

ADVENTIST REVIEW

**JUNE 2021: CAN WE TRUST OUR LEADERS? + BOYS
WILL BE MEN + VACCINATED YET? SO WHAT? +
VIRTUAL GRIEF + HOMELESS RELIGION**

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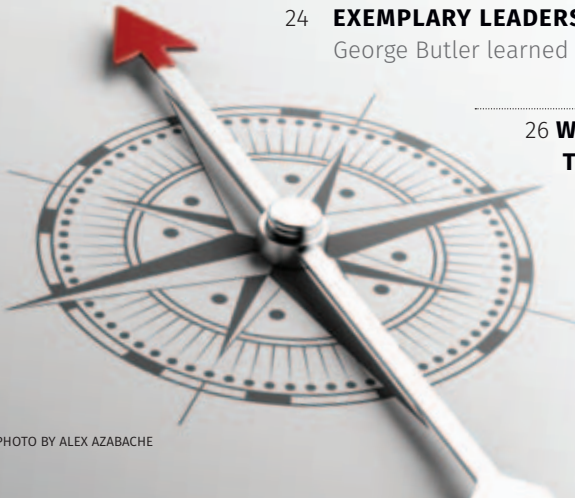
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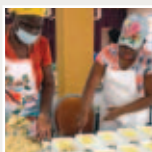
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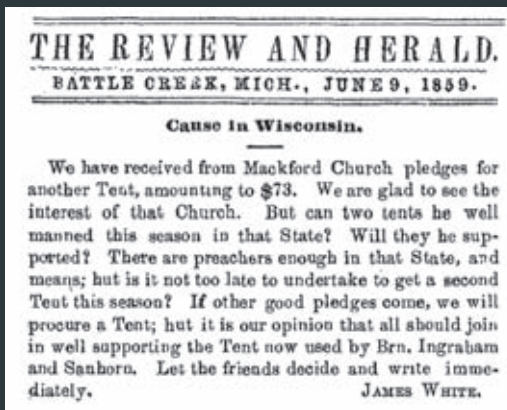
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TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON
ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:

- 1 The Psychology of Vaccine Hesitancy
- 2 Adventist Organizations Join Forces to Assist Pandemic-ravaged India, Brazil
- 3 Thank God for Mothers
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167 YEARS AGO



James and Ellen White spent much of their time circuit-riding throughout New England, New York, and the Midwest, especially in Michigan. As the number of believers grew, the ability to meet in homes or small churches declined. James White wondered if perhaps a tent might be the answer.

In a short time a tent was purchased in Rochester, New York, with donations from believers. The first evangelistic meeting was held in a tent on **June 9, 1854**, in Battle Creek, Michigan. Through the years more tents were purchased. By 1859 the *Review* regularly carried announcements of tent meetings, including a small graphic to grab the attention of its readers.



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Tens of thousands of children are trafficked each year

Trafficking

The sex trade in India recruits thousands of girls each month.

Many come from other countries like Nepal and Bangladesh. These girls are lured with the promise of a better life and work. Sadly, they are too quickly taken to other cities and forced into prostitution.

Operation Child Rescue teams act on information and liaise with special police groups. Operation Child Rescue funds a rescue home for these girls, giving them a future.

The rescue team are also involved in the rescue of children from child labor factories where children are exploited for low wages and poor conditions.

Orphan Rescue

The orphan problem in India is beyond comprehension. High death rates amongst parents and children being abandoned because of poverty are just some of the reasons for so many orphans in India.

Operation Child Rescue partners with the Sunrise Home, a rural orphanage with over 10 acres of farmland, located in Bobbili, Andhra Pradesh. Working with the government and local charities, Sunrise has become the home to over 130 special rescued children.

Baby Rescue

It is estimated that over 31 million children are orphaned in India.

Operation Child Rescue directly helps fund the Ashram Trust who for over 20 years has operated a baby rescue center. Children are found by Ashram as well as dropped off by police or hospitals. Sadly those who find these bundles of joy found them abandoned by the roadside.



Slum Rescue

It is estimated that over eight million children under the age of six live in over 40,000 slums across India.

Operation Child Rescue and Child Impact International operates a school in the largest city slum in the city of Vizak, India. The program operates a pre-school giving the mothers security and food for their child, and the time to earn some income.

The program also educates parents on the dangers of trafficking and operates a sewing school for women after the preschool closes and in the evenings.

Many children are then offered sponsorship at the local Adventist mission school.

*This pandemic requires a global response!
Help today!*



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“ My family and I are excited to be a sponsor of a child with Child Impact. Jean and my girls have visited her and the work of Child Impact in India. They do amazing work and in this virus crisis their work is really having impact! ”

Shawn Boonstra

Speaker/Director
Voice of Prophecy





BILL KNOTT

“There’s little glory in making disciples.”

That Long Obedience¹

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19, 20).

One author has wryly noted that these words of Jesus’ Great Commission are “the best known and least obeyed imperatives in the entire New Testament.” He isn’t referring to the “going” of Christian mission, for there’s a rich history of missionaries, martyrs, and everyday saints stretching from the first missions of Peter and Paul to the latest student missionary leaving for Palau. Christians generally, and Adventists specifically, have been remarkably good at going. Lest you doubt the devotion of early Adventists to global mission, read David Trim’s sobering volume *A Living Sacrifice* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2019). These are heart-rending stories of commitment and loss, tragedy and persistence.

Our struggles to obey aren’t centered primarily in a refusal to “go,” but rather in an underdeveloped understanding of what Jesus means when He urges us to “make disciples.” His words imply—require—a durative process, perhaps as long as the three years it took the Master to make just 12 of them. And in the most undiscussed phrase

of the Great Commission, Jesus offers us a clear definition of what He means when He urges us to “make disciples”: “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.”

We assume, wrongly, that this task belongs to someone else—to some mythical person in the congregation, perhaps the pastor or an elder, who will do the hard and patient work of helping new believers learn Christ (Eph. 4:20). Some imagine that the congregation in the aggregate is responsible for making disciples. Perhaps the round of weekly Sabbath School and several years of worship services will teach new Adventists to become poor in spirit; compassionate with those who grieve; meek; hungry and thirsty for righteousness; merciful; pure in heart; and peacemakers.

This is wishful thinking, fanciful thinking, and ultimately an expression of our disobedience.

Let’s be clear: there is some glory to be found in “going,” in crossing the Pacific Ocean or Pacific Avenue to carry the gospel to those who don’t know it. There’s greater glory in filling stadiums with thousands of cheering Adventists who celebrate the growth of God’s kingdom in their region. And when 2,000 candidates line up to be buried in baptism, cameras and reporters are poised to “tell the world” what we have accomplished.

But there’s little glory in mak-

ing disciples, in the slow and painful teaching of the thinking and the doing of the gospel. It requires an unusual and often uncomfortable personal vulnerability to allow a new disciple to witness how you are learning to live the gospel—praying from an open heart instead of a recited incantation; practicing reconciliation in the face of deep hostility; seeking the humility that teaches naturally proud persons to “regard others as better than yourselves” (Phil. 2:3, NRSV).²

We don’t hand out trophies or give promotions to those who make disciples: their ministry can’t be understood in days or weeks, but only in months and years. We have no metrics for measuring the vital task they perform. But without them, this church will never find the power of Pentecost, nor a passion for mission, nor, finally, a victory celebration with the Lamb.

Here, right here, among those who *make disciples*, is the true “patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12).

Bill Knott

¹The phrase comes from Eugene Peterson’s classic *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

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“When we see the Sabbath or the law as a gift, we appreciate it.”

WALLY HASSELBRACK

THE POETS OF AR

Reading the editorials by Bill Knott has always left me with a suspicion that he is not only a fan of the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, or probably a poet himself. Now we know that in writing prose his poet side cannot be hidden; it shines forth even if he ostentatiously tries to prevent it. I have also long suspected that Lael Caesar had the same bent. His T. S. Eliot—like “ELOI”—took hold of me. Both men contributed greatly to my spiritual pleasure in the April 2021 edition, for which I am thankful.

Ernest J. Stevenson, pastor, retired.

As an Adventist for 77 years, I am happy to share with the church the greatest “change” it could make. I believe the greatest change the church could make is our picture of God. I think all of us could grow to better understand what God is like. I hope I’m still growing to know God better. What’s important is that what we do and say

reflects well what God is really like. When we see the Sabbath or the law as a gift, we appreciate it, especially if it’s for our best good and strengthens our trust in God. You can tell a lot about “the maker” who cooks a meal or makes furniture. The Sabbath reveals who God is and what He’s like. The Sabbath keeps us in a relationship with Him.

Wally Hasselbrack
St. Helena, California



THE WEIGHT OF THE WAIT

Delise Wilson’s article was excellent and will bless so many. It was insightful, clear, spiritual, and so practical. Delise blessed me, and I know, many others. Keep writing, Delise, for God has given you a talent.

Pastor John Bridges
Forsyth, Missouri

THANK YOU

Thank you for the quality and helpful articles in our church paper. It continually enriches my journey.

Susan Reeves
Wimberley, Texas

“I find that highly manipulative and an inappropriate use of the gospel pulpit.”

BONITA SHIELDS

COMMENTS FROM
ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG

**2021 ELECTIONS BRING
LEADERSHIP CHANGES FOR NAD**

Our heavenly Father has blessed us with many dedicated and spiritually qualified leaders as we look to Him to lead us through this wonderful time of knowing prophecy has been and is being fulfilled.

Delta Harris

**THE PSYCHOLOGY
OF VACCINE HISTORY**

One (unintended) message of the article seems to be that a conscientious healthful-lifestyle person who minimizes/avoids unmasked mixing with others and who, for personal reasons, refuses to be vaccinated, is seemingly pictured as one who is “unconcerned” with the well-being of his or her neighbor. If one believer is willing to accept the choice of another believer to be vaccinated, why cannot the vaccinated believer be willing to accept the choice of a believer to remain unvaccinated, without putting a label on him or her? And to be fair, I fully realize that the “labeling” can go both ways.

M. Ross Rearon

I applaud the *Adventist Review* for tackling a difficult subject, but I

am disappointed in how the subject was presented. The author of this article first offers an unfair dichotomy between those who choose to be vaccinated as people of “reason” compared to those who choose not to be vaccinated as “emotional.” Yes, some are choosing not to take the vaccine because of emotional reactivity, but some are choosing not to take it because they have rationally studied the vaccines, weighed the pros and cons, and determined the benefits versus the risks. And some have chosen to be vaccinated from a rational stance of research and understanding, as well as those who have chosen it from an emotional reactivity to overwhelming fear. Second, the author encourages the use of the pulpit to persuade people to become vaccinated as “part of our Christian duty to protect others.” So if someone chooses not to be vaccinated, then the church has told them they are not performing their Christian duty to

protect others? I find that highly manipulative and an inappropriate use of the gospel pulpit. I would hope that in the future, especially for such a divisive topic as this, an article would present the evidence/rationale/facts and allow others the God-given freedom to choose their course of action without stereotypes or false guilt from their Christian brothers and sisters.

Bonita Shields

**NATURAL SELECTION, DARWIN,
AND THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW**

Very well argued and written article, thank you. You present very compelling arguments for why natural selection is incompatible with belief in God as the Creator. One more that I would add: the Genesis account states repeatedly that man and woman were created in God’s image. God did not leave it to natural selection to somehow embed His very attributes into His creatures, first of which is mankind.

Michel (last name withheld)

YOUR TURN

We welcome your letters, noting, as always, that inclusion of a letter in this section does not imply that the ideas expressed are endorsed by either the editors of the *Adventist Review* or the General Conference. Short, specific, timely letters have the best chance at being published (please include your complete address and phone number—even with e-mail messages). Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: letters@adventistreview.org.

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“The Seventh-day Adventist Church is really showing that they are their brother’s keeper. It is a good example for other churches to follow.” –Ralph Gonsalves, p. 16



The Adventist Church voted to release contingency funds to assist Adventist health-care institutions and humanitarian initiatives to fight the COVID-19 pandemic in India and Brazil. ADRA and Adventist Health International have also stepped up to help. PHOTO: ADRA

ADVENTIST ORGANIZATIONS JOIN FORCES TO ASSIST PANDEMIC-RAVAGED INDIA, BRAZIL

AMID HEARTBREAKING DEVELOPMENTS, LEADERS VOTE RELEASE OF FUNDS FOR URGENT RELIEF INITIATIVES.

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Leaders of several Seventh-day Adventist organizations are joining forces to provide urgent assistance to India and Brazil. In a May 4 action, the Administrative Committee of the General Conference (GC-ADCOM) voted to release contingency funds and ramp up the coordination of efforts by various church organizations to assist those two pandemic-ravaged nations.

Adventist leaders explained that several church organizations have already been assisting many coun-

tries affected by the lingering COVID-19 pandemic. ADRA in India has launched several projects in partnership with the Seventh-day Adventist Church health system in India. “Initial estimates in financial support, program strengthening, and in kind totals about US\$250,000,” they reported. Since the pandemic began, the ADRA COVID-19 response in India has totaled more than \$1.2 million, with another \$1 million expected in the coming weeks.

Assistance to India thus far has

included one oxygen generation plant for Surat Seventh-day Adventist Hospital and 3,000 personal protective equipment (PPE) kits to Adventist hospitals in Bangalore, Pune, and Nuzvid. ADRA India also partnered to provide 20 oxygen concentrators to those three hospitals and specific support to four vaccination centers for three months in Delhi.

ASSISTANCE TO ADVENTIST HOSPITALS

GC-ADCOM’s action provides that the General Conference (GC), in partnership with the Adventist Health Ministries Department and Adventist Health International (AHI), based at Loma Linda University Health (LLUH), will assign a combined US\$200,000 from the GC World Contingency Fund and other sources to be distributed proportionately among 11 Adventist hospitals across India. Besides the health-care institutions assisted by ADRA India, these funds will support the battle against the pandemic in Adventist hospitals in Ranchi, Otapalam, Aizawl, and Tanjore (Thanjavur), among others.

LLUH president Richard Hart, who is also president of the AHI management team, explained that as the pandemic intensified a year ago, AHI leaders realized the devastating impact it could have on the more than 40 hospitals the organization works to support. “We then set about creating a US\$500,000 COVID-19 fund to support payrolls, purchase supplies, and provide medical expertise to these hospitals and the Adventist Church worldwide,” Hart explained.

“The health situation is so critical in India... that it was the right thing to assist even in a modest way.” Ted N. C. Wilson

As the focus has now shifted to India, Hart said AHI is once again working in partnership with Adventist health-care institutions. “We are partnering with the 11 Adventist hospitals in that great country to support our health professionals who are working under very difficult circumstances,” he said.

The May 4 action also includes applying US\$75,000 from the GC World Contingency Fund for three large Adventist hospitals in Brazil. These health-care institutions, located in Rio de Janeiro, Manaus, and Belem, have been significantly affected by the last wave of the pandemic, church leaders said.

CHURCH AT ITS BEST

Peter Landless, director of Adventist Health Ministries for the Adventist Church and a vice president of AHI, told *Adventist Review* that he believes “the COVID-19 ravaging India reflects the undiluted suffering and humanitarian crisis of this broken planet and is heart-breaking.” In moments like these, the Adventist Church is committed to extending the healing ministry of Jesus, Landless added.

He also underscored that the goal of the action taken by Adventist leaders is to “express solidarity with our hospitals, health workers, and members, all stretched beyond capacity and supplies” during the current pandemic. “We fully understand in the face of the enormity of the situation that this support is the proverbial drop in the bucket, but every dollar counts,” Landless said.

In light of the latest developments, Landless emphasized he feels “extremely grateful and thrilled” by the Adventist Church’s lockstep response that can “effectively react, respond, and live mission as a team” in emergencies like these. “As I love to say, and believe with all my heart, ‘This is church at its best!’” he said.

Leaders noted that COVID-19 cash relief distributed to Adventist health-care facilities and world division health endeavors has exceeded US\$1 million during the past nine months, not including the amounts voted this week. According to church leaders, recipients have applied the funds and reported back to supporting and donating entities. “It is expected that the same procedure of application and reporting of funds will take place [in this case],” Landless explained. Landless and Hart will be advising on fund application on designated projects and initiatives as needed.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF CHRIST

In a statement released May 6, General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson asked Adventist leaders and members around the world to pray for the Lord to work through Adventist hospitals and health-care professionals to bring relief from this devastating pandemic:

“The decision to help the Southern Asia Division with relief funds to assist the Seventh-day Adventist hospitals in India with the crushing crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic

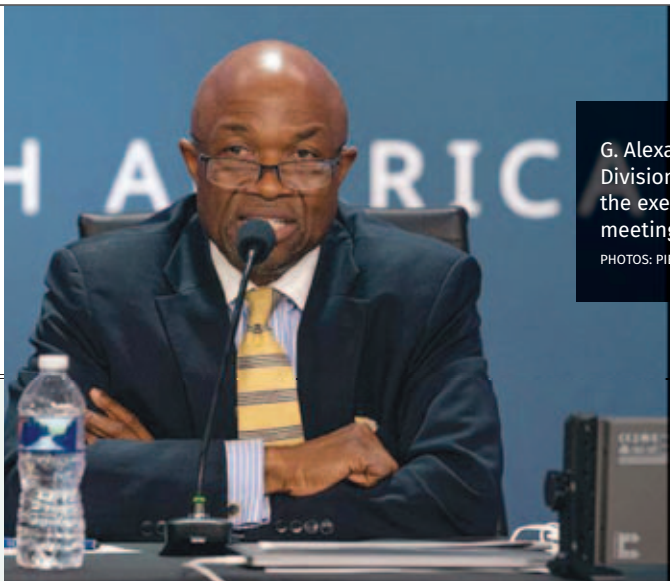
came as a result of an urgent appeal from the president of the Southern Asia Division, Pastor Ezras Lakra.

“The health situation is so critical in India with such human devastation that it was the right thing to assist even in a modest way considering the overwhelming public health crisis facing the population and our Adventist hospitals as they minister to people as Christ did. I asked Dr. Peter Landless to coordinate relief efforts, and he has engaged a collaborative approach with the General Conference, ADRA International, and Adventist Health International connected with the General Conference and Loma Linda University Health.

“We are also modestly assisting the South American Division with a financial donation to help care for the saving of life efforts for individuals in that large division territory. Please pray for the Lord to work through our Adventist hospitals and health-care professionals to bring relief from this devastating pandemic not only in these mentioned areas but around the world.

“May this be a wake-up call to all of us that Jesus is coming soon and that we need to be sharing the righteousness of Christ beautifully placed in His three angels’ messages and the hope of Christ’s soon return. In the meantime, let us do all we can to follow in the footsteps of Christ as we minister to those in great need.”

To donate to ADRA emergency relief for India and Brazil, go to: ADRA.ORG/COVID19 Response



G. Alexander Bryant, North American Division president, addresses members of the executive committee during a special meeting held on April 29, 2021.

PHOTOS: PIETER DAMSTEEGT/NAD COMMUNICATION PRODUCTION

ELECTIONS BRING LEADERSHIP CHANGES FOR THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

SEVEN NEW LEADERS ELECTED AT THE DIVISION'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING.

BY MYLON MEDLEY, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

Three vice presidents, two directors, an associate director, *Liberty* magazine editor, and the president of the Guam-Micronesia Mission (GMM) have been newly elected to serve the North American Division (NAD) until 2025. The election on April 29, took place during a meeting of the NAD executive committee.

A total of 42 names were presented for election or reelection from the division's nominating committee. Executive committee members could vote for or against the names or refer the names back to the nominating committee. Most positions voted were for incumbents. Seven new leaders accepted the call to serve.

Wendy Eberhardt was elected to serve as the NAD vice president for ministries, replacing Bonita J. Shields, who announced this spring that she would not seek reelection.

Eberhart is the director of young adult ministries and camp ministries for the Arizona Conference. She has also served in the Upper Columbia, Kentucky-Tennessee, and Pennsylvania conferences, primarily in the roles of camping leadership and youth ministries.

"She has a strong passion for mentoring, is highly spiritual, and has tremendous people skills. She has the desire to see people be the best they can be," NAD president G. Alexander Bryant said when presenting Eberhardt's name to the executive committee.

Calvin Watkins, Sr., was elected to become the NAD vice president for evangelism and regional liaison. Alvin Kibble, who retired in 2020, had served in the position of liaison to the regional conferences, in leadership development, and in public affairs and religious liberty (PARL). Watkins is currently the

president of the Southwest Region Conference. He had previously served the South Atlantic Conference as ministerial director and director of the conference's Adventist Community Services.

"Calvin has baptized more than 6,000 people in his time as an evangelist," Bryant said. "He is passionate about doing what he can to finish the work of the Lord."

Maurice Valentine was elected as the vice president for media liaison, replacing the retiring Gordon Pifher, who was vice president of media ministries. Valentine previously served the Lake Union as its executive secretary and is currently its president. Prior to the Lake Union, he served as president of the Central States Conference and vice president for administration of the Mid-America Union. He has also organized a citywide radio broadcasting network and has served on the Breath of Life Ministries executive committee.

"He's a facilitator and disciple builder. He brings administrative strength to the role for collaboration," Bryant said.

Current NAD vice presidents Arne Nielsen, vice president for education, and Tony Anobile, vice president for multilingual ministries, were both reelected.

All incumbents for secretariat and treasury positions were reelected: Elden Ramirez, undersecretary; Carolyn Forrest, associate secretary; Judy Glass, undertreasurer; C. Michael Park, associate treasurer; Sharon Mabena, associate



North American Division treasurer Randy Robinson offers prayer as members of the North American Division executive committee prepare to vote on names presented by the division's Nominating Committee.

treasurer; and Edwin Romero, associate treasurer. Romero also currently serves as Adventist Retirement administrator/CEO, a separately appointed position.

MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP ELECTIONS

Bettina Krause was elected as the new editor of *Liberty* magazine, the division's publication on religious liberty. Krause comes to the division from the General Conference as associate director of its PARL Department, through which she represented the denomination to the U.S. Congress. With a law degree (LL.B.) from Australia, Krause has significant experience in denominational work as director of Adventist News Network and director of media relations for the General Conference. Krause also served as special assistant to the former president of the General Conference Jan Paulsen for protocol, media, and communication.

"She has a strong love of religious liberty and is very qualified to serve in this role," Bryant said.

DeeAnn Bragaw was elected to become the women's ministries director of the NAD, replacing Carla Baker, who retired in 2019. Bragaw works for the Rocky Mountain Conference, where she serves as its women's ministries director and prayer ministries coordinator. She has a master's degree in pastoral ministries and received a bachelor's degree in education.

"DeeAnn comes highly recommended from many women's min-

istries directors," Bryant said. "She has coordinated many special events and retreats, and collaborates with the youth department to engage and empower teenagers."

The newest director of NAD Adventist Community Services is W. Derrick Lea. Lea was previously its associate director, serving as disaster response director, occupying that role since 2015. He was a fire chief before coming to the division.

"He has a rich history in disaster work, and a passion for serving the community," Bryant said.

Rudy Salazar will be the new stewardship ministries associate director. Salazar comes from the Central California Conference as its director of gift planning ministries and stewardship.

"Rudy also has many years of experience in stewardship and trust work from times in Texas, Oregon, and California. He's conducted camp meeting services in English and Spanish," Bryant said.

Incumbents for the following ministries were reelected: Adventist chaplaincy ministries, Paul Anderson, director; children's ministries, Sherri Uhrig, director, and Gerry Lopez, associate director; communication, Dan Weber, director, Kimberly Luste Maran, associate director, and Julio C. Muñoz, associate director; health ministries, Angeline Brauer, director; office of volunteer ministries, Ernest Hernandez, director; education, Martha Ban, associate director, Stephen Bralley, associate director, Leisa Morton-Standish, associate

director, and Evelyn Sullivan, associate director; family ministries, Claudio Consuegra, director, and Pamela Consuegra, associate director; literature ministries, Carl McRoy, director; public affairs and religious liberty, Melissa Reid, associate director; Ministerial Association, Ivan Williams, director, Jose Cortes, Jr., associate director, Dave Gemmell, associate director, and Esther Knott, associate director; stewardship ministries, Michael Harpe, director; and youth and young adult ministries, Tracy Wood, director, Vandeon Griffin, associate director, and Armando Miranda, Jr., associate director.

Three positions have been referred to the NAD Administrative Committee (NADCOM), which meets throughout the year. These include the position of vice president of strategy and assessment, recently vacated by the retiring Paul Brantley; director for Sabbath School and Personal Ministries; and NAD ACS associate director.

The final position filled on April 29 was president of the Guam-Micronesia Mission (GMM). Its previous president, Ken Norton, recently became the president of the Montana Conference. The NAD executive committee elected Matthew Kirk, the current secretary/treasurer of the Montana Conference, to become the mission's newest president. Remenster Jano, GMM secretary, and Donald Lloyd, treasurer, were both reelected. 🦋

Kimberly Luste Maran contributed to this report.



John Wesley Taylor V, during his April 14 presentation.

ADVENTIST EDUCATION HELPS STUDENTS JOIN AND REMAIN IN THE CHURCH, STUDIES SHOW

EXPERIENCED EDUCATOR DISCUSSES IMPACT OF ADVENTIST SCHOOLS.

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Does Adventist education make a difference? Does attending an Adventist school, college, or university provide something more than attending any other good educational institution? Is what one pays for Adventist education an expense or an investment? Is Adventist education actually evangelism? Does it result in spiritual development?

These were some of the questions that John Wesley Taylor V, associate education director of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, set out to answer in a prerecorded presentation to the members of the General Conference Executive Committee (EX-COM) on April 14. Taylor's presentation, entitled "Joining and Remaining: A Look at the Data on the Role of Adventist Education," reviewed multiple studies that illuminate various aspects of education as a redemptive enterprise.

"Adventist education is the longest and largest evangelistic event in the Seventh-day Adventist Church," Taylor reminded the hundreds of EXCOM members from around the world who were meeting virtually for the 2021 Spring Council.

Following a simple calculation, Taylor said that a child attending an Adventist primary school receives evangelistic instruction for

a minimum of 800 hours. If a student completes every level of education in an Adventist educational institution, this can add up to more than 37,400 hours, he shared. And every Adventist school at every level is a place where evangelism takes place, Taylor emphasized. "This means a total of 9,489 evangelistic sites, with 111,360 evangelists and 2,044,709 attendants," he said.

ADVENTIST EDUCATION'S EFFECTIVENESS

Taylor reminded Adventist leaders that some years ago, the CognitiveGenesis Study looked at factors that contributed to students' success in Adventist education. More than 800 schools participated, with 52,000 students in grades 3-9 and grade 11. "Results from the study indicated that students in Seventh-day Adventist schools surpassed the national average on standardized tests for all grade levels, and for all school sizes, regardless of ability levels," he shared.

He also referenced the so-called Adventist School Effect, which shows that "as the number of years in Adventist schools increased, the difference between those who attended Adventist schools and the national average . . . became more

pronounced in terms of achievement, as well as ability."

According to Taylor, another significant result is the difference in graduation rates. "Across the United States it averages 82 percent, but in Adventist schools it reaches 98.4 percent," he said.

BEYOND ACADEMICS: JOINING

Academics are not the only or best advantage, Taylor suggested. He quoted Jesus when He told His followers, "What do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?" (Mark 8:36, NLT).¹ Regarding education, he quoted Adventist Church cofounder Ellen G. White, who in her book, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, wrote that regarding Bible-based education, "the all-important thing should be the conversion of their students."²

With this backdrop Taylor discussed the role of Adventist education in relation to the Adventist Church. Beyond the more than 463,000 baptisms at Adventist educational institutions from 2009 to 2018, he shared that studies show a clear connection between attending an Adventist school and joining the church, and vice versa. "Children from Adventist families who do not attend an Adventist school are 13 times more likely never to join the church," he shared, quoting a study on the topic. "Adventist education is mission, and we must affirm and uplift the central role of Adventist education in the evangelistic mission of the church."

“Adventist education is the longest and largest evangelistic event in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.” John Wesley Taylor V

BEYOND ACADEMICS: REMAINING

Adventist education also plays a vital role in helping young people to stay connected to the Adventist Church, Taylor said, explaining that a study showed that in many demographic groups, about 50 percent leave the church by their mid-20s. On the other hand, he referred to seven studies that helped review various aspects of the relationship between Adventist education and church retention. “Together they present a picture that is consistent over time, and compelling,” Taylor said.

The Valuegenesis Study, for instance, lasted more than 20 years. That study examined 2,200 twelfth graders in Adventist schools. According to Taylor, the study showed that the more years in Adventist education, the greater the person’s reported loyalty to the Adventist Church. “They showed greater belief in the fundamental teachings of the church, and they were more likely to intend to remain Seventh-day Adventist at age 40,” he reported.

The study also examined factors related to the development of religious faith. The most significant factor was attending an Adventist school, Taylor said. “Eighty-one percent of all students said that ‘attending an Adventist school is the most important thing that has helped me develop my religious faith,’” he shared.

Another research project Taylor mentioned was the Youth Retention Study, which showed a posi-

tive relation between Adventist education and a personal commitment to Jesus Christ and a commitment to personal Bible study. It also affected the importance of religion in a young person’s life. “These are outcomes that are strengthened through Adventist education,” Taylor explained.

A MEASURABLE IMPACT

In the last part of his presentation, Taylor referenced several doctoral dissertations on the connection of Adventist education and church retention of young people. Even though they focused on different populations and were based on different geographical areas, every study quoted showed the significant impact of Adventist education on the likelihood that a young person stays active in the Adventist Church.


The opposite is also true, Taylor said. Quoting a specific research project, he emphasized, “Those who have not experienced Adventist education are disproportionately more likely to become inactive or leave [the Adventist Church].”

Results of these studies are also backed up by data from the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR) of the Adventist Church. In their “Leaving the Church” study, researchers found a clear difference in church retention between those who attended an Adventist educational institution and those who did not. The difference was even more marked for students who completed their primary school education in Adventist schools.

According to Taylor, these differences should not surprise us. “While there are important relationships between retention and Adventist education in each educational level, the strongest relationship is found in its earliest years,” he explained. “It is something that suggests that early Adventist education is a powerful factor in retention.”

A CLOSE CONNECTION

Are the accession and the retention of children and youth in the church associated with their participation in Adventist education? “Based on the evidence, the answer to that question is ‘Certainly,’” Taylor said. “There is a consistent and persuasive relationship between attending a Seventh-day Adventist school and the likelihood of that child or youth joining and then choosing to remain in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. And this is true for different times, for different places, and in different populations,” he emphasized.

“Adventist education makes a difference. Not only does it effectively prepare children and youth in the sciences, in language, history, and technology—it views each student as a candidate of heaven. Adventist education does make a difference. Adventist education educates for eternity,” he said. 

¹From the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

²Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1923), p. 436.



Stanley Arco, newly-elected president of the South American Division.

PHOTO: GUSTAVO LEIGHTON, SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

LEADERS ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT FOR THE SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION

STANLEY ARCO WILL REPLACE ERTON KÖHLER.

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Stanley Arco, an experienced leader in both Spanish and Portuguese-speaking regions of the South American Division (SAD) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, was elected as the new president of that 2.5-million-member, eight-nation division on April 21.

The Executive Committee of the General Conference (GC EXCOM) voted to accept the SAD executive committee (SAD EXCOM) recommendation of Arco for the top leadership position during a special virtual session. He will replace Erton Köhler, who was recently elected secretary of the Adventist Church after 14 years as SAD president, in the region that includes Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay.

After the SAD EXCOM recommendation on April 16, Köhler commented on the decision to send Arco's name for a confirmation vote.

"Pastor Stanley Arco is an experienced and balanced leader with a wide-ranging vision of the [Adventist] Church in South America," Köhler told *Adventist Review*. "He is a man of prayer, biblically sound, and well grounded in the guidance of the Spirit of Prophecy," he said, referencing the writings of Adventist Church cofounder Ellen G. White. "He is a leader open to dialogue,

respectful, conciliatory, and notably focused on mission."

During the April 16 session SAD EXCOM members also thanked Köhler for his years serving the Adventist Church in the region. It was an emotional moment for Köhler, who emphasized that he is confident about the future and Arco's leadership across the region.

"[Arco's] vision is that of a healthy church that grows not only in quantity but also in quality," Köhler said. "I believe the South American Division will be in good hands."

"This assignment is a joy, a privilege, and a huge responsibility," Arco told SAD EXCOM members after they recommended his name for the top leadership post. "I ask for the prayers of every member, of every person wishing for Jesus to come soon," Arco said.

Arco was born in southern Brazil and has extensive experience as a church leader across South America. In addition to being a church pastor in Brazil, he served as a youth ministries leader across several church regions for 17 years. Arco also worked as conference secretary and as assistant to the SAD president. In 2011 he was elected president of the Bolivia Union, and in 2015 he became president of the Chile Union Mission. In August 2020 he was elected vice president of SAD.

Arco is married to Regiane dos Reis Arco, and the couple has three daughters.

Before the vote, Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson reminded members that according to working policies, the new president would also become a vice president of the world church. "No matter what leadership position a person is in, he must ask God always to be part of this great mission of preaching the gospel," Wilson said.

During the April 22 session that elected Arco, several GC EXCOM

**"THIS
ASSIGNMENT IS A
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members spoke in support of the motion. "I believe Elder Arco is an excellent person to be considered for this position," said Gerson Santos, an associate secretary of the General Conference. Elbert Kuhn, another associate secretary of the General Conference, affirmed the motion. "It is a pleasure for me to support Pastor Stanley's name," Kuhn said. "He is a Bible-based and a mission-driven person. Praise the Lord for this recommendation!"



Adventist volunteers serve hot meals as part of the feeding program run by the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Mission in Kingstown, St. Vincent, on April 18, 2021.

PHOTO: PETER KERR

IN ST. VINCENT, ADVENTISTS FEED HUNDREDS AFTER VOLCANO ERUPTION

DISPLACED PEOPLE FIND COMFORT AMID HOPELESSNESS AND TRAUMA.

BY LIBNA STEVENS, INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Caribbean island of St. Vincent, along with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and church member volunteers, has provided food and clothing to hundreds who are staying in shelters across the island. More than 20,000 people have been displaced from their homes since the eruption of the La Soufrière Volcano began on April 9.

“No one has escaped the assault of the volcano, for the entire country has been blanketed with dust, ash, and rubble,” said Dermoth Baptiste, president of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Mission, headquartered in Kingstown, in the southernmost part of the island. “Scientists have reported that some areas have up to two feet high of ash in the most affected area,” Baptiste said. There are many damaged homes, and it may take

a long time to get back to them, he added.

Ash traveled as far as the neighboring islands of St. Lucia, Grenada, and Barbados.

Ten Adventist churches were directly affected, Baptiste reported. Hundreds of members and entire communities had to quickly evacuate the danger zones, many escaping with only the clothes on their backs.

Church member volunteers began preparing hot meals for lunch and supper as Adventist youth began delivering 600 meals to several shelters twice a day.

Prime minister of St. Vincent Ralph Gonsalves thanked the church for its leadership in assisting the community as church leaders and volunteers gathered for a press conference at the church’s headquarters in Kingstown.

“The Seventh-day Adventist Church is really showing that they are their brother’s keeper,” Gon-

salves said. “It is a good example for other churches to follow.”

CHURCHES AS SHELTER FACILITIES

Nine Adventist churches and one secondary school were used to shelter more than 300 persons, Baptiste said. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, only essential personnel were allowed to enter. Baptiste also said the church has provided clothing, especially because so many people ran out of their homes with only what they had on.

“We focused first on their basic needs, but we know that so many are going through a lot of trauma, distress, and anguish because they have no home to get back to,” he said. Since Baptiste was unable to visit shelters, he spent his time helping coordinate efforts and providing spiritual encouragement to pastors who are communicating with their congregations.

“We had just reopened churches for physical attendance on the first Saturday in April, and then days later, the volcano disrupted so many lives,” Baptiste said. He keeps reminding leaders and encouraging members on the phone to keep the faith and continue trusting in God. “We don’t know what is going to come out of this, but take your eyes off the environment you are in, the trying circumstances, and see God lifted up, for He is in control, even of the elements. By God’s grace we will rise from the ashes,” Baptiste said. 🦋

Kerry Kerr contributed to this report.



DAN WEBER/NAD

YOU CAN GO BACK TO THE MISSION FIELD, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION SAYS.

On April 15 the North American Division (NAD) administration voted to reinstate mission deployments through the NAD Office of Volunteers Ministries (OVM). This reinstatement includes long-term missionary volunteers (two months or longer) from North America who serve around the world. In October 2020 OVM was able to deploy volunteers only inside the U.S. and to virtual teaching assignments in the Guam-Micronesia Mission.



URBAN AND RURAL MISSION IN LAOS REACHES NEW MILESTONES.

Seventh-day Adventists in the Southeast Asian nation of Laos have recently reached several milestones in their mission initiatives. Inspired by the Mission to the Cities and the Urban Centers of Influence initiatives introduced by the world church's Adventist Mission department, local churches in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, developed new strategies and centers to share the Adventist lifestyle with people living there. More than 200 individuals expressed their openness in learning more about Jesus, and unprecedented baptisms took place among the Hmong tribe.



250,000 VACCINES TO PROTECT THE COMMUNITY. AdventHealth reached a significant milestone in its vaccine distribution efforts across nine states of the United States. As of April, AdventHealth administered more than 250,000 COVID-19 vaccines. The journey to this milestone began in December 2020, following the Emergency Use Authorization approval of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. In the months leading up to the first vaccine's availability, AdventHealth assembled a taskforce to plan a systemwide strategy for an efficient, safe, and equitable vaccine rollout.



IN PUERTO RICO HUNDREDS CAMP OUT AT HOME DURING NATIONAL VIRTUAL CAMPOREE.

Nothing but smiles appeared on hundreds of children's faces in Seventh-day Adventist homes across Puerto Rico as Adventurer Clubs around the island joined together for a recent online camporee. The island-wide camporee drew more than 550 children ages 4 to 9 for a weekend at home to study the Bible; take part in spiritual, physical, and missionary challenges; earn dozens of honors; and more.



UNION TREASURER IN VENEZUELA DIES OF COVID-19 COMPLICATIONS.

The East Venezuela Union church region is mourning the loss of Pablo Carreño, treasurer, who recently died from complications of the COVID-19 virus. He was 45 and passed away after being admitted to a clinic in Maracay on April 22. He was born in Venezuela and served the church more than 26 years. Carreño is survived by his wife, Nairim, and a son and daughter.



IN SOCHI, RUSSIA, CHURCH MEMBERS SHARE THE GOOD NEWS WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS.

Church leaders and members held a series of meetings in the southern Russian city of Sochi in April. Guest speakers for the meetings were Alexander and Tatiana Sakharov, youth ministries and children's ministries directors, respectively, in the Caucasus Union Mission. Led by the Sakharovs, teens and young adults had the opportunity to discuss relevant topics. At the end of the meetings, more than a dozen people requested Bible studies, and more than 50 answered a call to work on changing at least one aspect of their lives.



13,000 BIBLES AND 100,000 STEPS TO CHRIST. Adventist pastors and Hispanic Ministries coordinators gathered in April at the Columbia Union Conference (CUC) headquarters in Columbia, Maryland, to pray over and take home more than 13,600 Bibles and 100,000 copies of Ellen G. White's book *Steps to Christ* in English and Spanish. "We pray a special blessing on all these Bibles," Dave Weigley, CUC president, said at the special dedication event. "As [these books] go forth, may they be a wonderful light so many people might know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and prepare for the great soon coming of Christ."

BILL KNOTT

"Show me your leader, and you have bared your soul."

Historian Gary Wills' pithy summary of the symbiotic relationship between leaders and followers is as troubling as it is insightful.¹ Which of us would claim that those we follow are true reflections of our own character or goals? We may express admiration for a spiritual or political leader's vision or causes, but we rarely intend that endorsement to be total. We know that even those we call great, like the statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, have "feet partly of iron and partly of clay" (Dan. 2:33). We follow eagerly when their words energize us for evangelism or compassion, but sigh in disillusionment when they use their positions for personal or political gain, or to punish those who disagree with them.

So we may support a leader—follow a leader—in her campaign for equitable pay for women, but go quiet when she advocates just as eloquently for causes we find unwelcome or unbiblical. We line up behind the pastor when he leads the church board in "cleaning up the church books," but stop following—even resist—when that process would drop our wayward sons or daughters from fellowship. Our causes and commitments are rarely identical with those we call our leaders. Leadership, we learn, is a shifting, even fluid, contract we make with the women and men whose words and lives can summon us to more than the status quo.

CAN WE TRUST OUR LEADERS?

Whom is it safe to follow?

THE CONDITIONS OF TRUST

At the heart of the conundrum of contemporary leadership in both the culture and the church is the biblical value we call "trust." From childhood we memorized the Scriptural admonition to "trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding" (Prov. 3:5). But the same Bible that urges us to place our complete confidence in the wisdom of a sovereign God also advises, "Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help" (Ps. 146:3).

The same difficult obedience—the trust—that moved the priests bearing the ark of the covenant to step into the unparted Jordan, or caused exhausted Peter to cast his nets in the deep after a night of empty nets is deemed a spiritual liability (yes, a sin) if it causes believers to follow a wayward leader into idolatry, vengeance, or immorality. While we celebrate the trust that caused the apostle Paul to risk life and limb for the progress of the gospel (see 2 Cor. 11:24-28), we deplore the trust that caused believers to embrace the legalistic teachers who followed Paul from church to church to pull new converts back into observance of "the law of commandments contained in ordinances" (Eph. 2:15), from which the gospel had liberated them.

Trust is not invariably a good thing. Only the goal to which both leader and those led commit themselves can be wholly good: preaching and teaching the gospel; feeding the hungry; visiting those justly or unjustly imprisoned; caring for those marginalized by race or caste or poverty. For Christians, these are causes and commitments inextricably connected with the life and ministry of Jesus, in whom we say we place our trust unreservedly. Only those human spiritual leaders should be trusted who can demonstrate that they fully understand—in word, in deed, in how they lead—the requirement of their personal obedience to the teachings and the ethics of the gospel. Like Jesus, their lives must increasingly be “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

If spiritual leaders shouldn't be trusted unless animated by the loves and life of Jesus, and if following them is advisable only when the causes they advocate are consistent with the gospel, then it seems clear we need continuing guidance on how to be good followers—wise, discerning men and women who understand the covenant we are making when we line up behind any leader. Gary Wills pointedly laments, “We have thousands of books on leadership, none on followership. I have heard college presidents tell their students that schools are meant to train leaders. I have never heard anyone profess to train followers.”²

Except one. Much as I admire Wills' insights, he misses the most famous example of someone who spent His entire professional career training followers. Jesus says almost nothing positive about the leaders of His day—in the culture or the church—but He spoke extensively about new attitudes that would teach men and women to trust Him *and* those leaders who inhabited His values. “And He said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves” (Luke 22:25, 26).

LEARNING HOW TO FOLLOW

Jesus' repeated invitations to those who literally left hearth and home to be with Him day in and out underscore the enduring task of learning how to become good followers: “Follow Me, and I will *make you* fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19). Paul also

reminds us that we “*learn Christ*” (see Eph. 4:20), and reminds his readers of the durative process of being shaped as a Christian: “My little children, for whom I labor in birth again *until Christ is formed in you . . .*” (Gal. 4:19). There must also be a godly process by which Christians learn how to be good followers—of Christ, and of those who illustrate by their lives and leadership that they are inhabiting Jesus' teaching about servant leadership.

How does the individual believer suppress the claims of ego enough to place trust in those the Spirit has gifted and the praying church has called to leadership? There are few incentives in either the world or the church to do this difficult task. But without this voluntary covenant—this commitment of trust—between a godly leader and those led, the church is forever atomizing, disintegrating centripetally, and spinning off adherents who say, “‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ’” (1 Cor. 1:12). For lack of trust, Jesus and His bride—His church—are “put asunder” (Mark 10:9, KJV).

He who taught us how to follow Him teaches us in His Word how to enact a sacred covenant between us and those who lead in His name. “Fulfill my joy,” Paul writes, “by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. . .” (Phil. 2:2-5).

The cynic scoffs, “We get the leaders we deserve.” Believers counter, “We follow leaders who show unusual ability to encourage us to practice the behaviors, the attitudes, and the mission of Jesus.” If leaders display—both onstage and behind the curtain—that they are growing in the graces of the Spirit—“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22, 23)—we may safely trust that they will lead us to “grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15, KJV).

¹ Gary Wills, *Certain Trumpets: The Call of Leaders* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), p. 20. Wills' remarkable study of 16 leadership types, with numerous examples, is a fascinating one-volume introduction to how leadership functions in human society.

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Bill Knott is the executive editor of *Adventist Review* and a historian.

BREACH REPAIRERS

AS YAHWEH WOULD HAVE IT



People who fill gaps for God

TREVOR KINLOCK

For many of us the past year of global pandemic, economic crisis, social unrest and political turbulence has left us with the dismal feeling that we're living through the longest year ever! The sheer weight of being under such a prolonged period of stress and crisis constitutes an allostastic load—a wear and tear that millions of bodies nationwide cannot bear much longer.¹ This strain is worsened by the unending nightmare of gun violence, mass killings, and law-and-order shootings that constantly shock and shake the nation. Many are asking, *What is happening in the United States?*

WHAT THE SOCIOLOGISTS SAY

A sociological view informs us that the pandemic has merely accelerated massive global shifts in unemployment, production and distribution, global

trade, capital flows, migration, and demographic change that have been occurring for some time. Forty years of widening income inequality have concentrated wealth in the hands of the few while facilitating economic insecurity over a broader swath of the population (a trend continuing in the pandemic).² Such economic extremism inevitably leads to social and political extremism.

These zero-sum arrangements have led to a messy and turbulent conversation in our nation about *who matters*. From the summer racial reckoning of 2020 to the Capitol insurrection, January 2021, American society is seemingly at war with itself over the existential questions of whose life matters, whose voice deserves to be heard, whose experience needs validation, who deserves relief and redress, and to whom belong the rights, privileges, and opportunities of the national wealth. The question being asked, in sum, is what needs to be preserved, post-pandemic, and what needs to be dismantled?

French sociologist Émile Durkheim noted similar disruptive social conflicts in nineteenth-century Europe and America as Western societies transitioned from agricultural economies to the market industrial economy.³ The Industrial Revolution precipitated a massive reorganization of social life spawning urban migration, urbanization, poverty, crime, and dislocation.⁴ Durkheim theorized that the solidarity found in the shared traditions, beliefs, and experiences of the agricultural society were what bound people together.⁵ The Industrial Revolution generated a breakdown in these



Breach repair requires being present, visible, engaged, and vocal. We cannot fix the gaps by excluding ourselves from them.

collective bonds and shared values, leading to social conflict and disintegration. *The community was coming apart.* Today we find ourselves in a similar massive global economic reorganization that is testing the durability of our communal bonds.

HOW GOD SEES THE CRISIS

In these restless times the sociological view is useful, but insufficient. We must turn to a higher source to conceptualize both the root of our social ills and the proper remedy. Consider prophet Isaiah's searing indictment of the kingdom of Judah: "None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity" (Isa. 59:4, KJV). For God, the problem with this pre-exilic Judean society was the absence of justice. By ordinance of Yahweh Himself, justice (*tsedeq*) was the ethical foundation of the Hebrew economy (Lev. 19:36; Deut. 16:20; Prov. 16:11; 20:10; Micah 6:8, 11; Amos 5:24). *Tsedeq* was "rightdoing toward the other" in law, economy, and social policy.⁶ Justice and equity were to underlie the economic, social, moral, and political arrangements of life. However, in Isaiah's times, with these principles entirely abandoned in society, the prophet calls the people to account, "Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter" (Isa. 59:14, KJV). Judah was experiencing a breakdown in justice: economically, politically, and socially. And this breakdown in Yahweh's governing principle of justice led to a breakdown in community.

Twenty-seven hundred years later the truth of Isaiah's polemic speaks directly to our current ills. While corporations amass trillions in wealth, tens of thousands of working families earn less than a living wage and are unable to meet their basic needs. Because of the debts they incurred to qualify themselves as workers, millions of educated

Millennials cannot now gain access to home ownership and the vehicles of wealth creation. Also, racial discrimination locks communities out of access and opportunity at every level of social life.⁷ The pernicious intersection of race and class ensures that the zip code and skin in which one is born exercise controlling influence over many life opportunities.⁸ Ages of gender inequality and sexual predation have sparked the Me Too movement. And systemic racism within institutions ostensibly designed to protect all society continues to mete out deadly punishment on some but not other bodies and communities across the nation.⁹

As I write this article, one more unarmed Black man, Daunte Wright, has lost his life. There is a breakdown in economic justice, social justice, and criminal justice. Judgment is turned away backward, and justice stands afar off! And as in Isaiah's day, this *breakdown in justice* has led to a precipitous *breakdown in community*. By abandoning Yahweh's justice, we fail to see our common shared humanity. Who believes we can continue like this?

TRUST AT SUCH A TIME

In such a polarized and dark environment, what and whom can you trust? Where the trusted bonds of community are giving way to social disintegration, what is the role of the church? What is the purpose and work of the community of faith in these distressing times? Thankfully, the same sacred scriptures that point out our social maladies identify our source of hope! Under divine inspiration Isaiah provides the social corrective, identifying the role and work of the community of faith. Though Judah was immersed in its sin, the faithful seer prophesies the work of a righteous remnant: "And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in" (Isa. 58:12, KJV). Isaiah declares that God's righteousness will take up the hard work of repairing the physical, social, and ethical breaches wrought by humans' inhumanity to humans. They would raise up the foundations and restore God's justice in the land. They would rebuild what was torn down and reestablish God's purposes in their realm. They would be *breach repairers!*

This is the exciting and just work of God's church today! We are breach repairers! God's people have

the sacred calling of restoring God's hope and goodness to a world sorely in need of light. The church is not to remain ensconced within our physical and religious walls, concerned only with ceremony and religious performance (verses 3-5). We must not become symbols of insular piety and detached sanctimony. The work of the people of God is active. Isaiah tells us that we must loose the bands of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, free the oppressed, and break every yoke. We must feed the hungry, bring home the poor, and cover the naked and vulnerable (verses 6, 7).

Moreover, breach repair requires being present, visible, engaged, and vocal. We cannot fix the gaps by excluding ourselves from them—by living separately; by hiding in our sacred towers away from the community's pain. We must be actively present in the neighborhood and community; we must walk the streets; we must meet the people; we must identify with the struggling, with the poor and marginalized; we must work toward their relief. We must be visible. We must be seen as the vanguard of relief, advocacy, and compassion! This is the great example given by the One who took a servant's form, became like us, one with us, then, drawing even closer and being still more visible, became obedient to death on a criminal's cross (see Phil. 2:5-8).

This is how we bring God's light and hope to those around us who have lost hope. It highlights our third consideration: being engaged. We must lean forward on the issues of our time, committing to the hard work of rebuilding the foundations of righteousness in the world. The message of the three angels demands that we not retreat in resignation, leaving the world to its ultimate apocalyptic fate. Instead, we must launch into the world as righteous messengers and proclaimers of repair.

And finally, we must be vocal. We are the Isaiahs of our time—God's mouthpieces calling for justice in unjust and politically inconvenient times; not silent in this consequential hour, but boldly speaking God's truth to power and speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves (see Prov. 31:8).

EXEMPLIFYING SERVICE; INSPIRING TRUST

In my current role I am blessed to shepherd a faith community that has taken up the prophetic charge of Isaiah 58:6-12, the engaged mindset of Philippians 2:5-8, and the vocal action of Revelation 14:6-12. Amid the pandemic we have provided

groceries to more than 20,000 families each week on behalf of food security in our community; we have marched in protest against unjust killing, raised funds to support and care for suffering migrant children, and sent supplies to St. Vincent to aid in volcano relief efforts. Our church building has served as a COVID-19 vaccination site providing critical access to residents in our predominantly Black and Brown community. The pandemic has clarified our role—we are breach repairers.

Our sacred calling is to be restorers of Yahweh's justice. The Scriptures declare that "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another" (1 John 1:7, KJV). The word here for "fellowship" is *koinonia*, which also translates as *community*. Walking in Christ's light fosters community.

More than 50 years ago Martin Luther King termed it the "Beloved Community"—a society of reconciliation and redemption where the demands of justice were fully represented;¹⁰ a place and people touched by God's life-transforming love. *This is who we are called to be, breach repairers working with God for ultimate restoration of Eden's original peace; breach repairers who get it: no justice, no peace; know justice—true justice, know peace—eternal peace.* ♣

¹ Alvin Powell, "Pandemic Pushes Mental Health to the Breaking Point," *The Harvard Gazette*, Jan. 27, 2021.

² Robert Frank, "Why Is Income Inequality Growing?" in David Grusky, *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective*, 4th ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2014); "Billionaires Became Five Trillion Dollars Richer in the Pandemic," *Business Insider*, <https://www.businessinsider.com/billionaires-became-5-trillion-richer-during-pandemic-forbes-list-2021-4>, accessed Apr. 22, 2021.

³ Irving Zeitlin, *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory*, 7th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2001).

⁴ Mark Gottdiener, Ray Hutchinson, and Michael T. Ryan, *The New Urban Sociology*, 5th ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2015).

⁵ Peter Kivisto, *Social Theory Roots and Branches*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁶ R. Laird Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980).

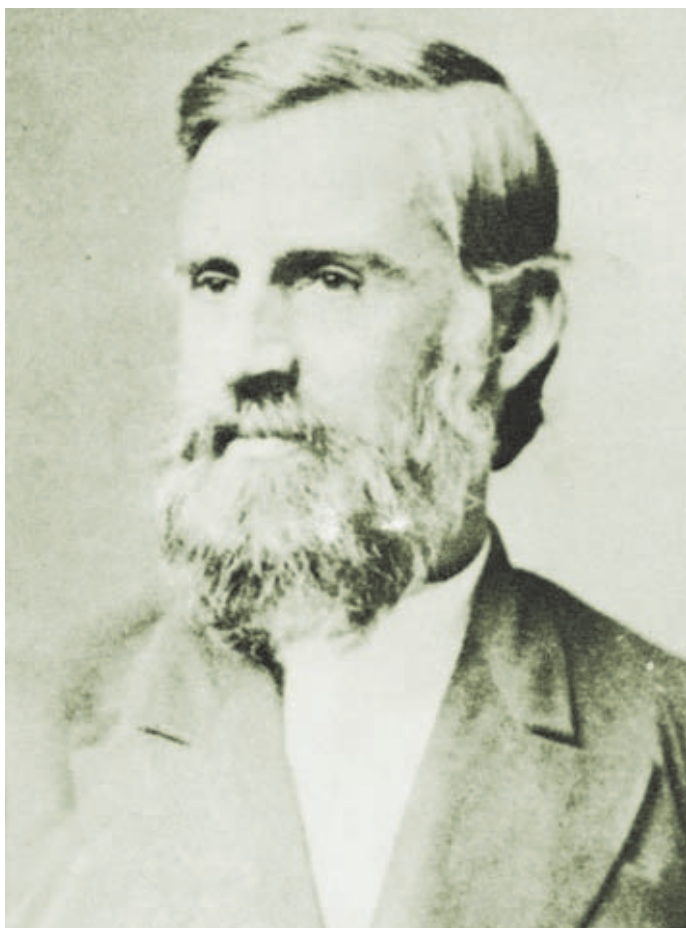
⁷ William J. Wilson, "Being Poor, Black, and American," in Grusky, *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective*, 4th ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2014).

⁸ Douglas Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

⁹ Samuel Walker, Cassia Spohn, and Miriam Delone, *The Color of Justice: Race, Ethnicity, and Crime in America*, 5th ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 2012).

¹⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981).

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CENTER FOR ADVENTIST RESEARCH

EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP?

*Trust an honest leader
and a transparent
process.*

DENIS FORTIN

In 1888, George Butler had been president of the General Conference for a total of 11 years, eight in his current term, and three previous years from 1871-1874. During his tenure the membership of the church had nearly doubled, and many new conferences had been organized all over the world. The church organization he had been overseeing had been set up 25 years earlier for a relatively

small church with few institutions. At that time a few leaders, but mainly James White, could oversee the entire operations.

EXHAUSTED LEADER

But by the fall of 1888 George Butler had been suffering from a recurrent burnout for about four years. And as the episodes of depression and nervous exhaustion intensified, he often felt that death would be a relief. The church had entrusted him with the highest leadership position, but this responsibility had become too much for him or for any one person. The responsibilities had consumed him.

Of course, what made his work difficult and exhausting by then were not only the numerous committees he needed to chair, or the unmanageable number of annual camp meetings and conference administrative sessions he needed to oversee. He also felt conflicted over heterodox theological developments some pastors on the West Coast were advocating, developments that seemed to be endorsed by some of his closest friends, even by Ellen White. His level of exasperation was very high.

CANDID LEADER

In this state of mind Butler, suffering from total exhaustion, wrote a long letter to Ellen White in which, among other things, he announced his resignation from his leadership roles. All of them. It was either that, he thought, or certainly die within a few months.

As he explained his decision to Ellen White, he reflected on his leadership character. His words are soulful. He told her that he would “retire with no morose or

bitter feelings.” Yes, he thought “things look dark in the cause,” and he even imagined “the shaking time for which we have been looking” to be happening. But, not abandoning his confidence in God, he would not “murmur nor complain,” or leave his functions “in despair or crying for sympathy.” He would seek to be brave and not give in to fear.

Then he wrote, “I have tried to do my best. I have committed no crimes, or disgraced my name or reputation, or taken a politic or underhanded policy, but have tried to leave a record I would not be ashamed to meet. My work seems wholly unworthy of the blessed master. I cannot tell you how much I wish it were better, but I have tried to be faithful to God and the cause.”¹

This was a typical letter for Butler, the kind of honest and sincere personal reflection he wrote to Ellen White as his mentor and spiritual confidant. He valued her opinion and input, even if at times he did not understand her intentions or counsels.

LEADER OF INTEGRITY

What stands out in these words is Butler’s understanding of personal integrity. In his responsibilities as a church leader he had committed himself to being the kind of person people could trust. Butler was a respected church leader, even when people disagreed with him.

Trusting church leaders, whether they be lay or church employed, requires people to perceive them as reliable persons of integrity and uprightness. This, we could say, is about the morality of leadership.

A number of Scripture passages speak of the integrity and good reputation of the leaders of God’s people. Solomon said, “A good name is better than fine perfume” (Eccl. 7:1, NIV). Paul also remarked to the Corinthians, regarding the generous offering he and his colleagues were taking to Jerusalem, and wishing to avoid any criticism, “For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man” (2 Cor. 8:21, NIV).

Integrity. Doing what is right. Uprightness. These are the qualities of people we can trust.

Writing to a brother who seemed to have been caught between the world and his desire to serve God, Ellen White noted, in 1878,

“A man may not have a pleasant exterior, he may be deficient in many respects, but if he has a reputation for straightforward honesty, he will be respected. Stern integrity covers many objec-

Part of that experience that always followed him was his integrity, uprightness, and unswerving love of the church.

tionable traits of character. A man who steadfastly adheres to truth will win the confidence of all. Not only will his brethren in the faith trust him, but unbelievers will be constrained to acknowledge him as a man of honor.”²

Along with a leader’s personal integrity, trust is also encouraged when the church’s organizational structures are themselves transparent. Upright and trustworthy leaders will make sure all church decision-making processes are clear and understandable for the benefit of all church members.

Few things can undermine confidence in church leaders and in church institutions as much as the withholding of information or the diversion of church funds for private gain.

In spite of all his faults, his proneness to over-extend his authority, and his guarded attitude toward doctrinal diversity, George Butler was a trusted church leader whose experience was valued and sought after. People knew he was a devoted follower of Christ. After many years of rest on his Florida farm, and taking care of a sick spouse until her death, Butler, at the age of 67, was elected president of the Florida Conference. Making no bones about it, Florida church members congratulated themselves “that they are so favored as to have one whose long experience so fully qualifies him to act as their leader.” Part of that experience that always followed him was his integrity, uprightness, and unswerving love of the church.³

Church members will trust upright and reliable church leaders who themselves value integrity, honesty, and fairness, and who will in turn fulfill their responsibilities with transparency and collegiality. These are the people you can trust. ▀

¹ George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, Oct. 1, 1888. See also George I. Butler, “Personal,” *Review and Herald*, Nov. 13, 1888.

² Letter 3, 1878. Ellen White later adapted this letter into an article in *Signs of the Times*, Feb. 19, 1902.

³ R. M. Kilgore, “Florida Camp-Meeting,” *Review and Herald*, Dec. 17, 1901.

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WHOM ARE YOU GOING TO TRUST?

JOAN FRANCIS

With so much disinformation about the COVID-19 virus, whom do you trust? Your neighbor? Your family doctor? Your gut? The scientists? How do you ascertain what is factual and what is fiction?

In our everyday activities we must rely on many things. We trust that when we use Zelle to transfer money, it will go to the correct person. We trust that the jet or other aircraft will lift off and land safely. We trust that if we put a letter in the mail, it will arrive. We trust that the items we ordered online will be delivered. We trust that the food we ordered to be delivered will be handled healthfully and delivered appropriately.

In interpersonal relations one assumes that they will be treated as a human being without regard for race, gender, or nationality. So much in life is depen-



dent on trusting that individuals will accomplish their task well, treating each other with dignity.

We expect administrators to act with integrity, to do the right thing, knowing that “nobody’s going to know whether you did it or not”—a sentiment Oprah Winfrey says that she lives by.¹ This is also expected in the business world, where business leaders assert that honesty and integrity are the foundations of leadership. How much more in the Christian world!

As Christians, we have biblical examples of trustworthy individuals like Joseph. In spite of the expected horrible consequences, he stood up to Potiphar’s wife. Joseph showed that because of his value system, he could be trusted.

In our beginning Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders showed that they could be trusted to stand up for justice and integrity. According to Kevin M. Burton, “Seventh-day Adventists also risked their lives to liberate slaves from bondage. While some did this legally by purchasing slaves’ freedom, many broke federal law by assisting fugitives on the Underground Railroad. They upheld God’s fugitive slave law in Deuteronomy 23:15, 16: ‘Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates.’”² It is also well known that Joseph Bates and his wife, Prudence, were leading abolitionists in Fairhaven, Massachusetts. They were trustworthy people.

What happened as the church developed? Could it be trusted to do the right thing consistently with regard to poverty and suffering? From our history it is evident that the organization has been involved in relieving suffering through its health and medical work. This is seen in the number of sanitariums, later hospitals, that have become an integral part of the church’s system. There is also the development of the service aspects of the local Adventist congregation, particularly the Dorcas Society, which eventually led to today’s Adventist Community Services.³ In the current pandemic, with its lost jobs and hunger, many Adventist Community Services centers have stepped up and delivered food.⁴ Local Adventist churches have too, and have drawn attention: the Berean church in New Jersey was featured on MSNBC. Whereas, previous to the pandemic, their food pantry served 100-200 families twice a month on Sundays, the community’s needs increased. Many people were furloughed from their

jobs or lost them completely. The community service team went from twice a month to every Sunday, serving twice as many families as before.⁵

We expect the church to carry out its mission. We trust it to do this and be a help to all, members and nonmembers alike. But the question remains: Does each individual church member understand and commit to what this means? Can I, your sister, can you, my brother, be trusted? Are there times I personally fail of God’s ideal for His children,⁶ or the church’s organization defaults on its task to stand up for justice, to support the afflicted, to relieve the oppressed, and to protect the vulnerable? What does this lead to?

And what about my witness regarding what Jesus says matters most (Matt. 25:31-46)? Does it inspire belief that His church is worth their trust? What of my attention to pressing issues in my community, or my inattention to unethical practices, avoiding or denying them entirely? Do I realize that the question “Who can be trusted?” is constantly being answered by me?

A life of integrity has never been more desperately needed than in the present time of turmoil, national and global health crises, racial and other social injustice, and political masquerades. And what is true of the single individual is no less true of the church of God. No wonder God’s message of this moment so directly highlights His own people of the moment, those whose individual and collective testimony is seen, known, and celebrated for keeping “the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12). 🍌

¹ <https://marketingworks360.com/2019/02/marketing-works-news/real-integrity-is-doing-the-right-thing-knowing-that-nobodys-going-to-know-whether-you-did-it-or-not-oprah-winfrey/#:~:text=Real%20integrity%20is%20doing%20the%20right%20thing%2C%20knowing,as%20to%20expand%20their%20brand%20and%20increase%20sales.>

² Kevin M. Burton, “The Seventh-day Adventist Pioneers and Their Protest Against Systemic Racism” (Ministerial Association, North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists), <https://www.nadministerial.com/stories/2020/6/18/the-seventh-day-adventist-pioneers-and-their-protest-against-systemic-racism>, accessed Apr. 22, 2021.

³ Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Lightbearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1979), pp. 146-159.

⁴ Mylon Medley, “A Year of Local Responses to Needs Created and Deepened by the COVID-19 Pandemic,” NAD News, Mar. 2, 2021.

⁵ To view their story on MSNBC, visit tinyurl.com/ycd33vke.

⁶ See Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903), p. 18.

Joan A. Francis, a professional historian and academic coach, taught for more than four decades at Northern Caribbean University, Atlantic Union College, and Washington Adventist University.



THE JOURNEY AROUND EDMOM

Another story of Israel's disobedience and mistrust

ELLEN G. WHITE

The encampment of Israel at Kadesh was but a short distance from the borders of Edom, and both Moses and the people greatly desired to follow the route through this country to the Promised Land; accordingly they sent a message, as

God had directed them, to the Edomite king—

“Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us: how our fathers went down into Egypt . . . ; and the Egyptians vexed us, and our fathers: and when we cried unto the Lord, He heard our voice, and sent an Angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt: and, behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border. Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king’s highway, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders.”

To this courteous request a threatening refusal was returned: “Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword.”

Surprised at this repulse, the leaders of Israel sent a second appeal to the king, with the promise, “We will go by the highway: and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it: I will only, without doing anything else, go through on my feet.”

“Thou shalt not go through” was the answer. Armed bands of Edomites were already posted at the difficult passes, so that any peaceful advance in that direction was impossible, and the Hebrews were forbidden to resort to force. They must make the long journey around the land of Edom.

CONSEQUENCES OF FAILING TO TRUST

Had the people, when brought into trial, trusted in God, the Captain of the Lord’s host would

have led them through Edom, and the fear of them would have rested upon the inhabitants of the land, so that, instead of manifesting hostility, they would have shown them favor. But the Israelites did not act promptly upon God's word, and while they were complaining and murmuring, the golden opportunity passed. When they were at last ready to present their request to the king, it was refused. Ever since they left Egypt, Satan had been steadily at work to throw hindrances and temptations in their way, that they might not inherit Canaan. And by their own unbelief they had repeatedly opened the door for him to resist the purpose of God.

It is important to believe God's word and act upon it promptly, while His angels are waiting to work for us. Evil angels are ready to contest every step of advance. And when God's providence bids His children go forward, when He is ready to do great things for them, Satan tempts them to displease the Lord by hesitation and delay; he seeks to kindle a spirit of strife or to arouse murmuring or unbelief, and thus deprive them of the blessings that God desired to bestow. . . . Any delay on their part gives time for Satan to work to defeat them.

EXPLICIT INSTRUCTIONS

In the directions first given to Moses concerning their passage through Edom, after declaring that the Edomites should be afraid of Israel, the Lord had forbidden His people to make use of this advantage against them. Because the power of God was engaged for Israel, and the fears of the Edomites would make them an easy prey, the Hebrews were not therefore to prey upon them. The command given them was, "Take ye good heed unto yourselves therefore: meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession." Deuteronomy 2:4, 5. . . . The Hebrews were to dispossess and utterly destroy the inhabitants of Canaan, who had filled up the measure of their iniquity, but the Edomites were still probationers, and as such were to be mercifully dealt with. God delights in mercy, and He manifests His compassion before He inflicts His judgments. He teaches Israel to spare the people of Edom, before requiring them to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan.

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

The ancestors of Edom and Israel were brothers, and brotherly kindness and courtesy should exist

God delights in mercy, and He manifests His compassion before He inflicts His judgments.

between them. The Israelites were forbidden, either then or at any future time, to revenge the affront given them in the refusal of passage through the land. They must not expect to possess any part of the land of Edom. While the Israelites were the chosen and favored people of God, they must heed the restrictions which He placed upon them. God had promised them a goodly inheritance; but they were not to feel that they alone had any rights in the earth, and seek to crowd out all others. . . . As an encouragement to Israel to trust in God and obey His word they were reminded, "The Lord thy God hath blessed thee; . . . thou hast lacked nothing." Deuteronomy 2:7. They were not dependent upon the Edomites, for they had a God rich in resources. They must not by force or fraud seek to obtain anything pertaining to them; but in all their intercourse they should exemplify the principle of the divine law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."




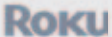
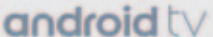

Had they in this manner passed through Edom, as God had purposed, the passage would have proved a blessing, not only to themselves, but to the inhabitants of the land; for it would have given them an opportunity to become acquainted with God's people and His worship and to witness how the God of Jacob prospered those who loved and feared Him. But all this the unbelief of Israel had prevented. God had given the people water in answer to their clamors, but He permitted their unbelief to work out its punishment. Again they must traverse the desert and quench their thirst from the miraculous spring, which, had they but trusted in Him, they would no longer have needed. ♣

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This excerpt was taken from the book *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), pp. 422-424.

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BOYS WILL BE MEN

Guys, here's the short version. You're under attack. Your very soul is in danger.

Now I'll share the longer version.

I'm the father of three daughters, ages 17, 21, and 23. My girls are beautiful because their mom is beautiful. It may seem easy to be a beautiful girl, but that isn't always the case.

I've seen my daughters spend all day Sunday getting ready for a banquet, hoping they look pretty (even as they always do), and then fly off into the sunset. Sometimes they've come home glowing; other times, wilting. Once my daughter's date didn't even tell her she looked nice; instead, he propositioned her in a disgusting way in front of his friends. "Why would you even say that to me?" she had the courage to respond. She came home in tears that night—and again the next day.

There's a current pop song called "Boys Will Be Boys," describing a girl's fear of things like walking alone or hearing comments about their bodies. All because "boys will be boys." Some of the song's last words are "No, the kids ain't alright."

And that's the problem. The kids ain't alright.

Look, girls aren't perfect and never were. They have plenty to work on too. But the simple truth is that the proliferation of pornography through computers and phones is particularly destroying the souls of our boys. Their eyes have gone dark; the culture of objectification is eating them alive.

"Dad," one of my daughters told me,

"the boys are skipping steps. They don't even want to hold hands."

Guys, let me share a story that may be helpful to you.

A few weeks ago, on a family vacation, we were driving in south Florida where some famous people live. One of our daughters said she wanted to drive by the house of a young Christian guy named Tyler whom she had seen on TV. Well, I could think of better things to do, but OK.

On the way, our daughter showed us a YouTube video of Tyler skimboarding in the rain in his backyard. Yes, Tyler looked very handsome and fit with his "six-pack abs" (I personally prefer the two-liter look, but OK).

"Sweetheart," I asked, "when a girl like you sees a cute guy like Tyler, what are you thinking? Are you thinking, *I want to give him a kiss* or *I want to touch his six-pack stomach*?"

"No, Dad!" she laughed. "I'm just thinking he seems intriguing, and I'd like to spend time with him and get to know him."

Did you hear that, guys? They just want to get to know you. You are not just an object—and neither are they. You are, in fact, sons and daughters of the most high God.

"Boys will be boys" isn't good enough. Boys will be men when they look to the same Man that girls should be looking to: the Son of man, Jesus Christ.

He will help you begin again. 🦋

Andy Nash is lead pastor at Littleton Adventist Church in the Rocky Mountain Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (andynash5@gmail.com).

THE LIFE
OF FAITH
ANDY
NASH



**YOU ARE NOT JUST
AN OBJECT—AND
NEITHER ARE THEY.**



COVID-19 AND THE “WORSHIP CROWD”?

BRAD THORP

The Viper¹ Pub and Lounge is thriving! Loud driving tempo, dancing patrons, with lots of alcohol flowing all around. A few masks and general social distancing. People having fun!

ANOTHER VIEW

Occupying a different category are local churches and temples (where people also gather, worship, often eat together, and have great social interaction), many of which are shut down, depending on their locale. Church members are willing to use masks and social distance. One set of locations—pubs and lounges—is legal, government approved, and endorsed! But churches are locked down and prohibited except for the most essential people to baptize an infant or bury the dead!

Why? Where is the logic and consistency in this contradiction? Why is one location healthy and

safe, and the other seen by government to be a threat to public health? True, government classifies pubs and bars as “restaurants and places where people get food.” What then of churches and the significant eating and socializing that happens there? Would a place of worship be allowed to open if they gave out a sandwich at the door?

Concern has been expressed by some that these mandates are an inappropriate government intrusion on religious liberty. Some religious organizations have made the news by defying the order to close, believing these orders a violation of the right of religious freedom.

Some speculate the shutdown of churches is a conspiracy; a bold move to undo a fundamental, historic freedom enshrined in the legal codes of many countries. I don’t believe this is true.

Rather, it’s important to identify the genuine



characteristics of religious freedom and differentiate them from fear-based speculation. At the same time, public health and government leaders need to be as equitable and consistent as possible in the application of isolation and quarantine regulations. Implementations of necessary restrictions should be done, as far as possible, in a manner that doesn't arouse fear of infringement on fundamental human rights and cultural values.

SEVEN CONSIDERATIONS

At least seven major factors must be considered when evaluating if these health restrictions intrude on religious liberty.

First: "If." Should a person worship a god? Atheists claim there is no god. People of faith believe there is a God. I don't see any direction being given in the current government health restrictions I'm aware of endorsing *if* there is a God.

Second: "Who?" Hindus believe there are more than 30 million gods. Followers of the great Abrahamic faiths: Jews, Muslims, Christians, believe there is one God. I see no direction being given by government on *whom* to worship.

Third: "Why?" The reason individuals worship

varies with their religion or philosophy. What I've seen from government gives no indication that it supports *why* an individual should worship.

Fourth: "How." Worship practices vary tremendously. Prayer, preaching, music, icons, images, philanthropy, pilgrimages, ancient writings regarded as sacred . . . the list is long. Again, I see no direction being given by government in current regulations on *how* to worship.

Fifth: "What." Religious beliefs have a wide range. Some beliefs held by individuals or faith groups are the opposite of those held by other individuals or groups. Government has no right to determine what individuals believe. In the current COVID-19 restrictions, there's no attempt to define or determine *what beliefs* a person should hold.

Sixth: "When." Muslims worship on Friday; Jews and some Christians on Saturday; most Christians on Sunday. "Holy days" fill the calendars of some religious organizations. In some jurisdictions gathering at places of worship has been suspended. However, governments have given no mandate on *when* to worship. Individuals are free to worship when they believe they should.

Seventh: "Where." Religious freedom includes the right to assemble and meet peacefully to worship.

Almost every religion teaches the ethic that is known in Christianity as the "golden rule": "Treat others as you'd like to be treated." Religious individuals and organizations who ignore health restrictions might possibly reflect on whether their actions genuinely fulfill this ethic of respect for equal treatment and the well-being of others. I suggest that the golden rule encompasses respect for community health needs, too.

From a biblical perspective, there are two key additional concepts. First, civil government that does not intrude on an individual's moral obligation to obey God is an institution ordained of God. Within a biblical context, civil government has responsibility to maintain law, order, and public safety (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17; Acts 5:29). Second, the Bible differentiates between moral law, such as the Ten Commandments, and health laws. In the Bible, in Leviticus 13, we find a strong mandate for isolation and quarantine for certain communicable diseases. Individuals possibly infected by serious skin diseases or leprosy were to be isolated and quarantined. There is clear biblical precedent for public health quarantine restrictions.

While other biblical teachings clearly define the principles of religious liberty, the issue today with COVID-19 restrictions, as I see it, isn't primarily religious liberty. It's public health and safety.

A CALL FOR CONSISTENCY

Religious liberty is enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.² Many countries have this liberty protected in their constitutions. Tragically, in some countries this freedom doesn't exist or is severely restricted. We all need to be vigilant to protect and advance religious liberty. Bible prophecy warns that this

We need to differentiate clearly between a genuine threat to religious freedom and fear-based speculation or conspiracy theories.



liberty will someday be taken away. Health laws, ostensibly not violating principles of freedom, can be misused. However, we need to differentiate clearly between a genuine threat to religious freedom and fear-based speculation or conspiracy theories. Generally, I don't believe current COVID-19 public health restrictions threaten our religious freedom. Our situation today is Leviticus 13, not Revelation 13. However, with all due respect, I believe current restrictions in many jurisdictions pose an unnecessary and unequal burden and are creating confusion in many minds.

The perceived problem is that government is being discriminatory. Is there consistency and equality in allowing pubs and bars to meet, while prohibiting or severely limiting the size of gatherings in houses of worship? I don't think so. I am not aware of any consistent health rationale for such possible discrimination. Food and support in these unusual times comes from much more than a "bar-restaurant" that serves snacks, liquid carbohydrates and sometimes meals. Why is government favoring those who self-medicate with alcohol or other chemicals to meet in bars, pubs, nightclubs, and vaping lounges; and in contrast, prohibiting houses of worship from meetings with congregants who experience spiritual, mental, and social health benefits? Religions are nonprofit. In general, they exist to serve. Many religious organizations have extensive support networks providing food and help to their members and needy community citizens. Why discriminate against them?

I strongly support public health measures—masking, social distancing, and closing public events, etc. COVID-19 is no joke! Several dear friends of ours have died from COVID-19. We must protect our health-care systems and our brave, hardworking health-care providers. My wish is that government leaders be consistent and equitable! If it's good for the "pub crowd," it should also be good for the "worship crowd."

Religious liberty? YES! Public health? YES! Consistent equality and treatment for any to meet, worship and support the community? Hopefully, YES! 🦅

¹ Pseudonym. Based on Proverbs 23:32.

² <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

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PETER N. LANDLESS

‘ve just had my first COVID shot!’

I happened to recently overhear a conversation between two nearby people I didn’t know. The words the first person spoke were expressed in a tone of relief.

“I had my second dose two weeks ago” was the triumphant response of the second person; then she added, “I have friends who are hesitant and scared to take the vaccine. And that’s understandable with so many stories going around about inadequate development time and insufficient testing and even possible side effects.”

This conversation is reflective of countless such

discussions and decisions individuals are making as they determine whether it’s best for them to get the vaccine to help stop the spread of COVID-19. The question for many is “Should I or shouldn’t I?”

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

On Wednesday, March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) director-general, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a global pandemic. More than a year and 3 million-plus deaths later, the situation remains disruptive and challenging.

Regardless of the consequences, the COVID-19



vaccines shine light at the end of the tunnel. Worldwide, at the time of writing, 1 billion shots have been given. Vaccination centers have been set up throughout the U.S. to provide accessibility to those more than 16 years of age. Numerous primary-care health providers and pharmacies are also giving the shots. But are these vaccines safe? Once vaccinated, what then? Are there risks and concerns? Do the risks outweigh the benefits?

Three vaccines have been approved for use in the United States: Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna (two-shot vaccines), and Johnson & Johnson (J&J), a “one and done” injection. The administration of the J&J vaccine was resumed following intensive investigation of 15 case reports in the United States of a rare side effect of blood clotting. These cases were mainly in women under the age of 48, some using hormonal treatments and some with associated obesity. The stringent safety-and-side-effect tracking offers reassurance that the priority is to protect the individual’s health. Because the benefits of immunization currently outweigh the risks, resuming its use appears warranted—with warnings and advice for those at risk for clotting complications to seek an alternative vaccine.

WHICH IS BEST?

Many people are asking, “Which vaccine is best? Which one should we take?”

At this point, robust peer-reviewed data and research are available supporting the safety and efficacy of all three vaccines. Health officials advise that the best one to take is the one you’re

offered at the time, with a careful exclusion noted for those with clotting risks to avoid the J&J vaccine. Millions of doses of COVID-19 vaccines administered in the U.S. each day have so far not revealed additional unexpected side effects or problematic consequences, other than those noted during testing phases, as well as the rare instances of blood clotting with J&J.

ENCOURAGING REPORTS

It’s not abnormal or unreasonable to be concerned about the safety and efficacy of the vaccine. It’s therefore helpful to note that the vaccine efficacy to date has been very encouraging as measured by the outcomes of preventing death, ICU admissions, and even overall hospital admissions because of COVID-19. The vaccines are also expected to protect against the United Kingdom variant, which is becoming prominent in the United States.

The country of Israel recently reported its first day of zero deaths from COVID-19 following its aggressive vaccination rollout. They’re hopeful that they’ll soon approach community (herd) immunity.

Research so far indicates that the vaccinated individual may become infected, but in these instances, the degree of illness is significantly decreased. We don’t yet know how long protection will remain effective, however, and the need for boosters may become a reality, even as the flu injection is an annual immunization. It’s therefore prudent to continue prevention measures as well as to consider responsible immunization.

There’s a deluge of information in the media and on the Internet regarding COVID-19 (including mis-



SHOULD I OR SHOULDN'T I?

The current best peer-reviewed and evidence-based health science and public health preventive data encourage and support vaccination.

information, disinformation, conspiracy theories, and allegations), but the current best peer-reviewed and evidence-based health science and public health preventive data encourage and support vaccination. To help work through the possible vexation of vaccination, you can check out the Adventist Church's informational document on vaccines,¹ as well as the church's official statement on immunization.²

VACCINATION ISN'T MANDATED

Although vaccination against COVID-19 is strongly recommended by the Adventist Church, it's not mandated for church members. The decision is left to each individual's conscience and choice. It's important to note that the vaccines are still under Emergency Use Authorization (EUA).

So what changes after someone has been immunized against COVID-19? The official guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the WHO are being revised on an almost daily basis as more data and evidence are analyzed. Changes and adjustments are inevitable.³ Since not all people you may interact with are vaccinated, the previously given general preventive measures and guidelines should still be followed.

WHAT GUIDELINES HAVE NOT CHANGED?

- **Practice the Adventist health message**, which comprises overall healthful living—trust in God, adequate sleep and rest, exercise, a balanced vegetarian diet, pure water, sunshine, temperance, and social support. Live it!
- Wear a mask when having face-to-face interactions with others.
- Practice physical or social distancing (six-foot separation if possible). Sadly, it's not yet time to hug and shake hands with everyone, but stay *socially* connected.
- Avoid crowds.
- Wash and disinfect your hands frequently and effectively for at least 20 seconds, preferably using soap and water or a hand sanitizer that is 60 percent alcohol.
- Clean surfaces in your home and workplace frequently.
- Avoid nonessential travel.

WHAT GUIDELINES HAVE CHANGED?

- The CDC has lifted self-quarantine and testing following travel (domestic and international) for those *fully* immunized, unless required by the local jurisdiction. Fully immunized means two weeks following the last shot from the particular vaccine used.

These guidelines and data are subject to ongoing review as the situation regarding the pandemic evolves. The data will teach us even more.

HANG IN THERE!

We're all weary of this disruption—the death, separation, and suffering. As we live each day in the hope of Jesus' return and long for His appearing, let's do what we can to avoid COVID-19 fatigue. Despite progress, the battle isn't yet over. And no, it's neither abnormal nor unreasonable to worry about safety and efficacy of the vaccine; that's why there's so much effort to secure the best data while combating this deadly pandemic.

Don't let vaccination become a vexation! Prayerfully consider the matter, check the reliable peer-reviewed health science, and consult your health-care provider regarding your risk profile. Let's be gracious and kind to one another, and respectful of views different from our own.

We have hope, we have purpose, and we have the promise of God's presence with us. We can even face death with unwavering hope and assurance. Let's therefore "be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid . . . , for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9, NIV). Maranatha! 🙌

To learn more, also read "The Psychology of Vaccine Hesitancy," by Carlos Fayard, at <https://www.adventistreview.org/the-psychology-of-vaccine-hesitancy>.

¹ <https://www.healthministries.com/covid-19-vaccines-addressing-concerns-offering-counsel/>

² <https://www.adventist.org/guidelines/immunization/>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>

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VACCINATED YET? SO WHAT?

*What is the right
attitude to
vaccination?*



To be or not to be, that is the question—a line from what is probably the most famous monologue of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. Quite possibly the most famous soliloquy—an erudite way of saying speech—in English literature.

THE CURRENT QUESTION

Someone has noted that the twenty-first-century parallel to Shakespeare’s illustrious words is *To code or not to code, that is the challenge*. Yet in 2021—more than 400 years from Shakespeare’s times—the most agonizing conversation people seem to be having with themselves and others in the middle of an atrocious world pandemic is *To get vaccinated or not, that is the question*. More than a year since the discovery of SARS-CoV-2—the strain of coronavirus that causes COVID-19—the world has experienced in excess of 3 million deaths globally, and close to 600,000 deaths in the United States. Still, there is apparently no end in sight for many countries—even among the most advanced economies—despite the arrival of several vaccines claiming to be our way back to some semblance of the normalcy we were experiencing in the prepandemic world.

To be sure, COVID-19 vaccines are a hot topic of conversation these days. Particularly fascinating is watching and listening to the different opinions about the virtues or disadvantages of getting or not getting a vaccine. An apparent reason the competing voices are so many and so loud may have to do—in part—with the wonder, spectacle, and sensation that vaccines were produced so quickly and effectively or not, depending on who’s talking or doing the analysis.

STATS AND STANDS ON THE QUESTION

In the United States, President Joe Biden, soon after he came into office on January 20, 2021, announced his plan to vaccinate 1 million persons per day in the first 100 days of his presidential term. Then on April 21, 2021, he stated that the nation was headed for administering 200 million COVID-19 vaccines by his ninety-second day in office—double his initial promise and in a shorter time. The president exhorted employers across the country to offer paid time off for their workers to get their vaccines as part of the effort to increase vaccination rates. As vaccination rates quickened during sub-

sequent weeks, and with the availability of vaccines beginning to be higher than the demand, the president announced new tax incentives for small- and medium-sized businesses to offer time off from work so their employees might receive their vaccinations and be able to recover, in the event of any side effects from the vaccinations.¹

Somewhat paradoxically, demand for COVID-19 vaccines started declining, despite the fact that every American adult was now eligible to get one, and at a time when half of all eligible Americans had gotten at least one dose of the vaccine.

On top of these factors vaccine hesitancy, a reluctance to take the vaccine, was observed, mostly in states in the Deep South. Besides such reservation, millions of Americans chose not to sign up to get their vaccines for a number of other reasons, including not caring for the trouble of finding an appointment online, or preferring to wait for additional research findings on the long-term side effects of the vaccines.²

The irony of living on Planet Earth is that while one group of people debates whether or not to avail themselves of a product or services that may enhance, protect or prolong life, another group is without access or has limited access to the same or similar goods. Such has been the case with vaccines during this global pandemic. Worthy of note is that as of February 19, 2021, about 90 countries had access to at least one COVID-19 vaccine. At that point 10 countries that make up 60 percent of the global gross domestic product had dispensed 75 percent of all COVID-19 vaccines. At the same time, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, World Health Organization director-general, and Henrietta Fore, UNICEF executive director, informed that some 130 countries, with a total population of 2.5 billion, were yet to give out a single dose.³

Anyone wondering what the official position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church might be on vaccines in general, and COVID-19 vaccines specifically, may take note of an article in the December 18, 2020, edition of the *Adventist Review* entitled “COVID-19 Vaccines: Addressing Concerns, Offering Counsel.”⁴ The church’s official declaration on immunization “places strong emphasis on health and well-being. The Adventist health emphasis is based on biblical revelation, the inspired writings of E. G. White (cofounder of the church), and on

We feel much better having taken the vaccine than if we were still waiting to get one.

peer-reviewed scientific literature.” A “responsible” attitude to immunization/vaccination is urged, advising that “no religious or faith-based reason” exists for avoiding “protective and preventive immunization programs.” The statement goes on to emphasize both the importance of community health and of individual conscience: “We value the health and safety of the population, which includes the maintenance of ‘herd immunity.’ We are not the conscience of the individual church member, and recognize individual choices. These are exercised by the individual. The choice not to be immunized is not and should not be seen as dogma nor the doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”⁵

OPPOSITION TO THE QUESTION

Despite the continuing research of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States, and despite the church’s clear counsel on the issue of vaccines in general and COVID-19 vaccines in particular, zealous monologues, passionate speeches, and energetic, fervent, and furious diatribes continue to be heard against vaccination. The CDC response to questions on the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines is firm: “Millions of people have safely received a COVID-19 vaccine. More than 52 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines were administered in the United States from December 14, 2020, through February 14, 2021. COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective” (April 13, 2021).⁶

And to a question, specifically about how effective the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine is, the CDC replied: “Based on evidence from clinical trials, the Moderna vaccine was 94.1 percent effective at preventing laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 illness in people who received two doses who had no evidence on being previously infected” (April 5, 2021).⁷

OUR PERSONAL RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION

For ourselves, we willingly share our personal testimony in relation to the questions in our title Question 1: “Vaccinated yet?” We answer, “Yes!” We both received our second dose of the Moderna vaccine in mid-February 2021, and except for mild flulike symptoms experienced by Elaine for about

half a day after the booster shot, we experienced no signs of maladies and have remained COVID-19 free.

To the second question posed by our title, “So what?” our answer is that we feel much better having taken the vaccine than if we were still waiting to get one. What’s even better is that for the first time in more than a year we have been able to join loved ones, also vaccinated, for brunch at a favorite restaurant, and to exchange those warm hugs we had gone without for more than a year.

As the pandemic continues, we earnestly pray for greater compassion from the international community, especially the world’s strongest economies, toward countries with much weaker economies and capacity to acquire vaccines for their populations. Our prayers will also continue to ascend to God for His providential intervention.

Living in the United States where millions in the population have still not received a vaccine, we continue to follow the best scientific advice on mask wearing, social distancing, and hand washing. We will also persist in other practices that are always good: eating healthy foods, drinking lots of water, exercising regularly, communing with God daily, and aiming for seven to eight hours of sleep each night. In addition, we will go on being fortified every day by ideal counsel from Scripture: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6, 7, NIV).⁸

¹ <https://apple.news/AWh3q5Wk2SwKYonrvD4EdEw?>

² <https://apple.news/Abrj8sqyTRvWm4sYAYWl0ug>

³ <https://rdcu.be/cjb28>

⁴ <https://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story15816-covid-19-vaccines-addressing-concerns-offering-counsel>

⁵ <https://www.adventist.org/guidelines/immunization/>

⁶ <https://www.cdc.gov>

⁷ <https://www.cdc.gov>

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HIS Impact On Me



Soraya

Former student
Holbrook Indian School (HIS)



Liked by **HolbrookIndianSchool**

10/6/18 is when my sisters and I got baptized. It's the best decision I've ever made. I went to an amazing school, met a lot of amazing people, went to church, had bible studies, sang songs, went to camp, rode horses, went bike riding, participated in sports and in Native festivities.

This was all because God lead my mama to Holbrook Indian School (HIS). My decision to attend HIS helped me so much. I'm not embarrassed to say how much I rock with God because He's done so much for me that I can't explain. God has plans. I don't know what they are but I trust Him. --Soraya via Instagram

Soraya is a singular example of the experience that many of our students at HIS have. Help other Native American children and youth experience God's amazing love by making a gift to Holbrook Indian School today at [HolbrookIndianSchool.org](https://www.HolbrookIndianSchool.org)



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Virtual Grief



ROBERT EDWARDS

On April 8, 2020, 4:47 p.m., my phone rang with a dreadful message: Darren had breathed his last. As I listened to the pouring rain, it seemed as though all of heaven was weeping over the loss of a son. Sheltered in place like the Israelites, whose doorposts were primed with the blood of promise, we were forced to engage in a strange process of listening to relatives wailing in grief over FaceTime and Zoom. Many of us, including me, felt robbed of the opportunity for a compassionate touch or hug. We'd had no chance to tell Darren our final "I love you, man."

GRIEF VIA ZOOM

At time of writing the tradition of sitting by a loved one who is clinging to life is almost impossible in many places. Even though as Christians we believe in a resurrection, in times like these we are challenged by the pain of knowing that our loved one died alone. It leaves an emotional space that may be difficult to fill. Until this loss, I had never wrestled with the thought of dying alone, and the idea shakes me. Doctors in white rushing from room to room; nurses monitoring machines and checking vitals; the chair next to my bed empty. This is not what we imagine to be a comforting presence in the shadow of death. I assume that the person dying would long for a familiar face, a familiar touch, a whispered word of comfort, a cool hand soothing the brow.

Grieving via Zoom and FaceTime leaves you feeling empty and lost. There was no sitting together to reminisce, no spontaneous moments of tears, no falling into the arms of a familiar embrace, no dropping what you are doing to get there to share in the pain. For an approximation of this, you must depend on the only thing you have: a signal from a cell tower.

We are in a new normal that doesn't feel normal. So many things have shut down: stores, businesses, colleges, airlines, weddings, concerts, churches—the list goes on. But one thing that hasn't shut down is death. We still long for the "no mores" of sadness, sorrow, and death—but our traditional ways of coping with it aren't available right now. COVID-19 has changed our familiar concept of the final send-off. Gone is the pre-funeral gathering. Gone is the ability even to suggest that funeral service. Gone is the proces-

sion, the singing by the gravesite, the repast meal, and the mingling. Gone is the family lingering together before the days of reality hit. Instead, you sit alone, grappling with the pain of loss and grief. Abnormal New Normal

No, in this current normal, the dying are often alone from the time they enter the hospital. And instead of comforting one another through the stages of grief, the survivors must deal with our loss alone. How do we cope with this not-normal new normal? How do we deal with the emptiness? How do we say goodbye amid social isolation? How do we find a way to grieve #AloneTogether?

A colleague of mine once asked a Rwandan pastor if they were able to recover the bodies of their loved ones who had died in the 1994 genocide. The Rwandan pastor said, "No. We aren't able to say goodbye, and that is the worst part of our journey." This story has resonated with me as I've watched my family cope with the loss of a loved one from a distance. Together we have instituted a coping strategy that has evolved from that pain, utilizing social media in ways that have enabled us to encourage one another even though we can't be together. We've gathered together virtually, posted pictures of our loved one, reminisced about old times, held an online celebration communion, and planned an online memorial service.

This new normal has pushed us to form new ways of connecting during loss, new ways of walking down the path of grief together, despite the physical separation required of us. As improbable and strange as it seems, it is possible and absolutely essential. We will one day be able to support each other physically and in person again. And in that ultimate "one day," when Jesus comes again to take us home, we will no longer need to support each other, because grief and loss will be a thing of the past. Forever.

Until then, however, we need to utilize whatever tools we can to find ways to connect so that honoring those we've lost, reflecting on their lives and our memories, and closure for those of us left behind can still be achieved. 🍀

This article first appeared in *Conference Priorities*, June 2020, a newsletter for the Southeastern California Conference. Reprinted with permission.

Robert Edwards is vice president for Black Ministries in the Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

A fervent cry goes up to heaven: “God . . . God . . . if You’re there, do something!” Over and over. Oblivious of Jesus’ words in Matthew 25.

JUDGMENT CRITERIA

In Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus and disciples are on the Mount of Olives. Jesus opens the curtains, gives them a glimpse of the future and sets out the judgment criteria for all nations and all people. He unveils a typical judgment scene with questions and responses. He will separate all the

people and put some on His right and some on His left, as a shepherd separates sheep and goats. Some will experience judgment positively; others, negatively. Some are called blessed; others, cursed. Some inherit eternal life; others, eternal death.

The solemn declaration, “Truly,” echoes back and forth in

verses 40 and 45 and draws attention from the drama of questions and answers to the central message: “Truly I tell you, whatever you did [or did not do] for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did [or did not do] for me” (NIV). If verses 40 and 45 state the criteria for the judgment, then they must be the mandate for our mission. To implant Jesus’ mission of compassion and ignite our hearts, we must successfully defend our understanding of at least two things:

1. First, who are “these”? Does Jesus use “least of these” to refer to *some* poor persons or *all* poor persons? “These” are the poor ones Jesus talks about—the hungry, thirsty, homeless, naked, sick, and imprisoned ones. So the “least of these” are some of “these”—some of the poor. Jesus’ disciples have a mission of compassion to *all* poor persons, and He is especially keen that our mission touch a set of the poor that He calls “least.”
2. Second, whom does Jesus call “least”? Long ago, people interpreted Jesus’ use of “least” positively, as those noble saints who suffer for His cause. Today people interpret Jesus’ use of “least” negatively, as every suffering poor person in the world. What is interesting is that both then and now, people believe that Jesus defines “least” using money, and they do the same.

It seems logical, doesn’t it? Jesus talks about basic necessities—food, drink, shelter, clothes, health care, transportation to visit the incarcerated. Obviously Jesus describes an economic situation and “the least” as the hungriest, thirstiest, most unclothed, sickest, and most hopeless of the imprisoned. In twenty-first-century North America these “least”



*Who are the
“least of these”?*



They were willing to scratch the back of someone who has no hands.

would fall far below the poverty line set by the federal government, and they may be inside or outside the church.

SECULAR OR RELIGIOUS?

If you believe that Jesus' "least" is some economic result, then you can probably embrace Christian missions simply as social action to the poor and oppressed: providing real help to real people with real problems. If people are defined by social standards, why should missions be anything else? It makes sense, because economic needs demand at least an economic response. The bottom line is that missions is about money.

This kind of Christianity is very attractive to the world because it creates a religion based *firmly* on deeds of love: practical, all-inclusive, and, supposedly, more "authentic." There is nothing about this religion that says it has to be Christian or rooted in Jesus. The good news is that it is sensitive to the suffering in the world! Would the Judge approve? Absolutely! In Matthew 25 Jesus promotes practical, inclusive, and authentic religion.

However, this religion of love gives an eviction notice on Jesus: there is no need for His kind of salvation. It is a "homeless religion" because the religion is not Christian, not Buddhist, not anything. This "homeless religion" creeps into the Christian community when Christians decode "least" using some perceived economic index. Missions, then (if you could call it that), really have little, if any, relation to how Christians *think* or what we *believe*—it's all about what we *do* in the world. Would the Judge approve? Not in Matthew 25! For Jesus, life is not just all about what we are seen to do.

Third-century theologian Origen suggests that

we think about the deeds of love and the church's mission through spiritual lenses: "being nourished with spiritual food, clothed with the clothing of wisdom."² To take in a stranger means someone takes Christ into their heart.³ Would the Judge approve? Absolutely! In Matthew 25 Jesus cares about what we believe.

This purely spiritual approach transforms Christian missions into a reasoning response to world suffering. Mission becomes supremely about right *belief*: about what Christians *think*. It has little, if any, bearing on what we *do*. Would the Judge approve? Not in Matthew 25! For Jesus, life is not just all about what we think.

So what does our Lord expect when He comes? Who are the "least of these"?

ECONOMIC "LEAST OF THESE"?

For Jesus, "least" is not some economic result. To call the poor "least" simply because they are poor is not His character; neither should it be ours.

Jesus teaches His disciples that internals are more important than externals and equity more than equality. His lessons depict contrasting sets of end-time people: one ready; another, not; this servant faithful/wise, that servant wicked (Matt. 24:45-51); these virgins are foolish; those virgins are wise (Matt. 25:1-13); these servants are good/fair, that servant is lazy/wicked (verses 14-30); righteous sheep, cursed goats (verses 31-46). What characteristic is common among members of each group? It's not economic. Although representatives from each pairing appear almost identical from the outside, Jesus exposes the stark heart differences inside. Why would Jesus now use external economic benchmarks to describe people?

Notice that economic pricing of humans discounts, divides, and dehumanizes; people will spend all their lives working desperately not to be the economic "least." Would the Judge approve? Not in Matthew 25!

Time is money. We know. Unfortunately, in our search for security in this life, money gets in the way of missions when we give money priority over God and people. It's difficult to find time for missions with busy lives. Is Jesus asking that we calculate some time in our busy schedule to fit some missions here and there? Not in Matthew 25!

In Matthew 25 what matters most to Jesus are

genuine acts of compassion that flow from a heart that is being transformed. Jesus knows that apples don't make apple trees—apple trees make apples.

Those whom Jesus commends are unaware that they do anything special for anyone! They make no special effort. All they do is act like humans to other humans in the course of being human. It's who they *are* in the normal course of their lives: participating with others, with respect, love, compassion, selflessness. They spend no time calculating expected reward or benefit. No tit-for-tat. They are willing to scratch the back of someone who has no hands. That is why they win approval from Jesus. This is how we'll win the world for Jesus.

Will economics or Jesus guide you to the "least"?

JESUS' "LEAST OF THESE"

To hear the heartbeat of Jesus' "least" in Matthew 25:40, 45, we should listen for hints He left elsewhere in Matthew. The best place for us to hear what Jesus' "least" means in verses 40 and 45 is His conversation about "least" in Matthew 5:17-19, because the Sermon on the Mount *flavors everything* He does in Matthew. Jesus says there: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have . . . come . . . to fulfill them. . . . Anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (NIV).

That's the verdict! Jesus calls "least" anyone who breaks/ignores/nullifies the least commandment. Since Jesus comes to fulfill the smallest details of the Law (verse 18), there is really no commandment that He downgrades to "least."

Might it be that the "least of these" in Matthew 25 are poor persons who do not obey the commandments; those poor who are unbelievers; least, not because of any deficiency in their humanity, not because of the size of their bank account, not because of their ethnicity, not because of their education; but least because they trivialize the commandments, or they teach others to do so! Jesus seems to be saying: "I expect you to show compassion to *any person* who is poor, even to the unbeliever. Your mission is not only to show mercy to the poor who are members of your faith community." "If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else?" (Matt. 5:47, NLT).⁴

In Matthew 25 Jesus makes it clear that our mission is not only spiritual but also social. Jesus

is talking as much about motive as about movement; about thought as about action; about why as about what; about being as about doing.

Jesus calls us all to see that the way we live today has eternal consequences—for ourselves and for others as well. Jesus loves us so much that he will hold us eternally responsible for how we treat the poor: "Whatever you did for *one* of . . . the least of these, you did for Me."


MESSAGE AND MISSION

Three days later Jesus dies (Matt. 27:50). To save the poor. To save the "least of these." To save the ones on the right. To save the ones on the left. For "the Son of man [came] . . . to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28, NIV). How's that for a religion of love?

Three days later Jesus lives! (Matt. 28:6). Savior to the poor. To the "least of these." To the ones on the right. To the ones on the left. This is the paradoxical life-changing gospel: One lives; all can have eternal life! How's that for all-inclusive?

The gospel is not homeless! It is rooted in Jesus! Our mission is rooted in Jesus. Real God. With real feelings. And real plans. For real people. How's that for authentic?

We must allow Jesus to transform the way that we love. As He does, allow your heart to access your head and move your feet. Walk the talk!

Jesus says: "If the tables were turned, what would you want someone to do for you? Do that for them" (Matthew 7:12, author's paraphrase). "Partner with Me and help people find where they need to be. Will you love each other for Me? Serve each other as people whom I love and cherish? It breaks My heart to hear: '*God . . . God . . . if You're there, do something!*' You go do it! (see Matt. 14:16). I am sending you." 

¹ This article, now condensed for space, was originally a sermon (Pioneer Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church, Berrien Springs, Michigan, March 6, 2021). Some of the presentation's oral style has been retained.

² Ulrich Luz, "The Final Judgment (Matt. 25:31-46): An Exercise in 'History of Influence' Exegesis," trans. Dorothy Jean Weaver, in *Treasures New and Old: Recent Contributions to Matthean Studies*, ed. David R. Bauer and Mark Allan Powell (Atlanta: Scholars Press), pp. 271-310.

³ See Klyne R. Snodgrass, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), p. 551.

⁴ Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

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The Dead Are Really Dead

*Revisiting the history of
the state of the dead
in early Adventism*

For Seventh-day Adventists, the future and imminent climax of God's salvation program on earth is strongly related to the present state of the dead. Our understanding of the Bible's teaching on that question is hardly popular or accepted across the world. And any historical survey of our understanding of the doctrine requires us to consider how our pioneers from the Christian Connection, Millerites, and Sabbatarian Adventists arrived at the church's current position.

THE CHRISTIAN CONNECTION

The Christian Connection was one of the first uniquely "American" Christian groups to emerge in the United States. The group emerged in the first decade of the nineteenth century from three different directions. These three groups formed a joint fellowship in 1810 known as "Christian"¹ or later as Christian Connection. Among these three groups, the group in New England enthusiastically promoted the biblical belief that the dead know nothing. One leader in this group, Elias Smith, promulgated the idea in his periodical *Herald of Gospel Liberty*. The periodical sought to connect the groups scattered along the Eastern region of the United States. In 1808 he wrote that at the second coming of Jesus, "immortality, and eternal life will be ours."² Smith did not then believe in the immortality of the soul but in conditional immortality, meaning that the righteous would receive immortality as a gift from the Lord.³ Smith made this idea evident in 1809, noting "that in the year to come we shall believe, and see greater things than these, and at last meet in the coming world, to enjoy bless [sic] IMMORTALITY forever."⁴ Smith's conditionalist thinking changed between 1816 and 1817, however, when he accepted universalism and discontinued the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*. Because of this, conditionalism among Christian Connection members became less prevalent. Other periodicals, such as *Christian Herald* and *Christian Palladium*, promoted the immortality of the soul as their central teaching on the state of the dead. While Smith supported conditionalism up to 1816, according to Lynn Waller, this idea was not well accepted

by Connectionists.⁵ From 1818 onward the immortality of the soul became the official position of Christian Connection churches, and conditionalism became a fringe idea.⁶

The diminishing of conditionalism's influence in the Christian Connection makes more understandable Joseph Bates' belief in the soul's immortality after his baptism in a Christian Connection church in early 1827. In September of the same year, Bates expressed his belief in the immortality of the soul. He wrote to his grieving brother that his "little children are in heaven" and now are "rejoicing with the Angels [sic] in heaven."⁷ In the following year he noted regarding his dead father that "he is with his . . . God in heaven."⁸ James White, a former Christian Connection minister and one of the cofounders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, acknowledged that he accepted conditionalism from teaching outside this group.⁹

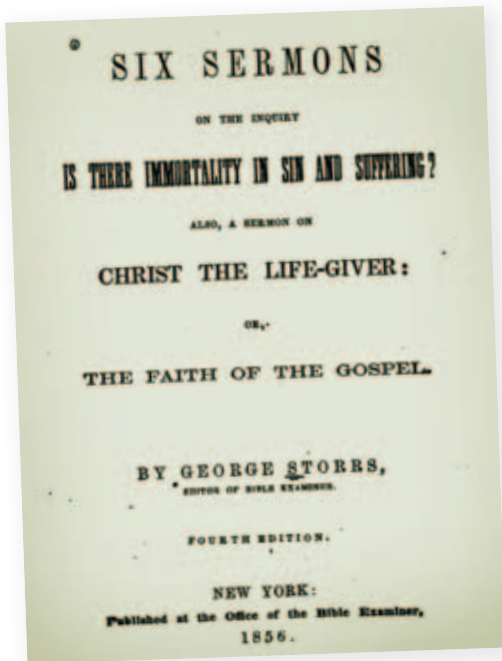
AMONG MILLERITES

The majority of Millerites believed in the immortality of the soul. William Miller and his associates, including Joshua V. Himes and Josiah Litch, believed in innate immortality. George Storrs, a Methodist minister who had resigned from Methodist ministerial work in 1836, was an important preacher among Millerites. After reading a pamphlet from Henry Grew about conditionalism, Storrs was convicted that the dead knew nothing, and that immortality would be received at the Second Coming.

In 1841 he wrote about this new conviction in *Three Letters*¹⁰ and expanded on it in *Six Sermons*,¹¹ published in May or June of 1842. In 1841 Storrs ministered to a small Christian Connection congregation in Albany that was not opposed to his conditionalism.¹²

Then, in 1842, Storrs became a Millerite, because of the influence of Charles Fitch. One of the reasons for his rejection of the immortality of the soul was that this doctrine "has led to a denial of the resurrection of the body."¹³

It seems that among prominent Millerite leaders only Charles Fitch accepted conditional immortality. He wrote three letters to



Storrs. In the first letter, dated January 25, 1844, Fitch stated his acceptance of conditionalism. In May 1844 his second letter testified his unwavering adherence to his new faith. The last letter was from July 3, 1844. Here Fitch told Storrs that he had accepted conditionalism sometime in 1843.¹⁴

The impact of the *Six Sermons* was significant for Advent believers. Storrs claimed that from 1842 to 1843 he had shared more than 20,000 copies of this publication in several states in America.¹⁵

Adventist pioneers recognized the influence of Storrs on the theology of the fledging group regarding the state of the dead. James White wrote: "Storrs's *Six Sermons* on the immortality question were being widely circulated among Adventists, and the doctrine of man's unconsciousness in death and the destruction of the wicked was being adopted by some and regarded with favor by many."¹⁶ J. N. Andrews, in 1855, regarded the *Six Sermons* as "written in defense of the author's views of future punishment; but the remarks are of equal value with respect to the Sabbath question."¹⁷ J. N. Loughborough noted, "George Storrs published his six sermons" and "this doctrine was largely accepted by the Adventist believers."¹⁸ Uriah Smith agreed that, as a result of the *Six Sermons* and the *Bible Examiner*, there were many "Adventists, almost as a body, [who] adopted the view of conditional immortality."¹⁹ Arthur W. Spalding concluded that George Storrs

"had introduced to Adventists the doctrine of conditional immortality, or the sleep of the dead."²⁰ His influence helped Adventist pioneers to share a common understanding that the dead know nothing.

SABBATARIAN ADVENTISTS

After the Great Disappointment in 1844, the Sabbatarian Adventist pioneers indicated their acceptance of conditionalism. They also believed that the righteous would receive immortality at the second coming of Jesus. In 1846 Joseph Bates considered the soul as the whole person and not as an entity that could live separately from the body.²¹ The righteous would "change from mortal to immortality"²² when Jesus comes again. It seems that Bates was acquainted with Storrs's view on the state of the dead. In his book *Autobiography of Elder Joseph Bates* he mentions Storrs's name and his ideas on the Second Coming and anti-slavery.²³ The state of the dead doctrine was seen as truth but not much discussed during the 1840s. This attitude changed in the 1850s when modern spiritualism became rampant through the influence of the Fox sisters, and the Adventist pioneers realized that this doctrine was essential to fortify Christians against Satan's deceptions.²⁴ During this time key church leaders promoted Storrs's conditionalism.²⁵

As early as 1847 James White had declared his belief in conditionalism. When Jesus comes the second time, he stated, He will call "forth the sleeping saints," then "gather the elect in the air."²⁶ At this moment Jesus would bestow "the resurrection of the just to the everlasting life."²⁷ White believed that the righteous do not have innate immortality until Jesus returns to confer it on believers. In 1853 he wrote about conditionalism that "we [Adventists] were acquainted with the clear and powerful writings of GEORGE STORRS on this subject, also the *Sonship of Christ*, in 1843 and 1844. He then had access to thousands of minds, which would not have been the case had it not been for the Advent movement."²⁸ White acknowledged the influence of Storrs's writings on conditionalism in Adventism, including on himself.

Ellen White accepted the idea that human beings were not immortal until the Second Coming after she joined the Millerite movement. She wrote that her mother introduced the idea that the dead knew nothing and there was no innate immortality for sinners. Initially, Ellen White wondered about

it, but after hearing a sermon several months later she wrote, "I believed it to be the truth."²⁹ It seems that it was Storrs's teaching that she heard at that time.³⁰ She was the first among the Adventist pioneers to warn of modern spiritualism, which appeared in the Fox family in 1848. She observed that the manifestation would "draw the minds of God's people to look at that and cause them to doubt the teachings of God among His people."³¹ Several months after the Fox sisters publicly demonstrated their spiritualistic ability in November 1849, White wrote: "I saw the power of the magicians has increased tenfold within a few months, and it will still be on the increase and spread, and unless Israel is rising and increasing in power and strength and is growing in grace and in the knowledge of the truth, the powers of darkness will get the victory over them."³² This warning drew the attention of Sabbatarian Adventists to this vital doctrine. A few years later this doctrine was regarded as present truth in Adventism.

HOW GOD HAS LED US

George Storrs introduced the biblical doctrine of the state of the dead to Advent believers before the Great Disappointment. Sabbatarian Adventists accepted this doctrine and grasped its significance for refusing Satan's deception at the end-time. Modern spiritualism, which appeared in New York in 1848, helped Sabbatarians to recognize the importance of the doctrine. The emergence of the Adventist Church in the 1840s was not coincidentally intersecting with the rise of modern spiritualism in the United States. It is by divine providence that this church, since its beginnings, opposed these false manifestations. The state of the dead became a crucial doctrine in Seventh-day Adventist theology and coalesced with other doctrines. Nearly one third of the statement of beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists in 1872 relates to this doctrine. 📌

¹David Millard, "Christian, or Christian Connexion," in *An Original History of the Religious Denominations: At Present Existing in the United States Containing Authentic Accounts of the Rise, Progress, Statistics, and Doctrine Written Expressly for the Work by Eminent Theological Professors, Ministers, and Lay Members of the Respective Denominations*, comp. I. Daniel Rupp (Philadelphia: J. Y. Humphreys, 1844), p. 170.

²Elias Smith, "Sermon No. v," *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, Nov. 24, 1808, p. 26.

³Stanley Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), p. 28.

⁴Elias Smith, "To Subscribers," *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, Aug. 18, 1809, p. 104. (Capitals in original.)

⁵Lynn Waller, "Elias Smith," in *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 689.

⁶For more, see Donny Chrissutianto, "The State of the Dead and Its Relationship to the Sanctuary Doctrine in Seventh-day Adventist Theology (1844-1874): A Historical and Theological Study" (Ph.D. diss., Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines, 2018), pp. 40-59.

⁷Joseph Bates to Dear Brother, Sept. 26, 1827.

⁸J. Bates, Logbook, June 11, 1828.

⁹[J. White], "The Bible Examiner," *Review and Herald*, Aug. 4, 1853, p. 48.

¹⁰George Storrs, *An Inquiry: Are the Souls of the Wicked Immortal? In Three Letters* (Montpelier, Vt.: [George Storrs], 1841).

¹¹George Storrs, *An Inquiry: Are the Souls of the Wicked Immortal? In Six Sermons* (Albany, N.Y.: W. A. White & J. Visscher, 1842).

¹²George Storrs, *Six Sermons on the Inquiry, Is There Immortality in Sin and Suffering? Also, a Sermon on Christ the Life Giver: Or, the Faith of the Gospel* (New York: Bible Examiner, 1855), p. 11.

¹³George Storrs, "Intermediate State of the Dead, or, State From Death Until the Resurrection," *Bible Examiner*, May 1843, p. 15.

¹⁴Charles Fitch, "Witness to the Truth," *Bible Examiner*, January 1848, p. 12. In this article, Storrs republished Fitch's letter that was written in 1844.

¹⁵Storrs, *Six Sermons on the Inquiry*, p. 14.

¹⁶James White, *Life Incidents, in Connection With the Great Advent Movement* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press, 1866), p. 154.

¹⁷J. N. Andrews, *The First Day of the Week Not the Sabbath of the Lord: Advent and Sabbath Tract, No. 1* (Rochester, N.Y.: Advent Review Office, 1855), p. 20.

¹⁸J. N. Loughborough, *Last Day Tokens* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1904), p. 164.

¹⁹Uriah Smith, *Here and Hereafter: Or Man in Life and Death; The Reward of the Righteous and Destiny of the Wicked* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1897), p. 327.

²⁰Arthur W. Spalding, *Footprints of the Pioneers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1947), p. 25.

²¹Joseph Bates, *The Opening Heavens: Or a Connected View of the Testimony of the Prophets and Apostles, Concerning the Opening Heavens, Compared With Astronomical Observations, and of the Present and Future Location of the New Jerusalem, the Paradise of God* (New Bedford, Mass.: Benjamin Lindsey, 1846), pp. 1, 3, 11, 22.

²²Joseph Bates, *Second Advent Way Marks and High Heaps: Or a Connected View of the Fulfillment of Prophecy, by God's Peculiar People, From the Year 1840 to 1847* (New Bedford, Mass.: Benjamin Lindsey, 1847), p. 48.

²³Joseph Bates, *The Autobiography of Elder Joseph Bates; Embracing a Long Life on Shipboard, With Sketches of Voyages on the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Baltic and Mediterranean Seas; Also Impressment and Service on Board British War Ships, Long Confinement in Dartmoor Prison, Early Experience in Reformatory Movements; Travels in Various Parts of the World; And a Brief Account of the Great Advent Movement of 1840-44* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press, 1866), pp. 275, 277.

²⁴J. White, *Life Incidents*, p. 154.

²⁵[J. White], "The Bible Examiner," *Review and Herald*, August 4, 1853, p. 48.

²⁶James White, ed., "The Seven Last Plagues," in *A Word to the "Little Flock"* (Brunswick, Me.: [James White], 1847), p. 3.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁸[J. White], "The Bible Examiner." (Capitals in original.)

²⁹Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 1, p. 40.

³⁰Denis Fortin, "Ellen G. White's Role in the Development of SDA Doctrines," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2013), p. 777.

³¹Ellen G. White to Leonard W. and Elvira Hastings, Apr. 21, 1849, letter 5, 1849, in *The Ellen G. White Letters and Manuscripts With Annotations* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2014), p. 167.

³²Ellen G. White to Harriet Arabella Hastings, Aug. 4, 1850, letter 8, 1850, in *ibid.*, p. 212.

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DEVELOPING MINDS AND SOULS WITH MUSIC

*The Ottley Music School nears
a half-century milestone.*

Nevilla Ottley and her music school are practically institutions around here,” says Merle Poirier, a Maryland resident and operations manager for Adventist Review Ministries. “I took my two girls when they were toddlers to a mothers and tots-type music course that Mrs. Ottley held at my local church in the early 1990s. The words of a lullaby she taught us have stuck in my mind ever since, and I’ve sung it not only to my daughters when they were young to help them go to sleep but also now to my grandson.

“Then in more recent years,” Poirier adds, “Mrs. Ottley would bring her students to the assisted-living facility where my mom was staying to perform for the residents. My mom, who also was a musician, always looked forward to the visits from the school and said the young people performed beautifully. Nevilla Ottley is an excellent teacher.”



The thousands of students who have developed their skills at the Adventist-run Ottley Music School (OMS) throughout the past 48 years attest the accuracy of Poirier's assessment. Many of those students have gone on to become professional performing musicians; others have chosen careers in such fields as medicine, civil engineering, education, and architecture, among others.

"Most of the students who take music classes at our school from when they are young go on to college—many on a full-ride scholarship," Nevilla Ottley, director and founder of the school, says. "They may not pursue a career in music, but they all go to college."

Ottley says that studying music involves discipline and time management, which help in any field of study students may pursue. "I feel proud when I see them choose careers that benefit others."

Some former students are now teaching for the school or serving on its 11-member board.

NEVER TOO LATE TO LEARN

OMS is a nonprofit musical learning institution financed by tuition and donations. Established in 1973, it offers instruction in piano, organ, voice and drama, stringed instruments, percussion, woodwinds, brasses, and world instruments such as the steel pans of Trinidad and Tobago and hand drums. No age restrictions from preschoolers to seniors hinder aspiring musicians from picking up an instrument, even for the first time, to learn how to "make a joyful"—as well as a beautiful—"noise unto the Lord" (see Ps. 100:1-4, KJV).

"One of my older students had dementia but enjoyed the lessons, even though she would forget what she had learned by the time she got home," Ottley says. "Her daughter attended the lessons with her and helped her to practice. She did it just for the mom to enjoy herself in her last years."

Another senior at age 80 went to Ottley's school for voice and piano lessons for about two years. More than a decade later Ottley attended a doctoral graduation party at the home of the woman's niece. "Aunt Mary sat down at the piano, and to the surprise of all, started playing beautifully!" says Ottley. "She was then 94."

Students and teachers come from not only the Washington Metropolitan community in Maryland but also numerous regions throughout the United States, as well as Europe, Iceland, Asia, Africa,

South America, and the Pacific and Caribbean island countries. Many of them take classes via teleconferencing.

Almost all of the school's 12 teachers are college-trained, degreed instructors who are also certified to teach students with certain learning disabilities. OMS currently has an enrollment of about 70 students.

Although it's never too late to learn, Ottley says that according to Plato and Greek philosophers from before the time of Christ, early music training develops not only children's cognitive abilities but also their moral values.¹

"My father once told me that music is a development tool for the brain," Ottley says. "My parents were musicians, but even though they were both born in 1914, my father knew that music helps to develop a person's brain. That's a proven concept today—that the study of music enhances cognitive development and productiveness in both children and adults²—but I've often wondered, *How did my dad know that back then?* That's remarkable to me."

ACTIVE LEARNING

Many brains are being developed at OMS through the school's Music for Little Mozarts program, designed for 4- to 6-year-olds, then con-



Nevilla Ottley

JCKA PHOTOGRAPHY

tinuing through graduate-school level. Students are involved in music competitions, pageants, music camps, and recitals. They've performed at such venues as the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, the Kennedy Center, and Carnegie Hall. Some students and teachers have traveled to the United Kingdom, Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean to perform. Students also performed at three General Conference sessions, where Adventist Church delegates from all world divisions meet to deal with church business.

Within the past decade, OMS has performed in various concerts at the Bowie Performing Arts Center in Maryland in partnership with the Coalition for African Americans in the Performing Arts; sang and played for the 150th anniversary of the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation at Arlington House in Virginia; and performed twice at Maryland's state capitol building.

Also not overlooked is preparation for service.

"Before COVID we would take the students to nursing homes and sing for the residents, and then the students would go around and talk to the people there," Ottley says. "One time a resident

came to listen to our performance, and she was all dressed up and had her hair and nails done. And she said, 'This is my Kennedy Center, so I dress up for it.' So after that I told the kids, 'Whenever you go there, you dress up, because that's their Kennedy Center.'"

The students have also done fundraising for a local women's shelter, and for about a decade have performed for an annual cancer survivor's celebration and for area churches.

"The children learn what service in a church means, and that isn't just to sit there and be entertained by the minister," Ottley says. "They know what it is to serve."

AS FAR BACK AS ADAM

Ottley, who holds a bachelor's degree in music education, a master's in music history and organ performance, and a second master's in music conducting, has taught music for more than 60 years. She says music has been in her family's blood for generations.

"It goes as far back as Adam," she says, only somewhat jokingly.

COURTESY OF OTTLEY MUSIC SCHOOL



“People get a lot of enjoyment from music, and during this pandemic they want music,” she says. “It’s stress-relieving.”

Ottley and her parents were born in Trinidad. Her father moved to Michigan in 1945, the year Ottley was born, and Ottley and her mother joined him there in 1947. Their love of music came with them.

“My father and mother both sang,” Ottley says. “My dad was called ‘a sweet singer in Israel,’ both in Trinidad and California. My maternal grandfather was a musician, as were my mom’s brother and two sisters. My paternal grandfather was a string player. My brother, Dr. Myron Ottley, who retired from EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] toxicology and pharmacology, was a member of the Breath of Life Quartet and conducted the Metrosingers of the Metropolitan Adventist Church in Hyattsville, Maryland.” Numerous other family members are musicians as well.

“My parents made sure that each of us had music lessons from the time we were in single-digit numbers in age,” she says.

Ottley’s musical heritage, however, can be traced back much further than her grandparents. Recently she came into possession of a diary belonging to Elizabeth Ottley, an eighteenth-century relative. In her diary Elizabeth wrote about friends coming to visit her for Christmas in 1772 and playing in a concert together. Elizabeth was 15 at the time. Elizabeth also talks about shipping a piano to the Caribbean and her concern for its safety when the ship carrying it was caught in a storm.

“It’s fascinating history,” Ottley says. “It might make an interesting book someday.”



MYRON S. OTTLEY

GOOD FOR THE SOUL

Ottley believes the study of music has been especially beneficial during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“People get a lot of enjoyment from music, and during this pandemic they want music,” she says. “It’s stress-relieving.”

Teaching lessons almost exclusively using Zoom and other remote-learning technology this past year has had its challenges, Ottley says, but there’s also been an upside.

“We’ve been receiving requests for music lessons from all over,” she says. “People from Los Angeles, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Toronto, and even from Ghana have contacted us. We’ve significantly expanded our reach.”

Ottley continues to promote excellence in music making and the betterment of students' lives and of society.

LIFE AFTER TEACHING

When the day arrives for Ottley to transition into retirement, she doesn't anticipate an aimless lifestyle. Along with spending more time with her husband and children, book writing, she says, is part of her future plans.

After taking a course on Black composers of choral music while attending university in the 1970s, Ottley says she walked into the Adventist radio station WGTS-FM in Takoma Park, Maryland, and convinced them to let her produce a

weekly program involving Black composers of classical music. The program was a hit, and Ottley continued to do the show from 1976 to 1991. Her passion for the subject has stayed with her.

"I've recently written and released a book on Black pianists of classical music born between 1838 and 1933, and another book on famous Black composers born before 1850," she says. "Now I want to write on Black singers, instrumentalists, and Black composers of music born after 1850."

In the meantime Ottley continues to promote excellence in music making and the betterment of students' lives and of society.

"The goal of our school is to offer a comprehensive, culturally diverse music and performing arts education experience provided by stellar and creative faculty," Ottley says. "I believe we've been doing that for almost half a century now, and—God willing—we hope to continue for many more years to come." ♣

To learn more about Ottley Music School, go to www.ottleymusic.org.

¹ <https://oapub.org/edu/index.php/ejes/article/view/3354>

² <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/03/180326140244.htm>

Sandra Blackmer is an assistant editor for *Adventist Review*.

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WHO STOPPED THE RAIN?

MARLAN KNITTEL

January's pounding storm was a fitting obituary to the prior year, a gloomy mirror reflecting many losses. It had been a rough year. My mother had unexpectedly passed away, and we were wading through the probate process. My wife and I both had serious health challenges. My own decline had forced me to quit a most satisfying career as a pastor and accept a significantly lower disability paycheck. We found ourselves living in an RV on a relative's land. Many days it seemed like a struggle just to stay warm and comfortable. I'd lost count of the number of times I'd been up on the roof to fix a broken vent or patch a leak.

That January evening was a dreary reflection of loss. Yet, as my wife and I sat down to eat a simple meal, we really did have much to be thankful for: food on our table; the generosity of my stepmother, who allowed us to live there; and our simple home. But sitting down to eat, I wasn't thinking about any of those. I was cold. Absentmindedly I went to turn the thermostat up. But it already was. Baffled, I turned the furnace off, then listened as it attempted to light—again and again. Something was putting out the flame.

I had a hunch I knew what it was: water in the furnace. I knew what I'd have to do. But I was dreading it this evening. It was dark outside. The wind was blowing in heavy gusts. It wasn't merely a gentle mist falling from the sky or even a persistent patter of raindrops on the roof. It was as if the skies had opened up and we were being deluged—pounded with rain. In the summertime the creek that ran through our property was a gentle stream with a couple of inches of water. Now it was a raging torrent. How on earth was I to go out in

this storm and dry the furnace compartment with the cover off and rain pouring down?

My mind was filled with ideas. Since I needed both hands, an umbrella wouldn't work—not in this wind. I'd have to find my raincoat. How would I keep the furnace compartment dry?

Before my wife left for orchestra practice, she said something that rebuked my lack of faith. She said, "I'm going to pray that God will stop the rain so you can work out there." I had not even thought of it. After she left, I too was praying.

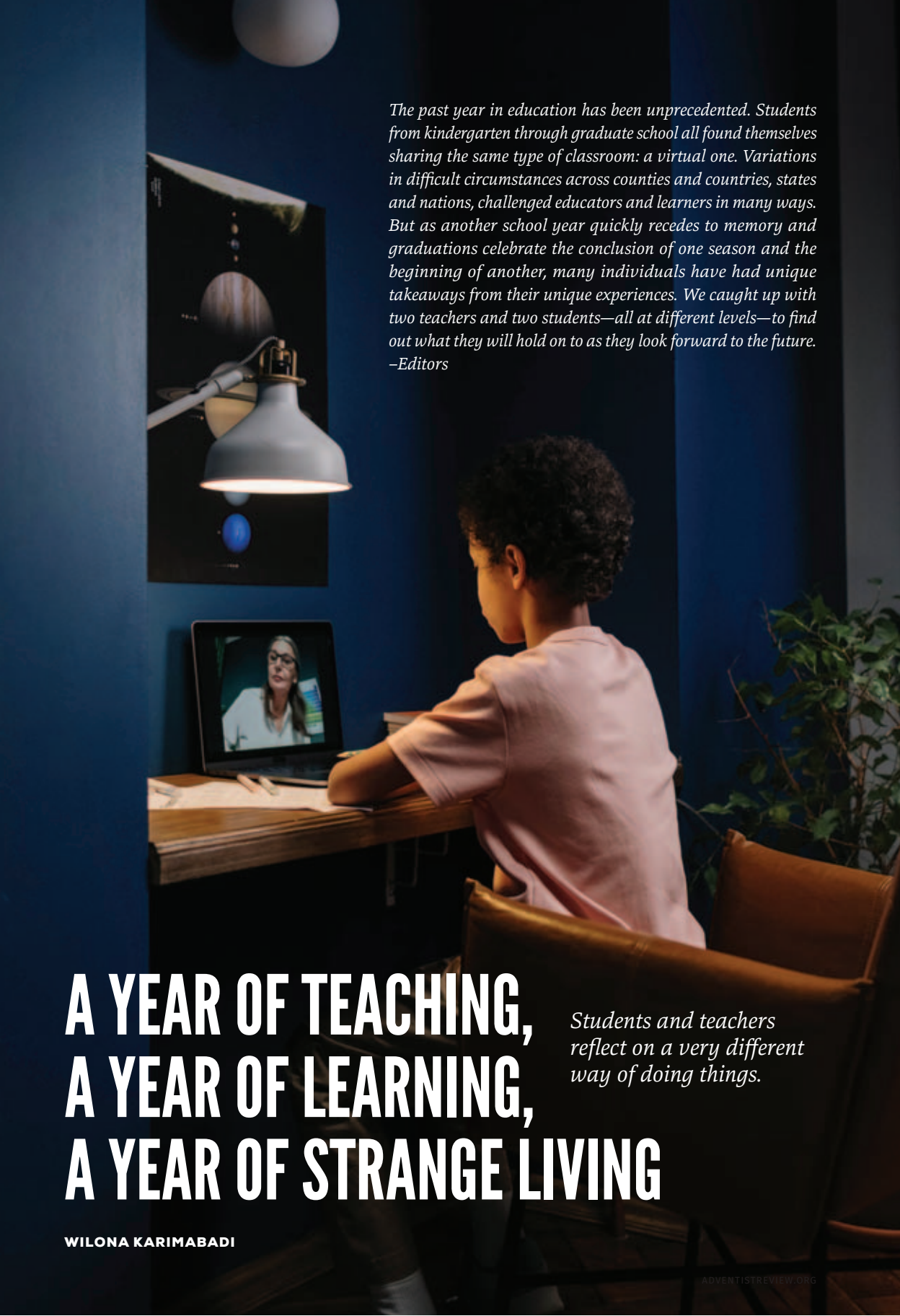
Finally I donned my rain gear, gathered my tools. I was ready.

Hour after hour pouring rain had continued to pound our thin roof. Those hours had turned into days and nights. But now, wrapped in rain gear, getting ready to step into the deluge, I was accosted by a sound I had not heard for some time: silence. The wind was gone. The downpour had disappeared. There wasn't even a fine drizzle. The rain had stopped!

Quickly I began to work. Just as I finished the task, I felt it: a drop of rain. Then another. As it started to rain again, I wasn't worried. I had finished. The heater was working.

Strangely enough, as I worked I found myself singing a song I hadn't heard or sung for years. A song lamenting the problems plaguing modern life. It had been performed by Creedence Clearwater Revival. The song was "Who'll Stop the Rain?" It was a question for which the band had no answer. But as I'd sung it I wasn't echoing their cynical melancholy. For me it was a song of praise. ♣

Marlan Knittel, a retired pastor, writes from Denver, Colorado.



The past year in education has been unprecedented. Students from kindergarten through graduate school all found themselves sharing the same type of classroom: a virtual one. Variations in difficult circumstances across counties and countries, states and nations, challenged educators and learners in many ways. But as another school year quickly recedes to memory and graduations celebrate the conclusion of one season and the beginning of another, many individuals have had unique takeaways from their unique experiences. We caught up with two teachers and two students—all at different levels—to find out what they will hold on to as they look forward to the future.

—Editors

A YEAR OF TEACHING, A YEAR OF LEARNING, A YEAR OF STRANGE LIVING

Students and teachers reflect on a very different way of doing things.

WILONA KARIMABADI

NAVIGATING THROUGH ZOOM COLLEGE

As a university-level educator, I felt like the whole experience of teaching on Zoom stretched me in ways I was not expecting. Especially regarding what I was teaching: writing, as well as observing graduate students try to tutor. Zoom education was trying but proved doable. As the saying goes: “Necessity is the mother of invention.” I am proud of myself and proud of my students for coming together to find ways to make learning possible in a very challenging environment.

I don’t know if the way forward is through online learning, as I see the importance of teaching in an in-person environment. There is a lot of learning that occurs just from the simple act of seeing an instructor visibly emote while speaking. It may be a nonverbal way of taking information, but it is important nonetheless. So when we are conducting a class on Zoom, we tend to lose out on all of that. It’s been a tough year to learn, instruct, and accomplish goals. But what I’ll always remember most about this time is the resilience shown by students and faculty alike. Together we’ve accomplished something good.

June Brady,* Ph.D.

Postdoctoral Fellow in Special Education

HIGH SCHOOL WASN'T SUPPOSED TO LOOK LIKE THIS

My senior year has turned out differently from what I was expecting as an incoming freshman at the beginning of my high school career. As a freshman I gazed at the “prom-posals” and senior events counting down the years until I could participate. As senior class copresident, I was especially disappointed hearing about my classmates yearning for more in-person events where they could see their friends. Virtual school was fun for a while because I rolled out of bed still wearing half of my pajamas; but going back to a hybrid model makes me enjoy learning more. I am excited to have an outdoor graduation and get that experience this year too. I am looking forward to living on campus at Stevenson University and getting a sense of independence while still living a short drive from home. Hopefully in my college experience we will be able to feel that

Even though this experience made us change the ways we do things, it also opened up some opportunities.

sense of normalcy and get back to the events and experiences one can enjoy in our youth. While this pandemic was a challenge, I am glad to have learned from and worked through it.

Marissa Chappell

Springbrook High School, Class of 2021

THERE WERE ABSOLUTELY PROS AND CONS

As a teacher of 22 years, I found teaching in a pandemic challenging. When we were forced to switch to distance learning last March, we jumped into survival mode. We had to convert our lessons, assignments, and assessments into a digital format. Even though this experience made us change the ways we do things, it also opened up some opportunities. Because we did not have the extracurricular activities that usually go on after school, I was able to spend more personalized time tutoring and helping students. I was able to meet with students in breakout rooms and talk to them privately, which cut down their fears of asking questions in front of the entire class. Some students seemed to be less distracted and were able to get more work done because they did not have their friends talking to them.

I think that this pandemic allowed students to figure out how they learn best. Now that we can offer in-person classes again, some have still chosen to stay home for different reasons. The ones who are back on campus know that they not only learn better in a classroom setting but also enjoy the social aspects of school as well. Some of the students who have chosen to stay home have found that they are more productive without distractions.



VANESSA GARCIA

Given this option, more students might choose to switch to online learning permanently.

As a teacher, I can see the pros and cons of in-person and distance learning. I enjoy in-person learning and hope that we will be able to return to it full-time next year. And I hope we can bring back most, if not all, of the extracurricular activities to provide a well-balanced high school experience for our students.

Liesl Quion

High School Teacher, San Gabriel Academy

THE REAL WORLD AWAITS

The end is finally in sight! As I prepare to complete dental school at Loma Linda University, I reflect on how God has led my journey. In general these programs are very difficult, requiring immense dedication and hard work. The pandemic has presented an additional challenge—attempting to learn dentistry with new protocols, distance learning, and reformed patient exposure. However, I believe that these challenges have also opened new doors and opportunities for my

training to be a dentist. We have learned to prioritize what is essential. Flexibility and understanding are two characteristics that we have refined and built upon. This time of uncertainty has certainly been frustrating, but I continue to see God's hand at work in our lives. Upon completing my Doctor of Dental Surgery, I will be moving to and working in Wisconsin. I am originally from the Midwest and look forward to being close to home! I am also blessed to be marrying a colleague who also completed dental school at LLU. We are excited to serve in Wisconsin and see where God leads us in the years to come. I am so thankful for the many blessings from my time at LLU—a wonderful, God-fearing husband, numerous lifelong friends, and a specialized education that has prepared me to serve.

Joanna Moses-Alé, D.D.S.

Loma Linda University School of Dentistry,
Class of 2021

*June Brady is a pseudonym.

Wilona Karimabadi is an assistant editor for Adventist Review Ministries.



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THAT DEVICE IN YOUR HAND

*How does something so small
yield so much power?*

Editor's Note: Seventy-five years ago, on June 17, 1946, the first "car phone" service was introduced in the United States. This groundbreaking technology allowed individuals in St. Louis, Missouri, to place and receive calls while in their cars. The radio tower that serviced the phones could handle only one call at a time. To reach the person you wished to talk with, you first had to go through a telephone operator, who would then connect you. We thought it appropriate to share an article on cell phones. We certainly have come a long way!

Gen Xers will remember a teen TV show in the 1990s called *Saved by the Bell*. The sitcom centered on a group of friends at a fictitious California high school. One of the main characters, Zach Morris, was best known for being a smooth-talking high school fixer of sorts who could talk his way out of pretty much anything. But Zach was also known for a piece of technology he carried around that was a long way from being accessible to kids his age: the cell phone.

Zach's early 1990s cell phone was larger than the standard cordless phones of the day. It could not fit in a pocket or purse, was clunky and cumbersome, and looked utterly ridiculous. But a futuristic piece of technology it was, something those of us in high school at the time could only dream of owning one day.

SPEEDY PHONES

It's amazing how fast technological innovations come about and the speed at which their updated forms get kicked out onto the market. Just a few years later, Zach Morris' giant cell phone was quickly replaced by a palm-sized version with a tiny screen. Nokia phones made their debut in the late 1990s, and aside from their cute selection of cartoonish ringtones, one could also play Snake—a game of moving squares traveling around the little screen. Coverage plans then weren't economical, however. For our very first Christmas as a married couple in 1998, my husband bought me one of those phones, with the caveat that it was to be used only for emergency communication and not for chatting with friends and loved ones.

ENTICING PHONES

Five years later the phones got smaller and took on a flip receiver look and feel. Coverage plans began to get more affordable and accessible to the masses, and the telephone landline—our lifelines for so long—began to occupy a place of lesser value in homes. My next phone, of the flip phone variety, fit neatly in the palm of my hand. It could store numbers and took four-color photographs. Of course, these pictures were strictly housed on the phone. To text, one had to press number buttons to get the right letter—a tedious and mistake-filled process. But they were sleek-looking little gadgets that made communication accessible anytime, anywhere.

Is there such a thing as too much of a good thing?

PHONES THAT OPEN THE WORLD TO US

When smartphones exploded on the scene, the sleekness, graphics, camera abilities, and all the increased app capabilities revolutionized everything. Apps to monitor your health, to watch TV programs live as well as previously recorded, to watch movies on demand, to attend meetings and classes, to create and design, to borrow library books, and to share documents—all of it available to the masses. A fully functioning, high-level computer could now rest in your hand, pocket, or purse. It has even been said that the giant computers that helped land humanity on the moon in 1969 were less powerful than the phones we carry around—and drop regularly—today.

Each new iteration of the modern cell phone has come with a public rush to acquire the latest and greatest version. Indeed, I can look back at all the cell phones I've owned and can chart major events in my life and how my phone was used within that context. For example, the Nokia phone I couldn't use saw the birth of my first child and the first years of my marriage. My LG flip phone marked the birth of my second child and the color pictures I stored of both kids. Then came another LG that opened wide to reveal a typing pad for easier texting. Its photo capabilities were still rather primitive, though. The day before the 2010 General Conference Session, I got my first smartphone: a Palm Pilot model that was tiny and sleek, and introduced me to map apps—a super-handly feature to have while navigating Atlanta, Georgia.

A year later, when the Palm Pilot model fell apart, I moved on to my first iPhone—my hus-

band's series 4 hand-me-down. And I discovered the world of everything in app form. Now I have a 10, while the 14.5 has hit the market. Cell phones in our lives today represent a never-ending trajectory of improvement, innovation, speed, and convenience, as one's life can now literally be run from a phone.

PHONES HAVE THEIR DOWNFALLS

But while our high-level cell phones have brought us previously unimaginable ways to do life, they've come with some downsides. I'm pretty sure my LED screen and the amount of time I spend looking at it have contributed to my blurring vision these days. My head constantly tipping forward to interact with it has caused me stiff necks and headaches. And when I've been on my phone too long, I start to feel sick.

Is there such a thing as too much of a good thing? Yes. There's no doubt a lot of us need our phones for work, communication, even entertainment—especially in light of pandemic life. But the presence of our cell phones needs to be accompanied by new

and renewed levels of self-control and discipline.

Because we can do so much with them—cooking, exercising, even worshipping—it's easy for our phones to dominate our lives. But separating ourselves from total dependence on them is very important. Get back to reading your Bible in its print version if you can. Watch a program on your actual TV set or computer (another screen I know), use a cookbook for new recipes, set a timer for how long you are on your phone, and get off when the alarm sounds. At night, cut yourself off from it and dock it to charge away from reach. There are many ways to regulate some of the downfalls that can arise from overuse of something that at its core is supposed to make your life better.

Cell phones are a bit like the candy shops of yesteryear—exciting, enticing, irresistible. But until you overload on the goodness and start experiencing unpleasant side effects, it's hard to believe that that can happen. The question to ask, then, is how will you find the right balance? ♣

Wilona Karimabadi is an assistant editor for Adventist Review Ministries.

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THE E-MAIL

My cell phone vibrated with a message from one of our managers. “Jill, are you sure you want to see all comments? Even if they’re bad? Personally, I’d rather delete this one.”

My meeting ended, and I picked up my phone to answer the text. “Absolutely. Feel free to send the comment. It’s important, so we can learn and grow. Plus, I want to answer them, so any viewer or listener feels heard.”

Sometimes life is easier when it remains intellectual. You know, when you know the “right thing” to say. *But what if it hurts? Can I glibly say the right thing then?*

I braced myself for the e-mail. I figured it must be pretty strong for the manager to comment on it in the first place. And then it came: “What a disappointment that Jill, or should I say JEZEBEL, is. I can’t stand to listen to God’s Word come out of her Jezebel made-up face. . . . Looks like Babylon truly has come into the church.”

Sometimes there are no words. But that doesn’t stop the thoughts. They can be more overpowering than any words. *Am I a Jezebel? Am I a hindrance to my church? Am I a stumbling block to someone else? And the most painful one: Am I misrepresenting the Jesus I love?*

An e-mail was sent back, thanking the viewer for their comment, assuring them I would pray about their concern, along with sharing my heart’s desire that God would always keep me humble, modest, and bringing glory to Him.

It’s been some time since that e-mail came in, but I haven’t forgotten it. One

can try to forget, but the impression that’s made, the feeling that’s created, lives on. Someone told me once to forget the good along with the bad. In other words, when someone praises you, don’t let it go to your head. Likewise, when someone criticizes you, don’t let it go to your heart. I’m not sure I’ve been successful with either.

But I’ve learned one thing: What I say matters.

The words I speak can uplift and encourage or tear down and oppress. Those words can mean the difference between success and failure, between victory and defeat, between choosing Jesus or walking away from Him.

Why are we so hard on one another? Why do we judge when we’ve never walked even a step in their shoes? Can we be true Christians if our hearts remain cold? Why do we claim to know truth when we cannot love each other? Why do we talk the talk but fail so miserably at the walk?

Could it be that we know truth but have never met the Teacher? that we accept doctrines without experiencing deliverance? that we’re so stuck on ourselves that we cannot see past the sin in our own lives?

Do I need to grow? Absolutely. I want to become like Jesus, to love as He loved, to share His compassion and grace with others.

God, teach me to speak Your words and to share Your love. 🙏

Jill Morikone is vice president and chief operations officer for Three Angels Broadcasting Network (3ABN), a supporting Adventist television network. She and her husband, Greg, live in southern Illinois and enjoy ministering together for Jesus.

JOURNEYS
WITH JESUS
JILL
MORIKONE



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CLOSER LOOK



Wait for God to Notice

By Sari Fordham (Wilkes-Barre, Pa.: Etruscan Press, 2021), 296 pages, \$19.00. Available on bookshop.org and Amazon. Reviewed by Wilona Karimabadi.

When I was in elementary school, the tiny library of our tiny church school was always well stocked with missionary storybooks. We could check those out to our hearts' content. As I was an avid reader on the hunt for Sabbath books to kill the boredom of after-church afternoons as my parents napped, I often checked those out. Many of them told tales of lives and times I didn't always understand. The stories were often difficult to relate to because of the country and conditions depicted, or the fact that many were written in the 1950s and 1960s and I was a 1980s kid. But the stories all had common themes: sacrifice, adventure, hardship, and God's power to triumph over odds.

Sari Fordham's debut memoir combines all those things but wrapped up in a package that Adventist Gen Xers (and others, of course) can easily relate to—right down to lyrics from the

Heritage Singers kids' album (I had that on eight-track, thank you very much).

The Fordham family lived in Uganda during the dictatorship of Idi Amin. Her story of being left without their father (on a work trip) when a soldier came to their home and her mother did her best to protect her girls (and everything in the house) is alarming. There are tales of journeys on dirt roads, the constant threat of poisonous snakes living too close for comfort, bouts with malaria, needed medicines not easily available, meager meals of whatever the garden produced while missing foods from "home," etc. Fordham's way of effortlessly weaving these anecdotes into a narrative that speaks of both quiet faith and devotion to a mission larger than themselves represents strong and beautiful writing.

Any missionary child who returned to their home country feeling foreign will resonate with Fordham's recollections of that painful transition. Her descriptions of the angst of joining a new school and trying to make new friends, learning to dress in the latest fashions, frantically trying to learn popular culture so as not to appear more out of place than they were, are as endearing as they are difficult.

Though she was a very small child while living in Africa during tumultuous times in the late 1970s, the family's time in mission service there left an indelible mark on the very framework of Fordham's life. And her longing to return prompted her to accept employment with ADRA in the field.

This is a special kind of missionary book—one that blends the harsh realities of foreign mission service with deep love and an unapologetic openness about certain nuances of Adventist culture. Given that this book was published by a non-Adventist press and is available to a market well beyond Adventist Book Centers, Fordham is serving the world a well-crafted memoir that not only entertains but shares light and truth about a type of life that most may never encounter otherwise. I highly recommend this book to anyone nostalgic for missionary tales, those with wanderlust for other countries and cultures, and historians interested in life under the shadow of a well-known dictator. ▀

Reviews and commentaries about books, films, or other items do not constitute endorsement by the editorial staff of Adventist Review Ministries.

TO FATHERS EVERYWHERE

In acknowledgment of Sunday, June 20, Father's Day, we share quotes about fathering and fatherhood—some inspiring, some amusing, some authoritative—from famous and not-so-famous sources.

"Fathers, spend as much time as possible with your children. Seek to become acquainted with their various dispositions, that you may know how to train them in harmony with the Word of God."

ELLEN G. WHITE

"As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him."*

PSALM 103:13

"A father is neither an anchor to hold us back nor a sail to take us there, but a guiding light . . . whose love shows us the way."

UNKNOWN

"You, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand."

ISAIAH 64:8

"Every father should remember one day his son will follow his example, not his advice."

CHARLES KETTERING

Jabal: "He was the father of those who live in tents."
Jubal: "He was the father of all who play stringed instruments and pipes."


GENESIS 4:20, 21

Philip: "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough." Jesus: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

JOHN 14:8, 9

"It is admirable for a man to take his son fishing, but there is a special place in heaven for the father who takes his daughter shopping."

JOHN SINOR



"My father didn't tell me how to live. He lived and let me watch him do it."

CLARENCE BUDINGTON KELLAND



"A daughter may outgrow your lap but she'll never outgrow your heart."

UNKNOWN

"One day when [Aksah] came to Othniel, she urged him to ask her father for a field. When she got off her donkey, Caleb asked her, 'What can I do for you?' She replied, 'Do me a special favor. Since you have given me land in the Negev, give me also springs of water.' So Caleb gave her the upper and lower springs."

JUDGES 1:14, 15

"A truly rich man is one whose children run into his arms when his hands are empty."

ZIAD K. ABDELNOUR

"Naaman's servants went to him and said, 'My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? . . . So he went down and dipped himself . . . , as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored . . . like that of a young boy.'"

2 KINGS 5:13, 14

"My father used to play with my brother and me in the yard. Mother would come out and say, 'You're tearing up the grass.' 'We're not raising grass,' Dad would reply. 'We're raising boys.'"

HARMON KILLEBREW

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

EPHESIANS 6:4

"I believe that what we become depends on what our fathers teach us at odd moments, when they aren't trying to teach us. We are formed by little scraps of wisdom."

UMBERTO ECO

"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you."

EXODUS 20:12

"My father used to say that it's never too late to do anything you wanted to do. And he said, 'You never know what you can accomplish until you try.'"

MICHAEL JORDAN

"I cannot think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father's protection."

SIGMUND FREUD

"Any fool can have a child. That doesn't make you a father. It's the courage to raise a child that makes you a father."

BARACK OBAMA

"I have found the best way to give advice to your children is to find out what they want to do and advise them to do it."

HARRY S. TRUMAN

"Fathering is not something perfect men do, but something that perfects the man."

FRANK PITTMAN

"This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob. . . . David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, . . . Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon. . . . After the exile to Babylon . . . : Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah."

MATTHEW 1:1-16

*All Bible texts are from the New International Version.

THE 5-TO-1 PRINCIPLE

Nearly 16 months of a pandemic have made their varied mark on our varied circumstances across the world. For those who have worked from home and had to live extremely isolated lives under stay-at-home or lockdown orders, it has taken its toll on the mental and physical health of many, both in the United States and beyond. Survey data from the American Psychological Association, based on interviews of 3,013 adults between February 19 and 24, 2021, offers a dire picture.¹ Sixty-one percent of adults reported experiencing undesired weight changes (mostly gains, but some also struggling with dramatic weight loss). Nearly

half of the interviewed parents reported a significantly increased level of stress, often related to virtual learning of their children or questions of childcare. Forty-six percent of Gen Z adults said that their mental health had worsened compared with prior to the pandemic. Gen Xers (33 percent), Millennials (31 percent), Boomers (28 percent), and others (9 percent) also reported increases in mental health challenges.

Seventh-day Adventists are not exempt from these dramatic health challenges and changes. While we are admonished not to be “of the world” (cf. John 17:16),² we live *in* the world, are affected by the world, and, ultimately, are sent “*into* the world” (verse 18) to be light and salt and the hands and feet of Jesus. But we hurt too when people all around us hurt. We also struggle when loneliness and pain seemingly extinguish every last bit of joy. We also need consolation and encouragement when disappointment and loss knock on our door. Those who have met the Gentle Healer will recognize their continual need of physical and emotional healing.

Some weeks ago I participated in a workshop on mental health by an Adventist M.D. and psychiatrist. The participants were all committed Adventists and church employees. As we listened to data relating to the current mental health crisis affecting everyone, I saw and heard echoes of real pain in friends looking at me on the Zoom screen. I too felt and relived some of the pain of the past 16 months that has affected my emotional and mental health.

The presenter shared with us an important principle that I have begun to implement in my own life. He called it the 5-to-1 principle: fill your mind and your life with five positive ideas for every negative one. It’s more difficult to apply than one would imagine. News sites all around the world tend to highlight crises; TV thrives on tension and conflict; social media is increasingly polarizing, painful, or even disturbing; and don’t get me started on music lyrics. Finding five positive news pieces or ideas can be challenging, but it’s an important step to recalibrate our minds, or, using Paul’s words, to “be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Rom. 12:2). The 5-to-1 principle doesn’t apply only to my media choices. It can also be applied to other areas of our lives, including serving others in practical ways, caring for those who are discouraged, or lending a listening ear to those who are burdened.

For the rest of 2021 I have committed myself to the 5-to-1 principle. What about you? 🍀

¹ American Psychological Association, “Stress in America 2021: One Year Later, a New Wave of Pandemic Health Concerns,” Mar. 11, 2021, <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2021/one-year-pandemic-stress>.

² Scripture quotations have been taken from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Gerald A. Klingbeil serves as an associate editor of Adventist Review Ministries.

THOSE WHO HAVE MET
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