

HERALD

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OCTOBER 2026



Motivated by Mission



UChicago Medicine

 **Advent Health**

“There are rare Christians whose very presence incites others to be better Christians.” — A.W. Tozer

When Gary Burns told me, “If you ever need anything, anything — and I mean this, I’m serious — let me know,” I remember thinking it was a kind thing to say.

People say things like that all the time.

But Gary paused, our eyes locked and he repeated, “I’m serious.”

Over time, I learned that he was indeed serious.

Gary passed away in August. He had been the Lake Union Herald editor before me and was instrumental in recruiting me for the position, first to work alongside him and then succeed him. He was the kind of person whose faith was most evident in how he treated people. There was a gentleness about him, a warm smile, a twinkle in his eye, and a willingness to make room for others.

In February 2006, Gary wrote in the Herald: “To be in partnership with God demands we be in partnership with one another,” describing a relationship in which, through God’s Spirit, “we bear one another’s burdens in truth and love.”

Gary wasn’t interested in drawing attention to himself. He looked beyond himself, beyond age, background or status — even if they disagreed with him on an issue — and saw people who needed encouragement, prayer or simply someone willing to listen.

I watched him read letters from our dear Herald readers, some he had known professionally but also some he’d never met, including people in prison and others walking through painful seasons. He did not merely read their words and move on. He wrote back. Sometimes he visited them and prayed with them.

That was Gary.

As I think about what he taught me, I realize some of his most enduring lessons were not about the church and communication. He reminded me that the key indicator of one’s commitment to Christ is not relegated to how many of the 28 Fundamentals we can recite or how quickly we can thumb through the Bible to find the book of Ezra or the level of our spiritual gifts. It is found in the gentle and kind response to our fellow man, especially those considered the “least of these,” which when we think about it is showing the face of Jesus. Gary modeled what it meant to be present, to carry another person’s burden and in so doing, he fulfilled the law of Christ.

Rest easy, gentle warrior. Until that great gettin’ up mornin’.

Debbie

► Gary, along with his beloved wife MaryAnn, before she passed away in 2020.



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TELLING THE STORIES OF WHAT GOD IS DOING IN THE LIVES OF HIS PEOPLE

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Motivated by Mission

At UChicago Medicine AdventHealth, our mission is not a sentence on a wall. It is something we live. Across our four hospitals and medical group in the Chicago suburbs, I see it every day in the care, commitment and quiet strength of team members who show up for our neighbors. Their work often arrives in small moments: a hand held, a prayer offered, a family comforted. But those moments are sacred. They shape trust, they carry hope and they remind us why we are here.



UChicago Medicine AdventHealth

▲ DR. MONICA REED

This year, we have embraced a simple theme: Motivated by Mission. For me, the question underneath it is the one that has always defined this work. What does it truly mean to extend the healing ministry of Christ? It means staying rooted in a purpose larger than any one role, department or hospital. And it means remembering whose character we are called to reflect.

Jesus was a beacon of hope and a beacon of light. He moved toward people in need and he met them with compassion and care. That is who we are called to be, not only inside our walls, but wherever people are hurting. Our Mission Integration Pillars — Missional Leadership, Wholehearted Teams, Whole-Person Care, Community and Environment — give us a clear path to become that kind of presence. They keep us centered on our purpose, our team and the communities we are called to serve.

Reflecting Christ is intentional work, and it begins with our own people. We cannot pour out what we have not first received. So, we care for the hearts of our team members, forming missional leaders who go the extra mile and creating a culture where people feel seen, supported and encouraged. When our team is whole, that wholeness flows outward to everyone we touch.

From there, the light reaches beyond our walls. Healing does not begin only when a patient walks through our doors. On the pages that follow, you will see it take many forms. You will read about team

members bringing comfort to families experiencing unimaginable loss through our Still Missed program. You will meet Spiritual Ambassadors tending to the spirits of their colleagues. You will see our teams carry care into the community through screenings, food pantries and outreach that reach neighbors who too often lack access to care.

At first glance, these stories may seem different. Yet they are held together by one conviction: we are called to be a beacon of hope for those who are overlooked and underserved, bringing the compassion of Christ to people who have nowhere else to turn. This is what it means to be the healing presence of Jesus in our communities, not a mission we talk about, but a mission we embody.

I believe this is one of the greatest gifts of our calling. When we choose to be that light for our neighbors, offering hope to the discouraged and dignity to every person, we discover that same wholeness within ourselves. We leave each day changed by the people we have served, grateful for the privilege of serving them.

That is our aim within our four hospitals and medical group — to extend the healing ministry of Christ far beyond the walls of any hospital, beginning with our own team and reaching every community we are blessed to serve. This is what it truly means to be motivated by mission. ■

Dr. Monica Reed, MD, is president and CEO of UChicago Medicine AdventHealth.

...WE ARE CALLED TO BE A BEACON OF
HOPE FOR THOSE WHO ARE OVERLOOKED
AND UNDERSERVED, BRINGING THE
COMPASSION OF CHRIST TO PEOPLE WHO
HAVE NOWHERE ELSE TO TURN.



Connecting Communities to Drive Better Health

For an uninsured woman, a breast screening can mean a \$300 bill — quadruple the cost of just a few years ago. Across the Great Lakes Region, UChicago Medicine AdventHealth hospitals are partnering with community organizations to create better access to care and health education for those who need it most.

Open Arms, started in mid-June by UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Hinsdale, covers the cost of screening and diagnostic mammograms, breast ultrasounds, breast MRIs and breast biopsies for low-income women. It is one of several outreach

initiatives that Hinsdale, La Grange and their sister hospitals in Glendale Heights and Bolingbrook are using to help bring healthcare — particularly preventive care — into their communities.

“You can’t imagine what this means for women in our community,” says Jennifer Swoyer, DO, chief medical officer of Pillars Community Health, which provides healthcare to low-income people. “This is amazing. It meets such an important need.”

The hospital foundations also provide funding for Open Arms and last year they invested \$522,000 in these programs.

“They’re truly committed to helping the community be healthy,” Swoyer says.

The outreach programs are carefully selected. Every three years, each hospital reviews local health data for the area they serve, then works with local agencies to identify the biggest health problems in its community. “Conducting a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) is an IRS requirement for nonprofit hospitals, but AdventHealth takes it seriously,” says Fabiola Zavala, director for community advocacy for the AdventHealth Great Lakes Region “It’s more than checking a box.”

The hospitals work closely with local health departments, social services and community organizations to identify social issues that impact health but may not be commonly addressed.



▲ UChicago Medicine AdventHealth team members providing diabetes screenings at the food pantry at Family in Faith Church.

Five years ago, UChicago Medicine AdventHealth La Grange started working with Pillars Community Health to address an issue not normally considered by hospitals: Where do people who lack stable housing go to recover after hospitalization for surgery or intense treatments?

The hospital provided a community nurse case manager to help identify patients who lack stable housing and connect them with community resources. That position still exists today, but the program has since grown into an 18-bed medical respite unit and healthcare clinic. In addition to providing financial support, family medicine physicians in the hospital's residency program staff the clinic. They see more than 350 patients a year.

Sometimes the outreach programs aren't as visible as a building, but they can be equally powerful. Through its CHNA, UChicago Medicine AdventHealth GlenOak identified diabetes as a pressing community issue. The hospital developed a diabetes education and screening program — with a twist.

Rather than providing the program in doctors' offices or the hospital, they partnered with community organizations to screen and educate people at established events. The team goes quarterly to the food pantry at Family in Faith Church to screen clients with a simple finger prick to measure their A1c levels, an indicator of diabetes. If the results indicate prediabetes or diabetes, they provide education and connect the person to DuPage Health Coalition for care.

"If we go to a trusted organization with an established relationship with the people we're trying to reach, they are much more likely to trust us and engage with us," Zavala says. "Knowing this is such a big need, we want to reach the most vulnerable."

Zavala's team uses data from the Social Vulnerability Index to target their outreach to the most vulnerable communities. Of the 27 people screened this year, seven were identified as having diabetes, with two of those at critical levels. Importantly, 13 were identified as being prediabetic, a stage where lifestyle changes can prevent the onset of diabetes.

Diabetes is the most expensive chronic health condition in the country, accounting for \$1 out of every \$4 of healthcare costs. Without early identification and control, it can result in amputation,

blindness, heart disease and stroke. More than half of all healthcare expenses for people with diabetes are to treat complications, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The outreach teams sometimes have to adapt to real-world circumstances to fulfill their mission. During a time of intense immigration scrutiny in the community, people were afraid to get out of their cars to go into the food pantry, so Zavala and her team used a golf cart provided by the Village of Glendale Heights police department to pull up to residents' cars and provide screenings.

"We're always innovating to see how we can get information to more people and to get more people screened," she says.

UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Bolingbrook has partnered with community organizations to host a whole-person wellness workshop and eight community outreach events featuring interactive activities focused on nutrition and physical activity that reached more than 900 residents.

The four hospitals also have developed a social media campaign addressing mental health, which has garnered over 1,000 engagements. They also are continuing work to assess inpatients and emergency department patients for social issues — from transportation challenges to food insecurity — and connect them with community resources to address those needs.

"Our mission is to address a person's whole health, and that includes factors other than traditional medical services," Zavala says. "Through community benefit, we have an opportunity to invest in interventions that improve health outcomes, address needs earlier and reduce avoidable hospital and emergency room use." ■

Michele Conklin is a writer for AdventHealth.



▲ The Family in Faith Church neighborhood food market.

UChicago Medicine AdventHealth

Helping Families Feel Whole After Loss

HOW “STILL MISSED” PROGRAM BRINGS HOPE, HEALING AND COMMUNITY

For parents who experience the heartbreak of miscarriage, stillbirth, or the loss of an infant, the grief can feel isolating and overwhelming. Through its Still Missed perinatal bereavement program, UChicago Medicine AdventHealth is helping families find support, connection and hope through whole-person care.

The Still Missed program provides support for families who have experienced miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, stillbirth, neonatal loss or the death of an infant up to one year of age. Through monthly group meetings, memorial events, one-on-one outreach and ongoing follow-up, Still Missed helps families navigate one of life's most difficult journeys.

Grounded in UChicago Medicine AdventHealth's commitment to whole-person care, the program recognizes that healing after pregnancy and infant loss extends beyond physical recovery. Families often need emotional support, spiritual encouragement and opportunities to remember and honor their babies.

“People often ask me what has kept me at AdventHealth for my entire career,” said Sharon Bowers, perinatal bereavement coordinator for the Still Missed program. “Nothing is more valuable to me than not only providing patients with physical care, but also caring for their emotional, mental and spiritual well-being.”

For Bowers, caring for grieving families is both a calling and a ministry.

A nurse at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Hinsdale for 37 years, Bowers spent much of her career caring for mothers and newborns before taking on leadership of the bereavement program

eight years ago. Initially hesitant to step into such emotionally challenging work, she said her faith guided her decision.

“God had different plans,” Bowers said. “He promised to help me care for these grieving families and over the years I have made some of the most beautiful relationships with them.”

Today, Bowers coordinates a comprehensive support system that extends across all four UChicago Medicine AdventHealth hospitals — Bolingbrook, GlenOaks, Hinsdale and La Grange. Physicians, nurses, chaplains and social workers work together to support families experiencing loss in emergency departments, labor and delivery units, mother-baby units, the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and other care settings.

Families experiencing loss receive a comfort-focused care bag containing items such as fuzzy socks, hand lotion, lip balm, a knitted prayer square and educational materials about loss and grief.

“We give these bags to show that we care and to bring a little sunshine into an otherwise dark day,” Bowers said.

Support continues long after families leave the hospital. The Still Missed team follows up with many parents for months afterward through phone calls, emails and handwritten notes of encouragement.



▲ Laura Nieland and her son, Ethan, 4, prepare to release a butterfly in honor of his twin, Rhys.

One of the program's cornerstones is its monthly support group, held on the second Monday of each month at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Hinsdale. Facilitated by Bowers and a hospital chaplain, the gathering provides a safe and welcoming environment where parents can share their experiences and receive support from others who have faced similar loss.

The support group and all memorial events are open to anyone who has experienced the loss of a baby, regardless of whether their care took place within UChicago Medicine AdventHealth. In fact, some families travel significant distances, including two families from Indiana who regularly participate.

Laura Nieland of Elmhurst has been part of the program for four years following the loss of Rhys, a twin son, who died one day after being born in March 2022.

"In the beginning, it was so important for me to go because I wanted to be around people who understood," Nieland said. "Being in a group of people who had been through the same thing made you feel less alone."

Nieland's participation in the group has evolved through the years. She now uses the time as a "celebration of Rhys" and to provide new members with the perspective of someone who has been where they are and understands what they're experiencing.

Rhys' surviving twin is Ethan, who spent 98 days in the NICU before coming home. Ethan has an older sister, Madelyn, 6, and now has a younger brother. Jack was born on March 27, 2026, and is known as a "rainbow baby," the next baby after a loss.

"God's blessing after a loss," Bowers said.

Among the most meaningful ways the program supports families is through its annual Butterfly Release, a community event that allows parents, siblings, grandparents and friends to honor their babies, acknowledge their grief and find comfort in community. Held each year in partnership with the Hinsdale Seventh-day Adventist Church, the event celebrates the lives of babies who were gone too soon.

This year's Butterfly Release, held in June, drew a record 337 attendees — the highest turnout in the event's 28-year history. The ceremony concluded with the reading of the names of 70 babies, ensuring each child was individually remembered and honored.

"Some parents come every year and their loss was over 15 years ago," Bowers said. "Others had a very recent loss. It is so good for them to know they are not alone."

The Butterfly Release is complemented by other annual remembrance events, including a burial service in July at Bronswood Cemetery for miscarried babies under 20 weeks gestation and a Baby Memorial Service in October. Together, these events provide meaningful opportunities for reflection, remembrance and healing.

The program also recently gained another valuable resource through the opening of the Butterfly Room in UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Hinsdale's new NICU. Generously donated by Janet and Randy Waring, the dedicated bereavement nursery offers families a peaceful, private space to spend precious time with their baby and say goodbye.

Bowers believes these acts of compassion are among the most important aspects of caregiving.

"Our patients remember more how they were treated during a heartbreaking time than how they were treated when everything went well and as expected," she said. "Caring for our patients in a loving way when their world has been turned upside down is being the hands and feet of Jesus." ■

Keith Hartenberger is senior manager for external communications at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth.



▲ Sharon Bowers (left), perinatal bereavement coordinator for the Still Missed program, is joined by Lynda Lentini (right), regional director of Nursing, Women's and Children's Services.





Holding the Ropes

ADVENTHEALTH'S MISSION INTEGRATION PILLARS

It took a group to hold the ropes — a collective that saw the crowds and decided to climb the roof to lower the paralytic man to Jesus' feet. At the height of Christ's ministry, when crowds gathered to hear Him speak, four men brought a paralytic to Jesus using an innovative method. That same spirit of purpose shapes AdventHealth's Mission Integration Pillars, which helps every team member support people in ways that are compassionate, faithful and practical.

At AdventHealth, mission is not an added layer. It is the way they lead, work, care and serve. The five pillars — Missional Leadership, Wholehearted Teams, Whole-Person Care, Serving Communities, Healing Environments — help connect daily work to a shared purpose: helping people feel whole in body, mind and spirit.

"When you talk about mission, it can become ambiguous very quickly," said Tim Cook, senior vice president and chief mission integration officer at AdventHealth. "For AdventHealth, mission isn't just one element or a bolt onto the organization. We see patients the way Jesus saw patients. That's the differentiator. The pillars aren't isolated, they're a step to the next pillar. It's a domino effect."

The result is a collection of team members who feel a sense of ownership and purpose within the organization, no matter their role, leading to better, more holistic patient care.

Missional Leadership

Connects people to purpose and models values-centered behavior.

"The Missional Leadership pillar paints a very clear picture of what leadership is at AdventHealth," shared Garrett Caldwell, vice president of mission integration at AdventHealth. "It would be very easy in a large organization like AdventHealth to see leadership as a ladder to climb or power to obtain, but this is the opposite of how Christ modeled leadership."

According to Caldwell, Micah 6:8: "To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (NIV) is the Scripture that drives leadership development at AdventHealth. Fulfilling this purpose requires taking responsibility for the sake of someone else.

In the Bible story of the paralytic man who was lowered through the roof of a home to be healed by Jesus, the men took responsibility for the paralytic's healing. They put themselves aside because there was someone in need and they had the ability to help.

Heather Hoffman, director of spiritual integration at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth, shared how she has seen senior leaders challenge team members. "At a recent biannual leadership retreat, Dr. Monica Reed [president and CEO of UChicago Medicine AdventHealth] challenged her team to reflect on their 'why.' Amid the updates and data points shared during the session, a large portion of the time was spent intentionally connecting with colleagues," said Hoffman. "We learned and reflected on how our individual stories influence our calling and explored ways to harness our God-given gifts in our leadership journey."

Wholehearted Teams

Experience a deep sense of calling in their ordinary work and sustain a culture focused on mission.

It's unknown whether the men who lowered the paralytic man



ADVENTHEALTH STRIVES TO BE MORE THAN A HEALTHCARE SYSTEM, BUT A CENTER FOR DEEPER HEALING WHERE EVERY PATIENT AND TEAM MEMBER CAN TAKE PART IN A GREATER MISSION.

through the roof were Jews or Gentiles, but they had a singular objective: working together to lower their friend toward the source of his healing. The Mission Integration Pillars redirect to a central mission and with over 57 hospitals and more than 107,000 team members, teamwork is necessary. Maintaining an entire healthcare organization cannot be a solitary pursuit. A leader can take action and assume responsibility, but doing so requires a network of intentional people.

At AdventHealth, one patient's care plan is the result of the efforts from over a dozen individuals. The front desk receptionist ushers them in from the waiting room, a space curated by designers who selected artwork, furniture and colors to help regulate and welcome patients. Nurses, interns, tech specialists, lab attendants, pharmacists, social workers and doctors lead the day-to-day patient care and interactions. Environmental services team members keep the

rooms neat and sterilized to hospital standards. Food services organize meals according to patients' dietary needs. Each moving part must work in tandem, bringing their expertise to create the best care plan for each patient.

"The AdventHealth brand promise, 'feel whole,' is delivered through excellent whole-person care," Cook shared. "That care is delivered through people who see their work as more than a job. They see it as a sacred calling and understand deep in their hearts that what they do is healing ministry. At AdventHealth, we call those people a wholehearted team and we are grateful for each one of them!"

UChicago Medicine AdventHealth hosts Whole-Person Care Conferences for team members at their Hinsdale location. The panel lecture series is all-inclusive, from housekeeping to the executive team and clinical professionals, exploring the social and emotional aspects of whole-person care. Attendees receive continuing education credits for attending and/or participating in the events. Each role will demand its own "what," but every team member can pursue the same "why."

Whole-Person Care

Achieves clinical excellence through integrated healing for body, mind and spirit.

People are more than just a body. There is a necessary partnership between faith and modern medicine. Applying clinical insights can provide more nuanced and wholistic care that gets to the root of a problem, offering longer, more sustainable healing.

Identifying underlying sources of stress, unmet needs and environmental factors allows healthcare providers to get the whole picture. Through AdventHealth's whole-person care approach, patients are assessed for physical, mental and spiritual care.

"Whole-person care begins with the understanding that health is interconnected," said Cook. "At its core, whole-person care is a commitment to treat body, mind and spirit as dimensions of one human life. Healing is not only physical. Emotional and spiritual needs influence how a person processes information, makes decisions and moves toward recovery. AdventHealth's commitment to whole-person care recognizes each patient's whole health and humanity, not just their malady.

Healing Environments

Spaces designed to foster dignity, peace and restoration while advancing environmental stewardship.

When caring for patients, every action, every choice, is meant to bring the patient closer to feeling whole. Whether a healthcare worker, administration, a family member, or a patient, treating others with peace and dignity creates restoration.

The artwork displayed in each facility is curated to foster calm

through natural elements and tones. Serenity spaces are available in multiple clinics within AdventHealth, designed for team members to decompress and relax after stressful cases or to take a break for private reflection and prayer. The benefits of quality treatment and gracious care are a way to pay it forward, encouraging a constant cycle of care. One example of this is when a musician offered to play piano once a week in the lobby at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth La Grange to honor the team members who cared for his loved one.

“A healing environment begins with the team members. When people feel acknowledged, they maintain the space,” said David Ocegüera, vice president for mission and ministry at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth.

For patients, this means being present in their lives as a healed individual feeling the impact of an entire healthcare system treating them with dignity. For AdventHealth team members, it means feeling empowered to continue active stewardship, recognizing their role contributes to a purpose greater than themselves. There is a difference in the atmosphere when spaces foster a peaceful environment made by respected individuals.

Serving Communities

Leveraging partnerships to address documented needs, advancing health and well-being beyond our walls.

The paralytic man was one of the few who were brought to Jesus by a loving collective of people. It was a community that worked together to address the need of a community member who might otherwise not have access to care.

What happens when healing a patient requires addressing a non-medical need? What if a healthcare or social worker recognizes a patient’s physical ailment is the result of food insecurity, domestic violence or poverty? With the whole-person care approach, AdventHealth goes beyond identifying the need and helps patients close the gap to get closer to feeling whole through practical solutions.

“Beyond direct service and community outreach, AdventHealth leaders actively engage in the communities we serve through board service and civic leadership,” said Fabiola Zavala, director of community advocacy at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth. “Across our local service area, our leaders serve on 25 community-based boards and advisory councils whose missions align with identified Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) priorities. These relationships strengthen collaboration, deepen our understanding of emerging community needs and create opportunities to collectively advance health equity, improve access to care and address the social determinants that influence health outcomes.”

The Legacy of the Mission Integration Pillars

The Mission Integration Pillars do not exist in isolation but as a

cohesive structure, with one leading to the other in an organic foundation upon which AdventHealth centers itself.

“The five pillars are a way to hold ourselves accountable, understanding the comprehensive work done in each area. Every role at AdventHealth is touched and shaped by the pillars,” shared Caldwell.

Empowering leadership through purpose inspires mission-focused teamwork that cares for the body, mind and spirit, fostering partnerships that benefit the community and create a healing environment. They serve as an entry point for every member of the organization, anchoring themselves in a mission that serves others. In the Bible story of the paralytic man, the men who gathered did more than climb a roof, make an opening or hold the ropes. The paralytic man was more than a patient and the Person to whom he was lowered was more than a man. The friends were leaders who used teamwork to aid a member of their community. The paralytic man was a complex person with both physical and spiritual needs. The Man was their Savior and the Ultimate Healer.

AdventHealth strives to be more than a healthcare system, but a center for deeper healing where every patient and team member can take part in a greater mission.

“The foundation of our mission, Extending the Healing Ministry of Christ, is intentionally inclusive,” said Cook. “What we are trying to do is build mission integration into the way we do what we do. We see a call to redeem and restore broken people just as Jesus did.”

Nicole Dominguez is a writer for AdventHealth.

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EFFECT.”

Moments of CONNECTION

INSPIRED BY GENUINE CARE AND A SHARED SPIRITUAL CALLING

UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Bolingbrook patient care technician Eleanor Charp did not expect to see Philip Garcia, physical therapist at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Bolingbrook, at her first Spiritual Ambassador training in March 2026. When the group started to discuss what supporting love, joy, peace and healing looks like in the work environment, Charp said, “I wanted everybody to know he is a child of God. I had to tell the story of the care [Philip] gives.”

Garcia had been Charp’s mother’s physical therapist when she was hospitalized with dementia toward the end of her life. Garcia did more than just address her mother’s physical needs. He also recognized and empathized with her emotional and spiritual needs and provided compassion and support at a time when her mother was ill and struggling physically and cognitively.

“I don’t just make the patient walk or exercise,” Garcia said. “I make sure they are well taken care of from point A to point B. Being an ambassador is a bridge. It enriches and empowers me to do more than mobility.”

While Garcia guided Charp’s mother through physical therapy, he also sat and talked with her.

“It’s just his heart. He’s sincere, patient and calm,” Charp said. “I think that’s what it is. He’s the calm in the middle of the storm.”

“When you have a parent with dementia and you’re their caregiver, one little second of some peace or joy means everything. So just time that he gave that I could have peace and know that she’s okay, she’s in good hands, it meant everything.”

The genuine care he provided meant so much, in fact, that it inspired Charp to become a Spiritual Ambassador as well.

Embracing Prayer as a Path to Healing and Hope

The Spiritual Ambassadors Program at AdventHealth launched 20 years ago. Today, more than 200 ambassadors across the Great Lakes Region serve remotely, at outpatient clinics, hospital settings and in the administrative offices providing an extra layer of whole-person care to peers, patients and families.

“Our organization not only says we provide whole-person care but also supplies and equips

EACH PRAYER IS ALSO A
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EXTENDING THE HEALING MINISTRY OF CHRIST CAN TRULY BE AS SIMPLE AS BEING THERE AND LISTENING.

people who want to be that extra empathetic listening person or shoulder to cry on. It's not about witnessing so much as about 'with'-nessing — listening, providing a safe space, being with each other," said Heather Hoffman, regional director of clinical mission integration at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth.

Spiritual ambassadors receive training on how to connect with others on a relational level. If a peer or patient needs extra support, a spiritual ambassador is empowered to initiate a conversation, which sometimes leads to prayer. Not all spiritual ambassadors are Christian, Hoffman said, but they are all united in their call to show up for others in an authentic, empathetic way.

"Anybody, regardless of their faith tradition, can get behind the concepts of fostering love, joy and peace," said Hoffman. "Plenty find their own way to connect on that spiritual level and to bring hope, meaning and purpose in people's lives."

Peter Marino learned about the Spiritual Ambassador Program when he started as the UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Bolingbrook urology team's practice manager about a year ago. A devout Catholic, Marino was drawn to AdventHealth's mission and becoming a spiritual ambassador has given him an opportunity to bring faith back to his entire office. Under his leadership, his team now starts each morning with a reflection or quote about God.

"We offer each other up in prayer. If we need to stop and pray for somebody, we do it," Marino said. "It gives each of us an opportunity to sit and reflect not only on our co-workers but also to know that God is working through each and every one of us."

Marino views the Spiritual Ambassador Program not only as a benefit to his team but also to their patients, many of whom welcome the invitation to share their vulnerability and experience.

"In That Moment, We Cannot Pass"

Cecilia Cruz, a certified medical assistant in one of the primary care offices at UChicago

Medicine AdventHealth Bolingbrook, has personally experienced medical trauma and understands what it's like to be on the brink of death. In those life-or-death moments, care for the spirit is as necessary, if not more, as care for the body and the mind, she said. Cruz has worked with patients who have lost children, spouses and best friends. When a peer was going through something traumatic, Cruz pulled everyone together around them to pray.

Being a spiritual ambassador feels like part of her calling. "Having faith in those moments is really critical," she said. "A lot of patients feel drained and scared. Having the opportunity to meet them there pulls all of us together to realize we're not alone. We can step through any experience with time and we are stepping through it with someone else, not by ourselves."

Cruz, Marino, Garcia, Charp and Hoffman are grateful to work for an organization that invests in a program like the Spiritual Ambassadors because it assures people in need that there is always another place to turn for hope.

"Some people are asking for hope," Cruz said. "Some are asking just to have someone there to listen to them. Some are asking to help pull depression from them. But every prayer truly feels uplifting and powerful."

Each prayer is also a reminder that no matter what a person is going through, they can get through it — and they are not alone. Charp will forever be grateful for the gift of compassionate presence that Garcia provided for her mother. Extending the Healing Ministry of Christ can truly be as simple as being there and listening, she said.

"Our patients, and even some of our peers, are often lonely," said Garcia. "They need somebody to talk to. They need our time. In that moment, we cannot pass. Just be there. Be a voice for them."

Keith Hartenberger is Keith Hartenberger is senior manager for external communications at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth.

Medicine Left in the Cabinet Does Not Heal

In July 2025, I lost a loved one who perhaps could still be alive today had he been taking the medication that was later found unopened in a box beneath his bed.



▲ AINSWORTH JOSEPH

He faithfully filled every prescription but never consistently took the medicine. The medicine was close to him, but proximity alone could not produce healing.

That experience illustrates an important spiritual truth. Many Christians treat forgiveness the same way. God has provided the prescription in His Word, yet many leave it sitting on bookshelves, coffee tables, nightstands, or stored on digital devices. We have the prescription and often neglect taking the medicine.

Forgiveness is one of God's healing prescriptions. Like medicine left in the cabinet, forgiveness that is never practiced cannot produce healing. Scripture teaches it, we may agree with it intellectually, and we may even admire it, but until we live it, we cannot experience its restorative power.

Unforgiveness often leaves people emotionally, spiritually, and sometimes even physically burdened. Research has suggested that chronic bitterness, resentment, and unresolved anger may contribute to increased stress and may be associated with certain health conditions, including some autoimmune disorders. However, we should never assume that a person with an autoimmune disease is unforgiving, as many biological, genetic and environmental factors contribute to these illnesses. The biblical emphasis is clear: Forgiveness promotes healing while unforgiveness prolongs suffering.

Forgiveness begins with a deliberate decision to release an offender from the personal debt you believe they owe you because of the hurt they caused through their actions or neglect.

It means choosing to release:

- Resentment
- The desire for revenge

- The longing to see the offender suffer as you have suffered
- The emotional control that the offense continues to have over your life

Jesus never confused forgiveness with several related but separate concepts that blur the vision to the freedom forgiveness brings.

Forgiveness is **not**:

- Denying that the offense occurred
- Excusing wrongful behavior
- Eliminating appropriate consequences
- Canceling legal or financial responsibility
- Automatically restoring trust
- Immediate reconciliation

Forgiveness does not require placing yourself back into harmful situations. Scripture encourages both forgiveness and wisdom. You may forgive someone while maintaining healthy boundaries. Do not expose yourself to repeated abuse unless genuine repentance, sustained behavioral change, and appropriate accountability have been demonstrated. Always operate within biblical principles and the protections provided by the law so that forgiveness does not become an invitation to be victimized again.

Medicine left in the cabinet cannot heal the body. Likewise, forgiveness left only in the pages of Scripture cannot heal the heart. God has already written the prescription. The question is not whether you possess it. The question is whether you are willing to take it.

Ainsworth Joseph serves as assistant professor of practical and applied theology and discipleship with special focus on marriage and family at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. He and his wife Gillian serve as family life directors for the Lake Region Conference.





▲ RACHEL KEELE

A Stinky Reminder

It was dark on that fateful August evening when I swung open my front door and let out our family dog, Marty, for one more bathroom break before bed.

There was a bark, a whimper, and the sound of something scampering away. Before my brain could catch up with my nose, Marty rushed past me and back into the house. The breeze he generated made one thing clear: He'd been sprayed by a skunk.

What followed for my husband and me was a long night of baths, upholstery cleaning, tears (shed by me, not Marty), and a resolution to *never* again let our dog outside without his harness.

A few months passed, and the skunk smell was almost entirely gone when one night, feeling tired, I skipped the harness and lazily clipped his leash directly to his collar.

Only 10 feet from the door, a skunk waddled by. It took just one strong pull for Marty to slip out of his collar. The skunk did his best to escape, but when Marty closed the distance, oblivious to my pleas from the front porch, it was game over.

"Why doesn't this dog learn?!" I cried, as I mixed baking soda, hydrogen peroxide and dish soap. The hypocrisy of the statement didn't escape me. I'd made a choice, but a dog is a dog, and it will chase no matter what. It can endure five baths in a row and being banished to the garage, but it won't recall any of that the next time it sees a skunk. And at the end of the day, I'm not so much better.

As Paul writes in Romans 7:15, "I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate" (NLT). Paul's frustration is palpable in this chapter, and I get it. Months of lingering skunk smell weren't enough to motivate me to slip that harness on Marty.

Sometimes I'm Marty, following my base instincts and running headlong into disaster while my Master calls after me. And sometimes I'm Paul, knowing full well what I should do and instead, leaving the harness hanging by the door.

That night as I finished bath number three, I thought of my own Master, Jesus. He calls out, entreating us to choose what's best, but He's always ready to patiently wash us clean when we fail. Sometimes the effects of our choices linger long after, but that never changes His love for us.

Let's find hope in Paul's conclusion to Romans 7: "Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord." ■



Rachel Keele is director of University Wellness at Andrews University and manager of the Andreasen Center for Wellness.

An Island Network That Saved Lives

When expatriate missionaries evacuated the Solomon Islands during World War II, they entrusted the Adventist Church's work to Kata Ragoso (1902–1964), a Solomon Islander pastor and tribal chief. From 1942 to 1945, he served as mission superintendent during one of the most dangerous periods in his people's history.¹



▲ DENIS KAISER

Ragoso understood that war threatened both human lives and the institutions the church had painstakingly established. He called together one hundred Adventists to hide the missionaries' possessions and the equipment of the Batuna hospital and school. They constructed storage buildings in the forest, labeled and concealed the supplies, and moved two mission boats upriver. After removing their masts, they covered the vessels with leaf shelters so that enemy aircraft could not detect them.

Protecting property was only part of Ragoso's mission. He established a network of watchmen stretching from Nggatokae Island to Vella Lavella Island. Whenever an Allied aircraft was shot down, the watchmen reported it, and Ragoso sent men to locate the survivors. They sheltered the airmen in villages and mission stations, shared their limited food, and transported them through Japanese-held territory to Allied coast watchers. Such service came at enormous personal risk. In May 1943, Japanese forces imprisoned Ragoso at Seghe. During four interrogations, he was flogged while lying face down across a large metal drum. Yet he refused to abandon his responsibilities. On May 29, he and a companion escaped and resumed their work.

The best-known rescue associated with this Adventist network involved Lt. John F. Kennedy (1917–1963), the future president of the United States. On Aug. 2, 1943, a Japanese destroyer rammed Kennedy's patrol boat, PT-109. Two

crewmen died, while Kennedy and 10 survivors eventually reached a small island. Biuku Gasa (1923–2005) and Eroni Kumana (c. 1918–2014), two young Solomon Islanders educated by Adventist missionaries and serving as Allied scouts, discovered the stranded men. Because their canoe could not carry the entire crew, Kennedy carved a message into a coconut husk. Gasa and Kumana carried it through dangerous waters to Allied forces, making the crew's rescue possible. Kennedy later preserved the coconut as a reminder that his life had depended upon the courage of two largely unknown islanders.

The rescue was not an isolated act. Ragoso reported that Adventists helped save 27 American airmen and 187 Australian and New Zealand servicemen during the war. Their courage grew from a faith that did not retreat when circumstances became dangerous. While armies struggled for control of the islands, Ragoso and his people demonstrated another kind of power — the power of courageous, self-sacrificing service. ■

1 This article is based on Wilson Gia Liligeto, "Ragoso, Kata," Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists, Jan. 29, 2020, accessed Aug. 5, 2026, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=A836>

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Adventist Heritage Centre, Australia

Worthy Pain



▲ DARREL LE ROUX

“... rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” (Acts 5:41)

“No pain, no gain” says the old cliché about the gym or exercise program you start in hopes of reaping the benefits. In a world of pain and suffering, is there a type of pain we should actually foster and encourage in our lives? Physically and culturally, we want to manage or move away from pain as quickly as possible to restore a sense of comfort. Does God want us comfortable? Does He permit pain in a sinful world so that we can intentionally not become comfortable? Are some types of pain purposed to mature us? How do we know what pain may be worth having?

Some of the best experiences come from embracing pain — “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience...” (James 1:2–4) Consider it joy?! Like the disciples rejoicing that “... they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” (Acts 5:41) Are our youth prepared to find joy when this kind of pain comes? Consider young Joseph when he spoke to his brothers, “But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good ...” (Genesis 50:20) How and at what point did Joseph discover that what was meant for evil, God meant for good, and worth the pain? What attitude did he need to see evil pain as worthy pain?

Pain did not control Joseph. Evil’s pain could not harden his heart when he wept in front of his brothers. Years did not erase the pain, but it did not rule his heart with hate, revenge or even anger. God was given rulership to keep it forgiving and soft.

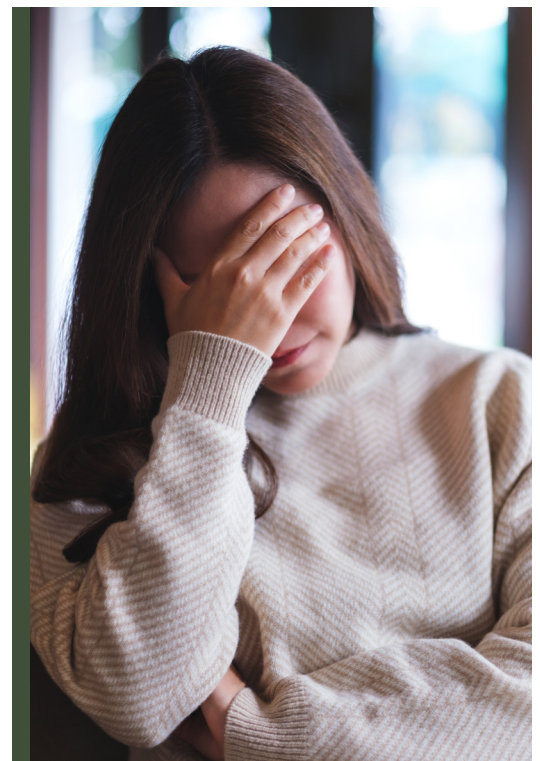
The greatest of all worthy pain is demonstrated at the cross of Jesus Christ to an unworthy world. His sacrifice showed love that was much stronger than the most brutal pain.¹ Hebrews 12:2 says that it was joy that held Him successfully on the cross (“... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross ...”). Jesus’ love was stronger than His hurt. Jesus’ joy endured because He experienced

1) The joy of just doing His Father’s will. Even when the Father did not take the cup away, “... nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” — joy! (Matthew 26:39); 2) The joy of participating with His Father, who gave Him the bitter cup to drink — even to the last drop — in saving the world. This joy, by faith in God, we should cultivate in a culture wanting to be comfortable in a world of sin.

When our hearts connect with our Heavenly Father’s breaking heart, who, with enduring love, still so loves this world when He permanently gives His Son to us, then, and maybe only then, we will understand how to endure worthy pain with an untouchable joy.

1 See free resource Pain Unparalyzed (Enduring with Joy), from EverlastingGospel.Life

Darrel le Roux, pastor of the Grand Rapids and Lowell Fellowship churches, also serves as prayer ministries coordinator for the Michigan Conference.





▲ The Comprehensive Stroke Center certification from the Joint Commission reflects UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Hinsdale's ability to care for the most complex stroke cases with a multidisciplinary team.

National Recognition Affirms Compassionate Stroke Care

Barbara's* Sunday morning changed in an instant when she suddenly became dizzy, weak, began vomiting and slurring her speech. The 72-year-old Willow Springs resident was rushed to UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Hinsdale, where tests showed that atrial fibrillation (an irregular heartbeat) had caused an ischemic stroke, the most common type of stroke, in which a blood clot blocks an artery supplying blood to the brain.

Not long after, Dr. Omer Doron, a cerebrovascular neurosurgeon with UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Hinsdale, performed an emergency thrombectomy, using advanced medical imaging to navigate a catheter from Barbara's thigh, through her blood vessels and into the brain. He was able to remove the clot and restore blood flow.

"It's amazing to think my symptoms started at 10:15 in the morning and everything was taken care of only a few hours later," she said.

For Barbara and her family, the care she received was more than a medical response. It was a reminder that God is present in moments of crisis, working through skilled hands, steady minds and compassionate hearts. At UChicago Medicine AdventHealth, that belief is central to every encounter: caring for the

whole person — body, mind and spirit — and helping people feel whole.

The advanced care that may have saved Barbara's life and prevented serious disability has been recognized by the Joint Commission, which awarded UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Hinsdale certification as a Comprehensive Stroke Center.

"Comprehensive stroke centers strive to provide the best medical level of treatment to the most complex conditions in medicine and to provide it at a high, academic level with well-trained people and cutting-edge equipment," said Doron.

The Comprehensive Stroke Center certification reflects the hospital's ability to care for the most complex stroke cases with a multidisciplinary team that includes acute stroke

specialists, neurologists, neurointerventional radiologists, neuroimaging specialists, neurosurgeons and rehabilitation therapists.

"This certification is a reflection of the exceptional care our teams provide and gives our community confidence that advanced, world-class stroke care is available close to home when every minute matters," said Elise MacCarroll-Wright, president and CEO of UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Hinsdale. "It represents our commitment to combining clinical excellence with compassionate, whole-person care."

At UChicago Medicine AdventHealth, the mission of Extending the Healing Ministry of Christ guides every part of the care journey. The goal is not only to treat illness, but also to care for the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of every patient. In cases like Barbara's, that means bringing together advanced medicine and a deep sense of purpose — trusting God, acting with skill and serving with compassion.

Joint Commission designations at the other UChicago Medicine AdventHealth hospitals include Bolingbrook and La Grange as Advanced Primary Stroke Centers and GlenOak as a Primary Stroke Center. All four hospitals have also earned the American Heart Association Get With The Guidelines Stroke GOLD PLUS quality achievement award. The hospitals are connected through the UChicago Medicine AdventHealth network, allowing patients to be transferred to Hinsdale for comprehensive stroke care when needed.

"A positive outcome for a patient experiencing a stroke is the result of the entire system working together," said Dr. Beejal Amin, a neurological surgeon and regional medical director of neurosurgery for UChicago Medicine AdventHealth. "Success depends on seamless coordination across all four of our hospitals and many disciplines to give patients access to advanced care and the best possible chance at recovery." ■

**This patient does not want her last name used.*

Keith Hartenberger is senior manager for external communications at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth.

A Mission Without Borders

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS SINCE GRIGGS MOVED TO ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

This year, Andrews University celebrates 15 years since Griggs University and Griggs International Academy moved to Andrews. The collaboration has strengthened Adventist distance education while expanding opportunities for thousands of students from more than 50 countries

“For more than a century, Griggs has served students whose circumstances make traditional education difficult or impossible. Whether separated by geography, work, family responsibilities, political barriers or limited access to educational opportunities, students have found a pathway to learning through distance education,” says La Ronda Forsey, principal of Griggs International Academy.

In 1909, Seventh-day Adventist education embraced an idea that was ahead of its time. Church leaders recognized that many members and workers around the world were unable to attend a traditional school due to factors including geography, work responsibilities, family obligations and distance.

In an effort to remove these barriers, the Fireside Correspondence School was founded in Maryland by Adventist educational pioneer Frederick Griggs. Lessons were delivered by mail, allowing students to study wherever they lived. The early years were marked by steady growth and adaptation, and the institution became the Home Study Institute in 1931.

A significant milestone came in 1990 when the Maryland Higher Education Commission granted permission for the institution to offer degree programs. This marked the beginning of Griggs University and expanded the school’s impact beyond K–12 education. While Griggs had served learners at multiple educational levels throughout its history, this decision opened up a new chapter of higher education opportunities for Adventist students worldwide.

As technology advanced, Griggs continued to evolve. The K–12 division became Griggs

International Academy in 2003, reflecting its growing international reach and commitment to serving students beyond traditional geographic boundaries.

Another transformative chapter began in 2010. After an extensive study by a General Conference commission on distance education, church leaders recommended that Griggs University become part of Andrews University. The recommendation reflected a growing recognition that distance education would play an important role in serving the worldwide church.

After careful planning, Griggs officially relocated from Maryland to the Andrews University campus in Berrien Springs, Michigan, in 2011. Then in 2015, Griggs University became fully integrated into the Andrews University structure through the School of Distance Education, while Griggs International Academy continued to operate independently within the same school. This strategic partnership brought together the experience and heritage of Griggs with the academic resources and global influence of Andrews University.



World Changers Made Here.

In March 2024, the Andrews University Board of Trustees voted to reorganize the School of Distance Education into Andrews University Global Campus. The new name reflects a broader vision for online learning, international partnerships, and innovative educational delivery for students from kindergarten through higher education.

Today, students connect to Global Campus from cities, local schools, villages, mission fields, military bases and homes around the world. Through direct enrollment, partnerships with Adventist schools and innovative online learning models, they receive a fully accredited, faith-based education regardless of where they live.

“As Adventist education looks toward the future, new technologies will continue to reshape how education is delivered. Yet the most important elements remain unchanged: caring teachers, meaningful relationships, academic excellence and a commitment to helping students develop a deeper connection with Jesus Christ,” says Janine Lim, dean of Global Campus. ■

Janine Lim is dean of Global Campus and **La Ronda Forsey** is principal of Griggs International Academy.



▲ Members of the Andrews University Global Campus team.

Courtesy of Janine Lim



▲ Adan & Aden Kamanzi and Ellie Heiss share a sermonette

Church-School Partnership Helps Kalamazoo Junior Academy Rebuild

Twelve years ago, Kalamazoo Junior Academy was down to just 18 students. Due to low enrollment, the school had to go from kindergarten through 10th-grade to just eighth grade. With support from the church and community, the school was brought back to its former status as a junior academy last year.

Principal Tami Draves, former Kalamazoo pastor Moise Ratsara, current pastor Jermaine Gayle and others in the church and school community were part of that journey.

One challenge affecting enrollment is the Kalamazoo Promise. Students who attend Kalamazoo Public Schools and meet the program's eligibility requirements can receive significant tuition assistance to attend colleges and universities in Michigan.

Draves said the financial incentive can make it difficult for Adventist education to compete.

"In general, we think 'why pay for something when we can get something else for free,'" she said.

Draves also believes families sometimes

lose sight of what Adventist education uniquely offers.

"What is the main reason we have Adventist education?" she said. "We can get good academics anywhere, but those connections with Jesus just can't show up in other places like that."

With the help of the church and school boards, teachers and pastors, the school was able to regain junior academy status. They now enroll 38 students from 13 countries. It took intentional work. To encourage enrollment, school staff interacted with families regularly. They also used social media to keep families up to date with activities and held events that brought people together.

"A lot of it is one-to-one communication, connecting with the parents and the kids inside and outside of the building and making the kids feel like they're loved so they want to come back," Draves said.

Gayle also worked to bring the school and church closer together. He said his vision is to create a partnership where students see the church involved in their lives, and the church sees the students involved in its life.

The children of Kalamazoo Junior Academy took a large role in an evangelistic series held about a year ago. Gayle wanted them to be involved in more than singing or greeting. He encouraged students to stand up front, recite Scripture, and preach short sermons.

Students worked with Gayle and their teachers to prepare their sermons. Gayle taught them sermon preparation while teachers helped students work through illustrations and delivery. He said that teamwork helped strengthen the relationship between the church and the school.

"My philosophy is there's no difference between the ministry of the school and the ministry of the church," Gayle said. "The church and the school are one."

Draves expressed a similar view. "Your pastor and your teachers have to be willing to work together," she said. "They have to be willing to put the focus on the kids' salvation."

The school has also developed programs to connect students with church members. The Secret Pal program paired students with members who would pray for them and give them small gifts. At the end of the year, the students would meet their Secret Pal.

The program continued for three years before becoming too large to manage in the same way. It was eventually changed to Pray for Us. Students fill out a biography sheet with some of their favorite things, and those are displayed at church so members can learn more about them and pray for them.

At the end of the day, the students want opportunities to be involved.

"They're eager to be involved. They like to be involved," Draves said. She pointed to one student preparing to enter eighth grade who



▲ Pastor Gayle praying with the students

An Outreach Spearheaded by Youth Grows Beyond Expectations

joined the church's AV team after discovering that was an area he enjoyed.

"I believe the sooner we involve them, the more committed they're going to become because it's theirs," Draves said. "It stops being my parents' religion and it starts being theirs."

Gayle also believes involvement begins with adults being present in young people's lives.

"One of the ministries that I find the most powerful is the ministry of care," he said. "And caring means I have to be present. I can't care and be absent."

For Gayle, that means spending time with students and showing an interest in their lives. He plays basketball and soccer with them, visits the school and takes time to answer their questions about faith.

"I used to say our kids are our future, but [Principal Draves] reminded me, no, they're not," he said. "They are our present."

That belief shapes how Gayle approaches ministry with young people. He said they do not have to wait until adulthood to preach or serve because God can use them now.

Draves, a former KJA student herself, believes that shared commitment to strengthening the Kalamazoo school and church experience makes a difference.

"Having your church and school work together and having your pastor and your staff all on the same page," she said. "Once you get that, God's unstoppable." ■

Briauna Skinner is a senior at Andrews Academy. She enjoys reading, writing, baking and listening to music. One of her most memorable life moments is the decision to follow her Heavenly Father and having her earthly father baptize her.

"Preach the gospel always. When necessary, use words."

This message was printed across the backs of the Village Seventh-day Adventist Church youth group's T-shirts and shaped their participation in Niles Jesus Fest, held July 9–12 at Riverfront Park in Niles, Michigan. Throughout the community event, the young people acted out the message by serving, singing, praying and connecting with others.

After attending the Lake Union Youth Evangelism Congress, Kaden Spare, a youth member of Village Seventh-day Adventist Church, returned home encouraged and eager to put what he had learned about evangelism into action.

Spare's enthusiasm helped spark conversations among the youth group about how they could reach young people in their community who may not have a church home or spiritual support system. Their primary project would be an outreach booth at the Berrien County Youth Fair in August. But the group did not want evangelism to be limited to a single event.

When one youth suggested that they also participate in Niles Jesus Fest, an annual Christian gathering, the group saw an opportunity to put its plans into action. With less than a month to prepare, youth members organized activities and created promotional materials.

"This opportunity came at the right time," said Tanaka Chogugudza, Village Church youth pastor.

Although the group applied for evangelism funding connected with the congress, the available funds had already been distributed. Village Church remained committed to the project and provided \$3,000 to help the



▲ Village Church Youth Pastor Tanaka Chogugudza takes a selfie with one of the "Jesus Fest" organizers. He's joined by Village youth Samantha Spare, Mya Mann, Nathan Crownover, Maliek Johnson and Nikanor Turon.



▲ Cooper Stuckey leads a Bible trivia with festival attendees.



▲ Susanna Spare, Samantha Spare, Mya Mann, April Mann, Susanna Hess and Lauryn Mann participated at the face painting station.



Photography by Eben Espirrosa

▲ The youth created a program titled "Freedom," and sang patriotic songs as a tribute to veterans. A short sermonette connected the freedoms enjoyed in America with the spiritual freedom found in Jesus, followed by a selection of praise songs.

youth purchase musical equipment and prepare for the outreach.

Their booth featured free popsicles and water, face painting, Bible trivia, Christian literature and information about Village's youth programs. A large prayer wall invited visitors to write and post their prayer requests.

Each activity was designed to create an opening for conversation.

During one interaction, Tanaka introduced a normally quiet youth to a visitor who shared her interest in art. As their conversation ended, the young person asked if she could pray for the woman.

"The fact that she initiated the prayer meant a lot to me," Tanaka said. "It showed me that they understood why we were there: to lead people to Jesus, pray with them and encourage them."

The group's participation expanded unexpectedly when organizers offered them an hour on the main stage. With less than a week to prepare, Tanaka reached out to Ron Whitehead for guidance. Whitehead encouraged him to involve as many people as possible and suggested creating a patriotic program in recognition of America's 250th anniversary, then connecting it to a spiritual theme.

Tanaka developed a program titled "Freedom," beginning with patriotic songs and a tribute to veterans. A short sermonette connected the freedoms enjoyed in America

with the spiritual freedom found in Jesus, followed by a selection of praise songs.

Village became the first youth group to participate in the festival's five-year history, Tanaka said. Although the youth initially planned to attend for only two days, they asked to return Saturday. One member who had expected to participate only on Thursday returned all three days.

"I had two goals for this outreach," Tanaka said. "The first was to reach the hearts of our own young people, and the second was to reach the community. I believe both happened."

As the event was coming to a close Saturday evening, organizers approached Tanaka and asked the group to return to the stage before leaving. They rearranged the program so the Village youth could share about their ministry and sing two additional songs.

Organizers also asked the youth to stand with their backs toward the audience so everyone could read the message on their T-shirts.

The invitation did not end there. Organizers encouraged the group to return next year, this time with two hours onstage to present an expanded program.

"We thought we were just going to have a booth," Tanaka said. "The success of this project was beyond my imagination." ■

Felicia Tonga is a freelance writer.



▲ Former Lake Region Conference President Clifford Jones encouraged Highland Church members to continue pursuing God's vision as it ministers to future generations. The celebration served as both a joyful reunion and a powerful reminder of God's faithfulness through eight decades of ministry.

Highland Avenue Church Celebrates 80 Years of Faith, Family and Fellowship

The Highland Avenue church in Benton Harbor, Michigan, celebrated a milestone on Sabbath, July 18, as members, former pastors, community leaders, conference administrators and friends gathered to commemorate the congregation's 80th anniversary. The celebration served as both a joyful reunion and a powerful reminder of God's faithfulness through eight decades of ministry.

Founded in 1946 as the first African American Seventh-day Adventist congregation in Berrien County, Highland Avenue has become a spiritual landmark whose influence has extended well beyond its local community. Throughout the service, speakers reflected on the church's rich heritage while challenging the congregation to remain committed to its mission for generations to come.

Senior Pastor Denry White welcomed attendees by emphasizing that Highland Avenue has always been more than a church building. It is an active community where Christ is revealed, faith is nurtured, and every person is welcomed. He also recognized the countless volunteers whose months of planning helped

make the anniversary weekend a memorable celebration of the church's legacy.

Greetings were shared by leaders from the Lake Union Conference and the Lake Region Conference, each expressing appreciation for Highland Avenue's enduring commitment to proclaiming Christ and serving the Benton Harbor community.

Lake Union Conference President Elden Ramirez praised the congregation for faithfully fulfilling its mission for eight decades, encouraging members to continue making Christ known until His return.

Lake Region Conference President Abraham Henry congratulated Highland Avenue on reaching this historic milestone

and described the congregation as a landmark church whose ministry has impacted not only Berrien County but the entire conference. He challenged the congregation to continue building upon the foundation laid by those who came before, reminding members that "the Lord has helped us thus far," and that the best chapters of Highland Avenue's ministry are still ahead. On behalf of the Lake Region Conference, Henry presented the church with a commemorative proclamation recognizing its 80 years of faithful service.

Former Lake Region Conference President Clifford Jones encouraged the church to continue pursuing God's vision as it ministers to future generations.

One of the defining themes throughout the celebration was Highland Avenue's deep partnership with the Benton Harbor community. Community leaders representing neighboring churches and civic organizations commended the congregation for decades of collaboration, compassion and service that have transcended denominational lines. Together, they affirmed that the church's influence has been felt not only through worship services, but through its consistent investment in the spiritual, educational, and social well-being of the community.

The City of Benton Harbor officially recognized the congregation's impact as Mayor Marcus Muhammad proclaimed July 17–19, 2026, as Highland Avenue Seventh-day Adventist Church Anniversary Weekend. The

proclamation celebrated the church's role as a beacon of hope since its founding in 1946 and acknowledged its decades of community service through outreach ministries, educational initiatives, health programs and spiritual leadership. A similar proclamation from Benton Charter Township honored the congregation's lasting contributions throughout the region.

Throughout the service, moments of reflection celebrated the generations who helped shape Highland Avenue's legacy. Former pastors were recognized for their faithful leadership, founding families were honored for their vision and sacrifice, and longtime members were celebrated for preserving the congregation's rich heritage.

The celebration culminated with a powerful message from Abraham Jules, president of the Atlantic Union Conference, whose connection to Highland Avenue made the occasion especially meaningful. As a seminarian at Andrews University, Jules served as a pastoral intern at Highland Avenue, making his return to the pulpit a full-circle moment in both his ministry and the church's history. He reminded the congregation that the church's 80-year legacy is ultimately a testimony to God's unwavering faithfulness.

Eighty years after a small group of believers first gathered in local homes to worship, the Highland Avenue church continues to stand as a testimony of God's sustaining grace. With a rich history rooted in faith, strengthened by

family, and demonstrated through fellowship, the congregation looks ahead with renewed commitment to sharing the love of Christ throughout Benton Harbor. ■

JeNeen Lendor is the Lake Region Conference communication director.



▲ A historic storm left Gary, Indiana, and surrounding communities without power for days, making everything from driving to sleeping a challenge. Thirty-eight thousand homes and businesses in Gary lost power from the Aug. 11 storms.

Gary Power Outages Spur Church-Led Relief Effort

When a severe storm knocked out power across Gary, Indiana, on Aug. 11, Rijenna Murray began calling home.

Her 87-year-old grandmother was without electricity. So was her 89-year-old grandfather, her 91-year-old aunt, her father, and

other relatives. The Haughville church member, who grew up in Gary and now lives in Indianapolis, knew her grandmother well

enough to recognize the significance of what she heard when they finally connected.

Her grandmother, Murray said, is the kind of woman who remains positive even when circumstances are difficult. But this time, she told her granddaughter, "It's bad."

The two-week-long power loss had created major problems throughout the entire city. Grocery stores and restaurants were without electricity, leaving residents with few places to get food. Food in home refrigerators and freezers began to spoil. Murray was especially concerned about older residents, including those who needed access to medications or were enduring the heat without air conditioning.

Murray knew she needed to go home.

"I knew that I had to go into action to do something," she said. "I didn't know what I could do. I didn't know where the money was coming from. I wasn't sure how we were going to be able to do it."

Murray, president of the Lake Region Conference's Illiana Youth Federation, had learned that instinct from the people she was now worried about. She decided to make the drive from Indianapolis and take whatever resources she could gather. Word spread



▲ Rijenna Murray with her grandmother who spent much of her life feeding others. Murray points to her family as examples of what it means to serve a community.



among coworkers, friends and others who knew she had family in Gary. Donations began arriving.

"I need flashlights. I need ice. I'm taking hygiene products," Murray recalled telling people. She also sought cleaning supplies for relatives whose homes had flooded.

Then the response expanded.

Lake Region Youth Director Earl Baldwin contacted Murray to tell her he was looking into what could be done to help the beleaguered community. He later called back to say Lake Region leaders were partnering with Mizpah and All Nations churches in Gary on a coordinated response.

Howard Hawkins, an elder from the All Nations church, had electricity before most and opened his beauty school to help the community charge their phones. Meanwhile, All Nations head elder Elijah Daniels mobilized the church to assess needs and led wellness checks.

On Sabbath, Aug. 22, the volunteers joined the response at the Hudson-Campbell Sports and Fitness Center in downtown Gary. The city-owned gym had been converted into a Red Cross shelter, providing electricity, showers and a place to sleep for residents who could no longer comfortably remain in their homes.

The Adventist volunteers brought food items and served breakfast to the shelter residents.

On one side of a curtain, people were sleeping on cots. On the other, volunteers were serving food and talking with residents.

After breakfast, the group cleaned the area and moved across the street to an open parking lot, where Baldwin along with Mizpah leadership held a Sabbath worship service.

City-wide Outreach

Amid frustration over power restoration and concern about damaged property, Murray saw glimmers of hope.

"Community people came from all over the place," she said. "People galvanized, the community galvanized and did not wait for someone else to do it."

For Murray, seeing her church among those responding mattered.

"To see them drop everything, to come to Gary was huge for me," she said. "Just to be present meant everything."

For Murray, that presence is at the heart of Christian discipleship.

"God has commissioned us all to serve," she said. "My life has always been about serving and making sure that our faith speaks louder than anything else and making sure we are representing Christ in everything that we do," she said.

To partner with Lake Region Adventist Community Services, visit Adventist Giving or <https://bit.ly/3Syszch>.



▲ Rijenna Murray, pictured in front wearing a white T-shirt, with Illiana federation members.

Debbie Michel is editor of the Lake Union Herald.



David Turner

▲ At the close of the Lake Region Constituency session, administration and department leaders were covered in prayers for the work of enlarging the kingdom of God.

Lake Region Conference Delegates Elect Returning, New Leaders at Constituency Session

On Aug. 9, 2026, delegates to the 30th Lake Region Constituency elected a mixed slate of returning and new administrative officers to serve a five-year term.

More than 500 representatives from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin met at the Howard Performing Arts Center on the campus of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, to determine leadership in a lively session covered with prayer.

The meeting began with a stirring devotional message from Pastor Debleaire Snell, speaker/director of Breath of Life Ministries. Leading from the account of the sons of Issachar in 1 Chronicles 12:32, Snell, whose

early days in ministry began in Lake Region, encouraged delegates to follow God's lead in raising up individuals who understand the times, but aren't intimidated by the challenges; who are willing to adapt methods for the times; and who understand how to fight battles through prayer.

"Don't choose the most popular, the person who will do what you like, the person you're most familiar with," he said, "but look for leaders who understand the times and know what Israel ought to do."

Election Results

Elden Ramirez, president of the Lake Union Conference, chaired the nominating committee and delegates voted on names for administrative officers and departmental directors.

President Abraham Henry was re-elected to a full term. He assumed the role in February 2026 after former president Garth Gabriel retired. Henry previously served as executive secretary. After the results came in, he stood with his wife Rebecca to thank delegates for their support.

"Thank you so much for this honor. Every win is a kingdom win, a conference win. We look forward to working with everyone. We want to serve everyone ... we are all family; we are all members. We cannot do this mission without you ... and so we're looking forward to praying with you, to working with you and to serve with you."

Pastor Eliot Brooks was elected to serve as executive secretary, a role previously held by Harold Cleveland. Kent Nichols was re-elected as chief financial officer/treasurer for Lake Region. Eddie Allen was re-elected as vice president for multilingual ministries.

Conference Updates

During the constituency session, several reports were given to provide updates from across the region. The president's report focused on advances in Christian education and evangelism. He announced that the Lake Region now consists of more than 32,000 members in 126 churches across five states. Henry also spoke of the acquisition of 70 acres of land adjacent to Camp Wagner, in Cassopolis, Michigan.

Lake Region administrators Harold Cleveland, executive secretary, and Eddie Allen, vice president of multicultural ministries, announced 15 new churches joined the conference. Administrators and delegates joined in giving God praise for the new additions and growth of the work in the region.

Delegates approved the removal of four churches: Michigan City Voice of Hope, Muncie Philadelphia, Pembroke Ephesus (Hopkins Park, IL) and Robbins.

An amendment to the constitution and bylaws, changing terms from four to five years was passed. Delegates approved to postpone a vote on additional proposed constitution and bylaws changes until the Lake Region camp meeting in 2027.

Both the treasurer and the General Conference auditor shared updates on Lake Region's financial condition. Despite inflation and other challenges, the conference received a clean audit. The treasurer spoke of continued efforts to reduce costs and increase working capital going forward to further stabilize finances.

Standing on Strong Shoulders

Throughout the session, leaders paused to acknowledge their colleagues' contributions. Delegates gave Garth Gabriel and his wife Rosita a standing ovation to express gratitude for his leadership and mentorship over 30 years of ministry. Outgoing ACS director Debra Davis-Moody received a plaque to commemorate her longstanding service in Lake Region; earlier this year she was honored by the North American Division for more than 50 years in community service. Administrators and departmental directors also paused to recognize leaders who have died since the last gathering in 2022.

The list of elected officials is as follows:

Administrators

President: Abraham Henry
Executive Secretary: Eliot Brooks
Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer:
Kent Nichols
VP for Multilingual Ministries: Eddie Allen

Departmental Directors

Adult Ministries: Darlene Thomas
Youth Director: Earl Baldwin Jr.
Associate Youth Director: Denry White
Education: Deidre Garnett
Health: Christina Wells
Family Life directors: Ainsworth & Gillian Joseph

Public Affairs and Religious Liberty:

Edward Woods III

Men's Ministry: Jason O'Rourke

Women's Ministry: Dian Welch

National Service Organization: Phillip Willis Jr.

Adventist Services & Industries: Wilbur Minisee Sr.

Prison Ministries: Christopher Clark

Urban Ministries: Steve Bramwell

Communications

Human Resources

Media Ministry

Stewardship

Young Adult Ministry

Conference Evangelist

Ministerial Director

Children's Ministry

Kaara Baptiste is an assistant professor of communication at Andrews University.

The following positions were referred to the executive committee:

Adventist Community Services

Camp Wagner director



▲ More than 500 representatives from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin met at the Howard Performing Arts Center on the campus of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan.



▲ Lake Region President Abraham Henry was re-elected to continue serving, following the retirement of Garth Gabriel.



▲ Jason and Midori Sliger, an Adventist Frontier Missions missionary couple, share information about mission

Following ASI National Convention, Lake Union Ministries to Receive Special Funding

Over 2,000 people from across the United States and around the world gathered in Phoenix, Arizona, from July 29 through Aug. 1 for the 2026 ASI International Convention.

Under the theme “Hasten the Day, Prepare the Way,” business owners, professionals, missionaries and ministry leaders explored how their work, skills and resources could be used to make Christ known.

The ASI Missions Inc. Board selected 36 projects to receive grants from the convention offering, setting a goal of \$1.781 million. According to ASI International, the final offering surpassed that goal by more than \$900,000, reaching a total of \$2.7 million.

Several Lake Union Chapter ministries were among those selected for funding. ASAP Ministries received \$25,000 to help build a girls’ dormitory in Myanmar for students training as medical missionaries. Streams of Light

International received \$50,000 to support a four-year mission initiative in Chicago involving literature distribution, health ministry and Bible work. Three Angels Broadcasting Network received \$100,000 to translate programming into multiple languages and use artificial intelligence to translate live events and Bible study guides. FARM STEW International received \$55,000 to establish its program in Burundi and Chad.

Beyond the projects selected for funding were personal stories of faith, sacrifice and service shared throughout the convention.

One of them belonged to Jerome Habimana, a Berrien Springs, Michigan, resident who represented Saving Orphans Through Healthcare

and Outreach, an Indiana-based ministry known as SOHO.

“When I saw those children, I felt for them because I have seen children suffer,” Habimana said. “I told Cynthia and the team, ‘I need to join you. I am willing to do whatever it takes to help those children.’”

For Habimana, SOHO’s work with vulnerable children in Eswatini is deeply personal. When he looked into the faces of children affected by poverty, abuse and orphanhood, he recognized the kind of suffering he had encountered before.

During the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, Habimana lost 71 members of his family, including his parents and siblings. They were among thousands who sought refuge at a Seventh-day Adventist mission compound and hospital in western Rwanda, believing it would protect them as mission properties had during earlier periods of violence.

Instead, on a Sabbath morning in April 1994, the Seventh-day Adventist mission compound at Mugonero, the place they believed would shelter them, became the site of a massacre that claimed thousands of lives.

Habimana was in the United States when the killings occurred. The scale of the loss was almost impossible to comprehend. Because he had not seen or buried his relatives, he initially coped by imagining that they might still be alive somewhere.

The reality settled in when he returned to Rwanda and found his family home demolished, with only bushes growing where it once stood. He later helped recover and properly bury remains from the mission compound and advocated for the construction of a memorial.

Habimana found peace in learning that many of his family members had spent their final days together in prayer, singing hymns and preparing their hearts for what they feared was coming.

“They had time to give their hearts to Jesus,” he said. “I told myself, ‘These people are only sleeping, and they will wake up. I will see them again.’ That helped me a lot.”

That hope helped him choose forgiveness instead of revenge.

After retiring from church financial leadership, Habimana settled in Berrien Springs and now serves as SOHO's chief financial officer.

SOHO provides homes and care for children affected by orphanhood, poverty and abuse, while working to build an Adventist school, clinic and additional housing in Eswatini.

"We want to see how we can improve their lives," Habimana said. "We want to rescue them, educate them in an Adventist way and give them a better future."

Habimana's work with SOHO was one of many stories at ASI International that revealed the people and convictions behind the ministries. Across the convention, service took many forms, from meeting an immediate need to surrendering a long-held dream.

Care. Share. Multiply.

In Myanmar, ASAP Ministries is helping reconstruct a deteriorating dormitory used for a six-month nurse aide training program. The program prepares young people to serve communities where poverty and conflict have placed healthcare beyond the reach of many.

Darryl Hosford summarized the ministry's approach in three words: "Care. Share. Multiply."

"We want to share the good news about Jesus, but before we share, we care," he said. "We care, we share, and then we multiply disciples."

Darryl shared the story of Naw Say Paw, who entered ASAP's six-month nurse aide program in 2016 seeking medical training. Through daily worship and Bible study, she accepted Christ and was baptized the following year. Today, she serves as an ASAP medical missionary in Kalaw, Myanmar, caring for minority communities and helping establish an Adventist presence where none currently exists.

For Jason and Midori, a missionary couple serving with Adventist Frontier Missions, the call to make disciples began with a different kind of step: leaving behind the life they had planned.

Laying Down a Dream

The couple left behind their home, income and familiar life to serve among the Gogodala people of Papua New Guinea through Adventist Frontier Missions.

For Midori, the decision meant releasing the future she had imagined for their three young children. She had dreamed of seeing them become accomplished musicians, but the family was moving to a remote community without pianos.

"I had to lay down that dream," she said. "I believe that it is good for our children to see that we are able to do without some things so that God's work can go forward."

After arriving, the couple met Bonnie, a local believer who had spent 13 years worshipping with his family and trying to reach his village. Jason began training several young men and encouraged them to share what they had learned.

Five months later, 120 people gathered for Sabbath worship. As local believers began teaching others, the work spread into surrounding villages.

What began with one man's faithfulness multiplied when others were equipped to reach their own communities.

Across different countries and circumstances, each story offered the same reminder: when people place their pain, gifts and plans in God's hands, He can use them to bring healing, hope and ultimately make Him known.

Felicia Tonga is a freelance writer.



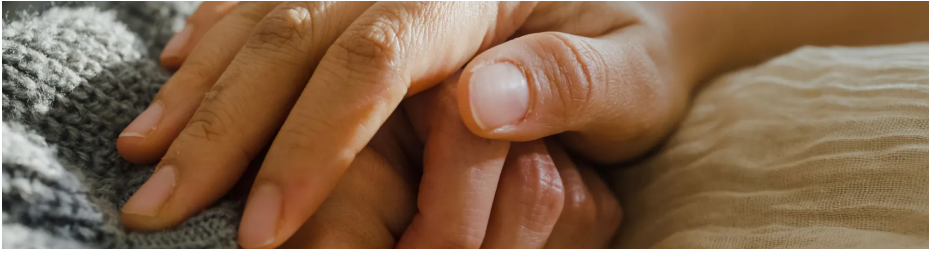
▲ Gianluca Bacchicchi, president of the ASI Lake Union Chapter, speaks onstage at ASI International 2026.



▲ Jerome Habimana, chief financial officer of Saving Orphans through Healthcare and Outreach (SOHO), and SOHO founder Cynthia Prime stand in front of the organization's booth in the ASI International exhibit hall.

▼ Left to right: Cheryl Hosford, Darryl Hosford, Robert Lawson and Carolanne Lawson stand in front of the ASAP Ministries booth at ASI International 2026.





Volunteers needed for UChicago Medicine AdventHealth No One Dies Alone Program

UChicago Medicine AdventHealth La Grange is seeking volunteers to help relaunch a program built on the belief that everyone deserves to have someone by their side at the end of life.

The hospital's No One Dies Alone program (NODA), a national volunteer-centered initiative, will be reincorporated into patient care services after pausing during the pandemic.

Originally founded in 2001 by Sandra Clark at PeaceHealth Medical System in Eugene, Oregon, the program first came to La Grange in 2015.

Its goal today is the same as it was then: To extend the healing ministry of Christ by offering patients who are at end of life the presence of a compassionate companion in their final moments.

"We want to honor every death with dignity by ensuring every person who comes through our doors has a loving presence by their side in their final hours," said Kathleen Downey, vice president and chief nursing officer for UChicago Medicine AdventHealth La Grange. "We want to let patients who are in the final stage of their life's journey know that they have worth and are seen and valued."

NODA relies on specially trained volunteers who sit vigil with patients, providing a

continuous, comforting presence as they rotate in over two-hour shifts.

Their focus is simply accompaniment; they might speak with the patient, hold their hand, or sit with them in silence. No clinical care is involved.

UChicago Medicine AdventHealth La Grange is seeking adult volunteers age 18 and older for the program.

Volunteers may include members of the community, current hospital volunteers and staff.

Because of the emotional nature of the work, participants should not have experienced the loss of a close friend or family member within the past year.

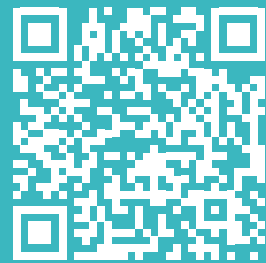
In addition to their initial training, volunteers will have opportunities to connect with one another for ongoing support.

Training sessions and informational meetings will begin in September.

For more information, call Cathy Ballenger, director of Critical Care, at 815-351-3903.

Keith Hartenberger is a senior manager of external communications for UChicago Medicine AdventHealth.

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MILEPOSTS

OBITUARIES

DEBUSK, Rita A. (Spicer), age 73; born June 28, 1952, in Scottsburg, Indiana; died June 3, 2026, in Fort Wayne, Indiana. She was a member of the Fort Wayne First Seventh-day Adventist Church in Fort Wayne. She is survived by her son, Jon (Terra) Gambrel; daughter, Michele (Robert) Viers; five grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren. A private inurnment was held on June 28, 2026, in Indiana. Flowers and condolences may be sent to 13209 Crescent Ridge Drive, Fort Wayne IN 46814.

FRANZ, Ken L, age 89; born Oct. 4, 1936, in Ellendale, North Dakota; died June 9, 2026, in Berrien Springs, Michigan. He was a member of the Berrien Springs Village SDA Church in Berrien Springs. He is survived by his wife, Norma Franz; daughter, Julene Jackson; two grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. Funeral interment was conducted by David Oakley on June 15, 2026, with a graveside service at Rose Hill Cemetery in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

MERCER, William H, age 98; born Nov. 11, 1927, in Winona,

Minnesota; died June 28, 2026, in Grosse Pointe Woods, Michigan. He was a member of the Warren SDA Church in Warren, Michigan. He is survived by his wife, Linda Mercer; son, Thomas W. Mercer; stepson, Tony Khalil; daughter, Linda J. Mercer Ghilardi; stepdaughter, Nicole Khalil Minnick; brother, Manley Mercer; half-brother, Floyd Mercer; four grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; three step-grandchildren; and three step-great-grandchildren. A graveside service was conducted with a private inurnment.

SOWLER, Richard “Dick” C., age 91; born Jan. 26, 1935, in Baraboo, Wisconsin; died June 16, 2026, in Berrien Springs, Michigan. He was a member of the Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan. He is survived by his wife, Claudia W. (Wallington) Sowler; stepson, Steven Andrews; sister-in-law Denise (Wallington) Collard; brother-in-law, Bill Collard; five step-nephews; one step-grandniece; and one step-grandchild. A memorial was conducted by Pastor Dwight Nelson at the Pioneer Memorial Church with an inurnment at Rose Hill Cemetery in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Within the Lake Union, the officiating pastor or church communication leader is responsible for submission of information to this column. Forms are available in print format, or they can be filled out and submitted directly online. Milepost forms are available at lakeunionherald.org. Conference addresses and phone numbers are listed in the masthead on the inside front cover.

CLASSIFIEDS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Andrews Academy invites alumni (those who attended/graduated, and/or worked at EMCA/AUA/AA) to a reunion from Oct. 16–17, 2026 (third weekend in October). Honor classes this year end in 1 & 6. The honor classes in 2027 will end in 2 & 7, and in 2028, they will end in 3 & 8. **Honor Classes:** 1946, 1951, 1956, 1961, 1966, 1971, 1976, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, 2021. The class of **1976** will celebrate their golden (50th) reunion. The class of **2001** will celebrate their silver (25th) reunion.

EMPLOYMENT

Andrews University Seeks Qualified Applicants: Andrews University is seeking qualified Seventh-day Adventists who may fill open roles in fulfilling our mission to Seek Knowledge, Affirm Faith and Change the World. If this is of interest to you, please check out our current openings at andrews.edu/jobs.

Union Adventist University seeks qualified candidates for a computer technician in Information Systems. This is a full-time opportunity with excellent benefits. The computer technician is responsible for all hardware and software on desktop computers and other end user devices including security. See the job description and apply at uau.edu/employment.

EVENTS

95th Church Anniversary, Oct. 17, 2026, Sharon Adventist Church, Inkster, Michigan. Speaker: Marcellus Robinson. For lunch, please RSVP to Daphne Springer at kimmey4@gmail.com or text 248-766-1644 by Sept. 15, 2026. For more information, call Daphne (248-766-1644) or the church (734-722-2313). All are welcome. Praise God!

14-Day Great Controversy Tour: A transformative journey through four European countries and 60 historic cities — exploring the powerful story of faith, reformation and God’s leading through history. Destinations: Italy | Switzerland | Germany | France. This is more than a trip — it’s a spiritual experience. Contact: gctours@naver.com, +1-202-714-8751

National Agricultural and Homestead Conference coming to Camp Kulaqua, Florida, Jan. 19–24, 2027. If you are planning or would like to transition to country living, a homeschooler, a church or school with an agricultural program, farmer or homesteader ... this is the conference for you! Four days of practical classes, demos and hands-on learning with an exciting program for kids too! Come and let’s Grow Better Together! Find out more at adventistag.org.



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CALENDAR OF OFFERINGS

SEPTEMBER

- 3 Local Church Budget
- 10 Union Designated
- 17 Local Church Budget
- 24 Local Conference Advance
- 31 Union Designated

God's Gifts Deserve Our Faithfulness

Planned Giving & Trust Services helps you leave a legacy that continues God's work while you're alive and long after you're gone. Contact your conference representative for more information.

- Wills & Trusts
- Powers of Attorney & Healthcare Directives
- Gift Annuities & Charitable Trusts
- Endowments & Legacy Gift



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Michigan Conference
Joel Nephew
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Wisconsin Conference
William Ochs
608-446-3452
bochs@wi.adventist.org

PASTOR APPRECIATION MONTH

OCTOBER



ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

GENERAL EVENTS

- Oct. 15–17:** *Theology of Community Transformation Center for Community Change Mentoring for Church Revitalization Symposium, Seminary Building*
- Oct. 16–19:** *October Weekend Experience*
- Oct. 20, 7 p.m.:** *John O. Waller Lectureship on the Arts, Buller Hall*
- Oct. 21, 7 p.m.:** *Robert and Lillis Kingman Lecture Series on Science and Society, Buller Hall*
- Oct. 22:** *Celebration of Community Engagement*
- Oct. 23, 12:30–4:30 p.m.:** *Celebration of Research, Buller Hall*
- Oct. 30–31:** *Andrews Autumn Conference on Religion and Science, Price Hall*

HOWARD PERFORMING ARTS CENTER EVENTS

For more information on the following events and to purchase tickets, call 888-467-6442 or 269-471-3560, or visit howard.andrews.edu.

Oct. 4, 7 p.m.: *Howard Center Presents: David Phelps*

Oct. 11, 3 p.m.: *Southwest Michigan Symphony Orchestra: Bernstein, Brahms & Barber*

Oct. 18, 4 p.m.: *Sunday Music Series: Daniel Quinn*

Oct. 31, 7:30 p.m.: *Andrews University Choirs Fall Concert*

ILLINOIS

Oct. 3: *Chicagoland Convocation, Yellowbox*

Oct. 4: *Adventurer Fun Day, North Aurora Church*

Oct. 16–18: *Master Guide Camporee, Camp Akita*

Oct. 30–Nov. 1: *Young Adult Retreat, Camp Akita*

INDIANA

Oct. 2–4: *FEJAH Hispanic Youth retreat, Timber Ridge Camp*

Oct. 9–10: *Indiana Academy Alumni Weekend*

Oct. 16–18: *Master Guide Campout, Timber Ridge Camp*

Oct. 16–18: *Indiana Conference Women's Retreat, Shippshewana*

Oct. 25: *Three Angels Natural Foods & Christian Books Open House, 11 a.m.–3 p.m.*

MICHIGAN

Oct. 4–7: *Lifestyle Improvement for Teens (LIFT), Camp Au Sable*

WISCONSIN

Oct. 3: *Northern District Sabbath*

Oct. 18: *Wisconsin Conference Constituency Meeting*

Oct. 23–25: *Leadership, Camp Wakonda*

Events listed were scheduled to proceed at press time. Please call ahead or check event websites before making plans to attend.

Sabbath Sunset Calendar

	Oct. 2	Oct. 9	Oct. 16	Oct. 23	Oct. 30
Berrien Springs, Michigan	7:25	7:13	7:02	6:51	6:41
Chicago	6:30	6:18	6:07	5:56	5:47
Detroit	7:11	6:59	6:48	6:37	6:27
Indianapolis	7:25	7:14	7:03	6:53	6:44
La Crosse, Wisconsin	6:43	6:31	6:19	6:08	5:58
Lansing, Michigan	7:17	7:05	6:54	6:43	6:33
Madison, Wisconsin	6:36	6:24	6:12	6:02	5:51
Springfield, Illinois	6:39	6:28	6:17	6:07	5:58

Data procured from timeanddate.com. Error not exceeding two minutes and generally less than one minute.

The Work in Front of Me

On my desk sits a picture of my mother. Every day, it reminds me why the work in front of me matters.

My desire to work in healthcare began with her. My mom had a natural way of caring for people. She cared deeply for her children, grandchildren and everyone around her. Watching her taught me that even if not at the bedside, my career could carry that same spirit of care.

I graduated from Andrews University in May 2025 and began my career with AdventHealth that August as a leadership resident in Chicago. But the season surrounding that new beginning was the hardest of my life.

A year earlier, my mom was diagnosed with stage three colon cancer. Her health declined so quickly that she couldn't physically attend my graduation. That summer, I went to Orlando for a final intern-

ship before moving to Chicago. During this time, cancer spread to her lungs and she was admitted into hospice care.

I was far from home, having to show up to work each day, smiling and trying to meet the expectations of my role. But internally, I was carrying the weight of watching the person I love slip away. I wondered, "If it hurts this much now, how will God hold me together if I lose her?"

On my internship's final day, days before I planned to move to Chicago, I went home to Ohio. I spent three days beside her in hospice. When I arrived, she could no longer speak or move and seeing her so vulnerable was painful. Still, I believe God gave me the gift of being there. Those three days became the final three days of her life. She passed away Saturday, Aug. 9, 2025, hours after I left for Chicago.

Carrying fresh grief into a brand-new city and career, I expected to fall apart. Instead, I recognized how God had prepared what I needed before I arrived. He placed people around me who welcomed me, a church where I felt seen, and leaders at work who showed compassion during the most fragile season of my life. Rather than falling apart, God equipped me with strength.

Today, my mother's picture reminds me of both her compassion and her pain. Part of what made her decline so quickly was because past experiences had caused her to distrust healthcare. Whether it be for reasons of distrust, financial burden or difficulty in access, there are huge population groups that avoid healthcare when they need it most. That reality shapes the leader I hope to become. It pushes me to create spaces where people are not only treated, but feel seen, heard, loved and safe enough to seek care.

AdventHealth's mission is Extending the Healing Ministry of Christ. For me, that mission is personal. It lives in the picture on my desk. It lives in the memory of my mother. Little by little, it is shaping how I hope to serve for the rest of my life and accomplish the work that's in front of me. ■

Jonathan Lutterodt is a management and operations leadership resident at AdventHealth.



Leading With Compassion, Rooted in Prayer

Prayer is a daily practice for Genesis Berroa as she welcomes patients, family members and team members at the registration desk at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth La Grange.

In her role, Berroa oversees patient registration, scheduling and aftercare, often serving as one of the first and last points of contact for patients. Every day she and her team greet people who are at the hospital for a variety of reasons, carrying a variety of burdens, worries and responsibilities. Some are there for walk-in services or routine lab work; some have scheduled tests or imaging; and others are preparing for surgery.

“Whenever I see that they’re stressed, I ask if I can pray for them,” Berroa said. “Praying in the moment helps keep me grounded. Just taking a moment to stop and listen, to breathe and pray to help find a solution, to pause and reflect allows me to receive insight into what I should say or do — or if I just need to listen.”

From a young age, Berroa always wanted to help people. Her mother worked as a medical assistant, which sparked her interest in pursuing a career in healthcare. Her father was the kind of person who could get anyone talking.

“I took on that trait of going out and asking people how their day is going. I feel you can get anyone’s life story if you just talk to them,” Berroa said. “People now are on their phones looking down. I have to be the one to look up.”

Recently, when a patient came in stressed before surgery, Berroa asked if they could pray together. As they did, Berroa saw the anxiety lift from the patient’s face. Another day, an elderly patient was anxious that a test he needed wasn’t marked as urgent in his orders. Berroa called the department to help him get scheduled for the test right

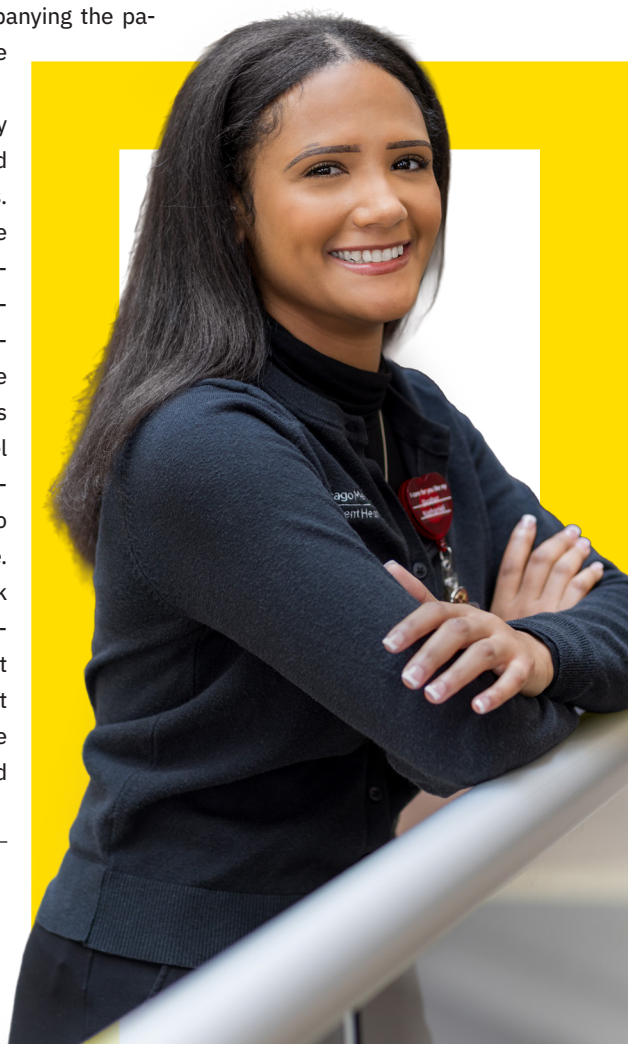
away, saving him from having to make a return trip to the hospital to get it done.

On another occasion, an elderly patient thought they’d lost their wallet, and Berroa helped search across multiple departments before determining it had been left at home. The situation escalated, however, when the patient realized they didn’t have enough gas in their car to make it back home. Berroa offered a solution, accompanying the patient to a nearby gas station where she paid for their gas.

When the patient offered to pay her back, she politely declined and prayed over him before parting ways.

What felt like a natural response to Berroa in the moment left a lasting impression. “[Berroa] is an outstanding person and an outstanding team member. She goes above and beyond for all of the patients and she truly does make them feel cared for,” said Pilar Ortega, patient care technician at UChicago Medicine AdventHealth La Grange. “It’s a blessing being able to work with someone who cares about people. Someone who doesn’t just treat them like they are a number but in fact a being worthy of love. She walks by faith and not by sight and that alone speaks volumes.” ■

Kailyn Blair is a leadership intern at AdventHealth



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