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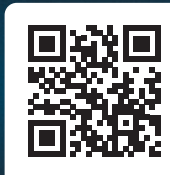


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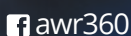
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Adventist Journey

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My Journey

My religious experience had really been about keeping score. It wasn't until I messed up and failed so miserably that I couldn't fix it that I came face to face with the reality of the grace of God. That's when the grace of God no longer was an intellectual exercise. It wasn't something that I just talked about. I can honestly say I had a conversion experience.

Visit nadadventist.org/ajboystephens for more of Stephens' story.

BOYD STEPHENS,
*entrepreneur, IT company founder,
and "community steward," from Montgomery, Alabama*

Boyd Stephens



Cover photo by Art Brando

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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THE RIGHTEOUS MISSION OF *MESSAGE*

An Interview with editor Carmela Monk Crawford about *Message* magazine.

Message is published by the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, and printed at Pacific Press Publishing Association. Message is one of several sharing magazines geared toward members being able to share them with their family members, friends, neighbors, and colleagues.

Message magazine, the second to be featured in our series, is available for subscription at www.messagemagazine.com. Once there, check out other products such as Bible studies and tracts. Also available at www.Adventsource.org.

What was the original mission of *Message*?

The origin story of *Message* brims with inspiration, if you ask me.

We know the mission of James Edson White, the second son of James and Ellen White, pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Many people think of Edson White as a “late bloomer” whose sentiments seem to echo today’s youth. He told his mother that he was “not at all religiously inclined,”¹ but was later moved to action upon learning the plight of Blacks in the South in his mother’s written work *Our Duty to the Colored People*. White would become a writer, printer, and operator of the *Morning Star* steambot, where he made his mark on the Adventist Church with his commitment to the dangerous and unpopular work among African Americans in the South.²

De jure racial structures, and de facto racist actions made it nearly impossible for the gospel to be internalized by many in the church in the late 1890s. This is post-Reconstruction, in the long shadow under the Supreme Court decision in *Plessy vs. Ferguson* that sanctioned Jim Crow. Yet White raised the money, partnered with members of means, and crafted a seaworthy steambot with the aim of using it as a riverboat classroom and church. He docked his boat in cities along the



Mississippi, where by day he'd teach Black children to read and write. White used his *Gospel Primer* to teach reading and spiritual concepts. By night, after they'd paused their back-breaking toil, Black parents learned reading, agricultural, and other vocational skills through White's ministry.

To solicit funds, prayers, and support, White published the magazine *Gospel Herald*; however, he suffered from a lack of resources. Fought discouragement. Struggled with illness. His team fought off both the threat of violence and actual assault. After he wrote his mother, she advised the sale of some of her work to raise money for the ministry. Unfortunately, the money raised was diverted to other projects, and was never fully recovered.³ By 1903 the *Morning Star* ministry had fizzled. Yet Black preachers, teachers, and church leaders saturated the country with churches and schools.

I find this story so compelling—the risk and the reason behind this ministry. The perennial lack of resource, the diverted funds. But the seeds planted and preached by those Black preachers grew like *weeds!* During the General Conference Session in 1934 the discussion of mission to Black America was, alas, revisited, and renewed.

Frank L. Peterson, who in 1934 was the secretary of the North American Negro Department, reported the vigorous growth among Blacks in membership, churches, institutes, clinics, and schools. Catch his appeal:

"One of our most urgent needs is the adoption of a program for the advancement of the work of the third angel's message among the Negroes of North America, rather than a discussion of the problem of the Negro. A problem is a puzzle. A program has in it prophecy and hope. It tends to strengthen and build up. It means cooperation. While problems have to do with theories, a program has to do with facts. A larger work has yet to be done for the 12 million Negroes of North America. In order that the best may be accomplished in the shortest possible time we must have a basis for mutual understanding, for common leadership, and for united action."⁴

Peterson's book, *The Hope of the Race*, in which he outlined the only hope of the *human race*, that of the righteous and redemptive gospel of Jesus Christ—met with great success in community sales. Likewise, the appeal to the General Conference for a "regular program" crystallized, in part, in the creation and publication of *Message*. The actual motion reflected in the minutes had such gravitas: "There are not less than 12 million colored people in the united States who must be reached by this message before probation closes!"

Since then, beginning in 1934, *Message* magazine has been working to word and reword, message and remessage, the gospel to Black America.

How has the mission of *Message* changed?

It hasn't. The methods have changed, but the mission is still there. It's important for us all to *all* continually reevaluate our mission and our methods. Even if we encounter some pushback on aspects of the mission.

We've encountered resistance to covering topics of concern to the specific needs and interests of Black people. We ran an article after the death of Trayvon Martin—a senseless killing at the hands of a self-appointed neighborhood watchman who sought clearance from local



An early cover (from 1935) of one of the first iterations of *Message*. *Message* magazine editor Carmela Monk Crawford.

police to pursue this boy on baseless suspicions that had to do with Martin's race. Martin's death led to protests and calls for justice, as well it should have. The racial threat, and how to approach it, how to dialogue, needed to be addressed in our magazine *for our audience*. Some eight years after that conversation, the death of George Floyd demanded the attention of us all. It required internal examination. It forced a critical conversation around race that challenges our Christian core.

That's why we remember the spirit and mission behind the *Morning Star* in our Adventist DNA. So we maintain the mission. We spread the gospel message. We identify and resist racist structures and systems that taint our theology, countering the uniquely American style of racial hegemony, and then—praise God—helping to restore and uplift this community. That is the righteous mission we should never release.

And just as central to our mission is the idea that *Message* is an outward-facing journal. We fight the temptation to focus on Adventist personalities, Adventist successes, and the jargon of "truth." All of that keeps us focused inward. That, along with the constant analysis of our Adventist "foibles," keeps us talking to ourselves. No, our mission is to present the ever-attractive and multifaceted gospel of hope and wholeness to the world.

Look back across the years of *Message*, and one can trace the resistance—from the cover showing Olympic track star Jesse Owens refuting in real time Hitler's murderous, Aryan propaganda to today's

At *Message* we remember the spirit and mission behind the *Morning Star* in our Adventist DNA.

Pamela Price, the new Alameda County (California) district attorney whose own case was the impetus for today's Title IX protections against gender discrimination and harassment. One can discern the mission of uplift in the beautiful images of Black women on the cover. This is an inspiration of editors such as Louis B. Reynolds and W. R. Robinson, who operated in a time when Black people had precious few national media outlets, and were all too often negatively portrayed.

Where is *Message* shared?

We float our content on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube), and our website, through our digital magazine, and our podcasts.

Community is the focus now. How do we emerge from our own bubble in the world to bless and be blessed? In addition to our bimonthly magazine, in digital and print, this year *Message* witnessed a boon in evangelistic opportunity, and by God's grace we were directed to support and infuse our communities with this product—carrying the gospel good news.

What else are you doing in the community, in that public space?

We attended the Congressional Black Caucus Legislative Convention to track some of the most pressing issues concerning our people today. There we were able



In New Jersey, Willingboro Seventh-day Adventist Church members pose with one of the books handed out at the Juneteenth festival on June 18, 2022. Photo provided by Carl McRoy

to present our September-October 2018 issue to the cover subject, Congresswoman Lucy McBath. She had never before seen this issue (we didn't meet in person). You may remember the story of her 17-year-old son, Jordan Davis, who was shot and killed in the parking lot of a Florida convenience store. The murderer claimed that he feared for his life and that he saw a weapon. McBath went to Congress. Fought for gun legislation. Fought. Just fought. She told us, "I'm so glad you talked about this from the perspective of my faith. That's the only way I can get through."

In November we attended the Holy Convocation of the Church of God in Christ in Memphis, Tennessee. There we believe God blessed us, because we were graciously welcomed to introduce *Message* to another audience. The sermon on Sunday appealed to the congregation to use an "old school" touch, the human touch to knock on doors, and be salt and light in the community. And as members passed us by that afternoon, we spread out our magazines and tracts and suggested, "You're going to need something when you go out there."

Finally, this year, we've learned how laypeople shared our *Message* Bible studies, and God has blessed the sharers and the materials to have been effective. "They have created a hunger and thirst for a connection to God," said Elythia Dean, a member of the Allegheny West Conference committee, and an ad hoc Bible study instructor. In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, we learned that members distributed magazines in front of a grocery store, when a young man approached and asked, "What is this? Who is this Jesus?" He came to their Relaunch Revival, with Pastor Jerome Hurst, and the NAD's Philip Baptiste, Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries secretary/treasurer, where he completed the studies and, along with his family, was baptized. *Message*—the message in *Message* is our superpower. It carries the gospel of Jesus Christ, and God has promised that His Word would *not* return to Him void.

¹The Ellen G. White Letters and Manuscripts (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2014), vol. 1, p. 905.

²History of *Message* magazine shared from *The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1996).

³See Louis B. Reynolds, *We Have Tomorrow* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1984).

⁴Frank L. Peterson, addressing General Conference Committee, Nov. 9, 1934.

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MISSIONARY: Sharon and John Pittman

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See You in the Morning

BY SHARON PITTMAN

Sharon and John Pittman made it their life's work to serve God and His church. Both have been dedicated to serving the underprivileged. Their most recent mission location is in Malawi at the Malawi Adventist University. While John served as a Bible worker and mentor, Sharon served (and still serves) as the vice chancellor of the university.

To go or not to go?" That was the question! We had just been informed that John, my husband, had idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, a terminal disease, and he had anywhere from six months to two years to live. After collecting our breath (literally), and crying together, we refocused our future on the eternal.

Thirty-eight years ago we pledged at our wedding service, "To become one to better serve the Lord!" That motto has guided each of our decisions throughout our many years of marriage. After we fasted and prayed about John's illness and our lifelong commitment to mission work, it seemed clear that the Lord was leading us to serve as AVS volunteers in Malawi, where I was to serve as the university vice chancellor despite John's physical challenges. Lugging oxygen concentrators, transformers, nasal cannulas, and, of course, the dog, we arrived in beautiful Malawi as a team not knowing how long John would be blessed with another day of breath.

Six months turned into two years and, with all the fresh cool air at our rural home, two years turned into four. We began our fifth year—so much for the doctors' predictions! Each day we lived the miracles, and each week John continued to offer Bible studies, distribute *The Great Controversy*, and prepare students for baptisms while being linked to the oxygen concentrators that the Lord kept miraculously working without any service or routine maintenance that would have been provided in the U.S.

Saying a long goodbye to someone I loved allowed us to live with more love and more vibrancy! Our commitment to service was shaded with the urgent reality that each day might be our last to maximize our shared impact for Jesus. I think we often shocked our Malawi family with open discussions about what should happen and what John would like to see happen when that day arrived. With John's Southern drawl he would declare without pause, "I am ready for my dirt nap whenever Jesus is ready for me to sleep!" Or "I will wait for Jesus while pushing up lilies!" His humor brought him through the days he was gasping for air, feeling nauseated, or enduring other such challenges brought on by his disease. He told the many friends who visited with him frequently, "Don't spend money on my funeral! Just make a box and put me in the ground and let me sleep!" He made it clear that all memorial moneys should be dedicated to the scholarship fund for our many needy college students.

Then came COVID-19. It began with a cough, nasal congestion, and other Omicron COVID symptoms. We had great cough syrup from the U.S.; I was sure that would help, but nothing we tried relieved his incessant coughing. Three days later he looked at me with one big tear streaming down his face and said, "Momma, let me go to sleep! This is my time . . . I have fought a good fight, and I have finished my course!"

I panicked, called my leadership team, and said, "He has made his decision, and I need to let him go!" They insisted that I take him to the hospital, but I told them that he preferred to be home during these final hours. Since he was on hospice before we left the U.S., I had been able to bring palliative-care medications, and

Saying a long goodbye to someone I loved allowed us to live with more love and more vibrancy.

he decided, with sheer exhaustion, that we needed to make that final choice that would end the suffering.

John breathed his last on Sunday afternoon, February 20, 2022, about 2:00 p.m., surrounded by the local kids that blessed our home, his many friends who wanted to say goodbye, his brother who happened to be visiting from the U.S., and a dear family friend who was with us in Malawi as a volunteer. We sang, we cried, and we prayed as he took one last gasp of air. Then the machine that kept him breathing was shut off, and all was quiet.

We purchased a village-made coffin and the next day hosted a small graveside service. We had the best of African music, numerous African funeral traditions that added a great cultural touch to John's "going-away party," as he had said he always wanted.

Today he sleeps on the Lakeview campus of Malawi Adventist University in our small cemetery. I walk the dogs by there each morning as the Lord and I talk while exercising. I am at peace. John is napping nearby, and our shared commitment to a life of service goes on even after death did us part! "See you in the morning, babes! Sleep tight!"



Above: John Pittman serves as a missionary despite serious illness. Below, right: Sharon Pittman with friends and colleagues from Malawi Adventist University. Photos provided by Sharon Pittman

NAD NEWS BRIEFS



← Volunteers distribute bags of fresh produce to community members at the North American Division's Thanksgiving fresh produce giveaway. *Art Brondo*

NAD DISTRIBUTES 10,000 POUNDS OF FRESH PRODUCE IN RECORD TIME

On Sunday, November 20, 2022, the Seventh-day Adventist Church's North American Division (NAD) headquarters in Columbia, Maryland, helped local families struggling to put food on the table, by giving away 10,000 pounds of fresh produce. Despite the brisk weather, a long lineup of visitors was waiting outside the building 30 minutes before the event's scheduled 10:00 a.m. start.

"By 11:30 we'd given away every scrap of food we had . . . more than 300 bags. And people were still coming hours [later]," said Orlan Johnson, director of the NAD's Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) Department. He added, "The [turnout] demonstrated the need, and I'm glad we were able to supply that need."

Visitors received high-quality produce, including potatoes, sweet potatoes, eggplants, cucumbers, slaw mix, and bananas sourced from local farms and grocery wholesalers, as well as *Message* and *Vibrant Life* magazines. The fresh produce and health-focused literature, including recipes, supported the Adventist Church's emphasis on healthy living. Families with children also received bags with magic sand, books, a slinky, and a Children's Ministries "Say YES to Jesus" wristband.

Strong promotion through social media, websites, radio and TV ads, and print flyers attracted a diverse group, including a family from Ukraine. Johnson said, "[This family] couldn't speak English, and I could tell them only who we were. Still, I could sense their gratitude. And I think they could sense our joy in providing. Being able to help them thousands of miles away from [the chaos in Ukraine] really touched me."

The NAD's first Thanksgiving giveaway was held in 2017, shortly after its new headquarters' grand opening. "When the NAD moved to Columbia, the late Dan Jackson [then president] challenged us to have a positive community presence, not just be an anonymous office building," recalled Melissa Reid, the NAD's associate PARL director. The annual giveaway was birthed from that challenge and has previously included health screenings and vaccination clinics. Thanks to these and other efforts, Jackson's vision came to life as Maryland's governor recognized the NAD for its significant community impact in 2018.

Organizers praised the 30+ NAD and local church volunteers for the day's success. "Because of the record number of volunteers, we were able to

pack all those bags in less than an hour," Reid said.

Furthermore, while this event is led by PARL, it is a collaborative effort, including Adventist Community Services, Literature Ministries, Children's Ministries, In-House Operations, and others.

Thanks to this spirit of volunteerism and the team obeying God's call "to be the hands and feet of Jesus," Johnson concluded, "the day went exceptionally well."

—Christelle Agboka, NAD Office of Communication

"I'm glad we were able to supply that need."

SONSCREEN FILM FESTIVAL HOSTS SECOND VIRTUAL FILMMAKER MIXER

Sonscreen Film Festival may be back in person, but two years of virtual screening experience are still paying off. And with the help of that technology, on Sunday, November 27, 2022, Sonscreen's new tradition of holding an online mixer and project screening for professionals sailed smoothly into its second year.

During the event college graduates who attended Sonscreen as students met with other film professionals in the gamelike virtual conference space of Gather.Town to catch up with old friends, make new connections, and share updates on film projects in all stages of production. Students were also invited to attend.

The Practical Filmmaker podcast, which Sonscreen sponsors, hosted the event. Podcast creator Tanya Musgrave, who is also the Sonscreen festival producer, invited event presenters and acted as host during the program.

Musgrave called the opportunity for connection between students and established filmmakers "invaluable," stating that she hopes regular mixer events will be instrumental in "widening the network available to new filmmakers."

Guests met in a cozy virtual rooftop lounge for a welcome by Musgrave and Sonscreen executive director Julio C. Muñoz. Next, guest presenters walked their avatars onto the digital stage to share trailers or other excerpts from seven ongoing or recently completed film projects.

John Quinn, a first-time attendee at a Sonscreen event, shared a trailer and stories from his work as editor of *The Chosen*, an increasingly popular series on the life of Jesus that is now in its third season.

Sydney Tooley and Nick Richey both presented trailers from feature films that were in distribution at the time of the mixer. Tooley's feature, *Sun Moon*, an autobiographical tale about a year spent teaching in Taiwan, was set for distribution through Affirm Films, a Sony company.

Richey's picture, *1-800-Hot-Nites*, a story about a foster child who finds an advocate in an unlikely place, was already on sale. Richey was unable to attend, but Quinn, who also edited Richey's film, stepped in to discuss the trailer.

Two more alumni shared feature films at the event. Theo Brown presented production stills from his diverse sci-fi piece *An Electric Sleep*, and Lenny Leonie shared the teaser for a project in development: *Ancient of Days*, a film set in a dystopian future that tells the biblical story of Daniel. Sonscreen films is a partner on the *Ancient Days* project.

"It's extremely valuable for students to have a solid opportunity to chat casually with someone who has worked on *The Chosen* or for networks like NatGeo or the BBC," Musgrave said after the screenings.

"I'm so excited that Sonscreen continues to expand to support young professional filmmakers," Muñoz said after the event. "Sonscreen is the only organization of its kind in all of the Adventist Church. We want to be the support system that up-and-coming filmmakers need, and we look forward to continuing to grow and celebrating diversity in creativity."

—Rachel Scribner, Sonscreen associate festival director

NEW LEADERS IN PLACE AT THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION IN FALL 2022

During fall 2022, six individuals were elected or appointed to leadership positions in the North American Division.

On December 11, 2022, the administrative committee of the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (NAD) voted to elect Milton Sand as the director of Information Technology Services (ITS) and Michael J. Brown as the director of Philanthropic Service for Institutions (PSI).

Milton Sand began serving at the NAD in 2018 as a senior network administrator. In 2020, he transitioned to the role of associate director of ITS, in charge of the NADcloud, a cloud services system for NAD entities. He looks to continue this work while managing the rest of ITS, including the office and users, and participating in various committees.

Previously, Sand served as IT director at Universidad Adventista del Plata in Libertador San Martin, Argentina, for nearly nine years. In 2014, he was appointed associate director of ITS at the Southern Union Conference. Four years later, he was called to the NAD.

↓ Milton Sand, new North American Division ITS director
North American Division



Michael J. Brown entered denominational service at the NAD in 2015 and has spearheaded multiple grant programs, including the Model Academy for Philanthropy Program and the Career Opportunities in Philanthropy Program. Presently, he also provides education and training for nonprofit boards and Adventist institutions in the academy, university, media ministry, and social service sectors; conducts fundraising seminars; and provides strategic and donor analytics support for Adventist institutions.

Before joining the NAD, Brown served as trusted council to several global ministries as a vice-president in multiple fundraising advertising agencies. He also served as senior leadership for a leading Madison Avenue-based direct response agency. Brown has led new product innovation, strategic marketing, and business research efforts for Fortune 500 and Global companies. He is also a speaker and published writer.

The NAD's Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries (ACM) welcomed the newest member of its team starting January 2023. Chaplain Cory Rowe (D. Min, M. Div, BCC) serves the division as the assistant director for the Southern region. His jurisdiction includes the Southern Union and Puerto Rico, taking over this area from Washington Johnson II, ACM director.

Rowe brings a rich tapestry of experiences to this role. He served in the United States Marine Corps, from which he received the Medal of Good Conduct. Rowe also pastored in the Northeastern



↑ Michael J. Brown, new North American Division PSI director
North American Division

and Allegheny West conferences. Notably, he served as the senior pastor of Mamre Seventh-day Adventist Church in New York and clergy liaison for Brooklyn's 63rd Police Precinct. He was also a local church prison ministries leader and the Northeastern Conference men's ministries leader. Finally, Rowe sat on the board of trustees for the Good Neighbor House Community Center, which provides health and human services to the underserved in the Dayton, Ohio, metropolitan area.

On October 30, 2022, during the NAD year-end meeting, Tim Madding was announced as director of the North American Division Evangelism Institute (NADEI). On October 31, Kimberly Luste Maran was elected as the director of communication and Gerardo Oudri-Varela as the associate director for resources for the Ministerial Association. Visit www.nadadventist.org/news/2022-nadyem-leadership-changes for more on these leaders.

BY WASHINGTON JOHNSON II

The Star of Hope

The North Star serves a fixed compass in the night sky, guiding the pathway to the dawning of a new day. The North Star, or Polaris, is located directly above the North Pole. It can be identified at night in the Northern Hemisphere. If you can see the North Star, it is obvious which way is north. The North Star is the brightest star in the constellation Ursa Minor.

Harriet Tubman, one of the best-known conductors of the Underground Railroad, a network of safe houses for slaves while they attempted to escape into the free states and Canada, used the North Star as a compass on the journey to freedom. It is estimated that “between 1810 and 1850, the Underground Railroad helped to guide one hundred thousand enslaved people to freedom.”* The bright rays of the North Star shone upon them from heaven while they attempted to steer clear of being captured, as they were subject to the Fugitive Slave Law, passed by the U.S. Congress that required citizens to return runaway slaves to their owners.

The North Star continually symbolized hope. Some years later in 1906, Charles Albert Tindley (1851–1933), a Methodist minister, wrote lyrics in the hymn “Beams of Heaven” (formerly called “Some Day”), seemingly to encourage hope for African Americans during some of the most arduous times of their journeys, and to acknowledge the oppression they faced as they migrated to Northern cities. The lyrics also alluded to the Israelites’ Exodus from Egypt and the “Star of Hope” that appeared at the birth of Christ. The lyrics encouraged focus on the beams of heaven, as did the slaves on the North Star, in anticipation of both the earthly and heavenly Promised Land.

“North Stars” in our Midst

The history of African American Seventh-day Adventists is filled with numerous “north stars” who have contributed to the betterment of society for all people. Fortunately, this growing list continues into the twenty-first century:

Barry C. Black serves as the sixty-second chaplain of the United States Senate and was formerly the first African American to serve as chief of chaplains of the United States Navy.

Charles E. Bradford was the first president of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists and an outstanding

administrator, preacher, evangelist, and mentor to pastors.

Charles D. Brooks, the first speaker/director of Breath of Life Ministries, was a trailblazer of religious media used to reach the African American community with a message of hope and wholeness.

E. E. Cleveland was a gifted evangelist, author, and civil rights advocate who participated in the first March on Washington, D.C., with Martin Luther King, Jr.

Chessie Harris, the founder of Harris Home for Children in Huntsville, Alabama, received the President’s Volunteer Action Award in 1989 from President George H. Bush for making a positive impact on the lives of children.

Mildred Johnson was a Bible instructor extraordinaire who worked both nationally and internationally with noted evangelists. She was also the first female to serve in a leadership role in the initiation of the Evangelism Council at Oakwood University.

Anna Knight was the first African American Seventh-day Adventist missionary to India. She was a pioneer for mission service among African Americans.

Ella Simmons served as the first African American female vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Our Star of Hope

The achievements of these men and women continue to inspire us; however, the ultimate reward of eternal life promised to the faithful believers in God will be given at the second coming of Christ. We will also receive a crown with stars from Jesus Christ (see Dan. 12:3), the one who made the North Star, and is our eternal Star of Hope.

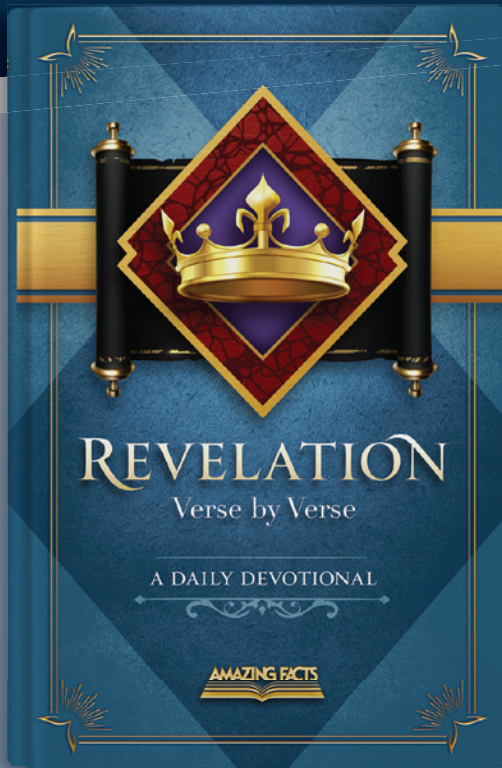
* “The Underground Railroad,” National Geographic encyclopedic entry: <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/underground-railroad>, accessed Dec. 15, 2022.

Washington Johnson II is director of North American Division Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries.

The North Star has continually symbolized hope.

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*Justice.
Compassion
Love*

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