

CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter of the ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA CONFERENCE
of Seventh-day Adventists

Baton Rouge 5th Annual Blessing of the Graduates

On Sabbath, May 30, the Baton Rouge Seventh-day Adventist Church held its 5th annual Blessing of the Graduates, honoring eleven students representing PreK-4, Kindergarten, Eighth Grade, High School, Bachelor's, and Master's degree programs. The graduates, dressed in full academic regalia, entered the sanctuary to *Pomp and Circumstance* under the leadership of Dr. Laurence Henry, PhD, who served as Grand Marshal.

The message for the service, "Take My Life & Let It Be," was delivered by Pastor Chester Readus, encouraging graduates to dedicate their gifts, plans, and future paths to the Lord. A sacred moment followed as each graduate was individually prayed over and anointed by the elders, led by Head Elder Ricky Rowe, symbolizing the church's commitment to covering them in spiritual support as they move into the next phase of life.

Graduates contributed meaningfully throughout the service:

- Fletcher Broussard (Bachelor's Degree) – Announcements
- Alain Belizaire (PreK-4) – Children's Story
- Allen Otieno (Kindergarten) – Special Music
- Claude Simmons III (High School) – Offering Appeal
- DaMarcus Lofton (High School) – Benediction
- Desmond Kangah (Master's Degree, Engineering) – Ministry of Prayer
- Austin Harris (Master's Degree, Musical Composition) – Scripture Reading
- Additional honorees included:
- Valerie Peña (High School)
- Iker Ramos (8th Grade, Jones Creek Adventist Academy)
- Jacob Schriever (8th Grade, Jones Creek Adventist Academy)
- Jassir Espinal (8th Grade, Jones Creek Adventist Academy)

This year's service was a meaningful celebration of achievement, faith, and dedication. Through prayer, anointing, and worship, the congregation affirmed each graduate and asked God to guide their steps, strengthen their character, and bless their continued educational and spiritual journey.

~ Submitted by Tracy Francis



INDEPENDENCE DAY BAPTISMS



July 4, 2026 was a special day for the congregation at Shreveport First Seventh-day Adventist Church. Not because it was the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, but because there were three baptisms performed by interim pastor, Tom Patzer. Shreveport First welcomed new members Sam and Carol Park and Chris Silvertooth.

Carol Park had been baptized several years ago while living in California. After she and Sam settled in the Shreveport area, they attended Shreveport First for a little while, then stopped. But Carol knew she needed to return. Several months ago, she and Sam returned to Shreveport First and decided to join the congregation. Carol announced her decision to be re-baptized and was delighted when Sam declared that he would be baptized. Their baptismal studies were supervised by Tina Pride, a long-time member of Shreveport First.

Chris Silvertooth always looked up to his grandmother and admired her faith. Chris reached a point in his life when he knew he needed to be part of a church family. He looked to the Adventist church because it was the church to which his grandmother had belonged. Studies on his own led him to attend Shreveport First. There he met Tom Patzer who was serving as the interim pastor. Elder Patzer worked with Chris through Chris's baptismal studies.

Shreveport First warmly welcomed the new members. Each was given their own Ellen White Conflict of the Ages set to remember their baptism.

~ Submitted by Stacey Williams

Singing in heaven...and Yellville!

In the early evening, on July 12, 2026, the Yellville SDA Church held a baptism in Bull Shoals Lake near Yellville. There was a large group of church members in attendance and Jennie Sanchez was baptized in the lake with family and friends looking on. Afterward all were invited to enjoy light refreshments and singing in a church member's lake home of. All were blessed!



~ Submitted by
email from the
Ranger's Wife



Baby Dedication

On June 27, 2026, our Texarkana church family and friends were blessed and privileged to witness the dedication of baby Anastasia, presented by her wonderful parents, Cody and Karson Reynolds. Also present was her big brother, Kaysen. Elder Mike Sowers conducted the ceremony, and afterward everyone had the opportunity to meet and greet the newest addition to the Reynolds family.

~ Submitted by David Hudson



**The Lord bless you
and keep you;**

the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.



Numbers 6:24-26 · NIV
bibleinspire.com



Fill My Cup, Lord: Anointing Service in Slidell, LA

On July 4, 2026, during the divine service, Slidell Church had a special Anointing Service. We gathered to seek a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon our lives.

Every day we need a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit. Don't settle for an empty plate, come to God and let Him fill your plate to overflowing with His love, His peace, His power, and His presence.

~ Submitted by Pastor Jerson Sical



WE HAD A BLAST THIS SUMMER!

After a successful Summer Blast event in Bogalusa, Louisiana, June 21-27, many gave their hearts to the Lord! Pastor Jerson Sical of Bogalusa and guest pastor, Kojo Twumasi, shared inspiring messages and lots of fun activities for the community's children and parents alike! Free toiletries were given away, prizes were given and a wonderful time was had by all. Best of all, many came to know Jesus Christ and the truths that were shared.

A few weeks later, the blast moved to northwest Arkansas. On July 12-18, friends, faith and fun collided at the Bentonville SDA Church's Summer Blast! The community was invited to



come out to bring the kids (ages 4-12) for a night packed with games, music, prizes, and a short encouraging spiritual message.

Everything about both events was FREE. And every night in Bentonville also ended with a giveaway — including such items as fuel cards and Wal-Mart gift cards, sneakers, school supplies, toys, laundry supplies, a Visa Gift card and Groceries. Something for everyone. The kids were entertained while the parents enjoyed a bible study.

By the end of the week, God blessed with more than 1,000 guests who visited the church. It was a joy to demonstrate Christ's compassion to the community while sharing the life-changing message of salvation. Again, God used Pastor Kojo Twumasi, to preach His Word. Here, 35 precious souls made the decision to surrender their lives to Jesus.



Please continue to pray for Bogalusa and Bentonville as they disciple these new believers and continue reaching their community with the love and hope of Christ. May God continue to richly bless this congregation and use them for His kingdom.

~ Frances Alcorn with Leonardo Melendez



DIRECTORS ACHIEVE DOCTORATES

Within the short space of about a month, two of our directors who serve at the conference office have been named as doctors—Tim Kripps and Leonardo Melendez.

Education Director Tim Kripps has just earned his Ed.D. (Doctor of Education) in Educational Leadership. His doctoral research focused on improving communication between school administrators, parents, students, and other stakeholders, using Ozark Adventist Academy as the case study to develop practical recommendations for strengthening school-community relationships. After two and a half years of diligent study and relevant projects, Tim successfully defended his dissertation online before the board of Liberty University on June 18. Tim graduated with High Distinction for having a 4.0 GPA. His degree was conferred on June 25, 2026. For Tim it was a humbling and rewarding milestone—not just a personal accomplishment, but as preparation to better serve God, the ARKLA Conference and the schools entrusted to our care. The knowledge, research and leadership skills he gained have strengthened his ability to make thoughtful decisions, solve complex challenges, and provide stronger support for our educators, students, and school leaders. He hopes that the things he has learned will ultimately contribute to the continued growth and excellence of Christian education throughout our conference.



More recently, at noon on Wednesday, July 22, Pastor Leonardo Melendez, Conference Evangelism Director, successfully defended his Doctor of Ministry dissertation at Andrews University through a similar zoom meeting. After six years of study, perseverance, and God's abundant grace, he reached this milestone, and we were all pleased to celebrate with him as he received his D.Min. His doctoral research, "Preparing Church Leaders for the Ministry of Spiritual Warfare in the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference," reflects his passion for equipping leaders and strengthening ministry throughout our territory—an area with which he is very familiar and in which he excels.

Both men are grateful to God for His faithfulness throughout their separate journeys. As Tim stated, "Completing a doctoral program required countless hours of study, research, and writing, and I know I could not have accomplished it in my own strength. God provided the wisdom, endurance and guidance I needed every step of

the way. 'For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.' (Proverbs 2:6)"

In addition, Leonardo expressed that it has been an incredible privilege to journey through this Leadership cohort, learning alongside outstanding professors and classmates. He could not have done it without the support of friends, family and the administration of this Conference who believed in him and encouraged him every step of the way. He believes this step will lead him into more practical ministry for our conference and contribute to the advancement of God's mission.

May the Lord continue to bless both men with wisdom, strength, and grace as they serve and share the gospel in their respective roles within the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference.

Our heartfelt congratulations to Drs. Melendez and Kripps!



HEALTH CORNER

Health Ministries / Health Evangelism


ARKLA
 ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA
 CONFERENCE
OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS


amen
Adventist Medical
Evangelism Network



ONE MONTH *to go!*



**FREE MEDICAL, DENTAL
& VISION CLINIC**
**STARTING FRIDAY,
AUGUST 28, 2026**

 **MEDICAL**
 **DENTAL**
 **VISION**


**AUGUST
28-30, 2026**


THE JONES CENTER
 922 E. Emma Ave.
 Springdale, AR 72764


amen
Adventist Medical
Evangelism Network


You can still volunteer!
 Sign up today at:
[https://amenfreeclinic.org/
upcoming-clinics/](https://amenfreeclinic.org/upcoming-clinics/)

**USE YOUR SKILLS.
CHANGE LIVES.
MAKE AN ETERNAL IMPACT.**
Be part of an incredible team of volunteers
bringing healing, hope, and the love of Christ
to those in need.

*Sharing the **LOVE OF CHRIST** through health and hope!*


 For more information, please contact
Dr. Marjorie Belizaire,
 ARKLAC Health Evangelism Director
mbelizaire@arklac.org


 Seventh-day
 Adventist Church
 ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA
 CONFERENCE

*"Freely you have
received; freely give."*
 — Matthew 10:8


BE THE HANDS AND FEET OF JESUS—SERVE WITH US!

We are just a little less than a month away from our FREE Community Health Clinic with AMEN to be held at The Jones Center in Springdale, AR on August 28-30. If you are a doctor, dentist, or optometrist/ophthalmologist, nurse, or just a person with time and a kind heart, we can still use volunteers during this event. Sign up now! And if you cannot commit to being there on those dates (and even if you can), please keep this event in prayer. We have already embarked on a 30-days of Prayer Campaign so we will be praying for God to be with us in all the details, in the hearts of the helpers, the healers and those coming to be helped. We will be praying right up until the day the event happens. So please join us as we petition our Heavenly Father for this event. If you need to know what we are specifically praying for on any given day, go to the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference Facebook page — it will be posted daily.

And then, the next big event that is coming up is our Conference-wide Step Challenge, from September 13 through October 4. This has been so much fun the past couple of years that we just want to keep it up, and we are looking forward to everyone's cooperation in a little "healthy" competition as we embark on the 2026 challenge "Miles for the Master." We will be using the Movezengo app, so you can go ahead and get that installed and be familiar with it. We look forward to seeing everyone getting those steps in together!


**ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA
CONFERENCE**



SAVE *the* DATE!



 **Moving our bodies.**
 **Sharing our faith.**
 **Transforming communities.**

SEPTEMBER 13 – OCTOBER 4, 2026




MILES *for the* MASTER

A CONFERENCE-WIDE STEP CHALLENGE!
 Using the **Movezengo** app

**Come and be blessed,
GRAB A FRIEND!**


 For more questions
 please contact:

Dr. Marjorie Belizaire
 Health Ministries/health evangelism director
mbelizaire@arklac.org

TAKE CONTROL OF
WHAT I SAY, O LORD,
AND GUARD MY LIPS.
PSALMS 141:3



CHURCH OFFICERS TRAINING

UNITED THROUGH DISCIPLESHIP

August 15 (LA) & August 29 (NWA)

Time: 3:00 PM



SABBATH SCHOOL



PERSONAL MINISTRIES



TREASURY



CHURCH CLERK



HEALTH MINISTRIES



CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES



DEACONS & DEACONESSES



ELDERS



PRAYER MINISTRIES



HEALTH MINISTRIES

Training sessions will be in both English and Spanish. This training is essential for all church officers and ministry leaders who desire to grow, lead effectively and make an impact in their local church. The first training will be held in Louisiana at the New Orleans First Church. More details will follow.

In Memory of ...



Pastor Eugene "Gene" E. Johnson, age 93, a former pastor in the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference, passed away peacefully on July 5, 2026, at Essentia Health—St. Joseph's Medical Center in Brainerd, Minnesota.

Gene was born on November 2, 1932, in Brainerd, Minnesota, the firstborn son of Walter and Margaret (Berg) Johnson.

After graduating from Brainerd High School in 1950, Gene attended Union Adventist University in Lincoln, Nebraska, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Religion with minors in History and Elementary Education.

Following his education, Gene answered God's call to ministry and was ordained as a Seventh-day Adventist pastor. During a remarkable 60 years of ministry, he faithfully pastored more than 20 congregations and led evangelistic meetings in Russia and Hungary, sharing the message of God's love and salvation with countless people.

Gene was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Rose Evelyn (Drake) Johnson; his parents, Walter and Margaret Johnson; and his brother, Leo Johnson.

He is survived by his brother, James Johnson (Linda); his sister, Mary Anderson (Dean); and his four children: Mitchell Johnson (Nilsa), Richard Johnson, Renee Johnson, and Milton Johnson (Rebecca).

He was the proud grandfather of eight grandchildren: Megan Hogan (Patrick), Melody Edwards (Nate), Dr. Lance Johnson (Jennifer), Tyler Johnson, Rachel Manahane (Colton), Frank Wyman, Dawson Wyman, and Margaret Wyman.

Gene was also blessed with seven great-grandchildren: Harper Malaphonh, Pearson Hogan, Leighton Hogan, Mae Edwards, Ruby Edwards, Hunter Stonich, and, Brooke Stonich.

Gene will be remembered for his unwavering faith, kind heart, gentle spirit, and genuine love for others. He lived a life of quiet service, always seeking to share God's love through his words, his actions, and the relationships he built over a lifetime of ministry.

Gene will be deeply missed by his loving family, many dear friends, and the countless members of the congregations he faithfully served throughout his long ministry.

A memorial service celebrating Gene's life was held on Friday, July 24, 2026 at the Brainerd Seventh-day Adventist Church with interment at Evergreen Memorial Gardens.

All who knew and loved Gene are warmly invited to join the family as we celebrate a life devoted to faith, family, and service, and rejoice in the blessed hope of Christ's promised return.

"Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord." — Matthew 25:23

Bonnerdale SDA Church

120

CELEBRATE LUCKY!

Honoring Our Past • Building Our Future

Sabbath, September 5, 2026

Breakfast at 9:00 AM

Service starting at 10:00 AM

Guest Speaker: Pastor Ryan Long at 11:00 AM

Bonnerdale SDA Church - Lucky, AR - An Historic Community



First Church Built
in 1904



School House
Established in 1908



1912 24 Students

Join us as we honor our rich heritage, celebrate our faith,
and look forward to years ahead!

Facebook: Bonnerdale Ark. Adventist Church & CrossRoads Friends
Don't miss this historical event — a long time 'til the next one!!

PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY SUMMIT 2026

AWAKE TO THE TIME, FAITHFUL TO THE TRUTH

NOVEMBER 6-8, 2026

KEENE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
114 S FAIRVIEW ST | KEENE 76059

FEATURED SPEAKERS



**DEDRICK L.
BLUE**

SENIOR PASTOR OF SEABROOK
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH IN LANHAM, MARYLAND



**ROBERT
COSTA**

GENERAL CONFERENCE
MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATE SECRETARY



FOR INFORMATION VISIT [SOUTHWESTERNADVENTIST.ORG](https://southwesternadventist.org) | SCAN QR CODE TO REGISTER

Seventh-day
Adventist Church
SOUTHWESTERN UNION

EN LA FAMILIA



Mas información: Juliana Mercado
318-361-6240 Ext 115 o
jmercado@arklac.org

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Women's
MINISTRIES

SEPT

27, 2026

🕒 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

UNITED THROUGH DISCIPLESHIP

Pastor

Tony Anobile
Vice President for Ministerial,
Southwestern Union Conference

Pastor

Daniel Hall
Compassion Ministry Coordinator, South
Atlantic Regional Conference

Pastor

Kojo Tsumani
Evangelism Director, Ohio
Conference

Pastor

Leonardo Melendez
Church Ministries & Evangelism Director,
Arkansas-Louisiana Conference

2026

ELDER CERTIFICATION



Seventh-day
Adventist Church
ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA CONFERENCE



LOCATION: ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA CONFERENCE OFFICE

Our Elder Certification Trainings have been highly successful in the past and you all have asked for more. Well, more is coming. This will be Certification Training #5 and it is happening at the end of next month in Shreveport. If you have not signed up yet, what are you waiting for? We look forward to seeing you there.

AUGUST 2026

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference Events



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
2	3	4	5	6 Master Guide Day	7	8
	SEUC: Union Teacher's Conference (Frisco)					
	Prayer Zoom 7pm					
9	10	11 Pastors' "Check up" Zoom call @ 10:00 am BOE / OAA Board Zoom	12	13	14	15 Church Officer / Leadership Training LA 3pm
16	17 School Begins Prayer Zoom 7pm	18 Pastoral Development Mtg. 9am Shreveport	19	20	21	22
23	24 Prayer Zoom 7pm	25	26	27	28	29 NAD: "End It Now" Abuse Day Sabbath Church Officer / Leadership Training NW ARK 3pm AMEN Health Clinic in ARK
30 AMEN Health Clinic in ARK	31 Prayer Zoom 7pm					

2026 EVENT LIST

FOR CHURCHES IN THE ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA CONFERENCE

AUGUST

- Aug 3-6SWUC: Union Teachers' Conference (Frisco)
- Aug 6 Master Guide Day
- Aug 11 Pastors "Check Up" Zoom call at 10:00 am
- Aug 11 BOE/OAA Board Zoom
- Aug 15 Church Officer/Leadership Training—Louisiana at 3 pm
- Aug 17 School Begins
- Aug 18 Pastoral Development Meeting in Shreveport at 9 am
- Aug 28-30 AMEN Health Clinic in Arkansas
- Aug 29 "End It Now" Abuse Day Sabbath
- Aug 29 Church Officer/Leadership Training—NW AR at 3 pm



SEPTEMBER

- Sep 1 S LA Ministers Meeting at 9 am
- Sep 3 ARKLA Executive Committee Meeting
- Sep 4-6 **Campamento familiar de Espanol en CYB**
- Sep 7 Office Closed—Labor Day Holiday
- Sep 8 Shreveport Area Ministers' Meeting at 9 am
- Sep 11-13 Club Ministry Leadership Meeting @ CYB
- Sep 12 Family Ministries: Family Togetherness Day of Prayer
- Sep 13-Oct 4 Conference-wide Step Challenge (Health Ministries)
- Sep 14-16 Adventist Risk Management
- Sep 18-20 SWUC Women's Ministries Retreat (Frisco)
- Sep 25-26 **FESJA Arkansas (para toda la conferencia) @ CYB**
- Sep 27 Elders Certification Training #5—Shreveport 9 am

OCTOBER

- Oct 1-4 Union Camporee at Lake Whitney
- Oct 10-17 English Evangelism Caravan
- Oct 13 Pastoral Development Meeting at 9:00 am in Shreveport
- Oct 14 Board of Education / OAA Board zoom meeting
- Oct 15 Ozark Adventist Academy Gala
- Oct 16-17 OAA Alumni Weekend
- Oct 20 Health Ministries Mental Health "Staff Day"
- Oct 22 Central Arkansas Ministers Meeting 9am
- Oct 24-31 English Evangelism "Compassion Caravan"
- Oct 27 Elder's Certification #5 in Shreveport
- Oct 29 NW Arkansas Ministers Meeting 9am
- Oct 29-Nov 3 NAD Year End Meetings in Columbia, Maryland

OUR HOURS

Our office hours are from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Thursday. We are closed on Fridays. Our office workers put in full-time hours; and the officers and department directors are often on the road serving our churches

and communities over the weekend. So if you can't reach us during our normal working hours, please leave a message, or email: info@arklac.org We continuously keep you all in our prayers.

(We meet each day for worship, so let us know if you have special needs and we will gladly add you to our prayer list.) God bless you all!

NOVEMBER

- Nov 1 Daylight Savings Time Ends
- Nov 6-7 Blended Families Regional Weekend in Arkansas
- Nov 6-8 PARL (Public Affairs Religious Liberty) Summit in Keene, TX
- Nov 8 Sabbath School / Personal Ministries Certification, Shreveport
- Nov 9 S. LA Ministers Feedback at 9:00 am
- Nov 10 Shreveport Ministers Feedback at 9:00 am
- Nov 11 Central AR Ministers Feedback at 9:00 am
- Nov 12 NW AR Ministers Feedback at 9:00 am
- Nov 13-14 Master Guide University, AR
- Nov 13-14 FRONTLINE: Youth/YA Training Cohort in NW Arkansas

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference of SDA
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<https://www.facebook.com/arklac/>