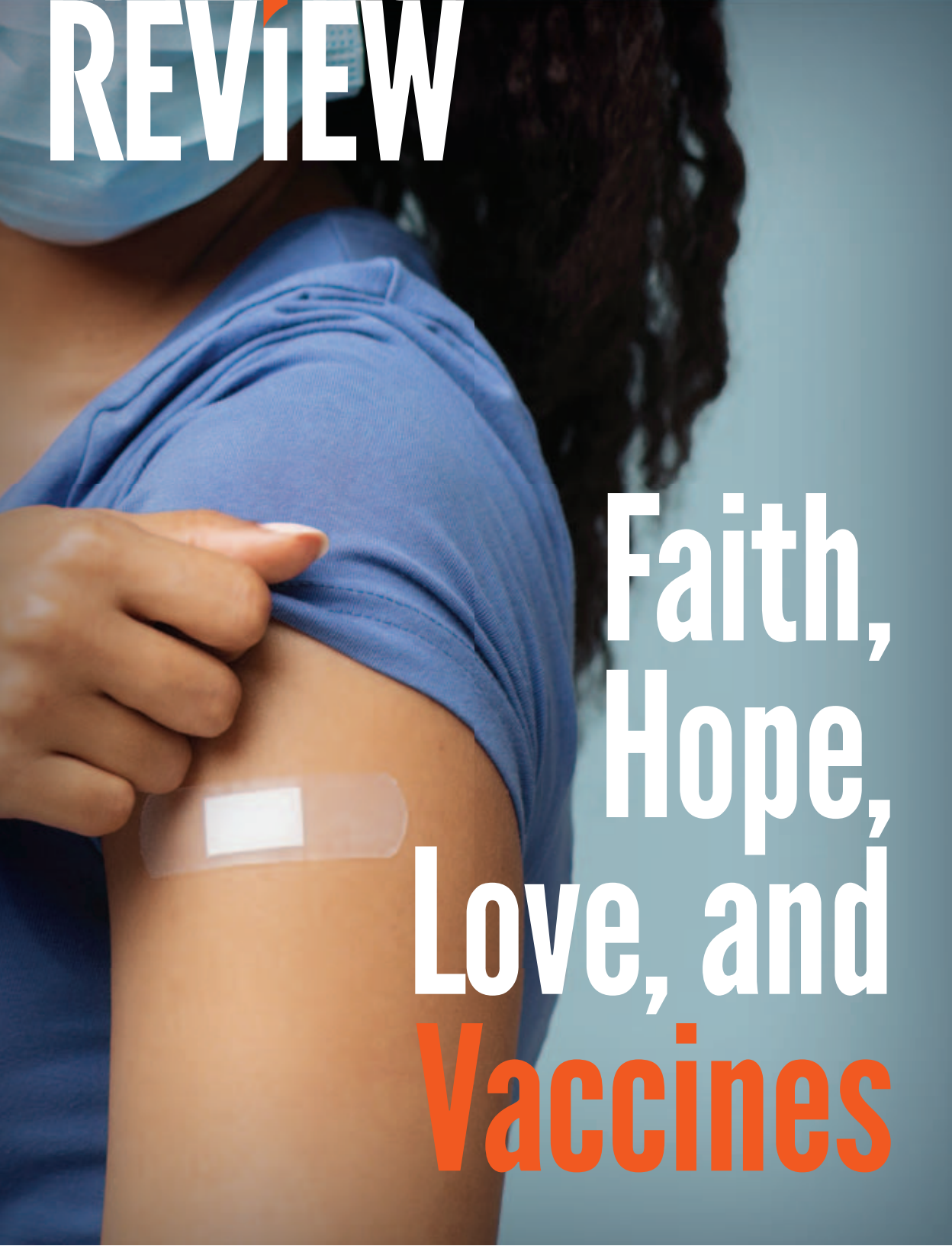


# ADVENTIST REVIEW

OCTOBER 2021: CHARLES E. BRADFORD PASSES TO HIS REST + IS VACCINATION BIBLICAL? + HOW SHALL WE NOW DO CHURCH? + MOUNTAIN PASSES AND GOD'S GRACES + PARABLES OF PICKLE BALL



# Faith, Hope, Love, and Vaccines

# HIS Impact On Me

## A Strong Claim for the Gospel



The Holy Spirit was working miraculously in the group pictured above, not only in the hearts of the students but to their parents/guardians as well. In addition to the **sixteen students** that were baptized, **three parents** were also baptized along with **two graduate students**, and **five staff children** for a total of **twenty-six** souls.

Pastor Ludy Mahinay is the school's Bible class teacher, chaplain, and Pastor. He spends a lot of his time in the spiritual area of our students. However, he would be the first to tell you that these baptisms are the result of a collaborative work of Divine power and a staff that loves their students.

"I did a random survey in class, asking our students what inspired them to accept God or get baptized," he said. "The multiple-choice options included: various specific teachings/doctrines or topics of the bible and a space for an 'other' response." The responses are heartwarming.

"Some answered with specific topics that convinced them," Pastor Mahinay recalls, "but generally, they wrote what convinces them is how all the staff here treated them, cared for them, and loved them. To me, this is a perfect reflection of God's love through action and not just in words."

This is how God works: He utilizes a network of human vessels, from the supporters of Holbrook Indian School who help make the resources and staff possible, to the staff who in turn provide direct education, love, and care.

"The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian."  
— Ellen White

You can help other Native American youth experience God's transforming love by making a gift to Holbrook Indian School today at [HolbrookIndianSchool.org](https://HolbrookIndianSchool.org)



## FEATURES



- 18 **IS VACCINATION BIBLICAL?** | JIŘÍ MOSKALA  
The Bible gives us God's ideas, not just Hebrew or English words.



- 26 **THE ADVENTIST HEALTH MESSAGE AND COVID-19** | FRED HARDINGE  
Living the Adventist health message may be the first line of defense.



- 30 **AFTER COVID, WHAT?** | ZENO CHARLES-MARCEL  
Christians have the forecast—the good and bad, the high and low of it.
- 34 **SO MANY VACCINE CONCERNS!** | RICHARD SLOOP  
An Adventist physician weighs in on the COVID vaccine.



**“Humans also need to apply common sense to life’s problems. We are rational beings, and our Creator gives us the ability to think and know what works best for our health. Our Lord wants us to take care of our bodies and live responsible lives because we are accountable to Him.”**

# 20

## ARTICLES

**38 HOW SHALL WE NOW DO CHURCH?**

**KYOSHIN AHN**  
The contagious compassion of Jesus should motivate Christians in uncertain times.

**42 FAMILY FOES**

**COSTIN JORDACHE AND ANGELINE DAVID BRAUER**  
The Church is family. So is quarreling an option?

**44 VAXED, VEXED, OR OTHER?**

**PETER LANDLESS**  
Need the latest guidance on vaccination? This is it.

**48 IN TENTS**

**JOHN WESLEY TAYLOR V**  
Isaiah’s word to Israel is strikingly relevant to us today.

**52 MOUNTAIN PASSES AND GOD’S GRACE**

**KRISTI RICH**  
Grace comes in many forms, and this time it’s in the weather.

**54 THE LAST SUPPER MYTH**

**STEVE CONSTANTINE**  
The Last Supper wasn’t really last; it was first.

**58 CREATION SABBATH**

**ELLEN G. WHITE**  
Sometimes we need a reminder about Sabbath.

**60 PARABLES OF PICKLEBALL**

**JOSEPH OLSTAD**  
We can find the gospel in all kinds of places, even a pickleball court.

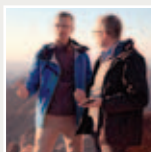
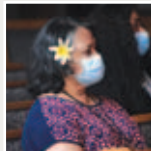
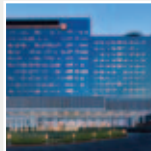
**64 WHAT’S WRONG WITH RELIGION ANYWAY?**

**JULIET BROMME**  
Why the “let’s avoid religion” bandwagon is not the one for you.



## NEWS | OPINION

- » Loma Linda Celebrates Opening of New Medical Campus
- » “We Are Fulfilling the Dream of Our Ancestors”
- » Series on the Codex Sinaiticus Invites Faith Development
- » Charles E. Bradford, First NAD President, Passes to His Rest
- » Nigeria Vice President Visits, Commends Adventist University



### EDITORIAL

- 5 **BILL KNOTT**  
A SIGN OF THE TIMES

### DEPARTMENTS

- 6 **LETTERS**
- 69 **CLOSER LOOK**
- 70 **VOICES**

### COLUMNS

- 25 **JOURNEYS WITH JESUS**  
JILL MORIKONE
- 47 **CURE FOR THE COMMON LIFE**  
HYVETH WILLIAMS
- 57 **REIMAGINING FAITH**  
SHAWN BRACE
- 72 **IN OTHER WORDS**  
JARED THURMON

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# TRENDING

## THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:

- 1 Charles E. Bradford, First President of the North American Division, Passes to His Rest
- 2 Vaccinated Yet? So What?
- 3 Vaccination: A Biblical and Theological Reflection
- 4 Vaccines: We've Been Here Before
- 5 Vaccination, Mandates, and Freedom

## 161 YEARS AGO

Charles W. Sperry was one of the delegates that attended a "General Conference" in 1860, in Battle Creek, Michigan. It was a significant event. The agenda was concentrated on the request from James White to legally organize. While the delegates finally agreed to organize, they were faced with what the church would be called. Delegates were divided on direction and potential names. Toward the end of the debate, Sperry made this speech:

"It looks to me that it is perfectly right and pleasing to the Lord, if we are not in harmony on this subject, to talk the matter over in the Spirit of the Lord. I have this confidence in the Spirit of the Lord that it will lead us into the same mind and judgment. And these brethren that can see the matter clearly are prepared to enlighten us who cannot see it so plainly. I believe that when we touch the right thing, and move in harmony with the Spirit of God, His blessing will follow our action. My mind was enlightened somewhat this forenoon in regard to it. My prejudices have been great; but in order to get light, I wish to lay my prejudices on the subject on the altar. I hope we shall not be hasty in the matter, but help each other on these points as we did last night. I believe God will give wisdom. I understand that at some time God's people will have a name; for John saw them having their Father's name on their foreheads" (*Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, Oct. 23, 1860).



On October 1, 1860, the name Seventh-day Adventist was selected. May the wisdom and grace of our pioneers find its way into our conversation and hearts as we also wrestle with tough issues today.

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BILL KNOTT



*I have watched the politics of attack invade the landscape of this movement.*

## A Sign of the Times

Enter any colleague's cubicle or office, and you quickly spot the items that make the space distinctive. Above, around, and on the standard-issue furniture are pieces of the occupant's past—his travel; her grandchildren; an anniversary photo; a philodendron that miraculously survives with little water and no natural light.

But perched atop the central bookcase of the six that ring my office walls is a rectangular sign that neatly sums up the role each of the 11 *Review* editors has discovered to be his own: "*Voice Crying in the Wilderness Department.*"

I've watched for a decade as first-time visitors and guests smile ruefully at my plaque. "Are you bragging or complaining?" one dared to ask. I grimaced, but didn't give an answer, for who can really say? Some roles, including being editor of the oldest journal in Adventism, require an ability to swim against the tide, to speak when others choose the seeming safety of silence, to call God's pilgrim people on toward better, wiser, higher things. There are, in fact, responsibilities that "come with the job."

But the anger and divisiveness that now dominate the discourse of this movement underline the loneliness inherent in my bookcase message. Are there still Adventists who believe in civil—or even civi-

lized—conversation? Are there still wise and thoughtful men and women who refuse to hurl the convenient brickbat at their theological or ecclesiastical opponents—who shun the easy swipe from their pulpits and their blogs at those who want different things for the church they love? Are there still souls who ask for quiet dialogues, for point-by-point discussion and debate—and don't deliver up their notes and anecdotes to the smoldering social media smudgepots that tar all who disagree?

I am less confident of this than I was 10 years ago, for I have watched the politics of attack invade the landscape of this movement. The sides are drawn; the banners unfurled; the pickets placed, for battle is in the air. Leaders who know better—and should do better—reach for the easy slur or hasty taunt, inciting fear when they ought to be creating understanding, even of ideas they don't like.

Persuaded by their need for stirring "Amens!" from a crowd, speakers thunder ominously against "the forces that would destroy us from within," causing many honest souls to wonder if they share the pew with heretics. God's people are too rarely led by green pastures and still waters: their loyalty is sought; their souls are not restored. Members in a thousand congregations show all the signs of

being "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36, NRSV). The complaint of Annie Smith, first poet of Adventism and the earliest female on the editorial staff of this journal, seems painfully, prophetically accurate: "*Long upon the mountains, weary, have the scattered flock been torn.*"\*

This lament is made all the more ironic by the realization that those who most need to hear a call for modest rhetoric and thoughtful dialogue will likely neither read it nor hear it. But still it must be given—for this is truly the "Voice Crying in the Wilderness Department." Even while we deplore the foolish conflicts that pit believer against believer and Paul against Apollos, we cannot cease to advocate for peace among God's remnant people. In hope, we plant the sprigs of future orchards, for where will we ever find olive branches to offer to each other if we don't put roots into the ground, and water them with kindness, sympathy, and prayer?

Paul's counsel stands the test of time—and this time of testing: "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32).<sup>†</sup>

\* Annie R. Smith, "Long Upon the Mountains," *Christ in Song* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1908), no. 736.



It will be quite interesting to see who is in heaven. I am looking forward to being surprised.

—DOUGLAS ABBOTT, LOS ALTOS, CALIFORNIA



## CAN AN ATHEIST GO TO HEAVEN?

I loved the excellent article by Charles Mills, “Can an Atheist Go to Heaven?” The good news is better than we even imagine. While we still need to do our part to tell people about Jesus and His free offer of eternal life, I agree that God’s mercy and love extend to those who never knew or heard about Jesus. God knows their hearts. It will be quite interesting to see who is in heaven. I am looking forward to being surprised.

**Douglas Abbott**  
*Los Altos, California*

## WHY WE DIG

The Bible says that the ancient city of Jericho was burned after the walls collapsed. In 1966 I saw the ashes verifying the biblical account in Joshua 6:24. We dig so as Seventh-day Adventists we may become a people of the book again. There is still something left that we can trust implicitly—the Bible. Thank God!

**Howard Loewen**  
*Lawrenceburg, Tennessee*

## INSPIRING

It was inspiring to read the August edition articles on archaeology to prove the veracity of the Bible. It reminded me of reading the first edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* revealing to the world that the Hittites, mentioned only

in the Bible, did not exist! When archaeology uncovered this great civilization, they had to issue a retraction in their next edition. I was also happy to read about the progress of youth ministries in Ukraine. After the fall of Communism, Neal C. Wilson asked me to visit Russia, Ukraine, and Moldova to meet with the leadership to start Pathfinder clubs and youth ministry. I can now see a new reality when I read of the youth forum in Ukraine, with more than 200 participants.

**Leo Ranzolin, Sr.**  
*Estero, Florida*

## A LITTLE CHUCKLE

Luella Nelson’s article, “Can’t Take Your Honda to Mexico” (August 2021), reminded me of the times I

visited an elderly person and would often go for rides on Sabbath in my Honda. At times we would just stop to take in the scenes before us. I would read from the Bible as we just sat there enjoying God’s second book, nature. In time she did choose baptism, and one day asked, “Will there be Hondas on the earth made new?” Yes, I told her, for then we will all be in one Accord.”

**Robert Rouillard**  
*Lakewood, Washington*

## REMARKABLE WOMEN OF GOD

Congratulations on the July 2021 *Adventist Review* theme, “Remarkable Women of God.” The excellent articles and thoroughly researched time line remind us of the work yet to be done. I especially appreciated the article by Gerald Klingbeil, “Rizpah.” It was very meaningful and well written. From the beginning of the Adventist Church, women have been faithfully answering God’s call and growing the church. During the past 50 years more and more women have been quietly and painfully waiting for justice in the church. When will a David arise and bring this about? Thank you for your prophetic voice. Keep up the good work.

**Selma Chajj Mastrapa**



I sometimes feel that the immediate task that God wants me to accomplish is to build a relationship with a person, rather than to convert them to my beliefs. —GREGORY MATTHEWS, VIA ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG

**2022 SPECIAL GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION**

Official notice is hereby given that a Special Session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will be held January 18, 2022 in the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists World Headquarters Building, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States. The meeting will begin at 8:00 AM, January 18, 2022. All duly accredited delegates are urged to be present at that time.

*Ted N C Wilson,  
General Conference President  
Erton C Köhler,  
General Conference Secretary*

**COMMENTS FROM ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG**

**MIAMI TO BECOME HOME TO WORLD’S FIRST BLUE ZONES CENTER**

This sounds strangely familiar. A Battle Creek Sanitarium for the twenty-first century? May the lessons learned with the venture of yesteryear be prayerfully applied here. So much good can be done if God, not man, is exalted. What seems to be missing in all the verbiage of this article is any clear addressing of the spiritual health of the client.

**J. Phillips Williams**

**WOULD JESUS POST HIS OPINIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA?**

I sometimes feel that the immediate task that God wants me to accomplish is to build a relationship with a person, rather than to convert them to my beliefs. Yes, I believe that Christ would post on social media. But His initial posts in a thread would be in response to the theme of the thread, rather than a statement of doctrine.

**Gregory Matthews**

**VACCINES: WE’VE BEEN HERE BEFORE**

Thank you, Dr. Hart, for your commentary on this important public health issue facing our nation and the world today. Being in the field of public health myself (I am a graduate of Loma Linda University’s School of Public Health), I agree with you. When it comes to vaccines, we have been here before, facing many of the same controversies of the past, but I have never seen it so politicized as it is today.

**John Westerdahl, PhD, MA, MPH, CNS, RDN, FAND, DipACLM**

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Paid circulation to term subscribers	17,342	12,444
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I certify that my statements above are correct and complete.  
Bill Knott, Executive Editor/Director of Adventist Review Ministries

**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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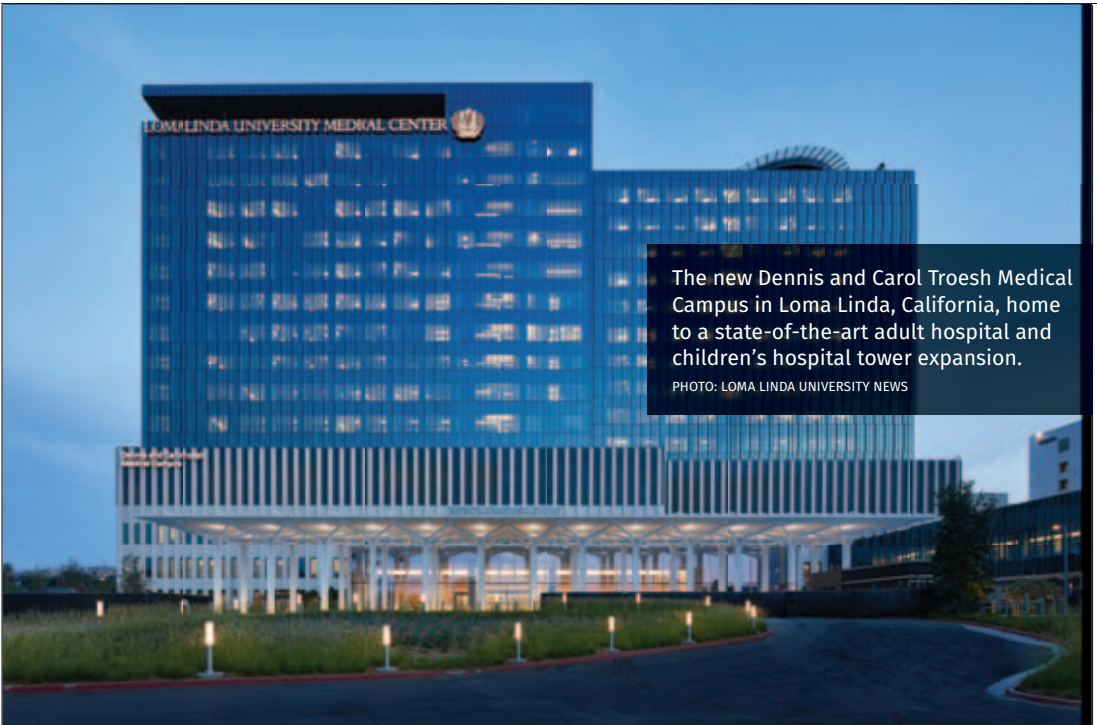


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**“When we focus on the practical side of the ministry, it will give us the tools that we need to minister to the heart issues of the people that God has called us to serve.”**

**Two Percent Ministry Board, p. 11**

# NEWS



The new Dennis and Carol Troesh Medical Campus in Loma Linda, California, home to a state-of-the-art adult hospital and children's hospital tower expansion.

PHOTO: LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY NEWS

## LOMA LINDA CELEBRATES OPENING OF NEW MEDICAL CAMPUS

**FACILITIES ARE HOME TO ADVANCED PATIENT CARE**

BY ANSEL OLIVER, LARRY BECKER, AND SHEANN BRANDON, LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH NEWS

**L**oma Linda University Health (LLUH) officially opened the Dennis and Carol Troesh Medical Campus on August 6. The new campus in Loma Linda, California, United States, is home to a state-of-the-art adult hospital and children's hospital tower expansion—a momentous occasion years in the making, as leaders celebrated with a jubilant ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Built to meet updated state seis-

mic codes for acute-care facilities, the campus is home to LLUH's new 16-story medical center and nine-story children's hospital tower. The campus incorporates leading advances in patient safety and comfort and was designed to continue the organization's 115-year legacy of care and health-care education in what has become one of the most medically complex regions in the United States.

The new campus was made possible in part by the philanthropy efforts of Vision 2020—The Campaign for a Whole Tomorrow. Leaders thanked philanthropists Dennis and Carol Troesh for their lead gift of US\$100 million to the initiative.

“This is truly a historic day in the legacy of Loma Linda University Health,” Richard Hart, president of Loma Linda University Health, said. “There are no words





View of the helipad of the new hospital in Loma Linda.

PHOTO: LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY NEWS

to adequately express the sincere gratitude and excitement that we feel as we open these doors to the community.”

Hart recounted his journey. He was born in the Loma Linda Sanitarium, located on a nearby hill, which now houses two university schools. He attended the Loma Linda University School of Medicine and helped move patients into the medical center’s cloverleaf towers when they opened in 1967.

On Sunday, August 8, Hart took part in the transfer of patients to the new medical center on the Dennis and Carol Troesh Medical Campus.

“What a remarkable transition in one lifetime from a quiet sanitarium with a College of Medical Evangelists to a world-renowned academic health center known as Loma Linda University Health,” Hart said. “We stand today on the shoulders of many who have made this transition a reality.”

The acute-care facility is built upon 126 base isolators to reduce the impact of seismic activity. The medical center is the second-tallest hospital in California and has 320 licensed beds, while the children’s hospital expansion adds 84

licensed pediatric beds, for a total pediatric bed count of 364.

Kerry Heinrich, CEO of Loma Linda University Health Hospitals, reflected on the Seventh-day Adventist legacy of the organization. He highlighted LLUH’s cofounder Ellen White arriving in the area in 1905 and remarking, “This is the very place” that would be used to bring hope and healing. The new campus, Heinrich said, begins a new chapter in that legacy.

“This very place will be home to thousands of dedicated physicians, nurses, and clinicians, a place where they will provide world-class clinical care and education,” Heinrich said. “This very place will support the intense efforts of researchers whose discoveries will make an impact around the world.”

LLUH leaders thanked the state of California for its support of US\$165 million in funding. State treasurer Fiona Ma expressed her appreciation at the ceremony. “I want to thank the Loma Linda community for all your good work and your persistence in making this happen,” she said.

A special additional ceremony was also held on the new facility’s fifth floor for the San Manuel

Maternity Pavilion. Leaders thanked the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians for their contribution of US\$25 million. The gift, the largest in the tribe’s history, recognized the century-long partnership between the hospital and the tribe.

Loma Linda University Health comprises eight schools, six hospitals, and approximately 17,000 employees. LLUH is the flagship academic health sciences center of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and it has sponsored numerous missionaries and served as a consultant for the establishment of the six other Seventh-day Adventist medical schools worldwide.

“The future physicians and health-care professionals who learn here will have many opportunities to train in multidisciplinary teams. They will come to understand that meaningful patient experiences must be at the center of everything we do,” Tamara Thomas, executive vice president for medical affairs at Loma Linda University Health, said. “It is my hope that the work taking place within these walls will transform the lives of both our current and future health-care professionals and the diverse community we serve.”





A participant follows the program on the opening night of the DVELiP Leadership Conference in Auburn, Washington.

PHOTO: MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

## “WE ARE FULFILLING THE DREAMS OF OUR ANCESTORS”

**NAD MINISTRY TO PACIFIC ISLANDERS MEETS FOR FIRST-EVER CONFERENCE.**

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Scores of Seventh-day Adventist church leaders and members met for the first-ever DVELiP Leadership Conference, under the title “Re-Thinking Mission,” in Auburn, Washington, United States, August 29-31. Many more participants followed the event online. The conference was organized by the Two Percent Ministry, launched in 2020 to support outreach by and for Pacific Islander communities in the North American Division (NAD).

“DVELiP is a vehicle that we, as the Pacific Islander and faith-based community, can use not only to empower our leaders both young and old but to also serve our larger communities,” the Two Percent Ministry board wrote in introductory remarks. “When we focus on the practical side of the ministry, it will give us the tools that we need to minister to the heart issues of the people that God has called us to serve.”

Participants were reminded that DVELiP stands for Discipleship, Vocation, Evangelism, Leadership, Indigenous, and Preaching. “These are tools that can be used to better our communities and our surroundings, but none of it makes sense without Christ at the center of it,” the board wrote.

### LAUNCHED TO BLESS OTHERS

Two Percent Ministry can be traced back many years and even decades, Meshach Soli, chair of the board, explained. “It was actually the dream of our parents and grandparents who came to this, a foreign land,” Soli said.

The idea came about after Soli attended an eHuddle series of meetings in Florida in 2017. These events, organized by the NAD Evangelism Visioning and Leadership Team, are held regularly to discuss how pastors and church members

can better witness and reach others for Christ. It was there that Soli recognized that Pacific Islanders like him, and indigenous people, represent 2 percent of the NAD membership. “In fact,” he said, “in the list of membership by ethnic and cultural groups, we were listed as ‘Others.’” The group includes people from Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, Fiji, and other islands, as well as indigenous members from New Zealand and Hawaii.

In the NAD territory, Pacific Islanders, some of them second- and third-generation U.S. residents, must grapple with various challenges, as many in the younger generation are not so tightly connected to the Adventist Church of their parents and grandparents. All of this instilled a new sense of urgency. During a past camp meeting at Auburn Adventist Academy, where the DVELiP event took place, Pacific Islander pastors had met

## “Remember that the best way to protect the church is to grow the kingdom.”

and, Soli said, decided that “we have to do more about this; we have to gather together to do more.” Despite the pandemic-related challenges, they officially launched the Two Percent Ministry in August 2020.

Their goal is simple but encompassing, Soli shared. “To equip and empower all people to be a blessing to the greater community that is around us,” he said. “We are fulfilling the dreams of our ancestors, the hope of our ancestors who came to this foreign land. Our hope is now that you will take [what you learn at the conference], not to bless yourself, but to use it to bless the greater community.” And, he added, “remember this is not just for you; this is also for our children, the generation to come.”

### THE BEST WAY TO PROTECT THE CHURCH

The opening general session at Auburn Academy Seventh-day Adventist Church on August 29 included congregational singing in English and Samoan, an introduction to the ministry, and a keynote message. Jose Cortes, Jr., associate director of the NAD Ministerial Association, brought the salutations and encouragement of the regional church.

“Remember that the best way to protect the church is to grow the kingdom,” Cortes told them. Drawing a parallel with the early Christian church, Cortes reminded those attending in person or fol-

lowing the program online that the early church faced all kinds of challenges. “There were economic problems, division problems, and on top of it, there was persecution. But that didn’t prevent them from moving forward,” he said. “I hope this is the first step of a movement that will work to tell others that Jesus is coming soon.”

### WHEN PEOPLE SEE YOU

The keynote speaker on the opening night was Jesse Wilson, director of the Bradford Cleveland Brooks Leadership Center at Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama. He is also the director of the Pastoral Evangelism and Leadership Council (PELC), whose model the Two Percent Ministry follows.

Wilson congratulated the ministry leaders on their initiative. “As much as we are inclusive, there are some things that we can only say to ourselves,” he said. “Ministries like this one have been created to do great things for God [because] we have been saved to serve.”

He based his message on the story of Hezekiah’s illness in 2 Kings 20:1-6, emphasizing how Hezekiah, in his moment of distress, sought God. “Sometimes it’s better to pray to a wall as long as you talk to God,” Wilson said. “And remember, sometimes God’s first response is not God’s last response.” According to the Bible, God granted Hezekiah’s request and gave him 15 more years to live.

Just like Hezekiah, Wilson explained, those of us who so far survived COVID-19 are being given a second chance. “Thank God for the second chance! Use your second chance to thank Him, to give Him glory!”

Now comes the critical part, Wilson said, because whenever God does anything of significance in your life, people see it. It happened to Hezekiah as Babylonians heard about the miracle, and it is happening again now.

“As people are looking at our churches, as we are now broadcasting our services around the world, what do they see?” Wilson said. “People who come to our churches need to see unity, creativity, and power,” he emphasized.

Above all, they need to see Jesus, Wilson said. “When they come back discouraged after a pandemic, having not been able even to mourn the relatives they lost to COVID-19, they need to see Jesus in us,” he emphasized. “Jesus is what people are looking for. They look for a relationship, help, hope, acceptance, but they are looking for Jesus.”

Wilson told Pacific Islanders and others that his prayer is that the Two Percent Ministry members may keep Jesus front and center in all that they do. “Jesus will accept you as you are, and then He will help you to move forward. He can make something out of nothing,” Wilson said. “My question is ‘What do people see when they see you? Do they see Jesus when they see you?’”



Hosts Tor Tjeransen (left) and Victor Hulbert discuss details of the production of Codex Sinaiticus on Mount Sinai.

PHOTO: TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION NEWS

## SERIES ON THE CODEx SINAITICUS INVITES FAITH DEVELOPMENT

NEW SERIES FILMED IN THE SINAI PENINSULA  
PREMIERED ON SEPTEMBER 2.

BY TED NEWS NETWORK AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

Situated in a remote valley on the Sinai Peninsula is a small Christian monastery that has withstood the ravages of time and history since A.D. 565. It is one of the oldest working monasteries in the world—and is filled with hidden treasures.

Pilgrims and tourists from around the world flock to Saint Catherine's Monastery, and some will climb nearby Jebel Musa, the traditional Mount Sinai. Few get to see the vast collection of ancient manuscripts hidden in the monastery library.

From September 2, that changed with the release of the documentary *Codex Sinaiticus: A Journey in Biblical Discovery*, which takes viewers on a rare visit inside Saint Catherine's Monastery to meet with Father Justin, chief librarian to a collection of more than 2,300 ancient manuscripts.

As Father Justin shares the history of the ancient Bible texts discovered there, he states, "These are not just historical texts; these are living texts." He notes how understanding the story makes a significant difference for trust and faith today.

In the combined production of Hope Channel Norway and the

Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, hosts Tor Tjeransen and Victor Hulbert take the viewer on an inspiring journey inside the monastery. Through an additional series of shorter video clips, they guide the audience to relive the biblical accounts of Moses and the children of Israel, bringing modern insights to their inspiring—and sometimes distressing—stories.

### FILMING CHALLENGES

The documentary was not easy filming, producers said. Hope Channel Norway worked hard to gain all the necessary permits to visit and film in this historically significant but high-security region. It involved meticulous preparation, prayer, and perseverance. Even with those permissions, it was an answer to prayer to gain entrance past the Egyptian security forces, who had recently turned away a film crew from a major international broadcaster.

Silja Leknes and Sindre Hammersbøen worked with camera and sound to give viewers access to rarely seen sights. They also had to carry equipment to the top of Jebel Musa (Mount Sinai). In one of the clips, an out-

of-breath Tjeransen jokes that he could understand why Moses stayed there 40 days and 40 nights after the effort of making the climb.

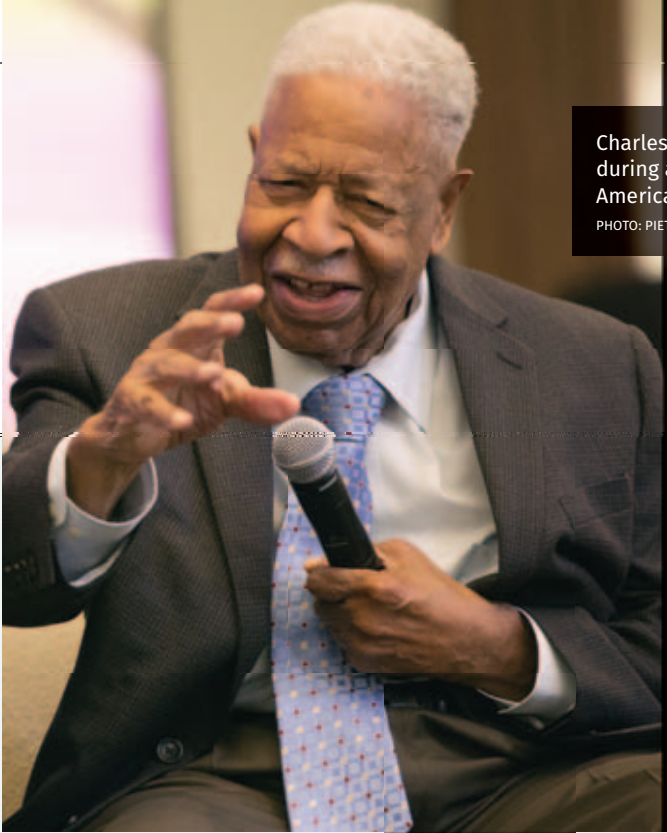
"My delight," Hulbert stated, "is that Hope Channel Norway and TED Communication working together [allowed us] to produce the series in two languages at reduced cost and easily make it available to other language groups for their translation and use."

It was an experiment in working together bilingually, but as both hosts learned from each other and blended their skills, they believe that they have a format that could easily be repeated in the future and used by other teams.

### POSITIVE WITNESS

The documentary and the accompanying short videos, *Moments From Sinai*, are more than just a travelogue or historical journey, the producers said. Watching a spectacular sunset from the mountaintop, Hulbert and Tjeransen found themselves sharing the story of Moses and God's faithfulness to a young Australian couple who had climbed the mountain but knew nothing about the Bible. The lively conversation during the descent led the couple to want to explore the story further. That is the purpose of the series, they said. Exploration and discovery lead to faith development, helping people to develop trust in Scripture and, more important, the God that Scripture reveals.

*Moments From Sinai* is available in English on Adventist Review TV. 📺



Charles Bradford answers a question during an interview at the 2017 North American Division Year-End Meetings.

PHOTO: PIETER DAMSTEEG

## CHARLES E. BRADFORD, FIRST NAD PRESIDENT, PASSES TO HIS REST

**BELOVED LEADER LEAVES A LEGACY OF  
INFLUENCE AND INSPIRATION**

KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN, BENJAMIN BAKER, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

**C**harles E. Bradford, first president of the North American Division (NAD) of Seventh-day Adventists, passed away on September 9, in Huntsville, Alabama, United States. He was 96.

In 1979 Bradford was elected to succeed Neal C. Wilson as leader of the NAD and named its first president. Wilson, who had served as a vice president in the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists with responsibility for North America, moved on to become president of the General Conference. Bradford, the first African American to serve as NAD president, and his administrative team were instrumental in the NAD's development toward functioning as a stand-alone division territory of the Adventist

Church. At his election Bradford joined the NAD after serving as associate secretary of the General Conference from 1970 to 1979.

### HIS BEGINNINGS

Charles Edward Bradford was born in Washington, D.C., on July 12, 1925, to Etta and Robert Bradford. Etta Littlejohn was born in Vicksburg, Mississippi, in 1883, and she became a Seventh-day Adventist from Bible studies on the *Morning Star* boat. She was one of the first 16 students to attend Oakwood Industrial School (now Oakwood University) at its opening in late 1896. From there Littlejohn attended Melrose Sanitarium near Boston, and for a while was a part of the caregiving staff for an elderly Ellen

G. White. Charles Bradford stated, "My mother exerted the greatest influence on my life."

Etta met her spouse, Robert Lee Bradford, at Oakwood. Robert was born in Athens, Alabama, in 1882. He was a part of a corps of early Black Adventist ministers who laid a solid foundation for Adventism among African Americans.

Etta and Robert's son Charles Edward was one of eight children. He attended Oakwood, where he decided to study for the ministry. On May 23, 1948, Bradford married Ethel McKenzie, who was an administrative assistant for the South Atlantic Conference. He said of Ethel, "She is the great joy of my life." The couple had three children: Sharon Louise Lewis; Charles, Jr.; and Dwight. At the time of Charles's passing, they had been married for more than 73 years.

### PASTORAL MINISTRY

Bradford began pastoring in 1946, and for 15 years ministered in Monroe and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, St. Louis, and New York City. During this period he began perfecting a folksy yet highly intellectual oratorical style that would become his trademark.

As a pastor-evangelist Bradford had great success leading churches and winning souls. He was one of hundreds of pastors who made regional conferences not only viable but exemplary in a time of considerable uncertainty.

"Elder Bradford was a spiritual giant among us," G. Alexander Bryant,



# “Elder Bradford was a spiritual giant among us. The impact of his legacy and ministry can never be fully measured or ascertained.”

—G. Alexander Bryant, president of the North American Division

current NAD president, said. “The impact of his legacy and ministry can never be fully measured or ascertained. It continues in the lives of generations of leaders, pastors, and members who have been influenced and inspired by his life. He always encouraged us to excel in our God-given talents and assignments.”

## ADMINISTRATOR AND CIVIL RIGHTS ADVOCATE

At 36 years old, “Brad,” as he was known, became the fourth president of the Lake Region Conference, a position he held for nine years. Under his leadership, the conference saw unprecedented growth, increasing membership by 80 percent. In this decade of racial upheaval in the United States, he strove to encourage the region’s churches, most in urban areas with large Black populations, to meet the needs of their communities in practical ways, with a special focus on strengthening the Black family.

Within the church, Bradford privately and publicly prodded church members to address the racial crisis. In 1966 he wrote a paper to the General Conference Session on the great need for the Adventist Church to engage in improving the condition of Blacks in America. Among other things, he stated: “The Negro Seventh-day Adventist is perforce affected by the tension and the drama of his people’s struggle for justice and equal rights. Half measures and token gestures do not satisfy now.”

Bradford was a Black Adventist leader who seemed to transcend race and whose rise showed that the “Blacks-are-only-fit-to-lead-Blacks” notion was being challenged in the church. His ability as a leader was undeniable, his oratorical and communication skills impeccable, and his commitment to the church’s mission unassailable. In his latest book, reflecting on more than 70 years of ministry, Bradford stated, “I have a lifelong romance with the Seventh-day Adventist movement. Right or wrong, my church. I am a ‘company man.’”

## IN RETIREMENT

At the General Conference Session in 1990, Bradford retired a beloved figure who influenced, mentored, and blessed hundreds of thousands around the world. In his retirement Bradford continued to speak around the world, share his vast knowledge with the church’s current and future leaders, and connect with the church’s heart, its members. Always a popular author, he published five books in retirement and was the subject of a biography.

In honor of Charles Bradford and two other Adventist legends, C. D. Brooks and E. E. Cleveland, Oakwood University established the Bradford Cleveland Brooks Leadership Center on the campus of Oakwood in 2007. The center’s mission has been to provide servant leadership training for future and key leaders, continuing the legacy of its three namesakes.

## TRIBUTES

Ron Smith, president of the Southern Union Conference, said, “It is with a sense of deep grief and sadness that we experience the loss of one of the outstanding Seventh-day Adventist leaders of all time. Elder Charles Bradford, a pioneer, consummate preacher, conference president, division president, and chair of multiple institutional boards, leaves an enormous vacancy and gigantic hole in the hearts of myriads of clergy and Christians within and without the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.”

General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson agreed.

“Elder Bradford was a giant in so many ways—a faithful follower of Christ, wonderful preacher, diligent Bible student, dynamic intellect, experienced administrator, caring pastor, loving husband and father, encouraging brother in Christ, long-time friend,” Wilson shared. “Elder Bradford seemed to always have things under control and had a way about him that, even in difficult situations, you would know that he was thinking three steps ahead of others and, by God’s grace, things would work out well to God’s glory.”

Wilson continued, “On behalf of the world family of Seventh-day Adventists, we wish Mrs. Bradford and the family our warmest regards, Christian sympathy, and deepest condolences.”

*For a more detailed history of the life and ministry of Bradford, visit [bit.ly/3Ah0QhR](http://bit.ly/3Ah0QhR).*



Nigeria vice president Yemi Osinbajo (center) during his visit to the campus of Babcock University in Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State. PHOTO: BABCOCK UNIVERSITY NEWS

## NIGERIA VICE PRESIDENT VISITS, COMMENDS ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

**YEMI OSINBAJO CONGRATULATED LEADERS FOR INVESTING IN HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION.**

BY BABCOCK UNIVERSITY NEWS, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

The vice president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Yemi Osinbajo, commended the Seventh-day Adventist Church and Babcock University for supporting the national government's drive for high-quality education in Nigeria. His call came as he gave a special address at the school's thirty-third inaugural lecture on its campus in Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, on August 8. Osinbajo came as a special guest and former classmate of the keynote speaker, Oluseyi Oduyoye.

Osinbajo based his words of commendation on the Adventist Church's supportive role in building a rich workforce in Nigeria through its investments in Babcock University. "Let me commend the Seventh-day Adventist Church for investments it has made in developing quality education in Nigeria. This is the direction many religious organizations must follow," he said.

He also called on the state government to support the federal

government's development efforts for the survival of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. Osinbajo shared that the federal government is making efforts to boost economic growth by providing SMEs with seed investments, grants, and incentives for expanding trade clusters in Benue and Anambra states. Against this background, he said, state support can ensure these efforts go a long way.

Osinbajo revealed that the Africa Development Bank (AfDB) has offered to support the federal government's SME growth with US\$500 million to complement its current effort. "The economic future of our country is dependent on small businesses," Osinbajo emphasized. "SMEs employ the largest population of the workforce, and the state government support is very critical. Those businesses bring hope, jobs, and support for many families," he said.

### ABOUT BABCOCK UNIVERSITY

Babcock University, as it is now known, opened on September 17, 1959, as Adventist College of West Africa (ACWA). Established by the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a senior college for training church workers from the West African sub-region, ACWA opened its doors with only seven ministerial students.

By 1966, when it graduated the first set of Bachelor of Arts degree holders in its own name, enrollment included students taking business administration as potential accountants within and outside the church; and two-year pre-nursing students preparing to pursue a nursing career at the church's School of Nursing at Ile-Ife, Osun State. An affiliation agreement with Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States, allowed the school to award Bachelor of Arts degrees in biology, business administration, history, religion, and secretarial studies.

In 1999 the government of Nigeria included Babcock University as one of the first three private universities in the country. The school officially gained university status on June 17, 1999.

As a private university in Nigeria since 1999, Babcock now has a postgraduate school that opened in the third quarter of 2010 and a medical school launched in January 2012. According to the school's website, it offers an education that inspires hope and transforms lives. 📖



**PRESIDENT OF ZAMBIA IS A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST.** Hakainde Sammy Hichilema, a Seventh-day Adventist church member, has become the seventh president of the republic of Zambia after an official inauguration ceremony in the capital city of Lusaka on August 24. Hichilema's message during the campaigns centered on uniting the country, which has 73 tribes, and revamping the nation's ailing economy. At the church level, Hichilema and his wife, Mutinta Shepande Hichilema, are baptized members of Chilanga mission district in the Lusaka Conference. Both were invested as Master Guides in the youth ministry of the Adventist Church in December 2020.



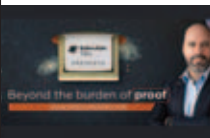
**MIAMI TO BECOME HOME TO WORLD'S FIRST BLUE ZONES CENTER.** In downtown Miami's highly anticipated mixed-use development, Legacy Hotel & Residences signed a record-breaking joint venture deal with Adventist Health called Blue Legacy Ventures (JV) on August 19. The JV will lease and operate a first-of-its-kind, 120,000-square-foot (about 11,150-square-meter) health and well-being center. This marks the next chapter for Adventist Health and its subsidiary blue zones in putting their longevity principles into practice via this flagship center for well-being. Services will include diagnostic, surgical, medical, spa, fitness, lifestyle medicine, and well-being improvement programming.



**THE AUSTRALIAN UNION CONFERENCE HAS ELECTED A NEW PRESIDENT.** Terry Johnson was elected as president of the Australian Union Conference (AUC). His appointment comes after Jorge Muñoz, the incumbent AUC president, indicated his intention to step aside earlier this year. Muñoz expressed a desire to return to local church ministry after 16 years in church administration. Johnson has ministered in the United States, New Zealand, and Australia as a local church pastor and conference youth director. He was president of the Western Australian Conference before moving to his current role as president of the Greater Sydney Conference.



**PATHFINDER CLUB STARTS TIKTOK MINISTRY.** During the pandemic the Jasper Seventh-day Adventist Church Adventurer and Pathfinder clubs were trying to reach more youth in their community and beyond. In southern Indiana, the Lake Region Conference club Group 180° found that TikTok was just the key to sharing the gospel. When the group began in March, it had 55 followers. After they posted a story called The Widow's Gift, the video went viral with 85,000 views. The group also hosts a live Bible trivia show with up to 70-80 live viewers at a time. The club's media ministry now has 7,370 followers.



**IN IRELAND, ADVENTISTS LAUNCH NEW MINISTRY FOR REACHING THE SECULAR MIND.** With a passion for reaching out to young people and the secular of skeptical mind, Dan Serb, president of the Irish Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, recently launched a new ministry titled BelieveAble Talks. The initiative is specifically aimed at anyone interested in the often contentious relationship between religion and science. It is designed as a platform for open and honest dialogue, where questions and doubt are welcome.



**IT IS WRITTEN SELECTS NEW EVANGELISM DIRECTOR.** Wes Peppers joined the It Is Written team as the ministry's new evangelism director. He previously served as a pastor, personal ministries director, evangelism coordinator, and associate ministerial director in the Michigan Conference. As the new evangelism director, Peppers will handle the creation and execution of the master plan of evangelism for the ministry. Previously he has done mission work in 35 countries and will now lead the evangelism team as It Is Written continues to preach the gospel around the world.

# IS VACCINATION

# BIB

**Biblical-  
theological  
reflections  
on a **live issue****

## **JIŘÍ MOSKALA**

*This article is a lightly edited version of a commentary first posted by the Health Ministries Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. —Eds.*

**T**he word “vaccination” does not occur in the Bible, as is the case with many other important health terms, such as “vitamins,” “transfusion,” “high blood pressure,” “kidney transplant,” “injection,” “pills,” etc. In the Bible there are no Mothers Against Drunk Driving, anti-smoking campaigns, instructions on gym classes, breathing fresh air, drinking six to eight glasses of water

every day, washing your hands before each meal, brushing your teeth, etc. We could create a much longer list of such good practices not verbally addressed in the Holy Scriptures.

## **WHAT'S IN YOUR BIBLE**

That longer list would include the command “Be vaccinated.” Or “Don’t be vaccinated.” So we need godly thinking to guide us as to whether to be vaccinated or not. Biblical teaching can help to counter misinformation and disinformation on health issues, even though it is not a medical





textbook on health. The Holy Scriptures present important health principles that are to be (a) the bases of such reflections, (b) beneficial components, and (c) elements we can implement in everyday routines of life. The general rule is plain: What is in harmony with biblical health principles and does not contradict them is permissible. One can argue that it may be recommended or even required when health or life is to be preserved.

Allowed are activities that are congruent with God's revelation, though not directly mentioned in the Bible. Such activities as conducting Sabbath

School or participating in potlucks on Sabbath; celebrating the Lord's Supper every quarter; building schools and hospitals, organizing the church structure with conferences, unions, etc. In other words, forbidden is (1) whatever contradicts God's explicit command, and/or (2) is in opposition to general principles of life expressed in God's Word.

These two principles are plainly in harmony with the first two commandments God gave to Adam in the Garden of Eden: "The Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the

# We have found nothing biblical that would stop people from being vaccinated.



knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die” (Gen. 2:16, NIV). Note well that God first commanded freedom by creating for humans a safe space for life and growth (general rule), and then put clear boundaries: no eating from one tree, “from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” This was a specific command. It was neither necessary nor practical to enumerate all that was allowed: you may eat from the apple, orange, fig, pear, banana, etc., etc., etc. All such was included in the general statement of freedom “to eat from any tree in the garden.” However, the specific prohibition had to be stated explicitly.

The same, sound rule must be applied to vaccinations: what is not prohibited is acceptable when it is in harmony with God’s revealed health principles.

## **RULES ABOUT VAXING—AND MUCH MORE**

Indeed, the importance of vaccinations from the biblical-theological perspective can be demonstrated from multiple angles. Prayerfully consider the following principles:

God is the only healer, the true physician, that can heal all our diseases (Deut. 7:15; 28:60; Ps. 103:3; Luke 4:40; 6:18; 7:21). In Exodus 15:26 God promised that no disease (or plague) He sent upon Egypt would fall on the Israelites if they followed His commands. He will also protect His people during the seven last plagues as He protected Israel from the Egyptian plagues (see Rev. 16).

There is no sickness or disease that He cannot heal. He is the source and giver of life for His children; He gives abundant life (John 11:25; 14:6). Scientific and traditional medicine can be beneficial. But only the Lord of heaven can be guaranteed to preserve and restore health when He so chooses.

God created humans in His image (Gen. 1:27) as intelligent beings, to use their minds to reason and acquire knowledge, and discern what is right, good, and profitable. Humans also need to apply common sense to life’s problems.

We are rational beings, and our Creator gives us the ability to think and know what works best for our health. Our Lord wants us to take care

of our bodies and live responsible lives because we are accountable to Him. Paul plainly states: “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies” (1 Cor. 6:19, 20, NIV; cf. 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 2 Cor. 5:10). Our spiritual health is closely connected to our physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being. Neither God nor we always need a “thus says the Lord” to know what to do or not to do, because He can show, and we can see the benefits or disadvantages of many of our decisions and actions. However, whatever we do should spring from biblical principles.

Applying this thinking to vaccination, we can see that this product, a result of capacities God has given to humans to think and be creative, is a lifesaving product. We can thank God for the wisdom He gives for research and invention. And we can thank Him and His human agents for the good they do in preserving and restoring life (Dan. 12:4).

We are not to expect that God will work for us when we overlook basic principles of life and are negligent, biased, lazy, or presumptuous about implementing them. Prayers for knowledge are not enough to bring success. Diligent study is also necessary. Again, it is not enough to ask for God’s intervention for reaping a good harvest and then not be willing to till the fields and work hard on maintaining the crop. In the same way, it would be presumptuous and arrogant on our part to ask God to give us good health while we neglect health principles and remain unwilling to study and apply the results of modern medicine that He has enabled us to discover for helping suffering humanity. We need to work diligently under God’s guidance and blessing: “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain” (Ps. 127:1, ESV).<sup>1</sup>

God wants us to preserve health—ours and everyone else’s—in the best possible shape and condition (3 John 2), not only to live longer, but to be able to serve others and be useful for as long as possible. Why die prematurely simply because we neglect remedies that are available to protect and prolong our lives, thus enabling us to be a blessing to others?

God commands that we protect life and care for

the health of our neighbors (Lev. 19:18; Eze. 34:4, 16). In that regard being vaccinated is an unselfish act, aiding the well-being and protection of others. There are still unknowns in the long-term research on vaccination’s effects, but the benefits far surpass its known and potential problems. Thus, becoming vaccinated is an act of kindness, because vaccinations are helping to protect others from serious sickness, hospitalization, and death.

Prayers for healing and vitality do not annul the use of different remedies, surgeries, medicines, or vaccinations. Knowing how to apply them all depends on life’s situations. Several examples come to mind from the biblical material. God could have miraculously and instantaneously healed the dying King Hezekiah by His power, but instead He chose to heal him through the remedy of a fig poultice (2 Kings 20:5-7; Isa. 38:21). God promised to heal him, yet the very prophet who brought the good news directed that the bandage of figs be applied to his wound. Jesus could have healed a blind man by His word, but He used mud mixed with His saliva for this purpose, and had the man also go and wash his eyes in order to receive his sight (John 9:1, 6, 7). Naaman had to go and wash in the Jordan River seven times to be healed of his leprosy (2 Kings 5:10-14). In all these instances the God of miracles chose to give lessons of collaborating closely between Himself and humans by using available remedies. Vaccines preserve health and stop the spread of disease, and “it is no denial of faith to use rational remedies judiciously.”<sup>2</sup>

Prevention is always more important than actual healing. To avoid being sick is a biblical mandate (John 10:10; 1 Cor. 6:20; 3 John 2). Bodies in good health and physical condition are a glory to the Creator. Beyond individual health, staying safe and keeping family and community safe are sound Christian motivations. Being healthy is not primarily about vaccination, but about establishing and developing a balanced lifestyle, resulting in being in good mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual condition to serve God and others in the most efficient way for as long as possible. Ellen White admonishes: “Train the people to correct habits and healthful practices, remembering that an ounce of preventive is more value than a pound of cure. Lectures and studies in this line will prove of the highest value.”<sup>3</sup> Vaccination is about preventing a potentially deadly virus from spreading within us

or through us to others. Vaccination, nothing magical, must be supported by other intelligent choices in life, such as prayerful, devotional living, a healthy lifestyle, spiritual witnessing, and trust in God. These activities point to vaccination when there is a need for it and it is available. Vaccination should then be applied according to our best knowledge and health conditions.

Medical science and faith work closely together and must be applied hand in hand. They are complementary. Creativity and ingenuity are God's gifts. The evidence of science is transparently clear: vaccines save lives. Their side effects are mostly minor and short-term. Multiple positives overwhelmingly outweigh their minimal negatives and health risks. As Ellen White states: "God is the author of science. . . . Ignorance may try to support skepticism by appealing to science; but instead of upholding skepticism, true science contributes fresh evidences of the wisdom and power of God. Rightly understood, science and the written word agree, and each sheds light on the other. Together they lead us to God by teaching us something of the wise and beneficent laws through which He works."<sup>4</sup>

### WAY OUT OF LINE

It is a gross misuse of Scripture to claim that taking a vaccination against COVID-19 is receiving the book of Revelation's mark of the beast, and that it will change your DNA. Such misinformation is connected to confusion about the mRNA basis of vaccinations against the corona virus and SARS. Various conspiracy theories terribly misapply biblical texts to create fear and dependency on false "teachers." Biblical prophets do not speak against vaccinations. Vaccination has nothing to do with the mark of the beast or with false Babylonian teaching. Here are several reasons:

The mark of the beast is about a false religious system that opposes God, His people, and His law.

The mark of the beast is about the distortion of God's character of love by accepting the nonbiblical teachings of Sunday sacredness and the immortality of the soul, including eternal torture in hell.

The mark of the beast is about false worship involving spiritually poisonous doctrines that Scripture calls Babylonian teaching, reflecting the confusion of the Tower of Babel.

The seal of God, on the other hand, is heaven's confirmation of the believer's experience of true

rest in Jesus Christ; such rest, in its fullness, involves living and keeping the biblical Sabbath as a sign of God as our Creator and Redeemer, expressing faithfulness to the comprehensive range of biblical doctrines centered in the triune God. Those bearing the seal of God love, honor, and give Him glory as their Creator and Savior. Their experience of continuous restoration to God's image is seen in their character and lifestyle. Such living integrates and restores our physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and social life by God's grace, through His Word, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

### ELLEN WHITE'S RELATION TO VACCINES

Ellen White wrote nothing about vaccination. But her life and practice provide good support for and confirmation of this article's reflections. White was herself vaccinated, and encouraged others to do so for at least two reasons: (1) personal health benefits enable us to serve others efficiently; and (2) vaccination prevents transmission of disease and contamination to others. White encouraged others to take a smallpox vaccination, and took it herself, according to eyewitness D. E. Robinson, one of her secretaries: Ellen White "was vaccinated and urged her helpers, those connected with her, to be vaccinated." She was aware that it would protect her as well as others: "She also recognized the danger of their exposing others if they failed to take this precaution."<sup>5</sup> She wisely advised: "Those who seek healing by prayer should not neglect to make use of the remedial agencies within their reach. It is not a denial of faith to use such remedies as God has provided to alleviate pain and to aid nature in her work of restoration. . . . God has put it in our power to obtain a knowledge of the laws of life. This knowledge has been placed within our reach for use. We should employ every facility for the restoration of health, taking every advantage possible, working in harmony with natural laws. When we have prayed for the recovery of the sick, we can work with all the more energy, thanking God that we have the privilege of cooperating with Him, and asking His blessing on the means which He Himself has provided."<sup>6</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Vaccines save lives by stopping the spread of disease, but waiting too long has often made it



too late. Vaccines prevent complications of health deterioration. Prayful application of God's provisions preserves our life and protects others from being harmed.

We have found nothing biblical that would stop people from being vaccinated. On the contrary, based on the biblical material, we strongly recommend the practice to people who have no specific serious health preconditions. If our bodies are not our own, and we are accountable to God for how we care for them, and if God will require an account of our love toward our neighbor, then caring for our own health as well as for that of our neighbor is a must. Paul emphatically states that "whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31, NIV). Being vaccinated will give glory to God by helping us and others to have a safer life.

We need divine wisdom to know how to be best informed and make mature decisions. Evidence-based science is beneficial in this decision process, allowing us to choose the best available options in given life situations. Ellen G. White affirms such an approach. The result may serve missiological objectives: "If they [unbelievers] see that we are intelligent with regard to health, they will be more ready to believe that we are sound in Bible doctrines."<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, she clearly warns: "But when men who advocate reform carry the matter to extremes, and are inconsistent in their course of action, people are not to blame if they do become disgusted with the health reform. . . . These men are doing a work which Satan loves to see go on."<sup>8</sup>

COVID fatigue can be overcome with God. May He graciously grant us discernment and power to act unselfishly according to His will so that we can be blessed by Him and be a blessing to others. Ellen White wisely advises: "God's miracles do not always bear the outward semblance of miracles. Often they are brought about in a way which looks like the natural course of events. . . . We ask to be kept from the pestilence that walketh in darkness, that is stalking with such power through the world; we are then to cooperate with God, observing the laws of health and life. Having done all that we possibly can, we are to keep asking in faith for health and

strength. . . . God gives us no encouragement that He will do for us what we can do for ourselves."<sup>9</sup>

Considering that Ellen White chose to be vaccinated both for herself and for the benefit of the community, it seems we have been given a good course to follow ourselves. ♣

<sup>1</sup>Scripture quotations marked ESV are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), book 2, p. 346.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, book 2, p. 280.

<sup>4</sup>Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1913), p. 426.

<sup>5</sup>E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 303.

<sup>6</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), pp. 231, 232.

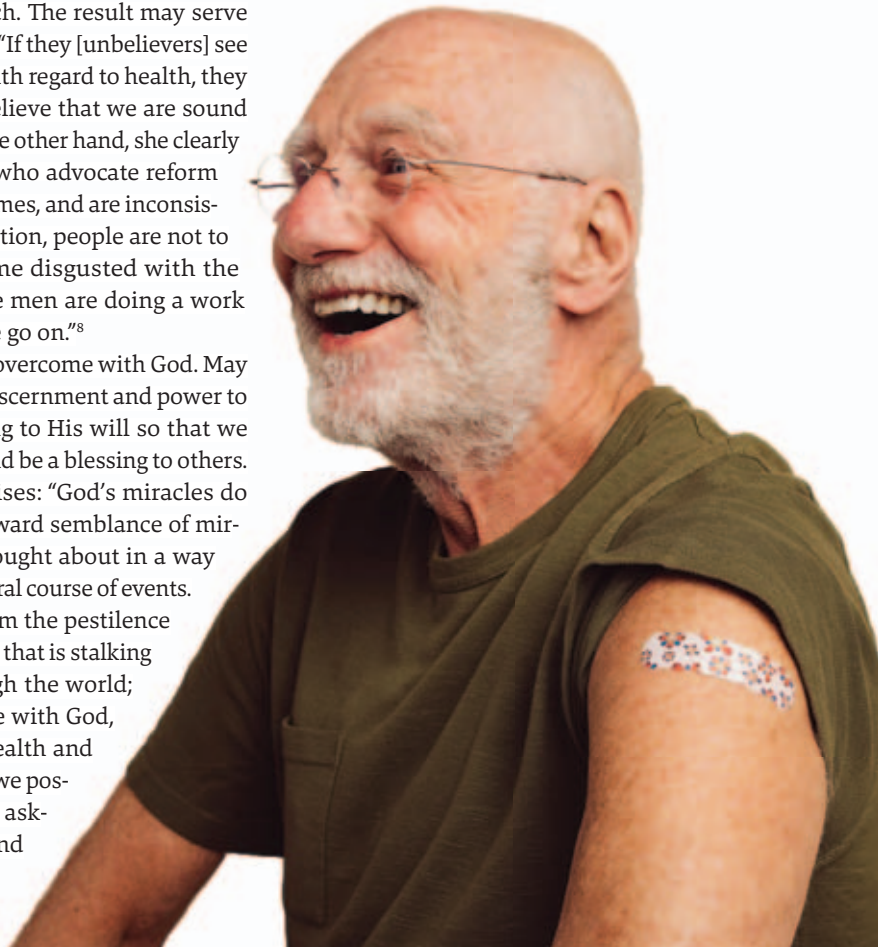
<sup>7</sup>Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1923), p. 452.

<sup>8</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 2, p. 377.

<sup>9</sup>E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 346.

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# THE CRY FOR HELP

**I**f only I'd known. I sat at my desk in disbelief, too stunned to cry. The text message lay open on my phone, daring me to question. A beautiful girl with a pure soul, Carrie\* possessed a rare sensitivity toward God and others. *How could she be gone?* Her life wasn't snuffed out by a car accident or wracked by the anguish of cancer. She had taken her own life. After a lingering battle with mental illness, had it come to this?

*If only I could've helped.* I've known suicide before, but always from a distance. This time it seemed up close and personal. Greg and I knew Carrie and her family. We loved her. She'd confided her battle, the personal demons she fought when her mind became warped and diseased. Greg and I had sympathized, said we'd pray, and life moved on. Actually, it had moved on for me, but not for her.

It was a long weekend after we discovered this news. Added to the pain of her passing was my pain of regret. I, the woman who believes in second chances, the one who seeks to hear and understand others' pain, who offers to pray and help—I had done nothing. I'd not reached out. I'd not texted or called. Worse yet, I couldn't even remember the last time I'd prayed for her.

I thought of her bravely seeking help. Of the dark days and darker nights when she wrestled. I certainly hadn't walked with her through the valley of the shadow. I hadn't petitioned the throne of grace for help for her. I'd done nothing.

Through my tears and anguish I realized I was too late. Too late to change anything in Carrie's life. Too late to redeem the time. Too late.

That weekend set me on a journey to discover the answer to this question: What is life? This vapor that we enjoy, this mingling of purpose and pleasure and pain?

Does life consist of what we do? Agendas set, meetings accomplished, lists fulfilled? There's got to be more to it than that.

Perhaps life is the beauty of a sunrise, the warmth of a hug, the sun on my face. Yet it encompasses more than that.

Maybe life is about me and Jesus, my walk with Him, my joy in His presence, my savoring of His Word. Yet, somehow, that still isn't everything.

I believe life is the relationships we build between Jesus and others. It's the sensing of a need and seeking to share. It's the drying of a tear and connecting that precious soul to God. It's being the hands and feet of Jesus. Now and forever.

That's my purpose. That's my passion. I want the *if onlys* of life to be in the past. It's time to live with purpose. ▀

\* Not her real name.

**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



THROUGH MY TEARS  
AND ANGUISH I  
REALIZED I WAS TOO  
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CHANGE ANYTHING  
IN CARRIE'S LIFE.  
TOO LATE TO  
REDEEM THE TIME.  
TOO LATE.



FRED HARDINGE

**O**ur entire world has been shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic since the early months of 2020. The way we work, worship, communicate, fellowship, and shop has changed dramatically. We hope the end is in sight, but nothing is certain yet.

Long-term population-based research such as Loma Linda University's Adventist Health Studies strongly suggests that individuals who live according to principles of the church's health message (including regular physical activity [especially outdoors], wholesome eating, adequate rest, avoidance of toxic substances, cultivating wholesome relationships, and trust in God) experience fewer of the conditions known as comorbidities. Healthy living confers some resistance to infections as well. While each principle is associated with tangible health benefits, the combination of healthy lifestyle practices provides the most benefit to overall health and well-being.

So can we say an Adventist lifestyle built upon

our health message helps in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic? Let's examine the current evidence.

**SLEEP:** Getting good-quality sleep is vital to physical and mental health.<sup>1</sup> Over the past few decades researchers have found that adequate sleep is necessary for the immune system to function appropriately in resisting infection. Inadequate sleep duration in otherwise healthy people is associated with an increased likelihood of developing the common cold, a viral infection. Subjects who averaged sleeping less than five hours per night had a 50 percent infection rate compared to 18 percent in those sleeping an average of seven-plus hours in the week preceding the evaluation.<sup>2</sup> While specific data relating sleep to COVID-19 infections is lacking, it is likely safe to assume adequate rest will make a difference since studies show consistent relationships between short sleep duration and increased risk for mortality, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, stroke,

# THE ADVENTIST HEALTH MESSAGE AND COVID-19

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*Can a few simple guidelines  
keep us healthy right now?*



coronary heart disease, overweight and obesity, weight gain, and type 2 diabetes. Thus, adequate sleep helps reduce COVID-19 comorbidities.

**EXERCISE:** The role of physical activity in defending us from infection continues to grow. Regular, moderate physical activity (i.e., walking, cycling, hiking, and swimming) acts as an adjuvant to stimulate immune defense and metabolic health. Consistent, moderate exercise reduces the incidence of upper respiratory tract infections, with decreased death from influenza and pneumonia.<sup>3</sup> Sedentary living contributes to excess weight, a significant comorbidity in COVID-19 infections. Moreover, a study of 48,440 adult patients in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* suggests that routine activity may help protect people who get COVID-19 from becoming seriously ill.<sup>4</sup>

**DIET:** Results of research on frontline health-care workers from six countries with high COVID-19

exposure are encouraging.<sup>5</sup> Participants were surveyed from July to September 2020. The self-reported data from 2,884 participants included demographic information, dietary pattern information, and COVID-19 outcomes (568 cases). After adjusting for confounders, those who followed a “plant-based diet” had 73 percent lower odds of moderate to severe COVID-19; those who followed a “plant-based or pescatarian [includes fish] diet” had 59 percent lower odds of moderate to severe symptoms—compared to those who consumed regular diets. When participants reported following “low-carbohydrate, high-protein diets,” they had significantly higher odds of more severe symptoms. This study found no association between the dietary pattern reported and the infection rate or duration of COVID-19. These encouraging results suggest that a diet rich in nutrient-dense foods may add an important layer of protection against severe COVID-19 symptoms without reducing infection rates or potential viral spread to others.



# The primary goal of the Adventist health message is health promotion and disease prevention.

**SUNLIGHT:** Recent studies suggest that sunshine exposure limits the spread of the COVID-19 disrupting virus particles in aerosols (sneezing and coughing) and may inactivate the virus in outdoor environments.<sup>6</sup> In addition, sun exposure, and vitamin D status are linked to COVID-19 incidence, fatality, and recovery rates through action on the immune system. Appropriate sun exposure (i.e., no overexposure) is beneficial. Vitamin D supplementation is recommended and beneficial when blood levels are not adequate, especially in darker-skinned individuals.

**SOCIAL SUPPORT:** Social support has been identified as a protective factor against COVID-19-related mental health issues.<sup>7</sup> Examples of social support include giving comfort or providing a listening ear in the face of life challenges or distress. Healthy personal relationships are the most beneficial, but an enriching church fellowship even virtually is effective in providing social support and spiritual encouragement. The benefits go both ways, too. Ellen White wrote that “doing good is a work that benefits both giver and receiver.”<sup>8</sup> The fellowship of believers during a pandemic plays an important role in healing, comfort, and spiritual nurture—a real boost to mental health. Additionally, studies show that diet, exercise, and sleep are great contributors to mental health and well-being.<sup>9</sup>

The Bible speaks to how Christians are to behave and personal prayer and trust in God are essential. Paul entreats all believers to “let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:4). Certainly this includes physical distancing, mask wearing, and basic hygiene measures. Christians

should do everything possible to limit the spread of the virus, if for no other reason than the well-being of others!

The primary goal of the Adventist health message is health promotion and disease prevention. Yet there is a crossover between preventive and therapeutic measures for there is wisdom in applying measures appropriate to the circumstances. The context informs the decision. In a pandemic a healthy, wholistic lifestyle can be a life preserver, but there may be other appropriate, acute, lifesaving interventions we may need. Even so, rigorous adherence to healthy behaviors does not guarantee an absence of sickness.

We absolutely should practice and promote the health principles God has given us through inspiration and inspired scientific discovery to protect ourselves and others. Wholistic health moves us to thank God for the knowledge and creativity He gives to humans to develop technologies that strengthen us so we can continue to honor Him in troubled times. For all these blessings we thank God and praise Him with our mouths, attitudes, and actions. ✨

<sup>6</sup>M. Hirshkowitz, K. Whiton, S. M. Albert, C. Alessi, O. Bruni, L. DonCarlos, et al., “National Sleep Foundation’s Sleep Time Duration Recommendations: Methodology and Results Summary,” *Sleep Health* 1, no. 1 (March 2015): 40-43. [PubMed: 29073412.]

<sup>7</sup>A. A. Prather, D. Janicki-Deverts, M. H. Hall, S. Cohen, “Behaviorally Assessed Sleep and Susceptibility to the Common Cold,” *Sleep* 38, no. 9 (Sept. 1, 2015): 1353-1359.

<sup>8</sup>D. C. Nieman, L. M. Wentz, “The Compelling Link Between Physical Activity and the Body’s Defense System,” *Journal of Sport and Health Sciences* 8 (May 2019): 201-217.

<sup>9</sup>R. Sallis, D. R. Young, S. Y. Tartof, et al., “Physical Inactivity Is Associated With a Higher Risk for Severe COVID-19 Outcomes: A Study in 48,440 Adult Patients,” *British Journal of Sports Medicine, Online First*, Apr. 13, 2021, doi: 10.1136/bjsports-2021-104080.

<sup>10</sup>H. Kim, C. M. Rebholz, S. Hegde, et al., “Plant-based Diets, Pescatarian Diets, and COVID-19 Severity: A Population-based Case-Control Study in Six Countries,” *BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health* 4, no. 1 (2021), doi: 10.1136/bmjnp-2021-000272.

<sup>11</sup>K. Sharun, R. Tiwari, K. Dhama, “COVID-19 and Sunlight: Impact on SAR-CoV-2 Transmissibility, Morbidity, and Mortality,” *Annals of Medicine and Surgery* 66 (2021): article 102419, ISSN 2049-0801, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amsu.2021.102419>.

<sup>12</sup>T. R. Worley and M. Mucci-Ferris, “College Students’ Mental Well-being During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Role of Relational Turbulence and Social Support Processes in Relationships With Parents,” <https://covid19.ssri.psu.edu/articles/social-support-and-mental-health-during-covid-19>.

<sup>13</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 2, p. 534.

<sup>14</sup>Shay-Ruby Wickham, “Lifestyle Behaviours as Predictors of Health: Understanding the Importance of Sleep, Diet and Physical Activity on Mental Health and Well-being” (Thesis, University of Otago, 2021).

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ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

**W**e were warned! Despite biblical warnings of end time pestilences and other calamities, our inherent planetary fragility was exposed through the unraveling of even the most affluent and technologically advanced nations by an invisible infectious agent. COVID-19, the first pandemic of the twenty-first century, has uncovered multilevel, global vulnerabilities.

#### CAUGHT OFF GUARD?

Notwithstanding the alarm sounding of scientists and prophets, few of us were ready for the worldwide devastation of 2020. Because God loves us, He gave us forewarning—advance information to share with a dying world—so that we all can escape unnecessary suffering and distress as we prepare for our Lord’s return.

Now, there is both bad and good news. The bad? More diseases, more frequent—and more deadly—pandemics and catastrophic events are coming. The good? We need not fear; God has given us an “escape plan” that we are to share with the world.

Staggering numbers of infected persons, growing numbers of persistent post-infection illnesses, and ever-rising local and global deaths continue to plague us in 2021. Governments, NGOs, medical, public health, and scientific communities, as well as industries of all kinds, have had to reckon with this virus and the global responses to it. Faith-based fellowships and religious groups have not been spared distress, uncertainty, and restrictions. Responses were slow, vacillating, inadequate (sometimes too lax and sometimes too severe), nationalistic, and increasingly political. Transnationally there seemed to be confusing messages and inadequate coordination and collaboration for effective global, regional, and local decision-making. The interconnectedness of nations by commerce, transportation, and communication created a fertile environment for global catastrophe.

We all became embroiled: what affects the world inevitably impacts the church. Seventh-day Adventists are in the world and depend on the world’s conveniences, the facets of modern life. Yet we are not to be of the world, even while using the means

# AFTER COVID, WHAT?

*Preparing for the next pandemic*




at hand to share the good news to the ends of the earth.

### **DISRUPTIVE CHANGE, AND BEING READY**

Unprepared masses were sent scrambling for basic supplies (remember the toilet paper shortage?). Many people had no financial cushion to lighten the sudden economic blow. Others wished they had more pantry space. “Loss” became a common descriptor: of job, income, contact, fellowship, certainty, safety net, health (especially mental health), common commodities, trustworthy information, stability, and of taken-for-granted safety—all in a matter of days! And all because, despite the warnings, we failed to prepare at just about every level of our societal fabric. To compound matters, there was the deluge of information, the regrettable misinformation, and the unforgivable disinformation facilitated by our modern connectivity.

To have built resilience to COVID-19 on a societal level would have required better worldwide disaster

surveillance and early warning systems; improved responsiveness of public health and all related governmental and nongovernmental agencies; improved emergency health-care delivery systems and safety nets, structurally and functionally, with coordination of service at all levels; and a better educated and informed public engaged in personal preparedness as individuals, families, and neighborhoods. While churches are not generally involved in all of the above resiliency factors, the preparedness of individuals, families, and neighborhoods (communities) are legitimate functions of churches that heed the warnings of the Bible writers, are aware of the times in which we live, and share in the mission of Christ’s early disciples. COVID-19 should not have taken us by surprise!



*“And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet” (Matt. 24:6).*

## DISRUPTIVE CHANGE AND MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In the 1800s the U.S. government attempted to mitigate the risks incurred by individuals and families moving to the expanding westward frontier, by developing college- and university-based extension programs. Partnerships with the U.S. Department of Agriculture provided the public with preparedness training and survival skills for risk-prone living. During the same period, the fledgling Seventh-day Adventist denomination was blessed by health counsels received and penned by Ellen White. Historical records show an unmistakable synergy between early Adventist health promotion and the cooperative extension programs that trained the citizenry in household agriculture, domestic farming, and strategies for building physical and economic resilience.



**Home demonstration agent demonstrating child care skills (1918 pandemic)**

UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION. HOME DEMONSTRATION WORK (UA023.009) HELD BY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS RESEARCH CENTER AT NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES (USED WITH PERMISSION)

Later, during the 1918 flu pandemic, Seventh-day Adventists were advancing reforms in sync with the extension programs: presenting home demonstrations in food preparation and preservation; helping deal with stress and strain, basic self-care, and home nursing care of the sick. Of course, the Adventists were guided by a wealth of information about additional health and well-being practices that included trust and reliance on a loving, compassionate God who wills much more for His children to thrive than be destroyed. The *Annual Report* of the Cooperative Extension Service in Raleigh, North Carolina, explained that it was through organized home demonstration clubs that people were able to come through the flu epidemic with the least amount of loss. The report commented on the

need for helping the sick, soup kitchens, and training in the value of scientific knowledge as well as useful training in home sanitary matters and home nursing. It specifically stated that “possibly the women rendered a greater service to the state during the great epidemic of influenza than in any other single way.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly, reports and articles written about the Adventist health work and “help” work show that the church was not idle. In an article entitled “After Influenza, What?” the secretary of the General Conference Medical Department wrote:

“We have known from Bible teachings and from the spirit of prophecy for many years that such times were coming. We have been told over and over again to prepare for these experiences by well-ordered lives and by securing such a preparation for service as would enable all our people to minister to the sick and distressed in such a time. [Leaders] and lay members have been urged to become medical missionaries. We are told that every Seventh-day Adventist home should be a small sanitarium . . . , that the medical phase of our work would be one of the last to be closed.”<sup>2</sup> This counsel from 1918 is equally or even more applicable today in 2021. Consider Dr. Ruble’s observation:

“Some ‘holier-than-thou’ person who has escaped the disease may look upon this epidemic as a harbinger of the great distress that will come in the last days and may look upon his immunity to the disease as an evidence of his own righteousness, while attributing the misfortune of his brother to his lack of fidelity. . . . Seeing his brother laid low and himself escaping, [he] will say, ‘I told you so. If you ate as I do, you would escape these plagues.’ Are these the lessons to draw from this calamity? . . . The great lesson . . . we should learn from this experience is to get ready for later and worse scourges than this, which will surely come, prophecy being true.”<sup>3</sup> There are obvious parallels in our COVID-19 context. We may substitute the current issues, but the sentiments are the same or similar. Selfishness and pride were passed on to us from fallen Adam and Eve. But for the grace of God, we would all be doomed to perish in the fiery lake that was not intended for us.

Dr. Ruble continued:

“During this epidemic every Seventh-day Adventist has had ten times as many opportunities for service as he could fill if he had been ready for them. . . . Barriers, social and professional, are

being broken down. What a sick person or the family of a sick member wants is someone that can and will do something for them. It matters not whether the helper be white or black, Christian or heathen, rich or poor.”<sup>4</sup>

There is much work to be done in preparation for the final events, but time is short—how short we do not know. Epidemics will continue to be part of the human experience. As already noted, the Scriptures teach that pestilences and other crises are inevitable. However, by anticipating each crisis, preparing for it, and having well-thought-out plans of action, we may be able to reduce the impact and devastation, and use the opportunity to help others wake up to prophetic truth.

We should learn basic self-care—physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual. We must engage in family-, congregation-, and church-based crisis preparedness, first aid, and basic disaster response.

Many individuals are negatively affected by the pandemic regardless of previous mental wellness. Social support and psychological flexibility have been two of the biggest factors in determining the level of mental health decline. The church can help. We still have opportunity to learn healthy food growing, storage, and preparation; also, economics and finance literacy, budgeting and effective spending strategies. Each church should engage in personal and community health services, collaborating with youth, family, women, and children’s ministries; providing crisis kits, masks, sanitizers, disinfectants, basic first aid, first responder, spiritual-emotional first aid, basic home-based care of the sick. In-home isolation strategies, medicinal herbs, wild edible plants, and basic orienting are all useful. Pathfinders and medical cadets can help through engaging young and old in effective service, as well as teaching survival skills.

In the family, church, and community, we must educate, educate, educate even while we are still learning. Preparation involves anticipating the crisis, intentional action, and proactive implementation. When disaster strikes, we become either beneficiaries or victims of our preparation as we strive or scramble to meet immediate individual and family needs. In a crisis, anti-social and selfish self-preservation instincts sometimes show their ugly head, leading to hoarding, looting, and even violence. Shortages, interruption, or the crippling of usual supply chains ensues, and supply-demand mismatch

## Within the Adventist fellowship there is no room or time for strife and selfishness.

generates price gouging. We have seen it. We have been warned and do not have to be surprised.

### DISRUPTIVE CHANGE AND BEING READY NEXT TIME

Within the Adventist fellowship there is no room or time for strife and selfishness. We must not stain our identity or cripple our mission with hostilities within the church. Rather, we must pray and confess, submit our wills to Jesus and let Him have His way. The issue never is whether God is on our side; rather, it is whether we, you and I, are on His side. There are more and greater trials to come.

We have a message of warning and also of hope and peace. We can prepare and not panic; be faithful and not fearful, examining ourselves (2 Cor. 13:5) and permitting the Spirit to search our hearts and expose any attitude or action that demonstrates our own unchristian character. We must pray for purging of selfishness and pride and the implanting of meekness, humility, and love for our fellow humans. We must pray for and act to promote healing and sealing for us and those around us. Are we not our brothers’ keeper?

As we hear His voice we will not harden our hearts (Heb. 3:15), disqualifying ourselves to bear a beautiful message to the world in this time of uncertainty and despair. Either we press together, or we fall apart. Paul’s optimism is the better part: “hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; . . . perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor. 4:8, 9). Then God’s healing shall be ours, physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually; and His love and compassion will overflow from us into a needy, dying world.

<sup>1</sup> Cooperative Extension Service, *Annual Report* (UA 102.002) (Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries).

<sup>2</sup> W. A. Ruble, “After Influenza, What?” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Oct. 31, 1918.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

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**SO MANY  
VACCINE  
CONCERNS!**





## RICHARD SLOOP

Some have wondered about the safety of the COVID-19 vaccine and whether it's wise to get it. I've personally chosen to be vaccinated and am recommending the vaccine to virtually all my patients. I'll explain the reasons I've made these decisions by addressing several of the concerns many people express regarding the COVID vaccine.

### POSSIBLE ALLERGIC REACTIONS

Some people are concerned about the risk of experiencing a serious allergic reaction, or anaphylaxis, with the vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that this serious allergic reaction, which develops within the first 15 to 30 minutes after receiving the vaccine, has been occurring with a frequency of 2.5 to 4.7 cases per million vaccines.<sup>1</sup> This is an exceedingly rare and treatable complication of any vaccine.

Just for comparison, if 1 million people were to get COVID, one would expect between 5,000 and 10,000 deaths from the disease.<sup>2</sup> So the risk of dying from contracting COVID is thousands of times higher than the risk of having a serious immediate reaction (not death) from getting the vaccine.

From December 14, 2020, through August 9, 2021, more than 356 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccines were administered to about 198 million people in the United States (342 million doses of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines and 13.9 million doses of the Johnson & Johnson [J&J] vaccine).<sup>3</sup>

During this time the Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System received 6,631 reports of death among people who received a COVID-19 vaccine.<sup>4</sup> CDC and FDA physicians review each case report of death as soon as notified, and the CDC requests medical records to further assess reports. A review of available clinical information—including death certificates, autopsy, and medical records—has thus far revealed evidence suggesting that the vaccination contributed to fewer than 10 of these deaths.<sup>5</sup> (Remember that thus far those in the older age groups are much more likely to have received the vaccine, and older people die from heart attacks, cancer, chronic lung diseases, pneumonia, hip fractures, and strokes even after they've been vaccinated, just as they did before the vaccine came out.)

*An Adventist physician sorts fact from fiction.*

### BLOOD CLOTS

As of July 8 in the United States, 38 cases of blood clots with four deaths have been reported, mostly in women under the age of 50.<sup>6</sup> These blood clots have appeared almost exclusively in the 12.8 million persons receiving the J&J vaccine, and the vaccine is likely causal. This serious adverse event is called "thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome" (TTS), which involves blood clots with low

**“I’ve personally chosen to be vaccinated and am recommending the vaccine to virtually all my patients.”**

platelets. Platelets are a type of blood cell that helps blood to clot. These blood-clot cases have occurred five to 42 days after the J&J vaccine was administered in the United States and after the AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine was administered in Europe. These two vaccines are very similar in the mechanism of action.

As of July 12, no cases of TTS have been reported with the Pfizer vaccine, and two cases have been reported with the Moderna vaccine.<sup>7</sup> These numbers appear to be no higher than would be expected by chance.

#### **GUILLAIN BARRÉ SYNDROME**

Another condition that appears to be triggered by the J&J vaccine is Guillain Barré syndrome (GBS), a rapidly progressive muscle paralysis condition that’s usually reversible with treatment, although recovery often takes many months. In the United States, as of June 30, about 100 cases of GBS have been reported within two weeks of vaccination with the J&J vaccine. There has been one death.<sup>8</sup>

As of August 6, again in the United States, 1,253 cases of myocarditis and pericarditis have been reported (730 of these have been confirmed).<sup>9</sup> Myocarditis is inflammation of the heart muscle, and pericarditis is inflammation of the lining around the heart muscle. The most common symptoms have been chest pains, shortness of breath, and rapid heartbeat. This has occurred mostly in younger men and usually within a few days of the second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. Most have responded to treatment with anti-inflammatory medication and rest and have quickly felt better. There have been no reported deaths so far.<sup>10</sup>

It’s worth noting that thrombosis is a very common complication of COVID-19, with blood clots occurring in 3 to 9 percent of patients hospitalized with moderate COVID and in 20 to 40 percent of those with severe disease.<sup>11</sup> These include clots in veins, lungs, and arteries supplying the brain

and the limbs. So the risk of blood clots from the COVID-19 infection is actually much higher than the risk of blood clots from the J&J and AZ vaccines, and blood clots are not a concern with Pfizer or Moderna vaccines.

GBS is a recognized complication of COVID-19, perhaps as rare as it is with the vaccine. And myocardial injury is very common with COVID-19 infections, often associated with severe outcomes as compared to the much more benign myocarditis and pericarditis seen with vaccinations.<sup>12</sup>

#### **JUST TO COMPARE**

Just for the sake of comparison, suppose that the government is not being honest, and all of the 6,631 total deaths reported by the Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System were indeed the direct result of the vaccine. (Let me emphasize that this is just hypothetical; I believe the CDC and FDA are being honest with the country, including the open reporting of the side effects listed above.) Let’s compare 6,631 deaths “after the vaccine” with what would happen if, instead, 198 million unvaccinated people had contracted COVID.

The case fatality rate (confirmed infections/confirmed deaths) for COVID in the United States stands at 1.7 percent.<sup>13</sup> Since there are many people who get COVID but aren’t tested (some studies suggest that there are twice as many people who have COVID antibodies from previous infection compared to those who have actually gotten tested and tested positive), we could estimate that the risk of dying from contracting COVID in the entire population is 0.8 percent, and perhaps up to 2 percent in the older population, which comprises many of the people who’ve received the vaccines so far.

So if 198 million people (many of them older) were to contract COVID rather than getting the vaccine, there would be 1.6 to 3 million deaths. As it turns out, however, they were vaccinated, and there have been about 1,600 deaths—1,587 of them breakthrough COVID infections despite the vaccine, and fewer than 10 deaths from the vaccine.<sup>14</sup> Even in the women under 50 who received the J&J vaccine (the highest risk group), the death rate from vaccine complications is only about one death per 1 million vaccine doses.<sup>15</sup>

One could also compare 6,631 deaths “from the vaccine” (in reality, fewer than 10) with 618,591 real deaths from COVID thus far in the United

States (as of August 15, 2021).<sup>16</sup> So the statistical odds of doing well are vastly in favor of the vaccine. And with the vaccine supply as ample as it is, one can choose which vaccine to receive if there is concern about potential risks associated with a specific available vaccine.

### IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT "ME"

We also need to consider what my vaccination could mean for someone else. Let's suppose that all the older people get vaccinated, and all those with other health risks get vaccinated. The trouble is that at least 6 percent of the people who get the vaccine won't actually generate a satisfactory immune response. This is even more likely in older people and those on immune-suppression medications necessary to treat a number of health conditions, including cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease, lupus, multiple sclerosis, myasthenia gravis, and polymyositis—just to name a few. In fact, a recent study suggests that 77 percent of multiple sclerosis patients who take one of the common immune treatments and 96 percent who take another common immune treatment developed no measurable response to the vaccine.<sup>17</sup> So now, these older people or the immune suppressed have done everything they can to protect themselves—but many of them are still vulnerable (and they may not know it). So if I decide not to be vaccinated and then catch COVID, I can transmit the disease to one of these friends, grandparents, or patients of mine. And then they can come down with severe or fatal COVID, even though they've been very vigilant. We shouldn't make them live in solitary confinement forever!

From a public health perspective and in compassion for the vulnerable, it still makes sense to seriously consider getting the vaccine even if you're young and healthy and not worried at all about getting COVID. What I choose affects those around me. It isn't just my health I should focus on.

### FAITH IN GOD

Last, but not any less important, I've had patients tell me that they're "just going to put myself in God's hands" and not get the vaccine. But I must ask, Would it indicate a lack of faith if you had colon cancer or breast cancer and you allowed a surgeon to remove the tumor? Or you developed epileptic convulsions and decided to

take medicine to prevent the convulsions? Or you decided to vaccinate your child to prevent her from getting polio? Or would it be better to "put all these in God's hands" as well?

Could it be that God has revealed these "discoveries" to our world for our benefit? This is, in fact, what I believe.

I'd like to encourage each of us to get the vaccine. The FDA has now approved the use of the Pfizer vaccine for COVID-19,<sup>18</sup> which should also help to eliminate doubts some people may have of its safety. I believe the benefits for all of us far outweigh the risks. ♣

<sup>1</sup> T. T. Shimabukuro, M. Cole, J. R. Su, "Reports of Anaphylaxis After Receipt of mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines in the US—December 14, 2020–January 18, 2021," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 325, no. 11 (Feb. 12, 2021): 1101–1102, doi:10.1001/jama.2021.1967; see also "Allergic Reactions Including Anaphylaxis After Receipt of the First Dose of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine—United States, December 14–23, 2020," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 70, no. 2 (Jan. 15, 2021): 46–51, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7002e2external.icon>.

<sup>2</sup> Our World in Data, "Case Fatality Rate Vs. Total Confirmed COVID-19 Deaths," Aug. 14, 2021, <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/deaths-covid-19-vs-case-fatality-rate>, accessed Aug. 15, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> CDC COVID Data Tracker, [https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#-vaccinations\\_vacc-total-admin-rate-total](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#-vaccinations_vacc-total-admin-rate-total), accessed August 15, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> CDC, "Selected Adverse Events Reported After COVID-19 Vaccination," <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/adverse-events.html>, accessed Aug. 15, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*; see also H. G. Rosenblum, S. C. Hadler, D. Moulia, et al., "Use of COVID-19 Vaccines After Reports of Adverse Events Among Adult Recipients of Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) and mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna): Update from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices—United States, July 2021," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 70, no. 32 (Aug. 13, 2021): 1094–1099, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7032e4external.icon>.

<sup>7</sup> CDC.

<sup>8</sup> Rosenblum, Hadler, Moulia, et al.

<sup>9</sup> CDC; see also Rosenblum, Hadler, Moulia, et al.

<sup>10</sup> Rosenblum, Hadler, Moulia, et al.

<sup>11</sup> UpToDate, "COVID-19: Hypercoagulability," <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/covid-19-hypercoagulability>, accessed Aug. 15, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> G. Giustino, S. P. Pinney, A. Lala, et al., "Coronavirus and Cardiovascular Disease, Myocardial Injury, and Arrhythmia: JACC Focus Seminar," *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* 76, no. 17 (Oct. 27, 2020): 2011–2023, doi:10.1016/j.jacc.2020.08.059.

<sup>13</sup> Our World in Data.

<sup>14</sup> CDC.

<sup>15</sup> Rosenblum, Hadler, Moulia, et al.

<sup>16</sup> CDC COVID Data Tracker.

<sup>17</sup> A. Achiron, M. Mandel, S. Dreyer-Alster, G. Harari, D. Magalashvili, P. Sonis, M. Dolev, S. Menascu, S. Flechter, R. Falb, M. Gurevich, "Humoral Immune Response to COVID-19 mRNA Vaccine in Patients With Multiple Sclerosis Treated With High-efficacy Disease-modifying Therapies," *Therapeutic Advances in Neurological Disorders* 14 (Apr. 22, 2021): 17562864211012835, doi:10.1177/17562864211012835, PMID: 34035836, PMCID: PMC8072850.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.fda.gov/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-vaccines>.

# HOW SHALL WE NOW DO CHURCH?

*Learning to serve in  
a different world*





**KYOSHIN AHN**

**E**arly in 2020 the entire world suddenly paused. COVID-19 disrupted our way of life and continues to be a significant threat against humanity as we go through our second autumn with it. The pandemic has also exposed and exacerbated many social issues around the globe and further strained our lives. Amid the disruption, however, we have witnessed countless individuals exercising the courage to confront painful realities and showing the tenacity to face challenging times.

Across the globe, health-care professionals lived vulnerably, working resiliently on the front lines to provide care for those in need. Many Christians have also become more faithful and committed to their mission in this time of anxiety and uncertainty. They have quickly adapted to a new normal, moving into digital space to continue their spiritual witness. It has been electrifying to see numerous Adventist churches serving their community as centers of emergency food distribution while simultaneously engaged in their spiritual mission.

### **THE TRODDEN ROAD**

Throughout its history, especially during times of widespread disease contagion, the Christian church has shown the contagious compassion of Jesus,<sup>1</sup> beginning with their witness of service during the devastating Antonine Plague (A.D. 165-180), probably smallpox, that may have killed up to a third of the entire Roman Empire. Less than a century later, Christians ministered to

## **The defiance of the Christian church against society's limits on kindness and courage was felt in every corner of the empire.**

the sick when the deadly Plague of Cyprian (A.D. 249-262), possibly measles or smallpox, invaded the empire, killing up to about 5,000 people in Rome per day, and annihilating two thirds of the population of Alexandria, second-largest city in the empire.

During these plagues the church, still in its early stages, responded by unselfishly caring for the sick and the suffering—Christians and non-Christians alike. People were comforted and encouraged by Christians' assurance that plagues were not the curse of the gods. The defiance of the Christian church against society's limits on kindness and courage was felt in every corner of the empire.

The same practice was exhibited by Christians during what some call the most devastating natural disaster in human history, the Black Death (1346-1353). About two centuries later Martin Luther decided to stay in his community to serve the sick when the bubonic plague hit his area (A.D. 1527), and he wrote about the Christian's duty to stay at their post in times of crisis.<sup>2</sup> In the nineteenth century, famed British pastor and theologian Charles Spurgeon cared for the sick during an outbreak of cholera in London in 1854.

Thus, the Christian church throughout its history has repeatedly adapted itself to different ways of doing church in order to coexist with or effectively handle disasters. Christians have been involved, not to make a name for themselves, but simply to follow the instruction of Jesus Christ, who instructs us to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). And Christian commitment to self-sacrificing service has been as evident during the current pandemic as it was in past history. Eighty-six percent

## The mission that Jesus, the church's head (Eph. 1:22, 23), has bestowed upon it, is still valid.

of U.S. Protestant churchgoers are proud of how their church has responded during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>3</sup>

### CHURCH AFTER THE PANDEMIC

COVID-19 will be around for some time. The prospect of a prolonged period with the virus is certainly disheartening. Yet life will go on. We must therefore give full consideration to how we shall coexist with the virus, identifying new ways to define, practice, and measure what matters in our church's life both now and after the pandemic. As a new reality sets in, we face the crucial question: Are we placing the utmost significance upon what is essential and core to our existence as a church?

Gladly, the church has already adjusted its forms of interaction. More important, we have also adapted our understanding of how to do church: virtual worship clearly stands on a more significant footing than before; "gathering" now highlights the fundamental sense of "connecting"; radically different understandings of the use of the church building have taken hold.

### FAITH BUILT ON TRAUMA

The Christian faith is built on history's most horrible trauma—the death of God's innocent Son on a criminal's cross. This belief is the foundation of the Christian faith, radically reorienting us away from secular standards and values, and toward our self-abasing, self-sacrificing Servant God. We now gladly participate in the traumatic experience of the crucified Christ through our daily living and practice (Gal. 2:20), finding immeasurable strength in Him (2 Cor. 12:7-10) even in the midst of profoundly painful trauma.

God, our Savior and model, is the same yesterday, now, and forever (see Heb. 13:8). This statement transcends objective fact. It strengthens believers to overcome the spiritual fatigue threatened by the current pandemic, enabling us to find flexibility in

reshaping our church life in this time of anxiety, uncertainty, and many unknowns. The form and modality with which we practice our spiritual affairs may change, but the focus of our faith, Jesus, remains the same. No pandemic can steal our focus on Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

The mission that Jesus, the church's head (Eph. 1:22, 23), has bestowed upon it is still valid, and calls for our continued commitment (Matt. 28:16-20). As the pandemic critically sharpens our focus on mission, we continue to reassess how we do church, focusing on what matters most. How we fulfill the gospel commission is the prism through which we view everything about church life. That perspective continues to define the nonessential elements, which may be altered by a thoughtful process of dialogue and consensus. The gospel commission beckons our church toward a place of authentic faith, of genuine Christianity, which alone can withstand the test of time and pandemic seasons of economic dislocation, disease, and death.

### "REMAIN IN ME"

Just before His crucifixion, Jesus commanded His disciples to "remain in" Him (John 15:4, NIV). It was an unusual time of uncertainty, tension, and unknowns. He urged them to make a conscious act of will to continue to remain in Him.<sup>4</sup>

For us, His followers doing church today, tomorrow, and until He comes, Jesus' highest prescription and expectation is that we make the same commitment to Him, during our own unusual time of uncertainty, tension, and unknowns. He desires us to engage with Him intentionally; He urges us to continue to remain united in Him; He need us to live lives that allow Him to continue to remain in union with us as we see "the Day drawing near" (Heb. 10:25, ESV).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Peter Barness, "Plagues Throughout Christian History and Some Christian Responses," *Reformed Theological Review* 79, no. 2 (August, 2020): 77-96.

<sup>2</sup>Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 43: *Devotional Writings II*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), pp. 119-138.

<sup>3</sup>Lifeway Research, "Churchgoers Proud of Church's COVID-19 Response": <https://lifewayresearch.com/?s=Church's+COVID-19+Response>.

<sup>4</sup>Aorist imperative in Greek.

<sup>5</sup>From *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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SCAN ME

**COSTIN JORDACHE AND  
ANGELINE DAVID BRAUER**

# FAMILY FOES

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*Learning loving  
disagreement*

**B**elittling. Mocking. Ignoring. Threats. Lies. Abuse. This was the environment that characterized Joseph's upbringing.

After more than 18 months of intense immersion in a pandemic, many people in our time and space can arguably relate to Joseph—experiencing similar dynamics, even within the family of God. The current COVID-19 pandemic has not only taken a toll on lives and livelihood around the world. In some cases it has negatively affected our local churches, dividing our faith communities.

Many years ago Adventist churches would sing, "You will notice we say 'brother' and 'sister' 'round here. It's because we're a family and these are so near." It's an old song that has perhaps gone out of style, but more unfortunate is that, to varying degrees, those sentiments may no longer be our dominant experience.

How did we get here? How did sincere believers lose so much genuine love and respect for one

another? Almost any string of comments on social media about the pandemic, masks, vaccines, and so on is a sad indication that many conversations have devolved into arguments and value judgments. How did we get to a place where, in general, it is difficult to have calm, enjoyable, and mutually respectful conversations, even about challenging topics like a pandemic?

## **WHY IS THIS MOMENT SO CHALLENGING?**

Among other factors, this moment is very much defined by our increasingly polarized political climate.<sup>1</sup> More and more people are holding hard and fast to political views without a willingness to consider another point of view. Enter a pandemic that affects all aspects of our society, and fairly or otherwise, people tend to view the pandemic—and all its effects—through the lens of political ideology.

This moment also aligns with many geopolitical theories of behind-the-scenes intrigue. Collusion and conspiracy are no longer limited to Hollywood-style dramas, but are seen as largely driving world events of today. In that context, consider a mysterious virus that is





so infectious that it seems tailored for the human body, that may or may not have escaped a lab in a tightly closed country, a vaccine that is funded by governments, and so on. Conspiracy theories abound and have become a filter through which many are viewing the pandemic.

Finally, this moment is extremely challenging because some are viewing this pandemic and vaccination through the lens of eschatology—the theological word for last-day events. Jesus has told us that in the last days of earth’s history, society will split over its allegiance to God or to a counterfeit system of belief. That we do know. What we don’t know with any certainty is if this pandemic has anything to do with actual last-day events. Even so, some in our community of faith have turned this into an eschatological crisis—including claims that COVID-19 vaccination is the biblical mark of the beast.

#### A FIVE-PART FRAMEWORK FOR HEALTHY CONVERSATION

With those factors in mind, how do we effectively engage with others about sensitive topics in general, but more specifically, about COVID, vaccination, and related topics? And what insights can we gather from Joseph’s story, which also took place in the midst of a widespread crisis?

**LISTEN.** The challenge with most human communication is that we come to conversations with preconceived ideas. Listening is only a polite exercise while we wait to educate someone with our thoughts. Looking back to Joseph, consider the model he leaves us as he engages with his brothers, unrecognized, as the governor of Egypt. Joseph asks them a number of questions, allowing them to tell their story while he carefully listens. “Joseph, listening, could not control his emotions, and he went out and wept.”<sup>2</sup> Notice the contrast to Reuben’s confession: “Didn’t I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn’t listen!” (Gen. 42:22, NIV).

**LEARN.** The next commitment to make is to learn from the other person. This is difficult, because our default mode is to want to share *our* viewpoint. But healthy relationships require us to recognize and admit that we don’t know it all. They require us to have a posture of learning from the other person. Indicating this to the other person (either overtly or through questions or nonverbal clues) will make an enormous difference in lowering

defensive walls that lead to poor communication.

**LEAD.** The next step is to lead the conversation. Point the conversation in ways that are healthy and effective. “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Prov. 15:1, NIV). “Gentle words are a tree of life; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit” (verse 4, NLT).<sup>3</sup> Ask open-ended questions, such as “Help me understand that better”; or, perhaps, turn to a less-sensitive topic.

**LINK.** Try to link your thoughts and perspectives with those of the other person. What are the points of commonality or shared experiences? As governor of Egypt, Joseph had the power to put his brothers to death immediately. But instead he asked about their father and brother. He brought to their minds a common link between them, even though the brothers were still unaware of it.

**LEAVE.** Last, leave the conversation assuring the other person you are still friends, family members, and brothers and sisters in Christ. Commit to maintaining the friendship and to not disparaging each other—even if you vehemently disagree.

Of course, **LOVE** should underscore every part of these conversations. “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1, ESV).<sup>4</sup> Despite being cruelly treated, Joseph had an abiding love for his brothers. And that love was manifested in his actions.

It certainly wasn’t easy, but consider that it was *during* the crisis of the day that Jacob’s sons were restored and reconciled. In the end, the sum total of all those experiences has been expressed as follows: “God produced something good from it, in order to save the lives of many people, just as he’s doing today” (Gen. 50:20, CEB).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 226.

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## VAXED, VEXED, OR OTHER?

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*Where do we go from here?*

**PETER LANDLESS**

In 1923, shortly after the 1918 flu pandemic, Frederick Grant Banting and John James Rickard Macleod were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for the discovery of insulin. This was an amazing milestone, and since then insulin replacement and even sup-

plementation have improved and saved countless lives. Until 1982 the only insulin available for use in humans was derived from the pancreas of either pigs or cows. In 1982, only one year after trials demonstrated its safety, bioengineered “human” insulin was introduced with great success into clinical practice in the treatment of diabetes. This insulin was produced using special (recombinant) DNA technology (developed in the late 1970s) spliced into *E. coli* bacteria. Artificial insulin continues to change lives for the better every day! It was produced, tested, and introduced over a very short time and continues to bring benefits today, amid yet another pandemic. This, and many breakthroughs in medicine and health, have been dependent on a careful study of physiology and related principles.

### **HOW DO I KNOW WHAT IS SAFE FOR ME?**

As Ellen G. White stated: “So closely is health related to our happiness, that we cannot have the latter without the former. A practical knowledge of the science of human life is necessary in order to glorify God in our bodies. It is therefore of the highest importance that among the studies selected for childhood, physiology should occupy the first place. How few know anything about the structure and functions of their own bodies and of nature’s laws! Many are drifting about without knowledge, like a ship at sea without compass or anchor; and what is more, they are not interested to learn how to keep

their bodies in a healthy condition and prevent disease.”<sup>1</sup>

Why, then, the vexation about vaccination in so many quarters? Could it be that we need to have a more complete understanding of the underlying mechanisms of disease processes? Will not this knowledge, united to prevention, help us to avoid confusion and to make the best decisions on our health? Choose your health information sources carefully, then; check that they are consistent with biblical principles, consonant with the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy, and supported by peer-reviewed evidence-based health science. At times we listen to the outliers, and sometimes even to those sharing outright lies. We need to be well informed. This means using the most reliable sources. Counsel with a reputable well-trained health-care provider to learn what will work best in your situation.

Modern technology continues to change and modify our lives daily. The smartphone in your hand has many times the power, memory, and applications of some of the computers that helped astronauts reach the moon! Website cookies and cell phone apps that include user location information abound in our daily lives and routines. We are already tracked and traced, as it were, whether we like it or not—unless we refuse to use the devices and technologies on which our society and existence have become virtually dependent! It is sad that some are avoiding the benefit of protection offered by the vaccines for fear of being tagged by an electronic chip in the vaccine—a theory already shown to be a myth.

### **HAS THE CHURCH MOVED AWAY FROM THE ADVENTIST HEALTH MESSAGE?**

Most certainly not. We have reiterated time and again that healthful living is primary and of utmost importance. We have seen, however, that it is necessary to use all the preventive measures at our disposal to survive the pandemic, especially until community immunity is reached. Universal precautions such as social (physical) distancing, regular hand washing, mask wearing, and early testing as needed are essential. Immunization is an important preventive tool. Prior to the release of the COVID vaccines, we buried too many faithful and healthy-living Seventh-day Adventists. Even with the availability of vaccines, we continue

**Many lives have been saved through the judicious use of vaccines. Adventists continue to advocate for vaccines to be produced ethically.**

to see deaths from COVID-19, especially and now almost exclusively in the nonvaccinated, and in younger people.

### **DOES THE VACCINE MAKE ME UNCLEAN?**

Some claim that “vaccines make those who take them unclean” because, supposedly, unclean substances are used to produce them. In this regard, it should be clarified that the abiding biblical instructions forbidding the consumption of unclean food and blood (Lev. 11:1-20; 17:11, 12; Acts 15:20) do not apply to vaccines for the obvious reason that vaccines are produced as medication to save lives, not to serve as food. We as a church have not opposed the use of essential medications such as animal-derived insulin in the past, nor the use of porcine tissue heart valves for curative heart surgery in human beings, as these interventions are lifesaving. Along with sanitation and clean water, over the years immunization has been proven to be lifesaving.

### **WHAT ABOUT THE USE OF FETAL CELLS IN VACCINE TESTING OR PRODUCTION?**

An often-asked question relates to fetal stem cell lines as used for culturing the viruses in the production of some vaccines. These fetal cells were harvested from two aborted fetuses in the early 1960s, and the same cells have been propagated using special processes to keep the supply available without having again to harvest fibroblast stem cells.<sup>2</sup> This process was first used in the production of a vaccine against rubella; by 2005 rubella had been eliminated from the USA. Cell progeny from those original cells are still being used today. Retinal cells were harvested from an aborted fetus in 1985; cells from this source were used in the production of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine.

# Being vaccinated still remains your choice, in accordance with your own conscience.

The Adventist Church does not condone abortion.<sup>3</sup> Many lives have been saved through the judicious use of vaccines. Adventists continue to advocate for vaccines to be produced ethically. We also support the saving of life and maintenance of herd immunity through responsible vaccination practices. A huge price was paid in the early 1960s. Since then, many lives have been saved. Various religions such as Roman Catholicism and Judaism have registered their disapproval of the initial harvesting process but have encouraged the use of vaccines among their adherents to prevent illness and to save life. The Adventist Church has clearly articulated its biblical stance on abortion as noted; we also encourage responsible immunization to save life and prevent illness.

## IS FREEDOM OF CHOICE BEING COMPROMISED?

For decades I have traveled with a yellow fever certificate in my passport pack. Travelers who do not produce this document when requested are either injected or rejected. Why? So as not to spread a potentially lethal disease. As health-conscious Adventists we were delighted when smoking on aircraft was banned. I am thankful that Adventists such as Dr. Denis Baird were part of the advocacy group that successfully negotiated this change. The main argument? Secondhand smoke is dangerous to the health of those exposed. The almost universal enforcement of car safety belt use infringes on my personal choices; the evidence confirms, however, that many deaths are prevented, and injuries avoided, when safety belts are used. A similar argument holds for the use of helmets in bike riders. Why would these interventions be required? Frankly, to save us from ourselves.

## WHO GETS THE VACCINE?

What a disparate world we live in! During the pandemic some have the means to privately achieve lifelong aspirations of being astronauts and paying for space flights. Others in this world die isolated, untreated, and without options of protection. Some countries have the opportunity to choose a third shot, a booster dose of the vaccine, while many have not got their first, living in countries struggling to gain access to reliable vaccine supplies. And even when these are available, the necessary logistics and infrastructure facilitating distribution are difficult to put in place.

## ARE THERE RISKS?

No vaccine is 100 percent effective, but they give significant protection. Do we regard complications lightly? We do not: we are committed to saving lives. The benefits of immunization far outweigh the risks (see Dr. Sloop's article in this issue, pp. 34-36). Being vaccinated still remains your choice, in accordance with your own conscience. Vaccinated or not, always seek early medical advice if you test positive for COVID-19. Some ask, Why has the church not endorsed specific treatment regimens apart from preventive measures and responsible vaccination? It's because this is the purview of the health-care provider in the specific clinical setting. We do not endorse or recommend specific medication regimens.

## WHAT IS OUR BEST WAY FORWARD?

The vexation, vilification, and stigmatization among Christ's followers must give way to respectful listening and hearing one another. Together we move forward in faith, "bearing with one another in love" and heeding heaven's counsel: Make every effort "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2, 3).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1923), p. 38.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-ingredients/fetal-tissues>.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.adventist.org/articles/statement-on-the-biblical-view-of-unborn-life-and-its-implications-for-abortion/>.

<sup>4</sup>For more on this topic, see <https://www.healthministries.com/covid-19-vaccines-addressing-concerns-offering-counsel/>.

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# Post-Pandemic Progress

**A**fter the resurrection of Jesus, as the gospel began gaining momentum, Satan's opposition and persecution increased. By Acts 7 Stephen, one of the first seven chosen to serve as deacons, was captured by religious leaders and stoned to death. Then came widespread persecution of Christ's faithful followers.

Have you ever wondered why God, Creator of earth, wind, and fire, allowed persecution and its heavy toll on believers? Is it because tested faith brings praise, glory, and honor to Christ (1 Peter 1:7); because battle-tested and strengthened disciples emerge fresher, stronger, and more courageous than ever, guaranteeing the progress of the gospel and the kingdom of grace?

Today Satan's tools include mega forces of fury in a host of killers and destroyers of lives, such as cancer, Alzheimer's disease, crime, violence, wars, hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes. He uses immorality, greed, substance abuse, child abuse, human trafficking, apathy among believers, and a litany of other evils that are on the rise in our nation and world. Having failed thus far to accomplish his pernicious plans to destroy the church, the apple of God's eye, he has sent a pandemic, the worst in more than 100 years, causing widespread death and debilitating health issues.

As the pandemic roars on, some churches are resuming old programs, old methods, and old activities. But some wise voices have warned that the pandemic is likely to be more like a "little ice age" than a long winter or stormy blizzard of discontent. Yet, what Satan meant for evil, we may just shift our eyes and see God using for great good.

How can we who are divinely called to lead in this world of unprecedented changes

be prepared to seek and save the lost? The answer is one word: "SHIFT." Shift our thinking: realize that worship and life will never return to the way they were in the pre-pandemic era. Shift from being busy with lots of activities and keep worship simple so members can do the most important ministries they are divinely called to do. Shift and place prayer and people over plans or programs, as our most important focus in the new normal. Shift to the fact of our church address as no accident, and connect like never before with people in the community where God has placed His church. Preach the Word in and out of season, for God is using the pandemic to cause a paradigm shift from traditional practices to spiritual progress with courage, confidence, and commitment—no matter the cost.

If you haven't done so already, check out churches and schools that have successfully made rapid shifts in methods and operations to virtual or remote activities. Once-bustling sanctuaries and bursting bank accounts have dwindled significantly, but churches have learned to use online giving and a variety of apps to donate to ministry.

The heightened anxiety of facing a future with no clear understanding of what it may look like has caused leaders to find innovative relief for members suffering from Zoom fatigue. Hope that we will soon return to the old normal has been replaced with creative, inspiring worship using livestreaming video, in a time when home has become the sanctuary.

I earnestly pray and appeal that those who have not yet caught on will shift from the old to a new focus on the gospel for the progress and spread of hope, health, and healing in our nation and world. ♣

**Hyveth Williams** is a professor at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

**CURE FOR THE COMMON LIFE**  
**HYVETH WILLIAMS**



**WHAT SATAN MEANT FOR EVIL, JUST SHIFT YOUR EYES AND SEE HOW GOD IS USING IT FOR GOOD.**

# IN TENTS

*Faith can be  
strengthened  
through principles  
you might have  
never considered.*





It was graduation at the university. With more than 2,000 graduates, ceremonies were in the sports stadium. Graduates and the platform party sat on the bleachers, while families and friends gathered under large tents on the field.

Partway through the program I saw men suddenly jump up, grab large sledgehammers, and run among the tents, pounding the stakes. Glancing toward the horizon, I saw a rapidly approaching wall of dust and sand.

When it hit us, pandemonium broke loose! Tents flailed violently, people shrieked, and graduation caps went airborne.

And then, just like that, it was over. We were covered in grit, but not one tent had collapsed.

#### WHAT DO TENTS HAVE TO DO WITH US?

Pan back some two and a half millennia. It is a time of uncertainty and anguish. God's people are captive, prisoners of war in a foreign land. The future is bleak. Hope has vanished. Life seems pointless. Then the prophet speaks: "Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes" (Isa. 54:2).<sup>1</sup>

For those quarantined in Babylon, the metaphor was apt. The patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—lived in tents, moving from place to place in the land to which they had been called.<sup>2</sup> The children of Israel, when they departed Egypt and journeyed to the Promised Land, also lived in tents.<sup>3</sup>

As with the patriarchs (Heb. 11:13), Peter notes we are pilgrims on the earth (1 Peter 2:11). We also are called to leave Babylon<sup>4</sup> and travel to the Land of Promise. On this journey, we live in tents—movable, temporary.<sup>5</sup>

In the patriarchs' days, tents were made of five main components: (a) the *covering*, typically woven from goat or camel hair, a material known as sackcloth;<sup>6</sup> (b) *poles* to support the covering, the tallest often in the center of the tent; (c) *curtains*, typically wide strips of recycled covering, hanging down at the sides of the tent; (d) *ropes*, which attach to the poles or covering and extend beyond the tent, providing stability; and (e) *stakes*, pegs driven firmly into the ground, to which the ropes are anchored.

Interestingly, there are also five imperatives in Isaiah's directive.

"Enlarge the place of your tent": Why do we need to "enlarge the place"? Simply, a wider space must be readied because a larger tent will be needed. The family will grow!

We notice in the preceding verse that the charge to expand the tent comes while the woman is barren. Isaiah, however, urges her, apparently desolate and forsaken, to break into singing *before* she has any

## Do not hold back is also a reminder that both the enlarging and the stretching will take time, effort, and personal resources.

children. And now she is instructed to prepare for those children.

Sometimes, God calls for action before we see reality. Noah built the ark and entered it before the rain fell (Gen. 6:13-7:5). Abram left the familiar, not knowing where he was going (Heb. 11:8). The priests stepped into the Jordan, and then the waters parted (Joshua 3). Responding to God's call, to His plan, requires faith.

What does *enlarging the tent* mean in our lives? Maybe it means that we exit our small boxes—our cramped thinking, our limited view of God.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps it means that we widen our hearts to make place for others.<sup>8</sup> Fundamentally, it means that there will be change and that that change will involve us personally.

The problem is that the status quo feels secure. Our routines are comfortable. Our boundaries are defined. "Enlarging the tent" is inconvenient and often messy. But God directs, "Enlarge the place of your tent" (Isa. 54:2). I have plans for you (see Jer. 29:11). What I want to do in you and through you simply will not fit with your existing space or mindset. Do not draw limits on your life. I need you to think big, to dream outsized dreams. I need you to make room for a God-sized future.

**"Stretch your tent curtains wide":** When the tent is enlarged, its border also expands. That means that you must add material to the tent, including the curtains around the perimeter.

And there is more: to *stretch the curtains* means to lift them up and out. This extends the shade of your tent, providing space for more people to stop by, rest, and visit.

Stretching your curtains may mean making room for new people in your life who will stretch you. Some will stretch your patience; others may stretch your nerves. Perhaps all of them will stretch your prayer life.<sup>9</sup>

But when you lift and stretch wide the curtains

of your life, it will broaden your horizon. You will see God's vision better.

**"Do not hold back":** "Think big!" Isaiah urges (Isa. 54:2, Message).<sup>10</sup> "Spare no expense!" (verse 2, NLT).<sup>11</sup>

When a tent is enlarged, additional supporting posts are needed. But that is not all. The center posts must also be raised. And for that, more robust timbers are required.

We are sometimes prone to say, "Everything is quite all right. What we have is good enough." But God says, "Don't be meager. Plan with audacious vision. Work with bold abandon." We are not to limit our imagination, our dream of how big the tent may need to be. God wants us to have unconventional optimism for growth.<sup>12</sup>

**"Do not hold back"** is also a reminder that both the enlarging and the stretching will take time, effort, and personal resources. After all, a tent requires support.

**"Lengthen your cords":** Success is not only about expansion. It is also about preservation. Expansion and preservation, however, are linked. We cannot enlarge a tent without adjusting the cords. The larger the tent, the longer the ropes that are required to keep the tent secure. Cords are key to preservation.<sup>13</sup>

Cords are also about connections. Notice the expanding circles of influence: enlarge the tent, stretch out the curtains, lengthen the cords. Not just Jerusalem, but Judea, Samaria, and beyond (Acts 1:8). To secure the tent, we need cords, not just on one side of the tent, but on all sides, reaching out in every direction.

To lengthen our cords means that we reach out beyond the familiar, beyond the farthest perimeter of our tent. It means that we venture into the unknown, that we touch other lives.

God's plans go beyond us. "For God so loved the world" (John 3:16). And we must love as He



loves. This preserves the tent. When we engage in service and witness beyond the tent, our faith and commitment are strengthened.<sup>14</sup>

**“Strengthen your stakes”:** As you enlarge your tent and lengthen your cords, you must also strengthen the stakes. “Drive the stakes down deeper,” Isaiah instructs (Isa. 54:2, NIV).<sup>15</sup>

Strengthening is essential for preservation. You cannot keep the same stakes and keep building a bigger tent. The larger the tent, the more wind it catches and the greater the potential to topple or collapse. A larger tent, then, requires stronger and more firmly planted stakes. It is like a tree—the more the branches spread, the deeper the roots must grow.<sup>16</sup>

God knows that winds will blow, that storms will unexpectedly lash the tent. So He asks us to prepare, to pound the pegs more firmly into the ground. Strengthening the stakes means that we become more firmly grounded, anchoring our lives in God’s truth through deep Bible study and secluded time with God.

Corporately it means that we are not merely to seek new converts, as important as this certainly is. We must also strengthen those already in the faith. Acts 2:42 reports that in the expanding early church “they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (KJV).

## CONCLUSION

What happens when we fulfill the divine imperatives in our life? The prophet concludes, “You shall expand to the right and to the left, and your descendants will inherit the nations, and make the desolate cities inhabited” (Isa. 54:3, NKJV).<sup>17</sup>

There will be growth on every side. People will come to the faith. And what seemed to be a desolate tent will be filled with a multitude of God’s children. Our church, our lives, “will be like a tent

whose ropes are taut and whose stakes are firmly fixed” (Isa. 33:20, NLT).

If life feels unfruitful and unfulfilled, if we feel that God cannot do anything in or through us, then God’s directive gives us hope. Isaiah’s message is ours: “Enlarge your tent. Stretch the curtains. Lengthen the cords. Strengthen the stakes.”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Unless otherwise noted, biblical passages are from the New International Version.

<sup>15</sup>See, for example, Gen. 12:8; 13:3; 18:1-10; 26:17, 25; 33:18-21; Heb. 11:8, 9.

<sup>16</sup>Num. 1:52; 9:17; 24:5; Joshua 22:4, 6.

<sup>17</sup>Jer. 51:6; Rev. 18:1-4.

<sup>18</sup>Paul and Peter utilize the metaphor, applying it to the Christian life (2 Cor. 5:1, 4; 2 Peter 1:13, 14).

<sup>19</sup>Fred Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), pp. 13-19.

<sup>20</sup>Jentezen Franklin, *The Fasting Edge: Recover Your Passion. Recapture Your Dream. Restore Your Joy* (Lake Mary, Fla.: Charisma House, 2011), p. 94.

<sup>21</sup>Sarah Barry, “Enlarge the Place of Your Tent (Isaiah 54:2),” Bonn University Bible Fellowship, June 29, 2010, <https://www.bonunbf.org/enlarge-the-place-of-your-tent-isaiah-54/2/>; Leon Waters, “Stretch Past Your Disappointment—God Is Enlarging You,” *Awakening Magazine*, Feb. 1, 2018, <https://awakeningmag.com/stretch-past-your-disappointment-god-is-enlarging-you/amp/>; Phillip Kayser, “Faith to Expand,” *Biblical Blueprints*, July 9, 2017, [https://kaysercommentary.com/Sermons/Communion/Isaiah%2054\\_2.md](https://kaysercommentary.com/Sermons/Communion/Isaiah%2054_2.md).

<sup>22</sup>Jentezen Franklin, “Strengthen Your Stakes,” *Daily Devotions*, Jan. 28, 2014, <https://jentezenfranklin.org/daily-devotions/strengthen-your-stakes>.

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<sup>25</sup>Scott Grant, “Breaking Out of the Box,” Peninsula Bible Church, Dec. 2, 2000, [https://cdn.pbc.org/Main\\_Service/2000/12/02/Is54-1-5.html](https://cdn.pbc.org/Main_Service/2000/12/02/Is54-1-5.html).

<sup>26</sup>The prophet Jeremiah laments, “My tent is destroyed; all its ropes are snapped” (Jer. 10:20).

<sup>27</sup>Grant observes [note 12, above], “Going beyond ourselves means depending on something beyond ourselves.”

<sup>28</sup>Texts credited to NIV are from the *Holy Bible, New International Reader’s Version*. Copyright © 1985, 1996, 1998, 2014 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide..

<sup>29</sup>Franklin.

<sup>30</sup>Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version.

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# MOUNTAIN PASSES AND GOD'S GRACES

*He was orchestrating  
things long before I knew  
I needed Him to.*

**KRISTI RICH**

It was an unexpected text. Totally unexpected. The accountant who replaced me so I could be a stay-at-home mom had an accident and suffered a concussion. Could I come do payroll?

It seemed like a simple request, but I had moved 575 miles away. The interstate between here and there crossed four mountain passes. It was March, and Montana weather was unpredictable at best. I had a 1-year-old and a 5-year-old, but I had also become antsy the past few weeks and wished I could be using my knowledge and training again. While I loved being with my kids, working with numbers instead of a toddler's emotional roller coaster seemed like a vacation.

I agreed, packed up my kids, and made the trip. The travel weather was beautiful, and for a week and a half my memory was tested and challenged as the administrative assistant and I worked through payroll and everything else that needed attending to.

## **CALLED INTO ACTION—AGAIN**

But the administration asked if I would come back in April and May. I had been planning an April event in my hometown, even filling out the paperwork for reserving a public location. Oddly enough, the event had fallen through for other reasons a few weeks earlier. The date? Payroll week.

For two months I worked on payroll, then squeezed in extra accounting items that needed to be done. To keep the kids happy in the car (i.e., asleep as much as possible), I would leave late in the afternoon and drive into the

night, often arriving at 1:00 or 2:00 a.m. We got up a few hours later to go to work, and my parents watched the kids while I dove into paperwork.

The days were long but busy and fast. Before I knew it, we were all packed and headed back home. The niche I needed filled had been accomplished, and I was happy once again not to be working that much daily.

What originally was supposed to be just three months of processing payroll turned into six months. Accounting events that I needed to attend were scheduled right before or during payroll, eliminating the need for extra trips. These events had been set up months before it was known that I would be the one who needed to be there. We switched payroll software and had training right before the week of payroll. The annual audit was scheduled over payroll week. Normally the worst possible week to schedule an audit, it became the best. Instead of visiting my husband's family overseas, we postponed the trip for other reasons. It would surely have been over payroll week. It was as if Someone knew ahead of time the situation, the traveling, the kids, and planned it all meticulously.

Summertime faded away, and my stance now was "Weather permitting, I will be here for payroll." Snow and icy roads can start in September for the mountain passes. The administration assured me they were looking for a new accountant.

October. November. Each month I watched the weather. Each month I was given at least a day of optimal travel each way. Sunday would be sunny and warm. Tuesday or Wednesday it would snow, only to clear up Thursday and Friday in time for me to head back home. I moved my travel to daylight hours to achieve better road conditions. By now the administrative assistant and I had payroll down to a science and were slowly getting caught up on all the other accounting items. We had a system down, and while far from perfect, it was working.

Real winter still had not yet arrived in Montana. My husband came with the kids for December's workweek. The weather hovered around "warm" (about freezing) without that much snow in the air or on the ground. Totally abnormal.

My husband had planned to help a friend move from Montana to the Seattle area. They left very early in the morning one day before my scheduled return home. They encountered icy roads and were

**The days were long but busy and fast. Before I knew it, we were all packed and headed back home. The niche I needed filled had been accomplished, and I was happy once again not to be working that much daily.**

stuck on the highway for more than six hours because of an accident and a closed road. They were a mere 15 miles from their intended first stop. I left midmorning the following day and faced only snowflakes and some slushy roads for an hour or so.

Word came at the end of December that the administration had finally hired a new accountant. She would be taking over on the first of January. Could I come and train her? Yes, weather permitting, the third week in January—when winter in Montana and travel over the mountain passes was brutal. But this year it wasn't. Again, two windows of good weather opened.

It was the second week of March—time for my final trip. This time I would be helping the new accountant get ready for the annual audit. By now I was amazed at how God had directed the weather for my previous 10 jaunts to the office. I wasn't worried. The snow would stop. It wouldn't be so cold. Everything would be OK. And it was. Once again I had a beautiful sunny day for travel. The roads were clear and dry most of the way. By the end of the week it had warmed up to above freezing, and I traveled back in the sun as well, arriving home to melting snow and the start of spring.

There was overwhelming thankfulness to God on that last trip home. His plans and timing were never off. It wasn't just God's love for me that filled me with awe, but His love for Montana and its people. It wasn't just me He was keeping safe; it was employee paychecks and financial records He was watching out for—the things many don't see God in. But He was there all the time, orchestrating it all. ♣

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**Kristi Rich** is a stay-at-home (most of the time) mom living in the Pacific Northwest.



# THE LAST SUPPER MYTH



JAMETLENE RESKP

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*Finding the right name  
and the right  
understanding*

I know that if you have one of those Bibles organized with captions labeling specific events, the subhead at Matthew 26:17 or Mark 14:12 or Luke 22:7, or John 13 perhaps, says, “The Last Supper.” But what we so often call “Last Supper” is not the Last Supper.

## THE FULL STORY

And before you declare and dismiss me as a heretic, come with me to examine Scripture references to make my point. Then answer my rather impertinent concluding question: “Are you ready for the Last Supper?”

And I have other questions before that: What really took place at the event labeled the “Last Supper”? What significant aspects of it make it the first rather than the last? Why do I say the label is a myth? And why do I believe that the true “Last Supper” is still future?

The origin of the Lord’s Supper is rooted in the original Passover, both in timing and symbolism. Passover marked a new beginning for God’s people, Israel, and symbolized deliverance from a life of bondage. The Lord’s Supper brings the same meanings to Christianity—



new birth and freedom from the penal debt of sin. Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage was a type of the real deliverance that Jesus would bring to the whole human race.

Despite the on-again, off-again relationship between the nation of Israel and their God from the time of their liberation from Egypt to first-century Judaism, the tradition of Passover celebration was preserved, though with a variety of interesting changes: on that last night in Egypt, Israel consumed bitter herbs; but by the New Testament era the bitter herbs seem to have been replaced by wine. Unleavened bread and roasted lamb were maintained, but over time the tradition grew into a "15-point" ritual, with as many as three to four servings of wine, an element adapted from the Romans, perhaps, since Romans drank several glasses of wine with each meal.

The Jewish Seder ("order") usually included the Matzo—unleavened bread—and roasted lamb as well as a ritual of seeking and removing all leaven from the house, a symbolic purging from sin (Ex. 12:15, 19; 13:7). In addition to a ritual cleansing of the house, some families that could afford it would use separate cooking and eating utensils specifically set aside for Passover—to avoid contamination with leaven.

Today there are more than 3,000 versions of the 15 ordered steps. The rabbis required the story of deliverance from Egyptian bondage to be told in as many ways as possible as long as the general theme was emphasized: "God's redemption from evil." Belief in the four goblets of wine is allegedly based on God's promise in Exodus 6:6, 7, as follows:

Cup 1: I will free you from bondage (*start of the meal*).

Cup 2: I will deliver you from slavery (*with the main meal*).

Cup 3: I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.

Cup 4: I will take you to be My people (*the Cup of Consummation—usually poured at the end of the meal but never drunk*).

#### A NEW STORY

In their first-century equivalent of this ritual Jesus met with His disciples in an upper room, conforming to a tradition that He Himself had instituted as Israel's original Deliverer, and was

about to reinterpret and reapply to all lost humanity as the Savior of the world from bondage to Satan and sin: "As He ate the Passover with His disciples, He instituted in its place the service that was to be the memorial of His great sacrifice. The national festival of the Jews was to pass away forever. The service which Christ established was to be observed by His followers in all lands and through all ages."<sup>1</sup>

What's incorrect about the Last Supper? Our quotation exposes the limit of the name itself, the "Last Supper." For Jesus intended the service "to be observed by His followers in all lands and through all ages."<sup>2</sup> This was an inaugural supper, with novel elements that are clearly identifiable: as they ate, Jesus said, of the bread, "Take, eat; this is my body." And of the wine: "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:26-28, KJV), new concepts for a familiar ritual—first, not last; Christian symbols that modified the Jewish ritual and hold a message of hope for all Christians.

Luke preserves a second new note in the order that Jesus gives when presenting His disciples the bread: "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). The early Christian church respected that counsel, which caused Paul to write: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). From that night in that upper room down through the ages until today, Christians have taken this supper in the hope of His coming.

And Mark's next new note from Jesus' words is a promise that thrills the expectant saint again and again: "Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25, NIV). This, above all, is the Cup of Consummation, the cup that was not drunk; the cup that Jesus is waiting to drink with us in His Father's kingdom: now, that's a "Last Supper" to look forward to. It will certainly be "the Climactic Supper." I want to be there. Have you thought of being ready for that Last Supper? I find it a thought worth living with: supper in the kingdom with Jesus. 🍷

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 652.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

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AMAZING FACTS

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WITH DOUG BATCHELOR

# ARE WE ANSWERING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS?

It's pretty popular these days for Christians and former Christians to talk about the deconstruction of their faith. This is essentially a "conversion" of sorts from an exclusivist form of Christianity to either a more inclusive faith or the rejection of faith altogether. The pile of bodies is staggering, growing by the day, and includes well-known pastors and leaders.

While I certainly wouldn't say my faith has been "deconstructed," I would say that during the past five years it's been reimagined and reordered. Some of what I previously deemed important has either faded into relative insignificance or been discarded altogether, as I've come to understand and embrace the gospel more fully and the "weightier matters of the law" Jesus spoke of—justice, mercy, and faith.

The main impetus for this reimagining is very simple: I started hanging out mostly with people outside my faith, and realized I was largely wrestling with, debating, and answering questions most of the world wasn't asking. As the result of a very intentional missional shift, my ministry changed from being insular and Adventist-centered to incarnational and community-centered. And I soon realized there's a whole world of questions out there that I had no idea existed, mostly because my whole world was Adventism.

The reason for this isn't complicated: we ask very different questions if we're sitting in a boardroom in Silver Spring or a seminary classroom in Berrien Springs than if we're hanging out in a café in Seattle or sitting by a well in Samaria. Theology is always contextual.

And there's nothing wrong with this, of course, so long as we recognize it.

For some this idea may seem troubling, sounding like my theological agenda has shifted—based not on Scripture but in the pursuit of relevance. But even Peter's theology finally changed, not because he proof-texted the Old Testament, but because he encountered the Spirit's working in Gentile Cornelius' life. This isn't to diminish the importance of deep Scripture study or to deny the existence of absolute truth. It's simply to note that our study of Scripture is *always* shaped by the questions we ask and the people we surround ourselves with. And the danger, of course, is that we become increasingly out of touch with and irrelevant to the world around us, failing to move the needle in our task of spreading the three angels' messages. Sadly, especially in the West, this has largely been the case.

So my objective in this column is to invite you to reimagine faith with me, ever keeping an eye on our missionary task, ever humbly being open to unfolding light. The reality is that our primary work as Jesus people has never been to protect, defend, or debate truth. We've been called to live as salt and light and, borrowing familiar phrasing, to "mingle with" those who don't embrace Jesus. Only then can we truly learn to proclaim and live out a faith that appeals to and answers the questions of people from "every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6). 📌

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**Shawn Brace** is a pastor and author in Bangor, Maine, whose forthcoming book, *The Table I Long For* (Signs Publishing), further details his and his church's recent journey into a mission-centered life. He is also a D.Phil. student at the University of Oxford, researching nineteenth-century American Christianity.

REIMAGINING  
FAITH  
SHAWN  
BRACE



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DEFEND, OR DEBATE  
TRUTH. WE'VE BEEN  
CALLED TO "MINGLE  
WITH" THOSE WHO  
DON'T EMBRACE  
JESUS.





# CREATION SABBATH

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*A part of God's plan for  
all people and times*

**ELLEN G. WHITE**

**W**hen God created the earth and placed man upon it, He divided time into seven periods. Six He gave to man for his own use, to employ in secular business; one He reserved for Himself. Having rested on the seventh day, He blessed and sanctified it. . . . It was not the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth day that was sanctified, or set apart to a holy use, neither was it a seventh part of time and no day in particular; but it was the seventh day, the day upon which God had rested. . . .

When the law was given at Sinai, the Sabbath was placed in the midst of moral precepts, in the very bosom of the decalogue. But the Sabbath institution was not then made known for the first time. The fourth commandment places its origin at Creation. The Creator's rest-day was hallowed by Adam in holy Eden, and by men of God throughout the patriarchal ages. During Israel's long bondage in Egypt, under taskmasters that knew not God, they could not keep the Sabbath; therefore the Lord brought them out where they could remember His holy day.

## **HONORING THE SABBATH**

Before they came to Sinai, they understood the Sabbath to be obligatory upon them. After the giving of the manna, the people, of their own accord, gathered a double quantity on the sixth day in preparation for the Sabbath. . . .

A threefold miracle was wrought in honor of the Sabbath, even before the law was given on Sinai. A double quantity of manna fell on the sixth day, none upon the Sabbath, and the por-



tion needed for the Sabbath was preserved sweet and pure, when if any were kept over at any other time, it became unfit for food. Here is conclusive evidence that the Sabbath was instituted at Creation, when the foundations of the earth were laid, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. And its sacredness remains unchanged, and will so remain even to the close of time. From the Creation, every precept of the divine law has been obligatory on man, and has been observed by those who fear the Lord. The doctrine that God's law has been abolished is one of Satan's devices to compass the ruin of the race.

The prophet Isaiah, looking forward to the gospel dispensation, sets forth in the most impressive manner the obligation of the Sabbath, and the blessings attending its observance: "Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. . . . For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant, even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters. I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off."

### **SABBATH BLESSINGS FOR EVERYONE**

Under the Mosaic law, strangers and eunuchs were excluded from the full enjoyment of the privileges granted to Israel. But the prophet declares that a time is coming when these restrictions will cease. . . . The prophet declares that the stranger who will love and obey God shall enjoy the privileges that have belonged exclusively to the chosen people. . . . "Every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant, even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides those that are gathered unto him."

Again, after rebuking the selfishness, violence, and oppression of Israel, and exhorting them to works

of righteousness and mercy, he declares: "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. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable." . . .

### **SATAN'S BOLD ATTEMPTS**

This prophecy [Isa. 58:12-14] reaches down the centuries to the time when the man of sin attempted to make void one of the precepts of God's law, to trample under foot the original Sabbath of Jehovah, and in its stead exalt one of his own creation. And when the Christian world set aside God's holy Sabbath, and in its place accept a common working day, unsanctioned by a single "Thus saith the Lord," they are encouraging infidelity, and virtually acknowledging the supremacy of that power by whose authority alone the change has been effected. The rejection of the Sabbath has led to the rejection of the whole law, and thousands of professed Christians now boldly declare it void.

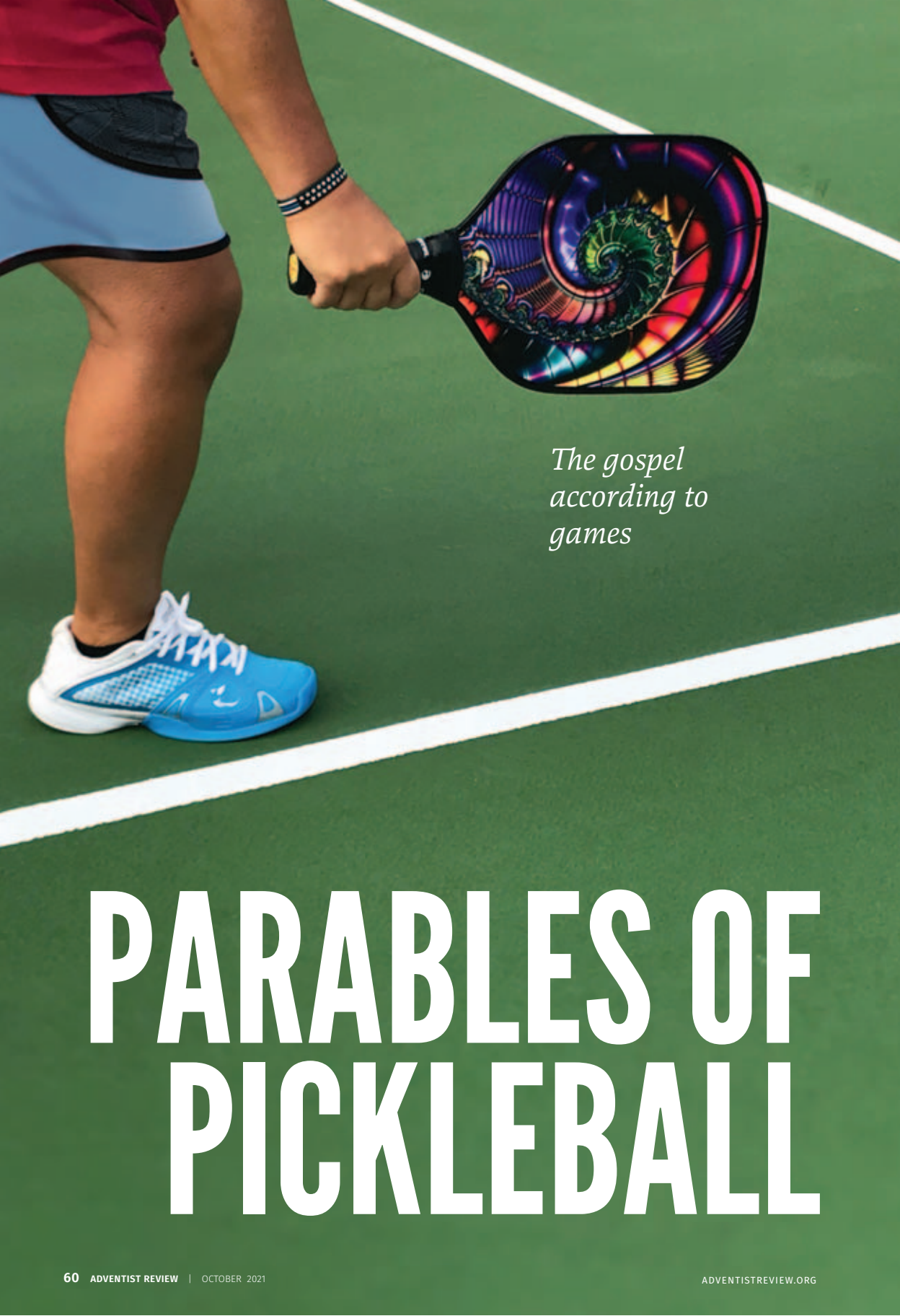
### **SABBATH IS ETERNAL**

The law of ten commandments, which has been so lightly disregarded, is the foundation of many generations. . . . God spoke this law from Sinai in awful grandeur, in the hearing of all Israel, and he wrote it with his own fingers upon tables of stone, not for his chosen people only, but for all men, to the close of time. Christ Himself declares that while the heavens and the earth remain, not one jot or tittle shall pass from this holy law.

There were two institutions founded in Eden that were not lost in the Fall—the Sabbath and the marriage relation. . . . He who loves and observes the Sabbath, and maintains the purity of the marriage institution, thereby proves himself the friend of man and the friend of God. He who by precept or example lessens the obligation of these sacred institutions is the enemy of both God and man, and is using his influence and his God-given talents to bring in a state of confusion and moral corruption. ♣

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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 *Signs of the Times*, February 28, 1884.



*The gospel  
according to  
games*

# PARABLES OF PICKLEBALL

## JOSEPH OLSTAD

It sounds sacrilegious. But it's not. Paul spoke of the Greek games to teach about our walk with God, or we could say our "race" to God. "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize?" (1 Cor. 9:24) or "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1).<sup>1</sup> Games are a microcosm of life. Teams (relationships) are formed, rules (laws) are learned and enforced, victories and defeats are experienced, skills acquired, and the parallels go on and on. So if Paul can use the word "race" (Greek *stadion*) to illustrate the spiritual, then pickleball, the current sports craze, may have a lesson or two as well.

For those not familiar with pickleball, it is an amalgam of sports. It's played on a badminton-sized court, uses a supersized paddle akin to a ping-pong paddle, hits a wiffle-like ball over a net, and feels like mini tennis.

### LESSON 1: DISCERNING DELUSION

During a vacation at some condos, I headed for the courts. Four young guys were already there. They were moving around on the pickleball court, swinging pickleball paddles, and hitting pickleballs. To a passerby it would look like they were, well . . . playing pickleball . . . , but I assure you, they were not. There is a unique rule in pickleball: one is not allowed to hit the ball out of the air if one is standing in, or even touching, a seven-foot zone on each side of the net. This nonvolley zone is affectionately called the "kitchen." This kitchen rule is essential to the game. The strategy, shot selection,

stroke technique, and body position all revolve around obeying this single rule. Since these four guys were not respecting this one rule, they were having fun playing something, but it wasn't pickleball.

This idea of believing oneself to be performing something when one is not is reminiscent of the religious delusion of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Every Christian on the planet recoils from identifying with Jesus' greatest antagonists. But if we don't think we are susceptible to the same problem, it's easy for Jesus' words to lose their relevant edge in our lives. As a teacher, Jesus had the most undesirable job possible: to verbally shock people out of the delusion that they were right with God when they were actually at cross purposes with the God they professed allegiance to. Remember, Jesus was speaking to leaders whose full-time vocation was to maintain strict holiness through Torah (law) observance. Here's my paraphrase of snippets of the Gospels where Jesus is in full intervention mode:

You honor God with your words, but who you are on the inside is far away from the God you're speaking about (Matt. 15:8).

*Your worship of God is pointless* (verse 9).

*None of you keeps the law* (John 7:19).

*You have neglected the most important matters of law: judgment, mercy, and faith* (Matt. 23:23).

*You are full of greed and self-indulgence* (verse 25).

*You are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness* (verse 28).

*You actually prevent people from*

entering the kingdom of God. It's bad enough that you don't enter in, but then you don't allow others to enter in either (verse 13).

*You put forth great effort to make a single convert, but what have you converted him to? Not a child of God, but twice more the child of hell than yourselves* (verse 15).

Not quite the ringing endorsement religious leaders are familiar with. Is it any wonder that they accused Jesus of merely hurling insults (Luke 11:45)? Like the four guys who thought they were playing pickleball but were not, so Jesus exposed those who thought they were faithful to God but were not. And the kicker is this: there is no reason to think that a delusion like this in the first century can't happen in the twenty-first century.

The question is; Will we be humble enough to apply Jesus' sternest warnings in this matter to *ourselves*, and not to the guy in the pew in front of us? It may sting a bit, because Christ reserved His strongest language, not for blatant moral failings, but for lips that were not aligned with hearts (Matt. 15:8), and for religious showmanship done in His name to veil "lawlessness" (Matt. 7:21-23). Think of any censure spoken by Christ, and none of them comes close to the intensity and frequency of His use of "hypocrisy" toward those immersed in a religious delusion.

So what can we do? We can find that place of naked honesty and vulnerability and let the words and warnings of Jesus wash over our souls. Then we listen—both to the encouragements and convictions of the Spirit. Then we surrender. Then we let Him change us.

## LESSON 2: CLEARING UP CONFUSION

It's not easy to make that pickleball do what you want. There are endless hours of Internet training videos that focus on how to control the ball's speed, spin, and direction. Even after years of practice, players (including me) will still blast the ball straight into the bottom of the net or launch it clear off the court into nearby courts or residential backyards. The game is just plain hard. Mistakes are inevitable. Even if someone held a gun to my head, I could not make myself play a game of pickleball flawlessly. But despite the mistakes, no one would doubt that I'm playing the game; some might even say I'm playing it well. And even with a few mistakes, victory is still


attainable. Absolute flawless performance is not necessary for repeated victories.

These scenarios offer a subtle insight into the issues of Christian performance worth considering. Living as a disciple of Christ is just that. It is a learned, ever-developing lifestyle of inculcating the commandments/law of God (Matt. 28:19, 20) and aligning oneself with the principles of His kingdom, with the result of being restored to His image (Gen. 1:27). Given that it is "His" image, we are being restored into, how could the call on our life be anything less than "perfection"? "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48, NIV).

"Perfection" should not be a burdensome concept to be avoided. On the contrary, it is a description of our Father's impartial divine love (yes, He loves evil people, too; see Matt. 5:43-48), and it is an honor to be called to possess the same. Since we are called to reflect the Father, *logically* we are commanded to do as He does. Can you imagine Jesus absurdly saying, "I want you to be just like the Father, except not in this area, because... well, it's just too hard!" So in every rally of pickleball played, each player embraces the call to perfection. No one plans or purposes to fall short of that standard. No one says, "I think that in this game I'll hit two balls out, four balls into the net, and then foot fault on match point." No. The goal of every rally is perfect performance—and it should be. Whether it turns out to be or not is a different issue. The fact is that on any given day I may play a nearly perfect game, without what's called any "unforced errors." But over multiple games and days it is highly likely that I will make a mistake. Some may think that a juxtaposition of "perfection" and "mistakes" is untenable. Perhaps. But Jesus did just that when he called us to "perfection" in Matthew 5:48 but then commanded us to pray for the forgiveness of our trespasses a mere 12 verses later. So "be perfect" and "ask for forgiveness." Embrace the tension. Jesus holds us to a high standard. But Jesus is also a realist. Let's not foolishly shun the idea of biblical perfection, but let's not hypocritically claim we don't need forgiveness, either.

For those who think this idea will give some a justification for rampant willful sin—it may. But those who want to sin will find an excuse regardless of what is said here. In the end they





are only fooling themselves. If I *purposely* drove the ball into the net and then gave myself two points for doing so and then hit the pickleball into a swimming pool and added three points for making a splash, no one would be impressed. I would not convince anyone watching that I simply was making “mistakes.” They would discern the difference between a player who is genuinely doing their best to play the game but falters, and the player who is claiming to play the game but grossly violates its rules. Hypocrites usually fool only themselves.

### COMING TO CONCLUSIONS

Recasting familiar conversations in fresh language is what metaphors are all about. Pickleball may seem like a silly parable to use for communicating theology, but if it has aided in adding nuance or insight to Jesus’ teachings, then it has done its job.

Concerning the first lesson, making His listeners self-aware was a critical goal of Jesus’ ministry as He attempted to verbally shock those who were under a dangerous religious delusion. He may need to continue that ministry at times in my life and yours. Let’s be receptive to it.

Concerning the second lesson, I honestly don’t know if Christians still debate the tension between grace and works, law and faith, or whether the word “perfection” is a good word or a bad one, a blessed gift or a dangerous heresy. To the degree that following Christ is truly a disciplined skill developed over time, such reflections on the life of pro athletes as training, growth, setbacks, and stunning performances may inform what the Christian life may be expected to look like.

Thinking harder about pickleball will go only so far, but it did provide us with a few cautionary takeaways. Jesus commands us to pray for forgiveness in His model prayer, which implies we’re doing something that needs forgiving (Matt. 6:9). We can’t minimize this fact, fearing that determined sinners will use Christ’s mercy as a pretext for willful sin. If we choose sin over Christ, then let’s not feign surprise when we receive hell over heaven. The choice was always ours to make. On the flip side, Jesus commands us to be “perfect.” That’s hard, and the context only makes it sound more difficult (i.e., loving enemies). But we must

**Living as a disciple of Christ is just that. It is a learned, ever-developing lifestyle of inculcating the commandments/ law of God (Matt. 28:19, 20) and aligning oneself with the principles of His kingdom, with the result of being restored back to His image (Gen. 1:27).**

resist the temptation to water down His calls to holy living just because some will use His words to launch into perfectionistic insanity. We can’t let our walk with God be a reaction to those who double down on some theological imbalance. We have only God to answer to, not theological factions that create identities in opposition to each other.

Perhaps Paul, thinking of the games of his time, said it best: “Not that I have . . . already become perfect, but I press on.” “Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize [award for victory in games] of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, all who are mature, let’s have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that to you as well” (Phil. 3:12-15, NASB).<sup>2</sup> So think on these things—perhaps while you play a game of pickleball. 🍓

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all 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.

<sup>2</sup> Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.

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# WHAT'S WRONG WITH RELIGION ANYWAY?

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*Understanding the importance of religion can be a way to preserve it*

**JULIET BROMME**

**Y***ou can live a happy, productive, charitable life without it. "Religion" can have a negative connotation. Maybe I'm conjecturing based on a few comments I've heard or patterns I've seen among my peers. Nevertheless, it seems that a recent trend, at least in my generation, is to drift toward a God without structure, one without doctrine and/or denomination.*

In some ways, I get it. That organized religion has sown division, perpetuated some of the most heinous crimes on earth, and reflected the opposite virtues of Jesus' earthly ministry is true.

But at the end of the day I'm not sure that my spiritual life is better without it. For me, it seems that life is enhanced and has greater depth when accompanied by religion. I don't think a denomination's infamy should define its entirety; despite its challenges, religion is crucial and, I'd venture, necessary.

When religion gets discouraging, monotonous, and challenging, we tend to walk away. When we get triggered by a statement or a position presented by the church, we let it define the whole. But when we turn our backs on it altogether, we leave a lot of value behind us.

## **REASONS FOR RELIGION**

Religion is important for families. Often, young adults who drift away find themselves coming back when they have kids. I suppose this is because of the values inherent in a church community. If this is a subconscious acknowledgment of the importance of religion, don't we deserve to have that for ourselves all the time?

Religion is thought-provoking. Through its core beliefs, a denomination is an explanation of the world; an attempted answer to difficult questions. In any situation, being forced to dig into the whys and whats makes the experience more valuable. And sometimes beliefs will take a lifetime to turn over and figure out. But isn't that the point anyway? A religion that doesn't challenge or make you think wouldn't offer much of a community to be a part of.

## “I don’t think a denomination’s infamy should define its entirety; despite its challenges, religion is crucial and necessary.”

Religion is responsible for so much good. Establishments rooted in religion are responsible for hospital systems, rescue and relief organizations, and successful educational institutions. Communities need to be cared for, and religious organizations are often the ones spearheading these efforts. Doug Hardt, senior pastor of Markham Woods Seventh-day Adventist Church, talks about the participatory nature of religion. “I believe that all humans, regardless of their religion or persuasions, enjoy spending time with like-minded people. . . . It is good to have churches, church schools, seminaries, etc., to care for the spiritual needs of a community. I don’t think that in theory, it should be different than other needs that we have as humans.”\*

Sometimes we forget about the significance of the mission aspect of religion; this characteristic has especially helped define the Adventist Church. Christianity revolves around including others in the spiritual experience. Pastor Hardt goes on to say, “We are not called by God to inhabit a deserted island or secluded monastery where we quietly pass time reading Scripture and praying. . . . It is a dangerous practice for God’s mission in the world to condone separating from organized religion to pursue individual spiritual enlightenment. If every last Adventist in the world church would consciously choose to do that, we wouldn’t see anywhere near the effective mission that has allowed us to go from being about 5,000 believers in New England in the 1840s to a worldwide denomination of more than 21 million members working for the gospel in more than 200 countries.”

Most important, a community of believers provides support and encouragement that can be a buffer to a personal relationship. Religion can certainly be a pillar.

### **JESUS WASN’T RELIGIOUS, WAS HE?**

A common argument I’ve heard and that many others state as a reason to phase religion out of their lives is that Jesus wasn’t part of one; some people even go as far as to say Jesus hated religion and stood in opposition to it.

However, during the first century, the majority of religions worshipped mythological gods and idols. Judaism was one of the only religions during the time Jesus was on earth that supported monotheistic beliefs. When He was 12 years old, Jesus was in the temple, debating with seasoned scholars. As a Jew, Jesus worshipped methodically at the synagogue, He observed Jewish holy days, He instructed believers to be baptized, and exemplified this ritual Himself. In writer Kevin DeYoung’s words: “If religion is characterized by doctrine, commands, rituals, and structure, then Jesus is not your go-to guy for hating religion.”

Avoiding religion isn’t the antidote to suffering. Just as there have been wars motivated by religion, there have been even more conflicts created by causes not even remotely related to religion. And to be honest, even if we took religion out of the equation, Jesus and conflict can still be connected.

### **THE FUTURE OF RELIGION IS DEFINED BY US**

Some churches claim to love grace, but all they give you is legalism. And legalism can certainly be found in some places in the Adventist Church. But don’t give up the good in religion when you’re trying to get rid of the bad. Religion is never just one thing; its shortcomings in one area may be successes elsewhere.

If some frown upon denominational organizations and structured worship, it maybe that they have lost sight of what these really are, and what they can be. You can still be open-minded and go to church. You can still ask all the questions. We get distracted by disagreements and decide that because we don’t want that part of it, we don’t want any of it. But if there are problems, we should be courageous enough to stick around and try to fix them, not point fingers as we walk away. 🦋

\*Quotations from Doug Hardt are culled from an email interview conducted by the author, April 9, 2021.

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**Juliet Bromme** is a senior communication major at Union College and was a summer intern at the *Adventist Review* when this was written.



# BLIND, DEAF & ORPHANS

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### **Sunrise Home**

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# CLOSER LOOK

## The Table's Story: and Other Observations Instructive to the Christian Journey

Lyndon G. Furst, *The Table's Story: and Other Observations Instructive to the Christian Journey*, with a foreword by Errol McLean, Teach Services, Inc., Publishing, 2019. Pp. xiii + 123. ISBN: 978-1-4796-1017-4; available on Amazon; reviewed by Lael Caesar.

**W**hen veteran educator Lyndon “Jerry” Furst began writing *The Table's Story*, it wasn't going to be a book, just a weekly blog for the bulletin of the All Nations church, of which he was a founding member, at the request of his pastor. As a fellow academic, Pastor McLean was acquainted with and admiring of Furst's intellectual and professional record. But more particularly, McLean had been following the regular commentary on current events that Furst wrote for the Berrien Springs weekly newspaper, *The Journal Era*. Admittedly, 31 of the book's 52 stories never made their way into the church bulletin blog. But the blog remains the identifiable spark that led to the book of which they now are all a part. Their inclusion is because they partake of the same spiritual soundness as other pieces that there appeared. Like the blog articles, they all offer lessons of devotional value. Walter Douglas's introduction to the All Nations church (pp. xii, xiii) provides background on the congregation that received Jerry Furst's short stories

Apart from its introductory material, the book is organized according to six categories that, listed as they occur, go through “The Spirit of All Nations Church”—10 stories, of which eight ran in the church bulletin blog; “Christian Witness”—nine stories, including three from the church bulletin blog; “Thinking of Others”—four stories, including one from the blog; “Struggles on the Journey”—

four from the blog; “The Blessed Hope”—six stories, three from the blog; and “Other Observations”—11 stories, with just one from the church bulletin blog.

Dates included for all the stories that appeared in the church bulletin blog show that their appearance spanned a period of almost two and a half years, from January 2015 to May 2017. The story topics engender significant intrigue: “At What Table Do You Sit?” Or “Johnny and the Chocolate Pudding.” Many titles disclose Furst's familiarity with the King James Version of the Bible, e.g., “The Wicked Flee,” which turns out to be that amusing story's climactic and ironic punch line. Indeed, all the stories but one, “Lessons From the Life of Shamgar,” have a concluding, biblical punch line text taken from one of five different Bible versions, mainly the KJV, NIV, and NKJV, but also from the ESV or NLT. Other chapter titles drawn straight from KJV scriptures include “Lean Not on Your Own Understanding,” “Which the Wind Drives Away,” and “Seeking Whom He May Devour.”

Furst has done a good thing for storytelling: narratives are light, simple and spare, regardless of the seriousness of the matter addressed, be it diversity, inclusivity, equity, church order, or faith and science. Stories are methodically pointed, consistently employing scriptural conclusions that illustrate the Bible's ubiquitous relevance, without ever approaching a burdensome moralizing tone.

And whereas Furst has done good for stories by his storytelling, readers will do good for themselves by seeking out his storybook for the breadth of its practical instructiveness—an entire year of stories, one per week, plus one! Follow the organized sequence or start where you wish, for each story stands on its own. Begin, perhaps, with the title piece, “The Table's Story” (p. 26), and find a new application—upside down!—of Jesus' parable of the talents. ♣



## IN TIMES OF TUMULT

Songs of encouragement and uplift

It is easier than it should be to miss the grandeur of God that charges our world. The unrelenting tread, tread, tread across His face seems willed to stamp out the evidences of His care that nature shows, to smother any public sentiment of gratitude to the supernatural, and even stifle personal “thank yous” that Providence may inspire within us. But the pandemonium of pandemic days, earthquake evenings, and hurricane nights, weeks, months, and years must not overwhelm God’s singers of the faithful, joyful song of grace.

In the lines below, a number of pastors ring out God’s song in multiple stanzas of their gathered wisdom that honors truth and wholeness. They sing melodies and lyrics of trust instead of despair, of peace instead of rage, of oneness and godly love rather than the fractiousness of suspicion and judgmentalism, of faith in their eternal Father rather than fear of tomorrow. Listen, then. And join their good song! *Eds.*

**PASTOR HAMILTON, ARIZONA:** The phrase “dancing in the rain” has earned itself some popularity. I love its optimism. It tells me that I need be neither bullied nor beaten, blustered nor battered, blockaded nor badgered into submission to cynicism or despair. Why am I unbroken? Because of whose I know I am: I belong to God. What can hell unleash that can undermine my faith and tear away my hope when my soul is one with His? Glory!

**PASTOR ANGEL, OREGON:** “Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace, be still!’ And the wind ceased and there was a great calm” (Mark 4:39). We may be daunted by the times in which we live. But if Jesus is in our ship of life, His very words that created and sustain our world will bring us peace . . . and more: they’ll bring us joy.

**PASTOR ROY, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA:** Praying through 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 has brought me much comfort over the past few months. By prioritizing the cause of Christ, Paul could draw on the grace of God and delight in weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamity.

**PASTOR ALAREECE, WASHINGTON:** Sometimes life feels dark and turbulent. In those moments,

remember that no matter what we face, we are never alone. Jesus has promised never to abandon us. This simple truth can bring back a spark of hope and keep us going.

**SISTER ELLEN:**

**We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.<sup>1</sup>**

**PASTOR EASTON, NEW YORK:** We all know folks who want to but can’t help. They have the heart but not the means. Others can help, but won’t. Our Lord and Savior is good and great, much too good and great not to help—help you; help me; help us all.

**PASTOR JINHA, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA:** How can we keep hope, joy, and courage alive during a global pandemic or any time when we are struggling to see light in the darkness? Ask the slave longing for freedom, and the saint facing the stake. They know one thing that enabled so many of





them not only to endure, but also to leave a lasting legacy for others.

What did they do? They sang; that's how African American spirituals were born; that's why many an anthem now exists; that's how many movements gain momentum.

Songs lift us up—whether you can sing like an angel or you're tone-deaf. Singing makes you feel better. We were created to sing.

**PASTOR HYVETH, MICHIGAN:** Looking to find stability in storms of sadness, clarity in oceans of confusion, hope through floods of tears? Run to the Rock, Jesus: "He sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety" (Job 5:11).

**SISTER ELLEN:** In every one of His children, Jesus sends a letter to the world. . . . He sends in you a letter to the family, the village, the street, where you live. . . . Perhaps they do not read the Bible. . . . But . . . it may be that through you they will be led to understand something of His goodness and be won to love and serve Him.<sup>2</sup>

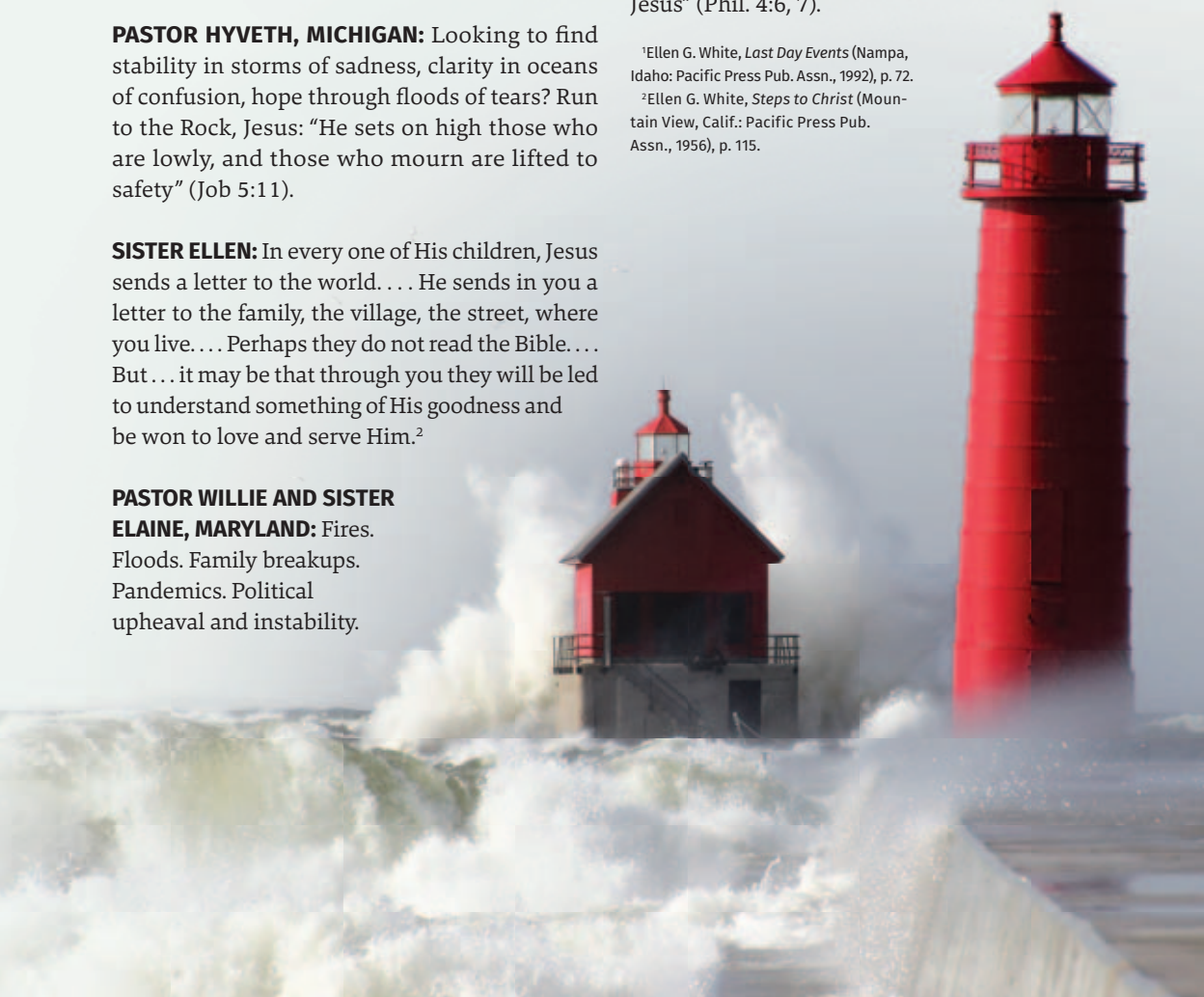
**PASTOR WILLIE AND SISTER ELAINE, MARYLAND:** Fires. Floods. Family breakups. Pandemics. Political upheaval and instability.

Wars. Refugees. Sickness. Fear. Unspeakable grief. Hopelessness. Death.

These are realities in our world today. To which heaven offers good counsel: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6, 7).

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1992), p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 115.



## UNDERSTANDING THE SOURCE OF POWER

**T**oday, many look across the landscape (i.e., scroll on their smartphones), and are easily intimidated by the giants in the land. How will the glory of God be revealed in all the world when so much of the world seems to be closing or closed to the gospel?

Counter those concerns with the often-confident expressions that accompany our conversations in many parts of the world that God has blessed us with so much. In North America alone Adventists are known as the longest living people; the most diverse group of people; and have access to a vast educational system as well as multiple large health-care systems. We need not say “if” but “in light of” God being for us, who can be against us? (Rom. 8:31).

Confidence in things or institutions is not new to those who claim to follow God and who believe they are called for a special purpose. Ancient Israel didn’t seem to grasp that their strength was in correlation with their adherence to the divine law contained *inside* the ark of the covenant, but instead put their trust in the ark itself—the golden box they carried to war seemed to make them feel invincible.

The Philistines thought this ark was the Israelites’ god. They didn’t have a clue that “the living God, who created the heavens and the earth, and gave His law upon Sinai, sent prosperity and adversity according to the obedience or transgression of His law contained in the sacred chest.”<sup>1</sup>

Some believe that the capture of the sacred chest—the golden box with its precious contents—was the greatest calamity that could come upon Israel. What do you think we would say today would be the greatest calamity that could come upon Adventism? Our schools shut down? Our hospitals closed? Our churches unable to be opened because of a pandemic? (There’s something that hits close to home.) How would we react?

We are told that “God permitted His ark to be taken by their enemies, to show Israel how vain it was to trust in the ark, the symbol of His presence, while they were profaning the commandments contained in the ark. God would humble them by removing from them that sacred ark, their boasted strength and confidence.”<sup>2</sup>

Today I wonder about some of those ominous statements in the “red but often not read” books about what and where we place our confidence. I fear sometimes I hear too many sentiments expressed that remind me of Nebuchadnezzar—“Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?” (Dan. 4:30).

As we begin to clearly see the foundations of society eroding, what will we do to show others—friends and foes alike—where we as a people put our trust? I wish it weren’t so, but I fear that God may need to remove the things from us that we have made for our own glory so that He can reveal His own glory to the world—through us.

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1870), vol. 1, pp. 403, 404.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 404.

**Jared Thurmon** coordinates marketing for Adventist Review Ministries. 📌

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