

# ADVENTIST REVIEW

DECEMBER 2022: MARY'S PRAYER + GRACE  
FOR OUTSIDERS + TANGLED IN TRANSITION +  
THE LULLABY OF CHRISTMAS + GRIEF DURING  
THE HOLIDAYS

# Through Their Eyes



“The soul that  
gives is always

**refreshed.”**

—Ray Hartwell

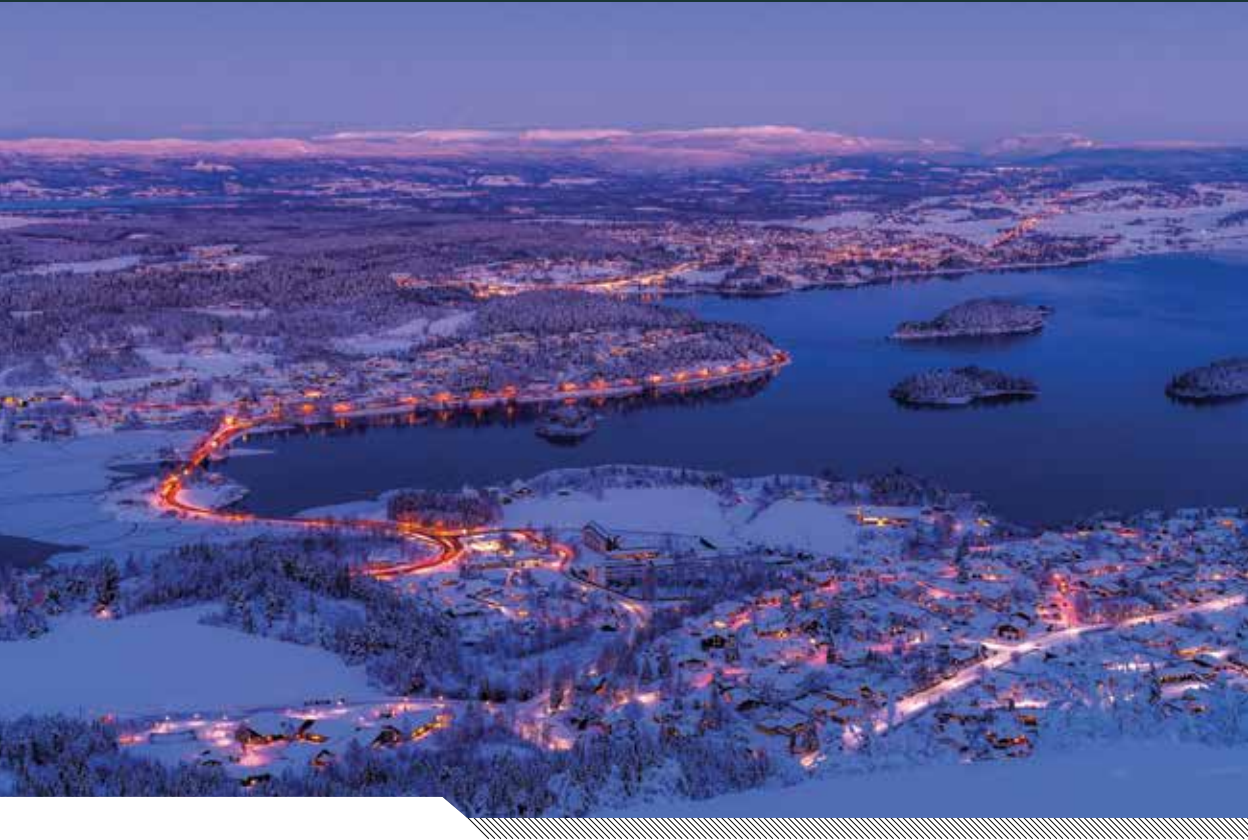
Director at Grateful Living  
(Trust Services, Stewardship)  
Georgia Cumberland Conference



**Planned Giving  
& Trust Services**

Experience the joy of giving • [willplan.org](http://willplan.org)





## FEATURES



18 **THROUGH THEIR EYES** | GERALD A. KLINGBEIL  
It's a familiar story with new perspectives.



20 **SETTING THE STAGE** | SAMUEL NÚÑEZ  
Since Jesus was born at "just the right time," understanding the context is important.



25 **MARY'S PRAYER** | KANDACE ZOLLMAN  
Her understanding of Scripture informed her consent and her praise.

28 **THE SURROGATE** | JAROD THOMAS  
He may seem incidental, but it was by his name Jesus was first known.

30 **FROM HEAVEN'S COURTS** | MICHELLE ODINMA  
An imagined first-person account from a heavenly perspective

34 **GRACE FOR OUTSIDERS** | THOMAS R. SHEPHERD  
The manger is a place of inclusion and welcoming joy.

**“The Christmas story is beautiful in its simplicity,  
 profound in its implications, but especially  
 wonderful in its revelation of salvation.”**

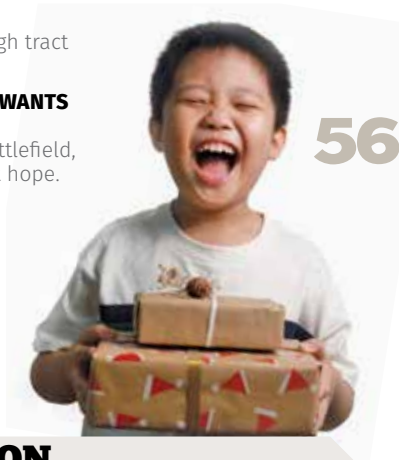
**34**

# ARTICLES

- 36 **BRIDGING THE GAP**  
 CHANTAL J. KLINGBEIL  
 Loss is universally understood and, while unfortunate, keeps us connected.
- 38 **TANGLED IN TRANSITION**  
 CHERYL DOSS  
 Change is inevitable, but we can learn how to manage it.
- 44 **LOVE LETTERS**  
 DAVID CARL  
 Spreading love through tract ministry
- 48 **THE BATTLE NO ONE WANTS**  
 FAITH-ANN MCGARRELL  
 We may be on the battlefield, but we're not without hope.

- 54 **CHRISTMAS IS COMING**  
 ELLEN G. WHITE  
 What does it really mean to be ready for Christmas?
- 56 **KEEPING THE DOOR OPEN**  
 DAVE LAWRENCE  
 Learning the lesson of Christmas from one persistent little boy

- 58 **THE LULLABY OF CHRISTMAS**  
 ED DICKERSON  
 The answer to a soul in distress may be found in a simple Christmas carol.
- 60 **A GATHERING OF GIFTS**  
 ESTHER LUCILE HOLLAND  
 Feeling down at Christmas? There is a solution.
- 62 **GRIEF DURING THE HOLIDAYS**  
 JACI CRESS SOLIS  
 Loneliness and grief seem heightened during this season.



## NEWS | OPINION

- » “Built for this Moment”
- » Health-Care Providers Vow to Ramp Up Mission-driven Efforts
- » More Than a Decade Focusing on Mission
- » Bill Knott Ready for New Challenge After 25 years of *Adventist Review* Editorial Work
- » Adventist Communicators Unveil New Collaborative Project



### EDITORIAL

- 5 **BILL KNOTT**  
 GRACE IN THE JOURNEY

### DEPARTMENTS

- 6 **LETTERS**
- 65 **HOUSE CALL**
- 69 **CLOSER LOOK**
- 70 **VOICES**

### COLUMNS

- 43 **TRANSFORMATION TIPS**  
 DELBERT BAKER
- 53 **CLIFF'S EDGE**  
 CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN
- 67 **THE LIFE OF FAITH**  
 ANDY NASH
- 72 **IN OTHER WORDS**  
 ENNO MÜLLER

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

## PUBLISHING BOARD

Ted N. C. Wilson, *chair*  
Guillermo Biaggi, *vice chair*  
Bill Knott, *secretary*

Audrey Andersson, G. Alexander Bryant, Williams Costa, Paul H. Douglas,  
Mark A. Finley, James Howard, Erton Köhler, Peter Landless, Geoffrey Mbwana,  
Daisy Orion, Magdiel Perez Schultz, Artur Stele, Maurice Valentine, Ray  
Wahlen, Karnik Doukmetzian, *legal advisor*

## EXECUTIVE EDITOR/DIRECTOR OF ADVENTIST REVIEW MINISTRIES

Bill Knott

## ASSOCIATE EDITORS/DIRECTORS, ADVENTIST REVIEW MINISTRIES

Gerald A. Klingbeil, Greg Scott

## COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR/NEWS EDITOR

Enno Müller

## DIGITAL PLATFORMS DIRECTOR

Gabriel Begle

## ASSISTANT EDITORS

Sandra Blackmer, Wilona Karimabadi

## FINANCE MANAGER

Kimberly Brown

## MARKETING

Jared Thurmon

## ART DIRECTION AND DESIGN

Bryan Gray/Types & Symbols

## LAYOUT TECHNICIAN

Fred Wuerstlin

## COPY EDITOR

James Cavil

## OPERATIONS MANAGER

Merle Poirier

## EDITORIAL ASSESSMENT COORDINATOR

Marvene Thorpe-Baptiste

## EDITORS-AT-LARGE

Mark Finley, John M. Fowler

## SENIOR ADVISOR

E. Edward Zinke

## AD SALES

Glen Gohlke

## CIRCULATION/DISTRIBUTION

Rebecca Hilde, Sharon Tennyson

## TO WRITERS:

Writer's guidelines are available at the *Adventist Review*

Website: [www.adventistreview.org](http://www.adventistreview.org) and click "About the Review." For a printed

copy, send a self-addressed envelope to: Writer's Guidelines, *Adventist*

*Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

## E-mail:

[revieweditor@gc.adventist.org](mailto:revieweditor@gc.adventist.org)

## Web site:

[www.adventistreview.org](http://www.adventistreview.org)

Unless otherwise noted, Bible texts in this issue are from the New King James

Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. All rights reserved.

Bible texts credited to NIV are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*.

Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Bible texts credited to NRSV are

from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the

Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in

the U.S.A. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Scripture quotations

marked ESV are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001

by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All

rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the New American

Standard Bible, copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman

Foundation. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise noted, all prominent photos are ©Getty Images 2021.

The *Adventist Review* (ISSN 0161-1119) is the general paper of the Seventh-day

Adventist® church. It is published monthly by the General Conference of Seventh-

day Adventists®, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. Periodicals

postage paid at Silver Spring, MD, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send

address changes to *Adventist Review*, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353.

Copyright © 2022, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®.

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Twelve issues of the monthly *Adventist Review*, US\$19.95,

plus additional postage outside North America. Single copy US\$2.00 plus

shipping and handling.

To order, visit [adventistreview.org/subscriptions](http://adventistreview.org/subscriptions) or send your name,

address, and payment to: *Adventist Review* subscription desk, P.O. Box

5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353

## ADDRESS CHANGES AND SUBSCRIPTION QUERIES:

[adventistreview@pacificpress.com](mailto:adventistreview@pacificpress.com) or call 1-800-545-2449

# TRENDING

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

# 1



Prophetic Denialism: The High Cost of Ignoring the Warnings, by Ivor Myers

# 2



Believing the Unbelievable, by Anthony Bosman

# 3



A Cluster of Malignant Tumors, by Marcos Paseggi

# 4



The Battle No One Wants, by Faith-Ann McGarrell

# 5



The Best is Yet to Come, by Mickey Kutzner



**WORTHINGTON**

**PLANT POWERED™**

MEATLESS MEAT MADE SIMPLY SINCE 1939!

*Happy Holidays*



HOLIDAY RECIPES!



[ with your phone ]

*Scan me!*

**CHECK YOUR SDA GROCERS FOR IN-STORE PROMOTIONS ALL SEASON LONG!**

EATWORTHINGTON  
@EAT.WORTHINGTON  
EATWORTHINGTON

**CELEBRATING OVER 80 YEARS OF MEAT FREE HOLIDAYS!**

BILL KNOTT



*I have deeply loved the years of leading this remarkable editorial team.*

## Grace in the Journey

The acclaimed Jewish author Chaim Potok once wrote, “All beginnings are hard.”\*

The good rabbi might just as well have added, “As are all endings.”

There is no easy way to report the ending of anything you have loved—a much-needed vacation; a cherished relationship; an exquisite concert; or a fulfilling job.

You may decorate the narrative with fond remembrances; you may underline the turmoil and hardship that attended the journey; you may sum up all the things accomplished and the growth that was experienced. But in the end, there still is the end.

With this editorial, I will complete 16 years as executive editor of *Adventist Review* and soon begin another chapter in my ministry career. On January 1, 2023, I will move to a new role as the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s liaison to the U.S. Congress, the White House, and the diplomatic corps based in Washington, D.C.

Unlike some who leave leadership positions, this is not for me a journey of regret or retirement. I have deeply loved the years of leading this remarkable editorial team, and the full 25 years I have spent shaping the flagship journal of the Adventist Church. But you may call yourself truly blessed if in leaving a job you have loved for 25 years, you move to a job of which you have dreamed for 50 years.

I was 15 when I first discovered that my church appointed a representative to advance its interests on Capitol Hill and with the political and intellectual leadership of the nation. It seemed then—as it seems now—a remarkable opportunity to work among and with those whose decisions shape the religious and political freedoms of the United States, and collaterally, other nations of the world. My life story—punctuated by an intense interest in government, a doctoral degree in the history of American religion, and a deep awareness of the vigilance required to protect the rights guaranteed in the nation’s founding documents—has quietly moved me to a role I never expected might be mine.

None of the remarkable growth and change experienced by this magazine and its umbrella organization, Adventist Review Ministries, in the past 16 years would have been possible without the immense contributions of the talented men and women who have worked alongside me. Adventist Review TV, podcasts, video documentaries, book-length publications, websites that serve hundreds of thousands each month, and a social media platform that communicates with millions more all emerged alongside our historic and widespread print ministry because the Spirit brought to us persons of singular talent and focus.

Many of them came with deep experience in other church ministries or the public sector. Their passion for their church, their extensive professional networks, and their desire to build God’s kingdom stretched both my vision and my comfort. Left to myself, I might have been content to camp within the world of print I have cherished since I first learned to read.

To the many thousands who value this journal and the way it has shaped your own spiritual journey, I offer my gratitude as well. Your notes of encouragement, your prayers, your phone calls, and even the occasional rebuke have helped to improve and strengthen both the magazine and the movement.

This journal has been from its inception in 1849 a defining force in God’s remnant church—both the inspiration for its mission and the place where that mission is reported and celebrated. Nudged by that history, I have written in these columns of passion for truth, of witness, of justice, of dialogue, and of civility. The conversation begun in the pages of this journal 173 years ago will continue shaping us until we wake to that day that has no end.

So stay in grace.

\* Chaim Potok, *In the Beginning* (Penguin Literary Group, 1975).

## WHO CARES

Reading through the October issue brought to mind my caregiving experience working for the elderly in many nursing health-care facilities. The time came for me to take care of Mom for four years in my home. She lived in Maine, and the transition was a little difficult for her to adjust to. Her religious preference was different than mine, but she still came to church with me weekly and attended many Bible studies. During my last time with her after a stroke that left her speech slurred, I greeted her and the first thing she said to me: “Guess what? I joined the church last night.” Undoubtedly a dream or vision; she never did say. I had her call her sister in Maine now that she could speak clearer words, and the first words she spoke to her sister were “Guess what? I joined the church last night.” Mom died the following day on Sabbath. I thank God for the reassurance that Mom would be with Him one day and allowing me to care for her physical and spiritual needs.

**Robert Rouillard**

*Lakewood, Washington*



## INSPIRING ISSUE

Thank you for the most outstanding and inspiring issue of the November Adventist Review about the wonders of the universe from some of our Christian scholars. Amazing to know that to the naked eye several thousand stars are visible and that there are around 200 billion trillion stars in the universe. Even though we have the most powerful telescopes the

human mind is not capable to understand the vastness, immense wonders of God’s creation. My wife and I have just finished reading again the book Home at Last by Walton Brown about the visions of E.G. White and what will be open for the redeemed as they are flown into heaven. She says that “we learned that there were millions of inhabited worlds, and that our own planet was but an

atom in the universe.” Thanks, again, for giving us a glimpse of what the redeemed is going to explore when we get to heaven and meet with our Creator!

Leo Ranzolin, Sr.  
Estero, Florida

## FROM FACEBOOK

### GOD HAS CALLED YOU TO BE THE BIBLE TO NONCHRISTIANS

Well done! I wish this to everyone who believes in Christ and wants to be there for others in helping them in their faith and salvation!

**Elena Georgieva Vasileva**

### INDIANAPOLIS WILL HOST 2030 GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

I wonder if this [the General Conference Session] can be done through Webex? There are probably many other ways to invest the cost of the event to share the gospel with the world.

**Eulises Canada**

Planning to attend. God willing, I am still alive, or maybe the next GC will be in heaven.

**Arlie Medenilla Geniza**

### SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY HOLDS INAUGURAL COMMUNITY EVENT

This is awesome! Great idea! Hats off to the planning team who thought of and put this together



---

I thank God for the reassurance that Mom would be with Him one day and allowing me to care for her physical and spiritual needs.

—ROBERT ROUILLARD, LAKEWOOD, WASHINGTON

---

and those who executed what sounds like a great event for reaching leaders, politicians, officials, and businesspeople in the community while getting them involved and raising awareness of all the university has to offer.

**Nathaniel Oregon**

**LET'S EMBRACE GOD'S MISSION OF RESTORATION, CHURCH PRESIDENT SAYS**

Very needful! May the Lord fill His vessels to do needful work.

**Adegbite Mofoluwaso**

**LOCAL CHURCH IN THE U.S. RECEIVES A \$1 MILLION GIFT**

What a blessing and example of allowing God to lead. Praying for God's continued blessings on both congregations.

**Patricia Andrews-Pierre**

**IS IT POSSIBLE TO LIVE WITH NO FEAR OF DEATH?**

We watched the events associated with Queen Elizabeth's

passing and were impressed by her trust in the resurrection and meeting her loved ones again. She did not exhibit fear, but trust!

**Dorothy McKinney**

**ADVENTISTS SEEK TO ASSIST PUERTO RICO AFTER HURRICANE FIONA**

Prophecy is fast coming to pass. Our King is coming sooner than we anticipated.

**Akwasi Danso**

**LEADERS TRAIN YOUNG PEOPLE TO BECOME DIGITAL EVANGELISTS**

Wish it could be held thru Zoom so that many from other countries can join in to glorify God.

**Le Thi Anh Tuyet**

**WHAT A WASTE!**

Some good ideas of how to share tracts. If put into things people receive (stuck into something), it will probably go to waste. But if it's set out in public, a person has to make a decision to pick it up

**CORRECTION**

The appeal for donations in the for the New Believer Program in the November issue listed an incorrect web address. Make your gift online by credit card at [adventistreview.org](http://adventistreview.org). See full details on p. 8.

to read, and then it is more likely to be kept. Just my experience.

**Richard Ramey**

**GOD'S UNFAILING PROMISES IN MY LIFE**

What a wonderful testimony, and very inspiring. Makes me think about the ones who did not have the opportunity to go to church in childhood. Yet we are still afraid to go out and tell the world the amazing love that comes from God.

**Diana Polo**

Wonderful testimony. God kept His hand on him.

**Barb Davis Guenterberg**

**MICROPANTRY EXTENDS WORK OF FEEDING THE HUNGRY**

In Waxahachie, Texas, we call ours the "Blessing Box" and have also added literature.

**Nancy Martin**

**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](mailto:letters@adventistreview.org).

December 01, 2022

# ADVENTIST REVIEW

Dear Friend and Supporter,

There are many things I love about this ministry. But the one that keeps the fire burning in my heart is the one I'm writing to you about today.

Our New Believers program from its inception has been to serve one purpose—inspire hope and faith in those newly joined to our global Adventist church family. There's something about reading about the lives and insights of believers around the world that makes all the difference when you're young in faith.

I'm humbled to have been involved in launching this crucial piece of our ministry many years ago, and I'd love your help to keep it moving forward today.

I'm writing to ask for your help to inspire a new faith generation that has just joined us. Thousands of New Believers have joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church across North America in the last 12 months, and they're looking to make sense of this new way of life they've embraced.

One of the ways we can help them is by sharing with them the same faith-building content that we've been offering for more than 173 years in the *Adventist Review*.

Today, the *Adventist Review* continues to expand in areas far beyond print. We now offer inspiring, practical content on **audio, video, virtual reality, and social media platforms**, and the list continues to grow.

Your continued support and kindness helps place this journal—with all of its supporting platforms—in the homes of thousands of new followers of Jesus. That's just one of the things that keeps me excited about this ministry!

For 24 years, faithful *Adventist Review* supporters like you have sponsored tens of thousands of subscriptions for these New Believers every year, helping them in that important first year as an Adventist with faith-building, high-quality articles, devotional materials, and news—on the platform of their choice. Your help in sponsoring a New Believer subscription is pivotal to anchoring them into this movement in the coming year.

Here's how you can join me in making such a difference in thousands of lives:

**For only \$10, you can guarantee that a newly baptized Adventist gets a full year's subscription—12 beautiful editions—of the print magazine, with all of its eye-catching, relevant news, doctrine, and inspiration, as well as full access to our digital subscription included with their subscription. In addition to our text-based content, we're also including new audio and video content for our New Believers.**

Thank you for caring. Thank you for praying. Thank you for keeping the witness going to a new generation of believers.

Share the grace that has been extended to you.



Bill Knott  
Executive Editor

P.S. Make your gift online by credit card at the *Adventist Review* website ([www.adventistreview.org](http://www.adventistreview.org)), or send your check to: *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland, USA. 20904

**“People will feel drawn to those not engaged in medical mercenary work but in medical missionary work, [which] is an extension of the healing ministry of Christ.”**

**—Mark Finley, p. 12**

# NEWS



North American Division president G. Alexander Bryant presents his report on October 27. PHOTO: PIETER DAAMSTEEGT, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

## **“BUILT FOR THIS MOMENT”**

**NAD PRESIDENT’S REPORT HIGHLIGHTS RELEVANCE OF ADVENTIST MISSION AND MESSAGE.**

**KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW**

**T**hree hundred executive committee members of the North American Division (NAD) met October 27 at the regional church headquarters in Columbia, Maryland, for the beginning of the 2022 NAD year-end meeting. This annual business meeting, which returned to an in-person event, with livestreaming on the NAD website, Facebook, and YouTube, provided the opportunity to receive reports, amend policies, strategize, and fellowship with church leaders who have dedicated themselves to sharing Christ and

the Adventist faith with others.

“During the pandemic the ministry of the church went forward, and we especially thank the Lord for our teachers, health-care workers, and IT personnel for their work. And our unions and conference leaderships, our pastors, and the faithful members for what you have done—a heartfelt thank-you for your service,” NAD president G. Alexander Bryant said as he opened his report. “As we have examined our life, we have had to do ministry and the mission of the church through

incredible political strife, economic collapse, and natural disasters, and yet we have seen God’s church move forward. God has been blessing His church during the pandemic.”

### **REACHING INTO THE CITIES**

As part of his report, Bryant shared a look at the North American megapolises, in particular 20 metropolitan areas. In these epicenters of power, he said, even though the NAD membership is “only 5 percent of the world population, those megapolises control 20 percent of the

United States GDP, the largest economic output of any megalopolis in the world. . . . And what this spoke to me about was the power of cities. The political power, the entertainment power, the economic power, the media power, the educational power, . . . and God has called us to impact these cities.”

Bryant then introduced the Antioch Initiative, in which “we take the resource that we have collectively, and we focus them in one area—we’re talking about centers of influence. We need to have thousands of centers of influence all around the North American Division.

“‘Together in Mission’ is the theme we have adopted,” Bryant continued. “‘Together in Mission: I Will Go,’ and what that means is that we’re stronger together. We can come together and power the church forward in a better, stronger, and more effective way than if we did it separately. One of our strategic focuses for the next three years is to take our media resources and expand them, and to focus on how we can take these media resources to be more impactful in these big cities that God has called us to reach.”

The use of media will be vital in reaching the cities, he said. Bryant encouraged year-end meeting attendees to explore the opportunities and network, and collaborate across all organizations, finding ways in which “we can maximize and expand our utilization of media.”

“This is an area where we can allow our youth and young adults

to help lead the way,” Bryant said. “Why not let them loose in the areas that they naturally live in to lead the church on how we can use those social media platforms to advance the gospel of Jesus? That is what that initiative is about, to train and equip 10,000 digital missionaries. We’re going to train and equip them to go into the ‘new’ arena we call social media and spread the love of Jesus Christ.”

### FIGHT FOR MISSION

The NAD church membership at the end of 2021 was 1.271 million, said Bryant, and if you consider that 50 percent of the population of the U.S. is in those 20 metropolitan areas and look at the church member ratio in North America to the general population, there is one Seventh-day Adventist for every 370 people. The church needs to grow exponentially, Bryant said. “Together we can make a stronger impact in these cities.”

Bryant addressed the issue of church leaders being the example, calling efforts a “fight for mission.” He said, “‘Multiply’ is to leverage the opportunity to exponentially grow the ministry of Jesus and all the aspects of ministry such as praying, building relationships, educating, helping, healing, proclaiming, revitalizing, and church planting.”

He added, “Whether it’s community outreach, or a health project, or a marriage seminar, or mental wellness, or an evangelistic meeting, or a weekly Bible study, let’s all do something for Jesus.”

### MENTORING

Bryant shared that during the past 18 months five out of nine union presidents and 33 out of 59 conference presidents are new to their positions; and only one of six NAD vice presidents has served in their role longer than three years. And 140 NAD executive committee members are also new.

Mentoring, the third strategic focus, is crucial. “We must collaborate with entities to create an intentional leadership development plan for leaders,” Bryant said. Sharing data on the average ages of the church leadership in North America, he added, “Even with the leadership who just changed, more than half of them will change again in just a few years, then again in a few more years. About 2,000 pastors will be ready to retire in just a couple of years. When you add up all the theology and religion majors in our universities and colleges, we have about 97, so this area of mentorship is critically important.”

### MARCH INTO VICTORY

He challenged delegates to “prioritize mission. Double down on public and personal evangelism. Mission refocus—let’s assess every aspect of our operations, and evaluate them for mission effectiveness. Don’t let the ‘good things’ keep us from the things God has called us to. . . . God is positioning His church for the final and rapid movements of the end-time. God will open doors for us. Our best days are ahead. Let’s march into victory.”



AMEN leaders pray for the incoming president John Shin and his family.

PHOTO: MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

## HEALTH-CARE PROVIDERS VOW TO RAMP UP MISSION-DRIVEN EFFORTS

AMEN PRESIDENT CALLS ADVENTIST PROFESSIONALS TO REMEMBER HEALTH IS A MEANS TO AN END.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

**A**fter five years, the Adventist Medical Evangelism Network (AMEN) said goodbye to its president Brian Schwartz and welcomed president-elect John Shin during the evening program at the organization's 2022 annual conference in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, on October 29.

AMEN board members thanked Schwartz profusely for his service at the helm of the organization that seeks to connect, train, and motivate Adventist health-care providers for mission.

"Doctor Schwartz became AMEN president at a difficult financial time for the organization," leaders said, "but thanks to his hard work and God's blessings, he's leaving it in a much more solid position."

Shin, who acknowledged to be "the firstfruits" of the mentorship emphasis of the organization on behalf of new generations, thanked Schwartz and others and the trust of the AMEN board. "I feel I am the least qualified to fill this position, but I think it's God's ministry, and

I will move forward on my knees," Shin said.

### THE PURPOSE OF AMEN

During the following minutes Shin laid out his vision for the mission-driven and mission-focused organization.

"We are not just a club of like-minded people who share the same passion," Shin said. "Medical ministry is not just another ministry." He referenced Adventist Church cofounder Ellen White, who called medical ministry "the right arm of the gospel." "You don't have multiple right arms," Shin said. "Medical ministry is *the* right arm."

Shin also reflected on how Jesus used medical ministry when preaching about God's kingdom. "Jesus combined both because He knew it was the most effective way of doing mission," he said. In that sense, Shin emphasized, "our commission does not end because we are medical professionals with passion for service. We as health-care providers are in a prime position

to teach others. We are not a club for medical professionals; we are the tip of the spear for medical ministry that should be embraced by everyone."

### MEANS TO AN END

According to Shin, AMEN must focus to engage not only medical professionals but all people. "If you see patients, we want you to be involved in AMEN," Shin added. "We wish to train you so that you become a catalyst in your community. Train you and provide you with opportunities to serve."

Shin said that this is just a natural result of nurturing our personal walk with Christ. "When you are connected to the vine, the branch cannot do anything else other than bear fruit," he reminded AMEN members.

It is the reason, Shin emphasized, why it is essential for Adventist providers to combine health-care service with ministry. "Otherwise, you fall into spiritual constipation: all input, no output," he said. "Indeed, health without ministry is a bridge to nowhere."

In expanding this thought, Shin explained that there is also what he called "a counterfeit health message," when health becomes the ultimate objective. "It's the health message without God," he said. "But health is a bridge to give us an unobstructed view of Christ. We cannot separate those two. Health is a means to an end."

### A CENTER OF HOPE AND HEALING

In the AMEN conference closing program, evangelist and AMEN co-

founder Mark Finley reminded members what health ministry is all about and why it is important as a missionary tool. “These days people are not so interested in a creed. They want to know that faith works, that there are people who serve unselfishly,” Finley said.

He reminded members that every person has the desire to live life fully, even in the twenty-first century. And to live fully, they need to see God’s character of love revealed through the unselfish service of God’s children. The peoples of the world “will feel drawn to a group of people more interested in the honor of God than in their honor or prestige. They will feel drawn to those not engaged in medical mercenary work but in medical missionary work. Medical ministry work matters because it is an extension of the healing ministry of Christ,” Finley said.

Finley also called AMEN members to remember that “Jesus wants us to live the life of abundance, knowing that everything is ours in Christ.” And “there’s nothing scarce when God gives you the abundant life.”

Against that background, he emphasized, “God’s desire for every medical office is to be a center of hope and healing.” He desires to see “men and women unselfishly serving, not consumed by themselves but focused on others.” And “as they serve lovingly, that is going to make a dramatic difference in their patients,” Finley said.

Finally, Finley suggested some questions Adventist professionals can use to probe for their patients’ real needs. “Is there anything else that I can do for you? Have there been any significant changes in your life during the past 12 months? Is there something troubling you? When you face a crisis, where are you likely to go for help? Does faith play any part at all in your life?” Finley asked. “Remember that you are God’s eyes and ears to your patients. So go from this place as an ambassador of the King of the universe to show His love,” he said. 🍌



Young people from more than 50 countries attended the latest “I Will Go” convention.

PHOTO: SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

## MORE THAN A DECADE FOCUSING ON MISSION

**THE LATEST “I WILL GO” CONVENTION GATHERED 5,000 MISSIONARY HOPEFULS.**

JEFFERSON PARADELLO, SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

**B**raving hot temperatures, thousands of people arrived on the campus of Bahia Adventist College in Cachoeira, Bahia, Brazil, October 19–22. Hailing from more than 50 countries, they came to the 2022 “I Will Go” convention with a common goal: to learn and share ways of better contributing to the mission of the Adventist Church.

Some among the thousands in attendance already had some kind of volunteer and missions experience from serving in other cultures. Others were taking their first steps to discover opportunities for using their gifts and talents to meet specific needs and talk about Jesus.

Miguel Mamani, a 24-year-old student from Bolivia, has been involved in several missionary projects in his country, as well as in Argentina and Paraguay. For him this event held a special meaning. “Mission is more than being in a specific location; it’s rather a lifestyle,” he said.

Mamani’s goal is to learn more about mission and get acquainted with the missionary projects the Adventist Church is currently carrying out across South America and around the world. He would also like to understand how he can be useful in his community and in other regions.

Student Clara Liz also saw in the program an opportunity to better serve others. “I have always enjoyed helping other people. When I found out about Maranatha [Volunteers International]’s projects on TV, it inspired me. I felt that I also wanted to do that,” she said.

Liz, however, almost didn’t make it to the convention in Bahia. She was hesitant to attend after recently facing some personal challenges. “In the end I decided to come because I want to help my neighbor, and I know I will find myself in this place,” she said.

## HEART TO HEARTS

The initiative that drew 5,000 people together in Bahia this year was born in the hearts of two young people who breathed mission. While studying medicine at River Plate Adventist University (UAP) in Argentina, Rigoberto Vidal and Daniel Hansen were leaders at the Mission Institute on campus. Their desire was to involve more students in mission activities, so mission service would become part of their academic and professional background.

While completing a medical residency in the Philippines, Hansen met Lester Merklin, then world director of the Institute of World Mission, and shared how he would like the UAP to be more immersed in mission. His dream was that people would have the opportunity to attend training at the Mission Institute and return with knowledge that they could share with others. However, soon another idea came to mind: to provide the training on the university campus in Argentina itself.

In August 2010 Hansen and Vidal proposed a convention plan for university students who desired to enter the mission field. Their plan was discussed and approved. A year later the first “I Will Go” convention took place in Argentina, with 700 participants. Two years later they met again, and this time 1,000 participants attended.

In 2015 the convention took place at Brazil’s Adventist University in São Paulo, with 2,000 participants.

Five thousand missionary hopefuls met in Bahia, Brazil, October 19-22.

PHOTO: SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS



Two years later the convention returned to Argentina, and again was attended by 2,000 missionary hopefuls.

In 2019 more than 3,600 participants gathered in Peru for the convention. And in 2022 the event returned to Brazil, for the current edition.

## TO THE WHOLE WORLD

According to Stanley Arco, president of the Adventist Church in the region comprising eight countries in South America (Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay), current generations are depositaries of a long-standing missionary spirit. In

fact, the Adventist message arrived precisely because families were willing to leave their homeland to share what they had discovered, he says.

For Arco, Adventist institutions, especially teaching institutions, must train people to serve. “We have a debt with the world, and so we can’t just keep staring at ourselves. We need to make sure that hope reaches other places, such as the 10/40 window, China, and so many other places. We are forming a generation of professionals with a missionary focus,” Arco said. “We want these women and men to leave a legacy elsewhere and come back to influence locally.”

Bill Knott speaking about the role of Adventist journalists at GAIIn Europe 2022.

IMAGE: TOR TJERANSEN/ADVENTIST MEDIA EXCHANGE (CC BY 4.0)



## BILL KNOTT READY FOR NEW CHALLENGE AFTER 25 YEARS OF ADVENTIST REVIEW EDITORIAL WORK

**OUTGOING EXECUTIVE EDITOR WILL JOIN WORLD CHURCH'S PUBLIC AFFAIRS, RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ARM.**

MARK A. KELLNER, FOR ADVENTIST REVIEW

**A**fter a quarter century of editorial involvement with *Adventist Review* magazine, the last 16 years as executive editor, Bill Knott said he is ready for his next challenge.

"It became clear to me that I needed to make a life-giving choice," Knott said about his decision not to seek re-appointment to the media ministry position. "I needed to move in a direction that brought joy and meaning to what may very well be the last act of my career. And I wanted to do that to assure a dignified transition between myself and whoever might follow," he said.

On January 1, 2023, Knott will become an associate director of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Public Affairs and Religious Liberty

Department, a post to which he was elected on October 9, 2022, during the movement's Annual Council. In the new role, he will serve as the world church's liaison to the U.S. Capitol, the White House, and the diplomatic corps.

Justin Kim, currently an associate director of Sabbath School and Personal Ministries for the world church, will become the new editor of the *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* magazines, succeeding Knott.

"I think the Adventist Church deserves a journal, a media platform, as good as the people I've been blessed to know and serve over 43 years," Knott said. "It's a remarkably wonderful group of people."

It's also an expanding, changing

group of people: There were 15.6 million baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2007, when Knott became editor. Today membership stands at roughly 22 million, a nearly 50 percent increase. Serving such a large and diverse community—most Adventists reside outside of the United States, where the movement began and is headquartered—has meant changes in the way Adventist Review Ministries presents its message.

The ministry is still best known for *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World*, the latter birthed in 2005 with the idea of providing a unifying periodical for a global church community. But electronic media—the Internet, podcasts, video, and even the WhatsApp mobile communications platform—now provide important, virtually instant links for news, information, and ministry.

Delivering to the audience for printed magazines has become a physical and financial challenge, he said, pointing to recurring issues in getting *Adventist World* to members in East Africa.

"We looked at it every way we could, and for years we tried pilot projects in Tanzania and Kenya," he said. "We looked at the logistics, and it was just going to bankrupt us. But then, during the pandemic, up pops an opportunity to use the WhatsApp platform to translate a full magazine into Swahili, [and add] additional content."

That switch has brought Adventist



content to millions who speak Swahili—a cohort that comprises 11 percent of world church membership—at a highly reasonable cost, he said.

“Sometimes those conundrums become the birth of some really good ideas that actually give you greater impact but can’t be measured anywhere on our old print subscribers model,” he said.

#### **A DIFFERENT PASTORATE**

When William G. Johnsson, his predecessor as editor, first invited Knott, then pastor of the campus church at Walla Walla University, to become an associate editor, Knott admitted some misgivings.

“I felt distinctly called to pastoral ministry, and 43 years later I still do,” Knott said. “The biggest conundrum of my life was when the invitation came to be an editor, and I couldn’t see initially [a] continuity between 18 years of pastoral ministry and the opportunity to be on the editorial team of a major magazine. It was only when I figured out that this was a different way of pastoring that I began to understand what God was doing and why it made sense to make that transition.”

But Knott also recognized that the grueling world of publishing—*Adventist Review* and the edition that eventually became *Adventist World* had a weekly production schedule for years—could exact a high price, and a friend was determined to see the then-new editor avoid a terminal case of burnout.

“The first time one of my good

**“I FELT  
DISTINCTLY  
CALLED TO  
PASTORAL  
MINISTRY,  
AND 43  
YEARS LATER  
I STILL DO,”**



friends walked through the General Conference building with me, many years back now, he stopped and looked at the pictures of the 10 editors on the wall ahead of mine,” the outgoing editor recalled. “He asked me about the pacing of this job, and I had to admit that it isn’t always a life-giving environment, even though you love the work and people you work with. The nature of a production schedule for this long is just very, very intense.”

Elected in 2006 and installed the following January, Knott brought a pastor’s heart as well as the mind of a scholar to a magazine founded in 1849, some 14 years before the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was organized.

One of the greatest shifts has been the need to move from what Knott called “an historic ‘imperial editor’ model” where the editorial team would unilaterally develop content, to an approach that listens carefully to reader comments and uses survey data to help develop and curate content.

“The big transition that we have experienced is beginning to say, ‘Wait a moment, the audience is going to shape this message, or the audience will go away,’” Knott said.

Knott laughingly concedes that he came to the job with a “risk averse personality,” and that he has had to adapt both personally and professionally as the media platform grew. “Both the media world and the church now require a flexibility I had to learn while doing. There’s a remarkable irony in the fact that a historian who loves print and books was asked to be the editor in an era of relentless change and reinvention. The talented men and women who have worked alongside me really deserve the credit for the breadth and depth of this ministry today.”

*Mark A. Kellner is the faith and family reporter for the Washington Times daily newspaper and served from 2007 to 2014 as news editor for Adventist Review and Adventist World magazines.*



The “700 Years of Happiness” documentary series will premiere in February 2023. IMAGE: SCREENSHOT BY GAIN EUROPE

## ADVENTIST COMMUNICATORS UNVEIL NEW COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

“HAPPINESS” TACKLES NOTION FROM THE STANDPOINT OF CENTENARIANS, CHILDREN, AND OTHERS.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Seventh-day Adventist communicators in Europe unveiled the last installment in a series of annual collaborative multimedia projects that have synergized them in creative partnerships for several years. The official presentation of the 2021-2022 project, titled “Happiness,” took place October 15 during the 2022 Global Adventist Internet Network (GAIN) Europe convention.

“This is part of a strategic goal, to work and move together,” GAIN Europe leaders reminded participants as they introduced the unveiling. “What we can achieve together is much more than what we can accomplish by ourselves.”

### BEYOND BORDERS

Adventist communicators in Europe have been collaborating in projects for several years now. Other productions include “This Is My Mission” (2017-2018), “Fathers” (2019), and “Uncertainty” (2019-2021). But what began as a mostly European idea soon crossed borders to include productions from other countries such as Brazil, South Africa, and South Korea. As of 2022, 26 countries have participated in producing spots or clips, 27 countries have collaborated to produce documentary films, and 21 countries have provided authors for the printed resources.

“Our goal has been to create the

environment and the spirit and the community that may think more as ‘we’ and less as ‘I,’” Adrian Duré, Hope Media Europe producer and coordinator of network projects, said during the October 15 presentation. “We need to keep creating a community that is willing to work together.”

### ABOUT HAPPINESS

The idea to focus on the notion of happiness was born out of a vote by GAIN participants after a brainstorming session during the virtual event in 2021. The cross-media initiative was created and coordinated by Hope Media Europe, the Inter-European Division (EUD), and the Trans-European Division (TED) of the Adventist Church. It also included the cooperation of the Inter-American Division (IAD), the North American Division (NAD), and the South American Division (SAD), GAIN leaders said.

“Happiness” sets out to explore various aspects of happiness itself. According to Duré, the project’s target audience is broad, and is intended to reach Adventists and Christians from other denominations, as well as people of other faiths and secular people. The type of production, format, and genre are all customized to reach specific and varied audiences. “The

materials portray the life experiences of people from different cultures who are happy and people who show those values that are important for them to live happily beyond their circumstances,” Duré said. “It is a project that highlights positive values, cultural diversity, hope, and faith.”

### WHAT THE PROJECT INCLUDES

The project includes “700 Years of Happiness,” a documentary series that interviews seven centenarians from different countries to find out what makes them happy and what helps them enjoy life even at this age. It also includes *Masters of Joy*, a documentary film about children in countries such as Bolivia, the U.S., and Iceland, who share what makes them happy.

The project also includes *Happiness, the Movie*, which will premiere March 2023, clips for social media titled “Happiness and the Biblical Beatitudes,” and the book *Happiness in Unexpected Places*, in which authors from several continents explore the same notion through storytelling.

“Networking and sharing resources make our work more efficient,” book editor Norel Jacob, who coordinated the printed resources, said.

Duré agreed. Some of the materials “were produced globally because there is a network established,” he said. “We are a strong network. We are a family. I am thrilled about the results of ‘Happiness.’”



### THOUSANDS JOIN THE ADVENTIST CHURCH DURING SPECIAL SABBATH.

Adventists across the Inter-American Division (IAD) celebrated thousands of baptisms on October 29 as they closed a special year of evangelistic campaigns and activities in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the church's official organization in that region. The special day of celebration was part of coming together to rejoice in what God has done, Balvin Braham, IAD vice president and main organizer of the centennial celebrations, said.



**U.S. REGION HOLDS FIRST DEAF YOUTH CAMP.** Sunset Lake Camp, an Adventist camp and retreat center in Wilkeson, Washington, hosted its first deaf youth camp this past summer in conjunction with the Adventurer camp for ages 8 and 9. The children came together for all the activities. Specialized staff from around the country supported the deaf youth camp experience.



**ADVENTIST CHURCH HOLDS FILM FESTIVAL.** The Adventist Church in the East Venezuela Union held a film festival where hundreds gathered to view more than a dozen evangelistic short films and celebrate their production. The event took place at the Cultural Central Park Center in Caracas, Venezuela, on October 1. The cinematography film festival, titled UVOFilms, becomes the first to feature 16 short films based on the parables of Jesus.



**SAVING LIVES AND LIMBS FOR FIVE YEARS.** The 10,000 Toes campaign celebrated a significant milestone—five years of helping communities in the South Pacific combat the devastating impacts of diabetes and other lifestyle diseases. Campaign coordinator Pamela Townend said 10,000 Toes is now operating in 10 countries across the South Pacific. Significant achievements over the past five years have included the first-ever Fiji Wellness Summit and the establishment of 24 wellness hubs and five mobile clinics throughout the South Pacific territory.



**SAY IT WITH A SIGN.** In September, at the Zamboanga Peninsula headquarters in southern Philippines, church members from the town of Ipil held their first community-wide Filipino Sign Language training. More than 40 people from 14 churches in Ipil came together for learning, camaraderie, and worship. Thirteen deaf individuals were asked to participate as resource speakers to enrich, engage, and inspire the training.



**SAN FERNANDO VALLEY ACADEMY CELEBRATES 120 YEARS.** In Fall 2022 San Fernando Valley Academy, located in Northridge, California, celebrated 120 years of providing high-quality Christian education. In 1902 the Fernando College became the first Adventist secondary school in the Southern California Conference territory, with 37 students. With the opening of La Sierra College in 1923, the Fernando College closed but continued to operate as an elementary school, adding more grades through the years, until the first high school class graduated in 1961.



### ADVENTIST REVIEW MINISTRIES NEWSLETTER

To receive our weekly newsletter highlighting current news, inspiring stories, thought-provoking commentaries, engaging features, and other media, sign up today.

[www.adventistreview.org/newsletter-signup](http://www.adventistreview.org/newsletter-signup)

**GERALD A. KLINGBEIL**

**H**ow often have we listened to the story of the Child born in a manger? How many times have we pored over the texts of Matthew and Luke to catch every conceivable detail of a narrative that dumbfounded angels and amazed generations of readers who opened Scripture so that they, too, could see the Lamb of God?

In this issue of *Adventist Review* we have attempted something new: we wanted to see the birth story of Jesus, the Messiah, through the eyes of those who were part of the cast in that drama. How did Joseph or Mary respond to the many strange happenings in their lives? What did shepherds and Wise Men see and hear as they came to worship a newborn King who looked so different from other royal babies? How did the angelic cast of the story respond to the unthinkable of God becoming part of humanity through the Incarnation? Add to this a more general introduction to the cultural, religious, and political landscape of first century A.D. Palestine, and you gain a better understanding of the story.

We asked four pastors and a Bible scholar to help us catch a glimpse of the story as we may have never seen before. Like all of us, they come to the biblical text with their own experiences. You will hear different tones in their voices and notice unique understandings. Consider once again the amazing story of a God willing to become part of a fallen creation because He wants to offer us a way home to find grace, forgiveness, hope, and eternity with Him. ♣

---

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

# THROUGH THEIR EYES



# SETTING THE STAGE

*Understanding the  
context of the  
Nativity stories*





PHOTO: BRIANA TOZOUR

## **SAMUEL NÚÑEZ**

In the Bible, as in many other historical and archaeological records, we find valuable information that sheds light on the religious, political, and social contexts of first century A.D. Palestine. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke are the only New Testament books that share details about the birth of Jesus Christ. It's in this context that we find the beautiful story of the Nativity, in both its Jewish and Greco-Roman settings.

### **UNDERSTANDING THE GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING**

The Gospel of Luke reveals details about Joseph's and Mary's travel just before Jesus' birth. Nazareth, located in the region of Galilee, is located 95 miles north of Bethlehem. The journey between these two small towns could easily take two or three days; by some estimates 33 hours of walking—and perhaps even longer when traveling with a pregnant wife in her last trimester. Such lengthy trips were especially common during the time of the Passover feast (Luke 2:41). On this occasion, however, travel was directly related to the empire-wide census decreed by Caesar Augustus (verse 1).

Historians tell us that Rome expanded its domain from the Italic peninsula southward, toward Carthage (264-146 B.C.). Its soldiers and vessels went eastward toward Macedonia and the Greek city-states (214-168 B.C.). They also conquered what the Bible identifies as “the beautiful land,” Israel (63 B.C.). By the first century A.D., Rome had expanded its power to all the countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.

Roman laws and customs were respected and followed.

### **THE TEMPLE AND THE APPOINTED KING**

Jews were granted religious freedom to worship God as prescribed in the Holy Scriptures. The temple in Jerusalem was vital to the faithful believers, and they directed their worship service and prayers toward this magnificent building, which God had prescribed as His dwelling place. It was in the temple where the nation awaited the Messiah's appearance (Zech. 6:12, 13) and ultimate deliverance from its oppressors.

King Herod, also known as Herod the Great, was a Roman-appointed Jewish king of doubtful ped-

## **Roman laws and customs were respected and followed.**

agree. He was keenly aware of the significance of the temple and ensured that renovations took place, along with an expansion of the temple mount toward the north. He was known for the massive building projects he undertook, such as the fortress at Masada and the seaport of Caesarea Maritima, which he named in honor of his benefactor, Augustus Caesar. Even today, the ruins of his projects are admired for their architectural design and technical ingenuity.

Despite what seemed to be strong political ties with Rome, Herod's fears about his relationship with Rome were well documented in the Gospels, and also by contemporary historians. His fears were manifested in his rulership. Matthew tells of the fear under which both the ordinary citizen and the elite found themselves when Herod was troubled (Matt. 2:3). He is depicted as one capable of killing relatives, innocent children, or anyone who posed a threat to his hold on power. His Roman-granted judicial powers gave him authority to imprison and even execute those that threatened or embarrassed him (see verse 16). Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Great, manifested very similar characteristics (Matt. 14:3; Luke 23:6-12).

### **RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP**

Because of the ruler's regional power, various religious factions within Judaism aligned themselves, as far as was convenient, with King Herod. This often led to disregarding Scripture in favor of tradition or their own comfort. Matthew

# The time when Jesus entered this world was a time of social and religious division.

points to the priestly class, most of whom associated with the sect of the Sadducees, who had ample knowledge regarding the birthplace of the Messiah yet were unwilling to join the Wise Men in their search for the newborn King (Matt. 2:4-6). We are also introduced to the Pharisees, a group of experts concerning the law of Moses, who were more focused on tradition and the appearance of piety than living justice, mercy, and faith (Matt. 23:23). Additionally, there were the scribes, professionals who dedicated their lives to recording and transmitting biblical knowledge by analyzing varying interpretations of Scripture. They were familiar with the Talmud and the Mishnah (the oral law) and associated with both Sadducees and Pharisees. Unfortunately, they, too, appeared to be oblivious to the fact that the Messiah was in their midst.

The arrival of the Messiah came amid spiritual darkness and apathy. Despite their vast knowledge, all these experts failed to recognize the event at hand. The role of the religious teachers is best understood when one takes into account that the Hebrew language had been mostly replaced by Aramaic and Greek. It was the Sadducees, Pharisees, and scribes who were trained to interpret the Hebrew Bible and teach the truth of Scripture. By the time of Jesus' birth the Old Testament had been translated into Greek, resulting in what is now known as the Septuagint (LXX). The translation, however, was not generally available to the average person. Jesus would later condemn the religious leaders for their neglect in preparing the people to welcome the Messiah. It was their failure to instruct the people that led to Jesus' holding them as accountable as their fathers for killing the prophets in years past (verse 37). There were other religious and political groups, such as the

Zealots and the Essenes, but they were much smaller in size and influence. The time when Jesus entered this world was a time of social and religious division.

## HELLENIZATION PREPARES THE WAY

At the time of Jesus' birth Aramaic and Greek were the primary languages for commerce, diplomacy, education, and religion. The use of these languages connected nations and cultures that were geographically distant. The result was the expansion of commercial trade, which brought construction of roads and harbors, and relative financial prosperity to the region. The Greco-Roman culture of prosperity influenced architecture, art, education, and technology. This process, also known as Hellenization, would impact all areas of life. The technological, sociological, and economic developments of the time would serve to carry the good news to a world that was desperately needing to know about God's kingdom and the plan of salvation.

Despite recording significant political tensions, social clashes, and religious division, the Gospels are careful to inform the reader that God always has faithful followers who are eager to do His will. It is in this historical, social, and religious context that Matthew and Luke inform us of Zechariah, a Levite priest, who had an encounter with an angel of the Lord when it was his turn to burn incense in the temple (Luke 1:11). During the reign of Herod the king, the shepherds who camped out in the fields, keeping faithful watch over their flock at night, are invited by the angelic host to visit the Child (Luke 2:8). On the roads of commerce and trade, the Wise Men from the East traveled a long distance to worship the newborn King of the Jews. They saw a star in the sky and followed it, recognizing that it was a special sign from God to the entire world (Matt. 2:1, 2). Regardless of the power struggles and the real social, religious, and political challenges, there were people who faithfully followed the truth to the best of their ability and believed that the time of promised fulfillment was at hand.

They continue to inspire us as we read their stories in Scripture. 🍀

---

**Samuel Núñez** is fluent in French, German, English, and Spanish and pastors the Triadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church in Clarksville, Maryland.



# Want to Have a Seating Problem at Sabbath School?

Could you imagine the biggest complaint at your church being, "I can't get a seat at our Bible study?" What would it be like if you had to take seat reservations at your Sabbath School so that your large group of visitors could even get in? Roy Ice has discovered how to do just that and more, and he and his team would love to share how God can do the same thing with your community by starting a Bible Lab.

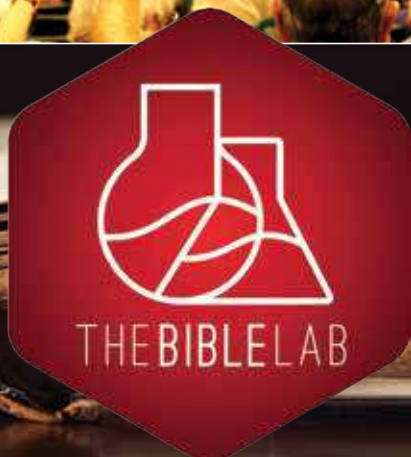
- Experience Explosive Growth In Church Attendance
- Bible Studies Focused On God's Loving Character
- Energetic, Interactive, Conversational Experiences
- Innovative, Fresh Approach
- Visitor Friendly & Attractive
- All Study Guide Materials Are FREE!



ROY ICE,  
Creator of  
Bible Lab

Find or start a lab near you!

[TheBibleLab.com](http://TheBibleLab.com)



Faith  
for Today

Engaging the Mind • Touching the Heart

P.O. Box 1000 • Thousand Oaks, CA 91359 • (888) 940-0062 • [www.FaithForToday.com](http://www.FaithForToday.com)



# MARY'S PRAYER

KANDACE ZOLLMAN

**A** bba, please explain it to me again." The young girl looked at her father with imploring eyes. "The prophet Jeremiah says that those who glory must glory in that they *yada'* Yahweh—not in their wealth or their might [Jer. 9:23, 24, HCSB].<sup>1</sup> Hosea says that we must press on to *yada'* the Lord, and that He will come to us as surely as the "spring showers" [Hosea 6:3, HCSB]. This is what I want more than all things, Abba. How do I come to *yada'* Yahweh?"

The father looked at his daughter tenderly. He sent his sons to the yeshiva, where they were taught by the rabbis. How he wished they had half the passion for the Torah that his daughter had.<sup>2</sup> *Yada'* means to know something or someone by experience, Mary. But even more, *yada'* speaks to the promise—the covenant—between each of us and our Maker. Yahweh made a covenant with Abraham based on the relationship they shared. Abraham obeyed when God called him, and as they journeyed together, they became good friends. To Abraham was given the privilege to *yada'* Yahweh."

Mary thought about her father's words as she built up the fire and kneaded bread that evening. *Abraham did not understand where he was going, she thought, yet he obeyed and grew to truly yada' Yahweh. How can I, too, follow like that?* "I do not know how to *yada'* You, King of the universe," she whispered, "but You know this is truly the desire of my heart"

\*\*\*

Early the next morning Mary slipped out to walk in the fields outside of town where she frequently went to pray. "Oh, my Yahweh," she breathed. "Help me. I willingly choose to surrender all that I am and be Your very slave, my Lord. I just want to understand how to truly *yada'* You."

When she opened her eyes, she realized she was not alone and abruptly stood to her feet, feeling embarrassed, unsure of what the other morning wanderer had heard.

"Rejoice, favored woman! The Lord is with you." *What a strange greeting*, Mary thought as she squinted into the gray light. *Who is this stranger?*

"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Now listen: You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High."<sup>3</sup>

A barrage of thoughts crashed through Mary's head. She fell again to her knees, looking desper-

ately at the man who could only be a messenger from Yahweh. But what was he talking about? She was engaged to be married, but the wedding was still many weeks away. She had so many questions she did not know where to begin. "How can this be," she stammered, "since I have not been intimate with a man?"

The stranger looked her directly in the eyes and calmly explained. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the holy One to be born will be called the Son of God." Mary barely heard the rest as he continued. *He said that the Holy Spirit will come upon me? The power of the Most High will overshadow me? Oh, Lord Yahweh, I prayed for yada' . . . I told You I would be Your slave, but this is more than I can understand.* Quietly words from the prophet Isaiah flowed clearly into Mary's mind. "The Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14, HCSB).

"The virgin. Immanuel," Mary whispered. "God with us." Her eyes suddenly widened in revelation. "The Messiah! He will be *with us*. Yahweh Himself is coming to teach us the meaning of *yada'*." With tears cascading down her cheeks, Mary repeated to the holy messenger what she had told Yahweh only minutes before. "I am the Lord's slave. May it be done to me according to your word." Suddenly she was alone, watching the sunrise as she knelt in the dew-soaked meadow.

\*\*\*

As Mary walked back to the village, her head and heart were crowded with thoughts and emotions. Would anyone believe her? What would her parents say? What would Joseph do? Would they stone her when they found out she was with child? But the messenger had promised the Child would be *Immanuel! God with us!* Like Abraham, who knew not where he was going, she too was on an unfamiliar path, but she also must obey.

And then she remembered Elizabeth. The messenger had said that Elizabeth, too, was with child. One pregnancy was as unbelievable as the other—but Elizabeth was an old and wise woman. She would listen without judgment. She would help Mary think this through.

When Mary arrived back home, her parents thought it strange when she suddenly insisted that she had to leave immediately to visit her cousin Elizabeth.

No objections would deter their determined young daughter, so they sent her and an escort to the Judean hill country with their blessing. When Mary burst through the door unannounced, it seemed that Elizabeth had been waiting for her. With a smile brighter than the noontday sun, Elizabeth reached out her arms and said, “You are the most blessed of women, and your child will be blessed! How could this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For you see, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped for joy inside me!”

Mary collapsed into Elizabeth’s ample arms and sobbed. Elizabeth *knew*. Mary didn’t have to repeat the long speech she had rehearsed all the way from Galilee to Judah. The relief was like the breaking of a dam, and the older woman just held the young girl and allowed her to release all that had been closeted inside her. When Mary finally raised her head, though her face was wet with tears, there was an expression in her eyes that could be described only as the purest joy.

Dipping back into her memory of the psalms that she had studied with Abba, Mary pieced together a song of praise that flowed straight from her heart: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior, because He has looked with favor on the humble condition of His slave. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed because the Mighty One has done great things for me” “just as He spoke to our ancestors, to Abraham and his descendants forever.”

After three months of visiting with her gray-haired cousin, Mary’s waist was noticeably enlarged under her flowing robe, and Elizabeth was great with child. The two women had daily shared the miraculous experiences of their God-ordained pregnancies along with the homespun responsibilities of daily living, but Mary knew that it was time to go home. It was time to share her story with her family and Joseph.

\*\*\*

As she headed home to Galilee, she thought of the verses from the psalms again and the promise God had made to Abraham and his children. Abraham, the friend of God. Abraham, who had received the covenant. Abraham, who had experienced what it was like to *yada’* Yahweh. All the way home she prayed to have the faith of the famed patriarch.

## The messenger had promised the Child would be *Immanuel! God with us!*

“Abba,” Mary asked after the initial greetings had been exchanged upon her arrival home, “will you walk with me out in the field before sunset?” Looking at her quizzically, Mary’s father pulled on his outer garment and opened the outside door. The two walked in silence, leaving the village behind—both absorbed in their own thoughts, and wondering what the other was thinking.

Mary had practiced her words carefully, but in her anxiety the story just tumbled out with tears of both anguish and joy. “Abba, I prayed to experience *yada’*, and Yahweh has answered. The child I carry will bring the relationship of *yada’* to all of us in a way far above and beyond what I ever could have imagined.” Her father was silent for what seemed like an eternity, and his face was full of shadows in the setting sun. Mary could not guess what he was thinking. When he finally turned to her and spoke, she saw that his tender eyes were filled with tears.

“Yes, my daughter. At last the Messiah has come. And the King of the universe has chosen *you* to carry Him and nurture Him. You are called to mother the One who will save Israel. Like that of Abraham, I fear that yours will not be an easy journey. But Mary, my child, Yahweh has answered your prayers. You will indeed have the blessing to *yada’* Yahweh as no one has ever done before. And as no one—ever—will do again.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Texts credited to HCSB are taken from the *Holman Christian Standard Bible*, copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.

<sup>2</sup> Mary clearly had a good mastery of Scripture to be the instructor of the Boy Jesus. “As a little child He [Jesus] was daily at His mother’s knee taught from the scrolls of the prophets” (Ellen G. White, *Education* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903], p. 185).

<sup>3</sup> This story refers to passages from Luke 1:24-56, HCSB.

---

**Kandace Zollman** is the pastor for nurture and visitation at the Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, Maryland.

# BE INSPIRED.



Download the brand-new AWR360° app!

Inspiration and a full media library at your fingertips!



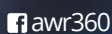
visit: [awr.org/apps](https://awr.org/apps)



**AWR360°**  
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

Adventist World Radio 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904

Let's Connect!



[awr360](https://www.facebook.com/awr360)



[awr360](https://twitter.com/awr360)



[awr.360](https://www.instagram.com/awr.360)



[awr.org/videos](https://www.youtube.com/awr/videos)



[awr.org/apps](https://awr.org/apps)



ALESSANDROGUERRIERO / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES

# THE SURROGATE

JAROD THOMAS

The conversation isn't recorded in Scripture, but by all indications, it did not go well.

"An *angel* visited you? You're telling me your pregnancy is the work of God, and you're going to give birth to the *Messiah*?"

Mary had received an angelic visitor announcing that she would be the mother of the coming Christ. Almost immediately she traveled to consult with her older, wiser cousin who was also miraculously pregnant. She returned three months pregnant and had the undesirable duty of explaining the situation to her fiancé.

Joseph didn't accept the explanation, and began making arrangements to terminate their engagement. Because he was a just man—a righteous man—he did not want to bring unnecessary shame upon Mary or her family.<sup>1</sup> According to Mosaic law, an adulterer was to be stoned. Although this was impossible under Roman occupation, her unplanned pregnancy still carried a vicious stigma. Joseph knew this would be catastrophic for the young woman, so to avoid public humiliation, he moved quietly. In the process, he received

his own angelic visitation in a dream.

"Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:20, 21, ESV).

When Joseph roused from his sleep, he chose to surrender to God's will in the same way that Mary did. But it was not without cost.

## MORE THAN AN ACCESSORY

Perhaps you have been tempted to think that Joseph was a simple bystander, an incidental accessory in the story. Matthew's genealogy mentions, after listing a long line of successive forefathers, that Joseph was simply "the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ" (verse 16, ESV). The Bible makes it clear in multiple ways. Joseph was not Jesus' father. There was no biological connection. But he was not incidental. Joseph was the reason for Jesus' identification as "the carpenter's son" (Matt. 13:55). Jesus was just as entrusted to an earthly father as He was to an earthly mother.

Joseph had three more encounters when the angel of the Lord spoke directly to him. He was given the divine warning that the family must flee to Egypt under cover of darkness to avoid the wrath of jealous King Herod. After the wicked king's death, the angel again appeared, directing Joseph to take his family home. When Joseph learned that Herod's son reigned over Judea, he was concerned for their safety. Mercifully, the angel returned a final time, directing them to Nazareth, where they could live peacefully.

Four times in total, the angel of the Lord presented himself to Joseph, and the surrogate father willingly submitted to the divine directive, even though it dramatically disrupted his life. Each time he obeyed he participated with God in fulfilling a series of key messianic prophecies that unmistakably pointed to Jesus as the long-anticipated Saviour.

But Joseph carried his responsibility on still a deeper level.

### THE BURDEN OF SHAME

If you hail from somewhere in the Western world, you likely operate predominantly on a paradigm of guilt and innocence. Sin is an individual affair, and we acknowledge it as such in many of our popular hymns. We sing, "Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole . . . Now wash *me* and *I* shall be whiter than snow." The gospel that elicits our Sabbath morning amens proclaims freedom from guilt for the one willing to receive Christ, and this is certainly true.

But the Semitic world—the society that the Son of God chose to step into—operates on a more complex system, predominantly of shame and honor. While guilt says, "I *did* something bad," the voice of shame says, "I *am* bad." And that shame, like a virus, touches the family, the community, even the city and nation. You may have heard of situations in which families from these cultures have actually removed the shameful person from the family system, either by shunning or even killing them to preserve the family honor.

Joseph likely sensed the coming storm. He knew people could count, and count they would. When Joseph wed Mary and she gave birth just six months later, it didn't take a scholar to realize that something didn't quite add up.

Would it all blow over? Not a chance.

Much later, when Jesus was a grown man, working miracles, healing people, and teaching with authority, the Pharisees *still* called out the

# Jesus was just as entrusted to an earthly father as He was to an earthly mother.

questionable circumstances of His birth. *Where is Your father, Jesus? You know, we were not born of sexual immorality* (see John 8:19, 41)—implying, of course, that He was. The scandal was inescapable.

When Joseph chose to remain with Mary, he knowingly took the shame associated with the Incarnation upon himself and bore it for the rest of his life, along with his wife. In an ironic twist he willfully became the bearer of the very shame from which he initially sought to separate himself. He began to have a sense of the cost of salvation, even as the infant Jesus lay innocent and unaware in a manger, then toted along the long road to Egypt, safely swaddled in His mother's arms.

What an incredible man of integrity and character, willing to take responsibility for a problem that wasn't his doing, dutifully executing his part of the story until he was no longer needed!

### THE TRANSITION

In the hustle and bustle of Passover at Jerusalem, the 12-year-old Jesus turned up missing. When Joseph and Mary found Him, deep in theological conversation, the frantic mother attempted to admonish her Son. "My child, why have you behaved thus to us? Your father and I have been searching for you in anguish" (Luke 2:48, Weymouth).<sup>2</sup>

His response must have stung. "I must be about my Father's business" (verse 49). No, not Joseph, but His heavenly Father. After all the family sacrifices, the unexpected upheaval of his quiet, blue-collar life, enduring gossip and scorn, it was becoming clear that Joseph's role was changing. Jesus now understood He was not simply "the carpenter's son."

Joseph knew it was time. He faded into the background so that the Father of Jesus, the Father of us all, might be fully glorified. ♣

<sup>1</sup> This story is taken from Matthew 1 and 2.

<sup>2</sup> Texts credited to Weymouth are from Richard Francis Weymouth, *The New Testament in Modern Speech* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1903).

**Jarod Thomas** pastors two churches in southeastern Michigan.



# FROM HEAVEN'S COURTS

*An angel's story*

**MICHELLE ODINMA**

*The Bible stories of the birth of Jesus confront us with the reality of “the unseen world” in which angelic messengers interact with individuals and groups. Here is an imaginative telling of the birth story of Jesus from the perspective of the angel Gabriel.—Editors*

**I**t was the last time I planned on asking after asking twice before. But of course, I was met with the same answer. “It has to be My Son, Gabriel.” I had thought long and hard about it. Perhaps if I could make a good case about why heaven needed the archangel Michael to remain at the side of the Father, they’d let me go. So here I was, trying once more. Something needed to happen soon, otherwise earth would truly be doomed.

From heaven’s courts I could see a familiar dark haze encircled around the planet. Since the first human pair had fallen, the haze had spread and darkened from all the years of evil. Sin, sickness, and death had left their mark. Even with the light of the sun steadily breaking its way through the fog, the devilish haze was a constant reminder to the rest of the universe that the citizens of earth needed a Saviour.

The closer I approached the throne, the brighter the light from the Father shone on me. I never tired of this; dwelling in God’s presence was an honor no angel would forfeit. When the light from the Father touched you, your whole being was invigorated. The Spirit was pouring





FREEBIBLEIMAGES.ORG/WWW.LUMOPROJECT.COM

## TO PREPARE THE WAY

In the blink of an eye I was there. I arrived during the hour of incense, while prayers were ascending from the people of God. *Ah, his prayers for a child must have come up again before the veil. This will be even greater news than!* I waited in the holy place of the temple. I figured he would see me next to the altar of incense. Hopefully I wouldn't startle him.

"Don't be afraid!" I said. I didn't waste time before delivering the message. The sooner he knew his prayers were answered about having a child, the sooner he could rejoice. But he didn't rejoice. His face contorted in confusion. He reminded me how he and his wife were aging in human years. *Has this man not seen the power of God?*

"I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news." *I'll have to give him a tangible reminder that God did visit him and answer his prayers. He'll be mute until the baby is born.* I left the temple and headed back to headquarters, but I couldn't help thinking how little faith Zechariah had. The earth was even darker than I had realized. Even the faith of God's servants seemed to be growing dim.

My time with Zechariah was short. When I returned, the angels were bustling to and fro, observing several of God's human servants from earth. They were discussing Mary and Joseph, who were betrothed, Wise Men from the East of the earth, and a group of devout shepherds. I inquired from the other angels why they were focusing on these particular individuals. One angel replied, "The servants of God on earth have little faith. These are the ones we've found who still have hope in the coming Messiah. They're part of the Father's plan." I headed toward the most holy place.

Again, the closer I came, the more my body was invigorated. I bowed in worship. "Gabriel, deliver this message to the virgin Mary in the city of Nazareth. Tell her she will have a son and she will name him Jesus because He will save His people from their sins. Her pregnancy will not be of man, but of the Holy Ghost." *It's happening. Michael will soon be taking up residence on earth. Maybe I should offer my services now?* "Once you've talked with Mary, tell Joseph, her husband, not to fear taking her as his bride. He is a just man and faithful; reassure him, and he will proceed."

I arose immediately. I felt honored to deliver

into me love, joy, and peace. I drew closer to the light.

Before I could speak, I was instructed to visit one of the earthly priests in the temple in Jerusalem. Zechariah was his name. Both he and his wife, Elizabeth, were older according to human years, and righteous before God. I was to fly swiftly to him as he ministered in the temple and tell him that his prayers had been heard in heaven. His wife, Elizabeth, would no longer be barren. She would have a son named John, and he would begin to prepare the way for the Messiah to come. There, in the scrolls of Isaiah, it had been written. Now it was happening. The next phase of the Father's plan was unfolding.

**Since Eve, every woman of Israel had hoped their womb would be blessed with such a gift. Mary was truly favored by heaven; she must have great faith. And Joseph, to be the earthly father of the greatest King was a good man.**

such news. Since Eve, every woman of Israel had hoped their womb would be blessed with such a gift. Mary was truly favored by heaven; she must have great faith. Joseph, chosen to be the earthly father of the greatest King, was a good man. My reasons for offering myself instead of Michael the archangel were looking weaker than I had initially thought. Maybe I wanted to offer myself simply because I didn't want Him to go. I would rather die a million deaths than see Him live and die on the earth. It hurt, but I trusted the Father's plan.

#### **FOR A YOUNG WOMAN WITH GREAT FAITH**

I made my way back to the planet to find Mary. I watched as she arrived home from the market. I assumed I would startle her; that's typically what seemed to happen anyway. "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you! Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God." I proceeded to tell her more details about the child, and she received them quite well. "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" she asked. *This was a genuine question. No miracle had ever been done like this before. A barren womb producing life? Yes. But a virgin having a child would be one of the greatest of God's miracles.* "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God." I watched as her confusion subsided and her brows lifted to a state of delighted peace. "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." *At last, what great faith!*

I was hoping that reassuring Joseph to take Mary as a bride would be just as pleasant as

talking with Mary. This time I would be appearing to him in a dream. Mary's waist was expanding, and it was obvious that he had been thinking about what to do next. By his distress it was clear that he loved Mary very much. He intended for no harm to come her way. I waited until nightfall to tell him, and watched as he whispered a tearful prayer to heaven. In his sleep I spoke to him, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." I didn't need to linger to find out what happened. Joseph was a man of faith. He would obey.

I was on my way back when I saw two bands of angels headed to earth. I stopped them midflight. "Where are you headed?" I inquired. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased! We're headed to a group of Wise Men we've been directing in their study of the prophecies. Their faith is greater than many of Israel. They've been expecting the Messiah for some time now. We will direct them to Mary, Joseph, and the baby. They have a long journey to travel; they must begin soon. We'll lead them far enough at a distance so that they'll believe they are following a star!"

The second band of angels spoke as well. "We've been watching a group of devout shepherds in Bethlehem for some time now. They also have been awaiting the arrival of the Promised One." I waved to the angels as they continued on their journey. My heart was overjoyed that finally salvation had come to the earth. I couldn't help feeling a bit sad that heaven would be missing its Head Commander. Things would be fine here, but different. We'd have to keep a close eye on the Baby with Mary and Joseph.

I joined the host of angels as they led the shepherds to the barn where Jesus had been born. We all watched from the sky above as we bowed continually in adoration. Despite how crude and dirty the barn was, the glory of God shone brightly in that place. The next phase of the Father's plan had commenced. We raised our voices in hallelujah and shouts of praise. *Praise be to God!* Salvation had finally arrived. ▀

---

**Michelle Odinna** is associate pastor of community life at Church of the Advent Hope in Manhattan, New York.

# Share Your Faith!

**3ABN+** has programs on the most important Bible topics



These topics and more!



[bit.ly/YourFavoriteBibleTopics](https://bit.ly/YourFavoriteBibleTopics)

Download our FREE 3ABN+ app  
and start sharing the links!



android    iPhone

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

**3ABN+**  
STREAM. STUDY. SHARE.

# GRACE FOR OUTSIDERS



*How God brings  
outsiders in*

**THOMAS R. SHEPHERD**

**O**utside. Rejected or neglected. Their viewpoint undervalued; their involvement in power structures of society minimal to nonexistent.

Ever been there? Meet two of the groups who hailed the birth of the Messiah—the Wise Men and the shepherds. Though we will see that these two groups are different in background, status, and outlook, yet they have something crucial in common.

## **WISE MEN**

The story of the Wise Men appears in Matthew 2. Who were these visitors from the East? The Greek term Matthew uses is *magos*. It means a wise man or magician, which suggests either a positive or negative connotation. The term could refer to a wide range of groups from astronomers and astrologers to magicians, fortunetellers, or priestly diviners.<sup>1</sup> The term is used six times in the New Testament, four of the uses here in Matthew 2, the other two uses in Acts 13. In Acts 13:8 the *magos* Elymas is called a false prophet. He clearly is on the wrong side of the gospel, opposing the work of Barnabas and Paul as they seek to bring the gospel message

to the proconsul of Cyprus. Paul calls this man a son of the devil, an enemy of righteousness and full of deceit and villainy (verse 10)—hardly a positive character!

But the Wise Men of Matthew 2 are not referred to with any of these negative characteristics. They have come to bring gifts to the one born “King of the Jews.” How and why would they do this? They are associated with the appearance of a star in the East that they follow to find the newborn King (Matt. 2:2, 9, 10).<sup>2</sup> They studied the heavens. Their belief that the heavens contained omens for what would happen on earth would likely garner for them the name of astrologers in our modern world. But this negative evaluation is based on a modern secular view that the heavens present no signs that predict or affect events on earth. This is clearly not the view of the Scriptures (cf. Matt. 24:29).

Astronomers today sometimes associate the Bethlehem star with a conjunction of planets, a comet, or a supernova.<sup>3</sup> But this astronomical event had the unusual characteristic of going before the Wise Men and actually standing over the house where they found the Christ child (Matt. 2:9). This detail indicates that the “star” was some-

PEARL / LIGHTSTOCK

thing unusual indeed. Ellen White notes that it was a band of distant angels.<sup>4</sup> The text of Matthew notes how the Wise Men rejoiced greatly at seeing the star (verse 10). Upon entering the house where Joseph, Mary, and Jesus resided, the Wise Men worshipped the child and offered gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

These visitors from the East were considered heathen by the religious leaders in Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> Herod saw their query “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” as a threat to his dynasty and laid a cunning plot to do away with the newborn King. What is especially striking is that the Wise Men came such a great distance to worship the new King, while Herod and the religious leaders were a mere 6.8 miles (11 kilometers) from the birthplace of Jesus, and they did not venture to travel that short way to find the Son of God. The Wise Men at great expense and time sought and found the Saviour of the world, while His own people did not treasure His birth (John 1:11). But foreigners, outsiders, received the revelation, saw the light and beheld its glory, and received “the right to become children of God” (verse 12).

### SHEPHERDS

Shepherds in Jesus’ day were considered dishonest and people who could not be trusted as witnesses in court because they grazed their flocks on the lands of others.<sup>6</sup> Thus, they too were outsiders like the Wise Men, but in most cases much poorer, even though within the Jewish community.

But like the Wise Men, they too received heavenly revelation of the birth of Jesus. The story is told in Luke 2. In their case the angelic revelation is much more direct and frightening.<sup>7</sup> An angel of God appears to them (Luke 2:9) and informs them of the birth of the Christ child in Bethlehem. He indicates that the child will be found wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.<sup>8</sup> Assuaging their fear, the angel proclaims the great joy of the birth of the Saviour of the world (verses 10, 11). Heaven cannot keep silent at this greatest event of salvation, and multitudes of angels burst forth in songs of joy.

The shepherds’ response to the revelation is not unlike that of the Wise Men: “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us” (verse 15). When they find the Christ child, they tell about

## These visitors from the East were considered heathen by the religious leaders in Jerusalem.

the angel’s message. Everyone who hears it wonders, but Mary treasures up the revelation. The shepherds, meanwhile, return to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen (verse 20).

### THE TAKEAWAYS

Several important lessons derive from these two somewhat disparate stories. First, God is no respecter of persons—He will give His message to those with an open ear to listen. Keep your ears attuned to His voice. Second, welcome outsiders; they may have a message from God that you need to hear. Third, when you receive the revelation, rejoice in the grace that God provides.

The Christmas story is beautiful in its simplicity, profound in its implications, but especially wonderful in its revelation of salvation. Rejoice! The Christ child was born for you. 🎄

<sup>1</sup> See Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> The Magi came “from the East” to Jerusalem (Matt. 2:1). They were likely from Babylon, Persia, or Arabia. See Brown; Robert K. McIver, “Matthew” in *Andrews Bible Commentary*, ed. Ángel M. Rodríguez et al. (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2022), pp. 1224, 1225. Why would they travel west to find the newborn King if the star appeared in the East? The answer is that Matthew 2:2 refers to *where they were when they saw the star*. The star actually appeared in the western sky.

<sup>3</sup> See Brown, pp. 170–173.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 60.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>6</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 420, and b. Sanhedrin 25b.

<sup>7</sup> The story of the shepherds in Luke 2 is typical of an epiphany (appearance of a heavenly visitant) in Scripture with five characteristics: (1) glory; (2) human fear; (3) “do not fear”; (4) divine revelation; and (5) human response. The fourfold human response includes the shepherds’ report, everyone wonders, Mary treasures the revelation, and the shepherds return praising God.

<sup>8</sup> The strips of cloth, “swaddling cloths,” were meant to keep the baby’s limbs straight. See I. Howard Marshall, *Gospel of Luke*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 106.

**Thomas R. Shepherd**, Ph.D., is a senior research professor of New Testament studies at Andrews University.



# BRIDGING THE GAP

---

*Bridges sometimes appear in unexpected forms.*

**CHANTAL J. KLINGBEIL**

**W**e stepped off the airplane and into a new world. A strange new world. As young missionaries, Gerald and I had arrived in Peru starry-eyed but with no cross-cultural training. We were eager and ready to connect, learn, and explore, but we quickly realized that we faced some serious challenges. First, there was the language barrier. Neither of us spoke a word of Spanish. We were on a large university campus, but there were very few English speakers and no one from our cultural background.

Weeks of flashcards and clumsy hand-waving attempts at communication slowly bore results, and we were learning to communicate, but somehow we hadn't really arrived yet. We could speak and understand most of what was going on around us, but we felt as if we hadn't made a connection with those we were working with. It

was as though there was an invisible wall that kept people aloof. They were polite and courteous but reserved. We just didn't know how to bridge the gap. We tried to be friendly. We invited people to our home to eat with us. Although they seemed to enjoy our company, we were never asked back in return. It seemed like a one-way street.

I remember one public holiday when Gerald and I worked in our small garden as we were respectfully greeted by people walking by, carrying delicious-smelling dishes on their way to celebrate with friends and families. No invitation came for us. We went through difficult isolated months as we struggled with depression. We continually prayed for a way to connect.

## **GOOD NEWS**

And then finally we had some good news. After six years of marriage, I was finally pregnant.

We were so excited. On a campus news travels fast, and soon everyone knew of our good news. Not that we minded—we were just so delighted. And then around the fourth month, early on a Sabbath morning in December, I went into labor. I was rushed to the hospital, but it was too late. We lost the baby. It was heartbreaking. Far away from family or any support group, we were really hurting.

A few days later I met a little old bent-over lady who lived with her children on campus. She didn't speak any English, and yet she took one look at my tear-swollen eyes and came and took me in her arms and held me. Loss doesn't need a translation. The pain of loss had united us. We had arrived. People opened their hearts to us. People hadn't meant to be mean; they just didn't understand us. We learned later that they didn't invite us because they weren't sure what kind of food we would enjoy and if we would feel comfortable eating with them in their homes. But our loss was something that really united us. Everyone knew pain and knew loss. Hurt is something universal. People around us knew what it was like to love and lose. In a strange sense the baby we lost became a bridge. We are grateful that God in His goodness has given us three beautiful, healthy children, but at this time of year I am always drawn back to the memory of loss, pain, and also connection and a loving embrace.

### **CROSSING THE GREAT DIVIDE**

Now is the time we hear in the Christmas carols and the Nativity scenes all about the arrival of another little Baby—a truly amazing Child. This is the great mystery that we celebrate. God becoming a human being. I imagine that the distance between Planet Earth and heaven with its innumerable galaxies circling around it is a lot farther than the airplane flight that took us to Peru. What a mind-boggling mystery, what a miracle, this tiny little Baby that Mary held. Shepherds and Wise Men came to marvel over this Living Bridge. This was God's way of healing the great divide between us and Him.

And in a very real way God's giving also involved pain and loss right from the start. There were no cultural misunderstandings when Herod sent his soldiers to murder all the newborns in Bethlehem. From the moment of His arrival, Satan engaged in an outright war to kill Jesus. And yet this fragile

**But our loss was something that really united us. Everyone knew pain and knew loss. Hurt is something universal.**

bridge would prove to be so strong that even after 2,000 years nothing can break it.

I love the way Paul put it in his letter to the Romans: "Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, 'For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.') No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:35-39, NLT).<sup>\*</sup> Absolutely nothing because God loves us. He loves us so much that He became one with us.

So as I look at Nativity sets and hear the echoes of "Away in a Manger," I remember the pain of our loss that brought us close to our Peruvian family with ties that haven't been broken in all the years since. There are still people living in the foothills of the Peruvian Andes whom I consider family. I know that we could ask for and receive help and support at any moment. That's how it is with family. And once again I am drawn to the great sacrifice of the Godhead, the unimaginable pain involved in that Gift that heals all of our hurts. I am reminded that God gave His only begotten Son to be our Living Bridge. 🍀

\* 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.

**Chantal J. Klingbeil** has been a cross-cultural missionary for nearly 30 years and currently serves as an associate director in the Ellen G. White Estate.



# Tangled in Transition

Living well through change



Transition makes headlines. Whether political (“Presidential Transition Update”), social (“The Transition to Work at Home”), medical (“Are We Transitioning From Pandemic to Endemic COVID?”), economic (“Energy Transition Needed”), or personal (“Transitioning to Retirement”), transition means change. Change has always been a part of life. Seasons come and go; people are born, grow old, and die; social structures and cultural practices evolve and change. Yet, while the human experience is one of change, the pace of change has greatly accelerated, with an increasing amount of transition required. Fifty years ago, in his book *Future Shock*, Alvin Toffler wrote, “Change is avalanching upon our heads and most people are grotesquely unprepared to cope with it.”<sup>1</sup>

Looking back over the half century since Toffler’s statement, living with an avalanche of change, whether prepared or not, has become normal but no less upsetting. Not only are individuals experiencing transition between careers or marriages, but the institution of marriage itself and the job market as a whole are also in transition. “Stuck in transition between situations, relationships, and identities that are themselves in transition, many . . . [people] are caught in a semipermanent condition of transitionality.”<sup>2</sup> The constantly changing social norms, public health requirements, and educational and employment conditions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic clearly show that transition has become a way of life and that the addition of one more type of transition heightens the stress of change in all of life.

### UNDERSTANDING TRANSITION

For many years transition as a separate category was ignored. Transition was embedded in life events—beginning school, entering adulthood, starting a family. Little was written on the underlying similarities and inner processes common to all transitions. William Bridges was one of the first who began to look at the dynamics all types of transition share. Since Bridges’ seminal book *Transitions*, published in 1980,

transition theorists from numerous disciplines have generally accepted the proposition that people in transition go through three stages.<sup>3</sup> While different theorists label the three stages differently, they clearly reflect similar thinking. Something old must end before something new can begin. Between the ending of the old and the beginning of the new exists an in-between “neutral” zone or “liminal” space, “. . . a no-man’s-land betwixt and between the structural past and the structural future.”<sup>4</sup> Whether a person or family is experiencing a marriage or a divorce, the birth of a child or the empty nest, starting a new job or retirement, or any other type of transition, large or small, they go through the three stages of transition—grieving the old, living in between, and adjusting to the new.

Even in welcome and necessary transitions (for example, the birth of another baby or the move to a new job) the losses of the old life (such as uninterrupted sleep before baby or enjoyable relationships with old work colleagues) must be acknowledged and grieved before the new can be fully embraced. Living in between the new and the old can feel very unstable and uncomfortable. Self-doubt, lowered self-esteem, and sadness, sometimes even depression, can characterize this time of internal emptiness. Like a car stuck in neutral, revving the engine will not make the car move, and berating oneself for feeling upset will not hurry the transition process. The time does finally come when the person in transition is able to let go of the past, start to embrace the present, and move toward the future. Frequently this occurs as a result of gaining some understanding of the meaning, or cause, of the transition. New understandings are then internalized, and personal growth and change emerges. New beginnings are often unpretentious. We cannot identify the precise moment or the clear trajectory of change that commences. Once the inner realignment occurs, in the space that the grieving process and the in-between zone made room for, growth begins, whether we are aware of it or not.

While all transitions share similarities, individuals experience transition differently. In fact,



As a church family and as individual church members we have the opportunity and responsibility of offering listening hearts, understanding words, and supportive attitudes that help others as they work through their transitions.

the same event may trigger a transition in one person but not in another. Developmental or social change may contribute to personal transition, but passing a developmental or social milestone does not necessarily guarantee the individual's passage through transition (for example, turning 18 may not change much in a teenager's life, even though they are now legally of age). Transition, then, is a reorientation that makes a *qualitative* difference in the life.<sup>5</sup> Since transition is such a fact of life, understanding the categories and causes of transition can help us better manage the avalanche of change we face.

#### **TYPES OF TRANSITION**

Transitions are categorized as normative, those shared by most people, or nonnormative, those outside of expectable experience. Transitions can be grouped into four types depending upon the initial causative factors: (1) developmental transitions; (2) transitions caused by crisis events; (3) transitions external to the individual; or (4) internally motivated transitions. The intensity of a transition depends upon the type of transition, the number of simultaneous transitions, and the personal response to the transition. Developmental transitions occur at fairly predictable points caused by the normal growth and development of an individual—when a child becomes an adolescent, at the time of marriage, when a new baby is born, etc. Developmental transitions are, for the most part, normative transitions. Sometimes transition occurs when an expected developmental milestone is not met—for example, not getting married or promoted or pregnant. Crisis transitions occur in a more unexpected manner and at unpredictable times—the death of a loved one, the dissolution of a marriage, the onset of catastrophic illness, etc. Crisis transitions are nonnormative,

difficult to prepare for, and, as a result, often very intense. External transitions usually spark internal transition and vice versa. Leaving home to go to college is a major external transition that requires answering numerous internal questions—who am I in this new place, who are my friends, how does my life change because of this move? Internally initiated transitions often reflect the accumulated pressure of personal frustration or need for growth and can push the individual or family into making major external changes. Job dissatisfaction can send a parent back to school or motivate them to accept a new job in a distant place, bringing multiple transitions to the whole family.

Often several types of transition must be negotiated at the same time, increasing the intensity and scope of change required. When crisis transitions (think COVID-19 pandemic) coincide with developmental transitions (a child starts school), necessitating major external transitions (school goes online), obviously the internal transition process will be greater and more complicated than if any one transition occurred by itself. The intensity of a transition can also be affected by variations within the individual—temperament differences, anxiety levels, emotional baggage, previous experience, personal resiliency, and so on. Are we surprised that so many people are struggling with the complex transitions they face that have been complicated by the pandemic and the resulting chaos in social, political, economic, medical, and many other spheres of life?

#### **GROWING THROUGH TRANSITION**

What, then, can we do to successfully negotiate the multiple adjustments required in a time of unprecedented change? I will include three strategies that have been shown to help us grow through transition.

## 1. Normalize Transition

Feeling disoriented during times of transition is normal. The internal sense of chaos that results from living in a state of “transitionality” is the sign that something (or multiple somethings) old has ended and we are adjusting to something new. We need to give ourselves permission to identify and grieve the losses and take the time necessary for our inner life to adjust to our outer circumstances. Often this takes much longer than we wish. Knowing our personal response to transition can be helpful. When I started a job that required frequent travel, my husband and I found we often had an argument almost immediately after I returned home from a work trip. We were like two sets of spinning gears trying to mesh but clashing instead. Once we realized that we were both dealing with the discomfort of transition, we were able to respond in much more loving and helpful ways to each other. We talked about what each of us needed to manage the transition. Our discomfort eased, and the arguments ended.

## 2. Accept Change

Change is a reality in all areas of life. Whether physical, emotional, relational, or spiritual, life is never static. Some change brings permanent loss. We do not “get over” the loss of a loved one, but we can eventually adjust to the loss as we negotiate the grieving process and come to some level of acceptance. Other types of change are welcome and necessary. Health means having the flexibility to respond appropriately to whatever type of change we face. Change can be an opportunity for growth. The discomfort that the change brings may well be “growing pains.” Maybe you remember having growing pains in your legs as a child or the emotional growing pains as you went through your teenage years. Transition of all kinds causes growing pains as individuals, families, communities, and nations adjust to the complexities of life in the twenty-first century. Acceptance of change, as a constant reality that can bring benefits as well as challenges, opens us to the possibility of personal and shared growth. Reading and meditating on the life of Jesus, Joseph, Ruth, Daniel, Paul, and other biblical characters can teach us much about how God brings personal growth and eternal good out of transition.

## 3. Give and Receive Help

We are social creatures. Many transitions are the result of living in families and communities. Since individuals negotiate transition at different speeds and in different ways, we need to be understanding of others who are struggling with or, conversely, sailing through transitions in ways we are not. As a church family and as individual church members we have the opportunity and responsibility of offering listening hearts, understanding words, and supportive attitudes that help others as they work through their transitions. Feeling “stuck in neutral” is a normal part of the transition process. Talking about the transition with someone else who has gone through the same type of transition can be enormously helpful. Joining a support group focused on the transition you are experiencing gives you the opportunity to both give and receive help. Support groups normalize the transition, help us accept the changes it brings, and show us how to get “unstuck.” Some people stay stuck longer than others. If you find yourself or a family member “stuck” and unable to move on, professional help may be necessary.

### WRAP-UP

Experiencing change often requires an individual, family, society, or nation to adjust attitudes, behaviors, values, and sometimes, even worldview. The process of adjustment can be one of positive growth, yet the necessity of deep-level change that results from multiple, simultaneous transitions can cause internal and external distress in our lives. Jesus promises, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). When we face transition, we can rest in the assurance that Jesus walks with us, understands us, and seeks our growth as we anticipate that greatest of transition days when He comes to take us to an earth made new. 🍀

<sup>1</sup> A. Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> W. Bridges, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes* (Reading, Mass.: Perseus Books, 1980), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Bridges, p. 9; cf. N. K. Schlossberg, E. B. Waters, and J. Goodman, *Counseling Adults in Transition* (New York: Springer Publishing, 1995), p. 44; V. W. Turner, “Dewey, Dilthey, and Drama: An Essay in the Anthropology of Experience,” in *The Anthropology of Experience*, ed. V. W. Turner and E. M. Bruner (Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1986), p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> Turner.

<sup>5</sup> P. A. Cowan, “Individual and Family Life Transitions: A Proposal for a New Definition,” in *Family Transitions*, ed. P. A. Cowan and M. Hetherington (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 1991), p. 18.

**Cheryl Doss**, Ph.D., recently retired as director of the Institute of World Mission at the General Conference. She now lives with her husband, Gorden, in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

# SPONSOR A CHILD. RESCUE A CHILD.

Provide a path out of poverty by eradicating exploitation and empowering children to pursue their educational goals.

This Christmas, would you prayerfully consider a gift to the **Where Needed Most Fund**, giving the most flexibility to meet emerging needs?



Scan the QR code to donate or visit [ChildImpact.org](https://ChildImpact.org) to learn more.



Contact Us: (423) 910-0667 | [Help@ChildImpact.org](mailto:Help@ChildImpact.org) | Child Impact International is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

# ELLEN WHITE IN HER SENIOR YEARS

Sunday, July 19, 1903, at her home in Elmshaven, St. Helena, California, Ellen White sat down to write a letter to “My dear son Edson.” Edson was Ellen White’s oldest living son. She was responding to a letter she had received from Edson the day before, asking for counsel on a publishing decision. At this time Edson and his wife, Emma, were living in Nashville, Tennessee, where he operated a printing business.

Ellen White was 75 years of age at the time of this letter. She would live 12 more years until her death at the age of 87. In this letter we catch glimpses of Ellen White’s active involvement and service mindset during her senior years. These few insights model positive principles of helpful service for all generational groups.

## LETTER EXCERPTS

“I thank the Lord for the good health that I enjoy. . . . I know that this is a miracle wrought by His mercy. I am so thankful, so thankful! If I can live until I can get my writings in shape and before the people, I shall be very grateful.” Here she is referring to several books she had interest in writing, such as on the work in the South, the life of Paul, and the work in Europe. (principle 1)

“The last two Sabbaths I have spoken at the Sanitarium. Sister Kerr from Honolulu, who is staying at the Sanitarium, says that the patients are delighted with my talks. . . . They can hardly believe, Sister Kerr says, that I am seventy-four years old. When Sister Kerr told me this, I said, On the twenty-sixth of November next, I shall be seventy-six years old.” (principle 2)

“My health is good. My appetite is excellent. I find that the simpler my food, and the fewer the varieties I eat, the stronger I am. I take a bath every day—sometimes two. . . . I prefer a cold bath in the morning and a moderately warm one at night.” (principle 3)

“We can accomplish much if we work

carefully, and in such a way that the Lord can work with us. . . . I believe that the Lord hears my prayers, and then I go to work to answer my prayers, which I am sure are indited by the Lord. I am of good courage.” (principle 4)

## PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES

**1. Sustained Commitment:** We see ongoing dedication to God’s work; multiple book and service projects supporting evangelism and outreach in the South in the United States, other regions of the U.S., and around the world. This active commitment continued until her death.

**2. Service Engagements:** Often readers see the big engagements and projects that Ellen White was involved with, but here we see her having pleasure in doing simple witnessing and service projects close to home.

**3. Health Principles:** Here is seen sensitivity to the importance and awareness of healthful practices and their integration into daily life and practice—diet, hygiene, and sensitivity to their efficacy and positive impact on life.

**4. Confident Faith:** Here is radiant faith born by years of cooperating with God, reading His Word, and prayer. Ellen White’s life of faith and assurance shines forth, clear and convicting.

In this personal letter from a mother to her son we see rich commitment, faith, and trust that continued throughout Ellen White’s life to the very end. Everyone has their own path to travel, and Ellen White’s private and public example can be an inspiration to all. ♣

\* Ellen G. White letter 150, 1903, in *Ellen G. White, Letters and Manuscripts* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate), vol. 18, p. 153.

**Delbert W. Baker, Ph.D.**, is the director of Research and Development for the Office of Regional Conference Ministries/Retirement Plan based in Huntsville, Alabama.

TRANSFORMATION TIPS  
DELBERT W. BAKER



ELLEN WHITE  
MODELED POSITIVE  
PRINCIPLES OF  
HELPFUL SERVICE  
FOR ALL  
GENERATIONAL  
GROUPS.



# LOVE LETTERS

## DAVID CARL

**W**hile attending Adventist Community Services meetings in 2017 in Gladstone, Oregon, presenters distributed a small tract titled *A Love Letter From Jesus*. If we were interested in getting a supply of them to hand out in our community, we were told to sign and address the card that came with the tract. My wife, Yvonne, and I did this, assuming we would receive a small package containing a few tracts.

Instead, about three weeks later a mail carrier placed a box about the size of a small moving/packing box on our porch. Not having the slightest idea what it could be, I found that I could barely pick it up because it was so heavy. I brought the box inside and opened it. It was full of packets of the *Love Letter* tracts. We couldn't believe that we had been sent so many—about 5,000 individual tracts!

What were we going to do with so many? Yvonne and I prayed about it and decided to “donate” them to our church. We told the pastor, the literature ministries leader, and the congregation about the tracts and encouraged them to each take a packet of them and begin passing them out.

### A TRANSITION

Two years later, in August 2019, my wife and I moved to a retirement “village” in Gresham, Oregon. Before we moved, I looked inside the box of *Love Letter* tracts and saw that it was still about two-thirds full. I decided to take 10 packets of the tract, a total of 1,000, with us to our new apartment. I placed them on the bookshelf in the bedroom. For the next year I would look at those *Love Letter* tracts and pray, “What do You want us to do with these?”

In July 2019 my son, who owns a small construction company, got so busy with work that he needed additional help. I volunteered to lend a hand and put in about 30 hours. In return, he gave me \$500.

*Hmmm, what should I do with this money?* I wondered. I first tithed it and then decided to dedicate the rest to God. When I prayed and asked God for guidance, almost instantly I heard a “voice” that said, “Mail the *Love Letter* tracts to the apartments in your area [there are hundreds of them], and begin with the ones right behind you.”

I smiled. I had heard that “voice” before, and it had led me and my two young sons to Walla Walla College, and then to Miles City, Montana, where I taught school for one year and met and married my current wife of 54 years. With her two sons and my two sons, we moved back to College Place, and I completed my degree in business and accounting. So I wasn't going to ignore that “voice.”

### ANSWERING THE CALL

It took time to determine the best way to distribute the tracts. We ended up walking around the apartments nearest to us and writing down their addresses. It wasn't difficult to come up with 1,000 individual apartment addresses. Often there were 100

*But perhaps not  
the kind you're  
thinking of!*

## For the next year I would look at those *Love Letter* tracts and pray, “What do You want us to do with these?”

to 200 addresses per apartment complex.

We started with the apartments immediately behind us. Along with the *Love Letter* tracts, we included a card inviting them to study Bible lessons. We also included a short message introducing ourselves, saying how much we have personally enjoyed the *Love Letter*, and inviting them to sign up for the Bible lessons. We offered a free Bible if they did not have one, and we also offered to pray for any requests they might have. We provided an email address—one designated just for this outreach—as a way of contacting us. Then we prayed.

### THE RESPONSE

About two weeks later we received a very cautious-sounding email from a person named Sarah.\* She wanted to know more and also requested a Bible. Sarah, a young woman, lives in the apartments right behind us. Since this was pre-COVID, we were able to deliver the Bible to her in person.

When Sarah received the Bible, she hugged it tightly, and the happiness in her eyes nearly brought tears to mine. We encouraged her to prayerfully read it and to sign up for the Bible lessons. We had prayer with her and left. We were soon mailing her two lessons (we use the lessons from *It Is Written* and *Voice of Prophecy*) the first of every month. At the time, we were unable to study with her in person because of COVID.

### A GROWING MINISTRY

We purchased an additional 4,000 tracts, and by the beginning of 2022 we'd mailed our 5,000th *Love Letter*. So far we've received 13 responses that we know of. If a person signs up directly online with *It Is Written* or *Voice of Prophecy* to study the lessons, we're unable to determine whether it's a result of a *Love Letter*. We're personally mailing two lessons every month to 11 people. One person has asked for prayer.

After sending about a third of the lessons to an individual, we then mail them a copy of *Steps to Christ*. About two thirds of the way through we send them a copy of *The Desire of Ages*. With the final lessons we send *The Great Controversy*. Four of the 11 people have almost completed the lessons.

One woman who is completing the Bible studies recently emailed us the following note: “I just wanted you to know how appreciative I am for the Bible study lessons. They are so wonderful and are helping me a lot. They're helping me to understand more about Jesus, and I'm trying to have a relationship with Him by reading the Word more. . . . Thank you so much. I look forward to the lessons. Keep them coming, please.”

We praise God for working on her heart!

### WHAT NOW?

We recently prayed, “Lord, if You want us to continue with these mailings, You'll need to supply the dollars to do so above and beyond our income and small savings.” (My wife and I are in our early 80s, living on Social Security.) It costs about \$1,000 for each 1,000 tracts mailed. So, because of donations and stimulus checks, and by accepting occasional small jobs, we haven't used any of “our money” for the first 5,000 tracts. We have since bought another 5,000, so we're now waiting to see how God supplies the money to mail them.

We realize that this is a very small outreach project, and a pastor once told us that this isn't a very effective way to reach people. That may be true, but seeds are being planted, and some are being watered. Also, these mailings are going almost exclusively to apartments and condos that usually don't allow solicitation and are not easily accessible for other forms of outreach. Above all, it's being done for the praise, honor, and glory of our Lord.

If you feel called to start an outreach like this, or something similar, I encourage you to pray about it. God will certainly answer your prayers.

Jesus is coming soon. Just imagine how many people could be reached if this small outreach spread across North America. Even with “small” outreach initiatives, many souls can come to know the love of Jesus. 🌱

To learn more about the *Love Letters* ministry, email [loveletter2300@gmail.com](mailto:loveletter2300@gmail.com).

\* Not her real name.

David Carl writes from Gresham, Oregon.



# WHEN IN ORLANDO AREA

Jim & Camille Gilley invite you to join them at  
**THE CLERMONT FIRST CHURCH**  
498 Montrose St. • Clermont • FL 34711

Where you can find  
**LOVE, ACCEPTANCE & FORGIVENESS**  
**AND TWO SPIRIT FILLED CAMP MEETING DAYS**



Pastor James Gilley

## INSPIRING SERVICES

### Sabbath School:

9:30 a.m.

### Worship:

11:00 a.m.

Every Sabbath

## KEEP ON SERIES:

- **January 7, 2023**  
*Never Quit*
- **January 14, 2023**  
*Press On*
- **January 21, 2023**  
*Keep On*
- **February 4, 2023**  
*God's Favor*
- **February 18, 2023**  
*Three Keys to Happiness*



Pastor John Lomacang

**January 28, 2023**

11:00 a.m.

Ordained minister of SDA church in 35th year of ministry will share the Word.

**Concert at 5:00 p.m. to conclude an inspiring day.**



Pastor John Carter

**February 25, 2023**

11:00 a.m.

John Carter is president of The Carter Report Ministry located in California. For many years he has traveled the world preaching the Good News of Christ to millions of people.



Jennifer LaMountain

**February 11, 2023**

11:00 a.m.

Worship in song and the Word.



Charles Haugabrooks

**February 25, 2023**

**Concert at 5:00 p.m.**

**JOIN JIM'S 41<sup>ST</sup> ISRAEL TRIP NOVEMBER 19-27, 2023**  
**CALL: (602) 788-8864**



FAITH-ANN MCGARRELL

## Three words changed my life: “You have cancer.”

I can still feel my doctor’s steady gaze as he presented the pathology report. I was blindsided. How could this be? To say it was a shock is an understatement. I had just moved to Maryland, started a new job, and was settling into a new life. A lingering cough and a routine wellness exam led to a bevy of tests culminating in that moment. Upon hearing the diagnosis, friends and family offered encouragement: “Treatment options are excellent now” or “Don’t worry, you’re young. You’ll be fine!” While I heard these words, they didn’t bring any peace.

# THE BATTLE NO ONE WANTS

---

*How a cancer diagnosis brought me closer to God.*

I remember one stressful cycle of coming home after a full day at work, getting on the computer, and searching for hours, looking up every word from the test results and pathology reports; reading research about life expectancies, survival rates, and various treatment options; and the stories of other people. I learned that in the United States one in eight women are diagnosed with breast cancer yearly. Globally, the disease represents one in four cancers, surpassing lung cancer. In women under 45 years of age, breast cancer is more common in Black women, who are also more likely to die from the disease. A person’s risk doubles if he or she has a first-degree relative (a mother or a sister) who has had breast cancer. For 85 percent of the 2.3 million who will be diagnosed globally, though, there is no family history.<sup>1</sup> As a Black woman under age 45 with a strong family history of cancer, I checked several boxes.

I became obsessed with reading the stories of others. I remember diligently following one particular blogger as she navigated her diagnosis. Her candid stories, upbeat and captivating, sparked hope. For several months her words gave me courage until I came upon a final post, written not by her but by a family member, thanking all of her followers for their concern and prayers. She had succumbed to the disease. I was crushed.<sup>2</sup>

Inundated with scans, biopsies, blood tests, surgeries, treatment options, and volumes of information on the Internet, I could not shut down the worry, anxiety, and stress. As a result, I couldn’t sleep or be at peace. I needed to find a way to continue to trust God. And so it was during this dark, uncertain period that I replaced the three words that scared me, “You have cancer,” with three words that encouraged me as I moved through this difficult time: prayer, praise, and promises.

### THE POWER OF PRAYER

One evening I confided in a dear friend that I was having difficulty concentrating while praying. I would begin to pray, and all these worries and

## Ultimately, it is God’s supernatural power that gives abiding peace, the courage to face trials, and confident assurance through each circumstance.

worst-case scenarios would flood my mind. She said, “Don’t worry; I’m praying for you,” and proceeded to offer a heartfelt prayer over the telephone. It might seem like such a simple thing, but her prayer shifted the atmosphere for me. I remember listening to her words and realizing that all I had to do at that moment was agree with her words as she interceded on my behalf. There is power in intercessory prayer, and on that evening, I experienced it firsthand. Matthew 18:19 records the words of Jesus saying, “Truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.”<sup>3</sup> This is a powerful promise from the Intercessor Himself, Jesus. We learn in Romans 8:34 that Jesus “is at the right hand of God . . . interceding for us”; in 1 John 2:1 we learn that He is our “advocate with the Father”; and in Hebrews 7:25 that He lives to intercede for each one of us. He extends to us this same privilege to pray with and for each other.

Writing down my prayers also helped me focus my thoughts. My sister reminded me, “Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. . . . Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him.”<sup>4</sup> She said, “Listen to me, you need to shut down that computer and write a letter to God.” So, I turned off my computer and began writing my prayers in a prayer journal. Some journal entries were long, some short. Some were hopeful, and others were angry and filled with frustration. The writing process allowed me to put the dark thoughts down on paper and clear them from my mind. Reading these many years later, I can see God’s hand at work in a very tangible way during that dark period. Many of the things I worried about never happened. However, this is not always the case: sometimes, our worst fears come true. What do we do when this happens? How do we, as Christians living in a decaying, sin-ravaged world, face the challenges and crucibles that are sure to come?

### PRAISE THROUGH SONG

We are encouraged to praise and reminded that in *every* circumstance God is with us: “When you

pass through the waters, I will be with you; and . . . through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze” (Isa. 43:2). We have confidence in Jesus’ words: “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13).

Sometimes such words as “praise” and “give glory” are used so often that they lose their meaning. What does praising God and giving Him glory look like in tough times? Cultivating a spirit of praise is not easy when things go opposite to what we anticipate. One author, Gavin Anthony, offers a practical suggestion: “Write down a short list of what [we] know to be the truth about God. Go through the list and praise God for each item.”<sup>5</sup> And as we reflect on these truths, we’re encouraged to consider how our feelings may change about our situation.

For me, music and singing had always been a big part of my praise experience. I love music—playing, singing, listening—all of it. But as a music lover, I found it difficult to sing or even listen to music: when I did, it triggered bouts of sadness. Sitting in silence was not an option either, since my mind would just gravitate to my worries once more in the quiet stillness. So I had to make a conscious decision, moment by moment, to praise God for what He would allow; in line with my prayers or not, I had to *decide* to trust God’s will. I found that listening to energetic, upbeat music kept me hopeful. J. Carl Laney, in “Cultivating a Spirit of Thankfulness,” says that to cultivate a spirit of praise, one must “acknowledge the sovereignty of God, appreciate everyday things, maintain proper perspective, and recognize that God has given us more than we deserve.”<sup>6</sup>

Psalm 100:4 says, “Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.” In addition to my thanking God for being God in the situation, it was uplifting to thank those around me—the chaplains who sat and prayed with me after that first three-hour surgery and the follow-up 10-hour one; the hospital and oncology nurses; and the various physicians who managed my care. Writing notes and delivering

them was cathartic. This spirit of gratitude was also extended to family members, friends, and coworkers who prayed, called, and visited, since each encounter provided an opportunity to praise and thank God for His care during a difficult time.

Within a few months I rejoined my local church choir and resumed singing with a community of believers. Researchers from Oxford University focusing on the mood-boosting effects of choral music found that full-throated joyful noises (specific reference to amateur, nonprofessional singers) can do so much for the immune system. Within a choir setting, a rich social bonding takes place and increases feelings of well-being; singing with others also improves breathing, posture, and memory. In some studies the act of singing releases tense muscles and can reduce pain by increasing positive neurochemicals such as beta-endorphins, dopamine, and serotonin.<sup>7</sup> Singing improved my healing journey significantly.

Yet, as the psalmist asked: “How can we sing the song of the Lord while in a foreign land?” (Ps. 137:4). As exiles on this earth, we face sickness, both physical and mental; death and loss; economic crises; increased crime; global and national conflicts; and a host of crises. Like the exiles of Israel, we know only this crumbling world. We must place our hope in a future that we can only trust exists.

The truth is that we can engage in many practical activities to help guide us through difficult circumstances; we can steel our minds and make conscious decisions to trust and praise God. These are all excellent steps, but ultimately it is God’s supernatural power that gives abiding peace, the courage to face trials, and confident assurance through each circumstance. We must exercise faith beyond what our eyes can see: “Now faith is the confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” (Heb. 11:1). We must believe that God is and that He is true to His word.

### STANDING ON HIS PROMISES

The promises in God’s Word are a sure and constant source of strength. There are two guarantees in this life: First, we will face difficult times, and second, we can stand on God’s promises to walk us through it all. In Psalm 23:4 we are reminded: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort

me” (KJV). And in Isaiah 41:10 we are told: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (KJV).

### PEACE AND STRENGTH FOR THE FUTURE

Throughout my bout with cancer, prayer, praise, and God’s promises helped me find peace in the assurance that Jesus has conquered sin and its many consequences. Jesus said, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). What a great comfort and reminder!

We can also participate by strengthening each other as God strengthens us: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God” (2 Cor. 1:3, 4). I pray that we find opportunities to strengthen each other and those who cross our paths—in the grocery store, at the gas station, or wherever we may find ourselves—with words of encouragement, the simple act of presence, or by “speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit” (Eph. 5:19).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> BreastCancer.org, “U.S. Breast Cancer Statistics,” at [https://www.breastcancer.org/symptoms/understand\\_bc/statistics](https://www.breastcancer.org/symptoms/understand_bc/statistics); Breast Cancer Research Foundation, “Breast Cancer Statistics Worldwide,” at <https://www.bcrf.org/breast-cancer-statistics-and-resources/>

<sup>2</sup> Lisa Szabo, “Breast Cancer Blogger Dies at 45,” *USA Today*, Mar. 9, 2015, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2015/03/09/breast-cancer-advocate-dies/24646491/>

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 93.

<sup>5</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Gavin Anthony, principal contributor, *In the Crucible With Christ, Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, Aug. 21, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> J. Carl Laney, “Cultivating a Spirit of Thankfulness,” *Transformed*, November 2017, <https://www.westernseminary.edu/transformed-blog/2017/11/23/cultivating-spirit-thankfulness/>

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Launay, “Choir Singing Improves Health, Happiness—and It Is the Perfect Icebreaker,” *University of Oxford Research* (2022), <https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/choir-singing-improves-health-happiness-%E2%80%9393-and-perfect-icebreaker>; cf. Mirella J. Hopper, Suzi Curtis, Suzanne Hodge, and Rebecca Simm, “A Qualitative Study Exploring the Effects of Attending a Community Pain Service Choir on Well-being in People Who Experience Chronic Pain,” *British Journal of Pain* 10, no. 3 (2016): 124–134; Daisy Fancourt et al., “Singing Modulates Mood, Stress, Cortisol, Cytokine and Neuropeptide Activity in Cancer Patients and Carers,” *E-cancer Medical Science* 10 (2016): 631.

**Faith-Ann McGarrell** is the editor of *The Journal of Adventist Education*. She lives in Silver Spring, Maryland.



Share  
*Hope*  
this Christmas



Your gift of a start-up kit today will support Rwandan refugees who learned a vocational trade and are starting their own businesses. Also, don't miss this opportunity to give the first-ever handicraft items made by graduates of Impact Hope to your friends and family!

**SHOP THE GIFT CATALOG TODAY**



[IMPACT-HOPE.ORG/GIFTCATALOG](http://IMPACT-HOPE.ORG/GIFTCATALOG)



(503) 673-3905



735 E CLARENDON STREET, STE. 107  
GLADSTONE, OREGON 97027



SCAN TO SHOP

# HIS WOUNDED HANDS

**Y**ou believe in the investigative judgment? Good, because it's true. And that your name will come up in it? Good, because it will.

How will you fare, though, when it does? Ellen White writes that every “work passes in review before God, and is registered for faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Opposite each name in the books of Heaven is entered, with terrible exactness, every wrong word, every selfish act, every unfulfilled duty, and every secret sin, with every artful dissembling. Heaven-sent warnings or reproofs neglected, wasted moments, unimproved opportunities, the influence exerted for good or for evil, with its far-reaching results, all are chronicled by the recording angel.”<sup>1</sup>

All of that is biblical. “For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Eccles. 12:14). “Every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment” (Matt. 12:36). God will “bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts” (1 Cor. 4:5). “Behold, it is written before Me, . . . your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together, says the Lord” (Isa. 65:6, 7).

So, how well will we fare when, with “terrible exactness,” every “secret thing” comes under scrutiny before God? Many would be ashamed to have their deeds exposed before other sinners—but before a holy God? If all human “righteousnesses are like filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6), what chance do people have when their iniquities are “written before” Him?

Satan, meanwhile, is there, pointing “to the record of their lives, to the defects

of character, the unlikeness to Christ, which has dishonored their Redeemer, to all the sins that he has tempted them to commit, and because of these he claims them as his subjects.”<sup>2</sup>

What, then, is going to get you through this judgment? Your deeds? Your faithfulness? Your character?

Is this not when and where the gospel, Christ's substitutionary atonement, becomes key? Absolutely—which is why Ellen White writes that “Jesus does not excuse their sins, but shows their penitence and faith, and, claiming for them forgiveness, he lifts his wounded hands before the Father and the holy angels, saying, ‘I know them by name. I have graven them on the palms of my hands.’”<sup>3</sup>

Those whose sins are blotted out “have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God.”<sup>4</sup>

Shouldn't anyone who professes Christ live in “harmony with the law of God”? Yet harmony with God's law reveals only the reality of their salvation; it can no more procure that salvation than manicures, baths, and perfumes can make a pig kosher.

That's why believers need Jesus, now and especially in the judgment, when, as their “Advocate with the Father” (1 John 2:1), Jesus “pleads their cause and vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary.”<sup>5</sup>

What else?

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 1888 edition (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1888), p. 481.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 484.

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

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 483.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1882), p. 470.

**Clifford Goldstein** is the editor of the Adult Bible Study Guides at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and a longtime columnist for *Adventist Review*.

CLIFF'S  
EDGE  
CLIFFORD  
GOLDSTEIN



HOW WELL WILL WE FARE WHEN, WITH “TERRIBLE EXACTNESS,” EVERY “SECRET THING” COMES UNDER SCRUTINY BEFORE GOD?



DRAZEN ZIGIC/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS

# CHRISTMAS IS COMING

*Celebrating the “Christ” in Christmas*

“Christmas is coming” is the note that is sounded throughout our world from east to west and from north to south. With youth, those of mature age, and even the aged, it is a period of general rejoicing, of great gladness. But what is Christmas, that it should demand so much attention? This day has been made much of for centuries. It is accepted by the unbelieving world, and by the Christian world generally, as the day on which Christ was born. When the world at large celebrate the day, they show no honor to Christ. They refuse to acknowledge Him as their Saviour, to honor Him by willing obedience to His service. They show preference to the day, but none to the One for whom the day is celebrated, Jesus Christ.

## **PUT CHRIST BACK IN CHRISTMAS**

The twenty-fifth of December is supposed to be the day of the birth of Jesus Christ, and its observance has become customary and popular. But yet there is no certainty that we are keeping the veritable day of our Saviour’s

birth. History gives us no certain assurance of this. The Bible does not give us the precise time. Had the Lord deemed this knowledge essential to our salvation, He would have spoken through His prophets and apostles, that we might know all about the matter. But the silence of the Scriptures upon this point evidences to us that it is hidden from us for the wisest purposes. . . . He has concealed the precise day of Christ’s birth; that the day should not receive the honor that should be given to Christ as the Redeemer of the world—one to be received, to be trusted, to be relied on as He who could save to the uttermost all who come unto Him. The soul’s adoration should be given to Jesus as the Son of the infinite God.

There is no divine sanctity resting upon the twenty-fifth of December; and it is not pleasing to God that anything that concerns the salvation of man through the infinite sacrifice made for them should be so sadly perverted from its professed design. Christ should be the



supreme object; but as Christmas has been observed, the glory is turned from Him to mortal man, whose sinful, defective character made it necessary for Him to come to our world. Jesus, the Majesty of heaven, the royal King of heaven, laid aside His royalty, left His throne of glory, His high command, and came into our world to bring to fallen man, weakened in moral power, and corrupted by sin, aid divine. He clothed His divinity with humanity, that He might reach to the very depths of human woe and misery, to lift up fallen man. By taking upon Himself man's nature, He raised humanity in the scale of moral value with God. These great themes are almost too high, too deep, too infinite, for the comprehension of finite minds.

### PARENTAL INPUT A NECESSITY

Parents should keep these things before their children, and instruct them, line upon line, precept upon precept, in their obligation to God, not their obligation to each other, to honor and glorify one another by gifts and offerings. But they should be taught that Jesus is the world's Redeemer, the object of thought, of painstaking effort; that His work is the grand theme which should engage their attention; that they should bring to Him their gifts and offerings. Thus did the wise men and the shepherds.

As the twenty-fifth day of December is observed to commemorate the birth of Christ, as the children have been instructed by precept and example that this was indeed a day of gladness and rejoicing, you will find it a difficult matter to pass over this period without giving it some attention. It can be made to serve a very good purpose. The youth should be treated very carefully. They should not be left on Christmas to find their own amusement in vanity and pleasure-seeking, in amusements which will be detrimental to their spirituality. Parents can control this matter by turning the minds and the offerings of their children to God and His cause and the salvation of souls. The desire for amusement, instead of being quenched and arbitrarily ruled down, should be controlled and directed by painstaking effort upon the part of the parents. Their desire to make gifts may be turned into pure and holy channels, and made to result in good to our fellow men by supplying the treasury in the great, grand work for which Christ came into our world. Self-denial and self-sacrifice marked His course of action. Let it

**But [children] should be taught that Jesus is the world's Redeemer, the object of thought, of painstaking effort; that His work is the grand theme which should engage their attention.**

mark ours who profess to love Jesus; because in Him is centered our hope of eternal life. . . .

### POSITIVE USES OF THE EVERGREEN

On Christmas, so soon to come, let not the parents take the position that an evergreen placed in the church for the amusement of the Sabbath-school scholars is a sin; for it may be made a great blessing. Keep before their minds benevolent objects. In no case should mere amusement be the object of these gatherings. While there may be some who will turn these occasions into seasons of careless levity, and whose minds will not receive the divine impress, to other minds and characters these seasons will be highly beneficial. I am fully satisfied that innocent substitutes can be devised for many gatherings that demoralize. . . .

Christmas is coming. May you all have wisdom to make it a precious season. Let the older church members unite, heart and soul, with their children in this innocent amusement and recreation, in devising ways and means to show true respect to Jesus by bringing to Him gifts and offerings. Let every one remember the claims of God. His cause cannot go forward without your aid. Let the gifts you have usually bestowed upon one another be placed in the Lord's treasury. I present before you, my brethren and sisters, an object, the European mission. In every church let your smaller offerings be placed upon your Christmas tree. Let the precious emblem, "ever green," suggest the holy work of God and His beneficence to us; and the loving heart work will be to save other souls who are in darkness. Let your works be in accordance with your faith . . . . If all, both old and young, will forgo giving presents to one another, and forgo the selfish outlay of means in these coming holidays, there would be in heaven a most precious record of self-denial for Christ's sake. ♣

---

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This excerpt was taken from the *Review and Herald*, December 9, 1884.

KEEPING  
THE  
DOOR  
OPEN



There were also times  
Tommy would knock for more  
than an hour and we would  
ignore him because we  
didn't want to be bothered.

## *A lesson learned from persistent knocking*

### DAVE LAWRENCE

Most of us experience Christmas with joy and celebration. We spend time with family and friends contemplating the blessings of life. We remember the wonderful gift we have in Jesus, our Saviour.

While I also enjoy all these things, I can't help feeling sadness, and maybe even some guilt, for those less fortunate than my wife, Paula, and me. I'm thankful for reminders that bring me back to reality when I'm tempted to become complacent and forget to consider the hardships of others.

Years ago, when we lived in Nampa, Idaho, one such reminder came in the form of Tommy,\* an 8-year-old boy who lived in our neighborhood. He could be annoying at times, but also gentle and kind. We didn't know much of his family situation, but we knew he came from a broken home. We had seen Tommy roaming the neighborhood on cold snowy mornings, wearing only sandals on his feet. He would often knock on our door, let us know he was hungry, and then spend hours in our home, playing with toys left over from when our children were small. There were also times Tommy would knock for more than an hour, and we would ignore him because we didn't want to be bothered.

The previous Christmas we had bought a small gift for Tommy and his younger brother. But that year we decided not to repeat the gesture. On Christmas morning Tommy knocked on our door. Once inside, within moments, he asked where his present was. As soon as he became aware there was no gift, he was quick to leave. With a heavy heart I watched him go and wander through the neighborhood. So when Paula and I went the next morning for some "after Christmas" shopping, we purchased two small gifts,

one for Tommy and the other for his younger brother.

Within 15 minutes of our arrival home from shopping, Tommy came knocking again. I invited him in, and he proceeded to wander throughout the house as only Tommy could do. He looked under the tree, he peeked into empty gift bags, he asked if he could share the nuts I was snacking on. When asked, he told us of the Spiderman glove he received for Christmas and pointed out the new shirt and socks he was wearing.

We hadn't had time to wrap the gifts we had purchased, so I asked Paula to occupy him for a few minutes while I slipped into a back room and wrapped the gifts. When I emerged carrying the wrapped packages, his eyes lit up, and he asked if one was for him. He began to get excited as I pointed to one and said, "This one's for you." With great anticipation he asked if the other was for his brother. Tommy could hardly contain himself as he watched us label the gifts. He asked if his was a toy. When we replied that it was, he excitedly blurted out, "Oh, that's good! I like toys."

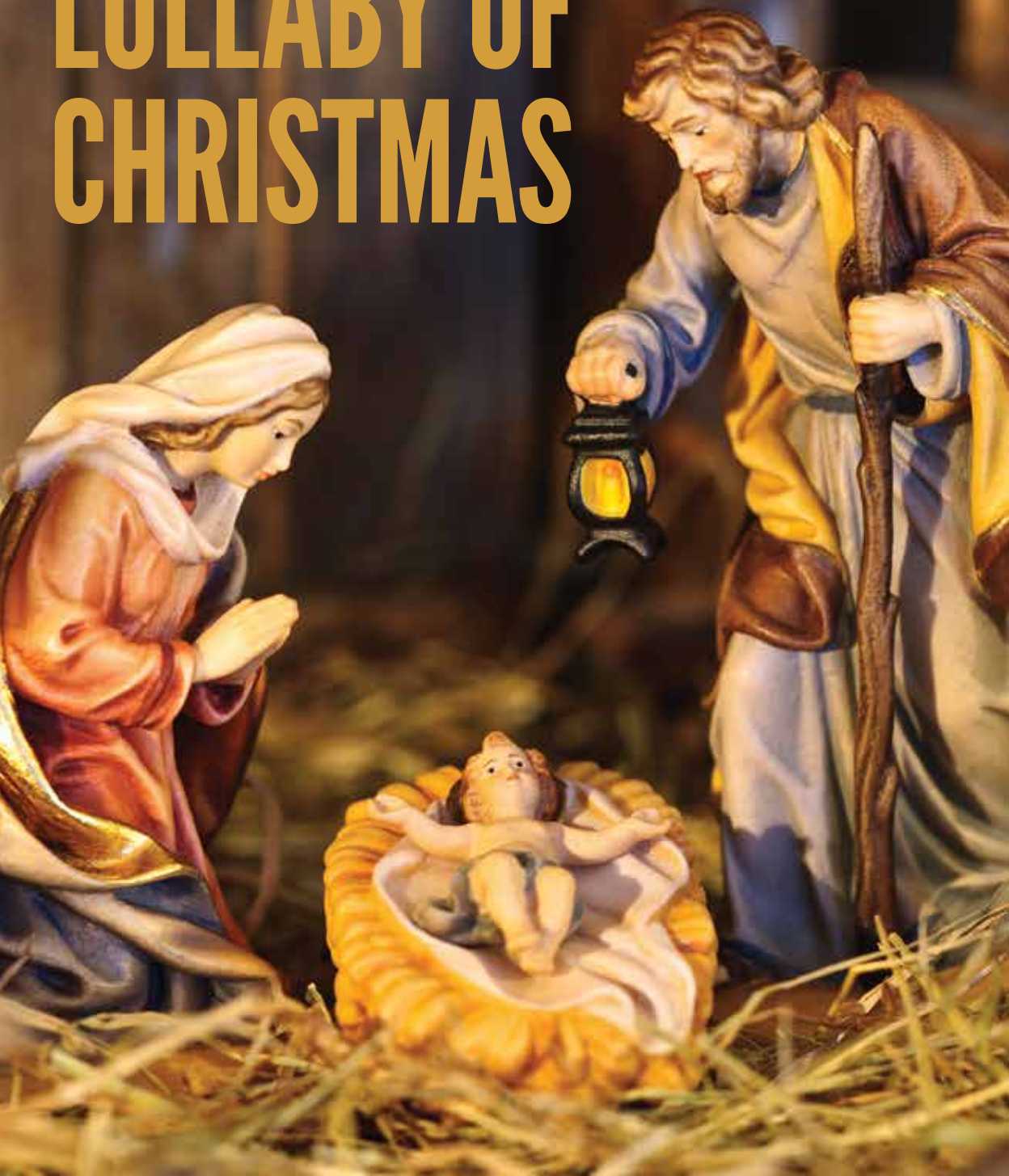
I asked if he needed help carrying them down the street to his home, but he quickly told us he could manage and had to go. As we opened the door to let him out, his enthusiasm grew, and he assured us he would be back. We had no doubt he would.

I learned a lesson from Tommy on that after-Christmas-morning day about keeping the door open. Not only for little boys, but for Jesus. I pray that the door to my heart will always be open, and the messages emanating from me will reflect Jesus. ♣

\* Not his real name.

**Dave Lawrence** is retired and lives in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

# THE LULLABY OF CHRISTMAS



*It's the message that soothes our soul.*

## ED DICKERSON

**M**y infant granddaughter Rebekah was registering her frustration. Tired beyond measure, she fought sleep with every fragment of will and fiber of her being, most noticeably, through her vocal cords. In the hopes of soothing her, I began to sing. Not any recognizable song at first, but soft, soothing, gentle tones that eventually transitioned to tunes. Interestingly, those tunes were Christmas carols.

As I sang to my granddaughter that night, I realized that many of our favorite Christmas songs are lullabies. As I hummed, I understood better the unique nature of Christmas. Throughout the year we sing hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God, worshipping His majesty and recounting the plan of salvation. But only at Christmas, it seems, do worship and lullabies come together.

### THE POWER OF LULLABIES

Lullabies—simple, serene, repetitive melodies with lyrics to match. They often employ “nonsense” words such as “tura lura lural”<sup>1</sup> or phrases selected for soothing effect. “Coventry Carol,” a lullaby tune from the sixteenth century, repeatedly uses the words “Bye, bye, lully, lullay.” In a lullaby the words matter little. Long before babies can understand a single word, they can understand a parent’s love made audible in a lullaby.

Adults find these Christmas lullabies comforting as well, especially those who have trouble imagining God as human. No one can fully comprehend the Incarnation. This is not unique to our time. In Martin Luther’s day, artists commonly pictured Jesus Christ, even as an infant, as the judge. The fearful aspect of this view of Christ reinforced the veneration of Mary as the nurturing mother who could plead with her stern offspring. In rejecting this view, Luther encouraged believers to view Jesus as the tiny infant: “Now is overcome the power of sin, death, hell, conscience, and guilt, if you come to this gurgling Babe and believe that he is come, not to judge you, but to save.”<sup>2</sup>

No matter how difficult it is to understand the Incarnation, it takes little effort to picture a mother and her child. We can easily hear that

same mother singing a lullaby to soothe a crying baby into peaceful slumber. When we envision Mary singing to the Babe “away in a manger” on that “silent night,” our Christmas lullabies echo her song. In dozens of languages, in varying melodies, meters, and styles, people in every culture sing lullabies at Christmas.

### GOOD NEWS

And that’s why I, without thinking, chose a Christmas carol to quiet my granddaughter. Because unlike any other holiday, Christmas centers on a newborn babe. When we pause to contemplate it seriously, we cannot help being amazed again and again. The One who created the universe deigned to come to earth, not in His glory as an all-powerful deity, but as a helpless infant.

The angels announce this astonishing news to the shocked shepherds: “This is what you’re to look for: a baby *wrapped in a blanket* and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:12, Message; emphasis supplied).<sup>3</sup> Think of it. God came to earth as a baby wrapped in a blanket.

No wonder we love Christmas so much. We love lullabies, because in this universe of vast forces, we all sometimes feel small. Like children, we fear the dark, worry about an uncertain future, or rage for reasons we can’t always express. Christmas soothes our fears, calms our fretfulness, and applies balm to our wounded souls. For beyond the darkness that seems to rule the world, we hear the Father’s loving lullaby. “Peace, be still,” He says to our cries. “Hush now. Be still and know that I am God,” He whispers. “I will love you forever. No one can harm you. You’re going to be all right.”

Christmas *is* a lullaby. It’s God’s serene song of love to a fretful world. ♣

<sup>1</sup> This is a phrase from a song composed in 1913 by James Royce Shannon, also known as “That’s an Irish Lullaby.”

<sup>2</sup> Roland H. Bainton, ed., *Martin Luther’s Christmas Book* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1948), Kindle location 275 of 593.

<sup>3</sup> Texts credited to Message are from *The Message*, copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

---

**Ed Dickerson** is an author, speaker, and Bible teacher who writes from Garrison, Iowa.



# A GATHERING OF GIFTS



## *The voice said to go, so I went.*

**ESTHER LUCILE HOLLAND**

**I**t was Tuesday morning, just 12 days before Christmas, and I was missing the Christmas spirit. Nothing seemed the same since Pop's death. I just wanted to forget the whole thing, but my three grandsons wanted their children to remember Christmas at Nana's house. I wanted to make it happen, but there was so much to do. Not a gift had been wrapped; not a card addressed and mailed; and the house was cluttered. The only thing completed related to Christmas was the tree, and even that was accomplished by my great-grandsons.

My sister cared for three children so their daddy could work. His wife and their mother had left them. I had seen them only two times. The boy was 6, and his sisters were 5 and 3. The family was poor, and the girls didn't have a nice dress between them. There were so many reasons I needed to be home, but I had a strong impression I should visit Martha's Outlet, a little girls' dress shop. Of all places for me to go! We had no little girls in my family—only the four boys. And I was busy. The Christmas to-do list was long and never-ending. I didn't want to go to town, but the feeling that I must go grew so strong that I couldn't ignore it any longer. A voice seemed to shout, "GO NOW!" I dropped what I was doing and drove to the store.

There were several women in Martha's Outlet that day. I went to the rack of slightly imperfect clothing, which were marked down because of a need of some small repair. The dress I picked out for the 5-year-old had a small place on the collar that needed mending. I could easily fix it. Even with the manager's assistance, though, I couldn't find anything suitable for the 3-year-old on that reduced rack.

Suddenly one of the women who heard me explain to the manager what I was looking for and why came up to us and said, "I have a refund coming of more than \$16. I'm in a hurry and can't spend any more time looking. Would you accept my refund on clothes for those little girls?" Nearly speechless, I said, "That's wonderful. Thank you so very much." Then, just as suddenly as she appeared, she was gone.

The manager picked out a pretty dress for the 3-year-old. When she saw the refund receipt, the manager exclaimed, "That woman had almost \$20 coming!" so we decided to get some underwear and socks for each of the girls. I would pay the difference. While we were getting the items, the store clerk picked out pretty socks: her gift to the little girls.

When everything was rung up, the stranger's refund covered the entire amount except \$6. The shop manager said, "I am paying the rest. Take your \$6 and buy something for the little boy." Needless to say, I thanked our heavenly Father then and there for His love and care of His earthly children.

Sabbath morning the children's classes sang "Away in a Manger" for church. Those three little ones looked angelic as they sang.

By the way, neither the shop manager nor any of the rest of us have ever seen or discovered who the kind woman was in Martha's Outlet that day. She was surely used by God to bless those children and make Christmas real to me that year. ♣

---

**Esther Lucile Holland**, of Denison, Texas, submitted this story to us in 1995. For reasons unknown, it was tucked away in a forgotten file cabinet. We discovered it just in time for this Christmas season. It seemed right to publish it in 2022, because even more than 25 years after she wrote the story, it still rings with the message of Christmas.

# GRIEF DURING THE HOLIDAYS





## *Finding hope in solidarity*

**JACI CRESS SOLIS**

In 2014 I found myself in the midst of a divorce after 10 years of marriage, and I moved home to Walla Walla, Washington, with my 1-year-old daughter. It felt as if my life and potentially my career were over.

The next few months were a blur as I hustled to make life work. I took a few teaching jobs and a part-time chaplaincy position while trying to keep myself and a baby alive. My house plants, alas, did not survive. The holidays were fast approaching, and I was struck with a sense of overwhelming dread. In the thick of my grief, I could not muster the emotional fortitude to put up a Christmas tree. I just could *not*.

Along with my extended family, my daughter and I went to the Oregon coast that year for Christmas. It was my first Christmas after my divorce, and I thought it might feel good to do something different. It did not. I slept in the bathroom on an air mattress. Nothing is like being exiled to the bathroom to sleep on a pool floaty to remind you that you have hit rock bottom. I remember bursting into tears partway through a family board game. The emotions were so raw.

Life, on a good day, can feel nearly impossible for even the most resilient among us. Throw in frenzied shopping, a few Christmas pageants, a fruitcake, and a lot of expectations, and many of us are hanging on by a very thin piece of tinsel. Pile on grief, loss, loneliness, isolation, and/or mental health challenges, and the holidays can feel especially brutal.

Early on in my divorce journey I said to a friend sarcastically, "At least when someone dies, you get a casserole!" What I really wanted to say was that I wished somebody—anybody—would say something. Anything. Risk sticking their foot in their mouth, and acknowledging the pain that I felt.

The next morning as I was leaving for work, I nearly tripped over a cottage cheese loaf on my front porch. Attached was a note that said: "We love you. We see you. We are here for you." To be honest, I'm not sure what the note said. That is what I remember. And it wasn't about the cottage

cheese loaf. OK, it was a little bit about the cottage cheese loaf. But it was mostly that someone had witnessed my pain and acknowledged it.

### **THERE IS HOPE IN SOLIDARITY**

Perhaps this Christmas you are experiencing grief or isolation more acutely for the first time. Perhaps this is the first year without your spouse and you can't bear to face Christmas without them. Or maybe you are experiencing infertility, and the holiday is yet another reminder that your hopes for a child are unrealized.

Perhaps a marriage or relationship ended, and though there is some relief, there is still so much grief. Maybe a loved one received a terminal diagnosis, so this Christmas feels harder, and the stakes seem impossibly high. Or maybe the faith that once felt so strong is now shaky and less certain.

COVID-19 has only compounded the feelings of loneliness, grief, and isolation. Nobody tells you that the isolation and loneliness that accompany grief are often more painful than the grief itself.

As if the primary loss is not enough, all the collateral losses that go along with it are excruciating. The loss of a relationship, the loss of a dream, the loss of a family, the loss of friendships. The absence of people you thought would be in your life forever who suddenly don't know what to do with your pain.

The grief that surrounds the Christmas story is not so different from our own. Mary and Joseph must have felt it acutely. Secrecy, shame, misunderstanding, the inability to explain themselves to anyone. Their story is complicated and solitary. Yet this is where the Incarnation takes place.

What I find so compelling in the Christmas story and in my own story is that there is hope in solidarity. Life is more bearable when we bear it together. Maybe in order to become more Christlike, we have to become more human in the best possible ways.

And what I found in the dark night of my own grief is that people showed up. Friends got me out of the house, paid for meals, texted me, or listened

## Life is more bearable when we bear it together.

to my anger and sadness. And my own grief enabled me to show up for others in ways that would not have otherwise occurred to me. This is the double-edged sword of suffering, the beauty and pain of becoming more human. The breaking open of a life, the process of being born again, and again and again.

### HOW TO COPE DURING THE HOLIDAYS

If you find yourself in a season of grief, what might it look like to care well for yourself this holiday? Here are a few things to try:

**Take inventory.** To manage the anxiety and anticipatory grief that accompany the holidays, I suggest making a list of what you think you might need in order to survive the holidays. It could look like more togetherness. But sometimes it is a paring down of expectations. It may look like doing something completely different or keeping things very simple. It may mean having open conversations and setting boundaries with family and friends.

**Try something new or continue a tradition.** Beginning new traditions may feel good to you as you navigate the holidays. Or you might continue a tradition, such as gathering the family to make the triple ginger cookies that your mom baked every year.

**Pay attention to your feelings.** Get some rest. Even small tasks may feel impossible when you are in survival mode. Notice your feelings and respond accordingly.

**Be kind to yourself.** If you find yourself crying into the batter of your triple ginger cookies, or you hear a song and have to pull your car over to the side of the road for a good cry, remember it's OK. Grief is not linear, and there are no shortcuts. Be compassionate with yourself.

### SUPPORTING OTHERS DURING THE HOLIDAYS

When presented with other people's pain, we are confronted with our own and discover we are ill-equipped to deal with our own grief, much less the grief of others. Despite our misgivings, what might it look like to offer solidarity to someone who is grieving this holiday?

**Help in tangible ways.** It may mean being spe-

cific about how you can help rather than telling them to reach out if they need anything. In my experience it is better "to do" rather than "to ask." Translation: Bring the casserole.

**Offer space for processing.** It may look like taking them to lunch and allowing them to process their grief. Or acknowledging their pain without judgment, trite answers, or spiritual clichés.

**Feel your feelings.** Be aware of the emotions that come up for you as you offer this level of support. We are often affected by the suffering of others, so be listening to your inner monologue.

**Be compassionate with yourself.** If you find yourself a complete wreck after listening to a friend talk about the death of her husband, remember to be compassionate with yourself; this is hard.

### "GOD WITH US"

In the book of Matthew we find Isaiah's prophecy saying: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23, KJV).

The coming of Immanuel is how God engages with our grief, trauma, fear, and loneliness. Humanity is the gift we received more than 2,000 years ago. With this gift He deemed Christmas a celebration not just for the merry and bright, but also for those who are lonely, grieving, and in their darkest hours.

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, rejected by His own people. He risked Himself in order to remind us that we are not alone, because we belong to Him. And in doing so, He shows us how to belong to each other.

The second Christmas, post-divorce, I set up my faux, pre-lit Christmas tree, and because my living room light was broken and a little light felt good to me, I kept it up through February. The light of hope felt a bit more tangible as I felt myself slowly rising out of the rubble. What I found to be true in my darkest hours and is true for me today—there is hope in solidarity. 🍀

---

**Jaci Cress Solis**, M.Div., is the member care pastor of the Walla Walla University church in College Place, Washington.



PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

## L-O-N-G COVID

**Q:** I had COVID in March 2021, along with my husband and one of our adult children. It wasn't severe for any of us, and they're both now fine, yet I'm still overly tired and have a hard time focusing mentally. Why me? My doctor says there's nothing to do but wait. Am I still infected or contagious?

**A:** Unfortunately, your description points to what is called "long COVID." Millions of people around the world are suffering from something similar. The diagnosis is not very precise and includes a wide variety of symptoms of varying degrees of discomfort, inconvenience, and severity that may last weeks to years after recovery from an acute COVID infection. Estimates of COVID patients who develop this condition range from 30 to 70 percent. Long COVID has significantly affected the lives and livelihoods of millions of people around the world.

There's no one test for long COVID, so doctors use descriptions such as yours to make the clinical diagnosis. But some family members and friends who have completely recovered from COVID and even some doctors may not take long COVID symptoms seriously. This increases the psychological stress of sufferers immensely.

We can't answer your "Why me?" question, but we do emphasize that *anyone* who gets acutely infected can get long COVID; nonetheless, we've listed the currently associated relative risk factors in the table below. People with this condition aren't known to be contagious, so you don't have to be overly concerned about spreading the virus to family or friends; however, please use prudent measures to avoid exposing the vulnerable people around you.

What causes long COVID? The SARS-CoV-2 virus may "hide" in tissues and organs and induce the production of chemicals that stimulate inflammation, activate our blood-clotting platelets, and damage the cells lining our blood ves-

sels. One hypothesis is that the symptoms are correlated with the location of the inflammation. Unfortunately, we still don't know why some people and not others develop long COVID. So there isn't any reliable advice about how to reduce your risk of long COVID once you've already caught COVID-19. As far as treatments, health-promoting lifestyle habits; antihistamines; naltrexone, a generic anti-addiction medication; antivirals; anticlotting agents; steroids; and nutritional supplements are all being used with variable benefits.

The virus of COVID-19 is not yet finished with us, but following the God-given lifestyle that optimizes our immune resilience and observing prudent public health measures are still effective in reducing our overall risk of COVID (and a multitude of other illnesses). By God's grace the research studies currently under way will soon give better solutions for individuals like you with this challenging condition.

### Risk Factors for Long COVID

- over age 70
- BMI over 30
- biological female
- socially disadvantaged
- high viral RNA in blood
- pre-COVID emphysema
- pre-COVID fibromyalgia
- unvaccinated for COVID
- fibrin-amyloid microclots
- pre-COVID type 2 diabetes
- high-stress pre-COVID infection
- autoantibodies present in the blood
- high Epstein-Barr virus DNA in the blood

**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.

# Exciting New Magazine About the Three Angels' Messages!

BRAND  
NEW FROM  
AMAZING  
FACTS

Perfect for Sharing and Mass Mailing!



## Earth's Final Warning: The Three Angels of Revelation

This captivating, beautifully designed, full-color magazine makes essential prophecy easy to understand and is the perfect resource for sharing with friends, family, and neighbors!

This attention-grabbing magazine, as well as Amazing Facts' 11 other sharing magazines, are available at great bulk prices—so stock up today! Please call us at 800-538-7275 for more information about tax-deductible mass-mailing opportunities!

**BK-3AMR ... \$2.95**

### BULK PRICING:

10+ \$2.45 ea. | 25+ \$2.10 ea. | 50+ \$1.95 ea. | 100+ \$1.50 ea. | 500+ \$1.20 ea. | 1,000+ \$1.10 ea.

### Or you can check out our ...

#### MASS-MAILING OPPORTUNITY

Mass mail *Earth's Final Warning: The Three Angels of Revelation* for as low as \$1.26 per home.\*

Now you or your church can share the truth in every home in your community for a low price. Reach more people with less expense by mass mailing *Earth's Final Warning: The Three Angels of Revelation*!

#### MASS-MAILING DISCOUNTS

Our mass-mailings offer the same product prices as buy-in-bulk; the prices below also include shipping costs to homes:

500+ homes, approx. \$1.88 per home\*

1,000+ homes, approx. \$1.56 per home\*

5,000+ homes, approx. \$1.26 per home\*

\*Prices are subject to change. Please call 800-538-7275 for current prices.  
Price per home includes both material and postage.



**AMAZING FACTS**  
INTERNATIONAL

ORDER NOW at [afbookstore.com](http://afbookstore.com).  
Or call 800-538-7275, Mon–Thu, 8:30 AM – 6:00 PM PT.

# SOAR THROUGH THE BIBLE IN A MONTH—CHRONOLOGICALLY

The best way to study Scripture is to walk verse by verse, book by book.

But there's also a time to take flight—to soar freely over the windswept peaks of Scripture and watch the story of redemption unfold.

Last January I invited readers to a spiritual system shock: reading through the Bible in a month.\* The experience was life-changing, with testimonials pouring in and many participants “meeting at the text” nightly online to share together.

Next month, January 2023, I invite you anew to this experience, with an update. Let's read through the Bible chronologically (still keeping most books intact). After Genesis, we'll read Job—since Job lived before Moses—and then Exodus. When we reach the kings, we'll blend in the psalms, proverbs, and the prophets. After the Babylonian exile,

we'll meet up with Ezra, Esther, and Nehemiah (whom Esther might have, ever so possibly, babysat).

On Day 23 we'll delight at the birth of Jesus. And after the Gospels and Acts, we'll read the New Testament letters in their likely sequence, culminating in Revelation.

The key is to read without stopping. Read at dawn, at lunch, in free moments, and into the night. Enjoy an audio Bible while driving or making dinner. And if you miss a day or need to skim, don't worry. You're saved by grace anyway.

You're also invited to a nightly “Meet at the Text” discussion group at 8:00 p.m. Eastern time on facebook.com/meetatthetext or Zoom (ID 515 728 2186; passcode 777).

Together let's soar through Scripture, filling our mind with His Living Word.

See below for the schedule, starting January 1. 🍂

\* <https://adventistreview.org/the-life-of-faith/read-through-your-bible-in-a-month/>

**Andy Nash** (andynash5@gmail.com) is a pastor and professor who leads study tours to Israel.

THE LIFE OF FAITH  
ANDY NASH



## Reading Schedule

TOGETHER LET'S SOAR THROUGH SCRIPTURE, FILLING OUR MIND WITH HIS LIVING WORD.

DAY 1  
Genesis

DAY 2  
Job

DAY 3  
Exodus

DAY 4  
Leviticus

DAY 5  
Numbers

DAY 6  
Deuteronomy

DAY 7  
Joshua; Judges

DAY 8  
Ruth; 1 Samuel

DAY 9  
2 Samuel

DAY 10  
1 Chronicles

DAY 11  
Psalms 1-75

DAY 12  
Psalms 76-150

DAY 13  
1 Kings 1-11;  
2 Chronicles 1-9; Song  
of Songs; Proverbs;  
Ecclesiastes

DAY 14  
1 Kings 12-22; 2 Kings  
1-17; 2 Chronicles 10-18

DAY 15  
Jonah; Amos; Hosea

DAY 16  
Isaiah

DAY 17  
2 Kings 18-20;  
2 Chronicles 19-32;  
Micah; Nahum

DAY 18  
2 Kings 21-25;  
2 Chronicles 33-36;  
Habakkuk; Zephaniah;  
Joel; Obadiah

DAY 19  
Jeremiah;  
Lamentations

DAY 20  
Ezekiel

DAY 21  
Daniel; Ezra 1-6;  
Haggai; Zechariah

DAY 22  
Esther; Ezra 7-10;  
Nehemiah; Malachi

DAY 23  
Matthew

DAY 24  
Mark

DAY 25  
Luke

DAY 26  
John

DAY 27  
Acts

DAY 28  
James; 1,  
2 Thessalonians;  
1, 2 Corinthians

DAY 29  
Galatians; Romans;  
Ephesians; Colossians;  
Philemon; Philippians

DAY 30  
Hebrews;  
1 Timothy; Titus;  
2 Timothy; 1, 2 Peter;  
Jude

DAY 31  
1-3 John; Revelation

# HIS Impact On Me

## Finding Love



Dalariyn

For a young teenager who was left to raise her four younger siblings, encountering a relationship with God required the appropriate occasion. Holbrook Indian School (HIS) student, Dalariyn, was at the Arizona camp meeting for a week as part of HIS summer program when she felt God's presence and heard his voice speaking to her.

When Dalariyn left school to live with her guardians for the summer, Dalariyn said for those two weeks, she "gave up on everything." "I questioned if God was real, why is this happening to me?" Realizing that being at home was not helping her mental health, Dalariyn went to the HIS Summer Experience program. For the first week of that experience, Dalariyn worked with horses during horse camp. Here she learned the fundamentals of relating to and connecting with horses, techniques that horse trainer Jaylin Clayton says help to enhance our relationships with others.

The following week, Dalariyn traveled with other students to the Arizona camp meeting at Camp Yavapines campgrounds. It was her first time attending a camp meeting, and by the time she was here, Dalariyn says, "I literally lost all faith."

As she listened to the messages on Biblical vs. worldly love on one particular night, something (or someone) spoke to her. "I had a big hole in my heart I filled with the wrong things over and over." Dalariyn had not been given any demonstration of true love.

"That night, it felt like a lot of stuff was lifted off of my shoulders. That's when I decided I wanted to get baptized and give my life to God." Dalariyn was baptized later in the week on Sabbath by Pastor Manny Cruz.

You can help other students like Dalariyn find God's love, despite their circumstances. To watch Dalariyn's full story, or to make a gift, visit [HolbrookIndianSchool.org/summer-experience](https://HolbrookIndianSchool.org/summer-experience).

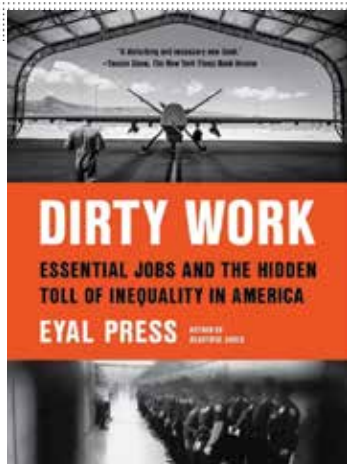


**HOLBROOK**  
INDIAN SCHOOL

Development Department

P.O. Box 910  
Holbrook, Arizona 86025-0910  
(928) 524-6845 (Ext. 109)  
[Development@hissda.org](mailto:Development@hissda.org)

# CLOSER LOOK



## Dirty Work

Eyal Press, *Dirty Work: Essential Jobs and the Hidden Toll of Inequality in America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021), 303 pages. US\$13.99, available on Amazon.com. Reviewed by Lael Caesar.

**E**yal Press has published another book on mental decency. But unlike with *Beautiful Souls: Saying No, Breaking Ranks, and Heeding the Voice of Conscience in Dark Times* (New York: Picador, 2012), he does not here focus on our better angels. Instead he writes on displaced morality, on its scope; on its disconcerting pervasiveness; on its apparently compellingly sinister inevitability.

His resulting work is now acclaimed as one of the 10 best books of 2021 and has been awarded the 2022 Hillman Prize for Book Journalism.

The book's nine chapters, organized into four parts, deal with matters concealed "Behind the Walls," "Behind the Screens," "On the Kill Floors." Finally, and dismayingly, they deal with the essential character of such concealment to "The Metabolism of the Modern World." Chapter headings such as "Civilized Punishment," "Joystick Warriors," "Dirty Energy," and "Dirty Tech"

offer some statement on the range of his meddling. Most telling of all titles, perhaps, is his seventh, where quotation marks ensure that the reader is not confused as he writes about "Essential Workers." An epilogue of six pages, acknowledgments occupying two more, and 17 that index key words, names, and phrases bring up the rear.

Aware of the implications of his work for the world, Press introduces his book with, and presents it under a borrowed and telling epigraph, words of American writer and activist James Baldwin: "The powerless must do their own dirty work. The powerful have it done for them."

Press rejects equating Nazi German terror with life in any democracy. But he acknowledges a debt to American sociologist Everett Hughes for (1) his reports of conversations with sophisticated, intellectual, mid-twentieth-century Germans; and (2) his highly appropriate phrase, "Dirty Work," which titles this book, Press's third. His observations, analysis, and reportage range from seemingly intractable abuses present in America's prison system to the elegance of remote-control conflict in a war room 7,000 miles away from the dying—guilty or other—if not the killing.

During a semester of teaching abroad in 1948, Hughes sipped tea and chatted about science and the fine arts with German scholars and professionals who were neither uniquely authoritarian, nor distinctly fanatical, nor peculiarly cruel and discriminatory. They could have been colleagues of his from any enlightened Western nation. Hughes was rebuked for thinking thus and saying so in America, Press advises. And it took him significant effort to make clear to whom his scholarly writing on the matter was directed: "I do not revive the case of the *Nazi Endlösung* ('final solution') ... to condemn the Germans." His actual intent was "to recall to our attention dangers which lurk in our midst always."

In *Dirty Work* Press demonstrates how perilously invested American societal structures, and we its soldiers and social workers, meat packers, and oil pipeliners, all are in dirty work; how we've consigned it to relative obscurity, away from the public eye, but with adequate public consciousness of its ugliness and shame, and why we find it better thus.

By anecdote and incisive reflection Press repeats a single, disturbing question, for whoever will hear it. How moral are you after all? There is no doctrinaire force to Press's effort—only a profound conscientiousness that cannot leave the reader unaffected.

How marvelous to hope that *Dirty Work* may be the first step of many toward a cleaner conscience. ♣

## PAYING OUR BLESSINGS FORWARD

The Christmas season is peppered with gift-giving to loved ones and those dear to us. But it's also a very important time to "pay the blessings forward." Is that part of your holiday experience? To close out another year of producing *Adventist Review*, members of our team share their holiday experiences—precious traditions and ways to pass the blessings along to others. We hope it will inspire you to make new Christmas memories that are just as much about giving as they are about receiving.—Editors.

Several years ago we decided with our teenage daughters to change the way we do Christmas gifting. Each member draws one family member's name and buys a special gift for that person. We usually put a monetary top limit on this gift. Then we put the remainder of the money we all budgeted for more gifts into a bucket, count it, and spend one joyful evening selecting several meaningful gifts from the ADRA Christmas gift catalog, thus blessing others. It's a great way to remember that Christmas is all about giving to those in need, not gifting those who already enjoy plenty.

**GERALD A. KLINGBEIL**

---

Over the years, during the holiday season of gift giving, we have always welcomed the opportunity to lend our musical talents to numerous cantatas and musical programs with the hope that others would be blessed. We have also consistently identified and delivered gifts to needy children as well as participated in the church's food, toy, or shoe box gift-giving programs.

**MARVENE THORPE-BAPTISTE**

---

For the past couple of years, my husband and I have done a mega shopping trip at Costco for food and food-type gifts (fancy cookies and chocolates) to contribute to the OneVision program, where the items are distributed to needy families. I've made almond/coconut cookies, wrapped them in pretty cellophane tied with red ribbon, and delivered them to our neighbors with a Christmas card and holiday greeting!

**SHARON TENNYSON**

---

One of my favorite holiday traditions is our family's "gratitude" jar. Starting in January, we write down any answers to prayer or divine interventions we've recognized. Carefully folding the paper, we place it in a special jar. It's exciting to watch the pile of papers build over 12 months. After worship on Christmas Eve, we take turns drawing from the jar and reading aloud the praises we've written. It's a wonderful reminder of God's grace and care!

**BETH THOMAS**

---

On Sundays since 2015 we've been going across the English Channel to the town of Dunkirk in France as often as we can. This is where a lot of the Syrian (and other) refugees "camp" waiting to find a way to cross the channel into England. In collaboration with the local ADRA effort and Newbold church, we've been helping with bringing the refugees a warm meal and also listening to their life stories.

**DARYL GUNGADOO**

---

We love shopping for children. So whether it's coats, toys, or food for families, we have made it a tradition to ensure children have a happy holiday. We also sponsor a child through Compassion International and give to their Christmas fund every year.

**LISA KRUEGER**

---

We like to find out if there are any families in need in our church and community or through other contacts and "secret Santa" them. What that means is we will find out what gifts would be of particular enjoyment to the children in the family and send those gifts anonymously if we can. Amazon makes





this so easy too! It always feels good to pay forward all the blessings we've been given—regardless of whether the “source” can be traced.

**WILONA KARIMABADI**

---

I often volunteer my time for the UK-based homeless charity Crisis ([crisis.org.uk](http://crisis.org.uk)). Crisis at Christmas provides a safe, warm place for homeless individuals to stay, hot food, and free health care. However, they don't do this simply on Christmas Day, but for a few weeks leading up to Christmas and through the new year. Perhaps the most impactful aspect of volunteering at Crisis—and the reason I feel utterly blessed—is the opportunity to talk to those in need, to hear their unique stories; to simply be a kind, listening ear.

**DANIEL BRUNEAU**

---

I'm blessed to be a member of a very active local church regarding community outreach and service. Our church's community service team regularly feeds homeless individuals, holds free food pantries, and provides clothes and other necessities to local shelters. Although we offer these services year-round, we place a special emphasis on blessing others during the gift-giving season. We give a little extra and also focus even more fully on Jesus and His love. People are generally more open to receiving Bibles and other forms of Christian literature. The dog therapy team that my dog Brody and I have been a part of for six years also steps up its visits to hospitals, assisted living facilities, hospice patients, and children's events during the season. Dogs are often dressed in holiday attire and provide a happy distraction in people's lives.

**SANDRA BLACKMER**

---

**My family likes to send anonymous surprises to people during the Christmas holidays, especially to those in need. The grandchildren enjoy baking cookies and delivering them to elderly individuals, and last year had an actual live Nativity scene in their front yard—yes, with a cow, rabbits, and a goat! They also distributed GLOW tracts and hot drinks to passersby.**

**KIM BROWN**



## A PATH TO TRUSTING GOD

The summer that I was 17 my family planned a vacation to France. My brother and I thought it would be a fun adventure to do a backpacking trip while our parents stayed with friends. This was our first major excursion we had planned together. We were excited to embark on our adventure. We studied maps and found a route that looked promising, a route that passed by lakes, crossed mountains, and followed creeks. We planned where we would spend the nights and what food we would eat. After all the preparation, finally the day arrived when we were dropped off. We got our backpacks and started our journey.

**THE LONGER  
WE WENT,  
THE SMALLER  
THE PATH  
BECAME.**

We spent the first night at the ruins of an old house. After a good night's sleep we packed up our things. Carrying full backpacks, we got on our way. We regularly looked at a map to make sure we were on the right path. After lunch on the second day, we started our journey to cross a mountain. The path we were on was a small paved road that soon turned to gravel. It eventually turned into a dirt road, and it progressively got smaller and smaller until it turned into a small path. We continued our hike, as the path was well traveled. But the longer we went, the smaller the path became. We continued for a little bit, and by now we were in the short alpine scrubs, just tall enough to block the view and thick enough to cover the ground.

After a little while the small path was gone. We traced our steps backward, but to no avail. We could not find the path. We were lost in these bushes where we could not see much beyond a few feet. We were lost, and our water was running out. We knew we were in trouble, so we prayed.

Then we chose to hike down a ravine. While hiking in the ravine, I happened to look up and saw a rock. It wasn't anything special, but I felt that we needed to climb back up the embankment and get to the rock. So my brother followed me up to the rock. As soon as we came around the rock, we found the trail. We were thrilled and took a minute to thank God.

This experience is one of several that I think of when I wonder where God is, when I feel alone or lost. I remember how God was present in those past experiences. This gives me hope, and I can cope with the situation at hand. And I am reminded of Moses talking with Joshua as he shared these comforting words: "The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged" (Deut. 31:8, NIV). We can be certain that God is with us when we are lost and when we are not. He is with us in the good times and the bad. ♣

**Enno Müller** is the communications director and news editor for Adventist Review Ministries.



ADRA

# No place to call home

War took everything Khan Mohammad owned. It also took his 12-year-old son. Now, he is trying to rebuild his life—but it’s one set back after another. “The conflict’s dark shadows darkened my life,” he says.

Many people like Khan face tragedies that knock them off their feet. All they need is a helping hand from someone like you to help them back up.

Thanks to an incredibly generous group of ADRA supporters, the first \$100,000 raised will be matched to DOUBLE your impact.

**They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share. –1 Timothy 6:18**

Your Gift	Your Impact
\$30 ———x2————>	\$60
\$60 ———x2————>	\$120
\$150 ———x2————>	\$300

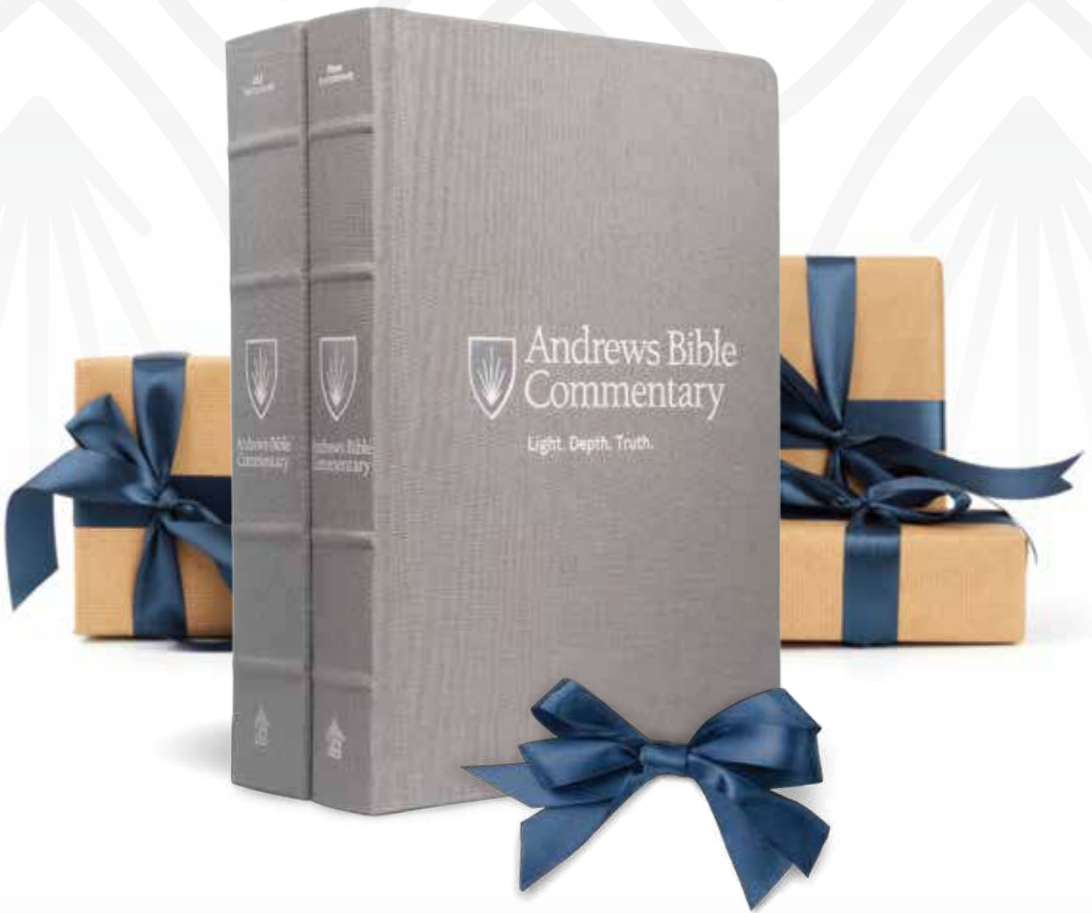
**You can be the helping hand families like Khan’s need.**

**A \$1=\$2 match means your money can do MORE good!**



**ADRA.org/DecemberMatch | 1.800.424.ADRA (2372)**

# *Give the Gift of Light. Depth. Truth.*



---

***The Adventist standard for the next generation***

---

Now complete in two rich and concise volumes  
10 years in the making | Written by 60 Adventist scholars

Adventist Book Center: 800-765-6955   Andrews University Press: 800-467-6369

**[universitypress.andrews.edu](http://universitypress.andrews.edu)**