

ADVENTIST REVIEW

APRIL 2022: SALVATION CHECKLIST + WHAT WILL THE CHURCH BE? + WE KNOW IN PART + THE CHALLENGE OF POLITICS AND FAITH + ADVENTISM AFTER AUSCHWITZ



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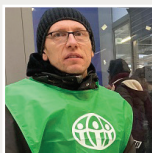
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 **DISCOVER**
BIBLE SCHOOL

BILL KNOTT



No one—not pastors, greeters, even longtime friends—is fully trusted yet.

Warmed by the Gospel

I have watched them coming back, filing from the parking lot like refugees returning to a long-abandoned home. They move through church foyers and hallways with furtiveness well-learned from two years of hiding behind masks and social distancing. No one—not pastors, greeters, even longtime friends—is fully trusted yet, for this strange season has persuaded us that other humans are the greatest threat to our existence.

Where once we feared the mushroom cloud, or galloping inflation, or society's long slide toward amorality and disintegration, we've learned in 24 short months to fear each other—even well-intentioned others. Who knows what unmasked moments may yield?

We sit in clusters that seem safe, like sculptures carved to fit the pews. No hands across the nearby pews; few hugs; no unnecessary talk. We rise for hymns and kneel for prayers with nothing like our former zeal. The music dies upon our lips, as if it is unseemly to be singing of a God of light and color after two long years of gray. A weighted blanket rests on all, suppressing what we once described as joyousness in Jesus. Few babies cry: young families are still missing from the gathering.

In 60 years of watching fellow Adventists in church, I've never seen the like of it, even in our

moments of great loss or tragedy. Where once a remnant people huddled close to find what warmth and joy they could, we now make do with showing up—hoping in our heart of hearts that some small piece of God's good truth might light a fire or warm a hymn.

Which makes this moment exactly the one in which the gospel must be heard—the everlasting good news that long predated this pandemic and will be told when all this pain is mercifully forgotten. Hearts grown cold from fear and loss will only warm when we decide to tell each other once again the well-worn stories of hope and love—how Jesus came into this darkened world with music in His heart and healing in His hands. This is the hour—for sometimes, that's all the window we have—to trace His kindness toward His enemies; His deep compassion for those lost without a shepherd; His unrelenting interest in the ones He termed “the least of these.” We need to hear again that God's first attribute is love—that all our brokenness is met by grace that does not alter when He alteration finds: “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17).

This isn't a responsibility only for the preachers, for they are living this strange time as well.

Their hearts are not the founts of optimism we frequently imagine, for they have seen the losses of these years on larger and collective scales. They've buried friends and longtime leaders; wept with desperate, grieving families; and worried for their spouses and their children. They've asked themselves a dozen times if they should do this painful work or seek the solace of some simpler job. The gospel we expect them to share from the pulpit is the same gospel we must share with them at the door—the Word of affirmation; the gratitude for caring; the stories of fears overcome; of sins forgiven; and the enduring power of hope.

A new covenant awaits our full endorsement—a deep calling to companionship, to holding on, to staying with, to gently weaving once again the fabric of community so tattered by the last two years. The post-pandemic church of Jesus won't rise from the ashes like the mythical phoenix just because the worst of times may now be over. It will require intentional re-tellings of the gospel; arms reaching out to re-embrace; a deep forgiveness born of grace for those who have offended us through these contentious months.

Nothing in the last 2,000 years has ever stopped the gospel. Nothing ever will. ♣

Bill Knott

FAITH AND TRUST

Thank you, Olga Valdivia (“Angel Watch,” February) for opening a new vista on faith and trust. I recognized faith and trust as defensive strategies enabling one to repel the attacks of Satan, but when you said, “My best weapon was my faith and the trust I was placing in the care of my heavenly Father,” that led to new and intriguing thoughts: faith and trust as a weapon against cruelty, the inhumanity of man to man, the evil of this world. A shield and a weapon all in one. A way to protect but also a way to take the battle to the enemy of my soul.

Bruce McClay, M.A., M.L.S.
Battle Ground, Washington



CHANGE THE HEART

What an impressive issue of the February *Adventist Review*, regarding the plight and suffering of African Americans. Coming from Brazil in 1956 to further my education, my wife and I rode by bus from Miami to Los Angeles and could not understand how Black people were treated in the buses and bathrooms. I admire the courage of Rosa Parks being arrested on February 22, 1956, to stand for equality! During my school days and work at the Church’s world

headquarters I met with wonderful leaders who were in their rightful position, side by side with workers from all over the world. Justice had been made! Elder Cleveland was my teacher at the old seminary in Takoma Park, and later I had the opportunity to work side by side with other outstanding Black leaders. Our message should be to change the heart and not the skin.

Leo Ranzolin, Sr.
Estero, Florida

COMMENTS FROM FACEBOOK

The articles referenced here can be found on our website: adventistreview.org and on our Facebook page.

VOLUNTEERS AND ADVENTIST MEMBERS SHOW THAT GOD’S LOVE IS STRONGER THAN WAR

Appreciating all of you. You are representing the “Salvation Army,” and your faith speaks. We pray for you all.

Peter Savari

LOCAL CHURCH EXPLORES CREATIVE APPROACH TO TEMPERANCE IN THE U.S.

Here in Colorado the use of marijuana has greatly increased among school-aged people since it was legalized for recreational use. It has cost our families, communities, and health-care facilities so very much. I feel grateful the Vassar Church is responding. Good luck with this project.

Beverly Helm

ARE ADVENTIST ONE-ROOM SCHOOLS RELICS OF THE PAST?

The main benefit of a one-room school (with multiple grades in one room) is that students learn self-reliance. They are also not subjected to teachers who think they must spend the full classroom day teaching from the front

2022 GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

Official notice is hereby given that the postponed sixty-first session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will be held June 6-11, 2022, in the America's Center in St. Louis, Missouri, United States. The first meeting will begin at 8:00 am, June 6, 2022. All duly accredited delegates are urged to be present at that time. This Session will also be accessible for delegates remotely by electronic means.

Ted N C Wilson, General Conference President

Erton C Köhler, General Conference Secretary

of the room. This gives the students the time they need to complete their schoolwork in the classroom, where they can ask for individual assistance from the teacher or from higher-grade students as needed.

Connie Dahlke

ABUSIVE ADVENTISTS?

Thirty years ago I stood in the pulpit of Adventist churches speaking on the hidden addictions and various abuses going on within the church. The message was not well received. I have walked away from the Adventist church a few times, disgusted by the level of denial and tired of the way I was treated. I dropped my membership and walked with Him, seeking His face. He called me back four years ago to the Adventist Church—back to pulpits to speak on the very same topics. He also put me on the radio and directed me to keep writing and seeking His lost sheep, those wounded lambs He loves so much. I am gladdened to see these topics are being discussed—finally. Thank you for sharing.

Laura Lee

Well done. Our medical institutions need to embed and integrate mental health services

with warm handoffs when patients are assessed as anxious, depressed, addicted, etc. They don't follow through well when sent out the door. Whole person care should extend to mental health. No, it won't make the clinic or hospital lots of money, but it's the moral and Christian service to offer.

Karen Spruill

I really appreciate the competent clinical perspective on this. We have much work to do and in my observation the conference level and many pastors are unwilling to explore ways to manage this.

Elise Whogardens

UNPRECEDENTED FLOODS IMPACT ADVENTIST CHURCHES AND SCHOOLS IN AUSTRALIA

We are living in the last days, when so many things are happening. Jesus is soon to come.

Angella Samuels

ADVENTIST SCHOOLS IN UKRAINE ARE DOUBLING AS PLACES OF REFUGE AMID ATTACKS

I'm proud of our brothers and sisters at those schools, for living out their faith this way.

Wanda Teed

"BIGGER THAN BASKETBALL"

Sounds like Eric Lindell's story in the famous "Chariots of Fire" movie and his refusal to run, as the favorite, at a 1924 Olympics Sunday (Sabbath for him) meet. Must applaud those who stand up for their convictions.

Ted Porter

"MISSION: INVENT" ENCOURAGES INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN STUDENTS

Bravo! This is hands-on learning. Now, take the next step and find sponsors to give the seed money needed to turn the best ideas into services for the community and business opportunities for the students.

William Noel

YOUR TURN

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

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“As a church, we want to use our means and facilities to assist people suffering the escalation of violence in Ukraine.”

—Johannes Naether, p. 11

NEWS



La Sierra University's four presidents since it became a university. Left to right: Friz Guy (1990-1993), Larry Geraty (1993-2007), Randal Wisbey (2007-2019), and Joy Fehr (2019-present). PHOTO: NATAN VIGNA

LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY LAUNCHES CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS

AT NEW SCULPTURE DEDICATION THE SCHOOL RECALLS GOD'S GRACE.

BY DARLA MARTIN TUCKER, LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY

Under cool, cloudy skies that eventually gave way to the sun, roughly 250 La Sierra University alumni, current and former leaders, and campus and community members gathered February 15 to begin the commemoration of a significant milestone—the school's 100th anniversary.

Serving as the first of three main celebrations planned this year, the inaugural event centered on the dedication of *The Lost Sheep*, a new campus sculpture situated within a grove of carob trees—a nearly 10-

foot (three-meter)-tall bronze illustration of the biblical parable of the lost sheep. The sculpture is the third and final piece in a series titled *Glory of God's Grace*, which is based on three parables in Luke 15—the prodigal or lost son, the lost coin, and the lost sheep. A sculpture depicting the lost coin was unveiled on La Sierra's campus in April 2017, while the anchoring work, an iconic sculptured tableau, was installed in 2002, surrounded by a reflecting pool and centering the university's main plaza.

“It's fitting that we gather here among the carob trees on this occasion. These trees, the pods of which are claimed by some biblical historians to have formed the diet of John the Baptist, the herald of grace to come, Jesus Christ, who then gave us the three stories in Luke 15 that reveal the glory of God's undeserved favor and love,” La Sierra University president Joy Fehr said in her address for the dedication event. Fehr took up the presidency in 2019 as the first female president in the university's history and has led the institution during the COVID-19 pandemic that swept through the nation and region just a few months after she took office, requiring its immediate shift to months of online learning.

Currently La Sierra University's faculty, the majority of whom hold

“They embody our university’s identity as a place where grace is paramount, where we have seen God’s blessing and compassion repeatedly during these 100 years.”

doctoral degrees, teach nearly 2,000 students from around the United States and more than 50 countries.

OF PARABLES AND PROGRESS

“One of my concerns from the very beginning was that we be a real university, a place where knowledge is expanded, where new ideas, new understandings, are developed,” Fritz Guy, La Sierra’s president from 1990 to 1993, said during remarks offered by the four presidents who have led the institution since 1990. “As we celebrate La Sierra’s first 100 years, I look forward to the university’s continuing contributions to Seventh-day Adventist thinking and living and serving,” he said.

Educator and archaeologist Lawrence Geraty served as La Sierra’s president from 1993 to 2007. Following his retirement, he was recognized with the title of president emeritus. “Today I’m thrilled that the dream is completed with *The Lost Sheep* sculpture celebrating 100 years of God’s grace to La Sierra University,” Geraty said.

Randal Wisbey, La Sierra’s third president, served in the office for 12 years before retiring in 2019. “La Sierra changed my life, and my family’s lives . . . and I am honored to participate in its centennial celebrations,” he said.

“As doctors Guy, Wisbey, and Geraty have already expressed, there is much meaning behind the three sculptures that now stand on our campus,” Fehr said in concluding the presidential remarks. “They embody our university’s identity

as a place where grace is paramount, where we have seen God’s blessing and compassion repeatedly during these 100 years.”

MOVED BY GRACE

For sculptor Victor Issa, who also created the sculpture depicting the lost coin parable, meeting those whose contributions support the artworks is a poignant moment.

“Having the opportunity to meet the donor families is always an honor and a joy. They do take a risk, and I take the commission very seriously, and I do my best to meet and exceed their expectations,” he said. “May the sculpture touch many lives as the viewers contemplate the knowledge that the Good Shepherd will seek every lost sheep.”

The sculpture was created at 133 percent of life-size, Issa said. The bronze monument was developed during a complex process that took more than two years and began with a detailed maquette, or small concept version, for the client. The following steps involved a live model for the clay work, a rubber and plaster negative copy, and a technical foundry process. Issa’s model for the sculpture was a young man “whose facial features perfectly reflected what I was hoping to portray—compassion, kindness, assurance, and deep love,” he said.

CHANGES FOR THE BETTER

The February 15 audience included alumni and community members who attended to view the new sculpture and celebrate

the university’s commencement of its centennial events.

Eddie and Rosebud Ngo arrived from Redlands, where Eddie is a certified financial planner. The couple met in 1961 while Eddie was a business major before transferring to Pepperdine University. Rosebud studied as a prehealth major in health information systems before transferring to Loma Linda University in 1962 and beginning a medical records career.

The couple recalled their days at La Sierra, when Eddie worked sweeping the walkways outside of Hole Memorial Auditorium and Rosebud lived in Angwin Hall. “I’m a business major, so I would like to see [the business school] push to continue on and hopefully rank in the top 10 business schools in the United States,” Eddie said when asked about his hopes for his alma mater’s future.

“It was a lovely event with excellent speakers and really makes you see how the president has done a terrific job of presenting the whole picture to everyone,” Marcia Gilman, wife of university foundation board member and Riverside attorney Dan Hantman, said. The couple were drawn to the university and involvement in its board through their friendship and support of Geraty during his presidency.

“I had occasion to be out in this area before it is what it is now,” Gilman noted. “It’s amazing. You look at the Riverwalk and how that’s changed. This area used to be farmland. It’s just amazing . . . how much influence this university has had.”



ADRA worldwide network, which includes ADRA Germany, has partnered to support refugees from Ukraine. PHOTO: ADRA GERMANY

RUSSIAN-SPEAKING ADVENTISTS IN GERMANY HELPING UKRAINE REFUGEES

ADRA PARTNERS WITH SEVERAL ORGANIZATIONS TO DELIVER ASSISTANCE.

BY ADVENTISTISCHER PRESSEDIENST AND MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Germany met with other organizations February 28 to discuss concrete steps to help refugees affected by the war in Ukraine. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Germany, the Advent Welfare Office (AWW), and Friedensau Adventist University are among the organizations involved. A working group known as Russian-speaking Adventists in Germany is also involved, leaders reported.

The Adventist Church and the other organizations came together to reactivate the Together for Refugees steering group, which, under ADRA leadership, is set to assist refugees from Ukraine as they seek protection in Germany. It is a partnership that collaborated successfully during the refugee crisis in 2015 and now seeks to build on the experience acquired at that time.

"In the past few days we have received numerous reports and calls for help, which has made us very concerned," Johannes Naether, president of the North German Conference, said in late February. "As a church, we want to use our means and facilities to assist people suffering the escalation of violence in Ukraine."

In early March the Adventist

Church, ADRA, AWW, and Friedensau discussed and shared information on what concrete steps the alliance was planning, where volunteers and those seeking help could find information, and where and how to donate to the cause. Russian-speaking Adventists in Germany rallied to support the initiative, leaders said.

MOVING TO HELP

ADRA Germany moved fast to actively serve both in Ukraine and on the Polish-Ukrainian border. ADRA leaders stated in a press release that they were "working with reliable partners and Adventist communities on the ground to ensure that our humanitarian aid can quickly reach those who need it." ADRA said the agency has provided welcome packs of clothing, food, and cash vouchers. In addition, leaders established plans to provide long-term psychological counseling so refugees can process the traumatizing experience.

The agency is part of a worldwide network with more than 118 independent country offices and about 7,500 full-time employees. ADRA Germany was founded in 1987 by the Seventh-day Adventist Church and carries out projects in development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

AWW is a nonprofit association

and, together with a number of social institutions and various subsidiary societies, is part of the social work of the Adventist Church. The organization manages day-care centers, retirement homes, addiction counseling centers, hospices, and other social institutions, as well as local helper groups.

In 2015 ADRA and AWW, together with other actors within the Adventist Church, launched the Together for Refugees alliance, which has been taking care of refugees as they search for a dignified, self-determined life.

THE ROLE OF ADRA COUNTRY OFFICES

Other ADRA country offices also stepped to the plate as soon as the war started. In Romania the ADRA team moved fast in late February to one of the crossings into Ukraine, where they met with the ADRA Ukraine teams. They managed to drive ADRA vans across the border with assistance for internally displaced persons (IDPs). At the same time, both teams coordinated support to welcome centers on the Romanian side of the border and prepared accommodations for those arriving.

In Slovakia an ADRA team welcomed refugees at the border with Ukraine in Vyšné, where the agency set up its main humanitarian tent.

The ADRA Poland team was also at the border with Ukraine providing support to those fleeing the conflict. Along with welcome packages, the team provided psychosocial support and legal assistance, leaders reported. ▀



UPDATE ABOUT THE GC SESSION

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is pleased to announce the General Conference (GC) Session will be opening its doors to the public. All are welcome to attend the business session and evening programs. The GC Session is the quinquennial meeting of the Adventist Church's Executive Committee, its largest governing body, and will be held in St. Louis, Missouri, June 6-11, 2022.

The health and safety of all attendees is our top priority. Therefore, we will have enhanced sanitation, ample space to accommodate social distancing, as well as other safety measures and guidelines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We will continue monitoring the ongoing coronavirus developments and will assess and adapt as necessary to keep everyone safe.

The GC Session will be held at the America's Center Complex in St. Louis. You can access the most current updates and information on our website www.gcsession.org.

When planning your stay, visit this website bit.ly/3IX82nv to locate a hotel within walking distance from the America's Center Complex. Meal tickets are also available for purchase. Go to bit.ly/3sUFgOX for more information.

We look forward to seeing you in St. Louis!



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Members of the disability community participate in a Possibilities Ministries convention at the Portmore Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2020. PHOTO: CENTRAL JAMAICA CONFERENCE

ADVENTISTS IN JAMAICA WELCOME DISABILITY ACT

LEADERS BELIEVE IT IS AN IMPORTANT STEP TO HIGHLIGHT POTENTIAL.

BY NIGEL COKE AND INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Jamaica is celebrating with those who are disabled, as it lauds the passing of the Disabilities Act. The new law, which was passed in Parliament in October 2014 and reaffirmed by both houses of Parliament in October 2021, came into effect February 14.

"This is one of the ministries that our church places special emphasis on because we need to be all-inclusive," Adrian Cotterell, coordinator of the Possibility Ministries for the Adventist Church in Jamaica, said. "We should never make the mistake of underestimating the abilities of persons with disabilities, and must refrain from thinking or treating others who may look different as incompetent or inferior."

While many refer to this ministry as "Disability Ministries," the Adventist Church has decided on the nomenclature Possibility Ministries. "We believe [in] the potentials, promises, possibilities, life-changing and transformational outcomes that can take place when we think and emphasize possibilities. We acknowledge that each person was created in the image of God and all are gifted, needed, and treasured in our church," Cotterell explained.

The Adventist Church in Jamaica is one of many in the Adventist world church that devotes one week

annually to celebrate those who are disabled.

"We do this to highlight the ministry and call attention to the need for total inclusion, total participation, total education, and total accessibility, and [to] promote equal opportunities for all persons with disabilities," Everett Brown, president of the Adventist Church in Jamaica, said. "As a church we will continue to do everything to ensure that the objectives of the Disabilities Act will be realized in our nation, particularly through our church."

Cotterell agreed. "We use this opportunity to call upon every citizen of this country to respect the rights of persons with disabilities and be reminded that all of us are broken and need healing. When we focus on possibilities, we look beyond the disability and see abilities, beauty, the lovely, and the wonderful attributes to affirm, the attractiveness to admire, and the person to adore," he said.

In October 2016 the Adventist Church launched the Portmore Adventist Deaf church in St. Catherine. Since then the congregation continues to grow, increasing from eight members to an average of 40 worshipping each Sabbath, with capacity for 75 members. Currently there are plans to set up another congregation in western Jamaica before the end of 2023. ▀



Graduates of the medicine program at Peruvian Adventist University were recently highlighted on national television for their performance at the licensing exam.

PHOTO: PERUVIAN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

MEDICINE GRADUATES ACKNOWLEDGED FOR OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE

IN PERU, PHYSICIANS TRAINED AT ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY ACE LICENSING EXAM.

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Graduates of the medical program at the Seventh-day Adventist university in Peru were recently acknowledged on national TV after a high percentage of applicants passed the National Medical Exam (ENAM). A February 21 national news bulletin highlighted medical students who graduated from Peruvian Adventist University (UPeU) because 96.3 percent of them passed the licensing exam on their first try. That percentage is higher than every other public medical school in the country and every other private university except for one, a recent national study reported.

Leaders said it is no small feat, as the Adventist school launched its medical program only in 2012 and held its first medical school graduation in January 2019. According to national education officers, ENAM is a comprehensive examination that includes testing students' basic science, clinical science, and public health knowledge. The UPeU score, based on 2019 data, marks the first time the UPeU medical graduates sat the national licensing exam.

UPeU medicine program director Felipe Segura said that the outcome reflects the importance of human effort added to God's blessings. "It is the result of the faculty and students' efforts, but above all, of God's

guidance," Segura said. "We are a school taking its first steps, but we hope to continue improving, to do things in the best way, hand in hand with God. Our goal is to train competent medical professionals with integrity, committed to research and the mission of the church."

HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS

Adventist Church secretary Ertion Köhler, who until recently was president of the South American Division, said that UPeU and its leaders deserve such results. "They have worked hard to balance a high level of academic instruction with a strong commitment to the Adventist philosophy of education," he said.

Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, education director of the Adventist Church, concurred with Köhler, noting that UPeU faculty and students have not only worked hard on their academic training but have also been active in outreach. "God has blessed them, but they have also enjoyed the strong support of the school and the South American Division [SAD] administration and its departments of education and health ministries," she said. "We could not be more pleased with this achievement, and wish these physicians God's blessings as they carry out

the healing ministry of Christ."

Peter Landless, health ministries director of the Adventist Church, echoed Beardsley-Hardy's sentiments. He also congratulated all those involved in the education of students at UPeU. "Heartiest felicitations and congratulations to all involved—parents, students, faculty, and, most important, gratitude to God," Landless said. "We rejoice with you!"

INTENTIONAL FOCUS

UPeU School of Health Sciences dean Roger Albornoz shared that the medical program has now started the process of applying for national accreditation. It is the natural next step for a program that, from day one, has strived to leave a quality mark on their students, he said. "The School of Medicine has pioneered in implementing a competency-based education model and the objective and structured clinical examination," Albornoz explained. "It was one of the first schools to apply it to its students since opening the program in 2012." Both models focused on the development of practical skills.

Albornoz said that educational quality is guaranteed through ongoing assessment and feedback. And all of that is complemented by an educational philosophy that seeks to restore human beings to God's image, he emphasized. Thus, Albornoz said, "UPeU is training physicians who can improve people's health and relieve pain in an attitude of respect and service." ▀

Volunteers distribute drinking water at Harbor of Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church in Benton Harbor, Michigan, United States. PHOTO: RAYNO VICTOR



LOCAL CHURCH BECOMES A "HARBOR OF HOPE"

HOW ONE U.S. CONGREGATION IS LIVING UP TO ITS NAME.

BY JULY KLEIN, FOR LAKE UNION HERALD

When the Benton Harbor community in Michigan, United States, was affected by a tainted water system, Harbor of Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church stepped up to support them.

In 2018 health officials in Benton Harbor began noticing an alarming rise in lead poisoning cases. After performing multiple tests, the city discovered that the water system was tainted because of corrosion in the original lead water pipes.

The city immediately reached out to partner with local agencies—one of which was the Adventist Community Services Center (ACS): Harbor of Hope. Once a month in Benton Harbor residents came to designated places, such as the health department, the library, and the Harbor of Hope, to receive water filters and information on how to use them. When the filters turned yellow, a replacement was available.

Harbor of Hope immediately en-

listed volunteers, partnering with United Way so that anyone, even if they weren't part of the church, could volunteer. Additionally, the state delivered water bottles, and they arranged for any leftovers to be picked up.

On October 30, 2021, in just one day, the church and its volunteers handed out 1,500 cases of water. Terri Trecartin, ACS director, remembers how thankful people were. Some told him they were on their last case of water and had been wondering what to do when it ran out.

Harbor of Hope went above and beyond their required duties, ensuring that everyone who needed water received it, even if they were homebound. "If people couldn't get out and get the water, we . . . took it to them," Trecartin said.

During the past three years the city has realized how challenging it is for residents to figure out which location stocks which supplies, so the city picked a central location—

the local high school—where all supplies are distributed. Now all residents go to the high school to get what they need on specified days, and local charities (including Harbor of Hope), assist them.

Harbor of Hope has established itself in the community as an important and trusted Adventist presence. And as ACS director Chelli Ringstaff also noted, one connection leads to another. What began with just water filters distributed at the ACS has grown to 1,500 cases of water delivered in just one day. The city has come to trust Harbor of Hope because they have proved themselves.

But it's not just the city officials who can depend on the Adventist Church. During the summer of 2021, student literature evangelists worked in the Benton Harbor area. Trecartin noted that every time the colporteurs identified themselves as Adventists, people lit up with recognition, "because they knew where the church was," Trecartin said. The church and its organizations have been so influential in the community that Adventist isn't just a name—it's associated with a positive experience. ▀



More than 1,000 laypersons gathered during the Ultimate Hope lay congress in Villavicencio, Colombia, in early February 2022. PHOTO: MELCHOR FERREYRA

MORE THAN 1,000 LAY LEADERS TRAINED IN SOUTH COLOMBIA

CHURCH IS HELPING THEM TO BECOME ACTIVE MISSIONARIES.

BY LAURA ACOSTA AND INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

More than 1,000 laypersons in South Colombia were recently trained during a special congress to strengthen small-group ministry in Villavicencio, not far from Bogotá, Colombia. The lay congress, held in early February, drew regional and local leaders from the East Los Llanos Conference to better equip small group leaders and active members in spreading the gospel where they live.

Themed “Esperanza Definitiva,” or Ultimate Hope, the congress also sought to “bolster the lay forces developing the discipleship, retention, new believers, and the missionary couples ministries set out in each congregation with the purpose to preach the gospel everywhere in the region,” Moisés Prieto, personal ministries director for the church in South Colombian Union Conference, said.

Missionary couples ministry is one of several important ministries, Prieto said. “It is definitely a biblical principle to evangelize, and it is the plan of God for the church in the current times. It is important that two persons work together, one encouraging the other

and praying and studying the Scriptures together,” he said.

Melchor Ferreyra, personal ministries director of the Inter-American Division (IAD), motivated the hundreds of laypersons to continue laboring with all their might in growing the church.

“We have more than 2,000 years of accumulated experience in laypersons, which means that the early church grew on the foundation of laypersons, church members,” Ferreyra said. “Very few were evangelists, but churches multiplied, and new churches were planted on the work of so many anonymous laypeople who work with tenacity and tireless efforts.” So the same is repeated throughout history and in the twenty-first century, he said.

It’s very clear, Ferreyra explained, that laypeople are not called to a spectator role but instead should be protagonists. “Laypeople are not clapping from their pews,” he said. “They are immersed in all of the activities of the church, following the Total Member Involvement church initiative. They are committed to participating in evangelism in [their] local church or local field,” he added.

Leaders provided 1,100 Missionary Work kits for church leaders, pastors, and ministers, as well as New Believer kits that contain a Bible, Bible study course, Sabbath School quarterly, and more.

“Laypeople in East Los Llanos are being trained to cater to four basic needs, namely, 1) retaining new members after baptism; 2) discipleship and winning others for Christ; 3) creating missionary couples and small groups; [and] 4) participating in the Sabbath School class,” Daruwin González, personal ministries director of the East Los Llanos Conference, said.

Leaders said the goal is to mobilize the membership to expand to 350 additional small groups, 700 missionary couples, 1,288 Bible instructors, and 1,000 baptisms in 2021, Joel Hernández, president of the church in East Los Llanos Conference, reported.

Regional leaders plan to hold another congress to gather more laypersons and equip them for coordinated evangelism efforts this year.

The other eight regional conferences and missions in South Colombia have also begun holding lay congresses this month as part of the evangelism strategy this year and in celebration of IAD’s centennial in 2022, church leaders said.

“The challenge that our lay brethren have in the union territory is to be messengers of hope everywhere,” Prieto said. “The world is sick, and we must share that message [of hope].”

As medical school dean, a post he held from 1994 to 2003, he used data to discover ways to empower students and increase graduation rates.

BRIAN BULL, ACCOMPLISHED HEMATOLOGIST AND INVENTOR, DIES AT 84

HE WAS LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY DEAN EMERITUS OF THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE.

BY ANSEL OLIVER, LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY NEWS

Brian Bull, a Seventh-day Adventist inventor and one of the world's leading experts on hematology, who served as dean of Loma Linda University School of Medicine for a decade, starting in the 1990s, died February 22. He was 84 and had been diagnosed with cancer.

Highly analytical and experimental, Bull was a prolific inventor, creating numerous methods and instruments to better understand blood platelets and their function, including clotting. Graduating in 1961 at the top of his class from Loma Linda University School of Medicine helped him land residencies at Yale University and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), where he collaborated on numerous groundbreaking research projects. He returned to Loma Linda University as a professor in 1968, where he remained the rest of his career.

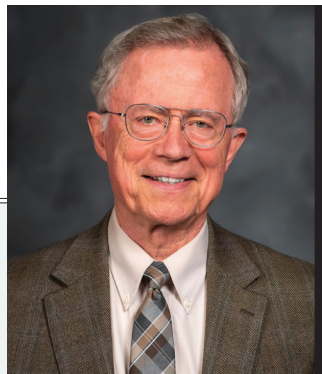
Colleagues estimate he was granted 17 patents and authored 230 papers. At the NIH he helped invent the Coulter counter analysis—essentially an electrochemical cell with a small hole in it to count blood platelets as they pass, similar to what had already been invented for blood cells. He also created “Bull’s algorithm” in

the 1970s, an equation for blood lab technicians to quickly determine if equipment is working correctly; the algorithm is still widely used in most lab equipment today.

Bull is also credited for increased monitoring of how cardiopulmonary bypass patients metabolize heparin to reduce postoperative bleeding, enabling the medical community to significantly reduce mortalities in the early days of open-heart surgery.

As medical school dean, a post he held from 1994 to 2003, he used data to discover ways to empower students and increase graduation rates. Bull chaired the Department of Pathology and Human Anatomy for more than 40 years, starting in 1973. He also served for 10 years as editor of the international hematology journal *Blood Cells*.

Bull was known for being incredibly knowledgeable about nearly any subject. He was widely read, extremely curious, and enjoyed surrounding himself with other experts from whom he could learn, said Paul Herrmann, current chair of the Department of Pathology and Human Anatomy. Bull was thoughtful and cared about helping others.



Brian Bull passed to his rest on February 22, 2022. He was 84.

PHOTO: LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH

He was known to offer tutoring to any medical student, even meeting with students at 5:00 a.m. if needed.

Richard Hart, president of Loma Linda University Health, said that “Brian Bull was the classic senior statesman on campus, and the stability he brought to the faculty medical groups and particularly the Department of Pathology in both his teachings and clinical function was immense.”

Brian Stanley Bull was born in Watford, a suburb of London, England, September 14, 1937. He attended high school in Jamaica, where his father served as a school administrator. He attended Pacific Union College in northern California and later transferred to what is now Walla Walla University in Washington State, earning a bachelor’s degree in 1957. He had to wait a year to attend what is now Loma Linda University School of Medicine to meet the age requirement.

Bull remained active in his work through December 2021, including a series of journal articles highlighting new research on the pathology of COVID-19 infection.

He is survived by his wife, Maureen, and daughters Beverly and Beryl. ■



ADVENTIST YOUTH MOVEMENTS CELEBRATE FIRST ANNIVERSARY IN THAILAND. The SADFREE Movement—which stands for Smoking, Alcohol, and Drugs Free Movement—and Asia-Pacific International University’s Youth Alive chapter celebrated their first anniversary in February. The hybrid event, which was themed “Stay Driven, Always Living,” took place during the university’s student assembly on the school campus, located in Muak Lek, Saraburi, Thailand. This movement seeks to save young people from the harmful effects of smoking, drinking alcohol, and using drugs, leaders said.



NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION EHuddle DISCUSSES TIPS TO REACH, RECLAIM, AND RETAIN. The seventh annual North American Division eHuddle took place online in February. The event is an opportunity for pastors, laypastors, and elders to gather and rethink what evangelism means to the church in the current environment. Each segment of the conference featured several presenters from various parts of the division, all sharing observations, tips, and convictions on the topic of disciple-making.



SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC YOUTH MINISTRIES FOCUS ON EVANGELISM AND NURTURING. The success of Voice of Youth (VOY) Ignite 2021, led the Southern Asia-Pacific Division to launch the VOY EXPAND, which aims to nurture and disciple new members following the Christian life cycle: bring them to Christ, build them up in Him through spiritual disciplines, train them to minister using their spiritual gifts, and send them out to witness.



LOCAL CHURCHES AND ADRA RESPOND TO FLOODS IN AUSTRALIA. Heavy rainfall caused unprecedented flooding in New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland in Australia, with an estimated damage of \$AU2 billion (about US\$1.46 billion). As soon as flood waters began receding March 3, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) volunteers and local Seventh-day Adventist church members joined efforts to meet the urgent needs of the flood-ravaged communities. In the Lockyer Valley, in Queensland, Gatton Adventist church ran an evacuation center to serve the worst affected areas. Volunteers have also provided meals, clothing, and bedding items to the community.



IN PANDEMIC YEAR, SCHOOL IN AUSTRALIA REJOICES OVER MULTIPLE BAPTISMS. Brisbane Adventist College (BAC) in Queensland, Australia, finished 2021 on a high note, with 12 students baptized in a single event, for a total of 21 baptisms throughout the year. Before performing the baptisms, BAC chaplains Annalise Cherry and Jean-Pierre Martinez invited the candidates to share their testimony, publicly affirming their decision and encouraging others to give their hearts to Jesus.



STUDENTS STEP ON ADVENTIST CAMPUS IN MEXICO AFTER NEARLY TWO YEARS. Nearly two years after Montemorelos University—a Seventh-day Adventist institution located in northern Mexico—was forced to close its campus at the start of the pandemic, students and faculty gathered to officially open its spring semester. More than 1,800 students joined administrators, faculty, and support staff to reflect on God’s goodness and pray together in front of the campus library in late January.



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GUNS OR ROSES?

Civil conversation about uncivil options

The issue of Christians owning and using guns, especially against other humans, has been debated almost since firearms and gunpowder appeared in Europe in the thirteenth century. In today's fragmented religious environment many opinions are advanced in churches, in the public square, and on media. Seventh-day Adventist Christians, often influenced by polarizing political, social, or cultural viewpoints, debate this issue both publicly and privately. We asked two authors with contrasting opinions to engage in an imagined conversation with a respected Adventist friend who holds a different opinion about this divisive topic, each explaining their viewpoint from a Christian and Adventist biblical worldview.—Editors.

TURNING GUNS INTO SHIELDS

Should Christians use guns? YES

JOSEPH OLSTAD

Scripture assumes a theology of protection, a presumption that the moral obligation of rescue from an attacker will be carried out (e.g., Deut. 22:23-27). Sometimes there's no need for command. The Lord simply expects others to rescue as He rescues when hearing their cries: "You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him . . . You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword" (Ex. 22:21-24, ESV).¹

The words for "oppress" and "mistreat" can also be translated "afflict, crush, treat violently," or even "destroy." No wonder God invokes lethal force, i.e., the sword, to defend these groups. He is saving their lives.

So what does this have to do with carrying guns? At the core, a gun is an extension of a theology of protection when used appropriately. The practical question is: What provides the best chances of defending innocent lives against lethal threat? Depending on the situation, a firearm, in well-trained hands, can be a shield of protection.

Many Christians, however, are convinced that carrying guns is out of harmony with Christ's teachings and therefore not an option. Let's consider these concerns.

VIOLENCE AND REDUCING THE TRAGEDY

Violence—intentional, casual, celebrated, or regretted—is the spirit of the age. No wonder that well-meaning intellectuals and activists, seeking to root out violence, have focused on guns. For many, guns are synonymous with violence, and if any group should be avoiding violence in all forms, it should be Christians.

If an attacker is shot by a Christian in self-defense, is that violence? If the standard definition of violence is used as intentional use of force with a likely result of injury or death, then yes, the Christian gun owner is committing an act of violence. (Note: if that definition is used, then any fighting, with or without a weapon, is violence.) But there's a problem. Using violence as the *only* contextual

DOES LOVE AND COMPASSION COME FROM THE BARREL OF A GUN?

Should Christians use guns? NO²

FRANK M. HASEL

Guns are weapons deliberately designed to damage an object, inflict wounds, or kill another living being. Whoever intentionally carries a deadly weapon must be prepared to use it and must be ready to potentially kill. Carrying a deadly weapon thus inevitably alters the way we see and interact with people. We view those around us through a lethal lens. This contradicts three paramount biblical principles: love your neighbor; love your enemy; and trust God fully.

This brings us to the heart of the problem: being ready to kill someone is at odds with loving them. Moreover, relying on a weapon to keep me safe raises a spiritual question: am I placing my faith in guns or God? Whom do I trust will save and protect me? My gun, or God?

WHAT MAKES A CHRISTIAN?

Love and compassion are high on the list of characteristics of those who would be recognized as Christians. Bearing arms, inflicting violence, killing other human beings, and causing others to suffer from gunshot wounds do not reflect the loving and compassionate character of Jesus Christ, who is the Prince of Peace.

It always puzzles me how some Christians are strangely forgetful of the clear teachings of Jesus that have guided and motivated Christians throughout the centuries: "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). Using a gun does not emulate the virtues of love and compassion. We know that "those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did" (1 John 2:6, NLT).³ Believers should never "repay anyone evil for evil" (Rom. 12:17, NIV), but rather "overcome evil with good" (verse 21). Love is the quintessential virtue of Jesus' followers and the identifying mark by which the world recognizes us as His disciples (John 13:35).

EMBODYING FAITH AND IMITATING CHRIST

God does not want people to be victims of violence, and certainly not at the hands of those claiming to be followers of Jesus. Christians cannot

TURNING GUNS INTO SHIELDS CONTINUED

category provides no substantial moral difference between whether the defender kills the aggressor or the aggressor kills the defender. Violence would have been committed either way, with the same result—the loss of one life.

But our God-given moral intuition perceives that although any loss of life is tragic, the tragedy of an innocent life lost is greater than the tragedy of a murderer being killed to prevent more murders. The question to ask is not “How does one eliminate violence in a lethal situation?” Violence is going to be committed whether we like it or not. The question is “How does one reduce the tragedy of inevitable violence?” A gun in the right hands can be used ethically to reduce the tragedy of violence. Simply think of a mass shooter being stopped by a civilian gun carrier. If that’s the circumstance, it’s hard to conceive that a Christian can be morally guilty for using a firearm to that end. In fact, we don’t condemn those who reduce tragedy; instead, we call them heroes.

FROM SWORD TO SHIELD

Christians carrying and using guns as an extension of a theology of protection don’t use guns to kill people. A shot is fired, not with the intention to kill someone, but to decisively *stop* a lethal attack. The shot may or may not be fatal. If they stop a threat by firing on an attacker, they then have the moral obligation to do all they can to save the aggressor’s life (e.g., calling for medical help, administering first aid, etc.). In this sense the gun is used more as a shield than a sword; its purpose is to protect under extreme circumstances, not to purposefully take life. “Vengeance is mine,” says the Lord (Heb. 10:30, ESV). The Christian carrying a gun recoils from any hint of vengeance killing. In fact, if the trigger is pulled after a lethal threat is discontinued (even if the bad guy did really bad stuff), the gun carrier could be convicted of attempted murder—and should be.

EDEN—NOT YET

To the objection that more spiritual weapons are at our disposal, including prayer, the miraculous power of God, and the moral teachings of Christ, gun-carrying Christians wholeheartedly agree.

Prayer should be unceasing, especially in dire situations (1 Thess. 5:17). Principles such as “turn to him the other [cheek] also” (Matt. 5:39, ESV), “put your sword back” (Matt. 26:52, ESV), and “love your enemies” (Matt. 5:44, ESV) should be carefully applied to daily life. Applying them to life-threatening situations becomes more complex.

I have four daughters. If an intruder stabs one of them, I feel no obligation to offer that person the other cheek. Perhaps in the name of self-sacrifice (Matt. 16:24) the Christian should let himself or herself be killed rather than take the intruder’s life. No doubt, this would be morally permissible and even commendable. However, it is less clear in a family situation, say, whether the father should make such a self-sacrifice, leaving the wife and (in my case) four daughters exposed to potentially unimaginable horrors.

A common reaction to scenarios like this is “Trust God to protect.” There is no doubt God is in the protecting business. But many of God’s protective actions are mediated through the agency of His creation. It may be no less an act of God for an angel to strike down a killer than it is for a Christian to shoot one. Also, because some Christians have lived a lifetime without experiencing horrible tragedy, they may be tempted to think that being a Christian insulates them from the extreme dangers of life.

Learning about the real world of violence, choices, and responsibility disallows that naive view. Christians during all times and places have had to face nightmare situations. I recently read of a Seventh-day Adventist family who lost a son to a serial killer. We are not in Eden yet. There are protections that Christians are permitted to take in recognition of that fact.

CONCLUSION

Seventh-day Adventist Christians possess a wholistic view of humanity. We don’t just focus on the mental and spiritual aspects of our lives; we also highlight the physical experience. Think about our health message or the bodily resurrection that Scripture teaches. Physical life has always been a priority with God (Gen. 9:6). If a firearm or other weapon is used appropriately to preserve the life of loved ones, it is difficult to see how this violates one’s commitment to Christ. Preserving innocent life seems, instead, to be a fulfillment of that commitment.

Joseph Olstad, a graduate of Andrews University and the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, lives in Utah, United States.

DOES LOVE AND COMPASSION COME FROM THE BARREL OF A GUN? CONTINUED

change the world through violence. Guns are instruments of violence, designed to harm other human beings who are created in the image of God. Even when guns are used with very noble intentions, the sad reality is that they destroy lives, fracture families, cause injuries, and result in enormous bloodshed, grief, and death.⁴

The use of guns runs counter to the spirit and teachings of Jesus. There is something profoundly unsettling when Christians use weapons of warfare to kill others and think they are somehow following the Prince of Peace.⁵ When this happens, Christianity loses credibility, because what matters most is not what we claim about Jesus, but how we embody our faith. By imitating Christ's peaceful and kind manner, especially in dealing with our enemies, we present to those who would cause us harm the manner by which Christ deals with them. For if we do not treat our enemies as Christ has taught us, how will they know the One we proclaim to be Lord and Savior? Can love and compassion come out of a gun barrel?

REDEMPTIVE VIOLENCE—FACT OR FICTION?

Hollywood and society have conditioned us to believe that violence stops evil and saves lives. This myth of "redemptive violence" is diametrically opposed to what Jesus practiced and taught in the Gospels. "Put away your sword," Jesus said, because "those who use the sword will die by the sword" (Matt. 26:52, NLT). Jesus did not commend Peter for his skillful use of a sword. Jesus did not wound: Jesus healed! As followers of Jesus, we should be willing to suffer injustice rather than retaliating with violence (1 Peter 2:20). In using guns, we have strayed a long way from the peaceful and loving path of Jesus.

AGENTS OF SHALOM

As Seventh-day Adventist Christians we are not called to play the Dirty Harrys, Rambos, or James Bonds of this world. Devotion to the way of Christ means that we do not take up worldly weapons and participate in violent acts, but we are agents of *shalom* as Jesus has described the essential nature and ethics of His new community of believers (Matt. 5:38-48). We do so because God

"is kind to the ungrateful and wicked" (Luke 6:35, NIV). Jesus never violently injured another human being. He never punched a Pharisee or assaulted a Sadducee. Jesus exercised His power to heal, not to harm. The early Christians comprehensively rejected the legitimacy to kill at any level, including abortion, capital punishment, gladiator contests (even watching them!), infanticide, and warfare.

CONCLUSION

If I am completely honest with you, try as I might, I simply cannot imagine Jesus looking into the eyes of another person and pulling the trigger of a gun or a semiautomatic weapon, firing a round of bullets at someone, or engaging in a knock-down, drag-out fistfight with an adversary. I cannot imagine Jesus deliberately hurting or killing another human being. His love compelled Him to act differently. We too should model this love by recovering the courage to learn from Him to be agents of peace. 🌱

Frank M. Hasel is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute at the world headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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

² For a more detailed description, see the discussion in Frank M. Hasel, Barna Magyarosi, and Stefan Höschele, eds., *Adventists and Military Service: Biblical, Historical, and Ethical Perspectives* (Madrid: Editorial Safeliz, 2019).

³ Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

⁴ For some sobering statistics on the impact of gun violence in the United States, see <https://www.bradyunited.org/key-statistics>, accessed Aug. 20, 2021.

⁵ There is a profound difference between shooting a wild animal and shooting a human being, who is created in God's image. No human being is made to be hunted or killed. No human being should be in the crosshairs of another person's gun or assault pistol.

POSTSCRIPT

Two highly divergent opinions, both argued from a biblical worldview perspective that accepts Scripture's truth claims on our lives. Both positions can call on scriptural support; both ground their reasoning in the believer's adherence to God's Word. We invite you to search for relevant biblical principles—and for civil conversations with those who may not believe as you do.—Editors.

HIS Impact On Me

Shanel Draper



“At Holbrook Indian School, I work as the Scholarship Coordinator. I work with the students and their parents to obtain scholarships for the students’ tuition. Some of our students will come up to me and ask about scholarships, and I help them as best as I can. I know that the feeling of having issues at home or even not being able to go home takes a toll on our students. I try to make Holbrook a comfortable place for the students by laughing with them or giving them a smile in passing, knowing that it is hard for them not seeing family as often as they want to.

During my time as a student, I had staff members who were there for me, and I thank them for that. I was broken in so many ways. I am in the process of becoming a mentor, and it’s quite nice. Being a mentor is meaningful coming from someone who shows that they care and will not stop giving up on them no matter what. The moments that I treasure are those spent with our students, as I gradually get to know them. They all have very different personalities. To see their faces light up or filled with laughter; those are the memories I treasure.

“With all the uncertainty over the last two years, it is wonderful to have some tangible tokens of God’s blessing. Four alumni of Holbrook Indian School (HIS) are dedicating their time and talents to give back to their alma mater. Shanel is the story of one.”

Shanel Draper is a HIS graduate who now works as a full-time staff at the school. Seeing our students rise above the challenges of their backgrounds, breaking the cycle of poverty and abuse, this is the reason Holbrook Indian School was founded. We know there are results to be seen on the other side of eternity, but it is refreshing to have some tangible tokens of assurance today--the first fruits of breaking the cycle.”

You too can help Native American youth while witnessing God’s hand in breaking chains and breaking cycles by making a gift to Holbrook Indian School today at HolbrookIndianSchool.org



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ADVENTISM AFTER AUSCHWITZ

I had a spirited conversation with a good friend whose intelligence, knowledge, and compassion are directly proportional to my great respect for him, but inversely proportional to our theological accord. Our immediate subject? Theology after the Holocaust. Peering through the smoke, soot, and ash that arose from the ovens at Auschwitz, partly fueled by the flesh of children, many people of faith in the aftermath of World War II felt compelled to reassess, even radically, their beliefs about God, humanity, and evil. Nothing, it seemed to them, could be the same.

“Why,” my friend snarked, “hasn’t the Seventh-day Adventist Church changed its theology after Auschwitz, as well?”

You mean, I might have said, the Adventist theology that teaches that human beings are basically good at heart? That theology?

But wait a minute. That theology is not Adventist, for biblical Adventism instead emphasizes the pervasive nature of human sinfulness, such as reflected in Paul—“There is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). Adventists never taught that humanity, at its core, is good, as did many progressive Protestant faiths in the early twentieth century. We believe the opposite, which is why nothing about the Holocaust required Adventist pastors to revise their sermons or compelled Adventist theologians to rewrite our understandings of innate, inherited, and learned depravity. If anything, the Holocaust only affirmed our theology.

You mean, I might have said, the Adventist theology that teaches that evil is only an illusion, a human construct but not real? That theology?

But that, too, is not our theology. Baseline Adventist theology teaches that evil is not only real but ever-present, and will remain so until the second coming of Jesus. And

which optimistic theologian could imagine that a prisoner at Auschwitz who watched his wife and babies marched to the gas chamber would agree that evil is an illusion? I dare someone to tell the prisoner that.

You, mean, I might have asked, the Adventist theology that teaches that good is increasing and evil is diminishing? That theology?

But that is not in any way Adventist theology, which teaches that humanity, far from creating a human-made utopia, is destroying what little good there is left, until, as Daniel warned, “there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time” (Dan. 12:1). All our reason, science, and technology—ideals that promised to usher in freedom, peace, and universal brotherhood—have not only failed miserably, but in some cases have backfired: wars are more deadly, regimes more oppressive, and propaganda more widespread. There is no metric for generational deadlines, but our world certainly appears poised—with nuclear weapons, biological weapons, pandemics—to get worse, and quickly, too.

Other faiths might have felt compelled by the calculated evil of the Holocaust—unprecedented in cruelty, malevolence, and scope—to readjust their theology accordingly, often in a more pessimistic direction, to match the mind-numbing cruelty that the Holocaust showed humans were capable of inflicting on others. But Adventists didn’t need to change a word. Far from contradicting or undermining Adventist theology, Auschwitz sadly affirmed our doctrine of human depravity, the reality of evil, and the continued degradation of the world until the second coming of Jesus.


Yes, that theology.

Clifford Goldstein is the editor of the *Adult Bible Study Guide* at the world headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and a longtime columnist for *Adventist Review*.

CLIFF'S
EDGE
CLIFFORD
GOLDSTEIN



IF ANYTHING, THE
HOLOCAUST ONLY
AFFIRMED OUR
THEOLOGY.



*Is it commandments
they're after?*

No one is worthy of heaven. The Bible makes that clear. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).^{*} The word “all” is inclusive because nowhere does the text add qualifiers such as “all except those who . . .” or “all but someone who has . . .” Yes, we can rest assured that none of us deserves—or has, in any way, earned the right—to occupy the new earth.

SALVATION CHECKLIST

CHARLES MILLS



BUT WHAT ABOUT OBEYING?

But then there's this verse included in the Bible's final book that greatly piques our curiosity. Describing scenes from the second coming of Christ, John identifies a particular group of people who aren't pleading for the rocks to fall on them. He writes: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12, KJV). These fortunate folk soon rise to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17).

Well, which is it? Is commandment keeping our key to heaven, or have we all sinned and fallen short? You can't have it both ways. Or can you?

To find the answer to that question, let's take the Ten Commandments, to which John is referring, along with everything else that Jesus taught us to obey (Matt. 28:20). For the sake of drawing a contrast, let's turn the Ten Commandments into a "salvation checklist" of sorts. It may look something like this:

TO BE SAVED, YOU MUST:

- Worship only the one true God.
- Not create false gods to follow.
- Never call yourself a Christian and then not act like one.
- Keep the Sabbath holy.
- Honor your parents.
- Not murder.
- Not commit adultery.
- Not steal.
- Not lie.
- Never desire something that belongs to someone else.

John the Revelator seems to be saying, "Hey, if you're keeping all of these commandments when Jesus returns, you're golden!"

So, as some might argue, we can place a checkmark on all of those items on the list, we can know that, without a doubt, we are saved—that heaven

is ours for the taking. Then we can spend our days and nights filled with the satisfaction that comes from knowing that our room reservation in God's heavenly mansion is secure.

And since we don't know the hour that Christ will appear, we would really need to be keeping all of those commandments all of the time, without a break, 24/7/365. Isn't that how we would assure our readiness for translation? That, and drawing confidence from the dead saints from times past who all lived flawlessly till the moment they breathed their last?

By now you may have concluded that, while being obedient to God's law is admirable and something for which we should be endlessly striving, actually living that flawless life might be a bit of a challenge. Why? Because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God!

Which begs the question: Who exactly will be saved when Christ returns? How should we describe them?

THE SMALL BLACK CLOUD

When I was a child, I heard a preacher say that commandment keeping was so important that even one sin unrepented-of could ruin my chances for heaven. That's quite a burden to place on the shoulders of an energetic and endlessly curious 9-year-old.

Soon after hearing that, I was playing with my toy cars in a field near my home in Tennessee when I happened to look up and see a small black cloud, about the size of a man's hand, hovering in the eastern sky. I'd heard it said that this was the way the Second Coming would look when it began. I stood and stared at that cloud for a long moment. Then a great feeling of dread and fear filled my young heart. I was quite certain that I had at least one sin unrepented-of rattling around in my life—probably more—and that the God in the cloud knew about them all.

What did I do? I ran home, hurried to my bed-

“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.”

room, and pulled the curtains closed. I didn't want Jesus to see me. I didn't want Jesus to hurt me.

That's where the law can sometimes take you. That's where some sinful human beings end up when obedience to a set of rules and regulations is presented as salvation. The unvarnished, ugly truth is: we're flawed. We're broken vessels. We're in the process of healing. We're on an ardent and often painful journey to allow Jesus to change us into His likeness; to pick up the pieces of our sin-shattered lives. To expect perfection in this way at any given moment is both unrealistic and dangerous.

Christ understands. He was born into a culture built on obedience and fear. God's laws ruled the day, the night, the Sabbath, and the workplace. Even sickness was considered a sign that you or someone in your family wasn't keeping the law as you should. Misfortune followed lawbreaking. Success was the direct result of law keeping. That trusty salvation checklist was the standard by which everything and everyone was judged.

SIN—FROM CHRIST'S PERSPECTIVE

Christ came at the sin problem from a very different perspective. He didn't preach that law keeping should be the primary goal of every sinner. He didn't tell the woman taken in adultery, "Start obeying the seventh commandment!" He said, "Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:11). He wanted her to experience a new life, to stop causing herself pain, to stop making herself sad.

He didn't tell the dying thief on the cross, "Thou shalt not steal." He simply said, "You will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

He didn't tell crooked tax collector Zacchaeus, "You're a hopeless commandment breaker!" He simply said, "I must stay at your house today" (Luke 19:5).

What did those people see in Christ's messages to them? Did they see condemnation, judgment, or hurt? No. They saw something very different.

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

One day, when asked, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (Matt. 22:36), Jesus identified two, which weren't even written in the law—at least not in a form most people would recognize.



Here's how He responded: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (verses 37-40).

What a shocker! The greatest commandment, according to the God who wrote them with His own finger . . . is love. And it seems that all the other Ten Commandments "hang" on love like ornaments on a Christmas tree. In other words, if you don't love, that would be like removing the tree. The ornaments—those time-honored rules and regulations that so many hold as the gold standards for living a saved life—would fall flat.

Without love, God's law is just a collection of arbitrary do's and don'ts. But with love acting as the supporting structure, God's law becomes a beautiful description of how we can live life with the least amount of heartache and strife. That's right. Those laws are for our benefit. They don't save us, but they can heal us when love is blended in.

Paul said it best: "If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

Keeping God's law without love in the heart is like buying a new car and never purchasing a single drop of gasoline. You own the car. You can show it to people. You can sit in it and imagine beautiful scenery passing by, but you're not going anywhere. You'll never reach the destination you desire. You and your new car will just grow old together, parked there in your driveway.

The prophet Isaiah uses a different metaphor: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isa. 64:6, KJV).

While God's laws aren't the judge and jury that decide our fitness for heaven, they are of incredible value when love is present. Then they are our guard-rail, our secure track, our clear indicator of how well we're doing in our constant battle with sin.

They're like God saying to us, "Oh, I see you're having trouble with number nine? I can help. Number five causing you problems? Let Me show you what you need to do." Empowered by the Spirit, we can get busy and work on solutions, a process that can take time. Lots of time. As a matter of fact, we may be working on a couple of those commandments when we see a small black cloud about the size of a man's hand appear in the east. But this time it's for real.

REACHING OUT

Knowing what we now understand, what should be our message to the world? Should we be saying, "God's not going to save you, because you're a sinner, because you're a heathen, because you're an adulterer, you're gay, because you don't keep all of His commandments, because you don't believe in or worship Him as the Bible instructs"? And should we be trying to legislate our doctrines, working hard to place the power of the government behind our demands for obedience to God's laws as we interpret them?

Or should we, instead, be following the example of Christ Himself? One momentous day He stood before a gathering of people who, without a doubt, included liars, cheaters, adulterers, thieves, and possibly even a murderer or two on a hillside overlooking the Sea of Galilee. The very first word out of His mouth that day—the very first word those struggling, sad, guilt-ridden people heard from God's Son—was "blessed" (Matt. 5:3).

When Jesus returns the second time, He won't be looking for law keepers—although they certainly will be there with happy smiles on their faces, because they've learned the uncountable value and far-reaching benefits of living by God's commandments. They've also learned that nurturing an attitude of love in their hearts makes keeping His guidelines for life much easier and far more fulfilling. No, God's salvation checklist will be much shorter. He'll be searching for those who've taken the greatest commandment seriously; those who, in spite of their sinful nature and out-of-sync-with-God's-ideal lifestyle, have learned—or are learning—to love. 🦋

*Unless noted, Bible texts are from the New International Version.

Charles Mills, author, radio show host, and media producer, has published several books, including *Religion in the Real World*, *Refreshed Parables*, and *Surprising Nature*.



PHOTO BY PRISCILLA DU PREEZ ON UNSPLASH

distinctly the warning is to ring out: “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen. . . . Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Rev. 18:2-4). The words of this scripture are to be fulfilled. Soon the last test is to come to all the inhabitants of the earth. At that time prompt decisions will be made. Those who have been convicted under the presentation of the word will range themselves under the bloodstained banner of Prince Immanuel. They will see and understand as never before they have missed many opportunities for doing the good they ought to have done. They will realize that they have not worked as zealously as they should, to seek and save the lost, to snatch them, as it were, out of the fire.

God’s servants are to be “not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.” Listlessness and inefficiency are not piety. When we realize that we are working for God we shall have a higher sense than we have ever had before of the sacredness of spiritual service. This realization will put life and vigilance and persevering energy into the discharge of every duty.

Religion, pure, undefiled religion, is intensely practical. Nothing but earnest, wholehearted labor will avail in the saving of souls. We are to make our everyday duties acts of devotion, constantly increasing in usefulness, because we see our work in the light of eternity.

Our work has been marked out for us by our heavenly Father. We are to take our Bibles

THE NEED OF EARNEST, WHOLE-SOULED LABOR

*No time for fakery;
no time to lose*

If our ministers realized how soon the inhabitants of the world are to be arraigned before the judgment seat of God, to answer for the deeds done in the body, how earnestly they would work together with God to present the truth! How untiringly they would labor to advance God’s cause in the world, proclaiming in word and deed: “The end of all things is at hand” (1 Peter 4:7).

WORKING WITH URGENCY

“Prepare to meet thy God” is the message we are everywhere to proclaim. The trumpet is to give a certain sound. Clearly and

and go forth to warn the world. We are to be God's helping hands in saving souls—channels through which His love is day by day to flow to the perishing. The realization of the great work in which he has the privilege of taking part ennobles and sanctifies the true worker. He is filled with the faith that works by love and purifies the soul. Nothing is drudgery to the one who submits to the will of God. "Doing it unto the Lord" is a thought that throws a charm over whatever work God gives him to do.

Carry on all your work on strictly religious principles. Let your earnest inquiry be: "What can I do to please the Master?" Visit places where the believers need encouragement and help. At every step ask: "Is this the way of the Lord? Am I, in spirit, in word, in action, in harmony with His will?" If you labor for God with an eye single to His glory, your work will bear the divine mold, and you will be carrying out the Lord's purposes.

SHOWING AND GROWING INTO CHRIST

In your study of the Word of God, penetrate deeper and still deeper beneath the surface. Lay hold by faith on divine power and sound the depths of inspiration. Bring into your ministry the power of God, remembering that the Lord is behind you. Let His love shine through all you do and say. Let the truth, the precious, simple truth of the Word of God, shine out in full brightness. Humble self before God. Christ will be your efficiency. He has appointed you as rulers over His household, to give meat in due season. Christ's laborers are very near His heart of love. He desires to perfect His household through the perfection of His ministers.

Christ is the sympathetic, compassionate Redeemer. In His sustaining power, men and women become strong to resist evil. As the convicted sinner looks at sin, it becomes to him exceeding sinful. He wonders that he did not come to Christ before. He sees that his faults must be overcome and that his appetites and passions must be subjected to God's will, that he must be a partaker of the divine nature, having overcome the corruption that is in the world through lust. Having repented of his transgression of God's law, he strives earnestly to overcome sin. He seeks to reveal the power of Christ's grace, and he is brought into personal touch with the Saviour.

When we realize that we are working for God we shall have a higher sense than we have ever had before of the sacredness of spiritual service.

Constantly he keeps Christ before him. Praying, believing, receiving the blessings he needs, he comes nearer and nearer to God's standard for him.

New virtues are revealed in his character as he denies self and lifts the cross, following where Christ leads the way. He loves the Lord Jesus with his whole heart, and Christ becomes his wisdom, his righteousness, his sanctification, and his redemption.

Christ is our example, our inspiration, our exceeding great reward. "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9). God is the Master Builder, but man has a part to act. He is to cooperate with God. "We are laborers together with God" (verse 9). Never forget the words: "*together with God*." "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12, 13). The miracle-working power of Christ's grace is revealed in the creation in man of a new heart, a higher life, a holier enthusiasm. God says: "A new heart also will I give you" (Eze. 36:26). Is not this, the renewal of man, the greatest miracle that can be performed? What cannot the human agent do who by faith takes hold of the divine power?

Remember that in working with Christ as your personal Saviour lies your strength and your victory. This is the part all are to act. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. He declares: "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). And the repentant, believing soul responds: "I can do *all things* through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). 📌

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This selection was taken from *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 9, pp. 149-152.



JUST AS I AM

A PROMISE OF GLORY

*Finding God and
finding myself again*

Ten years ago I lost my faith: it had drifted up and down, but then, suddenly, it was gone. Not that I didn't believe in God anymore. No shame or guilt or even anger. I just felt numb, didn't know why, and didn't know how to come back.

LOSING AND FINDING

Looking back, I think I was depressed. If I wasn't then, I certainly would be eventually—lying awake for hours, crushed by despair; suicidal, barely able to cope with everyday life, struggling along, alone. I couldn't put my feelings into words. I kept going to church, reading my Bible, even teaching Sabbath School on occasion.

By grace, my faith returned, little by little. The first step was to see myself as I really was: to see that my strengths—being nice, naive, and nonconfrontational—resulted in an inability to see people as they really are, even while they helped me show non-judgmental love and acceptance to others.

Seeing God's gifts in me alongside my deficits began my upward spiral. My self-condemnation started to ease. I improved my diet; started to exercise regularly. My brain fog cleared; my ability to see and know God grew.

Then early in the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, ARISE [an evangelistic, Bible-study group] offered their free online course. I'd heard about ARISE: Church youth would go to Kingscliff, New South

Wales, Australia, and come back on fire for the Lord. We would get Bible workers figuring out how to put into practice what they had learned. It seemed to be for the younger generation, not for someone who had teenage children.

Nevertheless, Ty Gibson and David Asscherick were a wonderful TV discovery. As they told the Bible's amazing story of a promise made and kept, my vision of God took on amazing clarity: God became real to me. I saw my own sinful human self, but I also began to see myself as God saw me: as the person I could really be if I was willing to give my will over to him. I was a woman beloved by God.

CHARLOTTE ELLIOTT'S FINDING

I now know that my experience of finding God and finding a new life is not unique.

Charlotte Elliott, born 1789, of a family of gospel ministers, was a talented writer, especially of humorous poetry, even though frequently bedridden by age 30. When a visiting family friend talked to her about the peace that only a personal relationship with Jesus can bring, she was initially annoyed at his interference, but slowly softened. What did she have to lose? But how was she to come to God? Her friend, Dr. César Malan, reassured her that it wasn't anything that she needed to do. It was God who would fill the gap.

She had only to come to Him, just as she was. It was the only way to begin. Slowly she started to grow in her love for God. No longer writing



for entertainment, she now penned poems about her Christian experience. God's love replaced her previous feelings of helplessness and condemnation.

More than a decade later, struggling with a feeling of uselessness, she recalled her initial conversion experience. "Just as I am." That's how she first came to God, and that was how she needed to continue. Sitting alone in the quiet house that day, she wrote a poem, one that would go on to help me and many other desperate searchers see our completeness in the love of God.

CALLING

"Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me, and that Thou bid'st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

God is calling every one of us. I may hear His voice, but what do I do next? Seeing God's holiness makes me fear that I can never be saved. I may realize His power, but I don't yet realize His goodness. I may know I need Him, but I don't yet love Him: "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24). Every day I struggle with the tension between the truth that God has offered salvation—full and free—and the lie that Satan bombards us with: *Am I, and can I ever be, good enough?*

But then I see Christ. I see He has done it all. All I have to do, sin-condemned, is come. For God has condemned sin. And because He has, there's no condemnation left over for me (see Rom. 8:1).

CLEANSING

"Just as I am, and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot, to Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

The law exposes me. But it can't change me. It's God's love that changes me. The consequences of my sins have already been dealt with when Jesus died on the cross. Gone is the struggle to be good enough. Now all I desire is to live my life for the one who loved me so much that He gave His Son to die for me.

We may fear losing our salvation, or doubt its validity. But our salvation depends, not on our law keeping, but on our choosing Jesus as our Savior.

He then covers our sins completely. My body may fail me, but my mind is set on Him. One day my body will be made new, but my mind is already His.

I—and you—we don't have to earn His acceptance. We already have it. We can grow because we are living out His love implanted in our lives: "For what the law was powerless to do . . . , God did" (Rom. 8:3, NIV).

FEAR

"Just as I am, though tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt; 'fightings within, and fears without,' O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

Sin shames me. I am frustrated by my continual failings. My mind is constantly fighting against my body, wanting to do right. The whole of creation features this war. One day God will conquer all. As Charlotte Elliott learned, my completeness and yours is found in God, the one who defines reality, who "gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not" (Rom. 4:17, NIV): God calls my holiness into existence out of nothing. Christ's faithfulness guarantees me the promises of adoption, of salvation, and of redemption.

GLORY

"Just as I am, Thou wilt receive, wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve; because Thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!"

Elliott seems to be speaking about someone starting a walk with God. But in fact, we renew our walk with God every day. No matter our yesterday, each day is a new day. And starting to walk with God is the same as continuing to walk with God.

Every day I need to come to Jesus: Elliott's struggle is one we all know. We can all drift away from faith. Life's trials or riches can pull us away from our dependence on God. But when feelings or failures threaten to pull me away from Him, I remember, with Elliott, that I may always come to Him, just as I am. For "those he called, he also justified; [and] those he justified, he also glorified" (Rom. 8:30, NIV). 🍀

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“Your estate plan
is a gift allowing your
family to focus on

memories

not challenges.”

—Eve Rusk

Director of Planned Giving and Trust Services
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“WE KNOW IN PART”

About a decade ago I befriended a couple guys, one of them a pastor, who were members of another denomination. Our relationship focused mostly on debating theology, as we’d send long emails back and forth, discussing various topics such as the Sabbath and last-day events. It was all fairly cordial, but they seemed very dogmatic, very stark, speaking in categorical terms.

What stands out to me the most was when the pastor in an email declared to me in no uncertain terms that the Adventist Church was (and I quote) “preaching a false gospel and therefore not part of the Reformation.”

I’ll be honest: that hurt. Being the recipient of such an attack didn’t feel good.

As I’ve reflected on that experience, though, it’s led me to wonder: *If being on the receiving end of dogmatism doesn’t feel good, why does it seem like we, as Adventists, so often dish it out ourselves—whether to those within our own ranks or those outside?*

One scriptural passage that’s been exceptionally thought-provoking for me lately is Paul’s reflection on knowledge, in the context of love, in 1 Corinthians 13. Twice he makes a point of saying that we “know in part” (verses 9, 12). Sandwiched between verses 10 and 12 is a comment about how he spoke, understood, and thought as a child, but now having become a man, has put away childish things.

How do children speak, understand, and think? As if they know everything (examples from my own children are legion). But as Paul got older, he realized his knowledge was partial, and he didn’t see the whole picture. Indeed, he saw “in a mirror, dimly” (verse 12).

I’ve been convicted lately that inflexi-

bly dogmatic thinking is one of the greatest threats to the gospel in my life. I don’t have to have it all figured out for faith to be operative, and I certainly don’t have to attack others for their beliefs—which usually doesn’t change their views anyway, but simply causes them to defend them even more determinedly.

Indeed, my confidence is based not on being infallibly right but on being infinitely loved. There’s a world of difference between the two. One is based on trust, but not immune to questions or doubts; the other depends on some sort of Enlightenment-defined, absolute certainty that yields, as I’ve known it, in arrogance and condescension. Humility is a better and more attractive posture than dogmatism anyway. And counterintuitively, I’ve discovered that the more dogmatic I am in my demeanor, the more insecure I actually am about the belief in my heart.

But my security is in Jesus, not in being right—which has been a huge and liberating realization for my Adventist heart. “The kind of certainty proper to a human being,” Lesslie Newbigin has thus written, “will be one which rests on the fidelity of God, not upon the competence of the human knower.”

Simply put, our security is based on God’s faithfulness, not on our omniscience.

This doesn’t mean we can’t have strong convictions. It simply means we try to hold them with an open hand, humbled by the glory, grandeur, and omniscience of God. 🍀

* Lesslie Newbigin, *Proper Confidence: Faith, Doubt, and Certainty in Christian Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 28.

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**MY SECURITY IS
IN JESUS, NOT IN
BEING RIGHT.**

The Plan

SHERILYN JOHNSON

He left glory with a purpose;
heaven willed that He would win
the battle for eternal ages
over wickedness and sin.

Would He vindicate His Father
from the cradle to the cross?
Near and distant worlds would witness:
He would win
what Adam lost.

Timeless purpose was determined
from the lofty courts above,
and experienced in the water
by the Spirit
and the dove.

He had power,
He had passion,
triune Deity knew the plan.
He was humble,
He was gracious,
He was God, and He was man.

He would comfort hurting people.
He would help the blind to see
that He died
for every sinner,
and His death included me.

He was raised from death to glory,
conquering death was of the plan:
to love the lost, however costly,
and to restore the fallen man.

He left glory with a purpose;
heaven thrilled to watch Him win
Rights for creatures now forgiven
Because Jesus took our sin.

Thank You, Lord, for awesome power;
may I nevermore be weak.
For Your plan impels my purpose,
And as You found me, I now seek.

Sherilyn Johnson is a businesswoman living in Yakima, Washington, 38 years wedded to Michael, and very active in her local church.



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Downsizing

*Where the church
must go to be what
it should be.*



MELVYN W. WARFIELD II

I've grown accustomed to moving over the years.

Hither, thither, and . . .

When I was an Adventist pastor's kid in the 80s and 90s, almost everyone thought my parents must have been in the military, because we moved so often.

Then I grew up and embraced the call to Adventist ministry. And with that came the obligatory move from one district to the other. With every change came a new home. And with every new home came the desire to downsize.

PACKING = DOWNSIZING?

Packing a home and looking through boxes always leads to a desire to declutter and purge. My philosophy was always "If I haven't seen it in two years, I don't need it." And most of the time that was true. I was making space for the new life that was a result of the change.

Change of any kind can be disorienting, especially when it's unexpected. The past two years of pandemic have been an unwelcome upheaval, but some good has come from it as well. In a sense the change has caused many of us to downsize. We've had to declutter our homes and our lives so that we can focus on the things that matter. It's been a lifestyle change.

The modern church has had to downsize as well, and not just in the sense of smaller numbers gathering on Sabbath mornings. We had to downsize ministry—cut the less extraneous significant elements, so to speak. We now have to redefine our vision and our methods. The church is downsizing to make room for the new ideas and practices that will be birthed from its response to a pandemic that literally turned the whole landscape of ministry on its head. And as churches slowly go back to gathering in greater numbers, the question we ask ourselves is "Where do we go from here?"

That's a tough question to answer, because the church finds itself nestled between the blissful nostalgia of pre-pandemic church, with its programs and ceaseless meetings, and looking forward with prophetic urgency to an uncertain future.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Today we face hurdles that we never imagined. But the church has also shown extraordinary grit as well.

So what does the post-pandemic church look like? To be quite honest, I'm not entirely sure. I'm still taking it a day at a time, like the rest of you.

What I do know is that as a remnant people we should look something like the church at its inception.

Acts 2 masterfully summarizes the characteristics of the early church:

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the

If prayer is central to post-pandemic ministry, the evidence of God's power will follow.

fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (verses 42-47, NIV).

The characteristics of the early church are the same that the modern church will have to embody in order to move with confidence into the great, wide-open spaces of the will of God.

The early church of Acts 2, and the church we will have to be in a new post-pandemic world, can be synthesized in five characteristics.

1 *A Learning Church:* The church of Acts 2 was dedicated to listening to sound teaching, and was always learning. It was a loving community of believers ever improving, ever growing, and ever evolving. God's people cannot be so comfortable as to believe that there is nothing left for us to learn. There is a progressive dynamic to our understanding as Seventh-day Adventists. Our understanding theologically, sociologically, and certainly methodologically will be ever growing and evolving. Knowledge—and its application in our lives and in the church—is not static but dynamic.

There is a danger in always looking back and never forward. Often we rest on what we know, or our last great idea, or the last great ministry initiative. When we focus only on what God has done in the past, we leave no time to see or be on board with what God is doing in the present.

I was 15 when my father taught me to drive. He told me to focus on the road because I needed to be able to navigate the challenges of highway driving. "Pay attention to the road," he said. "Use your rearview mirror only for a point of reference." The same principle applies to post-pandemic

ministry. The new world seen through the windshield of ministry is where our focus must be. We can't properly move forward while concentrating on the rearview mirror. If we have a rearview mirror ministry—always celebrating the past—we will miss out on the windshield of the will of God. And the result is catastrophic, for we will never see or understand what God is doing, how God is leading, or who we can become in the present. We will have to be an ever-learning people.

2 *A Community:* The early church was a close-knit group, an intentional togetherness, a unity. The early believers knew that they were responsible for each other. There was this sense that "we are only as strong as we are together." The accountability was deliberate. These new Christians understood that if there was a weak believer, they weren't to leave them behind in an "every-Christian-for-themselves" mindset seen too often in present-day congregations. The early church believed that if any brother or sister was weak, then the community of believers had a responsibility to carry them.

The book of Acts sees the church establish itself in two locations: the Temple court and the home. There was the grand gathering of corporate worship in the Temple court, but also the intimate meaningful setting of the home group. The fellowship was genuine, and they knew how to make the large assembly feel small. The home was an extension of the work of the church.

Today's congregations will have to adopt the same practice of making the big feel small. Gone may be the days of packed sanctuaries. But the church that has discovered the ability to make the large feel small through small intentional communities of faith (small groups) will see sustained growth spiritually and numerically.

The church truly becomes a community when there is loving togetherness. Post-pandemic church ministry will need to be a ministry built on a structure of loving accountability. The stresses of social distancing and the resulting feelings of detachment

and spiritual fatigue will linger well past the days of quarantine. And the church that emphasizes the health of the community of believers over programs and cathedral gatherings will be more relevant to believer and nonbeliever alike.

3 *A Prayer-prioritized Church:* Early Christians knew that they could not navigate life without prayer. They understood that no good could come of the efforts of the church without the power of prayer. It was a church inspired, motivated, and empowered by prayer.

The present church will face the challenges of a new world as we slowly emerge from these past two years. We will have to realize the truth that we can't meet the challenges of life and ministry if we have not first met God in prayer. No amount of learning, planning, money, or vision casting will sustain the church of God if prayer is not deliberate, permeating, and sincere.

Prayer requires bold, unapologetic belief in the power and character of God. We have to ask ourselves the probing question "Do we truly believe God will do what He says He will do?" We will have to be believers in the impossible, looking to the heavens for miracles and wonders. Prayer will be more than liturgical practice: it will be the supernatural collision between divinity and humanity.

Prayer is reliant more upon faith than budgets. It is predicated more on bold, childlike belief than on practical methods. Prayer will need to be the first response of the church rather than its last resort.

4 *A God-powered Church:* If prayer is central to post-pandemic ministry, the evidence of God's power will follow. When I was a child, the Bible was the book of the miraculous. Somewhere along the way we've lost that sense of wonder. But miracles are still happening, and God is still a beautiful mystery.

The miraculous can become commonplace again. The early church saw signs and wonders. Things were happening! Are those same things happening now? Are miracles still possible? Today's church, when given to prayer, can still be filled with wonder in an age of skepticism. We will have to be a community of faith that under-

stands that the impossible is only the beginning when we are unified with God and each other.

5 *A Happy Church:* The book of Acts reminds the church of 2022 that it should be a happy church. There has to be a joyful winsomeness that fills the church. In fact, the idea of an unhappy Christian is a contradiction in terms. We can't be both Christian and miserable.

But the joy should also be visible, unlike the generally hidden joy of knowing Jesus and being in fellowship with like believers. There will have to be an attractiveness about us. For so many stone-faced, somber Christians there is a line of granite running through them. Our Adventist Christianity will have to be more than simply being good. We will need to look, act, and sound joyous from the heart.

This kind of contagious joyfulness will be evidence of the abundant life that we profess as children of a loving God. It's the joy that will bring favor with the world around us and draw them in to want to know their Savior.

AND THEN?

Where do we land?

It goes without saying that much of what we will need to be is countercultural. Like the early church, the endemic church, the church that must now live with and manage the virus and its long-term effects, will have to be less concerned with building larger cathedrals and more focused on building loving communities.

Many of us learned, when the pandemic began, that we were more dependent on the building and in-person gatherings for our spiritual vitality than we realized. The thought was sobering. But now God has downsized us. He has stripped away the artificial supports of meetings and buildings and presented to us the question "What do you have left?" The answer comes back: "We have God, and we have community." That is the church! And that is who the church will need to be. A church divinely downsized. A denomination decluttered and focused on what matters most. I'd like to be a part of that church. My hope, my faith, is that there are many who will join me on this journey of rediscovery. 🖊️

Melvyn W. Warfield II is lead pastor of Community Praise Seventh-day Adventist Church, Alexandria, Virginia, United States.



WHAT WILL THE CHURCH BE?

*What I must do to
fulfill God's vision*



CHRIS HOLLAND

Where were you when you heard that John Kennedy was assassinated?” It was the question that shaped the calendar of an entire generation. Thirty-eight years later a new question shaped a new generation: “Where were you on 9/11?” It was such an important moment in history that the year is almost never mentioned.

THE NEW QUESTION

And now, 21 years later, there is a new question, a new event, that will shape generations to come: “What was life like before COVID-19?” We know the basics: coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.¹ The Western world had heard of SARS before, and watched on television as many in Eastern countries wore masks. Never in our wildest dreams would we have imagined that face coverings would become a regular part of life in the West.

As I write now in February of 2022, we are two years removed from the start of COVID-19’s effect on the United States. Just now, many restrictions are being lifted. I have heard a question repeatedly: “Pastor Holland, when will church be back to normal?” I have thought about this question many times. As I attempt to answer that question, the Lord has convicted me that I must write from my heart.

In March of 2020 my wife and I had just returned home from a trip to Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada, where we met with the local Adventist church to discuss evangelism in the North. I had been paying close attention to the news, and knew that there was talk of COVID-19 coming to the United States. I had no idea that in just a few weeks everything would change. Churches would close, the General Conference building would close, Zoom would become a new synonym for meeting, and there would be a complete disruption of everything we consider “normal.” It has left many wondering: what will the “new normal” be? What will the church be? What can the church be?

What I write about COVID-19 specifically addresses COVID-19 and its effect on church life and the future of the church. Millions have died; millions more have been affected negatively by the disease. At a time like this the church must know, more clearly than ever, what it is and ought to be and do; how it relates to challenging circumstances. We must have and share God’s answers to the specific issue of COVID and its effect on His church.

To those who have blamed COVID-19 for the challenges, problems, and deficiencies of the church in this moment, I

Disciples are made by “going,” “teaching,” and “baptizing.”

humbly respond that COVID-19 has rather exposed and exacerbated existing problems. Here are my own top three:

COVID-19 has taught us that retention is an even bigger problem than we realized. Here’s the sad reality: many people stopped attending church in March of 2020; we may never see them again. This sad reality has been studied and talked about for years through several different entities, most specifically the world church’s Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, as will be discussed later. But the need to focus on the Great Commission and making disciples is absolutely essential.

COVID-19 has taught us that many of us long for human touch and interaction. In Haymarket, Virginia, at the Living Hope Seventh-day Adventist Community Church—where I’m head elder—we were able to reopen earlier than other churches in our area. Because of that, we had an explosion of visitors. Right now, our attendance is regularly 50 percent visitors, many of whom are Adventists whose current churches haven’t opened or still have many restrictions.

COVID-19 has taught us the importance of being effective and engaging in the digital space. Many churches were already streaming their services. For those not online, COVID-19 provided the opportunity to get online. During the past 10 years, consumption of media through mobile applications has grown 460 percent.² To reach a new generation, we must engage in social/digital media.

WHAT NEXT?

What Will the Church Be? The big question facing local churches, conferences, unions, and divisions is “Where do we go from here?” While I make no claims to the prophetic gift, I believe

the best years of the Seventh-day Adventist Church can happen in the context of a post-COVID world. Our churches have been good at adapting. Many of our congregations have done a good job of getting online and attempting to stay connected through online services. Zoom has helped keep our various committees functioning despite the pandemic. What can the church be?

What Can the Church Become? We don’t know whether or not the societal changes brought about during the COVID pandemic will be a “new normal,” or if many of these changes will disappear. We don’t know whether a new virus will bring on a new pandemic. We simply can’t answer those questions. What steps can the Seventh-day Adventist Church and local congregations take, despite what we don’t know, to become all God wants the church to be? Here are my own top four:

1 *We must study and understand God’s appeal for His church today.* The church is, literally, “the called-out ones”, (Greek *ἐκ*: “out”; *καλέω*: “call”). It is a description of people who have been called out of darkness into God’s marvelous light. Too often, when we use the word “church,” we think of a structure or a building. But the church is the people. John McVay, president of Walla Walla University and former dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, writes that there are five metaphor categories of the church.³ Those categories are the church as a body, the church as a spiritual building, the church as a field (or other agricultural metaphor), the church as an army, and the church as a family/bride. While space does not permit a review of every metaphor, we may summarize the lessons learned through those five metaphors as follows: The church is a living, healthy body of believers

who are trained for a mission that is founded by God, and grown by God, as everyone actively participates in planting seeds for the gospel harvest.

2 *We must experience a revival of the responsibility of being personally involved in mission.* Ellen White states in *The Ministry of Healing*: “There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.”⁴ God has a vision that His church will not be filled with spectators and consumers, but rather with active participants who weep for lost souls. While pandemics may close buildings, they cannot close our homes to smaller, more personal work.

3 *We must become intensely intentional about discipleship.* The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 contains only one imperative: “Make disciples.” Everything else in the commission is a subordinate participial phrase. This means that disciples are made while “going,” “teaching,” and “baptizing.” Because of a lack of intentional discipleship, among other things, our retention issues continue to be a challenge. Intentional discipleship provides an opportunity for new believers to be integrated into the body and live out a fruitful Christian experience. Discipleship doesn’t happen through osmosis, but through intentional processes of development. The book *Simple Church* is predicated on a study of the fastest growing Christian churches in North America. The key among all of them? There is a clear, simple, and evident path of discipleship in each of these churches. *The Discipleship Handbook*,⁵ along with other appropriate materials, provides wonderful resources to help you and the church in that journey.

4 *We must have our buildings become centers of influence for their surrounding community.* Through each member actively involving themselves in the community, the church will be keenly aware of the needs of that community and be able to provide for those needs. Once again Ellen White states: “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, “Follow Me.”⁶ This process is easier said than done. Yet it is the model that will bring “true success.” And meeting the needs of a community will ultimately prepare us to help in times of great crisis. However, Gary Comer warns, “We are mired in an outdated, ineffective way of thinking that is not sufficient to bring the people of today from where they are into the faith. . . . To awaken, however, we must radically change our whole approach.”⁷ We cannot hire professionals to do the work that God has called each one of us to do.

There is so much more that can be said. However, I emphasize that none of the vision of the future of our church should be detained until a General Conference vote, a division policy change, a union session, a local conference executive committee, or even a local church board vote. Remember: the church is not some collection of bricks and wood. The church is you. The church is me. God’s vision of His church can and will happen when each one of us takes personal responsibility, takes time in prayer, humbly submits, and allows Him to work through us. What will the church be? What can the church be?

The answer is up to you. 📌

¹ https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1

² <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/how-media-consumption-has-changed-in-2021/>

³ <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/auss/vol44/iss2/7/>

⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), pp. 143, 144.

⁵ <https://adventistbookcenter.com/discipleship-handbook.html>; <https://www.growingfruitfuldisciples.com>

⁶ E. G. White, p. 143.

⁷ G. S. Comer, *Soul Whisperer: Why the Church Must Change the Way It Views Evangelism* (Eugene, Oreg.: Resource Publications, 2013), p. 12.

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FINDING DISRUPTION, FINDING CHURCH

*Choosing between
custom and power*



NOAH WASHINGTON

Some elements of Pastor Noah Washington's original sermon have been preserved in the text that comprises this article.—Eds.

The Lord has been dealing with me for the past four months, on some issues related to the church—His church: what it means, what it's supposed to be doing, where we're at in this COVID season. So I hope you hear a bit of my frustration today. I'm reading these famous words of Peter and Jesus.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Jesus asks His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" And Simon comes back with an awesome answer: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:15, 16). And Jesus responds: "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (verse 17).

I want to hang my hat today on Jesus' climactic words that come next: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (verses 17, 18).

For many years now I've been intrigued by this thing called church. I grew up in it. But over time, after you've lived a bit, the routine and regimen of coming to a building all your life strikes you a little different. You get to a place in your spiritual journey where you start thinking, *There has to be more than what I'm currently experiencing*. As much as I love music, good preaching, fellowship; as much as I love corporate prayer and the powerful impact it has; and as much as we have missed church fellowship, I'm now at a place in my spiritual journey where I want more. And the gaping difference between what Jesus meant and where we are threatens to expose the Christian church as irrelevant, and, in too many cases, impotent. What is the church to be in these times like we have never seen before?

Today we're watching human hearts fail for fear of what's going on. We're seeing things we thought impossible, manifold things, and all in the same season: compounded deaths of people that we have been in personal relationship with; insurrectionists taking over and storming America's Capitol; unprovoked war; personal tragedies of family breakdown and emotional fragility; continued racial disharmony, furious debates about sexual orientation and identity, and, simultaneously, threats of financial collapse, or, at the very least, a wildly unsteady market.

Church, God's church, is tasked with the responsibility of being the hands and feet of Jesus. But so much that I've heard in this season is from people who can't wait to get back to church, as if what the church was doing prior to COVID was working in the first place. For me, I go back much further. I go to the place where Jesus introduces a concept, "church," to His beloved



BEN WHITE ON UNSPLASH

What is the church to be in these times like we have never seen before?

disciples; a concept that would literally change the world.

You and I may have known “church” all our lives. But for the disciples the concept was foreign. Matthew’s Gospel was written to show how the Jewish man named Jesus would bring salvation to the world. His messiahship meets with rejection and opposition by religious leadership, demonic forces, and even His own relatives and followers, including His closest company—His chosen disciples. So when they arrive at Caesarea Philippi, after witnessing another intense exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees, Jesus asks the disciples, “What’s the word on the street about Me? Who are people saying I am?”

“You’re John the Baptist; or maybe Jeremiah, or Isaiah, or some other prophet.”

“So what about you? Who do you, brothers, say I am?”

Simon Peter speaks up and declares Jesus the Christ, Son of the living God. And because of his declaration, it seems, Jesus is impressed to share His unforgettable announcement: “On this rock, I’m going to build My church. And hell’s gates won’t be able to prevail against it.”

WHAT DID JESUS MEAN?

What was Jesus talking about when He said, “My church”?

Today, church has become listening to music. Or good church has become sitting down, listening to a sermon, an inspiring praise team, or sensing the presence of God. To you and me, church has become totally subjective.

Meaning that you and I are the subjects, and also the audience. If we like it, then that’s good church. If we don’t like it, then God (probably) doesn’t either. By and large, we relegate church to what happens during the worship service. But when Jesus introduces the concept of church, He has something way bigger in mind.

The Greek noun *ekklesia* derives from the verb *ekkaleo*, to call out, a common term back then, used for those who assembled in the public affairs of a free state or body of free citizens called together. The Christian community’s designation by the term *ekklesia* denoted freedom, liberation that came from being called out. It denoted people now free because they had been called out. So there’s something very problematic for the contemporary church, because “church” is really supposed to be a group of people who

are free because they've been called out. Maybe too many of us aren't excited about the idea because we're really not part of the church of the living God. We don't really know too much about "called out." But God's church is a group of people that Jesus has called out.

That Jesus would open his mouth and call you by name and call you to Himself . . . ! If I were Jesus, . . . ! But Jesus calls. And look whom He's calling! He's calling out people who have been in bondage to the enemy. A few of us know what it means to be called out by Jesus from bondage; and those who come out are sent to call other people out. The people of God are people called out by Jesus from bondage to the enemy, then sent to call out other people who've been in bondage to the enemy, to declare to them their freedom.

And you know what? It's easy to spot people who are part of the church of the living God. Because once you start talking about deliverance, about how the Lord brought you out, about being set free from an enemy who used to have your mind, body, or spirit—once they hear that, they always have a response. Redeemed people always have a response to the Redeemer.

Anyone knows what it means to be called out—apart from the two of you who've been pure since you were born? God bless you. But the rest of us in here know what it means to be in the grip of the enemy, lost even in the house. But then Jesus called us out, and it's amazing. That God would call you and now say, "Can you go call somebody else out?"—that's amazing! It's amazing that God would trust me with anything. But when you've been pulled out from enslavement, you're so excited that you're not in bondage anymore, that when you see other people in bondage, you cry out, "Lord, help me pull them out!"

CONTEXT OF JESUS' DECLARATION

The reason this is so important is that at the time of our text, He was speaking to people who knew only synagogue, an experience that makes Jesus' "church" idea problematic. Beyond the Temple in Jerusalem where daily sacrifices were offered, where prayer and various other meetings happened, most Jews, at the time of our texts, were engaged with their local synagogue: if at

least 10 male Jews were in a town or village, they could start a synagogue.

In the synagogue the officiant would read from the Old Testament scrolls. They would sing songs, primarily the psalms; they would offer prayers. Basically, they engaged in a variety of religious traditions, good traditions—fellowship, songs, Scripture reading, prayer—all good.

But here's where contemporary church gets to be a problem: there's really not much difference between what happened in the synagogue and what we engage in today that we call church. COVID notwithstanding, tell me what has changed from that synagogue ministry in first-century Palestine to contemporary church ministry all over the world? Repetition week to week. Pressing the repeat button, playing the same thing again and again for years. Then Jesus shows up and makes the declaration, "On this rock I'll build My church, and the gates of hell won't be able to prevail against it." Jesus' declaration is about moving on—dynamically, irresistibly, something the kingdom of darkness isn't able to stop.

The replay and replay brand of church doesn't frighten the devil, because that brand goes nowhere: it doesn't have any power.

Jesus in the synagogue, on the other hand, was consistently disruptive: changing a mindset, expelling a demon (Mark 1:21-34), freeing somebody from 18 years of sickness (Luke 13:10-17). Jesus' church is not simply "sit down and take it in." He never went to the synagogue to spectate, because the church is never supposed to play defense. It plays only offense. Jesus went into the synagogue to change the mindset. Mark 1:22 says that Jesus teaching in the synagogue brought amazement to His audience: He taught with authority.

Take a look at Luke 4:18: Jesus is teaching in the synagogue that "the Spirit of the Lord is upon" Him, empowering spiritual and social justice, ministering to the eternal salvation and the existential plight of people. And I'm wondering, with all the pandemic rage, and so many ailing church members, and all the hospital visitations we've got to do, and all the deaths taking place, and all the people dealing with mental fragility, where is the power in the church to heal, or to set free, or to change the mindset?

Instead, our big, big worry is about coming to

He wants those He's called out to go and call out more of His people.

fellowship, to read Scripture, to pray, to follow traditions that we imagine are godly, when God Himself has had to say sometimes, "I'm not endorsing it; it's all in vain" (Mark 7:7); "Don't be bringing it before Me" (Isa. 1:13). Your churches aren't even good hospitals. In hospitals, at least, people get delivered and people get discharged. But churches are really more like hospice centers where you go to die.

Every time Jesus did His works of God in the synagogue, people got upset: the fellowship, singing, Scripture reading, and praying was fine—no miracles, no healings, no breakthroughs, no restoration, no deliverance, no shift, no change, no release, no chains broken. But Jesus was disruptive.

When you asked people, pre-COVID, "How was church?" the answer always referenced things we do. We didn't talk about what the power of God did, because we were so locked into what we love and like about church. We didn't even give the Spirit of God time to do what He really wanted to do. How about coming to church broken? Have you ever come to church needing God to touch you? You were sick; or you needed God to touch your mind; or you were dealing with "the crazies" on your job; or you needed God to touch your child. And you'd given up, and thrown in the towel because you didn't know what to do. And you were putting all your expectations on the pastor's sermon and the praise team set. And no one looked for the Spirit of God to do what He promised He would do.

Leaving the parking lot: "How was church?" Answer: something mediocre like "Church was all right. The pastor was all right." And what did God's Holy Spirit do? Did He change your mind? Was He trying to talk to you? Was God the Holy Spirit in the house? Why isn't everybody saying, "We've never seen anything like this"?

JESUS IS BUILDING

"On this rock I'll build My church," Jesus says. And He wasn't talking about Peter, as

some say. He was talking about a place. And He wasn't talking about somewhere near where He was. This was not specifically about Mount Hermon.

Mount Hermon used to be a seat of both Hellenism and demonic activity. So to some degree He was including Mount Hermon. Because Jesus wants His church, His called-out and delivered people, to be in the very places and spaces where His presence is lacking, where the enemy has people most in bondage! He wants those He's called out to go and call out more of His people. And tragically, Jesus' church is greatly challenged on that point: *Church Leaders* magazine says that 95 percent of church members have never led one person to Jesus.

We're content with being around sick people and people who need the Lord. We walk over by and around them and mutter, "Hope they get to Jesus," not realizing that Jesus, who called me out, means for me to see them as my responsibility, to grab them out of the fire. And the text says that when God's people do this, the gates of hell won't be able to stop us. The force of the text is that hell's gates won't have strength against us.

I was worrying about my sports team losing; about some other team running up high scores against them. But then God's Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, "I know you're upset at your little team; but I need you to get that about the church. When the church becomes the church, and the church moves forward, it doesn't matter what the devil tries. It doesn't matter what defense the devil sets up. It doesn't matter what schemes he changes. When My church becomes the church, the gates of hell can't stop you."

Am I talking to any redeemed people? Am I talking to any church folk that know that once you become the church, the devil can't stop you? The devil can't stop God's church, folks. 🦋

Noah Washington is associate pastor of the Emmanuel Brinklow Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Ashton, Maryland.

Military Guard

Invulnerable to war; vulnerable to love

DAVID ROSS

We stood upon the stones of Calvary,
Swords down and shields laid low,
Remembering the crowds that gathered there:
To shout their hate—for one meek man.

We saw His back scourged wild, flailed up to shreds—
The treatment prisoners share.
We saw Him stumble, fall and rise again
To bear the cross He had to bear.

We held our guard, unmoved, around the plot
While they prepared the cross
As nails and pain pierced through His mortal flesh;
And as He cried, the tumult jeered.

We watched Him suffer on that rough-hewn cross
Beneath the scorching sun.
We heard Him cry, and then we saw Him die
As evening fell and dark drew on.

We heard the thunder rage across the sky—
The Father hid His face—
Men, women, cringed and fled in frightened fear
While we sustained our guard.

“He truly is the Son of God,” one said—
Our leader, struck with awe—
And we, the complement of his armed guard,
We saw; and we believed.

David Ross [davidross_ca@yahoo.ca] serves as elder of the Belleville Seventh-day Adventist Church, Belleville, Ontario, Canada.



CELEBRATING EASTER

Are Americans losing their faith in Easter? While many Christians prefer biblical terms—e.g., Passover, or equally solemn ones—e.g., Holy Week—the word “Easter” is not unfamiliar to any. So that when researchers pose the question, “Do you celebrate Easter,” many people are ready with their answer. And it’s been up and down over the last baker’s dozen of years.

“DO YOU CELEBRATE EASTER?”

Between 2009 and 2021, respondents 18 years and older replied “yes” or “no” to this question, with “yes” being in the majority. **The year 2013 was the peak year for celebration**, and the years 2016 through 2018 the number of celebrants held constant at 81%.

2009 79.9%

2011 80.2%

2013 83.1%

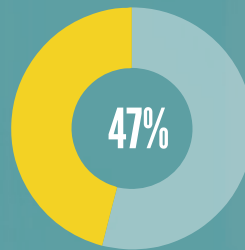
2014 80.3%

2016-2018 81%

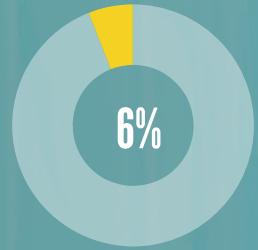
2019 79%

2021 79%

statista.com/statistics/221108/share-of-americans-celebrating-easter-since-2007

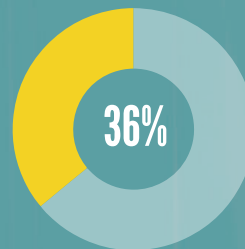


Family coming together

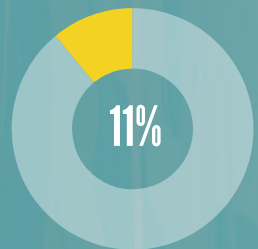


Easter egg hunt

“WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT ABOUT THIS EASTER SEASON?”



Religious meaning



Other

statista.com/chart/13370/easter-in-the-united-states

“WHAT KINDS OF GIFTS DO YOU GIVE FOR EASTER?”

733 respondents to this survey said they give gifts at this time of year, including the following:



75%

chocolate, sweets, and candy



30%

boiled/colored eggs



23%

flowers or plants

Total not 100%: some may give multiple gifts.



DIVINE DATA

The divine data included in the Holy Scriptures dealing with this time of year is compellingly clear:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).





SENSORY ASSAULT AND SUPERIOR ATTRACTION

Toto, I've got a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore," Dorothy perceptively said to her little dog in *The Wizard of Oz*. Everything was familiar, yet somehow different. Dorothy found herself in the same world and a new world all at once.

Sound familiar?

The world we currently live in is fundamentally different from any other time in human history. In fact, it's fundamentally different from the world we lived in just 20 years ago, even 10 years ago.

How so?

YOU ARE THE PRODUCT

The short answer is that humanity has perfected the art of sinning with the proficiencies afforded by unprecedented technological advancements. By both order of magnitude and sheer engineering exactitude, evil is now a precise science. Literally everything imaginable is at our fingertips and can be accessed by the senses through technology. Ours is a time of hyper stimulation, simulation, and assimilation. We are experiencing a state of sensory overload and sensual intake so pervasive and powerful that it has the potential to reduce humanity to a race of addicts.

"You are the product."

Those are the chilling words that operate as the central thesis of the Netflix documentary *The Social Dilemma*.

Each online act you perform is captured and commodified. As you scroll and click, a "map" of your personality is composed, called an algorithm, which then informs paying corporations how best to target you with their products and services. Companies pay social media platforms for your attention. Every time you click, you are monetized. Everything is for sale, including you. We're all

*The way to
dispel darkness
is to admit light.*

TY GIBSON

prostitutes being pimped to the highest bidder, unless we're intentionally not.

One of the interviewees for *The Social Dilemma* documentary is Jaron Lanier, the famed virtual reality pioneer who is currently an interdisciplinary scientist at Microsoft. Getting at the diabolical bottom line, Lanier says:

"We've created a world in which online connection has become primary. Especially for younger generations. And yet, in that world, anytime two people connect, the only way it's financed is through a sneaky third person who's paying to manipulate those two people. So we've created an entire global generation of people who were raised within a context in which the very meaning of communication, the very meaning of culture, is manipulation."

The *Wall Street Journal* recently ran an explosive article titled "Facebook Knows Instagram Is Toxic for Teen Girls, Company Documents Show," and the still more bracing subtitle, "Its own in-depth research shows a significant teen mental-health issue that Facebook plays down in public."¹

The article draws upon leaked internal research from Facebook to highlight the fact that Facebook, the owner of Instagram, is fully aware of the destructive impact the app is having on users, especially young girls. But it is also fully aware that to alter the app in ways that would mitigate the harmful effects would result in less clicking and therefore less revenue to the company. Thus far, Facebook has chosen to act in its own financial interest over human well-being, knowing that its platform is significantly contributing to an increase in depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and suicidal thoughts, especially among teenagers.

While Mark Zuckerberg and other Facebook executives are well aware of the harmful effects its platforms are having, they have chosen to evade and downplay the issue in congressional hearings and public comments. When asked by U.S. senators to provide their internal research regarding the harmful effects of their platforms on youth, Facebook executives essentially refused by stating that its research is "kept confidential to promote frank and open dialogue and brainstorming internally." Senator Richard Blumenthal said in an email, "Facebook seems to be taking a page from the textbook of Big Tobacco—targeting teens with potentially dangerous products while

masking the science in public." Not only are Facebook executives fully aware of the harm their platforms are causing in their current configuration—they initially indicated they planned on plowing forward to produce an Instagram app for children 13 years of age and younger, even in the face of objections by state attorneys general. Facing withering criticism from the U.S. Congress and other media platforms, Facebook announced in late September a plan to "pause" development of an Instagram version intended for kids.

With the Instagram app, Facebook is in a race against other apps, such as Snapchat and TikTok, to capture and hold the attention of teenagers and quickly expand to "onboard" even more children. And the only way to do that is to make Instagram more and more addicting and therefore more and more harmful. The goal is to make money, not to do the right thing for the well-being of our children. The *Wall Street Journal* article characterizes Facebook as the new Philip Morris, the massive tobacco company that concealed its own scientific research revealing the harmful effects of smoking and kept pushing its products for its own financial gain regardless of the obvious destruction to human lives.

Just as Victor Frankenstein, in Mary Shelley's 1818 novel, created a creature more powerful than himself and thus beyond his control, it would

The goal is to make money, not to do the right thing for the well-being of our children.

seem that humanity, in creating the Internet, has created a technological monster quite literally beyond our control. And why can't we control it? Well, that question points us to the underlying problem:

Our moral maturity is no match for the technology we've created.

As the Harvard sociobiologist Edward O. Wilson has observed: "The real problem of humanity is the following: We have Paleolithic emotions, medieval institutions and godlike technology. And it is terrifically dangerous, and it is now approaching a point of crisis overall."²

Said another way, the Internet is a powerful tool the human race shouldn't possess at its current level of emotional development. It's like giving a 5-year-old a bottle of whiskey and a pistol and expecting things to go well. And yet here we are in just such a predicament, and with no way back to simpler and less dangerous times.

For my fellow Seventh-day Adventists, I'd like to offer a biblical perspective—first an eschatological analysis, and then a practical theological prescription.

END-TIME ANALYSIS

According to Jesus, the final phase of human history will be characterized by an increase of evil and a corresponding decline in love:

"Because lawlessness will abound (*plēthynō*), the love of many will grow cold" (Matt. 24:12).

The New Century Bible renders *plēthynō* "more and more." Exponential escalation is the idea conveyed.

The apostle Paul issued the same ominous warning:

"In the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

That is to say, the last days will be perilous precisely because of hyperselfishness, most notably manifested as the love of money and of pleasure. When companies prioritize financial profits over people, the result will be exploitation to the

Because there is so much money to be made by capitalizing on the insecure and addictive tendencies of the human mind, we are experiencing a full-on sensory assault via technology, and there is likely no way to stop it.

point of inflicting harm. Because there is so much money to be made by capitalizing on the insecure and addictive tendencies of the human mind, we are experiencing a full-on sensory assault via technology, and there is likely no way to stop it. The apostle John informs us that evil will, indeed, exponentially escalate until supernatural demonic forces have complete control of large swaths of the human population:

"Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury" (Rev. 18:2, 3).

Under the compulsive lust for financial gain, the corporate titans of Babylon, greedy for "abundance" and "luxury," are harnessing data and algorithms for a full-on sensory assault of the

human mind. We are being mentally ravaged, raped, and razed by technological forces that are acting as the unwitting vehicle through which supernatural forces are playing out their endgame against humanity. The world is becoming “a dwelling place of demons,” and the demons are finding access to our senses through sophisticated technologies.

THEOLOGICAL PRESCRIPTION

Once we’ve gotten our bearings on the eschatological landscape, the pressing and practical question becomes *What are we supposed to do about it?* The question can be asked another way: *How can we successfully wage war against the powers of darkness and resist the overwhelming allure of evil?*

Ellen White offers this answer:

“The way to dispel darkness is to admit light. The best way to deal with error is to present truth. It is the revelation of God’s love that makes manifest the deformity and sin of the heart centered in self.”³

Those who spend too much time cursing the darkness will be swallowed up by it. To simply point out wrong and tell people to stop doing it is an approach that is bankrupt of moral power. It merely serves to leave people in a heightened state of guilt, but impotent to do anything about it. And it is inevitable—perhaps even a law of human nature—that a person who feels simultaneously guilty and powerless will take refuge from their guilt by plunging deeper into the forbidden behavior. The only way to break the allure of sin is to present a more alluring attraction.

While I am all for having serious restrictions on the access children have to our world’s media platforms, before you know it those children are going to be teenagers. At that point it is highly unlikely that you will be able to maintain your restrictions. For this reason I think Christian parents should take a far more proactive approach that aims at instilling in our children the principle of self-regulation so that they end up making good choices once they find themselves free to do whatever they want. And the best way to do that is to consistently hold before them the superior attraction of God’s love.

Saying *no*, no matter how authoritative and insistent we are, is a weak strategy for keeping

**The beauty of His love
is the only power
powerful enough to
break the power of sin
over our souls.**

our kids, and even ourselves, free from evil influences. Externally imposed authority can produce temporary compliance and pretense, but not authentic and deep-seated victory.

In Romans 7 the apostle Paul delves into the self-defeating psychology of negative imperative:

“When we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death” (verse 5).

“For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me” (verse 11).

“For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice” (verse 19).

No need to quibble over whether Paul is here describing a converted or an unconverted person. He’s not endeavoring to answer that question. He is simply describing the psychological reality of sin in relation to the law in relation to human nature in its fallen condition. He is explaining that the law, while it is good, says no to certain behaviors to which human nature is inclined to say yes. And the no that the law imposes, Paul explains, actually has the effect of increasing the desire for the thing that is forbidden. The law stimulates more sin, not less, according to Paul. The most effective way to cause an action is to forbid it.

In a parallel passage to Romans 7 Paul writes, “The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6). Religion is made lethal to one’s experience with God when it is imposed from the outside in and used as a behavior-control mechanism that

bypasses the formation of love in the heart. Ellen White states the point this way:

“The plan of beginning outside and trying to work inward has always failed, and always will fail.”⁴

This single insight explains to a great extent why the church loses so many people, especially our young people. The outside-in approach “kills” personal, voluntary attraction to God. By contrast, the inside-out approach is what Paul calls “the new covenant,” which “gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6). People run from control, but run to love. The problem with the old covenant approach is that it specializes in merely identifying and forbidding wrong behaviors and thereby, inadvertently, perpetuates the wrong behaviors.

Adventism has spent more than 100 years operating on the premise of the negative imperative approach to sin. We tend to identify things that are bad and then tell people—especially our young people—not to do those things. The result of this approach is obvious. We leave people feeling guilty and impotent by essentially insisting that they make promises to God that inevitably end up being like “ropes of sand.” This, then, drives them to either hypocrisy or despair. One way or another—either by generating pretentious pharisaism or by driving people to give up and leave the church—“the letter kills.” The “old covenant,” by virtue of the fact that it imposes moral requirements while keeping God’s love hidden from view, does not work.

Parents often ask, “How can I stop my kids from playing video games, watching movies, and spending hours on social media?” We are eager for help in telling our children no to bad things. And that certainly is understandable. The situation is staggeringly difficult to deal with, and super-scary, too. We love our children, and we want what’s best for them, and yet harmful influences are so pervasive that it seems impossible to protect them. So we are strongly tempted to resort to the negative imperative approach, which will work as long as our children are young and under our authority. But we need to ask ourselves, What is our goal? Is it merely to keep our children from doing bad as long as we can? Of course not! Our goal is to grow our children into responsible, self-governing adults who are personally in love with Jesus. And that means we must prioritize teaching our children, and our church members

in general, the glorious and powerful and transformative gospel of Christ.

“I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:32).

“Love is power. Intellectual and moral strength are involved in this principle, and cannot be separated from it. . . . Love cannot live without action, and every act increases, strengthens, and extends it. Love will gain the victory.”⁵

“The contemplation of the love of God manifested in His Son will stir the heart and arouse the powers of the soul as nothing else can.”⁶

“Nothing reaches so fully down to the deepest motives of conduct as a sense of the pardoning love of Christ.”⁷

“The theme that attracts the heart of the sinner is Christ, and Him crucified. On the cross of Calvary, Jesus stands revealed to the world in unparalleled love. Present Him thus to the hungering multitudes, and the light of His love will win men from darkness to light, from transgression to obedience and true holiness.”⁸

As a church, we need to prioritize developing discipleship curriculums that cultivate God’s love in the hearts and minds of our children, as well as our members in general. As a matter of emergency, old covenant orientations need to give way to new covenant orientations. Adventism desperately needs the gospel—the good news of God’s unmerited favor, by which the powers of the soul are aroused to live for God, not because we *have* to, but because we *want* to.

Sin attracts. There is no doubt about that fact. But in Christ we encounter a far superior attraction. The beauty of His love is the only power powerful enough to break the power of sin over our souls. ▀

¹ https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-knows-instagram-is-toxic-for-teen-girls-company-documents-show-11631620739?mod=article_inline

² <https://harvardmagazine.com/breaking-news/james-watson-edward-o-wilson-intellectual-entente>

³ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 498.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Temperance* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1949), p. 102.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 2, p. 135.

⁶ E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 478.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 493.

⁸ Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Nov. 22, 1892.

Ty Gibson is an author, speaker, and director of Light Bearers, a literature ministry based in Collegedale, Tennessee.

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LET THE BOOKS DO THE TALKING

My friends and I were headed to the parking lot after an enjoyable day at the park when suddenly a woman emerged from her car and made a beeline toward us. Before I knew it, *The Great Controversy* was being pushed wordlessly into my face.

“No thanks,” I said as I gently pushed the book back toward the stranger. “I already have this book.”

She turned to my non-Christian friend and repeated her push-the-book-in-your-face method.

“I have the book too,” he said.

My heart sank as I realized my example had prevented him from receiving a potentially life-changing gift.

I’ve repeatedly replayed that scene in my mind throughout the years, wondering what could have led to a more positive outcome. The thing I keep coming back to is conversation. If the woman had shown interest in us, chances are that one or both of us would have walked away with a book.

But therein lies the problem that this column is intended to address. Not everyone has the gift of gab. Whether it’s because we’re introverts, shy, or socially awkward, many of us become terrified when we think of verbally witnessing to strangers.

Sharing literature makes sense for introverts. We can let the books do the talking. But how can we get books into hands without socially awkward confrontations?

Here are a few ideas:

Drop-off points—The organization Little Free Library is popular right now. Anybody can take or leave a book at any of its 90,000 locations. Leaving one or, at the most, two books in a Little Free Library is

a wonderful way to share literature with people looking for something to read.

Geocaches are another place where people trade items. Some geocaches are large enough to leave tracts in. Again, leave only a few. Literature dumps don’t make good impressions.

Holidays—For Christmas, birthdays, and other special occasions you can wrap a book in bright paper, include a personal note, and leave the book on a neighbor’s front porch or a coworker’s desk.

At Halloween you can give children’s literature along with candy to trick-or-treaters. Kids love receiving a bonus treat when they come to your door!

Amazing tips—You can leave a tract along with your tip when eating out or in your hotel room. If you’re going to do this, be sure to leave a good—or even great—tip. Showing this kindness will make the recipient more likely to be interested in what you share.

It’s in the mail—Sending books through the postal system is a nice way to share literature without putting anyone on the spot.

One of my favorite ideas is to go through the obituaries and send an appropriate book with a thoughtful note to surviving family members.

For more ideas on how to share literature, check out the book *Spread the Word*,* available at your Adventist Book Center or Amazon.com. With a little creativity, even introverts can help scatter our literature “like the leaves of autumn.”

*General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department, *Spread the Word* (Silver Spring, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2018).

Lori Fletcher is an editor for the new *Alive in Jesus* Sabbath School curriculum that will be released in the next few years.

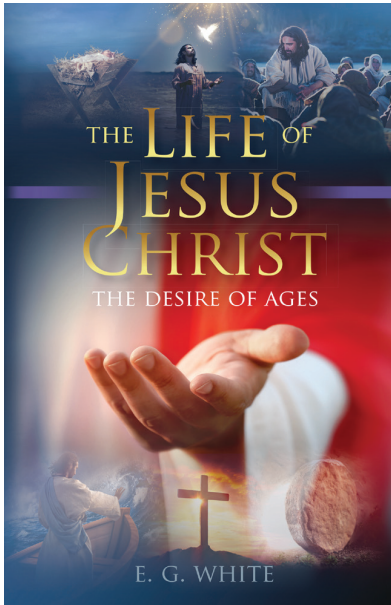
WITNESSING FOR INTROVERTS
LORI FUTCHER



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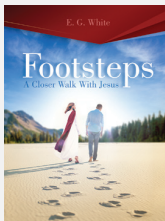
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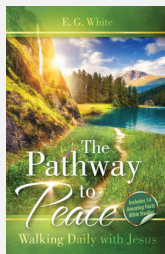
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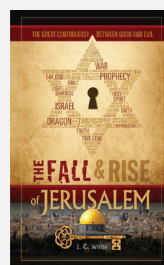
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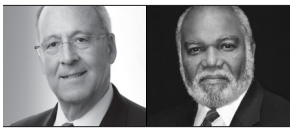
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PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

SHIFTY SHIFTS—SLIPPERY SLOPE!

Q: We started to work two-month rotating shifts during the first pandemic surge. My family has recently complained that I'm increasingly irritable, moody, and negative. My weight, blood pressure, and blood sugar levels are creeping up too, and I'm *always* tired. Could this be because of the shifts?

A: You'll need a comprehensive clinical evaluation to assess what else might be going on. We recommend you talk to your doctor for a definitive answer. That said, shift work affects stress levels, sleep quality, and overall health because of disruption of biological rhythms and may indeed contribute to your situation.

Our brain, other organs, and even our cells have biological clocks that strongly influence—in a rhythmic pattern—the way our bodies function and how we behave. Internal clocks regulate our hormones, our immune system, our digestion, and much more. These clocks are encoded in our genetic material, and the rhythms they produce provide special windows of time that are best suited for the various types of activities that we engage in daily (such as mealtimes and bedtime), and even the optimal timing for medications and radiation therapy on cancer.

The predominant body rhythm cycles every 24 hours and 11 minutes, or almost a day; hence, *circa* (almost) *dian* (day). It produces predictable changes such as reduced blood pressure during nighttime sleep and a rapid rise to daytime blood pressure levels starting around 6:00 a.m. It's not coincidental that the risk of a stroke or heart attack is highest between 6:00 a.m. and noon!

Our brain's performance also varies with the time of day, dipping, between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. in otherwise normal people, below the levels of someone legally drunk. We are naturally more prone to accidents and errors during those hours. The cycle disrupted by sleep deprivation, rapid travel across time zones (jet lag), and shift work

has consequences (see table). Consistent bedtimes, wake-up times, and mealtimes diminish biorhythm disruption and facilitate realignment.

Short-term Disruption	Long-term Shift Work
Decreased:	Increased Risk:
Attention	Infection
Alertness	Cancer
Creativity	Noncommunicable diseases
Empathy/compassion	Diabetes, hypertension, heart disease
Information processing	Obesity
Decision-making ability	Dementia, anxiety, depression, "fog"
Increased:	Decreased:
Micro-sleeps	Immune function
Impulsivity	Psychological resilience
Irritability	

Your situation may not permit avoidance of shift work. We recognize that there are some jobs that are needed to sustain our modern, 24/7 way of life. You may, however, be able to reduce the severity of the impact of shift work on your health and well-being. The most powerful resynchronizers include consistent, routine mealtimes, bedtimes, exercise, and, most important, sunlight exposure.

Sleeping in the dark and avoiding postshift light, alcohol, caffeine, sedatives, and screen-monitor light within 90 minutes of bedtime all help to realign your body functions with your biorhythms. Keeping a consistent schedule, applied even on your days off, will help your body's adjustment, but frequent shift changes are not optimal.

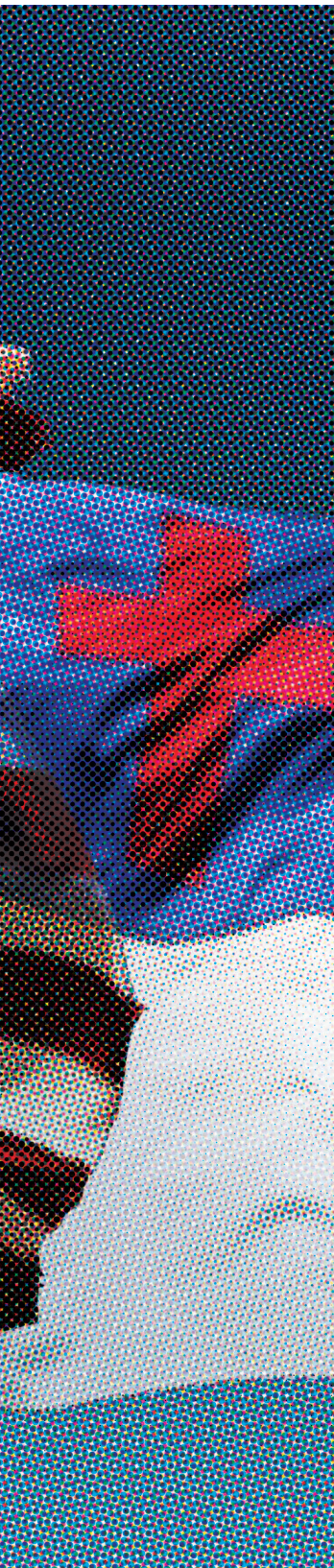
Individually tailored, carefully and prayerfully crafted, wholistic lifestyle intervention will help you (and your coworkers) reduce your physical, psychological, and even your spiritual risks. ▀

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



THE CHALLENGE OF POLITICS AND FAITH

*Are the political positions
we take creating divides
in our churches?*



BETTINA KRAUSE

One of the least useful pieces of advice I've ever received sounded rather sensible at the time: Don't let your politics shape your faith; let your faith shape your politics.

There's nothing inherently wrong with this idea. In fact, keeping my faith free from the taint of politics is a worthy goal. The problem comes when I try to put this idea into practice. No matter how hard I try, I will always—to some extent—look at the world through a lens shaped by my own unique experiences. And my faith isn't neatly separated out from these experiences; it's interwoven into every aspect of my life.

Consider my childhood, for instance. The Jesus I grew up with was White. He had kind, serious eyes, and, aside from His flowing Middle Eastern robes and hair that was a touch on the long side, He could easily have passed for one of the men at my small church in rural New South Wales, Australia. The Jesus I grew up with also seemed to have political preferences. Most Adventists I knew in my hometown tended to vote for the Country Party—a politically conservative party in Australia that promised to hold the interests of farmers and small-business owners at heart. We did not vote for the Labor Party.

I'm not sure how or when I came to understand all of this, but it was sometime between the hazy mists of toddler Sabbath School and my awakening sense of identity during the Pathfinder years. The faith I knew and loved—and the Christ at the center of my faith—was familiar and comfortable. I understood clearly how I should think and act, not just within the four walls of our church, but also as I negotiated the wider world of my small town.

Looking back, I feel two competing emotions. One is a sense of awe that words uttered in a Galilean dialect of Aramaic by someone living in the rough world of Judea more than two millennia ago were helping to shape the lives of ordinary folk in 1980s rural Australia. What stunning power Christ's words of salvation must have to bridge such chasms of time and culture!

Yet at the same time, I feel intimidated. It's precisely because of those chasms of time and culture that the task of obedience to Christ—within the complex realities of *my* time and *my* culture—often feels so confusing.

UNCONSCIOUSLY MOLDED

None of us chose where we were born. We didn't choose the families who raised us or the faith tradition of our early years. We were, as the sociologists label it, "enculturated" from an early age in the norms of our communities—communities of family and ethnicity, of town and school, and of the country of our birth.

This idea of "enculturation" is fascinating. It describes the way we absorb, spongelike and unconsciously, bits and pieces of data and belief from those we consider other members of our group—whether that group is based on our nationality, ethnicity, or religion. Our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world is shaped by our parents and extended family, and by other authority figures in our lives—teachers, pastors, mentors.

But for a Christian, the concept of enculturation is also deeply disturbing. How then do I identify, much less separate out, the strands of my faith from the beliefs and attitudes I continually absorb from elsewhere?

This isn't an abstract question. How we understand and express our allegiance to our nation, or ethnic group, or preferred political party, or any other "tribal" group to which we belong, can have real and devastating consequences. For every hero of the Holocaust or the Rwandan genocide, for instance, there are stories of others who claimed the name of Christ but still committed unthinkable acts of inhumanity.

MY COUNTRY, MY FAITH

I began work as editor of *Liberty* magazine—the Seventh-day Adventist Church's 115-year-old journal of religious freedom—at a politically "interesting" time in the United States. A couple of months earlier a violent mob had stormed the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, many waving flags and signs with slogans such as "Jesus: 2020" and chanting "Jesus is my Savior; Trump is my president"

In the public handwringing after the event, media attention focused on the problem of Christian nationalism—the belief that Christian identity is central to what it means to be an American citizen. Love of country is warped into an unthinking patriotic fervor that we conflate with godliness. And this becomes a sacred shibboleth of our "tribe."

A few months later I interviewed well-known American sociologist of religion Robert Wuthnow about his new book, *Why Religion Is Good for American Democracy*.¹ He explained the positive role people of many different faiths have played throughout America's history as they've brought their arguments and policy ideas into the public space and argued vigorously for them.

As we talked, however, it struck me that the reverse is also true. As the events of January 6 clearly show, this influence has been a two-way street. Just as religion has helped shape and strengthen America's democratic values and institutions, so too has our nation's political culture left its unmistakable imprint on American faith. Consider just this one statistic: nearly 78 percent of Republicans and some 45 percent of Democrats say believing in God is "very" or "somewhat" important to being "truly American."²

POLITICAL DISCIPLES

Our political culture instructs and shapes us, and today this culture is filtered through technology. Facebook, Twitter, cable news—whatever our

communication platform of choice—these are all coaching us on what's important and what values should guide our thinking. They are making "disciples" of us. Of course, as Seventh-day Adventists we are also trained as disciples in our faith. But given average rates of media consumption in the U.S., my guess is that many of us spend more time each week being trained politically and culturally as disciples than as religious disciples.

For Adventists, this political training is not monolithic in nature. We are, after all, not only one of the most diverse faith communities in America,³ but as a church we've consciously avoided attempts to ally Adventism with any specific political ideology or party. Letters to the editor from *Liberty* readers bear out this reality: the political views of our church members are scattered across the political spectrum, from left to right.

Regardless of our own personal political convictions, however, there's one key warning sign, a canary in the coal mine, that should make us stop and take stock of our attitudes and beliefs. That is, when these beliefs begin to negatively impact the health of Christ's body and its ability to be faithful to its God-given mission.

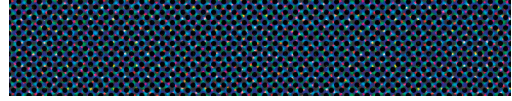
Do our political positions lead us to convictions or emotions that divide us from our brothers and sisters in Christ? Are our beliefs and the way we express them fostering discord in Christ's body? Do our opinions about public issues of the day—whether about the current occupant of the White House or masking and vaccine mandates—generate a spirit of animosity and divisiveness?

These aren't easy questions. It takes humility and courage to examine ourselves and to challenge our visceral loyalties to our various political, ethnic, or national tribes.

FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP

A key question, then, is this: Can we express allegiance to our country, or any other group to which we belong, in ways that also acknowledge the higher claims of our faith?

For me, a clue emerges as I read through the early archives of *Liberty* magazine and the writings of Adventist pioneers as they grappled with the same question within their own cultural framework and time. Some of the defining issues of their day in the United States were slavery and the abolition movement, participation in the Civil



War, and, later, the enforcement of state Sunday laws and the push for national Sunday laws. The many articles and letters they write addressing these questions reveal a nuanced thread of logic. There was a balance to how our Adventist pioneers approached these questions. Yes, there's a love of country, but also a recognition of its shortcomings. There's respect—admiration, even—for America's founding principles and documents, but also a readiness to take its leaders to task for falling short of these ideals. As a matter of prophetic understanding, also, there was an acceptance that neither America, nor any other nation, could ever fully embody the values of God's kingdom.

Ellen White didn't mince words when she wrote, "The people of this nation have exalted themselves to heaven, and have looked down upon monarchical governments, and triumphed in their boasted liberty, while the institution of slavery, that was a thousand times worse than the tyranny exercised by monarchical governments, was suffered to exist and was cherished."⁴

White, along with her husband, James, and other church leaders such as J. N. Andrews and John Loughborough, condemned the 1850 passage of the Fugitive Slave Law. White wrote, "We are not to obey [the Fugitive Slave Law]; and we must abide the consequences of violating this law."⁵

This clear-eyed view of America's failings was no doubt strengthened by the fact that being a Seventh-day Adventist in the late nineteenth century could be a risky business. Take the case of Pastor James Scoles from Springdale, Arkansas. He volunteered to help finish painting his congregation's newly built church and decided to complete the work one quiet Sunday morning. "I went over to the church," he said later, "and finished up a small strip of painting on the south side, clear out of sight of all public roads; and here I quietly worked away for perhaps two hours"⁶ For this act Pastor Scoles was arrested and jailed, and this was just one of many cases in which Adventists and other religious minorities were prosecuted under state Sunday laws.

So as our forebears struggled with public issues of the day, they acknowledged the biblical command to respect political authorities and their legitimate authority in ordering social arrangements. At the same time, these early Adventists demonstrated time and again their willingness to

There is a living Guide who invites us to submit ourselves, with all our political and cultural baggage, to His care.

hold their nation to account for its shortcomings. And most important, they unapologetically submitted to an Authority and mission far more compelling than any secular power.

THE PERSON ABOVE POLITICS

There are no neat conclusions I can offer for dealing with the challenge of enculturation. There's no handy formula that helps us separate our faith from our political or national biases. It is an inherently messy business to live with our heart in Christ's kingdom and our feet planted in earthly kingdoms formed by nationalities, ethnicities, and cultures. But this world as we know it is not our home. We're called to larger values and allegiances than the earthly and transient concerns of Washington, D.C.; Nairobi; Tokyo; Moscow; or small-town, rural Australia. Those values must invigorate and inform our attitudes and behavior, and ultimately people will know that we are His disciples because we "have love for one another" (John 13:35).

There is a living Guide who invites us to submit ourselves, with all our political and cultural baggage, to His care. And there's a promise, also, that as we struggle to do so, the end is in sight. Our divided societies and cultures will soon be made redundant by an enduring kingdom whose "King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land" (Jer. 23:5, NIV).⁷

¹ This interview will be published in the January-February 2022 issue of *Liberty* magazine, which will be available at libertymagazine.org.

² Public Religion Research Institute's 2021 American Values Survey, <https://www.prrri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/PRRI-Oct-2021-AVS.pdf>.

³ See the Pew Research Forum's 2014 Religious Landscape Study, <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 1, pp. 258, 259.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁶ A. T. Jones, *Civil Government and Religion* (Oakland, Calif.: American Sentinel, 1889), p. 114.

Bettina Krause is editor of *Liberty* magazine and an associate director of the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

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THE ACCIDENTAL AMBASSADOR

I was sitting on a cement step, leaning against a doorframe, watching the crowds move like living waves across the Cour Napoléon, the courtyard surrounding the giant glass pyramid that serves as the primary entrance for the Louvre Museum in Paris. My travel journal was open on my lap, but I wasn't writing much; the scene in front of me was entrancing, and I could hardly believe it was real.

It was 2003. I was a junior in college, and I'd worked hard to save enough to spend a semester studying abroad. My home base was in a suburb of London, but I wanted to see the Eiffel Tower before returning to the United States, so I spent a day in Paris.

I didn't notice the man until he was standing right in front of me. I was intent on memorizing every moment of my day in Paris. He said something, but as I'd been on French soil no more than six hours and had memorized only a few of the most necessary phrases in French, I had no idea what it was.

My awkward smile and quick shake of the head told him all he needed to know, and he smiled and said in accented English, "May I sit?"

And so began one of the most unexpected conversations I've had to this day. We simply chatted there on the doorstep about school, travel, and, to my great surprise, faith. This young man didn't claim any religion, but he respected those who did. He asked a lot of questions, and I answered as best I could.

We must have talked for an hour, and I watched the pyramid at the center of

the plaza glow brighter as the sky around us grew darker. Eventually I bid the gentleman good night, and as we stood together, he looked me in the eye and said, "If I ever meet another Seventh-day Adventist, I will know they are a good person, because I have met you."

That comment has stayed with me all these years because it's a humbling reminder (and perhaps a warning) that I represent something bigger than myself. *Someone* bigger than myself.

I'm reminded of that childhood memory verse, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).^{*} The world watches what we do, and—correctly or not—they judge the character of Christ based on who we are or seem to be. Somehow I managed to shine a bright light that evening, but I'm sure there are plenty of other moments when my behavior was not so flattering.

That experience in Paris taught me that as I go about my daily life, I must be aware that even simple interactions—placing my order at a restaurant, driving in traffic, responding to a delayed flight, talking with my children—can leave an impression not only of my own character but of Christ's. And I must be mindful, always. 🍃

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

Becky St. Clair is a freelance writer living in California with her husband and three children. She has a decade of experience in public relations for the church, and currently writes and copyedits for various church entities around the world.

THE FAITH-FULL LIFE
BECKY ST. CLAIR



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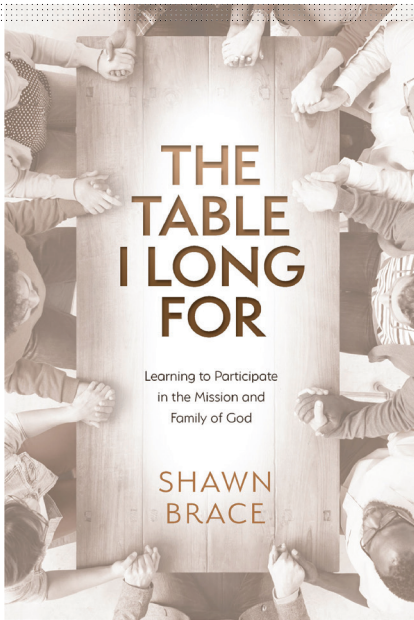


BRENDA CHELANGAT



ZIPPORAH OIRERE

CLOSER LOOK



The Table I Long For

The Table I Long For: Learning to Participate in the Mission and Family of God, by Shawn Brace, Signs Publishing, Victoria, Australia, 2021, 276 pages; available on Kindle; \$9.99; reviewed by Beth Thomas.

In his fourth book, *The Table I Long For*, Pastor Shawn Brace makes a compelling case for renewing the mission of the church. As he considered his vision for a unique church plant in one of the most secular places in the United States, Brace found himself presented with the opportunity to do something different. Not something new, but something renewing, an actual return to the fundamentals of Christian mission.

Brace distinguishes between attractive approaches to ministry—those that rely on programs and events to bring people to the church; and missional approaches—less-structured endeavors

that seek to meet people where they are. This insight led Brace to move his workspace to the local bagel shop in the center of town. It took him to city councils and recovery groups, in addition to their church's small group—or missional community, as he calls it. More than this, it caused him to wrestle with what church is: are we really fulfilling the calling we've been given? How can we strike out toward a fresh, relationship-centric approach to ministry?

The book is filled with stories of the pastor himself and his wife, Camille; stories of team experiences; stories that introduce you to such people as Jim, Trisha, Howard, Sandra, and Tony. Some of the stories are heartwarming and encouraging, illustrating what is possible when we partner with Jesus. Others are heart-wrenching and raw, giving us a glimpse into the author's wrestling with God over situations that took unexpected turns or—more seriously—into what happens when we fail to follow through on the Holy Spirit's impressions.

The book is almost prescient in the light of the current pandemic that has put more distance between many of us than we have desired. Churches have been temporarily closed because of either government mandates or a desire to keep members safe during periods of high transmission rates. This has left many of us longing for more authentic spiritual fellowship and communal worship. Brace's story caused me to realize my own dissatisfaction with the status quo. I don't want to be content with a superficial church experience when God has something richer in store.

At the same time, one shouldn't look upon these ideas too romantically. The kind of ministry Brace portrays is messy. Engaging with and investing deeply in people always carries some inherent risk. But there is no other option than to follow the example of Jesus, who did that for all of us. This book affirms that sacrificial approach.

Quoting a number of Christian missiologists, Brace presents challenges to traditional methods of outreach that might leave some unsettled. At the same time, students of Ellen White will recognize some of her terminology in the background, as well as direct quotes from her writings. Whether or not you agree with Brace's perspective, his approach is commendable, and his book offers a fresh perspective on approaching ministry to today's post-Christian society. 🍴

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

WHAT'S CHURCH? Many distinct meanings: which one's yours?

A little more than a year ago (AR, March 2021) we asked what you thought of church and change. A lot of your answers then involved individualized reflections about what or how church should be. The discussion was lively: you wanted to do more of it. This issue's question opens the door to that "more." So here's an edited selection of your responses to a simple query: "What's church?"

Church means my family in Christ. The church building is our Father's (God's) house, where we meet together to do His will, whatever our Father's will is.

LOUISE GIBSON ADDY, REALTOR, MARYLAND

Church: a family of like-minded, caring believers, supporting each other on the journey to heaven.

SHERLA MASON, MODERN LANGUAGES TEACHER, QUESTELLES, ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES (SVG)

Church: the community of believers, a shoulder to lean on in troublesome times, a beacon of hope for the future.

RHONDA MORGAN, TEACHER, PROSPECT, SVG

Church means fellowship, love, belonging, learning together.

GLORIA FARRELL, RETIRED TEACHER, NORTH CAROLINA

Church is a building where people get together to worship and fellowship, no matter where.

SARAH SCOTT, MIDDLE SCHOOL MATH TEACHER, CALIFORNIA

Church affords the opportunity to encourage and empower; it's spiritually energizing.

DESRIE RICHARDS, EDUCATION OFFICER, PEMBROKE, SVG

Church may be a structure where people gather in the company of like believers experiencing inclusiveness, friendship, love, and security as we worship our Lord and Creator.

ANN LAURENCE, NURSE, RETIRED, MARYLAND

Church is a building where Christians gather together for worship and fellowship.

L. K., LICENSED CLINICAL THERAPIST, YPSILANTI, MICHIGAN

Church: a place for spiritual enrichment, fellowship, physical and spiritual support, and corporate worship.

ANNCNELMA ALLEN, TEACHER, CHAUNCEY, SVG

For me the church is invisible; a safe environment. But I stress this very strongly: it is not a place to show off how great you are because of how many scriptures you know; and it's not some kind of contest.

ANONYMOUS, CANADA

The church provides spiritual stability to its members. The COVID pandemic demonstrates that church can do much more as its activities expand beyond its walls.

ASHLEY, ENGINEER, EDUCATOR, CONSULTANT, ALABAMA

Church is community. A place of friends and fellow pilgrims supporting each other through life and toward righteousness.

ANDWELE WORRELL, ARCHITECT, MARYLAND

Church is what happens when we get together to study God's Word, to do community service together—in a building; on the beach.

ISAAC GARCIA, CONTRACTOR, FLORIDA



Just walking through the doors brings you closer to God. We're making time for God and allowing Him into our lives by attending a place of worship.

DAVID JOHNSON, RETIRED FIREMAN, CANADA

A loving and caring extended family—if we allow it by opening up and engaging with other members within the community.

DEANNA HOLLOWAY, MARYLAND

A place of worship, thanksgiving, and praise.

RAQUEL JARAMILLO, RETIRED PHARMACIST, FLORIDA

Church is the place to receive a blessing and to be a blessing to someone else in need.

BETSY JOHNSON, HEALTH CARE—PARISH NURSE, BOWIE, MARYLAND

Church means *family*. It's a wonderful feeling to know that I have family beyond my earthly blood family. We can cry and laugh together. We are striving to stay together in Christ here and later for all eternity.

VIVIENNE LETTSOME, APPLICATIONS ANALYST, MARYLAND

Church is a body of Christ's followers, a community of fellowship and worship.

MEGHAN WAZOUA, SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHER, TEXAS

Church to us is a noun, verb, and adjective. It embodies and validates our most sacred beliefs. It the incubator for fellowship and service. It is fundamental to our identify as individuals, a family and members of society.

COLIN BRUCE, ECONOMIST, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Church means the place of fellowship with believers in Christ.

CAROL HOLNESS, PROFESSOR OF NURSING, MARYLAND

It's the people who follow Jesus; we are part of them.

MARCOS CORNEJO, ENGINEER, FLORIDA

Church is people gathered together to live out a life of faith, growing toward the full realization of their salvation and identity in Christ.

STEPHANIE GRANT, CHAPLAIN, MARYLAND

Church: a place where one goes to hear God's words. Church commands me to share.

ADINGA FINDLAY, CREDIT UNION EMPLOYEE, LOWMANS LEEWARD, SVG

A building, a place to hang out with people and experience God's love.

JEREMY SATNIK, YOUTH VOLUNTEER, CALGARY, ALBERTA

Christ's house for His called-out people who are to make disciples for Him from all nations, and to live in fellowship and unity until He returns.

MINEVA GLASGOW, HR CONSULTANT, SVG

A family for whom the love of Jesus is the common blood. Sometimes dysfunctional, but by God's grace always growing.

JOAN CORNEJO, CHAPLAIN, FLORIDA

Church: a place where someone is led to newer and deeper insights into God, challenged to be the best person, and encouraged by others who recognize their frailties and total dependence upon God.

IRIS MOUNSEY, TEACHER, YAMBOU, SVG

BEING THE SERMONS AND THE PICTURES

I received a stern letter about our ministry the other day. In it an angry-sounding woman told us she refused to renew her subscription to *Adventist Review*. “The *Review* is chock-full of sermons, unfortunately!” she said. “I would rather see the sermon than hear one any day. We don’t care how much you know until we know how much you care.”

She isn’t wrong.

To clarify, we don’t publish 72 pages of sermons or even more than the occasional three-page summary. Truthfully, we wouldn’t wish that on anyone. But our unhappy reader was spot-on concerning her other points. Seeing sermons and showing care go so much further than a display of academic prowess or skill with the written word.

When my son was in first grade, he did something (I can’t remember what) that got my husband and me justifiably upset. And so we spoke to him in a tone that conveyed that sentiment. He turned to us and said, “You’re not being the picture of Jesus. You’re being the picture of Satan!”

What is being the picture of Jesus supposed to look like? How do we reflect Christ in the way we act? in the way we treat others? If a mirror were held up to our behavior, who would be looking back at us?

At the time of this writing, most of us have been glued to the news and, in my case, even TikTok, for on-the-ground coverage of all that is happening in Ukraine, and I’m heartbroken at the fear, displacement, and violence facing innocent citizens.

But the news has made me think seriously. Especially in times like these, being the sermon and being the picture of Jesus are what is called for, not just through words, or thoughts, or prayers alone—important as they are.

A friend of mine took to cold calling a local Ukrainian church in the area and told whoever answered the phone how much she was praying for their country. I sent an email to the lead minister of a similar congregation just to extend my support. Refugees are crossing the borders into Poland, Hungary, and Romania to people waiting on the other side with food, blankets, and a welcome. And yes, brave Russian citizens are protesting, at great risk to themselves.

Even *Saturday Night Live* preached a simple sermon with its “cold open” during the February 26 show. On a stage decorated with sunflowers—the national flower of Ukraine—the show featured the Ukrainian Chorus Dumka of New York singing the hymn “Prayer for Ukraine.” The piece traditionally closes each service in most Ukrainian Christian churches.

It’s easy to talk the talk. To research the topics, finding all the biblical support, anecdotal evidence, and Spirit of Prophecy quotations to load a sermon—or an article—with powerful words. But what speaks the loudest?

We are facing challenges on a worldwide scale where we can see the opportunity to be the picture of Jesus, to be the most powerful of sermons. As we get closer to Jesus’ coming, watch where the sermons are coming from—in deed more than word. And join in. 🍀

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AND SHOWING CARE
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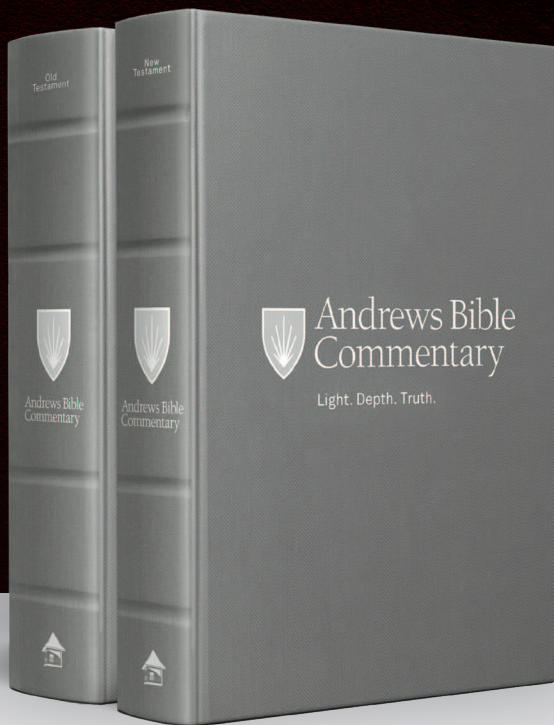
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