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Adventist Journey

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My Journey

During the time of my deepest struggle, the Lord brought me to the prayer ministry. I was angry at Him, and said yes only because a nice woman invited me. But the moment my prayer came out of my mouth, it hit me that I had a lot to be thankful for; and in the puddle of tears in front of me I realized I had put a wall up between God and me.

Visit nadadventist.org/gemcastor for more of Castor's story.

GEM CASTOR,

*ASAP Ministries ambassador and prayer coordinator,
living in Michigan*

Gem Castor



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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Conserving Is Serving

Meet Southwestern Adventist University's Jared Wood, a young, hip wildlife conservationist.

BY MICHELLE BERGMANN



Jared Wood, an associate professor at Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU), and friend and collaborator Jeff King get ready to take a craft out to check on wildlife in the Oklahoma Red Slough Wildlife Management Area. *All photos provided by Jared Wood*

In the Red Slough Wildlife Management Area in southeastern Oklahoma, you will find well-loved and well-respected Jared Wood handling and observing alligators, following a passion he developed as a kid. “I love all animals,” Wood begins. “My mother always encouraged my fascination with animals by letting me bring them home to play with, but I always liked reptiles the best.”

Growing up in a small town in Oklahoma, Wood describes attending an annual event that affected his lifework—a rattlesnake roundup. “Locals would collect and kill thousands of rattlesnakes as part of a community festival,” he recalls as he shifts in his chair during our interview in his office. Conviction changes the tone of his voice: “Even if they are venomous, I just didn’t think that was the right thing to do. Those experiences led me to pursue a career in wildlife conservation, specifically reptile conservation, because they’re so misunderstood.” On his office wall hangs a poster displaying pictures of the venomous snakes of Oklahoma.

Wood did his undergraduate studies in fisheries and wildlife management at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. During that time he raised 18 orphaned alligators, which led to the current project he is working on.

Alligator Tale

“A mother alligator either abandoned her nest or was poached, we don’t know, so there was a nest with no mother,” Wood tells the story. “Biologists sent the 18 young to Southeastern Oklahoma State University. I oversaw their care until the time came to let half go after one year in captivity, and half go after their second year in captivity. We studied their survival and movements through the winter,” Wood explains.

Graduate studies led Wood to Kentucky and then Florida. “I left the alligators behind and worked with invasive reptiles during graduate school,” he continues. “When I moved back to the Texas area, one of the wildlife technicians from Oklahoma’s Red Slough Wildlife Management Area asked me if I’d be interested in picking up where I left off monitoring alligators. That person was David Arbour, an alum of Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU), whom I already knew. We formed a working relationship when I was an undergraduate, and we stayed in contact after I moved to Kentucky. It’s kind of neat to have a SWAU connection on this project. So that’s how I first got back into working with alligators in Oklahoma.”

Wood, along with wildlife technician Arbour and two professors from Southeastern Oklahoma State University, started their research by doing a lot of monitoring of alligator nests and mothers using game cameras. About a year ago the state of Oklahoma decided to fund a study on alligators and awarded them a grant to work on it for the next two and a half years, “with the hope that it will continue into the future,” Wood tells me. “This project is really a collaborative effort, which is fun because I also get the opportunity to work with old friends, including my undergraduate mentor.”

As we continue to talk, Wood looks through his pictures on his phone and finds a picture of an alligator the team took that went viral on social media. “CNN even showed this one,” he says, and smiles. In the photo an alligator is “icing,” or “snorkeling,” sticking its snout up

through ice so it can breathe. “We want to know everything about the alligator population in Oklahoma,” Wood explains about the project. “To be able to successfully manage the population, we have to better understand their demographics, movement patterns, behaviors, and ability to withstand extreme winters that alligators in other parts of their range don’t experience.”

Living Out His Faith

We shift from talking about Wood’s alligator project in Oklahoma to talking about his position as an associate professor at Southwestern Adventist University and how his varied skills and conservation efforts flex between research projects and the classroom. He says, “I’m kind of known as the dinosaur guy at Southwestern,” and he is. He leads a dinosaur excavation expedition each June in the Lance Formation in eastern Wyoming. Besides his teaching duties,



Jared Wood, also known as the “dinosaur guy” at SWAU, checks on a smaller, adult alligator.

he is also curator of the Dinosaur Museum and Research Center on campus, home of more than 35,000 fossils, the largest collection of dinosaur bones in north Texas.

About his background, Wood shares, “I went into science because I wanted to help declining animal populations, and I wanted to do something to make a difference in the world. I ended up working primarily with reptiles, because, as a generalization, they are the most hated group of vertebrates. At Southeastern Oklahoma State University my work with alligators and turtles made me realize, *Hey, I really love wildlife research.* I thought I just wanted to be a game warden or a park ranger, ride around on a four-wheeler all day and handle animals, but my undergraduate professor really sparked my interest in research. That’s why I went on to the University of Louisville to continue my training in wildlife biology.”

Wood grew up as a Seventh-day Adventist, but no Adventist college offered what he wanted to study, wildlife biology. In the last year of his Ph.D. studies, his aunt, Penny Landeros, sent him a job announcement from her alma mater, Southwestern Adventist University. “It said they were looking for someone to teach ecology and zoology courses, help with the paleontology project, and I think microbiology might have been in there too,” he remembers. “I said to myself, *Well, that’s a mixed bag of skills, but I can definitely do the zoology and the ecology courses, I have curation skills, and I’ve had an interest in dinosaurs since I was a kid.* I mean, who doesn’t like dinosaurs, especially if you study large reptiles?” He breaks into a smile. Interestingly, the first time Wood ever set foot on an Adventist college campus was when he began his career at Southwestern Adventist University seven years ago.



A “HANDS ON” EDUCATION

Do you care deeply about animals, plants, or the environment? Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas, offers a B.S. Biology, Ecology and Conservation Biology Emphasis degree. Jared Wood provides students with a hands-on perspective in his classes, Ecology, Zoology, and Management of Fish and Wildlife Resources, to name a few. He says, “We’re getting our students involved in the field in multiple ways, and we’re providing them with research skills and connections to professional biologists outside of the classroom.”

“Hands-on” means working with animals and plants as part of labs, conducting research alongside faculty members, keeping live animals and plants in the classroom, and internships, according to Wood. If cages containing fish, turtles, boa constrictors, and rattlesnakes and shelves of preserved animal specimens and bones in a lab classroom sound like an environment where you or a young person you know would thrive, check out swau.edu/visit.

On the end of Wood’s desk, a plastic shoebox without a lid holds fossils Wood collected this summer but has not yet had a chance to catalog for the Dinosaur Museum and Research Center. A miniature T. rex skeleton sits beside it, along with a couple of massive-looking dinosaur teeth. I notice a picture book on Wood’s bookshelf, *365 Ways to Save the Earth*, amid other books about ecology and various field guides and textbooks. From the corner of his office, he shows me his favorite snake hook out of his collection of snake hooks and tongs. He points out his ever-ready field equipment in the other corner of his office, a radio receiver for tracking animals, and binoculars and scopes for observing alligators and birds.

“I love science,” Wood shares. “When I was an undergraduate, I loved giving presentations at elementary schools, and I always wanted to make a connection between science, what we do as wildlife biologists, and what students and the public can observe and understand regarding conservation initiatives. As a professor who works at a Christian school, I do get asked to preach, but I don’t necessarily enjoy preaching. My way of serving is stewardship, and for me that’s conservation—environmental stewardship. I just want to protect what God gave us, and any chance I get to work with wildlife is a way for me to be a good steward.”

Michelle Bergmann is a freelance writer for Southwestern Adventist University.

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ADVENTIST MINISTRIES CONVENTION REPLENISHES LEADERS ACROSS THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

BY CHRISTELLE AGBOKA, WITH KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

After three years apart, more than 600 conference-, union-, and division-level leaders from across the North American Division (NAD) reunited in Greensboro, North Carolina, January 8-11 for the NAD's 2023 "Replenish" Adventist Ministries Convention (AMC). With its theme based on Jeremiah 31:25, "I'll restore tired souls," every aspect of the AMC, including special music, keynote addresses, seminars, ministry exhibits, the "Replenish" juice bar, morning hikes, community service, entertainment, and ministry achievement awards, aimed to rejuvenate, educate, inspire, and celebrate the church ministry leaders present.

"Replenish" offered both spiritual and professional development, with nearly 70 educational seminars spread out over two days. Attendees gleaned best practices from NAD officers and departmental directors,

union- and conference-level leaders, pastors, and subject matter experts in different fields. The plethora of topics included children's ministry, cultural intelligence, disabilities, family, men's and women's ministry, health, IT, leadership, philanthropy, social media, stewardship, youth and young adult ministry. And for word-smiths, the counternarrative writing conference, on using writing to amplify marginalized voices, took place at Greensboro's historic International Civil Rights Center and Museum.

To round out the leaders' experience, the AMC also offered a concert by the Watchmen Acapella Group, the first showing of a Sonscreen showcase, including the film "Those Were the Good Days," and a comedy presentation by the Skit Guys that left the audience crying with laughter.

The three-day convention was bookended by the Adventist Radio

Convention on January 6-8, Adventist Women Leaders (AWL) luncheon on January 11, and NAD Children's Ministries retreat on January 11-14. Immediately following the AMC, the AWL luncheon taught 70 women presidents, administrators, department directors, associates, and assistants that focusing on God-given strengths is the key to fulfilling God's purpose.



All photography by Pieter Damsteegt

← G. Alexander Bryant, North American Division president, gives the first keynote at the opening general session of the Adventist Ministries Convention on January 8, 2023.

Jesus—an Oasis for Our Souls

G. Alexander Bryant, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, delivered the opening keynote address the evening of January 8. In his presentation, titled “God’s Oasis,” Bryant spoke to the stress many leaders are under because of challenges, including the pandemic, work, or family issues. He then presented the perfect solution. “Tonight, I want to spend a few minutes talking about God’s oasis for His people. It’s not a place. It’s a person, and His name is Jesus,” he said.

Bryant, after quoting Matthew 11:28-30, continued: “This is an invitation to God, through Jesus, for His people. And that invitation is for calm. . . . He asks us first to ‘come.’ . . . [Jesus] is the first place that we can retreat that brings peace in difficult and troubled situations. And in exchange for coming, He’ll give us rest.”

Rest, and what it entails, was a common theme throughout the AMC’s morning and evening general sessions, which featured two TED talk-style keynote addresses each session. Using personal stories and biblical examples, pastors, directors, and administrators from various NAD entities presented ways leaders can replenish spiritually, physically, and emotionally; these included creating space for solitude, engaging in laughter and humor, expressing gratitude, spending committed time with God in Bible study and prayer, or going for a walk. Then, recognizing our human weaknesses, several messages also touched on the need for repentance and surrender. In between messages, attendees also enjoyed two sets of worship music from the Crosswalk Seventh-day Adventist Church (Redlands, California) praise team.

Finally, the sessions included a short segment titled “Historical Replenish,” by Michael W. Campbell, NAD director of Archives, Statistics, and Research, and Matthew J. Lucio, pastor of the Peoria Seventh-day Adventist Church in Illinois and host of the Advent History podcast. The dynamic duo shared interesting tidbits from Adventist history described in modern terms. In one especially relatable “episode,” Campbell stated that James White experienced burnout while planning the “Dime Tabernacle” in Battle Creek, Michigan, and needed time to recharge physically and spiritually. “So,” Lucio quipped, “[he and Ellen] got a nice little Airbnb house in Colorado.”

Out in nature, hiking, and laying their souls before God, “[they] had this kind of reconversion experience,” said Campbell.

Changed Lives and Mission Opportunities

The exhibit hall open throughout the AMC was a hotbed of activity, where visitors could meet old



↑ Michael W. Campbell, director of NAD Archives, Statistics, and Research, and Matthew J. Lucio (left), pastor of the Peoria Seventh-day Adventist Church in Illinois and host of the Advent History podcast, talk about James and Ellen White getting a “nice little Airbnb in Colorado.” The pair hosted a segment titled “Historical Replenish” during each general session at the Adventist Ministries Convention, held January 8-11, 2023.

friends, play games, purchase ministry resources, or grab swag of all flavors. But the heart of the hall was the 45 ministries represented, from NAD departments such as Children’s Ministries, Communication, and Adventist Community Services, to ministries of the global Seventh-day Adventist Church, such as the Office of Global Mission and Adventist Risk Management, to supportive ministries.

Several exhibits shared stories of changed lives. For instance, attendees coming from the AMC’s general sessions were greeted by Tammy Mapes, a literature evangelist with Home Health Education Service, whose motivation for selling is personal.

“My dad had an Adventist coworker who tipped off a literature evangelist. There were six of us kids. He said, ‘Go see that family. They have kids.’ My parents bought the *Bible Story* books, and the colporteur passed our name to the pastor, who followed up with Bible studies. I was old enough that I remember life before, the drinking and smoking; then my dad becoming a gentle, godly man. *The Desire of Ages* changed him.”

Elsewhere in the exhibits, guests discovered that the Adventist Learning Community is more than a training database; it also produces several popular podcasts in English and Spanish. They discovered Faith for Today, a life-coaching branded television ministry, which pulls in 4 million weekly viewers for its flagship *Lifestyle Television* program. They also learned about tentmaking, where “you can keep your career and still be a missionary,” from the world church’s Office of Global Mission.

Attendees such as Akehil Johnson, NAD Student Association president for Adventist Christian Fellowship (ACF), public postsecondary campus ministry, left the exhibits inspired for expanded mission. He said, “I’ve been blessed to hear stories and discover new ministries that can support ACF’s vision. It’s been amazing.”



Nearly 70 women attended the Adventist Women Leaders (AWL) luncheon held January 11, 2023, at the conclusion of the North American Division 2023 "Replenish" Adventist Ministries Convention.

Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant

Ministry awards for lifetime achievement and excellence in ministry were incorporated into the AMC's general sessions. Awards were presented to 11 leaders at all levels of the church. Recipients came from Jewish Ministries, Regional Affairs, Children's Ministries, Adventist Community Services, Young Adult Ministries and Adventist Christian Fellowship, Women's Ministries, Club Ministries, Refugee and Immigrant Ministries, Oakwood University Church, Youth Ministries, and the Center for Youth Evangelism.

The awards presentations fostered an environment of warmth and appreciation, such as when awardee Ron Whitehead, executive director for the Center for Youth Evangelism and assistant professor of Youth Ministry at Andrews University, received a standing ovation.

They also created some lighthearted moments, such as when Ko Saelee, husband of recipient Terri Saelee, coordinator of NAD Adventist Refugee and Immigrant Ministries, managed to play "How Great Thou Art" using a leafy green plant.

Finally, recipients shared inspirational words. Don Keele, Jr., director, Young Adults and Adventist Christian Fellowship, Georgia-Cumberland Conference, stated, "It's one day at a time. That's how you make it in ministry. One day at a time and today with Jesus."

Replenished for His Service

As a first step in planning AMC, organizer Wendy Eberhardt, NAD vice president for ministries, turned to God. "I knew I needed God to direct this event. I said, 'Lord, these are Your leaders. What is the message You want us to present? You know what they need most,'" she said.

"After spending time just studying and listening to God, [the need] became clear as I was reading Jeremiah 31, about the Lord restoring us. Then my mind went to the four Gospels, and I read the story where Christ had sent the disciples out. They were so excited and exuberant about spreading the gospel. Jesus said to them, 'Come away. Come be with Me. We need to be together.' They just needed to regroup, needed to breathe. And Jesus knew that."

Eberhardt considered how ministry leaders were stretched during the pandemic, pushing through separation, isolation, and masks. "I felt the Lord telling me we need to 'come away'—to replenish through meeting and talking to other ministry leaders, have some time for silence and solitude, and just replenish," she said.

The convention's final day was a call for leaders to leave Greensboro with a greater sense of dependence on God. In his message, "Undeserved Blessings," Vandeon Griffin, NAD associate director for Youth and Young Adult Ministries, made an altar call, asking leaders: "Do you want to be replenished?" Roughly 40 percent of attendees walked to the front of the auditorium.

After speaking about the spiritual benefits of cleansing, in "The Gift of a Good Shower," David Ferguson, senior pastor of Collegedale Seventh-day Adventist Church in Tennessee, closed AMC with a meaningful Communion service. As the praise team softly sang, "Who can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus," Ferguson guided leaders into a prayer walk ending at a table laden with Communion bread and wine.

He led them to eat and drink the symbols of Christ's body and blood, then prayed. "Come into our lives, Lord Jesus. May we hear Your call and walk in Your footsteps. Not only to be bought and paid for, but also to be Your hands and feet"

Christelle Agboka is assistant director of communication for the North American Division.



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NAD NEWS BRIEFS



Pohnpei Seventh-day Adventist Mission School staff and faculty welcome the NAD visiting team in January 2023. Photo provided by NAD Education

NAD ADVENTIST EDUCATION TEAM VISITS GUAM-MICRONESIA MISSION

During January 2-20, 2023, the visiting team for accreditation from the North American Division (NAD) Department of Education spent time with students and faculty at four of the nine schools in Guam-Micronesia Mission. One of 13 divisions for the Seventh-day Adventist World Church, NAD operates a system of more than 900 early childhood centers, elementary, and secondary schools and universities, including the ones in the Guam-Micronesia Mission.

The visiting team from the NAD was comprised of Arne Nielsen, NAD vice president for education; Stephen Bralley, director of secondary education and accreditation; and Martha Ban, director of technology for education. The NAD team was accompanied by Churchill B. Edward, director of education for the Guam-Micronesia Mission.

While on Majuro, Pohnpei, and Kosrae, the team reviewed self-study reports compiled by the schools' faculty and staff and conducted fact-finding interviews to help them complete their official report—with a recommendation to the North American Division Commission on Accreditation.

At each of the schools visited, students expressed their belief that the teachers “believe what they are teaching, especially about God,” shared Nielsen. He reported that the students said they feel safe, are a “pod” (family), that their teachers genuinely care about them, and have a great appreciation for their academic preparation. “We found this to be true as we observed student and teacher interactions daily,” Nielsen added.

The visiting team continued to Chuuk to spend time with the school administration in preparation for their accreditation visit in January 2024. They finished up the time in GMM with a visit to Guam Adventist Academy and the Guam-Micronesia Mission office to discuss further in-service and training opportunities for student missionaries and teachers.

Aside from visiting the schools and meeting faculty and students, the team had the privilege of worshipping and fellowshiping together with our church members in Pohnpei and Kosrae.

Visit <https://www.gmmsda.org/schools> to learn more about our schools in Guam-Micronesia.

—NAD Adventist Education

Rose Otis, First GC Women's Ministries Director, First Woman to Serve as a NAD Vice President, Passes to Her Rest

On January 7, 2023, Rose Marie Otis, first General Conference Women's Ministries director, and first woman to serve as a North American Division vice president, passed to her rest. Widely known as a public speaker and author, she was living in Frederick, Maryland, at the time of her death. Otis was 82.

“Rose was the right woman in the right place at the right time—God's time,” said Heather-Dawn Small, current Women's Ministries director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. “God had chosen her to make a difference for millions of women of every social class, ethnicity, and ministry around the world. . . . Rose was a woman of incredible creativity, insight, sincerity, intelligence, and diplomacy.”

In 1991 Otis became the first Women's Ministries director of the General Conference (GC). With a passion to see women involved in the mission, Otis started the ministry with innovation, creating a women's devotional book series where all royalties from the purchase of the book would go to a scholarship fund supporting the education of women committed to spreading the gospel. Since that first book was published in 1992, the women's scholarship fund, known as “Scholarshipping

Community Faith Leaders Gather as North American Division Hosts Fourth Religious Freedom Prayer Breakfast

On January 17, 2023, approximately 100 people from diverse faith traditions gathered for the fourth annual breakfast. The event, held again in person for the second year in a row, recognized January 16 as National Religious Freedom Day in the U.S., and included seven special prayers after the blessing for the food: prayer for elected officials, the community, the nation, global health and healing, peace, religious freedom, and unity of spirit. Representatives of several religious groups prayed on these topics, including participants from Adventist, Jewish, Muslim, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Baptist, and non-denominational Christian faith traditions. Several NAD leaders and local church leaders participated through prayer and music.

During the prayer breakfast welcome, Orlan Johnson, director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty for the NAD, gave a warm greeting to guests, provided a brief summary of the program, and shared the significance of the January date for the event, emphasizing the historical framework printed on the event's program.



↑ Two attendees hug at the North American Division's religious freedom prayer breakfast held on January 17, 2023. *Art Brondo*

Johnson stated that “many Americans take our religious freedom for granted, despite the fact that nearly 80 percent of the world’s population do not have the freedom to worship and practice their faith in whatever way they deem necessary and that religious freedom is a global concern, not only a national one.”

Rabbi Craig Axler, from Temple Isaiah in Fulton, Maryland, offered the special remarks for the event. Near the conclusion of his remarks Axler said, “Part of the beauty of our American system is that we all have the religious freedom to go out and to advocate, and to protest and to lift up, to influence and, ultimately, to seek the compromise that creates us a fairer, more just nation.”

—*Kimberly Luste Maran, NAD Office of Communication*



← Rose Otis former GC Women's Ministries director; former NAD vice president
Photo provided by Pacific Press Publishing Association

Our Sisters” (or SOS), has raised more than \$1.4 million. *New Every Morning*, published in 2022, is the thirty-first book in the series.

While at the GC, Otis spent years traveling around the globe, assisting in organizing women's ministries in 12 of the Adventist Church's world divisions. During this time Otis edited the first six editions of the women's devotional book.

In 1996 Otis was elected a vice president of the North American Division. She was the first woman to hold this position. While vice president, Rose continued to create opportunities for women to worship and spread God's Word. Two years later she was asked to become the vice president of the Texas Conference, another first.

“Although her years at the NAD were few, Rose's impact on ministry was transformational,” said Debra Brill, former NAD vice president for ministries. “She brought a renewed focus on evangelism that flowed from her pioneering work with GC Women's Ministries. Her international

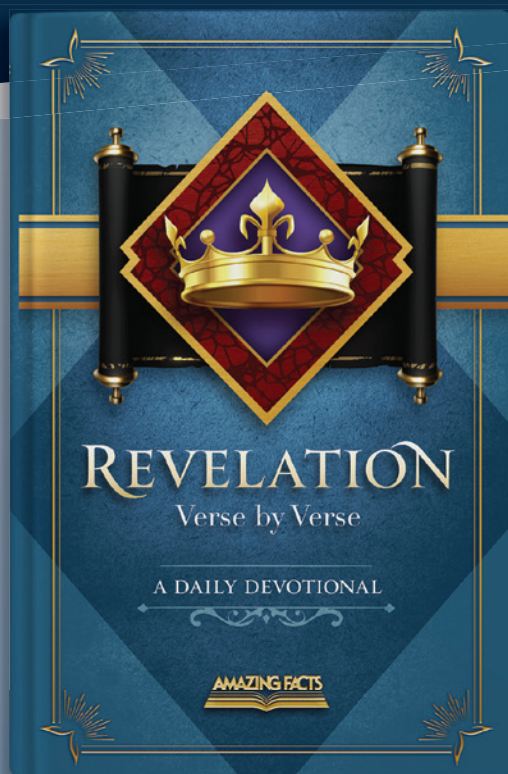
experience contributed to an appreciation of the rich diversity of cultures across North America. She embraced her new role as the first woman to join the NAD administrative team with a love for mentoring new generations; and she was a role model for leaders who followed.”

In 2002 Otis stepped away from her work because of health challenges. She is survived by her husband of 64 years; two children, Todd and Heidi; and four grandchildren. A celebration of life service was held at the Frederick Seventh-day Adventist Church in Maryland on January 14, 2023.

—*NAD Office of Communication*

REVELATION

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AMAZING FACTS
INTERNATIONAL

BY TRACY WOOD

Because He Cares

On a Friday afternoon after flying home from a week of meetings, I discovered that my laptop was missing. Panic hit. The last time I'd backed up my computer was two and a half months ago. So much work had happened since then. Committees, emails, documents, all were gone.

My mind turned heavenward. "Jesus, if You can make an axhead float," I prayed, remembering a Bible story from my childhood, "You can easily get my computer back into my hands."

I called Southwest Airlines at the airport, gave them my flight number, and told them which seat pocket it was left in, but no laptop had been found. And by then the flight was already en route to its next destination.

After the weekend, in my morning solitude time with Jesus, I began wrestling with soul-searching questions. "Lord, does the work I do make a difference?" I asked. "Jesus," I prayed, "if You want my computer to come back to me, You can do it."

An amazingly helpful IT worker told me the serial number of my lost computer, and informed me that that the laptop did have a North American Division sticker, hidden where I hadn't seen it. But I didn't bother to add those details to my lost item report with the airline. What was the chance that my computer would be found, even with the sticker? Not a very good one, I reasoned.

Still, a thought nagged at me. *Shouldn't I at least update my lost item report with the serial number and description of the sticker?* I shrugged it off at first. But the thought persisted. Finally I logged into my Southwest account and added the details, not expecting anything to happen.

The second week rolled in, then on Tuesday another update on my lost item report popped up in my inbox. It opened with the words "Your lost item has been found."

I quickly logged in to my account and paid the shipping fee, and my computer was on its way.

Two days later the laptop arrived at my home. As I took it out of the box and held it in my hands, words bubbled up in my mind. "If I can make an axhead float, I can easily get your computer back in your hands." God had answered my prayer.

Complex Questions

I had experienced a miracle. But that miracle has led to deeper, more complex questions that I don't have simple answers for.

Why would Jesus give me back my inanimate computer, without a scratch on it, but allow children to be killed in a school shooting that same week?

If Jesus can bring a lost computer back home, why does He allow the war in Ukraine to cause such massive destruction and loss of life?

Since Jesus can keep a computer from being broken, why do so many couples and family relationships come apart and break into pieces?

What is going on behind the scenes? What is happening that I can't clearly see?

Maybe Jesus is working miracles for people in the war, even if we don't hear about them? Maybe He already has someone in place to help the friends and family we worry about?

Today I'm giving thanks to Jesus for bringing my lost computer home. And yet my heart is heavy, too, as I pray for the many who need courage and hope.

And I pray for you, too. I pray that Jesus will speak into your mind this week, and show you tangible miracles in your life. Miracles such as His presence, and His love and care for you.

God showed me a miracle when He brought my computer home. It was not because I deserved it, but because He cares. And Jesus does care: for me, and for you.

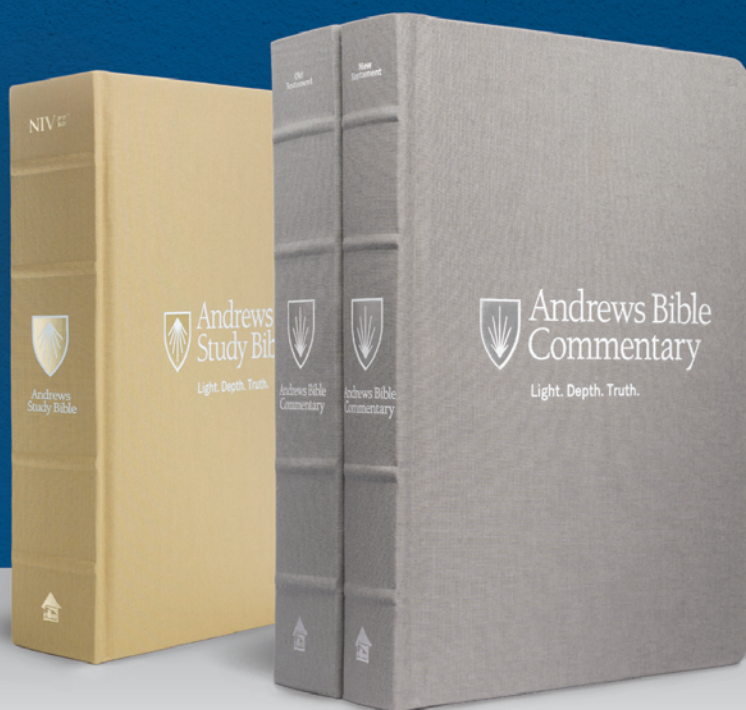
Tracy Wood serves as director of North American Division Youth and Young Adult Ministries.

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