

# Adventist World

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06/2024

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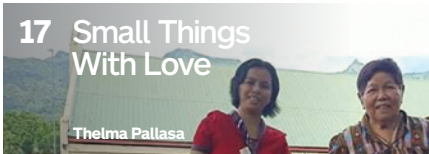
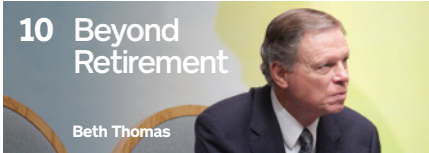
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## Beyond Retirement





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# Finishing Faithfully

By Justin Kim

In *Fan the Flame* Stowell J. Moody describes a race during the ancient Greek Olympic Games. Other racers competed to finish first; in this one the winner crossed the finish line with his torch still lit. It was a race of skill: one error could extinguish the fire. Careful attention to the flame resulted in victory.

Switch gears to another Olympic story. Born in 1891, Shizo Kanakuri was the first Japanese athlete to qualify for the Olympic Games. Along with Mishima Yahiko, the two represented Japan at the 1912 games, in Stockholm. Interestingly, Kanakuri was known for breaking the marathon record, not for the shortest time, but for the longest.

After an 18-day trip from Japan to Sweden by ship and train, he was exhausted. Because of summer Stockholm’s white nights, during which the sun doesn’t fully set, Kanakuri didn’t sleep well. He couldn’t stomach Swedish food. His coach caught tuberculosis and couldn’t train. Last, Stockholm faced a heat wave, resulting in a contender’s death, the first at an Olympic competition.

Kanakuri competed anyway, experienced hyperthermia, and lost consciousness. Full of shame and empty of electrolytes, he silently left midrace and returned to Japan without notifying the officials. Sweden considered him missing for 50 years before a reporter discovered him working as a geography teacher in Japan. In 1967 the Swedes offered Kanakuri the chance to complete his marathon in Stockholm. He ran, and finished the marathon in 54 years, 8 months, 6 days, 5 hours, 32 minutes, and 20.3 seconds. He concluded, “It was a long trip. Along the way I got married and had six children and 10 grandchildren.”



There are some races that we must finish first. There are some that we must finish last. And there are some races that we must simply finish. Our spiritual walks are that: walks that call us to pay attention to the flame until the victorious end. We live our lives with distraction, without purpose, without intention, and then wonder what it all means.

God’s people, His last-day people, are called to live faithfully. Holding the torch of truth and keeping the flame that generations afore have

kept alive, the Advent movement is called to be loyal until the very end. This means either until the end of earth’s history or until the end of one’s life, even if it means running more than 54 years.

We are not called to busy-ness, to first-ness, nor to win-ness, but only to faithfulness. Whether we’ve just started or see the finish line just ahead, we are called to be faithfully sacrificial, faithfully obedient, faithfully hopeful, faithfully faithful, with careful attention to the flame—no matter how long it takes.





**Almir Marroni, General Conference Publishing Ministries director, speaks to more than 50 publishing leaders at the recent European Tri-Division Publishing Workshop at the Adventist University of France. The workshop aimed to “enhance collaboration among publishing institutions and literature ministry coordinators across Europe, including the Euro-Asia region.”**

Photo: Vanesa Pizzuto/Adventist Media Exchange (CC BY 4.0)

**“This is the first decision by either the Constitutional Court or the Supreme Court to explicitly acknowledge a Seventh-day Adventist’s request for a change in the test schedule. It clarifies the obligations of administrative authorities to prevent Seventh-day Adventists and other minorities from facing undue discrimination due to their religious beliefs.”**

—A Supreme Court of South Korea spokesperson about a landmark decision that ruled in favor of students requesting to change the university’s interview schedule based on religious beliefs. This landmark decision accepted the Seventh-day Adventist’s test schedule change request for the first time.

**Adventist Review Newsletter**

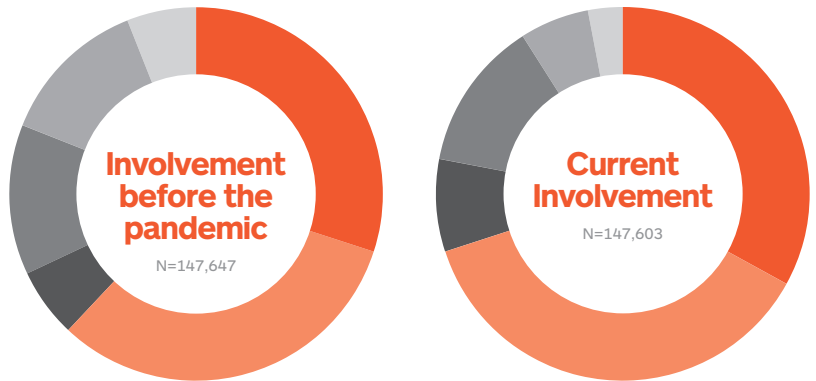
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## Engagement in the Local Church

Church members were asked how much they were involved in their local church before the pandemic and currently.



Source: 2022-2023 Global Church Member Survey



- 30% ● — Active leader — ● 33%
- 32% ● — Active participant — ● 37%
- 6% ● — Casual participant — ● 8%
- 13% ● — Rarely interacted — ● 13%
- 13% ● — Remote only — ● 6%
- 6% ● — Did not participate — ● 3%

Data provided by the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research

## More Than 4,000

The number of people that have been baptized in Haiti since the start of the year. Despite the surge in gang violence over the past months, which has significantly affected normal church operations, recent evangelism efforts have resulted in thousands of baptisms. Because of the unrest, at least 55 churches are closed, and many schools and institutions cannot operate fully. Some places on the island are more favorable than others. The 172 churches and 186 companies in the northern part of the island nation can meet regularly. Amid the violence and challenges, God continues to watch over His people.

**“Mission is the heart-throb of our division, and everything needs to be focused on mission. Ours is to have every member an active disciple doing something for God. We are blessed to have been here.”**

—Gideon Reyneke, secretary of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID), reflecting about a two-day trip to the Atlantic Caribbean Union. Leaders from the Inter-American Division and SID met in Nassau, the Bahamas, to learn about evangelism initiatives and mission strategies. Additionally, they learned about the union territory’s history and church growth initiatives.



“Serving is made easy at Southern [Adventist University], and VITA is one way that helps students envision how helping others as the hands and feet of Jesus can extend beyond the campus and after graduation.”

—Colin Gleen, business administration student at Southern Adventist University (SAU), about the university’s Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. This April marks the eleventh year students at SAU have the chance to volunteer to complete tax returns for low-income and elderly community members in Collegedale, Tennessee, United States, and beyond.

# More Than 70

The number of mission and conference administrators, field secretaries, and Ministerial Association directors from across the East Indonesia Union that participated in the first Living Hope Evaluation and Life Coach Reclaimer’s Training. The event was held April 3-6 in Tahuna, on Sanighe, North Sulawesi, Indonesia. The purpose of the training in East Indonesia was to equip pastors and church leaders with the tools and strategies necessary to build deeper connections within their communities and advance the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

“Since the installation of these toilets, our lives have been transformed. We no longer have to endure the unsanitary conditions of the old toilets or rely on beach visits for sanitation needs. ADRA’s intervention has truly transformed rural living.”

—Patrina Lonipitu, teacher at United Church Primary School in southeast Vela, Solomon Islands, about the SaTo pan project. This Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) project closes off pit latrines from the open air and reduces disease transmission from flying insects and mitigates unsanitary conditions associated with open-air facilities.

## More Than 2,500

The number of people that attended the welcoming ceremony for the mega health clinic at Mount Hagen, Papua New Guinea. Included among the attendees was the governor of the Western Highlands Province, Wai Rapa. The health clinic was held April 16-19 and was a joint effort of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s 10,000 Toes Campaign and Adventist World Radio. Services provided included diabetes screening and other medical and dental checks. The clinic was run by more than 420 volunteers, which was made up of doctors, nurses, and local health workers. ➔



Photo: 10,000 Toes Facebook account

## Church's Solid Finances Will Free Funds for Mission, Leaders Say

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*

The current solid finances of the General Conference (GC) of Seventh-day Adventists are a result of God's blessings and leaders' efforts to rein in expenditures while increasing funds for mission initiatives around the world, GC treasurer Paul H. Douglas said in his Spring Meeting report on April 9. The GC ended the financial year with approximately US\$310 million in net assets. "This is not our doing—this is by God and God alone," Douglas said.

In 2023 the GC received approximately \$91 million in tithe, \$13 million more than the \$78 million budgeted, and \$97 million in offerings, against the budgeted \$74 million. Only 48 percent of the GC funding came from tithe, reversing a trend in previous years.

GC program expenses in 2023 amounted to \$172 million, with 43 percent in mission support, 15 percent in leadership development, and 13 percent in media and publications. Another 9 percent was spent in educational institutions, and 20 percent on other items. Despite inflationary pressures,

Douglas said, the GC "was able to keep its expenses the same year over year, which is a testament to our careful attention to spending."

The working capital and liquid assets figures were also positive, Douglas reported. Church policy recommends a minimum of six months of working capital and three months of liquid assets. At the end of 2023, the GC had 13.9 months of available working capital and 11.1 months in liquid assets.

### TWO MISSION IMPACT FUNDS

In 2021 the GC implemented the first ever Mission Impact Fund that commits resources to supporting mission projects generated by local churches. The purpose is to invest in the frontline mission of local churches and impact the world for Christ, one community at a time, Douglas said. He reported that in 2025, US\$5 million is available for allocation to that fund.

A second Mission Impact Fund, recently set up, will allocate financial resources to world divisions and attached fields of the Adventist Church that implement a territory-wide

**Treasurer's report at Spring Meeting emphasizes increased mission impact.**

evangelistic initiative in 2024, 2025, 2026, or 2027. The focus will be on regions that "submit a comprehensive plan involving their unions, local conferences, and local churches," Douglas explained.

Investment per church entity highlights the intent of the GC to inspire church leaders and members in territory-wide evangelistic initiatives and "impact the kingdom of God with a high harvest of souls who in turn become active disciples of Jesus Christ," he added. "We are committed from the General Conference to support each division and each attached entity [to cover] up to 20 percent of the total program cost up to \$500,000 per entity."

Some divisions have already begun to make comprehensive evangelism plans. The East-Central Africa Division has Evangelism Impact 2025, which will support evangelistic efforts in 33,000 sites across its territory. In the North American Division the Pentecost 2025 plan seeks to implement "Three Thousand Proclamation Initiatives" for 2025, Douglas reported.

The latest moves are part of a paradigm shift that seeks to underpin concerted efforts to refocus on mission, Douglas said. "We need to be more intentional with strategy"

"We are happy about the impact of the second [Mission Impact Fund], which deals with the evangelistic activities in the whole territory," Robert Osei-Bonsu, president of the West-Central Africa Division, said during comments on the treasurer's report. "We believe this is laudable and has motivated us to go into evangelism." ©



Photo: Enno Müller, *Adventist World*



## Church in Romania Releases Documentary *Who Are the Adventists?*

Dragoș Mușat, Romanian Union Conference, Inter-European Division, and *Adventist World*

Film explores contribution of Adventism in the country and debunks myths about the church.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Romania recently released the film *Cine Sunt Adventiștii?* (*Who Are the Adventists?*), a documentary on Romanian Adventism. The 93-minute film places the Adventist Church within the history of Christianity and explores the major contributions Adventists have made to Romania, including health and education networks and social assistance.

Globally, Adventists represent less than 1 percent of the Christian population and are part of the Protestant family (36 percent), along with Orthodox Christians (12 percent) and Catholics (50 percent). Worldwide the Adventist population is approximately 22 million members.

“Ever since they appeared in Romania, Adventists have stirred controversy,” the producers said. “Romanians who have heard about them either consider them dangerous or feel that they think they are better than other Christians. We wanted to answer the question ‘What is the truth?’”

Among the topics the film addresses are the questions of whether Adventists are really Christians, why they have so much in common with Muslims and Jews, and how they interpret the prophecies of the end-times.

*Who Are the Adventists?* contains interviews not only with Romanians on the street but also with personalities such as the state secretary for religious affairs, Ciprian Olinici; the president of the Romanian Academy, Ioan-Aurel Pop; the former president of Romania, Emil Constantinescu; representatives



Photo: screenshot from *Who Are the Adventists?*

of various religious institutions, including Ionuț Corduneanu, of the Orthodox Church; Virgil Achihai, of the Evangelical Alliance; and Murat Iusuf, Muslim mufti from Romania, along with historian Adrian Cioroianu, influencer George Buhnici, and sociologist Dumitru Borțun.

Images in the documentary are from more than 30 Adventist places of worship selected from all regions of the country. The narrator is Ioan Paicu, editor of *Radio Vocea Speranței* and elder of a church. The soundtrack includes adaptations made for 26 hymns from the parishioners’ songbook.

The essential areas in which Adventist spirituality is manifested, as important sections in the video, are the contributions to health, charity, evangelical impact, and Adventist education.

Among the more than 1,000 believers who appear in the film are two families with four to six successive generations of Adventists, reflecting the social evolution of the denomination on Romanian soil.

*Who Are the Adventists?* also shows two of the most important doctrines from a confessional perspective: why Adventists celebrate Sabbath on Saturday and what Adventists believe about the imminent return of Jesus Christ to this earth. The Adventist understanding of the future is illustrated by highlighting the role played by Protestants in the Romanian (Timișoara) Revolution of December 1989, as well as the way religion decisively influences political and social crises.

“The material answers the question of whether Adventists are really Christians and why, of all Christians, Adventists have the most in common with both Muslims and Jews, which again emphasizes the role Adventists believe they will play in the future, in the final events before Christ’s return to earth,” producers wrote on the film’s YouTube page.

*Who Are the Adventists?* is a production of the Romanian Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. ©

## St. Croix Evangelism Includes Health Clinic, Community Project

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*

The Impact 24 evangelistic initiative in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, officially launched across the island on March 30. At the Central Seventh-day Adventist Church in the island's west end, church members and dozens of guests attended the first meeting of the "Your Journey to Joy" series, which ran until April 13 and included in-person meetings six nights a week, a health clinic, and a community outreach project.

The series was the result of a combined effort by the Adventist Church's General Conference (GC) Treasury Department, the Inter-American Division, Caribbean Union Conference, and North Caribbean Conference, along with support from Loma Linda University Health, Hope Channel International, and *Adventist Review*.

"The messages we are going to hear will be uplifting, connecting us all in a journey toward something great," the meeting's announcer told hundreds of people in the sanctuary. "In these two weeks you have a chance to pause from your busy schedule, relax, and

even discover paths to happiness, fulfillment, and joy. Who doesn't want that?" she asked. "We pray that as you complete this journey, you may find joy in the Lord."

### MISSION TERRITORY

The GC Treasury team at the Adventist Church headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, zeroed in on this U.S. territory as their special mission project for 2024 because St. Croix has faced significant challenges in recent years. Hurricane Maria devastated the island in 2017. After the catastrophe many residents, including some Adventist church members, left the island to live and work in the continental U.S. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit, which forced many to stay away from church and others to eventually resettle elsewhere.

Despite its strong Christian tradition, St. Croix is an increasingly Western society, and Adventists find it harder to share Bible truth and engage people in Bible studies and spiritual commitment than in the past, local leaders explained.

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Initiative has synergized efforts of church leaders and members across regions.

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And despite having more than 4,700 Adventist members on the church books, a large percentage are unaccounted for, either because they moved away or stopped attending. There's a lot to do on the island to turn this around, treasury leaders pointed out.

### REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY

On April 10 a team of 20 from Loma Linda University Health traveled to St. Croix to offer a free health clinic in a hall across from the Central Seventh-day Adventist Church. The team provided dental cleaning, fillings and extractions, primary care, blood pressure and glucose screenings, fittings for reading glasses, and mental health and family counseling. As people waited for the services, they could choose between several spa treatments, including chair massage, shoulder massage, eye rejuvenation, and facials.

The GC Treasury team said they also wanted a project that would be a show of support for the community surrounding the church. They found what they were looking for on the church grounds, where a basketball court had been in ruins after the hurricane. With funds from donors and others set aside, church leaders were able to resurface and refurbish the court, with the hope that it would attract young church members and their community friends for a friendly game that builds meaningful relationships. "We would like this basketball court to eventually become a center of influence in the community," local leaders said. ©



Photo: Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*



# Mission Focus



Photo: courtesy of Nelson Ernst

## Mission Trip to Tokyo Results in Sharing of 750,000 Tracts

**Volunteers from several countries came together to distribute GLOW tracts.**

A group of 55 missionaries gathered in Tokyo, Japan, in March for a weeklong endeavor to reach hundreds of thousands through Bible-based tracts. Church members came from several countries, including Australia, Canada, the United States, and some countries in South America. The trip was organized in conjunction with the Japanese Union Conference (JUC) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The group distributed nearly 750,000 pamphlets, commonly known as GLOW (Giving Light to Our World) tracts. The tracts, printed in Japanese, were written and produced by the General Conference Publishing Ministries Department and covered such topics as salvation, health, creation, and finding meaning in life—themes the JUC had identified as important to Tokyo residents.

Each day missionaries had a personal goal of giving out 3,000 tracts. For the most part, the pamphlets were placed in people's homes through their mailboxes.

"Many of us were used to walking an average of 20,000 to 30,000 steps per day, but one rainy Tuesday presented an extraordinary challenge," volunteer Catherine Ge said. "Soggy socks, wet GLOW tracts, and cold weather discouraged most of the missionaries, and I was no exception."

The Japan mission trip was a continuation of annual international efforts that have historically been spearheaded by the Central California Conference in the U.S., where the GLOW tract ministry originated. It was an effort to reach people in a largely secular and unreached area and has already generated encouraging results.

"The Japan Union Conference is so thankful to the GLOW mission team for their dedicated ministry in Tokyo," Yasunari Urashima, JUC Youth, Publishing, and Media Ministries director, said. "As a result of their service, VOP Online, which is the website where the Digital Evangelism Center of JUC offers online Bible study, had four to five times more visitors than usual during the distribution. Also, there has been four to five times more signups for the online Bible study."

The statistics were not the only fruit of the outreach. Volunteers found, for example, that security officers in some buildings switched from prohibiting tract distribution in apartments to becoming mission-

aries themselves and helping to give them out. Some residents took extra tracts to give to friends, including a pastor of a local church who said he wanted tracts to give to his parishioners. Others were so affected by receiving the spiritual literature that they broke down in tears.

As the mission trip ended, participants expressed their gratitude for the spiritual growth they had experienced.

"What I gained from this GLOW trip was something unlike any retreat or mission trip I've been on thus far," Erica Mendez said. "I felt like we were all a family, like I got to experience what heaven will be like with my brothers and sisters in Christ"

"As I reflect on that experience, I realized that God has repeatedly guided me through minor sufferings that are part of His work to strengthen my faith and trust in Him," Ge said.

Urashima said further tract distribution projects in Japan include a Women's Ministry Conference in Kyoto in April and an online evangelistic meeting to be hosted by the JUC Digital Evangelism Center in June.

Mass literature mission trips will continue to happen, organizers said. A 1 million tract trip is scheduled for Paris during the Summer Olympics in 2024, and Adventist World Radio and GC Publishing Ministries are developing other plans to reach millions through literature. ©



Focus

# Beyond Retirement

The unstoppable passion of a ministry power couple

BY BETH THOMAS





Photo: Tor Tjeransen / Adventist Media Exchange (CC by 4.0)

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**P**astor Mark and Ernestine “Teenie” Finley are a remarkable couple whose journey in ministry spans decades, leaving an indelible mark on the lives they’ve touched. Now, as they enter what they would call their “sunset years,” their commitment to serving the Lord remains as fervent as ever, proving that retirement doesn’t have to signal an end to mission, but rather may become a continuation in a different form.

For the Finleys, ministry has been more than a profession; it’s been a calling, a guiding force shaping their lives and relationships. Their story is a testament to the transformative power of faith and the resilience of the human spirit. From their humble beginnings to the pinnacle of their careers, they have exemplified dedication, compassion, and unwavering faith in their service to others.

## EARLY LIFE

Mark Finley's mother was Catholic, and his father was Protestant. After a providential encounter with an Adventist layperson, his father became a Seventh-day Adventist. Mark didn't think very much of it at the time. His father shared some of his beliefs with him, but respected a promise he had made to the priest when he married Mark's mother that he would raise his children Catholic.

When Mark was 17 and getting ready to go into his senior year of high school, his dad said to him, "I brought you up Catholic, as I promised the priest. But now you are going off to college, and I want to share some things with you."

Mark worked with his father in their machine shop, and every morning his dad would share biblical principles on the way to work. That led Mark to study the Bible for himself. He was baptized in March 1963, and enrolled in the theology program at the former Atlantic Union College (AUC) in South Lancaster, Massachusetts. The school closed in 2018.

It was there that he met Ernestine "Teenie" Tenney, and they married. After graduation Mark interned for two years in Hartford, Connecticut, while Teenie taught church school nearby.

Pastor Mark says he felt it best not to go immediately to the seminary. "I needed time to have my ministry seasoned. I needed time to really put my feet down, so I worked for a few years at Wildwood Medical Missionary Institute with Elder W. D. Frazee. He became my mentor. I learned to make altar calls from him, learned to preach biblical sermons from him, learned to see the Spirit of God moving powerfully."

From there the couple moved to the Southern New England Con-

ference, where Pastor Mark sensed immediately that the church needed a new type of evangelism. Instead of going into a city for three or four weeks and holding short-term public meetings, he brought teams of young people in and began to work with churches over a longer period of time.

This decision was based on a vision Ellen White had February 27, 1910, in which she related that there "should be a decided change from past methods of working. For months the situation has been impressed on my mind," she wrote, "and I urged that companies be organized and diligently trained to labor in our important cities. These workers should labor two and two, and from time to time all should meet together to relate their experiences, to pray and to plan how to reach the people quickly, and thus, if possible, redeem the time."<sup>1</sup> That was the model of evangelism Pastor Mark followed for many years.

From New England the Finleys moved to the Lake Union in the midwestern United States and held evangelistic meetings throughout the region, but particularly in Chicago. They started an evangelistic training school called the Lake Union Sowing Institute, a cooperative venture between the Lake Union and the Theological Seminary at Andrews University. After two years the North American Division assumed the sponsorship of the Soul-Winning Institute. Pastor Mark looks back on their experience fondly. "It challenged me to really to fill my mind with biblical thoughts and to be sharp when it came to the questions that the seminary students were asking," he says.

After six years in Chicago, Pastor Mark received a call to serve the church in Europe. From 1985 to 1990 he was the Ministerial Associ-

ation secretary for the Trans-European Division. It was there, he says, "that we began to work in Socialist countries, Communist countries. We had three Socialist countries in our division: Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. An overseas assignment broadens you. An overseas assignment gives you a breadth of the world work that you don't otherwise have."

After they returned to the United States for their children's education, Pastor Mark was offered the position as speaker/director of *It Is Written*, the internationally televised program founded by George Vandeman in 1956 with the goal of sharing insights from God's Word with the world. Pastor Mark traveled and preached with *It Is Written* until 2004.

In 2004 he was called to the world church headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, to serve first as director of world evangelism, then as a general vice president of the General Conference after his election at the 2005 General Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri.

## SUNSET YEARS

Pastor Mark laughs when recounting his attempt to retire at the General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia. "In 2010 Teenie and I were a little older, in our late 60s. I was getting ready to walk onto the stage to announce my retirement. Elder Ted Wilson had just been elected as the General Conference president. As I walked onto the stage, he shook my hand and said something to the effect, 'I'd really like you to stay on as one of my assistants.'" So for the past 14 years Pastor Mark has served a part-time role as an assistant to the president of the General Conference.

Now semiretired, the Finleys



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have branched out into other facets of ministry.

For several years Teenie has presented seminars on the importance of every church being a training school for Christian workers.<sup>2</sup> In 2009 they moved to Dominion Valley in Haymarket, Virginia. It was there that Teenie noticed a piece of property with a sign stating, "Future Church Site." She turned to her husband and said, "That needs to be an Adventist church and training school." Pastor Mark answered that he was working at the General Conference and that it wasn't wise to add anything else to an already-packed program. Teenie replied, "OK, I will pray." Together they earnestly prayed that God would open doors if it was His will for them to move forward with the project.

Their answer came in a remarkable way. Teenie relates, "I was teaching a seminar and giving this whole concept of how you train a church in evangelism, both preparation in the preevangelistic work and then in evangelism. I just casually mentioned that there was a piece of property for sale, and maybe, now that we're getting older, we need to retire more and stay in one place. 'And you know,' I said, 'I would love to have that for a training school.' Later a person I'd never met before came up to me and said, 'Could you tell me more about that training school?' I did, and the next day he came back to me and said, 'God impressed me to give you \$50,000 for that property.'" She went home and told Pastor Mark that God had given them \$50,000 for a training school. Almost as soon as they set up a designated account for the property purchase, they received a call. Someone had heard of the \$50,000 donation and wanted to match it. Someone else gave them \$7,000. It

was clear to them that God wanted them to move forward.

They went to Virginia and looked at the property; then the real estate agent told them of another piece of land in town that had been intended for a library, but that the township had decided not to use it. Would they like to use it for the church? The owners would sell the property to them for approximately half the original asking price. The Finleys thought that perhaps this was where God was leading, and began looking for more of His providence. Not long after, they received a call that all the funding they needed would be made available. They just needed to purchase the property.

They bought the land in Haymarket, Virginia, started the training school, and, as Teenie says: "Here we are still today in our retirement." The new church, Living Hope, started from a church in Warrenton, Virginia, that had a very small attendance. Their membership began to grow, and that church group moved to form the base for the Living Hope church in Haymarket.

Today Living Hope has approximately 250 members, and the church continues to flourish. They plan to replant a congregation back in Warrenton. Hundreds of pastors from across North America have attended their training sessions at the school of evangelism. They have anywhere from seven to nine sessions a year, usually about five days each.

All of this, Pastor Mark and Teenie say, was after they retired. They have continued to travel the world preaching and teaching, conducting evangelistic series, assisting the General Conference president, and writing sharing books. In fact, the Finleys recently participated in Hope for Africa, a satellite evangelistic event in Kenya

with 20,000 downlink locations in 11 countries and in seven languages. About 197,000 people were baptized in those meetings. They ran a field school of evangelism in the morning, with 300 to 400 pastors and laypeople attending, learning how to share the gospel more effectively.

"It seems we have sped things up a bit [in our retirement] and are doing what we did before, but are adding components such as the training school, the retreat home, and other evangelistic initiatives," Teenie says.

## NEW PROJECTS

Some of the other things she is referring to include a relatively new YouTube ministry, radio broadcasting, and retreats for pastors and church workers.

### YouTube

The Finleys started a YouTube ministry in their local congregation with "laypeople—no media professionals," Pastor Mark says. "We have now built a YouTube ministry where we have a team that are top quality. They are committed to sharing Christ with the world through media." Their YouTube channel, HopeLives365, has, as of the time of this writing, more than 238,000 subscribers and touches people in every country where YouTube can be accessed.

Every week they produce at least two to three programs. People around the world are coming to Christ and being baptized. Pastor Mark used the YouTube ministry for an evangelistic series for Chinese-speaking people around the world. They had 10 million views from those meetings alone.

### Radio

In just the past six months, Salem Broadcasting, the largest Christian



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“This is life for us in our retirement years . . . if you can call it that!” Teenie is quick to add, “We love it. We are rejuvenated ourselves.”



radio network in America, has added Pastor Mark’s sermons to their programming lineup. At a recent broadcaster’s luncheon, program directors from across the country were excited about having Pastor Mark preach biblical sermons. They have produced more than 200 radio programs now. “Incidentally,” Pastor Mark says, “within Salem Broadcasting we’ve developed wonderful relationships with the people in the evangelical community. We really appreciate them. They appreciate our ministry. They are actually fundraising for us!”<sup>3</sup>

#### Retreat Homes

The Finleys have established the nonprofit organization Hope Lives Evangelistic Ministries with two retreat homes to which they invite pastors to be their guests for quiet

retreats. These homes are specifically for pastors, church workers, and ministry groups to come and rest, eat good plant-based food, and exercise, all while learning how to help their ministry grow. They attend classes on church growth, evangelism, the three angels’ messages, and more at the Living Hope church. It’s a wholistic approach to a ministry retreat.

“This is life for us in our retirement years . . . if you can call it that!” Teenie is quick to add, “We love it. We are rejuvenated ourselves.”

Pastor Mark agrees. “We are excited about our ministry. We believe that God has opened doors for us today that we didn’t have 10 or 20 years ago. Today we have a broader vision than ever before. We are now able to reach the world with our YouTube and radio minis-

tries, and our retreat homes give us the opportunity to work with and train pastors.”

He concludes: “The greatest joy in life is serving Jesus. Ministering for Christ gives each one of us a purpose to live for in our retirement years. It provides a reason to get up in the morning. It energizes us and inspires us with a renewed vision. Find some area of ministry that you enjoy, and volunteer in that ministry for a portion of your time each week. You will be glad you did, and others will be blessed.” ©

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White manuscript 21, 1910, in *A Call to Medical Evangelism and Health Education* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2010), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> See Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 149.

<sup>3</sup> You can listen to Pastor Mark’s radio sermons by searching “Mark Finley” on OnePlace.com.

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**Beth Thomas** is assistant editor of *Adventist World*.

# Steadfast and Resolute

Harrison Mwathi's journey of faith

BY STEPHEN MBOLA



**M**uch can be written about Harrison Kathumbi Mwathi's spiritual journey in the hot and rough terrains of Kenya.

Born in 1952 to peasant farmers, Harrison didn't have an easy childhood. Farming was difficult in the semiarid region, and the family struggled. Still, he managed to join the Kyandili School for primary education. He later transferred to Central Secondary for his high school certificate.

After high school Harrison secured employment near Nairobi City as a machine operator at a meat processing plant. He was soon appointed to a government post as an assistant chief. Because of his exemplary service as the bridge between the government and the people, he was promoted to chief of his home village, Itetani.

Always a Seventh-day Adventist, Harrison juggled public service life and church life. It wasn't easy for him to balance the two, but his determined spirit carried him through. He had a wife and two children to take care of, and he ensured they got the best he could afford.

Throughout his life Harrison knew he was cut out for a nobler mission—to win souls to Christ through the three angels' messages. He became an elder in 1988 and served in a variety of roles, overseeing church plants and acting as an elected conference representative to meetings.

Harrison retired in 2008 and dedicated his life to evangelism. His experience as a lay church leader was soon required. He was tasked to oversee the construction and inauguration of Itetani Girls' Secondary School. The school now has 240 students, 23 of whom are Seventh-day Adventist. He collaborates with two Adventist teachers in nurturing them. He is on the board of several institutions, including the girls' school.

As a layperson, Harrison is the contact person between members and the administrative leaders of the local conference. He helps plan evangelistic missions with church

groups and institutions from the USA. Such missionary visits often bear fruit. Free medicine is distributed. People suffering from various ailments are treated. Clothes for the needy are distributed. Deserving students have their fees cleared. These endeavors aid various churches to support their evangelism work.

In the most recent visit by a team from Houston International Adventist

Church in Houston, Texas, and another by Weimar University from California, three new churches were planted and more than 200 people were baptized.

Many more continue to be nurtured into the faith. The greatest need is to finalize a church structure where these new believers will be worshipping. The local churches mobilized and acquired land, and construction has begun.

Harrison's wife has been a pillar of strength that motivates him in all his endeavors. Age is swiftly catching up with him, but he is steadfast and resolute. His vision is to see more Bible workers engaged, reaching out to the unentered zones in Kitui, Machakos, and Makueni counties. He also wants to see construction of churches in areas where new souls have been won.

Now 72, Harrison challenges other lay representatives to remain faithful and committed, put God first, be positive about God's work, lead as role models, and cultivate good relationships with other members. He cannot wait for Jesus to return. ©

**Harrison Mwathi cannot wait for Jesus to return.**

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**Stephen Mbola**, DNP, ANP-BC, served as director for ADRA South Sudan from 1995 to 1998. He currently lives in **Texas, USA**.



## Focus

# Small Things With Love

## One woman's quest to support Christian education

BY THELMA PALLASA

I am a resident of Concepcion Adventist Academy in Gregorio del Pilar, Ilocos, Philippines. I was a college professor at Philippine Union College (PUC), now called Adventist University of the Philippines (AUP), when, almost 50 years ago, I founded and organized the Philippine Union College Adventist Collegiate Taskforce (PUC ACT), inspired by an article by Ellen White that I read in the *Youth's Instructor*.

During school breaks PUC ACT sent students to conduct medical rallies and Better Living crusades in isolated areas where medical services are not readily available. The medical rally and Better Living Crusade in Concepcion garnered 11 precious individuals for the kingdom of God. These 11 pioneers composed the members of the first Adventist church in that area.

Through a friend in the government, I was able to procure a prefabricated school building to utilize as a gathering place for the increasing number of young people who attended young people missionary volunteer meetings every Sabbath afternoon. When I left for the United States in 1976, the visionary leaders of Mountain Provinces Mission (MPM) converted the building into classrooms for the newly established Concepcion Adventist Academy (CAA).

I worked a job and a half in the United States as a medical unit secretary at Glendale Adventist Medical Center and as an adjunct faculty member at Glendale College in southern California to send financial support to the teachers and students of CAA. I retired from the medical center in 2007, but kept my teaching position at the college until 2014 to continue sending funds to the school. I returned to the Philippines in 2014 to direct the school's philanthropic services and outreach ministry.

Because of inadequate facilities and some unfulfilled recommendations by the Department of Education

in the Philippines, CAA seemed doomed to close. The Lord intervened, however. Through earnest prayers; the loyalty, commitment, sacrifice, and dedication of teachers and of students and their parents; and the moral and spiritual support from MPM and the municipal political leaders, the school continued to stay open. They all worked hand in hand to keep CAA afloat. Its doors and gates for the past 48 years have stayed open for our young people who desire to obtain an education that shall equip them in their journey to spiritual and academic excellence from this earth to the earth made new. I am an avid believer and an ardent proponent of Christian education, and CAA shall always be a part of me.

As retirees we don't have to wait to do great things for the Lord. We can do small things with love. Ask your pastor where your help would be needed most, either in your local conference or in a developing country that suffers from political unrest, poverty, discrimination, and lack of education.

For those who live in the United States, financial support goes a long way. While you sleep at night, your dollars, coupled with prayer and love, will do wonders in winning precious souls for the kingdom of God.

The academy seemed doomed to close.

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Retired professor **Thelma Pallasa**, 85, has chosen to spend the rest of her life at Concepcion Adventist Academy in **Gregorio del Pilar, Ilocos, Philippines**.



## Of Great Value

### Leaving a legacy of joyful service

BY PAUL PETERSEN

Since my conversion as a teen, I have never, if physically possible, said no when invited to tell others about Jesus or to teach from the Bible. I was only 17 when I preached my first sermon, and my subsequent life experience has given me tremendous joy, preaching and teaching on five world continents.

Now, age and health naturally bring limitations. I may be slowly fading away, as soldiers of the gospel do, yet I am happy still to contribute as much as circumstances allow.

I enjoy pastoring a church community of about 25 people in Denmark, where my family and I now live. Based on an idea from one of the members, a newly converted high-level attorney, we presently work on a series of podcasts on how God has spoken through



the Bible, emulating the conversations the attorney experienced when deciding to become an Adventist.

My time is still occupied with seminars and sermons throughout Scandinavia. The most requested topics are the Trinity, Daniel, and how to read the Bible. International assignments have naturally become somewhat limited, but how fun it has been to preach online to a Ghanaian church in the Netherlands and to lecture to scholars in Peru and literature evangelists in Australia—albeit at times to the detriment of my nightly rest! Academically, being an associate editor of the new international Seventh-day Adventist commentary is a challenge, but also a great privilege.\*

Some activities are performed from my home office. During COVID, my YouTube channel proved beneficial for many people. I committed many hours to quarterly Bible studies. Called “Tidbits,” my handle, @biblewithpaulpetersen, contains series of comments for the Sabbath School lesson study in both Danish and English, introduces such biblical books as Genesis, Hebrews, Daniel, Deuteronomy, Psalms, etc., in the Danish version, and is often accompanied by written material on the Internet.

Another satisfying experience has been to author and publish the story of Revelation for children, written in poetry, with illustrations of happiness and joy, rather than of darkness and gloom.

Entitled *The Prisoner on Patmos*, the book has sold quite well. One of the readers is a non-Adventist classmate from my teen years. When I visited her, it was an encouragement to see the book still on her coffee table and to hear how she and her husband, with their grandchildren, loved the book.

How can a retiree contribute? Staying positive, sharing the joy of being a friend with Jesus and the wonders of the Word of God, is a blessing for retirees themselves, and it may be of great value to younger generations to experience how we old folks joyfully, with wisdom and understanding, support the church and love Jesus till the end. ☺

\* The commentary on Habakkuk and Acts are in production for future release.

## How can a retiree contribute?

**Paul Petersen**, Ph.D., has served the Seventh-day Adventist Church in a variety of leadership roles throughout his career. Before retiring in 2021, he was the chair of the Religion Department and professor of Hebrew Bible at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA. He writes from **Denmark**.





Focus

# The Book Garden

A dream come true

BY GABRIEL BEGLE



Susy and Luis Schultz found a renewed mission in the creation of an English library.

Five years before retirement Susy Schulz's list of postretirement activities had grown to more than 25. All the ideas had something in common: they were all things she loved. "Love" was not enough, however; she wanted to do something missional, too.

The answer soon became clear: her love for books, languages, and the need for children to learn the English language in her Argentinian hometown. Only a few children in Libertador San Martin, the River Plate Adventist University village, and the birthplace of the "I Will Go" global church initiative, had free access to learning English, the essential lingua franca of missionaries worldwide.

At the time, Susy's husband, Luis, was associate director of the Education Department at the General Conference, and Susy worked as managing editor for the *College and University Dialogue*, a magazine for Seventh-day Adventist university students and young professionals, produced by the Education Department.

Fast-forward to April 24, 2022, and Susy's dream became a reality. The Schulzes had moved back to Argentina upon retirement, rented an ideal space in the village and remodeled it, and had recruited a team of retired teachers and education workers to coordinate the library's free activities and care for the avid young readers. The Book Garden library was ready to open its doors to children, teens, and young families. There's much more at the library than 6,000+ books. Through an agreement with the university, this is a place where future ESL teachers (and other English-speaking pupils) offer mentoring and story-reading events, play games in English, sing songs, and engage in many other activities. The Schulzes planned for years prior to opening the library, carefully selecting books and strategizing. Their

lifetime background as educators for the Adventist Church informed their decisions and helped build a positive immersive experience for library patrons. In fact, when the Schulzes moved back to Argentina from the United States, they shipped a container of books they had saved specifically for the library. Numerous stories and science books are Bible-based, and others represent the vast array of knowledge children ought to be exposed to. Still, there's one commonality among the library's available publications—nothing in them contradicts the Adventist faith.

The Book Garden has become a success not only for people in town but for more than a few families that come from neighboring cities. Many of these families are not Adventist, but keep coming for more materials that seem to have a peaceful effect on their children.

"Mission doesn't stop with retirement. We'll help prospective missionaries acquire an indispensable tool: English," says Luis. Retirement has meant the beginning of new possibilities for this couple and given added meaning to the lives of retired volunteers who help with the library's daily activities.

What's next for the Book Garden? A series of public, English-only events have been planned for the upcoming months and will occur in neighboring cities. The library's walls have literally transcended the local community, and these events of public book readings, songs, skits, and much more (organized together with mission-minded students from the university) describe the next frontier of making friends in communities that are yet to be evangelized. ©

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**Gabriel Begle** is the director of digital platforms for *Adventist World*.





Spirit of Prophecy

# Fatherhood: A Blessed Responsibility

Recognizing the Father's role  
in the home


**A**nd, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4, KJV).

"While we have dwelt upon the importance of the mother's work and mission, we would not lightly pass over the duty and responsibility of the husband and father in the training of his children. His efforts should be in harmony with those of the God-fearing mother. He should manifest his love and respect for her as the woman he has chosen and the mother of his children. . . .

## **SPENDING TIME WITH CHILDREN**

"Fathers should . . . mingle with the children, sympathizing with them in their little troubles, binding them to their hearts by the strong bonds of love, and establishing such an influence over their expanding minds that their counsel will be regarded as sacred. . . .

"Upon returning home from his business he should find it a pleasant change to spend some time with his children. He may take them into the garden, and show them the opening buds, and the varied tints of the blooming flowers. Through such mediums he may give them the most important lessons concerning the Creator, by opening before them the great book of nature, where the love of God is expressed in every tree, and flower, and blade of grass. He may impress upon their minds the fact that if God cares so much for the trees and flowers, He will care much more for the creatures formed in His image. He may lead them early to understand



that God wants children to be lovely, not with artificial adornment, but with beauty of character, the charms of kindness and affection, which will make their hearts bound with joy and happiness. . . .

“Fathers, the golden hours which you might spend in getting a thorough knowledge of the temperament and character of your children, and the best methods of dealing with their young minds, are . . . precious.”—*Signs of the Times*, Dec. 6, 1877.

“The father’s duty to his children should be one of his first interests. It should not be set aside for the sake of acquiring a fortune, or of gaining a high position in the world. In fact, those very conditions of affluence and honor frequently separate a man from his family, and cut off his influence from them more than anything else. If the father would have his children develop harmonious characters, and be an honor to him and a blessing to the world, he has a special work to do.”—*Signs of the Times*, Dec. 20, 1877.

#### **FATHERS TO LEAD CHILDREN TO RELIGIOUS LIGHT**

“Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it” (Ps. 127:1, KJV). . . .

“We would solemnly impress upon fathers, as well as mothers, the grave responsibility they have assumed in bringing children into the world. It is a responsibility from which nothing but death can free them. True, the chief care and burden rests upon the mother during the first years of her children’s lives, yet even then the father should be her stay and counsel, encouraging her to lean upon his large affections, and assisting her as much as possible. . . .

“In that great day of reckoning it will be asked him: Where are the children that I entrusted to your care to educate for Me, that their lips might speak My praise, and their lives be as a diadem of beauty in the world, and they live to honor Me through all eternity?

“In some children the moral powers strongly predominate. They have power of will to control their minds and actions. In others the animal passions are almost irresistible. To meet these diverse temperaments, which frequently appear in the same family, fathers, as well as mothers, need patience and wisdom from the divine Helper. . . .

“The father should frequently gather his children around him, and lead their minds into channels of

## **The father’s duty to his children should be one of his first interests.**

moral and religious light. He should study their different tendencies and susceptibilities, and reach them through the plainest avenues. Some may be best influenced through veneration and the fear of God; others through the manifestation of His benevolence and wise providence, calling forth their deep gratitude; others may be more deeply impressed by opening before them the wonders and mysteries of the natural world, with all its delicate harmony and beauty, which speak to their souls of Him who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and all the beautiful things therein.

“Children who are gifted with the talent or love of music may receive impressions that will be lifelong, by the judicious use of those susceptibilities as the medium for religious instruction. . . . Many may be reached best through sacred pictures, illustrating scenes in the life and mission of Christ. . . .

“While there should be a uniformity in the family discipline, it should be varied to meet the wants of different members of the family. It should be the parents’ study . . . to . . . inspire them with a desire to attend to the highest intelligence and perfection of character.”—*Signs of the Times*, Dec. 20, 1877.

“The father is the priest of the family. The souls of his wife and children, as God’s property, should be to him of the highest value, and he should faithfully guide the formation of their characters. The care of his children from their infancy should be his first consideration; for it is for their present and eternal good that they develop right characters. He should carefully weigh his words and actions, considering their influence, and the results they may produce.” ©

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Seventh-day Adventist believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This excerpt was taken from the book *Reflecting Christ* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1985). pp. 174, 175, 179.





Global View

# The Joy of Camp Meeting

An opportunity for evangelism

Camp meetings have a rich tradition within the Advent movement—going back to the time of William Miller and the Second Advent Awakening of the 1840s in the United States. Beginning with three meetings in 1842, the number of Advent camp meetings grew rapidly, with 40 being held in 1843 and 55 in 1844.<sup>1</sup>

Following the Great Disappointment, the early Advent believers were reluctant to hold camp meetings for a time. By 1867, however, four years after the official organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a series of small regional camp meetings were held. As a result of the success of these smaller meetings, the General Conference discussed hosting a camp meeting “for the whole field.”<sup>2</sup>

This general camp meeting was to serve two purposes: first, as a source of “spiritual good,” and second, for “the promulgation of our views among the people.”<sup>3</sup> It was decided that a rural setting would best serve the purposes for such a meeting, and so Seventh-day Adventist Ephraim H. Root volunteered his farm in Wright, Michigan, as the site.<sup>4</sup>

## THE GROWTH OF ADVENTIST CAMP MEETINGS


This was the first official Seventh-day Adventist camp meeting, and the tradition continued to grow during the 1870s, with annual gatherings across North America. By the 1880s camp meetings were well established, with a regular “camp meeting season,” when believers gathered for spiritual encouragement and refreshment. It was also a place to promote Adventist literature, education, and more.

Camp meetings continued to increase, and by 1904 the denomination could boast that 68 camp meetings were held in North America and an additional 15 held globally.<sup>5</sup>

Another important purpose of camp meetings was to serve as an evangelistic tool. And this proved to be the case in a very personal way for the Wilson family.

## AN INVITATION TO CAMP MEETING

There was a man named William who was an engineer, farmer, and businessman. Born in Ireland, he immigrated to the United States around 1870. He and his wife, Isabella, lived in Philadelphia, where he worked as an engineer building locomotives. In time they headed west to the Redwoods of northern California to do logging, before settling near Healdsburg, where



A children's choir performing during a Sabbath camp meeting program in Himmerlandsgården, Denmark.

## Today camp meetings continue to serve an important purpose. Not only are they a wonderful place to fellowship with other believers . . . but they continue to serve as an important evangelistic outreach tool.

the Lord. He studied this precious Advent message for a year. He closed his store on Sabbath and trusted God for the future. He was baptized and later became the head elder of the Healdsburg Seventh-day Adventist Church. Christ changed his life.

William and Isabella Wilson were my great-grandparents, and the speaker who preached so earnestly about Jesus was Ellen G. White. After James White died, she moved to Healdsburg and was living near Healdsburg College—the forerunner to Pacific Union College.

My grandfather Nathaniel remembered Ellen White coming to their home when he was a boy, and how she lovingly told stories to him and his brothers as they sat at her feet. The Wilson family owes so much of its knowledge of this precious Advent message to the direct, practical, evangelistic activity of Ellen White.

### AN IMPORTANT OUTREACH

Today camp meetings continue to serve an important purpose. Not only are they a wonderful place to fellowship with other believers, listen to inspiring music and presentations, and enjoy practical workshops, but they continue to serve as an important evangelistic outreach tool.

Ellen White wrote, “The camp meeting is one of the most important agencies in our work. It is one of the most effective methods of arresting the attention of the people and reaching all classes

with the gospel invitation.”<sup>6</sup>

She continues, as if writing today: “Ambition and war, pleasure and money-making, absorb the minds of men. Satan sees that his time is short, and he has set all his agencies at work, that men may be deceived, deluded, occupied, and entranced, until probation shall be ended and the door of mercy be forever shut. It is our work to give to the whole world—to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people—the saving truths of the third angel’s message.”<sup>7</sup>

Friends, as we approach Christ’s soon coming, I invite you today not only to attend a camp meeting, convocation, or congress, but to invite someone to come with you—perhaps someone who has never experienced anything like this before—so they too can “taste and see that the Lord is good.” “Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!” (Ps. 34:8). ©

William became a fruit and cattle rancher and owned a country store.

Eventually the couple had four sons—William (Jr.), Ray, Nathaniel, and Walter. At some point Isabella became a Seventh-day Adventist, but her husband was not so interested in religion.

In 1905 tents were erected near Healdsburg, California, for a Seventh-day Adventist camp meeting. Isabella and the boys attended, and she invited her husband to join them for the Sabbath service. To her delight, he did.

As William sat under the tent, the speaker began to unfold the wonderful truth about Jesus, sharing the need of all sinners to have a Savior and to allow Him to change their lives. The speaker made an earnest appeal, and, much to the surprise and joy of Isabella, William stood up and went to the front, giving his heart to

Per Arild Struksnes / Adventist Media Exchange (CC by 4.0)

<sup>1</sup> See Michael W. Campbell, “Camp Meeting,” *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, accessed Mar. 31, 2024, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=1921&highlight=campmeeting>.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur W. Spalding, *Captains of the Host* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1949), p. 354.

<sup>3</sup> Editor’s note, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Aug. 11, 1868, p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> See Michael W. Campbell, “Camp Meeting.”

<sup>5</sup> “Historical Summary,” *1905 Yearbook of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 185.

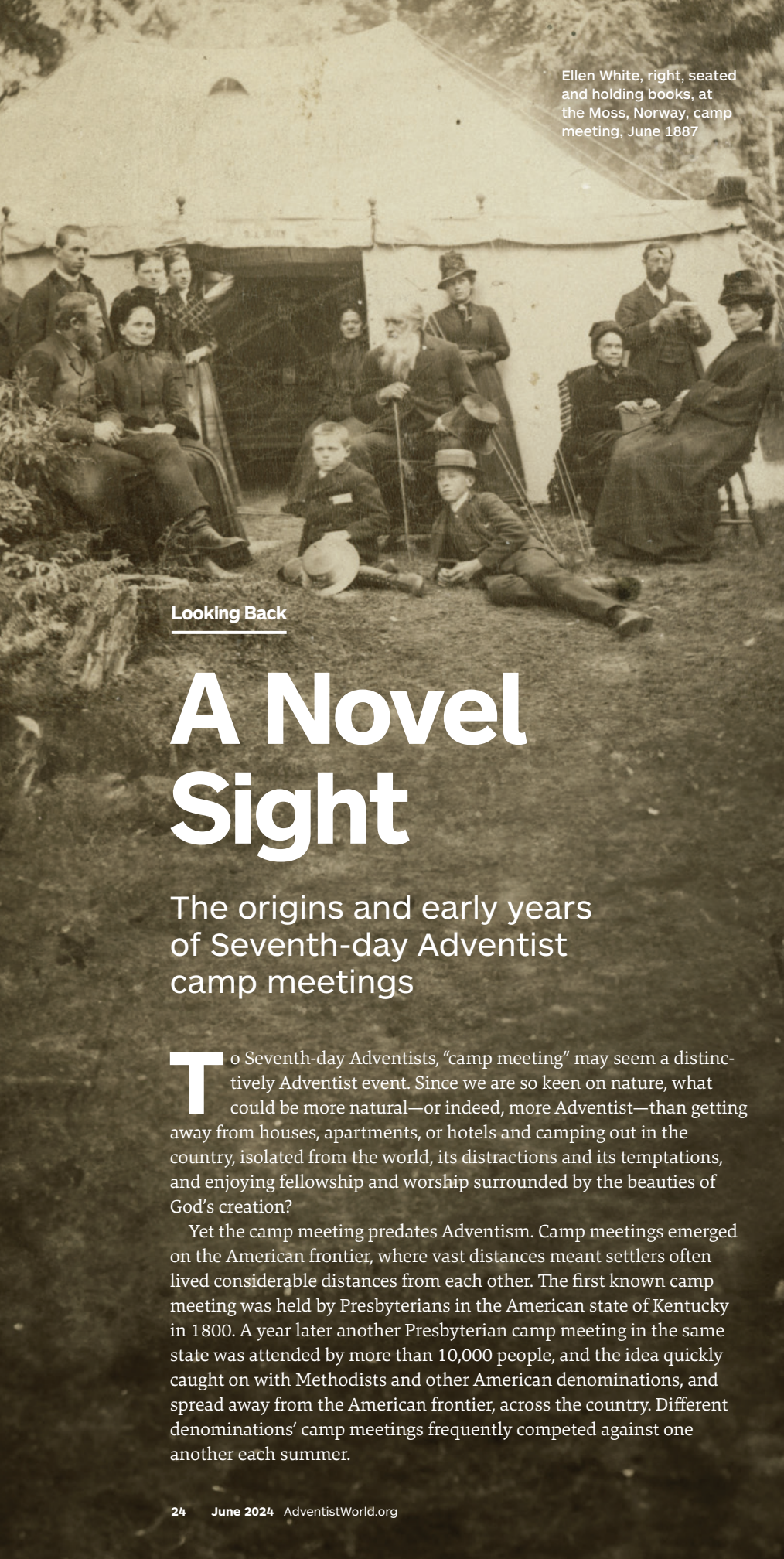
<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 6, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

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**Ted N. C. Wilson** is president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Additional articles and commentaries are available on X (formerly Twitter): @pastortedwilson and on Facebook: @Pastor Ted Wilson.





Ellen White, right, seated and holding books, at the Moss, Norway, camp meeting, June 1887

Looking Back

# A Novel Sight

## The origins and early years of Seventh-day Adventist camp meetings

To Seventh-day Adventists, “camp meeting” may seem a distinctively Adventist event. Since we are so keen on nature, what could be more natural—or indeed, more Adventist—than getting away from houses, apartments, or hotels and camping out in the country, isolated from the world, its distractions and its temptations, and enjoying fellowship and worship surrounded by the beauties of God’s creation?

Yet the camp meeting predates Adventism. Camp meetings emerged on the American frontier, where vast distances meant settlers often lived considerable distances from each other. The first known camp meeting was held by Presbyterians in the American state of Kentucky in 1800. A year later another Presbyterian camp meeting in the same state was attended by more than 10,000 people, and the idea quickly caught on with Methodists and other American denominations, and spread away from the American frontier, across the country. Different denominations’ camp meetings frequently competed against one another each summer.

### ADVENTIST ACCEPTANCE

The founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church grew up with camp meetings, and the Millerites embraced them enthusiastically. But some early Adventists were skeptical, since camp meetings, as held by other churches, could be rowdy events, with liquor flowing freely. They were a natural fit, however, for American society, in which distances were still much greater than in Britain or Europe, and in which society was very egalitarian. This was a contrast with the Old World, but in the New World, people of all social classes could happily camp together, especially when engaged in worship.

In addition, Seventh-day Adventists were regular users of tent meetings for evangelistic purposes, and thus it was probably inevitable that they would also adopt the camp meeting. Business sessions of the Wisconsin Conference were held in a tented encampment in 1867, which drew 300 campers; and it seems that, as a result, a larger number of church leaders, under the guidance of Ellen White, decided to embrace camp meeting.

The sixth General Conference Session, in May 1868, held in Battle Creek, Michigan, actually took an action on the matter, perhaps because a few Adventists still doubted whether the followers of the third angel should be indulging in camp meetings. “Resolved, That this conference recommend to our people to hold a general camp meeting annually at the time of the sessions of our business associations. Camp meetings are a series of meetings held for a number of days, generally in a rural or semirural setting, with provision for encampment on the grounds; a type of meeting now peculiar to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and a few other denominations.”<sup>1</sup>

The first official Seventh-day Adventist camp meeting was that



of the Michigan Conference, held at Wright, Michigan, in September 1868. By the 1880s “camp meeting season” was well recognized in North America and referred to as such in church periodicals. What, however, of the camp meeting outside the United States?

## INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

The first camp meeting held in Britain was on May 31, 1807, near Stoke on Trent, an event staged by Methodists, prompted by a charismatic and controversial American revivalist preacher, Lorenzo Dow. Wesleyan Methodist authorities considered such gatherings dubious, but a group of Methodists went ahead anyway, and one result was the formation of a new denomination, the Primitive Methodists.

Camp meetings did not catch on in England, however, and 80 years later, for the subjects of Queen Victoria they were truly an alien concept, one the American Adventist missionaries who arrived in the 1880s had to work hard to sell to the locals. In 1884 *The Present Truth*, the journal founded by Adventists in Great Britain, reported on a series of Seventh-day Adventist camp meetings in “Missouri, Minnesota, Tennessee, and California” and noted that “the largest meeting ever held in Michigan was held in the city of Jackson Sept. 18-30. We fancy that it would be a novel sight to our English readers to behold one of these encampments.”<sup>2</sup>

No doubt the “English readers” would have been astonished at the lavish scale on which the tent gathering was held. Another report in *The Present Truth*, reprinted from an American Adventist periodical, observed: “A telephone connects us with the city and with the world. Water is supplied through pipes from the city water-works. . . . A provision-stand and boarding-tent supply board at moderate cost to

those who wish it. A post-office receives and distributes mail.”<sup>3</sup> All this was, of course, facilitated by the hot and largely dry weather that could generally be counted on in the summer in the United States—unlike England.

The first Seventh-day Adventist camp meeting held outside the United States was in Canada in 1879. Soon after the article in *The Present Truth* appeared, the first camp meeting outside North America was held at Moss, in eastern Norway, in June 1887. Ellen G. White and her son Willie, who were both visiting Europe, attended the Moss camp meeting—Ellen White can just be seen at the left of a contemporary photo of those attending. The camp meeting at Moss was promoted as an event for all Seventh-day Adventists across Europe to attend, including being advertised to British Adventists in *The Present Truth*.

It was regarded as so successful—such a “great blessing to the church, and to the cause at large,” as one report put it—that the following sum-

mer, in 1888, the Central European Conference organized its first camp meeting, “held at Upper Tramelan, Switzerland, which was still more successful, being more largely attended, both by the Adventists, and by the people in general.”<sup>4</sup>

Thereafter, camp meetings spread across Europe and into other continents and became regular annual events, while in America all the conferences in the United States and Canada held their annual camp meetings as well. The camp meeting had truly become a part of Adventist society and culture. ©

<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCSM/GCB1863-88.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/PT/PT18841201-V01-08.pdf#search=novel%20sight%20encampments>.

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/PT/PT18851119-V01-20.pdf#search=post%20office%20receives%20and%20distributes%20mail>.

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved from <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/PT/PT18880927-V04-19.pdf#search=camp%20meeting%20upper%20tramelan>.

**David Trim** is the director of the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research at the General Conference in Silver Spring, Maryland.

## Camp meeting predates Adventism.



Attendees at the first camp meeting held outside of North America in Moss, Norway, June 1887

# The Dead Are Dead!

Q

**What does the Bible say about how we should relate to our dead ancestors?**

A

This is a major question in the field of missiology, specifically relative to world religions committed to the veneration and worship of the spirits of dead ancestors. This practice is not only a religious conviction but, in some cases, a matter of the people's social and national identity. This religious practice was well known throughout the ancient Near East and had an impact on some Israelites. God did not ignore this phenomenon, but addressed it head-on.

## **FOUNDATION OF DEAD ANCESTORS RITUALS**

There is one fundamental concept common to ancient and modern dead ancestor rituals—a dualistic view of human nature according to which humans are constituted by two elements, one of which survives after the death of the body. The spirit or soul that survives remains connected in some way to the members of the extended family in a beneficent or threatening way. The living members are responsible to provide for the needs of the spirit, thus showing respect and reverence for the dead. As a response, the dead ancestors are thought to protect and care for the family. According to this view, when the responsibility of caring for the spirits of the dead is not carried out, the spirits will be angered and in need of pacification. These spirits are also thought to have supernatural knowledge so the living can consult them to gain knowledge of the future.

## **RESPONSE OF THE BIBLE**

God categorically forbids consulting “spirits” of the dead (Deut. 18:11, 12). The consultation usually required a medium who claimed to receive the message

from the dead or who could be possessed by the spirit (1 Sam. 28:11-19; Lev. 19:31; 20:6, 27). This prohibition is based on the biblical understanding of human nature. Humans are an indivisible unity of body and life that ends when the person dies. The intellectual life of those who die perishes (Ps. 146:4); they are not productive (do no work), cannot make plans, and do not have knowledge or wisdom (Eccl. 9:10). Their memory is no longer active, and their capacity to gain knowledge and their emotional life vanish—they are unable to love, hate, or experience jealousy (verses 5, 6). Their religious life (verse 5; Ps. 30:9; 115:17), as well as their social life, comes to an end, for they are no longer involved at all in the world of the living (Eccl. 9:6). In other words, **THEY ARE DEAD!** Their only hope is the resurrection from the dead (Isa. 26:19; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

## **DEATH IS AN ENEMY**

Death is the last enemy to be eternally defeated by Christ at His second coming (1 Cor. 15:26). In Old Testament rituals the enmity of death was expressed through the symbol of uncleanness. Ritual uncleanness separated people from God and society, making death the epitome of the unclean and the absence of the holy (cf. Lev. 5:2; 19:2; 21:1; Num. 6:9). To enter into contact with the dead was to engage in friendship with the enemy instead of with the living God. If some knowledge reaches humans that appears to be from the realm of death, it is because evil powers pretend to represent the dead. When the medium described to Saul what she saw, she said, “I see a spirit [*elohim*, a god] coming up out of the ground” (1 Sam. 28:13, NCV; cf. Lev. 17:7).<sup>\*</sup> Only the true God is in charge of the future, and He shares His knowledge, plans, and will with the living through His Word. There is no need or reason to consult the dead. ©

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**Ángel Manuel Rodríguez**, Th.D., is retired after a career serving as pastor, professor, and theologian.



# Sitting Is the New Smoking

## The alarming consequences of a sedentary lifestyle

*I have heard the saying that “sitting is the new smoking.” Can this be true?*

In effect, yes! In recent years “sitting is the new smoking” is being used more in health and wellness circles. This catchy expression underscores the alarming consequences of a sedentary lifestyle, drawing parallels between the detrimental effects of prolonged sitting and the well-established hazards of smoking.

The dangers of smoking were denied and covered up for many years. Society has become more desk-bound and technology-driven. Health experts are appealing for a reevaluation of our work habits and environments because of the proven risks and dangers of extended periods of sitting.

The comparison to smoking is dramatic, but serves as a powerful wake-up call. Just as smoking was once considered an acceptable and harmless behavior, sitting has become part of our lives, particularly in office-based occupations. Mounting evidence suggests that excessive sitting can contribute to numerous health issues.

Research has demonstrated that prolonged sitting may impact cardiovascular health through poor blood circulation and an increased risk of heart disease. A sedentary lifestyle promotes the accumulation of plaque in the arteries, raised blood pressure, and elevated cholesterol levels. Over time, these changes can manifest as heart attacks or strokes.

Studies have indicated that people who sit for more than eight hours a day, especially without regular breaks for physical activity, face a significantly higher risk of cardiovascular issues compared to those who lead more active lifestyles. Sedentary behavior has been linked to an increased risk of such conditions as obesity and diabetes, further compounding the toll on the body.

The health of the musculoskeletal system is compromised by prolonged sitting. Hours spent in a seated position can contribute to poor posture, back pain, and stiffness. The lack of movement puts undue stress on the spine and can lead to the weakening of core muscles.

Mental health and emotional well-being are negatively impacted by a sedentary lifestyle. Physical activity releases endorphins, the body’s natural mood enhancers. When individuals spend extended periods sitting, they miss out on these crucial mood-boosting effects. Conse-

quently, a sedentary lifestyle has been linked to an increased risk of depression and anxiety.

The growing awareness of the detrimental effects of prolonged sitting calls for us to redesign our work/learning environments and habits. Initiatives encouraging standing desks, walking meetings, and regular breaks are gaining popularity. Incorporating physical activity into daily routines, such as taking short walks, stretching exercises, or opting for active transportation, can mitigate the harmful effects of prolonged sitting.

Ultimately the message that “sitting is the new smoking” serves as a warning that seemingly innocuous habits can have profound implications for our health. We need to intentionally exercise and stretch our muscles, thereby preserving our physical and emotional well-being even as we work at our desks and/or attend many lengthy meetings and committees. By so doing, we will live healthier and more productive lives and even make better decisions, by God’s grace! ©

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**Peter N. Landless**, a board-certified nuclear cardiologist, is director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference. **Zeno L. Charles-Marcel**, a board-certified internist, is an associate director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference.



# The Angel in the Classroom



## “May I Tell You a Story?”

BY DICK DUERKSEN

It was a good life, but one he saw no future in, unless he could somehow go to school. He argued often with his parents, begging them to let him go to a nearby Christian primary school. They finally agreed to his request, even though it was an expensive choice.

It was a good life, but one he saw no future in, unless he could somehow go to school. He argued often with his parents, begging them to let him go to a nearby Christian primary school. They finally agreed to his request, even though it was an expensive choice.

### A CLERICAL START

Knowing that the family was sacrificing to pay his tuition, Miguel studied constantly and learned quickly. After six years in the parish school, he was doing so well that the parish priest recruited him to join the priesthood. Miguel thought that would be a good job with a steady income, so he agreed. After graduation he spent the next four years training to serve God as a cleric, followed by a two-year novitiate to become a priest.

Just as he was to graduate and begin his priestly career, a new government took over Mozambique. Immediately the government declared religion to be the “opium of the people,” and closed all the churches. Overnight

Miguel had finally “made it.” He was happily married and living the life the government said he should live, drinking and smoking and teaching school. No problems. No worries. No cares.

Miguel’s home was in Africa, in the country of Mozambique. His parents had been subsistence farmers near Beira, where Mother, Father, and all his brothers and sisters worked at home. He remembers many days of herding cattle, milking goats, carrying water from the distant water hole, and harvesting vegetables from the family’s small plot, their *machamba*.

Miguel’s carefully planned life had been turned upside down!

Since there were no longer any jobs for priests, Miguel accepted a job teaching at a government school, and quickly learned that he loved being a teacher.

“I got married and fathered two children,” Miguel remembers. “Unfortunately, both of our children died very young. When they died, we were required to go to the witch doctor many times to discover why they had died and who was at fault for their deaths. The animal sacrifices, required to care for the anger of the devils, were very expensive! It was a very painful experience for me and my young wife.”

During all of this time Miguel was drinking and smoking and living a wild life, just as the government said was good to live.

### A CURIOUS QUESTION

One day after classes a young student came to Professor Miguel’s desk and requested permission to ask a question. “Sure,” the professor answered. “What would you like?”

“Professor,” the student said with a smile, “have you ever thought about giving up smoking?”

The question made Professor Miguel



angry. "Why do you ask me that, young man?"

"Because, Professor, you would be a much better teacher if you were not coughing so much."

Professor Miguel laughed and sent the boy away.

A few weeks later the young man came to the teacher's desk again.

"Professor," the student said, "have you ever thought about giving up drinking alcohol?"

Once again the question made Professor Miguel angry. "Why do you ask me that, young man?"

"Because you're a much better teacher when you're sober."

"I knew my drinking and smoking were ruining my health and my happiness, but I didn't know how to stop. So I looked down at the student and said, 'Yes! Can you help me stop?'"

"No, I can't," the student said. "But come with me, and I'll take you to someone who can help you change."

## COME WITH ME

The student took Miguel far across town to a tiny hut and introduced him to the young Seventh-day Adventist pastor who lived there.

"What would you like me to do for you?" the pastor asked.

"I want to quit smoking and drinking," Miguel answered.

"Is that all?" The pastor laughed. "We can care for that right away. This is easy. Come inside."

"The young pastor didn't have any books or special potions or anything that would make me think he was a wise counselor who could help me do the impossible," says Miguel. "I asked about his background and what schools he had attended.

The man laughed and said that he had completed only some primary school, not nearly as much as I had completed myself. Then I laughed out loud, thinking I was a fool for believing that this ignorant person might be able to help me."

The pastor asked Miguel to join him, and the two men knelt on the floor of the hut.

"He prayed for me," says Miguel.

"When the prayer was over, he told me that all my smoking and drinking desires were now gone forever. Then he

told me to sit down."

"Next comes the hard part," the young pastor said as he opened a Bible. "Now I need to teach you about Jesus."

Despite his training, Miguel had never held a Bible. For the next hour the Adventist pastor showed him things about Jesus that he had never heard or imagined.

Walking home that afternoon, Miguel passed the bar where he usually stopped after school, but realized he had no desire to go inside. His interest in tobacco and alcohol had truly been taken away!

At home his wife asked why he wasn't smoking. Then she asked if he'd like a drink before supper.

"It was hard to tell her the truth," Miguel remembers, "because I knew she would be angry that I had been talking to those horrible, crazy Seventh-day Adventists."

## A CHANGED MAN

"Who took you there?" she asked. "Adventists are foolish people! You must never go there again!"

But Miguel didn't obey. He kept sneaking over to the pastor's home, studying the Bible with him, and letting God change his life.

"My life improved so much that a couple months later my wife asked me why I was so different. When I admitted I was still seeing the Adventist pastor, she asked if she could come along. Three months later my wife and I were baptized together on the same Sabbath day. That was the best day of our whole lives!"

Miguel and his wife became strong leaders in their local church. After additional training, Miguel was ordained as a Seventh-day Adventist pastor and became a strong church and educational leader in southern Africa. When he told me this story, I asked him to introduce me to the young student who talked to him after class.

"I am sorry, Pastor Dick." Pastor Miguel frowned. "When my wife and I asked the young pastor to introduce us to the student who brought me to his house, he looked confused. 'No one brought you. You came alone,' he said." ©

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**Dick Duerksen**, a pastor and storyteller, lives in **Portland, Oregon, United States.**

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Web site: [www.adventistworld.org](http://www.adventistworld.org)

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# Blooming for Jesus

**An unexpected kindness brings unexpected blessings.**

**O**ne of my favorite things about spring and summer is all the flowers in bloom. What about you? Washington, D.C., near where I live, has a beautiful springtime show where 3,750 cherry trees around the Tidal Basin bloom, and views of famous monuments honoring American history are all within walking distance.

The idea to plant cherry trees began with Eliza Scidmore in 1885, when she advocated planting Japanese cherry trees in Washington, D.C. In 1906 David Fairchild imported and planted 75 cherry trees to see if they would grow in that climate, and they sure did! Japan's mayor of Tokyo at the time, Yukio Ozaki, decided to send 3,000 trees as a gift to the city of Washington, D.C., in 1912, cel-

brating the growing friendship between the two countries.<sup>†</sup>

Did you know we can bloom for Jesus wherever we are planted, just like the Japanese cherry trees? If we accept the gift of love that Jesus wants to plant in our hearts, His love will grow and bloom through our words and actions. We can show God's love in practical ways through our kind words and actions.

It was a busy weekend with the cherry trees in full bloom, and my husband and I joined some friends to see the blossoms in person. Well, we were not the only ones to go see the cherry trees that afternoon. Every year more than 700,000 visitors travel to this area to marvel at the beauty of the light-pink buds and petals!

After walking for some time and taking lots of photos of the beautiful trees from many different angles, we decided to find a place to sit and rest and check our photos. I was excited to find an empty bench among the crowds and quickly reserved it for our group. When I arrived at the bench, I noticed a small purse at the far edge, but did not see anyone around who looked like they might be the owner. I thought someone might be saving a spot, but I did not see anyone coming to the bench. Then I thought of how distraught I would feel if I lost my purse.

My friends and I discussed the situation and what we should do. We decided to look inside to see if there might be an ID or a phone number we could dial to contact the owner. We





## Bible Treasure

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”

John 13:34, 35, ESV\*

also looked around to see if we noticed someone who looked like they were searching for a lost item. We did not, but there was a wallet with a driver's license, cash, credit cards, and more, which made me feel even worse for the owner. We decided to pray for guidance and help to reunite this purse with its owner. If we were unsuccessful after 20 minutes, we would try to turn it in to lost and found.

As my eyes scanned the faces of the multitudes of people passing by, I suddenly saw a face that looked like the picture on the driver's license, and as she got closer to us, I was sure it was, indeed, the owner of the purse. The only puzzling thing was that she did not seem to be searching for anything; she

was just laughing and talking with her friends as they walked. We approached the woman and called her by name. She looked at us in surprise because we were strangers. Then we told her that we found her purse on the bench nearby. Her mouth dropped open in surprise when she realized that she was, indeed, missing her purse. She was so thankful! She was visiting from out of town and was so happy to have her identification and everything else in her bag. She would not have been able to travel back home without her identification, and she thanked us repeatedly.

We told her that God had answered our prayer and that we had prayed for her by name! She was touched and just kept thanking us. We felt such relief

for her and were thankful that we could show her God's love in such a practical way. I hope the seed of God's love that we planted that day will grow and bloom in her life.

God knows what we need even before we do, which is pretty amazing! I challenge you to look for ways to show God's love in practical ways and bloom for Jesus today! ©

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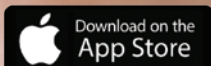
**Dawn Jacobson-Venn** is the administrative assistant of the Department of Family Ministries for the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in **Silver Spring, Maryland**. She is married with two adult children.

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