

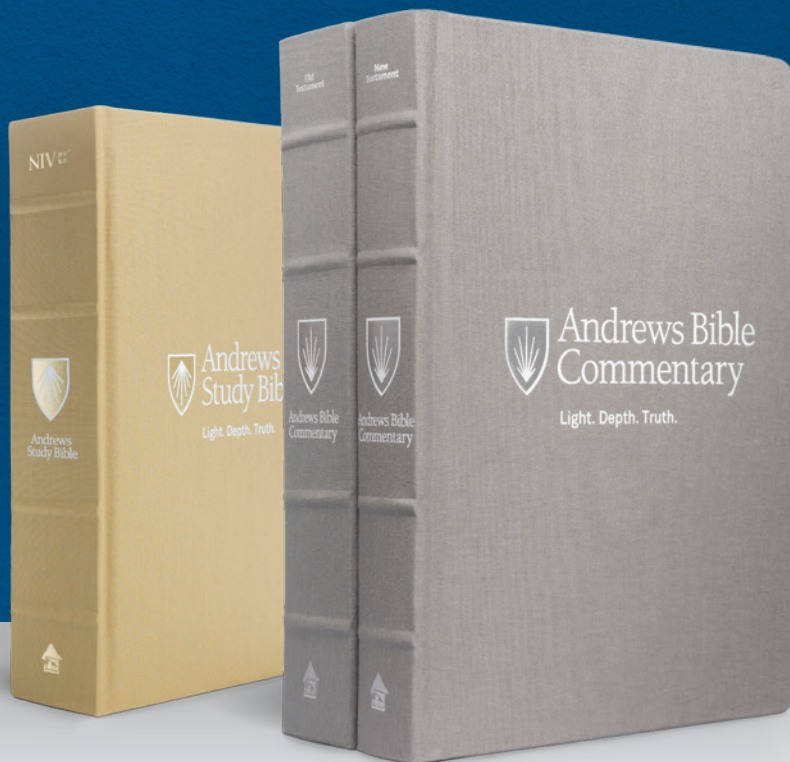
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Contents	04	Feature <i>Here I Am! Send Me! M. Gilda Dholah-Roddy Embraces Her Call to Chaplaincy Ministry</i>	10	NAD News Briefs
	06	NAD Update <i>Convention Prepares Educators for "Something Better"</i>	11	Perspective <i>Measuring Life by God's Marks</i>

My Journey

I would always say yes to everyone because I was afraid I was saying no to God. So yes, I'm busy, but I've learned that in order for me to serve God more efficiently, it's not about being always busy. I cannot serve God to the best of my abilities if I'm constantly on the go. God allows us breaks.

Visit nadadventist.org/ajjeje노발 for more of Noval's story.

JEJE NOVAL,

assistant professor, and research coordinator for nutrition and dietetics at Loma Linda University in California

JeJe Noval



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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Here I Am!

Send Me!

M. Gilda Dholah-Roddy is embracing her call to ministry as a newly commissioned U.S. Army Reserve chaplain.

BY DIXIL L. RODRÍGUEZ



It began with a humble prayer by a young girl from the island of Mauritius: “God, send me where You need me.” Without a doubt, God heard her sincere request. Those who know M. Gilda Dholah-Roddy, North American Division Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries (ACM) associate director, can attest that she has embraced her call to ministry with the grace and determination to speak the truth, echo the promises of God, and faithfully serve where called. Gilda’s fervor and love for God and the Seventh-day Adventist Church are evident in the diverse forms of ministry and leadership wherein she has served. Given her nonlinear path of service, it is no surprise that Gilda’s next bend on the road would take her back to her original prayer and acceptance of ministry.

A commissioning ceremony presenting, recognizing, and honoring Gilda as a U.S. Army Reserve chaplain

was held on April 17, 2023, at the North American Division (NAD) office in Columbia, Maryland. Brigadier General Andrew R. Harewood, a senior chaplain in the U.S. Army Reserve and a Seventh-day Adventist minister, administered the oath of office.

“I know her to be a brilliant and gifted servant leader,” stated Harewood. “She answered the call to say, ‘Here I am! Send me!’ . . . She will make an immediate impact on the thousands of soldiers under her ministry responsibility.”

The responsibilities Gilda has taken as an Army chaplain are numerous. They include providing emotional, spiritual, and pastoral support; offering counseling, mentoring, and religious education; officiating in funerals and weddings; and creating relationship-building platforms to foster the mental fitness soldiers need to overcome the challenges and rigors of military ser-

vice. Gilda will serve one weekend a month, two weeks a year, supporting service members and their families in the 55th Sustainment Brigade based at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

“Ministry is multifaceted, and in this season I am called to serve God and country,” said Gilda. “[As] an island girl, serving in the U.S. Army, I continue to be amazed at where God has brought me and continues to direct me.”

Creating Safe Spaces Outside Normative Margins

Colleagues, friends, peers, and the countless chaplains mentored by Gilda can speak to one specific tenet of her life: She leads by example. Her life story continues to be a book penned with the ink of service, pages recounting devoted ministry to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Said Gilda, “I have been blessed to be surrounded by capable leaders



Brigadier General Andrew R. Harewood, a senior chaplain in the U.S. Army Reserve and Seventh-day Adventist minister, administered the oath of office at M. Gilda Roddy's April 17, 2023, commissioning service. Photo: Sheldon Kennedy, North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church *Sheldon Kennedy, for North American Division*

who have recognized my leadership skills and facilitated a space for me to grow. In our church there are few women in leadership. Still, I have often been invited to sit at the table. I value this opportunity and long to see [in the church] a permanent structure and placement where women lead."

"Chaplain Gilda is a great colleague. She is tireless and passionate about supporting and advocating for all chaplains," says Chaplain Angela Li, NAD assistant director for ACM. Military and church colleagues also affirm that Gilda encourages chaplains to focus on the purpose of their ministry and not lose sight of the mission of sharing Jesus Christ with others.

Re-envisioning Ministry Ahead

One challenge of chaplaincy is the many communities it encompasses. Chaplains who serve

"Jesus is our model. He spent most of His ministry outside the synagogue. That is chaplaincy at its core."

outside of Seventh-day Adventist spaces can appreciate the importance of engaging in critical listening. It is not enough to say we are "meeting people where they are"; we must also acknowledge differences in our communities of service. Gilda engages this topic with incoming chaplains who may notice differences between service in congregational ministry and pastoral care in chaplaincy settings.

In the U.S. Army Reserve Gilda will use her skills to move through many religious and interfaith communities. "Outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church, chaplaincy occurs in a pluralistic environment," said Gilda. "As a chaplain, my role is to provide spiritual care, a safe platform for an individual's spiritual needs and worship traditions. [Thus,] when confronted with beliefs that do not align with Seventh-day Adventist doctrines, I relate to the spiritual faith and find that safe space to minister."

"Jesus is our model. Think about it. He spent most of His ministry outside the synagogue. That is chaplaincy at its core," Gilda added. "As ministers, we have individual callings. When God called me to ministry, it was to minister where the people are. I think of chaplaincy as the work that we, as Seventh-day Adventists, are going to do as we prepare to usher in Christ's coming. Certainly the parish has a place, but what about the rest of the community? As human beings, we inherently long for a relationship with the Almighty. I encourage our ministers to be involved in their community, open to community needs, and [ready to] step into the gap to fill them. That's serving the way Jesus served."

To Be a Faithful Servant

Chaplain Gilda is forging ahead as a faithful servant. When she is asked about her call to military chaplaincy, the story goes back to that humble prayer by a young girl from Mauritius who is happy to serve God and country. "When I was approached with the opportunity to serve as a U.S. Army chaplain, the calling was clear: this is where I needed to be, growing as a leader, working to align and enhance systems to connect and advance common missions and service," said Gilda.

"When we put our trust in the Creator, understanding that we don't know what the end will look like, we can rest assured that we serve a God who knows the beginning and the end. I don't have to know where I am going; by trusting in God, although [my path is] at times painful, I am not lonely, because God is right there with me. When God calls, God already has a plan. Here I am! Send me!"

Dixil L. Rodríguez is serving as a chaplain in Texas.

NAD EDUCATORS' CONVENTION PREPARES ATTENDEES FOR "SOMETHING BETTER"

BY CHRISTELLE AGBOKA,
WITH NICOLE DOMINGUEZ

Nearly 6,000 educators came together in Phoenix, Arizona, on August 7-10, 2023, for the North American Division's (NAD) first educators' convention since 2018. Attendees from across the division delighted in four days of spiritual rejuvenation, learning, and networking.

The convention's theme, "Something Better," is inspired by Ellen G. White: "Something better' is the watchword of education, the law of all true living. . . . To honor Christ, to become like Him, to work for Him, is life's highest ambition and its greatest joy"* Per NAD vice president of education Arne Nielsen, the theme reminds educators "that Jesus offers us something better than the world has to offer," and their work is of eternal consequence.

As the largest professional development and spiritual development opportunity for Adventist educators, the convention enabled educators to meet peers they had met only online, and reunite with old colleagues, classmates, friends, mentors, and former pupils. Canada's Ottawa Adventist School teacher Akehil Johnson expressed a common sentiment: "I learned that I am not alone."

The convention opened doors for ministry for other attendees, such as Ivenelle Perez, a fifth-grade teacher at Glendale Adventist Academy in California. Upon unexpectedly meeting a teacher from Guam at an ice-cream shop and learning that the Micronesian teachers needed laptops and school supplies, Perez determined to engage her students in a service project to assist.

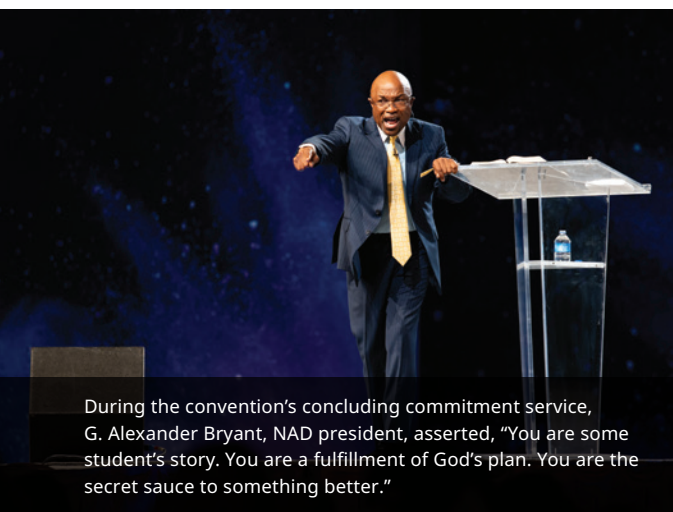


On the second day keynote speaker Mario Acosta, author and Marzano Resources associate, proposed "the crab method," which focuses on 15 learning standards.

Photography by Glendon Hines



Morning worships, including powerful devotionals by Donnett Blake, Northeastern Conference's Women's Ministries director, set a spiritual tone throughout the NAD educators' convention.



During the convention's concluding commitment service, G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president, asserted, "You are some student's story. You are a fulfillment of God's plan. You are the secret sauce to something better."



Phil Callaway, Canadian author and humorist, had the audience in stitches on the second day of the NAD educators' convention.

Educators Essential to Adventist Mission

On the first day, attendees learned that the world church has 9,589 schools staffed by 11,476 educators with more than 2 million children in their care. And every element of the convention, from worships to keynotes to seminars to exhibits, emphasized educators' centrality to the church's mission.

Morning sessions set a spiritual tone, including music from Cyzia Music Ministry, videos on the rich history of Adventist education, and devotionals from Donnett Blake, Northeastern Conference Women's Ministries director. Blake stated, "Some of you are going back to deep struggles, difficult students, empty schools with little resources. But I've come to tell you this morning, go back boldly in the name of Jesus! Let your continuing steps serve as a testament to the unwavering love of God. Through your perseverance you will become a living example of what it means to have a purposeful sacrifice."

Seminars Empowering and Equipping Educators for a Changing Context

This year's convention featured professional development, with 300 educational seminars spread across six breakout sessions. Offerings encompassed best practices in teaching, leadership, mental health, standards-based learning, innovation, marketing and recruitment, student information systems, and more. Workshops focused on remaining relevant in a rapidly changing context and preparing students for eternal life.

In a seminar titled "Is Adventist Education Still Worth It?" Adam Brown, Kettering College (Ohio) dean of student success, encouraged educators to persist in reaching younger generations. "It's all about Jesus. Our mission is to grow the kingdom. We do that through education," Brown said.

This year NAD Adventist Education hosted an all-new, separate early-childhood education (ECE) track with its own seminars. On August 8, 150 attendees joined the ECE Gathering, Appreciating, and Promoting (GAP) launch session and luncheon. There Nielsen praised participants for "creating a safe space engaging whole-child learning—physical, mental, spiritual, and social," asserting that "this is where it all begins in Adventist education."

Keynotes Inspire Educators to Excellence

Keynotes addressed contemporary topics in education and provided step-by-step guidance for educators on their journey to excellence. Opening presenter Carlton P. Byrd, Southwest Region Conference president, spoke on "The Why—Clear Purpose." He passionately urged attendees to lean into their God-given purpose amid trials.

He concluded, "Your purpose is bigger than you. Your calling is bigger than you. It's not limited to . . . lesson

planning, lectures, giving tests, an academic education. It's about expanding God's kingdom and bringing God the glory. It's about creating an environment that helps young people get into a saving relationship with Jesus."

On the second day renowned singer/songwriter Laura Story ushered participants into worship with the song "Blessings." Mario Acosta, author and Marzano Resources associate, then spoke on "The How—Core Elements of Training." He critiqued the traditional education model, which crams 22 years of content into 12 years, and offered "the crab method" as an alternative. This method limits hundreds of learning standards (or goals) to 15, ensuring that core topics are taught without causing burnout. Doing his best crab demonstration, Acosta explained that a crab doesn't sprint; it shuffles. This slower pace fosters happy, healthy classrooms, accommodates different learning styles, and helps teachers nurture positive character development.

In "The How—Capacity Building," Acosta's colleague, Tina H. Boogren, noted that while clear frameworks facilitate learning, the most direct correlation to student achievement is the teacher. Later Kim Strobel, a happiness coach, spoke on "The How—Collaborative Culture," offering teachers practical strategies for well-being and happiness. Robyn Jackson, CEO/president of Mindsteps, concluded with "The What—Commitment to Growth." Building on previous presentations, she offered the possibility of achieving 100 percent comprehension in grades, participation, and success through methods and frameworks outside of standardization.

Laughter as the Best Medicine

The convention also offered comic relief. For instance, in a



The STEM Experience, within the NAD educators' convention exhibit hall, offered educators a safe space to place with and learn about resources to get their students excited about science.

presentation titled "Laugh Again: Five Secrets to Success, Sanity, and Significance," Canadian author and humorist Phil Callaway reminded attendees that finding humor in situations allows us to appreciate life's nuances.

Carianna Farfan, North Tampa Christian Academy (Florida) fifth-grade teacher, later reflected, "My husband and I sat there and laughed and laughed, . . . those good gut laughs. We had tears coming out of our eyes. I left feeling lighter emotionally. That was priceless."

The new segment EDTalks also brought levity. Sponsored by Advancing Christian Education (ACE) Academy, it comprised 18-minute TED Talk-style presentations on different aspects of leadership, such as core elements of learning, capacity building, collaborative culture, and commitment to growth. Thirteen speakers, including musicians Story and Nicole C. Mullen, educators Boogren and Toakase Vunileva, and Adventist leaders Byrd, G. Alexander Bryant, and Meshach Soli, gave their unique take on this prompt: "Leadership. It All Comes Down to . . ."

In between presentations, attendees were entertained with music by the Sierra Collective and lighthearted, interactive segments, including giveaways, led by energetic host Ofa Langi, senior pastor of Auburn City Seventh-day Adventist Church in Washington. "We believe education is supposed to be fun," explained Vunileva, ACE Academy director.

Show-and-Tell, Resources, and More in Exhibit Hall

One of the most popular aspects of the convention was the exhibit hall. Nearly 150 exhibitors displayed classroom supplies, resources, higher education information, professional development tools, and more. The Adventist Learning Community was a prominent presence, with a seating area, information on programs, courses, and a podcast network. In a mobile podcast studio, educators could book to record themselves answering the prompt "Why I Teach." Across the aisle the Sonscreen Film Festival rolled out a literal red carpet, sharing the booth with other NAD heavy hitters, the Society of Adventist Communicators and *Adventist Journey* magazine.

The exhibit hall's STEM experience, sponsored by Versacare, could best be described as a science-based show and tell. On the elementary side, in the "tinker space," educators tried out STEM toys, such as ozobots, i.e., programmable mini robots, with a giveaway of all toys on the August 9. High school demonstrations included virtual reality software, robotics coding, information on EXSEED, Loma Linda University's STEM leadership certificate program for K-12 educators, the MakerBot Sketch 3-D Printer, TinkerCad, the brain-computer interface, and STEM courses at Walla Walla, Oakwood, and Andrews universities.

Other exciting features included booths sharing new children's

curricula; technology-based exhibits, such as Adventist Education Technology, showcasing quality production equipment for schools and Adventist Robotics, highlighting middle school and high school student-designed obstacle courses testing the skill set of robots; and Adventist Development and Relief Agency's booth, where visitors could enter environments ADRA serves using a virtual reality headset.

Spark Tank Gets Students Excited about Evangelism

For Spark Tank, a new two-day Shark Tank-style event, NAD schools were invited to submit creative, student-led evangelism initiatives for grant funding awards. Leisa Standish, NAD director of elementary education, said this initiative's aim, a collaborative effort with Calvin Watkins, NAD vice president, regional liaison/evangelism, was to "get kids excited about evangelism." Spark Tank provided necessary aid through grant funding and feedback from expert judges.

Eight NAD schools were chosen to present their projects in two rounds. First-place winner Kingsway College in Oshawa, Ontario, Canada, pitched a plan for a community garden with hopes for 100 planting spots by 2024. Their three-year plan to provide fresh produce and health education, leading toward a year-round greenhouse, would build a strong community network. Ozark Adventist Academy in Arkansas received a first-place finish and \$3,000 for their Youth Connect project.

Poulsbo Adventist School (Washington) came in second place, and both Tualatin Valley Academy (Oregon) and Oakwood Adventist Academy (Alabama) earned runner-up status. The latter three all won the \$2,500 prize money, and Loma Linda Academy Junior High (California), Beltsville Adventist Academy (Maryland), and Murrietta Springs Adventist Christian School (California) each earned \$1,500 in third place.

Ebeye Seventh-day Adventist School, also a second-prize winner, detailed the island population's dependence on highly processed foods, which is linked to a high mortality rate. The Re-educate Your Tongue project was designed to teach their school and local families about diet and the health risks of processed foods through cooking classes and educational courses. Second-place prizes were also awarded to Orcas Christian School (Washington) and Madison Adventist Academy (Tennessee), and Worcester Adventist School (Massachusetts) received third place.

Educators Sent Home With a Purpose

The convention concluded with a commitment service featuring musical guest Nicole C. Mullen ("Redeemer") and G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president, who gave a rousing charge.

The convention enabled educators to meet peers they had met only online, and reunite with old colleagues, classmates, friends, mentors, and former pupils.

Bryant began by acknowledging the hard work of Nielsen and the team in making this event possible. He also affirmed the educators present for their efforts to invest in their students and uphold the tenets of Adventist education.

Retelling the story of Daniel and his friends, children of Israel who trained alongside the children of kings and princes in Babylon, he noted that they exceeded the rest by upholding God's standards despite worldly pressure; he linked their story to the modern day. "They had God's plan, and because they followed God's plan, they received God's favor, and they received something better. Let us follow God's plan, teaching Christ across the curriculum."

Bryant then shared how teachers impacted his life, including Medford Brown, a local Adventist high school principal, whom he met as a new believer attending public high school. Brown's intervention transformed him from a grade 12 dropout to a graduate of Oakwood University, where Bryant accepted God's call to pastoral ministry.

"Teachers intersect the lives of students at critical times in critical ways. God uses you to speak—sometimes it's not a word, but a smile, a touch on the shoulder. All of us have teachers we can look back on and say they intervened in our lives at a critical time. All of us have stories. And guess what? You are some student's story. You are a fulfillment of God's plan. You are the secret sauce to something better. You are the instrument God uses to transform and change lives," he asserted.

Then, as he closed, Mullen sang, "I know my redeemer lives," and Bryant called educators to the front for a special blessing. Before committing the educators and their educational ministry into God's hands, he left these parting words: "The results of our teaching don't end with a graduation or diploma. Your teaching ends when one day He that shall come will come and not tarry. God desires all children to have something better not only down here but something better out there. That's what God's plan is designed to do. That's why we teach."

* Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903), pp. 296, 297.

Christelle Agboka is news writer/news producer for the North American Division; Nicole Dominguez is a freelance writer from Illinois.

NAD NEWS BRIEFS

DEBRA C. BRILL, FORMER NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION VICE PRESIDENT FOR MINISTRIES, PASSES TO HER REST

Debra Clements Brill, former vice president for ministries for the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, passed to her rest on August 27, 2023, at her home in Jamaica, Virginia, after an extended illness. She was 71.

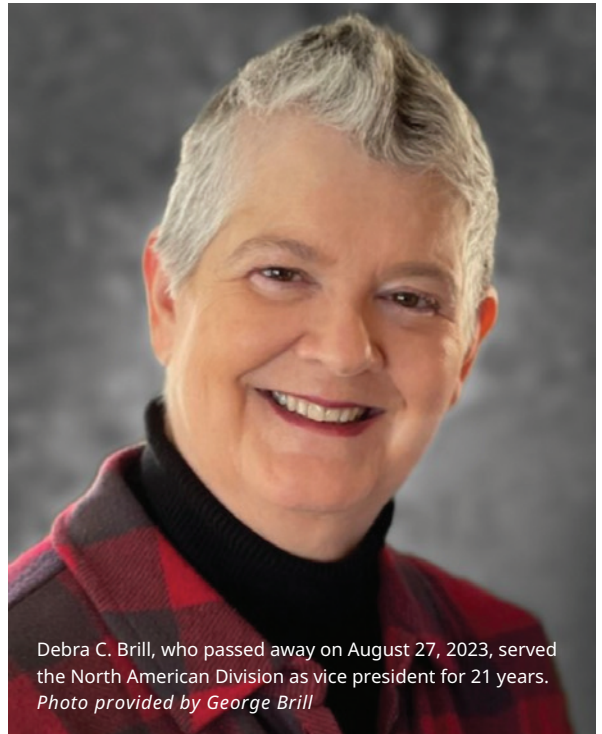
Brill retired on October 1, 2019, after serving the division as a vice president for 21 years. “It’s been my great joy to work with gifted leaders who love God and His church!” said Brill upon her retirement.

“Debra was an unusual and unique blend of dignified strength, humility, compassion, vision, and calm perseverance,” said G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president. “She could always find an encouraging word to say during the most difficult circumstances. She knew how to navigate the complexities of church structure to get things done. I consider it a high honor to have worked beside her for more than 10 years.”

“I would go to Debra’s office when I was faced with a challenging situation and learn from her. I always felt empowered by our conversations,” said Bonita Joyner Shields, NAD associate secretary. “When asked to follow her as vice president, I never felt as if I had to ‘fill her shoes,’ because I knew she was right there rooting me on. Her impact on my life—personally and professionally—was immeasurable.”

In the vice president role, Brill served as administrative liaison and chair of NAD committees and boards for the following ministries: Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Adventist Community Services, Adult, Children’s, Deaf, Disabilities, Family, and Health ministries, Hope for Humanity, Meeting Planning, Philanthropic Services for Institutions, Prayer and Reconnecting ministries, Resource Development, Special Projects, Stewardship, Women’s, and Youth and Young Adult ministries.

Brill, with 33 years of denominational employment, currently holds the record for longest-serving vice president of the NAD; and she was the second woman to occupy a vice president position at the division. Shields replaced Brill in 2019, and was replaced in 2021 by Wendy Eberhardt. The first woman to hold the position was Rose Otis.



Debra C. Brill, who passed away on August 27, 2023, served the North American Division as vice president for 21 years. Photo provided by George Brill

“I followed in the footsteps of Rose Otis, who was an amazing evangelist, and also a mentor to me,” said Brill during an interview around the time of her retirement. “At the time there was not a track for women. There were so few women pastors, and there were so few women even in conference leadership, much less union leadership. . . . But people believed in me, and Elder Alfred C. McClure, NAD president, said, ‘We want you to come and work with the leaders here at the division.’ And, in fact, he did poll them, and they were supportive.”

The division changed the portfolio to include church ministries and resource development; and the division added a distinct Women’s Ministries Department, with a director.

Before her work as an NAD vice president, Brill served as executive director for research and development, Church Resources Consortium, Pacific Union Conference, and in Potomac Conference as associate director for Adult and Children’s ministries, and special projects.

Brill is survived by her husband, George, former associate director for NAD Information Technology Services; their two children and their spouses; and three grandchildren. A memorial service was held on September 10 at the Collegedale Seventh-day Adventist Church in Tennessee.

—Kimberly Luste Maran, NAD Office of Communication

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

Measuring Life by God's Marks

This past summer my husband and I met Bonnie as she was walking back to the high-rise beachside condominiums with her mini-golden doodle dog, Pupido. Carrying groceries, we said hello, then stopped to greet the very wiggly dog begging for attention.

"He is very friendly," said Bonnie, who then introduced herself as a bakery business owner down from the Puerto Rican mountainside to sell her small cakes along the beach. She asked if we wanted to purchase any. We said yes. Sizing us up quickly, she invited us to her condo to pick up the freshly baked cakes. We got the dessert and then listened for at least an hour as she told her story about Hurricane Maria.

"It rained for 10 hours. The wind hammered us for 10 hours," she began. "We had very little warning, and as Maria approached, the people in the mountains were told to go down, and the people on the beach were told to head inland. No place was safe."

Bonnie talked about the devastation left by the storm. People started to slowly emerge from their hiding places, and found there was no water, no electricity, no phones, no elevators. And those conditions stayed that way for months. People in her 22-floor building devised a bucket system to bring water from a nearby pool. Everyone worked together, and residents managed to deliver, via a pulley system, a bucket a day.

"There were no leaves on any of the trees, on any of the plants," she shared. "And every window, *every window*, was broken. Imagine when you walk through fresh snow and it crunches under your feet. That was how it was here, everywhere on the ground, except it was broken glass crunching under your feet."

With a sigh, her eyes bright and her fingers touching the cross on her necklace, Bonnie quietly yet firmly declared: "It's been a week that I've been off the medicine that has helped me sleep at night for the past five years. It was time."

Measuring time through traumatic experiences seems woven into our humanity. I remember September 11, 2001. Vividly. I mark time before 9/11 and after—as some still do. My grandparents marked time by December 7, 1941. The people who lived through the 2018 Camp fire in Paradise, California, and surrounding area, mark time as before and after the fire—as will those affected by the 2023 Maui fires in Hawaii. So many of us are marking time as before the COVID-19 pandemic and after.

While it's natural to mark time by the tragedies and traumas that have marred our lives, including those of a more personal nature, we also mark time through triumphs. Wedding days, births, new homes, graduations, new jobs . . . these are some of the points—benchmarks—that give us measures of hope, joy. The sad reality for many of us is that those happy moments aren't often equal benchmarks in this sinful world. The traumatic seems to win out.

But I think of Jesus and how He has created the best markers to live by. The place where the horrors that serve as our benchmarks can be neutralized by these events: the birth of Jesus, the death of Jesus, and the resurrection of Jesus. If we keep these markers in our minds, they can help us prepare for when there "will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

The crucial historical time measures of Christ's life and sacrifice will remove the sting of sin and death. "He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57).

I want to be like Bonnie, and know that it's time to measure life by God's marks.

Kimberly Luste Maran is editor of Adventist Journey and communication director for the North American Division.

Measuring time through traumatic experiences seems woven into our humanity.

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Carol

is 80 and living with gratitude every day.

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