

Adventist

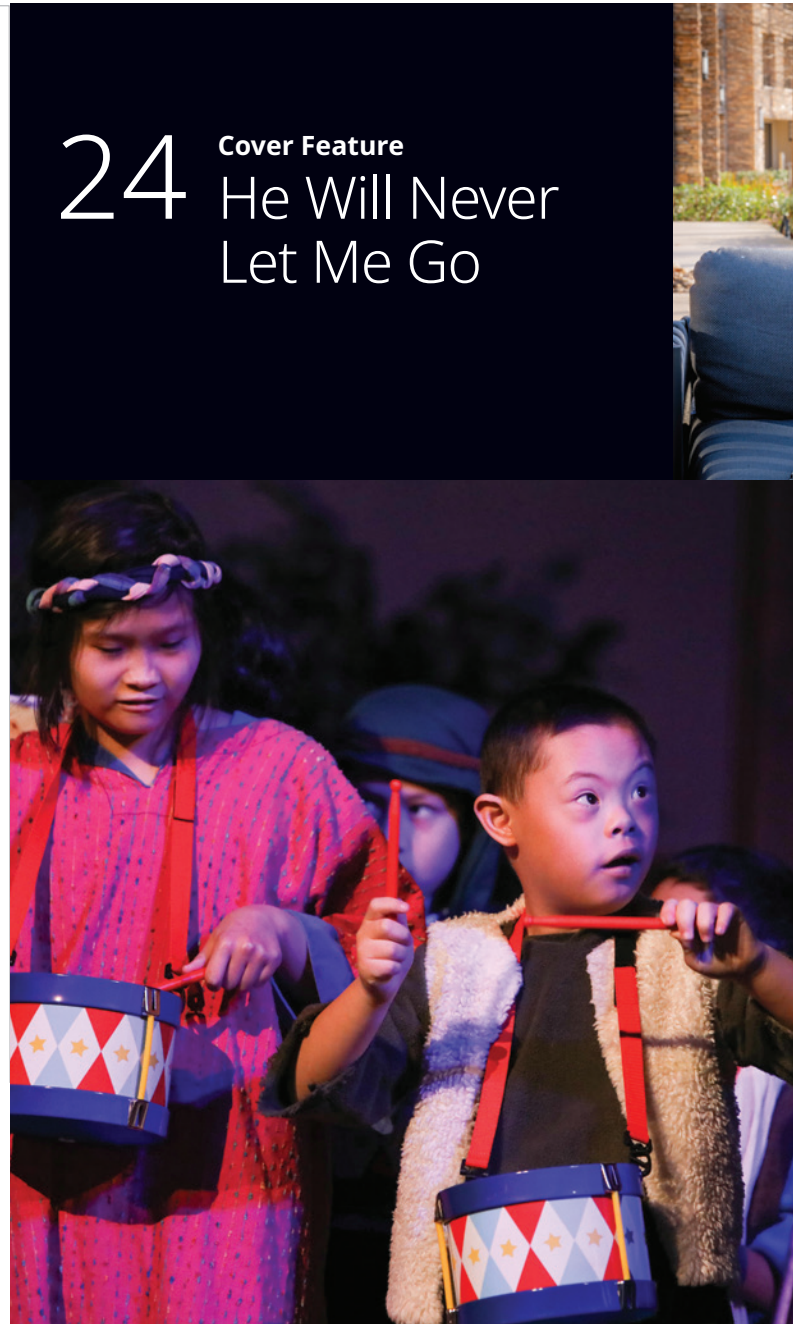
*Journey*  
INSPIRATION & INFORMATION  
FOR NORTH AMERICA



# Adventist Journey

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While it was fun, the first day [after teaching first grade] I was in pain from the top of my head to the tip of my toes. I woke up the next morning and was still in my uniform, and I thought, *Lord, is this what it's like?*

—**MARCIE OLKERIIL**,  
vice principal, Palau Seventh-day Adventist School, the Republic of Palau, in Micronesia



Visit [nadadventist.org/ajmarcieolkeriil](https://nadadventist.org/ajmarcieolkeriil) for the video, and check out pages 24-25 for more of Olkeriil's story.

Cover photo by Art Brondo



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*Adventist Journey* magazine has received an upgrade! We have kept the favorites and added additional features. We are also continuing to publish content from *Adventist Review*, albeit at a reduced capacity. Look for the updated *Adventist Journey* in your mailbox every other month!

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# Living in Peace in a Chaotic World

**A** few decades ago, WWJD became a popular acronym. It means “What would Jesus do?” We don’t hear this phrase very much in our society today; however, I believe it’s more apropos than ever before. This question should be at the very core of the life of a follower of Jesus. It is more than just a clever phrase or mantra; it is fundamental to living a life directed and guided by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In a world of relentless chaos and uncertainty, of information overload, and of individualistic thought and independence, this out-of-vogue phrase holds the key to living in peace. Jesus lived in perfect peace when the world around Him was falling apart. How was He able to do that when the society around Him was crumbling?

There are three elements in the life of Jesus I want us to consider as a formula for living in peace in today’s world: humility, boldness, and compassion.

## Humility

Jesus lived with a moment-by-moment consciousness that His life was directed, not by His own desires, ambitions, or career opportunities, but by the will of His Father. Though He was equal with God and came from God, He humbly surrendered His will and His life to His Father. His choices, actions, and words were centered on one purpose—to do His Father’s will. This did not eradicate the challenges and trials of His life, but it did give Him peace when they came, knowing this was the will of His Father. Would it not do the same for us today if we surrendered our will and lived for one purpose—to please God?

## Boldness

Jesus, though meek and humble, lived with a boldness of action. He sought to change the world around Him with His actions. As a boy He would often take the food off His plate and go feed the less fortunate (see Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 87). When the scribes and Pharisees were about to stone the woman caught in adultery, Jesus acted. He stood up for her and said, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone” (John 8:7). In another instance Jesus acted with boldness and engaged in a conversation with a Samaritan woman, crossing a boundary that a Jew was not supposed to cross.

Jesus demonstrated a courage and boldness that are required of those who take on His name. Jesus’ boldness gave Him peace in a chaotic world because He lived to please an audience of One. Demonstrat-



ing the boldness to please just God will give followers of Jesus a peace to live in a chaotic world.

## Compassion

The world teaches that only the strong survive; we should strive to be the king of the jungle. It’s “every man for themselves,” and pull “yourself up by your own bootstraps.” Jesus, however, teaches that we are our brothers’ keeper.

Jesus lived a life for others because He had compassion on them. Throughout the Gospels, the writers often say that He had compassion on the multitude (see Matt. 9:36, Matt. 15:32; Mark 6:34). This is especially true of the less fortunate and the more vulnerable in society. Jesus exercised tender care for the downcast and the downtrodden. Jesus calls on us, as His followers in a chaotic world, to exercise compassion on the vulnerable, the downcast, and the forgotten.

The key to living in a chaotic world is to live as Jesus did. WWJD? As His followers, we are to live with humility. We are to act with boldness. And we are to exercise compassion to the most vulnerable among us.

*G. Alexander Bryant is president of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.*

deeply rooted

## ADVENTIST MINISTRIES CONVENTION CALLS LEADERS TO CHRIST, REST, AND RENEWAL

BY CHRISTELLE AGBOKA, NAD NEWS WRITER/  
NEWS PRODUCER; WITH KRISTINA P. BUSCH

Yami Bazan, president of Union Adventist University, closes out the 2026 Adventist Ministries Convention by reminding leaders of the Source of their strength.

*Saul Dominguez*

**I**n Mark 6:31, after a period of intense ministry, Jesus tells the disciples, “Let’s go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile” (NLT). This invitation to step away from the rigors of daily life and be renewed in Christ anchored the 2026 “Replenish: Deeply Rooted” Adventist Ministries Convention (AMC).

Held January 25-27 in Louisville, Kentucky, the North American Division’s (NAD) triennial gathering brought together hundreds of ministry leaders who had braved a major snowstorm to be there. Every aspect of the convention—including daily devotionals, worship through music, ministry exhibits, keynote presentations, and seminars—aimed to educate, inspire, and replenish.

The heart of AMC was equipping participants for service, with 50

educational seminars offered over two days. Presenters included NAD officers and departmental directors, union- and conference-level leaders, pastors, and other experts. Breakout sessions featured an administrators’ roundtable focusing on best practices in church administration, a Pentecost and Beyond super seminar sharing the division’s continued vision for evangelism, and workshops across key ministry areas. These areas encompassed children’s, family, men’s and women’s ministries, communication, Indigenous ministries, information technology services, leadership, ministerial, philanthropy, public affairs and religious liberty, retirement, Sabbath School, stewardship, volunteer ministries, and young adult ministries.

Several workshops emphasized the connection between health,

healing, and mission. In one seminar Angeline D. Brauer, NAD Health Ministries director, introduced “Health Everlasting,” a model integrating health outreach into evangelism and discipleship. “We are not replacing evangelism,” Brauer explained. “We are complementing it and coming alongside it.”

Other seminars addressed trauma recovery, forgiveness, and reconciliation, and practical strategies for building stronger relationships within homes and church communities.

Enhancing attendees’ experience of rest throughout AMC was a listening bench, where they could share burdens without judgment or interruption. The Deep Roots Activity Park featured seven activity “trails,” including health screenings, physical activities, art stations, brain games, nature-based virtual reality experiences, and a



G. Alexander Bryant, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America (NAD), delivers the opening keynote at the 2026 "Replenished: Deeply Rooted" Adventist Ministries Convention (AMC), held January 25-27 in Louisville, Kentucky. *Art Brondo*

[NAD president G. Alexander Bryant's] message introduced a recurring theme: God's healing presence amid the storms inherent in ministry, from criticism and betrayal to loneliness and burnout.

prayer tree designed to energize the body and refresh the mind. Tree imagery across the convention also reinforced the theme of being deeply rooted in Jesus.

The three-day event was preceded by the NAD Children's Ministries Retreat (January 20-24), Adventist Radio Convention, and Young Adult LIFE Experience (both January 23-25). Immediately after AMC were advisory meetings for various NAD ministry departments and an enditnow® Safeguarding Peace training on abuse prevention and response, hosted by Women's Ministries January 28-29.

### Leaders Replenished Through Worship and the Word

"What are you doing here, Elijah?"

G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president, opened the first general session on January 25 with a familiar story. In 1 Kings 19 God calls out to Elijah, who is hiding in a cave after his victory over 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel prompts a death threat from Queen Jezebel.

Bryant then spoke directly to ministry leaders, referencing their "cave moments," saying, "God is asking us tonight, 'What are *you* doing here?'"

His message introduced a recurring theme: God's healing presence amid the storms inherent in ministry, from criticism and betrayal to loneliness and burnout.

Bryant emphasized that "a high point in ministry is almost always accompanied by a special attack from the enemy." However, he added, "God specializes in restoring depleted leaders," concluding with a

promise: "God says, 'You don't have to come out of the cave to be restored. I'll come to you. I'll restore you. I'll replenish you. I'll build you back up where you are.'"

This focus on restoration continued throughout the convention's morning and evening general sessions, which featured TED talk-style keynote addresses. Additional addresses were delivered by Gail McKenzie (Women's Ministries director, Kentucky-Tennessee Conference); Sam Leonor (chief mission officer, Adventist Health); Craig Carr (Ministerial and evangelism director, Mid-America Union Conference); Meshach Soli (executive secretary and Ministerial director, Hawaii Conference); Debleaire Snell (senior pastor, Oakwood University church, and speaker/director, Breath of Life Ministries); and Yami Bazan (president, Union Adventist University).

Presenters encouraged leaders to let God make them whole so they can minister to others, even in spaces in which they feel inadequate. Their tips for daily replenishment included establishing a daily rhythm of Bible study and prayer, drawing strength from past victories, and making time for rest.

Several illustrated these themes through personal testimony. Soli shared how his son Marley's mental health crisis, brought on by a severe burnout, taught him the true value of rest. An engineering major, Marley took a year off of school and pursued healing through therapy, church community, and service. Reflecting on his son's graduation the following spring, Soli said, "He didn't finish strong. He finished well. He redefined what strength is." Finally, he urged leaders to let go of the pressure to prove themselves, and rest in the assurance that "the race was already won."



Charlotte Henderson receives a lifetime achievement award from Michael Brown, NAD director of Philanthropic Service for Institutions (PSI), during the 2026 Adventist Ministries Convention. Acknowledged for more than 30 years of faithful service, Henderson has helped raise millions of dollars in support of Adventist education, while shaping the field of philanthropy as a leader and mentor. *Melvin Donadelle*



Meshach Soli, executive secretary and Ministerial director, Hawaii Conference, assures leaders during the 2026 AMC, "You are running a fixed race. The race was already won." *Saul Dominguez*

In between general session messages, participants meditated on God's goodness through two worship music sets provided by the Crosswalk Seventh-day Adventist Church (Redlands, California) praise team.

### Honoring Service, Shaping Leaders

Individuals recognized for their ministry achievements included:

- Donald Clarke Thoms and Morgan Vice, lay members active in Disabilities Ministries;
- Sonia Canó, Children's Ministries and Sabbath School director for the Southwestern Union Conference;
- Charlotte Henderson, a philanthropy professional honored by the NAD's Philanthropic Service for Institutions;
- Rosa Taylor-Banks, retired associate secretary of both the NAD and General Conference and the NAD's first chairperson of Disabilities Ministries;
- Edwin and Mary Mendoza, former Family Ministries directors for the Pacific Union Conference;
- Lynn Ortel, Women's Ministries director, Arizona Conference; and
- Sue Carlson, Ministerial spouse sponsor and director for Women's, Children's, and Family Ministries for the Kansas-Nebraska Conference.
- Luis Biazotta, Adventist Community Services (ACS) director for the Georgia-Cumberland Conference, was honored at the "Wellspring" ACS Convention in April 2026.

The leadership reflections presented at each general session by motivational speaker Seth Yelorda were another highlight. On opening night, he defined leadership as "deploying the highest version of yourself into circumstances to create outcomes that matter." He further reminded attendees that their relationship with Christ "is the essence and heart of leading."

Across five segments, Yelorda challenged leaders to (1) be with Christ; (2) respond to challenges out of faith, hope, and love rather than fear or guilt; (3) lead with clarity nurtured through solitude and prayer; (4) expand the limits of what feels possible; and (5) view themselves as co-creators with God.

He ended by having participants repeat: "I am a co-creator rooted in Christ. I am being formed into the image of Christ. I will deploy the highest version of myself with clarity, courage, and humility, creating outcomes that matter for people, for the kingdom, and for God's glory."

### Warm Smiles and Cozy Connections Fill the Exhibit Hall

As snow accumulated and temperatures dropped to single digits outside, nearly 40 exhibitors warmly welcomed visitors with activities, giveaways, resources, and freebies. Exhibitors included NAD ministries, services, and affiliates, as well as independent ministries and partners.

The exhibit hall was abuzz the first afternoon, then the crowds thinned a bit, allowing exhibitors to have longer conversations with attendees or make connections among themselves.

"It was wonderful to see people I haven't seen in so many years, and to network with them and see how God is using them," shared Gabriel Gutierrez, Jr., of SermonView.

Ultimately, the exhibit hall aimed to provide resources and solutions for ministry needs. Booths such as Children's Ministries showcased new offerings, including the Kindergarten (ages 4-6) and Primary (ages 7-9) Sabbath School curricula launching this year from the Alive in Jesus Sabbath School curriculum ([AliveinJesus.info](http://AliveinJesus.info)).

The Adventist Media Center booth, representing the seven NAD media ministries,

featured their newest offering: the Jesus 101 Bible study, *Jesus Wins*, available in English and Spanish ([Jesus101.tv](http://Jesus101.tv)).

Nearby, the Adventist Learning Community highlighted free online training courses at [AdventistLearningCommunity.com](http://AdventistLearningCommunity.com) and promoted a visual Bible study, supported by Adventist Connect, available at [APictureofGod.com](http://APictureofGod.com).

Throughout the hall, booths offered a wide range of resources, from event and interest management tools to ministry initiatives, stewardship materials, and new publications. The energy was high, as conversations flowed and vital information was exchanged.

Health Ministries was a quiet force extending beyond the exhibit hall. At its booth, participants received practical resources and even took part in a hand grip strength test that measured overall health. But outside of this space, they stepped into the “Deepwood Havens,” where the sights and sounds were curated to create a calming environment.

Health Ministries also promoted restoration through the Deep Roots Activity Park, a nature-inspired setting inviting visitors to pause and reconnect—body, mind, and soul.

“We wanted to maximize the healing opportunities,” said Brauer, citing research on the health benefits of being in nature, even when simulated.

In and around the exhibit hall, leaders encountered intentional restorative spaces where they could pause, reconnect, and be renewed for ministry.

### Returning to the Source

As AMC’s final speaker, Bazan brought the convention’s messages full circle with a question: *What makes us tired in ministry?*

Bazan referenced Acts 8, which tells the story of two very different characters: Philip and Simon. Philip was experiencing such success preaching the gospel in Samaria that Peter and John came to pray for the new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. Yet when the Holy Spirit led him away to a deserted road, he followed without hesitation.

In and around the exhibit hall, leaders encountered intentional restorative spaces where they could pause, reconnect, and be renewed for ministry.

For Philip, she noted, presence with God was more valuable than momentum. A “quiet miracle,” she added, was that Philip’s obedience sustained him and enabled God’s power to flow through him.

Simon, a former sorcerer turned believer, had a different approach. Impressed by the apostles’ ability to impart the Holy Spirit to believers, he offered them money to obtain the same power. Peter rebuked him, saying, “Your heart is not right before God” (Acts 8:21).

Bazan suggested Simon’s problem was not ambition, but misplaced trust. We often replace faithfulness and trust in God with hurry, visibility, and control. “Borrowed power,” she said, “will always take life from us. The Holy Spirit always gives life.”

She challenged leaders to examine the root of their weariness and return to the Source of their strength. “Perhaps our exhaustion isn’t because we’re doing too much for God, but because we’ve had too little time with God.”

Bazan concluded, “If you’re feeling tired and exhausted, back up and enter into His love and His stillness. Let Him recenter you [so] He may send you forward.”

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The exhibit booths were a popular feature at the Adventist Ministries Convention, held January 25-27, 2026, in Louisville, Kentucky. Here, exhibitor Wynelle Stevens, NAD Adventist Community Services assistant director, and a visitor share a laugh. *Saul Dominguez*

# WHEN THE FIRE GROWS: CHILDREN'S MINISTRY LEADERS FIND RENEWAL AT REKINDLE

BY HUGH DAVIS, MID-AMERICA UNION COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR

**C**arol Dozier knows what it feels like to carry children's ministry alone.

As the children's ministry leader at Emmanuel Temple church in Buffalo, New York, she has served since the ministry first began, long before it became a formal department. She is now also serving on the Greater New York Conference Children's Ministries team, led by director Michelle Broomfield.

Over the years, she has often worked without much structure or support. Because her church is located at the far edge of the Northeastern Conference and Atlantic Union, that isolation can feel even stronger.

That reality is why Dozier traveled to Louisville, Kentucky, January 20-24, 2026, to attend the North American Division (NAD) Children's Ministries retreat at The Galt House. "Children's ministry leaders tend to work alone," she said. "There isn't as much infrastructure for supporting children's ministry as there is for other things."

For Dozier, being in a room with others who share the same calling matters. "They say a log by itself will not burn," she said. "But when you lay a log with other logs, the fire will grow. So for me, it's an opportunity for my fire to grow."

With 130 people registered, the retreat brought together union and conference Children's Ministries directors, children's pastors, and VBS conference leaders from across the North American Division. The theme, "reKindle," based on 2 Timothy 1:6, 7, shaped both the content and the spirit of the gathering.

Each day of the retreat featured a different "reKindle" focus: Wednesday's focus was "Rekindle Your Passion"; Thursday's, "Rekindle Your Calling"; and Friday's, "Rekindle Your Relationships."

Aligned with these themes, participants engaged in a daily guided prayer experience led by an NAD Children's Ministry Certification presenter. These activities included filling a jumbo Lite-Brite board with lights representing reconnecting with God; weaving prayers and praises written on strips of paper into a colorful tapestry representing lives called by



Participants enjoy a fun moment at VBS Live, a hands-on VBS demonstration, during the 2026 NAD Children's Ministries retreat. *Art Brondo*

God; and praying for fellow leaders using photos taken during registration. After each prayer experience, the activity prop was moved to an enclosed space called the Curiosity Corner, where leaders could continue reflecting on the Source of their fire during spare moments.

According to Sherri Uhrig, director of NAD Children's Ministries, the retreat was intentionally designed to meet both practical and spiritual needs. "The foundation of this retreat is to help our leaders be equipped and to know they are seen, heard, and valued," Uhrig said. "We also want them to experience a sense of belonging with their colleagues in children's ministry."

Uhrig, along with associate director Gerry Lopez and the Children's Ministries planning committee, structured the retreat to blend spiritual renewal with training from experienced leaders. Speakers were selected to encourage participants while addressing real-life ministry pressures.

Among the highlights, CMR26 started Wednesday night with a special presentation by Anthony Hackett, actor, director, writer, producer, and founder of Sonset Friday Entertainment, a multi-award-winning production company producing faith and inspirational content. He used humor, inspiration, and affirmation to lift up the value of children's ministries, focusing on "Rekindle Your Passion."

Other speakers were Christie Thomas, author, and Sofia Montes, outreach specialist at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.



Sherril Uhrig, NAD Children's Ministries director, shares the stage at the 2026 "reKindle" retreat with preconference speaker Esther Moreno of Child's Heart, LLC. *Art Brondo*

"The foundation of this retreat is to help our leaders be equipped and to know they are seen, heard, and valued."

Alongside leadership development and spiritual care, the retreat also highlighted practical ministry tools leaders could take back to their conferences. One of those was VBS Live, which introduced the upcoming Vacation Bible School program.

Nicole Broushet, Children's Ministries pastor at College View Church of Seventh-day Adventists, shared that what inspired her most about VBS Live was how intentionally it speaks to the world children are growing up in. "Cactusville reminds children that following Jesus means being called to be different; not isolated, but faithful," she said. "While we teach kids to build bridges with others, we also affirm that living for God will often set them apart."

Broushet added that empowering children to embrace their identity in Christ is a message that reaches the whole family. She also pointed to the program's intentional prayer station, which uses play—the language of childhood—to help children learn how to pause, reflect, and connect with God individually and together.

For many participants, the retreat was also about reconnecting with colleagues who have become friends and mentors. Pastor Darnisha Thomas, associate pastor at Dupont Park Seventh-day Adventist Church in Washington, D.C., said she has attended the Children's Ministries retreat for more than 10 years, and continues to value the space it creates for reflection and renewal.

This year's "reKindle" theme resonated with Thomas during a season of transition. She shared that children's ministry extends beyond children to families and the entire church, and that the retreat gave her space to reconnect with others who share the same passion and calling.

She also highlighted the preconference sessions as especially meaningful. Introduced the previous year and expanded this year, the preconference created space for honest conversations around the realities of children's ministry, including burnout and sustainability. Although she had to leave early because of a winter storm, Thomas expressed gratitude for the time she was able to spend learning and connecting with fellow leaders.

The retreat concluded Saturday night with a celebration that reflected the connections fostered throughout the week. Participants enjoyed a meal prepared by chefs, unhurried fellowship, and a Glow Party featuring a glow-in-the-dark setting and karaoke, including familiar praise and Vacation Bible School songs.

From beginning to end, the emphasis of the retreat remained consistent: Children's Ministries leaders matter, their work is valued, and they do not have to serve alone.

Esther Moreno of Child's Heart, LLC, presented during the one-day preconference session; these preevent professional development sessions were introduced in 2025 and will continue annually moving forward. Following the retreat, Moreno reflected on what she hoped participants would take away from her presentation. "Healthy ministry flows from healthy leaders," she said. "Addressing burnout isn't a sign of weakness — it's an act of stewardship."

Moreno emphasized that when leaders care for their spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being, they are better prepared to serve children with clarity, compassion, and a Christ-centered focus. She also responded to challenges Children's Ministries leaders often raise, such as limited budgets, which Uhrig noted is a concern she frequently hears from leaders.

"To those navigating tight budgets or limited resources, I want them to know this," Moreno said. "Meaningful Children's Ministries isn't built on big budgets or flashy programs, but on faithful presence, intentional relationships, and the power of the Holy Spirit."



# Uniquely Made for Christ

Photo by Art Brondo

## Inviting Children to “Say Yes to Jesus” Through Children’s Ministries

BY MAKALA JAMES

Early one Sabbath morning in Oregon a greeter waited patiently for their usual small but faithful crowd to arrive. Unbeknownst to him, everything was about to change because of Children’s Ministries. The church’s elderly members had begun inviting neighborhood families to come learn about the new weekly Sabbath School program they were starting, and now new faces began to appear. The greeter warmly welcomed regular attendees along with a completely new demographic.

“They had so many children come that they had to recruit more adults to help. Some kids even came on their own,” said Sherri Uhrig, Children’s Ministries direc-

tor for the North American Division (NAD). The church’s central location made it possible for easy access without driving, which appealed to families and children curious about walking over and checking it out. “The church just exploded. It grew because it was very intentional about reaching the children.”

This is just one example highlighting how children have a deep desire to know Jesus. When churches foster a safe place for children to fulfill that desire, the impact can be life-altering. The Children’s Ministries Department at the NAD exists for that reason—to provide resources to members and churches to enable them to create opportunities for children to say yes to Jesus.

“You don’t need an elaborate amount of stuff,” said Gerry Lopez, associate director. “Simply providing a safe place for these children to have somewhere to go in the community is important. . . . The kids will come.”

“Children are very uniquely made, as God has told us,” said Uhrig. “And He’s planted in their hearts a desire to connect with Him. So we are very passionate about children having every opportunity to say yes to Jesus.”

“Say Yes to Jesus” is the official message for the Children’s Ministries Department. It’s also the inspiration behind every available resource and program, such as Vacation Bible School (VBS) and the newly developed Alive in Jesus worldwide Sabbath School curriculum, which are currently available for those interested in bringing them to their church.

## Alive in Jesus

“A high percentage of our churches are made up of smaller congregations that are struggling to reach families to fill their Sabbath School classrooms,” said Uhrig. “The Alive in Jesus curriculum is created exactly for that reason. It is an in-reach and an outreach for parents.”

Alive in Jesus is the new Children’s Sabbath School curriculum from the General Conference. Designed with family in mind, this three-year curriculum cycle focuses on family discipleship and on the joy of experiencing God’s love. Activities, music, and stories are intentional about connecting children to Jesus and the Word of God, from babyhood through youth. The Baby Steps lessons, birth to 12 months, are broken into easy-to-follow studies. “Baby Steps is for young parents [or caregivers] who want to nurture the spiritual development of their baby,” said Uhrig.

At her home church Uhrig teaches a children’s Sabbath School class. Three siblings in the classroom, ages 5 through 8, recently endured a traumatic experience. Thanks to a reliable Sabbath School program, they had a stable place for them throughout the difficulties. “They just wanted to be somewhere safe,” said Uhrig. “In providing that safe space, I was able to share with them about Jesus, who is their forever friend.”

Photo by Pieter Damsteegt



# #Say YES to Jesus

CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES  
GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Another important aspect of attending Sabbath School is the opportunity for children to gain community and fellowship. Teachers have the important job of creating a safe space, but lasting friendships between children may also anchor a child’s desire to continue learning about God as they grow. “This is where they can find that place of belonging,” said Uhrig. “Children are seen, they are heard, they are valued for who they are.”

“I still have friends that I went to church and Sabbath School with as a child,” said Lopez.

Baby, Beginner, Kindergarten, and Primary classes are currently available through Alive in Jesus. Visit [AliveInJesus.info](http://AliveInJesus.info) to get started.

## Vacation Bible School: Cactusville

“Vacation Bible School is the best evangelism out there,” said Uhrig. “We have people, little people, who run to get into the church, and they never want to leave. They may be little in stature but big in heart.”

This year, the theme for VBS is Cactusville, where children are called to follow Jesus. The kit includes everything needed to host this Scripture-based adventure. From opening and closing videos, original music, leadership guides, posters, and more, it’s designed to make planning VBS as easy as possible—all with a Christ-centered message.

“Cactusville is all about how God calls children to be different, to be . . . everything that God is calling them to be,” said Uhrig. “Not only is it a beautiful message, but just the fun factor of it is that the kids love it. We are very intentional about the message having a Seventh-day Adventist perspective.”

Cactusville can be ordered from [AdventistVBS.org](http://AdventistVBS.org). VBS is a children’s evangelism tool that can be utilized at any time. In fact, extra materials are often donated to mission trip groups for use throughout the year.

“When I talk to people who do our VBS programs, they tell me that it is one of the biggest evangelism tools that we have,” said Lopez. “A child really loved and enjoyed VBS. They started to come to church on Sabbath, really enjoying it. They kept coming, the parents started to come, and then the family decided that they wanted to give their lives to Jesus. All because a child had an experience at VBS.”

Alive in Jesus Sabbath School and Vacation Bible School are just two of many resources available through the North American Division to teach children about Jesus. These programs build the foundation for children and families to grow in Christ. They are easily accessible and simple to utilize. All it takes is a willing heart, inviting children to “say yes to Jesus.”

Makala James writes from Granbury, Texas.

BY SHERRI UHRIG AND GERRY LOPEZ

# Children's Ministries: Creating Ways to Belong

## Belonging Through Connection

**W**hen I was a young girl, my family attended a large church every Sabbath, and those early experiences quietly shaped my understanding of faith. I especially loved Sabbath School. My teacher had a way of bringing Bible stories to life so vividly that I felt as if I were part of them. Each week the familiar warmth of being greeted by name—with a smile and a hug—made me feel seen and valued. It created a space of belonging.

After Sabbath School my mother, siblings, and I would walk into the sanctuary, always sitting in the same row. Dad would slip in after he helped in the back. There was something deeply comforting about that routine. It was there, in that shared space, that I first became aware of God's presence. I remember leaning back against the hard pew, staring up at the distant ceiling, slowly counting the wooden slats above me. Somewhere along the way that quiet counting became something more—I began to talk to God. In those simple, unstructured moments, I felt an unexplainable peace and joy settle into my heart.

Children possess a natural spiritual awareness—an openness to wonder, awe, and connection with God. It's not something that needs to be forced or manufactured; it's already there. Scripture affirms this beautifully, reminding us that we are known and set apart even before birth, and that God has placed eternity within our hearts (see Jer. 1:5).

Nurturing a child's spiritual life isn't about shaping them into a single mold, but about recognizing and honoring the unique ways they connect with God. Whether through music, nature, quiet reflection, or acts of kindness, each child's journey is sacred. Supporting that journey is both a privilege and a profound responsibility.

—*Sherri*

## Belonging Through Leadership

**I** was a rambunctious child, always looking for something to do and someone to talk to. At 10 years old I joined the junior Sabbath School class where my aunt Martha was the teacher.

For the first half of the year she worked with me, trying to help me be calm and listen, but it didn't work. Then she did something that I believe changed the trajectory of my life. She invited me to be a part of her leadership team.

For the rest of the year she intentionally brought out the leader in me—a gift God had already planted in my heart. I continued to help Auntie Martha with Sabbath School classes until the end of my early teen class years. Afterward my church in San Diego asked me to be an associate youth Sabbath School leader. I served there until my early 20s, when I moved to a different place.

My parents made church life an important part of our family's life. Ministering to children in our local churches, alongside their parents, helps them grow spiritually and fosters their natural talents for the Lord. Auntie Martha's mentorship allowed me to begin developing leadership skills as a child, and at 15 I first felt the call to ministry. At 37 I heeded God's call to follow the ministry path He had intended. That path has led me through pastoral ministry, school chaplaincy, and children's ministry.

Participating in church, up front or behind the scenes builds confidence and develops leaders that can make a difference inside and outside the church. It's important to intentionally create a space for families and children in our churches. We can do this by giving them prime real estate in church participation, such as leading out in Sabbath School, helping with audio and visual teams—integrating more of our children into the church service.

As a pastor my goal has been to bring children into a true relationship with Jesus. It is a privilege to now partner with our conference and union leaders to help children say yes to Jesus!

—*Gerry*

*Sherri Uhrig is the North American Division Children's Ministries director; Gerry Lopez is associate director.*

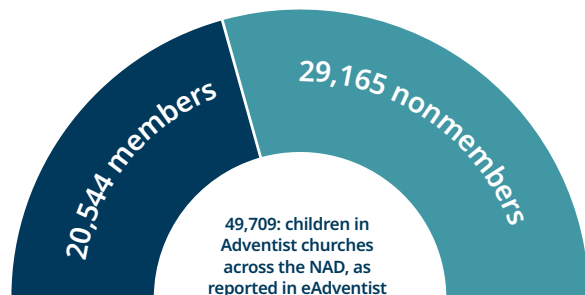
Children possess a natural spiritual awareness—an openness to wonder, awe, and connection with God.

# EMPOWERING LEADERS,

## Impacting Kids for the Kingdom

The North American Division Children's Ministries Department serves to create resources and equip unions, conferences, and local churches to inspire children to say yes to Jesus! In a world full of uncertainty and chaos, these resources help families and leaders create safe environments to teach children about God's love while fostering spiritual growth. Contact your local Children's Ministries director or visit [childmin.org](http://childmin.org) to learn more.

**6,900** Seventh-day Adventist congregations in North America



**50-60%** of Adventist youth in North America remain in the church into adulthood

Facts and figures from UNICEF, Valuegenesis Study, Barna Group, Fuller Youth Institute, Common Sense Media, NAD Children's Ministries.

### Vacation Bible School

**1,148**

VBS kits sold in 2025

**\$179**

VBS program per church

**3-12**

typical ages for VBS

**81,000,000**

children in the United States and Canada in 2025



**1 in 5**

diagnosable mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder in children ages 3-17

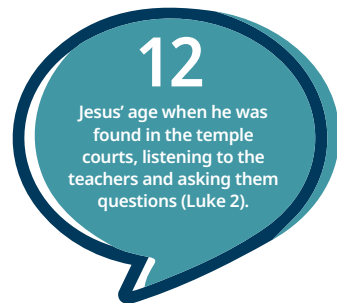


**85%**

of people who make faith commitments do so between ages of 4 and 14

**5:1**

For every 1 young person it takes at least 5 adults investing in them spiritually (between the ages of 15 and 18) to keep them connected to church.



**23%** global church membership, ages 0-20

**9%** NAD church membership, ages 0-20

## Sabbath School

Alive in Jesus age groups available now:



**Babies**  
Birth-12 months



**Beginner**  
1-3 years

**\$99**

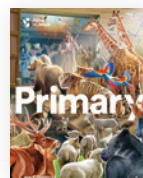
Alive in Jesus kit per age level



Alive in Jesus languages: English, Spanish, French in NAD



**Kindergarten**  
4-6 years



**Primary**  
7-9 years

**Alive in Jesus coming 2029!**

**Junior**  
10-12 years

**Teen**  
13-14 years

# Missionary Tales From Alaska to British Guiana:

## The Legacy of Ovid Elbert Davis



BY MICHAEL W. CAMPBELL

Images of Ovid Elbert Davis during his mission service years, circa 1905. *Adventist Archives*

**O**vid Elbert Davis was a pioneer missionary to the indigenous peoples of Alaska and British Columbia, Canada. He served in ministry in Washington and Michigan, and toward the end of his life, before tragically perishing from blackwater fever, he established a mission station near Mount Roraima.\*

### Alaska and British Columbia

Ovid Elbert Davis was born April 3, 1868, in Ovid Township, Michigan. After his marriage fell apart, at some point he became an Adventist, and there is evidence that he began to subscribe to church periodicals in the 1890s. He was training at the Battle Creek Sanitarium when it burned in 1902. Afterward he was inspired by Ellen White's counsels about the need for missionaries and the need to spread the Adventist message to new places. After completing the ministerial course at Emmanuel Missionary College, Davis responded to a call to minister to the indigenous peoples of Alaska. At one point some traditionalists who were upset about the message he was sharing threatened to tie him to a stake on the tidelands to be drowned, but he miraculously escaped without harm.

In 1903 Davis was in Balmoral Cannery, Port Essington, British Columbia. On December 11, 1903, he established the first "Indian church" (a term of that time meant respectfully to refer to the local indigenous peoples). This was quite possibly the very first congregation of its kind by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the entire Pacific northwest.

In 1905 he reported that he was laboring among the native peoples of Port Simpson, British Columbia. Afterward T. H. Watson came to take charge of this work, and Davis then spent time ministering in Vancouver. Here he was able to help finish building a church that he had helped start three years ear-

lier. He slowly worked his way along the coast, moving south toward Seattle.

### British Guiana

Davis returned to Michigan briefly, where he was ordained to the ministry, and then took another call to serve in British Guiana (now Guyana). Church leaders noticed his pioneering work among indigenous peoples and felt he was the right person to travel into remote jungle areas to establish a mission. Shortly before he left, he married Carrie Rosley, and the couple departed in May 1906. They spent their first two years of marriage distributing Adventist literature.

By 1910 Davis reported organizing a new church 160 miles up the Barama River. Another mission site was established on the Demerara River, this time 100 miles inland. These two would become the Rio Paruime and Mount Tulamang missions, respectively. As he traveled up the Essequibo River he received requests from another tribe "still farther in the interior" who had never before seen a White man asking for the "God-man" to come and teach

them the message of salvation. These tribes were later identified as the Arekunai (Arecuna) and Akawaio. Reports at the time from Adventist missionaries suggested that their interest in Christ's return arose from as early as the early 1840s from Millerite literature sent aboard ships, although some of the beliefs had become "mixed up" with "tribal traditions and superstitions." What mattered most was that they believed someone was going to come and "tell them about the coming of Christ."

### River Journey

The journey up the Demerara River took two months. There were reports by an old chief that he had been visited by a "shining angel" who taught them about the creation of the world, the entrance of sin, the story of the promised Redeemer, and Christ's second coming. He also taught them to begin worshipping on the seventh-day Sabbath and how to live a healthful life. The angel changed his name to *Owkwa*, meaning "great light," as he continued to have dreams and visions. He was told that a man with a "black book," the Bible, would be their sign that the missionary from God had arrived.

Davis visited among the tribes, "teaching them the Word of God," and reported "the establishing of three mission bases among them." He added that 187 "definitely took their stand to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." He built three church buildings and instructed them "on the points of our faith." He also taught them to sing in English.

Davis returned for a second visit in May 1911, but complained about a fever and heart problems just before he left. This would be his last trip, as he tragically died from blackwater fever. Before he died, he helped teach them about God: "God has especially blessed in this trip," he wrote in his diary that was found later. Before he passed, he also noted that on June 25, 1911, he established the first Seventh-day Adventist mission station in that region, and soon afterward, his handwriting in his diary broke off. He was buried at Mount Roraima by Chief Jeremiah, who had taken care of him until the end. The site is located on the border where Guyana, Venezuela, and Brazil meet. The people gathered every Sabbath by his grave and sang the hymns he taught them, especially "Shall We Gather at the River?" and "Jesus Is Coming Again."

The death of Ovid Elbert Davis would inspire many other missionaries to follow in his footsteps.

### Legacy

After his death, reports circulated that Davis had been killed. National Geographic explorer Henry Crampton heard about the death of a missionary shortly before he reached the area, and reported his surprise at hearing a tribe singing hymns in English. One of the chiefs had a vision about the second coming of Christ and that a man would come again with a "black book" to teach them more about God and the seventh-day Sabbath. After a 14-year wait, another missionary made the arduous trek. In 1927, thanks to Sabbath School mission offerings, a second attempt was made that resulted in one of the two missionary families reaching this remote place.

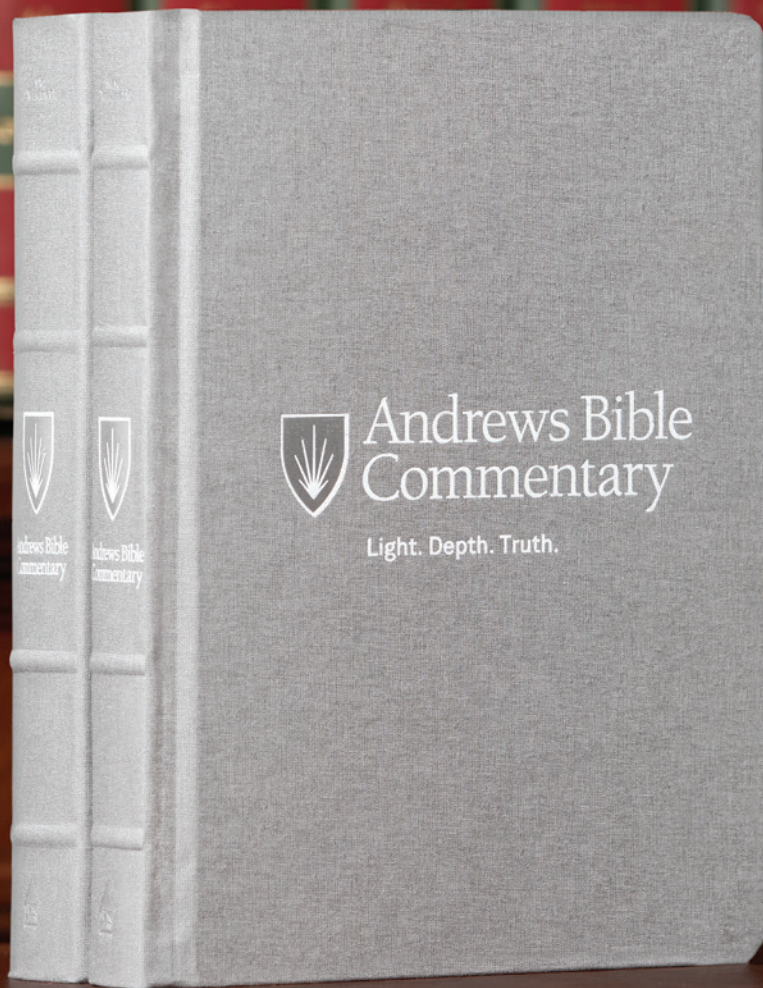
The death of Davis would inspire many other missionaries to follow in his footsteps. What began as missionary work in Alaska and British Columbia eventually became a profound sacrificial testimony, as God used Ovid and Carrie as pioneer missionaries in South America, and later when Ovid ultimately gave his life for the people he came to love. His pioneer legacy, what has been described as one of the most thrilling in Adventist mission history, is a poignant reminder of the incredible ways God works through ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

\* This article is adapted from a longer biographical treatment by the author in the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*.

*Michael W. Campbell is director of Archives, Statistics, and Research for the North American Division.*



Mount Roraima Mission temporary quarters; Mount Roraima mission site. Adventist Archives




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Sebastian Lopez, director of campus ministries, speaks to Kettering College students.  
*Genesis Santos-Guzman*

# Caring for the Caregivers

How Kettering College Supports Students in Demanding Health Care Programs

BY KETTERING COLLEGE STAFF WRITER

**I**t's not uncommon for a sonography or nursing student to complete more than 2,000 hours of clinical training before graduation. Early mornings, long shifts, and the emotional weight of patient care quickly become part of daily life.

For students preparing to enter health care, the challenge is not only academic but deeply personal. How do you stay mentally resilient, spiritually grounded, and emotionally healthy while navigating one of the most demanding educational paths?

At Kettering College in Ohio, that question is not theoretical. It is lived out every day.

At Kettering, a Seventh-day Adventist institution, students take a religion course each semester, engaging with faith, purpose, and personal growth. But what happens outside the classroom matters just as much. This year the college has taken intentional steps to support students not only in what they learn but in how they live, cope, and grow.

At the heart of that effort is a simple but powerful goal.

"Everyone that comes through these doors feels as though they're seen, they're cared for, and that they have a purpose," shared Sebastian Lopez, director of campus ministries.

## Meeting Students in the Middle of the Demands

Recognizing these student health-care demands, Lopez has been intentional about designing experiences that meet students where they are, not adding more, but stepping into the middle of their already-full lives.

"If students are preparing to care for others, they must also be cared for."

"Sebastian is really good at being present," said Emmy Magdadar, a senior nursing student. "If you just need someone to listen, he listens."

Across campus, small but meaningful moments of connection are becoming part of daily life. A mobile snack and encouragement cart,

the "Mindful Mobile," appears between classes, offering stress-relief items, quick treats, and handwritten notes. For a few minutes students pause, breathe, and are reminded they are seen.

"These moments may seem simple, but they can mean everything," Lopez said. "Community does not happen by accident. It must be built with intention."

Magdadar explained that in addition to short morning devotionals, campus ministries has launched interest-based groups, from running and painting to knitting and small group conversations. On a mostly commuter campus, these spaces create something deeper: belonging.

Lopez explains that these groups connect with those who may not be able to prioritize a formal service but will show up for a run that begins with prayer. Students lead these groups, creating space for authentic connection.

"Sebastian meets students where they are," Magdadar said. "It never feels forced. It just feels supportive and genuine."

## Preparing Whole-Person Health-Care Professionals

This emphasis on care is not separate from academic preparation; it is foundational.

"Health-care professionals are called to care for the whole person: body, mind, and spirit," Lopez said. "Students don't just learn this. They experience it, as this is how we try to care for them."

Students describe a campus that feels different, in which care shows up in everyday moments, and in the steady reminder that they are not alone even during long hours and the emotional strain of health care today.

Kettering College holds firmly to a simple truth: supporting the whole student is essential to preparing the next generation of health-care professionals.

Because caring for patients begins long before graduation.

It begins by caring for the caregivers.



← Marius Marton, pastor of the Elyria Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ohio, baptizes one of the 161 individuals who joined the church following its Pentecost 2025 evangelistic series, held August 2-9, 2025. Photo provided by Elyria church

## In Columbia Union, 161 Join the Elyria Church

**T**he Elyria Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ohio concluded its Pentecost 2025 evangelistic series, held August 2-9, with the addition of 161 new members—surpassing the congregation’s previous membership and worship attendance.

Before the series began, Elyria church had 100 members. Andrew Sutton, treasurer of the Ohio Conference, emphasized that in God’s eyes, every person is precious, and even a small number of baptisms makes an evangelistic effort worthwhile. However, he noted that what took place in Elyria was unprecedented in the Ohio Conference’s recent history. “We praise God for such a great harvest,” Sutton said.

Pastor Marius Marton, who leads the Elyria congregation, recalled telling the church board he was praying for 150 new souls. “One board member said, ‘150-plus,’” Marton said. “God blessed us with 161 [new members]. Imagine if we’d had bigger faith—God would have given us more.”

He credited the results to the church’s participation in Total Member Involvement (TMI), which united the congregation in mission. “Now the praises are being shouted from the rooftops, and the church is eager to do it again. *Soli Deo Gloria!*”

The guest speaker for the series was Pastor Kojo Twumasi, who preached under the theme “Summer BLAST”—Building Lives Around Solid Truth. This innovative evangelism model meets the community’s basic needs while sharing a Bible-centered message.

Twumasi commended the Elyria members’ passion for soul winning and determination to do even more for the Lord. He emphasized their prayerful approach to the series and strong retention program, which began immediately after the campaign concluded. “Last Sabbath morning the church was filled with both old and new members,” he said with joy.

At the time of the series, Twumasi was serving as senior pastor of the Toledo First and Northwood Seventh-day Adventist churches in Ohio. He was elected evangelism director for the Ohio Conference in October 2025. During the summer of 2025 alone, he spoke at five evangelistic campaigns—Elyria being the fifth—which resulted in 400 total baptisms. He credits God for leading each effort and touching the hearts of those who choose to follow Him.

Elyria’s Summer BLAST was part of Pentecost 2025, an NAD initiative seeking to fulfill the mandate of Jesus Christ in Matthew 24:14: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

—Francis Tuffour, Ohio Conference digital media and communication; this article was originally posted on the Ohio Conference website.

# In Canada, Lives Transformed at Pentecost 2025

**F**rom November 7 to 15, 2025, the Toronto Pilipino Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ontario, Canada, became a place of renewed faith as three congregations came together for “*Pentecost 2025 and Beyond: Hope for the End-time.*” In partnership with Fairhavens Filipino Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Ilocano Seventh-day Adventist Company, the weeklong series drew hearts back to God and reminded attendees that the Holy Spirit is still moving today.

Night after night, under the preaching of John Lomacang, pastor of the Thompsonville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Illinois, an average of 175 attendees gathered, culminating in a final Sabbath attendance of 370. Over the nine evenings Lomacang led listeners from the sobering reality that the end is near to the assurance that Jesus is the only way out. He further described the Holy Spirit as the true agent of change, guiding believers back to God’s perfect law, and invited participants to a new beginning through baptism.

One of the most beautiful testimonies came from Daisy, a 10-year-old Pathfinder who declared with childlike simplicity that she chose baptism “*because I love Jesus.*” Her words reflected the essence of the series—a call to follow Christ with wholehearted devotion.

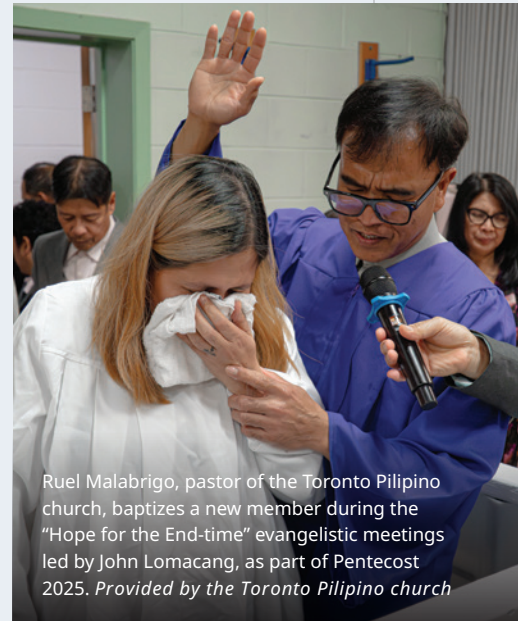
Another moving story came from Reza and her daughter, Venice, who recently immigrated to Canada. “This is our first year in Canada, and we’ve been fortunate enough to find a wonderful community of friends who share our Christian values and have

become like family to us. One of the greatest blessings we’ve received is the opportunity for my daughter to attend Crawford Adventist Academy, where she was immediately accepted,” Reza said.

She added, “Our journey took a significant turn when we were inspired by Pastor Lomacang’s teachings and witnessed miracles during the Pentecost [series]. That experience led us to convert to Adventism and become a part of this beautiful family. We are beyond grateful!”

By the end of the series, 13 individuals publicly declared their faith through baptism: eight from Toronto Pilipino, two from Fairhavens Filipino, and three from the Ilocano Adventist Company.

Supporting the nightly programs was a dedicated volunteer team from all three churches. Their united efforts reflected the true spirit of Pentecost: believers working together with one purpose and one hope.



Ruel Malabrigo, pastor of the Toronto Pilipino church, baptizes a new member during the “*Hope for the End-time*” evangelistic meetings led by John Lomacang, as part of Pentecost 2025. Provided by the Toronto Pilipino church

As the series concluded on November 15, one truth stood out: Pentecost is not just a moment in history; it is a living testimony that God still empowers His people today. The outpouring witnessed over these nine nights is only the beginning of what He will continue to do.

—Chinenn Daang-To, Hope Malabrigo and Leanne Sagun, communications, Toronto Pilipino Seventh-day Adventist Church; this article was originally posted on the Ontario Conference website.



The “*Hope for the End-time*” series held in November at Toronto Pilipino Seventh-day Adventist Church drew roughly 175 attendees every night. Provided by the Toronto Pilipino church

# Let the Little Ones Shine:

The Adventist Journey of Nitza Salazar

BY KRISTINA P. BUSCH

**N**itza Salazar has a heart for children, all children. Be it through Adventist education, club ministries or Children's Ministries, she's committed to Jesus' command in Matthew 19:14, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

A self-described "troubled" teen, Salazar recalls lacking good coping skills in the aftermath of her parents' divorce. "I made a lot of bad choices," she said. Her story pivoted, however, when her mother and grandmother sent Salazar to an Adventist school. "During my high school years in an Adventist school, I was able to find Jesus, my personal Savior."

Salazar eventually became a teacher and found herself ministering to young people dealing with the same issues she had dealt with in her youth. "It was nice to be able just to minister to them and to be there, not just as a teacher, but as a mentor that would pray for them and guide them during those tough times." Salazar, having taught in both public and Adventist schools, shared, "I love how from a classroom we can just be mentors to our children and make an impact for our next generation."

As she engaged with children in Sabbath School and at church, Salazar's passion for impacting their lives grew. She was involved with the children and youth at the church where her husband, David, pastored. "That's where it all clicked," she said. "I found out that that was the ministry that God wanted for me in my life."

She was called to serve as the Children's Ministries director for the Washington Conference, and as she began her role there, an unexpected conversation led to the start of a ministry very dear to her heart.

While Salazar was visiting a church in the conference, she was approached by a mother she didn't know. "She said, 'Nitza, I'm super excited that you're the new Children's Ministries director, and I have a big favor to ask you. Is it possible for you to have a Christmas pageant so my son can be Joseph?'"

Looking for clarity, Salazar repeated the request back to the mother, "You're asking me to have a Christmas pageant so your son can be Joseph?"

The mother affirmed her request and explained, "My son has Down syndrome. Every Christmas he wants to be Joseph." She explained that there



weren't many opportunities for her son to participate, and those roles never went to children like him.

"Sister, your son will be Joseph this Christmas," Salazar told her.

Salazar called every church in the Washington Conference inviting kids with special needs to participate in a Christmas pageant designed just for them. She even invited kids from non-Adventist churches, and in the end she had a cast of 15 eager kids.

"I had no budget," she laughed. "But I carried my [promotional] poster everywhere, and the community embraced the pageant." A church provided costumes and decorations, and the community pitched in financially. "I didn't spend a dollar; God provided," she said.

More than 500 people packed the church for the first Special Stars Christmas Pageant in 2018. The successful program brought together many volunteers and artistic talent as well. Salazar recalls one specific request she made of a very crafty family. Her three Wise Men were all in wheelchairs, and she wanted them to cross the stage in walking camels. She asked if it were possible. "Yes! Of course we can do this!" came the reply. That night the Wise Men crossed the stage in wheelchairs with moving camel legs and necks. Backstage a community mom approached Salazar with tears in her eyes and said, "I've never seen a kid with special needs treated like a king."

In 2019 the cast grew to 35 special needs kids. With the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the program went online with 70 participants. In 2021, with 120 participants and funding from a federal government grant, Salazar was able to rent and sell out a local performance theater for the Special Stars Christmas Pageant.

In 2022 Salazar received a call to serve as the Idaho Conference Children's Ministries director, and her husband received a call to serve as executive secretary. In 2023 the Idaho Conference held its first Special Stars Christmas Pageant, with 19 participants, only six of them Adventists, packing out the largest church in the conference. In 2024 the cast grew to 24, and in 2025 the pageant featured 42 kids. Salazar shared that they have outgrown the largest church and will be renting a performance theater in 2026.

"It costs a lot of money, and sometimes I have to remind myself to just trust God," she admitted. "Be faithful, do the program, and trust that God will take care of the finances." Every year they've been able to raise the thousands of dollars the pageant requires. And the investment is well worth the cost.

"This pageant has changed my life," Salazar said. "From backstage I am able to see Jesus. I see Jesus in the face of the parents and grandparents. I'm able to see Jesus in the happiness that those kids reflect during the pageant."

This ministry has become a way of life now for her family. Nitza, David, and their daughter, Jordyn, know that wherever they are, there will be a Special Stars Christmas Pageant.

Salazar is intentional about the support she and the pageant team provide the special needs families. "We train our Master Guides, Pathfinders, and even Adventurers to be a peer partner," she said. The volunteers are partnered with a cast member and are trained not only on the child's special need, but also on how to guide and assist them during the performance. Those volunteers often return the next year, moved by the experience.



Nitza Salazar Art Brondo

Special Stars has also paved the way for pastors and church members to engage their special needs families and children through Bible studies and club ministries. "One of my goals and desires, what God has put in my heart, is to be able to say that our Seventh-day Adventist Church is the church that welcomes people with special needs," Salazar said. She notes that the new children's Sabbath School curriculum, *Alive in Jesus*, has dedicated training for teachers on how to work with kids with special needs. "Our church is getting educated in how to welcome these families!"

Salazar encourages church members to connect with their local special needs families and engage them in the church service. From passing microphones to collecting offering, a simple invitation can go a long way. Salazar said, "It says to them that Jesus loves them and that Jesus needs them in the ministry of the church."

That "troubled" teenager with a broken heart is bringing hope and inclusivity to children often disregarded. Salazar's passion to pave a way for the little children with special needs to come to Jesus is a clear reminder that the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.

*Kristina P. Busch writes from Arlington, Texas. Nitza Salazar was featured on the July-August 2025 Adventist Journey cover; visit [nadadventist.org/adventist-journey/july-august-2024](https://nadadventist.org/adventist-journey/july-august-2024) to watch her interview.*

# He Will Never Let Me Go

The Adventist Journey  
of Marcie Olkeriil

EDITED BY ART BRONDO  
AND KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

Marcie Olkeriil is the vice principal at Palau Seventh-day Adventist Elementary School in Koror, Palau, part of the Guam-Micronesia Mission. Art Brondo

**M**y island home, Palau, is a place often called “the paradise at the end of the rainbow.” Turquoise waters surround its shores, and lush landscapes stretch in every direction. Life moves at a gentler pace, where beauty is abundant and hardship can feel distant.

And sometimes, because of that, it can be hard to realize how much you need God. For me, both joy and struggle have shaped my journey and revealed the quiet, persistent work of God.

I was born into a Seventh-day Adventist family. I’m a third-generation Adventist. Faith was always part of my life, but it became real for me when I was a student at Palau Mission Academy.

It was during a Week of Prayer. I remember being deeply moved. I had always been a troubled child, a troubled student. But in that moment I realized something: I could give my heart to Jesus, and He could change my life.

So I prayed, “Lord, never let me go. Always use me.”

I didn’t know then how much that prayer would shape everything that came after.

## A Different Direction

For many years my life followed what seemed like a practical path. My educational background is in business administration, and I earned my master’s degree in that field. I worked in human resources in government and semi-government offices. That was my world—management, structure, stability.

Part of my work involved interacting with high school students, encouraging them to consider careers in engineering. And through that, something began to grow in me. I found myself thinking, *How fun would it be to work with students? Maybe I could be a teacher.*

I told my boss, “I think it’s time for me to resign. I think God can use me as a teacher.”

He laughed and told me to stop joking.

At that time I had backslidden. It had been about four years since I had gone to church. But then something

unexpected happened. An Ellen G. White devotional started appearing in my inbox.

I tried to read it, but I couldn't understand it. I would read it again and again—sometimes 10 or 15 times—and still not understand. It felt too deep for me.

One day I knelt in my office and prayed, "Lord, help me to understand Your Word. I don't want to think that I've gone so far that I cannot grasp it anymore. And use me."

After that, things began to change. The devotionals started to make more sense. What once took many readings began to become clearer. And as that understanding grew, so did my desire to return to God and be used by Him.

For years someone at the Adventist elementary school had been encouraging me to teach. Every time I went to pay tuition for my children, I would hear the same invitation. And every time I would laugh and say, "Who in their right mind would leave their job to become a teacher for this meager salary?"

But this time I didn't laugh.

I went to the school and asked, "Do you have an opening? I want to teach."

They answered, "Yes! You finally made it. It's time." That marked the beginning of my journey as a teacher.

After the first day I was in pain from the top of my head to the tip of my toes. I remember waking up the next morning still in my uniform and thinking, *Lord, is this what it's like?*

It was exhausting, and I felt as if I didn't know what I was doing—but it was also fun. And I knew that I was in the right place.

But at first I treated my classroom like an organization. Every student had a job. It was structured, like a workplace, with me as the manager. I had to learn that teaching required something

different. I took courses, learned as much as I could, and leaned on a mentor who had been teaching for many years.

I taught first grade, then second grade, then fifth grade. Each year brought changes, and at times I wondered why I couldn't just settle into one place. But through those changes, I grew.

Eventually I reached a point where I felt settled and grateful. I remember praying and thanking God that I could finally teach the same grade again. I felt so content that I even thought, *If Jesus comes today, I'm ready.*

And then my life turned upside down.

### When Everything Changed

My son became very sick. He had to go off-island for treatment. At the same time, I was asked to help step into a leadership role at the school after the principal resigned.

I told them no—I wasn't in a place to give more of myself. My son needed me, and I was already overwhelmed. But then I prayed, "Lord, if the calling comes a third time, I will go. You see what I'm going through. You see how stressed I am. But if You want me to serve in a greater capacity, then may Your will be done."

When the request came again, I said yes.

I told God, "Only You can provide the solutions. I am empty. I have no educational background in this, and I am not ready emotionally or mentally. But if this is what You want, I will go."

It was one of the hardest times in my life. But it was also the time I saw God working most clearly.

My son recovered. And through everything, I learned that even when I feel empty and hurting, if I say yes to God, He will take what I have and use it.

As vice principal, I greatly desired to see a school that truly puts God first. I

would stand before the students and remind them, "Put God first."

We began going out into the community—visiting hospitals, prisons, and community spaces; sharing songs, Bible verses, and simple messages.

People respond differently when they hear about God from children. There is something genuine about it. And it changed us. It showed us that people are hungry for God's Word—and that when we put Him first, He works through us.

Not long ago a former teacher visited and saw me in this role. He said, "God can do anything. Just look at Marcie."

That stayed with me because it was true. God has limitless possibilities when He transforms a life. And when I think about what gives me joy, it's not a position or a title. It's experiencing Jesus every day and asking Him to talk to me, to guide me, to lead me.

And more than that, it's going through pain with Him.

That may sound unusual, but it's in those moments that my faith has grown the most. When things are difficult, I've learned to pray, "Lord, help me to love You more through this."

And He does.

He leads you through it, and when you come out on the other side, you are stronger, more faithful, and better able to help others.

Because through every part of this journey—from being a troubled student to serving in leadership—I have seen what happens when you say yes to God, even when you feel as if you have nothing left to give.

He will use you.

And He will never let you go.

*Art Brondo is media producer for Communication of the North American Division; Kimberly Luste Maran is Communication director, and editor of Adventist Journey.*



# THE LEARNING LEADER

**Growing and equipping educational leaders, strengthening schools at the Association of Seventh-day Adventist School Administrators Leadership Conference**

Ruth Horton (right, at podium), NAD vice president of Education, introduces the NAD Education team, including retired Education vice president Larry Blackmer (far left). *Art Brondo*

**BY LEISA MORTON-STANDISH, DIRECTOR OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION FOR THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION**

**T**hey almost didn't make it.

Principals from the Guam-Micronesia Mission longed to attend the 2026 Association of Seventh-day Adventist School Administrators (ASDASA) Leadership Conference—but distance and cost made participation seem impossible. Then something remarkable happened. Their sponsoring union, a generous donor, and the mission stepped forward in faith. Together they made a way.

Because when leaders grow, schools grow. And when schools grow, students flourish.

That spirit of shared commitment set the tone for “The Learning Leader,” the theme of this year’s 2026 Leadership Conference for educational leaders across the North American Division (NAD).

Held at the beautiful Woodlands Hotel and Conference Center in Texas, the ASDASA Conference gathered 421 leaders committed to excellence in Adventist education. While attendees from colder climates appreciated the warm 70-degree weather, it was the warmth of collaboration, inspiration, and spiritual renewal that seemed to have made the greatest impact.

Carol Campbell, vice president for Education for the Southwestern Union Conference, reflected: “The meetings were well attended and engaging, with a strong variety of plenary speakers showcasing diverse and effective presentation styles.”

## **Learning Leaders: Stronger Together**

The success of the conference was a testimony to partnership. The NAD team collaborated closely with union vice presidents, directors, and associate directors of education to design and execute a conference that was intentional, meaningful, and mission-driven.

Ruth Horton, NAD vice president for Education, expressed heartfelt appreciation: “On behalf of my colleagues at the NAD Office of Education, thank you for the important and impactful role each of you played in executing a successful ASDASA Conference in Texas. Your contributions were deeply valued. The camaraderie, spirit of cooperation, and support were palpable.”

The same spirit that brought Guam-Micronesia leaders across the ocean was evident in every conversation, breakout session, and shared meal.

1 G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president, speaks during a moving leader consecration service to conclude the conference.

2 One of the highlights of the conference was the Affinity Groups sessions, pictured here, where educators of similar categories meet to discuss leadership-related issues. *Art Brondo*



ue, and the intentional opportunities for relationship-building throughout the event.

Speakers including Baruti Kafele, Douglas Reeves, Robyn R. Jackson, Mario Acosta, Todd Whitaker, and Nancy Frey called leaders to deeper clarity of purpose and measurable growth. Sessions emphasized developing a strong leadership identity, ensuring lifelong student success, navigating the ethical use of artificial intelligence, building staff capacity, strengthening school culture, and leading courageous collaboration grounded in evidence.

Participants walked away with practical tools, renewed vision, and a clear reminder: impactful leadership requires purpose, balance, courage, and an unwavering commitment to continuous improvement.

### Learning Leaders: Breakout Power

The breakout sessions were where inspiration met implementation—practical, focused, and immediately applicable. Leaders gained tools, frameworks, and strategies they could implement as soon as they returned to their campuses. Just as impactful was the opportunity to reconnect and collaborate, building cross-regional relationships through small-group and role-alike sessions. Specialized gatherings for principals, superintendents, and small-school leaders created safe, relevant spaces for honest dialogue and shared problem-solving. With so many sessions offered concurrently, participants often found it difficult to choose. The breakout sessions blended practical leadership tools, culture-building strategies, instructional coaching, and spiritual grounding, equipping and encouraging leaders.

Rose Thomas, Southern Union associate director for Elementary Education and breakout presenter, reflected, “ASDASA was a space for leadership renewal, fellowship, and true collaboration.” Partnering with Fabiola Harper, principal of Adventist Christian School in Augusta, Georgia, she described the rare opportunity to co-present as a powerful reminder that leaders across the NAD share one common mission—educating for here and eternity. Their session, warmly received by an engaged audience, celebrated unity in purpose and reaffirmed that Adventist education is kingdom work—lifting up Christ, encouraging one another, and making excellence visible so it may bless others.

### Learning Leaders: A Sacred Mission

The conference concluded with a moving leader consecration service featuring an inspiring message from North American Division president G. Alexander Bryant entitled “Writing on the Doorposts.”

Cynthia Poole captured the spirit of the gathering: “It was a pleasure to participate in one of the most impactful events that I have attended. I was truly blessed and inspired by all that transpired.”

The 2026 ASDASA Leadership Conference affirmed that learning leaders are called to more than administrative excellence. They are called to spiritual depth, courageous collaboration, and steadfast commitment to student success—no matter the distance, no matter the obstacles.

Because when leaders are willing to grow, God makes a way.

### Learning Leaders: Spiritual Renewal

Leadership begins in the heart.

A highlight of the conference was intentional spiritual nourishment. Andreas Beccai, lead pastor of Crosswalk Seventh-day Adventist Church, challenged leaders to confront a reality they all face—resistance. Sometimes it emerges unexpectedly. Sometimes it lingers beneath the surface.

Through system-mapping tools and biblical reflection, participants explored the emotional dynamics behind pushback, disengagement, and stalled progress. Leaders left equipped to manage conflict with wisdom, communicate with clarity, and move the mission forward—without losing peace or people.

### Learning Leaders: Challenged to Grow

The keynote and plenary sessions stretched leaders both spiritually and administratively. Murray Cooper, director for Education in the Southern Union of Seventh-day Adventists, described ASDASA as exceptionally well run, noting the high-quality presenters, the excellent ven-



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Ruth Horton, NAD vice president for education, addresses attendees at a recent conference. *Art Brondo*

# Formed for a Purpose:

## Ruth Horton's Vision for Adventist Education

BY JESSICA LOZANO

**A**t its 2025 year-end meeting the North American Division (NAD) elected Ruth Horton as vice president for education, entrusting her with leadership at a time Adventist education is both growing and adapting. With experience spanning classrooms, school leadership, and system-wide administration in both Adventist and public education, Horton understands that student needs across the division are more complex than ever before, and that the expectations placed on teachers continue to expand.

Into this moment she brings both innovation and a perspective shaped by decades of service, guided by what she sees as the enduring purpose of Adventist education and its role in shaping lives for something beyond the present.

That sense of purpose traces back to her early beginnings. Even as a child in nature on the Caribbean island of Dominica, she found herself teaching the shrubs around the property, as her parents would later describe. Recognized as a strong student with a natural inclination toward teaching, Horton was asked to step into a second-grade classroom at just 17, immediately after graduating from high school. She taught for a year before continuing her education.

In the years that followed, Horton, earning multiple degrees and serving in a wide range of educational roles, came to recognize a deeper pattern in her journey. "I believe that God worked His design out in my life," she said.

That same understanding—of potential and calling, of what may not yet be fully visible—shapes how she views students. In the same way her own abilities were recognized and given room to grow, she believes educators must be equally attentive to each student. "It's incumbent on us as educators to truly see our students, to draw out what is already within them, and to use that as a springboard from which to inspire, guide, and teach," Horton said.

Whether working with divergent learners, students whose strengths may not align with traditional measures, or those anywhere in between, her focus from which to inspire, guide, and teach is to help each student grow into both their capabilities and their purpose. Horton believes that education is not limited to academic achievement, but extends to helping students understand their abilities and greater purpose.

At the NAD Horton describes her role as steady support, working through unions, listening to the field, and equipping educators with resources, training, and encouragement. "It's a faucet that keeps on dripping," she said. "We never stop sharing, releasing information, receiving feedback, providing training, and offering resources"

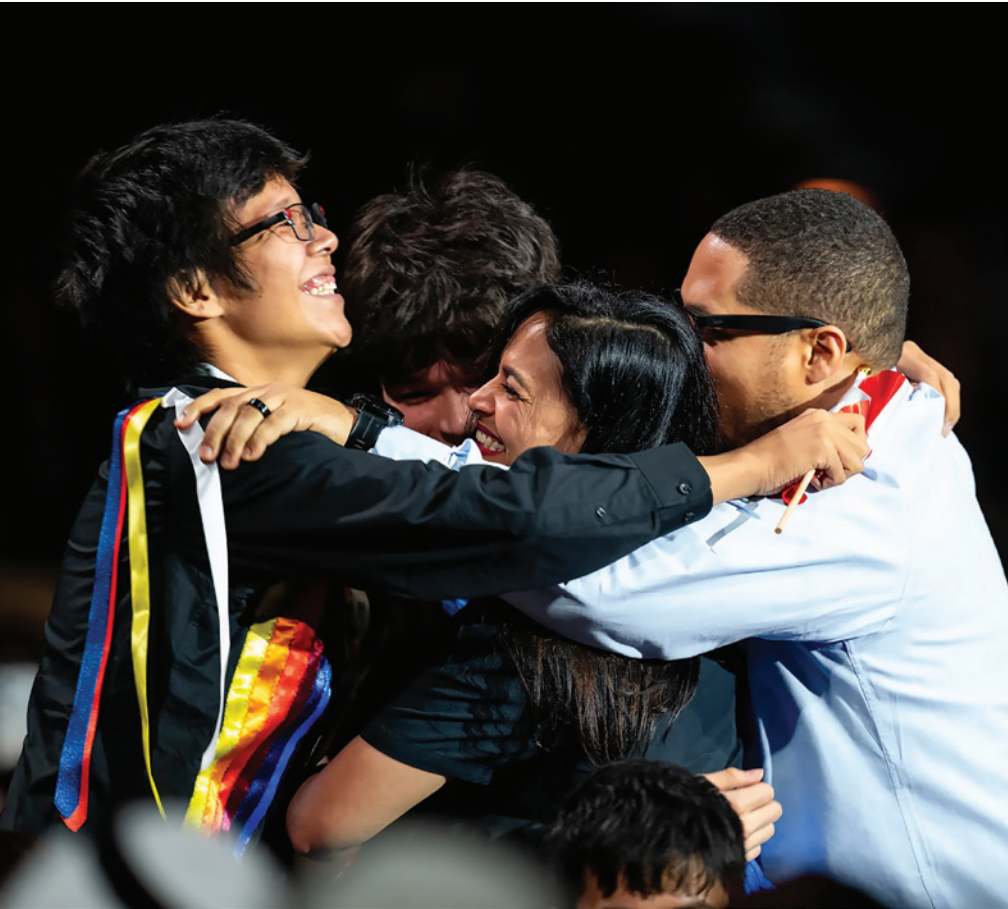
Her priorities include strengthening how schools serve a broader range of student needs. This includes training the many teachers who were not initially trained to best academically support such needs. She also emphasizes equipping educators for increasingly complex classrooms and ensuring Adventist education remains responsive to changing student populations while offering intentional care. "If we choose to accept students, we have to choose to respond with the best service for every student we admit," she said.

For Horton these priorities are not ends in themselves. They serve a larger purpose. "We have one primary aim," Horton said. "We're here to show God's love, to represent Him and prepare for His coming."

In her view Adventist education is not confined to curriculum or structure. It is about guiding students toward something lasting, helping them come to know God, recognize their purpose, carry that understanding into every part of their lives, and extend the love of Jesus to others.

*Jessica Lozano writes from Arkansas.*

# NAD NEWS BRIEFS



← Two students from Mamawi Atosketan Native School celebrate after winning the 2026 Zayed Sustainability Prize.  
 Photo courtesy of Zayed Sustainability Prize communications

## Mamawi Atosketan Native School Represents North America, Wins Global Sustainability Prize in Abu Dhabi

**T**wo Indigenous students from Mamawi Atosketan Native School (MANS) flew to Abu Dhabi to attend the Zayed Sustainability Prize award ceremonies on January 13, 2026, and bring home the US\$150,000 prize in the “Global High Schools—The Americas” category. MANS’ proposal for a student-led hydroponic farm project was chosen from more than 7,700 applications from 173 countries.

MANS was the only North American finalist.

MANS’ “Growcer Farm Project” competed with two schools in South America for the category prize. The high school finalists are participating in four days of panels and activities along with finalists in other categories during Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week.

The proposed hydroponic garden, which would be housed in a con-

tainer, would diversify the school’s sustainable food production education. Two years ago the K-12 school’s traditional “dirt” garden expanded to include hydroponics in a classroom and was recognized by ATCO with a “greenUp Award” in March 2025.

The proposed year-round hydroponic garden could bring fresh produce to the school and the Maskwacis community while giving students hands-on experience in leadership, science, and environmental stewardship connected to food security and sustainability.

As the only Canadian finalist, Mamawi Atosketan Native School is honored to represent Canada and North America and to stand on the global stage among inspiring schools from around the world that are working to build a better, more sustainable future.

“We are filled with gratitude, pride, and excitement,” said Melanie Dussaye, who submitted the grant application. “For us, this project is not only about food but also about possibility. It’s about empowering young people to see that their ideas matter, their actions make a difference, and their voices can create real change. Being recognized at this level reminds us that even a small school in rural Alberta can have a global impact when passion and purpose come together.”

—Lynn McDowell, Alberta Conference; and Kim Harrington, Mamawi Atosketan Native School

## NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT OF CODY FRANCIS AS ASI SECRETARY/TREASURER

The North American Division (NAD) of Seventh-day Adventists has appointed Cody Francis to serve as secretary/treasurer of Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries (ASI), effective April 1, 2026.

Francis brings more than two decades of pastoral, evangelistic, and administrative leadership to the role. He most recently served as Ministerial Association director for the Michigan Conference.

Prior to this role, Francis served four years as a pastor in Michigan, leading a three-church district with an emphasis on church revitalization and evangelistic outreach. He also spent more than a decade in lay pastoral and church-planting ministry in Washington, where he helped establish and grow congregations while leading public evangelism efforts, church planting programs, and educational initiatives.

Throughout his ministry Francis has conducted more than 50 evangelistic meetings in the United States and internationally and has helped develop various evangelistic resources.

"I believe God has uniquely equipped and shaped Cody for this position in the North American Division at this momentous time in the history of our division and in our world," said G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president. "He's a spiritual leader, and has been shaped by his pastoral background and his multiple experiences with ASI

ministries. I look forward to the contributions he will bring to our team."

Danny Houghton, president of ASI, expressed appreciation for Francis' acceptance of the role. "The selection of a secretary/treasurer is never taken lightly. Following a prayerful, months-long search, we are grateful that Cody Francis has accepted the role of ASI secretary/treasurer. We believe the Lord has prepared him for this moment and look forward to his contribution to ASI's ongoing mission of sharing Christ in the marketplace."

"I am excited for this opportunity to work with ASI and the North American Division in seeking to help us all to be more effecting in sharing Christ in the marketplace," Francis said. "I pray that I can be a blessing to ASI and the church as we share the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Savior with a world in need."

Francis and his wife have been united in ministry since their marriage in 2003. Together they have three children and share a passion for serving the church as a family.

—*Kimberly Luste Maran, NAD Communication*



Cody Francis

Photo provided by the Michigan Conference

## Washington Adventist University Board of Trustees Votes to Advance the University's Vision 2030

The Washington Adventist University Board of Trustees voted overwhelmingly to move forward with Vision 2030, a bold strategic redevelopment initiative that will modernize the university's 122-year-old campus and secure its financial sustainability for the next century.

The board approved the administration's recommendation to engage Takoma Park Development Partners to begin developing a comprehensive twenty-first-century master plan for campus-adjacent properties, including the former Washington Adventist Hospital site.

Vision 2030 is designed to diversify the university's revenue streams through a long-term ground lease

structure, generating predictable recurring revenue that will reduce reliance on tuition and expand scholarship support—making Christian higher education more affordable.

The proposed mixed-use development will include market-rate, senior, workforce, and affordable housing, with approximately 50 percent of residential units anticipated to be attainable housing serving households at 60-120 percent of Area Median Income—directly supporting Montgomery County and State of Maryland housing goals. The plan also includes neighborhood retail, essential services, and open green space designed to strengthen "town and gown" connectivity and enhance the student experience.

"This historic action demonstrates our unwavering commitment to continuing Christian higher education for another 100 years," said Weymouth Spence, president of Washington Adventist University. "Vision 2030 positions Washington Adventist University to serve future generations while remaining aligned with the values of Takoma Park and Montgomery County."

The master planning process will now begin in collaboration with the developer, the City of Takoma Park, Montgomery County, State of Maryland, and community stakeholders.

—*Everett Wiles, Washington Adventist University*

## Pacific Union College's Graduate Degrees: Service Across Sectors

**D**uring the past few years Pacific Union College (PUC) has enthusiastically expanded its graduate degree programs in education, nursing, communication, and business, offering flexibility, small class sizes, experiential learning, and, most important, a Christian environment that empowers students with opportunities within the Seventh-day Adventist world and beyond.

Having offered the Master of Education program for some time, the college decided to broaden its offerings in other high-demand fields in an online setting, which has ultimately allowed PUC to expand its reach to more students in California and Hawaii. Currently the M.Ed. degree is a summer-based program that exposes graduates to teaching skills and technological proficiency, scholarly research, and leadership development while observing classroom trends and issues.

Milbert Mariano, dean of the School of Arts, Humanities, and Professions, emphasized the need to reach students beyond PUC. "We are adding to our list of online graduate programs providing much-needed training for busy professionals who want to advance their careers through master's degrees," he said.

To keep up with the high demand for nurses in the job market, PUC now offers a Master of Science in Nursing, a 100 percent online program that provides core, specialty, and practicum courses to students who already hold a B.S.N. Two areas of specialization within this program are nursing education and nursing leadership and business management, equipping graduates for roles in healthcare and academia, as well as for administrative roles in healthcare settings.

Other programs designed for the working professional are the Master of Arts in Communication and the

Master of Business Administration, both 100 percent online, which each offer three emphases and collaborate on one of those specializations: Strategic Communication.

Available in the M.A. in Communication are the communication research, strategic communication, and health communication emphases, as well as stackable certificates, whereas the M.B.A. degree offers specializations in health-care administration, management, and strategic communication—allowing students to gain mentorship and learn under the guidance of experienced, faith-based faculty members.

Tara Hargrove, chair of the Department of Communications and World Languages and Culture, shared, "I am especially looking forward to more collaborations with other departments, institutions, and organizations."

—*Marina Maher, Pacific Union College*



Depiction of a patient undergoing an MRI, which allows surgeons to monitor the temperature of the laser in real time.  
*Garrett Fuhrman, Loma Linda University Health*

### Minimally Invasive Brain Tumor Treatment Now at Loma Linda University Health

**P**atients diagnosed with brain tumors once considered unreachable now have an accessible treatment option at Loma Linda University Health. The medical center is offering laser interstitial thermal therapy (LITT), a minimally invasive procedure that allows neurosurgeons to treat tumors deep within the brain.

Tumors located in areas such as the thalamus or basal ganglia have traditionally left patients with limited treatment options because of the risks associated

with open brain surgery. Now, using advanced robotics, real-time MRI guidance, and targeted laser energy, physicians can guide the placement of a catheter with submillimeter precision, allowing them to safely reach and ablate tumors deep within the brain.

According to Zachary Gersey, M.D., M.S., neurosurgeon and LITT specialist at LLUH, the technology is changing how physicians approach brain tumors.

"The data shows that LITT is safe, improves quality of life, and may improve survival or progression-free survival for certain tumors," Gersey said. "Because the approach requires only a small incision, recovery is typically fast, with many patients returning home the same day or the day after surgery."

"Because of tools like LITT, the term 'inoperable brain tumor' shouldn't be used anymore. There is almost always something we can do surgically," Gersey added.

The term "inoperable" has traditionally referred to tumors located in areas where open surgery could cause severe neurological damage. LITT offers a safer surgical option when traditional procedures pose too great a risk.

In some cases surgeons can perform both a biopsy and ablation during the same procedure, eliminating the need for multiple operations.

—*Alyssa Hunt, Loma Linda University Health*

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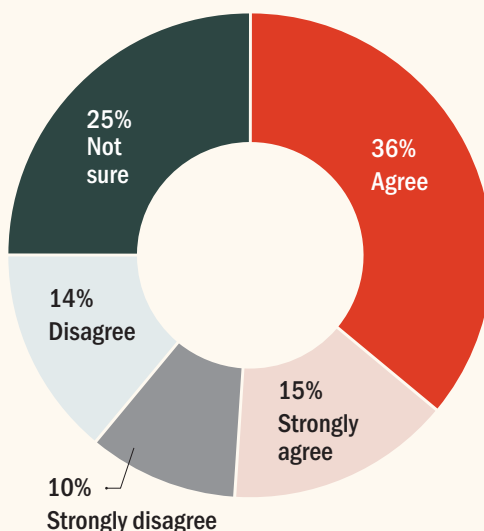
**ADVENTIST REVIEW**

Please enjoy the following pages 35-44, which feature content curated by *Adventist Journey* from the magazine, *Adventist Review*.

“Technology is not the mission, but it empowers and carries the mission. So our task as leaders is not to run IT; our task is to ensure that technology is designed . . . and funded to serve mission well.”

—Ryan Micua, IT director of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division during a presentation at the regional leadership summit in Bangkok, Thailand, March 4. Micua shared how his region is working in close partnership with the South Pacific Division to align their IT operations and collaborate to provide better services at a reduced cost.

# DOES YOUR LOCAL CHURCH OFFER TRAINING IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION?



Church members were asked about opportunities in their local congregation to learn how to better solve interpersonal conflict.



N = 146,115  
Source: 2022-2023 Global Church Member Survey

Data provided by the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research.

“God doesn’t call us to fix everything. He calls us to be faithful with what’s in front of us. To respond to need with justice and mercy. To remember that when we’re kind to the vulnerable, we’re not just helping them. We’re participating in something that matters to the heart of God Himself.”

—Paulo Lopes, president of ADRA International. He recently discussed whether helping others really makes a difference when the needs are so pressing and so many around the world. “My answer is unequivocal: ‘Yes,’ he said. ‘Now more than ever.’”

# 148

The number of preachers needed as speakers in 220 sites in the upcoming evangelistic series across the Solomon Islands in July. The meetings are part of the July-August Trans Pacific for Christ initiative, where speakers are scheduled to share Bible truth in more than 1,100 sites across the Trans Pacific Union Mission of the Adventist Church. Besides the Solomon Islands, the island church region includes American Samoa, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

# “WE ARE CALLED TO DO SOMETHING THAT HAS NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE”

400 Southern Asia-Pacific leaders commit to the OneVoice27 evangelistic initiative.

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist Review*

**C**reative visual displays, worship music items, and laser-focused preaching sought to move 400 Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders from across the Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD) to action, as they pledged to “do something that has never been done before.” Their commitment took place at the closing of a presentation on the

OneVoice27 project during the SSD Leadership Summit in Bangkok, Thailand, March 7.

“We are the generation that God has for a mission to this world,” said Alexander Ott, General Conference (GC) associate secretary and OneVoice27 liaison with the SSD. “We are His team, and we are doing something important together.”

## What Is OneVoice27?

OneVoice27 is an initiative of the Adventist Church that seeks to commemorate 2,000 years since Jesus’ baptism and the beginning of His ministry. The project envisions using all church media, leaders, and members to make an impact around the world in September 2027 by sharing God’s message as has never been done before, leaders explained.

“The idea is to mobilize the Adventist family, moving forward initiatives that are contextualized to each region and culture,” they shared. “OneVoice27 aims to unite members, local churches, and media to simultaneously share a message of hope.”

During an introductory presentation Ott quoted the apostle Paul’s words in

2 Corinthians 5:13, calling Adventist leaders to “lose their minds to Christ,” that is to say, to dedicate all they have to proclaim God’s message in one loud voice in this generation. “This is the call for us—to open our minds and do something that has never done before. It may take some sacrifice, but that is great leadership,” he emphasized. “Because OneVoice27 is a global evangelistic initiative that has not been done before.”

**“THE IDEA IS TO MOBILIZE THE ADVENTIST FAMILY, MOVING FORWARD INITIATIVES THAT ARE CONTEXTUALIZED TO EACH REGION AND CULTURE,” THEY SHARED. “ONEVOICE27 AIMS TO UNITE MEMBERS, LOCAL CHURCHES, AND MEDIA TO SIMULTANEOUSLY SHARE A MESSAGE OF HOPE.”**

Quoting the words of Adventist Church cofounder Ellen G. White, Ott called Adventists to “do something out of the common course of things.”\* “Ellen White

didn’t use the word ‘innovation,’ but this is what she was talking about,” Ott explained. “This generation that God has today is called to innovate.”

## What the Initiative Entails

Ott explained that the OneVoice27 initiative includes tapping the current power of media, which includes 5.66 billion people on social media, 7.2 billion smartphones, and 5 billion TV viewers. “If this is a reality, the innovation today is that we must do something with that. This is where people are—let us step into that space so we can speak with a loud voice.”

The goal of the project, Ott emphasized, is to “uplift Jesus as God and Savior, as the Messiah.”

A preparation phase will include a global prayer initiative throughout 2026, reflecting on Christ’s life by reading *The Desire of Ages*, by Ellen G. White, and studying the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation. Every region of the world will seek to “build spiritual unity and dependence on the Holy Spirit before public proclamation,” Ott explained.

## Regional Contextualization

During the presentation GC president Erton Köhler congratulated SSD leaders for embracing OneVoice27 wholeheartedly. “OneVoice is just an idea, a concept promoted from the General Conference, but you are the owners, the ones that [at regional and local levels] can decide how to



Group photo of General Conference and Southern Asia-Pacific Division leaders at the end of the March 7 presentation on the OneVoice27 project, in Bangkok, Thailand. Photo: Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist Review*

implement the project,” he told them.

Arnel Gabin, SSD vice president for Nurture, Discipleship, Retention-Integrated Evangelism Lifestyle (NDR-IEL), agreed, pledging the region’s “full support” to the world church initiative. At the same time, he reminded regional church leaders of the importance of moving forward together in unity as every regional and local church leader seeks ways to engage with the OneVoice27 project. “Get involved in united preparation and show a unified purpose,” he told Adventist leaders.

Referencing the billions of people who haven’t even heard the name of Jesus, Gabin said that such reality calls Adventists “to deeper sacrifice, strategic mission, and urgent action.” He explained, “We cannot simply repeat what has already been done; we must use all possible means . . . to reach those who still haven’t heard the everlasting gospel.”

Gabin called every church region to contextualize the initiative to their territories, even while keeping with the overall goal of the initiative. At the same,

he added, “OneVoice27 calls us to move together in intentional disciple-making.” In that regard, he explained, directives from the division office seek that each region moves forward, not working independently but harmoniously. “This is the spirit of OneVoice27,” he said.

### **A Loud Voice**

According to Köhler, the mandate of the Adventist Church is based on the book of Revelation, in which “we have a message that can reach, impact, and transform the world—the three angels’ messages—that the Lord has entrusted this church.” In that sense, he emphasized, there’s a golden thread across the book of Revelation that time after time calls God’s people to proclaim the last message “with a loud voice.”

Such mandate is also based on Adventist history, Köhler added, as Adventist pioneers “sold all they had to proclaim the message with a loud voice. They gave the best of their time and talents, and even gave their lives, to announce it with a loud voice.” Now, he said, it is our

turn to proclaim the message with a loud voice. “Are we doing it?” Köhler asked regional leaders.

Köhler shared that when he thinks of OneVoice27, in his mind he can sum it up with one word—boldness. “OneVoice is boldness—doing something that has not been done before . . . doing more than we have done before.”

That boldness includes being bold in faith, bold in courage, bold in investments, and bold in initiatives, he said. “The Lord is able to do things beyond our imagination, so let us move forward by faith,” Köhler said. “We can’t see the path? Let’s start to move forward, and the Lord will open the way. We don’t have money? Let’s move forward, and the Lord will provide. Our leadership is not well prepared? Let’s move forward by faith doing what we can, and the Lord will open doors, because what is impossible for us is possible for God.” **✝**

\* Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 123.

# YOUNG PEOPLE ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF ADVENTIST MISSION, LEADERS SAY

In Spain an initiative encourages children to learn, engage in mission service.



Two boys smile during one of the activities at the I Will Go Kids in Sagunto, Valencia, Spain, March 21. Photo: Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist Review*

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist Review*

**E**ngaging in mission is not an adults-only venture—it includes teenagers and even children. Thus, young people should be not an afterthought but an integral part of the missionary enterprise.

This was the driving thought behind I Will Go Kids, an initiative that is transforming Seventh-day Adventist children and teenagers in Spain and beyond. During the March 20-22 I Will Go International Mission Congress at Sagunto Adventist College in Sagunto, Valencia, dozens of children learned more about Adventist mission, engaged in hands-on activities, and listened to deployed missionaries' testimonies, as they prepare for a life of service wherever God may lead them.

## Not Just Spectators

As hundreds of college students, lay church members, and church pastors and leaders participated in the I Will Go International Congress activities, a parallel program engaged dozens of their children and others in multiple activities and learning sessions. Children were issued a large "passport" with a photo and fill-in-the-blank and drawing pages.

During the event children learned about the joys and challenges of mission fields around the world, participated in group activities, and reacted to the experiences of other children growing up in missionary families. They were also able to talk to missionary families and ask questions about their service.

At select times they attended some of the presentations in the main hall, sitting in a special section arranged for them. As

they listened, they were invited to fill their passport with answers to specific questions about mission life and deployment.

"Often we think that children should, at best, hope to become missionaries one day," organizers explained. "But as they prepare for whatever God has in store for them, children need to understand that they are already missionaries. At the same time, adults should apprehend the importance of planting the seed of service and mission as early as possible. Children who learn to love mission early are more likely to become lifelong missionaries," they emphasized.

## Well-rounded Kids

The carefully designed I Will Go Kids program is a byproduct of GPS Online, the brainchild of Maijo Roth, Children and Family Ministries director of the Spanish Union of Churches Conference. The initiative for 10- to 15-year-olds provides online extracurricular programs for Adventist children across Spain and has already connected, trained, and engaged hundreds of young ones in activities that focus on their wholistic development.

"The goal is not that children just become 'good kids,'" Roth said. "The goal is that they become well-rounded, wholesome individuals. We don't want our children just to survive—we'd like them to thrive."

To achieve this, the focus of the program is on children's emotional well-being, development of purpose, and spiritual identity. It also seeks to make them aware and develop significant relationships and resilience, Roth explained.

"Children and teens thrive when they can enjoy significant relationships and a sense of purpose," she said. "And acts of service are essential to achieve that. In fact, in every study we conducted after implementing the program, we found out that service was the most transforming element in young people's lives."

Roth explained how experts agree that human beings need a sense of belonging, competence, and autonomy. Service—and mission service—scores high in all categories, she said. "When you serve, you feel competent," she explained. "When you serve with others, you find belonging. And as you serve, you develop autonomy."

## From Mentees to Mentors

After several years of implementing GPS Online, Roth came across an issue she had not anticipated. "As the first participants of the program turned 16, many of them shared they loved the program so much they didn't want to leave," she shared.

Children leaders eventually signed a partnership with a company specializing in free-time mentoring, an officially recognized activity in Spain. This partnership allows GPS Online to facilitate certified training to many of those teens exiting GPS Online. During the I Will Go Kids program 25 of those certified teenage mentors helped coordinate and lead the daily activities.

"It's a win-win situation," Roth said. "Everyone focused on service, waiting to see how God will use them next." ❧

# OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

**I**n heaven Satan was next to the Son of God. But he yielded to the desire for self-exaltation, and was expelled from the heavenly courts. He came to this earth, to exercise over man his debasing power. This power increased with the ages, but its evil was not recognized, and God could not arbitrarily condemn its author. Satan's work was a deadly peril to the universe, but for the security of the world and of the government of heaven, he must be allowed to develop his principles in their true light.

Christ came to this world to save men from death; and from the manger to the cross His way was disputed by Satan. The enemy filled the minds of the Jews with hatred against their Redeemer. He rested not until Christ hung on the cross.

But in carrying out his enmity toward Christ till he crucified Him, hung Him on the cross of Calvary, with bruised body and broken heart, Satan completely uprooted himself from the affections of the universe. Christ's death silenced forever the charge that with God self-denial was impossible. It was seen that God denied Himself because of His love for mankind.

More than we could possibly endure, Christ endured in our behalf. Sinless to the last, He died for us. Justice demanded not merely that sin be pardoned; the death penalty must be met. The Saviour has met this demand. His broken body, His gushing blood, satisfied the claims of the law. Thus

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## Where the death penalty was met

Ellen G. White

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He bridged the gulf made by sin between earth and heaven. He suffered in the flesh, that with His robe of righteousness He might cover the defenseless sinner.

To resist Satan's temptations is no easy task. It calls for a firm hold on God. Christ has met every temptation which Satan can bring against man. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. In His strength man can keep the law of God.

Christ was crucified, but in wondrous power and glory He rose from the tomb. He took in His grasp the world over which Satan claimed to preside, and restored the human race to favor with God. And at this glorious completion of His work, songs of triumph echoed and re-echoed through the unfallen worlds. Angel and archangel, cherubim and seraphim, joined in the chorus of victory.

Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. In earnest appeals the cross continually proffers to the sinner complete expiation. In loving

invitation Christ lifts His voice, saying, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

As you draw near the cross of Calvary, you see love that is without a parallel. As by faith you grasp the meaning of the sacrifice made on that cross, you see yourself a sinner, condemned by a broken law. This is repentance. As you come with humble heart, you find pardon; for Jesus stands before the Father, continually offering a sacrifice for the sins of the world. He is the minister of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. The typical offerings of the Jewish tabernacle no longer possess any virtue. A daily and yearly atonement is no longer necessary. But because of the continual commission of sin, the atoning sacrifice of a heavenly Mediator is essential. Jesus, our great high priest, officiates for us in the presence of God, offering in our behalf His shed blood.

And as Christ intercedes for us, the Spirit works upon our hearts, drawing forth prayer and penitence, praise and thanksgiving. The gratitude which flows from human lips is the result of the Spirit striking the chords of the soul, awakening holy music. ❧

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Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of ministry. This excerpt is taken from *The Youth's Instructor*, Apr. 16, 1903.

# THIS LITTLE FRIGHT OF MINE

Letting your light shine . . . even when it's awkward.

**H**ey, Rachel, I'm having a party at my house this Friday night," my friend Sarah called to me as we passed each other in the school hallway between classes. "I hope you can come! We'll play games and maybe watch a movie."

"Uh, great!" I said, pasting a fake smile on my face. "I'll have to see if I can make it. I might have something going on already."

Pressing through a crush of students toward my next class, I mentally kicked myself. *You practically lied to Sarah. You don't have to check your calendar. You know right now you're not going to her party during Sabbath!*

I'd decided long before that going to parties with my friends from public school wouldn't help me get closer to God on Sabbath. But Sarah didn't know that. Neither did my other friends. I'd told them that I went to church on Saturday, but I'd never explained that Sabbath meant so much more than spending a few hours in church.

Whenever my friends invited me to a social event on Sabbath, I always came up with a weak excuse. "I'm doing something with my family" was the most common one. That was mostly true, since my family did spend a lot of time together on Sabbath starting Friday night.

Thinking up excuses was hard, but it seemed easier than launching into a Bible study. *It's already obvious enough that I'm different, I told myself. I don't swear; I don't wear skimpy outfits; I bring homemade veggie burgers for lunch. My friends would never understand my beliefs anyway. Some of them aren't even Christians.*

As I settled into my seat in English class, I pondered my dilemma. *This is ridiculous, I scolded mentally. You've gone to this school for three years, and you still haven't told your friends something so important? What kind of witness is that?*

That night I was still thinking about Sarah and her party. *It's time to stop making excuses, I resolved. I'm going to tell Sarah the real reason I'm not coming.* But I was sure I'd never have the courage to do it in person. So I decided to write a letter explaining why and how I kept the Sabbath.

Hunched over my desk in my bedroom, I stayed up late working on the letter. It had to sound just right. I explained that according to the Bible, Sabbath is an entire day set aside for God, and it goes from sundown on Friday night till sundown on Saturday night.

*Please, God, help this to make sense, I prayed.*

Folding up the lined paper, I decorated the outside with funny sayings and drawings, as Sarah and I often did when we wrote notes to each other.



## Whenever my friends invited me to a social event on Sabbath, I always came up with a weak excuse.

When I finally went to bed, I tossed and turned, wondering how Sarah would react. *She's going to think I'm hopelessly weird*, I worried.

The next day at school I waited until the very end of the day to find Sarah. That way I wouldn't have to face her right away after she read my bombshell.

"Here's a note for you," I said, forcing a casual grin to hide my anxiety. Then I hurried to catch my bus.

Sarah and I had no classes together, so over the next couple of days I didn't see much of her. My uneasiness grew each time

we passed each other in the hall. She hadn't said anything about the letter. What did she think?

Finally Sarah spotted me after school and handed me a note as I rushed toward the door. On the bus I carefully unfolded the paper, my heart pounding.

"It's OK that you can't come to my party," Sarah's letter said. "Actually, I respect you for sticking with your principles. I'd love to hear more about your beliefs sometime."

I took a deep breath as relief washed over me. *Thank You, God, that she still wants to be my friend*, I prayed silently. *I guess I shouldn't have worried so much.*

A few weeks later Sarah met me before school. "I'm having a party this weekend," she told me. "I planned it for Saturday night instead of Friday night so it won't conflict with your Sabbath. You can come then, can't you?"

"Of course!" I said, a genuine smile spreading across my face. "I'll be there!"

Sarah grinned back. "Great! I really wanted you to come. See you then."

As I hurried off to class, I felt a warm glow knowing that Sarah had made special plans just to include me—and let me stay true to God. In fact, I could think of only one bad thing about the whole situation: I should have let my light shine a lot sooner!

### DISCUSSION QUESTION:

Tell about a time you felt nervous or fearful about sharing your beliefs. What was the result? Do you feel more confident about witnessing now than you did then? How can you become more bold or excited about sharing your faith? **31**

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**Rachel Cabose** is a freelance writer and editor based in Michigan, United States.



# THE BIBLE ONLY AND ELLEN WHITE

## Adventists, *sola scriptura*, and the Spirit of Prophecy

### What is *sola scriptura*, and how does Ellen White fit in?

**M**any might wonder, after more than 500 years, whether the classic Protestant stand on *sola scriptura*, or “the Bible and the Bible only,” is still relevant. In fact, many Christians no longer believe in the principle of *sola scriptura*—that the Bible should be our only authority for faith and practice. What about the discoveries of science regarding evolution, and psychology’s contention that gender is relative?

There’s no question that we have made remarkable advances in science and many other areas of knowledge. Some even point to this as a sign that we are living near the end of earth’s history. Clearly, though, society has not always used that knowledge positively. Sometimes it has been devastatingly destructive. But the Bible has withstood repeated attacks, such as those of Voltaire, who predicted the Bible’s demise, but whose home, reportedly, was later used to house Bibles!\* The Bible itself unequivocally urges us to trust its pages: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

In answer to two disciples who no longer believed He could be the Messiah because of His crucifixion, Jesus, rather than revealing Himself openly as risen from the dead,

showed them “in all the Scriptures” that it was “necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to come into His glory” (Luke 24:26, 27, NASB). Thus, He shows that the Bible is the only authority for faith and practice. God has protected the Bible through the centuries because it alone can “make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15).

Archaeological findings continue to provide evidence of the Bible’s historical reliability. The accurate fulfillment of Bible prophecies through history up to the present also witnesses to its divine

*scriptura* preserves the primacy of God’s revealed Word as the final test of truth and faithfulness.

How should we understand the inspiration of Ellen White’s writings and their relation to the Bible principle of *sola scriptura*? She herself referred to her writings as the “lesser light” shining on the “greater light” of the Bible. They were given to help us understand the Bible and God’s will for us. They can never replace Bible study, nor are they in any sense an addition to the Bible. The Bible remains the supreme authority for doctrine, an infallible revela-

## In an age of relativism and information overload, *sola scriptura* preserves the primacy of God’s revealed Word as the final test of truth and faithfulness.

inspiration and trustworthiness. No other book comes close to God’s timeless wisdom found in Scripture. Only the Bible provides a God-given norm amid competing authorities—tradition, culture, experience, or charismatic leadership. Seventh-day Adventist doctrines arose through careful Bible study, letting Scripture interpret Scripture. In an age of relativism and information overload, *sola*

tion of God’s will, and a trustworthy record of God’s acts in history. **✚**

\* [https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/content/get\\_involved/bible\\_sunday/2016\\_resources/Bible-Sunday-Sermon-notes.pdf](https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/content/get_involved/bible_sunday/2016_resources/Bible-Sunday-Sermon-notes.pdf)

**Clinton Wahlen** is an associate director at the Biblical Research Institute.

# BEETROOT JUICE AND HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE



## Miracle cure or helpful add-on?

**I have heard that beetroot juice is the wonder cure for high blood pressure. My friends are encouraging me to stop my medications and just drink beetroot juice twice a day. What is your advice?**

**H**igh blood pressure, also called hypertension, is often called the “silent killer” because most people don’t feel sick when they have it, yet it can cause serious health problems over time.

Globally, high blood pressure affects more than 1.2 billion people and is a leading cause of death, especially common in adults over 40. Its main causes are a mix of lifestyle and inherited (genetic) factors. Eating foods high in salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats, being overweight, smoking, drinking alcohol, less than adequate restful sleep, and not exercising regularly all raise blood pressure. Family history also plays a role, meaning that if your parents have high blood pressure, you are more likely to develop it too. Stress and aging also make blood vessels stiffer, which raises blood pressure. Some medical conditions raise blood pressure levels, such as hormonal disorders, diabetes, kidney diseases, and sleep apnea (often accompanied by loud snoring), among others.

If high blood pressure is not controlled, it can lead to serious complications. The most dangerous include stroke (when the flow of blood to the brain is blocked or a blood vessel bursts), heart attack (when blood flow to the heart is blocked), heart failure (when the heart muscle becomes weak and cannot pump efficiently), kidney

disease, and vision loss. Because there are usually no early symptoms, many people do not know they have high blood pressure until these complications occur. This is why high blood pressure is called the *silent* killer.

Beetroot juice is rich in nitrate, a natural chemical compound found in many vegetables. Upon consumption, nitrate is changed by friendly bacteria in the mouth (oral microbiome) into nitrite, and then into nitric oxide, which relaxes the blood vessels. Relaxed vessels can lower blood pressure (BP). This “nitrate → nitrite → nitric oxide” pathway is well documented in human studies.

Drinking beetroot juice can modestly lower systolic BP for some people, especially those with hypertension, but results are not guaranteed and may fade when you stop drinking it, just as what happens with prescribed BP medicines.\* Think of it as an adjunct to, not a substitute for, proven lifestyle interventions (exercise, maintaining ideal weight, avoiding tobacco and alcohol, and getting enough sleep) and appropriate medications as needed.

How to use it safely (with your doctor’s guidance):

Talk to a qualified health professional first. Beetroot juice can interact with BP medicines by adding to their BP-lowering effect. Your doctor can advise on dose,


timing, and routine monitoring of your blood pressure for efficacy and safety.

Typical research doses: 250 to 500 milliliters (1 to 2 cups) per day of beetroot juice (often split), providing about 200 to 800 milligrams nitrate.

Raw beetroot (and nitrite-rich leafy vegetables) retain more nitrites than when cooked, and adequate time in the mouth and thorough chewing help bacteria convert nitrites.

Strong antiseptic mouthwashes (e.g., chlorhexidine) can kill the helpful oral bacteria that convert nitrate and may raise BP, blunting the beetroot juice’s effect. Avoid routine antiseptic mouthwash unless your dentist or doctor recommends it. Regular flossing and brushing are generally sufficient.

Beetroot juice may help lower BP for some people through its nitrate content and influence on the oral microbiome, but it is one tool among many. Additions such as beetroot juice should be layered on top of medications and lifestyle—not instead of them. Use it only with medical advice, keep up the lifestyle foundations, take your medications as prescribed, and follow up regularly to stay on target.

*An extended version of this article is available at [adventistreview.org](https://adventistreview.org)—Editors. *

\* For studies relating to the safety and effectiveness of beetroot in regulating blood pressure, see the following: <https://doi.org/10.1161/HYPERTENSIONAHA.114.04675>; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.numecd.2024.06.009>; and <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/40522148/>.

**Zeno L. Charles-Marcel**, a board-certified internist, is the director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference. **Peter N. Landless**, a board-certified nuclear cardiologist and General Conference Adventist Health Ministries director emeritus, is also a board-certified internist.

# THE REVERSE PATH OF HOPE

The same Lord who rebukes still knocks.

Erton Köhler

**R**evelation 2 and 3 do more than address ancient congregations. They function as an apocalyptic diagnosis of God's people living at the edge of history. Among the seven churches, Laodicea and Philadelphia stand in deliberate contrast. One exposes the danger of spiritual complacency; the other reveals the power of faithful endurance. Between them lies the reverse path of hope.

Laodicea was prosperous, influential, and confident. Archaeology confirms its banking system, medical facilities, and textile industry. Yet its hidden weakness matched its water supply: lukewarm by the time it arrived through long aqueducts. The Bible speaks with precision: "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth" (Rev. 3:16). In other words, complacency numbs faith.

At Laodicea's core lies a theological distortion: "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'" (Rev. 3:17). We have a dangerous situation here: religion continues, yet dependence fades; doctrine remains, yet trembling is gone; mission survives, yet urgency evaporates. Christ is not denied but displaced. The verdict exposes the tragedy: "... and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (verse 17). Yet the message also contains an appeal: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent" (verse 19). That is, the same Lord who rebukes still knocks. He offers restored fellowship.

On the other hand, Philadelphia presents a striking reversal. Historically weak, frequently shaken by earthquakes, it was a city accustomed to instability. Yet Christ offers no rebuke. "You have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name"

(verse 8). Fidelity, not appearance, defines the faithful. Endurance, not comfort, marks the people of God. "Because you have kept My command to persevere" (verse 10).

For Seventh-day Adventists this contrast determines our prophetic identity. The church recognizes itself living in the Laodicean era, yet is called to reflect the spirit of Philadelphia. The measuring standard is

found in Revelation 14. The three angels' messages restore urgency, re-center worship, and clarify allegiance. "Fear God and give glory to Him . . . ; and worship Him who made heaven and earth" (Rev. 14:7). This is not optional theology; it is end-time proclamation.

The reverse path of hope moves from comfort to conviction. From institutional confidence to covenant loyalty. From complacent religion to urgent fidelity. Scripture warns that truth has never advanced by majority. "Many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14). The final witness will be carried by a faithful remnant,

anchored in Scripture and awakened by prophecy.

Here is the call of this hour. Leave the theology of complacency. Embrace the fidelity of urgency. Let doctrine ignite devotion. Let devotion fuel mission. The world does not need a church impressed with itself; it needs a people filled with Christ, grounded in the Bible, and focused on the mission. Courageous enough to proclaim the everlasting gospel until the door that is still open finally closes.

From Laodicea to Philadelphia, the Spirit still speaks. Will you answer? ❧

Fidelity, not  
appearance,  
defines the faithful.  
Endurance, not  
comfort, marks the  
people of God.

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**Erton C. Köhler** is the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

# Sherry and Gary

are ready to retire next year.

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