Adventist World

05/2025

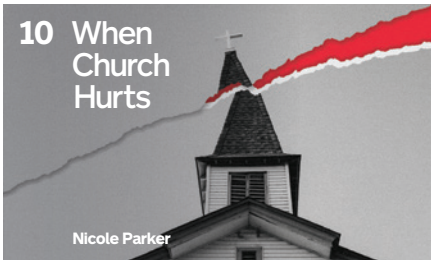
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Cover Photo: Drew Murphy / Baurzhan Ibrashev / iStock / Getty Images Plus / Getty Images

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The Blessings of True Greatness

John Peckham

Many think of the rich and powerful as the great ones of the world, those who are above all blessed by God. And many devote their lives to standing among them. In God's kingdom, however, it is not those who take the highest seats who are great, but those who follow Christ's example of service. For He "did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matt. 20:28).

What, then, is greatness?

The world has many standards by which it measures greatness: intellectual achievement; political and military leadership; scientific and medical discoveries; wealth and power; athletic, dramatic, literary, and musical skill. Jesus, on the other hand, responded to His disciples' arguments about who would be the greatest with these words: "Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great" (Luke 9:48; see also Matt. 20:16). It is those who follow Christ in serving others who are truly great and called blessed. Among these are those whom the world might think of as outcasts and treat as nothing.

The world says, "Important and to be honored are the rich and famous." Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3).

The world says, "Blessed are those who celebrate their successes." Jesus says, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4).

The world says, "Blessed are the bold and proud who have the power to take what they want." (Indeed, many worship power.) Jesus says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5).



The world says, "Blessed are those who live in luxury, with the richest of food and drink and every amenity under the sun." Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:6-8).

The world says, "Blessed are the conquerors." Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake" (Matt. 5:9-11).

Christians and Christian institutions, then, should not seek greatness and power in the eyes of the world, but the ways of true greatness modeled and taught by Christ. If you want to be great and blessed in God's eyes, do as Christ did—identify with and seek to serve those whom the world often overlooks. Take up your cross and follow Jesus in your sphere of influence. Serve as He served and live a life that reflects His greatness—the true greatness of love and mercy.



More than 900 church members gathered for the North New South Wales prayer conference at Yarra Holiday and Adventure parks in Stuarts Point, Australia. The prayer conference was initially launched in 2016 with 120 attendees and has grown each year.

Photo: *Adventist Record*

"It has always been and will continue to be a matter close to our hearts to help people in such great need and to enable better prospects and a new quality of life through such treatment; this is our understanding of our purpose as a Seventh-day Adventist Church."

—Bernd Quoss, CEO of Waldfriede Adventist Hospital, located in Berlin, Germany, about the partnership with the Gynocare Fistula Clinic in Eldoret, Kenya. On January 29 Stella Mokaya Orina, ambassador of Kenya, visited Waldfriede and expressed her gratitude for the partnership. Doctors from Waldfriede have traveled several times to Kenya in recent years to operate on affected women and to teach and train local staff about treatment and operations.

More Than 900

The number of Sabbath School teachers, ministry leaders, and Bible students that gathered on a livestream organized by the North American Division for the Do It Together Sabbath School Conference on February 7-8. The event aimed to discuss new and innovative ways to connect to the Sabbath School lesson while engaging students of every age. During the event attendees had the chance to attend one of the 15 workshops, and instructors provided handouts for teachers for future lessons.

2025 General Conference Session

Official notice is hereby given that the sixty-second session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will be held July 3-12, 2025, in the America's Center Convention Complex in St. Louis, Missouri, United States. The first meeting will begin at 2:00 pm, July 3, 2025. All duly accredited delegates are urged to be present at that time.

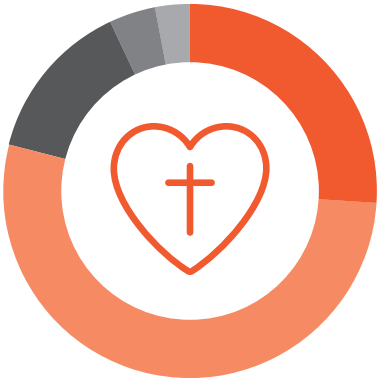
Ted N C Wilson, General Conference President

Erton C Köhler, General Conference Secretary

How Caring Is the Church?

Church members across the world were asked if they felt that their local church cared for them or not.

- **26%** Strongly agree
- **53%** Agree
- **14%** Not sure
- **4%** Disagree
- **3%** Strongly disagree



Scan the QR code to view the complete survey.

N = 146,323

Source: 2022-2023 Global Church Member Survey

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

"We thank God for the dedication of the Youth Department, which partnered with the Community Services and Sabbath School departments at Zion church to make this project a reality. Their commitment is a reflection of the ministry of Jesus."

—Guno B. Emanuelson, president of the Suriname Mission, about young Adventist church members joining with church leaders to serve the country's homeless population. More than 40 people gathered in Paramaribo, the capital city, to share hope, bring joy, and meet the basic needs of their community. About 100 individuals were given care packages, clothing, warm meals, beverages, and copies of the local Adventist magazine.

Adventist Review Newsletter

Would you like to keep up with what's happening in our church? Sign up today to receive our weekly newsletter that features news stories, inspirational stories, videos, and more.

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"Every year our LEs are distributing truth-filled literature into homes, schools, and libraries around the Pacific, with many people making life-changing decisions to follow Christ in baptism and lifestyle as a result. Only eternity will reveal the true impact of their faithful work."

—Tony Wall, associate director for Pacific Island literature ministry, about the work of literature evangelists (LEs) in the Pacific Island. Recently Papua New Guinea and Fiji held LEs summits that offered training on modern communication tools and marketing strategies.

More Than 1,500

The number of students who received a pair of shoes and socks. For a second straight year AdventHealth Ottawa in Kansas, United States, and AdventHealth Ottawa Foundation partnered with the national nonprofit organization Shoes That Fit to provide a brand-new pair of athletic shoes and two pairs of socks to every student across seven elementary schools in Franklin County. In the United States one in three children live in low-income families, and one of the most visible signs of poverty is shoes.

"With nearly 270 churches involved, this is an opportunity to connect with the community. We're encouraging churches to host programs like Bible studies, health events, and evangelistic series when the car visits their area."

—Terry Johnson, president of Australian Union Conference, about a new evangelistic initiative that features Bubsie, a restored Citroën 5CV, driving through Australia. The team will reenact the first-ever drive around the country that was completed by Adventist literature evangelist Nevill Westwood in 1925. The project will take Bubsie to various towns and communities, sharing the story of Westwood and distributing free Adventist literature and Bible courses.



Photo: Australian Union Conference

Adventist Medicine School in Brazil Opens with Inaugural Class

Students, families, and church and school leaders celebrate milestone.

Ana Júlia Alem, South American Division, and *Adventist World*

Brazil Adventist University (UNASP) reached a milestone on February 23 as students, families, and school and church leaders gathered at its Hortolândia campus for the inaugural class of its newly approved degree in medicine. The event included a formal introduction to the structure and syllabus of the program, and the traditional whitecoat ceremony.

The February 23 event brought together several officials, including regional health representatives and other public servants such as José Zezé Gomes, mayor of Hortolândia. It also featured a special reflection by Stanley Arco, president of the South American Division, as well as musical performances.

General Conference (GC) Education Department director Lisa Beardsley-Hardy sent personal comments to regional leaders in South America. "It is with great joy and much jubilation that we congratulate you and all the members of your team for your vision, effort, commitment, and perseverance in taking advantage of the opportunity that God provided for starting a school of medicine [program]," Beardsley-Hardy wrote in an email to UNASP president Martin Kuhn. "I promised you that the GC Health Ministries Department will continue to be an eager partner in your successful launch and future development."

GC Health Ministries leaders also sent a congratulatory letter celebrating the milestone. "We witnessed God's clear guidance and the huge efforts and hard work that made this wonderful project a reality," the letter cosigned by department director Zeno Charles-Marcel and associate director Milton Mesa read. "We wish you the greatest success in this endeavor."

NEW STUDENT DORMS

Leaders also inaugurated student dorms on the Hortolândia campus. The new dorms offer air-conditioned apartments with biometric control. Residents can have meals at the school's cafeteria and can access personalized support and athletic activities on campus.

Henrique Romaneli, general director at the Hortolândia campus, shared that the new dorms include living areas, a swimming pool, and wide green spaces. "We are extremely happy with the new dorms," he said.

OPENING CLASS

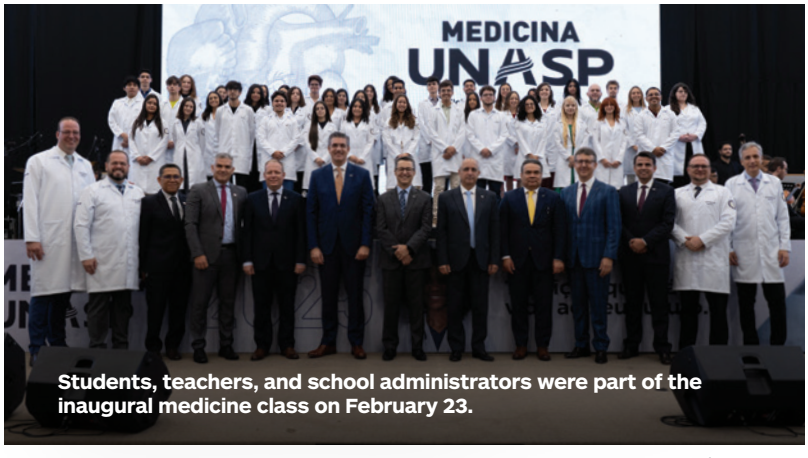
The program also featured a class taught by Ricardo Costa, a seasoned cardiologist and now dean of the School of Medical Sciences. Costa highlighted the inspirations that motivated him in his career and how he found the advice from the book of Proverbs to face challenges. Then he led in a class on cardiac anatomy and other essential health topics, providing students with firsthand contact with the complexity and importance of medical knowledge.

Costa left students with a piece of advice. "Seek knowledge and wisdom. Do not settle for the minimum. This is honoring God and your parents, who invested in your career," he said.

STUDENTS' FEEDBACK

Getting into medical school has been a motivating experience for students. For student Fabrizio Ferrari, the decision to study medicine came from a desire to follow a vocation that has always been present. "My father was a doctor, so I was always in touch with that field. Today I have the opportunity to follow my dream," he said.

Aline Alves, 22, always dreamed of studying medicine. Inspired by her father, a nurse and her biggest supporter, Alves described the whitecoat ceremony as a special moment. "It is a commitment that we make to take responsibility for people's lives," she said.



Students, teachers, and school administrators were part of the inaugural medicine class on February 23.

Photo: AICOM

Panama Adventists Take Major Step to Establish First Chinese Church

Recent cultural festival results in baptisms in that ethnic community.

Johana García and Inter-American Division News

For the first time in history the Chinese Music and Evangelism Festival, held February 13-15, launched a faith movement that regional church leaders say it is set to transform the spiritual life of the Chinese community in Panama.

Organized by the Inter-American Division (IAD), the Panama Union Mission, and the Metropolitan Panama Conference, the festival brought together more than 50 people of Chinese origin, marking the beginning of the first Adventist congregation within this ethnic community in Panama.

The event combined cultural elements with Western music, fostering an enriching interaction between Chinese culture and the Adventist Church.

Held in the heart of Panama's Chinese business district, the festival offered more than just cultural entertainment. Leaders noted that it represented a significant step toward creating a center of influence aimed at promoting the learning of the Mandarin language, offering health-focused treatments, and fostering spiritual connection among participants.

The event strengthened cultural ties and also had a direct spiritual impact, church leaders said. As a result of the festival, seven ethnic Chinese individuals were baptized, while 13 accepted Jesus, marking a new beginning of faith for the Chinese community in Panama.

One of the most moving testimonies came from Yami Zhou Yinying. Sometime ago, as she was walking past the meeting venue, she saw an advertisement offering free health treatments and massages from the Adventist Church. Curious about the free offer, she decided to check it out.



Daniel Jiao (left), president of the Chinese Union Mission, prepares to baptize Yami Zhou Yinying during the morning service on February 15.

Photo: Erick Rodriguez

Yinying, who had been seeking help for some time after her husband suffered a stroke, saw this service as a chance to support him. She was surprised by the generosity, kindness, and selflessness of the offer. Thanks to the treatments, her husband's health improved considerably. When Bible studies were offered, she became even more interested in learning about the Christian message.

Grateful for the help she received, Yinying decided to give her life to Jesus through baptism during the festival. As she emerged from the baptismal pool, she said that even the rain, which was beginning to fall, was a blessing from heaven.

Yinying served as a translator for the guest speaker, Chinese Union Mission president Daniel Jiao. On the first day of meetings, no one had dared to translate from Chinese into Spanish. Jiao, however, approached Yinying and asked her to take on the challenge. She accepted and bravely translated from Chinese to Spanish throughout the festival.

The center of influence will continue its mission with Bible study groups that meet on Saturdays while also promoting the teaching of the Mandarin language and offering traditional health-focused services.

THE FUTURE OF THE CHINESE ADVENTIST CHURCH IN PANAMA

While organizers were thrilled with the immediate results of the event, they also have big plans, they emphasized. Thanks to ongoing support from the IAD and the Panama Union Mission, leaders hope the church within the Chinese community will continue to grow.

"This event has been truly a blessing," said Metropolitan Panama Conference president Javier Espinosa. "More than ever before, our Chinese brothers and sisters feel they have found a spiritual home where they can grow together."

Geoscience Research Institute Expands Global Reach to Adventist Universities

Two new branch offices and two new resource centers are opened at universities.

Emeraude Victorin, Geoscience Research Institute, and *Adventist World*

The Geoscience Research Institute (GRI) marked a significant milestone at its operating committee meeting on February 26 in Loma Linda, California, United States, by approving two new branch offices and two new resource centers. These new GRI offices and centers strengthen the Seventh-day Adventist Church's commitment to engage globally in the faith and science arena.

The new branch offices and resource centers are the result of strategic partnerships between GRI and Adventist educational institutions. During the operating committee meeting, memoranda of understanding were signed between GRI and four organizations. The Euro-Asia Division (ESD) branch office is based in Zaoksky Adventist University, Zaoksky, Russia. The office will be under the direction of Aleksei Popov, a nuclear physicist. The West-Central Africa Division (WAD) branch office is located at Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Nigeria. Oluwole Oyedeji, a geologist, is the director of this office.

One of the requirements of branch offices is that they need to be led by a director holding a doctorate in a science-related field. The directors' academic training enables them to coordinate research and education about origin and creation topics and allows them to promote creation-related activities on their university campuses, in their surrounding communities, and throughout their division territories.

One of the newly voted resource centers is located on the campus of the Adventist University of Chile, Chillán, Chile. This center is managed by César Arriagada Campos, who is a museology expert. The other resource center is located on the Engenheiro Coelho campus of Brazilian Adventist University in the state of São Paulo. Tiago Souza, a biologist, is leading this center.



César Arriagada Campos (right), who is a museology expert, manages a resource center on the campus of Chile Adventist University.

Photo: Geoscience Research Institute

Prior to this expansion, GRI oversaw four operational branch offices. These are located across the globe in the Inter-European, Inter-American, Northern Asia-Pacific, and South American divisions. Besides the branch offices, there are 11 global active resource centers on various Adventist academic campuses.

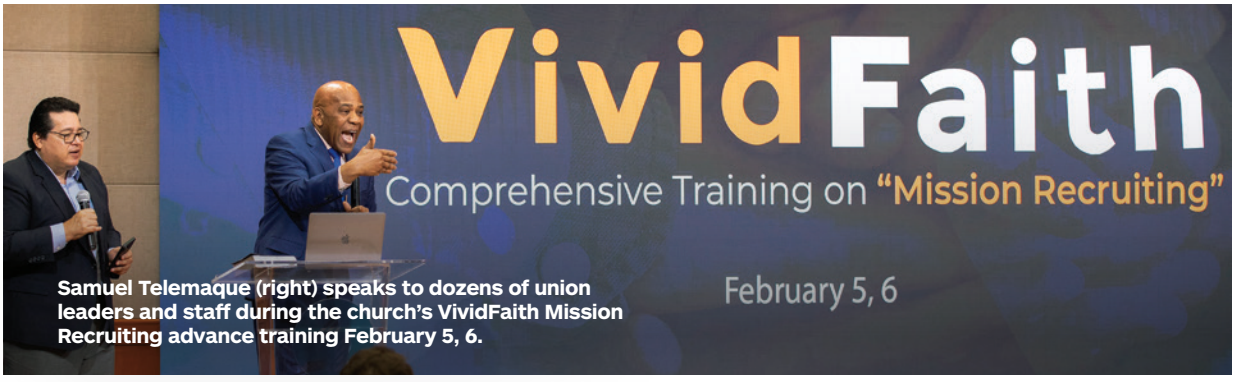
"The establishment of new GRI branch offices and resource centers is a valuable and strategic step in expanding the reach of our message about creation and earth history," said Ronny Nalin, director of GRI. "It has been a pleasure to collaborate with ESD and WAD leaders and representatives of the two universities to bring their vision to life. The greater objective is to strengthen professional networks, harness greater academic expertise, equip effective educators, and provide focus and resources on this important facet of the Adventist message."

The recent establishment of these offices is the result of the need for intentional engagement in faith and science, coupled with long-range planning. The strengthened network will enhance GRI's ability to provide resources, training, and research opportunities to scholars, students, and church members worldwide.

As Robert Osei-Bonsu, president of WAD, said: "These centers will reflect the Seventh-day Adventist Church's commitment to upholding biblical truth while engaging in scholarly inquiry that strengthens our faith and witness in an age of scientific advancement."

Libna Stevens. Inter-American Division News

Mission Focus



Samuel Telemaque (right) speaks to dozens of union leaders and staff during the church's VividFaith Mission Recruiting advance training February 5, 6.

Photo: Keila Trejo/IAD

Adventist Church in Inter-America Launches "VividFaith"

Leaders learn new platform to revitalize mission opportunities across the territory.

The Inter-American Division (IAD) took firm steps to revitalize its mission opportunities across its territory's 25 major regions during an advanced training session held recently in Miami, Florida, United States. The two-day training sessions brought together union executive leaders and staff to focus on enhancing mission opportunities using the church's online recruitment platform called VividFaith.

VividFaith is an online tool designed to connect potential missionaries with mission opportunities worldwide. VividFaith is a key component of the General Conference's Mission Refocus strategy, which seeks to realign the church's priorities and mission to better serve its changing membership and communities.

This is the first time that the IAD has partnered with VividFaith on such a large scale during an event called "Mission Recruiting," said Samuel Telemaque, Sabbath school and Adventist Mission director of the IAD. As a direct result of the training, 158 mission assignments were posted on the VividFaith platform, with many responses pouring in immediately.

"With training comes empowerment," said Telemaque, who was the main organizer of the event. "Our team of new VividFaith coordinators will help grow missions in the IAD, and we look forward to welcoming and equipping missionaries for the many mission fields within our division."

A TAILORED APPROACH TO GLOBAL MISSIONS

Preparation for the training event began in late 2024 and involved extensive coordination. According to Fylvia Fowler Kline, VividFaith's manager, the event's success was grounded in careful planning. Leaders identified mission opportunities requiring specialized expertise, created detailed job descriptions, and secured the necessary financial support for each position before the event.

Kline explained, "What is unique about VividFaith is its ability to customize to an organization's needs and policies, and to recruit volunteers, employees, remote workers, freelancers, and more."

BROADENING THE SCOPE OF MISSION WORK

The training event was also significant for leaders from various regions. Gail Smith-Anthony, of the Caribbean Union Conference, expressed optimism that the event would create more mission opportunities in the Caribbean. "There's a plethora of young people across the Caribbean ready to get involved in mission activities abroad," she said. She pointed out that even graduates of the University of the Southern Caribbean in Trinidad have the chance to participate in VividFaith's mission opportunities.

Leonard Johnson, secretary of the IAD, emphasized the importance of identifying mission needs to fulfill the gospel mission across the division. "We cannot keep Jesus to ourselves," Johnson said. "Our faith leaves no room for exclusivity; we are called to share Him with the world."

A UNIFIED CHURCH IN THE MISSION

The partnership between the IAD and VividFaith reflects the church's integrated approach to mission work, leaders said. Erton Köhler, secretary of the General Conference, expressed that despite administrative and geographical divisions, the church remains unified in its mission. "We may be divided into divisions and attached fields, but we are one church, sharing the same vision and goals," Kohler said.

Focus

When Church Hurts



Why I'm staying in God's church

NICOLE PARKER

I can't make it in the door!" My friend's heartbroken sobs on the phone wrenched my heart. "I tried so hard! I got dressed up and made it to the church parking lot. But I just can't!" Her wailing intensified. "They won't even sit near me."

I comforted my devastated friend, assuring her that Jesus could meet with her outside the church doors this week. Then, sobered, I dressed for church myself.

"Church." What does that word stir in your imagination?

For many, hearts warm with thoughts of sermons, potlucks, musical programs, soul-nourishing fellowship—a refuge in crisis.

For others, stomachs clench and tears burn. Agonizing thoughts of abuse, hypocrisy, judgmentalism, and rejection wash over them in painful waves. "Church" is fused with misrepresentation of God's love.

DECONSTRUCTION?

"Deconstruction" is a term mushrooming into today's mainstream media. It describes the avalanche of Christians rejecting organized religion, or even losing faith completely. Though some reach this point through skepticism or indifference, many trace their choice directly to church betrayal and harm.

As both an anti-abuse advocate and a pastor's wife, I've seen much church ugliness. But after witnessing one especially horrifying abuse cover-up, I finally found myself physically unable to attend church. My heart pounded uncontrollably when I sat down in the sanctuary. The stress eventually forced me into the gastroenterologist's office. Recognizing I needed deeper reasons to go to church, I started studying and journaling.

What began as a desperate attempt to cling to the church by my fingernails turned into a glorious months-long journey into the heart of God. I was able to "zoom out" to the bigger picture of what God is doing in His imperfect church. I discovered many reasons Jesus calls us to stay in the church, even when it's hard. This article briefly summarizes what I found that helped me heal, recommit, and calmly step back inside the sanctuary, reassured of God's comforting presence with me there.

WHY STAY IN AN IMPERFECT CHURCH?

1 God has called His people to tell the whole world about God's love—and we can't do it alone.

Loving God without loving others doesn't fulfill God's relational law (see Mark 12:30, 31). He calls us to leave our comfort zones, humbly working through differences where possible. But if I just invite friends to join me in worshipping peacefully in my own living room (Heb. 10:25), what then? My "movement" will still be severely limited by time, space, and my own weaknesses. We are "the body of Christ, and members individually" (1 Cor. 12:27; see also verses 12-31; 1 Cor. 13). In contrast with an increasingly lonely, individualistic culture in many parts of the world, God has given the end-time church a *collective* calling to show what love looks like in action—around the world. To effectively spread this profound gospel message around the world, believers must work in cooperation. This leads logically to the next point.

2 To take the gospel to the world, the church must be organized.

I firmly believe the Adventist Church holds the best systematic theological vision of God's love of any church in existence. Developed over generations through extensive Bible study by deeply committed theologians, this message is expressed in 28 fundamental beliefs.

Church structure is a God-ordained tool to streamline sharing this well-rounded vision of God's loving character with a hurting, searching world. But each of us is given only a few spiritual gifts to accomplish that mission! Church members should

fit together like complementary pieces of a puzzle. Not everyone is cut out to sing, cook, preach, or pull together Pathfinder campouts and Vacation Bible School. And what about beyond the local church? Where would we be without schools, medical institutions, and a tithe distribution system that helps prevent much of the corruption prevalent in other denominations' organizational approaches?

The founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church actively avoided organizing themselves at first, believing that structure itself would inevitably lead to abuse of power. But ultimately they realized that taking the gospel to the world *necessitated* organization. God wants to weave the body of believers into a seamless tapestry, a worldwide team for exponentially effective service. To achieve our global evangelistic mission of spreading Jesus' love, writers, preachers, and artists must join hands with others gifted with technological, financial, educational, and linguistic talents.

The pioneers were right about the challenges of organization. God warned Israel against having a king, because any organizational framework that implies *hierarchy* tempts sinners to fuse power with pride. All sin springs from the seed of Satan's "I will be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:14). From the first "you will be like God" temptation (Gen. 3:5), sinners have strategized to crown self on the throne. The Jews failed to recognize Jesus as the Messiah because of their desire for supremacy; a second descent into the temptations of hierarchical thinking spiraled Christianity into the abuses of the church leadership structure of the Dark Ages. Unsurprisingly, Satan targets spiritual leaders with intense temptations to misrepresent God by how they use power.

Perhaps our best defense against sin is to continually behold the stunning contrast between how Satan and Jesus use power. "Satan has represented God as selfish and oppressive, as claiming all, and giving nothing."[1] But the "hierarchy" of the universe is a "low-rarchy." Our King washes feet. The universe's omnipotent King, wearing a crown of thorns, forever refuted Satan's lie. He "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant. . . . He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:7, 8). Daily He pleads with us, "Let this mind be in you" (verse 5). Pride and selfishness melt before the blazing glory shining from Calvary.

Another potent antidote to the poison of hierarchical power hunger is remembering that the church is not merely an *earthly* organization. Jesus intentionally prefaced the Great Commission, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). This reminder to the new leaders of the fledgling Christian church shines as a beacon of hope on the end-time church, too. Jesus is the *only* head of His church.

Since no leader is perfect, leadership imperfections—and even outright corruption at times—will cripple the church's gospel work. Leadership mistakes have stained the records of Noah, Abraham, David, Peter, and every other spiritual leader since Creation except Jesus. But as long as even a few Spirit-filled members—God's 7,000—reject kingly power and wholeheartedly embrace humility, organization is more of a help than a hindrance.

Our worldwide structure exponentially catalyzes our ability to achieve our God-given goal of taking the gospel to the world. Ultimately, though, we need more than streamlined efforts. We can fulfill Matthew 28's Great Commission only through the power of the Holy Spirit. And how do we receive that outpouring?

3 The disciples received Acts 2 Holy Spirit power only after they stopped playing toxic "who is the greatest" earthly power games, and instead came into "one accord" in Acts 1.

Only the cross can adequately confront carnal tendencies toward self-exaltation. Perhaps cataclysmic crisis is the only path to the purposeful unity demonstrated in the early rain. But even outside of crisis, *we need the broken fellowship of other imperfect believers like ourselves.*

God's character is expressed in a relational law. We are called to image God, not as individuals each striving alone to achieve perfection, but *as a multifaceted mosaic of missional community, bound together by self-sacrificing love.* "When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own."[2] Far from a vision of individualistic perfectionism, the context of this statement refers to the fruits of the Spirit being manifested in the body of Christ as we abandon self-exaltation to serve one another sacrificially.

Humble connection with a diverse body of believers also helps correct slides into extremism or theological error. It provides structure for weekly worship, utilizes a variety of talents, and offers consistent opportunities to develop the fruit of the Spirit. Even if some individuals could maintain perfect theological and relational balance alone, refusing to fellowship with other believers wouldn't model a healthy path for their children—and others they win to Christ—to follow. *Believers need community.*

Need one more reason not to give up and strike out on our own? Let's look to prophecy.

4 "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:5, KJV) describes God's professed followers at the end of time.

Since the beginning God has called faulty believers to unite in telling the world about Him. The wheat and the

tares grow together until the harvest, and "the harvest is the end of probationary time."[3] Revelation describes no magical off-ramp out of lukewarm Laodicea, the final church. Standing against evil in a tepid church will surely be a necessity at the end of time, as "the love of many will grow cold" (Matt. 24:12). But as theologian Diane Langberg states, "We are God's dissidents. . . . We must never agree to 'protect' the name of God by covering ungodliness. In Ephesians 5:11, Paul warns us not to participate in the deeds of darkness but instead to expose them. Understand that you cannot single-handedly change an entire system; you are not called to do so. Yet we are to speak truth about our systems. . . . People are sacred, created in the image of God. Systems are not. They are only worth the people in them and the people they serve. And people are to be treated, whether one or many, the way Jesus Christ treated people."[4] The prophets were stoned for a reason—needed rebuke is never warmly welcomed. Why should we expect resisting evil to become easier at the end of time?

Jesus' example was not that of a shallow peacekeeper, but of a true peace*maker*. He inflamed spiritual leaders with rage, even braiding a whip and turning over tables. *The glory of God rises up against profound evil in the church*. But rebuke is most effective from within. Jesus continued to fellowship with Jewish believers as He rose up against evil.

Peacemakers must beware: self-exaltation is a trap that springs both ways. Humility is our only defense against nauseating hypocrisy. Truth must be spoken in love, with salvation as the goal. We must show gentleness when reproving, knowing we might stand accountable in the judgment for well-meaning work that harms.

WHY I'M STAYING IN THE CHURCH

"It's God's church. I'm *not* leaving." My brokenhearted friend from the beginning of this article often tells me this.

From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture repeats a sure promise: *the glory of God will be revealed within His church*. As Ellen White writes: "Although there are evils existing in the church, and will be until the end of the world, the church in these last days is to be the light of the world that is polluted and demoralized by sin. The church, enfeebled and defective, needing to be reproved, warned, and counseled, is the only object upon the earth upon which Christ bestows His supreme regard."[5] Further, she explains: "The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. . . . Through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to 'the principalities and powers in heavenly places,' the final and full display of the love of God."[6]



Jesus' example was not that of a shallow peacekeeper, but of a true peace*maker*.

God's true church is not merely an organization. It's a movement of people spreading God's love—together. Jesus is our head; the world is our mission field. His people must unify to fulfill Jesus' prayer: "That they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me" (John 17:23).

[1] Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 57.
[2] Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900, 1941), p. 69.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 72.
[4] Diane Langberg, *Redeeming Power: Understanding Authority and Abuse in the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2020), pp. 86, 87.
[5] Ellen G. White, *Counsels for the Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1991), p. 240.
[6] Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 9.

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Kenny Eliason / Baurzhan Ibrashev / iStock / Getty Images Plus / Getty Images

Feature

Cast Down, but Not Destroyed







God is greater than any obstacles we may face.

ALICIA MARIE HARDING

Crocodile Island,* a very remote island more than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) from Riverside Farm Institute, where my family is stationed as missionaries, is a two- to three-day journey of rugged travel in the Northern Province of Zambia. The Riverside evangelism and medical teams had planned the largest outreach program yet—providing three weeks of meetings to three different villages on the island simultaneously, while the dental and medical team provided free health care, and construction crews built three churches. The island, positioned in Lake Tanganyika, is named after its resembling shape, but the name could also easily represent the sort of untamed and even dangerous nature of life there. With a population of about 5,000 in three villages, this area had no church, no school, and no medical facility. Of all the evangelistic efforts over the years, this one was planned with the utmost attention. Yet never had one been met with more complications and roadblocks along the way.

After two days of driving, we were now 45 minutes from our destination. I was admiring the long winding view of the road ahead, thinking of how it hadn't changed from the picture I took at that exact spot a year before. It felt exhilarating to be so close. I commented that the lake was just beyond the visible road and hills that lay ahead. Then, without warning, our Land Cruiser and the trailer being pulled behind us lost control. All focus was on the side of the mountain we were careening toward. Time seemed to slow down. My mind became hyperaware of every millisecond leading up

Samuel Scrimshaw / Maxim Tajer / Fabrizio Conti / Umberto

to the impact. It all happened too fast for me to respond, or even to clear my thoughts to pray. We hit the mountainside, and the trailer behind us unhitched and was thrown off the road. The vehicle rolled onto its left side and began to slide down the road until it hit a ditch that rolled us back up on our wheels.

There was a half second of stillness and darkness as a thick cloud of dust blocked the light. My first impulse was to check on the children, but I couldn't see a thing. Then, all at once, they started screaming. Bloodstained boys emerged screaming, "Winston!" My 5-year-old son's head had been dragged along on the road through his broken window, tearing his scalp to the skull as the car slid down the hill. When everyone was assessed to be alive, I sent a radio message to the vehicle in the caravan ahead of us to call for help. Because they were out of view, I didn't realize they had seen the accident. My close friend, Rebecca, had watched the whole thing with horror, as her son, Benjamin, was in my vehicle.

Yes, that was a terrifying hour. But we would soon learn that this was no random, isolated event. The enemy was not happy about our plans to share Jesus on Crocodile Island, and he would try to fight back.

ENEMY ATTACKS

Two weeks before our accident, the bus transporting the majority of the outreach team struck and killed a man who had run into the street to commit suicide. The driver was ultimately cleared, but it was, nonetheless, a traumatizing experience that also caused unanticipated delays. Shortly thereafter, as we began our journey, my husband, Craig, barely averted a similar fate. Swerving into the opposite lane, he just missed striking a man who emerged from behind a passing truck as he ran across the road. He had *almost* killed a man!



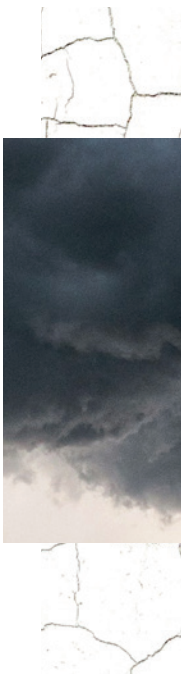
Catherine Costa / Elly Brian

As work on the island began, our medical leader, Beaver Eller, got severely electrocuted, and had he been grounded, the current would have been strong enough to kill him. The projector and speakers that were previously in good working order suddenly malfunctioned right before the meetings were to start. The truck hired to deliver all the church building supplies was hijacked, jeopardizing the church building operation.

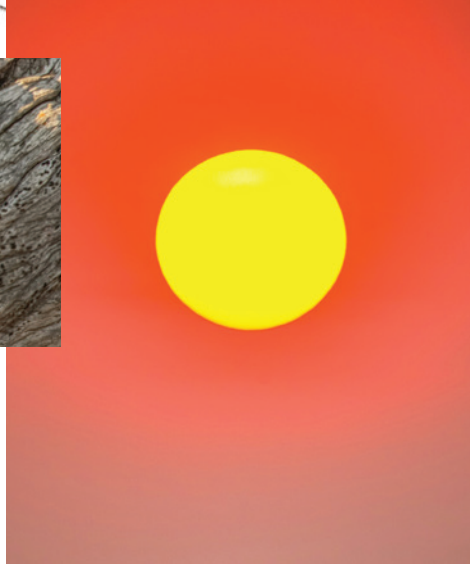
While the church was being built, fires that were not started by anyone kept popping up all around the church. The workers would put one fire out and continue to build, only to have another one pop up. They would put it out and go back to building. This happened the whole time the church was being constructed.

During the meetings a 17-year-old demon-possessed girl came seeking deliverance. As they prayed over her and burned her ritual clothes, she lost control of herself and was being pushed by an unseen force toward the fire. Once the clothes of her past life were consumed, she was delivered, and started studying the Bible with one of our team members.

The day following the meeting on what the Bible says about witchcraft and sorcery was intense. The dental and medical team tried to cross the lake to do a medical outreach on the other side when they almost capsized in the high waves. The water was calm and the sky was blue when they began their journey; then all of a sudden the waves were raging and the wind intense. The boat engine stopped and wouldn't start again. The little team on the boat started praying, singing, and worshipping. After the prayer the engine started. They turned the boat around as people on the hill watched to see if







they would make it back to shore alive. "Someone was supposed to die," said one witness who saw the struggle on the water below.

That same day one of our vehicles broke down in the middle of nowhere. My husband waited with the vehicle until the next day for help from the nearest town. We soon learned that the brakes on the fourth vehicle that was on their way to join us failed.

And this is only a sampling of the obstacles we faced during the evangelistic effort.

But God . . .

There I sat in the middle of a dirt road, pressing a loose shirt on Winston's head to control the bleeding. My heart sank at the realization that my child was a trauma patient and the nearest health facility would be ill-equipped to care for him. Even now, tears well up in my eyes as I relive those thoughts. We were two days away from home.

But I forbear to elucidate anymore on the devil's work. I want to highlight how much greater God is than the devil.

As soon as Rebecca saw the accident, she called her husband, Beaver, an experienced emergency room health-care provider who was on the boat that almost capsized earlier that day. Because they had rerouted, he had just finished unloading at a closer campsite—one more accessible to transportation. Rebecca had a blip of network access to make the phone call and then didn't have signal the rest of the way to town. After I called Craig, my network failed too. The locals who heard our story swear that you cannot get a phone signal in that area. But God connected Rebecca's call, and Beaver met us at the local hospital faster than we could have dared hoped. His skilled care was a great comfort in that simple hospital facility while we remained there.

Stranded hours away from us, Craig frantically made calls in search of a private plane or medical evacuation flight to take us to Lusaka (the capital city with the most equipped emergency facilities). No one was available until the next day. But then God interposed. Without any personal connections of our own, God provided a military flight out, in the middle of the night! We arrived in Lusaka two hours and 45 minutes from takeoff. Later we were told how impossible our intervention was—the air force never does evacuations, medical or otherwise. But God made a way.

In his greatest distress Winston cried more about severe abdominal pain than about his head injury. Later two of my close friends said that they had specifically prayed for God to heal any internal bleeding. By the time we arrived at the hospital, the pain in his abdomen had almost subsided, and the scan came back completely clear. God did something.

In the United States a close friend of the Ellers (whose son was in my vehicle) said she woke up in the middle of the night and felt a strong impression to pray specifically for Benjamin. Thankfully, after he recovered from his mild concussion, he checked out completely OK.

At the last church vespers meeting before we left on the evangelistic trip, the speaker shared a heartfelt devotional and pleaded with the church to intercede in prayer for the evangelism team. He expressed special concern for our group traveling two days later to join the rest of the team. I remember thinking, *That's nice, but we don't need special prayer. We experience this trip every year, and it's no big deal to go.* Little did I know how much we would need those prayers, but God knew what lay before us, and intercessory prayer was going up for us before we even knew why.

OUR GOD IS GREATER

A kind missionary couple who lived a few kilometers from the hospital we first arrived at heard of our accident and showed up at the hospital to help. They graciously opened their home to our group that night. They had been faithfully serving there for 25 years, and when they heard where we were heading, they said, "That is a really bad area! We have seen so many missionaries come and leave after trying to work in that area, some leaving with strange illnesses and complications." We weren't the only ones the devil had cast down. But greater than the work of the enemy is our God! On the last Sabbath of the evangelistic meetings, 68 souls gave their hearts to Jesus and were baptized!

Before our trip I had picked out a theme song for our team. It's a song right out of 2 Corinthians 4:6-9. I taught it to my children, and we sang it during family worship every night. I practiced the accompaniment on my guitar, and I taught it to a few friends as well. The words of this

Ian Mcgrory / Birger Strahl





God knew what lay before us, and intercessory prayer was going up for us before we even knew why.

scripture rang in my mind for days:

"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor. 4:6-9, NIV).

After reflecting on my personal experiences and listening to all the stories being shared around ours, the words of this text struck me with new meaning. That was it: It was the light of God's Word being shone through darkness being battled here! God had been shining through the hearts of the team on Crocodile Island to share God's Word and His love! We were but humble, simple jars of clay—the means of sharing this great treasure from God's Word. And the devil was attacking the jars of clay holding that treasure of truth and divine love.

Oh, yes, we and others had been hard pressed on every side. I have only brushed the surface in this retelling. There were perplexing moments. We were struck down, but by the grace of God, *not* destroyed! How intentional and personal God was, knowing what lay before us, to give me that promise to claim and hold on to, before we knew we needed it. How kind of Him to plant in my mind the words I would later refer back to for encouragement.

And an encouragement it has been! I am personally more motivated than ever before to let Jesus' light shine through my life. Let Him do what He will! There is a world full of so much darkness and sin. So much evil. So much sorrow. My purpose is renewed to seek more of Jesus so that He can shine through with greater power. The devil won't win. He has already lost. We serve a powerful God who deserves all glory, both in distress and victory. I am humbled, and challenged, and grateful, to be serving Him.

God never said we wouldn't experience tribulation. In fact, He promises that we will. But He has also promised that He will be there with us in the midst of it all. What a wonderful, powerful, good God we serve.

Crocodile Island now has a full-time Bible worker. One year later the Riverside team visited to encourage the new believers and found the new church with about 80 baptized members. It is the only church on the island.

And for my son, Winston, God was so merciful! When the airplane landed in Lusaka, an ambulance was waiting to transport us to a private hospital. He underwent surgery to debride and repair his scalp, followed up by a couple weeks of wound care. All other symptoms of abdominal injury and concussion had cleared, and diagnostic testing came back normal. Today, when people ask how Winston has recovered, I report, with a chuckle, that he is no worse for the wear. If anything, he just bounced back sharper, wittier, and more active than before. The healed scars in his hairline remind me every day of God's faithfulness, and the mission He has called us to—shining the light of God's love to those around us.

* Also known as Mutondwe Island.

Alicia Marie Harding is a missionary serving at the Riverside Farm Institute in **Zambia**, along with her husband, Craig, and their four children.

Max Andrey / Olena Bokovyk



Global View

Ready for the Wedding Feast

Accepting the beautiful gift

BY TED N. C. WILSON

The book of Matthew records a fascinating parable of Jesus. It's about a wedding and proper wedding attire. In Matthew 22 we read that a great wedding was arranged by the king. There was much excitement as the king prepared this celebration for his son. In verse 3 we read, He "sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding."

Sadly, those receiving the invitation were not excited. Can you imagine a king inviting people to a wedding, and they don't come? We should keep in mind that this parable has meaning for us today—Jesus is calling us to His wedding feast. Are we planning on being there?

In the parable not only did the guests refuse the invitation; they seized the king's servants, treated them cruelly, and killed them.

Sadly, this kind of treatment sometimes happens to God's messengers even today. As we accept God's call and say, "I Will Go," we should be prepared to be misrepresented, refused, tormented, shunned, and perhaps even killed. Through the years many Christians, including Seventh-day Adventists, have been martyred for their faith.

But we do not need to be afraid of the future. We are assured of Christ's presence until the very end of time. And anyone who has been watching current events will know prophecy is being fulfilled just as God foretold. We are living in highly unusual times.

THOSE WHO CAME

Returning to the parable, when the king heard how his servants were treated, he was furious. He sent out his armies, destroyed the murderers, and burned their city.

Then the king started over. He told his servants, "The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. . . . Go into the highways and as many as you find, invite to the wedding" (verses 8, 9). Many people came—both bad and good—and the wedding hall was filled with guests (verse 11).

Today, as God's message is proclaimed, there will be people who aren't aligned with God's Holy Word, but will be part of those who respond. To the very end of time there will be the good and the bad, the wheat and the tares (see Matt. 13:24-30). But the Bible assures us there will be a shaking, and, in fact, I believe the shaking has begun.

There is only one way you and I can prevent ourselves from being swept up with erroneous ideas and cultural implications that push against God's Word. There is only one way from being shaken out, and that is complete reliance upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ as we are nurtured in His righteousness by reading His Holy Word, studying His Spirit of Prophecy instructions, and maintaining our prayer life with Him at all times. We must receive Christ's justifying power, His sanctifying power, His reviving and reforming power. Let's share this marvelous gift and relationship in righteousness with others as we engage in Total Member Involvement.

The Bible is filled with beautiful promises showing what Jesus can and will do for us when we accept His robe of righteousness: "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe on His name" (John 1:12). Philippians 2:5 encourages us to "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." And Revelation 3:18 tells us exactly who we are and how we are to be redeemed from the terrible curse of self-centeredness: "Buy from Me

Anastasiia Stiahailo / iStock / Getty Images Plus / Getty Images



"When Christ provides His robe of righteousness, it's a perfect fit, and it fits everyone! We just need to accept it and put it on.

gold . . . , that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed . . . ; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent."

GIVEN A PERFECT GARMENT

Returning to the parable, we gain deeper insights into Christ's ministry. In Matthew 22:11 we read that when the king was greeting the guests, he noticed that one was not wearing a wedding garment.

"Friend," he asked, "how did you come in here without a wedding garment?" (verse 12). The man was speechless! Even though he was given a perfect garment, he chose not to wear it.

Today the King not only invites us to the wedding of His Son; He also provides the right clothing as a gift. When Christ provides His robe of righteousness, it's a perfect fit, and it fits everyone! We just need to accept it and put it on. This wedding garment represents "the pure, spotless character which Christ's true followers will possess."[1]

Please notice: It is not *our* character; it is *Christ's* character. "It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character, that through faith is imparted to all who receive Him as their personal Saviour."[2] Do we really believe this?

Continuing, we read this wonderful promise: "This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul. . . . This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us. 'All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.' . . . By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments."[3]

CHRIST LIVING IN US

Don't fall for the trap that people set up when they say, "It's not possible to keep the commandments. It's not possible to live a perfect life." While it is true that you cannot live a perfect life on your own, with the robe of Christ's righteousness covering us and His power living within us, we are able to follow where He leads.

And then, sanctification begins—Christ's righteousness in us. "When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart; the will is merged in His will; the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. . . . Righteousness is right doing, and it is by their deeds that all will be judged. Our characters are revealed by what we do. The works show whether the faith is genuine."[4]

Are you willing to receive, from the hand of Christ, His covering garment that will enable you to be a colaborer with heaven? Accepting the beautiful gift of Christ's robe that covers and transforms us into His image is foundational to becoming a follower of Christ and a colaborer with Him. Let us accept His incredible gift of His justifying and sanctifying power and be ready for that heavenly marriage feast of the Lamb!

[1] Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900, 1941), p. 310.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 311, 312.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 312.

Ted N. C. Wilson is president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Additional articles and commentaries are available on X (formerly Twitter): @pastortedwilson and on Facebook: @Pastor Ted Wilson.

Looking Back

A "Bold Move Forward" Backed by Believers

The story of Adventist World Radio

BY ALLEN STEELE WITH AWR STAFF

With its worldwide presence and mission to share the gospel in the "hardest-to-reach places on earth," it may feel to many in the Adventist Church that Adventist World Radio (AWR) has been around "forever." Not so. Although the ministry was founded 54 years ago, its origins extend back even further.

The true birth of AWR can be traced to World War II. When war broke out in the late 1930s, the conquering powers understood the power of radio over the minds of people who were attracted to the fledgling broadcast phenomenon. In the short decades since its discovery, radio had become a household word and was the major way people learned about what was happening in the world.

Pioneering civilians caught on to the miracle of radio waves as well, and many private radio stations blossomed across Europe. One person in particular was at the forefront of radio development. His name was Jacques Trémoulet, best known as the owner of Radio Luxembourg, but his eventual network of stations became one of the largest privately owned radio entities in Europe.

When the war started, the conquering powers commandeered radio stations as fast as they could expand their territories. Trémoulet's radio properties were confiscated, and he found sanctuary in a neutral country, hoping he could outlast the war. When the conflict ended, he returned to his home in France to see if his stations could be rehabilitated.

It was at this time that he met Seventh-day Adventists. The Adventist Church was actively helping Europe recover from the war years, and they were looking for radio stations that would permit them to air programs featuring spiritual messages and promoting their humanitarian efforts. They signed up for airtime on Radio Luxembourg, and the Voice of Hope in French went on the air in 1947. In 1951 the English Voice of Prophecy program had its first broadcasts on the station. Thus, a mutual partnership between Adventists and Trémoulet began.

EXPANDING THE MINISTRY

In 1971 Trémoulet had a new offer for the Adventists: "I now own a transmitter in Portugal that will give you shortwave coverage over all of Eastern and Western Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. Are you interested?"

Church leaders, namely General Conference president Robert Pierson and North American Division president Neal Wilson, wanted to use this exciting opportunity to reach a significant part of the world by radio, but the church budget did not have funds set aside to take advantage of such a new, large, long-term undertaking. So the question arose: "If this is the direction God is leading, how will we find the funds to support it?"



Gayatri Pandkar

The offer became a major subject of discussion at church headquarters. Treasurers warned that the church could not sustain the project in the long term, but lay members on committees urged the church to seize the opportunity.

Elders Pierson and Wilson listened and considered the pros and cons. In the end they came up with a strategy: They would challenge Adventist church members around the world to join them in the mission of launching programs for the part of the world covered by Trémoulet's large transmitter in Portugal.

They proposed this plan in faith, calling it *a bold move forward*, in the belief that church members would be inspired by God to do their part to support the project over the longer term.

Soon plans were underway to begin the project. Manager Allen Steele, and his wife, Andrea, were hired to help in the planning. One of the first items to decide was a name.

Should it be the Voice of Hope, as preferred by the Europeans, or the Voice of Prophecy, favored by the Americans?

Allen said, "The matter of choosing a name was given to the church's Communication Department. In the discussion I urged the brethren that a new name should be chosen—one that would identify the church as sponsor of the programs. The name Adventist World Radio seemed to be most appropriate."

The Steeles were sent to Portugal in late July 1971, with the warning that the church had committed to fund the project for only one year, so a longer term would depend on members' offerings.

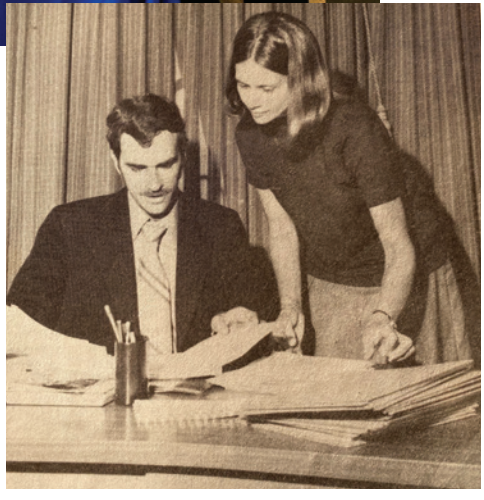
"We were willing to be part of the strategy," says Allen. "In the end no one should have worried, because at the conclusion of the first year, enough funding was available for another year. The support continued, and our invitation to continue broadcasting was renewed year after year."



Courtesy of the Author

AWR's first manager Allen Steele and his wife, Andrea (seen below), joined the ministry in 1971.

Today, Allen (seen left) still actively supports Adventist World Radio.



Allen and Andrea continued their work for AWR through many years as the ministry grew and became recognized as a major broadcaster on the world stage.

RIPPLE EFFECTS

Today AWR, under the leadership of Duane McKey, reaches around the globe through 2,000 broadcasts in more than 100 languages, shares the gospel via solar-powered "Godpods," meets felt needs through massive health events, holds large-scale evangelistic series in partnership with Total Member Involvement, and much more.

But it all began when a challenge issued by church leaders turned into the creation of a major vehicle to grow the church and prepare a people to be ready for the second coming of Jesus . . . a "bold move forward" with ripple effects that will be revealed only in heaven!

Editor's Note: Much of the information here is based on the author's personal knowledge. The phrase "bold move forward" is from an article that appeared in the Review and Herald *in 1971. To learn more about the history of Adventist World Radio, check out Allen Steele's book* God's Air Force, *published by Pacific Press. To watch inspiring mission story "miracle videos" and connect with AWR, visit awr.org.*

Allen Steele, Ed.D., is a pioneer of Adventist World Radio,



Spirit of Prophecy

God's Purpose for His Church

Revealing how God views His church and the role He expects it to play in transforming lives for eternity.

BY ELLEN G. WHITE

The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," the final and full display of the love of God (Eph. 3:10). . . .

PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

The church is God's fortress, His city of refuge, which He holds in a revolted world. Any betrayal of the church is treachery to Him who has bought mankind with the blood of His only-begotten Son. From the beginning, faithful souls have constituted the church on earth. In every age the Lord has had His watchmen, who have borne a faithful testimony to the generation in which they lived. These sentinels gave the message of warning; and when they were called to lay off their armor, others took up the work. God brought these witnesses into covenant relation with Himself, uniting the church on earth with the church in heaven. He has sent forth His angels to minister to His church, and the gates of hell have not been able to prevail against His people.

Through centuries of persecution, conflict, and darkness, God has sustained His church. Not one cloud has fallen upon it that He has not prepared for; not one opposing force has risen to counterwork His work, that He has not foreseen. All has taken place as He predicted. He has not left His church forsaken, but has traced in prophetic declarations what would occur, and that which His Spirit inspired the prophets to foretell has been brought about. All His purposes will be fulfilled. His law is linked

Lightstock / Pearl

with His throne, and no power of evil can destroy it. Truth is inspired and guarded by God; and it will triumph over all opposition.

During ages of spiritual darkness the church of God has been as a city set on a hill. From age to age, through successive generations, the pure doctrines of heaven have been unfolding within its borders. Enfeebled and defective as it may appear, the church is the one object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard. It is the theater of His grace, in which He delights to reveal His power to transform hearts.

CHURCH—GOD'S MISSION FIELD

"Whereunto," asked Christ, "shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?" (Mark 4:30, KJV). He could not employ the kingdoms of the world as a similitude. In society He found nothing with which to compare it. Earthly kingdoms rule by the ascendancy of physical power; but from Christ's kingdom every carnal weapon, every instrument of coercion, is banished. This kingdom is to uplift and ennoble humanity. God's church is the court of holy life, filled with varied gifts and endowed with the Holy Spirit. The members are to find their happiness in the happiness of those whom they help and bless.

Wonderful is the work which the Lord designs to accomplish through His church, that His name may be glorified. A picture of this work is given in Ezekiel's vision of the river of healing: "These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: . . . and by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine" (Eze. 47:8-12, KJV).

From the beginning God has wrought through His people to bring blessing to the world. To the ancient Egyptian nation God made Joseph a fountain of life. Through the integrity of Joseph the life of that whole people was preserved. Through Daniel God saved the life of all the wise men of Babylon. And these deliverances are as object lessons; they illustrate the spiritual blessings offered to the world through connection with the God whom Joseph and Daniel worshiped. Everyone in whose heart Christ abides, everyone who will show forth His love to the world, is a worker together with God for the blessing of humanity. As he receives from the Saviour grace to impart to others, from his whole being flows forth the tide of spiritual life.

God chose Israel to reveal His character to men. He desired them to be as wells of salvation in the world. To them were committed the oracles of heaven, the revelation of God's will. In the early days of Israel the nations of the world, through corrupt practices, had lost the knowledge of God. They had once known Him; but because "they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, . . . their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom. 1:21, KJV). Yet in His mercy God did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them an opportunity of again becoming acquainted with Him through His chosen people. . . .

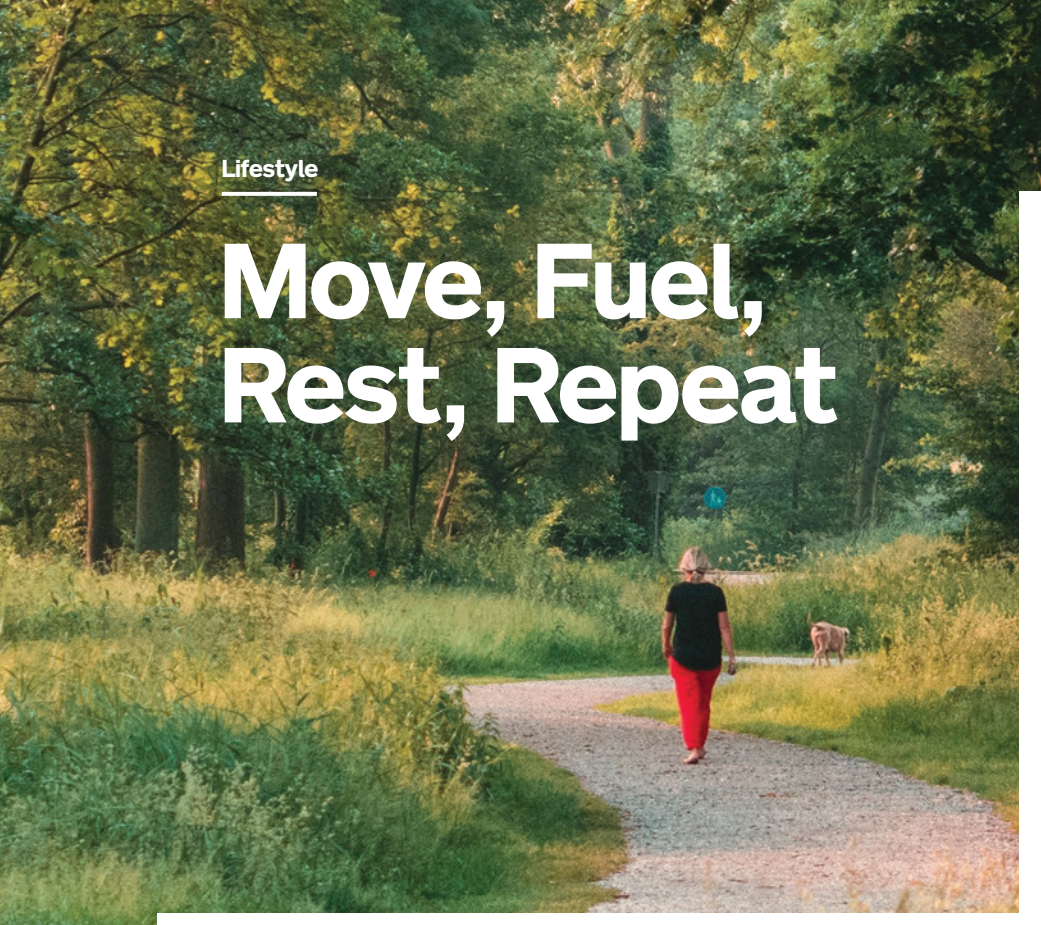
MISSED BLESSINGS

But the people of Israel lost sight of their high privileges as God's representatives. They forgot God and failed to fulfill their holy mission. The blessings they received brought no blessing to the world. All their advantages they appropriated for their own glorification. They shut themselves away from the world in order to escape temptation. The restrictions that God had placed upon their association with idolaters as a means of preventing them from conforming to the practices of the heathen, they used to build up a wall of separation between themselves and all other nations. They robbed God of the service He required of them, and they robbed their fellow men of religious guidance and a holy example. . . .

The Jewish leaders thought themselves too wise to need instruction, too righteous to need salvation, too highly honored to need the honor that comes from Christ. The Saviour turned from them to entrust to others the privileges they had abused and the work they had slighted. God's glory must be revealed, His word established. Christ's kingdom must be set up in the world. The salvation of God must be made known in the cities of the wilderness; and the disciples were called to do the work that the Jewish leaders had failed to do.

Seventh-day Adventist believe that **Ellen G. White** 1827-1915 exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This excerpt was taken from *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 9-16.

Move, Fuel, Rest, Repeat



Small, consistent choices make a big impact.

For most of my life I treated my health like an afterthought—neglecting movement and nourishment and chasing quick fixes. After years of struggling, I finally began to realize that caring for my health wasn't just about looking or feeling a certain way; it was about honoring God with the life He entrusted to me.

God created us to be stewards of many things, which includes the body He has given us (see 1 Cor. 6:19, 20). The question is: Do we treat our body with the same kindness and respect that He would? When we take care of ourselves, we are not only willing but able to follow His leading.

I don't know about you, but my life is *busy*! Where do we find the time to put into our health? Motivation doesn't just happen. It's hard to have a consistent exercise routine and to eat well. Thankfully, God is the giver of all good things, including the gift of discipline, and discipline is what creates motivation.

Here are some simple tips you can try to jump-start your health:

START WITH SMALL, SUSTAINABLE CHANGES.

Gradual adjustments over time are often more likely to stick than drastic and extreme shifts in lifestyle. For example, make it a habit to keep a water bottle beside your bed. Don't allow your feet to hit the floor before taking a long drink. Then set reminders to keep you drinking all day long! Those who start right are more likely to end right.

MOVEMENT IS A GIFT.

Exercise should never be viewed as punishment. Studies show the importance of overall movement as well as cardio and strength training to keep the organs and muscles healthy. That doesn't mean you must walk 10 miles a day or spend two hours doing something you hate. Start with 10 minutes a day of resistance training; make it a habit to get up and move every hour; find something you enjoy that your entire family can get involved in. Simply move more.

FOOD IS FUEL.

Instead of obsessing over diets and calories, appreciate the whole foods God has given. View food as the fuel it was intended to be. Eat "real food," balance your diet by getting plenty of fiber, clean protein, and healthy fats, and stop eating when you're satisfied.

TAKE TIME TO REST AND RECOVER.

As important as movement is, rest and recovery are equally important. Aim for more restful sleep and enjoy the Sabbath God gives every seventh day.

PRIORITIZE COMMUNITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

Community is vital to our health, as it provides a framework of support, accountability, and social connection. When we meet to worship as a community of believers, let's encourage each other—physically, spiritually, and emotionally!

Your health doesn't have to be complicated. By making small, consistent choices, you can build a healthier life. Caring for your body is a way to honor the Life-giver. Start where you are, use what you have, and trust that every step forward is a step toward lasting wellness.

Marion Peppers is a wife, homeschool mom, certified personal trainer, and the founder of Peppers Total Fitness. She and her family live in the U.S. state of Tennessee.

Frank Holleman



ADVENTIST REVIEW Magazine

DON'T MISS IT!

Starting in August 2025, we are excited that the *Adventist World* will continue as the *Adventist Review*! You can access all materials, such as global church news and Bible-based articles, by:

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- Contacting your local Adventist publisher to see what is happening in your Division/Union
- Looking out for new and different digital platforms that will be in various languages

One Day by the Jordan

Q Why was Jesus' baptism necessary?

A Jesus' baptism must be of great significance because it is the first thing Jesus does to initiate His public ministry. It is also significant that His baptism is recorded or alluded to in all four Gospels (Matt. 3:13-16; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21, 22; John 1:32, 33). Your question is a good one. A few thoughts are in order.

NOT NEEDED, BUT INDISPENSABLE

Initially John was reluctant to baptize Jesus, but Jesus informed him that this is to be done in order to fulfill God's plan (Matt. 3:13-15). True, sinners need baptism, but not Jesus. Here the Sinless One is demonstrating what, according to the divine plan, sinners should do. It is God's intention that sinners confess their sins, repent, and be baptized. Jesus as our representative was doing for us what, at that moment, we could not do but are expected to do. In His baptism Jesus introduced to us the order of salvation: confession, repentance, baptism, reception of the Spirit. It could be said that in His baptism Jesus transitioned from John's baptism of repentance through water to the true nature of Christian baptism through water and the Spirit.

THE PRESENCE OF THE GODHEAD

As Jesus comes out of the water, He engages in dialogue with the Father through prayer, and the Father and the Spirit make their presence felt by the Jordan. After the Fall the Son of God became the mediator between God and sinners, but now the Father once again speaks directly to a Human Being, the Incarnated God. One of the members of the Godhead was already here, and He is now joined by the other two members for the proclamation of an event of transcendental importance. As Christ is our representative, the words of the Father were also addressed to us (Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). This is a major moment in cosmic history. The voice of God is heard on our rebellious planet proclaiming that the human race belongs to the Godhead and describing humans as beloved sons of God! This will be possible because the Son will descend to the tomb and come out of it alive and victorious. At Jesus' baptism the three Persons of the Trinity, who originally formulated the plan of salvation, are now present on our planet at a critical moment in salvation history.

DECLARATION OF WAR

Through the Incarnation, the Son of God came to us to face the forces of evil as never before. Yet He remained hidden in Galilee for about 30 years. In the divine calendar every event occurs at the appropriate time. Daniel predicted the moment of the anointing of the Messiah (Dan. 9:25), and now that moment had arrived. Jesus left Galilee and went to the Jordan to declare that His public fight against Satan, on Planet Earth, was about to begin. His baptism was a public event through which He was introduced to us not only as God's beloved Son but also as the Lamb of God that would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29, 36) through a battle against evil powers without parallel in cosmic history. The decisive battle was now on. It would be a battle for the heart of the human race and for the final liberation of Planet Earth. There was no time to waste! Immediately after His baptism Jesus was led by the Spirit to the wilderness to face the enemy and defeat him, anticipating His final victory on the cross. Jesus' baptism is indeed an important event within salvation history that should move humans to join Him through baptism.

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, Th.D., is retired after a career serving as pastor, professor, and theologian.



Health & Wellness

The Sugar Swap Dilemma

Are artificial sweeteners really a healthy alternative?

I am trying to live and eat more healthily and have friends who do not lose weight even when using artificial sweeteners. Are these safe and effective for me to use in my quest for better health and weight loss?

Natural sweeteners and artificial sweeteners differ fundamentally in their origins, composition, and how they affect the body. Artificial sweeteners, often touted as healthier alternatives to sugar, have become a focal point of scientific research regarding their potential health risks. Studies have produced mixed results, leading to ongoing debates about their safety and long-term effects.

Natural sweeteners, such as honey, maple syrup, and Stevia, are derived from plants or animal sources and undergo minimal processing. They often retain some nutrients and antioxidants, which can provide additional health benefits. Honey has antibacterial properties, and Stevia is known for its low-calorie content while having a negligible impact on blood sugar levels. Honey can be a healthier choice than sugar and should be used in moderation.

Artificial sweeteners are synthetically manufactured compounds designed to replicate the sweetness of sugar without the calories. Common examples include aspartame, sucralose, erythritol, and saccharin. While they are much sweeter than sugar, their long-term health effects are still a topic of debate and have been for decades. Some studies suggest potential links to metabolic issues, increased cravings, and gut health disruptions not associated with natural sweeteners. Natural sweeteners tend to be more beneficial in moderation, while artificial sweeteners may carry risks that warrant caution.

Research indicates that certain artificial sweeteners may disrupt gut microbiota, which plays a crucial role in digestion and overall health. The consumption of aspartame may alter the composition of gut bacteria, potentially leading to metabolic issues. Other studies have drawn correlations between high consumption of artificial sweeteners and an increased risk of metabolic syndrome, obesity, and type 2 diabetes, indicating that these substances are not as harmless as once believed.

Recent studies have highlighted the risk of cardiovascular events (heart attacks and strokes) associated with the use of erythritol, a natural four-carbon sugar alcohol commonly used as a sugar substitute in processed foods. Further experimental studies have shown that erythritol increases the activation of platelets (blood cells that are key in clot formation or thrombosis-causing strokes and heart attacks) in human blood. The consumption of one erythritol-sweetened drink can produce the levels that may activate the platelets.

In summary, some artificial sweeteners may aid in reducing caloric intake, but their potential health risks cannot be overlooked. While moderation is key, the safest approach is to limit the intake of artificial sweeteners and focus on a balanced diet rich in whole foods. More research is necessary to understand the long-term effects of these substances fully and to determine which, if any, can be recommended safely. Exercise, rest, moderation, balanced nutrition, and a focus on whole foods are advisable for maintaining overall health.

"How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Your precepts I get understanding" (Ps. 119:103, 104).

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.

Alexander Grey

The Microscope Adventure

A Jim Lanning story



"May I Tell You a Story?"

BY DICK DUERKSEN



I got a phone call one day at the General Conference (GC). You know how the system works: Someone calls; if I'm not there, they leave a voicemail that I can check from wherever I happen to be."

Jim Lanning worked for the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, and he was seldom in his home office. Appointments took him all around the United States and into almost every country of the world. If you wanted to reach him, you called his office, left a voicemail, and waited.

"I called to check my messages almost every day," says Jim. "I'd just dial the voicemail number at the GC, enter my own extension, and then listen as the system played all the messages that had been left for me."

One week Jim had traveled to Seattle, Washington, clear across the United States from the General Conference headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, where he was to meet with some engineers at Boeing. One evening, before enjoying a great spaghetti dinner, Jim decided to check his messages. The first several voicemails were urgent, but easy to attend to. But one was different.

"It was a very long and rambling message that had been left for me by a woman named Susan Headley. She said she was calling from Leavenworth and then proceeded to go off on this long tale about a microscope that she had been hiding in her closet for many years. Her message just kept going on and on and on and on until she finally took a deep breath and then said, 'Please call me.' "

Unfortunately, that's when the voicemail timed out. Instead of hearing her recite her phone number, Jim heard an annoying beep.

"Call me," but no phone number!

AN AUDACIOUS MISSION

Remember, Jim was in Seattle, Washington, a very long way from his home office. And he didn't know anyone named Susan Headley! He'd never even heard of her.

A friend joined Jim for the spaghetti dinner, and Jim told him about the odd microscope call.

"The woman said that she lives in Leavenworth. Well, the only Leavenworth I know is a maximum-security prison the federal government runs in Kansas. Maybe she's a prisoner in Kansas or something!"

Both men laughed; then Jim's friend held up his hand.

"Wait. There's a Leavenworth in Washington! In fact, it's one of the most beautiful spots in the whole world! And it's up U.S. Route 2 on the other side of the Wenatchee Pass. Since you're at Boeing, you're just a couple hours' drive from Leavenworth. You ought to go up and find Susan Headley."

Jim started dreaming about a weekend field trip into Washington's mountains. "They have the best hanging flower baskets in the world," his friend had said. "And the road up over the pass is so beautiful . . ."

Jim chose Sabbath afternoon for the trip to Leavenworth, but had no idea how to find Susan, even if she lived there. Until he saw a post office mail truck parked at the side of the road.

I know this is going to sound a bit odd, but Jim drove over to the mail truck, got out of his rental car, and walked up to the delivery woman.

"May I ask you a crazy question?" The woman looked down at Jim and nodded an OK. "Do you know a woman named Susan Headley? I think maybe she lives here in Leavenworth."

"Sure do," the mail carrier said. "She's a great person. Lives right up that road. Would you like her address?"

SOMEONE MIGHT HAVE USE FOR IT

Jim drove to the address and knocked on the door.

"Hello. I'm Jim Lanning. You called me about a microscope."

Turns out that Susan had worked as a park ranger in several U.S. National Parks. She also was a Pathfinder Master Guide and a quiltmaker. She showed Jim a couple dozen of her favorite quilts, and then took him to the room where she kept her amazing rock, butterfly, and bird collections. There was so much to see!

"You called me about a microscope, ma'am," Jim reminded her.

"It's right here," she said, pointing toward an odd-shaped box on her kitchen table.

"I took the microscope home with me on the plane," Jim remembers. "Then I hauled it upstairs to my ADRA office and set it down beside my desk. I was only in the office for two or three weeks and was so busy I nearly forgot the microscope was even there."

Jim's office was a museum for medical equipment that had been given to ADRA. "Maybe you might be able to use this somewhere in the world," donors would say. Several times a year Jim would send container loads of equipment and supplies to small hospitals or clinics around the world.

His next international trip was scheduled for South America, where he would be visiting medical clinics in Peru and Bolivia. As he was leaving, his assistant said, "Jim, you ought to take the microscope with you. Someone down there might have a use for it."

"She boxed it up and even tied a cute little hemp rope handle on it. I took it with me on the plane."

Jim's very first stop was at a small Adventist clinic in Cochabamba, Bolivia. They did not have access to regular electrical power, so they were using a 12-volt battery to power the lights in their operating room. Jim was bringing them a portable generator that would provide regular electricity for the clinic.

"The day we arrived they were doing a biopsy on a woman who had been diagnosed with cancer. One of the nurses was literally in tears because their microscope had just broken, and they were not able to see the tissue biopsy they had just taken. The biopsy would show them whether they could do a lumpectomy or would have to perform a much more significant surgery. They were just beside themselves!"

Jim listened, then rushed out to the van, grabbed the odd-shaped box with the cute little rope handle, and sprinted back to the surgical rooms.

"I handed them the box and told the nurse to open it quickly. When she saw the microscope, she screamed for the doctor to come, and they both just stood there, completely overwhelmed! Susan's microscope was the same as their old one—exactly what they needed!"

The new generator kept the lights on, and the other supplies Jim brought helped the Cochabamba clinic provide hundreds of patients with quality care. Best of all, Susan's "perfectly on time" microscope (the one with the cute little rope handle hanging on the wall behind it) was busy saving lives every day.

"I am compelled to believe in God's leading," says Jim. "Especially when I think of all the things He had to fit together, each at just at the right time, for me and that microscope to arrive in Cochabamba when we did. Yes! I am a believer!"

Dick Duerksen, a pastor and storyteller, lives in **Portland, Oregon, United States**.

Adventist World

Publisher
The *Adventist World*, an international periodical of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The General Conference, Northern Asia-Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists®, is the publisher.

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Adventist World is published monthly and printed simultaneously in Korea, Brazil, Indonesia, Australia, Germany, Austria, Argentina, Mexico, South Africa, and the United States.

Vol. 21, No. 5

Seventh-day Adventist® Church



Sing for My Baby

One nurse's unexpected witness

Whaaaa! Whaaa! Whaaa. . . ."

The 3-month-old baby boy just wouldn't stop crying. His poor, frantic mother had tried everything at home. Now she had come to the emergency room for help.

The doctors did all kinds of tests, but couldn't find anything wrong with "The Screamer," as everyone called him. All day he kept screaming. The doctors were upset. The nurses were upset. The patients in the hospital were upset. But they couldn't get him to stop.

That evening a new group of nurses came on duty. This was a public hospital in a Middle Eastern country. Since there weren't enough nurses, they had been recruiting people from other countries. One of the nurses who came on duty that night was a Seventh-day Adventist.

As the nurse walked into the hospital, she could tell instantly that something was wrong. Everyone was upset and tense. Ear-splitting screaming was echoing up and down the halls. "What's wrong?" she asked one of the nurses who was going off duty.

"Oh, nothing's wrong! Except that we are all going deaf, the patients can't sleep, and nobody knows what to do, because there isn't anything wrong with that baby boy. He just won't stop screaming."

Our nurse quietly went about her duties and then walked into the room where the baby was screaming, and the poor, terrified mother was wringing her hands and wiping tears from her eyes as she watched her baby and all the angry workers. Our nurse picked him up and tried to pat him and jiggle him. Nothing worked. He kept screaming.

Then, without thinking, she began to hum a song she used to hum to her children. She didn't say anything, just hummed, but in her mind the words were going round and round: "Jesus loves me, this I know." Suddenly the baby stopped crying.

The nurse stopped humming in surprise, and immediately the baby began to scream again. She started humming, and he stopped. So all night long she carried the baby around as she did her other work and kept humming softly to him.

The next morning, as the day shift came back to work, everyone was whispering. Finally, one of the nurses came up to the Adventist nurse and said, "What did you do, anyway? That baby screamed all day yesterday, and they said he was quiet with you all night."

Our nurse didn't know what to say. She just smiled and shrugged her shoulders and said, "I hope he will be quiet for you today." But he wasn't. When she came back on duty that night, the frazzled nurses and doctors said he had screamed all day long. Our nurse picked him up and began humming. Instantly he got quiet and was quiet all night—as long as she kept humming "Jesus Loves Me" to him.

The next morning the doctors decided to send the baby and mother home. They couldn't find anything wrong with him, and they couldn't have him around the hospital screaming all the time. The frantic mother came to our nurse just before she went off duty and pleaded, "What am I going to do? My husband will be angry and divorce me if I come home with this baby screaming. But I have noticed that you hum to him and he gets quiet. Here is my phone. Would you sing that song into my phone so I can play

Illustration: Mugi Kinoshita

BY HOMER TRECARTIN





Bible Treasure

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16, NIV).

it for him at home and maybe keep him quiet?"

Now our nurse was afraid. You see, in the country in which our nurse worked, it is illegal tell people about Jesus or talk about Christianity. And the baby's father was a policeman! What should she do? But the mother begged and pleaded, and finally our nurse took the phone back into the corner of a closet and sang softly, "Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so . . ."

Then with great fear she gave the phone back to the mother and left the hospital. Instead of sleeping, she stayed up all day praying. She was sure that any minute the police would come to her door and arrest her. Maybe they would put her in prison or worse! Maybe they would just send her back home. But she was sure she was going to be in trouble.

That evening she peeked outside the door to see if anyone was waiting for her. They weren't, so she went out cautiously. She made it to work and started her shift. Nothing was said about it all night. The next morning there was no one waiting on her step to arrest her when she got home. In fact, day after day went by with no problem. Then weeks and months. Eventually she forgot all about it. Then one day, five years later, a mother with two children came into the hospital.

"Oh! Finally I have found you," the woman exclaimed excitedly. "I have searched all over the city, but you changed hospitals, and I couldn't find you till now. Do you remember me?"

Our nurse smiled a puzzled smile and said, "No, I am sorry. I don't remember you."

The mother nodded understandingly and said, "This is my little boy. He is 5 now, but he was 3 months old when I brought him into the hospital because he was screaming constantly."

"Oh, now I remember," our nurse said as her hands instinctively went up to her ears. Then, blushing a little, she reached out and patted him on the head and said, "He looks like a fine young man."

"Yes," the mother said, "he is wonderful. And it's all because of that song you sang into my phone for me. But now I have a problem. I lost that phone. Would you sing it again into my phone so I can play it to him and his little sister?"

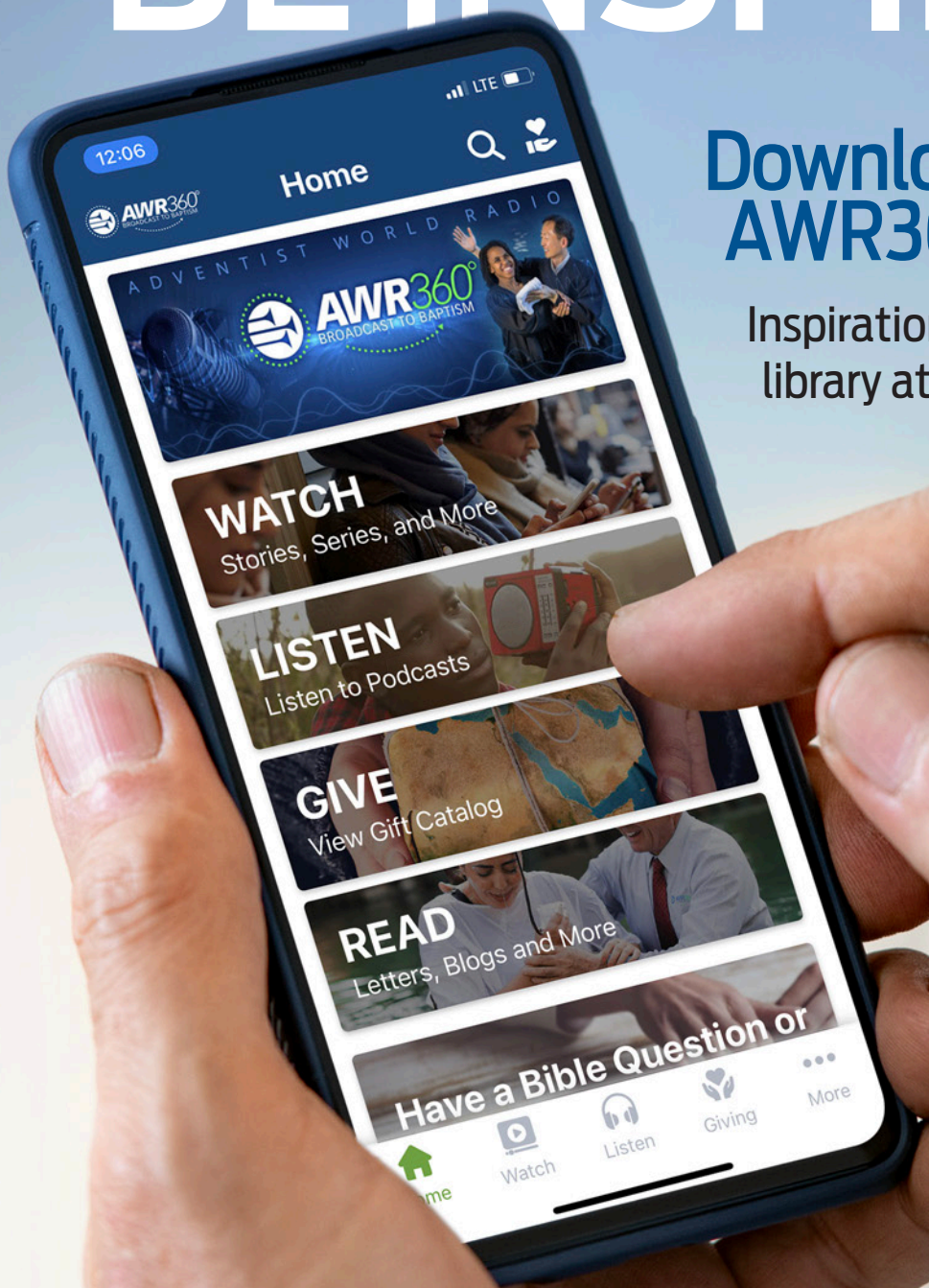
This time our nurse smiled and said she would be glad to. She knew it was still illegal, but she took the phone, went into a closet, and sang "Jesus Loves Me." Then she added, "Jesus Loves the Little Children."

It gives me goosebumps to think that for several years now, a policeman's children growing up in a Muslim country have been listening to songs about Jesus loving them, the Bible telling them, and Jesus loving little children all over the world no matter who they are!

The nurse wasn't a pastor or an evangelist. She didn't build churches or give Bible studies. She just quietly and courageously let her light shine through whatever situations God allowed to come to her. I believe there will be children, mothers, and even policemen in heaven as a result.

Homer Trecartin is a retired pastor, teacher, administrator, and missionary.

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