

NOVEMBER 2020: A GOSPEL OF WEALTH + "KEEP WALKING" + STEADY ON + PART OF A MASTER PLAN + ABOVE THE FRAY + THE FIGHT OF OUR LIVES

ADVENTIST REVIEW



DOLLARS & SENSE



Ruth's
VEGETARIAN
GOURMET

REAL. SIMPLE. GOOD.

INSPIRED BY ADVENTIST FAMILY RECIPES

Delicious

PLANT-BASED FOOD FOR YOUR WHOLE LIFE!

**FOR RECIPES, WHERE TO FIND OUR FOOD
AND FOR OUR COOKING SHOW
RUTH'S SIMPLY VEGETARIAN**

RUTHSGOURMET.COM



PHOTO BY TIM MOSSHOLDER

FEATURES

20 **MONEY, PROPERTY, AND POWER** | GERALD A. KLINGBEIL
We don't have to "read between the lines" to know what Old Testament prophets thought about poverty and wealth.

24 **ECONOMIST 101**
Adventist Review interviews three career economists about enduring principles for hearing, following, and serving God.

28 **A GOSPEL OF WEALTH?** | DANIEL BEDIAKO
The prosperity gospel is grounded in spiritual poverty.

32 **THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S** | G. EDWARD REID
Combining God's principles with common sense

36 **UNITING THE CHURCH** | MERLE POIRIER
For 135 years the Adventist Church has dedicated one week a year to spirituality and sacrifice. This year that happens this month.



“Care for those who are poor was not a prophetic afterthought. It represents one of the main themes in the prophetic texts of the Old Testament and was based on the law, God’s torah. It addressed the discrepancy between God’s ideal and Israel’s reality that was far removed from that ideal.”

23

ARTICLES

- 38 **THANK GOD FOR RESET BUTTONS**
STEPHEN APOLA
Turns out a global pandemic is a good time to reassess our priorities.
- 42 **STEADY ON**
MERLE POIRER
Rampant unemployment, financial instability: the church has faced these before.
- 44 **TIME FOR ECONOMY**
ELLEN G. WHITE
They will know we are Christians by our spending.
- 46 **THE TIME OF PROMISE**
HOMER TRECARTIN
We can worry about the uncertainty of our situation, or we can look forward to God’s activity.

- 48 **FOR THEIR SON ACROSS THE WORLD**
WILONA KARIMABADI
Traveling thousands of miles to make their family complete
- 54 **PART OF A MASTER PLAN**
Ronald Nalin, director of the Geoscience Research Institute, knows that things don’t happen by chance.
- 58 **ABOVE THE FRAY**
MICHAEL PEABODY
We can spend time chasing the devil’s rabbits. Or not.

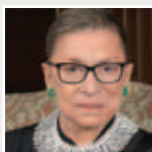
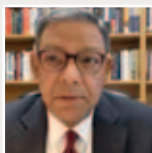
- 60 **HELPING HARVEY**
CAROLYN SUTTON
Had he gone too far? Did they have to help him?
- 62 **“I KNOW THAT VOICE”**
JIM AYER
Hearing the Holy Spirit boils down to one thing: familiarity.
- 64 **FOCUS ON JESUS**
Every five years the Ellen G. White Estate issues a new daily devotional featuring Ellen White’s writings.
- 70 **RAINBOWS OF PROMISE**
LORETTA MATTHEWS
Of prayers and answers



60

NEWS | OPINION

- » In a “Survival Year,” God Will Provide, Treasurer Says
- » Michael Kruger Named ADRA President
- » Adventist Leaders Issue a Clear Call to Tackle the Mental Health Pandemic
- » Two Ethnically Diverse Churches Worship Together
- » Adventist Church Amendments to Bylaws to Deal With Extraordinary Situations
- » Three Lessons



EDITORIAL

- 5 **BILL KNOTT**
FRESH COURAGE TAKE

DEPARTMENTS

- 6 **LETTERS**
- 67 **HOUSE CALL**
- 69 **CLOSER LOOK**
- 71 **VOICES**

COLUMNS

- 31 **SEARCHING THE OBVIOUS**
DIXIL RODRIGUEZ
- 41 **CURE FOR THE COMMON LIFE**
HYVETH WILLIAMS
- 57 **JOURNEYS WITH JESUS**
JILL MORIKONE
- 72 **IN OTHER WORDS**
MARVENE THORPE-BAPTISTE

FOUNDED 1849. PUBLISHED BY THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS®

PUBLISHING BOARD

Ted N. C. Wilson, *chair*
Guillermo Biaggi, *vice chair*
Bill Knott, *secretary*
Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, Williams Costa, G. Alexander Bryant, Peter Landless, Geoffrey Mbwana, G. T. Ng, Daisy Orion, Juan Prestol-Puesán, Ella Simmons, Artur Stele, Ray Wahlen
Karnik Doukmetzian, *legal advisor*

EXECUTIVE EDITOR/DIRECTOR OF ADVENTIST REVIEW MINISTRIES Bill Knott

ASSOCIATE EDITORS/DIRECTORS, ADVENTIST REVIEW MINISTRIES

Lael Caesar, Gerald A. Klingbeil, Greg Scott

COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR/NEWS EDITOR

DIGITAL PLATFORMS DIRECTOR Gabriel Begle

ASSISTANT EDITORS Sandra Blackmer, Stephen Chavez, Wilona Karimabadi

FINANCIAL MANAGER Kimberly Brown

MARKETING Jared Thurmon

ART DIRECTION AND DESIGN

Bryan Gray/Types & Symbols

LAYOUT TECHNICIAN Fred Wuerstlin

COPY EDITOR James Cavin

OPERATIONS MANAGER Merle Poirier

EDITORIAL ASSESSMENT COORDINATOR

Marvene Thorpe-Baptiste

EDITORS-AT-LARGE Mark A. Finley, John M. Fowler

SENIOR ADVISOR E. Edward Zinke

AD SALES Glen Gohlke, Seth Hill, Carlos Medley

CIRCULATION/DISTRIBUTION

Rebecca Hilde, Sharon Tennyson

TO WRITERS: Writer's guidelines are available at the *Adventist Review* Web site: www.adventistreview.org and click "About the Review." For a printed copy, send a self-addressed envelope to: Writer's Guidelines, *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

E-mail: revieweditor@gc.adventist.org.

Web site: www.adventistreview.org.

Unless otherwise noted, Bible texts in this issue are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Unless otherwise noted, all prominent photos are ©Getty Images 2020.

The *Adventist Review* (ISSN 0161-1119) is the general paper of the Seventh-day Adventist® Church. It is published monthly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. Periodicals postage paid at Silver Spring, MD, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Adventist Review*, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353.

Copyright ©2020, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Twelve issues of the monthly *Adventist Review*, US\$19.95, plus additional postage outside North America. Single copy US\$2.00 plus shipping and handling.

To order, visit adventistreview.org/subscriptions or send your name, address, and payment to: *Adventist Review* subscription desk, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353

ADDRESS CHANGES AND SUBSCRIPTION QUERIES:
adventistreview@pacificpress.com.
OR call 1-800-545-2449

TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:

- 1 Loma Linda University Participates in National COVID-19 Study
- 2 Southern Adventist University President to Retire in 2021
- 3 Attrition, Losses, and Growth Rates in Adventist Church
- 4 Adventist-sponsored Senior Housing Receives Occupancy Certificate
- 5 Adventist Wins Stock Market Competition in Jamaica

100 YEARS AGO

In the midst of a turbulent presidential campaign, it's worth noting that a century ago, a U.S. president was elected who had direct ties to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Warren Gamaliel Harding was elected president on November 2, 1920, with more than 60 percent of the popular vote, the largest margin to that point in U.S. history.


Harding's mother, Phoebe, and aunt, Sarah Priscilla Flack, had joined the church in 1879, while he was away at college. His siblings, younger by 13 and 14 years, were raised in the church; Warren was not.

After his inauguration on March 4, 1921, Harding's face appeared on the cover of *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*. The following year a delegation of Adventist leaders visited the White House and was received by Harding.

Harding died unexpectedly on August 2, 1923. In the *Review* he was lauded for his "honesty and integrity," his "loyalty of purpose and sincerity of endeavor." According to an unsigned column, Harding "sought faithfully and conscientiously to discharge the duties of his high office."

* See Bill Knott, "The Nearly Adventist President," www.adventistreview.org/2006-1503-8.





EVERY YEAR, THE WORLD THINKS ABOUT JESUS

Give them a small token of your love, and watch as the Light of the World dispels their fears and doubts.



Several colors available.
More details on our store.



CD and bonus CD
Code: 3ABN046-2



Journal and 2 CDs
Code: BPJ-PHC

FIND THESE ITEMS AND MORE AT: [3ABNSTORE.COM](https://3abnstore.com)

(618) 627-4651 | [3ABN.tv](https://3abn.tv)



 **3ABN**[®]

BILL KNOTT



Adventists, of all people, must resist the siren song of fatalism.

Fresh Courage Take

When we tell the story of this unimaginable year to our children or our grandchildren in the months and years to come, we will grope for words to summon all its dark, disruptive power.

“It was as if a giant blanket suddenly descended on the world,” we will say to all the little faces, “and no one could do what they normally used to do. We couldn’t drive to Grandma and Grampa’s house for fear of making them sick. Daddy (or Poppa) couldn’t go to work because it wasn’t safe to be mixing with the people he usually works with. Mommy couldn’t teach schoolchildren in a classroom: everyone had to do all their learning online. Recess and the playground and going to Little League games all disappeared.”

And they will say to us what children always do when they have heard an unbelievable tale: “Is that a true story? Or did you just make that up?”

Imagining how we will tell the story of 2020 to the children we love brings us to two immediate conclusions.

1 This has been a year like none in living memory.

Seventy percent of the nations of the world have been dramatically affected by the coronavirus. More than a million residents of the planet have succumbed to a mysterious disease that has no end in sight. The combined forces of national governments, international health organizations, and millions of

safe-distancing and mask-wearing individuals have not eradicated a scourge that many of us were certain would be a fading memory before Christmas.

Huge swaths of the global economy have been devastated—communication, travel, industrial production, and education. Hundreds of millions of people have lost jobs, lost income, or lost what little they had stashed away for the proverbial “rainy day.” It has been raining for eight months already.

Environmental disasters—fires, floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes—have eaten into what little security we have left.

It is right to grieve the losses of this year.

2 There will be a day when all of this is over.

A clear-eyed, candid look at all this year has brought us shouldn’t cause a people living by the Word to pull the house down about their ears or hide beneath the cellar stairs. While we may have previously been sleepily optimistic about the days ahead, there’s an equal and opposite danger that we will now “awfulize” the future, and dismiss all signs of normalcy and recovery as outliers to a plunging downward trend. As surely as successful vaccines will be found and schools resumed, and we will once again be able to assemble freely for fellowship and worship, there will come a corresponding temptation to huddle and to cringe at every bit

of troubling news for fear we are beginning 2020 all over again.

Adventists, of all people, must resist the siren song of fatalism that would cause our mission and our purpose to wreck upon the rocks. Either Christ “is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col. 1:17),* as the apostle Paul asserts, or we and all this movement stands for are but windswept leaves upon a dark and wild ocean.

There is a Lord who stands above this storm, and any other one that comes, who will not let a world He still loves go unwarned, unvisited, or unloved—by us and by His Spirit. God asks His fearful people, “Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?” (Isa. 50:2). In your heart, you know the answer.

In this season of both scarcity and abundance, adversity and small contentments, we may yet offer deep thanksgiving for the knowledge that everything we experience is known to Him and matters deeply to Him. William Cowper’s wondrous, faithful hymn, written more than two centuries ago, reads like tomorrow’s headline:

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;

*The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.”* ♣

* Bible texts are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.



ADVENTIST SPANISH PIONEERS

I was delighted to see the article by Manuel Vasquez on the pioneers of Adventist Spanish-language broadcasting. I immediately recognized the photo of the first radio speaker: Braulio Pérez, with my uncle, Manuel Nestares, the announcer of La Voz for several decades. However, imagine my chagrin when I saw my uncle labeled by a totally different name. Can this be corrected?

Congratulations on the timely and excellent articles of the past few months. They have been very helpful in these trying times. Also, the doctrinal articles remind us of the reason for our faith. Thank you for your hard work and commitment to excellence.

Selma Chaij Mastrapa

Beltsville, Maryland

The article "Broadcasting the Good News" (September 2020) states that Juan Eduardo Pérez was the announcer of La Voz de la Profecía/Esperanza for some years. But the announcer shown in the photograph is Manuel Nestares, who was from Argentina and became the announcer later.

—Editors.

LIFE, LIBERTY, ACCESSIBILITY

In an issue dedicated to highlighting Adventist uniqueness, I was gratified to see an article about inclusivity. I wish more of our pastors would preach about breaking down barriers of race, gender, and economics. In this Adventists are not unique. But while the national conversation is all about doubt and division, people have

to be reminded that we're all descended from the same heavenly Father.

Kevin Bryson

Orlando, Florida

WHAT ARE WE BECOMING?

Congratulations to all who have emphasized our need to be inclusive and welcoming as a denomination. Most of us agree that a church should be a hospital

for sinners, not a rest home for saints. But a hospital is where we go to get well, not a place to proclaim that it is OK to be sick.

What has happened to being "born again" or "becoming a new creature in Christ"? What is the point in calling someone out of Babylon when they simply bring Babylon along with them? I have, unfortunately, seen numerous examples of this in our local churches, and it has even worked its way up to leadership levels of local churches and beyond.

As we look around at the signs of the times in our world today, are we sure our denomination is not becoming one of them?

Robert L. Strube

Deer Island, Oregon

THANK YOU

Thank you, *Adventist Review!* I have followed the *Review* since it was my mother's Sabbath afternoon reading as I was growing up in New England. Thank you for preserving our history!

Karen Carpenter

via web

“I wish more of our pastors would preach about breaking down barriers of race, gender, and economics.”

KEVIN BRYSON, ORLANDO, FLORIDA

**COMMENTS FROM
ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG**

**THE CHOSEN OF GOD:
WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE?**

I do appreciate this post; it explains revival and reformation and what God wants for us. Thank God for giving this inspiring message to us. Let's read Micah 6:8 thoroughly.

Desmond Dut Achier
via web

OPENING THE DOOR TO FAIRNESS

The late justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg disagreed with some legal positions taken by the Adventist denomination. It should not be assumed that she was always wrong. I often support the Adventist position. But there have been times when I did not believe that the Adventist position was in accord with the statute. On occasion we have chosen to litigate a case that was poorly chosen, and when we lost established precedent, that was not helpful to us. We have also chosen to advocate positions unnecessary to our spiritual life that infringed upon the civil rights of others. In short, we have sometimes needed someone who would set us on a corrective direction of action.

Justice Ginsburg may have

served us when we did not understand that she had served us.

Gregory Matthews
via web

**AFTER MY MOM DIED
FROM COVID-19**

What a beautiful testimony by a loving son of God. May God continue to be with Stephen Moethopo and his precious family, and may each of us take his words to heart as sad times and the temptations of Satan come to us throughout our lives.

Praise God for using others to reach us through His Holy Spirit during these turbulent times. May we meet each other and his mother in heaven when Jesus comes to take us home.

Lynette Mcdermott
via web

**CHURCH MEMBER VISITATION
GLOBAL TRENDS**

About 62 percent of members reported that they had been visited by their pastor in the past

12 months. That is not a bad number; I expected it to be far lower. Typically, Adventist pastors have several hundred households in their membership list, and if they are visiting those households this often, they are neglecting the nonmember opportunities for visitation, as well as investing the kind of time that they should in community involvement.

Monte Sahlin
via web

GENESIS: A SCIENTIFIC ACCOUNT?

Any questions as to whether the Genesis account of creation is correct are answered by looking at the fourth commandment, which was written by God Himself. I'm not even a novice when it comes to the original Hebrew text. But on the face of it, there's no confusion in the words "for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them" (Ex. 20:11). Question answered.

William K. Weber
via web

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.

#MindBodySoul



Lifestyle
Magazine
www.Lifestyle.org

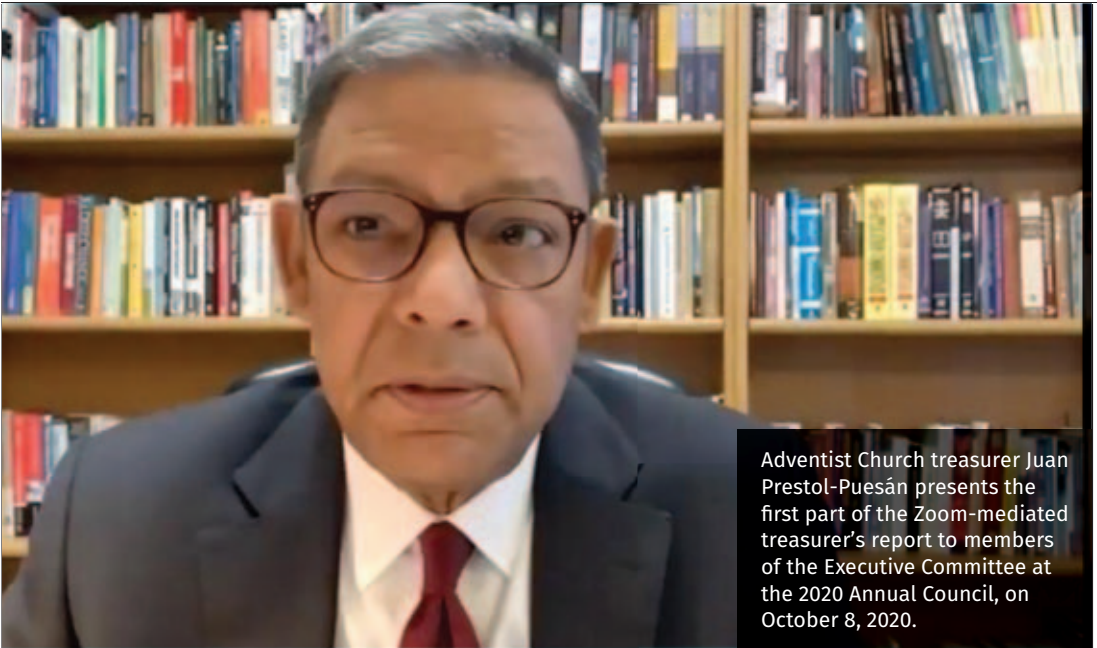
mind
body
soul



Scan for Life Tips

The tithe budget has been reduced from 2020 by US\$9.9 million, and the World Mission Offering budget has been reduced by US\$16.1 million.

NEWS



Adventist Church treasurer Juan Prestol-Puesán presents the first part of the Zoom-mediated treasurer's report to members of the Executive Committee at the 2020 Annual Council, on October 8, 2020.

IN A "SURVIVAL YEAR," GOD WILL PROVIDE, TREASURER SAYS

AMID GLOBAL CHALLENGES, ADVENTIST CHURCH FINANCIAL OFFICERS CALL FOR TRUST IN THE LORD'S LEADING.

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

In a time of worldwide challenges to the financial operation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, world church treasurer Juan Prestol-Puesán called on church leaders to redouble their dependency on God's guidance and protection. "This continues to be more relevant than before," he said, "as our new realities have changed our expectations for 2020."

Prestol-Puesán's remarks were part of his October 8 financial update to the members of the General

Conference Executive Committee representing the world church that met virtually for the 2020 Annual Council.

Prestol-Puesán acknowledged that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has affected church operations around the world. Between March and June 2020, he said, all major church regions reported a declining rate of tithe and mission offerings, year-over-year. It is expected that July to December will be no different. "We know that the year

2020 is a survival year, and that normality may return sometime in 2021."

IMPACT ON CHURCH OPERATIONS, PROGRAMS, AND EVENTS

In April 2020, Adventist Church financial officers had reported the positive results of fiscal year 2019. But "the closing of operation for 2019 feels like it was a long time ago," Prestol-Puesán acknowledged. "We are in the middle of an extended worldwide economic slowdown; the

U.S. dollar shows itself strong in relationship to other currencies, and unemployment remains high in the United States.”

He also reminded Executive Committee members that many congregations are unable to meet other than digitally, church executives’ travel has stopped, and adjustments to the operations have been

**ADVENTIST
INSTITUTIONS
AND PROGRAMS
HAVE
IMPLEMENTED
SIGNIFICANT
BUDGETARY
ADJUSTMENTS
IN ORDER TO
SURVIVE 2020.**

introduced, including the remuneration levels at headquarters.

Adventist institutions and programs have implemented significant budgetary adjustments in order to survive 2020, Prestol-Puesán said. In that regard, he expressed his appreciation to institutional leaders for their proactive approach, and for what he called “the innovative spirit displayed by our division leaders by adjusting budgets and adapting their finances to the days we are living in.”

Church financial officers from

around the world report decreases of income caused by the interruption of regular Sabbath activities, Prestol-Puesán said. “According to reports received from division treasurers, the decrease in tithe income could be estimated as low as 5 percent and as high as 25 percent in some places, and the decrease in mission offerings as low as 10 percent and as high as 40 percent,” he reported. “Despite these and many other changes, we remain optimistic and positive about seeing some improvement in the next few months.”

FINANCIAL RESULTS AND ACTIONS THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2020

Prestol-Puesán reported that the operating statement through September 2020 shows a decrease in net assets of almost US\$5.9 million. The church’s working capital (current assets minus current liabilities) level is 86.04 percent, and liquidity (assets that can be converted into cash quickly to meet commitments) stands at 102.26 percent. “We are grateful that our existing resources have provided for our contracted obligations and responsibilities,” he said.

The Adventist Church headquarters is expecting a negative financial impact on tithe and offerings estimated in the amount of US\$26 million. In view of that estimate, Prestol-Puesán reminded Executive Committee members of steps implemented according to an action from July 9, 2020, including

suspension of allocations to selected functions because of lack of income; introduction of budget reductions for departments and programs; and reduction, reallocation, and redirection of personnel. Remedial steps also included adjustments to remuneration, area travel, and travel budgets; planning of additional reductions as needed; and redirecting the application of funding from existing allocations to other areas of need as the circumstances require it.

GUIDELINES FOR THE 2021 BUDGET

Among the guidelines to inform the 2021 budget, Prestol-Puesán mentioned, among other items, that applying reserves as needed to seek the presentation of a balanced budget for 2021 and reassessing the financial situation after the 2020 fiscal year income has been recorded. It is also key, he said, to maintain communication with the world field through the division treasurers and division officers as to the progress of the strategy.

Prestol-Puesán explained that he mentioned the action voted on July 9, 2020, because the final impact of COVID-19 on church life is still unknown. “We know that it will affect the finances of the church at every level even more,” he said. “We are still unable to see the entire panorama. And while we believe we will be able to see it even more clearly in the next few days and weeks, we must remain proactive, vigilant, and conscious that every

dollar spent is of importance. While mission must continue, our level of financial diligence must remain high to conserve resources.”

IMPACT ON THE 2021 BUDGET

The 2021 budget will be significantly impacted by the current situation, Adventist Church undertreasurer Ray Wahlen explained. According to Wahlen, budgeting for the next year assumes that the COVID-19-related slowdown will cause a reduction of US\$18.8 million. Also, a Tithe Parity plan voted in 2019 suggests a reduction of US\$4.3 million. Finally, Wahlen said, income is expected to be negatively affected by the ongoing strength of the U.S. dollar against other world currencies to the amount of US\$2.9 million. For instance, he explained, “the 30 percent devaluation of the Brazilian Real, coupled with the fact that the South American Division provides roughly 20 percent of our income, had a major negative effect on the 2021 budget.” It is expected that the net impact on income in 2020 will reach US\$26 million (or 15 percent of 2020 budgeted expense).

Wahlen acknowledged how difficult it is to prepare a realistic 2021 budget based on the current data. “Our standard practice has been to budget for 100 percent of the actual income received two years previous, [which] in this budget would mean 2019. However, due to COVID-19, this approach would be totally unrealistic,” he said. So, Wahlen said, church financial officers have opted

to base the 2021 income on 100 percent of the projected income for 2020, following current data and estimations. It is an approach, he acknowledged, that has its weaknesses, but appears to be the most realistic assumption.

Following that procedure, Wahlen stated, the tithe budget has been reduced from 2020 by US\$9.9 million (an 11.4 percent decrease), and the World Mission Offering budget has been reduced by US\$16.1 million (a 22.8 percent decrease).

BUDGET REDUCTIONS

Wahlen explained that budgeting under the new method automatically implies reductions to budgets of several departments of the General Conference. For instance, the office dealing with international employees will suffer an automatic decrease of US\$4.3 million (or 16.4 percent). In this case, that shortage will be supplemented with US\$4 million in specific donations made for years for “foreign missions.” It is a one-time supplement, Wahlen said, that fully depletes this resource.

Other departments and offices will also suffer reductions, including US\$1.8 million (or 15.9 percent) for the General Conference Auditing Service, and US\$1.2 million in General Conference Administered funds. Savings in this latter item include reductions in Departmental Special Projects, eliminating booths at the General Conference Session, and cutting the contingency allocation from US\$1 million to US\$500,000.

Finally, Wahlen reminded the committee that the General Conference headquarters operates on a capped 2 percent of gross worldwide tithe. If tithes decrease, the same decrease happens to Office Operating Expenses. In this case, it will imply a reduction of US\$7.6 million, or 15.1 percent less than in 2020. “This major reduction has been accomplished by personnel reductions, maintaining the 50 percent reduction of travel budgets implemented in mid-2020, decreased depreciation funding, and elimination of the contingency budget,” Wahlen said.

Wahlen made clear that unfortunately, despite more than US\$20 million in reductions, the amount is not enough to offset the US\$26 million in lost income. He explained, however, that for years the General Conference has allocated reserves in the event it experienced a loss at the end of the year. “We praise the Lord that this allocated reserve has not been tapped,” Wahlen said. “It is anticipated that in 2020 we will need to do so for the first time due to losses resulting from COVID-19.”

For Wahlen, the idea of bringing a budget for approval in which expenses exceed income by such a significant amount is not appealing. However, he said, church financial officers feel that it is “an appropriate middle ground or interim step between the significant reductions that have already been implemented when compared to the additional major cuts to personnel and to appropriations that would otherwise be necessary.”

He added, “Looking to the future, our plan is to continue to closely monitor all aspects of the General Conference’s financial operations during the next six months. God has blessed us—in advance—with healthy reserves that will allow us to take this approach in the short term.” He cautioned that “significant reductions at the time of Spring Meetings in April and at General Conference Session in May 2021 are a strong possibility.”

A WORD OF THANKS

To conclude his report, Prestol-Puesán said that he wished to express his gratitude to God for providing the resources during the first nine months of 2020, and for making church programs still viable despite the circumstances. “We believe that He will provide the means, and the people that will do the work that remains to be done,” he said.

Prestol-Puesán also had a word of thanks to the many volunteer local church treasurers, the treasury personnel who serve in multiple entities around the world, and the dedicated and efficient treasury and accounting staff of the General Conference.

He closed with words recorded in Psalm 121: “[Our] help comes from the Lord,” Prestol-Puesán reminded the committee. “He does not slumber.” And, he added, “He is our keeper; He is our shade; and shall preserve our going out and our coming in now—during the days of COVID-19—and forever more.”

In brief remarks after the Treasury team’s presentation, Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson agreed. He encouraged church leaders and members to keep trusting in God’s leading despite current challenges. “COVID-19 will not stop the proclamation of the three angels’ messages,” he emphasized. Former Adventist president Jan Paulsen seconded. “The Lord will provide,” he said, “working also through very competent and skillful, faithful servants.”

Prestol-Puesán agreed. “We will never run out of money before the Lord decides we should run out of money,” he said. “We will be faithful, and we will do our best with what the Lord has entrusted us. The rest is up to Him. He will see us through.”

MICHAEL KRUGER NAMED ADRA PRESIDENT

ADRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTS ADMINISTRATOR AND FINANCIAL CONSULTANT TO TOP ROLE.

BY ADVENTIST DEVELOPMENT AND RELIEF AGENCY AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), the global humanitarian arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, announced that its Board of Directors has unanimously elected Michael Kruger as its new president.

Kruger was elected president in October 2019 to complete the five-year term of former president Jonathan Duffy. A search committee appointed by ADRA’s Board of Directors conducted a global executive search to identify a permanent president, and after an extensive review of candidates the board selected Kruger.

During his six years at ADRA, Kruger has played a key role in a period of enormous growth and transformation for the organization. He served as vice president for finance during a time of accelerated financial expansion, ensuring ADRA could operate more efficiently and transparently. As interim president, he steered ADRA through the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating strong stewardship while also leading ADRA’s global response, which impacted nearly 20 million people in 96 countries through 422 projects.

“Michael Kruger is a proven spirit-filled servant leader. We trust his commitment, vision, and passion to expand ADRA’s work globally, but also to ensure that ADRA continues to be relevant and effective in a rapidly changing world,” said Geoffrey Mbwana, ADRA board chair, former president of the church’s East-Central Africa Division, and now a general vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. “Michael has the expertise, the temperament, and leadership to guide ADRA forward so its work can continue to bring hope and new opportunities to vulnerable people everywhere, especially now during the global coronavirus pandemic,” he said.

ADRA board vice chair Ella Smith Simmons, who led the search process that identified Kruger, was equally affirming.

“A large majority of the clients that ADRA serves around the globe are women, many of them mothers of small children, who find themselves socially and economically disadvantaged in so many ways,” said Simmons, a general vice president of the world Adventist Church. “During the last six years, I’ve watched Michael Kruger address the needs of women with unusual clarity and focus. I’m confident that he will lead ADRA to do even more in empowering women as they raise children, do meaningful work in their communities, and reach their full potential for contributions in their societies.”

Erton Kohler, president of the church’s South American Division, highlighted the positive impact Kruger has already made. “During the months after he was appointed to the role, he made a special effort to lead the agency from the bottom up, listening and answering requests that could strengthen ADRA’s regional and global reach,” Kohler said. “He created a very positive environment among ADRA’s workers across the South American Division.”

“Early in 2020, at our headquarters in Miami we received a delegation from ADRA International led by Michael Kruger,” said Elie Henry, president of the Inter-American Division (IAD), and an ADRA Board member. “The ADRA leadership came to listen, and to exchange ideas and projects for good collaboration with a region in the grip of all kinds of crises—humanitarian, environmental, socio-political, and natural disasters, including being in the path of major hurri-



**“I AM
COMMITTED TO
STRENGTHENING
ADRA’S MINISTRY
IN ALLIANCE
WITH THE
ADVENTIST
CHURCH TO
ENSURE THAT
TOGETHER WE
CAN PROVIDE
HEALING TO A
WORLD IN NEED.”**

canes every year. Michael took the ideas we shared at this meeting with the clear goal of assisting the church in making a difference in the vast and diverse territory of the IAD, and to be of service to the community. I have confidence that God will use Michael to lead the agency successfully with a collaborative approach and a progressive vision.”

Responding to his appointment, Kruger focused on ADRA’s mandate to care for hurting and dispossessed peoples around the globe, and to bring sustainable development to regions challenged by war, poverty, and natural disasters.

“I am deeply humbled to serve

as ADRA’s president. I accept this position with great responsibility and pray to God for guidance so that ADRA can continue to be a source of justice, compassion, and love for millions of vulnerable and marginalized people around the world,” Kruger said. “As we look to the future, ADRA will work tirelessly to ensure that we can adjust to emerging challenges and can respond effectively not only in times of crisis but to long-term development problems. I am committed to strengthening ADRA’s ministry in alliance with the Adventist Church to ensure that together we can provide healing to a world in need.”

ABOUT MICHAEL KRUGER

Michael Kruger, originally from South Africa, brings to his role as ADRA’s president more than 25 years of experience in a variety of areas including international senior management with nonprofit and private organizations. He joined ADRA in August 2014 and served as vice president for finance before his appointment in October 2019 as president for the remainder of a five-year term.

Prior to his time at ADRA, Kruger worked in the financial sector for 23 years and opened his own private practice in 2000, specializing in audit, financial and regulatory services, as well as re-engineering distressed businesses. His firm provided auditing and consulting services for ADRA for almost a decade before he accepted a full-time position with the agency.

Kruger also shares his love for the Lord through an extensive preaching ministry developed over many years. He lives in Columbia, Maryland, with his wife, Delanney, and is a proud father of three adult children. ▀



ADVENTIST LEADERS ISSUE A CLEAR CALL TO TACKLE THE MENTAL HEALTH PANDEMIC

SEVERAL CHURCH DEPARTMENTS PARTNER TO SUPPORT A CARE INITIATIVE IN TIMES OF COVID-19.

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Every year, about 800,000 people globally die to suicide. That is about one suicide per 40 seconds," said Torben Bergland, psychiatrist and Adventist Health Ministries associate director, in a promotional video that a group of Adventist leaders are using to tackle mental health issues.

"For every suicide, there may be more than 20 who attempt suicide. For every suicide, there are more than 1,000 who suffer from a mental illness, a total of about 1 billion, most commonly anxiety and de-

pression. Suicide numbers are not even the tip of the vast iceberg of human suffering," Bergland said.

The video sought to introduce what church health leaders have called the COVID-19 Mental Health Initiative, and was livestreamed to hundreds of members of the General Conference Executive Committee on October 8, during the second day of Annual Council 2020. Because of COVID-19-motivated restrictions, the annual business meeting of the Adventist Church took place digitally this year.

A DIRE SITUATION

Adventist Health Ministries director Peter Landless acknowledged that mental health issues have been on the radar of Adventist ministries for years, especially because of an alarming increase in mental illness around the world. The dire situation has been exacerbated by the prolonged lockdowns imposed in 2020 as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Adventist Families Ministries associate director and counselor Elaine Oliver agreed. "Being human in this broken world is tough. Suffering is normal in this world. But, because of COVID-19, things are not normal anymore. Things are worse," she said.

The situation has brought dramatic increases in the levels of distress and mental illness because of people becoming ill with COVID-19, but also because of the disruptions to daily life, the stress and isolation, said psychologist Julián Melgosa, Adventist Education associate director. "A recent [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] report from the U.S. indicated a tripling of anxiety disorders in the general population, and a fourfold increase of depressive disorders," he said.

Melgosa added that the United Nations has acknowledged that "the mental health and well-being of whole societies have been severely impacted by this crisis and are a priority to be addressed urgently." It has also stated that "psychological distress in populations is wide-

spread. Many people are distressed due to the immediate health impacts of the virus and the consequences of physical isolation.” Finally, Melgosa said, the UN has emphasized that “mental health will remain a core concern even as countries emerge from the pandemic.”

Katia Reinert, a family nurse practitioner and Health Ministries associate director, agreed, noting that among all age groups, young people seem to struggle the most. “In the age group 18 to 24, 75 percent reported struggling with mental health or substance abuse, and 25 percent reported seriously having considered suicide in the last 30 days. That is a lot of suffering. This is serious,” she said.

Against this background, we cannot but ask ourselves how many are going to die to suicide in each of our church regions in the months ahead? asked Gary Blanchard, Adventist Youth Ministries director. “How many will be on the verge of giving up? How many will suffer because of fear, despair, loneliness, and hopelessness?”

A CALL FOR ACTION

Bergland said that given the current state of affairs, Adventist Church members and leaders need to act, and they need to act now. “This must be a matter of utmost urgency for every leader, every pastor, every educator, every parent, every friend,” Bergland said. “We are in the midst of a mental health pandemic. We have the opportunity now to minister to the present

needs of this world. If we want to reach people with present and eternal truths, we must also care for and minister to their present needs. That’s what Jesus did. Let us do it too. Now. Together.”

Oliver shared that the several departments of the world church headquarters they represent are partnering to tackle this issue. “Health, Youth, Family, and Education are working together on this. Our initial focus will be on reaching young people between 18 and 30. But we will expand to other groups. We pray, hope, and believe that what we do for one group may also benefit others,” Oliver said.

The actions that make up the initiative include sharing recommended resources to support mental health. Coordinators also hope to run a social media campaign on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and other relevant platforms. They also said they will host webinars, interviews, and panel talks online.

“You may want to do similar things. You may want to do other things,” Oliver told those watching the promotional video. “Do whatever you think is appropriate to the needs in your territory. And please share with us what you do, so we can share with others.”

Bergland concluded by emphasizing that in a world in crisis, partnerships such as the one Adventist leaders are suggesting can start to bridge the gap. “If we can stand together and work together, we can make a difference,” he said. ▀

“IN THE AGE GROUP 18 TO 24, 75 PERCENT REPORTED STRUGGLING WITH MENTAL HEALTH OR SUBSTANCE ABUSE, AND 25 PERCENT REPORTED SERIOUSLY HAVING CONSIDERED SUICIDE IN THE LAST 30 DAYS. THAT IS A LOT OF SUFFERING. THIS IS SERIOUS.”



Denver Park Hill and Littleton Adventist church pastors Kelby “Mac” McCottry (left) and Andy Nash greet joint worship-service attendees on October 3, 2020, in Highlands Ranch, Colorado, United States. PHOTO: RAJMUND DABROWSKI

TWO ETHNICALLY DIVERSE CHURCHES WORSHIP TOGETHER

FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN PASTORS RESULTS IN TRAILBLAZING INITIATIVE.

BY RAJMUND DABROWSKI, ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE NEWS

When two pastors became close friends in Denver, Colorado, United States, they decided to bring their churches together in a joint worship service.

Aware of COVID-19 pandemic regulations, the attending believers registered ahead for the worship service. More than 300 of them from Littleton and Denver Park Hill churches gathered on the Mile High Academy sports field on Sabbath, October 3, 2020.

The church service bulletin explained the reason for the gathering. Pastors Andy Nash, Chris Morris, and Alise Weber from Littleton church and Kelby “Mac” McCottry from the Denver Park Hill congregation talked with their church leaders about a joint service and “the response to the idea was overwhelming among all ages. If our Savior Jesus Christ prayed for us to be together, and if we’ll be together in heaven, why shouldn’t we be [together] on earth?” they asked.

Many congregants sported “Together, John 17:23” t-shirts, distributed to registered worshippers, and you would have had no problem witnessing the joy on their faces,

a mosaic of ethnicities worshipping together.

The worship featured a 20-minute sermon by each pastor, their theme based on 2 Timothy 1:1-14. Each congregant received a booklet provided at no cost by Thomas Nelson Bibles. “When Thomas Nelson heard about our event today, they immediately said they wanted to be a sponsor,” Nash informed the congregation.

A livestream of the event began with a welcome message by Ed Barnett and Roger Bernard, presidents of Rocky Mountain Conference and Central States Conference, respectively. They expressed their joy at seeing believers from both territories of the Seventh-day Adventist Church come together.

“Our Littleton church joining with the Denver Park Hill church from the Central States Conference and meeting at Mile High Academy for all-day services was fabulous,” Barnett commented.

“I felt bad that I was out of town and not able to join the celebration. Having heard comments from several of our members, I would say that it was a tremendous day.

Praise God for the camaraderie between our brothers and sisters from two different conferences and ethnic backgrounds ministering in the same territory. Truly a picture of what heaven will look like,” he added.

This was long overdue, several church members commented. “It’s up to us not to do it symbolically only, but also to cooperate in joint projects. We are neighbors, serving our community in Denver, aren’t we?” asked George Pelote, stewardship director of the Park Hill church.

Among the most welcome outcomes of coming together to worship was the feeling of being like a family, a community in need of camaraderie. It was not difficult to meet students from the school, past and present. Among them were two former students, James Harris from Park Hill and Kyla Dixon, a member of the Littleton church.

Harris commented that it was nice fellowshiping outside with everybody. Area churches should also come together in the future, he said. “I know Park Hill has been on its own, and it’s nice to see [us] coming together with everybody as well,” he said.

Dixon agreed. “It was awesome meeting everybody and intermingling, meeting new faces,” she shared.

The gathering of fellow Christians exceeded the expectations of both of the pastor friends. Following the Sabbath service, they shared their personal comments. McCottry commented: “Oh, yes. Way more. Way

ADVENTIST CHURCH AMENDMENTS TO BYLAWS DEAL WITH EXTRAORDINARY SITUATIONS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE APPROVES MOTION TO RECOMMEND CHANGES.

BY BETH THOMAS, FOR ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

During the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Annual Council business meetings on October 7, 2020, the Executive Committee of the church approved a motion to recommend to the next General Conference Session three amendments to the organization's constitution.

The first amendment is to Article V: General Conference Sessions would allow the Executive Committee to determine the timing of subsequent General Conference Sessions when one has been postponed whenever "world conditions make it imperative to do so."

During discussion of the motion, Karnik Doukmetzian, general counsel for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, clarified that "the General Conference Executive Committee is empowered by the constitution to designate and announce the date and location of General Conference Sessions or special Sessions. It is also given the authority to postpone a session for up to two years when world conditions make such postponement necessary, and to provide notice of such meetings or postponements to all its constituent organizations."

The proposed addition to the article reads: "In the event that the General Conference Executive Committee exercises its authority to postpone a Session, it shall also have the authority to set the subsequent regular Session at such time and place as it shall see fit, not to exceed five calendar years from the date of the postponed Session." Although the 2020 General Conference Session was rescheduled for May 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic, the date for the next Session will remain 2025.

The second amendment provides for delegates to attend meetings virtually and vote electronically, instead of on site and in person, provided that they can hear each other and be heard. Hensley Mooroooven, undersecretary for the Adventist Church, explained that the church's pioneers "did an excellent job ensuring that we would meet physically under one roof and conduct meetings with people who are physically present. . . . The committee is making some amendments, some provision, for electronic presence for virtual attendance to a session."

The third change would allow for session committees to meet virtually. This would affect the four main committees that meet during regular Sessions: nominating, steering, Church Manual, and church constitution and bylaws.

Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the General Conference, noted that these amendments would not be implemented until a quorum of delegates is able to meet in Indianapolis at the General Conference Session in May 2021 and vote approval. The Executive Committee makes recommendations to the General Conference Session, which, in business session, has ultimate authority to amend the constitution.

Postponing a General Conference Session is not unprecedented. At least four other sessions were rescheduled. The 1917 Session was postponed because of the outbreak of World War I; the 1934 Session was rescheduled because of financial hardship during the Great Depression; and the 1940 and 1945 Sessions were postponed because of the start of World War II and its continued effects. ▀

more. Just to see people coming, worshipping and fellowshiping together, regardless of membership, regardless of color of skin."

Nash said that the days of preparation were worth the effort and shared what many people said most: "We should do this more. Why haven't we done this more?" "This began out of friendship for Pastor Mac and me, and now we see other friendships forming. That's the work of the Holy Spirit."

As pastors, they recognize a need to encourage and bring people together, not just for one worship event.

"God brought us together for such a time as this," McCottry said. "To see what's happening in the world, in the United States, but to know that we can be a model, that we can still love each other. We may worship in different places and may have different preferences and styles, but we are still God's children together. The whole purpose was [coming together] to show that this is how it can be. This is how it's going to be in heaven, so let's do it now."

Nash said he believes that what they did together could be done elsewhere. "People are desperate for something to be hopeful and positive about. What's missing in many of the conversations in our country is Christ. As humans, we cannot solve problems, but in Christ, there is, as we said today, there is *dunamis*, dynamite, and power in Him, as we look to Him together." ▀

THREE LESSONS

Living, loving, and learning as rivals

LIONA ARCHER AND JASON HINES

On September 18, 2020, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, passed away at the age of 87. As the second woman appointed to the High Court, she served for almost 30 years. Her legal career is distinguished by her sustained advocacy for the equal rights of women.

Regardless of whether any particular person agrees or disagrees with Justice Ginsburg's politics or legal ideology, there are three lessons that we Adventist attorneys have gleaned from the life of this legal trailblazer.

First, although Justice Ginsburg had a distinct legal philosophy cemented over a lifetime of civil rights advocacy, she was able to maintain close relationships with other judges on the court, despite their philosophical disagreements. Throughout her tenure on the Supreme Court, she maintained an extraordinarily close friendship with the late justice Antonin Scalia. The friendship became well publicized, precisely because of its seeming improbability. Justice Ginsburg was a liberal, nonpracticing Jew; Justice Scalia a staunch conservative and observant Catholic. They shared a love for the opera, dined together frequently, and celebrated New Year's Eves together for nearly two decades. Ginsburg's life shows us that it is possible to maintain friendships and relationships centered on common values and interests, not just religious beliefs, without losing core beliefs and values. In fact, having these relationships can help to solidify core principles and extend grace to those different from us.

Second, Justice Ginsburg's marriage to the late Martin Ginsburg is an example of mutual sacrifice and submission. The Ginsburgs married at the ages of 21 and 22 respectively. Their 56-year marriage was the epitome of give and take—one party sacrificing so that the other could succeed.

Early in their marriage, while they were both law students, Martin was diagnosed with cancer. Justice Ginsburg took notes for both of them and also typed Martin's papers at his dictation, caring for him while she also cared for their young child.

When Justice Ginsburg ascended to a position on the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington, D.C., Martin left his successful law practice in New York to be with her. The Ginsburgs were known for



SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

sharing parental and household responsibilities as well. The type of love, camaraderie, partnership, and sacrifice they shared in their marriage is worthy of emulation in our households.

Third, Ginsburg's life shows how women should be allowed to thrive as valued members of society and our church; a church that needs their voices and their leadership. Ginsburg famously said, "Women belong in all places where decisions are being made. It shouldn't be that women are the exception."

Justice Ginsburg was well known for her sustained advocacy for the rights of women and for their equal treatment in terms of social and financial equity. Her record of legal victories as an attorney and judicial opinions on fairness for women had legislative ramifications. Despite the fact that hers was a dissenting opinion in the case of *Ledbetter v Goodyear* (2007), Congress took up the cause in helping women fight for equal payment. In 2009 Congress passed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which extended the statute of limitations for women to sue in payment discrimination cases.

Women are image bearers and essential to the work and mission of the church. Women should never be afraid to speak their minds, as their voices are integral to the church's growth and mission. The Adventist Church is an ecosystem unto itself—with churches, schools, hospitals, mission organizations, and other institutions all working toward the betterment of all God's children. Women are of inherent value in these bodies, and we must ensure that they are treated fairly and with the respect they deserve.

Lessons to live by: excellence in our work; fairness in our relationships; respect and mutuality toward those with whom we disagree. Thank you, Justice Ginsburg. 🍀

Liona Archer Hines is an assistant state attorney in central Florida. **Jason Hines, J.D., Ph.D.**, teaches at AdventHealth University, Orlando, Florida. They live in the Orlando, Florida, area with their two daughters.

Change a Life... *and Honor a Loved One*

Choose a gift from
our new catalog,
and change the life
of a vulnerable child...
a family...or a
whole community.



At the same time,
request a card
to honor a loved
one with the gift
you have selected
in their name.



Browse and shop online at ADRA.org/GiftCatalog. Or ask for a printed catalog
by email at Hello@ADRA.org or by phone at **1.800.424.ADRA (2372)**.

Money, Property, and **Power**

*An Old Testament
reading of
divine economics*



A Babylonian clay tablet containing an example of Babylonian mathematics. This tablet, believed to have been written about 1800 B.C., has a table of four columns and 15 rows of numbers in the cuneiform script of the period.

Like so many things in Scripture, this story begins in Eden. When God created this world and put plants and animals and human beings in His garden, profusion, beauty, and abundance best described His creation. Flowers bloomed lavishly, trees carried ample fruit, and a wild harmony of animals in all shapes and forms reflected their Creator's sense of humor and joy. Picture the tall and stately giraffe playfully interacting with a waddling penguin or a swinging monkey.

Everything was "very good" (Gen. 1:31)—and that also meant plentiful and bounteous.

Adam and Eve were God's stewards (verse 28) who represented the Master Designer as they named and cared for animals and plants. Plant produce provided a generous food supply for both humanity and the animal world. Death was unknown.

The entrance of sin changed everything—or, perhaps, almost everything. Doubt and distrust began to penetrate every relationship, affecting animals and humans alike. Following the expulsion of Adam and Eve from their garden home (Gen. 3:23, 24), life became much more of a battle. Produce had to be "labored for"; children caused heartache and pain—and not just when they were born. Death changed the way people looked at life forever. Wealth and riches became a way of securing one's future—and the future of one's offspring.

BEING RICHLY BLESSED

God's specific call to Abraham and his large household represented a new beginning following the Flood. We often highlight Abraham's faith and trust in the divine promises given to him—and so we should. He left everything familiar to go to a place that he didn't know and where he would be an outsider. He was promised that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the evening sky or the sand on a seashore (Gen. 22:17), even though the reality was that he didn't even have a son at the time of his call.

Yet Abraham's household was truly substantial. When asked to contribute to the army pursuing the force of Chedorlaomer from Mesopotamia, who had raided successfully the region of Sodom and Gomorrah, including also Lot and his belongings, he is able

to commit 318 trained men from his household (Gen. 14:14), who pursue the invaders, defeat them, and return everything that had been lost.

Abraham is described as "very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold" (Gen. 13:2; 24:35). Isaac was similarly blessed by God and became wealthy (Gen. 26:12, 13). Wealth was, however, always connected to God's blessings.

Many centuries later Moses reminds a new generation of Israelites of the fact that God is the ultimate giver of blessings—including also material blessings. It wasn't their hard work and military prowess that would give them victory and wealth in the Promised Land. It was their reliance on Yahweh. "But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today" (Deut. 8:18).

"The Old Testament often presents wealth neutrally, as a gift from the Lord that can be used for good or ill and that can be taken away and restored again by the Lord."¹ When people trust in wealth, they lose sight of the true source of their well-being, as noted in Psalm 49, which discusses the concept of wealth and false trust.

Unfortunately, by the time of Christ, wealth was often seen as the only measure of God's blessing. By the same logic, being poor meant that the person had moral flaws and stood outside of God's blessing. Jesus turned this concept upside down.

WEALTH AND THE LAW

God's particular care for the poor and the powerless is anchored in His concern for the *shalom* of His creation (see Lev. 25:23-55).

The laws about lending, the prohibition of charging interest, and the laws governing debt slavery recognize the fact that no one is exempt from becoming poor, considering the precariousness of human life and existence. The standard phrase "If any of your fellow Israelites becomes poor" (Lev. 25:25, 35; cf. verse 39) reminds the reader—both ancient and modern—that poverty can strike quickly, even those who work conscientiously, and often lies beyond human control. A sudden famine, a devastating stock market crash or financial downturn, a global pandemic, a horrific

Kingship became a means of distraction and disruption used by God's archenemy.

accident—and, unexpectedly, poverty can knock on any door.

While laziness is diametrically opposed to God's values embedded in His creation and His law, poverty is seldom the fault of an individual. As noted by Old Testament scholar Joel Kaminsky: "The notion that the poor person may not be at fault for their situation is also supported by the fact that the poor in general are often associated with the righteous, as opposed to the wicked, who frequently are cast as wealthy oppressors of the poor in many passages from Psalms, Proverbs, and the prophetic corpus (e.g., Ps. 10:2-11; Prov. 28:6; Isa. 3:14, 15; Zeph. 3:12)."²

The tithe laws offer a unique divine perspective on the issue of poverty. Deuteronomy 14:28, 29 instructs Israel that every three years a second tithe, usually dedicated to the service of the sanctuary and the maintenance of the priests and Levites, is to be used to offer food to all those who did not own property and experienced poverty, including foreigners, orphans, and widows. Together with the gleaning laws allowing the poor to gather the grain or the grapes behind the harvesters (Lev. 19:9, 10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-21; cf. Ruth 2:1-3), these commandments highlighted for Israel the value of compassion and care for those who could not adequately care for themselves.

Intriguingly, the rationale for these laws is Israel's memory of slavery in Egypt: "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this" (Deut. 24:22). Caring for the less privileged and poor was a key part of the ethos of God's people, for it kept reminding them of their roots and their own experience of redemption from slavery. Ultimately, it pointed them to their Redeemer and their King.

"GIVE US A KING"

Many things changed when Israel finally got a king. The narrative in 1 Samuel 8-10 offers a brief

window into two differing perspectives on communal life, social structures, and God's role in all this. The Hebrew Bible is full of references to God's kingship—over all the earth, but, especially, also over His people (Ps. 5:2; 29:10; 47:2-8; 95:3; etc.). The biblical ideal for Israel was a theocracy—God would be the ultimate ruler of His people and would communicate with them through prophets and judges.

But Israel wanted to be like the nations surrounding them: "Now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have" (1 Sam. 8:5). Israel connected safety, security, and economic well-being with a visible king. Even though God, through Samuel, warned them about the social dimensions and economic implications of the kingship model (verses 11-18), Israel was deaf to His pleadings. Their choice really was an expression of their rejection of the Lord (verse 7).

Kingship in the ancient Near East generally meant absolute power and control. Israel's kings would take, take, then take even more. Israel was willing to make themselves slaves of their royal masters. In a sense, Israel's election of kingship meant a move back toward Egypt.

THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL

It didn't take long for Samuel's predictions to become reality. Saul's kingship ended in disaster. He clung to his throne in spite of God's rejection (1 Sam. 13:13, 14; 15:10-29), causing Israel's first civil war of the monarchic period. The reigns of David and Solomon offered a brief (and partial) view of how the "king under God" model *could* work—until it didn't work anymore, and selfishness, self-importance, and self-preservation became all-prevailing characteristics of Israel's and Judah's kings.

Kingship became a means of distraction and disruption used by God's archenemy. The summary statement describing the reign of most kings sounded something like this: "X [insert name of king] did evil in the eyes of the Lord" (e.g., 1 Kings 11:6; 15:26, 34; etc.). Israel's and Judah's attempts to play major roles on the international scene were economically costly and spiritually devastating.

Kings in the Old Testament period were seldom positive role models for their people, but rather led people further away from God and His ideal. The reality of kingship also led to the development of classes of haves and have-nots. Israel's social fabric began to become frayed and brittle. Abuse

by the powerful and resultant poverty of those without voice and influence increased exponentially. Taxation became a tool to raise money for military adventures, the payment of tribute, or personal aggrandizement.

HE CAN'T KEEP QUIET

When God encounters abuse, He cannot stand by quietly or walk away. "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt," God said to Moses in Midian. "I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering" (Ex. 3:7).

Yahweh always takes the side of the abused and commands Israel to do the same. Israel's prophets were His loudspeakers—and they didn't mince words: "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow," we hear Isaiah calling (Isa. 1:17). Amos highlights Israel's abuse of the righteous and the poor (Amos 2:6) and laments how the rich oppress the poor and crush the needy (Amos 4:1).

This pattern continued seemingly unchanged after the exile, as can be seen in Zechariah 7:9, 10: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other." Care for those who are poor and needy was not a prophetic afterthought. It represents one of the main themes in the prophetic texts of the Old Testament and was based on the law, God's *torah*. It addressed the discrepancy between God's ideal and Israel's reality that was far removed from that ideal.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

"Biblical discourse on economic issues forces us to engage God, and that engagement pushes us into a discourse that is not fully encompassed by other forms of moral discourse in our culture,"³ writes Lutheran theologian Richard Nysse. As we think about God's view of economics we are called to go back to the beginning. Creation offers us a window into God's value system. He isn't stingy; He made everything bountiful; He models disinterested generosity and created Adam and Eve as equals—yet different. Ultimately, as the Creator and Giver of all good things, He appointed humanity to be His stewards. They were to care for His

When God encounters abuse, He cannot stand by quietly or walk away.

creation, including also their fellow human beings.

Closely related to our role as stewards on God's behalf lies the reality that everything that we own, produce, or create ultimately is God's. "Sovereignty belonged to God alone," notes Old Testament scholar Walter Kaiser, "mortals and governing officials were merely given dominion over the earth for which they answered to God as steward."⁴ This perspective is challenging people living in the twenty-first century. We applaud "self-made" millionaires; we praise hard work leading to positive results. Yet we continue to be creatures who are subject and accountable to our Creator.

Both rich and poor can reflect aspects of God's character and provide opportunities for growth in relationship with God. Being rich or poor represents a momentary snapshot of a material reality, but it doesn't say anything about our innate value. Our views of and relationship with money will always be a challenge in current economic structures. God's Word invites us to recognize that wealth is not something an individual creates, but rather the result of an opportunity given by God. With that opportunity always comes personal responsibility. Our highest financial goal should not be early retirement or a seven-figure dollar number resting in our savings account. Rather it should be to serve as faithful stewards who always have enough to share with those who need a helping hand. ♣

¹ "Wealth and Poverty," in *Dictionary of Daily Life in Biblical and Post-Biblical Antiquity*, ed. Edwin M. Yamauchi and Marvin R. Wilson (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2017), p. 1693.

² Joel S. Kaminsky, "The Might of My Own Hand Has Gotten Me This Wealth: Reflections on Wealth and Poverty in the Hebrew Bible and Today," *Interpretation* 73, no. 1 (2019): p. 12.

³ Richard Nysse, "Moral Discourse on Economic Justice: Considerations From the Old Testament," *Word and World* 12, no. 4 (1992): p. 344.

⁴ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Ownership and Property in the Old Testament Economy," *Journal of Markets and Morality* 15, no. 1 (2012): p. 235.

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

ECONOMIST 101

Numbers for Ministry

For our special focus on faith and economics three career economists agreed to share their stories with us. Margaret Enniss-Trotman works as an economist and strategic planner with a large nongovernmental organization; Gomez Agou works at the International Monetary Fund headquarters; Colin Bruce recently retired as senior adviser to the president of the World Bank.—Editors

Thank you, friends, for being willing to share yourselves with us. Perhaps each of you can begin by telling us a bit about yourselves.



Gomez Agou (GA): I'm a 35-year-old economist with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). I was born in Côte d'Ivoire, the world's biggest producer of cocoa. My wife and I have two kids, a 7-year-old girl and a 4-year-old boy.

Colin Bruce (CB): I'm Guyana-born, but I'm a citizen of the world, having lived in a half dozen countries. My parents lost six of their nine children shortly after they were born, and I lost another sibling to a car accident in Canada in 1980. My wife, Laverne Bentt, is an anaesthesiology professor, and our two kids are both in postgraduate studies.



Margarett Trotman (MT): I'm also Guyanese, and my name is a legacy of my country's colonial history when parents loved to name their kids after members of the British royal family. So I'm Princess Margaret with a distinctive spelling, Margarett. Unlike Colin, eight siblings and I have grown to maturity. My husband, Roderick, is a deeply spiritual man, and we have one young adult daughter.

That's a good segue, Margaret—your deeply spiritual spouse. Talk about your faith background.

MT: My family heritage is steeped in Adventism. My maternal and paternal grandparents, myriad uncles, aunts, and cousins were adherents as was my mom. My dad, though he grew up in the church and was a strong supporter, waited until age 75 to be baptized.

CB: My mother did the beat—church attendance, Pathfinder Club membership, caring ministry to needy neighbors, everything with me in tow. I made my commitment at 12 years old.

I guess we all can thank our parents.

GA: Yes, my dad's father was a pioneer of Adventism in Côte d'Ivoire, a man of faith to whom I owe a lot of my own. But I started my personal walk with the Lord when I was 14.

Talk about your choice of career.

GA: Poverty made me choose economics. I grew up puzzling about it, loved math in college, and learned that it was a good base for becoming an economist. I got admitted to a French elite school training in statistics and economics. Following graduate studies in economics and statistics, the IMF hired me as national economist for Côte d'Ivoire. As I dove into the sea of economic issues faced by the government entangled with other public policy challenges, I decided that I needed to know more. Columbia, Princeton, and Harvard accepted me, and I chose Harvard. Upon graduation from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government in 2014, I rejoined the IMF at its headquarters in Washington, D.C.

MT: Can I say "by accident"? In high school I was progressing well as a science student, excelling in math, physics, chemistry, and biology. But I needed three electives to complete my class load: I picked Spanish and geography. What else? I picked economics and got hooked. Economics was about real life. As class sessions progressed, my interest was piqued as I started to make connections between what I was studying and what I was observing in my own life. I started to understand how scarce resources were being distributed in my large family; why my parents' household financial decisions were mostly based on our needs and not our wants; and why transactions with my siblings sometimes bore reasonable benefits and sometimes generated unbearably high costs.

CB: In high school, economics provided the most compelling concepts and tools to understand people, households, firms, communities, nation states, and regional economic blocks; how they interacted with one another to create value, and how they tried to fix problems that occurred among them. Economics usually involves working with numbers, and I love numbers.

My passion for the subject grew when I realized that it provided insights into a wide range of practical issues, such as why families have so many or so few children; why three-lane highways should



The only thing you can take with you out of this world is your faith.

be built in some areas and not others; why floods in Pakistan can affect the economy of Egypt; why a dollar provided to a worker today might be more valuable to him than \$10 paid at month's end; and, at a personal level, why I was obsessed with time and far less with money.

One more explanation: I was under considerable pressure from my church community to become a pastor or a medical doctor. Choosing economics was an act of youthful rebellion. But I committed to doing well and doing good, God helping me.

Say more about how a high school kid attains the global perspective you're talking about.

CB: Well, you can credit both world and church. In the 1960s we had no Internet or television services, so reading was my window to the world. My dad insisted that my sisters and I read newspapers every day to familiarize ourselves with domestic and international affairs. Around that time the nonaligned movement was taking shape as many former colonies obtained their independence. Leaders such as Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah and Sri Lankan prime minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike visited our shores, and their worldview appealed to me.

Within Adventism, stories of missionaries introduced me to the idea of serving in far-flung places. Providentially, I ended up going to universities that nurtured such interests, and this became my gateway to employment in the premier global development organization.

How have faith and profession affected each other?

CB: My faith has gifted me a very clear purpose for living, a passion for fairness, a respect for all peoples, and a disciplined and independent mind. My mother helped me understand that purpose with the words of a song: "Help me to live for others that I might live for Thee." Working in global economics and in humanitarian affairs allows me to do this at scale. My faith has also given me unbending resoluteness in pursuing that purpose, and a quiet peace amid the fiercest personal and professional storms that life routinely brings.

GA: My job as an economist and public policy maker is to improve the lives of humans through a better management of country economies, particularly developing countries. Helping others, improving people lives, is what Christians are supposed to do on earth to witness the Word of God. So I do my job daily with one thing in mind: doing the right thing for the glory of God first. As an IMF economist, I advise sometimes on tough economic decisions. No matter how difficult and urgent the decision may be, I always ask myself how it is going to impact human beings—children of God; then I try to minimize the negative effects, if any.

MT: Practically speaking, my profession influences how and where I serve the church. For instance, I see connections between our stewardship doctrine and economics as it relates to resource use and allocation, and environmental preservation and conservation.

I serve as a stewardship leader. I also serve on the finance and budget committee and enjoy working with youth to provide counsel on debt management, budgeting, and financial planning.

Conceptually, the idea that betterment of and for humanity is common to both my faith and my profession as an economist, is somewhat intriguing. I can see how the message of the cross, how a Savior executing a solution for the world's sin problem to redeem us back to God, is in some way reflected in the discipline of economics that's heavily focused on developing solutions and fixes for economic problems, albeit temporal.

That being said, we must be careful that we don't make economics a type of religion that replaces faith in God. Some time ago I read in *The Guardian* an intriguing article by John Rapley titled "How Economics Became a Religion." In it he likened economics to a religion that offers comprehensive moral instruction "that promises salvation in this world and seeks to give guidance on how to reach a promised land of material abundance and endless contentment until reality forces a retreat from its claims, and the model no longer fits."¹

One more question and a wrap-up: What should earlier economic downturns—recessions (2008-2009), depressions (1929-1930s)—have taught us as Christians? More particularly, as Seventh-day Adventists?

GA: I'd mention two things. First, everything is vanity. You can lose everything, including your life, in this world in a very unexpected way. The only thing you can take with you out of this world is your faith. So preserve your faith. Second, Jesus is still coming back soon. The Bible has warned us. So let's get ready to meet Him.

MT: Can I tell a story? Saving for a rainy day is an important principle for many responsible adults, and it was for me too. As such, I had savings and investment bank accounts, and got into the habit of rolling over the investments at the maturity date to compound the returns.

So when I visited my bank Globe Trust and Investment Company in January 2003 and rolled over my investments as per habit, I didn't have the slightest inkling that the bank would fail within a week and that I would lose the majority of my savings. To make matters worse, I fell ill and needed surgery three days later, a surgery that

almost took my life and that required a three-month recovery period. To compound matters, we were on track to immigrate to Canada, and would need the lost funds.

Acting purely on economic principles, I completely disregarded the possibility that an omniscient God would choose to test me when I least expected it to strengthen character and to build trust in Him. I confess that as the stress and worry mounted during this dilemma (my sickness [and recovery] and the loss of a significant sum of money), I learned to rely on God, not on markets or money. What was taken away, He restored.

CB: I'd like to go to a Bible story. Joseph's youthful dream forewarned him of a global famine. Later, as Egypt's prime minister, he built a strategic food reserve and fed the masses. He also remained spiritually alert. When his starving brothers came calling for help, he not only provided food but seized the opportunity to restore their broken family ties.

God has done his part to forewarn us that economic downturns, natural disasters, and other crises will occur with greater frequency and intensity. We must do our parts to prepare and prevent the worst consequences. Competent leaders create sound contingency plans, organizations adjust and improve, and individuals learn to cope better.

What parting word do you have for those who will hear and see what we're sharing here?

MT: Our only hope is to trust in God. It is clear from earlier economic recessions that human systems will fail and fall, only to be propped up and fall again. In contrast, the kingdom of God will never fail; it will stand forever. A good picture to keep in mind is the rock striking and crushing the mixed-mineral feet of the image in Daniel 2, which thereafter filled the whole earth.

GA: Despite all these challenging times, we should never forget that Jesus loved us first and still does.

CB: Amid the ongoing turmoil, let's remember that "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."² ♣

¹ www.theguardian.com/news/2017/jul/11/how-economics-became-a-religion

² Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 196.



A GOSPEL OF WEALTH?

Decoding the prosperity gospel

DANIEL BEDIAKO

We all want to prosper—materially, socially, physiologically. Indeed, God is interested in the well-being and prosperity of humanity, even after our first human parents sinned in Eden and lost the paradise of prosperity (Gen. 2; 3). But what is now the biblical perspective on prosperity? Does Scripture support the contemporary prosperity gospel? I will briefly look at the origin and impact of this teaching, highlight some of its pitfalls, and review the biblical concept of prosperity.

ORIGIN AND IMPACT

The prosperity gospel is the teaching that “believers have a right to the blessings of health and wealth and that they can obtain these blessings through positive confessions of faith and the ‘sowing of seeds’ through the faithful payments of tithes and offerings.”¹ This teaching is espoused by Christians who call themselves the prosperity movement or the faith movement. The movement began during the decade following World War II in North America when some Pentecostal preachers revived Essek William Kenyon’s (1867-1948) theology of

“dominating faith,” which he borrowed from the metaphysical movement.² These preachers presented faith as a force, which, when expressed in the form of positive confessions, actualizes health, wealth, and success in a believer’s life.

Key among the revivalists was Oral Roberts (1918-2009), who influenced such others as A. Allen (1911-1970), Kenneth Hagin (1917-2003), Kenneth Copeland (1936-), and Fredrick Price (1932-).³ In 1956 Roberts published *God’s Formula for Success and Prosperity*, which offered a systematic way to claim divine blessings; and in 1970 he introduced a formula for wealth in his *Miracle of Seed-Faith*.⁴ By the late 1970s the faith movement had become prominent in North America. Its theology attracted many preachers from major denominations, with significant numbers of followers not only among White Americans, but also Black and Latino populations. A proliferation of associations of prosperity churches appeared, pushing prosperity theology beyond North America.

When the prosperity gospel crossed continental lines it received a warm embrace in developing countries.⁵ The teaching is attractive, and has permeated the Christian world with (1) its hermeneutics and theology that almost deifies the believer (see below); (2) music that sings away poverty and claims material success; (3) miracle-driven homiletics promoting seed-sowing and positive confessions of faith; and (4) the flamboyant lifestyle it promotes as a measure of faith and blessings.

The influence of the movement is seen not only in the number of its adherents but also in the adaptations to the prosperity teaching that are evident among other Christian denominations. There are indications of this influence among some Seventh-day Adventists in Africa.⁶ For example, some members, including pastors, are adopting the theology and practice of prosperity preachers in anointing, music, and prayer and deliverance. Some members also visit prosperity preachers for prayer and deliverance.

PITFALLS OF THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL

Scripturally, the prosperity teaching displays a deficiency in a number of critical areas, resulting in the obscuring of the biblical understanding of prosperity. Here are three of these pitfalls:

The prosperity gospel lacks sound hermeneutics. While prosperity preachers cite passages from

Scripture to support some of their claims, Scripture is not the primary source of their theology. Instead, they claim to have direct access to the divine mind and personally receive revelation knowledge—knowledge that comes directly from God to the believer in the spirit realm. Philosophical idealism and mysticism underpin the concept of revelation knowledge as taught by these preachers. Since the content of revelation knowledge often contradicts and supersedes Scripture, traditional hermeneutics, including the historical-grammatical method, have no place in prosperity theology. As a Bible-believing community, Seventh-day Adventist acceptance of the Bible as our “only creed” is diametrically opposed to the concept of revelation knowledge in prosperity theology (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

The prosperity gospel lacks sound biblical theology. This gospel essentially teaches that Christ’s death on the cross reclaimed the rights of believers to health and wealth, success and progress, which humanity lost at the Fall (Gen. 3). Following Christ’s death, the “faith of God,” a faith force with causal power, is reproduced in born-again believers by which they can actualize their rights. This theology ultimately divinizes believers, making them “little gods” who can exercise their faith force through formulaic expressions in the spirit realm to effect material realities. In effect, believers can “name and claim” their desires either independently or by manipulating God. Since the hermeneutics of the movement is not controlled by Scripture, the resulting theology equally disregards Scripture.

The prosperity gospel disregards key biblical concepts. First, by teaching that material wealth must accompany the life of believers, the prosperity gospel disregards the biblical concept of prosperity (described below). Second, equally unbiblical is the concept of “faith force.” Scripture teaches that believers must exercise faith in God (Hab. 2:4; John 14:1). They surmount difficulties in life by trust in God (Ps. 24; Isa. 40:31), while living in the hope of Christ’s soon return (John 3:16; Rev. 22:20).

Third, prosperity theology promotes an obsession with material wealth that focuses on the here and now, with little or no concern for the hereafter. The obsession with material wealth—also true of the concept of “faith force”—is detrimental to the relationship between God and the believer (John 15:5). The relationship with God is more important

The gospel of Christ directs the focus of believers to eternal life.

than material possessions, for “life does not consist in an abundance of possessions” (Luke 12:15). Finally, the prosperity gospel has diverted focus from the message of the kingdom of God to the material prosperity of the believer. Believers are not called to material wealth (Matt. 10:9, 10). Rather, they are called to be witnesses to the salvation that is in Christ (Matt. 28:19, 20; Rom. 1:16). The gospel of Christ directs the focus of believers to eternal life (Matt. 10:22, 41, 42; Luke 10:20; Rev. 22:1-5).

BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF PROSPERITY

The biblical texts suggest that “prosperity” refers not only to material wealth but also to peace and God’s presence in one’s life (Ps. 1:1, 2; 128; 3 John 2). God is the source of all blessings, including material prosperity (Gen. 1:28, 29; 1 Chron. 29:11-16; Ps. 24:1, 2). Since He gives life and blesses with wealth, He requires that people worship Him not only with their hearts but also with their possessions (Deut. 12:5, 6; Mal. 3:8-12).

God promised material blessings to ancient Israel as a nation (Deut. 28:1-14), but this did not mean that every Israelite would become wealthy. On the contrary, there would always be the poor and needy among God’s people (Deut. 15:11; Matt. 26:11). Consequently, faithfulness to God is not to be measured by material possessions. The righteous may be blessed (Prov. 10:6, 7; 28:20), but they may also suffer and lack materially (Job 1; 2; Acts 11:27-30). The wicked may prosper (Ps. 73:3-12; Jer. 12:1; Mal. 3:15), though not necessarily as the result of God’s special blessings (Prov. 20:21; 28:20). What God has promised is that He will provide the necessities of life—food, drink, clothing (Matt. 6:25-34).

Genuine prosperity is a gift of God. But as stewards, believers need to work conscientiously and invest in order to maximize their gifts (Deut. 8:17, 18; Prov. 10:4, 5; Eccl. 11:1-6; 2 Thess. 3:6-12). Not everyone may achieve material wealth, but believ-

ers are to be content with whatever they possess (1 Tim. 6:6-10). Since the rich and the poor will coexist among His people, God places responsibility on the faith community, especially those who prosper materially, to share their blessings with those who are poor and needy (Lev. 25:6-55; Deut. 15:7-11; Isa. 58:6-8; Rom. 12:13; 1 Tim. 6:17-19). Indeed, true worship includes generosity toward those who are less privileged (Matt. 25:34-40; Acts 2:44, 45; 4:32-37; 2 Cor. 9:6-12; 1 John 3:17, 18).

Jesus instructed His followers not to focus on possessions (Matt. 6:19-21; Luke 12:15; Rev. 3:17, 18). Since “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10), Paul advises believers to flee from the desire for riches that leads to temptation and destruction (verses 9, 10; see also Prov. 30:8, 9) and rather “fight the good fight” of “faith” and “righteousness” that leads to “eternal life” (1 Tim. 6:11, 12).

Whether rich or poor, believers are to live in view of the “blessed hope” and glorious “appearing” of Christ (Titus 2:12). This is when the righteous will receive the eternal inheritance, a reward more valuable than any earthly wealth (Dan. 12:13). This is our hope.

The gospel of God’s kingdom is not a gospel of material wealth. It is the good news of salvation in Christ. The prosperity gospel is not a biblical gospel. It is inconsistent with the biblical concept of prosperity and distorts biblical faith, lifestyle, and mission. Seventh-day Adventists cannot subscribe to the prosperity teaching, either as a whole or in part, as this would mean moving away from Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy, and, therefore, losing their identity and mission.⁷ 📌

¹ Lausanne Movement (Africa Chapter), “Lausanne Theology Working Group Statement on the Prosperity Gospel,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 34, no. 2 (2010), p. 99.

² Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 59.

³ Ken Silva, “True Origins of the Prosperity Gospel aka Word Faith Theology,” apprising.org/2014/08/30/true-origins-of-the-prosperity-gospel-aka-word-faith-theology/, accessed September 4, 2020.

⁴ Roberts was also influenced by Napoleon Hill (1883-1970), a famous writer of the New Thought Movement, especially his *Think and Grow Rich* (Meriden, Conn.: Ralston Society, 1937).

⁵ Bowler, pp. 4-8, 86-89; Paul Gifford, “The Prosperity Gospel in Africa: Expecting Miracles,” *Christian Century* 124 (2007), pp. 20-24.

⁶ See, for example, Bukola Ajide, *The Unknown Secrets of Prosperity* (Lagos, Nigeria: Victory Sanctuary, 2007).

⁷ For a comprehensive review, see Daniel Bediako, ed., *Prosperity Gospel: A Biblical-Theological Evaluation* (Accra, Ghana: Advent Press, 2020).

Daniel Bediako, Ph.D., serves as president/vice chancellor of Valley View University, Ghana.

“KEEP WALKING”

I cannot fathom how the invitation came about, but the outcome was quite profound: “Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away” (Gen. 5:24). There is room to wonder about *everything* in this brief but detailed story, for biblical cross references to learn of Enoch are few. What we do have is very precious: he reflected God’s love and character in his daily life: “For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God” (Heb. 11:5).

Enoch walked with God. I am intrigued by the movement in the passage: “then he was no more.” Someone noticed Enoch was gone. Maybe a friend set out to find him? Enoch’s presence was missed. Yet the only logical explication for his absence was that Enoch was transferred to heaven. What an amazing exposition of Enoch’s character!

How did Enoch receive the “great invitation”? It’s not difficult to imagine the relationship he had with God, because it is a relationship we Christians long for: to walk with God.

Every time I spend a day visiting patients in the rehabilitation center, I am reminded that God has understanding beyond our capacity of comprehension. Still, that knowledge does not prevent any of us from asking big “why” questions. Patients at the center learn how to live with mobility restrictions. It is a difficult process for heart and body. There is a profound wisdom in one specific emotion common among rehabilitation patients: patience. People move past the jagged edges of a difficult situation and land in the middle, the eye of patience. The price to pay for acquiring patience is

often frustration. Our independence as a human now requires dependence on someone else. It takes time. I think on this while sitting at the uneven bench of wonderment, listening to profound questions by an 8-year-old, Anthony, waiting for his first visit with the physical therapist.

“Why do people call it ‘walking with God’?” He glances at his father, a few feet away from us. “Pastor Sid visited and prayed I would get better and ‘walk with God.’ But I think he’s confused. Because if God showed up, I would run with Him, not walk. He’d give me a brand-new leg and we would run!” Anthony makes a sound of what it would be like to run fast, moving his arms for emphasis. I smile. *You are already aware of the necessity (and joy) of walking with God.*

In the therapy room I sit with Anthony’s father as he watches a new reality unfold for his son. Anthony will grow through many prosthetics and must remain active. The father wipes away tears, and I realize he is reliving the car accident that brought Anthony here.

“We are trying to keep the faith; my wife and I are really trying.” God creates an opportunity for us to talk and walk, moving through struggles of human patience and trust. Reminding one another that we need to keep walking with God, regardless of the terrain.

Enoch’s life pleased God, and they walked together. A similar prayer is ours: A closer walk with God, with one another; and for Anthony, maybe a little running. 🍂

Dixil Rodríguez, a hospital chaplain, lives in southern California.

SEARCHING
THE OBVIOUS
DIXIL
RODRIGUEZ



**“IF GOD SHOWED UP,
I WOULD RUN WITH
HIM, NOT WALK.”**



THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S

What to do in a (financial) crisis

The current global financial crisis has sent shock waves throughout every sector of the economy. And as if this crisis were not enough to worry about, it seems that scam artists are flourishing everywhere as well. Business leaders, church leaders, and individual families are understandably concerned. What is the appropriate Christian response? The Bible has answers.

AN OLD, AND RELEVANT, STORY

An interesting and amazing story is recorded in the Old Testament, whose principles would apply well to our current economic crisis. Our crisis, like the one faced by the kingdom of Judah, has the very real potential to harm God's church on earth and our own individual lives.

Toward the close of Jehoshaphat's reign the kingdom of Judah was invaded by an army before whose approach the inhabitants of the land had reason to tremble. Jehoshaphat was a man of courage and valor. He had been strengthening his armies and his fortified cities for years. He was well prepared to meet almost any enemy. Yet in this crisis he did not put his confidence in his own strength but in the power of God. He set himself to seek the Lord and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

People gathered in the court of the temple, as Solomon had prayed that they would if they were faced by danger. They prayed that God's name might be glorified. Then the king prayed, "We have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you" (2 Chron. 20:12).

After committing themselves to God, the Spirit of the Lord came upon a man of God who said, "Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. . . . You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you" (verses 15-17).

Early the next morning the king assembled the people with the Levitical choir in front to sing the praises of God. Then he admonished: "Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful" (verse 20). Then the choir began to sing and their enemies "helped to destroy one another" (verse 23). It took the men of Judah three days just to collect the spoils of the battle. On the fourth day they returned to Jerusalem, singing as they went.

CURRENT APPLICATIONS

No one has ever trusted God in vain. He never disappoints those who depend on Him. We must prepare well. But then we must recognize our weakness and depend 100 percent on the power of God for our deliverance. It is tempting to trust in the power of the government, or in our retirement accounts, but in every crisis mentioned in the Bible (ours is a real crisis too), when people trusted in God He honored their trust and provided for them.

I'm not trying to minimize the severity of our problems. Just the opposite: our only and best hope is to trust God and be faithful to our covenant with Him. Ellen White observed: "He who gave His only-begotten Son to die for you has made a covenant with you. He gives you His blessings, and in return He requires you to bring Him your tithes and offerings."¹

She also wrote: "No one sees the hand that lifts the burden, or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God."² The same unseen power that brings about conversion is evident in God's providential leading in our everyday lives.

There is no guarantee of universal wealth this side of heaven, but the principles for Christian money management do not change. They are always the same. By analogy, a healthy diet can often help regardless of one's chronic disease. A healthful diet is a healthy diet. Eat a variety of unrefined fruits, grains, nuts, and vegetables in sufficient quantity to maintain your ideal weight, and you will be better off than changing diet for every health concern that comes along. This analogy works for financial management as well.

THE "RECIPE" FOR FINANCIAL SUCCESS

The seven following principles for sound financial management are as simple as a good diet. If we don't follow them, our financial security is at risk.

1. Put God first. The wise man's counsel is still valid. "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine" (Prov. 3:9, 10). Jesus said, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things [food, clothing, and shelter] will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33). Current economic conditions

No one has ever trusted God in vain. He never disappoints those who depend on Him.

bring to mind the words of an old song: “If we ever needed the Lord before, we sure do need Him now.” Now is the time to trust that God will sustain us and provide for our needs (see also Deut. 28:1-14).

2. *Spend less than you earn.* We decry the government’s debt of more than \$20 trillion, but consumers in North America are equally guilty of overspending. The outstanding credit card balances in the United States—the amount that is unpaid and carried over from month to month and charged a high rate of interest—is more than \$930 billion.

The principle here is to be content with what we have and learn to live within our income (see 1 Tim. 6:6-10). It is estimated that 43 percent of North American families spend more than they earn each year.

3. *Save something every pay period.* Those who have followed this principle and have at least six months of living expenses in cash savings in the bank are in much better shape than those who are in debt. A savings account provides protection when there is a job loss, car breakdown, health concern, or other occurrence that could hurt your financial security. A nice little nest egg can help weather an economic storm and makes good sense.

Ellen White offered this counsel: “You might today have had a capital of means to use in case of emergency and to aid the cause of God, if you had economized as you should. Every week a portion of your wages should be reserved and in no case touched unless suffering actual want, or to render back to the Giver in offerings to God.”³

4. *Do everything you can to keep your job.* The Bible says, “Do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings; they will not serve before officials of low rank” (Prov. 22:29). There is much said about work and integrity in the Bible. Ask God for wisdom to do your work efficiently, so that you will be able to continue to work in these hard times. If you should lose your job, be willing to work at whatever job is available that will not violate your conscience.

5. *Be conservative with your investments.* Remember, there is no more secure investment than investing in your own debt. Beyond paying off your debts

during times of uncertainty, the better part of wisdom suggests that investments be on the conservative side. When we have a surplus of means, it is a good time to “invest” in the cause of God. The needs of God’s work continue even in hard times.

Many of us have accumulated assets over our lifetimes, and it’s a good idea to liquidate the unneeded assets for three reasons: to pay off debts; to advance the cause of God; and so that not much of our “stuff” gets burned up at the end.⁴

6. *Ask God for wisdom to make good earning, saving, and spending decisions.* Again, God’s Word directs: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:5, 6; see also Phil. 4:19 and Isa. 26:3). As Creator and Owner of everything, God has the unique ability to guide us in life. We must trust Him explicitly in this area of our lives. Enjoy the blessings of God by living prudently and helping others who are less fortunate.

7. *Don’t lose sight of the goal.* Our real home is in heaven. Someday soon everything on this earth will be burned up. The Bible says, “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and . . . everything done in it will be laid bare” (2 Peter 3:10). This will not be a great disappointment to true Christians. Their treasures will be laid up securely in heaven.

CERTAINTY IN UNCERTAINTY

The financial stresses of our economy can be greatly reduced or eliminated by following these seven principles. They have been given to us by God in His love for our best good. In looking back on his life, David said, “I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread” (Ps. 37:25).

Surely each of us can likewise see the blessing and hand of God in our lives. 🍀

¹ Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1940), p. 75.

² Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 173.

³ Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1952), p. 396.

⁴ See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 1, pp. 196, 197.

G. Edward Reid is an ordained minister and licensed attorney who served for many years as director of Stewardship Ministries for the North American Division.



CHILDIMPACT INTERNATIONAL

Child Impact International is a fully supportive ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist church and a member of ASI.

Its outreach is to take children based on need and sponsor them in an Adventist Mission school.

Child Impact operates in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Zambia.

childimpact.org

Child Impact International

PO Box 763, Ooltewah, TN 37363

email: help@childimpact.org

phone: (423) 910-0667

childimpact.org

Because of the Covid-19 crisis needs are even greater!

Key outreach for Child Impact International includes:

Child sponsorship

You can sponsor a specific child or contribute to our **Un-sponsored Child fund**. Sponsors receive correspondence and a school report from their child.

Special Needs children

Child Impact fully funds an Orphanage, Blind School and Deaf School in India. These Special Needs children would have no hope without these special schools.

You can make a big **IMPACT** by supporting these schools.

Operation Child Rescue

In Bangalore, India, Child Impact, through its **Operation Child Rescue** program funds and manages a rescue operation and rescue home for trafficked girls rescued from the sex trade.

The problem is overwhelming but this program makes a difference in their lives.



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

Shawn Boonstra

Speaker/Director
Voice of Prophecy



UNITING THE CHURCH

Prayer and offerings—
a winning combination

COMPILED BY MERLE POIRIER

1895

JANUARY 1895

O. A. Olsen reported that the readings resulted in **many donations** in spite of challenges.³

1885

DECEMBER 6, 1885

Because of a lack of funds for overseas work, the General Conference Session **voted to raise \$60,000 (equivalent to \$1,728,454 in 2019) from members.** In addition, they recommended the week between Christmas and New Year's be set aside as a Week of Prayer complete with readings provided by the leadership.¹

DECEMBER 8, 1885

The *Review* reported European and Scandinavian mission treasuries were empty and in debt; the English and Australian missions needed funds; and the International Tract Society funds were exhausted.

**VOTED:
TO RAISE
\$1,728,454**
(2019 equivalent)

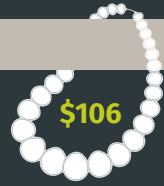
“It is evident to the minds of your Committee, after careful and candid consideration, that funds *must be raised*, or the work we have begun *must be abandoned*, an idea which no true believer in the third angel’s message can entertain for a moment.”²

1885 European Council

1888

FEBRUARY 1888

F. S. Porter visited churches in Vermont. He collected **\$105.84, besides jewelry**, as part of the Week of Prayer.²



\$106

1985

OCTOBER 1985

“Important world offerings always coincide with the annual Week of Prayer, thus combining the elements of prayer, devotion, and spiritual commitment. In the setting of the Week of Prayer, this offering has continued to be **inseparably associated with surrender, commitment, and the dedication of all we have** and are to our heavenly Father.”¹⁰



George W. Brown

1990

NOVEMBER 1990

New evangelistic thrust called **Global Mission begins.**



¹ *Review and Herald*, Dec. 8, 1885.
² *Review and Herald*, Feb. 14, 1888.
³ *Review and Herald*, Jan. 15, 1895.
⁴ *Review and Herald*, Dec. 3, 1903.
⁵ *Review and Herald*, Nov. 17, 1904.
⁶ *Review and Herald*, Nov. 2, 1922.
⁷ W. A. Spicer, in *Review and Herald*, Oct. 28, 1948.
⁸ J. L. McElhany, in *Review and Herald*, Nov. 4, 1943.
⁹ *Review and Herald*, Nov. 8, 1962.
¹⁰ George W. Brown, in *Adventist Review*, Oct. 31, 1985.
¹¹ *Adventist Review*, Nov. 1995.

1904

NOVEMBER 1904

The readings will now be included in the *Review*. General Conference president A. G. Daniells wrote:

First time
Week of Prayer
featured
on cover



“The week of prayer is intended to aid the church in reaching higher spiritual ground, and to stimulate her in missionary enterprises.”⁵

1903

DECEMBER 1903

Enthusiasm builds for the Week of Prayer. The *Review* requests all to write in to request their readings.⁴

1922

NOVEMBER 1922

Funds in 1922 are falling short. Autumn Council delegates voted that all church workers be invited to give an equivalent of one week’s income, and that church members share with them in the sacrifice.⁶ “No retreat’ was the watchword the world around.”⁷



1962

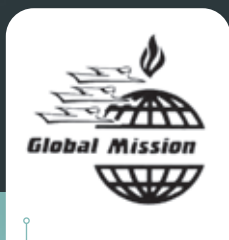
NOVEMBER 1962

The goal was set to raise \$500,000 during the Week of Sacrifice.⁹

1943

NOVEMBER 4, 1943

Twenty years later, the Week of Sacrifice and Week of Prayer are joined. “We believe that the consecration of our lives and the devotion of our means to the advancement of the cause of God in these perilous times will prove a double blessing to all who participate.”⁸



1995

NOVEMBER 1995

General Conference president Robert Folkenberg restores the Annual Sacrifice Offering so that 100 percent will go to frontline missions—Global Mission. Members are challenged to give the equivalent of a week’s wages, a day’s wages, or an hour’s wages.¹¹

1997-2000

NOVEMBER 1997

The Week of Sacrifice Offering is called the “Week of Sacrifice for Global Mission.”

NOVEMBER 2000

The Week of Sacrifice Offering is called the Global Mission Offering.

NOVEMBER 14, 2020

The World Budget Offering (Emphasis: Annual Sacrifice for Global Mission) will be taken. Are you willing to make the sacrifice?

Thank God for Reset Buttons

*Why giving thanks is
always appropriate*

STEPHEN APOLA

Ken (not his real name) and I sat in my living room on a recent Sabbath afternoon reflecting on happenings around the world.

A THANKSGIVING YEAR?

Ken took a deep and heavy sigh and breathed out, “2020 has been the worst year of my life!” His painful observation probably rings true for millions of others.

This has been one of the toughest years this century. A pandemic that has now become a cliché about suffering individuals and communities, resulting in hundreds of thousands of lost loved ones; fear and uncertainty for one’s own health and life; loss of sources of income and livelihood; social isolation and loneliness; increased tension in homes, resulting in higher domestic violence and divorce.

Apart from the pandemic, we’ve witnessed unprecedented social unrest because of social injustices suffered by minorities and the disenfranchised, increased racial and social tensions even in democracies as stable as the United States. So much uncertainty about tomorrow. Gloom and doom! The list is long, and none have been spared! These are unprecedented times.

Is Thanksgiving worth celebrating this year? What kinds of conversation will surround Thanksgiving tables? Or maybe we should just cancel Thanksgiving altogether. . . . While you don’t need another cliché, looking at the glass half full, rather than half empty, running the risk of seeming to ignore the tremendous hurt and pain of those that have lost loved ones, a job, or even their home, I still dare to say God is in control. There is a silver lining to all this as, across the globe, we watch and read individual and corporate reactions to the impact of the novel coronavirus.

HITTING THE RESET BUTTON

On a hot summer afternoon the dehumidifier labored away, waging a losing battle against the heavy humid air made worse by the cooking in three pots on the stove. The floor fan blew furiously. Someone turned on the microwave fan, and everything in the kitchen went quiet. In our effort to cool down the house and cook at the same time, we had overloaded the electric line, tripping the main breaker switch. We stood there for a few seconds, wondering what had gone wrong. Then I remembered that when electric lines are overloaded, the



built-in safety system automatically switches off the line. The solution was an easy fix. Reset! Turn back on the switch for this specific line.

The year 2020 is the year of the reset switch. It's the year when all things in our personal lives and in society have been brought to a standstill. Stopped! Yes, it's the time when everything has ground to a halt. All the sensory overload has been brought to a halt. All the crazy demands of life that have sapped our mental, social, physical, emotional, and spiritual energies intensely and unceasingly have been reset.

The global standstill has forced us to see and consider that which we normally wouldn't. We have been forced to stop and face our demons, biases, habits built over time, decisions delayed, or the very habit of procrastination itself. The too-busy-to-deal-with-it option has been taken away. We cannot escape to our comfort zones anymore without having to deal with the evidences before us of the trajectory that our personal and corporate lives have taken over time. We're been forced to stop and, in the silence, consider whether we'll continue in the same direction or chart a new course for our lives. Once the reset switch is hit and the silence is gone, what new path will we create?

SPIRITUAL RESET

The global pandemic has created a "come to Jesus" moment for hundreds of thousands. This has been a moment for personal and corporate awakening. Internet searches about biblical prophecy and the second coming of Jesus are at an all-time high. There's an awakening, a thirsting, a questioning about the meaning of life, and the significance of this once in a lifetime event. We have been forced to face the reality of our mortality and the shortness of life, the inevitability and unpredictability of not just our own death but that of our loved ones as well.

Although fear has been real, yet a certain confidence and grounding happens when we settle our hearts in the blessed hope of promised resurrection, and the return of our Savior. His promises become real: "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

Church as we know it has been redefined. The center of worship has shifted from church buildings into homes. I remember how fearful some were about "losing" members since the worship centers were the heart of worship. Families have had to become intentional and creative about their

The global pandemic has created a “come to Jesus” moment for hundreds of thousands.

worship experience. What could have become a mundane, once-a-week routine is evolving into a dynamic, personal, and intentional experience for individuals and families. Satellite worship centers are becoming a thing.

SOCIAL RESET

“I’ve come to the conclusion that the ‘eight to five’ craze is not really necessary for life to go on,” a colleague recently confessed to me. We suddenly have more time on our hands than we’ve had or were used to. No more rushing out early in the mornings before the sun is up to beat the traffic. No more two to four hours stuck in traffic, no horns blaring out of frustration or road rage.

Organizations are not just discovering, but have had to face the reality that proximity doesn’t always equate to productivity. A lot of time and resources can be channeled to other worthier ventures, making more savings from remote working. Work as we know it is being redefined.

The sudden stop has brought into our social lives a silence that was so long marred by the daily buzz. Opportunities have been created to reconnect and rebuild estranged relationships. Couples, families, and friends have time to actually think about each other. Ironically and sadly, domestic violence and divorce have exponentially increased, many possibly discovering that they’ve become strangers. Thankfully, some have seized the opportunity to reset relationships. The Lord promised He would “turn the hearts of the parents to their children” (Mal. 4:6). I cannot think of a season I’ve spent as much quality time with my wife and children. A time to bond and rebuild relationships, to create and re-create memories. A time to work on rebuilding lost family traditions such as eating together, worshipping together, and having fun together.

There is an intentionality about reconnecting with friends. The usual rush through social media posts has morphed and grown into actual phone and video conferencing. Families and friends have

created social online groups to regularly meet, converse, and pray together; distance and time zones no longer hinder. Reset: there is a revival of relationships.

In the silence of the global lockdown billions got a front seat view of what a modern lynching looks like in the brutal snuffing out of George Floyd’s life. The whole world exploded into demonstrations that continued for weeks and months.

Wherever individual sympathies may lie, there is an increased social consciousness about injustices taking place around us. We are forced to acknowledge, face, and deal with our own quiet or unconscious biases. The world, church included, is faced with the choice to reset to a new normal: “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you?” (Micah 6:8). What once seemed like far-fetched ideology has become core to our church’s existence as an entity: by our unity the world will know (see John 17:21).

ENVIRONMENTAL RESET

In early April, as countries shut down, global carbon emissions declined 17 percent compared to 2019.* Reports of clearer skies and cleaner air in Asian countries spoke to the possibility of living in a cleaner environment. For a moment the earth had a breather. Deserted cities without traffic and noise pollution allowed for animals to roam about more freely. Bird sounds previously drowned by the din of traffic could be heard. Some zoos even reported animals mating that previously wouldn’t. The apostle Paul’s words ring true, that even creation “groans” for redemption (Rom. 8:19-23).

SUMMING UP

Thanksgiving 2020 may be unique. The opportunity to sit together with loved ones at the table, enjoying the smell and taste of wonderfully prepared food, the gift of health and life, and the privilege of social connectivity are but a few of the myriad blessings we’ve taken for granted for too long. I’m starting my Thanksgiving 2020 by thanking God for the reset buttons in my life. Want to join me at my table? 🍴

*www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/06/why-covid-19-will-end-up-harming-the-environment/#close

Stephen Apola is associate director of the Publishing Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

CATFISH

Before COVID-19, many churches were experiencing spiritual erosion, declining membership and attendance. The erosion/decline was subtle, hardly noticeable.

When early believers in Jerusalem failed to follow the Lord's commission (Matt. 28:19), He allowed persecution to create a sense of urgency. This ignited the next phase of the Great Commission as they fled Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria to the remotest parts of the earth, where they preached the powerful promises of God found in the gospel.

Likewise, as dullness to Christ's commission deepened in our generation, God used an unusual, urgent, loud cry to shake His church from its slumber. COVID-19 roared into our lives, preventing normal face-to-face fellowship. While we are focused on losses, the devil has increased his pernicious practices to thwart God's call to His church in the crucible of crisis.

Satan is using a new weapon to capture sleeping Christians called catfish. The term actually refers to persons who are intentionally deceptive in their social media profiles. This deception can be elaborate and may involve the use of fake photos, biographies, and sometimes fictitious supporting networks, such as fake families. A catfish, therefore, is a person who creates a fake identity and uses it to lure people into a relationship, usually romantic, but increasingly to defraud or deceive gullible victims.

Pedophiles, for example, catfish teens by pretending to be teenagers. They encourage their targets to share intimate information that is later used to lure them into face-to-face meetings that sometimes result in assault, abduction,

or death. Getting "catfished" means that a person has been tricked into a relationship or activity by those who are not who they say they are. Because of the proliferation of social media, it's now easy to connect, communicate, and build relationships with people one never sees.

Satan, the biggest catfish, uses this method to spiritually and emotionally drain the church, turning some believers into catfished Christians who will believe any lie or sensational post just because it appeared online.

Toying with a catfish is deceptively dangerous. Jesus said: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves" (Matt. 7:15). False faces can conceal malice, greed, pain, and deceit. We are all vulnerable to clever catfish who pose as representatives of reputable companies, Christian ministries, or "friends."

The devastation caused by the foolish belief that one can find romance or get rich quickly by purchasing a ticket, calling a number, clicking on an Internet profile, or sending a check to an invisible partner is indescribable.

The apostle Paul, knowing our human weakness, penned these powerful words: "I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such persons are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people" (Rom. 16:17, 18).

Let's stay away from catfish on the Internet, and wolves who come in sheep's clothing with smooth talk and empty promises to seduce us into loss—especially our treasured eternal life. 🦋

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

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



**SOME CHRISTIANS
WILL BELIEVE
ANY LIE OR
SENSATIONAL POST
JUST BECAUSE IT
APPEARED ONLINE.**



HARRY ANDERSON © REVIEW & HERALD

STEADY ON

How the Review encouraged the Adventist Church

This is not the world's first experience with economic uncertainty. The Great Depression, a 10-year period beginning with the stock market crash on October 24, 1929, was a significant event in history.

What did the pages of the *Review* contain during that time? To find out, I scanned pages of the old black volumes that fill the shelves of our office. I also visited adventistarchives.org to peruse the digital archives. I restricted my research to 1929 through 1939.

The pages reflected the editorial leadership of F. M. Wilcox. Articles on Fundamental Beliefs, end-time events, and Christ's second coming were prominent. I found a home section, missions, and Current Events, a regular feature by associate editor F. D. Nichol. He commented on topics from secular news, adding spiritual and prophetic emphasis.

Certainly the financial news affecting the world and the church would be there. It wasn't.

So how did the *Review* address the economic fragility encompassing the world?

It didn't. At least not for some time. But in the November 27, 1930, edition, we read this:

"An unusual Autumn Council has just closed. . . . Business depression, with its consequent toll of unemployment, has not for many years been so marked and so gripping as in the present hour. . . . As in the individual life, so in the work of God's church, these very conditions are part of the 'all things' that 'work together for good.' As with trials and privations in the individual life, so it is with the church. They come to minister to us, to draw us back as a body of believers to the fundamental recognition that God still lives in His heaven, that the purposes and destinies of His church are secure in His hands, and that nothing can stay the power of our God in its operation upon human hearts and lives and in the extension of the interests of His kingdom upon the earth." ¹

In the same issue General Conference vice president W. H. Branson wrote:

"It was most inspiring to see the leaders from the great North American base of mission supplies struggling with the problem of balancing the budgets for our far-flung mission fields in this time of depression. . . . Several days were spent by the large Budget Committee, made up entirely of representatives of fields not receiving appropriations, in wrestling with this problem. The appeals for help

from the great mission fields were heart-rending. . . . After every possible source of supply was drawn upon, union and local conferences came forward and pledged to turn thousands of dollars of surplus funds into the mission treasury in an effort to make up the shortage.

"Finally their report was made up and rendered, and it was found that in spite of the present serious depression, and with the resultant shortage of tithes and mission funds, they had been able to grant the fields for 1931 94 percent of the amount they are receiving this year. . . . To us it seems nothing short of a miracle of grace, that in such a time of depression as this the Advent people can thus keep up a constant and nearly uniform flow of means to the great mission lands of earth."²

It became obvious that the *Review's* emphasis was not on what individuals should do to survive, but on how members should work together to stay mission-focused. By November 24, 1932, a vote was taken at Autumn Council:

"WHEREAS, The past year, in spite of unprecedented financial depression, has been the most fruitful in the winning of souls in the history of our work, resulting in a total of 34,859 baptisms in the world field and bringing our membership to the number of 342,435; and,

"WHEREAS, The protecting hand of God has been over our institutions, both at home and abroad; and,

"WHEREAS, The work in the mission fields has advanced in spite of heavy cuts in the budgets, and our missionaries are staying courageously by the work;

"Resolved, That we express our sincere gratitude to God for His manifold blessings which have brought success to the work in such a time as this."³

Financial challenges continued. By 1933 W. H. Williams, General Conference undertreasurer, wrote:

"The financial situation which we face throughout the world has brought us to a full stop so far as adding institution to institution and making large expenditures for equipment are concerned; but we have not stopped our evangelistic advance, and never has God worked so mightily for His people in foreign lands, and thousands are being born into this truth.

"It may be this thing which we call depression is God's way of readjusting the purpose and spirit of His people to new levels of devotion and sacrificial service. God is shaping events in the mission

fields. The developments which are taking place can be explained on no other grounds than that God has set His hand to the finishing of the work.

"Our great concern at this time is to *hold our mission lines and let God work*. This should be our watchword, and become a household phrase in every Seventh-day Adventist home."⁴

Faith and inspiration continued, as F. D. Nichol wrote in the July 5, 1934, issue:

"For Adventists to become discouraged over the demoralized condition of the world—the chaos of international relations, the difficulty in maintaining budgets in view of the depression—is really to deny our faith. Our belief calls for us to gather courage from catastrophe and richness of faith from the bankruptcy of the world."⁵

U.S. president Franklin Roosevelt's Second New Deal began in 1935, but the church had not wavered from its task. "We can rejoice in God," said M. E. Kern (GC secretary), "that neither the Great War, which engulfed the whole world twenty years ago, nor the great depression, which followed after, has stopped the onward march of the Advent message in its saving mission for a lost world."⁶

Finally, in 1937 a report from Africa: "During recent years the world has experienced the perplexities and problems resulting from the great financial depression. Our own work has been severely tested, but today we are, as it were, on the other side of the Red Sea, and we can sing with Miriam and the Lord's host the song of praise and thanksgiving as we see what God has wrought."⁷ World War II began in 1939, eventually ending the Great Depression.

The pages of the *Adventist Review* are not the place to find lament. "Steady on" was the cry of leaders and lay members alike as they leaned into God for their needs. May we today find similar encouragement that no matter what happens, the same God who led the church then still leads us today. ■

¹ Cecil K. Meyers, secretary, General Conference, in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Nov. 27, 1930.

² W. H. Branson, vice president, General Conference, in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Nov. 27, 1930.

³ *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Nov. 24, 1932.

⁴ W. H. Williams, undertreasurer, General Conference, in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 22, 1933.

⁵ F. D. Nichol, associate editor, in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 5, 1934.

⁶ M. E. Kern, secretary, General Conference, in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 31, 1936.

⁷ Milton P. Robison, secretary, Southern African Division, in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Dec. 30, 1937.

Merle Poirier is operations manager for Adventist Review Ministries.



© PRIXEL CREATIVE/LIGHTSTOCK

TIME FOR ECONOMY

*Demonstrating our faith
by restricting our wants*

Wherever there is life in a church, there is increase and growth. There is also a constant interchange, taking and giving out, receiving and returning to the Lord His own. To every true believer God imparts light and blessing, and this the believer imparts to others in the work that he does for the Lord.

As he gives of that which he receives, his capacity for receiving is increased. Room is made for fresh supplies of grace and truth. Clearer light, increased knowledge, are his. On this giving

and receiving depend the life and growth of the church.

He who receives, but never gives, soon ceases to receive. If the truth does not flow from him to others, he loses his capacity to receive. We must impart the goods of heaven, if we would receive fresh blessing.

The Lord does not propose to come to this world, and lay down gold and silver for the advancement of His work. He supplies men with resources, that by their gifts and offerings they may keep His work advancing. The one purpose above all

others for which God's gifts should be used is the sustaining of workers in the harvest field. And if men will become channels through which heaven's blessing can flow to others, the Lord will keep the channel supplied. It is not returning to the Lord His own that makes men poor; withholding tends to poverty. . . .

ECONOMY AND SACRIFICE

God calls upon His people to awake to their responsibilities. A flood of light is shining from His Word, and there must be a meeting of neglected obligations. When these are met, by giving to the Lord His own in tithes and offerings, the way will be opened for the world to hear the message that the Lord designs it to hear.

If our people had the love of God in the heart, if every church member were imbued with the spirit of self-sacrifice, there would be no lack of funds for home and foreign missions; our resources would be multiplied; a thousand doors of usefulness would be opened; and we should be invited to enter. Had the purpose of God been carried out in giving the message of mercy to the world, Christ would have come, and the saints would have received their welcome into the city of God.

If ever there was a time when sacrifices should be made, it is now. My brethren and sisters, practice economy in your homes. Put away the idols that you have placed before God. Give up your selfish pleasures. Do not, I beg of you, spend means in embellishing your houses; for your money belongs to God, and to Him you must give an account for its use. Do not use the Lord's money to gratify the fancies of your children. Teach them that God has a claim on all they possess, and that nothing can ever cancel this claim.

Money is a needed treasure. Do not lavish it upon those who need it not. Someone needs your willing gifts. There are those in the world who are hungry, starving. You may say, I cannot feed them all. But by practicing Christ's lessons of economy, you can feed one. "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." These words were spoken by Him whose power wrought a miracle to supply the needs of a hungry multitude.

If you have extravagant habits, cut them away from your life at once. Unless you do this, you will be bankrupt for eternity. Habits of economy, indus-

**If ever there was a time
when sacrifices should be
made, it is now.**

try, and sobriety are a better portion for your children than a rich dowry.

We are pilgrims and strangers on the earth. Let us not spend our means in gratifying desires that God would have us repress. Let us fitly represent our faith by restricting our wants. Let our church members arise as one man, and work earnestly, as those who are walking in the full light of truth for these last days. . . .

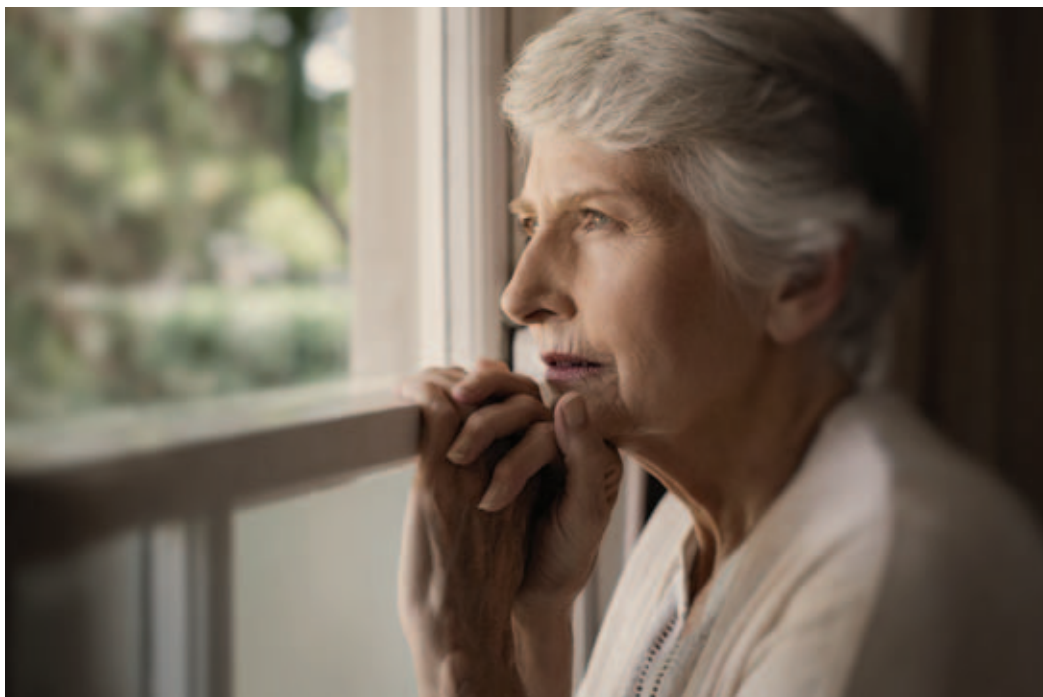
Of what value is untold wealth if it is hoarded in expensive mansions, or in bank stock? What do these weigh in the scale in comparison with the salvation of the souls for whom Christ, the Son of the infinite God, has died?

A PRIVILEGE AND A RESPONSIBILITY

The most solemn truths ever entrusted to mortals have been given to us to proclaim to the world. The proclamation of these truths is our work. The world is to be warned, and God's people are to be true to the trust committed to them. They are not to engage in speculations, neither are they to enter into business enterprises with unbelievers; for this would hinder them in doing the work given them.

Christ says of His people, "Ye are the light of the world." It is not a small matter that the counsels and purposes and plans of God have been so clearly opened to us. It is a wonderful privilege to be able to understand the will of God as revealed in the sure word of prophecy. This places on us a heavy responsibility. God expects us to impart to others the knowledge He has given us. It is His purpose that divine and human instrumentalities shall unite in the proclamation of the warning message. ♣

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This excerpt was taken from the book *Counsels on Stewardship* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1940), pp. 36-38.



THE TIME OF ~~TROUBLE~~ PROMISE

What the promise really is

Ah, retirement! On February 1, 2020, I officially joined that elite club of retirees. I had all kinds of plans and projects, and places to go, people to see, and things to do. Within a month COVID-19 had totally upended all my plans.

READY FOR TROUBLE

I'm guessing that I'm not the only one who decided to use this time in isolation to read more, or to reread *The Great Controversy*. This time I would just read the last half of the book—the part about our time. But then I came to the chapter called “The Time of Trouble.” I have to admit, I was tempted to skip it.

I don't like trouble. And through the years I have often

cringed as a well-meaning pastor or Sabbath School teacher began to wax eloquent on the horrors we could expect, and how we should be getting ready now or we would never survive then. I didn't want to read about trouble. There was already enough trouble around. I wanted to focus on something promising, beautiful, full of hope—not the time of trouble.

But I have a problem, perhaps an obsession: an obsession with filling in all the blanks. At the grocery store parking lot my wife likes to park with space on both sides. Me, I want to park right beside the next vehicle—filling blanks; no empty lots between cars. When we pick blueberries, I want to finish

picking all the berries on this bush—even the little nubbins—before moving to the next bush, loaded with big, beautiful berries.

READING ABOUT TROUBLE

So you guessed it: I read “The Time of Trouble”—the whole chapter. This time as I read I noticed something I had never noticed before: that chapter is filled with Bible promises. So I read it again and made a list. There are 20 of them by my count. I wrote them out on cards and started memorizing them. After all, if we are in, or expecting, the time of trouble soon, maybe it would help to know those promises.

They are not verses I have spent much time with in the past. As I read and reread them, as I worked on memorizing them, I was amazed at what I was learning. By way of example: “We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it” (Jer. 30:5-7, NKJV).¹

I have read those verses many times, and heard them preached and discussed often enough. The focus has always been on how terrible the trouble will be, with the afterthought added: “Oh, and by the way, God’s people will eventually be saved.”

But now the words seemed to jump out and shout at me: *No, you are reading it wrong. The focus is not on the trouble; it’s on God saving His people from trouble!* Wow! What a thought!

If I could read the verse out loud to you, I think I could convey that feeling with these same words. But I can’t. So here is my paraphrase. Maybe it will better say how I feel and see the passage now: “God says, ‘So what is going on? Why are we hearing voices filled with trembling and fear instead of peace? Everyone knows that men don’t have labor pains. So why is everyone going around groaning and moaning with their faces in distress as though they are in labor?’”

“Oh, it’s a terrible time of trouble, you say? Well, yes, it *is* bad. And yes, it *is* like the time of trouble Jacob had. But why should that matter? I have promised to save them. Why are they still afraid?”

My additional searching has not showed me a single verse or quote about the time of trouble

Paul was not holding his loins as though he was in labor. He was at peace.

that doesn’t include a promise of deliverance. Deliverance is always the focus, not trouble. Yet the sermons and discussions often mention only deliverance in passing, if at all.

PAUL’S SHIPWRECK TROUBLE

I heard someone share recently about Paul’s shipwreck reported in Acts 27:13-44. The storm was terrible. Everyone was sure they would die. Then an angel told Paul they would all survive, though they would be shipwrecked. It lifted their spirits, but not the weather.

The storm continued to pound them for days. To all appearances, Paul was wrong. He had misheard the angel. God had forgotten. Whatever Paul thought wasn’t happening. Then on day 14 Paul speaks again: “‘You have been so worried that you haven’t touched food for two weeks,’ he said. ‘Please eat something now for your own good. For not a hair of your heads will perish’” (Acts 27:33, 34, NLT).²

Notice, Paul was not holding his loins as if he were in labor. He was at peace. No one else was; but he was. Why? Because God had promised deliverance, and he believed God.

OUR TROUBLE

That’s what God wants for each of us in these last days of earth’s history. He won’t abandon us if we are afraid. We can cry out to Him, as David or Peter did when in distress. He will be there and rescue us. But He longs to see us as Paul was, having a voice of peace, not of trembling and fear. After all, He has promised deliverance. 🍀

¹ Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Homer Trecartin recently retired from working with Global Mission and the Office of Adventist Mission, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

FOR THEIR SON ACROSS THE WORLD

*A family's story of
adoption in a pandemic*

WILONA KARIMABADI

YouTube, for all its criticism, is an educational powerhouse. I have learned to prepare all kinds of recipes, researched topics I've been interested in, learned proper form for new exercises, and have been brought to tears by wedding, reunion, and adoption videos. And it was through that last genre that I stumbled upon Korean Family Adventures.

The page, run by David Kim and his wife, Esther, chronicles their journey of adopting their youngest child, Levi, from Korea. The family is based in the Atlanta, Georgia, area. The parents have been married for seven years. Their two older children are biological. Seth is 5. Ezra and Levi are turning 3 and 2, respectively, this month. David is a family practice physician, and Esther is an acupuncturist currently focusing on being a stay-at-home mom.

In the adoption community, "Gotcha Days" are as significant as birthdays. These are the days that adoptive parents take official custody of their children, and Levi's Gotcha Day video was a definite tearjerker. The Kims, who immigrated to the United States from Korea as children, were drawn to international adoption from Korea for obvious reasons—language and cultural barriers would

not exist, making Levi's adaptation to his new family a little bit easier.

If you've ever watched a Gotcha Day video, it tugs at your heartstrings to witness an international adoption in which children leave all that is familiar to them to go with a new family they can't communicate with. But the tears really come when you witness how quickly love transforms everything.

TAKING THE PLUNGE

With two biological children, what led the Kims to adoption at all? "I was open to it because the Bible often talks about how, as followers of Jesus, we need to be helping widows and orphans," says David. "That phrase comes up often throughout the Scriptures. That was always in the back of my mind, and so when attending Christian conferences

that would feature adoption stories, I thought, *You know, if an opportunity ever arises, I'm open to it*"

Esther felt the call to adoption from childhood. An elderly neighbor, who was Adventist, became separated from her husband and children in South Korea when the Demilitarized Zone split Korea in two in 1953. The woman then made it her life's mission to care for orphans, and Esther deeply internalized her influence. In college, a student missionary opportunity in South Korea cemented her desire to one day become an adoptive mother. So when David and Esther got serious in their dating relationship and the topic of potential adoption came up, both were on the same page.

They began the process—which can sometimes take years, especially if international—when Seth was a toddler. With all the paperwork filed and hope filling their hearts, they went through both a setback and blessing. Esther became pregnant with Ezra, and the couple was unaware that the adoption process would come to a screeching halt in that situation. Advised to start again only when Ezra was at least a year old, the Kims found themselves back at the starting line, but with a sweet new baby to love and care for. They applied again when Ezra was one month old, and a year and half later they were matched to Levi.

Levi was given up when he was a few days old. In Korea these babies are cared for in the nurseries of the three main international adoption agencies. Once matched, Levi was placed in the care



of a foster family who loved him dearly. In the international adoption community, Korean adoptions are considered the gold standard. Complete social, mental, and physical health records are meticulously kept, along with a thorough documentation of every facet of the baby's growth. All these records are provided to adoptive parents, giving them a more complete picture of their child. This alone can make the process of acclimating to a new member of the family easier than most.

But adoption, for all its beauty, is still very challenging. For the Kims, a worldwide pandemic was thrown into the mix. To adopt from Korea, parents have to make two trips. The first is to meet the child and establish some familiarity in a short amount of time; and to file requisite paperwork

in court. Levi warmed up to David and Esther cautiously but quickly on that first trip. One month later the Kims headed back to pick up their little boy and bring him home. "On that first trip the pandemic was just starting. It was peaking in China and had just started to come into Korea," says David. "But one month later, when we were about to fly out, it was full-blown. So we were very apprehensive." Esther's parents had arrived to watch Seth and Ezra while their parents were gone. And according to Esther, they advised them to put the adoption on hold.

But the Kims would not leave a member of their family in another country without them. To them, Levi was just as much their child as Seth and Ezra. So postponing was out of the question. With news



of the virus and country and flight bans changing daily, they decided to get in and out of Korea within 48 hours.

THE KIMS GROW BY ONE

There is no adequate way to describe the scene when Levi left his foster mother to go with David and Esther. Honestly, you just need to watch their YouTube channel to see. After many tears, the tiny boy, who quickly bonded with David first, was with his forever family now. On the long flight back to Atlanta, Levi slept most of the way (a blessing all traveling parents of small children hope for).

Once home, Seth and Ezra were happy to meet their new baby brother, who toddled around surveying his new home, new toys to play with, and two new big brothers to run after. Life as a family of five had begun.

The Kims were prepared for many of the behavioral challenges that would arise during Levi's transition to his new life with them. But there was something that took them by surprise. "The grieving process," says Esther. "Those first several weeks he must have been waking up 50 times, crying." Grieving is a process that comes in stages—even for little ones—and it was no different with Levi. "One of the grieving stages is anger," says Esther. "So, before, it would be a bawling cry, heart-wrenching. But now it's just angry screaming. Then he'll wake up, but two minutes later fall back asleep." As any parent knows, a sleepless night with a crying child affects the whole family—especially as the Kim boys sleep Korean-style, with a mattress on the floor for all three of them.

Another challenge was Levi's grief manifesting itself in the form of overeating. "So, like, 50 times a day he'd keep asking for food. I think it was emotional eating, but I thought, *Physiologically, there is no way he could put that much food in that little body*, but he did it." With two other growing boys, having the kitchen open 24 hours of the day was a bit much for Esther. The solution came just recently: three meals a day with no snacks. The boys eat their fill and go on with their day—including Levi, who is adapting.

It wasn't too long after arriving home from Korea that the pandemic started moving quickly throughout the United States. As cases began to climb in the Atlanta area, David quickly went on the front line, administering COVID-19 tests to patients of his practice. Because of his close proximity to the

"We had absolutely no idea our YouTube video would get so many viewers," says Esther. We thought several hundred at most, but 250,000 views?

virus, the family made the decision for Esther and the boys to move to her parents' farm in Tennessee to limit the risk of exposure. That was a difficult separation for everyone; it added to Levi's grieving process because of his special bond with David.

HOW LOVE STEPS IN

One thing Levi took to immediately was the family's morning and evening worship times. When David plays guitar, the boys love to sing along to songs from Sabbath School. "He loves music. From the very first worship time, we saw him just get up and immediately start dancing," says David of Levi. The family also eats a plant-based diet, and though Levi was not vegetarian in Korea, he transitioned seamlessly to the way the Kims do meals—with plenty of fruits and vegetables and typical Korean dishes.

The decision to adopt is a special calling. "So you have to understand the negatives and the behavioral issues that come along with adoption and be willing to patiently work through those with God," says David.

"That's one of the reasons we started our YouTube channel, because people don't hear about that," adds Esther. "It is very important for us to be transparent about our challenges so that people have real expectations that this is not a fairy tale like, 'Oh, you're a good Christian couple bringing a kid and living happily ever after.' It's not like that, you know. There's so much that goes into it."

Like any mother who spends 14-hour days chasing small children around unassisted, Esther sometimes reaches her limit. Her reliance on the Lord provides her strength. "The verse about being adopted by God—I pray about that verse a lot,"

says Esther. "I say, 'God, You adopted us as sinners. We were not very pleasing to your sight. So give me Your eyes. Give me Your hands. You know what I'm going through.' Some days it feels like it's getting better; then the next day we're going downhill again. It's very challenging."

"But overall we have seen improvements in Levi's behavior," adds David.

Seth is a kindergartner doing school online, like so many kids right now. Ezra and Levi, who honestly could be mistaken for twins since they are so close in age, have a typical brotherly relationship—they can't live with each other sometimes, but they need each other most of the time. When one is not in view, the other is always asking for him. Levi has also quickly learned the faith of his family. Esther sets three alarms on her phone daily, and when they go off, she and the boys stop what they are doing to pray for each other and for Daddy David at work. It's something Levi readily participates in.

The journey of adoption—with all its highs and lows—resonates with many people around the world. But many videos only show the carefully curated moments of joy. The Kims wanted to doc-

ument all of it to give an honest view of the process. And it has struck a chord with adoptive families, as well as those nowhere near that life situation.

"We had absolutely no idea our YouTube video would get so many viewers," says Esther. "We thought several hundred at most, but 250,000 views? We were also very surprised at how people reached out to us asking about our Friday [welcoming the Sabbath] ritual and people asking about Sabbath and our faith. We would like to continue using this platform as long as God allows us to share about our faith. Our YouTube analytics show us a surprising age range and countries [from where people] watch us such as Saudi Arabia and a lot of European countries. We want to share the importance of our faith in our family values to show how God needs to be the center, especially for our young viewers as they think about their own futures."*

* If you are a Korean-American Adventist or just an Adventist family interested in Korean adoption, please reach out to the Kims via private message on Instagram @Korean_Family_Adventures. To watch their stories, go to YouTube and search the same name.

Wilona Karimabadi is an assistant editor of *Adventist Review*.



WEIMAR
INSTITUTE
ACCREDITED

A CENTER OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH,
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
& HEALING

HEALTH
Nursing
Education
Religion/Theology
Natural Science
Business
Interdisciplinary Studies
M.A. Counseling Psychology & Wellness

FREE \$50
APPLICATION FEE WAIVER

(530) 422-7923
ADMISSIONS@WEIMAR.EDU
WWW.WEIMAR.EDU

Accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC),
965 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100, Alameda, CA 94501, 510.748.0861.

NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY AS TO STUDENTS
Weimar admits the students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. Weimar does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.



HIS Students, Laqueta & Isis dressed in their regalia for the annual HIS Heritage Fest.

Our Students' Greatest Need? YOU!

Holbrook Indian School is a first- through 12th-grade Seventh-day Adventist boarding school that serves Native American children and youth. Since 1946, our goal has been for our students to be prepared to go into the world knowing that their Creator loves them.

Many students come to us trapped in a generational cycle of poverty and abuse. Holbrook Indian School provides a safe, nurturing environment for Native American students to learn and grow in.

Many students call Holbrook home.

Our students need you. They need your prayers. They need your help. They need your financial support.

More than 80 percent of our funding comes from people like you who have a heart for Native American children. Without them, Holbrook Indian School would not exist.

When you make a gift to operations, you keep the school going. Operational funding allows the students to be here, which makes a major impact in their lives.



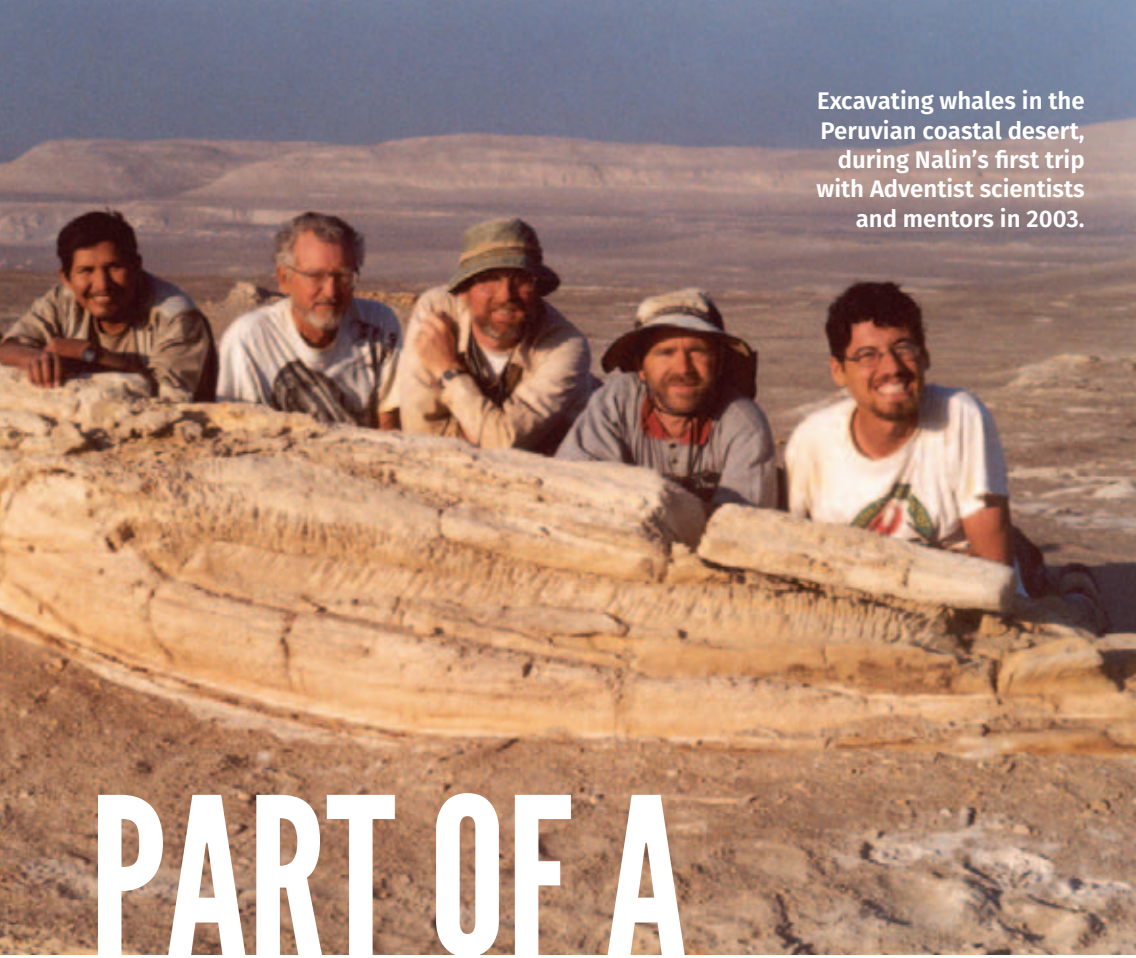
PO Box 910
Holbrook, AZ
86025

(928) 524-6845
ext. 109



development@hissda.org

holbrookindianschool.org



Excavating whales in the Peruvian coastal desert, during Nalin's first trip with Adventist scientists and mentors in 2003.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF RONNY NALIN

PART OF A MASTER PLAN

New GRI director shares his life story of love for creation and devotion to its Creator.

If we set out to find a common thread in the life of Ronny Nalin, two elements would instantly stand out: a deep-seated love for God's creation and a longstanding desire to serve its Creator. For Nalin, a geologist who was elected director of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Geoscience Research Institute (GRI) in July 2020, both elements go hand in hand. It has driven his experiences and training since the day he was born 42 years ago into a Seventh-day Adventist family in Padua, Italy. In Nalin's life, those two elements have been enhanced by his firm conviction about a master design in his personal journey and in the world so wonderfully created. Adventist Review senior news correspondent Marcos Paseggi caught up with Nalin after he returned to his home near Loma Linda University from a research trip to Utah. It was his first trip since the beginning of the COVID-19-related restrictions. "I had forgotten how beautiful the sky at night is," he says of his trip. In this conversation, Nalin discusses his family and church of origin, his professional background, and God's step-by-step leading in his life.—Editors

Share with our readers the beginning of your journey. Which early elements influenced your personal and professional life choices?

One is certainly my family. The story starts with my father. As a teenager, he proved to be a very spiritual person. He had many enquiries about spiritual topics, things that unsettled him about his Christian denomination at the time. With the help of a relative, who was a Seventh-day Adventist, he set out to study the Bible more intensely. He accepted what he learned, and asked to be baptized. At the time, he was baptized in secret, as his parents would have not allowed it. Later they came to accept it.

As an Adventist young man, my father decided to go door to door selling Adventist literature. In one home he met a young woman who showed a keen interest in knowing more about the teaching of those books, and the young man who walked around selling them. They began dating, and eventually she was baptized. Some time later they got married. So yes, I had the privilege of being born into an Adventist family, which has always loved the Lord deeply.

The second element is certainly my home church. The Padua Seventh-day Adventist Church was always my extended family. It was a church with just a few dozen members at the time, but a very vibrant congregation. It was also a church that allowed me to get actively involved from an early age. I was baptized at 17, but by that time, I had served my local church for years. We were expected to actively participate in the life of the church.

Some people think that Adventist congregations in Europe are mostly reduced to tiny clusters of senior citizens. What was your experience?

I enjoyed a wonderful church environment. We had members from different backgrounds and all ages. My children and later youth group were small but very active. We were a very cohesive congregation. At the time, there was a nearby U.S. military base near Vicenza. Sometimes, on Sabbath, some Adventist military members would travel from the base to worship at our church. It was always a joyous occasion. Members would fight to be the first to invite them for lunch.

Did you enjoy the opportunity of attending a Seventh-day Adventist school?

No. There was no Adventist school around. I

always attended public schools, knowing from the very first day that you would be perceived as different from the rest. In Italy at the time, students were supposed to attend classes on Saturdays. The government, however, had passed a law regulating religious rights and freedoms for certain denominations. A provision of the law allowed Seventh-day Adventists and others to worship on Saturdays. So as a family, we would go and talk to the teachers about the law protecting our right to



The Nalins: Ronny, Gioia, Elisa, and Chiara.

be excused from attending classes on Saturdays.

One of the challenges was related to soccer. Most matches were played on Saturdays. As an Italian kid, it was tough. But we understood from an early age that it was all about life choices.

What kind of support compensated for those gaps in your social life?

I was blessed with a small but wonderful youth group at church. We supported each other and shared many bonding activities such as sleepovers, which provided us memorable experiences from an early age.

As a teenager, I got involved with our church summer camps. We all were into Pathfinders, both regionally and nationally. There I learned about medicinal plants and my first constellations. We used to spend a lot of time outdoors hiking, exploring, sleeping out, and climbing peaks. All



Lisa and Ronny, during their first visit to Loma Linda in 2006, with several Adventist scientists who would eventually become Ronny's colleagues.

those things led me to a deeper appreciation for the love of God through His created works.

Even though my family lived close to the mountains, we were poor and couldn't afford expensive rock climbing gear or ski passes. But building a shelter in the woods and hiking were always free. Little did I know how important some of those limestone boulders that I climbed in my youth would become later.

So you had a connection with nature from a young age. Did you soon show a professional interest in it, or was it just a hobby?

I had no idea that I would become a geologist. I learned from a young age to love Scripture and enjoy its connections. I remember being amazed at how the Bible can talk to you personally and transform you. I also knew I wanted to serve the Lord in some capacity. For some time I thought I could serve as a Bible scholar or a pastor. I would say, "Lord, I am available. Where can I serve?"

As a teenager, I had taken part in discussions of theories about origins. I learned that it was possible to offer alternative, unconventional scientific explanations to some of the tenets commonly accepted by naturalistic science. I thought it was a great thing to see the work of God in the natural world, and a wonderful blessing to pass it to the next generation.

So you ended up studying geology.

Yes, and my passion grew as I studied. I eventually finished my undergraduate, then my graduate studies in geology. But that's not all, because looking back, I can see that through every experience,

God was preparing me for my future service to His church even when I didn't know it. Besides what I already mentioned, in high school I was trained in classical studies, which helped me to think logically and philosophically, with attention to detail. Years later I took part in an exchange program in the United Kingdom, without knowing at the time how important communicating and writing in English would eventually become.

God also gave me visionary church leaders who believed I could serve the church in my capacity as a geologist, and connected me with the right persons at the right time. Above all, God gave me Elisa, a girl I had known from the Padua church since she was a baby. She eventually became my wife, and was always supportive of God's plans for our lives.

In 2003, I was invited to a GRI expedition trip in Peru. The Adventist Church in Italy and the GRI supported me, covering part of my expenses. There I worked with Raul Esperante, and met Leonard Brand and Art Chadwick. I was elated. I felt I was not alone; I was part of a team of Adventist scientists. Then other invitations followed. When the GRI offered me a job a few years later, God's plan became crystal clear. In 2007, newly married, Elisa and I moved to the United States.

So there are no random events in your life?

Not at all. Elisa and I have seen God's hand in our life events. If we place ourselves in God's hands, He will lead us to the right place where we can serve Him. Both in our lives and in creation, everything that happens is part of a master plan. The more I study, the more I learn how wonderful God's world is. ♣

THE EMPTY VASE

It was a typical weekday morning. Prayer time with Greg, hurried breakfast, and the scramble to grab last-minute items for work. Except today was our wedding anniversary. Eighteen years ago Greg and I had stood in a sweltering church, two kids in our 20s, and said, "I do." We meant it then. We still mean it now. Every day I'm amazed at the kindness and strength in that man who promised to love and protect me.

That morning, as I grabbed my laptop, I reached in the kitchen cabinet for one of my vases. *Ah, this one is perfect!* I slid into the car seat, balancing laptop, purse, papers, and the empty vase.

Greg glanced over. "Why are you bringing an empty vase to work?"

I feigned innocence. "That's for the flowers you're going to give me today."

He laughed. "I knew you were going to say that. That's why I asked, just to hear your answer."

You see, for 18 years Greg has brought me flowers, whether for a special occasion or even for no specific reason at all. Sometimes they're wildflowers picked from beside the road; other times it's an exquisite bouquet of roses. For our anniversary, though, we have a tradition: we visit the grocery store and pick out a dozen roses together. Some years they're red, mauve, or lavender. This year they were two dozen pink and yellow.

I've never questioned whether he would follow through, because he's never forgotten. Not once has he ignored it; not

once has he complained about being too busy or tired; not once has he failed. Why? Because that's who he is. Greg's attitude toward me is love.

It took a friend to point out the obvious connection between my empty vase and our walk with God. Later, as Greg and I drove to pick out the flowers, I pondered that connection. Have you ever come to Jesus with an empty vase, waiting to be filled? Have you felt empty and broken, unsure if you could even hold the beauty and grace He longed to pour into your life? Have you questioned whether He would give you good gifts yet again?

If you have walked any length of time with our heavenly Father, then you know that He specializes in filling our empty vessels. We come empty and broken, but with eager expectation. Why? Because He will never turn us away. He will never be too busy or too tired. He will never fail.

I want to wake up each morning eager to bring my empty vessel to my Father. He'll smile and say, "Why are you coming to Me with an empty vase?" And I'll respond out of the love and trust in my heart, "That's for the grace, the strength, the victories that You're going to give me today." ♣

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



GREG'S ATTITUDE
TOWARD ME IS LOVE.



ABOVE THE FRAY

How to avoid the trap of false conspiracy theories

God created us to be naturally curious about the world. We want to put the puzzle pieces together and solve the mysteries we see around us.

When it comes to Bible prophecy, it may be tempting to “help it along” by coming up with fictional theories. Every year or so, a recycled rumor gets released that a world leader somewhere will be holding a meeting to announce that an international Sunday sacredness law will go into effect at a specific time and place. At every recycling, people post these stories on social media and e-mail their pastors to find out if they are real. The stories never pan out. Instead, people become disillusioned at those who repeatedly share these conspiracy theories, and eventually ignore them.

Fake conspiracy theories can be a jumble of fiction, truth, and exaggeration calculated to get people to pay attention and waste whatever positive influ-

ence they may have. Some can severely damage a person’s reputation and Christian witness.

We can read a headline and share a conspiracy theory with hundreds or thousands of people in a fraction of a second. A flood of raw data online and in television’s 24/7 news cycles makes Jesus’ warning that “you will hear of wars and rumors of wars” (Matt. 24:6) seem more likely today than ever before.

FAKE NEWS

So how do we tell the real from the fake news? The Bible gives us some hints.

Hearing what you want to hear, doesn’t make it true.

The apostle Paul warns us that “the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear” (2 Tim. 4:3).

Sometimes you might have a pet theory as to why something is happening, and you search for a key phrase. Chances are, many others have had the same passing thought, and you might find many websites that reflect your opinion on it. The problem is that your theory might not be true—but it may feel good to know that you’re not alone.

Psychologists call this “confirmation bias,” which is the “tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms or supports one’s prior beliefs or values.”¹ You might not be hearing the truth—you’re just having your thoughts repeated back to you. People you respect may have bought into a false

theory, but that doesn't mean that its true.

Jesus warned that "false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:24, ESV).²

While most Christians may not fall for a "false christ" scam, it is more common to fall for stories told by "false prophets."

False prophets, or people who claim that God has revealed something unique to them, can present themselves with uncommon amounts of piety. They may strictly follow all the rules and make a big show of their dedication to God. Sometimes they even call out others for religious infractions and speak in long flowery language. But that does not mean they are telling the truth.

Every so often a religious leader might pass along a false conspiracy theory. You'll be tempted to take it as truth simply because of whom you got it from. But even the "elect" can be deceived.

TEST AND VERIFY

Test theories to see if they are true or false.

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1, ESV).

When I was in college, some people tended to thrive in finding something wrong with everything. Some on the fringes of the church made an industry out of videos about "Jesuit infiltrators" and secret gatherings. For students with active imaginations, this information, conveyed in hushed tones, seemed so exciting.

But when the facts of what was allegedly happening were sought after, the stories started to fade. There are no clear pictures of the Loch Ness monster or bigfoot, and similarly, there were no specifics when it came to these theories. It didn't take long to realize that the stories were false.

An easy way to tell if a conspiracy theory is false is that the people spreading it will avoid giving any specific information that can be instantly verified. Supporting evidence is often from questionable sources. Those spreading the theories may provide bizarre explanations for glaring gaps in the information, and might even try to convince you that you are willfully blind to the "truth." Arguing with a conspiracy theorist is an exercise in futility. If you accept the smoke screen of a false

False prophets, or people who claim that God has revealed something unique to them, can present themselves with uncommon amounts of piety.

conspiracy theory that claims to have all the answers, you would have been prevented from finding out the actual truth.

CHRIST, ONLY CHRIST

While the "very elect" might fall for a false story, chances are other Christians that you trust and respect have not heard about the conspiracy. If somebody passes along a false report, you might want to prayerfully vet it privately with a couple close friends who are not prone to fall for conspiracy theories generally. Ask them if it passes the "smell" test—does it make sense? Does it contradict established truth? Is the source reliable? If they don't believe it, or express serious concerns, it might very well be false.

Resolve to tell the ultimate truth.

"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

Many conspiracy theories were floating around in the early days of the church. But Paul realized that he had a short amount of time, and he wanted to focus on bringing people to Christ through preaching the gospel. Even if a conspiracy theory is true, what do you gain from chasing the devil into his lair?

Years ago a fad within certain groups played records backward to find hidden evil messages. The Christian band Petra put on one of their songs a quick "backward" message that said, "Why are you looking for the devil when you ought to be looking for the Lord?"

It's easy to get caught up in what's wrong in the world. And it's easy to forget that Christ is calling us to share His love and the hope of eternal life. When our time on earth is complete, all that will matter is Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

¹ I. Noor, "Confirmation Bias," *Simply Psychology*, June 10, 2020, www.simplypsychology.org/confirmation-bias.html.

² 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.

Michael Peabody is an attorney and president of Founders' First Freedom, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving religious liberty. He writes from Los Angeles, California. He blogs at www.religiousliberty.tv.

HELPING HARVEY

Tale of an inconvenient whosoever



CAROLYN SUTTON

I was less than thrilled when a church I once attended accepted a newcomer into the baptismal tank and then into our congregation. Harvey, as I will call him, had been a shadowy attendee at our little church's evangelistic meetings. He was a sixtysomething, gray-bearded, lumbering tower of a man who sat in the back, avoided eye contact, and responded to questions in monosyllables. We later learned that he had recently served time for several counts of child molestation. You'd better believe that as a protective church kindergarten class teacher, I watched him like a hawk.

So did my husband, yet with perhaps a more spiritual motive. In fact, Jim soon invited Harvey home (yes, to *our* home!) for dinner after church. I knew it was the right thing to do, but I needed Jim's reminders that "though I don't like what the man did either, he's our brother in Christ now. You know: 'For God so loved the world . . . that whoever believes in Him . . .' [John 3:16]." Harvey devoured turnip greens, mashed potatoes, and boysenberry pie as if he'd not had a square meal in years. After a shared repast or two, the disheveled Harvey started sitting beside us in church. I asked God for a sense of compassion to balance out the revulsion I felt for this man.

One day Harvey phoned Jim to ask if he could come over "to talk." We all sat on the back porch as he guardedly, yet fearfully, shared that he was about to lose his house. Jim prayed for the situation and for Harvey not to lose faith throughout this ordeal. Two weeks later Harvey did lose

his house. Still on probation, he now had to park his little car (containing all his worldly possessions) at the flagpole of the county's law-enforcement headquarters—24/7. We prayed for him. Jim prayed *with* him, especially when we'd pull up beside the weathered Ford Pinto at the flagpole to hand easy-open food containers and a few gasoline dollars through the driver's window. As we pulled away from our mission on Easter Sunday, Harvey's parting words were "Thanks. Love you guys."

Various church members tried hard to find Harvey more permanent living quarters, but his particular criminal past nullified all potential options since children live pretty much everywhere. We tried hard not to think of Harvey as an inconvenience (the operative word being *tried*). Even when his car broke down and Jim repeatedly had to drop everything and give him a ride—to the bank, post office, grocery store, or Social Security office an hour away. On these trips Jim always took Harvey to a restaurant for a square meal. We prayed and hoped—*desperately* hoped—Harvey would become solvent and start meeting his own basic needs.

At long last Harvey's parole officer found him a dilapidated trailer at a rundown RV park situated a legal distance from schools and day-care centers. Almost immediately after Harvey moved into the trailer, though, a doctor sent him to a hospital an hour away for a diabetes-related toe amputation. Now his after-church meals with us became less frequent. Soon Harvey was put on dialysis twice

a week before ending up back in the hospital.

Jim and I dropped in on the hapless Harvey the day he was unexpectedly released from the hospital. As usual, he needed a ride . . . home, this time. I started indulging a familiar thought: *Great! Another day of putting our to-do lists on hold while attending to—* Suddenly Jim's earlier reminders of "God so loved the world . . . that whoever" slammed into my mind. *Jesus, give me patience. And love.*

When we got Harvey back to his trailer an hour later, he didn't have the strength to climb up the two steps into his domicile. Despite our lifting, pulling, and pushing, he eventually turned, collapsing heavily into a sitting position on the floor of the trailer doorway. At his request I clambered past him through the narrow entrance to rummage in the trailer's dark recesses for a pair of boots that Harvey thought would help him "stand better." I tried not to notice that anything I gingerly touched activated swarms of scurrying cockroaches. When the boots didn't "work," we warmed—in Harvey's minuscule microwave—the Italian take-out meal we'd gotten for him on the road. He devoured it, sitting on the sticky kitchen floor, limp legs still protruding through the trailer's entrance. Jim phoned two younger, stronger church friends. Yet even the four of us could not hoist the dead weight of the exhausted Harvey to an upright position. *Lord, forgive my earlier complaints. This is so not about me. It's Harvey, Lord. Meet this man's desperate needs any way You choose. Clearly, we are helpless.*

A chilly, cloud-heavy twilight draped dampness over us as we stood, semicircle, before the depleted Harvey now slumped on the floor of his trailer entrance. He finally concurred that Jim should call an ambulance. With heavy hearts we watched the paramedics secure him on a stretcher. His parting words were "Thanks. Love you guys." Blinking back tears, we slipped wearily into our own car as overhead rainclouds released their torrents.

Though Harvey was able to return home the next day, his trailer caught fire one night shortly after. Neighbors pulled him out, but not before he sustained burns severe enough to necessitate admission to a burn unit two hours away. A thoughtful hospital chaplain kept Jim informed by phone. Jim was able to speak with Harvey from time to time and assure him church members were praying for him and would be there for him upon his return. One morning the chaplain

We tried hard not to think of Harvey as an inconvenience (the operative word being *tried*).

phoned. "Harvey passed away last night. I believe he was ready to meet his Maker."

Though stunned and saddened, we marveled at God's care for Harvey. Our friend's last months of life were not spent in prison, his little car, or the squalid trailer. They were spent between clean sheets in a well-kept hospital room, along with three square meals a day, 24-hour medical care, and the companionship of a compassionate chaplain. In amazement we reflected that though some situations are just beyond human help, they're never beyond God's. He had truly answered our prayers about meeting Harvey's needs. But God had done more than that.

In fact, we sometimes talk about the surprisingly empty place in our hearts left by the departure of Harvey. We see now that when we were putting forth our imperfect, less-than-enthusiastic efforts to help him, God (perhaps in desperation?) was using Harvey to help us! To loosen our rigid schedules. To shake up our attitudes of self-righteousness. And (may I speak frankly?) to put aside a sense of entitlement that, because we were already hard at work on a long to-do list "for the Lord," we somehow weren't *that* responsible for helping every inconvenient "whoever" that might show up. No, despite our advanced age (another easy excuse), God wanted us personally involved in people's messy lives, getting our hands dirty in the name of Jesus and for as long as He gives us breath. Through Harvey, God reminded us what real love—His love—is all about: that at the foot of the cross, we are *all* whoevers, simply saved by grace and tasked with the responsibility of loving and helping one another.

Since helping Harvey, we have a deeper, more humble appreciation for God's grace toward us. We are also humbled when we remember that for the Friend of sinners, helping the whoevers is never, *ever* an inconvenience. 🍀

Carolyn Sutton writes from Phil Campbell, Alabama.



PHOTO BY AMY TRAN ON UNSPLASH

“I KNOW THAT VOICE!”

*Do we know when
God is trying to
communicate with us?*

Honey, I want to go to Duelekal and buy some cauliflower for tonight’s dinner. I want their first meal to be special.”

Janene responded quickly, “We have all the food we need.”

“Aw, come on, the car isn’t here, but it’ll only take a little while to walk. It’ll be fun.”

She finally responded, “OK, let’s go. I know you won’t be happy until you get your way.” She was right.

I wasn’t going to be happy, because I had the overwhelming impression that I had to have that cauliflower. We had been bouncing down a boulder-infested roadway earlier in the day when I noticed a beautiful green-and-white pile of cauliflower on a tattered grass mat. We hadn’t stopped until we reached our lodge perched on a cliff overlooking the Himalayas, but I wouldn’t have any peace until the inner voice had been obeyed.

We moved quickly, having to return in time to fulfill our assignment as head cooks for our 50 Maranatha volunteers working in Nepal.

There it was: my stack of cauliflower. But before I could make my purchase, I noticed a copy of *Steps to Christ* in the window of a shop not far away. This was highly unusual because at the time, the country was officially Hindu and didn’t take kindly to Christianity being shared openly.

Entering the store, I began to check out the nicely stocked shelves to see what else I could find. I saw other Christian books, but no other Adventist material. “Can I be of service?” the shopkeeper asked in broken English.

“May I ask where you obtained the *Steps to Christ*?” I asked.

He began to share his story and testimony with me, struggling with words here and there. I was able to discover that this man was district pastor and leader of several church groups and had received the book from someone years before. When he found out that I was an Adventist, he became animated and asked if I would preach in his church.

“I’ll be happy to come,” I responded.

This encounter eventually not only led me to speak in his church, but opened the way to introduce him to Joel, the country’s only Bible worker, who was able to share many happy days of Bible study with the shop owner and meet with others of his faith as well.

SOMETHING TO SHARE

On our way back to the lodge, loaded down with my prize, we felt a little like the disciples from

Emmaus, who, upon discovering that their traveling companion had been the Lord Himself, ran back to Jerusalem bursting with joy to share the good news.

Two important lessons: First, God may speak to only one person in the relationship at any given time and not to the other one. In this case He impressed me to get the cauliflower, not my wife. But we've learned over the years that when the Lord impresses one of us to do something for Him, we must allow that partner latitude in judgment to follow God's lead, regardless of whether or not we feel impressed.

Second, and perhaps the most important take-away in this story, is that God speaks to us today.

In the Garden of Eden God spoke in person to Adam and Eve. But it was the devil's studied purpose to cut off all communication. Once that was broken, our Lord took the initiative to restore the lines of communication that had been severed by Satan.

The Creator came calling out after the pair, "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9). Our Lord reestablished verbal contact with the human race, and He has never stopped talking to us. The devil wants us to believe the lie that God has stopped communicating with humanity. He knows that where such communication exists, there is power to resist his lies.

The Bible is packed with examples of God talking with His people. Consider Samson's mother talking with the angel of the Lord regarding her son's upbringing (Judges 13), or Moses' burning-bush conversation (Ex. 3). Remember Balaam's talking donkey (Num. 22)? Or how about Elijah at the cave entrance when God whispered, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9). Then there was Abraham, Jonah, Job, David, Samuel, and Gideon. The list is almost endless. Then there was the blinding encounter on the Damascus road when Jesus spoke powerfully to the apostle Paul.

A burning bush, a blinding light, a talking donkey, a whisper—the idea is not *how* God spoke but *that* He spoke. Jesus communicated throughout the Old Testament to His people, He spoke to humanity in the New Testament, and He still speaks today. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

On the Mount of Transfiguration the Father said, "This is my Son, whom I love. . . Listen to him!" (Matt. 17:5). Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life; and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:27, 28).

The idea is not *how* God spoke but *that* He spoke.

The blessings of Jesus' assurances of eternal life presume a commitment to listen to His voice and follow His instructions. And yes, in order to do as instructed, we must hear what God says to us.

So how do we arrive at the point that our ears hear a word behind us, saying, "This is the way; walk in it" (Isa. 30:21)?

THE VOICE OF RECOGNITION

Ring, ring, ring. "Hello. Yes, I'm doing fine, but who is this? Janene? Oh, hi, honey! I didn't recognize your voice."

Gentlemen, how many times could you get away with not recognizing your spouse's voice on the phone? Any more than two or three times, and you'll be talking to yourself.

Recognizing my wife's voice comes as a result of spending time with her. With additional time, I can even recognize certain looks.

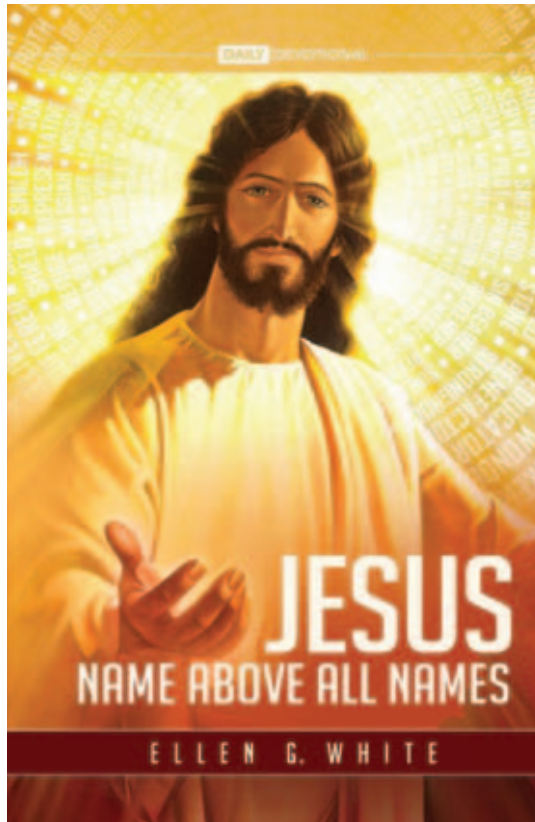
There's no substitute for spending quality time together and talking with one another. If we want to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, we must spend time getting to know Him. Jesus said, "This is eternal life; that they know you [the Father]" (John 17:3).

Interview 10 couples happily married for 30 years or more, and you'll likely discover a common thread running through their lives. There will be variations, of course, but the underlying vein of gold will certainly be conversation. Great numbers of previously happily married couples enter divorce court because husband and wife no longer talk to each other. As time passes, they become so busy with careers, children, and the race for money and possessions that the special time they once spent talking about life, dreams, and each other has been replaced with long work hours, television, and the computer.

The devil's plan is working perfectly.

Communication with God is not only desirable but essential. Hearing and recognizing God's voice through Bible study, prayer, and acts of service is absolutely necessary for being available to do His will. Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice" (John 10:27). 📌

Jim Ayer is president of Talking Donkey International, a ministry that shares the gospel of Jesus Christ through various media.



FOCUS ON JESUS

New daily devotional is all about Him.

The newest daily devotional book to feature the comments of Ellen G. White was released earlier this year. The book, Jesus, Name Above All Names, is one of a series compiled by the Ellen G. White Estate. Dwain Esmond, an associate director of the White Estate, was directly involved in preparing the manuscript for this book, and agreed to be interviewed.—Editors.



How long have you been working on Jesus: Name Above All Names?

I've been working on it for about two and a half years. The whole idea was to do a devotional on the names and titles for Jesus Christ. There are more than 840 of them used by Ellen White in her writings.

No one had ever really tackled it. And I thought it would be excellent to do in time for our 2020 General Conference Session. I came to the White Estate in 2015, and it immediately came up on my radar. So I started working on it.

Describe the process. How did you begin? What steps did you take?

Of course, the first thing is to begin with prayer. I felt that this concentrated focus on Jesus would be not only life-changing for people who read the book, but good for me to read about Jesus consistently from Ellen White's perspective.

So I began to take each one of those names and titles and go into her writings, search for those uses in her writings, look at what she wrote, and see if there was enough to sustain a full devotional entry. Then I marked it, put it aside, and selected the strongest ones I could. Out of 840, I could choose only 365. So I pulled them together and wrote the foreword.

Then it was reviewed by our director, our vice director, and my colleagues at the White Estate. I received some great feedback. It was a team effort. The main compilation, the overseeing of it from start to finish, may be one of the best Ellen White devotionals we've released.

The last one, *Homeward Bound*, was released in 2015 and was coordinated by William Fagal. When I came to the White Estate in 2015, the devotionals became my responsibility. So every five years they are released, usually at a General Conference Session. Then they are available for ordering in the fall.

What surprised you as you were putting this together? What jumped out at you and took you by surprise?

So many things. I was amazed by the sheer dexterity of Ellen White's uses, and how creative she was in coming up with names to define something that Jesus was doing or could do for us. I got an appreciation of her Christology from reading those entries; she goes to great pains to let people know that Jesus is for whatever we're going through, whatever our need or challenge in life. Jesus is available and has the capacity to meet every situation. He is everything.

It's not just that Jesus is for others. This is the Jesus Ellen White knew, these are terms she used when speaking about her relationship with Jesus. He is a rock, a sword, a shield. She writes not just for those to whom she is writing; she's writing about her personal relationship. I don't know of another Christian writer who used that many descriptions of Jesus.

You seem to be saying that this book will have universal appeal.

Maybe I'm biased, but I think this devotional has the potential to be the best devotional that the White Estate has ever put out. We have had great ones reflecting Christ, and they're all great. But I don't think any of the others have such a concentrated focus on Jesus. That's going to separate this devotional from others: its appeal is universal.

We have something else that's different in this devotional: it includes a reflection question at the end of each page. That's something we've never done before. That reflection question is meant to deepen the learning, to give readers something to apply this aspect of Jesus' character or this aspect of what Ellen White wrote to real life. Jesus said, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32). This book reinforces the truth of that statement.

People will learn new things about Jesus that they may not have known. One of the titles Ellen White used came from Jesus claiming His victory. She calls Him a "Conqueror claiming His victory"—that's one of the titles she uses for Him. Then there's the wide range of names: one is "Mighty to save," and of course things such as "Bridegroom," "Divine Voice." The wide array of names will be new to people.

Did you try to organize these after various themes, or are readers just to go straight through the 365 articles? Is there any kind of order in which the names of Jesus are listed?

I didn't try to put them into any kind of order, because that would've been almost impossible. Jesus is the all-sufficient remedy for sin, and that theme will come through in several different readings. It's actually "the Great Remedy for Sin"—that's one of the titles Ellen White uses in addition to things such as "Bright and Morning Star," "the Center of All Goodness," "the Vendor of Heaven," and "Perfect Gift." These are names you just don't come across often in Ellen White's writings, and people don't often think about using them for Jesus.

If nothing else, this book is an appeal from Ellen White to read and simply fall in love with Jesus. It had that effect on me. I have to speak, and I do things from my oral perspective. I found the material so rich that I just felt inundated. It's so rich. ♣

FREELY YE HAVE RECEIVED,
FREELY GIVE. MATTHEW 10:8

Donate Today to Save Lives

AWA strives to meet the needs of those who have so little.
With your support we can make a difference.



Scan here with compatible
smartphone to donate or go to
flyawa.org/donate/#donate

By Mail:
AWA, 3457 Swift Creek Rd. (Corp. 3)
Smithfield, NC 27577

By Phone:
919-938-2920



PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

The Fight of Our Lives

Q: How do we fight viruses?

A: Virus particles are invisible, about one millionth of an inch in diameter. They don't have the biochemicals necessary to live; instead, they come to life by finding a suitable host cell, hijacking its life-giving and reproductive machinery and disabling or even destroying it in the process. But in order to invade and infect humans, viruses have to get past a fierce defender, the immune system, which possesses the ability to detect foreign invaders and interpret the telltale "protein signature" on the surface of cells to differentiate and destroy disordered cells.

The first layer of defense against invasion is intact skin and mucous membranes. Viruses can survive on the skin and on mucous membranes and exploit breaches or breaks in their integrity in order to gain entrance to bodily tissues and host cells. (In dengue fever mosquitoes can penetrate the skin and can introduce viral particles directly to the underlying tissue.)

The next layer of defense is tissue beneath the skin's surface and mucous membranes. The sub-surface tissues have spiny-surface cells that are extremely efficient at alerting the rest of the immune system to the presence of foreign material. Specialized cells and chemicals in the skin and subskin tissues provide a highly complex network of interconnected defense surveillance that some scientists have likened to a fortress of old (that is, well-trained troops), an array of weapons, a well-defined battle plan, and contingency strategies that enable rapid and effective dealing with any breach of its walls. This is the innate immune system.

An additional layer of defense is the cell membrane itself. To gain access to the human cell's interior, viruses must first bind to a compatible receptor on the cell's surface that's normally used for some legitimate function. Without an appropriate or available host receptor, viruses cannot enter. This interaction is very specific and determines



which hosts, and cells (and organs) within the host, can be infected by a particular virus. Some viruses don't enter host cells but instead inject their contents inside after attachment to the membrane.

Once inside, the virus usurps the control center and directs everything toward its own viability through replication. The subsequent barrage of newly replicated viruses in the blood induces a greater immune reaction, and in the process of fighting, the body produces a wide variety of countermeasure chemicals, some of which produce the symptoms of infection.

Fever is evidence of the battle and actually helps the body fight the infection. This phase of the immune response continues until the viruses are eliminated from the body. Specific viruses act differently; for example, the polio virus releases toxins that destroy nerve cells (often leading to paralysis), while HIV (AIDS virus) targets and destroys immune cells, decreasing the body's ability to defend itself.

General principles to protect ourselves against the invisible offenders include avoiding contact with them, destroying them with soapy water before they enter the body, keeping the immune system functioning optimally through living healthfully and managing stress, and being a loving neighbor by avoiding spreading viruses to others, by God's grace. ♣

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



As schools re-open and resume education, the need for girls' menstrual hygiene has never been greater.

Many girls have deep shame when they begin menstruating that brings their education to a halt. FARM STEW brings dignity to African girls by training and equipping them with reusable cloth pads, panties, and Biblical health education. For \$15 you can change their lives forever.



Girls in East Africa celebrate their freedom from shame with Betty (in green)



Your gifts enable FARM STEW to address the root causes of hunger, disease and poverty with the "right arm of the gospel."

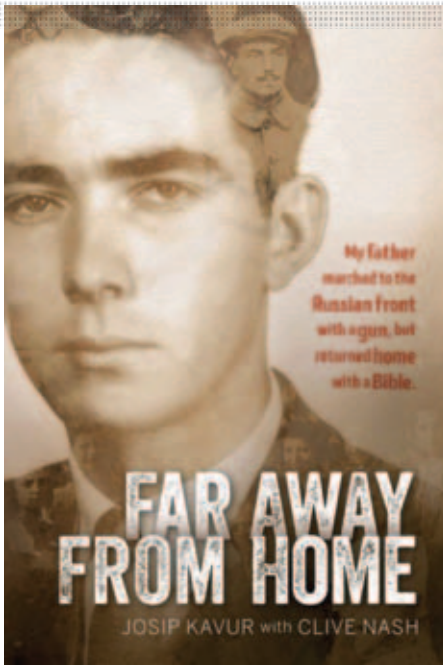
- Train and mobilize FARM STEW communities (\$37 per class)
- Improve family nutrition with kitchen gardens (\$15 per garden)
- Provide access to clean water (\$15 per person)
- Help girls stay in school with washable cloth pads (\$15 per girl)



Please send your donation to:
P.O. Box 291, Princeton, IL 61356
or go to: www.FARMSTEW.org

FARM STEW is a 501(c)3 charitable non-profit and a member of OCI and ASI. Donations are 100% Tax Deductible.

CLOSER LOOK



This World Is Not Our Home

Far Away From Home, Josip Kavur with Clive Nash, Signs Publishing, 2020, 147 pages, US\$9.99 (Kindle edition). Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, *Adventist Review*.

Subconsciously we all know that we're pilgrims. We call Earth home because it's where we have our roots. But for those who, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, are transplanted to places and situations they could never have imagined, being pilgrims is more than theoretical.

That's the narrative in *Far Away From Home*, the story of Josip Kavur and his father, Mirko. The story begins during World War I, in a part of Europe where boundaries were redrawn (and still are) based on the victories and defeats of Europe's military powers. Most of the book is set in the Balkans (Macedonia, Hungary, Serbia, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina)—countries that were part of a tug-of-war between European empires for most of the twentieth century.

Far Away From Home (at least the first half) is actually

two stories—one about the author and the other about his father. One is about the challenges faced by Adventists during World War I and its aftermath, and the other about World War II and Christianity after the appearance of Communism. Their stories and the challenges they both faced were separated by decades, but the issues that motivated them were remarkably similar. They both had to serve God and attempt to stay neutral in the midst of national, religious, and political pressures.

A significant element in each story is evangelism, and the hardships endured by different members of the large family to share the good news of God's love. The themes of these stories—faithfulness, sacrifice, risks, and rewards—are just what readers would expect from such a book. They won't be disappointed.

The family's escape from tyranny and oppression to a life in which they could live and worship in freedom is one that echoes the headlines and newsfeeds often seen today. This book is a reminder not to take for granted the freedoms we enjoy. It is also a challenge to take seriously the truths on which our faith is founded. People in many parts of the world have fewer freedoms, making their faithfulness all the more remarkable.

Readers of all ages—from teens to seniors—will appreciate the stories and lessons communicated in this book. All will be challenged to set their sights on the "city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10). ▀

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord” (Jer. 29:11).

LORETTA MATTHEWS

I retired from the World Bank in 2016 after working there for more than 28 years. I still do temporary assignments there sometimes. One day in late June 2019, I had a phone call from a previous work colleague. Her unit was in dire need of my services, she said. I responded that I would seek God’s guidance and wait upon Him to direct my path. She and her manager were insistent: they needed me “at any cost!” I repeated my statement about waiting on the Lord.

I spent Friday and Sabbath, June 28 and 29, praying for God’s direction with the many options I had. After Sabbath I turned on my computer to find an e-mail with an attached 150-day consultant contract: I had been appointed without any negotiation or verbal agreement. God was clearly ahead of me on this.

Once I was introduced at staff meeting, the manager informed me that more important than all the tasks outlined in my terms of reference, employees could always reach out to me for prayer when they felt the need. That was my affirmation that God had placed me there for His purpose. Praying with staff became almost a daily matter.

One day my manager texted me: “Please pray. . . I am at a board meeting, and things are just not going well for me and our unit.” I invited a couple colleagues to go over to her office to pray right away. We felt we were on holy ground: we literally took off our shoes and fell on our knees with our faces to the floor, pleading for God’s help to turn things around in favor of our manager and unit in this dire situation. I concluded by asking God to “give us a rainbow of promise” as an affirmation that He had heard and answered according to His will.

As I was putting on my shoes a colleague said, “Look, look. . . You asked God for a ‘rainbow of promise,’ and there are hundreds of rainbows in this room.” My faithful God was showing His awesome presence in the appearance of rainbows—on the walls, ceiling, and side table; under the table; on and under the manager’s desk.

I said, “But Lord, can You please put a rainbow of promise upon my manager?” At that moment “rainbows” of different sizes appeared on my manager’s white jacket hanging behind the door. Walking toward my office, rainbows regaled corridor walls, the floor, and the ceiling.

My prayer partners said, “You asked for a rainbow, but God gave us so many!”

Back from the meeting, my manager informed us that something happened suddenly at the meeting: the board of directors changed their approach and ended up favoring our manager and our unit in a major way. I shared our experience of praying in her office and showed her a few of the pictures we captured of the presence and faithfulness of our God, including the assurance of His “rainbows of promise.”

Loretta Matthews is a prayer warrior at the World Bank.

RAINBOWS OF PROMISE



PEOPLE AND THINGS

God has used the resources of the willing to benefit individuals, institutions, and societies for centuries. Satan has used them to inspire and facilitate “all kinds of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10). Jesus counsels, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth. . . . But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matt. 6:19, 20). Our challenge is to use and value things and people with the same measure that God uses.—Editors.

“You had better be a poor man and a rich Christian, than a rich man and a poor Christian. You had better do anything, bear anything, and be anything rather than be a dwarf in grace.”

THOMAS BROOKS

“A nation proclaiming equal justice should not tolerate discrimination.”

CALVIN ROCK

“Jesus’ teachings concretized the meaning of his message: God’s kingdom is at hand! When you are wronged, he counseled, and feel the natural urge to retaliate—stop! Since God’s kingdom is at hand, search for a better, more creative response.”

THOMAS N. FINGER

“Because the poor are plundered and the needy groan, I will now arise,” says the Lord. “I will protect them from those who malign them.”

KING DAVID (PS. 12:5)

“We are not cisterns made for hoarding; we are channels made for sharing.”

BILLY GRAHAM

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?

Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear;

then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;

you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I!”

GOD, THROUGH THE PROPHET ISAIAH (ISA. 58:6-9)

“Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.”

JESUS (LUKE 12:33)

“Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me, because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist them.”

JOB (JOB 29:11, 12)

“Philanthropy is commendable, but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the circumstances of economic injustice which make philanthropy necessary.”

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

“In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor.”

LUKE (ACTS 9:36)

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

APOSTLE PAUL (2 COR. 8:9)

“Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done.”

SOLOMON (PROV. 19:17)

ONE FATHER LOVING

We were slammed by the coronavirus, aka COVID-19. How could something that couldn't be seen, smelled, or touched infiltrate countries worldwide, leaving utter devastation in its wake?

I decided not to panic, but to follow all the guidelines issued by health experts. Even though there were (and continue to be) missteps and mishaps by those in authority, we had a family to protect. We socially distanced from our children, grandchildren, and friends. No one knew for how long, but surely God knew, because He was in control. I reasoned that it would be for a short while and we'd get through it.

**MANY PRAYERS
IN MANY WAYS
MADE THEIR WAY
TO THE ONE GOD.**

Everything was affected, everything changed—the economy; the if, how, and where we worked, shopped, attended school or church, to name a few.

Yet I'm sure we were not the only ones praying, asking for God's blessing and protection. It brings to my mind the line, "millions of us [lifted] up our eyes to one God."¹ I tried not to be overwhelmed by the rising death count (more than 220,000 in the United States), attending virtual or Zoom memorial services for deceased friends. Surely our Father noticed the demise of each of His children, "One Father loving each the same."²

In the midst of the pandemic, overwhelmed by the ever-rising death count, we became engulfed in another major social concern—the unnecessary, senseless deaths of young Black people at the hands of those charged to "protect and to serve." Watching the replays of a man dying because of a lack of oxygen while gasping

"I can't breathe" was heart-wrenching.

I decided to be supportive of the many protests that ensued, while staying out of the fray. Many prayers in many ways made their way to the one God, as all over the world strangers became brothers and sisters united for the cause of Black Lives. I continued praying for hurting families, protesters, and my children, especially my youngest who felt compelled to lend his voice to the cause. Then it became disconcertingly personal when a group of peaceful protesters of which he was part was shooed away with rubber bullets and tear gas. Thankfully, my son was unhurt. "One Father loving"

Friends, there's work to be done. The protests may no longer be as common, but it doesn't mean that injustices have ceased. Some may prefer to see the protests silenced, to bury our heads in the sand and pretend that no wrongs have been done. Some declare we aren't responsible for what happened in the past. But we cannot shirk our duty to work for those unseen and marginalized, whether by racism or otherwise.

We are currently dealing with serious issues demanding our prayers; and pray we must to "one God," the true God who has many names, but is the "one Father loving each the same." In the end we're all accountable to Him [He's watching us!], and His grace, the grace of "our God, yes, your God and my God," is ever available to bless and save us all!

¹ "One God," words and music by Dave Rotherway and Paul Heaton, Universal Music Publishing Group, © The Songwriters Guild of America. (See 1 Cor. 8:5, 6.)
² *Ibid.*

Marvene Thorpe-Baptiste is editorial assessment coordinator for Adventist Review Ministries.

**Short.
Shareable.
Unexpected.
On-Demand.**

ADVENTIST REVIEW TV

artvnow.com

iOS fireTV Roku tvOS
android  XBOX androidtv

A song of
love and grace
will be the
anthem
of the future.



GraceNotes

For weekly messages on the power
of Grace visit moregracenotes.com
also look for GraceNotes on Facebook