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Adventist Journey

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My Journey

I never attended summer camp as a kid, and never lived in a dormitory as a student. This was never a part of the plan. But through a number of directional changes in my Christian journey, we ended up here. . . . The Lord and I have a long-term agreement that I will do what He asks me to do.

Visit nadadventist.org/ajglenmilam for more of Milam's story

GLEN MILAM,
Mount Aetna Retreat Center director



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!

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Email: AdventistJourney@nadadventist.org | **Web site:** nadadventist.org

ADVENTIST JOURNEY

Editor **Kimberly Luste Maran**

Senior Editorial Assistant **Georgia Damsteegt**

Art Direction & Design **Ellen Musselman / Types & Symbols**

Consultants **G. Earl Knight, Mark Johnson, Dave Weigley, Gary Thurber, John Freedman, Ricardo Graham, Ron C. Smith, Carlos Craig**

Executive Editor, *Adventist World* **Bill Knott**

Notice: The next *Adventist Journey* will be a combined July/August edition and should arrive in your home by mid-July.

NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH THE GENERATIONS

An online children's Sabbath School program expands ministry in a California church.

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

Virtual pancake breakfasts, Vacation Bible School, Lego video stories and Bible studies, family skits, and outdoor learning segments are just the tip of the iceberg for the virtual program at Corona Seventh-day Adventist Church in California. This church, already producing a quarterly multigenerational Sabbath School experience before the COVID-19 pandemic, expanded its program into a full, weekly online worship experience. And the beauty of each program produced is not only the creativity employed in the various segments. It's also about seeing the interaction between some of the youngest congregants (think toddlers), their siblings, parents, and even grandparents.



During the Corona Seventh-day Adventist Church Kids Worship Service on April 17, 2021, children and parents lead song service with "This Little Light of Mine."

“We are nurturing relationships through the generations,” said Kelly Pick, children’s ministries director for the Corona church. “I have seen so many relationships grow through this ministry. Adults are watching what’s happening with children’s ministries, they see the value these kids are adding to the church family, and often the adults want to be part of it.” She shared with me the ins and outs of their broadcast, and offered tips for other churches that might be considering an online multigenerational experience for their members.

Tell me about your church’s Sabbath School program. It is a children’s program, but you’ve incorporated an innovative, multigenerational approach.

“Innovative” is the word of the day since everything started happening with COVID-19. We’ve had to figure out how to take our discipleship to an online method that was still as personal as it is face to face in the classrooms. I’m sure you know how difficult that is—sitting in front of a TV with a clicker in your hand is a recipe for, you know, ‘Am I going to be engaged or not?’ So, to engage kids personally was one of the first things we had to figure out how to do. Before that, we had to figure out how to educate ourselves in the virtual world—all the platforms and all of the media technology that comes with pulling an online Sabbath School together.

In making it personal, we had to figure out how to make it so that the kids are engaged watching a virtual service on the TV in their own living rooms. And so what we decided was: “Let’s do a Zoom Sabbath School for the older kids, and use everyone, all the kids, and families, for a kids’ worship service—that’s going to be their Sabbath School.”

So we have a kids’ worship service every Sabbath. We’ve tailored our



Kelly Pick, children’s ministries director for the Corona church in California, cheerfully greets the audience during the April 17, 2021, kids’ program.

curriculum; we use a curriculum that makes it possible for every classroom to study the same lesson. Even the parents are in a class studying the same lesson as their kids. We took all of that and tailored it so that kids lead this family worship service. Kids like watching kids, kids learn from kids, so we had to make it interesting enough to where, when a child is watching a virtual service, they’re going to stay engaged.

You started this online program before the pandemic. In what ways has COVID-19 impacted the way you deliver the program?

In a very special way, this has made discipleship for these families more accessible. I write out, based on our curriculum, segments of what I think the child participant can do, then I contact the parents so they can review/study the material and help their child film it. Through this process you can see how discipleship is back in the home, back in the hands of the parent—they’re taking this study, and the parents say, ‘My child is going to be teaching online,’ so they help their child do the best they can with what they’ve been given to film. They send it back to me, and then we start putting it all into our movie-making software and stitch-

Our church has the mindset that everyone is valuable, everyone’s a part of this family, and everyone can do something. Everyone can help.

ing it all together to make one big worship service. Of course, we’re at the mercy of all the parents’ smartphones, but overall, it has been such an incredible experience.

Did you have to recruit families to participate; and how long does it take to put the program together?

It takes about four days to put a worship service together, and then from there it goes into the editing process, where it is all stitched together with the entry logo. And then we upload onto our social media platforms.

Going back to your question about contacting the families: it has been really easy because we’ve been doing the children’s program for a long, long time. Our kids have been

leading a quarterly children's church for many years. It's always been our ministry mindset to have kids lead kids.

The kids do children's church, and the families and ministry leaders mentor them and help them with what they're going to do: how to present, and learning who can present what. If you know your members, you know their skills and their gifts, so when you get the phone call from a parent who wants their child to participate, you can more easily decide together what presentation will work best for them. Every week the parents text me, asking me if their kids can take part. They know they too have a hand in it, so it's pretty amazing.

As relationships and that family feeling through a virtual service develops, who is benefiting the most and why?

Everyone! Especially the parents! What parent doesn't want to see their child acting out their faith? The children think it's so much fun to be able to teach Jesus to all their friends. They are also benefited by having their friends see them "on TV." There's ministry to their own children, themselves, and others—they're actively participating, not just dropping them off in our classroom.

I think our program has really grown the families. I have seen so many relationships grow through this. We have adults that are watching what's happening with these kids' and children's ministries, and it's interesting to see that the adults want to be a part of it too. The Corona church is a family church. We've been growing together for years. We have the mindset that everyone is valuable, everyone's a part of this family, and everyone can do something. Everyone can help.

This type of interactivity didn't just start online. As you've mentioned, you've been growing as a community for years.

When we are in person and do things together, the adults will come up to



This past spring, a teen church member from the Corona Seventh-day Adventist Church plays "special music" during the weekly children's online worship service.

the kids, call them by name, and talk to them. And the kids light up because of these interactions. They'll say, "Oh, hey, that's that guy who came into our classroom and pretended to be Moses in costume, and he was so good." Our church family is very mission-minded as well. We've been doing multigenerational mission trips for more than 25 years. A group of 40 to 50 of us have been going on long-distance mission trips to many places: Africa, India, and all over South America. During these trips we spend two weeks together, all ages, and you know what that's like: you come back, and you're just completely bonded.

You come back and share this love, this experience, with the rest of the church, and now they're drawn in. This is the mindset of our church. Every generation is so involved. I know it's Spirit-led.

What is some advice you could give church groups that are looking for ways to be more multigenerational with their Sabbath School programming?

It's harder being multigenerational virtually, but it can be done. You're going to have to get creative and think outside the box. Involving parents, grandparents, and adults of all ages as special guests in skits and lessons with the kids doing the leading is always fun. I would also recommend doing a park day or something where people can socially distance and be together.

Last summer our church did a virtual Vacation Bible School, and a lot of the segments were recorded by our children's ministries leaders, pastor, and youth. And they stitched it all together into a program that was well received.

Once a quarter we try to hold a children's ministries Sabbath School pancake breakfast, usually in person. We all meet together for Sabbath School and have pancakes together in our fellowship hall. There's a segment of that where we put the Sabbath School teaching in the parents' hands at the tables, and right there the parents do Sabbath School with their kids.

During the pandemic, we've done it virtually, announcing, "OK, it's Pancake Sabbath; everyone make your pancakes, and then we'll eat our pancakes as if we're together." Then they send us their videos of eating their pancakes while watching the kids' virtual service.

Whatever you do, make sure that you try to involve every age in your church. You might be surprised what a 2-year-old can do! Everyone has value in the family, so make a place for them and involve them.

Kimberly Luste Maran is editor of Adventist Journey. Visit <https://www.facebook.com/watch/CoronaSDAChurch/> to see program videos.

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MONDAY – AUGUST 2, 2021	
8:30 AM – 9:30 AM	Welcome and Announcements
9:30 AM – 12:30 PM	Urban Mission and Ministry: Jesus in the City
12:30 PM – 1:30 PM	LUNCH
1:30 PM – 3:30 PM	Ministering Cross-Culturally – Part I
3:45 PM – 5:45 PM	Ministering Cross-Culturally – Part II
TUESDAY – AUGUST 3, 2021	
8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	Devotion/Announcements
9:00 AM – 10:15 AM	Standards for Excellence – Nonprofit Sector
10:30 AM – 12:30 PM	Conflict Management
12:30 PM – 1:30 PM	LUNCH
1:30 PM – 3:30 PM	Human Resources and Volunteer Engagement
3:45 PM – 5:45 PM	Marketing and Communication
WEDNESDAY – AUGUST 4, 2021	
8:30 AM – 9:30 AM	Devotion/Announcements
9:30 AM – 12:30 PM	Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation

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2021 eHUDDLE REDEFINES ADVENTIST EVANGELISM IN NORTH AMERICA, EXAMINES CHURCH GROWTH PATTERNS

BY MYLON MEDLEY

A two-day clergy professional development conference organized by the Ministerial Association of the North American Division (NAD) explored the definition of Adventist evangelism, highlighted challenges in achieving church growth, showcased innovative examples of service, and provided guidance for the new and evolving realities created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The sixth annual “eHuddle,” or “evangelism huddle,” which is the gathering of the division’s evangelism visioning and leadership team, was held virtually March 8-9, 2021. The event was broadcasted live from the NAD headquarters in Columbia, Maryland.

Ivan Williams, director of the NAD Ministerial Association, and two of his associate directors, Jose Cortes, Jr., and Dave Gemmell, led and moderated various presentations and sessions while attendees and the majority of the

presenters attended via Facebook Live and Zoom. Interactivity was strongly encouraged throughout the event. The Ministerial Association leaders asked for engagement via chat features in both Facebook Live and Zoom, and ran polls in every session to gauge knowledge on certain topics or assess significant ministry needs.

“It is a privilege to talk about what God is doing in the NAD, how He’s winning people . . . and how He’s using us,” said Williams.

G. Alexander Bryant, president of the North American Division, echoed the observation and set the tone for the conference during his welcoming remarks. He acknowledged the challenges and lessons learned from carrying out ministry during the COVID-19 pandemic, and offered words of encouragement to attendees.

“I’m amazed at all the stories I’ve heard of how God’s mission has continued to go forward,” said Bryant. “Together in mission we can multiply the ministry of Christ, and thousands will respond to His voice.”

Evangelism and Multiplying

The anchoring theme for eHuddle was “Multiply,” which is also the quinquennial strategic focus for the Ministerial Association. Multiply is also a focus of the division’s 2021-2025 strategy that falls under “Together in Mission.” “Multiply” aims



Ivan Williams, director of the NAD Ministerial Association, and Dave Gemmell, associate director, lead a session during the 2021 eHuddle.
Pieter Damsteegt

to activate discipleship among members that will in turn create more disciples and encourage churches that plant additional churches.

The biblical inspiration for “Multiply” can be found in Acts 12, where there are accounts of persecution toward Jesus’ earliest followers, including the imprisonment of Peter. However, in the midst of tremendous challenges “the word of God continued to spread and flourish” (verse 24, NIV).

The format around the 2021 eHuddle was largely centered on a newly revised definition of what it means for Adventist ministers and lay leaders to evangelize within the NAD territory. The definition, presented by Cortes, is to “reach, reclaim, and retain the people of North America with Jesus’ mission and message of compassion, hope, and wholeness.”

Within this definition of evangelism lies six components: love, serve, baptize, equip, plant, and revitalize. Six of eHuddle’s eight sessions were dedicated to an individual element of evangelism through presentations given by multiple pastors and church leaders who had inspirational testimonies.

Tracking Growth and Loss

Kyoshin Ahn, NAD executive secretary, highlighted statistical challenges related to attrition and loss, growth rates, and church culture within the division.

Ahn shared that while the church has annually added three new members for every 100 members during the past 10 years, approximately 120,000 members have gone missing or requested to be removed from membership over the same period.

Although the numbers can be discouraging, Ahn said true hope and guidance comes from God.

“When we see these challenges, it’s a reminder that we need to go

back to where we began our journey and refresh ourselves with the core message of the gospel, which is Christ crucified. Christ is the power and wisdom of God,” said Ahn, referencing 1 Corinthians 1:23, 24.

Pastoring in the New Normal

One major focal point of eHuddle was understanding the new realities of church life as the nation moves toward the end of the coronavirus pandemic. Sam Reiner, president of Church Answers, an organization that creates resources to help strengthen churches, believes that this year may present more challenges for church leaders than last year—when the pandemic was at its peak. He predicts denominations will see their steepest decline, with a movement toward “neighborhood churches” as more people have become hesitant of gathering in crowds.

“Nationwide, attendance and giving are down. Very few churches have grown during the past year,” said Reiner. “Further, people have developed new routines and habits that no longer include church.” Reiner says that in addition, there is much uncertainty of how the nation’s economic recovery will impact churches. Pastors are also experiencing burn-out and “decision fatigue.”

Reiner also believes there are many ways this year will be a better year for the church experience. “People are more flexible than they’ve ever been. The core membership is stronger than ever, and accelerated changes mean mission replaces preferences,” said Reiner.

Encountering Conspiracy Theories

Another key emphasis of eHuddle was equipping pastors and church leaders on how to confront the spread of conspiracy theories among congregants. This topic was

presented by Ed Stetzer, the chair of church, mission, and evangelism at Wheaton College, and executive director of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College. Stetzer is also a repeat presenter, having addressed the first eHuddle in 2016.

“Conspiracy theories substantially harm Christian witness,” said Stetzer. “Jesus says He’s the way, truth, and life. As people of the truth, we want to make sure we have congregations that reflect and share that truth.”

“Pastors need to see this as a fight for discipleship,” Stetzer added. “Those who spread conspiracy theories are trying to disciple people away from the gospel and are co-opting the mission.”

Additional Resources

The ministerial team announced a number of resources and upcoming events that are geared toward empowering ministry leaders. The *Best Practices* podcasts became available on March 8 on all major podcasting platforms. The three shows under the umbrella of *Best Practices* includes “The Leadership Effect,” with Ivan Williams; “Adventist Ministry,” with Dave Gemmell; and “Multiply,” with Jose Cortes, Jr.

“eHuddle means ‘evangelism huddle,’ but it can also mean ‘everyone huddle.’ Evangelism cannot happen without everyone. Without you, without our church members, this cannot happen,” said Cortes. “We got together in the midst of the pandemic to talk about the things God wants to do through us, so we can go back into this game to win for God’s honor and glory. The game is won when we bring people in touch with Jesus.”

Mylon Medley is an assistant director of communication for the North American Division.

NAD NEWS BRIEFS

ADVENTIST BIOGRAPHY SERIES PROJECT CHANGES EDITORS

Denis Kaiser, Ph.D., has been named the new editor of the ongoing Adventist Biography Series, one of the most ambitious publishing projects in Seventh-day Adventist history. Kaiser is a specialist in Adventist history and a professor at the Seventh-day Adventist

Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan. He will be assuming leadership of the series with the retirement of George Knight, Ph.D., who has served as series editor for the past 20 years.

The Adventist Biography Series provides an understanding of Seventh-day

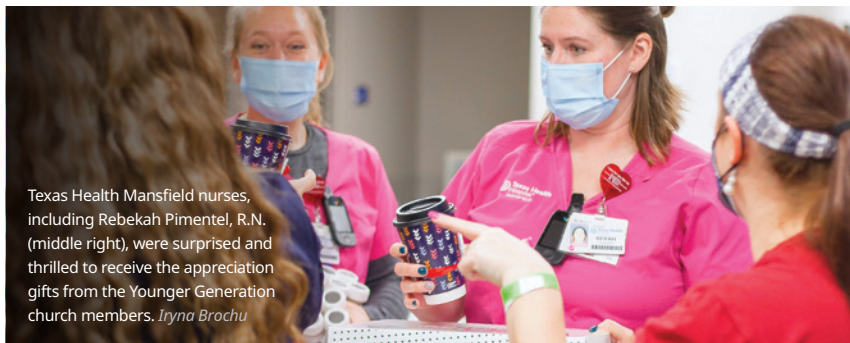
Adventist history through biographies of the prominent men and women who have shaped the church through the years from its beginnings. The first volume in the series (2003) featured James White, and the latest (2019) deals with J. N. Andrews. Future biographies are planned for early figures such as J. V. Himes, William Miller, and W. C. White, as well as for more contemporary figures, including Edward Heppenstall, Anna Knight, and L. R. Conradi.

The biography series is unprecedented in its breadth and scope. Volumes are based upon thorough research by some of the denomination's foremost historians, with every biography years in the making. Through the lives of these "movers and shakers" readers will gain fresh insights into what it meant on a personal level to live and work as an Adventist during different eras of the church's evolution.

"The Adventist Biography Series is important not only as a historical record of our church's past," said Dale Galusha, president of Pacific Press Publishing Association. "It is also a fascinating picture of real men and women who struggled, as we do, to find their way through difficult issues. . . . We can learn important lessons for our own lives as we read their experiences."

The Adventist Biography Series started at the Review and Herald Publishing Association, and continues at Pacific Press. Visit www.adventistbookcenter.com/aps for more information.

—Pacific Press Publishing Association



Texas Health Mansfield nurses, including Rebekah Pimentel, R.N. (middle right), were surprised and thrilled to receive the appreciation gifts from the Younger Generation church members. *Iryna Brochu*

Young Adults in Texas Show Gratitude for Health-Care Workers

It started with gratitude: a simple idea to acknowledge and appreciate the dedication of health-care workers who serve all of us. Faith Rivera, a young adult at Younger Generation church (YG) in Arlington, Texas, pitched the idea of offering Valentine's appreciation gifts to all the frontliners at Texas Health Mansfield.*

"I wanted to start this project to thank the health-care workers for all they do day in and day out," shared Rivera.

With the help from students at Burton Adventist Academy, YG collected personal, heartfelt notes and letters from students thanking frontline workers for all they continue to do to keep others safe and healthy. The notes were added to a collection of goodies, including warm drinks, sweets, and Krispy Kreme doughnuts in store for the hospital employees.

The February snow and ice storms only temporarily postponed the young adults' efforts, who arrived the following week at Texas Health Mansfield and went from floor to floor, unit to unit, sharing their gratitude.

"These past few months have been challenging for us with COVID-19, the winter storm, and opening a new hospital," admitted Kimberly Pieper, executive assistant to the president of Texas Health Mansfield. "Having YG come by and bring goodies brought a smile to our faces. We appreciate their support and their kindness."

* Texas Health Mansfield is a joint venture of Texas Health and AdventHealth.

—Kayla Goodman, Southwestern Adventist University religion major, Younger Generation church pastoral intern



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DO NOT PANIC

Name:
Jason Inanga

Location:
Dallas, Texas

Profession:
Courier

Many Adventists in North America have worked and are working in essential roles during the COVID-19 pandemic. In several magazine editions we will share, in their own words, glimpses into some of their lives. We thank them and many others for their service, and encourage our readers to pray for them.—Editors.

What has been the toughest part of the past year?

I was classified as an essential worker during the COVID-19 pandemic, as we couriers are vital to both the U.S. and global supply chains. Having to go into work was tough for several reasons.

1. The fear of coming home with the virus and negatively impacting my wife and children.
2. The very real fear of unknowingly handling a package that may have been in an environment where the virus has been present.
3. Driving past shut businesses and realizing the economic impact is real.
4. I have missed the physical church experience.

How has your work impacted your life during the pandemic? How has it changed?

My company had to adapt to dynamic changes because of the growth and demand of e-commerce. So I now find myself working six days a week, with a day off each Saturday. This increase to my workload during the pandemic now has me paying greater attention to healthful eating and living. I do not take

My faith has played a big part in keeping me calm.

on stress, and I thank God that I have been able to show my coworkers how to maintain a positive attitude in all things. Many people are going through stress during the pandemic, so I try to put a smile on the faces of coworkers and customers alike. I also cherish every moment I am able to spend with my wife and children.

Where do you get your strength?

I get my strength from God as well as from having a supportive wife and children. My faith has played a big part in keeping



↑ Jason Inanga is a FedEx courier living and working in Dallas, Texas.

me calm, and in learning to trust and believe the Word of God. I've been able to use it as an opportunity to remind people (non-Christians) that life is real and that we are living to see the fulfillment of prophecy.

What do you want people to know from your experience?

Apart from prayer, my other line of defense has been paying more attention to hygiene. Again, I want people to recognize that life is real! Do not take it for granted. Psalm 46:1 tells us that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Tests and trials will come our way. Do not panic. There is always a solution to situations that we face.

BY MELISSA REID

The Promise to Be Forgotten

Recently I listened to a podcast that contemplated the “right to be forgotten.” The episode featured the staff at a medium market newspaper who were grappling with the balance between relevant media coverage and an individual’s right to privacy. Because of the longevity of the Internet and the paper’s extensive online archives, local residents’ minor legal offenses haunted them years after they had paid their fine, served their probation, or even had their court records expunged.

During the past several years, the paper had received an increasing number of pleas from individuals begging for a decades-old news mention to be removed from their website.

Pre-Internet, someone would have had to spend countless hours in a library combing through pages and pages of microfiche to unearth such references. Now they were accessible in a matter of a few keystrokes. Adults’ teenage transgressions were the first thing that popped up when potential employers searched their name online. People who had played a minimal role in a salacious, yet years-passed incident now had their name forever entwined with the embarrassing event.

The discussion—appropriate media coverage versus disproportionate long-term consequences—brought to mind the absolutely counter-culture character of our Heavenly Father: “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins” (Isa. 43:25).*

We think the Internet has a lengthy shelf life, but our Creator is omniscient. He knows everything: past, present, and future. Our blunders that are public and the ones that are private. The times we were “caught” and the times we “got away” with our misdeeds. What’s more, our offenses against humankind are corresponding offenses against God Himself (1 John 4:20). If anyone has the right to hold us eternally accountable, it’s God. And yet He assures us, “I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more” (Heb. 8:12).

It’s hard to wrap our finite minds around the amazing grace of our Savior, particularly given society’s new obsession with “cancel culture.” Redemption is a gift we do not deserve, but we’re encouraged to both accept and extend toward others. We are not to dwell on forgiven transgressions (ours or our brothers’); rather, as Paul counseled the Philippians, we are to forget what lies behind and strain forward to what lies ahead. Our focus should not be on self (or other) condemnation. Instead, we are enjoined to be pressing on “toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14).

The newsroom profiled in the podcast I listened to found itself often sympathetic to the entreaties of people whose one-time mention in a long-ago news story continued to stain their reputation. It established a staff committee to consider these “requests to be forgotten” on a case-by-case basis, which I think is reasonable given the earthly context.

But as a Christ follower, I am profoundly grateful for the pardoning blood of our Redeemer. I cling to the promise that “there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). His unmerited crucifixion on Calvary is substitution for the judgment I rightly deserve. His spotlessness covers my iniquity, and I can rejoice that “as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us” (Ps. 103:12).

I am profoundly grateful for the pardoning blood of our Redeemer.

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Melissa Reid is an associate director of the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department for the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In this role she advocates for the religious interests of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its members on Capitol Hill.

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