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As a chaplain, you take care of people. You care for people. You listen to them. They are real. They say, "I smoke. I drink. I have these issues ... This is me. How can you help me?" You respect everyone. And you help. That's the beauty of what I do.

Visit nadadventist.org/ajyepsicamoreno for more of Moreno's story.

YEPSICA MORENO.

U.S. Army chaplain stationed in Colorado





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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Email: AdventistJourney@nadadventist.org | Web site: nadadventist.org

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Editor Kimberly Luste Maran

Senior Editorial Assistant

Art Direction & Design Ellen Musselman/Types & Symbols

Consultants G. Earl Knight, Mark Johnson, Dave Weigley, Kenneth Denslow, Gary Thurber, John Freedman, Bradford C. Newton, Ron C. Smith, Carlos Craig

Executive Editor, Adventist World Bill Knott

ADVENTIST JOURNEY



With His power, the church, as a prophetic movement, can rise up and do the work that God has called us to do.

BY G. ALEXANDER BRYANT



"We are a prophetic movement, a place of hope, a proclaimer of God's final message."

This article is adapted from the October 30, 2021, North American Division (NAD) year-end meeting sermon entitled "More Than a Denomination," given by G. Alexander Bryant. Some characteristics of the oral presentation remain.—Editors.

ll through the Bible we see evidence in which God has used

people to do His bidding and to carry His message. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is no different. And we are more than a denomination. We are a prophetic movement.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was born out of prophecy, the church coming out of the wilderness, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (see Rev. 12:17). That's who we are. We sometimes squabble over whether we should be more focused on the gospel, the righteousness of Christ, or whether we should be more focused on the final message to the world, but the truth is, God has called His people to proclaim both messages: the message of Christ's soon return and the message of righteousness by faith, which is the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's what the three angels' messages teach us. That is the final message that is to go out to the world.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is called to do both: we're to lead people into a loving relationship with Jesus; and we're to tell the world that Jesus is soon to come. We have a dual responsibility. God didn't call us, however, because we were special, or because we were better than anyone else. And even having this message does not make us better than anyone else. It just says God has given us the assignment to warn people that He is soon to return—and let them know that He loves them with an everlasting love.

The Bible teaches us that we aren't special or better. "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people" (Deut. 7:7, KJV). God is telling Israel, I didn't choose you because you were better. I didn't choose you because you were bigger. I didn't choose you because you were richer. But I did choose you to accomplish a prophetic assignment.

We are a prophetic movement, but we are also a place of hope and wholeness. You know, sometimes we think that because God has given us a special assignment, we are "it." But remember the text that says, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold" (John 10:16, KJV). That's God's kingdom. One Shepherd. But His kingdom is broader than this church. And you can be a part of the kingdom and not part of the church. You can also be a member of the church and not part of the kingdom. God has other sheep, but He also has a special assignment for a chosen people: to tell the world that He's soon to return; and that He loves us all with an everlasting love.

Centered on Jesus

This is the very essence of the three angels' messages. The first angel's message proclaims with a clarion call the gospel of Jesus. And the gospel is good news, the hope for humankind. God has given this message to His church in these last days to tell the world that there's hope—in spite of all the hopelessness around us, God has called this people to declare the hope that He has for the world.

We should never let people think that our church and our message is not centered in Jesus. No one should ever preach Jesus more than *this* church, because without Jesus, this church doesn't exist. This church is nothing without Jesus; this church has no message without Him.

If you ever want to know what this church stands for, go read what the church believes. Don't just listen to what people say, go read what the church said—read our beliefs, the foundational truths on which we stand.

The three angels' messages are relevant to the times we're living. They speak to justice. Creation is in there. They let people know that, in spite of how difficult this world is today, there is hope. God has a sure future for those He created in His image. We are a prophetic movement, a place of hope and wholeness, and a proclaimer of God's final message.

Sound the Alarm

I grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, and I remember practicing tornado drills in grade school. Sirens would sound when there was the threat of a tornado. People had studied the atmospheric conditions enough to know when the conditions were right for a tornado, and whether it was a tornado warning or a tornado watch. A tornado watch can be issued hours in advance; it simply says that the conditions are ripe



for a tornado to take place. Things might change suddenly, so people need to be alert and be vigilant. A tornado warning meant that a tornado had been spotted by the radar system, or a tornado had touched down and had been witnessed by someone. Whenever a tornado warning went out, the sirens would go off, and people would take shelter because a tornado had been spotted or was on the way.

We know that a tornado is just around the corner. God says to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I've set you on the walls of Zion to warn them for Me. Tell them that the atmospheric conditions are ripe. I'm about to return. God has called us to sound the alarm. The atmospheric conditions are right. Tornadoes have been spotted on the radar. One touched down during the killing of George Floyd. I saw another touch down during the coronavirus pandemic. I saw it touch down during the insurrection at the Capitol on January 6, 2021. I saw it touch down in the turmoil over in Afghanistan. I saw it touch down on the streets of Myanmar. I saw it touch down on the Mexico border. I saw it touch down in Haiti.... The Lord has called the Seventh-day Adventist Church to warn the world that a tornado is coming. The conditions are right. The tornadoes have touched down.

The purpose of the warning is to give people an opportunity to prepare. You can't force people to act or take

cover. Back when I was in school, there were some people who'd just walk up the street or drive down the street ignoring the cry of the siren. But the siren had done its job.

You can't force people to take action. But it's almost criminal not to warn people that the tornado is coming. Oh, my brothers and my sisters, it's criminal to know the tornado is coming—to see the signs as we know them, to see it coming over the horizon, and stay quiet. It's criminal to have a bullhorn on your desk and a megaphone in your car seat, and you don't warn the world, letting them know that the tornado is on its way and that Jesus is about to come! There is no excuse—God says one of the purposes of the church is not only to warn the people who will listen, but also to warn the people who will not listen.

Beyond the Devil's Distractions

The devil brings all these challenges into the church—theological debate, a squabble over this, a squabble over that. What is his intent? His goal is to keep us distracted from doing the mission that God has called us to do. We spend our time either afraid of the challenges or fighting each other.

The devil is no match for the church when we're steadfast in doing the work God has called us to do, because the church does it in the power of God. And so the devil says, *The best way I can mess*

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the church up is to distract them. Get them arguing over the coronavirus vaccination, get them arguing over wearing face masks, get them arguing over women's ordination. Get them arguing because as long as they're arguing, they're not doing the mission. Distract them because they're out to win our subjects from us.

God says, I'm looking for a church, and a people who will stay focused on the purpose for which I brought them into existence. I want my people to tell others that I love them. To tell them there's a God who cares and is coming back.

My brothers and sisters, the church has challenges. But I'm so glad the church doesn't stand by itself. We have a mighty weapon. Jesus said, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18, KJV). Jesus understands how the enemy fights, and He understands how we must fight to be successful.

Sometimes we get mixed up and confused, and we play defense. But God has not called this church to play defense; God has called this church to play offense. When the subjects for whom Jesus Christ gave His life receive His power,

One of the purposes of the church is not only to warn the people who will listen, but also to warn the people who will not listen.

and they go out and do what God has called them to do, the church becomes more than a denomination. We are a prophetic movement; we are a place of hope, and we are proclaimers of the last message God has for this world.

The Bible says when we, the church of the living God, take up our armor and move forward in the name and power of God (see Eph. 6:11), there's nothing the devil can do to stop us. We are an unstoppable force. Yes, we have challenges, but the gates of hell shall not prevail. When we have difficulties, the gates of hell shall not prevail. When we have errant theology being taught, the gates of hell shall not prevail. When there is more mission field than mission people, the gates of hell shall not prevail. The church will survive the devil's challenges. The church will be triumphant. It may rock to and fro, and it may appear that it's about

to fail. But it will not fail. It's built upon the Rock, Christ Jesus.

We are a prophetic movement, a place of hope, a proclaimer of God's final message.

God says this about His church through His servant Ellen White: "The church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is the only object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard. While He extends to all the world His invitation to come to Him and be saved, He commissions His angels to render divine help to every soul that cometh to Him in repentance and contrition, and He comes personally by His Holy Spirit into the midst of His church."* The church is not perfect because you're in it and I'm in it. But in spite of its challenges, God says, I called My church, and I'm going to guide it safely through.

Will you today say, "Lord, I'll be Your mouthpiece"?

Time is running out on us. Time is running out on accepting the grace God gives so abundantly. May we, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, cry aloud, and spare not a moment. May we lift up our voices like trumpets and let the world know Jesus is soon to come. May we take on the responsibility, be more than a denomination—and soon the Lord will come, and we will go home.

* Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1923), p. 15.

G. Alexander Bryant is president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.



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MIRACLES, RESILIENCE, AND GROWTH OPPORTUNITY

Officers share their annual reports at the North American Division year-end meeting.

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN AND ADVENTIST REVIEW



lhe 2021 North American Division (NAD) tear-end meeting started at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 28, at the division's headquarters in Columbia, Maryland. This annual business meeting, which was conducted virtually on Zoom for the second year in a row, with livestreaming on the NAD website and various other social media platforms, provided an opportunity for almost 300 executive committee members to receive reports, amend policies, strategize, and fellowship online with church leaders and laypersons who are dedicated to sharing with others Christ and the Adventist faith.

This year's theme, "Together in Mission: I Will Go," echoed the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, which is "to reach the North American Division and the world with the distinctive, Christ-centered, Seventh-day Adventist message of hope and wholeness."

"In spite of the challenges we have faced—we've had COVID-19, we've had the Delta variant of COVID-19, we've had racial injustice and inequality, we've had economic fallout, we've had all these things happening — God has continued to bless His church, and the mission of the church has gone forward," said G. Alexander Bryant, president of the North American Division (NAD), as he opened his report after thanking the NAD staff, church members, pastors, educators, and the leaders of conferences, unions, and the division for their dedication, service, and giving.

Part of Bryant's report included a six-minute video highlighting the ways Adventist members and organizations have given support to their communities through food distribution, disaster relief, student-led community service projects, shoe donation and distribution, help for the homeless, free health and dental clinics, mental health outreach, hybrid

(online and in-person) educational options, and online worship opportunities (including Sabbath School training and programming).

Bryant talked about how the church and its members have adapted and become more agile and flexible during the past year. "And God has blessed us richly. He is still working!" he said, citing the faithful support of the members as well as the adjustments institutions, churches, and schools have made in the face of the pandemic.

Bryant specifically addressed the growth in Adventist schools, sharing the increase in students, based on opening school year reports, through high school. In the NAD's early childhood program, student numbers increased by 1,295, with 158 centers and a total of 4,347 students; in pre-K through eighth grade, numbers increased by 3,801, with 37,809 students; and in high school, numbers increased by 583, with 11.672 students.

The NAD executive committee voted in February to focus on the three areas of media, multiply, and mentorship. Continuing to unpack



what this may look like in terms of the church membership and leadership working together, Bryant said, "We need to look for ways that we can intersect in those areas in a way that we can leverage each other's strengths to do more together."

After sharing his thoughts on multiply and media, Bryant then turned to mentorship.

Bryant explained that Adventist Retirement reported seven years ago that in 10 years, 50 percent of NAD pastors would be eligible to retire. "We have approximately 4,000 pastors. We don't have enough people in the pipeline in our schools to replace 2,000 pastors if they were to retire at their eligibility years," he said.

"We need to collaborate with [our] entities to create an intentional leadership development plan for leaders. How can we be more intentional in developing leaders for not only tomorrow, but for today? How can we take the current generation of young people and young adults and help prepare them for leadership?" asked Bryant.

Bryant expressed the desire for the NAD to take "the three M's" and move beyond rhetoric, applying these focuses in order to make an impact in several metropolitan centers in the division.

"That's the opportunity before us. We have 50 percent of the population in our entire division in the 20 largest cities in our division," Bryant said, adding that the ratios of Adventist presence in those cities means that we are overwhelmed. "A new approach is needed."

"God will bless His people; and God has blessed His people. God wants to do more, and I'm asking for God to do more," Bryant concluded. "It is my prayer that

we rise to the challenge. We work together in mission. We pray for God's Holy Spirit. And we watch God do the miraculous."

Mission Meets Resilience

"Despite the pandemic, our church has carried out its mission with resilience: our members have been faithful to their mission," said Kyoshin Ahn, NAD executive secretary. Ahn's words marked the beginning of the secretary's report during the NAD year-end meeting on October 31, 2021.

The goal of his report this year was "to have a better understanding about where we are as a church," Ahn said.

Ahn acknowledged the impact of COVID-19 on the Adventist membership across the NAD, and shared that the pandemic slowed down the net increase of members in 2020. As of December 31. 2020, the Adventist Church in the division had 1,265,754 baptized members, who worship in 5,639 churches and 894 companies. There was a 2,827 net increase in members in 2020, a figure that included a total of 17,392 accessions (a decrease of about 55 percent if compared with a year prior).

"We are inspired by many of our churches that, despite the pandemic, engaged in evangelistic efforts," Ahn said, adding that it is expected that the numbers will be similar in 2021, because the pandemic was still in full swing the first two quarters of the year.

The number of members' deaths topped 8,897 in 2020 (670 more than in 2019). Ahn explained that it is a trend that continued in the first two quarters in 2021 when compared to 2020. In the first half of 2021, 4,655 members passed to their rest.

← On October 31, 2021, Kyoshin Ahn, NAD executive secretary, delivers his report to the executive committee gathered virtually for year-end meeting.

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Ahn also shared that NAD Adventist members comprise 5.83 percent of the worldwide Adventist membership.

In the last section of the secretary's report, Ahn discussed some of the missional challenges the division is having, including data on attrition and loss. He acknowledged that the growth rate has been plateauing for some time, "a trend that, if continued, may have troubling implications," he said.

Regarding the accession rate (how many members are added per every 100 members), Ahn shared that in 2010 it was 3.63 percent. In 2019 it went down to 2.73 percent, and in 2020 it reached just 1.44 percent.

"It's a great challenge for all of us reducing the losses," Ahn acknowledged. "We must ask ourselves, 'Are we effectively nurturing our members to retain them to become full-fledged disciples?""

Miraculous 2020

Before diving into his report, Randy Robinson, NAD treasurer, shared his amazement with how God has worked through His church members as he portrayed the financial backdrop undergirding his report.

Referencing in particular the months of the COVID-19 pandemic, he said, "Even though we went through a time of uncertainty, and are still in a time of uncertainty, I look at 2020 in the context of a miracle; [it was] 'miraculous 2020'. Remarkably, we ended the year with a tithe gain."

The division ended the year with nearly a 2 percent increase in tithe, Robinson reported, saying, "that is just an unbelievable evidence that God was with His church through the giving of His people."

"Even to this moment, while it seems the pandemic is reducing its grip on our culture, our businesses, our society, we still have some uncertainty about how that



 \uparrow Randy Robinson, NAD treasurer, presents his report on November 1, 2021, at the NAD year-end meeting.

will end," Robinson remarked. "But I'm heartened, again, at God's grace. Even with all of this continuing uncertainty, God has blessed His people. He's blessed His church through the giving of His people, and I'm amazed at what God is doing."

Robinson continued, sharing highlights from the 2020 audited financial statement, which include operating and plant fund trends, recommended working capital, and tithe. He also shared the 2022 proposed budget with Judy Glass, NAD undertreasurer.

Gross tithe in 2019, Robinson reported, was \$1.075 billion. Tithe annually from 2016 to 2019 reached \$1 billion, but then COVID-19 hit in early 2020. Because of the pandemic and subsequent economic downturn, there was speculation that tithe might be down double-digit percentages. But that wasn't the case, and 2020 ended with tithe at \$1.093 billion. And, said Robinson, for 2021 "we have a more than 12 percent year-over-year gain in tithe through September; and nine out of nine unions have a gain. . . . Additionally, through September, 58 out of 59 conferences have gains year-over-year, and most of those conferences have double-digit gains. I'm just in awe of the amazing reality that God has [provided]—in a demonstration of God's benevolence to us through the giving of His people."

Robinson continued. "We have an increase in our income year-over-year. We have managed expenses well. We're under budget, and we have an operating gain of \$15 million through September."

Robinson talked about remaining financially conservative, but also about the opportunity to expand mission work across the division.

"I am just amazed how God has benefited the North American Division and His church this past year in a very difficult situation under very uncertain circumstances," Robinson closed. "He knows the plans He has for us even though we may wonder and doubt and not be certain about what those plans might be specifically. He's faithful; and I'm grateful to God for His benevolence, for His patience, for His blessing, and for allowing us to serve Him in this way."

Kimberly Luste Maran is editor of Adventist Journey; Adventist Review Ministries contributed to this report.

IN DEPTH ON YEAR-END MEETING

To read these reports in full, and access links to other news reports and video of each YEM session, visit www.nadadventist.org/news/2021-nad-year-end-meeting-video-and-news-coverage.

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MULTIPLY, MEDIA, MENTORSHIP: INTENTIONALITY IN GROWING THE CHURCH

During breakout sessions over the course of three days at the 2021 North American Division year-end meeting, G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president, asked union and conference leaders to consider specific questions related to three words undergirding the division's quadrennial strategic focus: multiply, media, and mentorship. The results of these discussions were compiled into a master list; and the final voted list of ideas will guide NAD leadership. A brief summary of each group follows.

Multiply

How can we increase members' involvement in the mission of the church? How can we increase our impact and influence on the community? What are some opportunities to collaborate with other entities? Should our methodology change in a post-COVID world? If so, how?

These were some of the questions presented to the NAD union and conference executive committee representatives as they gathered in nine different breakout sessions based on the nine union territories.

Evangelism and church planting are standard go-to responses, but many church leaders are beginning to consider what those activities look like. Church planting doesn't necessarily have to come from an outside entity moving into an area; church planting can be effectively accomplished from within an already-assembled group.

Similarly, evangelism doesn't necessarily need to happen in a faraway place. Meeting people where they're at is an important part of connecting the church to its community.

"We need to focus on things that are actually needed in the communities and neighborhoods we propose to serve," reported Mark Johnson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada, on behalf of the SDACC, following the breakout session.

Media

The second breakout sessions were intended to focus on the following questions: What attributes do you believe are currently associated with the Adventist brand in North America? How can we best brand the Adventist Church? How can our church entities best collaborate to tell a bigger, better story? How can we encourage our members to use their social media accounts as evangelistic outreach?

Before the breakouts several media-related presentations were shared including one on brand by Kurth Lampe Worldwide, a strategic communications firm, the "rest" campaign idea (sharable video clips) presented by the NAD communication department, a presentation from the Adventist Learning Community, and an update on Adventist Information Ministry, the NAD's evangelistic customer service call center.

During their reports the unions recognized and acknowledged the importance and necessity of digital ministry. Many also recognized the role young people can play in utilizing this valuable tool for the church and for Christ. Those who aren't engaged in using digital media need to be invited and trained to use those skills for ministry.

One suggestion was to use members of the church who are already successful online.



↑ Kimberly Luste Maran and Julio Muñoz, associate directors of communication for the NAD, introduce an idea through video clips to help inspire creative thought during the media breakout session at the 2021 NAD Year-End Meeting. Pieter Damsteeqt

"We have pastors and young adults who have thousands of followers," said Sandra Roberts, Pacific Union Conference executive secretary. "Let's identify our social media influencers and work with them."

Mentorship

According to numbers reported by Bryant, 78 percent of presidents, 58 percent of secretaries, and 50 percent of treasurers within the church will become eligible for retirement in the next five years. Nearly 50 percent of pastors are eligible for retirement in three years.

The need to develop a new generation of church leaders is growing exponentially each year. And, as Bryant pointed out, working together on mentoring young leaders will yield a better result than trying to accomplish it as a field of silos.

"We must collaborate in creating intentional leadership development plans," Bryant said.

Union groups were asked to consider several questions in the final breakout session, including: How are we bringing in and equipping the next generation of leaders? How do current leaders find someone to intentionally mentor? How do we change the perception of "ambition" as being negative?

One suggestion: perhaps young people themselves have some answers.

"We should start by asking them what should be done to attract and prepare young leaders," Stephen Brooks, Southwestern Union Conference executive secretary, said. "We should find out from them what mentorship should look like, and how we as a church can earn their trust."

-Becky St. Clair, freelance writer

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BY JOHN GELI

Lives Changed Through Listening

ave you ever had a life-changing experience? One that changed or confirmed your life direction?

Back when I was operating a college radio station, a caller said he appreciated the music and message on the radio station one particular evening. He went on to describe how he had been contemplating suicide, even coming to the point of deciding to end his life—that evening. But just before doing so, something grabbed his attention. As he listened to the radio, the power of the music and the message spoke to his heart and altered his decision. He called the radio station to tell me about it.

I grew up the son of a pastor and considered the vital role ministry plays in the lives of others. I wanted to dedicate my life to help others. But I had not considered that sitting alone in a radio station was much of a ministry, until the phone call from a listener that pivotal evening. Suddenly I realized that ministry is not just a matter of standing in a pulpit. There are other ways to be a positive influence in the lives of others. Bible-based messages on the radio can have a powerful spiritual effect. So can music and other programs that meet specific, felt needs.

That was a life-changing experience for me.

Working my way through college at the radio station led me to my life calling. My career and my ministry has been in Adventist radio. Today I'm the director of LifeTalk Radio, which celebrates its thirtieth anniversary in 2022. For 30 years this radio network has been a positive influence in thousands of lives. Hearts have been transformed and lives have changed because of the LifeTalk Radio network. And in conjunction with some churches, baptisms have been the result where radio was the opening wedge.

Media Is a Powerful Tool

The North American Division recently launched a new strategic initiative called Together in Mission. One of the three main areas of focus is media. Media includes television and radio along with other methods of communication. LifeTalk Radio is the only radio network owned and operated by this division. It can be heard on our free LifeTalk Radio app, Amazon-Echo, Google Home, Roku,

on satellite, on the Internet, and more than 200 local affiliate radio stations.

Media is a powerful tool for sharing the gospel. Much of the media in our world today is not positive. Many programs in the world of media promote evil or questionable content and self-serving agendas. But media can also be used to encourage, uplift, and connect people with Christ. LifeTalk Radio, through its programming and wide array of resources, exists to connect people with Christ.

For more than a year our world has been plagued by a pandemic that has caused a major paradigm shift in many lives and organizations. However, radio programming is abundant and available on more devices than ever before. During the pandemic people were still connected to LifeTalk Radio, and for many, it was a lifeline, connecting them with Christ.

Positive Influence in the Community

Many of our affiliate stations are owned and operated by local churches who use the programming from LifeTalk to broadcast to their local community.

Many individuals use LifeTalk Radio as a witnessing tool.

They also use LifeTalk resources to connect people with Christ. This includes LifeTalk's free sharing cards, available at www.lifetalk.net as printed cards and digital eCards, that provide a Bible text or positive message—letting others know God loves them.

Media can be used to encourage, uplift, and connect people with Christ.

Wherever you are you can be involved in ministry. Decide today to make a difference in the lives of others. Be a positive influence in your community. Your efforts may create a life-changing experience for someone else and even impact their eternal destiny.

John Geli is director/manager of Life-Talk Radio.

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Television goes beyond borders



When people are restricted, isolated, or can't attend church, they can still watch a message of hope and hear the Good News. People are searching everywhere for comfort, peace, and answers.... and Adventist Television programs are here to share real hope through the truth of Scripture and the person of Jesus Christ.

Choose to be a part of media evangelism! Your faithful and continued support helps make a difference in the lives and eternal destinies of others.

Please support our Adventist Television Ministries on February 12, 2022. Let's continue sharing the life-transforming Gospel together!

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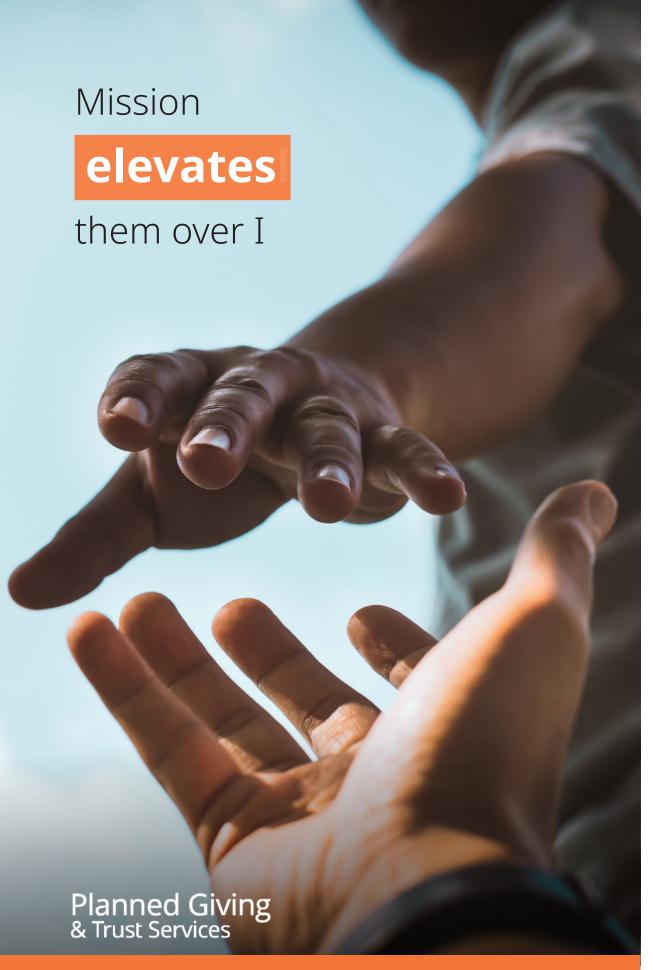
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