

ADVENTIST REVIEW

DECEMBER 2017: CREATED NOT TO BE ALONE + BE STILL,
AND KNOW + A TOUCH OF KINDNESS + BE A BUILDER +
IT'S BECAUSE HE'S COMING SOON + HEAVEN'S SONG



HEAVEN'S SONG

Hellan Dimock

What do you get when you call a press conference to share false doctrine? You get

PRESSED

Rev. Ed.

1:04 PM ET

BREAKING NEWS

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LIVE

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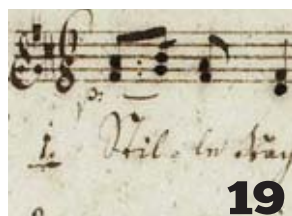


The extended team of Adventist Review Ministries—employees and consultants—that bring you digital and print versions of *Adventist Review*, *Adventist World*, *KidsView*, and ARTV, wish you God's richest blessings for the coming year.

(Front row, left): Stephen Chavez, Zanele Sokupa, Wilona Karimabadi, Gerald Klingbeil, Daniel Bruneau, Marvene Thorpe-Baptiste, Sandra Blackmer.

(Back row, left): Kim Brown, Kristina Penny, Marcos Paseggi, Lael Caesar, Sharon Tennyson, André Brink, Jared Thurmon, Bill Knott, Costin Jordache, Evan Bambrick, Rico Hill, Merle Poirier.

“Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord” (Ps. 31:24).



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TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:



- 1 What Every Christian Should Know About Halloween
- 2 Adventist Attorneys Admitted to the Bar of US Supreme Court
- 3 A Mighty Fortress is Our God
- 4 Power to Finish the Work
- 5 Celebrating 500 Years of the Reformation

VIDEO RESOURCES FROM ARTV



A GIFT FOR ME?

Kids can explore the story of the birth of Christ through this and other animated Bible stories for children. Other Christmas stories include "His Name is John" and "Don't Be Afraid!"



FROM PLANT TO PLATE

Whether you're seeking comfort food for cold days or festive foods to try this holiday season, browse more than 50 healthy recipes with step-by-step video instructions.



BEYOND HEROES

Everyone is searching for a hero. Some look to comics, movies, celebrities and even sport stars. This episode of the *Beyond the Search* series investigates society's obsession with heroes, pointing to the ultimate Hero who came to save us.

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EDUCATION

BILL KNOTT



We aren't herded into truth.

Heirs of the Reformation

If there is a downside to our otherwise praiseworthy celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, it's that they have given unintended cover to many partisans among us for behaviors the Word of God describes as unworthy of those who claim membership in the body of Christ.

In the heart of Protestantism—and thus Seventh-day Adventism—lies a conundrum rarely addressed but increasingly urgent. How do we strenuously critique the unbiblical “doctrines” and practices of institutions the Scriptures term collectively as “Babylon” while simultaneously building a community of faithful, humble believers who are “*kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another*” (Rom. 12:10, NKJV)?¹

The reforming zeal that animates a thousand self-styled modern Luthers allows each one to imagine every church potluck serving dairy or sugar as the Diet of Worms, and every congregational board meeting as the door of the Wittenberg Castle church. The language of denunciation abounds, and the very graces Scripture calls essential to a community built on Jesus are termed “weakness,” “compromise,” and “giving in.” Those who know neither their history nor their Bibles cast themselves as heroes who only know how to speak in declaratives: “Here I stand: I can do no other.”

“But the wisdom that is from

above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17, NKJV). No reform that fails to produce such fruit can rightly be considered either godly or necessary for Christ’s church, however well-intentioned it may seem.

The goal of ongoing reform in the church of Jesus isn’t the perpetual shrinking of a remnant until it finally becomes the church of “me and mine,” but the gathering of a diverse company of faithful disciples who are best known through Jesus’ description: “*By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*” (John 13:35, NKJV). Unless our commitment to reforming what we teach and how we behave is matched by a commitment to reform the way we treat each other, we will inevitably succumb to the Pharisaism that hounded Jesus all His ministry.

This is no imaginary threat just now. The Web sites, blogs, and social media posts of this Advent movement have increasingly become the bulletin boards of angry saints who overuse the exclamation mark and forget that many a well-written sentence still employs a comma. Spurred on by a vitriolic political culture in which the loudest voice is assumed to win, believers lose the low and mid-range voices better suited to addressing those who also love this truth.

Peaceable words and kindly

deeds create the climate in which men and women truly listen, prayerfully reflect, and ultimately make the changes to which the Lord is calling them. We aren’t herded into truth: if we go there at all, it’s only because we have allowed ourselves to be led by those we love and trust.

So let’s hear it for a reformation—needed now—that produces a community of faith well known for its belief in grace and for behaving graciously; for a movement that embraces the forgiveness offered by Jesus, and embracing those who most need our forgiveness; for a rhetoric that invites, persuades, and shares, instead of castigating those who disagree.

In doing this, we show ourselves to be, as Jesus called us, “children of your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:45, NRSV).²

*God of kindness,
lead Your people
To the primacy of love;
Give us deep, connected living,
Mirroring Your courts above.
Let our words be full of caring;
Let our hands be full of peace;
May the gentleness of Jesus
In Your church each day
increase. ♣*

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² Bible texts credited to NRSV 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.

“Why Should I Care?” is so timely in our world today. I shared the entire article on Facebook.

NILA SALSBERY, MESA, ARIZONA

“WHY SHOULD I CARE?”

Malcolm Cort’s article “Why Should I Care?” (September 2017) contains many good, thought-provoking statements concerning how we Christians should care for and treat others of all social and ethnic backgrounds.

However, portions of the article seem to carry a rather strong condemnation of the justice system of the United States, without presenting any evidence for such a condemnation, except for the disproportional incarceration rates of certain ethnic groups, which rates (both high and low) may be caused by many complex factors. The author seems to strongly imply that the only reasons that some ethnic groups make up a larger percentage of the prison population than their percentage of the general population are racism and a flawed justice system. This seems, at best, to be quite simplistic and perhaps displays prejudice.

Omar L. Brown
Mesa, Arizona



the September issue I especially appreciated the two articles mentioned above. “The Word and His Word” was a refreshing apologetic for the Word of God (both contexts), setting aside political correctness.

“Why Should I Care?” is so timely in our world today. I shared the entire article on Facebook.

Nila Salsberry
Mesa, Arizona

TWO GREAT ISSUES

In July’s edition of *Adventist Review* the article “When God Says, ‘Give!’” ends with a soul-searching question: “When the Lord comes in brilliant glory, will He find us sitting on our possessions, or sharing with others the priceless gift of salvation?” It is an inspiring story of mission service that involved

A MUST-READ

I’ve enjoyed the *Review* for years, but when I saw this new edition I wasn’t sure. But the August 2017 issue should be read from the first page to the last by every church member. It is so interesting and encouraging, and tells us what is our duty. I enjoyed it

from start to finish. Thank you very much.

Silva Gryte
via e-mail

“THE WORD AND HIS WORD” AND “WHY SHOULD I CARE?”

I find much to make me think in each issue of *Adventist Review*. In

employer and employee. Instead of sacrifice, “it was an honor to have a part in reaching people for the kingdom.” Both couples displayed a commitment to mission service.

I also liked the theme and direction of the September 2017 edition. So often government leaders use the offensive expression “illegal aliens” when referring to persons needing a safe country in which to live. They are God’s children: human beings—men, women, boys, and girls. They are our brothers and sisters. Their need is met when the Christian response is love and service.

Natalie Dodd
Centerville, Ohio

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.

IN A FEW WORDS...

ADVENTIST CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICAN FOCUSES ON MISSION

Powerful report and very encouraging to see the NAD taking a lead on mission. Praise God!

Sone Mariner, via Web

IN SPAIN, “ZERO CHURCH” ADDS UP TO REACHING THE SECULAR MIND

This is an amazing strategy to reach the secular and postmodern mind. May God give strength and grace to continue this work. We are also doing a church plant in the Cayman Islands to reach those who are secular, wealthy, and well-educated. God is really blessing this project.

Dixon Seth Teresa, via Web

ADVENTIST COLLEGE REJECTS MULTI-MILLION PROPOSAL TO SELL ITS LANDS

Keep the land. Adventists don’t seem to do well when they sell off land that belongs to our schools, from Oak Park Academy in Nevada, Iowa, in the late 1970s, to Newbury Park Adventist Academy in Newbury Park, California, losing millions of dollars and losing hundreds of acres of land and now being surrounded by secular development. PUC, good for you for a wise change of course.

Dave Pennock, via Web

CORRECTION

The news article “Preparation Continues for New Sabbath School Lessons” (November 2017) was accompanied by the wrong photograph. This photograph should have accompanied that article. We apologize for the error.—Editors.



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Vision: To increase the number of children being served.

Need: \$100,000



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“Unity and the commitment to the message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is as strong as I have ever seen.”

Thomas Lemon

NEWS



Zuki Mxoli, a member of the Executive Committee comments during discussions at the 2017 Annual Council meeting. MYLON MEDLEY/ANN

ANNUAL COUNCIL VOTES TO CONTINUE DIALOGUE ON UNITY AND RECONCILIATION PROCESS

DOCUMENT REFERRED BACK TO UNITY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

BY ADVENTIST REVIEW AND ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

Following nearly six hours of discussion and debate, a majority of members of the Executive Committee of the General Conference (GC) of Seventh-day Adventists voted during their Annual Council meeting to send a document entitled *Procedures for Reconciliation and Adherence in Church Governance: Phase II* back to the Unity Oversight Committee for further review.

“The body has spoken,” said Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. “It will go back to the committee. By God’s grace we will find a way of bringing something together again.”

THE SCOPE OF THE SECOND DOCUMENT

The document outlines the second phase of a process of reconciliation voted during last year’s Annual Council that sought to initiate standard procedures for maintaining church unity in matters involving noncompliance. Areas addressed include fundamental beliefs, voted actions, or working policies of the church. Phase I, voted at the 2016 Annual Council, sought to provide a “pastoral” approach involving dialogue and a greater understanding among those involved.

The Phase II document empha-

sizes the Executive Committee’s commitment to “preserve the governance and organizational structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on all levels” in the context of “godly forbearance, Christian charity, and redemptive grace.” Introductory paragraphs also highlight a commitment on the part of the Executive Committee to “the continued forbearance and discussion process” that offers “additional time to find solutions.”

“I believe that the church has been forbearing,” said Wilson during the day’s discussion. “Our purpose is to redeem. But we have to respect what the world church votes.”

“We have absolutely no intention to split the Adventist Church and to start our own church in North America.”

Dan Jackson

POLICY WITHIN THE CHURCH

The Phase II document that was referred back to the originating committee also makes an unapologetic case for the need of church policy, anchoring its roots in biblical references, along with principles articulated by church cofounder Ellen G. White. “Throughout Scripture, organization has been a priority for God’s people,” says the document. “Church organization is also a clear biblical mandate and foundational biblical teaching for God’s end-time people.”

While recognizing that “the policies of the church are not infallible,” the document explains that policies offer “the best judgment of a representative group of church leaders at a given time on how denominational entities live and work together.” The General Conference *Working Policy* is the result of votes taken by representatives from around the world during either the General Conference in session every five years or during the annual meeting of the Executive Committee.

The Phase II document is built on existing voted policies such as B 15 05, which clarifies “the authoritative voice” of the General Conference *Working Policy* and B 15 10, which requires global adherence to *Working Policy*. The document recognizes that “noncompliant practices can be very complex expressions of cultural, ethnic, theological, communication and economic values, beliefs, and practices,” and “differentiates noncompliant practices into three categories.”

Category 1 deals with the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Category 2 deals with voted actions of the General Conference Executive Committee that are “designed for global implementation” and that if not implemented, “would adversely impact church unity.” Category 3 involves “policies, initiatives, and practices that are local in nature, and not in violation of actions voted in General Conference session or voted by the General Conference Executive Committee and would not impact church unity.”

BACKGROUND TO THE DOCUMENT

An introductory report was given by Thomas Lemon, GC general vice president and chair of the Unity Oversight Committee. Lemon was charged with facilitating follow-up to the voted 2016 Unity in Mission document. “We took the process that you voted last year as a pastoral mandate, an opportunity to engage with people all around the world,” Lemon explained.

Throughout the year, invitations to meet and dialogue came from the North American Division (NAD), Trans-European Division (TED), Inter-European Division (EUD), and South Pacific Division (SPD). Lemon met with the first three. Scheduling conflicts kept him from meeting with the SPD.

Lemon said while there are compliance issues, he saw “no sign of rebellion” in his interactions with the entities he engaged with. “Unity

and the commitment to the message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is as strong as I have ever seen.”

Lemon also introduced the Phase II document, emphasizing that it came through the Unity Oversight Committee, was then discussed by the Administrative Committee of the General Conference (ADCOM), and was finally referred to General Conference and Division Officers (GCDO) before coming to the Annual Council Executive Committee today.

Prior to discussion from the floor, G. T. Ng, GC executive secretary, explained that while the document addresses the matter of the ordination of women to ministry and “was triggered” by the issue, it is much broader in scope, and “it is about governance.” Ng reminded members that “personal conscience is not on trial, but church governance is.”

Juan Prestol-Puesán, world church treasurer, explained that he favors the ordination of women as a personal conviction. “However, there is one more overwhelming, superseding conviction—staying together,” said Prestol-Puesán. “My personal conviction needs to be subservient to what holds the body together.”

COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR

The 14-page document was read aloud by Hensley Mooroooven, GC associate secretary. Committee members and invitees then addressed comments to the chair from various microphones on the floor. Comments were diverse and varied in their perspectives on the

material in the proposed document. Both Church leaders and lay committee members from around the world spoke openly, at times passionately, in favor or in opposition to the document.

Some urged the Committee to approve the document and move forward, while others supported referring the document back to a committee for further refinement. Those supporting referral raised questions about the constitutionality of certain segments of the document. Still others asked for refined language

in the Phase II document.

One thing was clear. Despite strong convictions on both sides of the matter, no one suggested a split within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. "I want to give this body some assurance," said Dan Jackson, president of the North American Division. "We have absolutely no intention to split the Adventist Church and to start our own church in North America. We will not split from this church. We are committed to the work of this church both in North America and around the world."

VOTES AND ACTIONS

The major vote of the day resulted from a motion to refer the document to the General Conference Constitution and Bylaws Committee. The motion suggested potential conflicts between the document and provisions within the GC Constitution and Bylaws. The action was subsequently amended to refer the document back to the Unity in Mission Oversight Committee, and was voted on by secret ballot, carrying 184 to 114. 🗳️



Raafat Kamal, president of the Adventist Church in the Trans-European Division region, speaks before the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium. TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION

ADVENTIST LEADER DISCUSSES THE REFORMATION AT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

"ITS LEGACY MUST NOT END," SAYS TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION PRESIDENT RAAFAT KAMAL

BY VICTOR HULBERT, TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION NEWS

What is the legacy of the Reformation for Europe in the twenty-first century? For Raafat Kamal, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European Division (TED) church region, the answer is simple:

It is a legacy that must not end.

Together with mainly Lutheran theologians, pastors, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), and church historians, Kamal was invited to present at the European Parliament celebratory event on

October 17, 2017, at the Parliament building in Brussels, Belgium.

Organized by MEP Hannu Takula, vice chair of the Parliamentary Intergroup for Freedom of Religion and Belief, the event's goal was to explore lessons from the Reformation that can positively shape a future Europe.

DIFFERENT TAKES ON THE EVENT

From the start there was a strong emphasis on "grace," a concept that, according to Bishop Simo Peura of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, "opens the prophetic role of the community." He noted Luther's example in Wittenberg of a "common purse for the poor," and his strong work ethic, which was for the well-being of the whole community.

Dutch MEP Peter van Dalen equally focused on the importance of grace, noting that it was closely

“We are created in God’s image, and this can be genuine only when other people’s rights are respected.”

Raafat Kamal

linked to “doing justice” (see Ps. 37). He stated that it is “essential for us as politicians to seek justice and prevent injustice.” Van Dalen emphasized that “good government will seek the well-being of our neighbor,” adding, “gracious politics is directed to ‘the other,’ the neighbor, the environment.”

Several speakers saw the translation of the Bible into national languages as significant. The key, according to Hungarian theologian and historian Dezső Buzogány, was that it put the Bible on the table of every family. It also helped establish the language and so, equally, led to national identity. The emphasis on reading Scripture led to education, even for girls. It is something that transformed Europe.

Speakers noted that many Reformation issues were still highly significant today. “Tolerance is still a big issue,” said MEP Arne Lietz.

Orthodox priest Heikki Huttunen observed that different Christian traditions could come together on “the relevant, not the routine.” Different approaches from a variety of backgrounds can lead to better understanding in areas of witness, justice, and hospitality.

“Migration is an issue, not just for those coming into Europe, but also those moving internally,” he explained. Huttunen stressed the need for safe entry into Europe to reduce human trafficking and criminal exploitation. “The church needs to bring this discussion to the table,” he stated.

THE ADVENTIST LEADER’S PRESENTATION

Kamal, one of the last speakers, led the attentive audience back to the concept of grace, expounding on the Old Testament principle in Micah 6:8, to “act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.”

“Martin Luther, with his transformed conscience, held fast to this concept, which has since inspired generations of believers and nonreligious people alike,” said Kamal.

Kamal said that “to embrace religious freedom is to champion and integrate the dignity of human beings in our laws, culture, and way of life. It is to adopt a personal attitude of tolerance, whereby tolerance is an expression of solidarity with every member of the human family.”

For Kamal, “it translates into respect for every human being. After all, we are created in God’s image, and this can be genuine only when other people’s rights are respected.”

However, for Kamal, this goes hand in hand with mission. Before highlighting some of the mission aspects of the church he leads, he emphasized, “Most people know that Jesus came to bring forgiveness and grace; these are hallmarks of the Reformation. Less well known is the biblical teaching that a true experience of the grace of Jesus Christ inevitably motivates persons, communities, and nations to see and apply biblical justice and mercy in this world.”

Martin Luther might have been surprised had he found himself

sitting in the parliament building. Two speakers, both from a Catholic background, spoke highly of his contribution to the development of Europe. Mairead McGuinness, first vice president of the European Parliament, has developed a great deal of understanding and tolerance for those who think in ways different from the way she was brought up. “Even my mother,” she confessed, “thought she could talk straight to Jesus and didn’t need to go through an intermediary.” She then reiterated the point Kamal had stressed: “The church must keep reforming.” Even though Christianity is not as influential as it used to be in secular Europe, she emphasized that the church plays an important part in our society.

The final speaker was a lawyer and theologian. Katrin Hatzinger acknowledged Luther’s mistakes in his treatment of Anabaptists and Sabbatarians (among others), yet through those mistakes she saw the basis of learning for current dialogue. She sees the church as a “critical counterpart” in legislative dialogue and also a great provider of expertise in, for instance, areas such as handling asylum seekers and refugees. On a religious liberty note she stated that “we want differences of churches to be recognized by the EU.”

Looking back on the day, Kamal reflected that “the unending reformation, the implication for today, based on the Word of God—I saw this today in the presentations that were shared.”



ADVENTIST COLLEGE REJECTS MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR PROPOSAL

PACIFIC UNION COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES SAYS NO TO A WINERY OFFER.

JENNIFER TYNER, PACIFIC UNION COLLEGE NEWS

In a historic move the Pacific Union College (PUC) Board of Trustees voted Monday, October 2, 2017, to withdraw from negotiations for the sale of more than 100 acres of agricultural land. Trustees rejected a multimillion-dollar proposal from a Napa County winery.

"I am pleased the board has given Pacific Union College the opportunity to pursue a vision that includes stewardship of the PUC lands," said Bob Cushman, PUC's president. "We intend to develop a campus physical master plan that will include the development of auxiliary revenue streams while preserving the legacy of our land. The land is our endowment."

This decision followed a similar vote on May 11 when the board of the Adventist-managed school in Angwin, California, voted to remove four other land parcels from the market. The board also voted to suspend further discussion of land sales until the campus physical master plan is approved by the board. Cushman outlined a 12- to 15-month time frame to revise a plan that has not been updated since 1975.

"The new college senior leader-

ship team is offering an attractive vision for the future of the college, one that I and the board are excited to see put into action," said board chair Bradford Newton. "We are encouraged by this new view of how PUC's land can be utilized as part of our endowment, and for the land to stay in our possession."

"Yesterday's vote is a clear indication that PUC is changing course and moving in a new direction," said Eric Anderson, past president and chair of the college's ad hoc agriculture planning committee. "The board agrees with Cushman that 'our land is our endowment.' It must be preserved for productive use, as the college's founders intended."

"It's hard for an institution to say, 'We were wrong.' But the policy of trying to sell off large portions of college land was a failure, and did not lead to permanent improvements for PUC," said Anderson. "From mission-minded Adventists to secular viticulturists, we have heard one recurring message: 'Your land is your endowment. Don't ever sell it.'"

Nearly the entire board meeting was devoted to the discussion of PUC's land. After a field trip to some

of the land and the PUC Preparatory School Farm, much of the afternoon was spent discussing whether to proceed with selling the parcel in question or to pursue alternative opportunities for sustainable revenue streams.

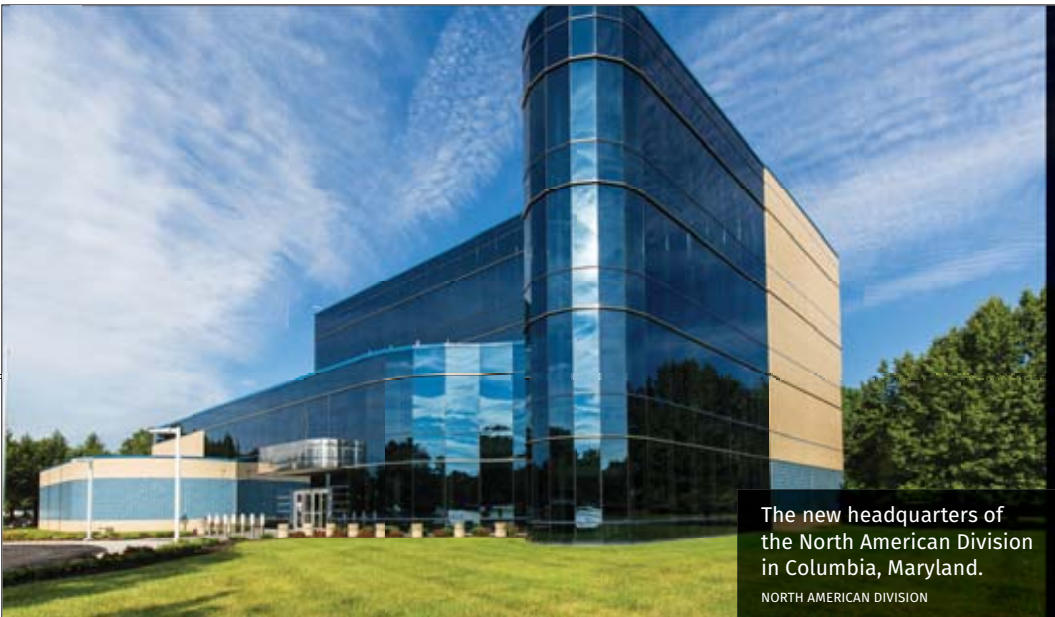
Nancy Lecourt, vice president for academic administration and a member of the agricultural committee, explained that keeping the farmland at the center of campus allowed for the planning of innovative academic programs. "We look forward to getting more students involved with growing food and appreciating the natural environment," she said.

With the school year now in full swing, Cushman and the senior administration team are looking forward to explore further new opportunities for the use of the college's land.

"Much prayer has been devoted to the long-term well-being of Pacific Union College," he said. "As we develop the campus physical master plan, we will consider and vet opportunities for agriculture, light industry, and education.

Cushman said they will be looking to utilize the full potential of the land that makes PUC unique among higher education institutions, as he asked for ongoing support and prayers.

"We sincerely ask for and encourage continued prayer for PUC's future. God has blessed PUC with rich resources, and we are determined to be faithful stewards of His gifts," he said. ▀



The new headquarters of the North American Division in Columbia, Maryland.

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION MOVES TO NEW HEADQUARTERS

FAREWELL LUNCHEON, CONSECRATION SERVICE MARKED BY GRATITUDE, LAUGHTER, AND TEARS.

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America (NAD) officially moved its offices from the building it shared with the General Conference (GC) of the world church in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, to new headquarters located 12.5 miles (20 kilometers) north in Columbia, Maryland, on September 18, 2017. The move capped years of joint planning with world church leaders and months of building renovations and logistical considerations.

An August 29 farewell luncheon hosted by the GC Prayer Ministries team, and a consecration worship service and reception organized by GC leadership on September 20, were marked by moments of gratitude, laughter, and tears. GC and NAD church leaders emphasized that the main reason for the move is to help the region focus even more intensely on mission.

“The move is to focus on mis-

sion, to advance mission in the NAD,” said world church president Ted N. C. Wilson in a message delivered at the consecration service. “We thank [the NAD] for being part of the great world family of Seventh-day Adventists.”

THE NEWEST DIVISION

For decades, as “divisions” or church regions were formed around the world to serve local members better, the Adventist Church in North America remained an almost indistinctive part of the world church headquarters.

“The North American Division, unlike other divisions, has almost always been administered directly by the General Conference. In fact, for many years the two have been virtually indistinguishable,” explained *Ministry* magazine editor J. R. Spangler back in an April 1984 feature explaining the NAD’s new status at the time.

After some recommendations in the late 1970s, delegates to the 1980 General Conference session in Dallas, Texas, voted to establish the North American Division as a separate division of the world church, like ones already in place in other parts of the world. For the first time in the late 1980s to early 1990s, department directors were appointed to serve the needs and meet the specific challenges of church members in North America. The NAD and the GC, however, kept sharing the same building.

“Those who have worked in the NAD realized decades ago that the time would come when the NAD would need more room to do their planning and to execute their plans,” said world church treasurer Juan Prestol-Puesán in remarks at the consecration service. “We are glad this moment has come. [But] as you leave this place, remember this is your house too.”

CLOSE CONNECTIONS

Church leaders reminded attendees that the network of close connections between the world church and the church in North America has been historically strong.

“Words do not adequately express the interconnections between

For decades, as “divisions” or church regions were formed around the world to serve local members better, the Adventist Church in North America remained an almost indistinctive part of the world church headquarters.

the GC and the NAD,” said NAD president Dan Jackson in a live phone message during the luncheon. Jackson, who was attending a board meeting in California and could not attend the luncheon in person, said, “We have been greatly blessed along the years. . . . For all the prayer support, the verbal support, the actual support the NAD has been given through the years, we praise God and we say, ‘Thank you.’”

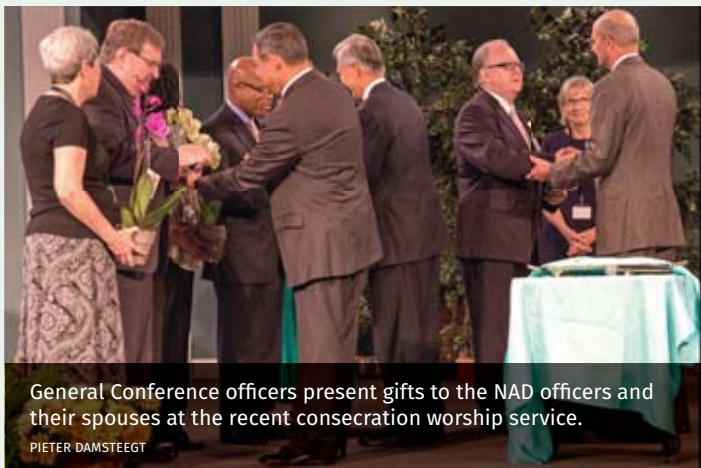
PROPHETIC INTIMATIONS

In a more solemn moment, a consecration service invited GC and NAD leaders to reflect on the historical meaning of the Adventist work in North America and its contemporary implications for mission.

Wilson began his message by reflecting on a mission-driven approach to ministry. He encouraged NAD leaders, based on the scriptural passage of Joshua 1:3—“Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you” (NKJV)*—to move forward with mission.

“The NAD has been spread before you, as it has since its beginning,” Wilson told regional leaders. “The wonderful opportunity that the NAD has to reach every place in the division is a wonderful gift from God.”

“God set up His end-time people to begin in this country for a reason,” he said as he referred to the significant contributions the North American church has made to the world field. “Thousands of missionaries have been sent; mil-



General Conference officers present gifts to the NAD officers and their spouses at the recent consecration worship service.

PIETER DAMSTEEGT

lions upon millions of dollars have been expended,” he said. “People still look to the United States for an incredible amount of financial support, of intellectual opportunity, of the opportunity of living in a free society.”

World church Health Ministries director Peter Landless, a native of South Africa, agreed that the United States and the North American region’s contribution to the world church has been outstanding. “The NAD has been very close to my heart through the years, because all the magazines, all the missionaries I’ve ever met, have come from this part of the world,” he said.

FOCUS ON MISSION

Wilson said that even though most Adventist members now live outside the NAD—a region that comprises the United States Canada, Bermuda, Guam, and the Microne-

sian islands in the Pacific—he feels confident that “the NAD will continue to be a great powerful force for mission.”

He appealed to everyone to stay focused on mission. “Let us go forward. Let us move together. Let us stay together. Let us see the mission of the church. Let us place our foot in every spot of the territory, not only in North America but around the world,” he said.

Looking forward, Jackson said that what he sees as a two-way road will strengthen after the move to the new regional headquarters. “I believe that in the coming years the obvious support and connections of the NAD to our world church will become more and more evident,” he said. “I’m praying for that. We all need to pray for that.”

*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.



Bible worker Dina Mojica and Las Vegas Paradise Seventh-day Adventist Church member Susana Pantaleon shared GLOW tracts on the Las Vegas Strip about an hour before the shooting started in that area. JASPER IVAN ITURRIAG

ONE HOUR BEFORE THE SHOOTING IN LAS VEGAS

BY JASPER IVAN ITURRIAGA, AS TOLD TO ADVENTIST REVIEW

As I watched the breaking news on the TV screen of the restaurant where two friends and I were about to have a bite, we couldn't believe our eyes. We knew very well the street featured on the live news report. We had been there one hour before.

I am a pastor and evangelist from the Philippines, working as a full-time filmmaker on projects for the Seventh-day Adventist Church around the world. While I usually travel to various places on assignment, I also enjoy doing volunteer work. I love making videos for promotion of various church-supporting ministries. On October 1, 2017, one of those initiatives took me to Las Vegas, Nevada.

It was the first day for Dina Mojica, a Bible worker on a canvassing mission in the Las Vegas suburbs. Together with Susana Pantaleon, a member of Las Vegas' Paradise Seventh-day Adventist Church, we spent the day knocking on people's doors to share words of encouragement and Christian literature.

After working most of the day, we decided to take some time off for sightseeing. Since I had to fly

to Washington, D.C., the following day, we decided to stroll along the Strip, that 4.2-mile (6.8-kilometer) stretch known for its concentration of high-end hotels and world-renowned casinos. But enjoying the city lights was not our primary goal; we planned to distribute 200 GLOW tracts to passersby as the sun fell behind La Madre Mountain.

We started sharing tracts with people walking around some of the most recognizable sights in the city. Hundreds of people walked up and down South Las Vegas Boulevard, laughing and taking pictures. Some of them walked toward a nearby venue, where a large country music concert was about to take place.

We took a couple pictures to remember that fruitful day. When we ran out of GLOW tracts, we went back to Paradise Seventh-day Adventist Church in southeast Las Vegas, where we had planned to spend the night. But I wanted to film some final takes, so we walked to a nearby restaurant, where we could have dinner.

On our way to the restaurant we saw several police cars arrive. Though not an uncommon sight,


they were going too fast, and there were too many. We wondered what call deserved such a rush.

Just after we ordered our food, a server approached our table with an anxious look on her face. "Have you heard the news?" she blurted. "There's been a shooting on the Strip."

A chill ran down my spine.

At once we ran to a TV set to watch the breaking news. On the screen, we saw the surroundings of the very street we had been walking an hour before. It was the area where we had shared GLOW tracts on several topics, including "Where Is God When I'm Hurting?"

As soon as we recovered from the initial shock, we couldn't help wondering about the people who had received and read our tracts. Who decided to take it home to read it later? Is it possible that someone who got a GLOW tract was shot an hour later?

Until we reach heaven, we will never know. But our experience has renewed our resolve to keep sharing the hope that is within us. God has shown us that we are on the right track. 



RESEARCHERS AWARDED GRANT TO STUDY TOBACCO CONTROL IN ASIA

Researchers at Loma Linda University School of Public Health were recently awarded a \$1.4 million grant from the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) to develop new research methods for enhancing the effectiveness of tobacco-control programs in Cambodia, Laos, and Mongolia.



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF EXCAVATIONS IN JORDAN The 2017-2018 season marks the fiftieth anniversary of the start of the Heshbon Expedition to Jordan, the forerunner of the Madaba Plains Project (MPP). Today MPP is the longest continuously collaborating archaeological consortium in Jordan. Organizers have set up an endowment in hopes of raising enough funds to make the valuable archaeological project sustainable into the future.



ADVENTISTS PROVIDE SUPPORT TO LAS VEGAS CRISIS Following the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history, local Adventist churches in Las Vegas, Nevada, moved into place to aid those affected. Local churches, including Paradise and Mountain View, opened their doors to community members wanting to pray with someone. Local Adventist pastors visited and prayed with family members of the injured in a local emergency room, and members provided portable meals to law-enforcement officers.



ADVENTIST MEMBERSHIP GROWS, BUT CHALLENGES REMAIN Seventh-day Adventist membership around the world is growing at an increased rate, reports the church's Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR). Current membership sits at 20,343,814 baptized members around the world. ASTR also reports that the increase includes the fact that an auditing process, which attempts to account for members who left the church, has slowed after several years of steady implementation in most regions of the world.



CALIFORNIA WILDFIRE DESTROYS ACADEMY CAMPUS On Monday, October 9, 2017, the Tubbs fire—a wildfire that burned more than 34,000 acres in Napa and Sonoma counties in northern California—swept into Santa Rosa, California, and destroyed Redwood Adventist Academy. No students or faculty were on campus at the time. Several of the students lost their homes to the fire as well.



ANDREWS ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS ASSIST IN HURRICANE RECOVERY

In the aftermath of the devastation left by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico, a team of graduate architecture students from Andrews University, along with adjunct professor Troy Homenchuk, traveled to the island commonwealth to assist with recovery efforts. Team members purchased thousands of dollars in supplies.



BOOK CHRONICLES ELLEN WHITE'S LIFE IN AUSTRALIA

A new book about a Seventh-day Adventist Church pioneer's life in Australia reveals new information about her ministry. The volume shows the influence church cofounder Ellen G. White's faith made in her community. *Stories From Sunnyside: Ellen White in Australia 1891-1900* shares various stories gathered from those familiar with White's years in Australia, where she wrote, among other things, part of the book *The Desire of Ages*.

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ALSO IN THIS SECTION:
» FOR YOUR HOLIDAY TABLE
» DID I EVER BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

DISCOVER


Largo. Weihnachts

Voci. 

1. Heil'ge Nacht! Heil'ge Nacht! Alle Welt schläft, Jesus in
2. Gottes Haus! O! wie lag
3. Die der Welt Heil geborn
4. Wo sich find'et alle Welt
5. Lange schon und barock
6. Haben erst Lind' gemacht

Gitarr. 

1. leucht'gen Stern, schlaf' in friedlichen Ruh! schlaf' in
2. ruh'nden Mund; Jesus! in Linn'geburt! Jesus in
3. Alle Welt schlaf' Jesus in Menschengehalt! Jesus in
4. Heilig'gott ungeschloß Jesus die Welt der Welt! Jesus die
5. ungeschloß'nen Zeit Alle Welt schlaf' ungeschloß! Alle Welt die
6. Ein' was im Schlaf: Jesus



Text von Joseph Mohr Copirt. 1816.

The earliest existing manuscript of Silent Night. It was handwritten by Joseph Mohr, who penned the poem set to music by Franz Gruber in 1818.

*largo.**Weyhrachts-lic*

1. Viel, so Kraft! viel, so Kraft! Als der Pfahl, der in dem

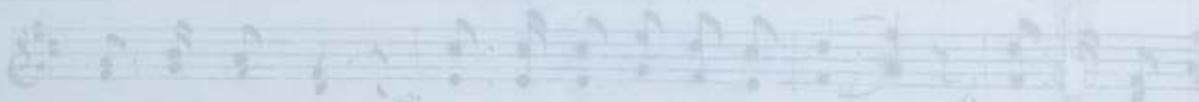
2. Gottes Pflanz! O' wie laßt

3. Die in Welt, die in dem

4. No' so viel, als in dem

5. Lange schon, die in dem

6. Haben sich, die in dem



1. Leuchten kann, die in dem

2. selbst in dem

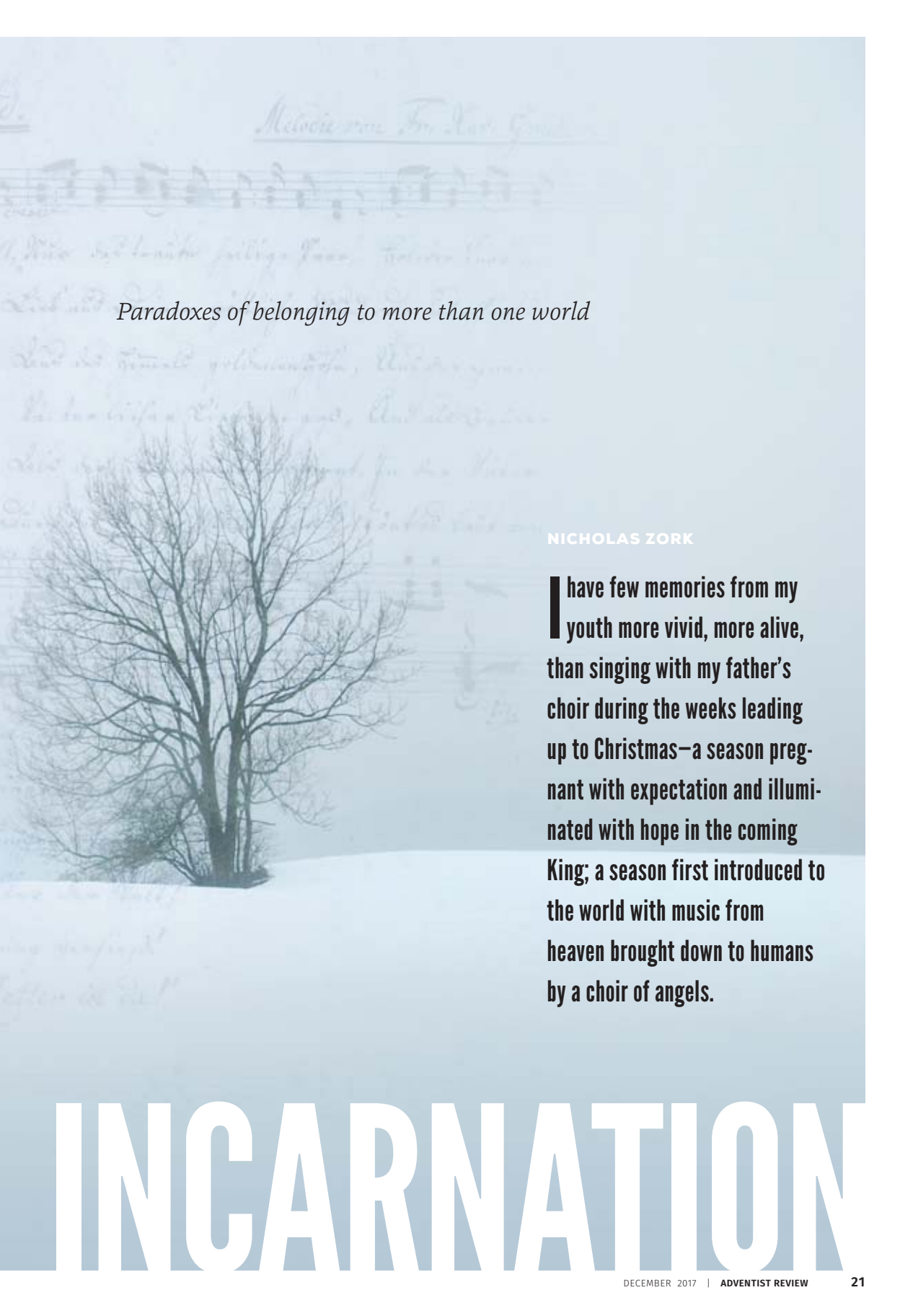
3. Die in dem

4. Die in dem

5. Die in dem

6. Die in dem

MUSIC OF THE



Paradoxes of belonging to more than one world

NICHOLAS ZORK

I have few memories from my youth more vivid, more alive, than singing with my father's choir during the weeks leading up to Christmas—a season pregnant with expectation and illuminated with hope in the coming King; a season first introduced to the world with music from heaven brought down to humans by a choir of angels.

INCARNATION

Perhaps I shouldn't be surprised, then, that this music of the Incarnation—music of the eternal Word made flesh (John 1:14)—has seeped so deeply into my bones. Music and memory are inextricably intertwined. And it seems to me that the songs that echo and resonate most powerfully within me are those that celebrate Jesus' birth; our songs that echo the songs of God's out-of-this-world choir; human and angel songs of God with us, of God becoming one of us, of God's still-tangible presence. I've always wondered why.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN: MUSIC?

My suspicion is that "music"¹—the act of making music—is itself an essentially incarnational, fully embodied practice. This can be easy to forget, given the way we tend to talk about music. When we say "music," we're often referring to written notes on a page, or an audio recording of a performance. But composers and performers alike recognize that in the best sense, neither of those things is truly music. The notated page may well contain highly detailed instructions for performance, complete with dynamic markings and other directions for interpretation. But music is principally what happens when those written notes take on breath in singers' vocal folds and become sound waves reverberating from their bodies—when the words on the page become flesh.

Music is what people do. A recording of a performance may capture sound and accurately translate it into the binary code of a digital file or grooves on a vinyl record. But even when the recording is played through speakers, those frequencies emanating through the air become music only in the listener's ear. Most of us have likely heard the philosophical question "If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?" Perhaps it does. But it certainly doesn't make music.

Music is most clearly intelligible to us when it is embodied in a human being. What more appropriate medium could there be for celebrating the eternally preexisting Word's first human cry, the fully embodied and fully human self-revelation of God?

MEANINGFUL MUSIC MAKING: THREE WAYS


I've come to believe that there are three ways that making music together can enliven our participation, as the communal body of Christ, in the reality of Jesus' incarnation. Each of these ways

embodies a powerful paradoxical truth typified in Jesus Christ Himself.

First paradox: music interweaves the transcendent and the immanent. It's commonly said that music is a universal language, but that's not quite accurate. For the world is filled with countless musics, each with its own logic, practices, and meanings. What is universally true is that music is cosmically embedded. The sounds we organize, produce, and hear are part of God's created order. We don't make music out of nothing. Every song is, in a sense, preexisting, in that it's composed of elements that God has made.² When we utilize these common constituents of the created cosmos—to make metal into strings, wood into keys, and our own bodies into singing voices—we send vibrations through the atmosphere we all breathe. A single song of praise can resonate in all who have gathered to worship God, physically connecting us in a sonic affirmation of shared faith. In this sense music is, like the Jesus we celebrate, transcendent.

But also, like Jesus, music is immanent, it's personal, and it's particular. Jesus did not dwell among us as a generic human being. He was born as a first-century, Palestinian, Jewish son of a carpenter. Jesus drew close to us not only physically but also culturally in a particular way, to the extent of becoming specifically identified as native to a town of dubious reputation (John 1:45, 46). This was essential because even universal truth must be understood through the particularities of language and culture. One way to guarantee misunderstanding is to communicate in the exact same way to different people. Particularity is what makes universality possible in our diverse world. Musics are immanent in the myriad of stylistically specific ways they embody an animating hope that unites all followers of Jesus—"whosoever" from every cline and every time, without regard to epoch, ethnicity, or class (John 1:12; 3:16; Gal. 3:28).

Second paradox: music can be both an act of revelation and an act of response. Jesus embodied both God's perfect self-revelation and a perfect human response to God. On the one hand, seeing Him shows us the Father (John 14:9); on the other the sinless life of this one human confounded all the forces of evil: though "he himself was tested" (Heb. 2:18),³ no discordant note of sin ever marred the perfect symphony that was His life. He could openly challenge: "Which of you convicts me of sin?" (John 8:46).



The power of
“musicking” together
is not that we all have
the same experience,
but rather that we
have unique and
particular experiences
at the same time.

Our own human activity of making music will never reach His perfection. But by cooperation with the Holy Spirit, by being in tune with the Holy Spirit, we can musically enliven both God’s inspired words to us and our words of response to God.⁴ Consider how the united praise and prayer and testimony of early saints, scorning the devil’s menace and his persecuting hand, rocked the very building where the believers were assembled (Acts 4:24-31). Such is the power of synchronized praise. We should therefore find it no surprise that the angels chose to proclaim Jesus’ birth in a song of praise: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” (Luke 2:14).

At times words seem wholly insufficient and music feels necessary to convey the full sense of a revelatory moment. This impetus to sing is equally true of our responses to who God is, what God has done, and God’s self-giving presence. Whether we praise God for His unfailing faithfulness and love or lament the circumstances of our beautiful yet broken world, whether we ask for help or give thanks for what we already have, music enables us to honestly bring our whole selves—body, mind, and spirit—before our Creator and Redeemer. Music can enliven our participation in divine revelation and human response alike.

Third paradox: although music is inherently time-bound, it also points beyond time. Making music is a way of playing with and shaping our experience of time. Through rhythm and meter, sound and silence, tempo and duration, we become aware of time’s qualitative and not merely quantitative dimensions. Yet this experience of time also points to realities that preexist and continue beyond the present moment.

When “the Word became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14), God entered time qualitatively and quantitatively. Jesus experienced what it meant to feel the passing of time, to undergo change, to grow older, to die. This passing of time, this experience of growing and dying, binds us all together as human beings and connects us, even now, with God.

So it’s no wonder sharing time together through sacred music making can be such a spiritually significant experience. Because musics differ and our individual interpretations of the same music vary, our personal understandings of a specific song are never identical. That’s why music is so powerful. The power of “musicking” together is not that we all

have the same experience, but rather that we have unique and particular experiences at the same time.

The psalmist captures well the universality and particularity of our privilege of worship and praise: “Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul” (Ps. 103:22). The music of his praise is at once both cosmic and personal. In this way, each within our own individuality, we are able to share time together in musical worship of God.

SEEING A WORLD BEYOND

Like Jesus, this time-bound human practice can also point beyond our musical creation to a world we did not create but are graciously invited into in all our human diversity. Jesus entered our world to meet us in our present time and condition and illuminate an awe-inspiring hope beyond the horizon of our vision: the God who “became flesh and lived among us” will come again and take us to Himself (John 14:3) so that we might dwell in complete unity with one another and with God.

The incarnate Christ took on not only our flesh but also our time—the fullness of our human experience. He was born according to a temporal schedule, and in the manner of humans like you and me, “born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive” (Gal. 4:4, 5) new possibilities in life that sin had made impossible. He came and lived and overcame and died and rose again for our sake so that through Him, and together with Him, we might begin to more properly comprehend, by experience, life’s greatest definition of reality—divine love (1 Cor. 13:13).

His coming assures us that the eternal logic of divine love, out of which we were created, will one day soon be fully realized again. The angels sang to let us know that the perfect is on its way (verse 10). All earthly music that proclaims this logic, this Word made flesh, transforms our time into a foretaste of the perfect world once known and yet to come: a world without injustice, exclusion, and division—a world of restored love—that we can practice embodying now.⁵ Such songs are the ones we want to seep deeply into our bones.

NANA’S WORLD

My maternal grandmother (“Nana”) lived a full and generous life. As anyone who has lost a loved

one to the relentless march of aging knows, we don’t fall apart all at once. During my final visit with her, she was as mischievous and loving as ever. She recognized me but couldn’t quite figure out which grandchild I was. She knew I was married. But she had my spouse mixed up. It didn’t matter. I was happy to see her. My mother spent time with her after we’d all left for the day. Together they did what was always one of Nana’s favorite activities: they sang hymns. Somehow this aging woman, in her final chapter of life, who was uncertain of even my name, could still remember every word of the hymns they sang.

Music therapists, like Alicia Claire, have come to understand that “music, unlike language, is not seated in a specific area of the brain but processed across many parts. ‘You can’t rub out music unless the brain is completely gone.’”⁶ So even as our bodies inevitably fail, even as we experience the final cadences of our finite lifetimes, we can still remember songs that have taken root inside us—songs of love, songs of hope, songs of the Incarnation. The music that remains embodied in us as the rest seems to unravel can remind us of a God who was embodied with us, remains with us, and draws us into a future beyond our time.

I have few memories from my youth more vivid and alive than singing in my father’s choir during the weeks leading up to Christmas—a season pregnant with expectation and illuminated with hope in the coming King. Thank God. When all else fails, that music of the Incarnation will remain enfleshed in me, one of many musics of the Incarnation that resound in us all. 🌿

¹ This term belongs to Christopher Small. See *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

² For a discussion of how music is both cosmically and culturally embedded, see Jeremy S. Begbie’s *Resounding Truth: Christian Wisdom in the World of Music* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

³ 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.

⁴ Michael C. Hawn writes insightfully about music’s enlivening role in worship. See *One Bread, One Body: Exploring Cultural Diversity in Worship* (Herndon, Va.: The Alban Institute, 2003).

⁵ John was given a vision of this world, a world in which God “will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4).

⁶ Sara Davidson, “Songs they Can’t Forget,” *The New Old Age* (blog), Apr. 23, 2009 (8:00 a.m.), newoldage.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/04/23/the-songs-they-cant-forget.

Nicholas Zork serves as minister for worship and the arts at Church of the Advent Hope in New York City.



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FOR YOUR HOLIDAY TABLE

Add something special to your meals this season.

It's always nice to make your special occasion table even better with the addition of dishes that are a little out of the ordinary. We hope you enjoy these delicious recipes with a twist to make your Christmas meal or even Sabbath dinner something remarkable.—*Editors.*



Fresh Cranberry-Apricot Sauce

- 1 (12-ounce) package fresh cranberries
- 8 ounces dried apricots, chopped
- 1¼ cups sugar
- 2 cups orange juice
- ½ cup water

Combine all ingredients in a Dutch oven; cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until the sugar dissolves. Reduce heat and simmer 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Serve sauce warm or cold. Makes four cups.

—Marilyn Perez

One-Hour Dinner Rolls Italiano

- 3½ to 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 packages instant dry yeast
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1 cup milk
- ½ cup water
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 1 egg
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

In a large mixer bowl, combine 1½ cups flour, yeast, sugar, salt, and seasoning; mix well. In a saucepan, heat milk, water, and butter until warm (120-130°F; butter does not need to melt); add to flour mixture. Add egg. Blend at low speed until moistened; beat 3 minutes at medium speed. By hand, gradually stir in ½ cup cheese and enough remaining flour to make a firm dough. Knead on well-floured surface until smooth and elastic, about 3-5 minutes. Place in greased bowl, turning to grease top. Cover; let rise in warm oven (turn oven to lowest setting for one minute, turn off) for 15 minutes. Punch down dough and divide into 16 pieces. Form into balls. Dip tops into melted butter and ¼ cup cheese. Place in well-greased 13" x 9" baking pan or two 8-inch round pans. Cover and let rise in warm oven about 10 minutes. Bake at 375°F for 20 to 25 minutes until golden brown. Remove from pan; cool. Makes 16 rolls.

—Marilyn Perez





Gingered Braised Greens

- 2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger (use fine grater)
- 1 large sweet onion, minced
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 pound kale, sliced into 1-inch slices
- 1 pound Swiss chard, sliced into 1-inch slices
- 1 pound mustard greens, sliced into 1-inch slices
- 1 cup veggie broth
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar or lemon juice
- salt and pepper to taste
- olive oil to cook

Preheat oven to 350°F.

In a large pot with cover, coat with olive oil and sauté ginger, onions, and garlic over medium heat. Add the greens and pack them into the pot. They will shrink a lot in the oven. Add vegetable broth and balsamic vinegar or lemon juice, cover with lid, and place in the oven for 45 minutes. After 20 minutes, stir and return to oven for remaining 25 minutes. When done cooking, add salt to taste. This dish is excellent served with mashed potatoes.

You can also do all the above in a pressure cooker, on highest pressure, for 7-10 minutes.

—Sharon Tennyson



Gluten-free Sweet Potato Cake

- 1/3 cup finely chopped pecans
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 3 teaspoons ground cinnamon (divided—see directions below)
- 1 box Betty Crocker gluten-free yellow cake mix
- ¼ cup packed brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 cup cooked and mashed sweet potatoes
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 3 tablespoons plain yogurt or sour cream
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 3 eggs
- powdered sugar (optional)

Heat oven to 350°F. Spray 12-cup fluted tube cake pan with cooking spray. Make sure it is thoroughly wet on sides and the middle cone as well.

In small bowl, mix pecans, granulated sugar, and 1 teaspoon of the cinnamon. Mix the three and sprinkle onto the pan, turning the pan so top and sides are thoroughly coated.

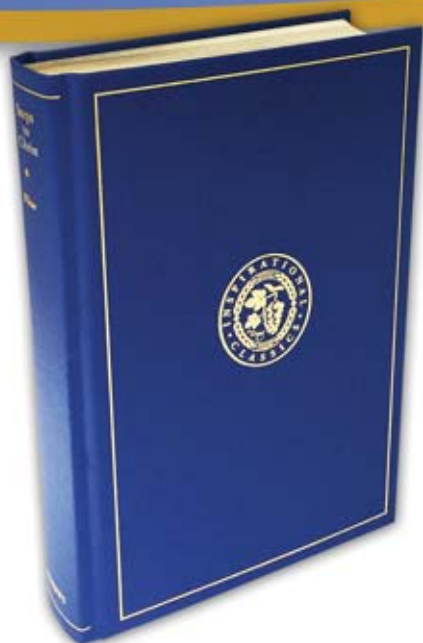
In large bowl, beat cake mix, brown sugar, two teaspoons of the cinnamon, nutmeg, sweet potatoes, oil, yogurt (or sour cream), vanilla, and eggs with electric mixer on low speed 30 seconds, then on medium speed two minutes. Carefully pour into pan.

Bake 35-40 minutes. Cool 10 minutes and remove from pan. Cool completely. Sprinkle with powdered sugar if desired.

—Merle Poirier



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BE A BUILDER

The new year is almost here. You may be in the habit of making New Year's Resolutions, Personal Resolve Lists, or simply deciding to turn a new chapter. Whatever your practice, be challenged to start 2018 with a determination to be and do better. In fact, be challenged to be a builder in the new year.

BE REFLECTIVE

There is merit, at any point in the year, to resolve to make a difference, to do good. For our purposes, we'll call that resolve, being a builder. Hence the Scripture: "Teach *us* to number our days, that *we* may gain a heart of wisdom" (Ps. 90:12).

A little known, free-spirited woman in the Bible named Sheerah can inspire us to do something special in 2018. Her life suggests not 10 resolutions, just one: be a builder. Plan to do something significant for God and humanity. Build something, accomplish something in 2018.

BE REMODELED

A word about Sheerah (your own research may reveal more about this extraordinary woman): Only one Bible passage refers specifically to her: "His [Beriah, son of Ephraim] daughter was Sheerah, who built Lower and Upper Beth Horon as well as Uzzan Sheerah" (1 Chron. 7:24).

Sheerah was the great-granddaughter of Joseph and his Egyptian wife, Asenath (Gen. 41:50-52). Her name means "kinswoman" or "remnant." Reading into the symbolism of her name, one can think back to the legacy of Joseph (Gen. 39-50) and the blessing of Jacob on Ephraim, her grandfather (Gen. 48:8-20). Sheerah was in a blessed lineage, Joseph preceded her

and Joshua succeeded her (Josh. 33:11).

Sheerah cooperated with the principle of the Abrahamic blessing (Gen. 12:3) by stepping out of the traditional role for women to creatively make the world a better place to live. She was the builder of three cities mentioned in Joshua (16:3, ff.), one of her cities was the site where the sun stood still (Josh. 10:9-14), and Lower and Upper Beth Horon became Levitical cities (Josh. 21:22) and were fortified, strategic cities by King Solomon (2 Chron. 8:5). The name of her third city, Uzzan Sheerah, means "listen to Sheerah," and may be interpreted as a prayer for God's providence.

BE RESOLVED

After a domestic calamity experienced by Ephraim, when an entire generation of his sons were killed (1 Chron. 7:20, 21), God gave him this creative daughter, Sheerah, who would go down in the biblical record as inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Christian businesswoman and blogger, Jennifer Leonard, noted about Sheerah: "Creativity is neither traditionally male or traditionally female, but a characteristic of what it means to be human, made in the image of our Creator." Though there is no record of physical descendants, Sheerah was the mother of strategic cities referred to by extra-biblical writers that can be visited today.

Sheerah, the builder, creatively broke out of the mold, and did something no woman in the Bible had done before or since. Notable. Remarkable. Extraordinary.

Be like Sheerah in 2018.

Delbert W. Baker is vice chancellor of the Adventist University of Africa, near Nairobi, Kenya.

TRANSFORMATION TIPS
DELBERT W. BAKER



A LITTLE-KNOWN,
FREE-SPIRITED
WOMAN IN
THE BIBLE CAN
INSPIRE US TO
DO SOMETHING
SPECIAL IN 2018.



DID I EVER BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

What do you mean: conversion?

As I pulled into the quiet driveway of a modest home, I wondered about the people I had arranged to meet there.

SPIRITUAL TRAVELS FOR TWENTYSOMETHINGS

I was researching the subject of conversion, and several young adults had agreed to talk to me about their spiritual journeys.¹ They seemed intrigued by my quest to understand how their experiences of having grown up in the Adventist Church might be considered *conversion*.

As Andrew welcomed me, I could see that the group was already in active conversation.

Belinda, a 29-year-old teacher, launched directly into the sub-

ject: "There are a lot of people like me. We've grown up in the church, so we don't have that moment of being struck blind by God." Belinda was thinking of Saul the persecutor of Christians, struck down on his way to the city of Damascus (Acts 9:1-31). His dramatic story stands for many people as the ultimate conversion story.

"I agree," chimed in David, a 25-year-old theology student. "Sometimes the word 'conversion' means people are afraid to share their story, because they don't think they have a story."

"But what is conversion?" asked Andrew, a thoughtful 31-year-old scientist. "Because I don't really know. I don't think there's ever been a point in my life when I thought, *You know, I'm now converted*. I kind of wish it would be that way. Maybe it's still coming," he finished wistfully.

The experiences of these young adults are not uncommon. Second-and-greater-generation Christians don't generally have Saul's point-in-time experience that is normally equated with *conversion*. But while the language of conversion doesn't adequately describe their experience, those who've grown up in the church have no alternative language for describing their unique journey. This can limit their ability to appreciate God's presence and work in their lives, and lead many to question the legitimacy of both their experience and, ultimately, their salvation.²

Following many conversations with third-and-greater-generation Adventist young adults, I've come to see that while the experiences of those who've grown up with faith are not the same as

first-generation conversions, they are more similar than they are different. They still represent authentic conversion experiences. What we need, then, is a language for articulating the distinctive experience of conversion in the lives of those who've grown up in the faith. My research points to four characteristics of personal experience that allow us to consistently recognize what we nevertheless concede is the spiritual miracle of conversion.

CONVERSION: FOUR CHARACTERISTICS

First, conversion is a process that occurs over a period of time, sometimes even years.³ Ellen White suggests that while we “may not be able to tell the exact time or place” of our conversion, this does not mean that we are “unconverted,” as the work of God’s grace in our lives can be “silent and almost imperceptible.”⁴

Andrew described it this way: “I guess I can never pinpoint any clear conversion time because there was never a time I was purposefully heading away from God. There was never a time I was neutral, or not intending to serve God, to know Him better.”

Rather than being something that happened in the past, for those who've grown up in the faith, conversion includes the ongoing process of God’s work in their lives. As Belinda explained: “It’s a constant turning away from me to Christ. Every moment that I have is an opportunity for conversion, for turning and looking toward my own interests or looking toward Christ. Choosing God on a daily basis—that’s what conversion is.”

Alan’s insight was similar: “I was filling in a survey just last week, and it asked about conversion. I thought, *I was probably converted again this morning, you know, in my devotional time.* I think conversion is almost a daily thing.” Evidently conversion as a process need not have a definite beginning or ending. Rather, it consists of how God has worked in one’s heart across their life span. As Paul has put Alan’s worthy insight: “I die daily” (1 Cor. 15:31, KJV).

Second, conversion includes a thinking, or *head*, component. For first-generation converts, this involves a radical change in thinking, as a result of understanding and accepting the gospel.⁵ While their experiences were not as dramatic as first-generation conversions are, the young adults with whom I spoke all described growth in understanding as part of their conversion experience. For those whose early faith experiences had been positive,

this head component of conversion consisted of *owning* their faith.

David described it this way: “It was not really ever as much a question of ‘Do I really believe in this?’ as much as making it real; of determining that it’s not just a bunch of stories; of recognizing that it’s about Christ who lives, and then having that really, really settle in.”

For those whose early faith experiences had been less positive, this head component of conversion included an *unlearning* of false beliefs they had grown up with. Pablo’s spiritual journey was complicated by the legalism of his childhood home. His conversion included a radical transformation in his understanding of God’s grace. He shared: “I finally understood that Jesus is my Savior, and that I can have joy and peace because it’s His righteousness that God sees and not my ‘fig-leaved,’ feeble, filthy-rag righteousness. I mean [laughs], this is why we can be happy Christians. You can’t be if you don’t know that. And it’s changed everything.”

Reflecting on the conversion experience includes remembering its head component—either an owning of truth or an unlearning of error—and thoughts about how this might have occurred in one’s life.

Third, conversion includes a relational, or *heart*, component. For young adults whose childhood faith had been positive, this occurred as a natural progression from their earlier experiences. As Alan shared: “I don’t think it was ever not there, but there was another step: that I would have a relationship with God. To know the person you’ve believed in, rather than just belief.”

Central to this heart component of conversion is a growing sense of trust in God, which develops from coming to know God personally. As Joshua explained: “Relationship with God is, like, you know someone; and from that knowing comes a trust.”

For those with less-positive early faith experiences, this heart component of faith was more difficult. For Abel, childhood faith was “unfelt,” and his picture of God was that of “a distant God.” He explained: “I knew what they wanted me to believe, but I didn’t believe it. I didn’t feel it.” By the time he reached adolescence, Abel considered himself an agnostic.

Similarly, Pablo once considered himself “a deist, because I felt like God isn’t interacting, like God isn’t there.” For young adults with less-positive early life experiences, conversion involved unlearning some

Choosing God on a daily basis—that’s what conversion is.

of their early perceptions of God.

For some, this occurred through the created world. As Joshua explained: “When you stop by a flowering bush, and you see the insects’ activities, you know it’s real. I can feel something profound in that experience.”

For others, it was through relationships, particularly with their children. As Andrew shared: “The way that I love my kids: if that is how God loves His children, then I think we’re in a good place.”

Abel said “Had I not had my son, I would never have been able to understand God’s love. But I now understand the love a parent has for a child; I now get it.” Of his current faith experience, Abel says: “I don’t hesitate to tell Christ about my problems or what I’m thinking, or anything like that. I know, just like a good parent, He wants the best for me. I know I’m not a traditional Adventist, but I love Adventism and want more people to have the peace and joy it has brought me.”

Fourth, conversion includes a turning, a *hand* component. For first-generation Christians, this involves a radical turning from sin to righteousness. Those who’ve grown up in the faith don’t usually include a dramatic experience of turning. But as Joy explained, they do experience “a turning—kind of—because conversion involves making choices to turn from those things that are not helpful, that get in the way of your relationship with God.”

For the young adults I spoke with, this included both past and ongoing experiences of turning. *Past* experiences were described as “turning away” from time pursuits incongruent with faith commitments, as well as “turning away” from romantic relationships unsupportive of their faith.

Many young adults also described their conversion in terms of a “turning” in their choice of vocation. As Mark explained, choosing to pursue a

spiritual vocation “wasn’t conversion to God. But it was a life-altering kind of experience, and it changed everything.” *Ongoing* experiences were described as “turning away” from sin and self.

As Allan explained: “On a regular basis I have to reaffirm that, actually, no, my life is with God, even though I have this tendency to do it my own way. The need for daily conversion comes out of, you know, the awareness of messing up. It’s almost a daily thing.”

SUMMING UP

Articulating a conversion narrative can be difficult for people who grew up in the church. Asked about their conversion, many youth initially responded with words of uncertainty and long pauses. But articulating one’s conversion narrative is an important part of a Christian experience: it enhances our appreciation of God’s work of grace in our lives, “personally and individually,” rather than just “abstractly and theoretically.”⁶

Early faith experiences are a good beginning point, learning to love the Lord with all the heart, soul, and strength (see Deut. 6:5). Then come later (head) experiences that lead to new thinking about God. Also significant is continued reflection on how new thinking enables one to experience God in new ways (heart). Finally, individuals should consider turns they have made and continue to make away from self and sin, and toward God and faith (hand).

Each person’s conversion experience is unique. But conversion always results in “new thoughts, new feelings, new purposes.”⁷ These, in turn, lead to a more wholistic love for God.

So have you been converted? 🌱

¹ This article is based on my doctoral dissertation research, and the people described here are a composite of 14 interviews. No names apply to any actual individual.

² See Gordon T. Smith, *Transforming Conversion: Rethinking the Language and Contours of Christian Initiation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

³ James I. Packer, “The Means of Conversion,” *Crux* 25, no. 4 (1989): 14–22; also Smith, *Transforming Conversion*.

⁴ Ellen G. White, “The Burning of the Books on Magic,” *Signs of the Times*, Feb. 18, 1886.

⁵ Gordon T. Smith, *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion and Authentic Transformation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

⁶ Smith, *Transforming Conversion*, p.159.

⁷ Ellen G. White, “The Sanctifying Power of Truth,” *Review and Herald*, July 25, 1899.

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PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

BREAKFAST

Is it really all that important?

Q: I'm a young person, on the move and conscious about my weight, so I put off eating until later in the day. Lots of us aren't hungry until a few hours after we wake up, and we do all right. Is breakfast really that important?"

A: While broadcasting a breakfast story in 2016, one announcer conducted an informal Twitter poll of listeners that showed only about one third of listeners had had a substantial breakfast that morning. After citing a few studies and a brief history of breakfast cereal, the announcer concluded that the breakfast-is-best dogma is really based on a blend of cultural tradition and *some* science, but that its persistence is significantly fueled by marketing campaigns by cereal and breakfast food makers. "What works for you is what you should do," she said.

Really?

Over the past decade, research studies have raised awareness that a hearty breakfast leads to better health. A Tel Aviv University study was done of obese women on a controlled 1,400-calorie diet distributed 700/500/200 in one group and the reverse in the other. Both groups lost weight, but the morning loaders lost two and a half times more weight than evening loaders, lost more body fat—especially tummy fat—and had healthier glucose levels.


A seven-year study of 50,000 Seventh-day Adventists strongly supports front-loading our calories early in the day and tapering off as the day progresses to a light or no supper. There was better weight management in people who ate a wholesome early breakfast, lunch ending by midafternoon, and no foods or snacks until the following day.¹ One researcher interviewed by the *New York Times* said that we seem to be hardwired for cyclic feasting and fasting with "digestive rest" of up to 18 hours per day, and reporting that we should skip a large supper.

Skipping breakfast increases the risk of diabetes, coronary heart disease, heart attacks, and strokes from blood clots and from bleeding. Using

sophisticated imaging techniques, the PESA CNIC-Santander study (*Progression of Early Subclinical Atherosclerosis*) clearly demonstrated that breakfast skipping is associated with atherosclerosis development, even in as short a time frame as six years. A morning breakfast consisting of at least 20 percent of total daily calories is associated with a healthier metabolic profile and lower risk factors for heart disease. Riskwise, breakfast skipping now joins the ranks of sedentary living, cigarette smoking, and high cholesterol.²

Young people who skip breakfast have higher cholesterol levels and blood pressure measurements, are 30 to 40 percent more likely to be obese, and do poorer in objective measures of academic performance. Not coincidentally, adverse effects of breakfast skipping start in childhood and progress into adulthood.

While some say the breakfast-is-best approach seems to be switching to a "whatever suits you" one, current evidence supports the conclusion that meal timing is just as important as meal content. To be able to have a good breakfast is a blessing.

So the "old-timers" were right: make morning breakfast a robust, wholesome meal, and taper off the calories as the day progresses. This helps even our biological clocks—but that's another story. 

¹ H. Kahleova et al., "Meal Frequency and Timing Are Associated With Changes in Body Mass Index in Adventist Health Study 2," *Journal of Nutrition* 147, no. 9 (Sept. 1, 2017): 1722-1728.

² B. Lopez-Melga et al., "Subclinical Atherosclerosis Burden by 3D Ultrasound in Mid-Life: The PESA Study," *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* 70, no. 3 (July 18, 2017): 301-313.

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.



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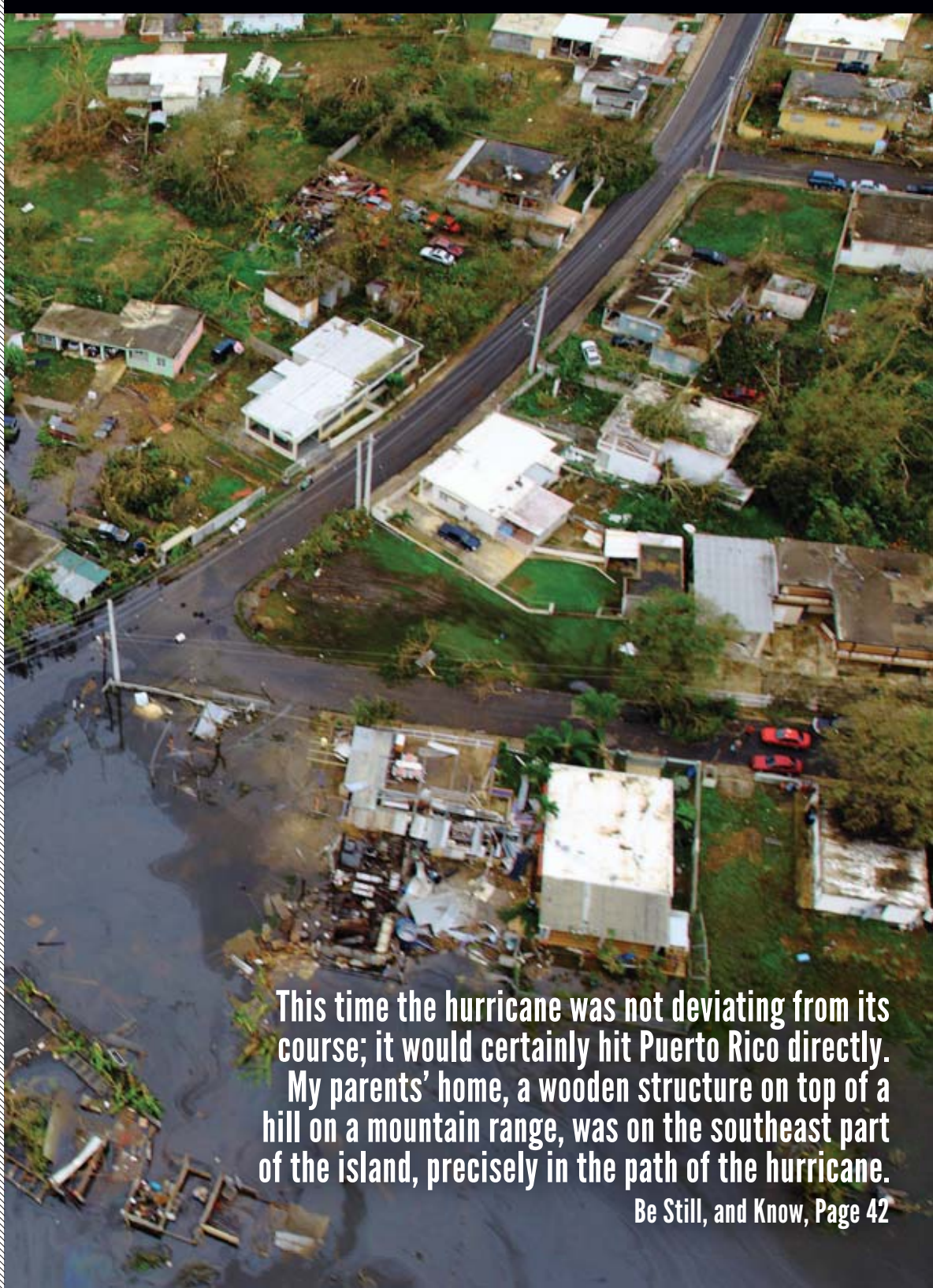
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Power for Mind & Soul

ALSO IN THIS SECTION:

- » BE STILL, AND KNOW
- » CHRISTMAS LONELINESS
- » HEAVEN'S SONG

CONNECT



This time the hurricane was not deviating from its course; it would certainly hit Puerto Rico directly. My parents' home, a wooden structure on top of a hill on a mountain range, was on the southeast part of the island, precisely in the path of the hurricane.

Be Still, and Know, Page 42

It can even impact our health.

CREATED NOT TO BE ALONE

JULIE GUIRGIS

From the beginning of time God has known the importance of being connected. In Genesis God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (Gen. 2:18). God recognized Adam’s need for contact with another human being—a need God had built into him.

By God’s design we have an innate need to be loved and belong. As children we learn to give and receive affection and are taught the skills that will help us find acceptance in society. Through our relationships with family, friends, coworkers, and others, we form our sense of individuality and find our place in the world. When our need for affection and companionship goes unfulfilled, we become restless, unhappy, and lonely.

The loneliness I speak of is a hollow emptiness of isolation and disconnection. Jesus understands the full breadth of human loneliness because He experienced it Himself. His love penetrates deep into our hearts so that we never feel fully alone. His Word gives us comfort. “The Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you” (Deut. 31:6).

Loving relationships are some of the cornerstones of a healthy human life. In the book *Personal Relationships and Personal Networks*, interpersonal communications scholar Malcolm Parks writes, “We humans are social animals down to our very cells. Nature did not make us noble loners.”¹

Psychologist Roy Baumeister and professor of psychology and neuroscience Mark Leary believe that “the need to belong is a fundamental human need to form and maintain at least a minimum amount of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships.”² This need is an innate motivation that we’re born with rather than one we learn.

We work, play, and live in communities. We rely on others to help us in times of crisis, and we offer our own help, even to strangers, when we see a need.

LONELINESS AND THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Holidays are meant to be times of joy and celebration. But for some, the time between

Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day can be very lonely and highly stressful. Christmas in particular comes with great expectations of perfect, happy families enjoying celebrations and gifts. Not only is there pressure to enjoy Christmas—there’s also the reflection that comes with the end of the year. Comparing ourselves to others and thinking about what we haven’t accomplished during the year can evoke feelings of inadequacy.

We are more susceptible to feelings of loneliness if we associate past holidays with traumatic events, such as the loss of a loved one or a family conflict surrounding the holidays when we were children. Christmas can intensify feelings of grief and sadness.

THE EMPTINESS OF MODERN CONNECTIONS

What’s difficult about our hunger for affection is that it’s easier to ignore than physical hunger. That’s because most of our lives we are surrounded by others, either in a real or a virtual way. We live, work, go to school, do our grocery shopping, eat, go to concerts, worship, volunteer, and exercise in various social communities.

The world around us is becoming smaller each day. You can go online and instantly communicate with someone on a different continent.

John F. Helliwell of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research recently conducted a study of more than 5,000 Internet users. He used an online survey to determine the difference between online and offline connections. The findings revealed that “real-life friends were significantly related to well-being.” Also, “when the number of offline friends was doubled, it had the same effect on happiness and well-being as increasing income by 50 percent.”³

DISCONNECTION AND POOR HEALTH

People who feel lonely and disconnected aren’t just in poorer health than others—they also take worse care of themselves. Compared to people who feel socially engaged, lonely adults exercise less and eat more of their daily calories as fat, all of which worsens their health. One of the main causes of depression is loneliness. It can both trigger depression and prevent us from recovery.

But loneliness doesn’t just affect mood disorders. It has a hold on heart disease, immunity

function, nervous system disorders, and many other illnesses. Like oxygen, food, water, air, and rest, we also need affection to survive.⁴

LACK OF EXERCISE

Regular exercise has many health benefits, such as maintaining a healthy weight, regulating cholesterol and blood sugar, boosting energy, and promoting better sleep. Research shows that both loneliness and shyness discourage people from exercising. One study found that college students who were either shy or lonely were less likely than

their peers to exercise at all; and those who did exercise did so less often.

A later study with older adults (aged 50 to 68 years) similarly found that lonelier participants exercised less often than their peers, and they were more likely to quit exercising altogether. Loneliness is a significant risk factor for several problems that often accompany a sedentary lifestyle, including obesity, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure.

SLEEP DISRUPTIONS

Psychologist John Cacioppo has suggested that



social disconnection affects health in part because lonely, disconnected people don't get as much restorative sleep as others do. The problem isn't necessarily that they can't fall asleep; it's that they don't stay asleep long enough to reap its important benefits.⁵

Studies have shown that people who feel lonely are more likely to wake up during the night and have fragmented sleep. This contributes to such health problems as high blood pressure, heart disease, and depression, says lead researcher Lianne Kurina, an assistant professor

of epidemiology at the University of Chicago.

"In lab experiments, when people are intentionally woken up repeatedly, it seems to have effects on [their] metabolism," she says. "Their insulin sensitivity goes down, almost suggesting that poor sleep could put them at higher risk of type 2 diabetes, for example."

Kurina and her colleagues conducted a study of 95 participants in a close-knit rural community in South Dakota. They all had strong connections, yet even small differences in their degrees of loneliness appeared to have an impact on their sleep.

The men and women in the study were asked how often they felt a lack of companionship, left out, or isolated from others. Researchers used these responses to rate them on a standard loneliness scale. For one week the participants wore a wrist device to bed each night, which recorded their body movement and sleep disruption. A small increase in the loneliness scale was associated with an increase in sleep disruptions and restlessness, sleep apnea, and negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, and stress.⁶

DEPRESSION

One obvious result of loneliness is depression. We humans are an intensely social species; we have a powerful need for social relationships. When people feel excluded or cut off from connection with others, they experience sadness and depression.⁷

We are built for social contact, and there are serious outcomes when we lack that in our lives. Our mental and physical health becomes compromised. Being social is vital to our well-being. 🌱

¹ Malcolm R. Parks, *Personal Relationships and Personal Networks* (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2006), p. 10.

² Aaron Ben-Zeev, Ph.D., "Why We All Need to Belong to Someone," Mar. 11, 2014, www.psychologytoday.com/blog/in-the-name-love/201403/why-we-all-need-to-belong-to-someone.

³ Jen Wilson, "Online Friends Don't Deliver Offline Happiness," Sept. 18, 2013, www.goodtherapy.org/blog/online-friends-dont-deliver-offline-happiness-0918131.

⁴ Mayo Clinic staff, "Friendships: Enrich Your Life and Improve Your Health," Sept. 28, 2016, www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/friendships/art-20044860.

⁵ Kory Floyd, Ph.D., *The Loneliness Cure* (Adams Media, 2015), pp. 133, 137.

⁶ Amanda MacMillan, "Restless Sleep? Loneliness May Be to Blame," November 2011, www.health.com/depression/restless-sleep-loneliness.

⁷ Kendra Cherry, "Loneliness—Causes, Effects and Treatments for Loneliness," Nov. 10, 2016, www.verywell.com/loneliness-causes-effects-and-treatments-2795749.

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COMBATING LONELINESS*

1. Recognize that loneliness is a sign that something needs to change.
2. Understand the effects that loneliness has on your life, both physically and mentally.
3. Consider doing community service or another activity that you enjoy. These situations present great opportunities to meet people and cultivate new friendships and social interactions.
4. Focus on developing quality relationships with people who share similar attitudes, interests, and values with you.
5. Expect the best. Lonely people often expect rejection, so instead, focus on positive thoughts and attitudes in your social relationships.

*Taken from John Cacioppo, "Treating and Preventing Loneliness," managingcontraception.com/treating-and-preventing-loneliness/.

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CHRISTMAS IN OCTOBER

Sometimes Christmas comes when you least expect it. For me, the essence of Christmas arrived the first week of October. And I wasn't even home. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

I opened my tired eyes and looked outside the plane. The first blush of dawn touched the sky, highlighting the clouds below. *Soon we would begin to see the miracles I'd only heard about!*

The captain's voice interrupted my reverie. "As we begin our initial descent into Moscow, please ensure your tray tables are in the upright and locked position." I glanced at Greg, and he squeezed my hand. *We're almost there!*

We, along with others from the Three Angels Broadcasting Network (3ABN), were heading to Nizhny Novgorod in celebration of 25 years of 3ABN Russia. Twenty-five years ago, just after the Soviet Union collapsed, evangelist John Carter preached a series of meetings to thousands. I had heard stories about thousands of people congregating outside the hall, people who had spent a lifetime under incredible hardship and privation, who had waited years to own their very own Bible. I knew about the baptisms in the Volga River, and the start of 3ABN Russia on the heels of that campaign. But they were all just stories somehow. From a different time and place.

The reality turned out to be so much bigger, so much more "God-anointed" than I had ever imagined. The warmth and kindness of the Russian people, their dedication and sacrifice when it could have cost them their lives, was life-changing.

There was the little, wrinkled babushka, well into her 80s. We visited her home in

the country, saw her outhouse and the steam room in her basement, along with her oven, which still heated her home. Her eyes sparkled when she told of keeping the Sabbath as a young mom, walking with her two sons along a frozen river to attend church. *What kind of dedication did I have to my faith?*

There was the conference secretary's wife, who invited us into her home and served us tea. Over delicious Russian desserts she told the story of her childhood, of growing up under Communism. About the underground church and the need to hide from the authorities. How she had placed the typewriter on a pillow to muffle the sound, and as stroke by stroke she painstakingly typed the Sabbath School lesson so others could have a copy to study. *What kind of sacrifice have I ever endured for my faith?*

We met with conference leaders in 3ABN Russia's facilities. Both the conference president and the secretary had come in under Carter's campaign. They were young men then—one still in his teens—when they first heard the message of Jesus Christ, of deliverance from sin. Now here they were, leaders in the church! *What kind of commitment did I possess?*

That spirit of service, of sacrifices made to spread the gospel: this was the essence of Christmas! It's that precious story all over again, of the ultimate Sacrifice, so we all can be free.

That's when Christmas came to me this year. I want to keep it with me forever! 🌟

Jill Morikone is administrative assistant to the president of 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



THE REALITY
TURNED OUT TO
BE SO MUCH
BIGGER THAN I
HAD EVER
IMAGINED.



Before the storm, and after: the author's parents' home was severely damaged by Hurricane Maria.



BE STILL, AND KNOW

We can wear ourselves out, or we can trust God.

On Monday, September 18, 2017, I called my mother, as I usually do on Mondays. Our conversation that morning had a different tone. There was an urgency in our conversation, because in two days Hurricane Maria was forecasted to hit the island of Puerto Rico. Not long before, Irma had made landfall on the island. It turned and merely brushed the northern part of the island. There was still destruction and loss of power and water to that part of the island.

As I spoke with my mother, I asked about their preparations. She said they were boarding up some windows and the main entrance to their house. They had purchased food and water to sustain them in the short term. Mother also shared that they had packed a few things since the neighbor across the street had invited them to stay with her in her concrete house.

I called the following day and confirmed that everything was ready. This time the hurricane was not deviating from its course; it would certainly hit Puerto Rico directly. My parents' home, a wooden structure on top of a hill on a mountain range, was on the southeast part of the island, precisely in the path of the hurricane.

BE STILL, AND PRAY

After our conversation I could have turned to doubt and worry, but that would have accomplished nothing. Instead, I turned to my faith and trust in God. I prayed and specifically asked God for my parents' safety, and for my family and friends as well.

Then I turned to social media to solicit support and strength. While I experienced the agony of my parents' situation, the words of Psalm 46:10 kept coming to mind: *"Be still, and know*

that I am God.” This beautiful promise provided a sense of security and peace, as if God spoke directly to me: *“Let Me be in control.”*

Here are some postings from Facebook as they relate to my journey through a challenging time for our family.

FACEBOOK, SEPTEMBER 19

How heart-wrenching it is to say goodbye to your parents, just in case. Giving it to You, Lord.

FACEBOOK, SEPTEMBER 20

Thank you, everyone, for your prayers, notes of encouragement, and most of all, genuine care and concern. My parents got in touch a moment ago. Praise God, they are fine. . . . My parents lost their home—EVERYTHING! They are homeless. They have been with a neighbor, and will remain there until we can figure things out.

I need to get to them, so [I’m] praying I can find a way. Continue praying. . . . I’m still, trusting God.

FACEBOOK, SEPTEMBER 22

Again, thank you . . . for your love and prayers. . . . Communication in Puerto Rico is nearly impossible at the moment. Some municipalities have yet to report on their status. Many cities and towns have to be evacuated, moving people to higher ground because of flooding. Some towns are essentially covered in water. . . .

In the midst of all this, God has opened a way. I was able to reach my parents this morning. They are alive and holding on as best they can under the circumstances. Thank You, Lord! They have a small supply of food and water, and a bed to sleep in. Praise God for the compassion of a neighbor who has taken them in. I don’t know who they are—a woman and her son—but they are already my family. . . .

Now to the bigger challenge: [I] need to find a way to . . . get to my parents. . . . Roads are impassible because of debris, bridges that have collapsed, flooding, and other challenges. The airport is to open today with the U.S. military flying in food, water, and other supplies. Domestic flights have not been cleared yet. But as I said, I’m still, and I know that God is God; He will open that way, too.

FACEBOOK, SEPTEMBER 23

Prayers have been answered. Once again, thank you for the support you have been to me

and my family. God has opened a way. . . . Arrangements have been made, and [I] will be reuniting with them next weekend. Praise God! [I need] continuing prayers for other family members we have not heard from, and many others who have yet to hear from their loved ones.

FACEBOOK POSTING, OCTOBER 4

PR-bound. Prayers, please.

FACEBOOK POSTING, OCTOBER 6

I’m back from Puerto Rico. My parents have been recovered and safe. They are with my sister. They will be sharing time with each of us (four siblings) as we love on them, care for them, help them settle, and secure a new place for them to begin a new chapter.

Our family has expanded. I had the opportunity to take cases of supplies to the neighbors who took my parents in, our new sister and brother, Aracelis and Christian. [They are] beautiful people, with hearts of gold. Our relationship will continue to grow and extend beyond the circumstances that brought us together. . . .

On behalf of my parents and family, we thank you for the many prayers and tangible support. We request your continued prayers for Puerto Rico. I have so many stories from my short time there. . . . No pictures prepare you for what you actually see, smell, experience. My heart broke as I saw the devastation and destruction.

But the people are resilient, strong in spirit, and resourceful. The journey of recovery will be slow, and the process testing and strenuous. My trip was not only to recover my parents but also to assess needs. I’m working to put together a group to go back and help. . . . There are logistical details I have to figure out first. . . .

Let us be compassionate, empathetic, kind, and much more. Let us extend the hands of Jesus to a world that is conflict-ridden. Look at me, preaching. Of course, I wouldn’t be doing my part if I didn’t do a bit of that.

THE REST OF THE STORY

It took longer to reach my parents than I expected. Canceled flights and other issues made travel difficult. But I kept asking God for a way. We continued calling airlines and working out

different scenarios until it finally came together. It took two weeks, but we found a way.

On my journey to Puerto Rico I was delayed in Newark. I had made arrangements for Dad to pick me up at the airport in San Juan. Because communication was still impossible, I was unable to notify him that I was delayed. I was concerned he would be unable to connect with me, and I would have to find a different way to get to them. I prayed, and kept praying.

I spoke with some of the individuals waiting at



L to R: Lisa Chiarillo (sister); Angela Caez (Mom); Jack Caez (Dad); Jay Caez (brother) and Marilyn. One brother, Joshua, lives in Canada and was unable to be with the family.

the gate. Understandably, everyone was concerned for their loved ones. I shared that I had not been able to get hold of my family, and that I wasn't sure I would be able to connect with them at the airport. Another woman, Diana, said she had already been traveling for two days from California, and she was trying to find her family. As we shared stories, we immediately bonded and agreed that once we reached San Juan, we would meet at baggage claim and try to figure out how to get to our families.

I remember thinking, *Lord, thank You for "angels" You have provided to help me reach my parents.* In the meantime I kept praying that I could somehow reach Mom or Dad. I kept calling, but there was never an answer, no signal. I had a five-hour delay, and I prayed the entire time. On the plane I found my seat, placed my carry-on in the overhead compartment, and buckled my seat belt. At that moment my phone rang. It was Dad! He was at the airport in San Juan. I told him that I had been delayed and that I would not see him for four hours. The phone call dropped after I shared what had happened.

After arriving at the airport in San Juan, I met the group at baggage claim and told them I had connected with my father. We hugged, said goodbye, and wished each other luck as we parted ways. The rest of the group moved forward with their plan. I met my parents, hugged them, cried, and hugged them again.

We loaded the car and left the airport. As I drove, I kept seeing total devastation. It looked as if a bomb had exploded: everything was destroyed. Any trees left standing were stripped of foliage. Many roads were still covered with debris; towns had no electricity, except those lucky enough to have generators.

Finally we arrived at what used to be our home. Had the good Samaritan next door not invited my parents to stay with her, they would not have survived. I praise God for their kindness and goodness. They housed my parents for two weeks and took great care of them. I got better acquainted with them and gave them the supplies I brought. They even prepared a bed for me.

The next morning I prayed that no delays or issues would surface during our return trip to Newark, where we were to meet my siblings. God answered yes to that prayer, too. My flight to Washington, D.C., was delayed. But we got back to the mainland, and we are together now. My delays were a minor inconvenience.

I wish I could say that all is fine, or normal, but it is not. As I write, my parents (yes, both of them) have been hospitalized with pneumonia. There is still much work we need to do to settle things for them. We are navigating our "new normal." Of greater importance is finding a new place for my parents to begin the next phase of their lives. I know God will show us what to do. For now, we are still, trusting God to do what's necessary.

God impressed my heart to allow Him to be in control. I have, and He has demonstrated that He cares about every little thing. He wants to be involved in our lives. He is attentive to our struggles and successes. All He desires is for us to trust Him: to "be still" and know that "He is God." Even when His answers are not what we expect, we can rejoice in knowing that He loves us and will never abandon us. We can remain in the stillness of His love. 🌿

Marilyn Scott is associate pastor for families at New Hope Adventist Church in Fulton, Maryland. She loves working with children and their families.



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CHRISTMAS LONELINESS

Holidays can be the worst times of the year.

It was Christmas Eve. How I dreaded its arrival! I knew I shouldn't feel that way—but inside my little house the silence had become unbearable. My only company was the television, and most shows weren't the kind that held my interest long.

I moved through my daily Bible reading and my prayers. I often talked to the Lord during the day, and there was comfort in that. I tried not to think about the past, but when the Christmas season arrived, I couldn't help thinking about happier times.

CHRISTMAS TOGETHER

I remembered last spring, when my Ted went to sleep in

the Lord. Ours had been a good marriage. What made it special was that he was my best friend, and we were happy and contented with each other's company. What made it even more difficult was that at my age, 82, most of the family on Ted's side and mine had all passed away.

Christmas is a happy time for families and children. Even more, it's a joyful celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. I was comforted, thinking that I, too, will someday meet again departed loved ones and be together with them in heaven, worshipping our heavenly Father and being with His Son, Jesus, forever.

My first Christmas without Ted I didn't feel like putting up Christmas decorations. I displayed, however, the most important decoration: the Nativity scene of the Baby Jesus. It sat on the dining room table where my family once had gathered in happy excitement. In years past, we'd shared wonderful Christmas Days with a feast of good food and lots of love and laughter.

I hadn't forgotten for one moment the true meaning of Christmas. I knew it was to celebrate our Lord's "birthday." In my heart I was more than happy that I had a Lord and Savior who cared for me and was always there for me. But I had such a yearning for something or someone to love and hug on that Christmas Eve.

"Dear God, please help me cope with my loneliness," I prayed as I stood at my front room window in the late afternoon and gazed out past the front yard to the street.

ACROSS THE STREET

I looked across to my neighbors' house. Patrick and Desarae McDonnell had a pleasant young son, Aiden, and a pretty daughter, Alyssa, who was now in her late teens and finishing up her senior year in high school. I could see the McDonnells' tall spruce Christmas tree standing near the large picture window. It was decorated with colorful ornaments and bright, flickering lights.

In my imagination I heard the happy sounds of family love as they sat down to their Christmas Eve dinner. Later there would be gifts to open amid excited cries of delight.

I returned to my recliner, took the remote control, and flicked on the television to the Christian TV station. Soon they would perform the story of the birth of Jesus. I'd enjoy that presentation.

Before I sat down that evening, I thought about having some cookies and milk. I still bake oatmeal cookies with raisins for the Christmas season.

Looking at my platter of cookies, I wondered whether I had baked too many just for myself. Then I heard the doorbell ring. When I opened it, there stood Aiden.

"Merry Christmas, Mrs. Adams," Aiden said, grinning happily. He held a little black Scottie dog with a red-colored, plaid ribbon tied around his neck. On his head was a tiny, black, Scottish beanie-cap with a round fuzzy pom-pom on top. The puppy's pink tongue licked at Aiden's hand.

With his free hand Aiden offered me a rounded, paper plate wrapped in aluminum foil. "Mom wanted to share some of our Christmas Eve dinner with you," he explained. "She hopes you will enjoy it."

I held the warm paper plate smelling of delicious food. "Why, thank you, Aiden!" I exclaimed in surprised delight. "How thoughtful of your mother! Give her a big hug for me."

Aiden nodded and gave me another wide grin. "I guess Mom told you Molly had three puppies a few months ago. It's too many puppies for us. We thought maybe you might like to have this little guy to keep you company. We call him Mac, short for MacDonald—a good Scottish name.

"Oh, Aiden, he's precious," I said softly, as Aiden put the squirming puppy in my arms. "How kind of you all. I'd love to have Mac. I know how to house-

train and care for him," I said confidently. "We had several puppies when my children were small."

"Merry Christmas, Mrs. Adams," Aiden said again. "If you need any help with Mac, just give me a call, and I'll be right over."

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE

Tears filled my eyes. "Thank you for thinking about me," I murmured. "Please, Aiden, come inside and take some of my homemade oatmeal cookies to your family."

"Thanks, Mrs. Adams," Aiden said. "And Mom told me to tell you she hopes you're not cooking for yourself tomorrow. She'd like for you to have Christmas dinner with us about 2:00. I'll come over and help you cross the street."

This time a few tears escaped and rolled down my cheeks, and I gave Aiden a quick little hug. "Tell your mother I said, 'Thank you for the invitation.' I'll look forward to coming over."

With a covered plate of oatmeal cookies in his hands, Aiden crossed the yard and turned and waved. "Merry Christmas, Mrs. Adams," he said once more, smiling.

"Merry Christmas, Aiden, and thank you all again," I called as a warm, squirming Mac wriggled in my arms. His little pink tongue spread wet kisses all over my cheeks. I closed the door. "I love you, too, Mac," I said.

I looked up for a moment and smiled. "Thank You, God," I whispered. "Thank

You for answering my prayers and giving me a puppy to love and hug. I guess I won't be too lonely anymore. I'm sure Aiden will come over to visit Mac now and then. Thank You for neighbors who care about me."

That night I slept a contented sleep. Mac and I are great friends. He keeps me busy and active as I follow him around the house and take him out in the yard for exercise. And yes, he's spoiled. He even sleeps at the foot of my bed!

My friends the McDonnells are always checking in on me, and I've not had an attack of loneliness again. I'll never forget that happy Christmas Eve when God answered my prayers, and the McDonnells blessed me with their "good neighbor love." 🍪

Evelyn Horan is a former teacher and school counselor. She authors books and stories for both youth and adults.

In my
imagination
I heard the
happy sounds
of family love.



© NATHAN PINNOCK

HEAVEN'S SONG

*While shepherds
watched and prayed*

ELLEN G. WHITE

In the fields where the boy David had led his flock, shepherds were still keeping watch by night. Through the silent hours they talked together of the promised Savior, and prayed for the coming of the King to David's throne. "And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the

angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

A JOYFUL SONG MADE KNOWN

At these words, visions of glory fill the minds of the listening shepherds. The Deliverer has come to Israel! Power, exaltation, triumph, are associated with His coming. But the angel must prepare them to recognize their Savior in poverty and humiliation. "This shall be a sign unto you," he says; "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

The heavenly messenger had quieted their fears. He had told them how to find Jesus. With tender regard for their human weakness, he had given them time to become accustomed to the divine radiance. Then the joy and glory could no longer be hidden. The whole plain was lighted up with the bright shining of the hosts of God. Earth was hushed, and heaven stooped to listen to the song—

"Glory to God
in the highest,
And on earth peace,
good will toward men."

Oh that today the human family could recognize that song! The declaration then made, the note then struck, will swell to the close of time, and resound to the ends of the earth. When the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, with healing in His wings, that song will be re-echoed by the voice of a

great multitude, as the voice of many waters, saying, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Rev. 19:6.

EARTHLY CONFIRMATION AND TESTIMONY

As the angels disappeared, the light faded away, and the shadows of night once more fell on the hills of Bethlehem. But the brightest picture ever beheld by human eyes remained in the memory of the shepherds. "And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger."

Departing with great joy, they made known the things they had seen and heard. "And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God."

Heaven and earth are no wider apart today than when shepherds listened to the angels' song. Humanity is still as much the object of heaven's solicitude as when common men of common occupations met angels at noonday, and talked with the heavenly messengers in the vineyards and the fields. To us in the common walks of life, heaven may be very near. Angels from the courts above will attend the steps of those who come and go at God's command.

WHAT GRACE, WHAT CONDESCENSION!

The story of Bethlehem is an exhaustless theme. In it is hidden "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." Rom. 11:33. We marvel at the Savior's sacrifice in exchanging the throne of heaven for the manger, and the companionship of adoring angels for the beasts of the stall. Human pride and self-sufficiency stand rebuked in His presence.


Yet this was but the beginning of His wonderful condescension. It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand

Heaven and earth are no wider apart today than when shepherds listened to the angels' song.

years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life.

A FEARFUL RISK

Satan in heaven had hated Christ for His position in the courts of God. He hated Him the more when he himself was dethroned. He hated Him who pledged Himself to redeem a race of sinners. Yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion God permitted His Son to come, a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted Him to meet life's peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss.

The heart of the human father yearns over his son. He looks into the face of his little child, and trembles at the thought of life's peril. He longs to shield his dear one from Satan's power, to hold him back from temptation and conflict. To meet a bitterer conflict and a more fearful risk, God gave His only-begotten Son, that the path of life might be made sure for our little ones. "Herein is love." Wonder, O heavens! and be astonished, O earth! 

This excerpt is taken from Ellen White's book *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), pages 47-49. Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.

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ENGAGE



PHOTO BY WARREN WONG

**READY FOR
NEW YEAR'S EVE**

Ready for what whom?



LAEL CAESAR

Being ready depends on knowing what's coming and how to prepare for it.

There's 2018's New Year's Eve: 12.31.17. And then, or before, there's eternity. And everybody needs to be ready for both. At least we do for the latter—eternity. And putting it second in our heads, focusing on 12.31 more than on forever and ever may be the most tragic sequence of thoughts in anyone's head that could ever take place.

INTRODUCING BILLIONAIRE BILL

Billionaire Bill Koch has an outrageous story for *Adventist Review* (AR) readers, and other folks too, who are getting ready—either for forever, or even just for New Year's Eve. The folks in Bill's Billionaires Club are quite an extraordinary lot, though there is probably no great coincidence between his group and the extraordinary mortals who make up

AR readership. Bill's league, the "B" league ["B" for billionaire], with its 2017 list of 2,043 individuals,¹ or 0.000027 percent of earth's population, is rather more restricted than the "A" league ("A" for AR), with its scores of thousands of readers and sharers online and in hard copy.

The United States, where AR is published, is also the country with more billionaires than any other. This year's list included 565 names. Reasonably enough, most people in the United States and elsewhere entertain very little expectation of ever getting called up to play in the "B" league. But that doesn't mean that we of the "A" league cannot profit from them. Dissimilarities notwithstanding, we may yet be able to learn personally applicable lessons from Billionaire Bill Koch. Also, engaging with other individuals, "B" leaguers or other, from the United States or from wherever else, may introduce to them the scope of benefits of joining the "A" league.



READY FOR THE SCOUNDRELS

I do not know how many AR readers Billionaire Bill has ever met. He has never met me, though I have met him: to be precise, I have encountered him on TV and online.² But in search of life lessons for myself and my “A” team—you, I tried engaging him in an imaginary conversation about imaginary wines. *Imaginary wines?* Yes, imaginary wines. “A” teamer endowments include the virtue of patience. And patience will help us understand about imaginary wines by sustaining us through our imaginary conversation with Billionaire Bill. Here goes:

“Are you ready, Billionaire Bill?”

“Ready for what?”

“For what’s coming?”

“I don’t know what’s coming. Can’t know if I’m ready if I don’t know what’s coming. Being ready depends on what’s coming: on knowing what’s coming, even if it’s just a ball drop, and knowing how to prepare for it.”

“True.”

Now and then, looking at my office printer, I see that it is saying “Setup Menu”: it may be giving a “not ready” notice: I may need to push some buttons to get it ready to work. Sometimes, though, it will say “Supply very low,” which is also a “not ready” note. Except that this time it is not button-pushing time: it’s just paper-stuffing time.

Sometimes, especially at first, I bewildered the machine by pushing buttons out of turn. Of course, I ended up bewildered myself when the machine did not know how to respond.

So Billionaire Bill is correct: being ready usually includes knowing both what has happened and what is

coming. Let’s resume our conversation with him:

“I understand, Bill, that your wine cellar ended up stocked with Hardy Rodenstock’s fake wines. Why would you have allowed that to happen?”

“Probably because I wasn’t ready for tricksters—given that people aren’t usually defrauded if they’re ready for the scoundrel. Wasn’t it Jesus who told those stories about people being either ready or unready? In one of them He speaks of people having to stay awake until midnight, and even until 3:00 a.m., because they’re expecting someone: they don’t know exactly when that person’s arriving, but they’re determined to be awake and ready when the individual shows up [Luke 12:35-38]. He tells of another person He calls ‘the goodman of the house’: even though he’s good he still gets robbed. Just being nice isn’t enough to protect yourself. Being ready is. Jesus says that if Mr. Goodman had known when the thief would strike, ‘he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through’ [verse 39, KJV]. Sometimes the goodman isn’t ready. I wasn’t.”

Billionaire Bill has a lesson for us—not only about “[un]readiness,” but about what to do if you’re caught unready. Bill didn’t sit on his hands or wring them forever once he knew that he had been had. He figured out what to do after he was defrauded: he both figured out what to do and did it (I’ll admit that “B” leaguers are well positioned to do what Bill did).

Bill had collected hundreds of bottles of wine he thought was pure class and age: four bottles from Thomas Jefferson’s cellar, for which he paid \$100,000 each; more than 200 fake bottles from a dealer in Los Angeles, California, named Rudy Kurniawan. But somewhere along the line Bill became sensitive to the possibility of charlatans in the wine business,

If we’re thinking of forever preparation as a New Year’s Eve experience we’re actually preparing to be surprised.

people who were making up exotic back stories about their wine production and ownership: on a CBS show presented Sunday, October 22, 2017, Bill displayed a bottle labeled “Chateau Lafite Rothschild 1870.” The materials expert he hired to examine his prize catch, told him that the bottle and its label were joined together with Elmer’s glue. Turns out that Elmer’s glue came along 77 years too late (1947) to be part of an 1870 original.

Bill came to realize that farce was a significant element of the sophisticated wine business, involving flashy dealers traveling by private jet financed through their fabulous concoctions: not their wines; just their stories about aged burgundy. Bill discovered that even famous auction houses selling the wines needed to be held to account for auctions that advanced the cause of deception.

So Bill set out to fix it. By the time CBS ran his story in October 2017, Bill had spent more than \$35 million tracking down the frauds responsible for selling him wines that “never existed”—as Sharyn Alfonsi and Brad Goldstein put it on CBS’s *60 Minutes*.³ Precisely here, on his hunt for fake-wine purveyors, Billionaire Bill fits right into an article on being ready. But whereas I could not more fully agree that fraudulent and criminal activity and its perpetrators should be investigated and rooted out, that didn’t keep me from reflecting that \$35 million of Billionaire Bill’s good money spent in pursuit of elusive tricksters could supply 1,754,386 conscientious, truth-seeking individuals with “A” league subscriptions in 2018.

JESUS AND BEING READY

Bill may not have been ready for the frauds who outwitted him and many other people. But he has

dedicated himself to pursuing and correcting what went wrong.

Jesus’ stories about readiness, however, stand in dramatic contrast to Bill’s cause célèbre. They mark a crucial difference between getting ready for New Year’s Eves that come, and go, and come again, and getting ready for forever. Jesus’ stories seem to go consistently in the opposite direction, leaving no place to apply Billionaire Bill’s hunt for criminals.

Consider Mr. Goodman: his entire story takes up no more than 20 words (in the Greek). Jesus’ application takes up another 14. Jesus’ point is sharp, narrow, simple, and categorical: if Mr. Goodman had known the thief’s hour of striking he would have been able to stop the criminal. No room here for time and outlay of millions of possible feed-the-poor or clothe-the-naked, or provide-the-subscriptions dollars to correct what went wrong; no time to call the cops or pursue the thief yourself and recover your stolen goods (Luke 12:39, 40).

And the five foolish girls at the pajama party sleepover in Matthew 25 get no second chance to catch bouquets at the wedding celebration (Matt. 25:10-12). Evidently Jesus’ interests in our being ready signify considerably more than staying awake, with most of America (78 percent!), long enough to see the 12,000-pound, Waterford crystal ball drop, and sing “Auld Lang Syne.”

Moreover, without taking anything away from your New Year’s Eve excitement, getting ready for eternity is for Jesus, in a very real sense, the opposite of many people’s perception of New Year’s Eve preparations.



In His stories about coming back Jesus sometimes speaks of Himself in the third person, as the Son of man (Matt. 10:23; 13:41; 16:27, 28; Mark 8:38; Luke 12:40), emphasizing His humanity and personally engaging with prophetic language from Daniel's judgment vision (Dan. 7:13): He's the judge who rules in favor of His people, clearing the way for coming to take us home.

If we give His stories the attention they deserve, we may realize how much more important is the coming of the Son of man than the coming of New Year's Eve. Also, we may recognize that His coming is climax, not buildup; conclusion, not introduction; the end, not the beginning. So that being ready for it is critical, a matter of life or death. Popular perspectives on New Year's Eve are so diametrically opposed to Jesus' "get ready" stories that a New Year's Eve fascination could seriously threaten, or even tragically compromise, our readiness for the Son's appearing. It could be the saddest, most dangerous, most ill-advised arrangement of thoughts in my head or yours that we ever did.

A quick review of our New Year's Eve get-ready items, compared with the essentials in Jesus' get-ready lists, will readily confirm or disconfirm this sober truth.

While preparing this article, I read of a man named Vasily who had many friends with birthdays in late December and early January. Because of how his friends' birthdays coincided with year-end festivities, New Year's Eve preparations meant even more preparation than otherwise: for Vasily and his friends, getting ready for New Year's Eve and beyond meant stocking up two solid weeks' supply of cigarettes and vodka. Vasily's thinking and actions at that point⁴ show that the more we think of readiness in purely New Year's Eve terms, the more we jeopardize our eternal future.

His New Year's Eve-style preparation is so dangerous for Christians that it earned the specific focus of three church leaders who were messaging big-city Christians in the Roman province of Macedonia around A.D. 50 to 51: drunkenness and sleeping are things you do at night, Paul, Silas and Timothy wrote to believers in Thessalonica, Macedonia's New York: but we are people of the light, not people of the night (1 Thess. 5:5). Understanding Paul and his

colleagues in the context of 12.31.17 and the 60-second ball drop tells us that if we're thinking of forever preparation as a New Year's Eve experience we're actually preparing to be surprised; disappointed, in fact.

As the message to Thessalonica explains, Jesus' coming will then be like that of a thief sneaking up on you (verse 4). For too many Vasily's in the world, being ready for New Year's Eve means having enough vodka at hand to ensure themselves of a time of revelry and carousal purchased by mind-blowing intoxication. By contrast with the world's vodka-swigging Vasily's, we as people of the day must maintain our sobriety, while those of the night intoxicate themselves; and we must watch while they choose to sleep (verses 5-8).

READY FOR WHOM?

The greatest thing about getting ready for eternity, and the thing that sets it apart from any New Year's Eve jollification, must be that when the climax comes we'll meet Jesus. Yes, we shall meet Jesus, and get to spend all of forever—gloriously, interminably all—with Him whose love and sacrifice make eternity possible, with Him who has prepared it for us and us for it: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16, KJV).

Jesus is coming back to take us to Himself. It may be a New Year's Eve event. I can't say. But being ready for Him every day, every moment, guarantees readiness for New Year's Eve and way beyond: 12.31.17 will find you ready. And if your destiny is sealed before that, you'll be ready too. Being ready for Jesus every day guarantees a championship 2018 season, and winning every day beyond, until the day we see Him for ourselves and He takes us to Himself to celebrate the endless endlessness of life with Him in glory in His heaven and in our earth made new.

¹ www.forbes.com/sites/kerryadolan/2017/03/20/forbes-2017-billionaires-list-meet-the-richest-people-on-the-planet/#750606c362ff

² CBS, 60 Minutes, Oct. 22, 2017, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/billionaire-koch-brothers-crusade-against-counterfeit-wine/>.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ He later found Jesus and everything changed.

Lael Caesar, an associate editor of *Adventist Review*, is not always awake at midnight, 12.31, but looks forward to being for Jesus' arrival.



THOUGHTS ON A TANKER REFUELING

*Good stewardship
for good caregivers*

PATRICE WILLIAMS-GORDON

In the aftermath of Hurricane Irma a lone gas tanker being refueled caught my attention.

STAR STATUS

Just a few days before, gas tankers had been the center of attention. In the disruptions that follow hurricanes, everyone was seeking to fill up gas tanks and store reserve supplies of gasoline. Lines of people at gas sta-

tions snaked away around corners. And with gas stations running out of the precious fuel, the sight of any loaded tanker inspired pandemonium, as panic-stricken motorists stormed the vehicle, necessitating police escort services for the tanker. But now, with life returning to normal, my gas tanker has lost its celebrity status: now it's just another truck being quietly refu-

eled. Thoughts on its renewed commonplaceness now hold me captive.

DURING AND AFTER THE STORM

Disturbances in our personal lives often mirror nature's storms. Nature's tantrums generate chaos and great need, such as for gas tankers. But then the calm returns, demand wanes, and tankers lose their elevated status. How similar with our own social world. In times of crisis, caregivers are in high demand. The rush may become so intense that it threatens their very stability. Demand for their attention and possible intervention may lead them to feel both exhausted and indispensable. Then circumstances improve and the crisis abates, diminishing demand for their caring service. Their value seems to evaporate, leaving them either invisible in the shadows or conspicuously redundant. As liberating as it may seem to have no new burden, this change in pace can sometimes be disconcerting and even depressing for the caregiver as they reevaluate their worth.

THREE LESSONS FOR CAREGIVERS

Caregivers may learn valuable post-storm lessons from my lone gas tanker.

1 Embrace "alone" times. Don't be discouraged by slow times. Your service comes in seasons. During those times when life seems to forget you, when demand for your assets is low and introspection yields little to celebrate, use the freedom for self-refueling. Check your gauge and service your being all you can, because calm times don't last forever. Wise man Solomon says, "There's an opportune time to do things, a right time for everything on the earth: . . . a right time to embrace and another to part, a right time to search and another to count your losses, a right time to hold on and another to let go, a right time to rip out and another to mend" (Eccl. 3:1-7).¹ "Alone" times are the right time to mend.

2 See service as your calling. Though it may seem selfish, it's worth being aware that others often care much more about what you have to offer than what you need to survive. Your provisions and services on their behalf bring them to you and keep them in your company. Discovering or experiencing this may awaken feelings of

Service is why we are and how life is.

resentment. But this truth is only one more of life's less-flattering realities.

Yet all of us are created to service and sustain the life of others by means of the unique gifts and talents that we each process. It's why we're expected—in fact, instructed—to bear each other's burdens "and so complete Christ's law" (Gal. 6:2). The weight on that lone tanker's back is not for self-enhancement; it is, in time of peace or war, for the sake of serving many. We too must ever be ready, whatever life's changing circumstances may demand, to empty ourselves for others, to serve the rest to the last drop of fuel in our tank.

It won't always be smooth, comfortable, or even acknowledged and thanked, but service is why we are and how life is. Service is how we express and participate in "the great principle which is the law of life for the universe."² Consider this detailed and in-depth description: "All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. . . . Through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service. . . . And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life."³

None of us needs, even for one moment, to worry about service for God going to waste: "God doesn't miss anything. He knows perfectly well all the love you've shown him by helping . . . , and that you keep at it" (Heb. 6:10).

3 Keep fueled up. It had never crossed my mind before that tankers themselves need to be fueled. It doesn't matter how much gas is laden on their back to transport—they are stumped,

We must ever be ready, whatever life's changing circumstances may demand, to empty ourselves for others.

useless, without their own personal supply to get the job done.

In the same way, we cannot aptly serve others if we ignore the administration to ourselves of what we seek to give away: however rarely acknowledged, doctors do need medical checkups; teachers still need to be taught; pastors need to be ministered to; and parents often need a shoulder to cry on. Caregivers, depended on to supply care, need care themselves. That is what “alone” times are for, whether physically, emotionally, or spiritually. The apostle Paul warns: “I don’t know about you, but I’m running hard for the finish line. I’m giving it everything I’ve got. No sloppy living for me! I’m staying alert and in top condition. I’m not going to get caught napping, telling everyone else all about it and then missing out myself” (1 Cor. 9:27).

Paul’s words apply to all who find themselves called to care for others. “Staying alert and in top condition”—physically, emotionally, spiritually—is not just good stewardship: it is crucial to one’s continued ability to serve. So be a good steward to yourself. The chances of being run over, overturned, or otherwise damaged by those they seek to help is a risk care providers constantly face.

Run over, overturned, damaged, wiped out: it’s

what happened to Jesus; it’s what His care for us got Him. Sometimes the Father sent Him support (Luke 22:43). Good stewardship of the self includes knowing when to call in the cops; when you need backup support or reinforcement to your boundaries. Being exhausted likely diminishes the care you may be able to give to those in need.

The Dalai Lama states it this way: “In dealing with those who are undergoing great suffering, if you feel ‘burnout’ setting in, if you feel demoralized and exhausted, it is best, for the sake of everyone, to withdraw and restore yourself. The point is to have a long-term perspective.”⁴

No wonder Jesus found it necessary to call His servant–trainees away from the field of action: bubbling over with excitement over all the work they had just done, the thrill of it threatened their continued stability in service. There was so much noble work to do, and such a sense of accomplishment in doing it, that even meals took a back burner. So Jesus invited, “Come off by yourselves; let’s take a break and get a little rest” (Mark 6:31).

CLOSING COUNSEL

Precisely because of your commitment to good stewardship, include yourself in taking care of yourself. Down times, “alone” times, are a necessary privilege, not moments for moping at being ignored. They are your times of recuperation. Embrace all the seasons along the path of service to which you feel called, and remember, too, the refueling seasons. It’s what you need in order to be able to steadily “work hard and cheerfully at all you do, just as though you were working for the Lord and not merely for your masters, remembering that it is the Lord Christ who is going to pay you, giving you your full portion of all He owns. He is the one you are really working for” (Col. 3:23, 24, TLB).⁵

¹ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

² Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), p. 21.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ http://thinkexist.com/quotation/-in_dealing_with_those_who_are_undergoing_great/346720.html.

⁵ Verses marked TLB are taken from *The Living Bible*, copyright © 1971 by Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Ill. Used by permission.

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FAITH ON FACEBOOK

By nature I'm a pretty calculated guy. I read all the reviews on Expedia when I need to book a hotel room, then sweat the difference between 3.9 and 4 stars. I have a running list at all times of things I need to get at the store: divided into such categories as "household stuff," "food," and "produce." I could go on, but you get the idea.

I've been writing for the *Review* for about a decade now. When I write a column, it is generally the product of something I've been mulling on for months, or an experience that deeply affected me. I don't write off the cuff.

But in the wake of the tragic mass shooting in Las Vegas, I was reminded that there are times God calls us to do less-precise planning and take action.

During the past 20 years our country has experienced a plethora of these kinds of events in schools, churches, and nightclubs. But this one hit a bit closer to home. With Las Vegas only four hours away, we had connections with a number of the victims.

The day after the shooting, I noticed a variety of posts about God on Facebook. Probably the most interesting was from a man who said he went to the concert as an agnostic but left as a believer. He said that without God he would not have survived. Of course, in the comments he was berated for insinuating that God valued his life above those who were killed. Most of these comments came from a worldview in which a God of love cannot exist, because if He did, He would not allow something like this to happen.

The question of God's character has

plagued humanity for millennia, causing some to question their faith, leave the church altogether, or never consider Christianity a viable option.

In the face of so much suffering and confusion, this calculated columnist just started typing. I opened my Facebook profile and wrote nearly 1,000 words in less than a half hour. I introduced the post with the simple phrase "A post about the battle between good and evil, and why God seems to stand by and allow bad things to happen."

It didn't quite go viral, but it did get shared 44 times, some by people I didn't even know. One such share had the following comment: "Thank you for sharing this. 'My husband' and I have just read this together and found it to reveal new insights that we hadn't considered before."

In writing this post, I was reminded of two things: First, we have special biblical insight that most of the world has never heard. Second, God has called us to take this insight, known as the "everlasting gospel," to every corner of our planet. Sometimes we do this through carefully written 550-word articles, meticulously planned sermons, or a series of one-on-one Bible studies. But other times God calls us to share truth through the lens of our personal faith using less-formal methods: a conversation at work, going door to door with a GLOW tract, and yes, even on Facebook. 🍷

*To read the whole post, look me up on Facebook.

Jimmy Phillips is executive director of marketing for Adventist Health Bakersfield.

INTRODUCING
THE WHY
JIMMY
PHILLIPS



I OPENED MY
FACEBOOK
PROFILE AND
WROTE NEARLY
1,000 WORDS IN
LESS THAN A
HALF HOUR.

A TOUCH OF KINDNESS

*Noticing others
is a great way to
spend the holidays.*

EDITH PADFIELD GALAMBOS

The restaurant was crowded that last Sunday before Christmas. Taking a lunch break from their hectic schedules, holiday shoppers joined with the “after-church-go-to-dinner folk” to make this a busy place. Just six more days until Christmas! And here I stood alone, waiting to be seated.

NOT-SO-HAPPY HOLIDAYS

The seasonal decorations did little to lift my spirits; just the day before, my sister had lost her yearlong battle with cancer. Following a challenging week in the hospital, she went to sleep in Jesus on Sabbath. Always a special friend and an important part of my life, she would be sadly missed. After spending Sunday morning discussing funeral arrangements with her daughter, I decided to stop at this restaurant buffet for a quick lunch on my way home.

Following a short wait, I found myself seated alone in a booth, but with little appetite. As I bowed my head to ask a blessing on food, there was a lot on my mind that had little to do with food. My silent prayer centered on my niece, who had just lost her mother, and on the funeral service that would follow in three days. In the coming weeks there would be an empty place in the lives of family and close friends that only God could fill. These thoughts made my prayer of blessing somewhat longer than usual, and it mattered not that others might be watching.

Christmas music over the sound system could barely be heard above the happy chatter and laughter of those in the restaurant. I observed family groups and their friends as they shared this happy time together. One family sitting in the booth across from me especially caught my eye: a smiling father and mother with two well-behaved children, a little boy and girl, looked like a model family. But of everyone in the crowded restaurant, I recognized not one familiar face.

I also observed that in the entire restaurant I was the only person eating alone. The “alone” part was not unusual. Whenever I had occasion to be in a restaurant by myself, I would usually be the only one eating alone. Even after six years as a widow, I found that eating alone was not the most enjoyable experience.

ALONE, BUT NOT ALONE

But the food was good, and I was, after all, a little hungry. With no one to talk with, I tried to occupy

my mind by concentrating on happy thoughts. Pleasant memories flooded my mind as I ate. Family childhood memories, teenage memories, memories of the not-so-long-ago, memories of happy times, all events shared with my wonderful sister. How much I looked forward to the resurrection!

I was almost finished eating when I realized that the server had not yet placed the bill for my meal on my table. Some of the other patrons were already finished eating and were leaving.


The family that had been sitting across from me was also leaving. I would soon be ready to go too, but I was a little puzzled because I had not yet received my bill from the server. When she finally came with no bill in her hand, she surprised me by announcing that my meal had already been paid for. Paid for by whom? I had recognized no one. What stranger would have paid for my lunch? And why?

With a big smile the server told me that the family that had been sitting across from me had paid for my meal, wishing me a very Merry Christmas. My first thought was to thank them, but they had already left, leaving instructions that I was not to be told of their gift until after they were gone. Neither the server nor I had any idea of who they were or how they could be reached.

This had never before happened to me, and I was quite at a loss for words. All I could think to say was that maybe the family were Christians. Perhaps they had noticed that I had asked God’s blessing on my food. Or maybe they detected a glimpse of sadness amid the holiday merriment. Whatever the reason, I felt blessed by their action, and my heart was touched by their kindness.

LOOK AROUND

A random act of kindness? Or was it an act prompted by a loving God who knew that I could use some encouragement that very day? Either way, I’m thankful for this type of caring kindness that can be repaid only by paying it forward. Some blessings are meant to be passed on to others. How good it is that the future beckons with many occasions to spread kindness along someone’s pathway.

“Lord, make me aware of any opportunities in which a touch of kindness could bring happiness to others.” 

Edith Padfield Galambos writes from Hamburg, Pennsylvania. A retired schoolteacher, she taught at Blue Mountain Academy for 27 years.

CHRISTMAS:

LESS STRESS, MORE JOY

Don't get lost in the hustle and bustle of the season.

SHEILA ELWIN



Christmas is upon us. What do you envision?

I see bright, colorful lights and happy people. The church sanctuary is loaded with poinsettias, and an inspiring Nativity scene with the kindergarten and junior kids plays out on the platform.

At home, tasteful decorations highlight each corner, and a warm and friendly tree beckons from the immaculate living room. There are many outings with friends, delicious six-course meals full of laughter with family, or maybe quality time spent with one special person.

WHEN IT'S NOT ALWAYS SO LOVELY

Wouldn't that be lovely? Adjust your glasses just a little, though, and you see people—maybe even yourself—scrambling through long lists of Christmas shopping, with an element of panic in the air. The church sanctuary certainly is lovely. *But* you volunteered to help with that Nativity scene, and are now herding lively young children around in an attempt to create order. The house is a mess, boxes of decorations are open and scattered about, and the half-decorated tree has a strand of lights that simply will not stay lit. Your calendar is ridiculously full, and there is no way you can fit in one more Christmas event, not even a Messiah sing-along. The food actually makes it to the table and the family is gathered round, but you're praying that Uncle Lou doesn't say anything politically inauspicious and that your 5-year-old grandniece doesn't spill her bright-red juice. Or, maybe it's worse than that: nothing is happening, no one is there for you—you're lonely at Christmas.

This holiday season how can we lessen our stress while at the same time bringing more joy to our lives?

LESSEN THE STRESS

Let's start with the stressors. What are the things that cause you the most grief at the holidays? Make a list: expense, family stress, too much busyness, loneliness.

Personal boundaries are a wonderful thing. Set some realistic ones for yourself so that you won't be overcome with holiday stress. For example, take the area of expense. Is your family inclined to be in debt by the end of the season? Set a budget for gifts, food, and activities.

If you have a large extended family that gathers to exchange gifts, suggest to them that you exchange names, enabling each person to purchase only one gift. Or if there are numerous children in the extended family, perhaps each family unit could present only the kids with gifts, and allow the adults to be gifted by saving money. Maybe extended family isn't an issue, but you have a very tight budget for your immediate family. Prepare children ahead of time that each child will get one gift—which could be bought, handmade, or even presented as a gift of one-on-one time for something they were particularly wanting to do—and the rest of your Christmas will be filled with family activities.

Another boundary area is time. Too many activities on your list? List your possible commitments, then number them in order of importance. Decide to choose one special event a week, or maybe only one for the season if you are easily exhausted by crowds. Do you have children, grandchildren, or young friends engaged in a plethora of Christmas concerts? If family obligations demand your attendance, then cut out a block of time each day for yourself. It might only be a half hour, but take yourself away from people, phones, and television, and spend that time reading a book, listening to music, or talking with God.

Are there ways you can retain some of the activities you've been looking forward to all year, but tweak them to be less frenetic? Don't lock into a pattern just because it's the way you've always done it. Are there things you can do before the stressful season hits? Be willing to look for tiny gifts of peace.

MAGNIFY THE JOY

So things are looking better. You've set a few parameters not to overwork yourself and get lost in stress. Now, how do magnify the joy of the season? There are usually a few traditional ideas that spring to mind readily. Make a list of the things you like best during Christmas, and seek them out: drive through neighborhoods to look at twinkling lights and displays; find a local church hosting a Messiah sing-along and participate; go ice skating with family or friends; look for free concerts in the area.

Help your family retain the spiritual significance of the season. Read the Christmas story every day for family worship in the week preceding Christmas Day. (If you have young children at home or grandchildren nearby, follow the 12 Days of Advent with

them.) Make sure your own soul is also fed during this time. Step away from the holiday trappings each day, and make time to be alone with God. Look for those “grab it” moments. Late-night wake-ups, alone in your car as you run errands—both times lend themselves to communing with God.

A SEASON OF SERVICE

Here’s another way to keep our perspective. Even though we know the true meaning of Christmas, the focus of the season is usually on our family and ourselves. Service to others doesn’t automatically surface on our list of favorite seasonal activities. Finding ways to serve others could turn out to be one of your best memories and favorite traditions of Christmas.



SIMPLICITY SAVES SANITY

I love these ideas that some of my friends at the Mount Ellis Academy Church in Bozeman, Montana, use to simplify Christmas Eve.

Joan Pierce shares that, “I try to find things I can do ahead of time, such as thinking about my Christmas list early and buying some gifts during

the year when I see something that is right for someone; or sometimes making gifts I can work on through the year.”

“Everyone in the family gets to open their Christmas stocking on Christmas Eve, no other gifts, just the stocking,” says Molly Cypher. “Every stocking gets a book. So, guess what the family is doing the rest of the evening! It is such a peaceful Christmas Eve.”

“When feeling alone or overwhelmed with the thought of either not having family nearby or having too much family nearby, we have opened up our home to potluck the main meal for the day. We have never been disappointed with the outcome. People truly feel at home and snuggle into a sofa, bean bag, or just sit on the floor. They can visit, watch football or a movie in another room, play games, put together puzzles, etc., something for everyone.” Penny Roberts points out, “It’s an opportunity for growing relationships. After all, isn’t that truly what the gift of Christmas is? A relationship with our Almighty God?”

See if your local pet shelter needs help with feeding and walking during the holidays. Call a homeless shelter and volunteer. The latter might not turn out to be the poignant picture in your mind of handing plates of food to suffering humanity. What they might really need is for you to wash dishes in the kitchen. Nonetheless, “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matt. 25:40).

A classic example of Christmas service is singing carols at the nursing home. Don’t stop there, though. Stay and chat. Many of the elderly will have no one visiting them on Christmas Day. Your 20 or 30 minutes spent listening to reminiscences of a past era may be the best present ever.

Are you yourself alone this Christmas? Consider spending the whole day at a nursing home, shelter, or hospital. Serving others helps both giver and receiver. “Ask what is it God is wanting to teach us through this year’s festivities, and who is it He is wanting to place in our paths to be a friend to, or to be a friend to us,” reminds my friend Penny [Roberts]. “So many possibilities! It’s awesome, really.”

I know a gentleman in Georgia who has a 20-year tradition of Christmas service. Early Christmas morning every year, Michael Fuchcar, a member of the Marietta, Georgia church, gets up and starts baking. He has gathered all his ingredients and pots and pans ahead of time, so that Christmas Day can be all about the joy of doing and giving. He bakes dozens of cookies in several varieties, loads them on colorful plates, and delivers them to several local fire departments: first responders who have given up their own Christmas to serve the public. “It’s an absolute honor to serve those who serve us each day by putting their lives on the line, standing in harm’s way,” says Fuchcar.

Ellen White wrote, “As His representatives among men, God does not choose angels who have never fallen, but human beings, men of like passions with those they seek to save.”*

This Christmas, stay above the fray of it all and find ways to stay grounded and peaceful. See how you can represent God to a lonely old man, a sick child, a homeless woman. Maybe you can even represent Him with a cookie.

Merry Christmas! 🍪

*Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 134.

Sheila Elwin writes from Livingston, Montana.

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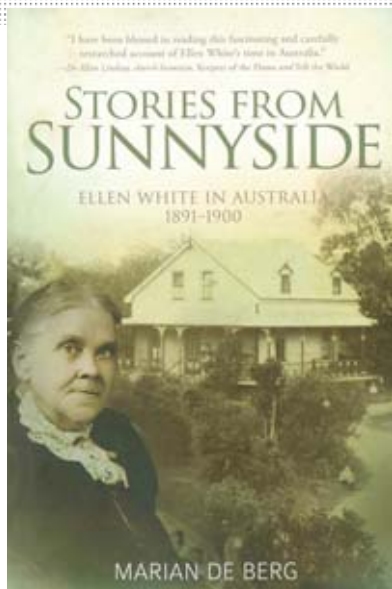
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Stories From Sunnyside

Stories From Sunnyside: Ellen White in Australia 1891-1900, Marian de Berg, Signs Publishing, Warburton, Victoria, Australia, 2017, 308 pages. Softcover, US\$16.99. Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, *Adventist Review*.

Those of us who live in North America have a fairly well-defined understanding of Ellen White and her ministry to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We know how God called her as a teenager; how she and her husband, James, were instrumental in forming the Adventist movement; and how her prophetic voice is mainly responsible for a worldwide system of education, health care, and publishing.

But not many people in North America know that Ellen White spent nine years in Australia; and even fewer know the stories of the people she met and the way she influenced the Adventist Church there.

In *Stories From Sunnyside* Marian de Berg, an administrative assistant at the Ellen G. White/Seventh-day Adventist

Baptizing the Devil

Baptizing the Devil: Evolution and the Seduction of Christianity, by Clifford Goldstein, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Nampa, Idaho, 2017, 256 pages. Hardcover, US\$24.95; Kindle, \$9.99. Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, *Adventist Review*.

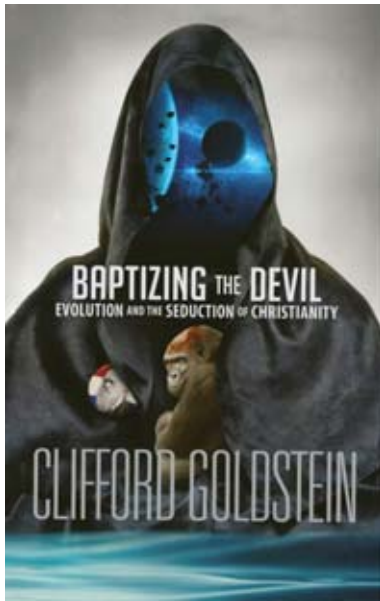
You don't have to wonder what's on Cliff Goldstein's mind. Ask a simple question, and you'll get a response that won't stop.

Baptizing the Devil reveals Goldstein's study, reflection, and rumination over the past five years about the apparent contradiction between inspiration/revelation and reason/science. The result is like drinking from a fire hose. In 11 chapters, using illustrations and applications that range from contemporary and well known to ancient and obscure, the author deconstructs many popular evolutionary theories and explains why the biblical account is more credible than any theories connected with evolutionistic thinking and logic.

The burden of the book is revealed in the subtitle: "Evolution and the Seduction of Christianity." The author contends that many Christians are abandoning the literal reading of the Genesis cre-

Research Centre in Cooranbong, Australia, tells a story unfamiliar to all but the most well-informed Adventist historians. In nearly 50 short, readable chapters de Berg tells how Ellen White came to Australia, describes the places she lived, and introduces us to the family members and friends who surrounded Ellen White during her sojourn "down under."

A remarkable feature of the book is not only the narrative provided, most in Ellen White's own words, but also the photographs that accompany the volume, most of which will be unfamiliar to Adventists



ation account and attempting to marry evolutionistic theories with inspired accounts. To those who find it increasingly difficult to defend the biblical account of Creation against the popular perception that we just evolved, reading *Baptizing the Devil* will do a lot to erase feelings of inferiority.

For Goldstein, no theory, no science is valid unless it points people back to a God who “created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). The story of origins is as much about inspiration, salvation, and destiny as it is about Christian belief that “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (verse 31). *Baptizing the Devil* is not a simplistic book with simple, trite answers. It’s a book for those who value

their Christian foundation as a solid platform on which to stand while grappling with hard questions that have confounded so many for so long.

Baptizing the Devil has a wealth of documentation; each chapter is carefully and thoroughly footnoted. One thing that would have added to the value of the book is an index. The author cites so many authors—scientists, philosophers, and theologians—that it would be helpful to see how often, and in what contexts, they appear in the book.

In *Baptizing the Devil* Clifford Goldstein, editor of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, and one of the church’s most prolific and thought-provoking writers and thinkers, has provided readers with a substantial and formidable defense of biblical inspiration as it relates to the earth’s origins.

in North America. Who knew, for example, that Ellen White kept a dog named Tiglath Pileser, named after a ruthless ancient Assyrian king and described as “a terror to evildoers” (the dog, that is). A photo of the dog next to his house is one of the many photographs that illustrate the book.

In addition to the story of Ellen White’s influence in Australia, de Berg tells the stories of many of the Adventist pioneers who helped build the institutions that have served generations of people throughout the world. This is more than a book about an individual. It’s a book about a dynamic, powerful movement.

AROUND THE WORLD AT CHRISTMAS TIME

The memories and traditions we hold dear.

For centuries, the birth of Christ has been remembered by Christians all over the world. Traditions celebrating this singular event vary from country to country. Here we share glimpses of this special season as seen by people who have experienced it in various settings. They may differ from what you are used to, but are meaningful nonetheless. What traditions connected to Christ's birth hold a special place in your heart?—Editors.

FILIPINO-AMERICAN CHRISTMAS JOY

In America, Christmas typically begins the day after Thanksgiving, but in the Philippines the season kicks off on September 1, and continues until the Feast of the Three Kings on January 6. Christmas music floods airwaves and malls, and decorations light up offices, stores, and houses.

Filipino Christmas traditions blend the cultures of two nations that occupied the country—Spain and the United States—and this is evident in religious customs and commercial influences.

Churches conduct a Christmas worship featuring a cantata followed by a festive meal shared by all. Home decor includes a Nativity scene with stars and angels. And Christmas is not complete without a Christmas Eve family get-together for a midnight feast. Following the feast, gifts are distributed, to the delight of the children in the family.

It is widely claimed that the Philippines celebrates the longest Christmas season in the world. That carries through in our suburban Chicago life as Filipino-Americans. More important, we are Christians saved by our Savior, whose birth we bear in mind as we celebrate the season and look forward to life with Him forever someday soon!

BING ALABATA

SUMMER CHRISTMAS IN SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa, where we live, Christmas is at the height of summer. We usually celebrate with our family and share lunch together. We gather at our family cottages by the beach for a few weeks. On Christmas Day we sometimes have a “braai,” or traditional Christmas lunch. It’s a special day, during which the focus is on spending time together. We do not exchange many presents, and we focus on gifts that are useful and meaningful. We recognize the importance of Christ to us as well.

KAREN SCHWARZ



South African Christmas KAREN SCHWARZ



DOAR-TAHA CHRISTMAS

I was born and raised in Syria, in a village called Doar-Taha, located on a hill that overlooks the great Mediterranean Sea. Our village has four different religions, with most people being Greek Orthodox, and the remainder Ishmaelite, Sunni, and Shia Muslim. Christianity in our village traces its origins back to Bible times, when the name “Christian” was first used in the north Syrian city of Antioch (Acts 11:26). Despite our different beliefs, we have long treated each other like family.

Christian traditions and ritual heritage are still a big part of life and worship in this part of the world. The Greek Orthodox Church celebrates many holy days related to specific historic events during Jesus’ life on earth. Christmas celebrations center on a day of visitation among relatives and friends, wishing them a happy holiday and a prosperous new year. Of course, good food and different kinds of sweets are prepared for our celebrations that come at the end of 40 days of fasting; there is also a little exchanging of gifts, but mostly sharing of food with the poor and needy.

Significantly for us, though, Christmas is called “the small feast,” in comparison with Easter, which is called “the big feast.” Some of this relates to the weather, which is colder at Christmastime and much more pleasant at Easter time in the spring. In recent times Western traditions such as Christmas trees and Santa Claus have come to be integrated with our older and distinctive traditions.

NAHJEEB NAHKLE

CHRISTMAS IN GUYANA

Christmas festivities in Guyana include two public holidays: Christmas Day, December 25; and Boxing Day, December 26. From as early as November, Christmas carols can be heard on the airwaves and from churches. Numerous schools and churches do Nativity plays. Guyana’s six races all celebrate the season, as the variety of dishes prepared for Christmas Day meals would indicate. Many families who have migrated to Europe and the United States return to Guyana for Christmas claiming that “there is no Christmas like a Guyanese Christmas.” Street parades of West Indian music and performers on high stilts with such names as “Mother Sally” and “Mad Bulls” reflect the season as well, competing with Father Christmas [Santa Claus] for children’s attention, and sometimes their terror. Guyanese housewives expect the youth to drop in at multiple homes to savor such seasonal foods and drinks as black cake, mauby, ginger beer, and sorrel drink. Buildings are decorated with Christmas lights, which Guyanese call “fairy lights,” along with scenes depicting the birth of Jesus as written in the Bible. Guyanese hospitality also shows itself in serving economically disadvantaged families on Christmas Day in ways that enable them too to revel in the joyful spirit of the day.

FLORENCE ALLEN AND FAITH NGONDO

Many families who have migrated to Europe and the United States return to Guyana for Christmas claiming that “there is no Christmas like a Guyanese Christmas.”

It was a very simple time.

A SWEDISH TAKE ON AN AFRICAN CHRISTMAS

There is one tradition I fell in love with when I was 11 years old and we had just moved to Rwanda. One of the Swedish missionaries had us dress in white with wreaths on our hair. She made pastries, and we went to all the homes singing and giving them out. It was a very simple time.

MYRA GALLEGO TONGPO

THE HOLIDAY IN A MAJOR CHINESE CITY

Christmas in Shanghai is interesting. Most expats leave the city during the Christmas-New Year holiday, so traffic dies down a bit. However, Christmas is not a public holiday, so schools, offices, and businesses are open. Christmas is catching on commercially, so in December, stores decorate and have sales. Many young urban Chinese will also have a Christmas celebration in the evening after work on December 25, but rarely do they give gifts to each other. Most of the Chinese I know enjoy being invited to my home for a taste of this special time. They are curious and interested to see how foreign families celebrate together.

ANGIE WAN

A THAILAND CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

We moved to Thailand in September 2010 and I remember the kids working on the Christmas program from the very start of the school year. The music teacher, Teacher Linney, wrote nearly every song for the program. It was like a scene off a Broadway show! My husband and I had been told to get there three hours early, because every seat would be taken. The AIMS (Adventist International Mission School in Muak Lek, Saraburi, Thailand) Christmas program was not to be missed! All the parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles of the Thai Buddhist kids attending AIMS would attend. Student demographics were 90 percent Thai Buddhist, so this was a big outreach to the community. On the campus at Mission College (now APIU, Asia-Pacific International University), the Christmas holiday was understated. There were no Christmas lights and wreaths decorating the school or in the faculty neighborhood. There may have been an artificial tree in a Westerner's home, but there was no outward sign that this was the Christmas season. It struck us how differently Christians over the world celebrate this holiday. The malls in Bangkok, however, were decorated with lights, fake snow, and sleighs with reindeer. All the shops are open on Christmas Day, of course, and the beautiful decorations don't come down for months after.

SHARON TENNYSON



Thailand Christmas SHARON TENNYSON



Nativity HEIDI MURPHY

FOR THE LOVE OF CHRISTMAS COOKIES

For as long as I can remember in our nearly 36 years of marriage, my husband has made sugar cookies at Christmas. This tradition only became more joyful when each of our three children hit the toddler years and were deemed old enough to help create a happy mess. As they grew, their designing efforts took on levels of increasing complexity. We went through a phase of ensuring that there was brown frosting for the camels and horses and reindeer, and that everything that had a face had eyes, a nose, and a mouth. When they hit their teens, there were fancily decorated ornaments and a few that looked like a Green Bay Packers helmet, along with angels adorned with a red W for the Wisconsin Badgers. As silly and secular as it may seem, we have come to the realization that our Christmas cookie tradition represents stability, family strength, and the power of God's love to our family. For them, our Christmas cookie tradition has given them reason to come visit, but more important, because they were involved in making and decorating cookies when they were younger, they have experienced stability, family strength, and God's love through this time together. Now we're grandparents, and the first of our grandchildren has enjoyed his parents' Christmas cookie tradition. Not surprisingly, the grandparents and aunt and uncle were right there helping his parents show him stability, family strength, and the power of God's love in the simple experience of making Christmas cookies. Another grandchild will be joining in the tradition this year, and may the experience be the same for her.

TOLA EWERS

THE REASON FOR THE SEASON

There's just something about the Christmas season that ignites a warmth in my spirit. Our traditions begin the Friday after Thanksgiving. The kids and I head to the Christmas tree farm to pick out the perfect tree. When it's found, the three of us proudly take our Christmas card photo. After the adventure of getting the tree inside and standing straight, we head downstairs. There's one box in particular they are looking for: *la casita* (the little house). It has 25 little doors, and every morning they eagerly read the message inside. From bedtime stories under the Christmas tree to creating new ways to share Jesus, each day is a new memory. I look forward to opening two boxes each year. The first holds our Christmas ornaments. Each year I buy the kids an ornament that reminds us of something God did for us that year. The other box holds a wooden Nativity scene. It's special to me because there is a sacredness to how the artist portrayed each figure. Each has its head bowed in reverence; they know they are in the presence of holiness. That's what ignites my spirit, and that's what I'm trying to teach my children by revealing Him to them—Him who is the definition of love.

HEIDI MURPHY

It's *Because* He's Coming Soon

This past year has been filled with things that matter; filled with profound things that matter to humanity. Political unrest, injustice, natural disasters, violence—the list could take the rest of this piece.

These things could indeed be a fulfillment of prophecy signaling that the long-awaited end is much sooner than we think. For anyone longing to see Jesus, that is truly our hope. However, the Bible is pretty clear that no one truly knows the “when” except the Father. And for those who’ve wrestled with Him on concerns great and small, we also know His timing is something we can’t correctly comprehend.

In the meantime, aside from wringing our hands and posting social media messages of “our prayers and thoughts are with you” in the face of horrific world events, what are we really supposed to do while we wait?

In reading the many comments we receive to Facebook posts and online articles related to the tragedies and injustices unfolding on a seemingly daily basis, I’ve noticed several alluding to how none of this really matters because Jesus is coming soon.

So, if I’m following this logic correctly, Puerto Rico being 75 percent without power for more than a month after Hurricane Maria doesn’t matter. Our brothers and sisters in our communities continuously hurt through racism and violence don’t matter. Homes and schools burned to the ground, upending lives overnight,

don’t matter. Countries destabilized by governments bringing chaos and economic collapse to innocents don’t matter. It’s all part of what’s supposed to happen, right? Because we should just focus on readying ourselves for Jesus’ coming.

But that’s exactly it: Jesus is coming because He can’t let the hurt go on. How do we share that with a devastated world? The world is asking, “Where are you Christians? Aren’t you all supposed to care? Isn’t that your Jesus message? I know this, because I’ve literally been asked that by nonbelievers who want to know what followers of this Jesus plan to do.

How do you spread the gospel, without caring, to someone who doesn’t have electricity to read the tracts we hand out? How do you effectively extol the mercy of God to someone burying a loved one gunned down in senseless violence? How do you show the relevance of Jesus’ soon coming to a person trapped in a refugee camp for years where soon isn’t soon enough? And how could anyone say it doesn’t matter? To aching hearts in need of dire help, there is no good news without any of us *living* the good news first. While we are still here, for as long as He sees fit for us to be here, it all matters. While we wait, we can’t embrace silence and cling to prophecy about the end of the world without trying to help this hurting world. Because their pain is exactly the reason He’s coming back (see Matthew 25:34-40).

None of it matters because Jesus is coming soon? *Because* Jesus is coming soon is exactly why all of it matters. 🍌

**“OUR LIVES BEGIN TO
END THE DAY WE
BECOME SILENT ABOUT
THINGS THAT MATTER.”**

—MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

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