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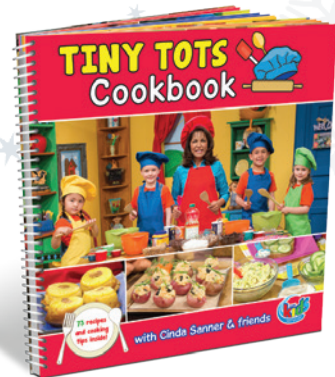


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# Adventist Journey

<b>Contents</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>Feature</b> <i>“We’re Here to Help People”</i>	<b>10</b>	<b>NAD News Briefs</b>
	<b>09</b>	<b>NAD Update</b> <i>Charles E. Bradford: A Spiritual Giant Among Us</i>	<b>13</b>	<b>Perspective</b> <i>Sharing the Culture of Stewardship</i>

## My Journey

Camp ministry was not originally my calling. It was not on my radar. I had a job in our family construction business, so once I took this job—that was my real introduction to camp ministry. I realized what camp ministry actually meant: It’s a way of doing ministry when you’re not the pastor. It’s a ministry for the rest of us.

See page 4 for some of Allen’s story; visit [nadadventist.org/ajbobballen](http://nadadventist.org/ajbobballen) for more.

**ROBERT “BOB” ALLEN,**  
*Southwest Region Conference Lone Star Camp  
and Retreat Center manager, Athens, Texas*



Cover photo by Pieter Damsteegt

**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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## ADVENTIST JOURNEY

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# “We’re Here to Help People”



Lone Star Camp manager shares his story, and what it means to run a camp that helps fill more than one need.

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

**G**od, if You want me to go down there, I have no problem with it. If You want me to leave everything I know, if You want me to leave my family business and all the things and all the friends I have in this area, and move to Texas, away from everyone—to take on a job that I’ve never done, that I’m not quite sure about—I’ll do it.”

This was Robert “Bob” Allen’s prayer eight years ago as he and his wife contemplated leaving their lives and jobs in New York for camp ministry in Texas. He worked for the family contractor business his father had started. Allen, his sister, and brother-in-law had been discussing the takeover of the business when they got a job building a welcome center at the Hiram Edson barn near Clifton Springs, New York. Allen, a husband and father, began to draw closer to God, recognizing that he needed a closer relationship with Him. As Allen worked, he felt a stir in his soul. “I started seeing a glimpse of wanting to work for God more, instead of just trying to fit it in.”

Allen had become a deacon in his local church, and although he was very busy, it wasn’t enough. He prayed to God, “How can I become full-time for You? How can I do more for You?” Shortly after this, he received a phone call from Helvis Moody, Southwest Region Conference youth and young adult ministries director, asking Allen if he’d be interested in a job as camp manager. In Texas. A place Allen and his wife, who was just transitioning from a vet tech to a nurse as she worked to finish her nursing degree, had talked about living.

After several months of miraculous experiences and lots of prayer, the couple visited Lone Star Camp and



Retreat Center. “I loved the campground,” said Allen. “It just all of a sudden started feeling like home.”

It wasn’t all smooth terrain, however, as Allen felt anxiety creep in as he tossed and turned one night after the camp visit. Could they afford the move, and the reduction of income? Feeling attacked, he prayed, and asked others to pray as the couple contemplated their next steps. God answered their prayers with just enough salary—and several miracle grocery store gift cards—to pave the way as they made the move. Allen, camp manager, greets every day of work with gratitude and a spirit of service.

“The campground is all about the ministry, about helping people,” said Allen. “If we lose sight of that, there’s no point in us having it. It’s not just about the facility, it’s about helping people by providing a place where they can get away from their chaos, the craziness of their lives—and where they lose sight of what it means to have a relationship with God. We [can help] them by providing a safe place to get away and spend time hearing God’s voice.”

In addition to space to relax, enjoy nature, and hold meetings, the camp provides church services on Sabbath. “Everyone is welcome to come up to the gymnasium and do a church service with us,” Allen shared. “And to have that exposure that they normally wouldn’t have—because when they’re here, they tend to listen. It’s another aspect of outreach.”

“We’re here to do ministry, we’re here to help people,” reiterated Allen.

← Bob Allen manages the Lone Star Camp in Athens, Texas, which is pictured here.

→ Derrick Wiltz, a Hurricane Ida evacuee from New Orleans, Louisiana, walks down to the camp lake with his family to fish and relax. *All photos by Pieter Damsteegt*



## Hurricane Ida

That is the purpose of the Lone Star Camp and Retreat Center as a variety of groups use the facilities. “We get Adventist groups from our conference that come through here,” said Allen. “Adventist groups of other conferences, union events; and we also get groups that are outside of the Adventist Church. We are that safe haven where people can go and realize that they have somewhere to get away from their normal, daily lives, that constant chaos.”

Allen explained that the camp is prepared every year to welcome people who evacuate their homes when bad weather makes it a necessity. “At least every other year we work with Adventist Community Services to provide shelter to those who need it,” he said. “With Hurricane Ida we took in evacuees who were coming not just from the everyday chaos of life, but out of fear, or from something that may be devastating to everything they own.”

“The Lone Star campsite is just a little ways from New Orleans,” explained W. Derrick Lea, North American Division Adventist Community Services director. “This particular campground has been made available for individuals who can no longer stay in their homes because of lack of power and sewage [services]. We [brought] people in from southern Louisiana.” In the first few days after Ida touched down, about 75 people were at the camp, as some wrapped up their stays to make room for those needing shelter. Nearly 60 people have already sought shelter at the camp.

“We have eight cabins and six dormitories that we’ve opened up, and we have a gymnasium and cafeteria that we can open as well,” said Allen. “We’re here to do

ministry, we’re here to help people. We’re here to serve . . . for as long [as needed].”

“We’re not really sure how long this is going to take,” agreed Lea. “This particular camp will be open to those that need a place of refuge. We’re providing lodging, food, and activities for the children. . . . We are grateful for what the leadership of this conference, and this camp in particular, are doing for and offering to the members of the community.”

Carlton P. Byrd, Southwest Region Conference president, agreed. “We have free food, free lodging, and air-conditioning here; and most important, God’s Spirit and His presence are also here,” he said. “We have heard that it could be . . . three weeks, three months, before full power is restored in southern Louisiana and water is available to everyone. With that in mind, we solicit the prayers of everyone. . . . We’re not asking the persons who have evacuated for anything; we’re just saying, ‘Come.’”

And that’s what Derrick Wiltz and his family did. He was 18 years old when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans; with Ida he did not hesitate to prepare his family for a long-term evacuation. According to Wiltz, his family was welcomed with open arms at Lone Star Camp. “We ended up here about 5:00 in the morning, and [when] we got here . . . it felt like home. Going from hotel to hotel is uncomfortable—and it costs a large amount of money,” he said. “I’m grateful that we chose to come here instead. I’ve been blessed here, and we’ve been able to relax—God [is] here.”

## Present and Future

“We want to grow the campground, to help come up with ideas of how to expand it, and how to make that happen, as well as continue dealing with the groups that are coming through,” said Allen as he looks to the future.

“My job is everything from growth of the campground, remodels, builds, plunging toilets, cleaning up areas—anything that has to happen here is my job. That’s just camp ministry,” he said. “My gift, which I learned later on in life, is to be able to provide the facility for people to come in and rest. And I can help them. You can say I’m the deacon here at the camp.”

Allen said that coming to Texas to serve as a camp director changed the trajectory of his life. And he has no regrets. “People asked me, ‘Do you know what you’re giving up? You’re giving up everything that you know, all of your friends, your family who’s still in the area, and the security of a job that makes good money!’”

“But working at camp, it’s not about the money. You have to have an entirely different focus. It’s about doing ministry. And so it changes your outlook on what success is,” he added. “You have to basically throw out [what the world] says is success to work camp ministry, or any kind of ministry, really. Ministry is not about money. Ministry is about serving.”

“And that’s what we do here. The entire purpose is to serve others. That’s what we do.”

*Kimberly Luste Maran is editor of Adventist Journey.*



# A SPIRITUAL GIANT AMONG US

Charles E. Bradford, first NAD president, passes to his rest.

**C**harles Edward Bradford, first president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America (NAD), passed away on Thursday, September 9, 2021, in Huntsville, Alabama, after more than half a century of ministry. He was 96.

Bradford joined the NAD after serving as associate secretary of the General Conference (GC) from 1970 to 1979. In 1979 Bradford was elected to succeed Neal C. Wilson, who had served as a vice president in the GC with responsibility for North America—which was officially recognized as one of the church’s world divisions after Bradford took the helm. Wilson moved on to become president of the General Conference.

Not only was Bradford the first NAD president, serving as leader of the fledgling division—he was the first African American to serve in that role. He and his administrative team were instrumental in the NAD’s development toward functioning as a division territory of the Adventist Church. Described as a “company man working for the Lord,” He served as NAD president until 1990.

As shared in a recent tribute video,\* Bradford wrote, “The most urgent theological task before us today is to understand what the church is all about and model it—make it visible” (from *The King Is in Residence*). Known for his theological prowess as well as his leadership expertise, Bradford often recognized that the local church is at the core of the gospel work.

During a special interview with Bradford and his wife, Ethel, at the 2017 NAD year-end meeting, Bradford spoke passionately about the local church. He said, “Everything is contained in the small little egg of the [local] church. Love those people, respect them, know how to talk to them!” Bradford added, “Don’t think the early church was perfect . . . The church is made up of human individuals. But God is working with us.”



Charles E. Bradford

## Adventist Influence

One of eight children, Bradford was born in Washington, D.C., on July 12, 1925, to Etta and Robert Bradford. Etta Littlejohn, born in Mississippi, became an Adventist from attending Bible studies on the *Morning Star* riverboat, and was one of the first 16 students to attend Oakwood College (now Oakwood University) in Huntsville, Alabama, in 1896. There she met Robert Bradford, from Alabama, who was part of a group of early Black Adventist ministers who provided a solid foundation for Adventism among African Americans.

Bradford’s decision to go into ministry was influenced by his attendance at Oakwood College, specifically Oakwood’s Friday night ministerial “seminars” and seeing his fellow classmates receiving the call from God to go into ministry. He finished at Oakwood in 1946, and started his pastoral ministry that June in the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference. In 1947 he became the pastor of the Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and later pastored a church in Monroe, part of the Southwestern Mission, which became the Southwest Region Conference in 1949.

He married Ethel McKenzie on May 23, 1948, and the two of them continued in ministry at Baton Rouge, Lake Charles, Hammond, and Covington churches. They were married for more than 73 years and raised three children. Before they wed, Ethel was an administrative assistant for the South Atlantic Conference, a charter staff member for the conference when it began in 1946.

As the couple moved to various ministry assignments in more than seven different cities, Ethel worked at Southern Adventist University, the Federal Housing Administration, several conferences, and at the North American Division. Bradford said, "She is the great joy of my life . . . I can't say enough about Ethel."

For 15 years he served in Louisiana and New York City. During this period he began perfecting a folksy yet highly intellectual oratorical style that would become his trademark.

### Visionary Leadership

"Charles Edward Bradford was anointed by God to be an exemplary leader in all the major phases of gospel ministry. By faithful obedience to God's calling he dignified ministerial endeavor, elevated laity confidence, and left the church a better place," said Calvin Rock, retired vice president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and former colleague and nephew of Bradford.

According to Trevor O'Reggio, chair of Andrews University's Church History Department, Bradford was noted for his "bold and courageous stance on issues that were considered controversial. He excoriated the church for its position on the issue of race, drawing upon the counsels of Ellen G. White to buttress his case. He challenged the church to reach out to African Americans of the inner cities and to implement remedial action to alleviate their suffering. He raised serious questions about the fairness of the Adventist financial structure relative to the regional conferences. He urged the church to employ more Black Adventist youth and set up scholarships for them."

"Brad's approach to leadership was about empowerment," said Harold L. Lee, close friend and

"Charles Edward Bradford left the church a better place."

author of *Brad: Visionary Spiritual Leadership*, a biography written with Monte Sahlin about Bradford's life of ministry and servant leadership. "He firmly believed in servant leadership—and the type of church structure that would nurture new leaders. He encouraged those in leadership to never forget that they serve the local church."

While Bradford still kept close to the local church with pastoring through the years, he moved into leadership roles in several conferences before becoming president, at age 36, of the Lake Region Conference in 1961. Under his leadership the conference membership grew by 80 percent. In a decade of racial upheaval in the U.S., Bradford directed Lake Region's churches, most in urban areas with large Black populations, to meet the needs of their communities in practical ways with a special focus on strengthening the Black family.

Within the church Bradford privately and publicly prodded church members to address the racial crisis. In 1964, while president of the Lake Region Conference, he wrote a letter to then GC president R. R. Figuhr, eloquently and passionately urging him toward a more progressive view of race relations. In 1966 he wrote a paper to the General Conference Session on the great need for the Adventist Church to engage in improving the condition of Blacks in America. Among other things, he stated: "The Negro Seventh-day Adventist is perforce affected by the tension and the drama of his people's struggle for justice and equal rights. Half mea-

asures and token gestures do not satisfy now."

Nine years later Bradford was elected associate secretary of the GC, serving in that role from 1970 until he was elected NAD president in 1979, a historic election reported on in secular newspapers, including the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.

As NAD president, he served as chair of Oakwood's board of trustees. In his retirement the Oakwood University Bradford-Cleveland-Brooks Leadership Center, the brainchild of Bradford as a leadership development "lab" for church leaders, came to fruition—and today serves as a continuing education center, initiated and supported by the North American Division Regional President's Council and Oakwood University, that provides servant leadership development for present and future leaders.



↑ Charles and Ethel Bradford receive special recognition at the North American Division headquarters grand opening on October 26, 2017. Photo by Pieter Damsteegt.



At the 2017 North American Division year-end meeting, Charles and Ethel Bradford pose for a photo with their family during a special moment recognizing Bradford's years of dedicated service to the church. Left to right: Charles Bradford, Jr.; Dwight Bradford; Ethel Bradford; Charles Bradford; and Sharon Lewis. *Photo by Pieter Damsteegt.*

In 1995 he was asked to speak at the General Conference Session in Utrecht, Netherlands, on the subject of women's ordination. Bradford reasoned that if one takes into consideration major biblical doctrines, including salvation, the Holy Spirit, and the church, the ordination of women is in keeping with biblical principles.

Bradford, awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree from Andrews University in 1978, was also a prolific writer. With all the contributions Bradford made to the church, the most significant are arguably his writings on ecclesiology. In addition to numerous articles and letters he wrote, he also authored seven books through his ministry and in retirement, including *Find Out About Prayer*, *The Wit and Wisdom of Charles E. Bradford*, *Sabbath Roots: The African Connection*, and his most recent, *The King Is in Residence*, published in 2017.

As a guest at the 2017 NAD year-end meeting, Bradford had words of wisdom and encouragement for the gathered leaders as he urged them to read Ephesians. "Study what the church really is. We have suffered because we have failed to recognize the depth and the breadth of this people that He called out of darkness into the marvelous light," he said. "We've got to get to know more about it, [learn] how it operated in those

days. We've got to walk in their footsteps and try to understand what is God's future for His church. . . . The church has really been put in charge in the whole world. We are members of the house of God. . . . We're on the board, and we can talk to Jesus."

### A Spiritual Giant

"Elder Bradford was a spiritual giant among us. The impact of his legacy and ministry can never be fully measured or ascertained. It continues in the lives of generations of leaders, pastors, and members who have been influenced and inspired by his life," said G. Alexander Bryant, current NAD president. "He always encouraged us to excel in our God-given talents and assignments."

Bryant added, "Elder Bradford had a rare collection of passion, grace, power, and humility. He made an incalculable impact on our lives, on our church, and on our world. Indeed, a prince of Israel has passed away, but his legacy lives on."

"Elder Bradford was a giant in so many ways—faithful follower of Christ, wonderful preacher, diligent Bible student, dynamic intellect, experienced administrator, caring pastor, loving husband and father, encouraging brother in Christ, longtime friend," shared Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the GC. "As a student and young worker, it was a

privilege to watch the close working relationship and friendship between Elder Bradford and my father. Elder Bradford seemed to always have things under control and had a way about him that, even in difficult situations, you would know that he was thinking three steps ahead of others and, by God's grace, things would work out well to God's glory."

Ron Smith, president of the Southern Union Conference, said, "It is with a sense of deep grief and sadness that we experience the loss of one of the outstanding Seventh-day Adventist leaders of all time. Elder Charles Bradford, a pioneer, consummate preacher, conference president, division president, and chair of multiple institutional boards, leaves an enormous vacancy and gigantic hole in the hearts of myriads of Christians."

"Men and women . . . around the world pause now to examine going forward in church life without Elder Bradford's incessant coaching and inspiration to so many members, church officials, and ministers throughout our church. We will continually intercede for his dear wife, adult children, and members of his family. Our prayer will also embrace the millions of grieving Adventists around the globe," Smith said.

Bradford is survived by his wife, Ethel; three children, Sharon Louise Lewis; Charles, Jr.; and Dwight; three grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren. A memorial service celebrating Bradford's life and ministry was held October 3, 2021, at the Oakwood University church in Huntsville, Alabama.

\* Visit <https://www.nadadventist.org/news/spiritual-giant-among-us> for link to this video and additional videos and articles.

*Kimberly Luste Maran is editor of Adventist Journey; Benjamin Baker, Ph.D., is an Adventist historian.*



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# NAD NEWS BRIEFS



## It Is Written Welcomes New Evangelism Director

**I**t Is Written welcomes Wes Peppers as the ministry's new evangelism director. Peppers replaces Yves Monnier, who accepted a call to serve as the ministerial and evangelism director for the Pennsylvania Conference. Peppers began his new position in August.

Peppers joins It Is Written from the Michigan Conference, where he served for 10 years as pastor, personal ministries director, evangelism coordinator, and associate ministerial director. Peppers also has experience in international media evangelism from his time with Amazing Facts.

"We're thrilled to have Pastor Wes Peppers join our team," said John Bradshaw, It Is Written speaker/director. "He is an unusually gifted speaker and evangelist and has been extremely successful in pastoral and evangelistic ministry, as well as in administration. He has a love for souls that is obvious and infectious. It is a privilege to have someone of his caliber join us at It Is Written."

As evangelism director, Peppers will handle the creation and execution of the master plan of evangelism for It Is Written. Having done mission work in 35 countries, he is ready to lead the evangelism team as It Is Written continues to reach souls around the world with the gospel.

—Cassie Matchim Hernandez, marketing assistant for It Is Written

← Wes Peppers, It Is Written evangelism director

Photo provided by It Is Written

## Hundreds Attend Virtual Conference on Forgiveness

**M**ore than 800 individuals from 78 countries registered for the North American Division Family Ministries virtual conference on July 22-24, 2021. Themed "Forgiveness: Reaching Peace," the conference featured two plenary session speakers, a special panel discussion, and 18 different breakout sessions. Those who registered for the free conference received a digital copy of the Journal on Family Research and Practice from the NAD Family Ministries Department.

The conference, officially titled the 2021 Adventist Conference on Family Research and Practice (ACFRP), is a collaboration between the NAD and General Conference Family Ministries departments and Andrews University.

The event started with an evening keynote session with Everett Worthington, Ph.D., Virginia Commonwealth University psychology professor emeritus, who has published more than 40 books and more than 475 articles.



↑ Fredrick Russell approaches the topic of forgiveness through biblical stories and themes in one of the keynote sessions at the 2021 Adventist Conference on Family Research and Practice. Screenshot/2021 ACFRP



Worthington's first session dealt with explaining several types of forgiveness, including forgiveness in conflicted couples, self-forgiveness, forgiveness and justice (and the way those two are related to each other), forgiveness when offenders are not willing to be accountable, and communicating forgiveness and the role of religion in forgiveness. Worthington offered practical tips for how to deal with each situation.

Another keynote speaker, Pastor Fredrick Russell, approached the topic of forgiveness through biblical stories and themes. In one of his keynote presentations, Russell, principal at the True North Leadership Group, LLC, a global executive leadership, coaching, and management training firm, and former Allegheny West Conference president, shared what practical lessons can be learned through Old Testament Joseph's story, bringing the story further into context by sharing Romans 8:28. He talked about letting go of bitterness and finding a forgiving spirit. "God is always working a bigger plan. And even if you've been hurt, even if people have done things against you and it has caused great pain—God will always take what is meant for evil and bring good because nothing just happens. . . . God is always working the bigger picture in every situation."

The theme for next year's ACFRP is centered on stepfamilies. Speakers will be expert and best-selling author Ron Deal (author of *The Smart Stepfamilies*, and several other books on the same topic), and Elizabeth Talbot, Ph.D., speaker/director of the Jesus 101 Biblical Institute.

—Kimberly Luste Maran, NAD Communication



← Screenshot of youth congress hosts Pax Fordham and Savannah Fortney and NAD Youth Ministries leaders Tracy Wood and Vandeon Griffin at they introduce the Sabbath morning program on August 14, 2021.

## NAD Youth Ministries Holds Three-Day Virtual Youth Congress

The North American Division Youth and Young Adult Ministries Department held a three-day virtual youth congress on August 12-14, 2021. The youth congress, titled "Go Do It," was the first annual youth congress sponsored by the department. The program was held live on-screen with events particularly geared toward the youth—the target audience was middle school, high school, and college youth. Each session included different speakers and was presented via Zoom on the NAD OneTeam website.

NAD Youth and Young Adult Ministries director Tracy Wood, and associate directors Vandeon Griffin and Armando Miranda, Jr., started the general session on August 12 by welcoming attendees and discussing plans for Sabbath's events. Each of the sessions dealt with different topics, such as makeup, music, social media, school, relationships, sports, video games, self-awareness, fine arts, and mental health.

Young adults Pax Fordham and Savannah Fortney hosted the event with featured speakers Damian Chandler and Jessie A. Lopez Abdul-Karim, both pastors. The opening day included worship music, and the youth played games and watched a discussion panel titled "10 Things I Wish I Knew When I Was a Freshman." At least 135 people viewed online each day and posted comments of their excitement for the event. The viewers also sent comments requesting prayers, sharing their excitement, saying hi to people on the stream, and congratulating those who received prizes and giveaways, including iPads and a Macbook, during the congress.

Events for August 13 and 14 included four sessions in total. One TikTok/Instagram challenge had participants download the program's theme song and then follow the department's TikTok and Instagram pages. After that, participants had to create a duet with the song as a reel or TikTok video for a prize of \$250.

Making connections was an important reason to hold the youth congress. Wood said, "As youth directors, we know that young people enjoy getting together at gatherings like these. Also, they make decisions to choose Jesus and reconfirm their commitments to Him at special events such as youth congresses, Bible camps, and leadership retreats."

—Christian Grullon, junior journalism student, Kean University



DECEMBER 11, 2021

# Adventist Community Services (ACS) Offering

*Touch one heart, Transform your community!*

Dedicated ACS volunteers are doing a tremendous job listening to people's struggles in their communities and demonstrating the love of God while meeting their needs. Adventist Community Services has been *the church* in your community, and your financial gifts to the ACS Offering will continue **servicing communities in Christ's name.**

**GIVE YOUR OFFERING at your local church, marking "ACS Offering" on your tithe envelope, or give online at [www.communityservices.org](http://www.communityservices.org).**



Seventh-day  
Adventist Church  
NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION



BY MICHAEL HARPE

# Sharing the Culture of Stewardship

**E**ven before COVID-19, a challenge during these times in earth's history is the marginalization of stewardship. Over time the word has received a negative reputation in the minds of believers. Many worshippers were and still are introduced to it at the tithing and offering phase of our worship experience. Because of this limited exposure, we have been conditioned to think of stewardship in terms of money only, i.e., the passing of the offering plate. It is so much more than this! At our services, unless a highlight is presented relating to the significance of a personal relationship with God over money, the spiritual importance of stewardship is marginalized. Stewardship then becomes transactional.

Throughout the years our church has wisely repeated the importance of reviewing the beliefs of the Bible in relationship to the church to aid members in understanding the foundations of the faith. This is perpetuated in a myriad of ways: books, articles, audio, video, evangelistic outreaches, sermons, etc. One way this is seen is in the church's adult Sabbath School quarterlies; yet somehow in the didactic repetition of these truths—the wholistic, balanced, and salvific message of stewardship—seems to have taken a back seat.

It was about 46 years ago that the focus of stewardship was seen in a complete Sabbath School quarterly, in the fourth quarter of 1974. It wasn't until the first quarter of 2018 that the subject was revisited in the lessons prepared by John Mathews, former NAD stewardship director.

In 2018 the world church studied and experienced the magnitude and the scope of stewardship. Giving increased as a result. We must not lose this boost and resuscitation of stewardship. Not only that, we are poised to produce more. Remember, stewardship is not merely transactional. It is transformational.

## Leaning on Leadership

In some cases it is understandable that budget restraints (including those related to COVID-19) at the conference and union levels may keep stewardship from being a single department held by one individual, even though this should be the model.

Every department ministry leader holds the belief that his or her ministry is the most important; that's understandable, since many are called by God for that ministry. And they do have their part in the body of believers. Without them, we would lack that blessing.

However, it is the consistent highlighting of stewardship that will aid in strengthening the field financially. When believers are inspired and reminded of faithfulness to the Master through stewardship principles, the result is increased giving, in tithing and offerings. This is how we reverse the marginalization of stewardship, which is much more than a liturgical segment in worship.

## Sharing a Culture of Stewardship

Weekly we are inspired and reminded in our worship experiences to strengthen, sustain, refresh, renew, and reignite our relationship with our loving Savior. In many cases new members are birthed out of these experiences. This is a good reason (from time to time) for repetition of the loving principles that brought them to Jesus—the same principles these believers fell in love with when they joined our mission-driven church. It is with this same passion and healthy repetition that the complete culture of stewardship must be shared.

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, many are anxious, angry, frustrated, scared, and uncertain of the future.

Jesus prophesied that pestilence (pandemics) and other events would be a sign of His coming.

In Matthew 24:3 the disciples ask Jesus about the signs leading to His second coming and the end of the world. In verses 4-8 He warns them to watch out for those who will falsely come in His name, and describes how wars, natural disasters, and other catastrophes will occur. We are living in these times. Being good stewards now, and sharing our culture of stewardship, will help us prepare to meet Him in the clouds of glory. Get ready, be ready, stay ready—Jesus is coming!

Stewardship is more than a liturgical segment in worship.

*Michael Harpe is the director of stewardship for the North American Division.*



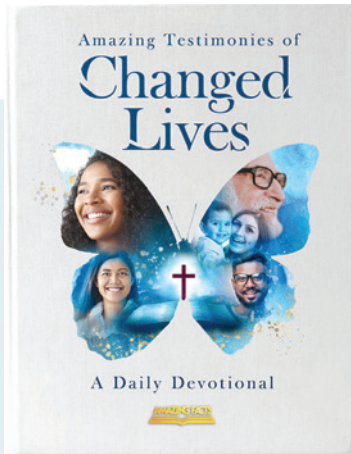
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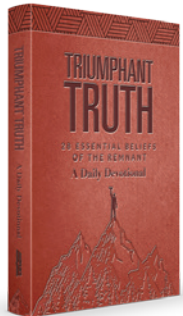
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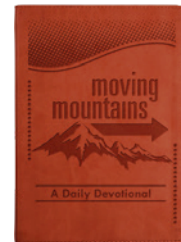
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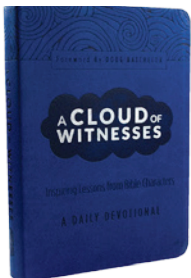
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