

# Sierra Vista SDA Church Newsletter September – October 2026 Edition

A Life of Faithful Service: Celebrating Pastor Alvin Schnell



As Pastor Alvin Schnell prepares to officially retire at the end of August, we look back with gratitude on a remarkable life devoted to God, ministry, and service to his community.

Born on April 20, 1937, in the sawmill town of Council, Idaho, Alvin grew up with his younger sister in a faith-filled Seventh-day Adventist home, where active involvement in the church was simply a way of life. His foundation of faith was established early. After

attending local church school, he graduated from Gem State Academy in 1955 and went on to complete four years of undergraduate study at Walla Walla College. Although Alvin was baptized at age ten in Payette, Idaho, it was during his years at the College of Medical Evangelists—now Loma Linda University—that his personal relationship with the Lord deepened profoundly. He went on to earn his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree in 1963. For decades, Pastor Alvin skillfully combined his dental profession with a deep and enduring calling to ministry. After beginning his dental practice in Palmdale, California, he moved in 1970 to Caldwell, Idaho, where he cared for the oral health of his patients for 48 years. At the same time, he remained actively involved in ministry, serving as a local church elder, on the Idaho Conference committee, and for five years on the North Pacific Union Committee. His passion for evangelism was evident in many ways. During the 1990s, he championed 3ABN downlinks throughout Southern Idaho and helped establish a new church plant in Caldwell. Recognizing his leadership, dedication, and heart for ministry, the Idaho Conference ordained him as a bivocational pastor. He continued in that role until his initial retirement in 2018 in Middleton, Idaho. But retirement was not quite what God had in mind. Alvin and his wonderful wife, Coral have partnered in ministry for 29 years. One of her talents is the piano, and she has an Associate degree from La Sierra University, as a Bible Worker. “This has been “huge”, in our ministry to this area.

It helps us be on the same page”, Alvin says. In August of 2020 the Arizona Conference invited him to Pastor the Sierra Vista-Bisbee Arizona district. Alvin was ordained as SDA Pastor by Arizona Conference on March 11, 2023. “It has been an absolute wonderful thing to be associated with these two active congregations. May their tribes continue to increase until Jesus Comes!” Throughout his ministry, Pastor Alvin has remained deeply anchored in his love for the Three Angels’ Messages of Revelation 14 and his desire to share the hope of Christ with others. His life is a testimony to the fact that God can continue to use a willing servant through every season of life. As Pastor Alvin enters this new chapter, we give thanks for his many years of faithful service, his steady leadership, his passion for evangelism, and the love he and Coral have shared with so many. His life reminds us of Paul’s words: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” (2 Timothy 4:7)

May the Lord bless Pastor Alvin and Coral with abundant peace, joy, and continued opportunities to serve Him in the years ahead.

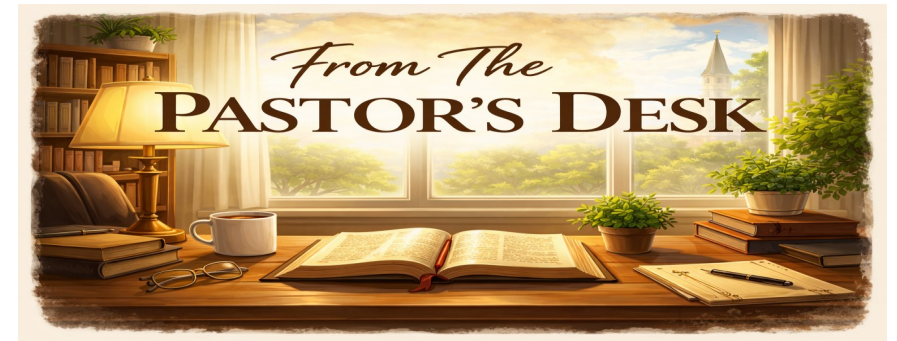
## Frog in the Kettle

It’s heating up faster than we thought!

By Dwight K. Nelson

Pardon the hackneyed metaphor, but am I the only one who thinks this “frog in the kettle” chapter of American history is heating up faster than any of us anticipated? Seriously, the speed at which America today is beginning to resemble the earth beast of Revelation 13 is stunning! “Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he . . . causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship” (Rev. 13:11, 12). He forces the world to worship—really? There is a national movement afoot that threatens the liberty most Americans grew up with—freedom of worship—the familiar guarantee of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

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## The Gatekeeper at the Wall: Guarding Your Mind's Gate

Many years ago, a Chinese emperor, built a gigantic wall to defend the country from barbarians from the North. For a time it was successful.

The wall stretched many miles along the border, and wide enough at the top for two chariots to pass each other. It remains one of the wonders of the world. It was a strong protection, but as a defense effort, the wall became a complete failure. The enemy breached the wall by merely bribing the gate keeper.

This wall is an object lesson for us. The fiercest, toughest, and most decisive battle ever fought by us is the battle for our minds, yours and mine. It is the mind that decides, it is the mind that chooses, it is the mind that loves and worships. It is the mind that is tempted, for the mind is the fortress of the soul. For us the very center of our mind is will power. God has built the defenses of the mind strong - it is the power of the will that is controlled by us. The gate keeper is us.

What are the weapons that the devil uses against us in this battle for our minds? First of all, words. Words arranged in advertising, newspapers, in books, on the radio, the TV screen, words on the internet, AI talking to us, something we might read or hear, and the words we say. These words can hurt, bring worry to us, to love sin and hate what is true and good Words can cause us to harm others, or bring joy and peace to us, and them. But there are other weapons that Satan uses in the battle for our minds. The Bible wants us to be suspicious of anything we take into our bodies, that might alter our thinking, such as alcohol or drugs, like caffeine, nicotine, and a host of others. There are also pictures we look at and the music we listen to. Our thoughts are the products of almost everything that comes close to us. (1 Cor. 10:31) We bring glory to God when we protect our minds. Our minds are where thoughts are harbored, and where defenses against the enemy of our soul are concealed. Thoughts can be good thoughts that cause us to do and say good things. But there are thoughts can also lead us to say and do things that are harmful to others, and make us ashamed.

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Clearly some Americans are tired of waiting, and now believe that the way to advance their religious preference is to persuade the government to enforce their religious practice. We must “make America Christian again.”

Christian nationalists, generally considered conservative American evangelicals, ostensibly have abandoned their evangelistic effort to win America to Jesus—and instead are turning to state and national lawmakers, even the president himself, to legislate religious practice. Their ill-conceived efforts to hang the Ten Commandments in every classroom (Louisiana), to mandate the Bible to be taught in public schools (Oklahoma), to call for a “uniform day of rest” (the Heritage Foundation), thus far have been turned aside. But their intent is clear. What did Jesus mean when, in answer to Pilate’s query, He replied: “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight . . . ; but now My kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36)?

The sad reality of Christian nationalism is that it seeks to do what Jesus and His followers refused to do: engage in political warfare! Never mind the rough-and-tumble commotion of political campaigning, never mind the moral imbroglios of its political leaders, its win-at-any-cost strategy compromises not only Jesus’ rejection of political counterattack but also His Sermon on the Mount’s radical counter call: “But I say to you, love your [political] enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matt. 5:44). The painful truth for Christian nationalists is that they fail to take seriously Jesus’ strategic call to win this cosmic conflict, not by force, nor by ballot box, but by the radical template of His own self-sacrificing love: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you” (John 13:34). Lewis Smedes writes: “God weeps when people think they can love only Him. . . . People need people as surely as they need God. Because God knows this, His redemptive love creates a company of love-sharers.”

What if you and I became that “company of love-sharers”? Not by hanging the Ten Commandments in our classrooms, but by living out those same commandments toward “the immigrant who is living with you” (Ex. 20:10, CEB)?

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### Flourish!

Choose well - Think well - Live well

#### Choose Kindness!

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:32 NKJV.

Doing kind things for others can sometimes be the most effective way to lift our spirits when we feel sad and down.

Try to do something kind every day for someone in your home, workplace, or neighbourhood.

● Buy a gift card for a local café and give it someone who needs a hot drink and something to eat.

● Make or buy some cookies and treats for a team of people who care for others (teachers at school, a police station, a doctors' surgery, etc.).

Call someone who lives on their own and spend time listening to them.

Donate a few packets of good quality food to a food bank, women's refuge, or homeless shelter.

Buy a small plant or bunch of flowers and leave it with a kind message on someone's desk or doorstep.

Fill a box with good things you no longer need. Give it to a charity shop or leave it in a dry place where people can help themselves.

Raise some money with your friends to buy something for a person in need. Or donate money to a small local charity.

● Wrap a present that anyone might like. Add a tag that says "If you find this gift - it's for you! If it doesn't suit you, please pass it on to someone else."

Write some short and positive messages on sticky notes. Stick them in different places, like inside a magazine, in a library book, on a package in a grocery store, on a mirror, etc.

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)

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

A good prayer like the words of a song: "Others, yes others, this let our motto be: Others, yes others that I might Thee, "Be like Jesus is my song, in the home and in the throng."

It takes wisdom from God to be successful here. A beautiful test about all this is found in James 3:17.

The enemy of our souls wants to bribe the gatekeeper. In the very center of our minds is the "will". We all have a will right there in our foreheads. Maybe you have heard the expression "will power". Our will is really the rudder. We can choose the direction of our lives. Proper use of the "will" is like the rudder of a big ocean ship. The rudder is only a small part of the ship, but it controls the direction of the huge ship. The "will" controls the direction I go, and it is a very small part of me, (like a rudder) the "will" controls the direction my personal boat will go.

Today we are living in a very troubled world and the wall that protect us is no better than the power of the will, which determines our day to day choices. The wall is the moral compass by which God protects us. Ten commandments are our protective wall. The Bible talks about a wall that protects a vineyard to keep the little foxes out. Let us pray each day to keep us close to God's will for us. In these "dog days" of summer, let us pray for wisdom that comes from God, as expressed in Phil. 4:8

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Alvin Schnell

We look forward to honoring our ladies with autumn birthdays on September 13 at 11:30am in the BLC. Please RSVP with Susan T. or Janelle M by September 9 so that we have enough of everything to make the party fun. September 27 we will be doing a Cookie Exchange at Janelle Miller's. More information will be coming. Invite a friend to meet your church sisters. Only 12 ladies will be hosted at a time. Another exchange will be set up if there is more interest. Learn a new recipe for the holidays.

AZ Conference Autumn Women's Retreat at Camp Yavapines will be held October 9-11. More information will be posted in the church alcove as it becomes available.

October 18 WM will host a "Craft-O-Rama" from 1 to 4 pm. Come and create 3 items from a choice of 6 items to take home. The cost will be \$15.00 for each participant but if you bring a friend who is not a church member, they get in free. This is for adult ladies only. Stay tuned for more information and location.



## The Immovable Ladder



For more than 300 years, a simple wooden ladder has rested quietly on a narrow ledge beneath a second-story window of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Untouched, unmoved, and weathered by time, this unassuming object has become one of Christianity's most striking symbols of division.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is revered as the site of Christ's crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. Since the fourth century, it has drawn countless pilgrims from every corner of the world. Today, the Greek Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Roman Catholic, Coptic Orthodox, Ethiopian

Orthodox, and Syriac Orthodox share custody of this place. Sadly, the spirit of Christian brotherhood has not always prevailed. For centuries, disputes over chapels, altars, processions, cleaning responsibilities, and even the use of stairways frequently erupted among the various groups. Some disagreements occasionally turned into physical confrontations. To bring an end to the constant conflicts, the Ottoman Sultan issued a decree in 1852 known as the Status Quo, freezing all rights and responsibilities within the church exactly as they existed at that time. From that day forward, even the smallest alteration required the unanimous consent of all six denominations. In nearly 175 years, only a handful of changes have ever been approved.

The ladder itself, believed to have been placed on the ledge sometime in the early 1700s, remains exactly where it was because no one can agree on what to do with it. The immovable ladder serves as a reminder of the challenges of Christian unity when human pride, vanity, and stubbornness can eclipse the very spirit of the One the church was built to honor. Yet there is also hope. Despite their differences, these Christian communities continue to worship under the same roof. The immovable ladder challenges every Christian to pursue the unity that Jesus prayed for—not necessarily uniformity in every belief or practice, but a spirit of love, humility, and mutual respect.

As Paul urged believers, we should strive to keep "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). Jesus Himself prayed: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:20–21).

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## Why Time Seems to Pass Faster

Many of us have noticed that the years seem to pass much more quickly as we grow older. According to research in psychology and neuroscience, this feeling is not primarily caused by aging or declining brain function. Instead, it is linked to the way our brains organize memories through "temporal landmarks"—new, memorable, or emotionally significant experiences that help distinguish one period of life from another.

One of the leading researchers in this field, German psychologist Dr. Marc Wittmann, has spent decades studying how people perceive time. His research, along with more recent brain-imaging studies, suggests that our sense of time depends less on the ticking of the clock than on the richness of our experiences. The more meaningful and varied our experiences, the more "landmarks" our brains create, making life seem fuller and longer in retrospect.

During childhood and early adulthood, life is filled with firsts: first day of school, first meaningful friendship, job, travel, or discoveries. These experiences create countless memory markers, making those years seem rich, detailed, and expansive. As people settle into familiar routines later in life, however, novelty becomes less frequent. Because many days look alike, the brain compresses similar experiences together, causing weeks, months, and even years to blend into one another. As a result, time appears to speed up.

Fortunately, researchers suggest that the solution does not require dramatic life changes. Simply introducing regular doses of novelty—such as trying a new foods, taking a different route home, exploring a new neighborhood, learning a new skill, or attending an unfamiliar event—can create fresh temporal landmarks. These small "micro-disruptions" help the brain store more distinct memories, making life feel richer and more memorable.

The encouraging conclusion is that the rapid passage of time is not an unavoidable part of growing older. By intentionally adding variety, curiosity, and meaningful new experiences to our daily lives, we can create stronger memories, experience the present more fully, and enjoy a deeper sense of purpose, well-being, and fulfillment.

God never intended life with Him to become dull or routine. Each day offers new opportunities to grow in faith, serve others, and discover fresh evidence of His love.

"Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22–23).

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## Nighttime Light Linked to Higher Heart Disease Risk

Many people fall asleep with the television on, scroll through their phones in bed, or leave a bedside lamp burning throughout the night. Others are exposed to light from streetlights or glowing digital clocks. While these habits may seem harmless, new research suggests they could have an impact on heart health.

A major study published in the October 2025 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) found that exposure to light during normal sleeping hours is associated with a significantly higher risk of developing cardiovascular disease. The findings add to growing evidence that darkness is an important ingredient for healthy, restorative sleep. Researchers followed nearly 89,000 adults over the age of 40 for an average of 9½ years. Participants wore wrist sensors that measured their exposure to light at night. This allowed researchers to compare long-term health outcomes among people who slept in dark environments with those regularly exposed to nighttime light.

The results were striking. Compared with people who slept in the darkest conditions, those exposed to the highest levels of nighttime light had a 56% greater risk of developing heart failure, a 56% higher risk of a heart attack, and up to a 30% greater risk of stroke. The problem is the disruption of the body's circadian rhythm, the internal biological clock that regulates the sleep-wake cycle, hormone production, metabolism, and other bodily functions. Even if a person sleeps seven or eight hours, exposure to light during the night can signal to the brain that it is still daytime. This suppresses the production of melatonin, the hormone that promotes restful sleep, and may interfere with the body's normal nighttime repair processes.

Over time, these repeated disruptions may place extra stress on the cardiovascular system. The new study suggests that nighttime light itself may be an overlooked contributor to these problems.

The good news is that reducing nighttime light exposure is both simple and inexpensive. Turning off lights before bedtime, avoiding phones, tablets, and televisions for at least an hour before sleep, using blackout curtains if outside light enters the bedroom, or dimming bright electronic displays, and keeping a consistent sleep schedule. Even small changes can help improve sleep quality and support long-term heart health. Cardiologists also emphasize that healthy sleep is only one part of a heart-healthy lifestyle.

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## Prediction Markets—The Business of Predicting the Future

If you've kept up with the news lately, you may have come across two unfamiliar names: Polymarket and Kalshi. They are part of a rapidly growing trend known as prediction markets.

Simply put, prediction markets are online platforms where people wager on the outcomes of future events. Participants can speculate on everything from who will win an election, sporting events, to monthly inflation rate, to whether a movie will win an Oscar. Prices constantly fluctuate according to what the crowd believes is most likely to happen, and fortunes are made or lost with the click of a mouse.

Some platforms have even seen millions of dollars wagered on religious questions. On Polymarket alone, more than \$3.3 million was bet on whether the Second Coming would occur before the end of 2025. The wager itself highlights the absurdity of trying to profit from such an event. First, Jesus plainly declared, "But concerning that day and hour no one knows" (Matt 24:36). Second, if Christ had actually returned in 2025, what exactly would the winning bettors have done with their earnings on the day Jesus came back?

For many people—especially younger generations—these platforms have transformed nearly every aspect of life into a betting opportunity. Politics, sports, financial markets, celebrity news, and even global tragedies are increasingly viewed not as events affecting real people, but as opportunities to place a wager. Humanity has always longed to know the future. Ancient civilizations consulted astrologers, diviners, and oracles. Today we have algorithms and artificial intelligence. The technology has changed, but the desire remains the same. Scripture, however, reminds us that our knowledge of tomorrow is limited. James offers this sobering counsel: "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit'—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring... Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that'" (James 4:13–15). The same wisdom echoes in Proverbs: "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring" (Pr 27:1). Neither Kalshi nor Polymarket can actually see the future. They estimate probabilities based on available information—and often on little more than human intuition. A natural disaster, a political scandal, a technological breakthrough, or any unforeseen event can instantly overturn what the market considered its most certain prediction. Only God knows the future with perfect certainty. Through the prophet Isaiah, He declares: "I am God... declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things not yet done" (Isaiah 46:9–10).

Prediction markets thrive on two powerful human impulses: the desire to know what is coming and the desire to profit from that knowledge. It is easy to become captivated by percentages, probabilities, and the illusion that tomorrow can somehow be mastered. Yet Jesus offers a better perspective: "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself" (Matt 6:34). Our peace comes not from predicting the future, but from trusting the One who already knows it. As prediction markets continue to grow in popularity, they remind us of an important truth: while they may estimate probabilities, they can never replace God's perfect knowledge. In an age fascinated with forecasting tomorrow, our greatest assurance remains unchanged. The future is uncertain to us, but it has never been uncertain to God. The world will continue building ever more sophisticated tools to guess at tomorrow, and some of those guesses may even prove useful. But no algorithm, exchange, or crowd of traders can ever possess what belongs to God alone. Whatever tomorrow may bring, may we say with James, "If the Lord wills," and with hearts at peace, knowing that the One who holds tomorrow already holds us.

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## Flock Safety Cameras: Security and Privacy in a Changing World

As security technology becomes increasingly common across America, many neighborhoods, businesses, and local governments are adopting camera systems designed to monitor vehicles and assist law enforcement. One of the fastest-growing providers is Flock Safety, founded in 2017, which now operates tens of thousands of cameras nationwide.

Flock Safety cameras are automatic license plate readers installed by homeowners' associations, businesses, and municipalities. Activated by motion, the cameras capture images of passing vehicles and record license plate numbers and other distinguishing features. According to Flock Safety, the system does not use facial recognition technology and is not intended to identify individuals, although some critics question these claims. The company maintains that collected data is retained for a limited period and that law enforcement access is restricted by customer permissions and legal processes. However, concerns about abuse are not merely theoretical. This year alone 24 law enforcement officers have been arrested for accessing the data improperly and using it to spy on girlfriends or family members. Incidents like these raise legitimate questions about whether safeguards and oversight are sufficient to prevent the technology from being misused. Supporters point to Flock Safety's potential role in protecting communities, and helping solve crimes. But privacy advocates are concerned about the personal data being collected. Tracking a vehicle over time can reveal a great deal about a person's daily habits—where they live, work, worship, shop, and travel. Others question how this information could eventually be used as surveillance technology continues to evolve. In an age of expanding surveillance, staying informed and exercising discernment is more than simply a civic responsibility.

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## It's a Boy! The World Welcomes Its First Trillionaire

In June 2026, entrepreneur Elon Musk made history by becoming the first person with an estimated net worth exceeding \$1 trillion. This unprecedented milestone was driven largely by the soaring value of his business holdings—particularly SpaceX, whose recent public offering dramatically increased the value of Musk's ownership stake.

To put one trillion dollars into perspective, if Musk, who is 55, were to spend \$1 million every single day, it would still take him 2,740 years to spend his fortune. A net worth of \$1 trillion is roughly equivalent to the annual economic output of countries such as Saudi Arabia, the Netherlands, or Turkey.

This historic milestone also raises important questions about wealth, stewardship, and the widening gap between the world's wealthiest individuals and ordinary families struggling to make ends meet. While innovation and entrepreneurship deserve recognition, the concentration of wealth on such an unprecedented scale invites thoughtful reflection on our economic priorities and our responsibilities toward one another.

For Christians, however, the greater question is not how much wealth a person possesses, but what that person values most.

Jesus warned, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt 6:19–20).

The apostle James offered an even more sobering warning to those who place confidence in their wealth: "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you" (James 5:2–3). Wealth that is hoarded rather than used in service to God and others ultimately has no lasting value.

Whether we possess little or much, the true measure of success is never found in financial accumulation. It is found in faithful stewardship, quiet generosity, humble service, and love for God and our neighbors. As the world celebrates the arrival of its first trillionaire, we are reminded that the greatest riches cannot be measured in earthly currency. The treasures that endure are those invested in God's kingdom—where no market fluctuation, economic downturn, or passage of time can diminish their value.

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work" (Revelation 22:12).

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