SERVING SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS IN THE LAKE UNION SINCE 1908

HERALD

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2026



WITH GRATITUDE
FOR OUR CHURCH PIANISTS

"Come, we that love the Lord, and let our joys be known" (hymn 422).

And what better time than Thanksgiving to "Come, Ye Thankful People" (hymn 557), celebrating the harvest and remembering the One who provides for our needs?

"For the Fruits of His Creation" (hymn 558), we give thanks. For the blessings we have received, we declare, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" (hymn 100).

Even when life brings disappointment or sorrow, we can take comfort in knowing "God Will Take Care of You" (hymn 99). His faithfulness gives us reason to sing "Now Thank We All Our God" (hymn 559).

And before the Thanksgiving leftovers disappear, another familiar melody fills the air, "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing" (hymn 122), announcing the arrival of the Savior. "Joy to the World" (hymn 125)! The long-awaited Messiah has come.

Of course, these beloved hymns would sound quite different without the church pianists who faithfully accompany our worship. Long before the congregation arrives, many are at the piano, practicing familiar melodies and preparing to lead us in song. Week after week, they bring hymns to life, helping us find comfort in times of sorrow and giving voice to our joy and praise. In this issue of the Herald, we celebrate their ministry. When we invited you to submit names of church pianists to be featured, we received an outpouring of responses. We did our best to include as many as possible.

During this season of Thanksgiving and rejoicing, we are especially grateful for our musicians' faithful service. May the hymns they play and of which we sing become the lives we live, offering a daily chorus of thanksgiving and praise to our great God.

God rises to shouts of acclamation,
Yahweh rises to a blast of trumpets,
Let the music sound for our God, let it sound,
let the music sound for our King, let it sound!
God is king of the whole world;
play your best in his honor! (Psalm 47:5–7 JB)

Let the church say, Amen! ■

Debbie



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FEATURE



8

Have You Thanked Your Church Pianist Lately?

by Scott Moncrieff

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

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The Ministry Behind the Keys

Every Sabbath, across the Lake Union, and around the world, faithful hands rest upon the keys of pianos and organs, helping congregations lift their voices in praise to God. We hear the music and sing the hymns, but how often do we pause to appreciate the ministry taking place behind those keys?



▲ ELDEN RAMIREZ

I came to understand the value of that ministry through an experience I will never forget.

Early in my pastoral ministry, I had the privilege of serving a newly planted congregation that was still developing its ministries, including music. We did not yet have a pianist or organist to accompany our congregational singing. We sang a cappella or used recorded accompaniment, both meaningful ways to worship. Nevertheless, I longed for the blessing of live music accompanying our voices.

The challenge was simple: No one in our young congregation knew how to play the piano.

I began exploring possible solutions. Perhaps we could invite a Christian pianist from a nearby church to accompany our worship services. I even envisioned a double blessing: enriching our worship experience while building a friendship with a fellow Christian who might come to appreciate our Adventist faith.

The congregation embraced the idea. Unfortunately, despite our efforts, we could not find an available pianist. Determined not to give up, I proposed another approach. What if the church offered to pay for piano lessons for anyone interested in learning and eventually serving as our congregational pianist?

We promoted the opportunity for several months, but no one expressed an interest. I was saddened that we had not yet found a solution, and I remember bringing that concern before God in prayer. Little did I know that He would gently invite me to consider becoming part of the answer.

As I prayed one day, I sensed a question forming in my heart: "What about you, Elden?"

My response was immediate. I did not have the time, the training, or the ability! Yet, as I wrestled with that impression, I remembered something from my childhood. Growing up, we had a piano in our home, and as a child and teenager, I occasionally sat down to play. I was hardly accomplished, but I had learned a few basic chords and had certainly made my share of joyful noises unto the Lord!

Could God use what little I remembered?

Eventually, I decided to try. Early in the mornings, before beginning my pastoral visits and Bible studies, I would stop at our empty church and practice. Those first attempts were painful, musically speaking! More than once, discouragement nearly convinced me to quit. But I continued praying and practicing, and little by little, those childhood chords began coming back to me.

After several months, I approached Charlie, our head elder, and announced that we would try singing with piano accompaniment during our Wednesday evening service. He was thrilled! I quickly tempered his enthusiasm, explaining that we could sing only the few hymns I knew and that he would have to lead while I played.

I wish I could tell you that our first attempt was a beautiful musical experience. Unfortunately, it was



far from impressive! I could not transpose music into different keys, so Charlie had to adjust his singing to whatever key I could manage. Sometimes the melody was painfully high, and other times, uncomfortably low. But somehow, we managed, and most importantly, we kept going.

Charlie became my greatest encourager. Whenever I struggled, he would reassure me, "You got this, Pastor!" His patience and encouragement meant more than he probably realized. Somewhere along the way, Charlie and I became that little congregation's first praise team. Eventually, I began accompanying our congregational singing every Sabbath, with Charlie faithfully leading the hymns.

Then, in God's providence, an accomplished pianist joined our church. I cannot adequately describe my gratitude! I gladly surrendered the piano bench to someone who truly knew what to do with all those keys. Looking back, I realize that what began as an unexpected personal challenge became one of the most meaningful lessons God taught me about the ministry of music.

That experience forever changed how I view church pianists and organists. I came to appreciate not only the beauty of their music but also the time, preparation, patience and dedication required to serve faithfully, Sabbath after Sabbath.

Scripture reveals that music occupied an important place in Israel's worship. First Chronicles 9:33 describes Levitical musicians who were devoted to their sacred responsibilities. Their ministry was not treated as an afterthought but was recognized as an important part of the worship life of God's people.

Their ministry mattered then, and yours matters today.

I sometimes wonder whether we have become so focused on completing our worship services that we unintentionally diminish opportunities for worship itself. We carefully plan our programs, yet occasionally shorten hymns to accommodate everything else on the schedule. While every element of our worship experience has its place and purpose, congregational singing is not merely another item to complete before moving on to the next.

Psalm 100:2 invites us to "come before his presence with singing" (KJV). When we unite our voices in praise, we are doing more than participating in a musical exercise. We are offering our thanksgiving, adoration and worship to the One who is worthy of all praise.

To churches without musicians, I offer a heartfelt encouragement: Consider investing intentionally in developing them. Identify young people who demonstrate an interest in music. Help provide lessons, nurture their abilities, and create opportunities for them to grow. Not every congregation has the same resources, and beautiful worship does not require an instrument. Nevertheless, perhaps the person God will use to bless your congregation is already sitting among you, simply waiting for someone to recognize and encourage their potential.

And to every pianist and organist who faithfully serves our congregations, Sabbath after Sabbath, I want to say something from my heart: Thank you. Even when your dedication goes unacknowledged, please know that your ministry is deeply valued and appreciated. Behind those keys are more than talented hands. There is a willing heart, a sacred calling, and a ministry that brings glory to God. Thank you for allowing God to use your hands to touch so many hearts. ■

Elden Ramirez is president of the Lake Union Conference.

"AND TO EVERY PIANIST AND ORGANIST WHO FAITHFULLY SERVES OUR CONGREGATIONS, SABBATH AFTER SABBATH, I WANT TO SAY SOMETHING FROM MY HEART: THANK YOU."

A Bell Still Calls

WISCONSIN ACADEMY RINGS IN NEW ERA WITH HISTORIC BELL

For most of its life, the old bell had one job: calling people to church. For decades, its sound carried across the grounds of Bethel Academy near Arpin, Wisconsin, summoning students from the Adventist boarding school to worship. Even after the academy moved to Columbus in 1949 and became Wisconsin Academy, the bell remained at the church and continued ringing on Sabbath mornings.



Then, a few years ago, it nearly lost its voice.

Membership at the old Bethel church had dwindled, and the Wisconsin Conference decided to sell the building. Terry Howard, a 1972 Wisconsin Academy graduate who grew up nearby, immediately thought about the bell.

"I don't know who's going to buy this church, and that bell has a lot of history to it," Howard remembers thinking. With permission from the conference, he and his son-in-law removed it before the sale.

Howard wasn't sure what should happen next. He just knew what shouldn't.

"Initially it was to protect it really," he said. "I didn't know what I would do with it, but I knew that I didn't want it to go to just ABC Church or ABC New Use."

The connection was personal. Howard's parents attended Bethel Academy. He grew up in a home built on the foundation of its former boys' dormitory, and as a child he heard that same bell ring at 9 a.m. on Sabbath mornings. He met his future wife at the grade school connected to the church, and they later attended Wisconsin Academy together.

To Howard, the bell had always meant more than keeping time.

"The bell is almost like a directive," he said. "It directs you to the church. It directs you to worship God."

So, he stored it at his home.

And waited.

Sometime later, when Wisconsin Academy was preparing to mark 75 years in Columbus, Howard called Wisconsin Conference President Titus Naftanaila.

"Pastor, I got a crazy idea," Howard told him.

His proposal: Howard would donate the bell if the school promised to build a tower so it could continue ringing for students.

Naftanaila's response? "That's a wonderful idea. If you come up with any other crazy ideas, you just let me know what they are."

What Howard did not know was that another conversation had taken place at Wisconsin Academy just weeks earlier.

Maintenance Director Dan Cunningham and Bible teacher Greg Edge had been talking about how nice it would be to have a bell on campus. "Nothing elaborate," Cunningham said. "Maybe a 10-inch bell students could ring during school celebrations."

They talked about it, realized there wasn't money for it, and moved on.

Then came the word that Howard had a bell.

Not 10 inches.

Thirty-four inches. Cast iron. Somewhere between 600 and 800 pounds. Cunningham estimates, based on its design and manufacturer, that it dates to about 1903.

"The timing was kind of providential," Cunningham said.

For a maintenance director accustomed to facing repairs with limited resources, the timing fit a pattern he had already seen on campus. A need appears. There is no obvious solution. Then somehow a donation arrives or someone offers help.

"I don't see how it would have [happened] otherwise," Cunningham said of the bell. "We turn around within a matter of a couple weeks, and we have a bell that has significance to the school."

Now the bell is getting a permanent home.

Students have helped with the bell tower, and the Class of 2026 made completing the tower part of its class gift. Its brickwork even marks the transition from Bethel to Wisconsin Academy, with the 49th and 50th rows laid differently to recognize the move to Columbus and the school's first graduating class there.

Perhaps no one demonstrated that connection more vividly than Patricia Bunker, a member of Bethel Academy's Class of 1949. When she returned for Alumni Weekend, she was invited to ring the bell once again. She did so vigorously.

Today, graduates walk beneath the bell after commencement and ring it before gathering for their final class prayer. It also sounds during alumni gatherings.

Those traditions arrive as Wisconsin Academy is seeing enrollment climb from about 60 students in recent years to more than 90 today. Principal Derek Timms says students are also beginning to see the academy as something they have a part in building.

"They're starting to get it that this is their school," he said.

Howard, a Christian musician, sees something fitting in an instrument finding its voice again.

"It's a missionary, if you will," he said, "calling these young people to church."

More than 125 years after Adventist secondary education began at Bethel, the campus has changed, and generations of students have moved on. But the old bell has returned to the school whose story it helped begin.

And it is still calling. ■



▲ **Top:** *Terry Howard delivering the orginal bell to Wisconsin Academy.*



▲ **Bottom:** *Patricia Bunke (center), a member of Bethel Academy's Class of 1949, returned for Wisconsin Academy's Alumni Weekend last spring. More than 125 years after Adventist secondary education began in Wisconsin at Bethel (the name was later changed to Wisconsin Academy), the campus has changed, and generations of students have moved on. But the old bell has returned to the school whose story it helped begin.*

Debbie Michel is editor of the Lake Union Herald. Additional reporting by Kaara Baptiste.



Karen White



HAVE YOU THANKED YOUR CHURCH PIANIST LATELY?

WRITTEN BY SCOTT MONCRIEFF

PHOTOS BY DAVE SHERWIN AND SANDRA MENDEZ

On days when she's playing piano at the Stevensville Church in Michigan, **Karen White** likes to arrive before Sabbath School, get everything set up and run through a few bars to reacquaint herself with the touch of the church piano. She has already put little paper clips or bookmark stickers into the hymnal and other music books she brings so that she can easily turn to the right page. Before each service Karen prays that her music will touch someone's heart and make a difference in their relationship with Jesus. They may be in the valley of decision, she says, and even though she can't see it happening, she draws strength from knowing the Holy Spirit is working on people's hearts.

For the 10:45 a.m. service, she begins playing prelude music at 10:40, choosing meditative hymns or praise songs that coordinate with the theme or sermon topic of the day. She considers the message of each song and plays in a style which supports that message. If she's playing "There Is a Quiet Place," for instance, she might start with just the melody for a few measures, then bring in some right-hand harmony, then the left hand as the song gradually builds to a climax, and then return to a soft, meditative ending. For hymns with multiple verses, she creates variety in the way she plays each verse, because, she says, "humans lose interest very quickly."

That kind of playing may sound unassuming from the pew, but it is hardly accidental. Behind each hymn, each transitional sound, is a musician thinking carefully about how to support the worship experience week after week.

It takes a lot to be a capable church pianist. Every church needs at least one such person, and a few congregations are blessed to have several, faithfully present, usually in the



Susie DeHart



Preparation *for Service*

background. They may not give sermons in words, but they contribute much to the spiritual tone of the service.

According to Johann Sebastian Bach, in a note he wrote on the margin of his Bible next to II Chronicles 5:13: "Where there is devotional music, God is always at hand with His gracious presence." In many congregations, it is the church pianist who helps create space for that sacred atmosphere. The church pianist is typically the pillar of the church's worship music: the prelude, the postlude, the children's story music, the congregational prayer prelude, vocal accompanist; you name it. We'd like to introduce you to some of these dedicated Lake Union musicians.

Playing for a church service can be a demanding job, so it's no surprise that becoming a church pianist doesn't happen overnight. It helps if you start early.

Karen began life in the early 1950s, and taking music lessons was expected in her community. She started at age 6, practicing 30 minutes a day, and very shortly began following her half hour of required practice with another 30 or 40 minutes of playing just for enjoyment. By the time she was 10, she accompanied her father singing at Carolina Camp Meeting. After the meeting, one man asked her father who accompanied him — from the congregation he couldn't see anyone at the piano. Karen is not tall. By the time she reached high school, she was taking lessons in piano, organ and clarinet, and she has spent a lifetime making music.

Susie DeHart, who plays at Carmel Church in the Indiana Conference, can't remember a time before she started playing piano. Once, when she was about 12 years old, she was visiting her grandparents' farm in Wisconsin and played at the local church Sabbath School. Someone called "number 4" in the old "Singing Youth" songbook, "The Captain Calls for You," wondering if this lively arrangement might be too challenging for the young pianist, but Susie had it securely in her repertoire and was ready when called.

For another young pianist, the first lessons came through family and technology. **Lily Reitman,** from the Michigan Conference, began piano lessons with her grandma over FaceTime when she turned 6 and immediately enjoyed it. From day one, recounts her mother, she would sing along as she played her simple songs. When she got good enough, she started



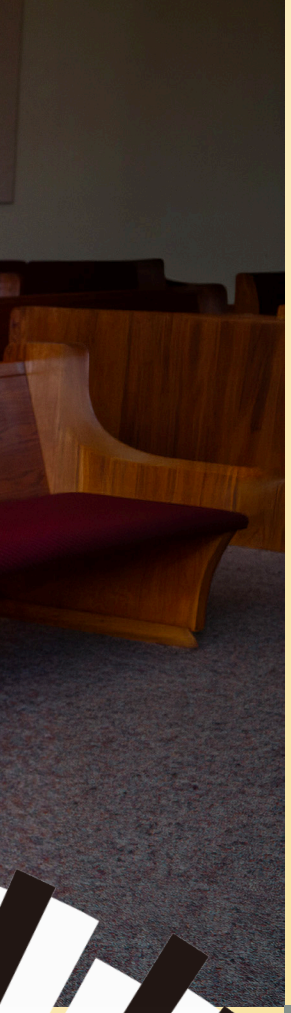
Jacob Martin

> *For many people, the piano is background music, something to talk over until the "real service" gets underway, ... but there's also a great blessing in listening to the meditative melodies and having a quieter transition to the worship service.*

to practice hymns for her lessons. Now 12, she plays nearly every week for her father Charles Reitman's district of churches in Northeastern Michigan.

Family influence also drew **Lucinda Croft** toward music. At Milwaukee Northwest Church in the Wisconsin Conference, Lucinda became interested in the piano when she was 9 or 10 years old, just entering the fourth grade. Her mother played, and it naturally intrigued her to learn. Observing Lucinda tinkering on their home piano, her father began looking for a teacher. He found a newspaper ad for a local college student teaching half-hour lessons for $1.25 and started driving Lucinda on the back of his motorcycle into town for weekly lessons.

For **Myrna Hunt**, of Niles Philadelphia Church in the Lake Region Conference, a teacher's influence helped turn ability into consecrated service. Myrna says that her mother discovered she had a good ear and started her piano lessons at age 8. After eighth grade, she began taking lessons from Esma Ruth Williams at the Northern Indiana Conservatory in South Bend, Indiana. Williams really inspired her students, and Myrna learned to put a touch on the piano just like her teacher. It was her



influence on the piano, Myrna says, that convinced her to give her talent to the cause of God.

Not everyone was so fortunate to receive lessons. **Elizabeth Joy Buikema**, who plays for the Sauk Valley and Savanna Churches in the Illinois Conference, grew up in a Seventh-day Adventist-owned floating log camp in Southeastern Alaska in the 1960s. She dreamed of playing hymns of praise on the piano but, as the eldest of six children, she realized there was never enough money for formal lessons. Undaunted, she made her little church her classroom and sat at the piano with the 1941 hymnal, slowly teaching herself to read music, "agonizing over the notes, measure by measure, hymn by hymn."

The beginning was rough for **Jacob Martin**, who plays at The Shepherd's House Church in the Wisconsin Conference. He remembers playing "Lift Up the Trumpet" in the wrong key and barely making it through all the verses with tears in his eyes. Fortunately, Jacob had the opportunity for 14 years of classical training, from age 7 until he graduated from college, and further honed his skills by watching pianists at big events, like GYC, where he would listen to how the pianists played and embellished their pieces. Then he would practice their styles until he could do it himself.

Though **Stephanie Kasner** always loved to play any keyboard or piano, the Wisconsin Rapids Church pianist really suffered stage fright. One Sabbath the regular pianist at her church was unable to attend and the silence of the service weighed on her until she couldn't stand it any longer. When the offertory time came, she "snuck up to the piano and nervously played 'As the Deer.'" The congregation was very grateful, and Stephanie was glad she was able to help. She began filling in at the piano when needed, but because at that time her repertoire of playable hymns was small, she would always request "Draw Me Nearer" for the opening



Elizabeth Joy Buikema

Playing from *Prelude to Postlude*

hymn.

As Karen sits down at the piano to begin her prelude music, a hum of conversation is going in the background. She begins playing, and the hum continues right along, until the platform participants take their place. For many people, the piano is background music, something to talk over until the "real service" gets underway, and it's certainly appropriate to greet adjacent church members and welcome visitors, but there's also a great blessing in listening to the meditative melodies and having a quieter transition to the worship service.

As the children walk to the front for the children's story, Karen plays variations on "Jesus Loves Me," different rhythms, different octaves, alternate harmonizations, left hand walkups, running arpeggios. She knows this old chestnut so well she can do pretty much anything she wants with it.

The opening hymn is "Redeemed," but with six guitars and a visiting choir plus the congregation, I can barely hear the piano, even though I'm only 20 feet away.

Later, I ask Karen what a pianist can do when the congregation is singing a joyful song too slowly. She says she can encourage a "somewhat" faster tempo by her playing — unless there's a chorister, at which point she just follows the chorister. With a twinkle in her eye, she notes that James White reportedly came down the center aisle of the church beating his hymn book vigorously against his leg to get the congregation singing up to speed.

Regarding getting through mistakes, Karen used to tell her piano students that it's not the mistake that's the problem; it's what you do after the mistake. "If you just keep going," she says, "almost no one in the congregation will know it." However, she adds, "If I make a big



Stephanie Kasner



mistake, I might make another one on purpose, and then people will say, 'Oh, that's just Karen improvising.'" In 1976 Karen attended one of the last concerts given by world-renowned pianist Arthur Rubenstein, then 89 years old. She said he made plenty of mistakes but played with such passion and conviction that she was incredibly moved. As a self-described perfectionist, Karen has learned to let go of mistakes at the church piano — which went hand in hand with more of a focus on self, "how am I doing?" — and focus instead on praising God in union with the congregation.

The visiting choir is handling the special music, so Karen can enjoy just listening and relaxing.

Now it's time for the postlude. But we'll get to that by and by.

Having learned to play "church piano," what do our pianists enjoy about playing, and what purpose do they find in their role?

Purpose in *Every Note*

For Lily, the joy is simple and immediate. "I love making people smile with real music," she says, "because it isn't the same when singing to a CD, which the congregations would have to do if I did not play."

Whereas for Elizabeth Joy, the purpose reaches heavenward. She imagines herself and the congregation "gathered around the throne of God, lifting our voices together. That vision keeps my heart steady and my purpose clear." She says "music finds its true meaning only when it honors our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Without that purpose, it loses its heart. But when it is offered to Him, it becomes worship — an expression of love, gratitude and reverence."

That sense of music as testimony is something Myrna understands deeply. "Music is my passion," she says. "I may not be able to preach sermons, but I can testify to what I feel on the piano and organ."

Stephanie sees music as more than an accompaniment. After citing Paul and Silas singing in jail (Acts 16) and Jehosophat's army going out with the choir "on the front lines, praising God" (II Chronicles 20), she says "Sacred music invites God's power in an awesome way. It vanquishes the enemy, prepares hearts, and deepens



Myrna Hunt

"I may not be able to preach sermons, but I can testify to what I feel on the piano and organ."

convictions of the Holy Spirit." As for her personal experience, she says "while public speaking is not my forte, I can offer my tribute of praise through music. Music is a passion I cannot keep to myself. I know God put this passion into my heart for a reason, and it is my joy to use it to glorify Him in any way or time I can."

For Jacob Martin, music is both a gift and a universal language. "I have been a church pianist in Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, Wisconsin and even Seoul, South Korea. Regardless of the language spoken, if I have a piano, I can instantly connect with people in the congregation through the language of music. Music is universal and I love being a part of any worship service through music."

Looking back on her decades of church piano playing, Lucinda sees this skill not only as a gift but a lifelong ministry. "Playing piano has been my pleasure, joy, comfort, expression and outlet. Hands down, learning this skill was the best gift I ever received from my parents. They would remind me that I would always have something valuable to offer the church." She adds, "I would highly recommend piano lessons to any interested young person. God can and will use you as He has me. Just be willing and humble and persevere to success. Always exalt Him."

For postludes, Karen enjoys several arrangers, including Dale Wood, Gloria Roe and Mark Hayes. She finds some of Mark Hayes' arrangements very moving, including "All Hail King Jesus with Majesty," which she says sounds very grand but is not that difficult to play.

Today, Karen is playing a version of Dino Kartsonakis' arrangement, "Miracle of Grace: In Christ Alone." I tremble when I see runs of sixteenth notes with "11" or "14" written under them, but Karen says she makes it "easy" by dividing the notes between two hands. It does sound beautiful.

After holding the final chord and listening as the sound dies away, Karen puts her music books into her floral print tote bag, her contribution complete for another week. ▪

Scott Moncrieff is an emeritus professor of English from Andrews University. One of his favorite parts of church, as you may have guessed, is listening attentively to the wonderful church pianists at Stevensville Seventh-day Adventist Church, his home church.

Favorite Hymn *or Arrangement*



"I Surrender All" (309). "The lyrics connected with me at the time of my conversion to Christ when I began to have the mindset of being all in for Him." **Howard Chambi, Lansing Spanish Church**



"Because He Lives" (526). "This song brings hope to me every time." **Rebekah Gordan, formerly of Berrien Springs Village Church**



"Tell Me the Story of Jesus" (152). "Fannie Crosby, my favorite hymn writer, wrote it. She's such an inspiration to me. This song is the whole life story of Jesus summed up in three verses." **Nancy Johnson, Hylandale Church**



"Any hymn arrangement by Mark Hayes brings a smile to my face, and usually a smile to the people who listen. He brings an orchestral style to his arrangements and usually uses as many of the 88 keys as possible, which really tests my skills and brings an awesome range of dynamics and sounds to any piece of his that I play!" **Jacob Martin, Shepherd's House Church**



"Isn't He?" by John Wimber (Maranatha Music Praise Chorus Book, expanded 2nd edition). "When the song ends with a G2 chord, I just get goose bumps because I feel so blessed!" **Marie Dow, Waukesha Church**

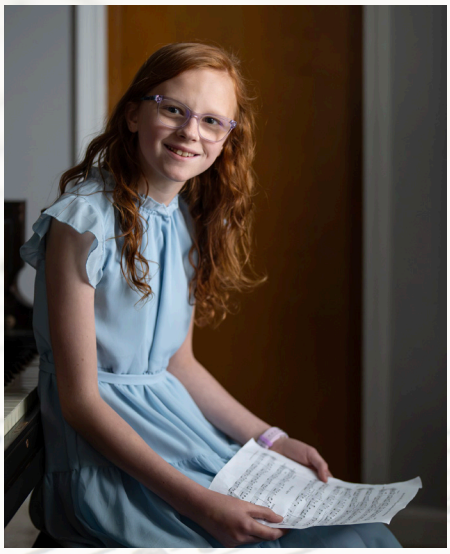


"I really enjoy creating my own arrangements. I enjoy the creativity of being able to change hymns and make them different each time I play them." **Hannah Petersen, Milwaukee Church**

Favorite Hymn *or Arrangement*



"Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" (334). The tune seems to be joy itself. It has a sort of poetry in the melody, if music can be said to rhyme. It is also wonderfully adaptable to variations and medleys." **Stephanie Kasner, Wisconsin Rapids Church**



"Let All Things Now Living" (560). "I really love it because it is such a happy tune and about thankfulness. I also love to play 'Watch, Ye Saints' (598) because it is really fun to play." **Lily Rietman, West Branch, Tawas City and Glennie Churches**



"When We All Get to Heaven" (633). "I don't think this old world is going to last much longer, and it will be such a joy when we get to heaven." **Myrna Hunt, Niles Philadelphia Church**

"Sacred music invites God's power in an awesome way. It vanquishes the enemy, prepares hearts, and deepens convictions of the Holy Spirit."



"But Until Then" (632). "Its message keeps me anchored in hope." **Elizabeth Joy Buikema, Sauk Valley and Savanna Churches**

Encore

We thank all the pianists who submitted material for our article. There was so much we couldn't include it all, but in this sidebar we put a few other tidbits.

Leonard Smith, from the Houghton Lake Church, was pushed toward a love of music by the tabletop Sears record changer and six classical LP's his father purchased when Leonard was barely old enough to operate the record player. In this musical ambience, he learned to play by ear before he learned to read notes.

Rebekah Gordan used to play for the Berrien Springs Village Church, until joining Pioneer Memorial Church. She reports that after the Soviet Union collapsed, the church had a lot of evangelistic programs. Thousands of people were baptized and there weren't enough pianists to cover the worship. So, Rebekah started to play at the age of 12 because "we did not have anyone else."

Waukesha Church pianist **Marie Dow** became a pastor's wife, which, she says with tongue in cheek, "evidently qualified me to be a church pianist." For her initiation, Marie had a song with five flats thrust in front of her two minutes before the service began. "It was awful," she says, but the rest of the service went "fairly well," and at the end many people at the little church came forward to thank her for her "beautiful" piano playing.

On another memorable occasion, Marie showed up to church one Sabbath morning and there was confusion about whose turn it was to play that day, so she stepped in. The presiding elder made a point to thank her for playing on the spur of the moment. Later, she found out that it was really her turn to play, but since she had looked at an old schedule, she didn't realize it. Now she jokes about the time she filled in for the mysterious missing pianist, who ended up being herself."

Stephanie Kasner says that "playing piano at my church (and several others I attended) was a new responsibility because I had to play a lot of songs each week, sometimes taking requests at random. I learned not to play exactly what I saw. It's ok to skip some notes as long as it doesn't damage the melody and timing. It's ok to add extra notes and passing tones that feel comfortable to my style; it helps me keep the timing regular and the congregation can also track when to come in. Personalizing the song goes a long way to making it feel natural. Very importantly, it's ok to mess up! That was a hard lesson to learn but, in the end, I found out nobody is perfect and the congregation is happy someone is at the piano."

After about four years of lessons, **Caryn Erb** of the Wisconsin Conference did not feel pianistically gifted. Nevertheless, when she was around 14 years old, she asked God to bless her enough so that she could play hymns for church. She learned to play five hymns. Then 10. "On Friday evenings," she says, "my dad would stand at the piano and ask me to play so he could sing. He then gave his weekly feedback, usually something like, 'I didn't have much time to breathe but you're doing very good.' Ah, thank you, dad," she says. "Noted!"

Benjamin Calderón from the Paw-Paw Church says, "Music has the power to quiet the loud incessant background noise that as modern people we've become so accustomed to," and that when he is at the piano he tries to help the congregation "forget about the piano, forget about the church, forget about the leader and whatever else, and find a special moment of connection to God, of worship, of reflection, of awareness of His presence." ▪

The Kind of Love People Remember



▲ INGRID WEISS SLIKKERS

Not too long ago, one of my heroes passed to her rest. She was not related by blood but was deeply interwoven with our family and we referred to her as "Tia."

She was 96 when she died and had lived through various deep traumatic events. But for as long as I could remember, she continued to find ways to be grateful, hold joy, and pour into others. She overflowed with hope (Romans 5:13). During a particularly difficult period of my life, she was the one I intentionally sought out. I wanted to be in her presence.

Why? Not because she had a counseling degree. Not because she could quote scripture at me, solve my problems, or even give advice. It was how I felt in her proximity. I knew, cognitively, that she was a dedicated Christian as external factors pointed to this such as her church involvement and the well-worn Bible and study materials on her kitchen table. But that wasn't what I sought when struggling. As the popular quote goes, "They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel" (Buehner, 1971). Or as one social media quote puts it, "Some people are human medicine. You spend an hour with them, and everything just feels better." *That* was my experience with her. Have you experienced someone like this?



Upon hearing of her death, I find myself asking: how can I be like her to others? What was different about her? Here's what I've arrived at so far.

Interpersonal Neurobiology teaches that every human needs to feel seen, soothed, safe and secure (the 4 S's). This connects to the concept of "felt safety" which is defined as the psychological and physiological state where the nervous system releases its defenses because it experiences the relationship as genuinely safe. She was someone I felt I could exhale with. She had what TBRI (Trust-Based Relational Intervention) calls 'soft eyes' which is a gaze that communicates safety and warmth. There was a rich warmth in her presence that I believe came from her knowing that she is fully loved by her maker and could then fully love others. I felt seen, heard, fully accepted. She routinely noticed specific strengths in me and spoke to them aloud.

She walked and talked like Jesus. I think of Jesus looking at the rich young ruler, imperfect as he was and knowing what he was about to not do, and, as Mark tells us, Jesus "loved him." I think of the woman with the issue of blood. He stopped, noticed her and spoke with her. He saw her. And I think of His words: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Being in her presence helped me carry my burdens, and she led me in prayer to the feet of the Father.

In recent conversations with God about this, I've started asking for the ability to reflect Him in such a way that those that come into proximity with me will feel like I felt when in Tia's presence. Remembering that maybe I don't have to worry so much about what I am saying (not diminishing the power of words) but instead focusing on reflecting my Savior's way of encountering people that went beyond words.

For more information on Interpersonal Neurobiology or TBRI:

https://drdansiegel.com/interpersonal-neurobiology/

https://child.tcu.edu/tbri/ ■

Ingrid Weiss Slikkers, LMSW-C&M, CCTP, CFTP, is an associate professor in the School of Social Work as well as executive director of the International Center for Trauma Education & Care at Andrews University.

Processing the Truth About Food

Ultra-processed foods dominate the global food supply today but were non-existent prior to 1879 when the sweetener saccharin was invented.



▲ CHRISTINA WELLS

The need to feed soldiers during World War II also prompted the invention of new "ingredients" and food processing. The industrial revolution, along with urbanization, further impacted food production, consumption and distribution. Technological advancements led to the initiation of canning, pasteurization, and refrigerated transport of food. Mechanization in agriculture replaced human labor with machines. While these advancements improved shelf life, palpability, convenience, availability and safety of foods, it also led to increased mass production of food and the rise of ultra-processed foods. Increased consumption of ultra-processed foods is noted to be the most detrimental to human and public health and has been implicated in the prevalence of diet-related chronic diseases seen today.

CLASSIFICATION OF FOOD PROCESSING

Unprocessed or minimally processed foods may be altered slightly through cleaning, cutting, drying, packaging, freezing, roasting, boiling, refrigeration, pasteurization, without adding chemicals like sugar, salt or oils. These processes help preserve natural foods, make them suitable for storage, increase their safety, or make them edible or more pleasant for consumption. Some foods in this category include fresh produce, grains and legumes, nuts and seeds.

Processed culinary or industry ingredients include salt, sugar, honey, butter and vegetable oils. These food products may contain additives or preservatives to maintain quality and are used to prepare, season and cook unprocessed or minimally processed foods.

Processed foods consist of processed culinary or industry ingredients added to unprocessed or minimally processed foods to enhance durability and sensory quality. Common examples include canned foods (vegetables, fruits, legumes) with added preservatives, salted nuts, cured meats, cheeses, freshly baked breads, and alcoholic beverages (beer, cider, wine).

Ultra-processed food products contain industrial formulations (highly processed substances extracted or chemically synthesized from whole foods) with five or more ingredients. They contain minimal or no intact Group 1 foods and have substances not usually used in home cooking (flavors, colors, emulsifiers, chemical-based preservatives, etc.). Non-sugar sweeteners, high fructose corn syrup, hydrogenated oils, artificial colors/flavors, casein and whey are some examples. These foods are typically highly palatable and feature attractive packaging and aggressive marketing toward children. Some examples include mass-produced breads, ice cream, packaged snacks, frozen dinners, and artificially sweetened yogurt. The problem with ultra-processed "foods" is that they contain little or even no intact food. They are high in calories, unhealthy fats, refined starches, sugar and salt, poor sources of protein, and lack needed dietary fiber and essential micronutrients. These food derivatives are major drivers of obesity and other diet-related chronic diseases.

You can become an educated food consumer and reduce your risk of disease. Read food labels, choose foods with five or fewer ingredients that you easily recognize, avoid chemical additives, shop the grocery store perimeter, and cook at home more often. "And God said, See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food." Genesis 1:29 NKJV ■

Christina Wells, MD, is health ministries director for the Lake Region Conference.



From Scrubbing Floors to Training Nurses

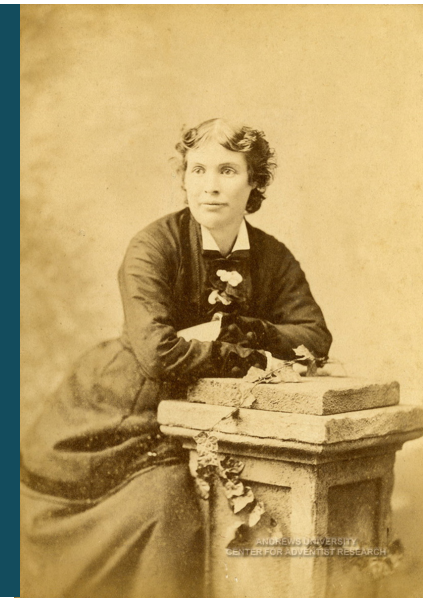


▲ DENIS KAISER

When 25-year-old Catherine "Kate" Lindsay (1842–1923) arrived at the Western Health Reform Institute in Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1867, she did not step into a classroom or a medical ward. She was assigned to dust, scrub and mop. But Lindsay was paying attention.[1]

The young Seventh-day Adventist had left her Wisconsin home despite little encouragement from her parents and no financial support. She wanted to learn how to care for the sick. What she found in Battle Creek surprised her: the fledgling Adventist health institution had no qualified nurse on its staff. For Lindsay, that was not simply a deficiency to complain about. It became a problem to solve.

Before the year was over, she left Battle Creek and enrolled in a nursing program in New Jersey. She supported herself in part by doing family laundry. When she returned to Battle Creek in 1869, however, her training was not readily appreciated. Nursing itself was still struggling to gain recognition as a profession.



Lindsay could have lowered her expectations. Instead, she raised them. Recognizing the need for better-trained medical personnel, she decided to become a physician. In 1870 she entered the University of Michigan Medical School at a time when the admission of women was still controversial. After completing her medical education, she returned to Battle Creek in 1875.

Yet she had not forgotten what she had seen years earlier while scrubbing floors: sick people needed skilled nurses. For the next several years, Lindsay repeatedly urged John Harvey Kellogg (1852–1943) and other leaders at the Battle Creek Sanitarium to establish professional nursing education. In 1880 she pursued postgraduate medical study at Bellevue Hospital in New York and observed its nursing school, which had been reorganized according to principles associated with Florence Nightingale (1820–1910).

Then, in the spring of 1883, the vision became reality. The Battle Creek Sanitarium opened the first Seventh-day Adventist school of nursing. Its first course lasted only three months, and just two women completed it. The program soon expanded, however, and Adventist nursing education eventually spread far beyond Battle Creek and the United States.

There is something striking about where this story began. Kate Lindsay did not arrive at Battle Creek with authority, money, or even a professional title. She arrived with a willingness to work, and eyes open enough to notice what was missing. Christian service sometimes begins that way. We see a need others have learned to accept. We ask why things must remain as they are. And then, with persistence, education, and faith, we become part of the answer. The woman who once scrubbed the floors of an Adventist health institution helped prepare generations of people to care for those who walked through its doors. ■

1 This article is based on Lorena M. Jeske, "Lindsay, Catharine 'Kate' (1842–1923)," Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists, Jan. 28, 2020, accessed Sept. 2, 2026, https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=69OS.

Denis Kaiser is an associate professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

When Prayer Begins With "How Long?"

For some people, the number 13 can stir anxiety. Hotels skip room 13. High-rise buildings sometimes omit the 13th floor. Airlines may avoid labeling a row 13. And when the 13th falls on a Friday, like this November, the superstitious may steer clear of black cats, sidewalk cracks and anything thought to bring bad luck.



▲ EDWARD WOODS III

There's even a name for the fear of the number 13: paraskevidekatriaphobia.

But there is another 13 worth considering, one that offers hope rather than fear. Psalm 13 gives us a powerful lesson about prayer, especially when life seems overwhelming and God feels far away.

Written by David, a man who knew both God's favor and the fury of his enemies, this short psalm takes us from protest to prayer to praise.

David had been anointed king, defeated Goliath and served faithfully in King Saul's court. Yet his success made him a target. Consumed with jealousy, Saul repeatedly attempted to kill him. David fled into the wilderness, uncertain of what tomorrow might bring.

Against this backdrop, David cries out: "How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?" (Psalm 13:1, NIV). Four times David asks, "How long?"

Perhaps you've asked that same question. How long must I endure this illness? How long before my family is restored? How long must injustice prevail? How long before my prayers are answered?

David teaches us our first lesson about prayer: **We can be honest with God.**

His words are raw, filled with anguish and frustration. He feels forgotten and overwhelmed by his thoughts. Yet even in despair, he directs his questions to God. His lament is an act of faith.

Then David moves from prayer to protest to petition. "Look on me and answer, Lord my God. Give light to my eyes" (verse 3). David doesn't abandon the God he believes has abandoned him. Instead, he pleads for God to restore his strength and deliver him.

Here is our second lesson: **Prayer connects us to God even when we cannot sense His presence.**

David's circumstances have not changed. Saul is still pursuing him. Yet his perspective begins to shift. By the closing verses, his lament gives way to a confident declaration: "But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me" (verses 5-6).

This brings us to the third lesson: **Prayer reminds us of God's faithfulness.**

David remembers how God sustained him through previous trials, rekindling his confidence that the same God who carried him yesterday will sustain him tomorrow. Prayer doesn't always bring immediate deliverance. But in God's presence, despair can give way to hope and anxiety to trust.

Psalm 13 reminds us that we can bring God our questions, disappointments and even complaints. And when we remember His goodness, we may discover that the prayer beginning with "How long?" can end with "Praise the Lord." ▪

Edward Woods III is Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director for Lake Region Conference, as well as the Conscience and Justice Council chairperson. For more information about the Conscience and Justice Council, please visit cjcouncil.org.





▲ (From left) Colleen Hagen, MD, Jabeen Fatima, MD, and Mohammed Vaseemuddin, MD, share their thoughts during a session of the UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Physician & APP Well-being Conference.

Caring for the Caregivers

At UChicago Medicine AdventHealth, caring for patients begins with caring for the people who provide that care. Physicians and advanced practice providers (APPs) from the western suburbs of Chicago gathered at the Morton Arboretum in Lisle, Illinois, for the inaugural UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Physician & APP Well-being Conference, an uplifting day focused on purpose, connection and whole-person care.

Held as part of AdventHealth Clinical Wellness Week 2026, the conference reflected AdventHealth's commitment to supporting body, mind and spirit and to strengthen the people who extend the healing ministry of Christ every day. The program invited clinicians to pause and reconnect with the reasons they chose medicine.

One participant provided feedback about how the session "Your Mission – Your Why" was especially meaningful, noting that it was fascinating to hear what brought people to medicine. Those stories, the participant said, helped frame current challenges and reaffirmed that healthcare professionals are driven to help people overcome problems and achieve their best health.

Other sessions featured a discussion about finding meaning in medicine, tips about how to improve your well-being with the use of technology and innovation and a nature walk on the Arboretum grounds to focus on mindfulness.

Carlos Martinez, MD, an emergency medicine physician and Bolingbrook Physician & APP Well-being Committee chair, valued the opportunity to connect outside the usual clinical environment.

"Being out in nature and away from the pressures of the hospital and office allowed us to slow down and connect with colleagues in a completely different way," Dr. Martinez said. "The discussions about resilience and acknowledging our emotions helped me step away from the daily grind of medicine and look at both my professional and personal life from a more wholistic perspective.

"The small-group conversations were especially meaningful. They led to deeper discussions about life, medicine and the challenges we all face. Most importantly, the conference reminded me that we are part of a community and that we are not alone."

Carla Carpenter, DO, a member of the Hinsdale/La Grange Physician & APP Well-being Committee, also contributed to the event's focus on intentional reflection and community.

"The retreat hit both those targets well. It was so nice to catch up and get to know them a little better," Dr. Carpenter said. "One of the key drivers for physician wellness is to lessen the sense of isolation and a retreat with your 'work friends' is a strong step in the right direction."

Heather Hoffman, regional director of Spiritual Integration, said the gathering came at an important time.

"We've seen significant changes in our region that makes it even more important to take pause, reflect on our 'why' and connect with those who have a shared calling," Hoffman said.

"This event brought physicians and APPs from across the region together in a beautiful environment with intentional time built in for conversation, movement and the great outdoors to rejuvenate their bodies, minds and spirits." ■

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

UChicagoMedicine AdventHealth



▲ Larry Wilson, MD, UChicago Medicine AdventHealth Physician & APP Well-being Committee chair, speaks to participants at the system's inaugural Physician & APP Well-being Conference.

Andrews University Hosts Founding of NESTX

Andrews University
World Changers Made Here.

In spring 2026, the Adventist Innovation Network (NESTX) was officially launched as an international organization bringing together Adventist institutions of higher education to promote innovation rooted in mission.

"NESTX seeks to unite Adventist universities through innovation, research and entrepreneurship, fostering an ecosystem where faculty, students, and leaders can work together more efficiently, achieve greater impact, and carry out our educational mission with relevance and purpose," shares George Perez, associate professor of management and marketing at Walla Walla University.

The inaugural NESTX General Assembly was held from March 27–29, at Andrews University. The assembly brought together representatives from Seventh-day Adventist institutions of higher education in the United States, Mexico, Chile, Peru, Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, the Dominican Republic and Brazil, among other countries. In total, representatives from 13 universities participated, reflecting the global and interdivisional character of the initiative.

Andrés Díaz, director of the research and development center at Universidad de Montemorelos, affirms, "NESTX begins its journey not merely as a partnership of institutions, but as a unified international community committed to advancing innovation, research, entrepreneurship and technology transfer in support of the Seventh-day Adventist educational mission."

Activities began on Friday with an Innovation Forum, where key topics related to educational innovation, applied research and interinstitutional collaboration were addressed. On Saturday, a networking dinner took place, hosted by Anneris Coria-Navia and Sócrates Quispe, associate directors of the Department of Education of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The event fostered relationship building, the exchange of experiences, and the development of new opportunities for collaboration.

"Our Adventist heritage reminds us that our pioneers were disruptive thinkers, courageous innovators, and visionary leaders. … By working together through initiatives like NestX, we can honor that legacy, amplify our collective strengths, and create solutions," shares Licci Zemleduch, assistant professor of business administration at Southwestern Adventist University.

On Sunday, March 29, the NESTX bylaws were presented and approved, the Executive Committee was elected, and the Founding Charter was formally signed. As part of this process, Matías Soto, director of the Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship at Andrews University, was elected president of the network, assuming leadership of NESTX.

The appointment of divisional representatives was also formalized. Alcides Flores, faculty at Universidad Peruana Unión, was appointed vice president and representative of the South American Division; Zemleduch and Perez were appointed representatives of the North American Division; Díaz was designated representative of the Inter-American Division; and Márcio Araújo, faculty at Faculdade Adventista do Paraná, and Nicolás Quaranta, manager of Human Resources at Universidad Adventista del Plata, were named representatives of the South American Division. The additional appointments of Jhon Niño, faculty member at Corporación Universitaria Adventista Colombia, and Ana Quirós, vice president for academic affairs at Universidad Adventista de Centro América, as representatives of the Inter-American Division were also completed later.

The gathering concluded with the presentation of the elected Executive Committee, the conferral of recognitions and the official closing of the General Assembly. Through the creation of NESTX, Adventist education reaffirms its commitment to an innovative, collaborative and missionfaithful future. ■

NESTX Participants



Courtesy of Matías Soto

▲ *NESTX participants gathered at the Andrews University globe.*

JACKSON CHURCH CLUB MINISTRIES REVIVED



The Jackson Seventh-day Adventist Church in Michigan, recognized as the world's oldest continuous Seventh-day Adventist congregation since 1849, is entering a hopeful new chapter in ministry to children and young people.

From earlier clubs known as the Jackson Blacksmiths and Jackson Jaguars, the congregation now celebrates the restoration of the Jackson Lambs Adventurer Club, Jackson Shepherds Pathfinder Club, and Master Guide Club.

After the church school closed in 2010, the congregation experienced a difficult decline in young families and children. The Pathfinder ministry gradually faded, and there was even a season when no children were present during Sabbath morning children's programming. Yet longtime members continued to recognize the spiritual value of Adventurer and Pathfinder ministries: spaces where young people can grow in faith, service, leadership, practical skills, and friendship.

A Prayer Answered

The church family began praying boldly for God to bring children and young families into the congregation. The 6:00 AM Morning Prayer Ministry, led by Madlyn Hamblin since 2023, faithfully reinforced these specific prayers for young families and children. In God's providence, a young family began attending, and soon other families with children followed. What had once been a season of absence became an opportunity for renewed faith, intentional discipleship, and ministry.

In April 2026, Jackson Church was selected to receive an endowment fund facilitated through a Lake Union special project for children's ministries in cooperation with the Michigan Conference. This encouragement came at an important moment as the church sought ways to strengthen its ministry to young people. The pastor, current children's ministries leader Alyssa Martinez, Toyai Caudill, and Ashley Marr worked together to prepare and submit the necessary documents for the endowment funding. In May, the desire for the children to experience the Lake Union Camporee led the pastor and parents to give renewed attention to restoring the Pathfinder ministry.

Preparing for 2027

This restoration is also an important step in Jackson Church's five-year plan, which identifies 2027 as Children and Youth Emphasis Year. The renewed clubs are helping establish a stronger foundation now — training leaders, involving parents, welcoming children, and creating meaningful opportunities for young people to know Jesus and serve others.

The names Jackson Lambs and Jackson Shepherds were chosen with a meaningful discipleship vision in mind. The Lambs, representing the Adventurers, will be nurtured, led, and guided by the Shepherds, representing the Pathfinders. In time, these young Shepherds may become Master Guides who continue the legacy of shepherding Lambs and future Shepherds to Jesus. This vision reflects the church's desire to raise not only participants but caring servant-leaders who will guide others in faith.

On July 1, 2026, Michigan Conference Associate Youth Director Craig Harris led the first Basic Staff Training course for those preparing to serve in the clubs. Then, last Sept. 5, 2026, the church held an induction ceremony for the newly restored Jackson Lambs Adventurer Club, Jackson Shepherds Pathfinder Club, and Master Guide Club. The service included David Christeson, Area Coordinator; Pastor Ian Santos, Club Director; and Master Guide Nathanael Jensen, Company Evangelist at the Family and Lifestyle Medicine Center in Holt, Michigan.

Jackson Church's long Adventist heritage reaches back in the 1800s, when church planter and pioneer Joseph Bates, together with Daniel Palmer, the original Blacksmith, helped establish in Jackson, Michigan, what would become the oldest continuous Seventh-day Adventist congregation in the world. Just as the early Blacksmith helped lay a foundation of faith for generations to come, the Jackson Lambs, Shepherds, and Master Guides now carry that legacy forward — nurturing children, equipping young leaders, and guiding each new generation to Jesus. This is more than the relaunch of a club; it is a testimony of prayer, perseverance and God's faithfulness, as Jackson Church continues its mission of shepherding young hearts for Christ. ■

Ian Santos serves as the pastor for the Jackson, Marshall and Holt churches.





▲ *Pathfinders hold a salute in honor of longtime youth leader Ron Whitehead during a retirement recognition at the Lake Union "Unbreakable" Pathfinder Camporee.*

Katie Fellows

RON WHITEHEAD HONORED AS RETIREMENT IS ANNOUNCED AT LAKE UNION CAMPOREE

Thousands of Pathfinders stood at attention Sabbath morning, Sept. 26, as longtime youth leader Ron Whitehead was called to the stage for an unexpected recognition.

During the Lake Union's "Unbreakable" Pathfinder Camporee, held Sept. 24 to 27 at the Berrien County Youth Fairgrounds, leaders announced Whitehead's retirement after more than four decades of ministry devoted largely to children, youth and young adults.

Lake Union President Elden Ramirez invited Whitehead and his family forward, emphasizing that the decades of ministry being recognized were a shared journey.

"Pastor Ron Whitehead is someone extremely special, but he would tell you that this has been a family endeavor," Ramirez said. "Behind every great leader, there is an amazing wife and an incredible team behind him, and that is his family."

Whitehead has served Lake Union youth ministries since 1996. His career has included pastoral and youth leadership across four North American Division unions, service as an NAD associate youth director, and roles at Andrews University as assistant to the president for spiritual life and assistant professor of youth ministry.

He also led the Center for Youth Evangelism for nearly three decades while serving the Lake Union, before transitioning in 2025 to the full-time role of director of children's, youth and young adult ministries.

FAR-REACHING INFLUENCE

His influence, however, extended far beyond the Lake Union.

Whitehead directed seven International Pathfinder Camporees, beginning with "Dare to Care" in Colorado in 1994. Over the next three decades, the gathering grew from just over 12,000 participants to more than 55,000 Pathfinders from around the world.

Craig Harris, Michigan Conference director of Club Ministries and associate youth director, reflected on the reach of Whitehead's ministry.

"You've invested in the Union. You've invested in the North American Division. You've invested in the General Conference," Harris said.

Harris also credited Whitehead with helping shape the International Pathfinder Camporee into what it became.

"It is because of Ron that the International Pathfinder Camporee grew to what it did," Harris said.

But the Camporee was only one part of Whitehead's broader imprint on youth ministry.

Over the years, the ideas kept coming.

In 2001, the Center for Youth Evangelism launched WeCare, mobilizing young people for disaster response. Whitehead's vision for the Andrews University Easter Passion Play followed in 2003. Cruise With a Mission launched in 2007, and in 2008, Whitehead and Japhet De Oliveira helped create the





180° Symposium. Church of Refuge followed around 2009, with a focus on helping congregations better connect with youth and young adults.

Then, in 2013, Whitehead helped launch the Lake Union Youth Evangelism Congress, giving young people more than encouragement to evangelize. It gave them resources to put their ideas into action. Since the Youth Evangelism Congress began, 122 youth-led ministries have received more than $589,000 in confirmed support, with additional matching funds contributed by conferences and local churches.

PERSONAL MINISTRY

Behind the Camporees and programs, those closest to Whitehead say his ministry has always been personal.

"When I married Ron, I knew life with him was going to be an adventure, but I had no idea just how extraordinary that adventure would become," said his wife, Betty Whitehead, in an interview.

Betty eventually became producer of the five-night musical dramas presented at the International Pathfinder Camporees. She traces that journey to a Camporee in New South Wales, Australia, 26 years ago, where the couple watched Pathfinders respond to a dramatic presentation of the biblical story of Joseph.

"Ron and I looked at each other and knew that we needed to bring that same kind of experience to our own Camporee," she said.

Still, Betty said, the events themselves were never the point.

"Without a doubt, Ron's favorite part of every Camporee has always been the baptisms," she said, describing the joy he found in seeing young people publicly give their lives to Jesus.

"Through every season and every role, it has always been about the people, especially young people," she said. "He has wanted them to know how deeply Jesus loves them."

At home, Betty said, that connection with young people has always come naturally.

"What I hope people remember most about Ron is that, at heart, he has always been a kid himself," she said.

Betty shared that their grandchildren know him as the grandfather who plays and fishes with them, takes them to the park, teases them and can turn something as ordinary as a trip to the hardware store into an adventure, "with popcorn, of course."

Betty believes that same sense of joy shaped his ministry.

"Whether he was a pastor, youth director, summer camp director, or executive director of the Camporee, his message was always that following Jesus should be an adventure," she said.

Khaikhai Cin, a former Lake Union Youth Evangelism Congress director mentored by Whitehead, said he experienced that personal investment firsthand. He remembers receiving unexpected texts from Whitehead simply reminding him that he was being prayed for.

"Leadership is not just about meetings, programs, numbers, or getting things done," said Cin. "It is also about people. It is about caring for people and letting them know that they matter."

One moment particularly stayed with him.

When Cin was preparing to leave Michigan for a pastoral call in Washington, Whitehead made time in his schedule to attend Cin's farewell Sabbath at his home church, a Zomi refugee church plant in Grand Rapids.

"He took the time to meet my family and spend time with my church family," Cin said. "That meant a lot to me."

As the recognition at Camporee drew to a close, Harris called the Pathfinders to attention.

"Without a doubt, Ron's favorite part of every Camporee has always been the baptisms," she said, describing the joy he found in seeing young people publicly give their lives to Jesus."

"Pathfinders, present arms."

Thousands of Pathfinders held their salutes in silence as Whitehead raised his own. He held it as long as he could, then lowered his hand and wiped away tears.

"Pastor Ron Whitehead, thank you for being a servant of God and a friend to man."

"Pathfinders, order arms."

On the count of three, the Pathfinders answered in unison:

"Pathfinder strong."

As the salute ended, youth directors from across the Lake Union, North American Division, General Conference and International Pathfinder Camporee gathered around Whitehead and his family for prayer.

"In all my years of knowing Pastor Ron, it's not been about him. It's been about You," said Charlie Thompson, Indiana Conference youth director, his voice breaking as he prayed. "I am here today because of Pastor Ron." ■

Felicia Tonga is a freelance writer.



INTERNATIONAL CAMPOREE RETURNS TO OSHKOSH, WISCONSIN, IN 2029

For months, the North American Division International Camporee office staff and executive committee have been praying, meeting and exploring options for the NAD International Pathfinder Camporee in 2029. After much consideration, the 2029 Stand Strong North American Division International Pathfinder Camporee is going back home to Oshkosh, Wisconsin. The dates are August 20–26.

"While the 2024 Believe the Promise Camporee out west in Gillette, Wyoming, was a phenomenal, unforgettable experience, there is a distinct joy in returning to our roots," shared committee members. "Oshkosh is the place where the international camporee dream truly matured into a worldwide event, and we cannot wait for a brand-new generation of Pathfinders to experience this."

The exact location for the 2029 camporee is the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA), which has gone through an expansion since the last International Pathfinder Camporee in 2019. This allows the camporee the opportunity to come back to this awesome venue. "We are excited that the newly developed property will give us the space we need to hold the nighttime program," organizers added.

As the camporee team continues preparations for Pathfinders to experience this world-renowned camporee, they invite the global church family to cover this event in prayer. Please lift up the newly appointed camporee executive director Pastor Pedro Perez and the entire camporee team. Pray for wisdom, safety and vision as they provide an atmosphere where more than 50,000 Pathfinders from around the world can explore the story of Elijah, grow their faith, and find the courage to stand strong for Jesus. ■

North American Division


LAKE UNION PATHFINDER CAMPOREE
UNBREAKABLE
BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN
SEPTEMBER 24-26, 2026
PATHFINDER
CLUB

“UNBREAKABLE”

2026 Lake Union Pathfinder Camporee

Sept. 17–20
Berrien County Youth Fairgrounds
Berrien Springs, Michigan

BY THE NUMBERS

3,300 **tickets sold**

37 **honors,** many of them offered at Andrews University. They included dinosaur, poetry, crisis intervention, journalism, nutrition, nursing, Sabbath appreciation, and many, many more.



▲ Rich Aguilera, also known as the “Mud Guy,” thrilled the crowd with his nightly presentations.

6 baptisms, all from the Illinois Conference





16 different activities,

from boat rides to fishing to basketball to swimming

2 guest speakers:

North American Division Associate Youth Director Armando Miranda and General Conference Associate Youth Director Alfred Asiem





Beyond the usual drills and honors, activities, exhibits and pin-trading, stories of faith abound. These are just a few of them.

Photos by Katie Fellows, Dave Sherwin and Nate Reid

Scan here for more photos

FACES FROM THE CAMPOREE



Nate Reid



"ON DEC. 24, 2025, MY PARENTS AND SISTER WERE IN THE CAR. My mom [Talia Bryant, Conant Gardens Cougars Pathfinder Club director and Lake Region Pathfinder assistant executive coordinator] had a heart attack. She didn't recover from it.

It was sad, life-altering. It was confusing because you would ask God, 'Why'?

What I've learned over the last few months is that God is always with you. Even in the moments you don't see Him, He's walking with you or He'll put people in your life to walk beside you.

Some examples of how He walks with me are through 'framily.' That word is friends and family mashed together. The church, my church family — they've been very supportive. People in my Pathfinders club have been helping us out. People were cooking food. They were helping drive us to school.

For this camporee, my mom was planning it for the Lake Region. The theme for this camporee is 'Unbreakable,' and it reminds me that to be unbreakable means having faith, staying strong and continuing to move forward no matter what life brings my way. It's knowing that God is with me and He gives me strength through every situation.

Coming here and being part of the 'Unbreakable' camporee also reminds me that I'm stronger than I sometimes realize and that I can still smile, make memories, meet new people and enjoy the blessings that are in front of me. It's continuing to live out my mom's legacy and be at events like these that she wanted us to be at. She put her time into something special for us to get a closer relationship with God.

What I want people to remember is that my mom loved Pathfinders. She wanted kids to have a genuine relationship with God so they can go to heaven. She wanted them not just to know who He is but know that He's your friend and He loves you dearly."

Nadiyah Brayant, Conant Gardens Cougars Pathfinder Club



5-member Indiana-based Chitans singing group provided special music

FACES FROM THE CAMPOREE

"I MADE A DECISION TO BE REBAPTIZED AT THIS CAMPOREE because I never, never, never doubted God's love and loyalty and mercy. It doesn't matter — the things that we do in our life — it's something that I'm never going to doubt.

One of the things that motivates me in the Adventist Church is Adventist clubs: Pathfinders, Adventurers and Master Guides.

In the church I'm attending, the last time I went with them [to a camporee] as a volunteer it was like a reconnection with friends and with something that I'm really passionate about. I was seeing myself back in the time when I was working in my old club, seeing my kids who were Pathfinders when I was club director. [It led me to] say, 'Well, you know what? Soon I will do it [be rebaptized].'

About a month ago, they said, 'We are going to the Lake Union Camporee.' I said, 'Oh, I want to go, at least as a volunteer like the last time.' And after talking with some people, they said, 'Oh, you can also get baptized there.'

I said, 'You know what? Probably yes. I would do it.' I felt it was going to be a good opportunity to be rebaptized and have a new start.

Personally, and spiritually, I can say that I was on good terms with God. But I know getting rebaptized was very important as a testimony, also as reconciliation to the church and to the people. Also, to repair, especially in front of my kids.

[The organizers] were telling me, 'Put your uniform on to get baptized.' I said, 'That's the Master Guide uniform, and I want to wear it after I get baptized, right away.' I was just waiting for that moment, racing from the water and running to my Master Guide uniform.

It's been almost 20 years since I've [been] baptized for the first time. Well, now I'm rebaptized, getting my identity in Christ back and coming back to what I really like to do."

Yeison (Jason) Mora, Lighthouse Spanish Sailors Club



Nate Reid



Nate Reid



7 Master Guides invested



71 TLT (Teen Leaders in Training) braided

FACES FROM THE CAMPOREE

"SOME OF OUR PATHFINDERS SAID, 'I WANT TO GO TO THE CAMPOREE, because what if I never come back?' It was sad to hear that because these kids are actually scared.

When the war started in Ukraine, we had a lot of people join us. About five people in our Pathfinder club are there because of the war. There's a big change right now with all the [Temporary Protected Status] documents. There's a chance that everybody can be sent back, and it's really sad.

So, we decided we needed something to connect these kids and give them some core memories. I think that's something that really pushed us to come to the camporee.

We're mainly Russian-speaking, but we have Ukrainian, Romanian and people from Moldovia, just like a whole Slavic church. We just made our Pathfinder group. Our church community, when they got here, was very inspired to create a space for the children to be able to make friends, so that their church community didn't feel the pressure of moving countries because of a war. That's a lot of pressure.

My dad [Russ Drumi] is the pastor of the church and director of the Pathfinder group. He thought, 'Let's make a Pathfinder group now.'

This is our first camporee with the church. I've been a Pathfinder for years now, but almost everybody else is a brand-new Pathfinder, not even invested yet.

I believe the main reason was that we felt like the church needed something to connect all of us together, and kids are always the reason why parents are going to get together, support, fund raise — all those things really pull the church together. The kids that we have here — they're a good family.

The parents that are here are so on fire about wanting their kids to upgrade their skills and get these Adventist experiences, because only a couple go to Adventist schools. The parents just want to give them a beautiful environment, something fun, and also give them some training. Without these parents putting their love and effort into it, we would not have made this trip happen."

Evelina Drumi, Hope Lights Club



Nate Reid



Katie Fellows

FACES FROM THE CAMPOREE



ONE AFTERNOON, I STOPPED BY PROFESSOR DUSTIN YOUNG'S OFFICE for what was supposed to be a quick conversation. Cough ... cough ... Or, more or less, me yapping her ear off and overstaying my welcome. As I was leaving, she mentioned needing social work student volunteers for a Crisis Intervention workshop on Sept. 25, 2026, at the Lake Union Pathfinder Camporee Pathfinders would earn a Crisis Intervention Honor at Andrews University. I said yes on the spot.

The opportunity felt both timely and forward-thinking. Here was a longstanding youth ministry program intentionally equipping the next generation of believers not only with spiritual knowledge and practical skills, but also with tools to grow in emotional intelligence, recognize when someone may be in distress, listen with compassion, and respond in ways that connect people to appropriate support.

After finishing my shift with Adventist Connect, where I serve in digital spiritual care, I headed to the workshop, led by Young and BSW Program Director/Assistant Professor Yazmik Cantillano. Social work students sat at tables with Pathfinder youth, parents and chaperones as we practiced something that sounds simple but is hard when someone is hurting: how to LISTEN. The heart of it fits in four words: Listen. Don't Fix.

Every participant went home with a small Crisis Intervention Kit holding a LISTEN card, practical response tools, 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline information, and a heart-shaped stone with the reminder, "You're Never Alone." I remember thinking, "This is such a thoughtful little kit." It was small enough to tuck into a jacket pocket, purse or backpack.

The very next day, while serving online with Adventist Connect, I found myself in conversation with someone carrying a heavy load. As we talked, I asked about their safety.

And then something clicked. Let them finish. Identify the emotion. Summarize what you heard. Take their perspective. Explore with a question. Notice the urge to give advice. Then I remembered the kit.

I rummaged through my bag, found that little LISTEN card, and used it to help me slow down, listen more intentionally, and think carefully about how to connect this person with the right support. For me, that was one of those moments when education left the classroom.

As an MDiv/social work student, I am learning that ministry is not only about having a Scripture, a prayer, or the right words ready. Sometimes caring well means knowing how to listen when the words are hard to hear. It means asking the safety question. It means recognizing the limits of what we can provide and knowing when and how to connect someone to additional help.

Foluke Arthurton, MDiv/MSW student, Andrews University







Hundreds of interested spectators watched as 1,000 Pathfinders paraded by a reviewing stand on the campus. The Pathfinders were outfitted in full parade dress as they marched from the fairgrounds to the campus and back. Pictured above is the EMC Pathfinder group, the EMC Evergreens.



Three EMC Evergreens





FUN FACT

DID YOU KNOW THE LAKE UNION WAS THE FIRST TO HOST A UNION-WIDE PATHFINDER CAMPOREE? In the June 3, 1958, issue of the Lake Union Herald, correspondent Morton Juberg wrote: “The Camporee marked a first for the denomination in work for Adventist youth. Never before had a union wide Pathfinder outing been held and the success of this venture showed the results of long hours of planning” by the Lake Union.

In 1958, Pioneer Memorial Church Evergreens Club is pictured here marching from the fairgrounds to campus and back.

Fast forward to 2026, the Evergreens club, one of the largest in North America, marched from the Andrews University campus to the fairgrounds — one of the shortest commutes of any club in the union.



Photos by Ruben Casabona

▲ At the center of the effort are plans to build a smaller-scale replica of the Dime Tabernacle, which would serve as the village's new visitor center, and a replica of the Western Health Reform Institute, the denomination's first health institution.

Battle Creek Historic Adventist Village Gains Support for Major Renewal Projects

General Conference President Erton Köhler is calling for renewed investment in Battle Creek's Historic Adventist Village, with plans to add replicas of two institutions that helped shape the Seventh-day Adventist Church and restore existing historic properties for a new generation of visitors.

At the center of the effort are plans to build a smaller-scale replica of the Dime Tabernacle, which would serve as the village's new visitor center, and a replica of the Western Health Reform Institute, the denomination's first health institution.

"This place belongs to all of us," Köhler told church leaders gathered Friday, Oct. 2, at the Historic Meeting House at the village.

Köhler has invited leaders from the church's world divisions and other Adventist institutions to help develop the Battle Creek site, where the early Seventh-day Adventist movement took organizational shape and established publishing, health, education and other ministries that eventually spread around the world.

He said the goal is to create a historic site that more fully represents a worldwide church while helping younger generations connect with the denomination's beginnings.

One of the largest proposed projects is a replica of the Dime Tabernacle, built in 1878–79 as Battle Creek's fourth Adventist meeting house. The tabernacle became an important center of Adventist worship, organization and mission before it was destroyed by fire in 1922.

The proposed replica would serve as the village's visitor center, with an auditorium seating approximately 150 to 200 people and exhibits introducing visitors to Battle Creek's Adventist story before they tour the surrounding historic properties.

Köhler said the project is expected to cost about $3 million, with approximately $2 million already committed through the General Conference and donors.

A second major project would recreate the Western Health Reform Institute, which opened in Battle Creek in 1866 as the denomination's first health institution. The institute reflected the developing Adventist belief that caring for the whole person was an integral part of the church's mission. It later developed into the Battle Creek Sanitarium and helped lay the foundation for Adventist health ministry worldwide.

Köhler approached AdventHealth President and CEO David Banks about supporting the project. Their conversations expanded into an effort to involve Adventist health care organizations across North America in rebuilding a place that represents their shared roots.

Banks said the connection between Battle Creek and Adventist health care remains relevant to leaders today.

"Mission is both organizational and personal," he told the group.

Over the past two years, Banks said, more than 100 AdventHealth leaders have visited Battle Creek to study the origins of Adventist health ministry and better understand the mission behind their work.

"I can tell you they come back changed," Banks said, adding that the experience leaves leaders "more deeply understanding what the health movement is about."

For Banks, the connection is also personal. His family is marking 60 years as Seventh-day Adventists. He said his mother was offered a job at a small Adventist hospital when the family was not Adventist, and the compassion they experienced there eventually led them to join the church. Banks said that experience gave him a

personal understanding of the reach of Adventist health ministry.

Beyond constructing the two replicas, plans call for restoring existing historic homes, updating exhibits and improving the village grounds with walkways, lighting and gathering areas. Köhler also envisions greater use of technology to help younger visitors engage with the people and events represented at the village.

Some world church divisions have already stepped forward to support the broader restoration effort, and Köhler recognized several of those partners during the Oct. 2 gathering.

North American Division President G. Alexander Bryant was recognized for the division's ongoing financial support of Historic Adventist Village. Köhler said the NAD provides annual appropriations to help maintain and improve the site.

The East-Central Africa Division, represented by Secretary Moses Maka, was recognized for its contribution toward restoration efforts. A recognition plaque is to be placed at the Deacon John and Betsey White Home, the home of James White's parents. The small house, located across the street from the James and Ellen White home, was the first property purchased in 1980 by the group of Adventist lay members who founded Adventist Heritage Ministries the following year.

South American Division President Stanley Arco was recognized for the division's contribution toward restoration of the James and Ellen White Home. Köhler said some of the funds have already been used for urgent work, including replacement of the roof, while additional interior restoration remains.

The home is the oldest surviving Adventist structure in Battle Creek. James and Ellen White lived there from 1856 to 1863, during formative years of the Adventist movement. It served as a center for family life, writing, worship and ministry. In 1858, Ellen White wrote the first edition of "The Great Controversy" there.

The General Conference also is seeking additional partners for other parts of the village. Köhler said seven Adventist publishing houses have joined together to contribute $200,000 toward renovating the interior of the publishing house replica and expanding its interpretation of the denomination's early publishing ministry.

The broader renewal is being developed with 2030 in view, when the General Conference Session is scheduled to meet in Indianapolis, a little more than two hours from Battle Creek. Köhler said the gathering could bring Adventists from around the world to Battle Creek and provide an opportunity for them to take the story of the church's beginnings back to their own countries.

But he said the investment is ultimately about more than preparing for visitors in 2030. The aim is to ensure that the history represented in Battle Creek continues to speak to those who follow.

"We are inspiring people and renewing their commitment to the mission, to the identity," Köhler told the Division leaders. "We have a dream and we invited you to come here today to dream with us because this is the beginning of all of us." ■

Debbie Michel is editor of the Lake Union Herald.



▲ North American Division President G. Alexander Bryant was recognized for the division's ongoing financial support of Historic Adventist Village.



▲ AdventHealth President and CEO David Banks said the connection between Battle Creek and Adventist health care remains relevant to leaders today.

MILEPOSTS

OBITUARIES

PETZNIK, Violet "Vicki" M. (Kitchen), age 99; born Dec. 7, 1926, in Grand Rapids, Michigan; died Aug. 23, 2026, in Coopersville, Michigan. She was a member of the Wright Church in Coopersville. She is survived by her sons, Dan Petznik, Leonard Petznik; and daughter, Lauri Clay. A funeral interment was conducted by Pastor Bernard Andersen on Aug. 27, 2026, and graveside service at the Maplewood Cemetery in Lamont, Michigan.

SANFORD, Janet E., age 81; born March 20, 1945, in Michigan; died Aug. 10, 2026, in Muskegon, Michigan. She was a member of the Wright Church in Coopersville, Michigan. She is survived by her sons, Andy and Roselle Sanford, Scott Sanford, Rick and Reggie Sanford, Steve and Sarah Sanford; daughter, Mara (Fred) Bergman; father, Carl Sanford; mother, Esther (Soper) Sanford; brother, Stephen Soper; sisters, Carla Butcher, Genie Philo; four nieces; one nephew; ten grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren. A memorial inurnment was conducted by Pastor Ted Toms on Sept. 20, 2026, in Michigan.

SELVADAS, Muthabaranam "Janet," age 74; born June 2, 1950, in Tamil Nadu, India; died Aug. 11, 2026, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. She was a member of the Paw Paw Church in Paw Paw, Michigan. She is survived by her husband, Rajan "Sam" Selvadas; son, Jeffrey Selvadas; daughters, Geetha Selvadas, Lata Selvadas Elanko, Reetha Selvadas; and one grandchild. A funeral interment was conducted by Pastor Michael Taylor on Aug. 18, 2026, at the Mountain Home Cemetary in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

VISANI, Eva (Suarez), age 93; born Oct. 26, 1929, in Montevideo, Uruguay; died July 18, 2026, in St. Joseph, Michigan. She was a member of Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan. She is survived by her sons, Hernan Visani, Donaldo Visani; brother, Roberto Suarez; sister, Ana Maria (Anita) Suarez; and four grandchildren. A memorial service was conducted on Sept. 25, 2026, at Pioneer Memorial Church.

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

EVENTS

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.

SERVICES

Holiday Programs: Fill your life and home with a Christian spirit of Christmas. LifeTalk Radio plays Christmas music all through December with special concerts nightly at 9 p.m. ET, from December 6 through 25. Enjoy Christmas music 24/7 at LifeTalk.net

Don't just retire. Live with purpose at Fletcher Park Inn. A Christian Independent Living Retirement Community, located on the campus of Fletcher Academy near Hendersonville, North Carolina. Join our family, take part in the many opportunities for staying active, volunteering, making new friends and living with a purpose. Call our marketing department at 828-209-6930 to find out more about

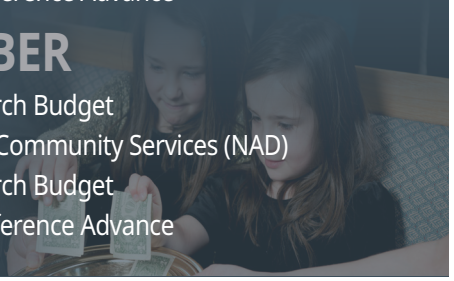
CALENDAR OF OFFERINGS

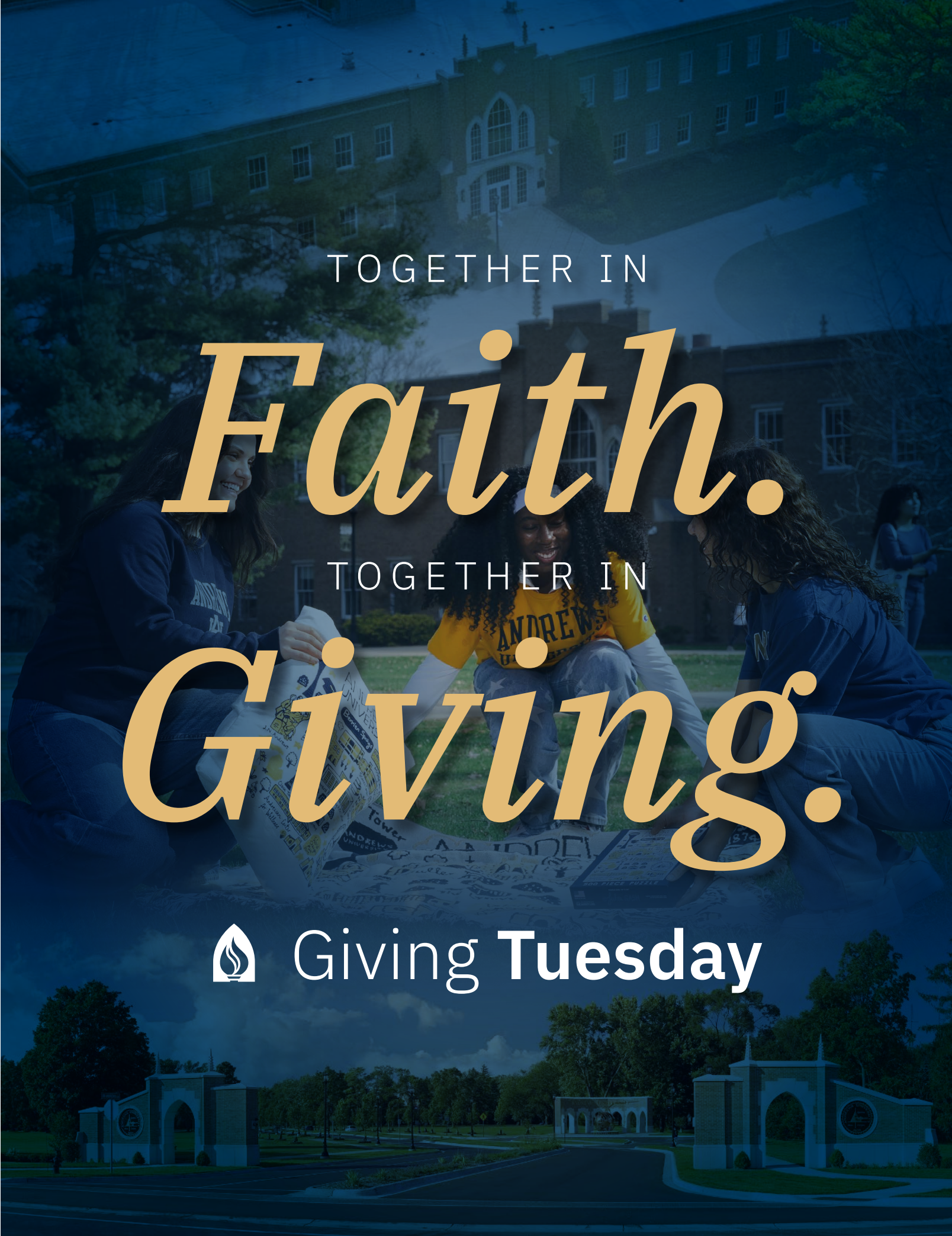
NOVEMBER

7 Local Church Budget
14 Annual Sacrifice for Global Mission (GC)
21 Local Church Budget
28 Local Conference Advance

DECEMBER

5 Local Church Budget
12 Adventist Community Services (NAD)
19 Local Church Budget
26 Local Conference Advance




TOGETHER IN
Faith.
TOGETHER IN
Giving.
Giving Tuesday

our apartment and villa homes or visit fletcherparkinn.org.

Saipan Seventh-day Adventist clinic seeks a qualified dentist and dental hygienist for full-time positions. Join our mission-driven team providing compassionate, quality dental care while making a meaningful difference in our island community. Learn more at saipansdadental.com. For job details and island-living information, contact Jocelyn Sonsona at officemanager1@saipansdadental.com or 670-234-6323.

Choice mountain land inside Cherokee National Forest in beautiful E. Tennessee. 15-acre tract with mature trees. Large creek flows through property. On county-maintained road. Utilities on site. 50 miles to Southern Adventist U. 60 miles to Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Many scenic rivers, lakes, trails nearby. Ideal for retreat, country living, retirement. Several Adventist families live close by. For more info, call 301-325-6159 or email kathyrr777@gmail.com.

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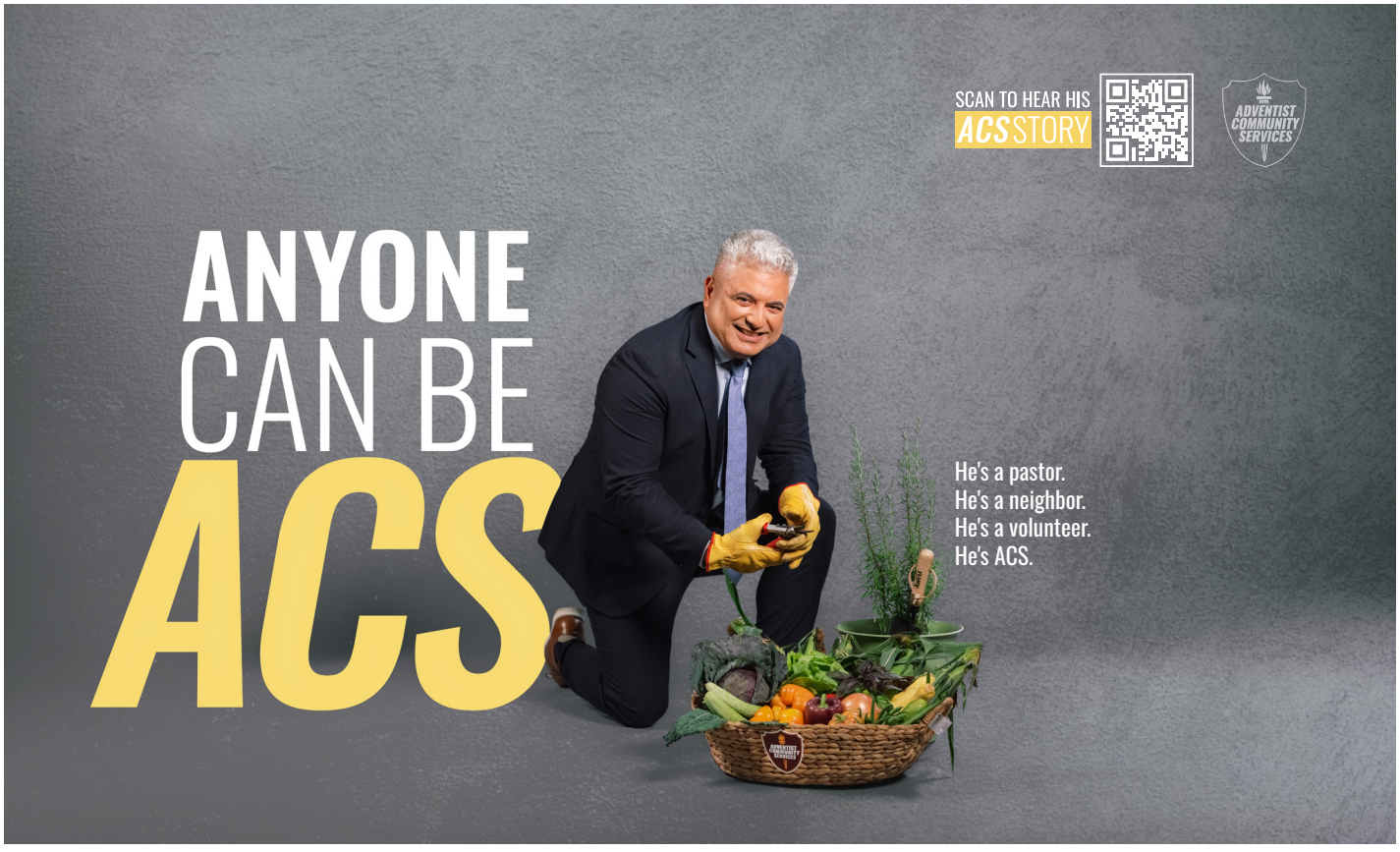
SMALL CHURCHES, BIG IMPACT: We Want Your Stories!

For an upcoming issue of the Lake Union Herald, we're turning the spotlight on small churches, and we'd love to hear from you!

Is your church finding creative ways to reach its neighbors? Have you discovered new purpose after a difficult season? Are you partnering with other churches or community organizations to make a difference? Perhaps your congregation has learned that being small can actually be one of its greatest strengths.

We're looking for inspiring stories, fresh ideas, practical advice for church leaders and thoughtful reflections on what small churches can teach us about faith and ministry.

Send your story ideas to herald@lakeunion.org by **Dec. 31**.



November/December

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

GENERAL EVENTS

Nov. 1–2: *Lake Union College Days*
Nov. 6–9: *Transfer/Health Professions Preview*
Nov. 7, 11:45 a.m.: *Honors Church, Seminary Chapel*
Nov. 15: *Christmas Behind Bars*
Dec. 1: *Giving Tuesday*
Dec. 3, 5–7 p.m.: *Fall Honors Thesis Symposium (formal talks only), Buller Hall*
Dec. 11, 7 p.m.: *Feast of Lights, Pioneer Memorial Church*

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.

Nov. 8, 7 p.m.: *Howard Center Presents: The Vienna Boys Choir*
Nov. 14, 7:30 p.m.: *Andrews University Wind Symphony Fall Concert*
Nov. 15, 4 p.m.: *Sunday Music Series: Chi Yong Yun*
Nov. 21, 7:30 p.m.: *Andrews University Symphony Orchestra Fall Concert*
Dec. 5 & 6: *Department of Music Christmas Extravaganza*

ILLINOIS

Nov. 13–15: *Public Campus Ministry High School Retreat, Camp Akita*

INDIANA

Nov. 13–15: *Young Adults Retreat, Timber Ridge Camp*
Dec. 4–6: *Journey to Bethlehem, Cicero Church*
Dec. 12: *Night of Hope Concert, Cicero Church*

LAKE REGION

Nov. 7–8: *TLT Bootcamp, Camp Wagner*
Nov. 28–Dec. 5: *Stewardship Revival Week, Conference-wide*

MICHIGAN

Nov. 6–8: *Public High School (Hi-C) Retreat, Camp Au Sable*
Nov. 6–8: *Upper Peninsula (UP) Fall Campout, Camp Sagola*

WISCONSIN

Nov. 13–14: *Hispanic Marriage Retreat*
Nov. 21: *The Table@Wausau at the Shepherd's House*
Nov. 28: *JAHWI Youth Rally*

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

Sabbath Sunset Calendar

	Nov. 6	Nov. 13	Nov. 20	Nov. 27	Dec. 4	Dec. 11	Dec.18	Dec. 25
Berrien Springs, Michigan	5:33	5:26	5:20	5:16	5:14	5:14	5:15	5:19
Chicago	4:38	4:31	4:25	4:21	4:19	4:19	4:21	4:24
Detroit	5:19	5:11	5:06	5:02	4:59	4:59	5:01	5:05
Indianapolis	5:36	5:30	5:25	5:21	5:20	5:20	5:22	5:25
La Crosse, Wisconsin	4:48	4:41	4:34	4:30	4:27	4:27	4:29	4:32
Lansing, Michigan	5:24	5:17	5:11	5:06	5:04	5:04	5:06	5:09
Madison, Wisconsin	4:43	4:35	4:29	4:25	4:22	4:22	4:24	4:27
Springfield, Illinois	4:50	4:44	4:39	4:35	4:33	4:33	4:35	4:39

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Nate Reid

Tired of being known as the blind pianist, I wanted to be somebody else. So, I turned my back on music.

Until God showed me music is a gift.

ONE VOICE



LISTENING FOR WHAT COMES NEXT

"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'" — Isaiah 30:21

FOR A WHILE, I STOPPED PLAYING.

I had spent years at the piano, studied music in college and became the person people called when they needed an accompanist. But I was tired of being known as the blind pianist. I wanted to be somebody else. So, I turned my back on music.

At first, I thought I was making a decision about my future. Instead, my life began to lose direction. Music had helped carry me through college, but I had never really recognized how much of my life was connected to it. Suddenly, I was looking ahead and seeing very few possibilities. The future did not seem to hold much promise.

My closest friends noticed the change. People usually associated me with smiling and laughing, so they knew something was wrong. They reminded me that I had gifts I was no longer using and eventually convinced me to talk with a therapist.

Because I did not want anyone to know I was seeing a therapist, I found one online. During an early conversation, I told him, "I'm a musician, but I'm no longer a musician." He asked me to send him a video of myself playing the piano so he could better understand what I did. After watching it, he told me, "Derek, I think I know where the problem is."

He challenged me to think about my ability differently. God had placed a gift in me, and I was suppressing it, he told me. He compared me to the servant in Jesus' parable who was entrusted with a talent but buried it instead of using it.

Maybe my problem wasn't that music had become too much a part of my identity. Maybe I had spent so much energy trying not to be "the blind pianist" that I was rejecting a gift God had given me.

I have been blind for most of my life. When I was about 18 months old, my mother noticed a white spot in my right eye. We lived in a small town in the Philippines where access to extensive health care was limited, and a pediatrician initially told her there was nothing to worry about.

After my family sought several more opinions, doctors diagnosed me with retinoblastoma, a cancer of the eye. Because of a missed early diagnosis, my right eye had to be removed. Doctors tried to save the left one, but by age 3, I had lost both eyes.

Musical Family

Music was already part of our family. My grandfather was known locally as a singer, and my mother came from a musical family. She had noticed that whenever music played, I would drum the rhythms with my feet. Apparently, my rhythm was pretty accurate. My mother, however, wasn't especially interested in raising a drummer.

Then, an Adventist piano teacher from a larger city began coming to our community during the summers. My mother saw her chance. The teacher had never taught a blind child, but she agreed to try. I was 5 when I had my first piano lesson.

She didn't immediately sit me down and teach me a song. First, she introduced me to the piano. She talked about how the keys were arranged and helped me understand the length of the instrument. She even opened the piano and explained what was inside so I could understand where the sound came from and how the hammers worked.

She used the Suzuki method, which emphasizes listening. I would listen to recordings and memorize the music. Then she would explain what was happening on the written score, where the rests were, where the ties were, and how everything fit together.

Over time, I began forming a picture of the music in my mind. Believe it or not, I am a very visual person. I may be blind, but I literally have a score in my head. That way of learning has shaped how I accompany people today. Playing with a singer is not simply about knowing the notes. I have to listen closely. I listen to the singer's breathing. I listen for the inhale before a phrase. It takes a lot of concentration, but listening tells me what comes next.

For many years, church gave me plenty of opportunities to practice that kind of listening. My mother made sure I was involved, and singers frequently needed someone to accompany them. They discovered that I could listen to a recording, figure out the chords and play without needing sheet music.

Word spread. Even when I was ready to quit, somebody would call because they needed a pianist. Eventually, I began to understand that perhaps I was looking at the whole thing the wrong way.

With the help of my therapist, it still took months before I could really say, "Yes, this is part of me. This is my talent, and I need to embrace it."

Eventually, I earned a bachelor's degree in music with an emphasis in piano pedagogy from Central Philippine Adventist College and today I am a graduate student in piano performance at Andrews University.

'Looking for Wrong Kind of Miracle'

More importantly, I have begun understanding God's presence in my life differently. I sometimes describe God as the silent undercurrent in my life. There was a time when I thought knowing God closely meant experiencing dramatic miracles or having Him appear in dreams. I wondered why God did not show Himself to me that way. After all, I had lost my sight. Couldn't He at least give me some unmistakable sign that He was there?

Over time, I began realizing that perhaps I was looking for the wrong kind of miracle. The fact that I am still moving forward is itself evidence that God has been working. I think of it like riding in a vehicle. You don't have to see the wheels turning to know they are moving. You know because the vehicle keeps going forward and the scenery changes around you.

That's what God has been in my life. I may not always see Him working in some dramatic way, but He has always been there, quietly moving my life forward. And if there was a time when my life came to a standstill, perhaps it was because I had stepped away from the gift He was using to move me.

These days, I don't want to play simply so people will be impressed by what a blind pianist can do. I want the gift of music God has given me to be useful to Him. After years of resisting the identity of "the blind pianist," I am learning that I don't have to be defined by my blindness, and I don't have to run from the piano either.

I simply have to be faithful with what God has placed in my hands. And keep listening for what comes next. ■

Derek Inapan, as told to **Debbie Michel**

Watch for more on Derek's story

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