

Adventist World

06/2025

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The Center of the Church

Justin Kim

The church has always been global in intent. What has changed in this century is that this intent has been realized. But where, within this global church, is the center of global Christianity? Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America have seen unprecedented growth. Active mission activity and great populations live in the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, and Asia. Church wealth and strategic mission resources exist in North America, Europe, and some parts of the South Pacific.

One study has mapped the trajectory of the statistical center of global Christianity between A.D. 33 and 2100. Each statistical point

represents a location where one half of all Christians live north and one half south of it, as well as one half east and one half west. After Pentecost the church was centered in Jerusalem, but Christianity as a whole grew northwesterly toward Europe. During the early church councils the statistical center was in Asia Minor, or modern-day Türkiye. The Reformation of the 1500s saw further growth toward Europe, while the missionary era of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries moved the church westerly. Growth in the twentieth century was seen in Africa and Latin America, resulting in southwesterly growth in the 1970s. Today we see projections continuing into the south, as well as easterly toward Asia, namely in China and India, the two largest populations in the world.



Statistical center of gravity for
global Christianity, AD 33-2100*

Missionary activity used to be “from the west to the rest,” but now it is “from everywhere to everywhere.” Mission has now become a global task. Spanish is a rising language of the membership, with other risers such as Mandarin Chinese, Hindi, and Swahili. Brazil is the country with the largest number of Seventh-day Adventists. Such countries as Mexico, Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire), Philippines, Ethiopia, and Uganda are projected to become among the top 10 Christian countries.

Today, where is the center of global Christianity? As north, south, west, and east are geographical constructs on a spherical planet, the center is not geographical, not national, not cultural, nor institutional. The center is where Christ is active in the heart, mind, and body; the center is where any Adventist lives out and communicates the gospel from everywhere to everywhere; the center is Christ (Col. 1:15-19).

As the church has actualized the reality of becoming global, we now close the *Adventist World* publication and join the global trail that it blazed with the 175-year legacy of the *Adventist Review*. The next issue will continue its task to inspire Adventists around the world and to center our faith, our church, and our mission on Jesus.

* Sun Young Chung and Todd M. Johnson, “Tracking Global Christianity’s Statistical Centre of gravity, AD 33-2100,” *International Review of Mission* 95 (2004): 167.



Eglen Brooks, president of the British Union Conference, opens the Safeguarding Summit. More than 130 participants gathered February 21-27, at Newbold College of Higher Education to discuss, learn, and reflect on safeguarding issues within the church.

Photo: Jim Botha

“A simple but significant gesture, such as a phone call, a visit, or a chat, can make a difference, giving smiles and creating bonds of affection and closeness.”

—Giovanni Benini, director of Casa Mia, a retirement home in Forli, Italy, about a new initiative called “Adopt a Grandfather.” The new initiative is part of the facility’s mission, as it seeks to fight the loneliness of elderly individuals and give citizens the opportunity of rediscovering the meaning of community. Benini and his staff are committed to improving the lives of their residents, to create a family environment in which everyone can truly feel at home.

More Than 1,800

The number of people served during a free health fair in a neighborhood outside Asunción, the capital city of Paraguay. The fair offered a diversity of services that included family medicine for adults and children, cardiology, gynecology, urology, psychology, and ophthalmology, with free prescription glasses. People also had access to ultrasounds, ECGs, and Pap smears as needed. The event was the result of a partnership between Asunción Adventist Sanitarium and AdventHealth.

2025 General Conference Session

Official notice is hereby given that the sixty-second session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will be held July 3-12, 2025, in the America’s Center Convention Complex in St. Louis, Missouri, United States. The first meeting will begin at 2:00 pm, July 3, 2025. All duly accredited delegates are urged to be present at that time.

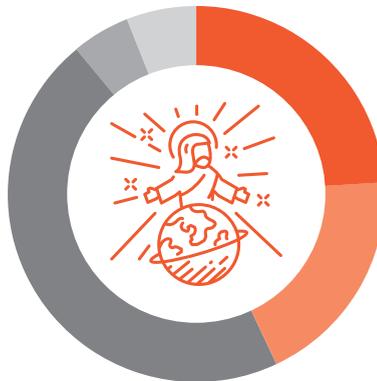
Ted N C Wilson, General Conference President

Erton C Köhler, General Conference Secretary

Will Jesus return during my lifetime?

Global Adventist Church members were asked if they believed that Jesus would return during their lifetime or not.

- **24%** Strongly Agree
- **19%** Agree
- **46%** I am not sure
- **5%** Disagree
- **6%** Strongly Disagree



Scan the QR code to view the complete survey.



N = 145,274

Source: 2022-2023 Global Church Member Survey

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

20 Percent Less

The number of cost-reducing methods taught during a health and lifestyle training in the North New South Wales Conference, Australia, during the budget-friendly cooking class. Participants learned how to prepare simple, healthful meals at home. By prioritizing core food groups such as vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and legumes, presenters shared how grocery costs could be reduced by 20 percent. Led by health and lifestyle educators Margot Marshall and Kym Fowler, and nutritionist and lifestyle medicine practitioner Kaysie Vokurka, the FoodSAVE training challenged the perception that healthful eating is expensive.

Adventist Review Newsletter

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“I loved the training! Thanks to God, the organizers, and the whole team. We learned many new things we can apply in Women’s Ministries. Thank you for the wonderful moments we spent together.”

—Zlatka Ivanova, from Nova Zagora, Bulgaria, and an attendee of the Women’s Ministries training, which took place at the Adventist Health Center in Banya, Bulgaria, about her experience at the event. The training covered a wide range of topics, including history and philosophy of women’s ministries, women in the Bible, and Jesus’ leadership model. Participants also discussed small group ministry, the church’s campaign against violence, and the discovery of spiritual gifts.

“We are experiencing an alarming loss of members after baptism, and many who remain in the church are idle, becoming mere benchwarmers. This conference . . . is designed to equip us all to become effective disciple-makers actively engaged in the mission of the church.”

—Munaji Musa, evangelism director of the Northern Nigeria Union Conference, about the Discipleship and Membership Retention Conference that was held in Jengre, Plateau State, Nigeria. The event addressed critical challenges hindering effective discipleship and membership retention.

More Than 3 million

The number of copies of *Living With Hope*, this year’s missionary book, written by Marcello Niek and Bruno Raso, that were shared and distributed by young people in Mexico. The book distribution was one of several initiatives that young people did in support of the Global Youth Day on March 15. A Pathfinder group in Huixtla, Chiapas, came across the president of Mexico, Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo, and they shared a book with her and were able to take a photo with her. →



Photo: Courtesy of Osmara Roblero/Facebook

Economic Uncertainty Hasn't Stopped God's Blessings, Church Officers Say

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*

Amid “the highest economic policy uncertainty ever,” the financial officers of the General Conference (GC) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church said they are thankful to God for what they called His intervention in the financial affairs of the church. “We praise the Lord for the strong financial position of the church, considering the prevailing global economic conditions,” said Paul H. Douglas, GC treasurer, at the 2025 Spring Meeting of the denomination in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, April 8.

Douglas reported that the GC ended the financial year with approximately US\$338 million in net assets, 94 percent of which was in cash and investments. “We have been faithful stewards of the resources God has provided to advance the cause of His kingdom,” he said. At the same time, he emphasized that the financial strength of the GC “is not because of our

own accomplishment—it is rather God’s divine purpose to provide us what we need to do His work.”

A GROWING SHIFT

For 2024 the GC received approximately \$4 million more for its share of tithes than the approximately \$82 million that was planned for in the budget, Douglas reported. Tithes, however, showed an uneven pattern since 2019 that can be attributed to the implementation of a tithe parity agreement between world church regions, which effectively reduces the contribution of the North American Division to overall budget, he reported. Also, in 2024 a significant strengthening of the U.S. dollar against foreign currencies resulted in a smaller amount of tithe received from certain countries around the world.

Offerings have again surpassed what had been budgeted. Douglas explained that there is a growing

GC Treasurer’s Report highlights increased focus on mission despite high volatility.

shift in the tithe-offerings pattern of contributions. Tithes went from contributing 58 percent to the budget in 2020 to just 45 percent in 2024. “The growing shift in offerings exceeding tithe suggests that an interest in the global mission of the church is being reignited in the hearts and minds of our church members,” Douglas said. “Without a doubt, there will be a reflex influence on the local work of the church that will become more prosperous because of the purposeful attention being afforded to the global work.”

“What we are seeing here in terms of offerings is a dream,” commented Marcos Bomfim, GC stewardship director, after approaching one of the microphones. “It’s a reason for joy, and I think we can grow even more.”

GOD STILL IN CONTROL

God has continued to bless His church through the faithfulness of our members so we can be about our commission to reach the world for Christ, Douglas emphasized.

The mission funds voted to be allocated have and will be used in supporting mission initiatives administered at the local church and by world church divisions. For 2025, \$6.7 million has been earmarked for local church projects, he reported.

Douglas closed by reiterating his and his team’s trust in God’s leading. “In spite of all the challenges we face around the world . . . the work of the church is moving forward,” he said. “Even though the word ‘uncertainty’ describes the current economic conditions, we recognize in this house that God is still in control.” ☉



Paul H. Douglas, General Conference treasurer, speaks to members of the Executive Committee during Spring Meetings on April 8.

Photo: Enno Müller

The Power of Sharing Your Story

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*

“A personal story with the power of the gospel is almost undefeatable,” said Jarrod Stackelroth during the 2025 Digital Discipleship Conference on the Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia, March 15. Stackelroth, managing editor of *Adventist Record* and *Signs of the Times* in the South Pacific Division, discussed how the power of authentic storytelling—including your personal story—can have the potential to connect, empower, and help transform others.

BREAKING THROUGH THE DIGITAL NOISE

In that regard, Stackelroth emphasized that “authentic stories have the power of breaking through the digital noise to reach hearts. . . . AI, as good as it’s going to get, will never be able to tell your personal story.”

He explained that AI can make a compelling argument, develop an outline for a talk, and really help you in your job. “But it can’t share your personal testimony,” he said.

THE POWER OF STORIES

In this context a message of authenticity is extremely important, Stackelroth said. And personal stories have the potential of fostering authenticity. According to him and experts in the field, stories can help create an emotional connection that can lead to lasting relationships. They can also help increase transparency, which builds trust and loyalty. Finally, stories can help us to engage authentically to build meaningful connections.

Stackelroth also emphasized that sharing personal stories and experiences carries emotional weight,



Jarrod Stackelroth speaks at the 2025 Digital Discipleship Conference on the Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia, March 15.

Photo: Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*

which again may lead to lasting relationships. Stories break barriers and build bridges, highlighting how God is working on people and in the world.

“People in your neighborhood may not understand your points of view or beliefs, but they can’t argue with your personal story . . . and with the way God is working in your life,” he said. “And when you share your brokenness, when you share your difficulties, you are putting the spotlight on God, not on yourself.” It’s like saying, “I’m rubbish; I have nothing to offer, except what God has given me to offer you.”

STORIES THAT HEAL AND TRANSFORM

Listening to personal stories can change our lives and the way we live our faith, said Stackelroth. Because Stackelroth was interested in the power of stories to heal, he did research on trauma narratives, especially with veterans suffering

post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). “Getting your story out helps you heal; it helps others heal,” he said. “That’s why I’m passionate about stories.”

The key, however, is to “do it right,” with humility, Stackelroth emphasized as he quoted 2 Corinthians 11:30: “If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness” (NIV). “It’s all about humbling yourself and showing humility,” he said. “At the same time, you must be smart by knowing when and where to share. And have empathy and compassion when you do it,” Stackelroth added.

“I encourage you to look for ways to use authenticity to cut through the lack of trust that there is in society today. And maybe you can be the person that makes someone else [say], ‘I want what she is having. I can see that there’s something different, and I want it,’” he said. ©

Regional Church Leaders Inaugurate Hope Media Poland

Daniel Kluska, Polish Union Conference, and *Adventist World*

On March 29, in Podkowa Leśna, Poland, regional church leaders and media officers held a thanksgiving service to celebrate a new missionary institution: Hope Media Poland.

Tadeusz Niewolik, the newly appointed director, noted the unique nature of the gathering: to serve primarily to worship God together, as well as to recall the rich history of previous church missionary institutions in Poland. The service was followed by a thanksgiving concert, a communal meal, and an afternoon gathering during which employees shared their testimonies.

THE NEW INSTITUTION

For several months the Polish Union Conference (PUC) has been in the process of transforming existing institutions into one new one called Hope Media Poland. The service expressed gratitude for the past performance of the church's missionary institutions in Poland and the launch of the new entity.

Members of the Adventist church in Podkowa Leśna attended, as well

as numerous guests from various parts of the country and former employees of church institutions that are being transformed. Niewolik expressed gratitude for the attendees and encouraged them to prayerfully focus and orient their thoughts on God's guidance "in the past years and the coming future."

A UNIQUE BIBLE STUDY

Instead of the traditional discussion groups and Bible study, Peter Bylina, PUC secretary, was invited to summarize the current Bible lesson. He did so in poetic form, pointing out the most important idea—that God's law is based on love for the Creator and for our neighbors. He pointed out that without a personal relationship with God, we are unable to properly fulfill the commandments of love.

The centerpiece of the service was the presentation of films telling the story of the four previous missionary institutions, whose activities are now being transferred to Hope Media Poland.

Newly formed network will have a missionary focus, they say.

AN UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION

The new institution will group several organizations, including the publishing house, which opened in 1921 in Bydgoszcz. A film shown highlighted its role in the integration of believers and the development of evangelization in Poland, as well as the difficulties of the war period and the Communist era. Speakers after the presentation included Miroslaw Harasim, director of the Polish Publishing House, and the publishing house's editor-in-chief Andrzej Siciński.

Another video mentioned Emanuel Beret, founder of the Correspondence Bible School, which has locations in Warsaw, Podkowa Leśna, and Bielsko-Biała and is engaged with tens of thousands of Bible correspondents. They also offer courses on depression, stress, and emotional health, said Lucyna Kurz, one of the school employees.

The last film was devoted to the youngest of the presented institutions—Voice of Hope. It began its activities about 50 years ago. Voice of Hope helped radio listeners during the Communist era have access to biblical content without ubiquitous censorship. Cooperation with Adventist World Radio has enabled Voice of Hope to grow professionally.

Later in the service Niewolik explained that the Adventist Church in Poland is currently transferring the publishing, media, and training activities of its existing missionary institutions to Hope Media Poland. "The church is looking forward to new opportunities to spread the gospel in the form of printed materials, radio and television programs, and other online projects," he said. ©



Employees of Hope Media Poland pray together with the leaders of the Polish Union Conference in Podkowa Leśna, March 29.

Photo: Polish Union Conference



Volunteers from Paper Love Ministry proudly showcase their handmade greeting cards.

Photo: Paper Love Ministry

Unique Ministry Brings Comfort Through Inks and Papers

Paper Love Ministry has reached thousands in the Philippines and beyond.

In a world dominated by instant messages and fleeting social media reactions, one ministry in Cavite, Philippines, continues to make a lasting impression—one handmade card at a time.

Paper Love Ministry, a small but passionate group of Adventist crafters, is devoted to creating handmade greeting cards that bring comfort, encouragement, and inspiration to individuals in need. Using simple art materials—paper, pens, stickers, stamps, and love—these volunteers transform blank pages into heartfelt reminders of God’s presence and human compassion. What began as a quiet act of kindness has grown into a meaningful movement that is transforming lives across different spaces—from hospital rooms to airplane aisles.

“In 2017 I embarked on a heartfelt mission: creating handmade cards to give to strangers,” shared Joy Tagolgol, the ministry’s founder. “It was a simple yet powerful act of kindness,

spreading joy to those I encountered. Fast-forward to 2024, and this small gesture has blossomed into a beautiful tradition shared with friends. Together we craft cards for flight crews, as our work frequently takes us to the skies.”

Tagolgol and her friends often give the cards to airline crew members during their travels. The reactions, she said, have been profound.

“Many flight attendants, touched by our thoughtful gesture, express their gratitude with heartfelt smiles, and some even shed tears of joy. In their demanding jobs, complaints often overshadow appreciation, making our cards a cherished surprise,” she added. “Praise God for blessing us with the creativity and hands to continue this ministry, bringing light and love to the flight crews we meet.”

A TANGIBLE GESTURE IN A DIGITAL WORLD

Paper Love Ministry stands as a counterpoint to the impersonal nature of digital communication. While technology enables rapid exchanges, the personal nature of handwritten messages offers something far deeper. A study maintains that handwritten notes evoke more intense emotional responses than digital messages do. Similarly, an article reported that 70 percent of

adults find receiving paper cards more meaningful than digital alternatives.

The cards created by Paper Love Ministry often contain Bible verses and comforting words, allowing volunteers to subtly share the hope and love of Christ in ways that are respectful and sincere.

MORE THAN ART—IT’S MINISTRY

The ministry’s scope extends beyond airplanes. Volunteers organize local workshops and partner with community groups to teach others how to craft cards as a form of outreach. Whether sent to patients, church members, or strangers, each creation carries a message of grace.

From its humble beginnings in 2017 to its growing reach in 2024, Paper Love Ministry demonstrates that simple acts of kindness, rooted in prayer and purpose, can leave a lasting impact.

“This ministry reminds us that you don’t have to be loud to be heard,” said one of their social media page posts. “You just need to be sincere.”

Tagolgol emphasized that “in every ribbon-tied card and inked Scripture verse, Paper Love Ministry sends a quiet but powerful message: you are seen, you are loved, and there is hope.” ©



Focus

Understanding the Three Angels' Messages

The gospel and a message of warning

BY THOMAS R. SHEPHERD

The three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12 are central to the mission of our church and have been from its beginning. The early Adventists saw in these powerful proclamations their mission to the world in preparation for the soon return of our Lord and Savior. But if you are reading them for the first time, you might wonder how they fit with life in the twenty-first century. What do they mean for us today, and how can we share their meaning with our neighbors?

THE LAYOUT

The three angels' messages appear in the central vision of Revelation 12-14.¹ In this central vision the great themes of Revelation reach a climax—good versus evil, obedience versus rebellion, true worship versus false worship. Chapter 12 opens with a harrowing picture of a woman (God's faithful people) chased by a great red dragon (the devil and his earthly puppets, Rev. 12). A battle ensues in heaven with Michael and His angels defeating the dragon and casting him down to earth. But then the dragon chases the woman into the desert and goes off to make war with the last of her children (God's people in the last days).

Revelation 13 deepens the tension with two beasts (later persecuting powers), one from the sea, the other from land, that continue the persecution of God's people. It seems good will be defeated and evil will triumph, when the three angels come on the scene (Rev. 14), proclaiming both a message of salvation and a message of destruction. After the angels comes the Son of man

on the clouds of heaven, fulfilling what the three angels have proclaimed. So why do we have these three angels' messages at this point in Revelation?

A GOSPEL MESSAGE?

The first angel's message reads as follows in Revelation 14:6, 7:

"Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. And he said with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.'"²

The angel's message is called an "everlasting gospel," but it does not seem like that to many readers. There is no mention of grace, faith, hope, love, forgiveness, salvation, or the cross. How can this message be called gospel when it does not contain the words we typically associate with the New Testament message of salvation? The problem resides in our presumption of how to describe the gospel message. We are used to Paul's depiction of righteousness by faith, reconciliation to the Father through the Lord Jesus, and the story of the cross as depicted in the Gospels.

But another way the gospel message is depicted comes from Jesus Himself. In Mark 1:14, 15 we meet Jesus' message just after His baptism. "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.' " Jesus' straightforward gospel message here has three parts: the fulfillment of Bible prophecy (here the fulfillment of the coming of the Messiah foretold in Daniel 9:24-27),

False worship leads to false ethics.

a covenant promise (the kingdom of God is at hand), and a call to discipleship (repent and believe).³

We see these same three elements in the first angel's message: the fulfillment of Bible prophecy (here the hour of judgment as prophesied in Daniel 7-8), a covenant promise (the receiving of the kingdom by God's people in the judgment [see Dan. 7:22]), and a call to discipleship (fear, glorify, and worship God as rooted in the judgment message and God as Creator).⁴ Thus, the first angel's message parallels Jesus' preaching. Jesus proclaimed God's kingdom at the initiation of the New Testament church; Revelation proclaims the kingdom's fulfillment at the culmination of earth's history.

Where Jesus' preaching called for discipleship in the setting of the Mediterranean world of His day, the first angel's message calls for discipleship in the setting of the end-time conflict between good and evil. Fear God, not the beasts. Glorify God, not men or evil forces. Worship God alone, not the beasts or their image. So the first angel's message truly is a gospel message in the setting of the last days of earth's history. But what about messages two and three?

WHY SUCH FRIGHTENING LANGUAGE?

In light of Jesus' message we can see that the first angel preaches the gospel in an end-time setting. But messages two and three—the fall of Babylon and the wrath of God on false worshippers—seem to

many to be out of step with God's love for all. How can the God who expresses His great love in John 3:16 ("For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life") be the same God who promises fiery destruction to worshippers of the beast in Revelation 14? The language is stark in Revelation 14:9-11: "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshippers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

What does this all mean?

THE BEAST: ITS IMAGE AND MARK

The beast described in the third angel's message is the sea beast of Revelation 13. A careful study of chapter 13 reveals that the sea beast is the antichrist power that deceives the world, leading people astray from the worship of the true God. More than that, the sea beast and its ally, the land beast (the anti-Holy Spirit in Revelation's theology), threaten persecution and death for anyone who does not worship the sea beast.⁵ This concept of worship stands at the heart of the conflict in Revelation. Two sides are drawn: worshippers of the beast versus worshippers of God.

The image of the beast is reminiscent of Nebuchadnezzar's great golden image in Daniel 3. There everyone was commanded to worship the image representing

Nebuchadnezzar's authority and worldview or face torturous death in a fiery furnace. Three brave young men resisted the king's demand and miraculously survived the furnace by God's power. The image of the beast in Revelation 13 therefore represents the authority and worldview of the antichrist power and his allies in defiance of God. Bend to this system or face certain death.

The mark of the beast is simply an emblem of submission to the sea beast's demands. Since Revelation is by and large a symbolic book, we should not consider the mark some sort of tattoo on a person, but it is an indication the individual has agreed to the beast's demands either wholeheartedly (a mark on the forehead) or at least in outward actions (a mark of the hand).

THE WINE OF GOD'S WRATH

We return to that stark language in Revelation 14:9-11. We can phrase the question a bit differently. Why would God threaten worshippers of the beast with fire and brimstone? What is so very bad about worshipping the beast? It is a principle of our nature that we become like that which we admire. Fans of movie stars or sports heroes will dress like them, talk like them, even act like them. At a higher level we become like that which we worship. Worship the beast, and you will come to think and act like the beast.

Since the beast is antichrist, you come to act in the opposite way that Christ acts. Where Christ loves, you hate. Where He shows compassion to the downtrodden, you show indifference to those who suffer. Where Christ is moral, faithful, abounding in goodness and truth, you become immoral, disloyal, full of evil, hate, and lies. It is a serious thing to worship the beast. Indeed, all the evil, crime, war, abuse, lies, and hatred we see in the world

are only symptoms of the true underlying problem—false worship, idolatry. False worship leads to false ethics (mistreating people).

So why would God respond to all this with the wine of His wrath? Suppose you witness an act of egregious abuse and profound injustice. Should it not be addressed? To leave abuse and injustice undressed would itself be unjust.

God cannot allow the abuse of the antichrist to continue in our world. Like a compassionate surgeon, He will cut out the cancer that is destroying our world. Sin is that cancer. The first angel's message points to the solution that God offers to a sin-sick world—turn back to God. Center your life in Him to find true happiness, true moral worth, true meaning, true worship, and compassionate treatment of others. Otherwise, the cancer of sin will consume your life and ruin your relationships. It is that simple and direct.

THE OTHER ANGELS

There are actually more than three angels in Revelation 14. Three more appear in the last half of the chapter. The turning point of the chapter, and of the book, is Revelation 14:14.⁶ "Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand." This is the second coming of Christ on the clouds of glory to redeem His people. Where up to this point in Revelation there has been a movement into God's heavenly sanctuary, from this point onward the movement is outward. Revelation 14:15 states, "And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, 'Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully

ripe.'" Symbolically, the sickle in Jesus' hand is a sickle of salvation as He reaps the ripened grain of the earth. Grain is saved, stored in a barn, thus this harvest is a symbol of salvation. These actions are parallel to the first angel's message of gospel of salvation.

In the rest of Revelation 14 two more angels are involved in the symbolic grape harvest of the earth. Grapes are crushed when harvested, and out flows something the color of blood—a symbol of damnation, the destruction of the wicked. These two angels parallel the second and third angels' messages, which depict the opposite of the message of salvation the first angel brings.

CONCLUSION

Revelation 14:6-12 give us the message of warning to the world just before Christ returns, a message of salvation and destruction, a call to discipleship to turn back to God or face the sure result of eternal loss, not because God is mean and unloving, but because false worship will destroy your life, and God will not allow the evil, hatred, pain, and sorrow to continue.

Revelation 14:14-20 show us the fulfillment of that warning message in verses 6-12. Two harvests are coming, the harvest of salvation and the harvest of destruction. God

wants you and me, our neighbors, our towns, cities, and countries, to heed the warning and be saved. This is our great mission to share with the whole world. ☉

¹ Scholars have various ideas about the outline and center of Revelation. G. K. Beale has a long discussion of the outline in his commentary, and one of the outlines he favors is seven visions with a prologue and epilogue. See G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation NIGTC* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 108-151. See also Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2009), pp. 24-50. Stefanovic favors a chiasmic structure with the vision of chapters 12-13 at the center. I favor chapters 12-14 as the central vision, with the turning point at 14:14, marked by the shift to leaving the heavenly sanctuary after that point.

² Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version. © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. ESV Text Edition: 2016. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

³ Daniel 9:24-27 describes the coming of the Messiah and pinpoints the time frame from "the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem." The final decree to restore Jerusalem was given in 457 B.C. In the prophecy the coming of the Messiah would be 69 prophetic weeks later, or 483 literal years, which reaches to A.D. 27, the very time Christ was baptized, anointed with the Holy Spirit, and began His ministry (see Mark 1:9-11; Acts 10:38).

⁴ Daniel 7 presents God's judgment on evil earthly powers. Daniel 8 presents the parallel cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and the time frame for it to occur, the 2,300 evenings and mornings prophecy. With the beginning of that time frame set by Daniel 9, the coming of the Messiah, the start of the judgment reaches to 1844.

⁵ The sea beast in history is Rome in its Christian phase and the land beast is the United States of America working in coordination with the sea beast. See C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1985), vol. 2, pp. 324-349.

⁶ Revelation begins with a vision of Jesus walking among the candlesticks in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary (Rev. 1:12, 13). As the visions progress, movement proceeds inward into the heavenly sanctuary, culminating with Revelation 11:19, with a view of the ark of the covenant in the most holy place. From Revelation 14:15 onward, movement is outward from the most holy place, representing judgment.

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Two harvests are coming, the harvest of salvation and the harvest of destruction.

Faith in Action

Behind the Walls, Beyond the Bars

God's unexpected plan to use me

BY VICKI FUNK



My experience in prison ministries began in 2017 when I read an article by Project *Steps to Christ* about a woman who sent cards to individuals in custody. I thought to myself, *I can do that!* The main obstacle was getting a list of individuals to whom to send cards. I contacted the local prison, located just a few miles from my church. I have passed that prison on my way to school and church since 1969, not giving much thought about the people behind those high walls. The Holy Spirit impressed me, so I called the prison.

I spoke with a chaplain who promptly told me to send him a proposal of what I would like to do. I told him I needed only a list of men to whom I could send cards. He told me to email him a proposal. After the phone call, feeling somewhat baffled by this request, I began reaching out to others for ideas. I was referred to an individual at Three Angels Broadcasting Network (3ABN). He gave me contact information for an organization called Christmas Behind Bars. I wasn't familiar with the organization, but I called the director, Lemuel Vega, to see how he could help me. I didn't realize how involved he was with prison ministries. Their ministry was crucial to our fledgling prison outreach.

UNEXPECTED BLESSINGS

I set up an appointment with the senior chaplain of the Stateville Correction Center in Illinois, United States, to discuss sharing the gospel with individuals in custody there. This was the most amazing meeting, showing how God opens doors for His work to proceed.

Before the meeting, I sent the chaplain a list of things I wanted to do for the inmates, and he approved almost every one: (1) through the ministry Christmas Behind Bars, we would provide each inmate a bag that includes items such as the book *Steps to Christ*, free Bible study correspondence, and food items; (2) we would provide books, snacks, paper, pencils, and other items; (3) we would correspond directly with inmates through birthday and Christmas cards. The chaplain asked me how many inmates I wanted to correspond with, and for some reason I said 500. (It must have been the Holy Spirit impressing my response.)

I also asked the chaplain if we could provide a religious program for the inmates. He stated he had no openings then, but he followed up with a request: "I want you to do a Bible study on Daniel and Revelation starting in June or August." (Me? What else could I say? Yes!) As I left the prison that day, my faith was so encouraged, seeing how the Lord opened the door to minister to these men.

My church had just completed a public Daniel and Revelation Seminar, and my pastor had asked me to

I never thought I would be the one God would use to reach those behind the prison walls.

participate in conducting this series. Little did I know that I was being prepared to teach this same series at Stateville Prison. God was preparing me, and I did not even know it.

In late fall I began my Bible study on Daniel and Revelation with about 30 men. As time passed, I noticed that some men would leave, and others would come. Before the series of lessons was over, I had handed out more than 100 Bible study sets, magazines, books, and other materials. The inmates asked me questions on doctrines, Bible texts, and my beliefs. I continued to teach at Stateville, covering other books of the Bible, such as Ezekiel and Romans, until COVID-19 hit.

Even during COVID-19, church members sent out more than 300 cards and religious materials. My list of individuals has grown to more than 550 men. We continue to let these men know that they have not been forgotten and that God loves them. We not only send out cards but mail literature and cards for them to request Bible studies at least once a year.

God is moving on the hearts of these men. Several have requested free Bible studies, Bibles, and religious materials, and have expressed a desire to be baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I receive weekly letters expressing appreciation and sometimes including tithe and offerings for the church.

I never thought I would be the one God would use to reach those behind the prison walls, yet He has been preparing me for this ministry, and I did not even know it. ☺

Vicki Funk is the outreach coordinator for her church in Joliet, Illinois, United States. This story was previously published in the August 2023 issue of the *Lake Union Herald*.

Global View

A Clarion Call

Now is the time

BY TED N.C. WILSON

Exiled on the rugged shores of Patmos, the apostle John found himself with much time to reflect on the eventful decades that had shaped his journey. More than 60 years had passed since he last saw his beloved Savior ascending in the clouds with the promise to return. Jerusalem was destroyed, Christ's followers were scattered abroad, and of the original 12 disciples, he alone was left. But remembering Christ's promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20), he was at peace.

Suddenly the silence of John's contemplation was broken as a loud voice behind him, like a trumpet, rang out: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches'" (Rev. 1:11).

Turning quickly, the beloved disciple saw Jesus Christ Himself, standing before him in all His glory. John's work was not yet finished. Jesus had come to give him what would be the apostle's most important assignment:

"Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this" (verse 19).

It was the beginning of the "Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place" (verse 1).

Through this amazing revelation, Jesus opened up, in symbolic language, the future history of His church down through the ages to the end of time. And this divine revelation shows not only future history but very important messages for us today, including the three angels' messages.

A CLARION CALL

Revelation 14:6-12 presents these end-time messages as a clarion call to worship God as our Creator, acknowledge that the judgment has begun, recognize Babylon's fall, and resolutely reject the mark of the beast.



God has given these urgent messages to His end-time remnant people to deliver to the entire world just before Jesus comes. What a privilege to be part of God's last-day movement proclaiming Christ's soon second coming—we are not just a church; we are a movement with a message on a mission!

From the pen of inspiration we read, "In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention. The most solemn truths ever entrusted to mortals have been given us to proclaim to the world. The proclamation of these truths is to be our work. The world is to be warned, and God's people are to be true to the trust committed to them."¹

YOU ARE CALLED

My brothers and sisters, God invites you to be part of His last call to the world. Will you answer Him and say, "Yes, Lord, I will go"?

Perhaps you are like the woman in Brazil who has so far, with God's help, won more than 80 people to the Lord. When she heard of the "I Will Go" movement, she asked, "What is this about 'I Will Go'?—I already *went!*" And she is still going.

Even if you have not yet told the Lord, "I will go," it is not too late. God is calling you—you are needed to reach the world for Him.

Inspiration tells us that "the work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and

women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers."²

GLOBAL TMI

This is what Global Total Member Involvement (TMI) is all about—everyone, everywhere, sharing our God-given message with the world. You are called, you are chosen by God Himself, to reach others for Him.

How is this done? First, we must earnestly pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:13). And just before the cross He gave this assurance: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14:26).

As we claim these promises we can reach others for Christ, showing compassion, relieving suffering, and teaching righteousness.³ Talk with your neighbors and friends, pray for and with them, share what Jesus has done for you, invite them to meetings at your church, give Bible studies, and be active in your local church outreach.

A CONTINUAL WITNESS

These are just some of the many ways you can be involved with Global TMI. Just a few years ago one couple found a unique way to encourage their own child to be a living example of Total Member Involvement.

Their little daughter was born just as TMI evangelism was sweeping across their home country of Burundi. It was an exciting time, as Burundians told neighbors, friends,

We are not just a church; we are a movement with a message on a mission!

relatives, and even strangers about Jesus. People were meeting in small groups to study the Bible. Then they gathered at large evangelistic meetings, where many were baptized.

This couple was delighted to witness TMI evangelism and wanted their own family to be a continual witness. When their daughter was born, they decided the perfect name for her was TMI. As the little girl grew, TMI became more than just her name—it became the way she lived. When she was just 4 years old, she began singing to reach others for Jesus. Today she is 6 and through her music has already touched the hearts of many.

Friends, even if your name isn't "TMI," you can still be a part of Total Member Involvement! Jesus is coming soon. Now is the time to get involved. Now is the time to answer God's call, saying, "Yes, Lord, I will go! Send me." ☺

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 9, p. 19.

² *Ibid.*, p. 117.

³ See Ellen G. White, *Welfare Ministry* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1952), p. 250.

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

The End of an Era

BY MERLE POIRIER

You hold in your hand the last issue of *Adventist World*. Just let that sink in a bit. Even though I've known this day was coming, it's still difficult for me to write, let alone read. I, of all the present staff in the *Adventist Review* office, am the only one who worked with *Adventist World* at its conception and continues now to its last day. The publication would have turned 20 this year, so you can understand my sadness in this moment.

I recently attended the memorial service of a friend. Her husband gave her eulogy, a heartfelt expression of their life together, emphasizing the loss of his dearly beloved. One expects to grieve the passing of such a person. Yet my home church burned less than a year ago, and I've been amazed at the sorrow that comes with losing a building. And now I, along with my colleagues, face the loss of a publication. Again I find this odd sense of grief.

IN THE BEGINNING

The idea of *Adventist World* was introduced by former General Conference (GC) president Jan Paulsen. It was at a time when there was a void of Adventist resources in certain parts of the world. Where there is a vacuum, something or someone will step in to fill the gap, so there was concern that the understanding of Adventist theology was being compromised. The solution was a publication that would go around the Adventist world, uniting members in truth, news, features, and stories. While this wasn't a new idea in *Adventist Review* history, the scope of it was. Jan Paulsen placed it in the lap of William (Bill) G. Johnsson, then editor of the *Adventist Review*.

Bill Johnsson was excited and enthusiastic, but quickly became overwhelmed. He was already leading the *Adventist Review*, and it was a GC Session year involving hours of detail and preparation. On one day when he was feeling uncharacteristically gloomy, I offered to step in and assist. Thus, my beginning with *Adventist World* included, at the very start, mocking up the first issue with colleague Kim Maran in order to

“sell” the idea to division presidents. Now looking back almost 20 years, I believe four distinct individuals can be credited with where *Adventist World* is today.

THOSE WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE



Bill Knott, then associate editor, stepped in to also assist Johnsson in meetings, working with publishing houses, getting bids, and developing a distribution plan—probably the biggest challenge of all. We knew how to create a magazine, edit, design, and print it, but how do you deliver it around the world when there is no system to receive it? For example, one area used bicycles as the transportation of choice. The appeal of mission and spreading the gospel in that image is strong



Many thanks for the *Adventist World*, and for sharing all that is going on around the world. When I'm done reading I mail it to my sister, and then she gives it to someone else. If I do not get to meet you on this earth, I will meet you all in the new earth.

UNITED STATES

until you realize that the cyclist was picking up, not a few copies, but hundreds! Without Bill's patience, negotiations, and understanding, *Adventist World* may not have had the positive start it did.



Roy Adams became *Adventist World's* first protector and nurturer.

A meticulous, detailed, and conscientious editor, Roy made sure that *Adventist World* was balanced and international in its scope, again not an easy feat by a staff that at the time was largely North American-based. Roy kept the fledgling paper together. He had a world map brought in, placing a pin in areas where stories or news was shared within the publication. It was an immediate picture of how we served the world. Where there

was an imbalance or gap, Roy made sure stories were found from that region. He can be credited with bringing balance, impartiality, and insight in discovering how to reach all members.



Enter Claude Richli in 2007 under the editorship of Bill Knott.

One of Bill's goals was to make the staff more international. Claude certainly contributed, having worked in several other divisions and speaking at least five languages. But more important was the energy Claude brought to the team. He had a keen sense of numbers, which, when placed into a staff that was all about words, brought new perspective. He was persuasive, full of ideas, and saw potential in

Adventist World that had yet to be tapped. Claude's skills coupled with Roy's carefulness was about to take the publication to places yet to be seen—literally.

I used to manage the distribution, which involved pages of a spreadsheet containing countries, addresses, managers, and more. Claude zoomed around the world in rapid fashion, and I used to tease him, saying that where most people collected souvenirs, Claude collected countries and languages. During Claude's time in our office, he took the number of languages from four to 21! We brought in a team of translators, whom I also managed. The first languages negotiated were Spanish, French, and Portuguese. While this seemed straightforward, it wasn't. Claude

I was so much delighted to receive this most splendid magazine, *Adventist World*.

SWITZERLAND

I thank God for the mighty work through this magazine. I wish my fellow youth all over the world could get access to this magazine. God bless the *Adventist World* magazine and organization.

UGANDA

I was spiritually touched after reading the *Adventist World* magazine. I borrowed a copy from one of my friends who is an Adventist. The scriptures used in it are wonderful! I hope I can get other copies so that I can read them and even share them with others.

ZIMBABWE

It is my pleasure to say that *Adventist World* is really proclaiming the three angels' message throughout the world as one of the church's different media. I enjoy reading this wonderful magazine.

INDIA

navigated the challenge of selecting translators who would be accepted worldwide. I've worked with the same group of about 20 translators for nearly 18 years, all strongly committed to making this publication accessible to every member around the world.

It was Claude who discovered distribution issues as he visited. It was Claude who helped those who were mired down in how to receive the magazines or distribute them. It was Claude who developed the idea of a quarterly publication called *Adventist World Digest* for those who couldn't afford to print the full monthly magazine. It was Claude who discovered that in Africa the magazine went far beyond what was intended. The African divisions

were some of the most enthusiastic recipients of *Adventist World*, taking it to a whole new level. While it was intended for members, they shared it everywhere. One could walk into a doctor's office, an auto repair shop, a hotel, or other non-Adventist location and find a stack of *Adventist World* copies for the taking. They used them in evangelistic meetings and Bible studies. We soon learned, through letters, of *Adventist World* magazines impressing the lives of prisoners wanting Bibles and Bible studies.



Last, but not least, is Gerald Klingbeil. I won't go into detail, because you can read his own words on page 21, but when he arrived in 2009, he became the next protector of *Adventist World*. We, in the office, would frequently hear him reference it as "my baby." And that's exactly how he treated it. A

father of three daughters, he added a fourth with this publication. He brought new insights not only because of his German heritage but also from having lived all over the world, bringing a wealth of global experience. He educated the staff to think internationally and not only in English. He brought a passion for helping writers find their voice in the church, expanding our author list into many different countries. He looked specifically for ways to bring relevant biblical insights, including deepening the understanding of the Adventist Fundamental Beliefs. During Gerald's time *Adventist World* achieved brand recognition. It became what Jan Paulson desired—a unifying tool recognized by members around the world.

A FOND FAREWELL

Perhaps you can now understand why I might be sad as we reach the close. But when one is a person of faith and a follower of God, while times might be disheartening, we can never remain there long, because we know who is in charge. *Adventist World's* race may be run, but it has done something that no other publication in our history has accomplished—established a worldwide path. Now that race will be taken up by its sister publication, *Adventist Review*. Where *Adventist Review* has largely been restricted to North America, it will now serve the world on the same path *Adventist World* ran. The individuals who started *Adventist World* did not work in vain. They only helped make the streams of light deeper and clearer.

Farewell, my publication friend. It's been a privilege to have a front-row seat to watch you unite more than 23 million Adventists worldwide. ©

Merle Poirier is operations manager for *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World*.



I'm very happy to read all the articles of *Adventist World* since I read that first issue in 2005. I thank God when I receive *Adventist World*. Thank you for your efforts to publish this magazine.

SOUTH KOREA



I love to read *Adventist World*. Thank you for giving this publication to us for free. I especially make sure I bring the *Adventist World* when I travel and give to my seatmate or even leave it at the seat. I know the Holy Spirit will work with me.

PHILIPPINES

Young, International, and Connected

The editorial journey of *Adventist World*

The invitation to join the editorial team of Adventist Review Ministries came as a shock in 2006. We had just moved from South America to Asia, and I enjoyed my work as professor of Hebrew Bible and dean of the seminary at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in Manila, Philippines. We politely declined—this was not the time.

Two years later the invitation came again—and this time we accepted, albeit hesitantly. Many of my friends in academia did not understand. Why would I leave the classroom to edit two popular magazines? It was a good question, and I realized that I wanted to be part of a conversation that went beyond the classroom or the—sometimes—isolated ivory towers of academia. *Adventist World*, the new kid on the block, offered that opportunity.

The learning curve was steep, and the rhythm grueling. I enjoyed working with a dynamic team, and as the first senior editor whose native language wasn't English, I began to recruit new, younger, and more international authors whose insights, dreams, concerns, and ideas would be a blessing to a magazine printed in nearly two dozen languages reaching all continents. *Adventist World* was a conscious move by the global Adventist Church to go beyond its U.S. roots and embrace the church in Africa, Central and South America, Asia, Europe, and the Pacific region.

I led the major redesign of the magazine in 2018, which not only included a more contemporary look but also involved the conscious decision to focus more on the large young population of Adventist members. We included for the first time a monthly column written by young adults from around the globe (Millennial Voices), as well as a feature written and designed for children (Growing Faith). We also recognized that many cultures around the world relate well to stories and were glad to incorporate a monthly story by pastor-storyteller Dick Duerksen ("May I Tell You a Story?").

Our articles on biblical studies or fundamental beliefs featured not only scholars but also others who enjoyed thinking biblically. Encouraged by our team, our contributors began to send us articles in languages other than English—and we paid happily for these translations.

Part of my responsibilities also involved traveling to many far corners of the Adventist Church to speak at pastors' meetings, at academic symposia, university Weeks of Prayer, or other church gatherings. My membership on the Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference offered great opportunities to connect to Adventist scholarship, and I also cherished my trips to West Africa as part of their local Biblical Research Committee. All these trips afforded the opportunity to recruit authors and keep my ear to the ground of Adventist thinking around the world.



The monthly production cycle was extremely busy, and the very complex logistical challenges of producing a magazine in different regions and in distinct languages required a logistical mastermind. We were glad to have Merle Poirier fill that role.

Beyond the deadlines and sometimes financial strains of helping to run a global operation, I was privileged to see the church mature and grow beyond its North American origins. *Adventist World* was a child of its age, during which connections and links became part of larger networks that brought the world closer together. These trends have been inverted in many regions, and we would do well as a church to be suspicious of regionalization and national navel gazing. The story of *Adventist World* is a timely reminder that Jesus' body is global, connected, caring in solidarity, and embracing all age groups. ©

Gerald A. Klingbeil, D.Litt., served from 2009 to 2023 as associate editor of what was then known as Adventist Review Ministries. A native of Germany, in 2023 he returned to Germany and currently serves as the CFO of the Hanseatic Conference.



Feature

Returning to Our Missional Roots

Planting with purpose

BY BOYAN LEVTEROV

I love my church! Being an Adventist is exciting because our beliefs center on the gospel of Jesus and the anticipation of His soon return. Yet in my 26 years of pastoral experience, I've observed that our excitement about Jesus' second coming more often translates into a desire for a deeper study of Bible prophecies than a passion to share the hope of Christ's soon return with the world. One of the biggest challenges in my pastoral ministry has been to motivate my congregations to transition from being once-a-week worshippers to becoming disciples who daily share the gospel with others.

The mission to share the gospel with the world is central to our existence. In His eschatological sermon Jesus revealed that the end will come, not when we understand all the signs, but when this gospel is "preached in the whole world" (Matt. 24:14, NIV). Likewise, in His last words to the disciples, Jesus warns us not to concern ourselves with "times or dates," but to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the whole world (Acts 1:7, 8, NIV).

BEYOND THE STATUS QUO

As I began to challenge my members to live out missional lives, I soon discovered that we saw our mission limited to our own local congregation. We tend to focus on buildings and worship programs. Acts 1:8 reminds us that God's call is much bigger, however. It is to reach beyond—to Judea, Samaria, and the whole world.

We have contributed to our self-centered focus by neglecting to emphasize the broader evangelistic mandate. While we have successful year-round evangelism strategies, and our members are committed to daily outreach, we have completely ignored expanding our mission into new

territories. The early Adventist movement wasn't just about growing local churches. It was a disciple-making, church-planting movement. Long before we had a formal denominational mission department, pastors and new disciples were sent as evangelists to new communities, cities, countries, and even continents.

James White wrote extensively on the need to plant new churches. In 1862, for example, he wrote: "In no way can a preacher so well prove himself as in entering new fields. There he can see the fruits of his own labors. And if he be successful in raising up churches, and establishing them, so that they bear good fruits, he gives to his brethren the best proofs that he is sent of the Lord."¹

Ellen White also challenged the church to have a broad missionary perspective. "In all countries and cities the gospel is to be proclaimed. . . . Churches are to be organized, and plans laid for work to be done by the members of the newly organized churches."² "New churches must be established, new congregations organized. At this time there should be representatives of present truth in every city and in the remote parts of the earth."³ "Place after place is to be visited, church after church is to be raised up."⁴ "Many of the members of our large churches are doing comparatively nothing. They might accomplish good work if, instead of crowding together, they would scatter into places that have not yet been entered by the truth. . . . The same rule would work well for our large churches. Many of the members are dying spiritually for want of this very work. They are becoming sickly and inefficient."⁵

James and Ellen White were challenging local churches to develop leaders who would take care of the

needs of the local congregation while the pastor (and others who felt called) would be free to go and evangelize new territories. This was similar to what was done by the apostolic church. The Spirit told the elders of the Antioch church to send out Paul and Barnabas, their best leaders, on a mission while they took care of the church (Acts 13:1-3).

Such missional spirit was carried forward by the Adventist Church all the way into the early 1900s, before it slowly started changing to what we see in most churches today. In 1912 General Conference president A. G. Daniells wrote a warning to churches that demanded to have settled pastors to care and serve only the needs of the baptized members. Daniells was afraid of losing the outreach missional culture. As he put it:

"We have not settled our ministers over churches as pastors to any large extent. In some of the very large churches we have elected pastors; but as a rule we have held ourselves ready for field service, evangelistic work, and our brethren and sisters have held themselves ready to maintain their church services and carry forward their church work without settled pastors. And I hope this will never cease to be the order of affairs in this denomination; for when we cease our forward movement work, and begin to settle over our churches, to stay by them, and do their thinking and their praying and their work that is to be done, then our churches will begin to weaken, and to lose their life and spirit, and become paralyzed and fossilized, and our work will be on a retreat."⁶

ADOPTING A GROWTH MINDSET

In 2006 I accepted a call to become a full-time church planter with the Texas Conference. I was part of a missional movement started by the

Richardson Seventh-day Adventist Church, with a very mission-minded pastor and an outreach-focused team of elders. Collaborating over 20 years, the Richardson church and its "daughter" churches planted 14 new congregations with more than 3,000 total members.

Today most churches that are self-centered are plateaued or declining, while those that have adopted church planting as part of their outreach strategy are growing and multiplying. To become a missional movement again, Adventist churches must commit to multiplying disciples, developing leaders, and looking beyond their "Jerusalem" church by including church planning as part of their evangelistic vision.

Imagine with me that your church decided to plant one new church every 10 years. Then each newly planted church commits to do the same. By 2055 you could have 16 new Adventist churches in 16 new areas! Now imagine that one fifth of the 168,000 Adventist congregations around the globe made the same commitment.⁷ We could double the number of Adventist churches in the world in 30 years. Are you ready to return to your apostolic and Adventist missional roots and go beyond your "Jerusalem"?

"And this gospel . . . will be preached . . . and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14). ☺

¹ James White, "Go Ye Into All the World and Preach the Gospel," *Review and Herald*, Apr. 15, 1862, p. 156.

² Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 19.

³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 6, p. 24.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 20.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 244.

⁶ A. G. Daniells, "The Church and Ministry: An Outline of Lesson No. 5," *Pacific Union Recorder*, Apr. 4, 1912, p. 1.

⁷ Seventh-day Adventist World Church Statistics, 2021, retrieved from <https://www.adventist.org/statistics/>.

Boyan Levterov, D.Min., is a church planting pastor for the Potomac Conference, currently serving the Renewal Church in Rockville, Maryland, United States.



Lifestyle

Living the Message

One bite at a time

A couple of years ago I was convicted to begin a health group at my church in Albuquerque, New Mexico. As I began learning more about nutrition, I was discouraged by the seeming disinterest in my church. I remember thinking, *The church needs to know about this!* It struck me that our church was commissioned with the health message, but it felt as though no one was practicing these lifesaving principles. I wished that someone would step up and start a health ministry. Then I realized that I could be that person! I may not know everything, but I was willing and able, and that is all God asks for.

I was absolutely terrified to begin; I had no idea where to start or what to do, so I asked our church what they wanted. I created a paper survey to determine members' health needs and what type of health counsel they felt was best for our local church. There was an overwhelming response for a plant-based cooking class, so that was the first thing we did.

I began with a presentation on plant-based nutrition, and we learned how to cook several healthy dishes, including cornbread and butternut squash pasta. After this meeting I began an eight laws of health series covering individual health principles, followed by fellowship and nutritious food.

My goal for this group was to inspire people to take care of the "temples" God gave us so we could be ready and able to do His work. Though the class was small, its impact was real. Several church members began to make changes to their lifestyle, implementing what they learned and finding great rewards in doing so. What started as a small ministry has become an ongoing opportunity to serve others through health and education.

If you haven't considered it, I encourage you to start your own health ministry in your town! We need to share the health message with the world, but how can we do that if our own church knows nothing about it? You don't have to have certain qualifications or abilities. I certainly didn't. God is willing to use anyone! If you have questions and concerns, ask God. He's more than willing to hear your prayers and worries. ©

We need to share the health message with the world, but how can we do that if our own church knows nothing about it?

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ADVENTIST REVIEW

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The Unimaginable!

Q

What does Paul mean when he speaks about the bringing of “all things together in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth” (Eph. 1:10, NASB)?*

A

Ephesians 1:10 is part of a long passage covering verses 3-14, packed with theological insights. Within the passage, verse 10 summarizes Paul’s central message to the Ephesians.

THE DIVINE PLAN

Paul aims to display before the Ephesians God’s plan for the reunification of everything in Christ. The cosmos, under Christ’s power as a result of His sacrifice, is heading toward this most important divine goal. Essentially Paul offers a vision of the future of the cosmos from the Creator Himself. This futuristic vision presupposes that the cosmos was originally created in Christ (see Col. 1:16), but something went wrong, and it is no longer fully in Christ. The intrusion of sin fragmented it, making it necessary to restore all things to oneness in Christ. The magnitude of the divine plan greatly exceeds our personal interests.

We are part of something bigger than ourselves that reaches to the deepest recesses of the cosmos. Paul challenges us to shift our focus from the world we know and to look by faith into the future of a cosmos unified in Christ. Indeed, this vision of the divine plan for the cosmos offers us a vision of the future that is beyond what any other spiritual or human power could achieve.

INVOLVEMENT OF THE GODHEAD

What God offers us is so significant that the Father (Eph. 1:3), the Son (verse 3), and the Holy Spirit (verse 13) are personally involved in its realization. In fact, the plan was formulated in the divine mind long before the creation of the cosmos. It is called “the mystery of

His [God’s] will,” that at the right moment was made known to us in Christ (verses 9-11). He is the divine instrument through whom the Father “blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (verse 3) and “chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world” (verse 4), and in Him we have redemption (verse 7). This redemption will reach cosmic dimensions. After the cosmos returns to God at the consummation of redemption, it will again sing praises to the glory of God (verse 14). For Paul this portrait of the future is not a false utopia or an illusion formulated by human desperation. It is being realized within human history, not as a natural result of human progress, but as a result of God’s activity.

A PRESENT REALITY

According to Paul, we witness the beginning of the implementation of the divine plan for the cosmos in the presence of the church in the world. The existence of the church is God’s first move in the enactment of His plan to unify the cosmos in Christ. It has already been activated on this small planet through the saving work of Christ, who, through the work of the Spirit, has been wooing humans to place their faith in Christ in order to be incorporated into Him (verses 11-13). Such believers are now in Christ, and He will not stop until His work encompasses the whole cosmos. The divine intention reached first the Jews, who, according to Paul, were the “first to hope in the Christ” (verse 12, NASB), followed by the Gentiles, who, “after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation . . . also believed” (verse 13, NASB). Yes, the reunification of the cosmos in Christ has been initiated, and we are already part of it. We, believers, are the objective evidence of this cosmic event. ©

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Move More, Live Longer

The power of exercise
for body and mind

I understand that optimal nutrition can promote mental and physical health. Is regular exercise as important for physical and cognitive wellness?

You ask a very interesting and important question. There is much discussion and even dissension regarding diet and nutrition, which are very important. Among the many factors influencing longevity and cognitive health, exercise is the single most effective lifestyle intervention for extending lifespan and reducing the risk of cognitive decline. Research consistently demonstrates that regular physical activity improves cardiovascular health, enhances brain function, and significantly reduces the likelihood of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and dementia.

EXERCISE AND LONGEVITY

Exercise is directly linked to increased lifespan by reducing the risk of chronic diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, and cancer—leading causes of mortality worldwide. Cardiovascular fitness plays a crucial role in longevity. Studies have shown that higher cardiorespiratory fitness was strongly associated with lower mortality risk, regardless of age. Regular physical activity reduces inflammation, improves immune function, and enhances mitochondrial efficiency, all of which contribute to a longer, healthier life.

Additionally, exercise is a powerful regulator of metabolic health. It enhances insulin sensitivity, lowers blood pressure, and promotes healthy lipid profiles, reducing the risk of metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes—both of which are strongly linked to a shortened lifespan. Resistance training helps maintain muscle mass and bone density, critical factors in preventing frailty and age-related decline.

EXERCISE AND COGNITIVE HEALTH

The benefits of exercise extend beyond physical health to cognitive function. Studies show that regular physical activity enhances neuroplasticity—the brain's ability to form new circuits and internal connections—by increasing levels of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a protein essential for learning and memory. Exercise also promotes neurogenesis, particularly in the hippocampus, a brain region vital for memory processing.

Exercise improves cerebral blood flow, reducing the risk of vascular dementia arising from impaired blood supply to the brain. Aerobic exercise, such as walking, jogging, or cycling, has been linked to greater hippocampal volume and slower age-related brain atrophy. Individuals with higher physical activity levels have a significantly lower risk of cognitive decline over time.

Exercise also reduces chronic inflammation and oxidative stress, two major contributors to neurodegeneration. By lowering systemic inflammation and enhancing antioxidant defenses, exercise protects neurons (nerve cells) from damage associated with degenerative diseases, including Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

HOW MUCH EXERCISE IS NEEDED?

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends at least 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise or 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise per week, combined with strength training exercises at least twice a week. Even small increases in activity levels—such as daily brisk walks—can yield significant health benefits.

CONCLUSION

While diet, sleep, and social engagement are all important for health and longevity, exercise remains the most impactful single intervention for both extending life and preserving cognitive function. Its ability to reduce chronic disease risk, enhance brain resilience, and promote overall vitality makes it the cornerstone of any longevity-focused lifestyle. Regular physical activity is not just an investment in physical well-being—it is a fundamental pillar of a long, cognitively healthy life (3 John 2). ©

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Honesty Pays



“May I Tell You a Story?”

BY DICK DUERKSEN

Our story begins in the early 1960s.

“Your cash drawer is 45 cents off, young man. That’s 45 cents more than you should have in the drawer at the end of today’s work.”

I looked down once more at my numbers. My boss, Mr. Britt, the hospital credit manager, was right. I had tried to come out balanced to the penny, but I was young and not as perfect as he required me to be.

“Richard, let me tell you a story.”

Mr. Britt motioned for me to sit down in the cashier’s chair, right where I had been working. I sat, my mind rushing back over all the patient accounts I had dealt with that day. How had I come out 45 cents long?

“Once upon a time,” he began, “way back in the year 1928, the cashier was a young man named E. E. Martin, and the credit manager was Mr. Harley Rice. Young Mr. Martin sat in this same office you do, and on the day I want to tell you about, he wondered why his drawer was 45 cents long. It had been a full day. One of the patients, a man named Mr. Henry Porter, had tried to pay a portion of his account with odd-looking coupons rather than with cash or a check.

“Mr. Porter had contacted our hospital, which was known back then as Paradise Valley Sanitarium, because he had a terrible cold and believed several days of hydrotherapy treatments might help. We sent a car to collect him from his hotel, the Del Coronado. We gave him one of our better rooms, one with running water and a toilet, and he stayed there for almost a full week. He must have enjoyed it, because his wife joined him for the last few days.”

“Mr. Britt,” I interrupted, “this Mr. Porter must have run up a pretty large bill!”

“You’re right, young man. When Mr. Porter stood right over there to

check out, the cashier, Mr. Martin, gave him the handwritten journal of charges. Mr. Porter looked it over and wrote a check for everything except for his rather large telephone bill. For that, he pulled out a book of coupons and tore out enough coupons to cover the phone bill. Then he handed the check and coupons to Mr. Martin, who had never seen anything like the odd coupons before.”

“I’ve never seen anything like that either, Mr. Britt. I probably would have said I’d be right back and come right over to check with you.”

“And that’s exactly what Mr. Martin did! He took the certificates, smiled at Mr. Porter, and excused himself to check with the credit manager, Harley Rice.”

“How did Mr. Martin get the account off by 45 cents?”

“Don’t get ahead of me,” chuckled Mr. Britt.

“OK. Were the coupons any good?”

“Very good. Harley Rice called the San Diego branch of the telephone company and asked to speak with the manager. When the manager came on the phone, Harley told him about Mr. Porter’s coupons and asked what they were.”

“Those coupon books are issued only to our large stockholders and members of the phone company’s board of directors,” the manager said. “Please accept them as cash.”

“Wow! Mr. Porter must have been a pretty important man!”

“Well, nobody here thought much about it, but that evening when he was cashing out, Mr. Martin discovered his drawer was 45 cents off—to the good—just as you are today. Harley Rice looked over the accounts and discovered that we had figured part of Mr. Porter’s bill incorrectly, and that we owed him 45 cents.”

“Forty-five cents isn’t a very big deal. What did they do about it?”

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Seventh-day
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Elder Rice was overwhelmed, astonished, and eager all at once.

and got on the train.

“When Mr. Porter received the letter, he chuckled, realizing that neither Harley nor his father believed he was serious.

“That changed quickly when Mr. Porter met Elder Rice at the train station. He put his guest in a big limousine with a uniformed chauffeur and drove him all around Denver, showing him all the buildings that the Porters owned.

“The trip included two very important stops. The first was at the Denver National Bank building, where Mr. Porter was president. The second was to 40 country acres on the edge of town.

“This land will be the location of your new hospital, Elder Rice. I’ve decided to give you \$330,000 for the new hospital. That will cover the cost of the land, the buildings, and the equipment. Here, let me walk you to where you will even be able to have a small farm to provide vegetables for the guests.’

“Elder Rice was overwhelmed, astonished, and eager all at once.

“I will help get it all started,’ said Mr. Porter, ‘but you will have to operate the hospital on your own. I know you can do that, because I know your son Harley and the other employees at Paradise Valley. I trust that you will run this hospital honestly, fairly, and well. I can trust you with my health and my wealth.’”

“All that because of a check for 45 cents!”

“No, young man. Mr. Porter gave a total of more than \$3 million to the hospital because he had learned he could trust us with his health and his wealth.

“Now,” Mr. Britt smiled at me, “go find your 45 cents.” ☺

“It was a big deal to Harley Rice. He quickly corrected the account and sent a letter of apology, dated February 10, 1928, along with a check for 45 cents to Mr. Henry Porter at the Hotel Del Coronado.”

“What did Mr. Porter think about that?”

“Two days later Harley received a letter from Mr. Porter. In it was the check, endorsed back to Paradise Valley Sanitarium, with a note of appreciation for Mr. Rice’s honesty.”

“Mr. Britt, did you tell me that story to make me feel better about the 45 cents I’m off in my drawer?”

“No, Dick. I told you that story so you will always remember to be careful and kind, and to make sure that your work is done accurately and well.”

“Sounds to me like there’s more to the story.”

“Sure enough! On April 16, 1928, Harley received another handwritten letter from Mr. Porter, this one post-marked from Denver, Colorado. Here’s what it said:

“Can you please give me the address of the manager of your various corporations, as I would like to correspond with him in regard to establishing a like institution in Denver.”

“Did he actually do it?”

“Don’t get ahead of my story!”

“Sorry, Mr. Britt.”

“Harley sent the letter on to his own father, Elder M. L. Rice, who was the associate secretary of the General Conference Medical Department in Washington, D.C. Then he forgot about it. Neither he nor his father really believed what Mr. Porter was saying about wanting to establish a new hospital. But Elder Rice’s travel plans included a four-hour layover at the Denver train station, so he sent Mr. Porter a note offering to meet him between trains.

“It’s odd,’ Elder Rice told his son, ‘that this man would talk about having a hospital in Denver. I wonder if he knows that we have an excellent sanitarium just a few miles away in Boulder, Colorado.’ So Elder Rice decided to tell Mr. Porter about the Boulder Sanitarium,

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



God on the Road

Help when we least expect it

Cars. They're everywhere! We see them so much that we often take them for granted. Cars are so convenient to have. We use them to drive to the grocery store, the hospital, or the church. We use them to drive across the country to visit family and friends. But we usually think about cars only when ours breaks down or when there is an accident and lives are lost—or saved.

Have you ever heard of or been in a car accident during which someone was miraculously saved? My sister told me a story of the time she lost control of her car on an icy road. As her car slid toward a steep cliff, she could only pray. Her car stopped inches short of going over the edge. God saved her!

My own story happened

several years ago. I was driving down a mountain road. As I came around a curve, I pressed my foot on my brake pedal to slow down. The road was wet from a recent rainfall, and my tires lost their grip. I slid across the road and crashed head-on into a truck coming up the mountain. My car was completely ruined, but I wasn't hurt at all. I thought I was pretty lucky at the time, but realized later that it was God's protection that saved me.

God is not just with us in these scary moments. He is also with us in not-so-scary moments.

Many years ago I was driving home from a trip and saw a hitchhiker standing alongside the road. A hitchhiker travels by getting free rides from passing vehicles, usually by standing

alongside the road and signaling to the drivers. I stopped and asked him where he was going. He needed a ride to New York City! I couldn't take him all the way there, but I did drop him off safely in Syracuse, New York.

Now, the car I was driving had a problem. The gauge that measured my fuel wasn't working, so I constantly had to estimate when I would need gas. As I continued my drive home, I saw a sign indicating the next exit was in 16 kilometers (or 10 miles). *I will have to get off there*, I thought. But with only two miles left to go, the car sputtered to a halt. There was no option but to walk to the exit. But no sooner had I started to walk than a truck pulled up beside me. The gentleman took me to the nearest gas station and, after I



Bible Treasure

“But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows”
(Luke 12:7).

filled my gas container, brought me back to my car and waited to make sure all was well.

I know that these two events were connected. God directed me to help someone in need, and God sent someone to help me when I was in need.

Three years ago my wife and I were driving out in the country when we took a curve too fast and slid into a ditch. No matter how hard we tried, we could not get out. A kind man came from a house nearby to help us, but even with his help we were unsuccessful. The only thing we could do was call a tow truck. Then, amazingly, a tow truck appeared! We had not even made the call! The driver pulled us easily from the ditch. When I asked him how much it cost, he said it was his “good deed for the day.”

More recently I was driving home when my tire suddenly popped. I pulled over to change it. It was wintertime, snowing and freezing cold. I didn’t have gloves, and I was having difficulty removing the bolts that held the tire on. Suddenly a car pulled up behind me. Two men got out, surveyed the situation, and in less than a minute had replaced the tire. When I asked how I could repay them, they replied, “Pay it forward,” meaning help someone else in need.

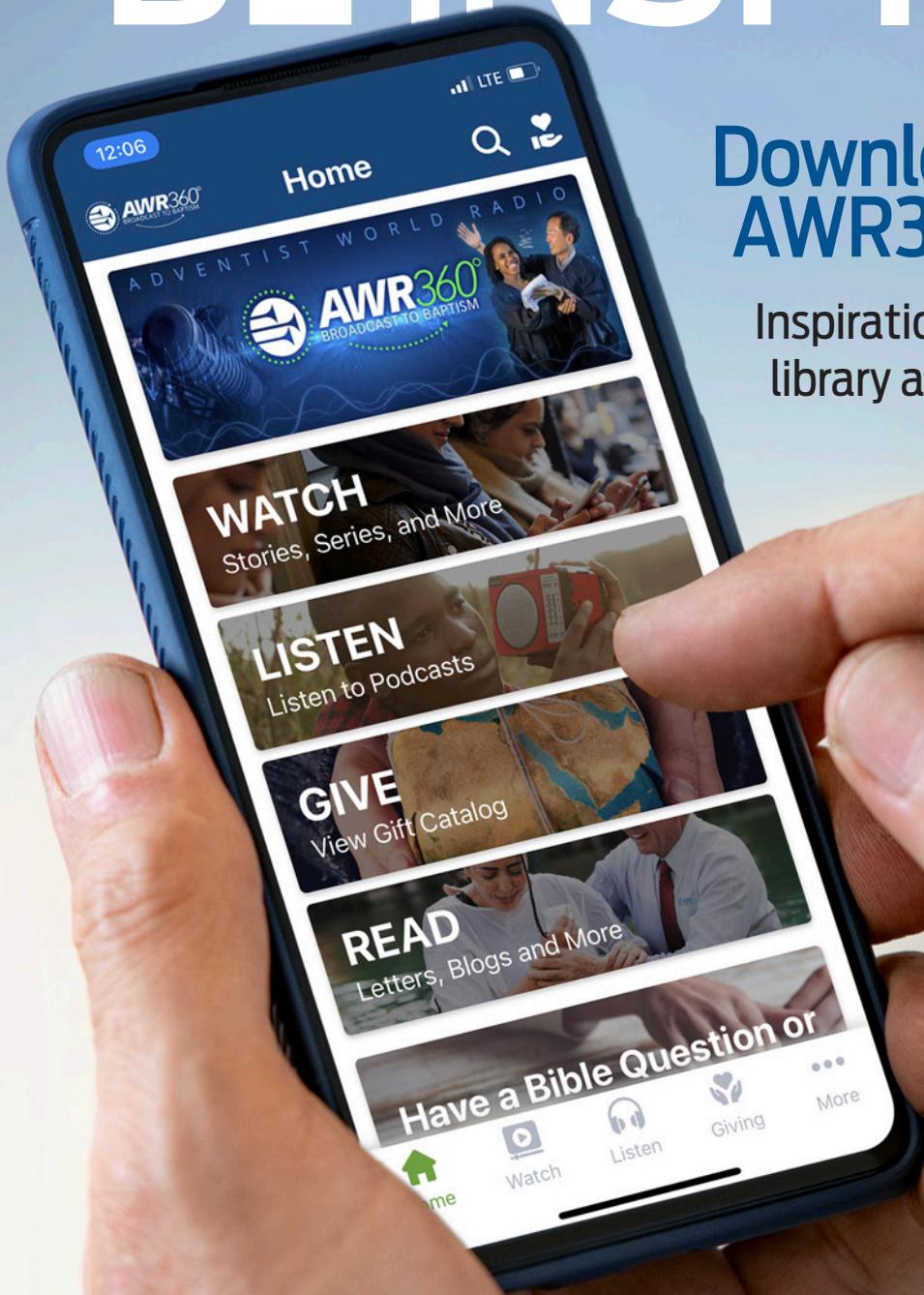
Sometimes we might be tempted to think that our problems are too small for God to notice. Adults think, *This is not a major illness, a time when we have to buy or repair this, or a family argument. God has better things to worry about than my little issues.* Kids might

think, *God isn’t interested in my small problems at school or with my brother or sister.* But Jesus reminds us that “the very hairs of your head are all numbered” (Luke 12:7). God cares about every detail of our lives.

In each of my situations, God sent someone to come to my aid. God is like that. He does not leave us or forsake us. He is with us always in all situations. No matter whether the problem is big or small, we can always count on the Lord. ☺

David Ross is retired and lives in Belleville, Ontario, Canada. He is an elder at the Belleville Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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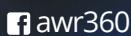
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