Adventist Review

INSPIRATION & INFORMATION
FOR NORTH AMERICA



Adventist Journey

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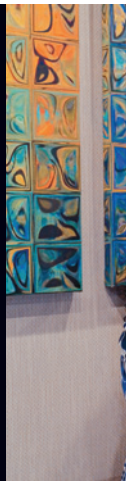
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"If I meet someone who says they want to be missionaries, I tell them, 'Go. Don't have fear, because my challenges and your challenge, the one you're going to face there, they're not the same. They're different. Just go work for the Lord, and then God will bring you home the way He brought us home.' "

—ROSE [AND JEAN] NTAKIRUTIMANA
longtime missionaries, most recently serving in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Rose & Jean Ntakirutimana

Visit nadadventist.orgajroseandjeanntakirutimana for the video, and check out pages 24-25 for more of the Ntakirutimanas' story.

Cover photo by Art Brondo

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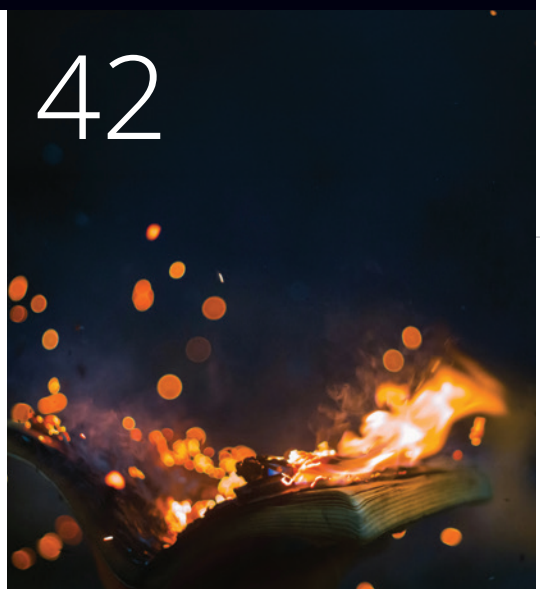
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Dear Reader: The publication in your hands represents the collaborative efforts of the North American Division and *Adventist Review* magazine (Justin Kim, editor). Please enjoy *Adventist Journey*, plus some of *Adventist Review*!

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

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Is Tithing Transactional?



Is tithing transactional? It is a question I have heard people pose and ponder, and one worth considering.

First, one must define what is meant by "transactional." The most common definition describes an interaction based strictly on a mutual exchange in which each person expects a specific benefit or return. Given this definition, tithing is not a transaction in which the individual giver receives a benefit from the organization. In fact, the biblical understanding of tithing goes even further: God lays claim to the tithe as being His and even declares it holy unto Himself (Lev. 27:30). Tithing, therefore, is an acknowledgment of God and a returning of what already belongs to Him—not a transactional activity.

The tithe-sharing system in the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been a blessing, instrumental in the growth of the church around the world. Embedded in this system is the principle of the stronger helping the weaker. It carries the notion that every person, church, and entity may contribute to the tithe without receiving services or resources in proportion to their contribution.

For example, some of our large churches remit substantial tithes to their local conferences, but do not receive services or personnel in proportion to the amount of tithe they remit. Instead, the Lord's tithe they remit helps assist smaller churches within their conference territories and throughout the Seventh-day Adventist Church to support the mission around the world. This sharing of tithe takes place at every level of the church—local conference, union, division, and General Conference. Through this global approach to tithe-sharing, conferences, unions, and divisions that may have fewer resources are strengthened and better equipped to fulfill their mission.

If we regard tithing as transactional, then the question becomes "What am I getting in return for my tithe?" However, if we regard the tithe as holy unto the Lord, the question changes to "How is His tithe being used to support the work of the Lord around the world?"

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has designated the local conference as the storehouse. From there the tithe is shared with all levels of the church to support its mission. When a person returns to the Lord that which is His, God's work is impacted worldwide. Tithing is not transactional; rather, it is an act of obedience to God's command to bring "all" the tithe into the storehouse, that there may be "meat in mine house" (Mal. 3:10, KJV). God's command provides meat (resources) for His work.

Although tithing is not transactional, it comes with a promise from Him to whom the tithe belongs. This is not an obligation owed by the storehouse to the giver, but a promise made by the Creator Himself to those who obey His command and faithfully return to God what is already His.

God promises to "open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing" (verse 10, KJV). His promise of blessing is not a guarantee of material return or a reward we can demand. It is an assurance from a faithful God who knows our needs.

My dear brothers and sisters, we return His tithe and our offerings to be faithful to what God has asked us to do. God honors our faithfulness to His Word. This is not a transaction. It is the divinely designated way God has chosen to provide resources for His church and advance His mission.

God has invited us into partnership with Him! What a sacred privilege!

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

SABBATH SCHOOL ALIVE! VIRTUAL CONFERENCE DRAWS THOUSANDS, HIGHLIGHTS COMMUNITY OUTREACH

BY NICOLE DOMINGUEZ, FREELANCE WRITER

On August 28-29, 2026, thousands all clicked the same link. In an instant 3,546 people joined the Sabbath School ALIVE! Virtual Conference.

This North American Division conference gave pastors, Sabbath School teachers, and congregants a chance to enhance the impact of weekly study by getting to the heart of Sabbath School. Gladys Guerrero, the Office of Volunteer Ministries Tutoring and Mentoring coordinator, and Michael W. Campbell, the North American Division (NAD) director of Archives, Statistics, and Research, hosted the event and engaged with the other program leaders.

Dwain Esmond from the Ellen G. White Estate opened the Sabbath on Friday evening by exploring the Four Pillars of Sabbath School DNA: Study of the Word, Fellowship, Community Outreach, and World Mission Emphasis. Esmond revisited the origins and evolution of Sabbath School. He noted its importance, stating, "If more pastors allowed Sabbath School to travel from



Sabbath School ALIVE! virtual conference hosts Michael W. Campbell and Gladys S. Guerrero start the conference during the livestream while a studio audience looks on.

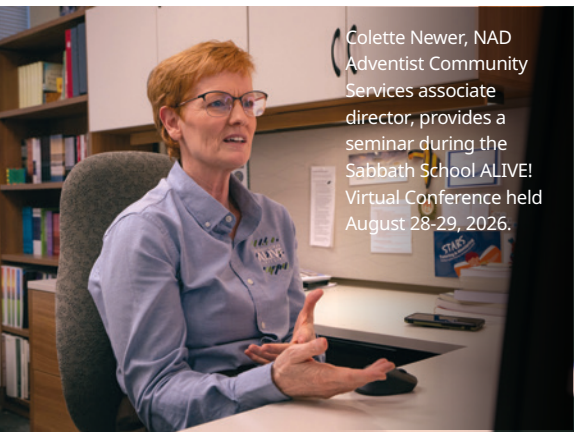
Church leaders gather in prayer around speaker Naraya Omar at the 2026 eHuddle. *Merari Medina*

Photos by Pieter Damsteegt

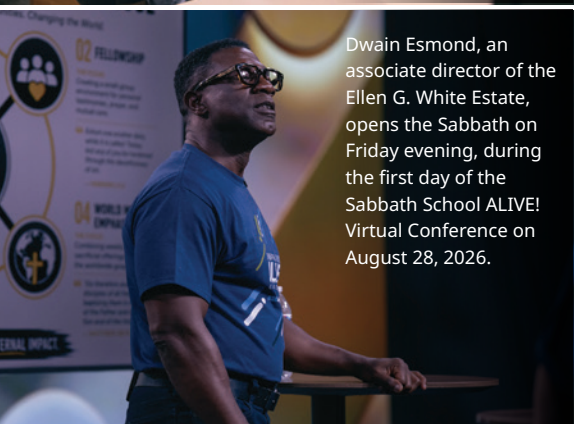
the classroom to the pulpit, we might have a different church." Esmond urged attendees to remember that Sabbath School's purpose was to reach the community, and if it failed to do so, it was merely a club.

Community application added a new dimension for the virtual conference, now in its fifth year. In addition to panel regulars NAD Youth and Young Adult (YYA) Ministries director Tracy Leon Wood and Sabbath School and NAD Personal Ministries director Andre Bill Watson-Payne, representing Adult Sabbath School; Vandon Griffin, YYA Ministries associate director, representing Youth Sabbath School; and Sherri Uhrig, NAD Children's Ministries director, representing Children's Sabbath School, new panel member Colette Newer, associate director of NAD Adventist Community Services, also joined, representing the outreach track.

The outreach track fit well within the well-known workshop tracks of Adult Sabbath School, Youth Sabbath School, Children's Sabbath School, and Spanish language workshops. Over the weekend, attendees could attend the virtual sessions and foster dialogue with fellow teachers.



Colette Newer, NAD Adventist Community Services associate director, provides a seminar during the Sabbath School ALIVE! Virtual Conference held August 28-29, 2026.



Dwain Esmond, an associate director of the Ellen G. White Estate, opens the Sabbath on Friday evening, during the first day of the Sabbath School ALIVE! Virtual Conference on August 28, 2026.

> "Sabbath Schools are the natural starting point to connect, share, and put the gospel into action."

Pastor Deni Reis, from the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference, introduced his new multilingual app, Re:fresh Sabbath School, in his Friday workshop. The app is designed as a spiritual "Swiss Army knife" for new methods of study and comprehension. Cleveland Houser, the Prison Ministries coordinator and trainer for the North American Division, also opened on Friday, offering practical advice on how to welcome those returning to society after prison, based on his experience with as executive director of the nonprofit Don't Follow Me. Saturday held the bulk of the workshops, with three time slots available for each collection of sessions, allowing attendees to explore every avenue of teaching. Additionally, a panel of young adults dove into thoughtful questions to help reevaluate the priorities of Sabbath School small groups, and new curricula from babies to middle school were given for the Children's Sabbath School.

Throughout the weekend, those in the live chat were tested on their memory, with the promise of a giveaway box containing a mug, a T-shirt, teaching resources, and a James White or Joseph Bates bobblehead, to those who could answer questions about the opening sermon.

Ultimately, each session highlighted ways for Sabbath School to become a practical tool for church regulars and for the broader community. Adventist Community Services' presence at the event and through the workshops added a missional dimension to the lessons.

"Sabbath Schools are the built-in small groups of the church. They are the natural starting point to connect, share, and put the gospel into action," said Newer. "It is inspiring to see so many people joining the discussion about how to bring Sabbath Schools to life and make them a thriving and welcoming part of every church. Sabbath School Alive attendees were engaged and lit up the chat with their thoughts and reactions. It was a joy for Adventist Community Services to be a part of this event."

The attendees were challenged to share ways they were applying their lessons through outreach. Through the chat, attendees shared about blood drives, food banks, and upcoming efforts to help their neighbors.

Bill Watson-Payne, director of Sabbath School and Personal Ministries for the NAD, reflected, "Sabbath School is the heart of the church, but the heartbeat might be a bit weak. What are you doing to get the heart beating at full capacity? Out of the heart flows: Bible study, fellowship, community, spiritual growth, community outreach, missions—locally and globally. Sabbath School ALIVE! is vital to revitalizing Sabbath School."



IN TIME FOR THE LAUNCH OF ONEVOICE27, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION PREMIERES SHORT FILM FOR ALL THINGS NEW

BY NAD OFFICE OF COMMUNICATION

On September 4, 2026, in time for the call to Seventh-day Adventist Church members across the North American Division (NAD) and around the world to unite in OneVoice27, the NAD premiered a short film, *When Hope Shows Up*. Dealing with the unimaginable and how hope and faith can play a part in healing and renewal, this film launches the All Things New initiative, in which members are asked to begin preparation now. Connecting with others in person and in the digital space are urged leading up to September 2027 by praying like Jesus, serving like Jesus, sharing Jesus, and following Jesus. The goal of the short film is to create awareness among our members and inspire them to join the All Things New initiative. Members are also encouraged to visit **allthingsnew2027.com** for resources.

"The creators took a different approach intentionally with a creative short film," said Julio Muñoz, a film producer and an NAD associate director, sharing that the director, Anthony Hackett of Sonset Friday Entertainment, is an Adventist filmmaker. "We want viewers to experience the journey from despair to hope."

"We wanted to share a message with our members that even in the darkest moments, God is with us, and that we can be a light to others who are struggling," affirmed Rohann



Wellington, film writer and producer, who serves as an assistant to the NAD president. "This film touches on the themes of forgiveness, grace, and hope."

"We are not attempting to say that those experiencing loss and pain just need to have more faith," asserted Wellington. "Many, many times people need professional guidance through their grief, anxiety, and depression. We don't want that to get lost here."

He continued, "But there is a place for the message of hope and healing that can be found in Jesus to be shared with those around us, and we are called to bring that light to them whether in person or in the digital sphere."

The film asks this question: Have you ever felt as if your prayers were hitting the ceiling and that the faith you built your life on was made of paper? In the moments of darkness and exhaustion, it is easy to feel completely alone and forgotten. This film can be a powerful reminder that grace does not need an appointment to change your life and that hope is just the beginning of that journey of renewal.

This film reminds us that God frequently moves through the people who refuse to let others stay in the dark. You do not need to be polished or perfect to be used by God. In fact, He is making all things new through the most unlikely people, starting with you.

"We recognize that even as broken people ourselves who may have dealt with this sort of unfathomable pain, someone in our world is exactly where we've been—and we can be there for them," said G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president.

NAD Launches New Missional Filmmaking Initiative

The North American Division will release an original Christmas short film for members to share with friends and family.

In the short film, titled *An Unexpected Arrival*, a woman goes into labor on a moving subway train. Her story parallels another baby born in surprising circumstances.

The narrative drama is the first of four original shorts created for the All Things New initiative. Additional stories will be released for Easter and in the summer and fall of 2027. Designed for digital audiences, the films explore themes of faith, hope, and grace, encouraging viewers outside the Adventist ecosystem to think of Jesus.

"We want to meet people where they are; to invite them to see Jesus in a fresh way," said Rohann Wellington. "Film speaks to people emotionally as well as intellectually, and this series speaks powerfully of Jesus."

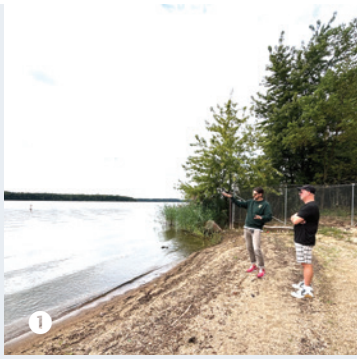
The NAD is partnering with a new production company, Open Circle Films, to produce the series. The production employs skilled creatives, including talented alumni from several Adventist film programs.

"These are among the most ambitious creative media projects the NAD has undertaken," said Julio Muñoz. "We're creating powerful stories that stay with people and open the door to meaningful conversations about faith."

"This is a groundbreaking production, and we're thrilled to see the church making this kind of meaningful investment in creativity," said Zach Kast, cofounder of Open Circle Films.

"The scale of the collaboration is incredible," added fellow cofounder Rachel "Rynn" Scribner. "There are underwater scenes and police cars, and we're building a subway. There's enormous potential to reach new audiences, and I hope church members feel proud of what they've helped create."

An Unexpected Arrival is set to premiere December 1. Viewers can learn more, including where to watch and how to download to share with others at **allthingsnew2027.com**.





❶ Director Dan Steadman (right) and cinematographer Rob Stern map out a shot for the third short film in the series during a location scouting trip. *Rynn Scribner*

❷ A commercial airplane set is scouted for use in a later installment of the short film series. *Rynn Scribner*

PACIFIC PRESS AND NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION PARTNER ON NEW SHARING BOOK

BY SHERLY ROTHGEB, PACIFIC PRESS PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION DIRECTOR OF MARKETING

Pacific Press Publishing Association is partnering with the North American Division (NAD) of Seventh-day Adventists in All Things New, the church's worldwide initiative to share the hope of Jesus Christ through this public-facing expression of the global OneVoice27 movement. Through OneVoice27 the NAD is looking to mobilize members, churches, schools, ministries, conferences, and unions around a shared mission focus leading to September 2027.

As part of a yearlong emphasis, Pacific Press will produce a special sharing book featuring nine chapters from Ellen G. White's *The Desire of Ages*. The NAD hopes to distribute 5 million copies of *Jesus Makes All Things New* throughout its territory, giving Seventh-day Adventists opportunities to share the story of Jesus with friends, neighbors, coworkers, and community members.

> "Every book placed in someone's hands represents an opportunity for connection, conversation, and an encounter with Jesus"

For Pacific Press, this project represents more than a publishing initiative. It is an opportunity to use the ministry of publishing to place a Christ-centered resource directly into the hands of millions of people.

"We are honored to be entrusted with producing a resource that will support the church's mission on such a significant scale. Every book placed in someone's hands represents an opportunity for connection, conversation, and an encounter with Jesus," said Dale Galusha, president, Pacific Press Publishing Association.

A cornerstone of All Things New is an invitation for members to read or reread *The Desire of Ages* now, as they prepare to share Christ with others.

The initiative offers three reading plans to help members journey through the book together, all currently available as downloadable PDFs from **adventistbookcenter.com/desireofages**:

Read five pages a day: starts September 5, 2026
Read a chapter a day: starts September 5, 2026
Read a chapter a day: starts January 1, 2027

The goal is not simply to complete a book, but to spend intentional time reflecting on the life, character, compassion, and ministry of Jesus.

As members encounter Christ through *The Desire of Ages*, they are encouraged to share what they have discovered with the people around them.

The 5 million copy goal reflects the broader vision of All Things New: to move beyond a program or campaign and create meaningful opportunities for people to encounter the hope found in Jesus.

The book is designed to make personal witnessing simple and accessible. It may be given to a friend, neighbor, coworker, loved one, or someone encountered through community service.

The initiative will emphasize four areas: Pray Like Jesus, Serve Like Jesus, Share Jesus, and Follow Jesus.

Pacific Press and the Adventist Book Center network are also making *The Desire of Ages* available in a variety of editions and formats for those who want to participate in the reading journey or share the book beyond the special 5 million copy edition.

Explore *The Desire of Ages* resources available through: **adventistbookcenter.com/desireofages.**

The 5 million books are not simply a publishing goal. They represent 5 million opportunities to start a conversation, build a connection, and share the hope of Christ, say initiative organizers.

Through this partnership, Pacific Press is grateful to support the North American Division through the historic All Things New initiative, and looks forward to seeing how God will use these resources across North America.

ALL THINGS NEW

PRAY LIKE JESUS | SERVE LIKE JESUS | SHARE JESUS | FOLLOW JESUS



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
WWW.NADADVENTIST.ORG/ALLTHINGSNEW

ONEVOICE27
MISSION FOR ALL

North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists

Seventh-day Adventist Church

ONE TEAM, SHARED MISSION

More than 110 Club Ministries Coordinators Gather at Union Adventist University

BY ARMANDO MIRANDA, JR., ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES AND CLUB MINISTRIES LEADER



More than 110 participants from across North America met at Union Adventist University in Lincoln, Nebraska, June 11-14, 2026, for the ONETEAM Club Ministries Coordinators convention. Jointly organized by the university, AdventSource, and North American Division (NAD) Youth and Young Adult Ministries, the event was designed to inspire and equip Adventurer, Pathfinder, and Master Guide—or Club Ministries—coordinators.

Local conference Youth/Club Ministries departments typically appoint these lay leaders to serve designated areas for set terms. Coordinators support conference departments and local area coordinators, who then assist church club directors. Under the direction of the local conference department, they also facilitate staff and leadership certifications, support induction and investiture ceremonies, and help plan camporees and other Pathfinder and Adventurer events.

Attendee Korey Anthony-Chisholm appreciated the event's acknowledgment of the scope of coordinators' responsibility. "Coordinators are not simply event helpers; they are connectors, mentors, resource guides, and culture carriers for Club Ministries," Anthony-Chisholm said.

He added, "The convention created space for area coordinators, specialty coordinators, executive coordinators, assistant coordinators, and other ministry leaders to learn together, ask questions, and better understand how our work fits into the larger mission of Adventurer, Master Guide, and Pathfinder Ministries."



← More than 110 Club Ministries coordinators and other leaders from across North America gathered at Union Adventist University in Lincoln, Nebraska, June 11–14, 2026, for the ONETEAM Club Ministries Coordinators convention.
Photo provided by Armando Miranda, Jr.

Equipping Coordinators for Frontline Ministry

Convention speakers addressed timely topics such as inclusion, mentoring, leadership development, volunteer retention, club safety, and ministry administration. Speakers included NAD leaders Paolo Macena (leadership director) and Tracy Wood (Youth and Young Adult Ministries director), as well as NAD Club Ministries coordinators and other experts.

One featured resource was a new Adventist Youth Ministries Certification (AYMC) course, "Inclusion of Youth With Disabilities," presented by its lead developer, Deanna Lambert, and available at AdventSource.

Lambert shared why this knowledge is vital. "Every child is created in the image of God and is a valued member of the body of Christ. Intentional inclusion moves us beyond simply welcoming individuals to creating environments in which everyone can fully engage and thrive."

The training aimed to help leaders better understand the diverse needs and strengths of children and youth with disabilities, remove barriers, and make reasonable accommodations.

"Ultimately, I want leaders to see inclusion, not as an additional program, but as an essential part of discipleship and ministry," Lambert said.

Mentorship was another highlight. Macena facilitated three workshops on mentoring, while Wood's sessions centered on strengthening the coordinator ministry through annual conventions, Adventist Learning Community (ALC) courses, and the Teen Leadership Training program.

"The most valuable experience I took away from the convention was about mentorship. As leaders, we are called to be mentors, and in order to lead, we must be able to delegate. If we do not delegate, we will burn out," said participant Violet John. She continued: "If we take the time to mentor, the mentee will in turn mentor someone else."

John noted that she had been asked to mentor a future area coordinator. She purchased Macena's handbook, *The Mentorship Guide*, at the convention, and later planned to take an ALC mentorship course. "I believe [these resources] will be a tremendous help to me in mentoring," she concluded.

Affirming a Sacred Calling

The convention opened Thursday night with Andre McCloud, president of AdventSource, challenging coordinators to share the light God has given them. Following McCloud's lead, weekend devotionals and testimonies reinforced the NAD Youth and Young Adult Ministries' "One Team" theme, rooted in Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17:21-23.

On Friday evening, after a powerful charge by the Pathfinder coordinators, youth directors, and pastors, every coordinator was anointed as a reminder of their holy calling. The anointing ceremony underscored the value of their service on the front lines of ministry.

As the convention drew to a close, participants expressed gratitude for the training and connections, inspiring them to continue serving as "One Team" in Jesus.

"Overall, the convention affirmed that Club Ministries is strongest when leaders are connected, trained, resourced, and working together with a shared mission," Anthony-Chisholm said.

Then he expressed shared sentiments: "I hope this summit continues under the NAD umbrella and is replicated at the union level so more coordinators can benefit from this kind of focused training and fellowship."

Author Armando Miranda, Jr. is the NAD's associate director for Youth and Young Adult Ministries and Club Ministries leader. Additional reporting by NAD Communication.



A Ministry of Trust

Philip Bond Brings Experience and Compassion to Planned Giving & Trust Services

BY JESSICA LOZANO

Philip Bond's path to the North American Division (NAD) has included several unexpected turns. A graduate of the University of Georgia, he owned a travel agency and worked in banking for 10 years before receiving a call to serve as the planned giving specialist with Adventist Frontier Missions.

He subsequently accepted a call to the Florida Conference, where he served as director of Planned Giving and Trust Services for 14 years. Now, as the NAD director of Planned Giving and Trust Services, he brings nearly two decades of experience to a ministry he describes as both technically demanding and deeply personal.

"It is about listening to people, understanding what matters to them, and helping them navigate ways that they can care for their families while also providing the opportunity for them to support the work of the church," Bond said.

Planned giving begins with helping members provide for their own needs and those of their families. Only then does the conversation turn to the legacy they may wish to leave for God's work. At times Bond has advised individuals not to make proposed gifts, because doing so would leave them without adequate resources.

The ministry became especially personal during his years in Florida, where he sometimes walked alongside members who had no close family to help them navigate hospice care and end-of-life decisions. Those experiences reinforced his conviction that Planned Giving and Trust Services is a ministry of expertise, compassion, and trust.

Bond also emphasizes that estate planning is not only for older adults. For parents of minor children, a will provides guidance on who should care for their children if anything happens to them. Without that direction, a court unfamiliar with the family's wishes, values, or faith will make important decisions that may run contrary to what the parents would have done.

As the department's work in North America transitions fully from the General Conference to the division, Bond is assuming leadership of a program developed throughout nearly 60 years. He describes it as a strong, well-established ministry that he is grateful to lead. The department serves a territory that includes 59 local conferences, nine unions, universities, and media ministries in the United States and Canada. Because these programs differ in size, staffing, and services, the NAD provides division-wide support, coordination, and oversight.

That work includes certification, accreditation, and professional education. Employees seeking certification complete a rigorous 12-week course, 30 hours of orientation at other NAD-accredited organizations, and a final examination. Certified personnel must also complete 16 hours of continuing professional education each year.

The department works with the General Conference Auditing Service (GCAS) to review accredited organizations against 50 standards addressing professional practice, legal compliance, accountability, and service. Reviews occur at least every three years, and more often when follow-up is needed.

This oversight is essential to protecting members, strengthening confidence in the church and ensuring that local organizations have access to dependable expertise. The NAD Planned Giving and Trust Services Department equips conferences and institutions to serve members well.

"By providing experience, resources, and oversight, we increase consistency and continuity across the organizations within the Division," Bond said, "while strengthening trust in the church and advancing the mission of the church."

Members can visit **WillPlan.us** to find the Planned Giving and Trust Services provider serving their area.

Jessica Lozano is a freelance writer based in Arkansas.

UNEXPECTED GIFTS, UNEXPECTED BLESSINGS

These testimonies illustrate how thoughtful planned gifts can meet urgent needs, strengthen ministries, and extend faithful stewardship across generations and around the world.

Reaching Around the World

A couple left several million dollars to the General Conference, which used their gift to establish a fund supporting projects around the world. During the past several years, hundreds of ministries have benefited. One is a church-based shower ministry in northern California that serves people experiencing homelessness.

The ministry operates a four-unit shower trailer connected to the Auburn Seventh-day Adventist Church's water, septic, and electrical systems. Each Monday approximately 30 people receive a safe place to shower, along with clean clothing, hygiene supplies, sleeping bags, backpacks, and other necessities. The ministry provides Bibles and spiritual literature, while volunteers listen, pray, and offer encouragement.

This support has helped individuals improve their physical, emotional, and spiritual health, obtain employment, and rediscover the dignity of knowing that God and His people care for them. Although the couple could never have met all the people touched by their generosity, their planned gift continues serving others every week.

Quiet Generosity

Margaret "Peg" Lipscombe lived her faith through quiet acts of generosity. She helped families struggling to afford Adventist education, brought home-cooked meals to those facing illness, and provided every Bible requested by her church's prison ministry. Whenever she learned of someone in need, she found a way to help. Her friend Ann Richards remembered, "Most of what she did was done quietly, without anyone seeing."

She established a revocable living trust with the Georgia-Cumberland Conference Planned Giving and Trust Services Department, so when she passed away, her careful planning ensured that her commitment to Adventist education would continue beyond her lifetime. Through her generosity young people in the Augusta, Georgia, area receive financial assistance for their educational needs. Her planned gift continues to extend her faithful, behind-the-scenes influence for generations to come.

A Gift to Honor God

Several years ago a couple who had moved away from the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference contacted the conference about vacant land they still owned near Nashville. After prayer the couple felt led to give the property to the conference, with the sale proceeds supporting several ministries they cared deeply about.

The Planned Giving and Trust Services team reviewed the property and completed the necessary arrangements. By God's grace, the land sold quickly, and the proceeds were distributed according to the couple's wishes.

They later shared: "Everything we have comes from God—our minds, talents, and possessions. We may call these things 'ours,' but they are really on loan from Him. He gives them to us to use for His glory and to help others. Our responsibility is to be faithful. Praise God if this gift honored Him!"

Thoughtful Stewardship

When a longtime member and supporter of the Arizona Conference passed away after a long and full life, he blessed the conference immensely.

After retiring from a medical practice, he continued carefully managing the assets and investments he had accumulated. His estate plan reflected that same thoughtfulness. When he died, his affairs were in excellent order. His trust named 18 Adventist organizations as charitable beneficiaries. Seven of those within the Arizona Conference received significant distributions.

His careful saving, attention to detail, and thoughtful estate planning created a legacy far greater than financial wealth alone. Through his generosity, ministries throughout North America and across the world have been strengthened, allowing his lifetime of faithful stewardship to continue blessing others for years to come.

FORTIFIED FOR MISSION

BY MICHAEL W. CAMPBELL

Organization, with Seventh-day Adventists," wrote James White in 1873, "was not entered into as a matter of choice; but it had become a necessity. And now, with our organization, however complete, we need wisdom to use it properly. I regard organization more like a fort, to use military terms, in which we may entrench ourselves for protection and self-defense, rather than as a weapon for aggressive warfare."[1]

It turned out that "military terms" were an appropriate way to describe the battle over church organization. Some, including James White, had come out of the Christian Connexion movement that emphasized no polity beyond the local congregation. The Millerite George Storrs had warned that "no church can be organized by man's invention but what it becomes Babylon the *moment it is organized*."[2] James White found that even the suggestion of an annual meeting of believers in each state was met with accusations that the fledgling movement was already selling out to be like other churches.[3] Ellen G. White later recalled that "we had a hard struggle in establishing organization."[4] Another church leader later remembered this period as one of "great fear" and "much prejudice regarding organization of any sort."[5]

For the Sake of Mission

Adventists gradually accepted church organization for several reasons, but largely because they realized that a lack of organization was making it harder to share the Adventist message. Despite such earlier misgivings, Ellen White would challenge the church to "become established upon gospel order which has been overlooked and neglected."[6] Many congregations lacked ministerial guidance and church members tended to focus instead upon their livelihoods. The few ministers who traveled around tended to quickly get discouraged with little, if any, meager support. By providing "gospel order," a term used to help sell the idea in early Adventism, systems were put in place that helped to alleviate these problems by keeping a strong missional focus as the catalyst behind organization. Organization existed for the sake of mission.

Another reason for church organization was to come up with a better system for financing the work of the church. Tough economic conditions gave church leaders cause for reviewing their giving system. The 1857 financial panic resulted in the first system, based upon one's property (in a time when many early believers were rural farmers). This worked well through the 1860s until the panic of 1873. Once again, as funds didn't stretch far enough, church leaders dialogued with one another and looked to Scripture for guidance. The result was an 1876 series of articles based upon Malachi 3:8-11 that emphasized divine blessing by returning a "tithe" back to God. This shifted finances from 1 percent per year of one's property to 10 percent of one's income.

Beyond Jerusalem

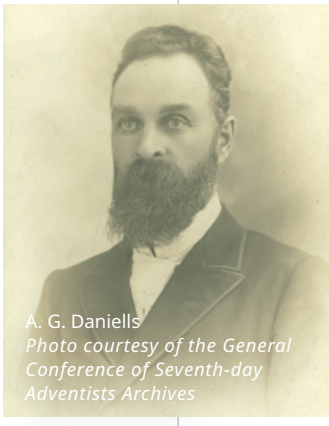
By the turn of the nineteenth century, Adventists had effectively made their church headquarters in Battle Creek, Michigan, into a kind of "Jerusalem."[7] The proliferation and growth of institutions created a new problem—too many resources concentrated in one place. As calls were coming in to establish new missions, those resources were instead being tied up in an ever-expanding Adventist mecca. Even worse, the combined centralization and financial strain, along with many independent entities that pursued independent goals, effectively "broke" the system. Ellen White also warned that concentrating the power into the hands of a few individuals had led to "kingly power" that at times resulted in the abuse of one's influence and position.

In the 1890s a series of experiments began to search for new ways of adapting and changing the church's structure to utilize its mission more effectively. In 1892 a European Council was formed to coordinate the work in Europe. The



work of the church was divided up into eight districts between 1888 and 1893. In South Africa A. T. Robinson organized the work along departmental lines. This included Sabbath and publishing programs that had previously been too independent. In Australia another solution, spearheaded by A. G. Daniells and W. C. White, was to add one more level of governance between conferences and the General Conference—the union conference.

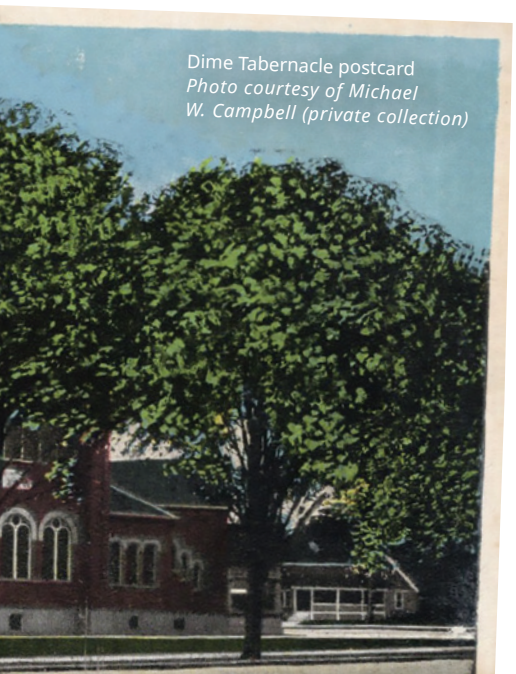
A sense of excitement filled the air as delegates gathered on April 2, 1901, in the Battle Creek Tabernacle. Ellen White had met with a group of key church leaders the day before to share guidance and challenge those leaders to take a new course of action. Change was desperately needed. During the opening session a plea was made by Daniells to set aside the regular agenda and make reorganization the major focus. His motion was adopted, and he was tasked with leading out in the discussions. A new committee was formed, union conferences (and missions) were officially created within the polity, and auxiliary organizations such as health and publishing, etc., were made into departments. Larger executive committees were placed to provide more accountability. The General Conference Committee was expanded from 13 to 25 members. Later, between 1913 and 1918, the denomination would add "divisions" of the General Conference to help once again facilitate the church's mission.



A. G. Daniells
Photo courtesy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Archives

As the church grew, it became essential to modify and adapt the church's structure and organization to constantly assess and ensure that mission remained paramount. Unions served an important role supporting conferences, and the division would provide an important link as a "division" of the General Conference, applying world church initiatives in contextual, relevant ways. All levels of the church exist for the purpose of mission; and each provides unique resources and plays an important role in the mission of the church.

Adventists moved from a stance that was fiercely anti-organizational to one that embraced organization. There were growing pains along the way.



Dime Tabernacle postcard
Photo courtesy of Michael W. Campbell (private collection)

Perspective

Adventists moved from a stance that was fiercely anti-organizational to one that embraced organization. There were growing pains along the way. Probably foremost was how to create a system that efficiently distributed funds for mission. This process was revised at various times. Many more examples could be cited in this article, but it is sufficient to say that whenever funds have run short or there has been a financial recession, this has generated renewed discussions in Adventist history about how to carry forward the work of the church most efficiently.

At the same time, whenever such discussions take place it is vital to study and understand where Adventism has come from. Organization didn't happen by accident. Two of the most instructive periods of time occurred when the denomination officially organized (1863) and then formally reorganized (1901), but one should not overlook the many other nuanced modifications that have taken place.

Church organization exists for the sake of mission, not the other way around—which means that it becomes vitally important to review our past so that we can better understand where we came from, seek God's continued guidance, and constantly evaluate at all levels of the church—from the local church to the General Conference—how to share most efficiently the good news of a loving Savior, and the distinctive Adventist message, to a world who so desperately needs to hear about Christ's soon return.

[1] George Storrs, "Come Out of Her, My People," *The Midnight Cry,* Feb. 15, 1844, p. 238.
[2] James White, "Yearly Meetings," *Review and Herald,* July 21, 1859, p. 68.
[3] Ellen G. White letter 32, 1892.
[4] A. G. Daniells, "Reformation and Reorganization," *Review and Herald,* June 11, 1925, p. 3.
[5] Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1882, 1945), p. 100.
[6] See "The Beginnings of Adventism in Battle Creek," featuring newspaper clippings compiled from the Battle Creek *Enquirer and News,* circa 1932, p. 3, located in the City of Battle Creek Archives.

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

"The Onward Progress of the Gospel to the World"

How Can Church Members Have Confidence in the Tithe System?

BY JOJEAN BIRTH

Every Sabbath hundreds of thousands of church members faithfully return tithes and offerings, but do they know how those funds are used, and can they have confidence that the money is used for appropriate purposes?

Merriam-Webster defines confidence as "faith or belief that one will act in a right, proper, or effective way."[1] We place confidence in many things throughout our lives: parents, teachers, leaders, pastors, and legal systems, to name a few. But do we have evidence that those people and systems are worthy of our confidence?

The General Conference (GC) Executive Committee has established the framework and policies for the use and sharing of tithe within the church. These policies have been developed through prayerful consideration and study of biblical principles and divine inspiration and are documented in the GC and North American Division (NAD) working policies. Appropriate uses of tithe include pastoral ministry (pastors, evangelists, and ministers), soul winning support, a portion of literature evangelists' costs, evangelism activities and equipment, specific educational expenses, auditing services, and contributions to retirement funds related to tithe-permissible personnel costs. Specified percentages of tithe are also passed on from the local conference to unions, divisions, and GC to support the worldwide work of the church. Tithe is not retained at the local church to support ministry and operations at the local church level; however, the local conferences use their tithe portion to pay the pastors who serve at the local churches.



Getty Images

At its year-end meetings the NAD Executive Committee reviews and votes the percentages of tithe to be retained at the local conference and passed on to the unions and division. At the 2025 year-end meetings the tithe allocation percentage approved for the local conference for 2026 was 69.6 percent. The rest was divided between the unions, the NAD, and the NAD retirement plan.

Back to confidence . . . how can a church member have confidence that tithe is used as described by GC and NAD leadership? This is where the General Conference Auditing Service (GCAS) comes in. GCAS traces its legacy back to 1863, when the GC was organized and an audit committee was appointed to provide financial oversight.[2] Since then, GCAS has grown to include more than 300 audit professionals in 50 countries around the world, serving all 13 world divisions.

Auditors not only perform financial statement audits in accordance with country-specific auditing standards but also perform a review of an organization's compliance with certain working policies, including the use of tithe. Upon completion of the audit, a policy compliance report is provided to the organization's management, governing committee, and oversight organizations (unions and division), documenting whether the auditor observed non-compliance with core policies.

"The funds that are contributed by the people must be carefully handled. . . . It is the auditor's duty to make such investigation . . . to see that no confidence has been misplaced, that policies followed are in harmony with our general work and will assist in the onward progress of the gospel to the world."[3]

GCAS auditors believe they are called by God to serve in this unique mission. The dedicated team of GCAS auditors has been called to provide church members with confidence that their tithes and offerings are used in accordance with biblical and divine inspiration.

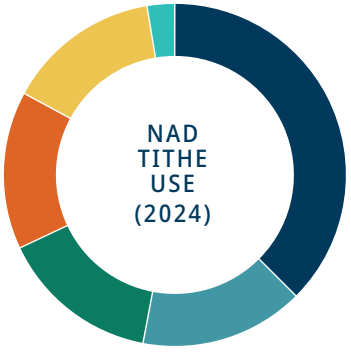
[1]Definition from merriam-webster.com/dictionary/confidence.
[2] See gcasconnect.org/history.
[3] J. J. Ireland, the first General Conference auditor, 1914.

JoJean Birth is the General Conference Auditing Service auditor assigned to the North American Division.

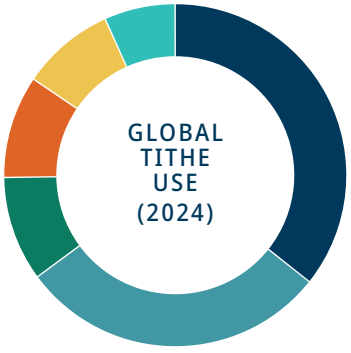
Where the **TITHE GOES**

See the Reach of Your Faithfulness

Tithe is the financial lifeblood of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In 2025 The North American Division (NAD) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church collected $1.317 billion in tithe donations. This represents 41.59 percent of the tithe collected by the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church contributed by the NAD in 2025.* These funds allow the church to operate our organizational structure, churches, schools, ministries, outreach programs, and more. This includes funding the salaries of pastors, teachers, missionaries, and other employees. We are grateful for our pastors, teachers, and leaders who serve at the forefront of ministry outreach. We are also grateful to our members, whose financial faithfulness allows the church to make disciples and disseminate the gospel to North America and beyond.



37.5% Pastors
15.5% Adventist Education
15.0% Other Uses (?)
14.9% Operating Expenses
14.5% Adventist Retirement
2.6% Direct Evangelism, Media Outreach and Literature Evangelism



35.7% Pastors
29.2% Operating Expenses
9.9% Other Uses (?)
9.7% Adventist Education
8.8% Retirement Fund
6.7% Direct Evangelism, Media Outreach and Literature Evangelism

7,276
NAD Congregations

3,940
NAD Pastors

41.59%

North American Division's contribution percentage to worldwide tithe

$86 Million

Received in Tithe and Offerings Worldwide Each Week

2025-2026 EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH UNIVERSITY

Educators
10,045

Students
74,975

Schools
852

Unions
9

Conferences
59



North American Division is
1 OF 13 DIVISIONS

Tithe Also Sustains:

- **Missionary Deployment**
- **Religious Liberty**
- **Legal Services**
- **Accounting/ Auditing**
- **Data Services**
- **Curriculum Development**

TITHE DOES NOT SUSTAIN:

- Local Church Maintenance and Operating Expenses
- School maintenance and operations
- Building Projects and Vehicles
- Camp Properties and Equipment
- Higher Education Maintenance and Operating Expenses

COMPARING QUENQUENNIUMS

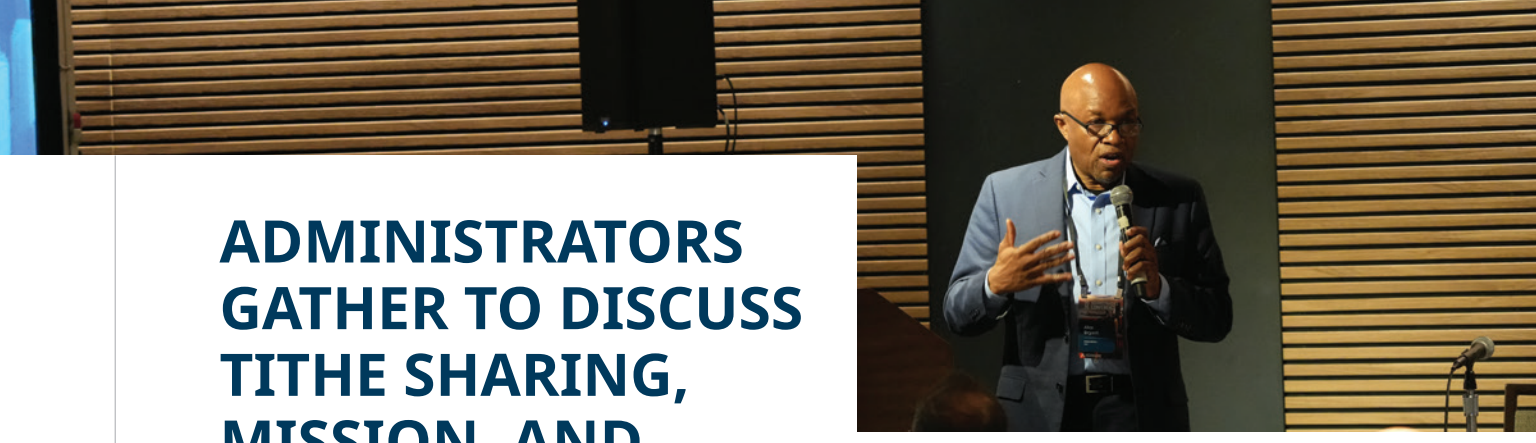
2019-2025 Quinquennium Versus Previous Quenquennium

TITHE: $14 Billion (16% ↑)

MEMBERSHIP: 23.68 Million Members (40% ↑)

NEW CHURCHES: More than 10,000 established since 2022 GC Session

*Sources referenced: NAD 2025 YEM Treasury Report, 2025 GC Session Treasury and Secretariat Report. Final numbers for 2026 are not yet available.,



ADMINISTRATORS GATHER TO DISCUSS TITHE SHARING, MISSION, AND NEXT STEPS

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN, NAD COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR

How do the different levels of the Seventh-day Adventist Church work together to fulfill its mission? How should tithe move through that system? And how can the church provide services and resources efficiently while strengthening ministry in local conferences and congregations?

Those questions brought approximately 200 conference, union, and North American Division (NAD) administrators to Chicago, Illinois, September 30-October 1, 2026, for worship, prayer, presentations, and discussion about tithe sharing, organizational responsibilities, and the use of church resources to support mission.

Recognizing that the stewardship of tithe is a sacred responsibility, NAD leaders convened the meeting as a proactive step toward establishing a shared understanding of how tithe moves through the church. The meeting also sought feedback on near-term financial needs and possible long-term directions, including whether current organizational and funding models are sustainable and how responsibilities might be streamlined or better aligned with mission. Designated discussion periods allowed administrators to relate the information presented to conditions in their territories and identify areas needing to be addressed.

Both mornings began with worship and prayer. Randy Roberts, Loma Linda University church senior pastor, emphasized that while the gospel remains constant, methods and structures used to advance it may need to change. On the second day, Tricia Payne, Lake Region Conference Ministerial associate director, reminded participants that mission requires more than planning, resources, and organizational ability; it also requires the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In his opening remarks G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president, noted that most attendees had entered their current roles during the past four years. Only 28 had attended a similar administrators' meeting near Dulles, Virginia, in 2014, and just 15 remained in the same positions.

Bryant said NAD officers had met with leaders union by union before convening the Chicago gathering, and were moved by what they heard about the needs of conferences. He also emphasized that questions surrounding tithe sharing must be considered within the larger mission of the church. While leaders may discuss whether current percentages should be adjusted, he said, those conversations should begin with an understanding of why tithe is shared.

Understanding Tithe Sharing

Unlike systems in which most funds remain with an individual congregation, the Seventh-day Adventist Church identifies the local conference as the storehouse for tithe. Conferences retain the majority and remit portions to the union, NAD, and General Conference. These resources support ministry within North America and around the world.

The principle is larger than a financial transaction in which each congregation or organization receives services equal to what it contributes. Resources are shared so that stronger congregations and territories can help support ministry in places with fewer resources and so the church can accomplish work beyond the capacity of one congregation or conference.

"The strong help those who are weak, and together the work overall is strengthened with increased accountability," said Michael W. Campbell, NAD Archives, Statistics, and Research director.

Campbell traced how Adventist organizational and financial systems have changed during periods of growth, constraint, and experimentation. He emphasized that the church has repeatedly adapted its methods as needs arose, while keeping mission central.

Judy R. Glass, North American Division treasurer and chief financial officer, explained how tithe is distributed and supports ministry. She reported that in the 2026 gross distribution, conferences retain 78 percent of tithe, unions 8.1 percent, the NAD 10.9 percent, and the General Conference 3 percent. Those figures precede retirement contributions and, in the NAD's case, the return of education and evangelism funds and other appropriations, which means that of the 10.9 percent, more than 7 percent of it is given back to conference and other entities.

Glass explained how the NAD's 10.9 percent portion supports retirement obligations, education and evan-

← On September 30, 2026, G. Alexander Bryant, North American Division president, welcomes church administrators on the first morning of the two-day Chicago meetings. *Kimberly Luste Maran*

gelism funds returned to the field, appropriations to institutions and ministries, and NAD operations and shared services. Those shared services include systems for online giving and membership management, ministry resources, education, religious liberty, community services, disaster response, technology, and other functions that would be difficult or inefficient for each conference to provide independently.

Leaders also received results from the 2026 NAD Organizational Effectiveness Survey. Its 725 responses, representing all nine unions, affirmed the importance of the NAD's major functions while calling for clearer roles, less duplication, greater transparency and accountability, and more support directed toward the local church.

Considering Change

Administrators considered changes that could provide near-term help and broader questions requiring additional study. They examined the education and evangelism funds that currently move through the NAD and return to unions for those designated purposes. Most union groups favored keeping those funds closer to the local field, although participants expressed differing views about how the money should be designated and protected.

Kyoshin Ahn, NAD executive secretary, reviewed similar discussions that began at the 2014 Dulles meeting. That work considered ways to streamline operations, eliminate unnecessary duplication, reconsider tithe distribution, and examine how organizational structure affects mission. The NAD Executive Committee took action in 2015 to continue that work, but Ahn reported that the broader recommendations did not advance in 2016 after administrators indicated they were not ready to proceed.

During the second day, General Conference treasurer Paul H. Douglas reviewed biblical principles and General Conference *Working Policy* governing tithe. He reiterated the local conference's role as the storehouse and tithe's primary purpose of supporting gospel ministry. After hearing concerns about the financial challenges facing Adventist education, Douglas said he would take a request for renewed study of the policy governing tithe use for education back to the General Conference.

Administrators also considered examples of possible organizational efficiencies and ministry approaches. Doug Bing, North Pacific Union Conference president, described studies underway in that union on organizational structure and the financing of Adventist secondary education. Leslie N. Pollard, serving as an NAD consultant for pastoral continuing education and mission, and Ismael Castillo, Texas Conference president, discussed the use and support of trained volunteer lay pastors as one way to extend pastoral care and involve more members in mission.

Throughout the meeting union discussion groups emphasized the importance of clarifying responsibilities, reducing unnecessary duplication, and determining which services can be shared efficiently and which ministries should remain close to local churches and communities.

Next Steps

The Chicago gathering was a consultative rather than a decision-making body. It did not vote policy changes or approve a final financial recommendation. Instead, the discussions provided direction for proposals that must be developed and considered through the church's established governance processes.

Near the conclusion of the meeting, Bryant presented four next steps that had emerged from the discussions:

- Providing additional financial assistance from the NAD and unions to conferences, with a proposed effective date of January 1, 2027.
- Forming a committee representing all levels of the church to study organizational efficiency, reduce duplication, and streamline operations.
- Forming a committee representing all levels of the church to study organizational restructuring.
- Beginning the established process for changing tithe reversion policies totaling 3.85 percent of tithe.

NAD officers will work with union leaders on the conference-assistance proposal and share it with administrators before the 2026 NAD Year-End Meeting, scheduled for October 29-November 3 at the division's headquarters in Columbia, Maryland. Any recommendation requiring action will be considered by the NAD Executive Committee.

Bryant said that the longer-term process is expected to include outside consultation, representative committees, reports to administrators in summer 2027, a framework for streamlining organizational roles and functions later that year, and a proposed restructuring framework in summer 2028.

He emphasized that adjusting percentages and organizational structures alone will not address the church's long-term needs. Financial and structural work must remain connected to mission, church growth, discipleship, and the involvement of lay members.

"If there's going to be significant change, it's going to require everybody in. It's going to require all of us," Bryant said.

He added, "We will try to advance these discussions to be more than a discussion, but actions. We can't do it by ourselves. We all must do it together."

NAD STEWARDSHIP ANNOUNCES THE OFFERTORY READINGS: "GOD WILL PROVIDE"

New weekly resource by Stephen and Felecia Lee will connect stewardship, worship, family, and the 2027 Jesus-centered mission emphasis.

BY NAD STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

The North American Division (NAD) Stewardship Ministries will soon release its 2027 weekly offertory readings under the theme "God Will Provide."

Written by young adult multicultural ministry couple Stephen and Felecia Lee, the readings are designed to help congregations rediscover the offering portion of the worship service as a Christ-centered moment of gratitude, trust, discipleship, and mission.

The resource will support the North American Division's participation in All Things New, the public expression of the worldwide OneVoice27 initiative. The NAD approach invites members and ministries to: Pray Like Jesus, Serve Like Jesus, Share Jesus, and Follow Jesus.

Each weekly reading will seek to lift up Jesus while helping members understand stewardship as more than a financial subject. The readings place *treasure* within the larger framework of whole-life stewardship, expressed through these seven T's: time, temple, talents, treasure, trust, theology, and testimony.

God as Owner and Provider

Under the "God Will Provide" theme, the readings begin with God's character. They emphasize that God reveals Himself as provider before inviting people to give. Returning tithe acknowledges God's ownership. Giving offerings expresses gratitude for His faithfulness and supports gospel ministry, local church life, community service, education, evangelism, and worldwide mission.

The resource avoids transactional or prosperity-centered language. God's provision will be presented as a biblical reality encompassing His presence, salvation, wisdom, strength, community, daily care, and the gift of Jesus Christ—not as a guarantee that every contribution will produce personal financial gain.

Ministry Couple Speaks to Generations

Stephen and Felecia Lee are a ministry couple dedicated to helping young people follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

Stephen is a mission-minded entrepreneur who strengthens gospel ministry through leadership, organization, and partnership. Felecia is a homemaker, founder of the New Wives Club, and a Women's Ministries director who equips women through practical, Christ-centered discipleship.

Together they "speak and create content that builds healthy relationships, strengthens communication, and calls individuals and families to live with God-focused purpose," said Michael Harpe, NAD Stewardship director. "Their participation brings a young adult, family-oriented, and multicultural perspective to a resource intended for every generation."

Supporting Local Worship

The readings have been prepared for pastors, elders, stewardship leaders, worship coordinators, and local church offering readers. Congregations will be encouraged to present them prayerfully and naturally rather than treating them as routine announcements.

Current NAD offertory readings are available for download and adaptation through the NAD Stewardship website, with recent annual editions provided in English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Korean.

The 2027 resources, which are available **now** at **nadstewardship.org/readings/**, include:

- Weekly written offertory readings
- Digital and print-ready editions
- Offertory readings in five languages
- A 30-minute interview with Stephen and Felecia Lee.
- Short-form interview segments for social media.
- Promotional articles and leadership resources.

Offertory authors for 2027 Stephen and Felecia Lee and their young daughter *Photo provided by NAD Stewardship Ministries*



A video conversation with the Lees explores God's provision, the spiritual purpose of the weekly offering appeal, family stewardship, communication between couples, and questions younger adults bring to church giving. "The Lees also help us highlight the importance of presenting the offertory with authenticity and care," added Harpe.

In time to start in 2027, the full interview will be available through **nadstewardship.org/god-will-provide**. Short segments will be adapted for Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and other digital platforms.



↑ Offerings from the 2015 General Conference Session are collected during Sabbath divine worship. *Bryant Taylor*

Can You Stand to Be Blessed?

BY MICHAEL HARPE

Bills and expenses arrive faster than income. Groceries cost more. The electric bill rises. The car needs repairs. A medical expense appears without warning. By month's end little remains. On Sabbath morning you look at the offering envelope after returning tithe and quietly ask, *Lord, how can I give when I barely have enough for myself?* You are tired, afraid, and trying to be faithful while keeping food in the refrigerator.

After the tithe is returned, a quiet question remains: What about the offering? The answer takes us beyond arithmetic and into relationship. Offering is where giving begins—our voluntary, grateful response to God, who first gave Himself for us. Tithe declares, "God owns everything." Offering declares, "Lord, You also have my heart."

Unlike the tithe, Scripture assigns no universal percentage to an offering. Paul says, "Let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7, NKJV). Biblical offering is prayerful, planned, proportionate, and joyful. It asks not merely, "What is required?" but rather, "How has God blessed me, and how may I bless others?"

Jesus said, "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over" (Luke 6:38, NKJV). This is not a formula for buying prosperity. We do not sow money to force God to send more money; we give with no strings attached because we love Him. The blessing may not be a larger bank account. It may be deeper faith, a freer heart, a more grateful spirit, needed provision, or the joy of seeing lives transformed. We do not give to get; by grace, we get to give.

The biblical Adventist tithe-sharing system strengthens gospel ministry across the worldwide church. Local offerings turn mission into a living presence in our neighborhoods—supporting worship, children and youth, evangelism, facilities, compassion, and trusted community connections. A repaired furnace, welcomed child, community meal, or Bible study can become a doorway to Christ. Without faithful local offerings, these ministries cannot flourish. Our part is to fund the mission faithfully; God's part is to bless His church and shape those who participate.

NAD Stewardship Ministries' "7 T's" show why an offering is larger than an envelope or online transaction. We offer *Time* in service; care for the *Temple* of the body; use *Talents*, God's earth—to bless others; and dedicate *Treasure* to mission. Supporting these visible gifts are *Trust* in God, *Theology* grounded in Scripture, and *Testimony* that tells what God has done. An offering may begin with treasure, but mature stewardship places the whole life on the altar.

Make generosity intentional. Return an honest tithe, then prayerfully choose a regular offering percentage. Some begin with 5 percent; others choose 10 percent or more—not as a biblical mandate, but as a disciplined expression of gratitude. Include your local church budget, give consistently, review your commitment as God prospers you, and add time and talents to your treasure. When income changes, revisit the plan prayerfully. Generosity begins with whatever we have, wherever we are, and a heart willing to trust God with the rest.

Ellen G. White wrote, "By imparting, they increase their blessings. God has promised them a sufficiency that they may continue to give" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 86). Can you stand to be blessed—not merely by receiving more, but by becoming more like the Giver?

Michael Harpe is director of Stewardship Ministries of the North American Division.



Still Ready to Serve

The Adventist Journey of Jean and Rose Ntakirutimana

BY ART BRONDO

When Rose White-Ntakirutimana heard "Thank you," tears came. After 13 years of missionary service, including nearly a decade in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the words carried the weight of years of sacrifice and perseverance.

Rose and her husband, Jean Ntakirutimana, were attending the General Conference's Welcome Home retreat in Maryland. Listening to other returning missionaries helped them realize they were not alone in carrying both gratitude and heartache.

"You work hard . . . everything is good," said Rose. "But getting the big 'Thank you' was not there. That's why when I heard the words 'Thank you,' I had a lot of tears."

The recognition affirmed a calling that began long before their first overseas assignment. Their journey grew from Adventist homes, personal loss, and a desire to serve wherever God sent them.

Together they had crossed continents, raised a family, opened their home to children, and accepted assignments that asked more of them than either had anticipated.

A Legacy of Faith

"My Adventist journey began within our family," Jean shared.

His mother insisted that her children attend Adventist schools. Through school and Bible classes the church's teachings became part of Jean's life. His faith developed gradually as he studied Scripture and learned more about God.

Missionaries who taught at Jean's Adventist high school in Rwanda also influenced him. Some later helped students obtain documents to study in the United States. Their mentorship inspired his desire to serve as a missionary.

Rose also grew up with an example of missionary service. Her father was a pastor and missionary in Congo, and his work inspired her desire to follow in his footsteps.

Her early life, however, was marked by profound loss. While Rose was attending an Adventist school in Congo, her mother died in February 1994 after a long illness. Two months later the genocide in Rwanda began, and Rose lost two brothers.

Jean also faced uncertainty. After studying at the Adventist University of Central Africa, he worked as an accountant for a department overseeing seven clinics in Rwanda. He later enrolled at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, with church sponsorship.

War near the university in Rwanda ended that support. Unable to return to a military zone, Jean transferred to Indiana University South Bend, worked to pay tuition, and completed his computer science degree.

Rose returned to Rwanda carrying the grief of losing her mother and brothers. In February 1997 she met Jean, who was visiting from the U.S. They continued communicating after he left. Jean returned that November; they married, and began life together in the U.S.

At Praise Fellowship Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Bend, Indiana, Rose served as head deaconess for nearly nine years, while Jean was treasurer. Their home in Indiana also became a place of ministry. During eight years as foster parents, they cared for 12 children.

"I wanted to help others," Rose said.

Their first overseas appointment took them to Sierra Leone in August 2013. The assignment ended sooner than expected, and they returned to the United States

← Jean and Rose Ntakirutimana are ready to continue serving God wherever He leads. *Art Brondo*

in April 2014. In November 2015 they left for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Jean became treasurer of the East Congo Union Mission, which faced serious financial challenges. The Adventist Book Center was approaching bankruptcy, and the union carried substantial debt.

Jean and his team worked to restore financial stability. By the end of 2025 the debts had been paid and the union was moving in a healthier direction.

"All those challenges were resolved by the grace of God," he said.

While Jean worked with his team to address the union's financial challenges, Rose faced a different set of demands. She coordinated the pastors' kids program; managed the guesthouse; supervised grounds, cleaning, and security staff; and served as Jean's secretary.

Her responsibilities extended beyond the office. She arranged accommodations and prepared meals for visitors. When outdoor workers struggled with their tasks, she picked up a broom and dustpan and helped clear leaves.

"Even if you tell me to sweep the floor, I will do it," Rose said. "God sent me here to work for Him."

Faith Through Hardship

Rose's responsibilities became overwhelming. She carried several demanding roles and sometimes faced criticism instead of appreciation. But she reminded herself that she had gone to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to serve God, even when her work went unnoticed.

Then came a serious health crisis.

Medical examinations before the assignment had found no serious concerns, but several months after she arrived in the Congo, a large growth developed in her abdomen. During a return to the U.S., a doctor warned it might be cancer.

The growth was not cancerous, but recovery was difficult. Rose spent time in the hospital, unable to eat or drink normally, and it took about four months for her strength to return.

Rose does not know what caused the illness. She remembers the stress, fear, and unanswered questions, but she also remembers that God sustained her.

"I saw God's hands in my life," she said.

Hope also came through relationships. Rose shared food with security workers, building trust with people who watched over the couple and alerted her to concerns. By caring for them, she experienced care in return.

Jean and Rose had both experienced profound family loss, although their journeys through grief were different. Jean grew up with seven siblings, and has lost them all. Yet he does not feel abandoned. His hope rests in Christ and the promise of reunion when Jesus returns.

> "Just go work for the Lord, and God will bring you home the way He brought us home."

"What brings me joy is to know that I am in God's hands," said Jean.

For Rose, that same hope is intertwined with her father's missionary legacy. After her parents and brothers died, she wondered who would continue his work. Eventually she accepted the calling herself.

"I am the one who will follow my dad's steps to be a missionary," she remembered deciding.

She imagines meeting her father again and telling him that she continued his work, helped the church, served people, and shared the faith he had given her.

The Mission Continues

At the Maryland retreat Rose listened as other returning missionaries shared their experiences. Some cried as they spoke about their years of service. Their circumstances differed, but Rose recognized the pain they described.

"We came here heartbroken," Rose said. "We thought we were the only people."

During the retreat they thanked the General Conference, the North American Division, and those who supported them through prayer and encouragement. The week brought fellowship and spiritual renewal. And it reminded the couple that their work had not been forgotten.

Despite the hardships, Rose would still encourage someone considering missionary service to go.

"Don't have fear," she said. "Just go work for the Lord, and God will bring you home the way He brought us home."

Looking back, she sees the God who helped them keep going.

"We didn't leave the job," she said. "We didn't quit. We didn't give up."

Jean described the retreat as spiritually uplifting. Among fellow missionaries, he felt closer to his Savior and renewed in the hope that had carried him from Rwanda to the U.S. and back to Africa.

Although their assignment in the Congo has ended, their calling has not.

"We are still available and ready to serve," Jean said, "as long as the Lord gives us strength."

Art Brondo is a media producer for the North American Division.



← An audience listens during the Meet Hope series in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the culmination of a yearlong evangelistic partnership and preparation effort. *Robert Zama*

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada,

an Outpouring of Hope

The Pentecost 2025 initiative invited churches across North America to reimagine evangelism—not as a one-time event but as a way of life. Of the churches, schools, and camps registered division-wide, 383 were from Canada.

In Canada this movement began quietly. In small churches scattered across the nation, from the forests of British Columbia to the fishing towns of Newfoundland, members gathered to pray for something they could not manufacture themselves.

They prayed for Pentecost. Not simply a program or a series of meetings but a movement, a renewal of purpose, and a fresh outpouring of mission.

What followed became one of the most encouraging seasons of evangelism in Canada in recent years. Nationwide, churches rediscovered their reason for existing: to reach their neighbors, serve their communities, and share the hope of Jesus—and know that in Him, there's more to life.

Members met the challenge through creative endeavors such as youth-led monthly concerts, relationship-building, and outreach within Indigenous communities, home-based small groups, and preaching events and media evangelism via Hope Channel Canada.

And slowly—story by story, community by community—something began to change.

Faith Movement

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada began 2025 with 78,733 members and ended the year with 80,627, representing a 2.41 percent growth. During that time 2,315 people joined the church through baptism or profession of faith, with nearly 60 percent of that growth (1,275 people) directly connected to evangelistic initiatives such as Pentecost 2025.

These numbers help tell the story of a movement that engaged thousands of Canadians in conversations about faith and led many to take their next steps toward Christ. And the stories below, just a small sampling of what happened across Canada, show how God worked through His people.

Living Rooms and Kitchen Tables

In Alberta the initiative focused on something simple but powerful: relationships. Under the leadership of the conference president, Pastor Jeff Potts, 66 proclamation sites were launched across the province, involving 56 churches and 10 schools.

But the strategy began long before the meetings. Potts and his team partnered with Burman University to create and record a set of video Bible study guides called Project New Beginnings. Church members were trained to host small groups designed to build friendships with people outside the church before inviting them to a reaping series.

In Bonnyville, a town of 6,000 people, the church decided to launch small groups. At first, only four non-Adventist friends attended. But those friends invited their friends.

Soon 24 community members were attending the small groups,

exploring faith together in living rooms and around kitchen tables. By the end of the year, 10 of them had made decisions for baptism.

A Culture of Evangelism

Every month youth from Cariboo Central Seventh-day Adventist Church organized monthly concerts in a city park, using testimony and song to create spaces where music and faith could intersect. Elsewhere, First Nations ministries built and strengthened relationships within Indigenous communities.

Across the province, lives were transformed. In White Rock a person with a Buddhist background began attending church and eventually became an active member. In Smithers a former member returned, was baptized, and is now involved in ministry. The Ukrainian church company in Burnaby welcomed 17 Ukrainians, four of whom were baptized.

For conference leaders, however, the greatest impact of Pentecost 2025 was not simply the baptisms. It was the beginning of a culture of evangelism.

Small but Mighty

In New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, Pentecost 2025 began months before the first sermon was preached.

Small congregations across the Atlantic provinces began to engage their communities through public meetings, small-group Bible studies, and outreach. Hope Channel Canada and the Maritime Conference partnered to hold preaching events in all three provinces, as well as training and bridge events.

The planning for a series in Halifax, Nova Scotia, marked the start of a yearlong partnership, careful preparation, and the quiet, persistent work of the Holy Spirit. When it came time for the evangelistic series, 18 people requested baptism or profession of faith.

The Maritimes experienced 3.96 percent growth in 2025, with half of that growth connected to Pentecost 2025.

All In

Few places captured the spirit of Pentecost 2025 like the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Newfoundland and Labrador, one of the few regions in the North American Division that had 100 percent church involvement.

St. John's Seventh-day Adventist Church, the largest congregation, hosted a series that resulted in five baptisms, with eight more people preparing for baptism. In Bay Roberts two people were baptized, while Marystown recorded two professions of faith. Bonavista Seventh-day Adventist Group, a company of only eight members, celebrated two baptisms and one profession of faith, with 13 more baptisms taking place at camp meeting. Finally, three people were baptized at Corner Brook Seventh-day Adventist Church, while others who had left the church began returning.

With momentum extending beyond public evangelism, six nonmembers began attending Bible studies in Botwood Seventh-day Adventist Church, while a group of nine members in Cottrell's Cove Seventh-day Adventist Company has become known for its vibrant women's ministries, singing groups, and Bible studies.

A New Chapter for Mission in Canada

Pentecost in the book of Acts did not end after a single day. It launched a movement.

That same spirit appears to be stirring again across Canada. Small churches are rediscovering their purpose. Young people are organizing outreach. Refugees, prisoners, skeptics, and seekers are encountering faith.

The story of Pentecost 2025 is not simply about numbers. It is about momentum toward deeper discipleship, a culture of evangelism, and a church that remembers why it exists.

As the work in Canada continues, the prayer of thousands of believers remains the same as it was at the beginning: "Lord, do it again."

— Adapted from Robert Zama's "An Outpouring of Hope: The Lasting Impact of Pentecost 2025 Brings Momentum for the Future," published in the May 2026 Canadian Adventist Messenger.

(Left) Participants gather for a presentation at Toronto Yugoslavian Adventist Church in Ontario as part of Pentecost 2025. *Photo courtesy of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada*; (Right) A new member is joyful following her baptism through the ministry of Cariboo Central Seventh-day Adventist Church in British Columbia during Pentecost 2025. *Kaleb Eisele*





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Power for Mind & Soul

Food as Medicine:

Nourishing Health, Restoring Hope

BY SEBRENA SAWTELL, ADVENTIST HEALTHCARE VICE PRESIDENT FOR MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS



When people think about health care, they often picture doctors, diagnoses, and treatment plans. But for many families in the communities served by Adventist HealthCare—headquartered in Gaithersburg, Maryland—health begins at the kitchen table.

Through Adventist HealthCare's Food as Medicine initiative, food has become a powerful tool for healing and connection—addressing hunger as a critical social driver of health while helping restore dignity and stability to families facing significant hardship.

Funded through a grant from the Montgomery County Office of Food Systems Resilience, the program brings together trusted community partners to ensure families have access to nutritious food options. Manna Food Center provides dry goods and protein, while One Acre Farm supplies fresh vegetables. The team also collaborates with community clinics that serve as food distribution sites and, in some cases, delivery partners—meeting families where they receive their health care.

Since launching in 2024, the program has distributed more than 88,000 pounds of food to more than 400 households, representing more than 1,000 children.

One of those families was Olivia* and her two sons. Olivia had just bought her first home and worked two jobs to support her family. Everything changed when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. With her strength drained, Olivia stopped working altogether. Food quickly became scarce.

There were days, Olivia shared, that the family had nothing. One evening they were down to a single box of spaghetti. Her boys tried to help cook, but the food burned beyond being edible. "[I had] nothing else to give them," she recalled. That night the family went hungry.

During this overwhelming time Olivia was connected to Food as Medicine. What followed was more than food assistance—it was relief. Regular access to healthy groceries meant that her sons could eat balanced meals and that Olivia could follow the nutritional guidance her doctors recommended while undergoing cancer treatment.

"Fresh vegetables, fruit, and fish [were] foods my doctor asked [me] to eat," she shared—foods she could not afford without the program.

At the heart of the initiative is a relationship-centered approach rooted in compassion.

"It's a real community," said Adventist HealthCare Grants and Research director Henry Artigues. "No one wants to ask for things when you're struggling. You want to feel like you're talking to a friend."

For Olivia, the impact extended well beyond the groceries. She spoke of the kindness she experienced—the people who took time to listen, and who treated her and her family with kindness.

By integrating food support and nutrition education into health-care delivery and building strong community partnerships, Adventist HealthCare continues to live out its commitment to whole-person care—body, mind and spirit.

** Name changed to protect privacy.*

Food as Medicine Program Support Includes:

- Weekly fresh vegetables;
- Monthly boxes of shelf-stable foods such as whole-grain pasta, beans, canned vegetables, frozen meats and fish;
- Ongoing nutrition education via text, email and in-person classes;
- Assistance enrolling in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other food-assistance programs.

They are neighbors. They are volunteers. They are ACS.

ANYONE CAN BE *ACS*



ADVENTIST COMMUNITY SERVICES

SCAN TO HEAR THEIR ACS STORY

BY COLETTE NEWER

Connections That Change Us

The Adventist Community Services (ACS) volunteer saw the woman get out of her car and called out, "Sarah! It's so good to see you! Come in and tell us how we can help you." Sarah and her son had been living in their car when they made their way to the ACS center. There they received food, clothing, and other resources. Along with those necessities, they found friendship and connection. During the next few years the ACS volunteers walked with this small family as they navigated their way to employment, housing, and stability.

When I visited with Sarah, she expressed her gratitude for the help she received. The goods and services had been an important part of getting her family on their feet. She also spoke about the encouragement and strength this group of volunteers had given her through their friendship, care, and respect, even when her own family had turned away.

Today Sarah and her son are thriving, yet they still feel deeply connected to the people who invested in them. They return often to volunteer and to visit. The personal bonds continue to encourage and strengthen them. "I work hard in school because they believe in me," Sarah's son remarked.

Research has shown that a network of supportive friends is an essential component of resilience through challenging times. These connections are often an unrecognized gift that churches offer their communities. By creating spaces of welcome and belonging, we also offer hope and resilience. That may sound familiar, especially during this season as we celebrate the birth of Christ, because, through Jesus, God offers each of us the gifts of connection, hope, and strength.

In her book *Christ's Object Lessons* Ellen G. White states that "the last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of [God's] character of love" (p. 415). In a world in which suffering often leaves people isolated and without hope, God works through His people to bring love, care, and connection.

Genuine connection changes everyone involved. As we experience life together, strangers become neighbors, stereotypes begin to fall away, and we learn from each other. God is not only working through us to bless someone else. He is also working through those relationships to deepen our compassion, broaden our understanding, and reveal His heart to us.

Sarah's story reminds us that a bag of food, a set of clothing, or help finding resources can meet an immediate need. When those gifts are accompanied by genuine relationships, however, they become part of a deeper ministry that communicates: You matter! You are not alone! There is hope!

Variations of Sarah's story are unfolding in Adventist Community Services and other ministries across the North American Division. Each story is as unique as the people and circumstances involved, yet each reflects how God meets people where they are.

Genuine connection changes everyone involved.

How do you connect with others through the ministry you are a part of? How do you communicate God's loving-kindness through genuine connection? Each of us is called by God to serve. If you are not already involved, I invite you to find a place to serve and experience it for yourself. Through simple acts of welcome, friendship, and faithful service, we can help people build better lives today and connect with God for eternity.

Colette Newer is the associate director for Adventist Community Services of the North American Division.

Not-So-Happy Holidays

Navigating Grief and Loneliness This Season

BY HEIDI CAMARGO WITH KRISTINA P. BUSCH

The end of the year brings celebrations, gatherings, and a festive spirit. However, the holidays may not seem so happy for everyone. Often they are a sharp reminder of loved ones who are no longer with us, and the first holiday after a loss can be additionally devastating. Others may feel the sting of loneliness during the holidays because of physical distance, deployment, estrangement, or divorce.

This season may not feel joyous for a number of reasons, but comfort and hope are also available! May these resources help you navigate this season.

This season may not feel joyous for a number of reasons.

Seasons

Seasons is a peer-driven support group program, presented by the North American Division (NAD) Health Ministries Department, to be used at local churches or community centers. This 10-week journey offers a safe place of healing for individuals who are grieving the loss of a loved one.

Teresa Nelson, Grief Program coordinator for the NAD, explains that "in the Seasons program the Calendar of Grief section helps us prepare for the feelings that the holidays can bring up, and addresses how dates can activate grief. This can be painful and disconcerting if you felt that you were moving forward."

The "3 C's of Grief," developed by grief expert Kenneth J. Doka, through the Hospice Foundation of America, offers a practical framework for navigating the moments when grief hits hardest. You can also use them to think through how to understand or best support a friend going through a difficult time.

Choice: Give yourself permission to be selective. Make conscious choices about what events and activities best support you.

Communicate: People do not know what you need unless you tell them. Let others know what you may be able to do or not do.

Compromising: Often other people in your life are also affected by the event that is causing your distress. If you are going to be together, take each other's uniqueness into consideration and realize that everyone processes loss and grief differently.

"We encourage churches to offer a grief support ministry," said Nelson. "It's such an amazing opportunity to pour God's love into hearts that have been broken." We need to walk with each other and comfort each other as we receive God's comfort. Visit **NADhealth.org/recovery/grief/** to learn more and find a support group.

Counseling

Seeking help, when needed, is a sign of strength, not weakness. The NAD Family Ministries Department has compiled a list of Seventh-day Adventist counselors who can help during these times. If you are in need of counseling or know someone who is, we encourage you to visit **NADfamily.org/resources/counselors**. Adventist counselors who would like to be listed in the database can contact **family@nadadventist.org**.

NAD Family Ministries prays for God's richest blessings for you and your family. Despite the circumstances that this year may bring, we encourage you to find reasons to be thankful, reasons to celebrate, and reasons to seek the Baby born in a manger.

New Resource in 2027

The NAD Ministerial Association plans to release a new resource entitled "When the 'We' Is Gone." This free ebook and downloadable pamphlet set are designed to help those living through the loss of a spouse or child. It is authored by Donna Jackson, wife of the late NAD president Dan Jackson, with project development support from Desiree Bryant, current NAD Ministerial Spouses director. It will be available online in 2027.

Something to Remember

"Our greatest stress in life is more than suffering—it's suffering alone. . . . When anyone has to bear pain, they deserve someone to at least bear witness to it. . . . We give each other 'withness' and witness. That is the gift we can give each other in a suffering world" (Christian author, blogger, and speaker Ann Voskamp, taken from **Annvoskamp.com/2023/03/whats-the-answer-to-all-this-suffering**).

Heidi Straw Camargo and Kristina P. Busch are freelance writers.


Getty Images

Waiting for His Comings

How we should wait for the Lord?

BY KYOSHIN AHN

The season of Advent is just around the corner. The word *advent* comes from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming" or "arrival." The Latin word is a translation of the Greek word *Parousia*, often used in the New Testament to refer to the expected coming of Jesus (Matt. 24:37; 1 Cor. 15:23; 2 Thess. 2:1). During this holiday season we celebrate the historic coming of Jesus and anticipate His second coming more than ever.

Christians can be described as people who wait for Jesus—the Jesus who has come, the Jesus who is coming, and the Jesus who will come again. Christmas is, in a sense, about waiting. Waiting may sound passive, but our waiting is not. Active waiting means thinking deeply and intently about the person who has come, is coming, and will come. Anticipating a cherished reunion with patience leaves our minds with no room for distraction.

Advent is about remembering the triune God and aligning the rhythm of our lives with God's. It is an effort to harmonize our lives with the pattern of God's life and the universe—the life in which God creates and preserves, and fully unfolds His will, bringing about renewal.

Therefore, the meaning of Advent is not so much about what we do, or what we rejoice in. Rather, it is about quietly observing what God has created and preserved, and commemorating His coming, His return, and the completion of His creation. In short, it's about how we should wait for the Lord, and what kind of people we would like to be as we wait.

The holiday season allows us to further reflect on the significance of the Lord's coming and our human waiting, and to align the rhythm, character, and attitude of our lives with God.

What do we do while waiting?

First, we celebrate the historic coming of Jesus. Celebrating His historic coming at Christmas has its own meaningfulness in our lives. But it also invites us to step away from the noise of the season and consumerism, and instead, mirror the stillness of Jesus' birth. We reflect upon ancient Israel's longing for the Messiah and draw practical lessons for the delays or seasons of hardship we experience in our lives.

We anticipate the Lord's presence in the everyday. We see Jesus, who listens to our prayers, speaks to us, and comforts us in our daily life. Our lives are filled with gratitude in the mundane. Even basic provisions, family moments, and daily breath are taken as precious gifts rooted in Christ's care for His creation.

Living out His coming today means waiting for the Lord who comes today in the concrete realities of life, sometimes amid suffering and sorrow, and enduring and being refined through life's trials. Through such trials we think with Jesus, feel with Jesus, and converse with Jesus about what He would have done.

We also practice His presence when we join Him in proclaiming "good news to the poor" and "liberty to the captives," and "set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18, 19, ESV).* By doing so, we acknowledge *Emmanuel* ("God with us") in our ordinary life.

While we wait for His ultimate coming, we learn to do so with patience and faith. Even when faced with situations in which we feel there is no hope, we look to Jesus, who bore the cross for us. His creation will be completed at His second coming, the culmination of creation.

And that is reason to celebrate.

* Scripture quotations marked ESV are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. ESV Text Edition: 2025. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Kyoshin Ahn is executive secretary of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

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ADVENTIST REVIEW

Please enjoy the following pages 37-46, which feature content curated by *Adventist Journey* from the magazine, *Adventist Review.*

"Every miracle flight has been underwritten by a legacy of sacrifice. To fly for the gospel is to step into a realm in which the risks are as real as the rewards."

—Nathan Tasker, flight center director for Pacific Union College, at which a new Adventist Aviation Museum was launched during the 2026 Homecoming Weekend. Attendees heard from mission pilots who served in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tanzania, Kenya, and other hard-to-reach places. The museum will showcase Adventist aviation history and missionary accounts, and honor those who served.

"I have always wanted to be part of the Adventist community, but I did not have the opportunity. Through attending this crusade, I have finally fulfilled that desire."

—Thokozani Davison, one of the 150 people baptized after a two-week evangelistic campaign run by the Central Malawi Conference Women's Ministries Department. About 30 of the 150 baptisms took place in Sitolo Village, which had no Adventist members before the meetings began, and the campaign was designed for those with little to no experience with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

8

The number of participants who completed a hairdressing course in Khabarovsk, Russia, with the support of Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Far East regional office director Roman Medvid and professional hairdressers Alina Marchenko and Tatyana Apolikhina. After receiving a certificate and a professional hairdressing kit from ADRA, the charity hairdressing salon at the "Kind Heart" social center welcomed its first visitors. Apart from free haircuts, the ministry center also provides clothing and other essentials.

"It was faith moving beyond the four walls of the church to embrace the pain of the community."

—Sandra Pinto, Women's, Children, and Youth Ministries director for the Inter-American Division, seeing the mobilization of church members across the territory as they marched on the global enditnow® emphasis Sabbath. Members called for an end to violence, distributed literature, held educational programs, and distributed food and other practical assistance.

23.8 MILLION

Estimated digital reach of the OneVoice27 Global Launch Day posts in the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, representing what the division's media team was able to track across the region. Church members around the world were encouraged to post on their social media platforms in preparation for next year's campaign.

ADVENTIST CREATORS CALLED TO TURN DIGITAL INFLUENCE INTO MISSION

Leaders challenge them to use connections to reach others.

Libna Stevens, Inter-American Division News

For Bledi Leno, director of the Center for Secular and Post-Christian Mission (CSPM), reaching people for Jesus in an increasingly secular and digital world begins, not with winning arguments, but with listening, building relationships, and living out faith.

It was a key challenge he presented to nearly 200 Adventist content creators and influencers at the 2026 Creator Summit, held July 20-24 in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States: Look beyond followers and views and use digital influence to reach people who may never enter a church.

The emphasis comes as the Seventh-day Adventist Church prepares for OneVoice27, a global initiative that will call members to use their voices, gifts, and platforms to share Jesus and prepare for a worldwide evangelistic thrust in 2027.

Leno challenged creators to understand the people behind their screens before deciding how to communicate with them. In societies in which institutional religion is increasingly viewed with skepticism, the personal witness of individual believers can open doors that an organization may not, he said.

"You are not the institution. You are a person. But you are part of the movement," Leno told participants. "You, the person who connects with other people, represent the global organization, the movement that we are as a church."



Bledi Leno, director of the Center for Secular and Post-Christian Mission, speaks to nearly 200 content creators and influencers during the 2026 Adventist Creator Summit in Silver Spring, Maryland, on July 22. Photo: George Nelson/ANN

Understanding the People Behind the Screen

Leno described secular and post-Christian audiences as people who may distrust institutions and reject traditional expressions of religion but still wrestle with loneliness, identity, purpose, hope, and belonging.

Behind skepticism and apparent disinterest, he said, many people are still searching for connection, healing, and meaning.

For creators, that reality requires a different approach to digital mission.

"It's not about telling—it's about showing," Leno said, urging creators to communicate faith through both words

"YOU ARE NOT THE INSTITUTION. YOU ARE A PERSON. BUT YOU ARE PART OF THE MOVEMENT," LENO TOLD PARTICIPANTS. "YOU, THE PERSON WHO CONNECTS WITH OTHER PEOPLE, REPRESENT THE GLOBAL ORGANIZATION, THE MOVEMENT THAT WE ARE AS A CHURCH."

and the way they live. He encouraged an approach marked by listening, humility, honest questions, and invitation rather than imposition.

That emphasis was intentional, said Alyssa Truman, Communication director of the General Conference, who helped shape the mission focus of the summit. Creators were introduced to several challenging mission audiences to broaden their understanding of the people they may already be reaching or could intentionally seek to reach.

"As content creators I think it's important for them to understand some of the most challenging audiences in the world," Truman said. Creators, she added, often concentrate on producing content without fully understanding the people consuming it.

The goal was not simply awareness, she said, but equipping creators and leaving room for a deeper sense of calling.

"It's also allowing the Holy Spirit to place burdens on people's hearts," Truman said. "Maybe somebody feels very called to create for a very specific audience."

From Audiences to People

Leno illustrated that approach through the story of a woman he met while planting a church and center of influence in New York City. She initially made clear that she did not believe in God and was attending only because of a friend.

Rather than pressuring her, Leno and his ministry partner gave her space and built a relationship. Later, after experiencing tragedy, she reached out with a question: "What would you tell someone who has lost hope completely?"

That question opened the way for deeper conversations about faith, purpose, and meaning. She was eventually baptized publicly in New York and later began leading a Bible study group. Leno said the experience demonstrates what can happen when believers listen and remain present long enough for trust to develop.

The same principle can extend into the digital space, he said.

"You can do that from your screen today," Leno told creators, pointing to people around the world who may be searching for something they cannot yet identify.



General Conference executive secretary Rick McEdward challenges content creators to use their digital influence to carry the gospel across geographic and language barriers. Photo: George Nelson/ANN

Taking Mission Beyond the Screen

Rick McEdward, executive secretary of the General Conference, broadened the challenge by asking creators to consider populations, cities, and languages that the Adventist message has seldom reached.

"You as content creators are the creative brain trust of the church," McEdward told participants, challenging them to use available tools to communicate the gospel across language barriers.

But digital reach alone is not enough, he said.

McEdward challenged creators to move from online influence toward personal discipleship by praying for at least one person with whom they could personally study the Bible during the next 18 months.

"If you're a digital influencer, you need to take the next step and lead somebody to Jesus," he said.

For McEdward the opportunity lies in connecting digital influence with personal relationships. "You never know how God will bless your prayer if you but take a risk beyond the digital into the personal," he said.

Preparing for OneVoice27

That call takes on added significance as Adventists prepare for OneVoice27, which seeks to mobilize members around the world to use their voices and influence to share Jesus.

The mission emphasis at the summit underscored for content creators that participating in such a movement involves more than producing religious content, organizers said. It means understanding the people receiving it, communicating in ways that connect with their questions and experiences, and creating pathways from online engagement to Christian community and discipleship.

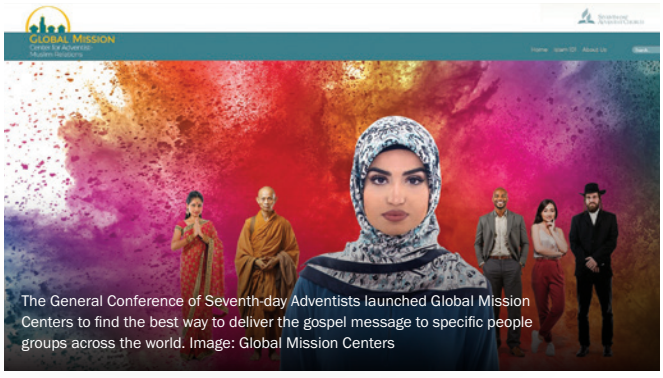
Leno encouraged creators to connect their online ministry with local churches, community projects, and centers of influence so that relationships that begin digitally can develop in person.

His challenge ultimately returned creators to the person on the other side of the screen, meaning someone who may appear indifferent to faith but is still searching for identity, hope, belonging, and something beyond the present.

The opportunity for creators, Leno suggested, is to become not simply more effective influencers but more intentional missionaries, using the platforms already in their hands to open doors through which people can encounter Jesus. ℟

MISSION CENTERS PROVIDE EXPERTISE TO REACH ACROSS PEOPLE GROUPS

Director explains what they are, what they do, and why they are essential.



The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists launched Global Mission Centers to find the best way to deliver the gospel message to specific people groups across the world. Image: Global Mission Centers

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist Review*

When we try to deliver the gospel message to different cultural or religious contexts, what can happen? The reception of the message can be damaged, acknowledged Chanmin Chung, director of the Global Mission Centers.

Addressing Seventh-day Adventist Church executives in Bangkok, Thailand, in August, Chung explained what those centers are and how they help Adventist mission to connect to specific people groups and eventually share the gospel message.

The Message and Its Audience

At the beginning of his presentation Chung shared the story of a missionary serving in Asia who wished to discuss the Genesis story of Joseph with the local people. "His intention was to communicate such values as integrity, sincerity, and diligence to the village people," Chung shared.

Chung explained how people sat and listened to the story of Joseph. When the missionary was done, he asked his listeners, "What did you learn from the story?" An elder of the village raised his hand. "This man, Joseph, is a good man, because he never forgot his homeland. He asked his bones to be carried to his homeland. So he is a good man."

The local man had different values, Chung explained. He appreciated the story for a different reason than the one the missionary had in mind. "So," Chung said, when dealing with specific people groups across the world, "our intentions and the delivery of the message are two different issues."

Mission Centers to Support Outreach

Against this background Chung explained that the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists launched Global Mission Centers to "find the best way, with our field workers, to deliver the gospel message." Currently there are six centers of this kind, whose stated goal "is to help Adventists know how to build bridges of understanding and friendship with people from major world religions and philosophies."*

"What we are doing is not just intellectual activity," Chung emphasized. "We work closely with our field workers . . . and church leaders."

Chung shared some stories from people who have been impacted by the targeted efforts to give hope to various people groups around the world.

He first introduced a video report by Bledi Leno, director of the Center for Secular and Post-Christian Mission. The center provides resources, training, and special projects to people serving in secular contexts.

A Customized Approach

The video report featured Daniel, a missionary serving in Tallinn, Estonia, alongside his wife, Svetlana, and their daughter. In Tallinn he shared, "We realize that one pastor or missionary doing the work alone will not have the same effect as mobilizing the membership and the youth to work together, to bring their friends and their community to God."

Breakthrough in a Secular Environment

After discussing it with Leno, the regional church in Estonia decided to open a place for young people to meet and play board games. They meet twice a month, as every young Adventist also invites a non-Christian friend "just to connect and be together." After a few months there are several regular attendees with whom they are developing deep friendships, Daniel shared.

A second step includes inviting them to a movie night and a discussion after the screening. "The discussion builds around spirituality, faith, and the meaning of life." From there, leaders offer Bible studies, and everyone is invited to attend. The method has proved successful, as even a self-declared atheist has not missed a single church event, Daniel reported. That same young person spent four days at a youth camp and listened to spiritual messages "all the time."

It's for this kind of person that the center is there, Daniel said. "We are not only doing a project but finding different ways to connect to people, and through these connections we invite them to something else." R

* Retrieved from https://www.globalmissioncenters.org/home.

THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER

Every breath a prayer

Ellen G. White

We, too, must have times set apart for meditation and prayer and for receiving spiritual refreshing. We do not value the power and efficacy of prayer as we should. Prayer and faith will do what no power on earth can accomplish. We are seldom, in all respects, placed in the same position twice. We continually have new scenes and new trials to pass through, where past experience cannot be a sufficient guide. We must have the continual light that comes from God.

Christ is ever sending messages to those who listen for His voice. On the night of the agony in Gethsemane, the sleeping disciples heard not the voice of Jesus. They had a dim sense of the angels' presence, but lost the power and glory of the scene. Because of their drowsiness and stupor they failed of receiving the evidence that would have strengthened their souls for the terrible scenes before them. Thus today the very men who most need divine instruction often fail of receiving it, because they do not place themselves in communion with heaven.

The temptations to which we are daily exposed make prayer a necessity. Dangers beset every path. Those who are seeking to rescue others from vice and ruin are especially exposed to temptation. In constant contact with evil, they need a strong hold upon God lest they themselves be corrupted. Short and decisive are the steps that lead men down from high and holy ground to a low level. In a moment decisions may be made that fix one's condition forever. One failure to overcome leaves the soul unguarded. One evil habit, if not firmly resisted, will strengthen into chains of steel, binding the whole man.

The reason why so many are left to themselves in places of temptation is that they do not set the Lord always before them. When we permit our communion with God to be broken, our defense is departed from us. Not all your good purposes and good intentions will enable you to withstand evil. You must be men and women of prayer. Your petitions must not be faint, occasional, and fitful, but earnest, persevering, and constant. It is not always necessary to bow upon your knees in order to pray. Cultivate the habit of talking with the Saviour when you are alone, when you are walking, and when you are busy with your daily labor. Let the heart be continually uplifted in silent petition for help, for light, for strength, for knowledge. Let every breath be a prayer. . . .

It was through faith and prayer that Jacob, from being a man of feebleness and sin, became a prince with God. It is thus that you may become men and women of high and holy purpose, of noble life, men and women who will not for any consideration be swayed from truth, right, and justice. All are pressed with urgent cares, burdens, and duties, but the more difficult your position and the heavier your burdens, the more you need Jesus. . . .

Nothing is more needed in our work than the practical results of communion with God. We should show by our daily lives that we have peace and rest in the Saviour. His peace in the heart will shine forth in the countenance. It will give to the voice a persuasive power. Communion with God will ennoble the character and the life. Men will take knowledge of us, as of the first disciples, that we have been with Jesus. This will impart to the worker a power that nothing else can give. Of this power he must not allow himself to be deprived.

We must live a twofold life—a life of thought and action, of silent prayer and earnest work. The strength received through communion with God, united with earnest effort in training the mind to thoughtfulness and caretaking, prepares one for daily duties and keeps the spirit in peace under all circumstances, however trying.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of ministry. This excerpt is taken from *The Ministry of Healing,* pp. 509-512.

Burn the Bibles

How a plan to destroy Bibles helped multiply them

Dick Duerksen



Two men, casually attired as common tradesmen, walked purposefully down the dingy alley in Antwerp, Belgium. They had been sent there with clear instructions: go directly to the house at the very end of the alley, where they would find the man and the goods they were seeking. The directions were clear, easy to follow. At last their quest would end.

They tested the door, easily breaking through its rusty latch. Inside, the house was empty and the shelves bare. In the back room, where they had been told they would find stacks of freshly printed New Testaments, they found only dusty floorboards.

Betrayed, they returned to the alley and strode angrily back toward their lodgings.

Hidden behind the filthy panes of a nearby window, William Tyndale watched them go, breathed deeply, and returned to his stacks of New Testaments. Several hundred were there, prepared for shipment to friends in England. He had been warned and had moved the Bibles to this place only hours before the king's emissaries broke through the old door.

Tyndale was accustomed to danger, having experienced numerous last-minute escapes from dishonest friends. Even one of his most trusted printers had betrayed him. Now, watching two of the most powerful men in England stride angrily away, he was unsure of his next step.

Those men represented all who desired him dead.

The year was 1529, and the New Testaments were beautiful, each word and phrase painstakingly translated from Greek into the common dialect of his English countrymen.

Blessed are the meek, he thought. Though those words were simple and clear, none of his countrymen had ever heard Jesus speak them. Certainly not in the same English they spoke in their kitchens and above their plows.

Oh, there was so much he wanted them to hear!

The two men? Cuthbert Tunstall, bishop of London, and his traveling companion. Tunstall was one of the most powerful

Photo by Fethi Benattallah / Unsplash

men in England, and he had joined Sir Thomas More, the king's Lord Chancellor, in a quest to destroy Tyndale's English translation of the New Testament before its truths could threaten the comfortable power both church and crown enjoyed over the people of England.

Tyndale watched them walk out of the alley, his heart heavy with dread. He had tried so hard to follow God's command and make His Word available to every man and woman who spoke the English language. A few thousand copies had been delivered, and he had heard them being read beside kitchen fires and in the dark corners of village pubs. He had seen tears of joy as people heard God say that He loved them.

He looked over the bundles of God's Word around him in the room. *Every Bible must get to England*, he thought, almost saying it out loud. There was a weighty problem, however. He was completely out of funds and could not afford the cost of shipment, much less the massive expense of printing the thousands more copies that would be needed by the people in England.

An Unlikely Solution

Tyndale worked with the Bibles until nearly sundown.

The tap on his door was frightening.

"It's Packington," a welcome voice whispered.

Tyndale unlatched the door, and his merchant friend slipped into the room.

"I have a proposal for you," his friend said. "I see you got the message and moved the Bibles before the bishop found them."

The two men talked a bit, then Augustine Packington put a hand on Tyndale's knee.

"I have just come from speaking with Bishop Tunstall."

"You? With him? Why?"

"I have an idea," he said, "and wanted to see if he might buy in. I told them that I knew a man who had access to a collection of New Testaments that were about to be shipped to London. Then I offered that, if he were willing to pay well, the man might be willing to dump the shipment where he could find it."

"The bishop has promised Sir Thomas More that these New Testaments will be shipped to London and burned publicly at Paul's Cross in London."

"You what?" Tyndale exploded.

"Hear me out," said Packington. "I told him that the price would be steep and that it would need to be paid immediately to purchase the shipment."

"Why?" asked Tyndale, feeling betrayed.

"William, you are a poor man, yet you have some New Testaments, the printing of which has both endangered your friends and beggared yourself. I have found you a merchant with ready money to purchase all you have. It is a very profitable deal for you."

"Why does this always have to come down to money?" Tyndale asked.

Packington threw his friend a victorious smile. "The bishop has agreed to pay about three times the value of the Bibles you have here in this room. That's enough money for you to re-edit, print, and ship three times as many New Testaments in the coming months! You will lose a few but gain thousands more!"

Tyndale sat on the dusty floor and stared at the bundles of Bibles, carefully prepared for smuggling into London.

Finally, he looked at Packington and asked, "How much have they offered, and what will happen to these Bibles?"

Packington named a higher amount than Tyndale had dreamed possible. Then he added, "The bishop has promised Sir Thomas More that these New Testaments will be shipped to London and burned publicly at Paul's Cross in London."

Tyndale flinched, then smiled wryly. "When he burns the books, the public will be enraged and will demand their own copies. If he pays well, his generosity will allow us to print thousands more. I guess this is a small price to pay."

A few days later, as the stacks of Bibles were loaded onto a ship as part of Bishop Tunstall's luggage, William Tyndale began arrangements for the next printing of the New Testament in English, a new version that would not have been possible without the extra money.

Later, when Tyndale was finally captured, he was commanded to reveal the names of those who had helped him meet the expense of printing the Bibles.

"The bishop of Durham did more than any other person," Tyndale replied.[1]

Historian John Foxe records this fitting conclusion to the story: "The bishop of London had the books, Packington had the thanks, and Tyndale had the money."[2]

[1] This account is based on the story of William Tyndale and the bishop's purchase of his New Testaments as recounted in multiple sources, including Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), pp. 246, 247. Some dialogue, thoughts, and scene details have been reconstructed for narrative purposes and should not be understood as recorded quotations.
[2] John Foxe, *Book of Martyrs*, chap. 12, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, https://ccel.org/ccel/foxe/martyrs/files/martyrs.html.

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CAN HE HEAR ME?

Why do some prayers go unanswered?

This is an important and deeply personal question that confronts every believer. But it may help to rephrase it: Why does God sometimes answer differently—or later—than we hope? Scripture assures us that God hears our prayers. He may answer "Yes," "No," "Not yet," or "I have something better," but His response is always shaped by perfect wisdom and love.

Some prayers receive an immediate and certain "Yes"—as when we sincerely confess our sins and seek forgiveness. God promises: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Also, God always welcomes the person who turns to Him for salvation. Jesus promised, "The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37). He will answer our prayers for wisdom (James 1:5) and has promised the Holy Spirit as we witness for Christ (Acts 1:8).

Other prayers may be answered differently from what we request. Moses pleaded to enter Canaan (Deut. 3:23-26), but God refused because of his disobedience at Meribah (Num. 20:7-12). Yet God had not rejected Moses. Scripture indicates that he was later raised from the dead and brought to heaven (Jude 9; compare Matt. 17:3). What appeared to be a painful "No" was not the end of the story.

God's larger redemptive purpose may also require an answer we do not initially understand. Jesus prayed that, if possible, the cup of suffering might pass from Him, yet He submitted to His Father's will. Through Christ's sacrifice, humanity could be redeemed. Paul prayed three times for his "thorn in the flesh" to be removed, but God gave him something else: sufficient grace and divine strength in weakness (2 Cor. 12:7-10). God did not abandon Paul; He sustained and strengthened him.

Even when God's answer is "Yes," we may need to wait, keeping in mind that God's timing is always best. Abraham waited many years for the promised son. He tried to speed things up through human plans (Gen. 15:2, 3; Gen. 16:1-3). Nevertheless, God fulfilled His promise when, from a human perspective, it seemed impossible (Gen. 18:11; 21:1-3). Delay did not mean "Deny."

We can think of prayer, then, not as an attempt to persuade a reluctant God, but as an invitation to trust our loving heavenly Father, who sees the whole picture. We may not always understand His timing, methods, or reasons, but we can be certain of His character. He freely grants forgiveness to those who confess their sins, and salvation to those who come to Christ. With every request we can trust that His answer will serve His redemptive purposes and our eternal good.

We can think of prayer as an invitation to trust our loving heavenly Father, who sees the whole picture.

Therefore, we are invited to "trust in the Lord" with all our heart rather than lean on our own understanding (Prov. 3:5, 6). As we place our requests in His hands, the peace of God will keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7). ℟

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KEYS TO ANSWERED PRAYER

The secret to a successful prayer life

Prayer," Ellen White famously wrote, "is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him."*

That is perhaps one of the warmest thoughts about prayer ever put to paper, leading us to wonder why we tend to emphasize answers to prayer more than the relationship involved. When we spend time with our loved ones, after all, is it to see what we can extract from them, or is it about the relationship? Perhaps one of the greatest keys to answered prayer is to emphasize the relationship first.

In what order does Jesus prioritize relationship and prayer requests? (Matt. 6:31-33)

God already knows what you need (an important distinction from what you *want*), and tells us not to worry about those things. Instead, we are to prioritize seeking Him.

Some feel that answered prayer belongs to a special class of believer: the "prayer warrior." What does the Bible say about that? (Matt. 7:7, 8)

Notice how answered prayer is for "everyone" (verse 8). Prayer does not belong to a privileged class of believers; it belongs to *you*. Also notice that Jesus promises that when you *do* seek God sincerely, you will find Him.

What key to answered prayer is found in the Gospel of John? (John 14:14)

Some treat the name of Jesus as a magic talisman; all you have to do is verbally tack it onto the end of the prayer, and suddenly heaven has no choice but to answer you. But never forget that the third commandment tells us that it is possible to take God's name in vain. God's name is more than a label; it stands for His character (see Ex. 34:5, 6). To pray in Jesus' name is to align yourself with Christ, choosing to live as He did, and to allow His character to be lived out through your life. Answers to prayer naturally follow that alignment.

How do 1 John 3:22, 23 and 1 John 5:14 emphasize this idea?

John reminds us that "whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments." God's moral law is a transcript of His character, a powerful description of who He is. When we align with God, of course, we will not be praying for things that He wouldn't want us to have—a virtual guarantee that our prayers will be answered. In our present sinful state, we won't always get it right—but God is gracious, and loves our intent. David was far from perfect, after all, but is remembered as a "man after [God's] own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22).

What important promise helps us understand a "No" from God? (Rom. 8:28)

When we *do* get it wrong, it's important to remember that God is working out "all things . . . together for good." He will always do what's best for us, giving us what we need rather than what we want. Other times God is simply telling us to wait. This is why a prayer life that opens the heart to God as to a friend is so critical: we are growing closer to Him so that our trust deepens, and we rest in His stated intent to bring us into the kingdom.

Prayer, in other words, *always* gets answered—just not always as *we* would want. And the more we prioritize the relationship over making a wish list, the better prayer gets.

* Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 93.

Shawn Boonstra is an associate editor at Adventist Review.



Photo by Sixteen Miles Out / Unsplash

THREE CALLINGS. ONE MISSION.

Finding people God has prepared for you

Erton Köhler

Acts 9 is usually remembered for one man—Saul. He dominates the narrative, and rightly so: his conversion remains one of the most remarkable turning points in Scripture. A persecutor becomes a preacher. An enemy of the church becomes one of its greatest missionaries. Yet a closer reading reveals something even more remarkable. God not only was working in one life but was simultaneously preparing Saul, speaking to Ananias, and using Judas, an almost unknown disciple. Three separate lives were moving toward a single appointment, and not one of them fully understood it.

Before Damascus, Saul believed he was defending the truth. Stephen's death strengthened his determination to stop the followers of Jesus. Yet what Saul intended as destruction became expansion. "Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Then Christ interrupted both Saul's journey and his certainty with one question: "Why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4). In an instant Saul realized that the One he thought he was serving was the very One he had been resisting.

While Saul waited in darkness, God was arranging the rest of the story: Judas opened his home without knowing why, and Ananias received the assignment no one else wanted, questioning God's judgment. God simply replied: "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine" (verse 15). Nothing more was needed. God had already prepared the person Ananias feared to meet. This detail may be the most encouraging lesson in the entire chapter.

> Somewhere someone is already searching for answers.

Long before Ananias knocked on the door, Christ had already entered Saul's heart. The missionary did not initiate the miracle; he simply walked into one that God had already begun.

The same is true today. Somewhere someone is already searching for answers. A family is praying. A young person is questioning the direction of their life. A neighbor is carrying a burden no one else can see. God is already at work before any missionary arrives, before a Bible study begins. That means mission is never about persuading God to act. It is about joining what He is already doing.

Perhaps He is impressing you to visit someone. Perhaps to send a message. Perhaps to open the Bible with a friend. Perhaps simply to listen. None of those moments appear extraordinary. Neither did Ananias' walk across Damascus. Yet someone may already be waiting for *you*!

Acts 9 is not only Paul's story but ours, too. God still prepares hearts before He sends His people. He still knows names, families, streets, and cities. He still brings lives together at exactly the right moment.

The question is no longer whether God is calling. It is much more personal:

Who is already waiting for you?

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



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Join Us in 2027 for Galilee Calling

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In 2027 you and your family are invited to be part of a special project called Galilee Calling.

1. STUDY JESUS WITH US FROM A GALILEE BOAT! In Spring 2027 join Pastor Andy & Cindy Nash online for 90 days from the "Hope Boat" on the Sea of Galilee—and throughout the Holy Land. Andy authored the April-June 2027 Sabbath School quarterly on "The Ministry of Jesus." Let's journey with Jesus on-site—all ages together! (See GalileeCalling.com for the online links.)

2. HELP ADOPT GALILEE FOR JESUS. Did you know that most people now living in Galilee don't even know about Jesus? We invite you to help "adopt" Galilee for Jesus through your prayers, support, and even volunteer opportunities.

3. COME WALK IN JESUS' STEPS. Come celebrate the 2000-year anniversary of Jesus' ministry with a beautiful 2027 Holy Land tour in Jesus' steps. All groups will worship together on our Galilee boat. See tour dates at GalileeCalling.com

Be part of Galilee Calling, Let's glorify Jesus in the very land where He lived.



Andy & Cindy Nash



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JUMP-START THIS JANUARY

Start 2027 with Andy Nash's new book, "SAVED: The Story of God & Us"—a chronological journey through the Bible. Available E-Book, Audiobook, or 464-Page Paperback. Includes more than 50 Biblical maps.

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