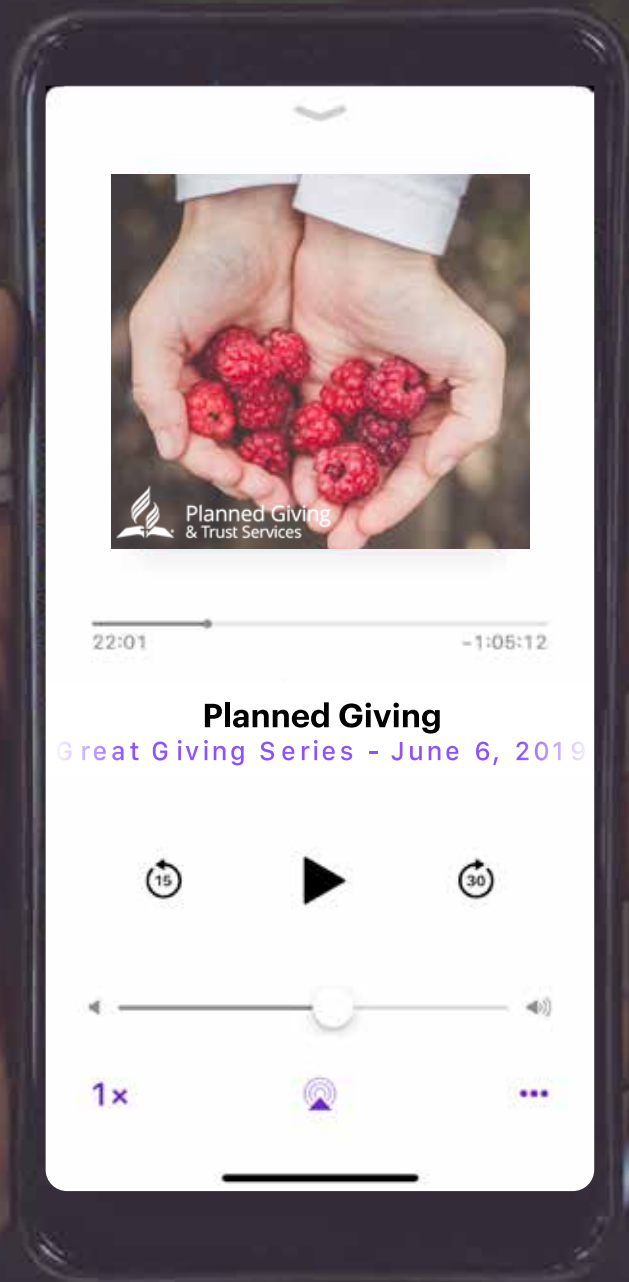


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Adventist Journey

Contents	04	Feature <i>Finding Purpose for Youth Sabbath School Starts by Asking "Why?" and "How?"</i>	13	Perspective <i>This Church Knows</i>
	08	NAD News Briefs		

My Journey

What brings me the most joy on my Adventist journey is playing the long game with some of my friends who are in and out or just out [of the church], where being a steady presence in their life does pay off, and they come back around and say so. It's those relationships that can change the world. Visit vimeo.com/nadadventist/ajtanyamusgrave for more of Musgrave's story.

TANYA MUSGRAVE,
*filmmaker, videographer,
 and photographer, living in Idaho*



Cover Photo by Mylon Medley

Dear Reader: The publication in your hands represents the collaborative efforts of the North American Division and *Adventist World* magazine, which follows *Adventist Journey* (after page 16). Please enjoy both magazines!

Adventist Journey (ISSN 1557-5519) is the journal of the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The Northern Asia-Pacific Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is the publisher. It is printed monthly by the Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Copyright © 2018. Send address changes to your local conference membership clerk. Contact information should be available through your local church.

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ADVENTIST JOURNEY

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Finding PURPOSE for Youth Sabbath School Starts by Asking “WHY?” and “HOW?”

BY STEVE CASE AND HUBERT CISNEROS

The following article is based on the report “Finding Purpose and Practices for Youth Sabbath School” prepared for the 180° Symposium. This article highlights the findings of Steve Case and Hubert Cisneros, describes the status of youth Sabbath School in North America, and offers guidance for the future strengthening of youth Sabbath School. Youth Sabbath School is part of the Young Adult Life missional initiatives of the division in this quinquennium.—Editors.

Youth Sabbath School predates the official beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, and even predates adult Sabbath School.

James White wrote the first four lessons for youth Sabbath School in 1852 with the first publication of *The Youth’s Instructor*. Its purpose was simple and straightforward—Bible study.

About 25 years later Sabbath School became an official department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. By 1885 a second purpose, world mission, was added to the original purpose of Bible study. In 1944 the General Conference Sabbath School Department published three objec-

tives for Sabbath School—studying the Word, world mission, and soul-winning—with the “supreme objective” being evangelism. A fourth objective, fellowship, joined the other purposes of Sabbath School in 1978.¹

While the adult Sabbath School objectives have increased and morphed over the years, a purpose for youth Sabbath School seems silent. It may be assumed that something religious or spiritual should be attempted, but currently the social element is probably the strongest motivation for young people who do attend. This reality begs the question as to the worth of youth Sabbath School today. Has youth Sabbath School lost its value? If so, how can we make it valuable again?

Deciding the Purpose

While it’s relatively easy to operate a youth Sabbath School out of habit or duty, rarely can leaders or participants articulate a clear purpose for it. Rarely do people ask, “Why are we doing Sabbath School?” or “Why are we doing this particular thing for Sabbath School?”

As a result, youth Sabbath School practices often amount to filling time or haphazardly doing whatever comes to mind. Implementing a few key steps can help Youth Sabbath School become spiritually purposeful, with practices that correspond to its purpose.

Lacking a clear purpose, we unconsciously evaluate by attendance (“We had more people than last week”), or how a person feels at the

moment (“I liked it”), or level of criticism (“At least nobody complained”).

When youth Sabbath School has a clear purpose, both planning and evaluating have better criteria for measurement. Can we identify a purpose or a goal for this weekly gathering? Unfortunately, Adventist youth ministry, and certainly youth Sabbath School, usually lacks a current resource that addresses its purpose.²

If there isn’t a purpose for Sabbath School, it’s time to do some brainstorming, and feel free to get input from others. Ideas might include: go to heaven, have a relationship with Christ, grow the youth group, keep youth in the church, or reach the community.

Either immediately or over time, some of the purposes will probably

be adjusted and improved. Others will fall by the wayside. Asking the question “Why?” helps link youth Sabbath School to the purpose or goal for youth ministry.

We suggest the overall purpose of *Christlikeness*. This is not a new term.³ It includes accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord, and that involves broad and unique discipleship by living God’s kingdom now as well as in the future. Following Paul’s familiar “All things work together for the good, to those who love God,” Scripture continues with: “He [God] knew those who would be His one day, and He chose them beforehand to be *conformed to the image of His Son* so that Jesus would be the firstborn of a new family of believers, all brothers and sisters” (Rom. 8:20, *The Voice*).⁴

In practice, this is what happened to Christ’s disciples: “When they [the Jewish Council] saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13, NIV).

There may be short-term goals that lead to this overall purpose, but identifying the big goal enables a person to take sequential steps to move toward that goal.

After starting the plan with the goal, move to the youth Sabbath School program. And instead of asking “Why?” ask “How?”

The program should provide the answer to “How?”—This relates to the method of ministry or your philosophy of ministry. Some would label this your values.

The Philosophy

We suggest a five-part philosophy called “Fostering Relationships That Build Responsible Servant Leaders.”

The expression “fostering relationships” forms the foundation of youth ministry and youth Sabbath School in particular, because Christlikeness is all about a rela-

Without a clearly understood purpose, youth Sabbath Schools will continue their aimless target. The time slot might be filled, but who really cares? Young people who do attend will go through the motions with low expectations and little or no change.

relationship with Jesus Christ. Building relationships includes horizontal relationships with others and one's vertical relationship with God.

Another component of the method/philosophy is "leaders." This term usually conjures up visions of many people following a specific, charismatic person we label as the leader. But a broader understanding of "leader" is someone whom someone else follows. It doesn't require a large group to empower a leader. It calls for full participation, rather than sitting passively as spectators, to empower leaders.

The "servant" component of the method/philosophy addresses the common adolescent challenge of self-worth. Applying this to youth Sabbath School, one would expect the youth themselves to fill various roles for a Sabbath School program rather than expecting only adults to lead or to serve. It also means those in youth Sabbath School find options and opportunities to serve others inside and outside the church rather than expecting all others to serve them.

The word "responsible" usually resonates more with adults than with young people. Adults want the youth to be "responsible," while teens prefer "freedom." In practical terms, this means the Youth Sabbath School serves as a laboratory for young people to be given the freedom to choose what will happen during Sabbath School; then they must follow through to make that happen. It means entrusting them with finances and support, and holding them accountable for what

they do with what they have been given. Instead of token positions on a church board, give them the authority, as well as financial and emotional support. Offer mentoring to make things happen for both Youth Sabbath School and other church ministries, and give them feedback—affirmation and critiques—so they continue to serve, grow, and minister.

This leaves us with the word "build." We think the best way to build young people is to provide a strong relational foundation for security, then move them out of their comfort zones for positive change. Another way of saying this is that most humans prefer a "neutral environment," in which no change is needed. Young people would label this as "boring." In contrast, most young people prefer a "nonneutral environment," in which change is needed. It is a challenge for stable churches to allow or even encourage change. But young people thrive in such an environment. This is where reinvention can take place. As the psalmist often said: "Sing a new song to the Lord."

The Bridge Between Programs and Purpose

The philosophy/methodology provides a bridge between the youth Sabbath School and the purpose/goal of Christlikeness. You can start with the program, youth Sabbath School, and ask "Why?" The philosophy now answers that question. What is it in your youth Sabbath School that includes at least one component of the philosophy: relationships,

leadership, service, responsibility or a nonneutral environment that motivates change? You may need to adjust your youth Sabbath School to make that happen.

Your programs can and should change, or else they will become neutral/boring. When people ask, "Why are you doing this in youth ministry?" answer with the *purpose* instead of defending the *program*. You can also point out which element(s) of the *philosophy* you are using in that particular program.

Putting It Together

Rarely can a person identify the purpose for a youth Sabbath School. Without a clearly understood purpose, Youth Sabbath Schools will continue their aimless target. The time slot might be filled, but who really cares? Young people who do attend will go through the motions with low expectations and little or no change.

In contrast, a youth Sabbath School with a clear purpose of *Christlikeness* can provide a focus for planning, implementing, and achieving the very thing Christ desires—for us to become like Him.

A philosophy of "Fostering Relationships That Build Responsible, Servant Leaders" explains the methods of doing youth Sabbath School so each component answers the "Why?" question. Or you can begin with the overall goal of *Christlikeness* and ask the question "How?" By implementing the philosophy in each part of youth Sabbath School, you can make your youth ministry count.

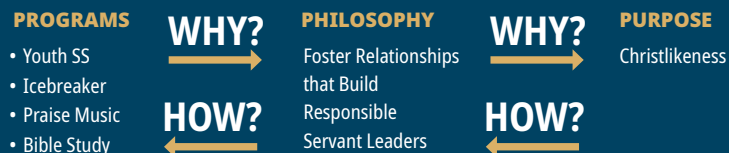
Recommendations

We've shared several recommendations with and for the North American Division Youth Ministries team. Based on the need for youth Sabbath Schools to have purpose, we recommend the following for youth ministry on more local levels in the church:

FOR CONFERENCE YOUTH DIRECTORS

- Make youth Sabbath School part of your job description. Initiate this with your conference president.
- Discover which churches in your conference have a youth Sabbath School. This will take time, especially if little or no relationship currently exists between you and the local church.
- Identify the youth Sabbath School leaders in the churches that have a youth Sabbath School.
- As these contacts with local church youth Sabbath School leaders are made, listen for feedback on what is happening in the local church youth Sabbath School, what is not happening, and how the conference youth department can best serve them in their church.
- Allocate time to research and respond to the needs expressed.
- Develop a network of communication in which you are able to share the good news of what others are doing, and solicit help and interaction with fellow youth Sabbath School leaders in the conference.
- Dialogue with youth Sabbath School leaders about their purpose(s) for youth Sabbath School. Be prepared to give short and longer responses as requested and needed.
- Provide certification training for local church youth Sabbath School leaders. Two resources already published and available include *A Place to Belong* and *Building a Great Team*.⁵ The NAD Youth Department has also begun training specifically for youth Sabbath School. It's called IGNITE. For more information, contact Vandeon Griffin at the NAD Youth Department (VandeonGriffin@nadadventist.org).
- Prepare to share resources for youth Sabbath School, and ask what others are using and their evaluation of them. AdventSource carries many youth ministry resources. *Cornerstone Connections* is available as a free app for youth Sabbath School lessons. Create and share your own as well. The NAD Youth Department created a new website of youth Sabbath School Ideas that launched in January 2019. Pass along this resource to local church youth leaders by directing them to YouthSabbathSchoolIdeas.org.
- Establish a Youth Sabbath School of the Year Award of \$1,000 to be awarded once a year for five years.

PROGRAMS WITH PURPOSE



FOR LOCAL CHURCH YOUTH SABBATH SCHOOL LEADERS

- Have an overall purpose for your youth Sabbath School. If you don't have one yet, develop one as described in this article, or in the resource *A Place to Belong*.
- Connect and share with other youth Sabbath School leaders from other churches.

- Always be training young people to be leaders in various ways in the youth Sabbath School.
- Connect with your conference youth director and ask for input. Go through the certification process recommended to the NAD Youth Department.
- Tap into the new youth Sabbath School Ideas website created by the NAD Youth Department. This contains a host of ideas for youth Sabbath School each week as a supplement to the *Cornerstone Connections* teacher's guide. You can access it at YouthSabbathSchoolIdeas.org or sign up for a weekly prompt that makes it just a click away.
- Share with the conference youth director what you're doing and not doing, as well as needs you perceive when it comes to youth Sabbath School. You can also post this on the new Facebook page "Youth Sabbath School Ideas."

¹These same four purposes also appeared in 2002 edition of Ellen White's *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* in the General Conference Sabbath School Department's Foreword (Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* [Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2002]).

²A wide array of youth Sabbath School resources used to be available each quarter through *Cornerstone Connections*. But that stopped and *Insight* magazine took over and published *Insight Youth Resource*. This quarterly publication included a collection of Sabbath School ideas, AY program ideas, socials, outreach activities, talk sheets, and youth ministry leadership articles. But that went out of print, and the student lessons that appeared each week in *Insight* magazine ceased when *Insight* went out of print in 2018. Only a teacher's quarterly is available in print through the cumbersome process of a "standing order." Churches can establish with Pacific Press through an Adventist Book Center, or now as a free app for quick access in a more current method of delivery. Robert Holbrook lamented the absorption of the Youth Department into the Church Ministries super-department in 1985. He marked that as the downturn in youth ministry emphasis, personnel, and a shift from youth soulwinning to youth baby-sitting. The printed aim on *The Youth's Instructor* 100 years ago is sometimes repeated still today in some AY settings: "The Advent message to all the world in this generation." Few would connect that to youth Sabbath School today, although a change could be made.

³Nevin Harner used this term in 1939 to name the church's objective in educating church members (Nevin C. Harner, *The Educational Work of the Church* [Abingdon, 1939], p. 20). Klaus Issler used the same term in 2001 to identify the goal to which we educate in the church (Klaus Issler, "Theological Foundations of Christian Education," *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, ed. Michael J. Anthony et. al [Baker, 2001], p. 35). In 2014, Steve Case and Hubert Cisneros labeled "Christlikeness" as the broad, overall goal for all youth ministry (Steve Case and Hubert Cisneros, *A Place to Belong* [AdventSource, 2014]).

⁴*The Voice Bible*, copyright © 2012, Thomas Nelson, Inc. *The Voice* translation, © 2012, Ecclesia Bible Society. All rights reserved.

⁵Steve Case and Hubert Cisneros, *Building a Great Team* (AdventSource, 2015).

Steve Case is president of *Involve Youth*, a parachurch organization that energizes young people for service; and coordinator for the youth and young adult ministry concentration in the *Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary's Doctor of Ministry* program. Hubert Cisneros is youth and church ministries director for the *Mid-America Union Conference*.

NAD NEWS BRIEFS

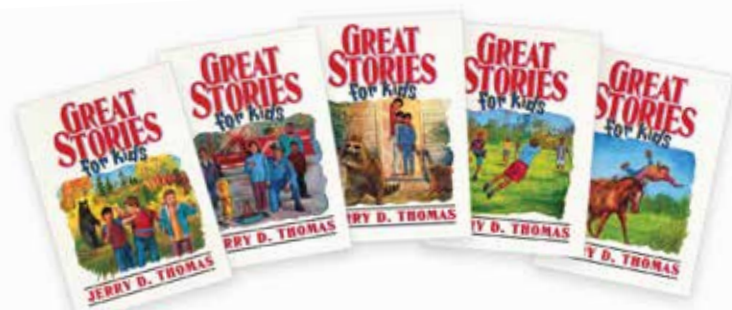
JERRY THOMAS, ADVENTIST AUTHOR OF NEARLY 60 BOOKS, PASSES TO HIS REST

Jerry D. Thomas, writer of nearly 60 books for children and adults, passed away on March 15, 2019, from complications from a blood clot. His works include the best sellers *Messiah*, *Blessings*, and *A Thoughtful Hour*. Thomas also wrote and created such popular series as *Detective Zack*, *Great Stories for Kids*, and *Shoebox Kids*. He was 59.

“His ability to convey spiritual topics in precise, easy-to-understand language touched many lives,” said Miguel Valdivia, vice president of product development for Pacific Press Publishing Association in Idaho.

Before coming to Pacific Press, Thomas served as a Bible teacher at Highland View Academy (HVA) in Hagerstown, Maryland. Colleagues, friends, and former students expressed sadness at his passing on social media. Many also shared their appreciation for Pastor Thomas (PT) and his compassion, humor, and insightfulness during his years at HVA.

“I will always remember PT as an important part of my adolescence. He was a great teacher and a truly wonderful human being,” said HVA alumnus David Fales.



Thomas started working at Pacific Press on April 4, 1991, as an associate book editor; later he became the editor in charge of the trade books team. During those years Thomas developed what perhaps remains his best-known work, the *Detective Zack* set, an adventure mystery series for young readers that revealed Bible truth in a captivating narrative.



↑ Jerry D. Thomas authored nearly 60 books; (below, left) *Great Stories for Kids* is just one of many series he produced. Pacific Press Publishing Association

Thomas went on to write or develop nearly 60 books, including *Messiah*, a paraphrase of Ellen G. White’s *The Desire of Ages*. *Messiah* was published in 2002 with the approval of the Ellen G. White Estate; it became a best seller in various formats. More than 500,000 copies of *Messiah* have been sold. In total, Thomas’ books have sold more than 1.5 million copies through the years.

“Jerry touched our lives through his words and actions,” said Laura Sámano, *Guide* magazine managing editor. “He believed in the people he hired, and he supported us. More than just a creative author, Jerry was a good person. He was authentic. His passing is a loss to Adventism, to the world of writing, and to the Pacific Press editorial family.”

Thomas left Pacific Press in 2003 to work as communication director for the Southwestern Union Conference in Keene, Texas, where he remained until October 2008, when he was invited to come back to Pacific Press as vice president of the editorial department.

“He will be missed by his coworkers for his kindness, his unwavering support, his great talent, and his exceptional wit,” said Valdivia.

Thomas is survived by his wife, Kitty; children Jonathan, Jennifer, and Jeremy; and four grandchildren.

— Pacific Press Publishing Association, with the NAD Office of Communication

AT FESTIVAL, SOUTHWESTERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY HOSTS PREMIERE OF “PSALM 23”

Southwestern Adventist University’s (SWAU) annual music festival weekend culminated with a concert at the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas, Texas, on Sunday, February 10, 2019, as 280 students representing 25 high schools, along with professional musicians, combined their talents to bring honor and glory to their Creator.

“It was a great experience,” said Christian Gonzales, senior music/communication double major who played his baritone saxophone at Meyerson. “The best experience is entertaining the audience and putting on a good show. Plus, we had a lot of interaction with high school students.”

Renowned composer Craig Courtney was in attendance for the world premiere of his composition “Psalm 23.” This piece, nev-

er previously performed in public, was commissioned especially for A Night at the Meyerson. The mass festival choir and festival strings performance brought the audience to its feet in applause. Other highlights from the evening ranged from mainstream “pop” song renditions to large mass choral arrangements.

“Our goal has always been to promote musical achievement among young musicians and provide scholarships that will enable students to thrive as they engage in music while they pursue their college degrees,” shares Ken Shaw, SWAU president. “The Night at the Meyerson is one of the highlights of the year for our university.”

— Timothy Kosaka, creative manager for marketing and public relations, Southwestern Adventist University



↑ Southwestern Adventist University’s annual music festival weekend culminated with a concert at the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas, Texas. Princess Music

Versacare Foundation Awards \$1.15 Million to Adventist Schools to Support STEM Education

On March 8, 2019, the Versacare Foundation awarded \$1,159,000 in grant funding to Adventist education, including \$920,000 to 118 primary and secondary schools across the United States and Canada in support of STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) education.

The STEM grant program is open to every conference or church-sponsored primary or secondary school in the North American Division and provides funding in three categories: \$5,000 for smaller schools of three or fewer classrooms; \$10,000 for larger schools of four or more classrooms and 12-year schools; and \$10,000 for senior academies.

In the United States a total of \$835,000 was given to schools within eight union conferences, 38 conferences, and 108 schools. In Canada the foundation awarded a total of \$85,000 to four conferences and 10 schools.

STEM grant funds can be used to purchase classroom smart boards, provide tablets or Chromebooks for students, equip or update student computer labs, install 3-D printers and related software, initiate or fund robotics programs, teach software coding, and equip chemistry, physics, and biology labs.

This is Versacare’s fourth successive year funding STEM grants. To date, Versacare has provided 228 schools with a total of \$1,825,000. A complete list of the schools funded in 2019 can be found at ow.ly/ArNC30omPzO.

Versacare, Inc. is the largest independent private foundation supporting the varied ministries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with grant funding. Since 1990 it has awarded nearly 1,200 grants totaling more than \$26 million.

— Versacare Foundation, Inc.

NAD NEWS BRIEFS



PARADISE PRAYER WARRIORS EARN FIRST-PLACE PBE AWARD

On March 23, 2019, the Paradise Prayer Warriors earned a first-place award at the Pacific Union Pathfinder Bible Experience (PBE) competition in Fresno, California. The only Northern California Conference (NCC) team to win a first-place award, they were able to join more than 200 teams from across the United States, Canada, and Great Britain in the North American Division PBE in Rockford, Illinois, on April 26 and 27.

Almost all the club's 30 members and 13 staff lost their homes in the November 2018 Camp Fire. About a month after the fire, the kids asked if the club could start meeting again. Leaders wondered if the PBE team should continue since they had lost so much preparation time. "Everyone has suffered from the trauma, and we did not want to add to this strain," said Terry Parsons, club director. "With much prayer and encouragement the team decided to continue." Not only did they have to study extra-hard, they also had to assemble new uniforms in time for the competition.

"Our first-place finish is remarkable," said Parsons. "Our families are scattered across the state, and they attend as they can and keep in touch through Facebook and e-mails. . . . The two months lost for study and practice revealed a practice score of 75 percent. The team needed a 90 percent score to pass. We also wondered: *Could we get uniforms in time?*"

Parsons shared that the uniform club crest came in the mail the day before testing. Belts were borrowed; pants and shoes purchased. The club passed inspection, went through the testing, and achieved scores giving them a first-place finish.

On the day of the event the team asked God to help them remember what they had learned and to help them glorify Him. "To God's honor, they have qualified for the division finals," said Parsons.

"They could have quit, but instead they flourished," said NCC youth director Eddie Heinrich. —Northern California Conference

International Pathfinder Camporee Tickets Sell Out in Record Time

As of February 8, 2019, all the North American Division tickets for the Chosen International Pathfinder Camporee in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, were sold. "The international camporees exist to celebrate the importance and spiritual influence of Pathfinder ministry. God is bringing His Pathfinders from around the world to Oshkosh," said Ron Whitehead, Chosen International Camporee director.

International tickets sold out in early December 2018; and day passes sold out by early March 2019. "Historically, this is the earliest that NAD and international tickets have sold out," said Whitehead.

The theme, "Chosen," centers on the biblical story of David. More than 50,000 tickets have been sold for the mid-August Pathfinder event held every five years. —NAD Office of Communication



Adventist Church in Canada Elects New Treasurer and Undertreasurer

On March 3, 2019, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada (SDACC) Board of Directors elected Paul Musafili as its new treasurer and Rose Jacinto to serve as undertreasurer. Musafili will take over the position held by Ulysses Guarin, and Jacinto will fill the position vacated by Musafili.

Mark Johnson, president of the SDACC, remarked, "The SDACC Board of Directors, with regrets and respect, received the retirement of Ulysses Guarin, SDACC treasurer. I have deeply appreciated his skill and wise counsel."

Musafili has served as undertreasurer for the SDACC since 2014. Prior to this he served in the Quebec Conference. He assumed his new responsibilities on March 1. Musafili said, "It is my honor and privilege to serve the church in Canada. I know it is a significant commitment and I need your support, prayers and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to build upon what has been accomplished by my predecessors."

Jacinto has worked with the General Conference Auditing Service (GCAS) since 2001, most recently as audit manager. "I am thankful for this opportunity to serve the church in a different capacity. I pray God will continue to guide me daily," Jacinto said. She began her new role on March 19.

"I have worked with both of these individuals. I know them well and respect their work," Johnson added. "I believe that they will be a blessing to all of us throughout Canada, and to our work at the national headquarters."

The national headquarters of the SDACC oversees seven regional districts that serve 72,000 members, 500 congregations, 43 schools, various media ministries, and humanitarian organizations.

—Office of Communication, Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada

Paul Musafili (left) is the new treasurer for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada; Rose Jacinto (pictured with family) is the new undertreasurer. *Canadian Adventist Messenger*



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These buildings are condemned

CHILDIMPACT INTERNATIONAL

URGENT BUILDING NEED ! BANGLADESH MISSION SCHOOL

A key mission school in Bangladesh has an urgent need for a multi-purpose building. The current building is over 20 years old and poorly constructed. It is in an extremely dangerous condition. Child Impact International CEO, Jim Rennie, recently visited the school and confirmed the critical state of the building and the danger it poses to everyone.

The school, Kellogg Mookerjee Memorial Seminary, has over 450 students including many sponsored by Child Impact. This school is a key missionary outreach and serves a very poor community, however the building is long past its time to be replaced.

The new three story building will house:

- Over eight classrooms
- School library
- New English medium school
- Science laboratory
- School administration offices

At the front, adjoining the road, will be a multi-level English training school. This will attract fee paying day students and will provide urgently needed revenue for the school.

The total cost including the fit-out of the school, library, science lab and English training school is US\$520,000.

To date Child Impact has raised \$250,000.

DOUBLE YOUR DONATION
Child Impact has a donor who will match your donation dollar for dollar. The matching grant applies to all donations large and small.

“This is a special school that serves a poor community including over 50 orphans. The need for the classrooms, library and science lab is critical to children graduating. The English training school will provide critical revenue for the school.”
Child Impact CEO Jim Rennie



Please help!

Mail: Mark donation 'Bangladesh building fund' and post to Child Impact International, PO Box 763, Ooltewah, TN 37363
Phone: Call 423 910-0667
Email: support@childimpact.org
On line: www.childimpact.org

BY GABRIELA PHILLIPS

This Church Knows

Following the news of the March 15, 2019, massacre at a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand, we reached out to our Muslim neighbors. The following is what happened during one of those visits.—Author.

As I walked into Jamila’s home, I knew something was seriously wrong. Her usually cheerful self was hiding under puffy eyes and a somber mood. I did not see any of her colorful Kurdish outfits, just black—black robe, black shoes, black memories from a past that, as a refugee, she wanted to keep buried.

Since the mosque mass shootings in New Zealand three days before, her locked-tight grief and fear suddenly now ran loose, untamed. When words failed her, a flood of tears came to her rescue. She has three sons and feared for all of them.

“One of the victims was the son of Jannah, a well-known calligrapher, and there are victims from Pakistan, Iraq, Syria . . .” The list went on before she paused to gasp for breath. Her younger son came and quietly and tenderly hugged her.

Wishing to say something soothing, I finally spoke. “Sister, all over the world there are many people hurting with you over what happened, even if they seem silent. As believers, we recognize that all humans are given breath by God before they belong to any religion or nationality. But if we allow terrorists to poison our hearts and make us afraid, then they win. The purpose of terrorism is to instill terror. To poison our children to believe that we cannot live together.”

I continued: “As people of faith, we stand shoulder to shoulder together before the same Creator and Father of all. We ask God to replace fear with His love, so that every time one of us [is attacked], we come closer to each other. Then *Shaytan* [Satan] loses.”

Jamila agreed: “We cannot let the terrorists win.”

Our friend Fatima was with us, and told Jamila that we had talked about this very thing earlier in the afternoon, at our monthly gathering of Adventists and Muslims. At this gathering we typically eat, deepen friendships, and share stories

of Jesus. But that day a group of teens from the South Bay Seventh-day Adventist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee, joined us on behalf of their congregation. Led by Nicole Parker, an elder’s wife, and Faith Anderson, the pastor’s wife, the teens brought a handwritten poster board with the words: “We Are One Community.” Many hearts, signatures, and hope-filled comments such as “Love will win” surrounded their message. During the gathering Nicole said they would stand side by side with our local Muslims. She rejected violence in no uncertain terms.

Even though Jamila and her family had not attended our gathering this time, someone had already reported to her in great detail. But she had missed an important point. “Gaby,” Jamila said, “I know that your family and [some others] love us, but what about other American people? Can they see that we are here to enrich them too? Do they accept us?”

Fatima nodded as Jamila continued: “We perceive a very strong anti-foreign sentiment . . . can they see that we came to add, not to subtract?”

Both Fatima and I had pictures from our earlier gathering, so I pulled out my phone and said, “This church knows. Look at these young people.

They are growing up with another mentality. They came to say that as people of faith they recognize your value and want to tell your children that fear will not win. These are also Americans.”

Jamila wiped her tears, called her younger son and her nephew, and told them in Arabic what I said. Showing them the picture and pointing to the poster board, she said with a soft smile, “These people want us here. They love us.”

Gabriela Phillips is the North American Division coordinator for Adventist-Muslim Relations.

As people of faith, we stand shoulder to shoulder together before the same Creator and Father of all.



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