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Adventist Journey

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I'm a nurse. I went to school to be a nurse. But all the while I was wrestling, God was showing me the different places in my life that He had been training me all along to minister, to do this exact role. I don't know what He has for me down the road. But I do know that He knows best for all of us.

Visit **nadadventist.org/ajheidijackson** for more of Jackson's story.

HEIDI JACKSON,

community outreach pastor for the Arlington Seventh-day Adventist Church in Texas Seidi Jack

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ADVENTIST JOURNEY

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ADVENTIST Journey

ney 03



Following God, Loving People

How a nurse in Texas answered God's call to the ministry

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

ommy, I don't want to go to preschool anymore."

Those are the words that pierced Heidi Jackson's heart and changed the trajectory of her adult life. It was a God thing, undisputable proof, the Gideon-fleece moment—a sign that Jackson could not ignore. After a season of vacillating, of not listening, pivot was swift. With her husband's support, Jackson quit her dream job to follow God's clarion call.

Wife and mother Jackson was enjoying her sixth year serving others through work as a nurse



in the cardiovascular operating room (CVOR) at Cook Children's Medical Center in Fort Worth, Texas. Originally from Puerto Rico, she had previously worked for five years as a school nurse, but realized that the job wasn't her purpose or calling.

Every so often she questioned her path, wondering if God was beckoning her to something else. Often, during prayer time, she heard a voice pointing her in directions that she was hesitant to follow. A quiet yet insistent whisper had been encouraging her to "minister." Jackson, who has been

When you're in communication with the Lord, and you seek Him every day, He wants to hear from us, but He also wants to speak to us. And He does that in different ways.

singing since she was 3 years old, thought ministering was working as an CVOR nurse and serving in her church's music ministry.

Then one morning Jackson very clearly heard, "Take your child out of preschool and let go of your job." Jackson attempted to dismiss the thought. After all, her three year old eagerly looked forward to going to his new school each day and she was working at her dream job.

Clarity fully struck that afternoon when her son came home and said, "Mommy, I don't want to go to preschool anymore. I had an accident today, and [the teacher] shook me and told me not to do this again." Jackson's son indicated that he had received a spanking for the incident.

That was the boy's last day at preschool.

For next two weeks, however, Jackson wrestled with the Lord. "I had this dream job. But I felt impressed that God was telling me, 'Now it's time to go.'" Still I asked, 'Why, God? I've been here for six years. How am I going to tell my team? It's hard to train. It takes six months to get somebody else in. If I leave, everyone will have to do more work.'" Jackson thought about the team, the surgeon they worked with, and was beside herself with worry.

Moving by Faith

Then Jackson remembered the promise she made to God. "I promised Him that I'm going to place my feet wherever He calls me and do whatever He asks me to do. I'm not going 'rogue' again," Jackson explained. "And so I woke up one morning and decided that that was going to be the day that I resigned. I didn't have another job lined up. My husband was the one [who] really supported the decision. He told me that I had to do what the Lord said, even if we struggled."

While Jackson finally had peace in her decision, it didn't make breaking the news to her team any easier. As she drove to work at 5:00 a.m., she wasn't sure she had the courage to do it. She prayed, "God help me!"

Immediately Jackson heard a little ping, indicating that someone has sent her a text message. Stopped at a red light, she looked the phone. It was a scripture sent from a friend—Isaiah 41:10: "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Bolstered, Jackson went in and resigned.

The family struggled going from two incomes to one. For the next year and a half Jackson was able to stay at home with their son until they were able to get him into the nearby Adventist school.

"During that time I applied to different places, and every time I felt impressed—even though they offered me huge amounts of money to come and do this or do

that—to say no," shared Jackson. "We would pray about it. And it just didn't feel right, and we felt impressed that that's not what God wanted."

"When you're in communication with the Lord, and you seek Him every day, He wants to hear from us, but He also wants to speak to us. And He does that in different ways," she added. "He spoke to Moses through a burning bush, right? He might speak to you through Scripture, but He does want to communicate with us. And so I just felt impressed that that wasn't the way to go."

Fast-forward to 2019. The senior pastor of the Arlington Seventh-day Adventist Church in Texas posed a question to the congregation: "If this building were to go away, and all the people with it, would our community even notice?"

He went further, and asked Jackson, who had been deeply involved in music ministry at the church, that same question. With the support of his staff, he asked if Jackson would be the assistant director for Revive Community Care, the church's outreach program.

"This time it only took me a week to give an answer," Jackson said with a laugh. "I didn't even think that they thought I was going to say yes, I didn't think I was going to say yes. I just went home thinking, I will absolutely not do this. I'm a nurse. I'm going to find a hospital job. But the Lord said, "This is what I want you to do. This is it."

Jackson accepted the volunteer position. Just a couple of months later the director left, and Jackson filled the position, earning a small wage. Things shifted again dramatically when COVID-19 hit and shook the community.

A COVID Blessing

"The pandemic hit this community very hard, as it did the world," said Jackson. "We had a food



pantry going that would see about 60 families a week. But when the pandemic hit, the numbers started increasing. We wondered how we were going to continue, but the one thing that this church did not do was close these doors for the community. We decided that no matter what, we were going to meet together, as far apart as we could, and feed the community because they needed it. And who else was going to give it to them around here?"

The numbers increased about sixfold. "There are still about 350 families that come by every other week for food and clothing. And we facilitate a couple of other needs," said Jackson. "Looking back, I saw what God was doing, and I was praying because there was so much need. And I was only a part-time employee."

An idea came to Jackson. What about a community outreach pastor, someone that would be there for the people? she wondered. "I call them the members that don't know they're members of this church, the people we love on and care for," Jackson explained. "I fell in love with the community pretty much on week one, and so I just had this love in my heart to see people being taken care of; and it hit me that we need somebody devoted to them. I never thought it was going to be me. I was thinking maybe I'd tell someone, and they'd get somebody in here just for them."

But God had a different plan.

Jackson talked to the church's executive pastor. About five minutes later she called Jackson back and said, "You're never going to believe this, but our senior pastor just walked in, and he just said exactly the same thing you just said." Then Jackson noticed the senior pastor calling and clicked over to the other line. He mentioned that he'd had the same idea and asked Jackson if she'd be interested in the position.

Stunned, Jackson grappled with the idea. She was a nurse. How would this work?

"All the while I was wrestling, God was showing me the different places in my life that He had been training me all along to minister, to do this exact role," she said.

In the moment she said yes, Jackson felt peace and joy at joining the pastoral team. "It's a good lesson," she shared, "when we follow the Lord and His steps, there is a peace and joy, even if we're struggling, that can be found in knowing that God told you to do this. We're doing what He said."

Another unexpected blessing came to the church community center: during the pandemic the space was renovated. "That's a story in itself," shared Jackson. "But because of the renovation, which happened faster than we could have hoped, we've been able to serve the community in ways we had only dreamed of."

It's a Party—and More Than a Party

Jackson and her family moved to Texas when she was 4. "I was little; we were very poor," she recalled. "I remember my mother having to go to food pantries when we were really struggling. And I remember how humiliating it was for her to go. I was grateful with a box of food, with the cereal and good things to eat, but I know that it cost my mom a little bit of her pride.

"We do have a food pantry here, but [the people who come]—they're our guests. It's a party. We make sure that everyone who comes through that line feels seen, loved, and taken care of, and not ashamed," Jackson added, explaining that the community center also operates a clothing store, a vision clinic, a mobile dental clinic, and a homeless ministry (including emergency shelter assistance). They have also offered health screenings and blood drives. There are currently eight programs that the church runs, largely through the generosity of the church members.

"People are coming here with nothing, just with their shirts on their back, trying to get away from a life that was hard, harder than anything we can think. And they're surgeons. They are authors. They are all these big things, but they come here and they can't do those things, and they have nothing," she said. "We're seeing an increase in homelessness, or people that are unhoused, and the numbers are going up. And then there's a great need for just the basics. So how can you tell someone about Jesus if they have no clothes, no food? Here we really focus first on loving people. There have been many homeless people who have come through. And the church has provided for them, taking care of them, and maybe helping to put them back on a different path."

Jackson continued, "We try to do anything that we can to make that person's life a little better, even if it's just for that moment. We will go make dinners and take it to homeless shelter residents. There are some projects to help people with basic needs that are in the works too. People are now coming to our church and asking,

The Revive Community
Care team serves a meal
to community members.
Revive Community Care/
Arlington Seventh-day
Adventist Church

How can you tell someone about Jesus if they have no clothes, no food?
Here we really focus first on loving people.

'Who are you? Why are you guys doing this? Why are you so kind? I've never experienced this before. Who are you?'

"It's a great segue into telling them about Jesus. It's the greatest sermon that we don't have to preach. It's showing God's love to people. It's the most attractive thing that you can do for your church, and really, you're bringing a little bit of Jesus to someone every day, just by loving them and loving them well.

"I think that that is one of the biggest callings of our church, it's not just to keep the truth here in our nice, warm, cozy building, but to go out in the community and spread God's love in the dark places, the not-so-cozy-comfy places."

Joy on the Journey

As Jackson continues on her Adventist journey she said that while she feels the most connected with the Lord through music, what brings her the most joy is connecting and growing closer to Christ every day, and "just learning things about Him that I never knew. I love how He weaves together, how He just orchestrates everything. I love getting to know Him more and more."

Jackson's family, her husband, two children, and her extended family are important to her as well. "And also, just growing as a body together with the members of our community and our church brings me immense joy. Finding ways in which to connect and to just love on each other is something that has brought me joy."

She continued, "I don't know what God has for me, or my family, down the road. But I do know that He knows best for all of us. And if we listen, He will place us where He has called us according to His purposes."

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

NAD NEWS BRIEFS



"Night at the Camporee" Brings a World Premiere to Gillette Community

or the past few years, since it was announced that the 2024 "Believe the Promise" International Pathfinder Camporee was moving west to Gillette, Wyoming, the event has generated significant community interest and curiosity. After all, it's not every day that a city of about 34,000 sees 60,000 young people from 100 countries transform its CAM-PLEX multievent facilities into a tent and RV city.

Camporee leaders thus decided to host "Night at the Camporee," held August 4 at CAM-PLEX Park, to showcase the week's nightly events and thank Gillette for welcoming them. A rapt audience of more than 1,000 guests—mostly community members—enjoyed a short praise set, ending in the camporee theme song. Then they witnessed a premiere presentation of night one of the camporee's theatrical pro-

duction based on the story of Old Testament character Moses.

Attendees were transported to another world through historical costumes, memorable songs, and relatable performances. The production depicted the unique events of Moses' birth and early childhood, setting the stage for his eventual calling to lead Israel out of captivity in Egypt. A repeated theme was that no matter the challenge, "our God will make a way."

In his welcome, camporee organizer and Center for Youth Evangelism director Ron Whitehead noted that while camporee attendees had enjoyed Oshkosh, Wisconsin, for the past 20 years, Gillette had won them over. "We heard about Gillette; how special it is. And the more we saw, the more we fell in love with your community. So tonight's for you!" he said.

← The community, invited to "Night at the Camporee" held at CAM-PLEX Park in Gillette, Wyoming, on Sunday, August 4, 2024, offers them a sneak peek into programming for the "Believe the Promise" International Pathfinder Camporee. Cerron Pollard

The audience cheered in appreciation as the final curtain closed and Whitehead shared that they had just seen a world premiere. He was then joined by artist Victor Issa, who unveiled a sculpture he had created for the 2024 camporee. Titled Moses: A Life of Miracles, its centerpiece is a dying Moses on Mount Nebo, longing to see God's face directly, surrounded by key scenes from his life, including the baby in the basket and the burning bush. Whitehead later noted the sculpture would remain in Gillette's beloved Mount Pisgah Cemetery post-camporee. Coincidentally, Mount Pisgah is another name for Mount Nebo.

Whitehead then welcomed Mayor Shay Lundvall and other civic and business leaders, accompanied by Pathfinders, to the nearly completed stage to thank them for their support. They each received a miniature of Issa's sculpture, representing excellence in leadership.

Lundvall, who attended the nightly programs in person, later expressed, "My first thought [of the production] was: its scalability is unbelievable. We're blessed to have the camporee here. We think it's great. My perspective is that in terms of the world, we need more positivity like this. I'm excited you guys chose Gillette, and I look forward to meeting as many people as I possibly can."

As the evening wound down, Whitehead shared a few facts about Pathfinders, including that it started in the 1940s; it's a faith-based "Boy Scout/Girl Scout-type organization;" and, just like Coca-Cola, "Pathfinders are everywhere." He added that while the Seventh-day Adventist Church sponsors Pathfinders, children from all faith backgrounds, or

even no religious background, can and do join.

Whitehead extended an invitation to watch the program's livestream from Tuesday to Saturday night, August 6 to 11, on the camporee website. When asked how they found the night, some community guests shared that they were highly impressed and planned to tune in every evening.

He then prayed for the "five-star community" and the camporee, emphasizing the theme's significance. "We believe the promise. We believe You love us unconditionally, and look forward to Your return. And all the people said amen. Have a great evening!"

—Christelle Agboka, NAD Office of Communication

Christon Arthur Selected as La Sierra University's Next President

he La Sierra University Board of Trustees on May 9, 2024, unanimously approved the appointment of Christon Arthur to serve as the university's sixth president. He arrived from Andrews University in Michigan, where he had been provost since 2016.

Arthur began his presidential duties on July 1. He takes over the leadership post from Richard Osborn, who was selected last fall to serve as the university's interim president following the resignation of Joy Fehr.

"What an exciting moment for La Sierra University. We are thrilled by the selection of Dr. Arthur to the president's role," said Bradford C. Newton, university board chair and Pacific Union Conference president. "His remarkable breadth of experiences and insights into so many aspects of educational leadership are a perfect fit for La Sierra. We look forward to working with him as the university continues to chart an upward path following the short-term strategic plan that has been developed, and we anticipate a bright future for years to come under Dr. Arthur's skillful guidance."

In a surprise Zoom call from Michigan, Arthur made his first appearance to the campus following the May 9 board selection. "It is the joy and honor of my life to be able to accept the invitation to join this illustrious La Sierra University," he said. "I'm looking forward to the years ahead. I'm fully confident that God will lead, God will guide, and God will direct. I'm placing the future in the hands of God to help La Sierra to become all that God



← Christon Arthur, new president of La Sierra University Photo provided by La Sierra University

has called it to become, and I'm delighted for the opportunity to work for Him and to see where He will lead us into the future."

Arthur holds multiple graduate degrees, including an Ed.S. and a doctoral degree, respectively, in curriculum and instruction and in educational administration from Andrews University, and completed postgraduate studies at Harvard University's Institute for Management and Leadership in Education. Last year he earned a graduate certificate in finance from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, where he is currently an M.B.A. candidate. He also holds a B.A. in theology from the University of the Southern Caribbean in Trinidad and Tobago.

Arthur, a native of Grenada, will serve as La Sierra University's first Black president in its nearly 102-year history. Other recent presidents have included Fritz Guy, Lawrence T. Geraty, Randal R. Wisbey, and Fehr, respectively.

—Darla Martin Tucker, La Sierra University Office of Communication and Integrated Marketing



Oakwood President Appointed as Member of the Executive Committee of the American Council on Education Inaugural Commission on Faith-based Universities

n May 16, 2024, Oakwood University president Leslie Pollard was officially invited by Clark Gilbert, commissioner of the Church Educational System of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and cochair of the American Council on Education's (ACE) inaugural Commission on Faith-based Universities, to join the inaugural executive committee for this newly formed advocacy organization.

Pollard joins a distinguished group of university presidents in assisting ACE and the U.S. Department of Education in understanding and advancing institutions with a faith-based mission. Inaugural members of the executive committee include Robin Baker, president, George Fox University; Ari Berman, president and rosh yeshiva, Yeshiva University; Rochelle L. Ford, president, Dillard University; Jim Gash, president and chief executive officer, Pepperdine University; John I. Jenkins, president,

← Leslie Pollard, Oakwood University president, invited to join the American Council on Education, is pictured here at the NAD's 2023 Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Conference. Ronald Pollard

University of Notre Dame; Peter K. Kilpatrick, president, The Catholic University of America; D. Michael Lindsay, president, Taylor University; Candice McQueen, president, Lipscomb University; C. Shane Reese, president, Brigham Young University; Philip G. Ryken, president, Wheaton College; Beck A. Taylor, president and professor of economics, Samford University; and Dwaun J. Warmack, president, Claflin University.

This service appointment comes as Pollard winds down his 2022-2024 term as chair of the Board of Presidents of the Alabama Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (AAICU), led by Paul Hankins, president. This group, based in Montgomery, Alabama, works to partner with the Alabama Legislature on behalf of the 25 independent colleges and universities in the state of Alabama.

Pollard commented, "With the rapid upheaval in the higher education industry post-COVID-19, it is crucial for Adventist higher education in general, and Oakwood University in particular, to have a strong and impactful voice in influencing national policy on postsecondary education for institutions of faith. As higher education's only Seventh-day Adventist historically Black institution (HBCU), Oakwood brings a unique perspective to this important conversation — much of which depends on continued access to federal funding for institutions of faith. We seek your prayers for the work of this national commission."

-Oakwood University Newsroom

BY G. ALEXANDER BRYANT

Women Leading in the Spirit of the Latter Rain

od has promised a special gift to His church and to His people living in the last days. This promise is illustrated in a very familiar passage found in Joel 2:28, 29: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit" (KJV). This promise is for us today. For all people.

As we prepare for Pentecost 2025,* there is a need to reiterate this promise and to clarify that God is inviting young people, old people, men, and women to receive His Spirit, and to teach and preach as a witness for Him in these last days.

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church we believe in the priesthood of all believers—all have been called to proclaim the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ. To be clear, women are a part of this calling, and our youth are a part of this calling. We need everyone to finish the work that God has entrusted to us. The Seventh-day Adventist Church still believes that God has called women to play a significant role in the advancement and the finishing of His work. The church still calls women to serve in leadership roles in the local church as pastors, elders, departmental leaders, and as conference, union, division, and General Conference leaders.

I want to take this moment to celebrate and thank all the women who have served this church so faithfully over the years. I also want to acknowledge that this church would not be where it is today without women leading in various capacities and the pivotal role they have played in the advancement of our mission.

God calls us to make disciples in Matthew 28:18-20, and promises in Acts 1:8 that He will grant the power of the Holy Spirit upon us to be His witnesses. When the Christian church began, we see in its infancy a marvelous display of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Acts 11:15-17 says, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them [Gentiles], as upon us at the beginning. . . . Forasmuch then as God gave them the gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" (KJV). The disciples discerned that the same Holy Spirit that fell upon them had also fallen upon the Gentiles. God was fulfilling His promise. He was, and still is, pouring out His Spirit upon all flesh.

It is my prayer that we earnestly pray for the outpouring of God's Spirit upon all of God's people. May His gift be seen in each of us! As we prepare for Pentecost 2025, the shaking time, and for the final and rapid movements of God,

may the words of the prophet Joel be lived out in God's church: "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions."

God was, and still is, pouring out His Spirit upon all flesh.

Let us pray fervently for the outpouring of the latter rain, and let us use everyone that God is calling to preach the everlasting gospel as a witness to all nations so that the end will come and we can see our Lord and Savior face-to-face. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

*Pentecost 2025 is an evangelism initiative spanning the North American Division that encourages churches, schools, and members to pray for the Holy Spirit's power in conducting at least 3,000 proclamation events.

G. Alexander Bryant is president of the North American Division.

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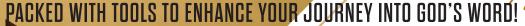
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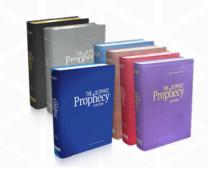


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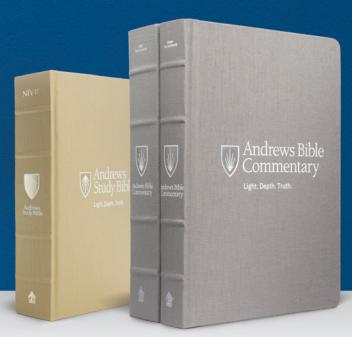




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