

# Sierra Vista SDA Church Newsletter

## May – June 2026 Edition

### Born Fallen, Not Born Guilty



Have you ever watched a newborn baby and wondered, could this little one really be a sinner? It's a question that has divided Christian traditions for centuries. Some denominations teach that because we are born with a fallen nature, we are sinners from the very moment of birth, and infant baptism often follows from that belief. But when we sit quietly with Scripture, a more merciful and more beautiful picture begins to emerge.

The apostle John gives us a clear foundation: "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). Sin is not simply a condition we are born into; it is an act. It requires a moment of choice, a turning away, a willful crossing of the line God has drawn. Just as a person does not become a thief until they steal, none of us become sinners until we choose to transgress. This is one of the reasons the sinless life of Jesus is so profound. He took on our humanity fully and completely, born in fallen flesh, acquainted with temptation, tested in every way we are, yet He never sinned. His life shows us that a fallen nature does not make sin inevitable. The inclination toward wrong does not have to become the act of wrong. Jesus Himself gave us an insight into the hearts of children when He said, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 18:3). He didn't point to children as examples of inherited guilt; He held them up as examples of innocence. A baby simply cannot transgress God's law. Moral accountability requires the capacity for genuine choice, and that capacity develops gradually as we grow. Ellen G. White expressed this truth with clarity: "Before sin exists in the heart, the consent of the will must be given... none can be forced to transgress." (Signs of the Times, December 18, 1893). We do not arrive in this world as guilty sinners. We arrive as beloved, vulnerable human beings, fallen in nature, yes, but not yet fallen in act. None of this means we come into the world untouched by the Fall.

We inherit a bent toward self, a weakened will, and desires that pull us away from God rather than toward Him. That is real, and we feel it every day. But there is an important and merciful distinction between an inclination and a transgression. A tendency toward wrong is not the same as committing wrong. The fallen nature is our condition; it is not our condemnation, and the Bible draws this line clearly: "The son will not bear the guilt of the father, nor will the father bear the guilt of the son"\* (Ezekiel 18:20). Guilt is deeply personal. It belongs to the one who chose, and to no one else. It also helps to remember the order of events in Eden. Adam and Eve did not fall because they had a sinful nature; they received a sinful nature as the consequence of their fall. The transgression came first; the fallen condition followed. And a God who is just does not assign guilt for something we never chose. "The wages of sin is death"\* (Romans 6:23), but wages are earned, not inherited. This is not a minor theological point. It speaks directly to the character of God. He is not a Judge who condemns the innocent. He is a Father who grieves when His children choose to wander, and rejoices when they choose to come home. Perhaps the most liberating truth in all of this is what it means for how we live. When Jesus looked at the woman caught in adultery and said, "go and sin no more" (John 8:11), He was not setting an impossible standard. He was speaking as One who knew, from the inside, that victory is real. Our fallen nature is not a life sentence. Ellen White reminds us that "as we partake of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are cut away from the character... Then we cooperate with God in overcoming Satan's temptations." (God's Amazing Grace, p. 235). Through the Holy Spirit, the very tendencies we inherited can be transformed. We are not slaves to what was passed down to us. In Christ, we are genuinely, powerfully free. This is the beauty of what we believe as Seventh-day Adventists. We are not born condemned; we are born loved. We carry a fallen nature, but we also carry the image of God and the gift of choice. And in Jesus Christ, we have not only forgiveness for the wrong choices we have made, but power to make better ones going forward. We are not defined by what we inherited. We are defined by the grace that found us, the Savior who redeemed us, and the choices we make day by day to walk with Him.

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As spring moves along and everything comes to life outside—trees putting on blossoms and leaves, flowers blooming—hopefully the same is happening within us. We have good counsel from the great apostle: (1 Cor 10:31) "whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

Honoring God with our bodies and giving Him the glory: that's what it says in the first angel. "Fear God and give glory to Him (Rev 14:6, 7).

We want to stay active with happy faces and healthy habits. Paul called our bodies the temple for God's Spirit. We don't want to treat these bod-

ies of ours like old cars that don't run from inaction, or treat them as if they are garbage cans, by what we eat and drink. Paul says, "If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him". (1Cor 3:17) This does not mean that God will arbitrarily punish us if we destroy our bodies. (some sort of revenge – God is not like that!) Or it does not mean that God, because He does not force the will, will stand by and permit us to destroy our bodies if that is what we insist on. Listen: God wants to save the whole man – mental, spiritual, and physical. And physical is the house we live in, what a treasure, even if it is an earthen vessel – yet – precious in God's eyes.

Often, our resolutions are so good, and our performance is so bad. Can we all agree that as we get older, our habits slip a bit?

The great violinist and composer, Nicola Paganini, willed his violin to the Italian town of his birth, but there was one condition. No one should ever play this wonderful instrument again. The violin was placed on exhibition under a glass case in the city hall. Many years passed, and the stipulation that it should not be played was forgotten. A great violinist came to town for a concert, and he wanted to try the great Paganini's instrument. He was given permission, but when the violin was picked up, it fell apart. Worms had been eating it, as it lay there unused for years.

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# MATTHEW BRIAN TAWNEY

February 14, 1959 – March 14, 2026



On March 14, 2026, our beloved Matt Tawney went to rest. A devoted husband, loving father, grandfather, brother, and loyal friend, Matt was a steady anchor to all who knew him. He found joy in life's simple moments; fishing at dawn, hunting in the quiet of nature, and sharing laughter and stories with those he loved. His strength, quiet wisdom, and faithful presence left a lasting impact on many. Matt served our church faithfully for many years as a deacon in the Sierra Vista Seventh-day Adventist Church, living out his faith through compassion, service, and humble leadership. Though we feel his loss deeply, we rest in the blessed hope of his sleep in Christ until His soon return.

**Family:** Matt is survived by his beloved wife, Susan Tawney of Sierra Vista, Arizona; his sons, Justin Allyn (Leah) and Clayton Tawney (Adrianna); and his cherished grandchildren: Nevaeh, Noel, Beau, Charlene, and Henry.

He is also survived by his brothers, Stewart (Darla) Tawney, James Tawney, and Daniel (Laurie) Tawney; his sisters, Elizabeth Tawney and Meghan (Dan) Brito; and many extended family members and friends. He was preceded in death by his father, Earl Tawney, and his mother, Charlene Weinrich.

Susan Tawney

*"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first." (Thessalonians 4:16)*

## Flourish!

Choose well – Think well – Live well

### Choose Hope!

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13, NKJV

Hope is like a light that helps us to get through the dark tunnels of life

Find Bible verses or quotes that give you hope. Write them on plain index cards, decorate them and memorise them.

- Make a list of all the things you are looking forward to – today, this week, this month, this year and in the future.

Talk with your close family or friends about what you are most looking forward to in the earth made new (Rev. 21).

Plan something fun for your family or friends to look forward to.

Share hope. Give a candle or card to someone going through a difficult time and let them know you are praying for them.

Think about something you are worried about. List three good things that might happen instead.

Make a list of thirty things you would really like to do or places you would like to visit. Start doing the things on your list.

- List 5 small things that you look forward to every day. Make those moments as special as possible and share them with others if you can.

Think of three times where you were worried about something, but things went much better than you expected. What can you learn from these experiences?

- When someone asks you to pray for them, write an encouraging prayer and send it to them, or record your prayer and send them the message.

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This poster is part of the Trans-European Division project "Flourish!".  
For more ideas to help you flourish, please visit the TED Children's Ministry Resource pages at [www.ted.adventist.org](http://www.ted.adventist.org)

*From the Pastor's Desk – Continued from Page 1*

A violin is made to be used, so also, the muscles of our body, the lungs also, and every body part benefits from exercise. We should huff and puff at least once every day so that the blood channels can perform well. (But according to a doctor's advice – of course.) Dangerous or not, kids keep fit and call it fun. It's too bad that this never changes for us. Somewhere along the road to maturity, exercise for many people ceases to be a toy and becomes a tool. And the tool is put away in its kit to be taken out and dusted off less and less frequently. (and we are paying the price of inactive life).

Let us analyze our own situation and whatever we do: give God glory, whether we eat or drink or whatever we do. May God bless each one of you in this beautiful time of the year!  
Alvin Schnell

### Thinking About Getting a Dog?



Maddie the Greyhound

There's nothing quite like a loyal, four-legged companion – and for older adults, the benefits go well beyond simple company. Studies show that dog owners enjoy better heart health, lower blood pressure, and more physical activity. Even something as simple as gazing into your dog's eyes triggers oxytocin, the "love hormone" that lifts your mood and eases stress. Regular walks also open doors to new friendships and a richer social life. Of course, not every dog suits every lifestyle, so it's worth

thinking through a few things before you commit. How much living space do you have? Some breeds thrive in apartments, while others need room to roam. What's your activity level? Energy levels vary widely between breeds. And what are the ongoing costs – food, vet care, grooming – that fit comfortably within your budget? Don't overlook older dogs, either. They're often already house-trained, naturally calmer, and every bit as loving as puppies. Several breeds are especially well-suited to older adults. The Bichon Frise, Cocker Spaniel, Beagle, Greyhound, and Pug are all popular choices, valued for their gentle temperaments and manageable care needs. With the right match, you won't just gain a pet – you'll gain a companion who brings joy to every single day. AG

## Nine Words That Changed the World



Bell's 1876 Telephone

In the history of inventions that have transformed human life, few rival the impact of the telephone.

"Mr. Watson, come here. I want to see you." These words may seem ordinary, yet their significance was extraordinary. Spoken by Alexander Graham Bell in his Boston laboratory on

March 10, 1876, they were the first intelligible words ever transmitted electrically through a wire. With those nine simple words, the telephone age began. Bell's assistant, Thomas A. Watson, received the message in the next room. But Bell's ambitions extended far beyond that small space. The 29-year-old professor at Boston University believed he had invented something that would change the world. For several years, Bell had been experimenting with what he called a "harmonic telegraph," hoping to send multiple telegraph messages along a single wire. His patent was issued on March 7, 1876, and only three days later, he successfully transmitted the famous words that made history. The challenge was to convert the vibrations of the human voice into electrical signals that could travel through a wire. Interestingly, Bell's first successful transmission used a liquid transmitter filled with acidified water that conducted electricity. At first, many people admired the device but wondered what practical use it might have. When Bell demonstrated the telephone at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, it was nearly overlooked among the many exhibits. Yet two respected scientists recognized its promise and awarded Bell a medal.

Bell tirelessly promoted his invention. In one demonstration in 1877, he used the telephone to connect an audience in Salem, Massachusetts, with Watson in Boston. The listeners first heard Morse code played as musical notes, then music performed miles away — an astonishing experience at the time. With the support of investors, Bell founded the Bell Telephone Company in 1877. The technology spread rapidly, eventually leading to the creation of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, now widely known as AT&T. By the early twentieth century, the telephone had become an essential part of everyday life, linking homes, businesses, and entire nations. All because of nine simple words spoken through a wire.

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## Artemis II: Beyond the Moon, Beneath His Care



The successful return of the Artemis II astronauts marks a historic moment, not only for science and exploration but for all of us as we pause to reflect on humanity's place in God's creation. After a remarkable ten-day journey around the Moon, the crew splashed down safely on April 10, 2026, in what mission controllers described as a "textbook" landing, bringing to a close the first crewed lunar mission in more than half a century.

The mission carried four astronauts farther from Earth than any humans before them. Traveling 683,508 miles and reaching speeds of 24,665 mph (32 times the speed of sound) their safe return required extraordinary precision and courage. It also reminded us of something humbling: for all our technological achievements, we remain dependent on God for conditions we cannot control on a planet we did not create.

*"When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?" (Psalm 8:3-4)*

Perhaps the most powerful moments of the mission were not only its technical successes but the perspective it offered. From hundreds of thousands of miles away, Earth appears small and fragile, an island of life suspended in a vast darkness of space. Astronauts have long spoken of this view as life-changing, with a profound sense of awe and reverence.

And yet this mission reminds us that humanity is not insignificant, for the same God who set the Moon in its orbit also came down to die for us, so He could spend eternity with us. We are travelers in a vast and often uncertain world, reaching, searching, and striving. Yet we are not without direction, nor without hope. The God who created the heavens also guides our path and promises a safe return.

As we reflect on Artemis II, may we be inspired not only by how far humanity can go but by the One who holds all things together.

*"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." (Psalm 19:1)*

## A Proposal for Sunday Rest

In January 2026, the Heritage Foundation released a policy document titled "Saving America by Saving the Family: A Foundation for the Next 250 Years." While much of the document addresses economic and social reforms, one specific proposal has attracted much attention from the Seventh-day Adventist community: a call to reinstate a nationally uniform day of rest on Sunday through state and municipal law.

For the secular observer, this may appear to be a cultural effort to strengthen families and slow the pace of modern life and a nostalgic attempt to resurrect the "Blue Laws" of the 1950s. But for us, Seventh-day Adventists, the concept carries deeper significance.

We have long interpreted biblical prophecy, particularly Revelation 13 and 14, as predicting a future conflict over worship and religious liberty that involves enforced Sunday observance.

The proposal arises amid growing concern about social challenges such as declining family formation, screen time that is consuming childhood, and weakening community institutions.

In times of social and economic instability, governments often face pressure to enact sweeping measures to restore order and shared values, and some see a mandated day of rest as part of the answer.

Adventist theology, however, emphasizes that the biblical Seventh-day Sabbath is a distinct sign of loyalty between God and His people. That conviction has led Adventists, historically and consistently, to resist the legislation of religious observance. On May 21, 1888, Senator Henry W. Blair of New Hampshire introduced Senate Bill 2983, the "Sunday-Rest Bill. Adventist pioneer Alonzo T. Jones traveled to Washington to argue that the State has no right to legislate religious observances. The bill was eventually defeated.

For Adventists today, the discussion highlights the importance of remaining engaged in religious liberty issues while maintaining a balanced perspective. Our response should not be fear, but faithfulness, continuing to uphold the Sabbath as a witness to the Creator and advocating for freedom of conscience for people of all beliefs.

Ultimately, society's ills cannot be healed through legislation and coercion. We are a people of the Sabbath! Not because we keep rules, but because we bear a sign pointing to our Creator whose rest is a loving invitation, not an imposition.

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## Peter Thiel Lectures on the Antichrist Near the Vatican



Silicon Valley venture capitalist and billionaire Peter Thiel, co-founder of PayPal and Palantir Technologies, recently delivered a four-lecture, invitation-only series in Rome exploring the biblical concept of the Antichrist. The event drew considerable attention because of its proximity to the Vatican and Thiel's prominence in technology and political circles. Thiel's political and religious views make him an unusual voice in these discussions. A libertarian and self-described Christian, he has been a significant financial supporter of conservative causes and politicians, including an early role backing the political career of Vice President JD Vance. Thiel has a long fascination with apocalyptic themes, often framing the Antichrist and Armageddon in terms of the existential choices facing humanity today. In a November essay published in the Catholic magazine *First Things*, Thiel reflected on how Christians have debated the fulfillment of prophecy for centuries. His Rome lectures appear to have followed a similar series he presented in San Francisco last September, blending a hodgepodge of random ideas about AI, science and technology with insights drawn from theology, history, literature, and politics. The event proved controversial as several Catholic institutions initially associated with the conference, including the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (the Angelicum, alma mater of Pope Leo XIV) and the Catholic University of America, publicly distanced themselves from it. In Thiel's interpretation, the biblical Antichrist, prophesied to oppose Jesus Christ before the end, might appear not as an obvious enemy, but as a reassuring figure who gains influence by promising safety and protection from the "existential risks" of technological progress. This provocative reading has attracted attention among business leaders and has drawn scrutiny from both the Italian government and the Holy See. While Seventh-day Adventists differ significantly from Thiel's interpretation of apocalyptic prophecy, it is noteworthy how much interest these subjects continue to generate around the world. For us, this attention comes as no surprise. The identity and role of the Antichrist have been central to Adventist prophetic understanding since the church's earliest days. Moments like this remind us that the world is asking questions our church has been studying for generations, and that we have much to contribute to these conversations from the solid foundation of Scripture.

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## Church Night Out



*'And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. God made two great lights – the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the fourth day.'*  
Genesis 1:14-19

Thanks to all who joined to celebrate God's Creation! We had 20 people in attendance!! It was a wonderful, clear night to share! Angela Lee

## Small Steps, Stronger Hearts

For many, improving heart health feels overwhelming. We are often urged to make sweeping changes—overhauling diets, committing to intense workouts, and reshaping daily routines. While effective, such efforts are hard to sustain and often discouraging. New research offers a more hopeful path. A large study in the *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology* found that small, consistent improvements can be just as meaningful as major lifestyle changes. Lasting progress often begins with simple, steady steps. The study tracked more than 50,000 participants over eight years, focusing on three connected pillars: sleep, physical activity, and nutrition (SPAN). These habits reinforce one another—better sleep supports healthier eating, physical activity improves sleep, and together they strengthen overall health. Even modest gains made a measurable difference. A combined improvement—just ten extra minutes of sleep, five minutes of daily activity, and a small dietary change like adding a serving of vegetables—was linked to a 10 percent reduction in heart disease risk. That may seem small, but over time—and across many lives—the impact is significant. It also reframes success: not perfection, but consistency. The takeaway is simple: every minute counts. A short walk, a little more rest, or a small dietary choice may seem insignificant, but over time, these add up to lasting health. In the end, heart health is shaped not by occasional bursts of effort, but by steady, faithful steps taken day by day.

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## 100 Creative Activities for Sabbath

*From 100 Creative Activities for Sabbath by Karen Holford.*

### A Scrapbook of Songs

As a child, many of us were busy making scrapbooks where we placed mementos of fun or memorable events. Looking those scrapbooks over years later brought fond memories and sometimes comfort of happy times we would love to relive. Why not create a scrapbook of songs that inspire you by creating your own illustrated album of words?

#### Things You Need:

- Words for your favorite songs
- Scrapbook or mini-scrapbooking album
- Materials for writing the words and decorating the album pages
- Scissors, Glue and Pens

#### What You Do:

1. Write out the words for your favorite songs. You could use a computer to print the words in an attractive way or on special papers.
2. Paste the verses for the songs on different pages and use pictures, stickers and embellishments to illustrate the themes in the songs.
3. Add verses of Scripture connected to the themes of the songs.

#### Other Ideas:

- Use this idea to create a scrapbook of any songs that you have written yourself.
- Make a scrapbook of a friend's favorite songs or hymns to give as a gift or use the hymns and readings from your parents' wedding to create a scrapbook gift for an anniversary gift

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## Spring, Plant, Pantry, and Surplus Sale!

**When:** May 3, from 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

**Where:** The Church Parking Lot

It's time to clean out the garage, pot those seedlings, and decide what to cook! Table and space rentals are now open to all church members, and the sale itself is open to the entire community.

**Cost:** \$15.00 per table.

**Your Profit:** All proceeds from your personal sales go directly to you.

**The Cause:** Your rental fees will help fund upcoming landscaping projects on our church grounds.

**How to Reserve:** To secure your spot, please contact a Landscape Committee member: **Janelle Miller, Randy Cardwell, or Renee Finney**. We will be advertising the event across social media, so let's make it a great turnout. Ready, set, go!

Janelle Miller