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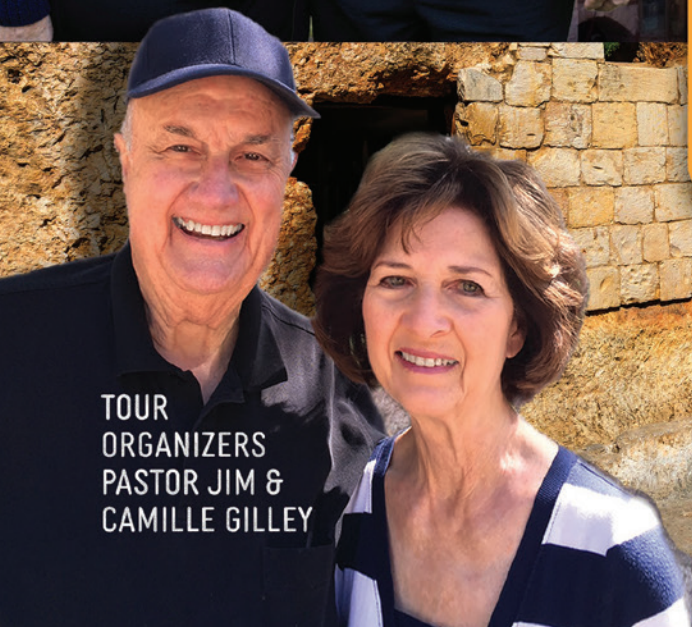
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Adventist Journey

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My Journey

I was pretty devastated by the COVID shutdown because there were so many unknowns. I felt like I could see what the next six months looked like, and then COVID hit. I wondered, *Will we ever be able to pull the project off? Will it ever happen?* We still had such a need in the community.

Visit nadadventist.org/ajjoellechinnock for more of Chinnock's story.

JOELLE CHINNOCK,
*Adventist Community Services director for the
Paradise Seventh-day Adventist Church in California.*

joelle chinnock



Cover photo by Pieter Damsteegt

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 JOURNEY

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Joelle Chinnock stands outside the Paradise Adventist Academy gym where Sabbath school and church services are being held until a new church can be built. The school has been repaired, and the community services building relocated to a warehouse downtown to better serve the community.

COMMUNITY

BY KIMBERLY
LUSTE MARAN

in the Midst of Crisis

One member's account of the Camp Fire in California, and how helping others impacts everyone involved.

As I sit at my computer, reading over notes from an interview with Joelle Chinnock, an Adventist Community Services leader, the steady thrum of water from the gray sky catches my attention. I glance outside. The rain drips from the overflowing gutter, spilling unabashedly on the verdant plants below the window. The torrent serves in stark contrast to the warm, dry, and windy weather of Chinnock's home, the ridges high above the Feather River Canyon, where the scorched but healing town of Paradise, California, sits along the Sierra Nevada foothills.

It's been three and a half years since the Camp Fire devastated Paradise and several nearby communities in 2018. The fire, which has been attributed to two ignition points sparked by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) power lines, tore through the town in about four hours, destroying more than 18,000 structures (including about 14,000 residences) and killing 86 people.

The last of the debris from homes and buildings and charred trees was hauled away in the fall of 2021. A few skeletal frames of houses on concrete slabs perch on the ridge community, the new wood gleaming in the reconstruction process. For many in Paradise, including Chinnock, rebuilding is slow but steady. So is the healing.

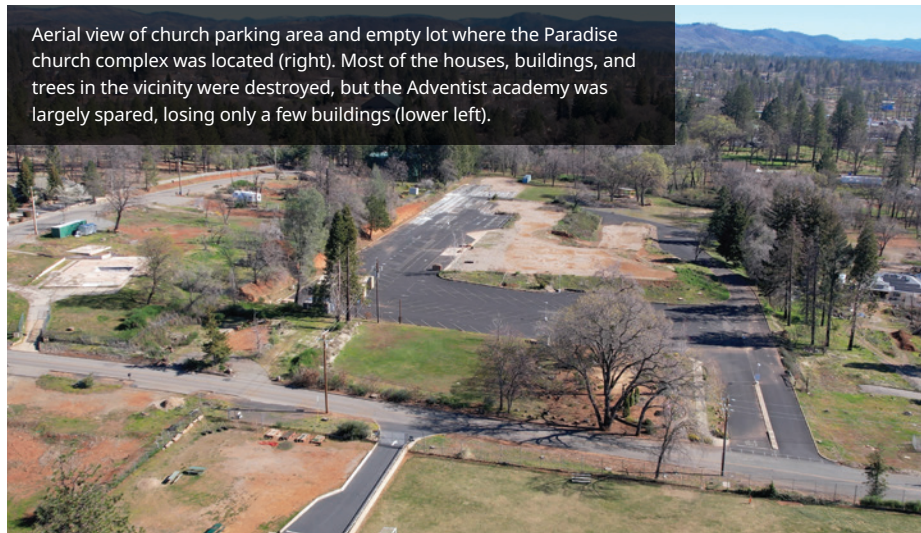
The Evacuation

"November 8 started out like any other day," recalled Chinnock, explaining that the entire area had been experiencing a drought for several years. "We'd been warned that week of potential power outages, that PG&E was potentially going to be cutting power if the winds got too high or conditions got too unfavorable. But I don't think any of us really took it super seriously because we'd been through it before."

That morning, Chinnock went for her usual walk along a bike path. As she made her way back she looked up and saw some smoke. Everything else was clear. Chinnock texted her husband Geoff. He said there was a fire eight miles away—news of small fires along the ridge was common. So Chinnock continued walking but soon, the smoke cloud had gotten considerably bigger—and darker. *Something's not quite right*, she thought as she arrived at home to see her son off to school on his bike. She waved to him as he rode away to school, less than a mile from home. Ash began to fall from the sky. Within 15 minutes she got a phone call from him. "Mom, they're evacuating the school. I'm coming home now," he said.

Then her husband called, saying, "I'm coming home. Start packing up the stuff. We're going to get out. This is moving a lot faster than anyone expected."

Aerial view of church parking area and empty lot where the Paradise church complex was located (right). Most of the houses, buildings, and trees in the vicinity were destroyed, but the Adventist academy was largely spared, losing only a few buildings (lower left).





The gym, where church services are being held, has been repaired after sustaining damage with the intense heat of the fire warping the metal frame.

All photography by Pieter Damsteegt

The family of six all started packing. “We were quickly just throwing things in,” Chinnock said. “I grabbed photo books, a little bit of food, some basic clothing, and we threw that stuff in as fast as we could.” Trying to calm her family’s anxiety as they prepared to leave with their truck and camping trailer, Chinnock looked up. The sky was black.

“We have dusk to dawn lights on the outside of our house and those had come on. That’s when I realized this isn’t like the other times we’ve been through a fire and had to evacuate. We gathered briefly on our lawn and had a prayer. And then my husband asked me to drive the truck and trailer out while he went to make sure his parents got out. And while it was a terrifying experience, God was in the chaos of it all and I could feel His peace. It took us two hours, moving slowly, bumper to bumper, and the kids and I went out on the last road from Paradise that, at the time, didn’t have flames on it. At one point we saw them in the distance over on Skyway but we never actually had to drive out through flames.”

Chinnock lost contact with the rest of her family. She found out later that not only did her husband make sure his parents were evacuated, he stayed as long as he could at the house, hosing down the roof and securing a few other things, before he drove out a different road, escaping through the flames. These actions may have helped save their home. “We did have pretty significant damage to the outside, and we had to gut the interior of the house. But the structure itself was saved,” said Chinnock.

The Chinnocks, like many of the other evacuees, found shelter in nearby communities down off the ridge in places such as Chico, Durham, and Sonora.

Her first thoughts after the harrowing experience included, *Have we lost everything now? What will this mean to friends and church members, and our church and our community?* The vastness of the loss was overwhelming.

“We were lucky in comparison to many,” noted Chinnock. “We have friends who really didn’t think they were going to make it out. And some people from the community didn’t make it. We heard stories of needing to get out of the vehicles, leaving them on the side of the road and running because it was gridlock and the flames were coming. But we also heard about the heroism of people coming back in and helping others get out.”

After the Fire

“It’s a day we will never forget—ever,” Chinnock said. “We will always mark time now with ‘before the fire’ and ‘after the fire.’ I can’t go back to the person that I was before. And I don’t want to go back. In that pain you are either forced to grow or not—and to see what God has done through what happened. More than ever, you develop this feeling that if you help someone else you will be helped too.”

As the rain falls, I think about how to tell the story of Paradise. The story of Joelle Chinnock, the story of resilience, of faith and compassion.

I remember the last few moments with Chinnock after the interview. She and I looked out behind the community service center she manages for the Paradise Seventh-day Adventist Church. It’s a warehouse location that served as a food bank for many months (including at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic) and now also helps give high-quality, almost new, donated furniture to

anyone in need. A way to continue the healing. She points to the small neighborhood below as the arid heat of the day shifts into a cool, dry evening. A few homes dot the hilly area plainly visible through sparse vegetation. “You see some people have come back and are rebuilding. But many are gone. And before the fire, you couldn’t even see any of these homes through the tall, thick forest cover. All that’s gone. But some of it is coming back.”

The town’s population was about 27,000 before the 2018 fire. The measured revival of Paradise is evident as the population grew to more than 6,000 by January 1, 2021, from a low of 4,600 on the same date in 2020, according to the California Department of Finance. The Paradise church membership and Paradise Adventist Academy student population have also shrunk comparatively. But here too, are signs of growth as plans for a new church building finalize (the entire church complex, and some of the school buildings, were completely destroyed by the Camp Fire).

“We’re still feeling the shockwaves. We’re still seeing them,” Chinnock shared. “Every day we meet people who come in here and their struggles are so real. You have more suicides that happen, more heart attacks, more family problems, marital problems. You hear reports of abuse toward children. You have loss of jobs as a result of the fire, mental breakdowns too. And yet through that we see a smile on a face again, and hear someone say how this program impacted them—if we can play one little piece in someone’s healing journey then it’s worth it. Right?”

She added, “There’s never a day that you wake up and you’re like, ‘Jesus, I’ve got this. I don’t need you today.’ Every day I wake up I tell Him, ‘I don’t got this today. I don’t. It has to be You.’ And He’s faithful and He does. He’s got it.”

A Journey to Love

How Ministry and Recovery Go Hand in Hand in Paradise

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

Joelle Chinnock, whose father served as a dean on campus, was born and raised at Pacific Union College for the first 22 years of her life. “Growing up Adventist, I didn’t really know another option, and I didn’t understand the principles and beliefs for myself until later in life,” shared Chinnock, who moved to Paradise, California, about 20 years ago with her husband.

“In my early 20s I was challenged, wondering, *Is this really the faith that*


I want to continue in?” said Chinnock, feeling that religion was just a series of rules and regulations. She and her husband, after experiencing a couple of devastating miscarriages, didn’t feel supported by their church at that time. They stepped away for about four years to a church down in Chico that “just took us in, loved us in that brokenness, in that trauma, and we flourished there. My relationship with [God] grew. There was healing that happened.”

Something else grew in Chinnock. She saw how dedicated the church in Chico was to the community. They ran a men’s house and a women’s house, solely dedicated to helping people get their lives back on track from alcohol or drug abuse. “It was palpable when we would meet together in worship—you could see the brokenness in people. You didn’t have to come to church looking perfect, like you had it all together. The church was so dedicated to sharing the good news that they actually started a program where they took church to the community—they would have church out on the street. I saw what it was like to be bathed in love, to be accepted in brokenness, accepted in pain. To see how that turned into service impacted me.”

Chinnock also started to better understand the beauty of Sabbath, not as a day to have rules kept but as a day for communion and relationship with the Creator. “We transitioned back into our local Adventist church slowly, coming back and bringing our kids back into it. And we’ve been part of the Adventist community since then.”

Once their children began going to the local Adventist school after being homeschooled for years, Chinnock started to become involved in the Paradise Seventh-day Adventist Church’s community services. Then came the Camp Fire, and Chinnock moved into full-time work for the church’s ACS.

“Our community service started as Love Paradise,” explained Chinnock. “We have Love Delivers, which is our food pantry and delivery. We have Love Gives at the new warehouse with our furniture giveaways. We have Love Builds [a housing project]. We don’t just call it ministry. We call it Tuesday. Everyday. This is life. This is how we do life. We just choose to try to love as best we can.”



Two free sofas are being loaded on to a customer's trailer at the Love Gives community service center operated by the Paradise Adventist church.

Since the Camp Fire of 2018, which completely destroyed more than 18,000 structures, including the Paradise Adventist Church and the Community Services building, Chinnock has served as the director of disaster recovery and development for the church at the “Love Gives” Adventist Community Services center, located in a warehouse purchased with the church’s fire insurance funds. They’ve been privileged to partake in community outreach projects in ways that specifically help fill community need in the recovery process from the fire.

In the Face of Adversity

Steve Hamilton, the lead pastor for the Paradise Seventh-day Adventist Church, arrived shortly before the fire. While ACS was active in the community before the fire through their Love Paradise program, the recovery and restoration of the community and church after the fire have taken the front seat.

“Joelle had been involved some in community service before the fire through the youth department ministry of the church,” said Hamilton. “They branded their initiative Love Paradise, where they had done some yard work and town community service projects and such. Joelle was part of that as a volunteer and a mom. Then, after the fire, when we came back up onto the ridge, you could just see that Joelle’s heart was totally consumed by the plight of the people. Early on, Joelle was the one we sent out to go look for ways to help people on the ridge.”

The first thing Chinnock discovered was the need for clean drinking water. The church had a deep well, and from the first couple of days after the fire until the need dissipated, residents often stopped by the church to fill up their containers. In fact, water is still available at this source.

The church group also provided home goods kits, which helped many who were living in RVs. During that time Chinnock met a woman on dialysis living in an RV. All of her medical equipment was out in the rain, just outside of the RV.

“That’s where the idea for the sheds came into being. At that point, we needed someone to lead and consolidate it, and put together sort of mechanisms for grants and money to be able to assist. Joelle was clearly the person for that,” said Hamilton. “We started out saying we’ll build a dozen sheds, maybe, and then, with help from Maranatha and lots of volunteers, that turned into hundreds.” The sheds still dot the community.

COVID-19 caused the group to pivot. “While we were figuring out the continuation of the shed project piece, Joelle started a new initiative in food service that we tagged Love Delivers. She networked with local organizations and with the grocery stores here, and we began delivering food to people during that time, and then started up a drive-thru food service, so people would pull up to our parking lot and receive food once a week.”

“Joelle is one of those people who, in the face of adversity, actually accelerates—which has been inspiring to watch. She is also a person who will try something and if it doesn’t work, try something else, but keep the idea tucked in her back pocket because maybe there will be another time for it.”

Team Effort

“We have been blessed to be able to bring on some staff and volunteers who we would not be able to do this without,” Chinnock explained. “We have a warehouse manager, Chuck Wiesner, who lost his home in the fire, and he had been working with Adventist Health in their hospice thrift store program before the fire so he has a lot of experience when it comes to this type of venture.”

Chinnock shares that the center’s front office manager was the registrar at the high school Chinnock attended growing up. She said that God crossed their paths again almost two years ago. “We’ve been able to bring her on as well,” said Chinnock. “But we have to rely heavily on volunteers. We have two volunteers who give us at least two full days a week to come and help the program, as well as several other volunteers who will pop in on occasion. We’re always needing more help, and we’re always grateful for when we do get it.”

With the anticipation of a large number of volunteers coming up to Paradise, the group was poised to build more sheds with partner Maranatha in April 2020. Then the pandemic hit in March.

“I was pretty devastated by the COVID shutdown because there were so many unknowns. I felt like I could see what the next six months looked like and then COVID hit,” said Chinnock. She wondered, *Will we ever be able to pull the project off? Will it ever happen? What about all the funding that we’ve raised? Do we have to give it back? We have such a need still in the community.*

Chinnock and the team didn’t know what to do. But God shifted their direction and they were able to start the Love Delivers program.

“I would love to say that from this point on I will never have my faith waver again, I will never be disappointed, that there will always be a sure, solid foundation. I’d like to promise that, but I can’t.

“What I can say is that seeing His faith in us again and again is what reminds me—I know that when I get to that spot again where I am feeling on the edge of brokenness, I remember how He has led in the past.”

Kimberly Luste Maran is editor of Adventist Journey.

"Your estate plan
is a gift allowing your
family to focus on

memories

not challenges."

—Eve Rusk

Director of Planned Giving and Trust Services
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DESPERATION, VIOLENCE, SUICIDE—AND HOPE

In the midst of one of the greatest youth crises in history, one system is bucking the trend.

BY LEISA MORTON-STANDISH

We're in the midst of one of the greatest youth crises in history. Suicide rates are up. Way up. So is depression, anxiety, sexual confusion, and desperation. All of this was completely predictable when so many school systems decided to close their doors and leave children to the mercy of the Internet. But one system has bucked the trend. Here's our story.

Darkness Descends

Their excitement was palpable. The middle school honors choir was on a grand adventure to Illinois to participate in an elite program for outstanding choirs across the nation. The children sat with their friends and giggled about the events

of the day as parents on the bus snoozed contentedly.

The students entered the vast cathedral where they would sing. Their hopes continued to rise in anticipation of their performance. Their voices swelled, then paused, as a grave announcement was made. Faces fell, and disappointed sighs filled the hallowed halls—their long-awaited trip, having just begun, had been abruptly canceled. The cause of the cancellation? The novel coronavirus pandemic. The governor had closed the schools, and the

students had to return home for two weeks of remote school.

At that moment their hopes were dashed. And that was just the start.

Within weeks, the things they loved were taken away. Their friends, their performances, their sports, their playgrounds, their routine, their church, their extended family, their entire life. Everything that made them feel safe and secure.

Day after day, week after week, month after month, the news was bad—and worsening. There was no hope of this ending, no vaccination, no safe place. They could not go out.

The hospitals were filling up, the death toll rising. In New York City maintenance crews still had to turn



up to work in the shuttered public schools—why? To build coffins in the empty gyms so the city could keep up with the surging demand because of COVID-19 fatalities.¹

Kids in Crises

It's no surprise that in 2020 emergency department visits for suspected suicide attempts among adolescents jumped 31 percent (51 percent among girls aged 12-17) compared with 2019.²

In addition, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Children's Hospital stated that the pandemic-related decline in child and adolescent mental health had become a national emergency.³

As the long, lonely summer of 2020 came to an end, 74 percent of the 100 largest school districts in the country started the year with remote-only instruction models, affecting more than 9 million students.⁴ A team of researchers at Stanford University crunched the numbers and found that the average student had lost a third of a year to a full year's worth of learning in reading, and about three-quarters of a year to more than a year in math since schools closed in March – December 2020.⁵

"Kids are going feral," said Macke Raymond, director of the Center for Research on Education Outcomes at Stanford University. "Thousands of them are unaccounted for, with no contact since schools have closed."

Adventist Education's Alternate Path

What did we do in Adventist education? We looked at the data and the implications of continuing remote schooling, and our dedicated Adventist teachers and administrators knew that students needed to be in school, in person. For the fall of 2020, every school that was able to open for in-person instruction did.

Our teams of dedicated Adventist professional educators erected outdoor classrooms, started forest schools, put safety procedures in place, modified everything from drinking fountains to classrooms, set up cameras and screens for hybrid learning for families that did not feel comfortable sending their children to in-person school, and spent hours planning and learning new ways of delivering instruction. Our teachers spent countless hours making school safe and instruction exciting for our children.

The rising rates in the mental health crisis, however, did not make us immune.

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry reports that children aged 8-12 spend an average of four to six hours a day online and teenagers are online up to nine hours a day. The report goes on to outline research that shows our children are exposed online to violence, risk-taking behaviors, sexual content, negative stereotypes, substance abuse, cyberbullying, predators, negative advertising, and misleading and inaccurate information.⁶ We are in the greatest war for the hearts and minds of our children. Their physical, mental, and spiritual health is at stake.

Providentially, just as the need became so acute, two years of development came to fruition as we launched the Adventist education mental health toolkit during the pandemic. With resources to support our teachers and students in understanding the mental health epidemic and how to get professional support. Our goal was and is to provide hope in Adventist education.⁷

Hope for the present—providing a safe and loving Christian school environment; Hope for the future—an engaging, experiential, exciting academic program that sets the stage for success in their

chosen career; Hope for eternity—a redemptive, loving, Christ-centered education that points our students to Jesus and the hope of eternal life.

The Bible talks a lot about hope. At this moment one text stands out as important: "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer" (Rom. 12:12, ESV).⁸ So let's meet the needs of our children; let's give them hope for the present, future, and, most important, for eternity.

We Can Stand With Adventist Families

We want to partner with you, your church, and your community to make a difference in the lives of children. Adventist schools have among the lowest private school tuition rates. Still, many families can't afford even the modest fees that Adventist schools need to survive.

If you want to give a child a chance for hope in this life, and for eternity, why not contact your local Adventist school or your conference and contribute to their worthy student fund to ensure every Adventist family can give their children the very best Christian education.

¹ E. Shapiro, *When Covid Raged in New York, These People Helped Keep the Schools Running* (June 2, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/02/world/when-covid-raged-in-new-york-these-people-helped-keep-the-schools-running.html>.

² E. Yard and Associates, *Emergency Department Visits for Suspected Suicide Attempts* (June 11, 2021), <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7024e1.htm>.

³ American Academy of Pediatrics, *A Declaration From the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Children's Hospital Association* (Oct. 19, 2021), <https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/child-and-adolescent-healthy-mental-development/aap-aacap-cha-declaration-of-a-national-emergency-in-child-and-adolescent-mental-health/>.

⁴ Staff, *A Year of COVID-19: What It Looked Like for Schools* (Mar. 4, 2021), <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/a-year-of-covid-19-what-it-looked-like-for-schools/2021/03>.

⁵ E. Richards, *Students Are Falling Behind in Online School. Where's the COVID-19 "Disaster Plan" to Catch Them Up?* (Dec. 17, 2020), <https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/education/2020/12/13/covid-online-school-tutoring-plan/633497002/>.

⁶ American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, "Screen Time and Children," https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-Watching-TV-054.aspx.

⁷ <https://mentalhealth.adventisteducation.org>.

⁸ Scripture quotations credited to ESV are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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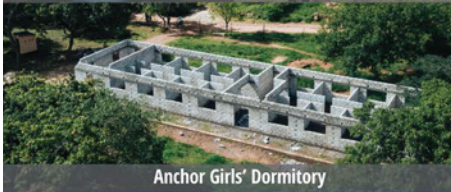


Twing Memorial School



Anchor Tomato Production

Anchor New Mattresses



Anchor Girls' Dormitory



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ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO EXTEND OUR IMPACT IS A GIFT TO THE WHERE NEEDED MOST FUND.

Our **Where Needed Fund** is critical to our operations. Curious where your dollar goes? We have funded major projects with recent gifts to the Where Needed Most Fund in addition to supporting our day-to-day operations. Your donations will enable us to respond quickly to new opportunities to expand our impact.

Recently, this is how some of those funds have been used:

- Greenhouse expansion at Kingsway Preparatory School, allowing the school to provide all its own produce for the 300+ children.
- Install perimeter fence around Twing Memorial School to increase safety and security.
- Completion of the girls' dorm, purchasing mattresses for the boys' dorm at Anchor School. Girls are currently sleeping two to a bed which is not only uncomfortable, it is out of compliance with local COVID regulations.
- Adding five classrooms to the primary school at Riverside Farms to serve 360 more children.



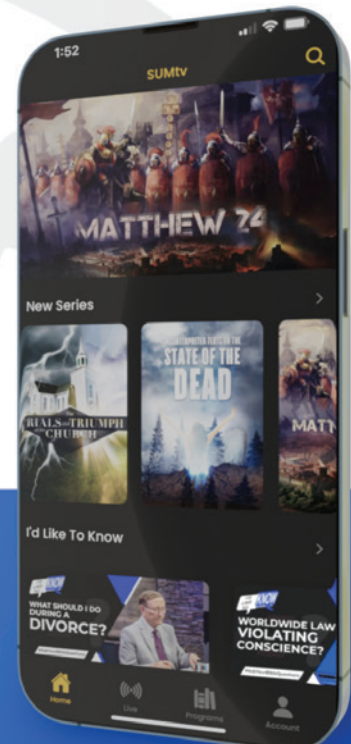
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PLAY PRAY SHARE



Graduate-level Bible Study at Your Fingertips



BY PHILIP BAPTISTE

Going Together in Mission

The North American Division has a wonderful strategic focus called Together in Mission. I love this focus and the emphasis on multiply, media, and mentorship as our way of going about our mission. But what I especially love about this focus is the word “together.”

For too long our church and its various departments have worked in silos. It’s time for us to come together and unify—and work together in mission.

Unity is important in the Bible. Thousands of years ago the psalmist sang a delightful song, and while we don’t know the melody or the tune, the words of this song ring as true and pure as gold. “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!” (Ps. 133:1). In John 17 Jesus prays a passionate prayer for His disciples to have unity. The apostle Paul counsels us to remember that the church is a body and each part is important; therefore he counsels “that there should be no division in the body” (1 Cor. 12:25). U-N-I-T-Y!

Why Unity Is Important

Unity is defined as the state of being one: a whole, or totality, as combining all its parts into one. The disciples did not have a history of working together in unity. *Who’s going to be on the left side and who’s going to be on the right side?* They bickered angrily.

They didn’t realize the importance of team: the idea that “together everyone achieves more.” Jesus wanted them to work together. He taught love, togetherness, and the importance of unity. He prayed earnestly that they would become one as He and His Father were one.

Perhaps the unity Jesus prayed for was not fully realized until the day of Pentecost came. And on this day, after being together for so long, the disciples finally understood what it meant to be in unity.

Promise, Potential, Power

Maybe this is where they learned that *unity provides promise*. They had been promised the gift of the Holy Spirit, so they gathered together to pray and look for that promise. Today, as Seventh-day Adventists, we too must pray and look for the promise: “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with

a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever” (1 Thess. 4:16).

In unity, we can help realize this promise. In unity, as we share and preach the gospel to our friends and neighbors, we can help hasten the Second Coming and the fulfillment of this most precious promise.

Unity not only provides promise—*unity unveils potential*. As the disciples came together in unity, in that upper room, the potential unveiled, not only for the Holy Spirit to come and fill them, but for them to be able to speak in new languages and ways (see Acts 2:1-4). And with this new gift of diverse language and communication, they now had the potential to reach people from all walks of life with the good news of Jesus Christ. Unity unveiled the potential—language and culture does not have to be a barrier to reaching the masses for Christ.

Finally, *unity unleashes power*. After the unity of the upper room, the disciples, now empowered with the gift of the Spirit, were able to move, preach, and reach people for God with unprecedented power and unbridled creativity.

Do you want that kind of power? Do you want the Holy Spirit’s power to fill your church and empower you to reach your community for Him? It can happen when we are in unity! It can happen when we are working together in mission.

In unity, as we share and preach the gospel to our friends and neighbors, we can help hasten the Second Coming.

Philip Baptiste is secretary/treasurer for Adventist-laymen’s Services and Industries.

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