

Adventist World

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Asking God for More

BY BILL KNOTT

In the long shadows of late Sabbath afternoons, we would often visit Mabel.

She lived alone in a house too big for one person, consolidating her living on the lower floor where the woodstove’s warmth held back the February chill. A favorite chair; a favorite shawl; a stack of books on every table; her Bible always within reach.

And stories—always stories—of long-ago evangelistic campaigns; of Bible study interests visited; of families coming back to faith through patience and persistence. For more than 40 years, Mabel had been a Bible worker in a small conference, crisscrossing the territory through dozens of public campaigns, through deep snow every winter and humid heat in summer.

But the “brethren” had retired her at age 65, seeing a chance to trim personnel expenses. Hurt by the fact that she could no longer do the work to which she had given her entire adult life, she retreated to the old house 200 miles from where she wished to be. She threw herself into the life of a nearby congregation, teaching the weekly Sabbath School, hosting potlucks at her house, calling church members by phone when roads were deep with springtime mud.

Her mind was always on her mission, though, even in those moments when you thought the topic had turned to gardening or cars. Her old Dodge might take her places the rest of the year, but it served its truest purpose if it carried her those 200 miles to camp meeting each June, the two weeks when she went back to volunteer among the dozens—hundreds—she had brought to faith. The garden crops were planted so as not to mature during that critical fortnight when nothing else mattered so much as seeing how big the children had grown; how folks were settling into faith; how families were choosing Adventist education.

For Mabel, there was no such thing as part-time mission or occasional involvement. Her eyes lit up, her voice might break, when she would speak of Jesus. In between the stories of long-ago evangelists and storms survived and lonely years, her thought seemed always bending toward the task to which the Lord had summoned her. There was a sweet ferocity in Mabel’s single-minded focus: it made you check yourself and examine your commitments.

Though all help will be welcome, the mission to which Jesus calls this end-time people asks more than just our surplus time and energy. It asks for consecration even when our hands are full of other tasks. The “mind of Christ” never settles for “good enough”: it’s never satisfied with the 99 who “safely lay in the shelter of the fold.” If grace has found a home in us, we search, we pray, we work, we travel, to share the joy that is still changing us.

Just like Mabel.

The church I want to belong to is . . . mission-minded.



We believe in the power of prayer, and we welcome prayer requests that can be shared at our weekly staff worship every Wednesday morning. Send your requests to prayer@adventistworld.org, and pray for us as we work together to advance God’s kingdom.



On the South Coast in the state of New South Wales, Australia, the sky turned a hazy red from the recent bushfires.

SPD/courtesy of Carol Hawken Facebook account

20,761

—The number of Adventist volunteers, most of them young, who spent part of their Southern Hemisphere summer vacation serving other people in two north-east Brazilian states. The number represents almost 10 percent of the total church membership in the two states. Volunteers led multiple activities, including health fairs, cleaning drives, blood donation drives, and Bible study sessions.

“The best way I can be like Jesus is to minister to the needs of others, just as Jesus Himself did when He was here. He mingled with people, healed them, and then He saved them.”

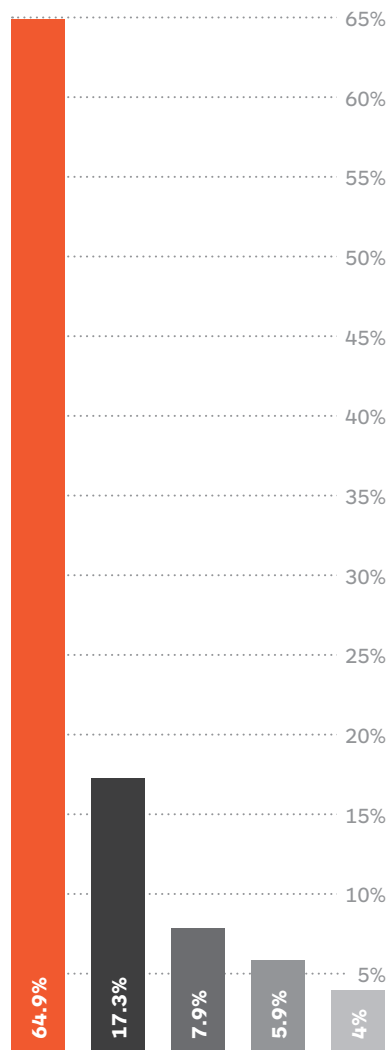
—Peter Landless, world church Health Ministries director, at the Inter-American Division (IAD) territory-wide 2020 health summit. Nearly 200 administrators and leaders from dozens of IAD countries and islands met in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, in January. Themed “Your Brain, Your Body, Your Heart,” the four-day event reinforced the need for the physical, mental, and spiritual health necessary for a fruitful health ministry throughout the division territory and beyond.

Adventists and Prayer

Adventists around the world were asked: “How often do you have personal prayer?”

- Daily or more than once a day
- More than once a week
- About once a week
- Less than once a month
- Never

Source: Adventist Global Member Survey 2018, n = 58,285



“It was a clear appeal to those who are still undecided about their loyalty between Christ and Satan, to choose Christ today and allow Him to make that difference in their lives.”

—Organizers of a recent dramatic production in London, England, that traced the beginnings of the fall of Lucifer, ushering in the effects of sin. The play, *And There Was War*, based on great controversy themes, drew both Christian and secular crowds.

“It has been raining for almost five days now.”

—David Panjaitan, communication director of the Adventist Church in West Indonesia, describing conditions in the country in early January as monsoons and rising rivers submerged the Indonesian capital because of torrential rains and severe flash flooding. Some Adventist families and churches were greatly affected by the flooding. ADRA in Indonesia conducted rapid assessments and quickly aided at least 300 families by providing ready-to-eat food.

200,000

—The number of Pacific edition *Signs of the Times* magazines intended for use during this year's "Papua New Guinea for Christ" evangelistic effort in May. The special edition of the magazine is believed to be the first full-length *Signs* developed especially for the Pacific Islands. Written mostly by Pacific authors, the magazine deals with current issues in the region, including deforestation, church-state relations, and Type 2 diabetes. Distinctive Adventist Bible teaching is also featured, including the Sabbath, wholistic health, and signs of Jesus' second coming. Coordinated evangelistic meetings will take place at approximately 2,000 locations across the nation.

"The core of our existence is to understand and accept others."

—Jenő Szigeti, a former president of the Hungarian Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and church historian who has been awarded a prize for his lifelong work in higher education and pastoral care focused on minorities. The prize is given to individuals or organizations that uplift high ethical standards and demonstrate serving minorities, underprivileged people, and those discriminated against in society. In his acceptance speech Szigeti highlighted that every human being is a minority because everyone is unique.

2020 General Conference Session

Official notice is hereby given that the sixty-first session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will be held June 25-July 4, 2020, in the Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, Indiana, United States. The first meeting will begin at 8:00 a.m., June 25, 2020. All duly accredited delegates are urged to be present at that time.

Ted N. C. Wilson,
General Conference President

G. T. Ng,
General Conference Secretary

"I cannot get back to each of you personally, but I want to acknowledge your thoughtfulness and thank you for the warmth and care that you have shown."

—Former world church president Jan Paulsen regarding the many condolences received for the loss of his wife, Kari, who died at the age of 85 on January 10, 2020. Kari, who battled chronic illness for most of her life, made a personal ministry out of calling others in need of encouragement. The Paulsens were married for 65 years and served in various leadership capacities in Europe, Africa, and at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, where Jan Paulsen served as president from 1999 to 2010.



Photo: Josef Kissinger

Seventy-five Years Later, Adventists Remember Auschwitz Liberation

By Victor Hulbert, Trans-European Division, Inter-European Division staff, and *Adventist World*

Seventy-five years have passed since the liberation of Auschwitz by Soviet troops on January 27, 1945. Few survivors are alive today, and each year fewer can tell the story. The horror has haunted human history and blemished Europe.

Seventh-day Adventists had a small part in that story—some hiding and protecting Jews, some ending up in the death camps themselves.

Visit the Adventist Church headquarters in Riga, Latvia, and you will see a small marker inlaid in the pavement outside the building. Scattered across the city, the engraved bronze plates are memorials to the brave citizens who hid or helped Jews during the Nazi occupation in World War II.

Not far up the road is another marker outside a simple timber-frame building, where two Adventist sisters lived in an upstairs apartment. They took in a 17-year-old Jewish boy, sheltering him at great risk to their own lives. Their kindness led to his acceptance of Christianity. Ysack Kleimanis eventually became a Seventh-day Adventist minister and one of Latvia's most effective soul winners.

In Hungary, László Michnay saved the lives of more than 50

Jews, hiding them in church properties and with church members, and working to help them escape.

"There were so few who had the courage for this," recalls Magda Berzenczey, Michnay's daughter, referring to Adventists who helped Jews during the Nazi period. "Yes, there were some, but there should have been more, many more."

Michnay decided to build up a clandestine network for the rescue of Jews. His wife, Jolán, a "mother in Israel," supported him wholeheartedly.

Central to his rescue operation was the Adventist church building on Székely Bertalan Street, near the Jewish ghetto. In a series of small rooms, corridors, and corners of this building—in cellars, attics, under the stairways, and behind the stage—the fearless pastor kept a number of Jews in hiding, code-named "U-boats." He made no distinction between Adventists of Jewish descent or other Jews. Michnay tried to help everyone who asked.

Auschwitz symbolizes the horror of the Nazi death camps and the genocide that wiped out 6 million innocent lives. Adventists were not immune to the horror of the death camps.

In a documentary that highlights

Some Adventists protected Jews, and some ended up in death camps.

Adventist mission in the Trans-European Division (TED) across 90 years, TED president Raafat Kamal shares stories of hope and courage that still inspire mission today. Among those stories is the testimony of Polish Union president, Ryszard Jankowski. He recounted how nine of his family members were incarcerated in Auschwitz and Ravensbrück because they faithfully kept the seventh-day Sabbath. Most of them died there. Their example of faithfulness inspires him to mission, Jankowski said.

Holocaust Remembrance Day, observed on January 27, is more than a history lesson. It brings an insistence that history should not be repeated, despite recent crises in Rwanda, the Balkans, and with the Rohingya peoples.

"More than 1 million people, most of them Jews, were murdered at the camp in Nazi-occupied Poland before it was liberated in January 1945. Remembrance is not enough, and past lessons are quickly forgotten," Kamal said. "Today evil and hatred are on the increase with new faces. The remedy can be found only as reflected in the mission of our Seventh-day Adventist Church: Make disciples of Jesus Christ who live as His loving witnesses and proclaim to all people the everlasting gospel of the three angels' messages in preparation for His soon return."

"The horror of the holocaust is not dimmed by time," emphasizes TED executive secretary Audrey Andersson. "The passing of time puts a greater responsibility on all of us to work for reconciliation where there is war and discord to ensure that these events are never repeated." ©



The commemorative plate reads: "Here, people of Latvia sheltered Jews from certain death during Nazi occupation."

Photo: Trans-European Division

Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists Inches Closer to Launch

By Adventist World Staff

Editorial Committee members of the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists (ESDA)* projects met at the Seventh-day Adventist Church headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, on January 28, 29, 2020. It was their fifth annual meeting, and the last one before the launch of the new resource, which is slated for the upcoming General Conference session in Indianapolis, Indiana, United States, in late June 2020.

ORIGINS OF THE PROJECT

The *ESDA* project has its roots in a 2010 proposal by Adventist Review Ministries to set up a Wikipedia-style website “to support the installation, updating, and further expansion of the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* through volunteers around the world.” The *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* was first published in 1966.

General Conference administrators agreed on the need for a new resource that reflected “the tremendous growth and maturity of the church, as well as the shifts in global dynamics and the reception of information,” the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR) said in a statement at the launch of the project.

During its 2015 Spring Meeting, the General Conference Executive Committee earmarked US\$1.6 million for the project. The project’s editorial committee met first in January 2016.

ABOUT ESDA

According to *ESDA* managing editor Dragoslava Santrac, the online reference publication will become an official publication and record of the history of Adventist work.



The *ESDA* editorial committee met in Silver Spring, Maryland, in January.

Photo: The Office of Archives, Statistics and Research

“This global church project will produce an estimated 10,000 articles on Adventist history, on crucial events and themes, and on organizations, entities, institutions, and individuals; with accompanying photographs, media, and original documents,” Santrac said.

ESDA will be a free website, ensuring global dissemination of content, Santrac said. She said editors have leaned on history and theology scholars as well as researchers, teachers, students, and members with expertise on given subjects. They have contributed articles on topics not yet covered by the initial invitation-only editorial process, she explained.

“Usual sources for *ESDA* articles have been local church archives, obituaries, yearbooks, newsletters, church publications, private collections of missionary letters and diaries, audio and video materials, interviews, and historical data from oral traditions,” Santrac said.

In a recent e-mail to *Adventist World*, retired South Pacific Division president Barry Oliver, a member of the *ESDA* editorial committee, reflected on the importance of the initiative.

“This is an exciting project that will pay dividends for the church

for many years into the future,” Oliver wrote. He explained that great care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information “by seeking out primary sources and, wherever possible, consulting people who were involved firsthand with the item described.”

Oliver, who is volunteering as the regional assistant editor of *ESDA* for the SPD region, said that a bonus is that people from the global church are writing the *Encyclopedia*.

“In the South Pacific alone, approximately 140 authors have been writing 620 articles about people, institutions, ministries, administrative entities, and issues faced by the church and its members,” he shared.

Oliver said that overall, he has felt positively impressed by the seriousness of the enterprise. “The *ESDA* leadership team at the General Conference is to be commended for the professional manner in which they have moved the project forward,” he wrote.

Adventist World will provide further updates, developments, and articles on the *ESDA* project in future issues. ©

804,547

The membership of the West-Central Africa Division

“Lack of food would bring the world to its knees.”

—Babcock University president and vice chancellor Ademola S. Tayo in his opening statement at the third World Food Day event held on the university’s campus in Nigeria. Other speakers emphasized that despite official statistics pointing to a decrease in hunger, a condition called “hidden hunger” has reached “alarming proportions.” Babcock University operates a Department of Agriculture that seeks, in part, to address global hunger.

“Let us therefore gird ourselves with zeal and determination for the final victory. The work before us is challenging. Our strength and our victory reside in Christ Jesus.”

—Elie Weick-Dido, president of the West-Central Africa Division (WAD), in a video addressing WAD members.

4,000

The number of women from 22 countries across the West-Central Africa Division (WAD) who gathered together in Kumasi, Ghana, for a women’s congress. Kwame Nkrumah University’s stadium was the chosen venue for the congress, themed “Saved to Serve.” Programs included a parade of nations attended by Ghanaian officials and WAD leaders. The division also launched a 2020 devotional book entitled *Balm of Healing*, written by African women for African women.

First Adventist Congress for Men in Cameroon

The Organization of Adventist Men (OAM) recently held its first congress in Cameroon. The event was organized as a result of 100 OAM members deciding to take some time off their regular occupations for meetings. Training and candid exchanges characterized the meetings, themed “Faithfulness to His Prophets in the Search for Growth.” Topics included Christian entrepreneurship, keys to blessing, African case studies of member self-sufficiency, and various investments and projects.

“Wherever I go, in my neighborhood and here in the school, I tell everyone that my son used to be mediocre and even delinquent at first. But when he came to an Adventist school, he started doing well.”

—The mother of a former student at Marcory Adventist School in Côte d’Ivoire. Her son came to the school struggling with slipping grades and low motivation, along with some disciplinary issues. The student eventually graduated with honors and is now studying economics at a university in Morocco. Approximately 900 students attend Marcory Adventist School. 📍



Students gather at Marcory Adventist School

Photo: Tom Lloyd, Maranatha Volunteers International

Perspective



Photo: Majkl Velner

We Will Never Look Away Again

Remembering the liberation of Auschwitz 75 years ago

On January 27, 1945, troops of the 60th Army of the First Ukrainian Front (part of the Red Army) liberated Auschwitz, one of the most infamous concentration and extermination camps established by Nazi Germany on the soil of what is now Poland.¹ Seventy-five years ago Soviet soldiers opened the gates of a place that had witnessed the systematic murder of as many as 1.1 million people (90 percent were Jews).² What they found went beyond the imaginable. Seven thousand survivors, only bones and skin, looked at them, silent and terrified. They had survived an evil machinery built to produce death on a scale we cannot comprehend. Death numbs every soldier involved in combat, but this was another dimension of death.

Primo Levi, an Italian Jewish chemist and author, one of the 7,000 survivors, described the reaction of the soldiers liberating the inmates of Auschwitz: “They did not greet us, nor did they smile; they seemed oppressed not only by compassion but by a confused restraint, which sealed their lips and bound their eyes to the funereal scene. It was that shame we knew

so well, the shame that drowned us after the selections, and every time we had to watch, or submit to, some outrage: the shame the Germans did not know, that the just man experiences at another man’s crime; the feeling of guilt that such a crime should exist, that it should have been introduced irrevocably into the world of things that exist, and that his will for good should have proved too weak or null, and should not have availed in defense.”³

Commemorating one of history’s darkest moments does not generate pleasant feelings. Like many of the Red Army soldiers, we are tempted to look away when we see evil all around us: the young woman, wearing a head covering, and being accosted by a group of tattooed young men in boxer jackets shouting long-forgotten slogans; the elderly couple from Central America struggling to make sense of the insults of angry citizens; the minority group persecuted by the majority population; the young man who tells his furious parents that he has chosen to become a follower of Jesus in the midst of a society dominated by a different faith.

There are many ways to look away. We are too busy (perhaps even doing God’s work!); we aren’t qualified to lead the charge; we have enough problems of our own; we don’t know the whole story (and often we don’t). We could add many more excuses.

This milestone anniversary reminds us that we need to look—and then act. Darkness can be overcome only by light; evil is countered by compassion and grace. God’s plan of salvation was not executed in the high-domed, ethereal halls of heaven, but in the grimy, sin-filled world that we call home. Jesus, fleeing with His parents to Egypt, growing up in run-down Nazareth, faced evil many times in hand-to-hand combat—in the wilderness, but also every day in human prejudice, racial slurs, holier-than-thou attitudes so pervasive among God’s chosen people.

Commemorating the liberation of Auschwitz 75 years later doesn’t only remind us that we need to look. Once we have really looked, we are called to move forward in step with heaven’s values and attitudes. We embrace the persecuted; we speak up for the oppressed; we identify with the victimized—and we do it all in the name of Jesus. For we wait for a better morning; we yearn for new beginnings; we offer Christlike compassion; we look out for “the least of these.”

This is a good moment to promise that we will never look away again. ©

¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auschwitz_concentration_camp#Liberation

² See www.britannica.com/place/Auschwitz

³ Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man—The Truce* (London: Little, Brown, repr. 2001), p. 188.

Gerald A. Klingbeil was born and raised in **Germany**. He serves as an associate editor of *Adventist World*.

MISSION-MINDED

From Everywhere to Everywhere

God's mission vision exists for all.

BY CHERYL DOSS

Mission can seem like a rather ambiguous word. After all, it's used in many different ways to describe many different activities. What do you think of when you hear the word "mission"? A mission to Mars, a diplomatic mission, a military mission, or something missionaries do in a foreign land? When I think of mission, I think of God's mission of love to all who live on earth and the people who take that special purpose as their own.

The tiny group of disappointed and scattered Adventist believers of the 1850s could not have become a worldwide church without embracing God's mission of love and allowing His vision to draw them together in shared action to reach others. The unity found in mission vision and action still ties the Adventist Church together across differing languages, cultures, ethnicities, and nationalities, for Christianity was birthed multicultural and multilinguistic (Acts 2:7-11). Just as Acts 2 records people hearing the gospel in some 15 different languages, so today the Adventist Church is active in scores of languages and has a presence in most of the 195 nations of the earth. Full-time General Conference missionaries from about 70 home countries currently serve in 85 countries of the world. In addition, many world divisions send cross-cultural missionaries within their territories, with supporting ministries adding to the workforce. Adventist mission truly is from everywhere to everywhere.

Yet we have far to go to take the good news of Jesus' soon return to every person on earth. About 75 percent of Adventists live in the Americas and

sub-Saharan Africa, while more than 75 percent of the world's population live in the Middle East/North Africa, Europe, and Asia, where fewer than 25 percent of Adventists live.¹ Jesus' last words on earth instructed His followers to be His witnesses "in Jerusalem [with one's own people], and in all Judea and Samaria [with near people groups], and to the ends of the earth [with distant people groups]" (Acts 1:8). That mission mandate is still in effect for each of us today. Our mission starts at home, in our families, to our neighbors, and often within our own linguistic group. But Jesus' last words remind us that we cannot stop there. We also have a responsibility to be His witnesses in every culture and language, to "the ends of the earth."

Today the mass movement of peoples across nations and continents has brought cross-cultural mission to our very doors. Every city in every country has ethnic restaurants and neighborhoods, often with growing refugee and immigrant groups who also need to hear God's end-time message. Too often such groups are invisible, forgotten, or thought to be "too hard" to reach. Yet if we are to fulfill God's mission vision of bringing people everywhere into a relationship with Him, we need to find ways of sharing His love with every one of them. We must be willing to embrace our diversity, use every gift and talent, try new ideas and methods, and take united action.

Often the parts of the world where the church has not grown quickly have cultures and religions that are very different from the parts of the world where the church

is strong. Winning to Christ adherents from another world religion requires a deep understanding of their unique culture and worldview. That usually means working in a very different way than we would with a Christian from another denomination. Different ways of witnessing are also needed where secularism has created a disinterest in religion. We cannot expect results unless the gospel has truly transformed us, and we authentically invest in the lives of those we seek to reach. In mission, as in many other areas of life, seeing is believing. Thus, sharing the gospel must be done with sensitivity, creativity, and integrity because “a loving, lovable Christian is the most powerful argument in favor of the truth.”²

Joining in God’s mission has the power to draw His church together across cultural, linguistic, and ethnic divides in witness to all people from every background, nationality, and religion. When we have experienced God’s mission of love in our own lives, we want to share His love with all those we meet. No matter who we are, or what our circumstances, God has a mission for each of us, and it’s not at all ambiguous. ☺

¹ Gordon Doss, *Introduction to Adventist Mission* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2018), p. 280. You can order the book on www.amazon.com.

² Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), vol. 9, p. 129.

Cheryl Doss, Ph.D., grew up as a missionary kid, spent 16 years as a missionary with her husband, Gordon, in Malawi, and currently serves as director of the Institute of World Mission at the General Conference.



Spain

Tea and Talk

Many are familiar with TED Talks, the influential videos from experts on such topics as science, business, education, and technology. These lectures are creative, inspiring, and motivating. And because they’re short and relevant, people listen.

My church recently decided to create a series of talks in a similar format to reach out to people in our community. We called our program Tea and Talk and began inviting friends and neighbors to join us once a month for fellowship, a presentation, and good food (necessary in any social encounter in Mediterranean countries!).

When our guests arrive, they receive a warm welcome. Live music plays in the background as they visit with old friends and make new ones. As they chat, they sip hot herbal tea. They even have the option of decorating their cups and entering our “most beautifully decorated cup of tea contest” to win a prize.

When it’s time for the presentation, we invite our guests to join us in sitting in small groups around a table. The topics range from family, friendship, health, lifestyle, and social issues to the beauties of the universe and emotional intelligence. At the conclusion of the talk, they can participate in group discussion, meet the speaker, and enjoy a variety of plant-based juices and snacks.

Before our friends leave, we give them a present—a book related to the evening’s presentation. And we give them an opportunity to evaluate the program and make suggestions for upcoming talks.

Tea and Talk has helped our church members follow two important steps in Christ’s method of ministry: mingling with people and winning their confidence. When they’re ready, we invite them to the next step, which is joining a small group.

But that’s another story! ☺

Jonathan Contero is pastor of the Zero Seventh-day Adventist Church in Spain. He is married to Abigail, and the couple has two children.



More than 950 people participated in the 10-kilometer race planned by a youth group to raise funds for a health fair.

Photo: Ricky Oliveras

Ecuador

The 10-Kilometer Church Plant

Our initial attempt to share Jesus in our community in Quito, Ecuador, didn't go well. We knocked on people's doors and asked whether they wanted to study the Bible with us. It was a bad idea. They said, "We don't even know you." "Who are you?" "What do you want?"

We met again to pray about how best to connect with people. We decided to do a survey to determine their needs, and we discovered that many of them were experiencing health problems.

We chose to host a health fair with free medical consultations and lab work. The problem was that it was going to cost approximately

\$3,000, and we didn't have the money.

Every Wednesday our group went jogging together. One week my mother suggested that we use our weekly activity to raise funds. "You could have a race," she said, "and charge a small registration fee." We loved the idea and got busy planning.

More than 950 people participated in the race, providing enough money to conduct the health fair and rent a building to start a new group of believers. The health fair and other outreach programs resulted in friendships, Bible studies, and people attending our church plant on Sabbath mornings.

Next to the church is a bakery owned by a couple named Noemi and Miguel. Sometimes during the week several members of our church plant bought things from their store. One day Noemi asked them about the

church. They invited her to study the Bible with them. As her faith grew, she prayed that Miguel would go to church with her. He showed no interest initially, but after a few months, as a birthday gift, he agreed to join Noemi at church—for one Sabbath only.

"My first impression was that I didn't know anybody, but everybody knew me," Miguel says. "I felt immense love."

Miguel wanted to learn more, so he and Noemi asked for Bible studies. Eventually, they gave their hearts to Jesus and were baptized.

"It's a radical change," Miguel says. "We used to have a lot of problems, but now it's different. We study together, go to church, sing, and pray to God."

Miguel and Noemi's family is just one example of those who have come to know the love of Jesus, and they're excited to share what they've learned.

About 10 people have been baptized as a result of our church plant. We pray that our efforts will continue to spread God's love throughout the community. ©

Carolina Meneses is one of the leaders of the church plant. She told her story to **Ricky Oliveras**.



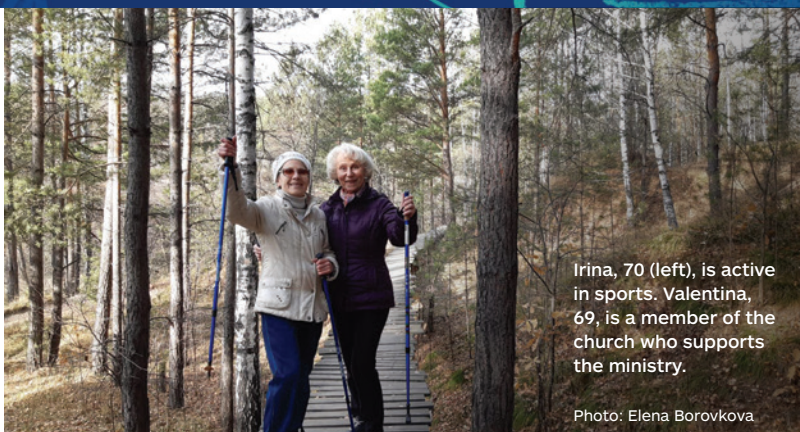
Photo: Flavio Ferraz

Trinidad and Tobago

Warming Hearts With Ice

Wesley is a 40-year-old snow cone vendor in Trinidad and Tobago. Each day (except Saturday) he wakes up early to grind ice before leaving for work. Then he slowly pedals his cart through the quiet streets of Felicity to sell his icy fare. He's been doing this since he was 13 years old.

But selling snow cones isn't all Wesley does. He also ministers to people's physical and spiritual needs.



Irina, 70 (left), is active in sports. Valentina, 69, is a member of the church who supports the ministry.

Photo: Elena Borovkova

Siberia

A Walk in the Park

In August 2019, I and several church members in Siberia formed a Nordic walking group at Health Center Sequoia, in Novosibirsk, Russia, an urban center of influence started with support of Global Mission. The center already offered members of the community massage, physical exercise programs, and health lectures. We thought Nordic walking would be a great addition. Nordic walking involves using specially designed trekking poles, like ski poles.

To meet people, we often walked in a nearby park. As we did, we noticed a lot of people using walking sticks. They were mostly elderly couples and women. One of the women had her own health food

store. She didn't know God when we met, but she was motivated to help and serve people. We met about 20 people, and we trained them in Nordic walking techniques.

Sometimes after training sessions we'd tell them about the eight principles of a healthy lifestyle and read the Bible with them. We also showed them how to pray. Now every training session begins and ends with prayer.

In Siberia, frost and snow arrive in October. So in winter, our group engages in indoor exercises while we wait for warmer weather.

We meet with our group members three times a week. We also spend holidays with them, such as Mother's Day, New Year's Day, and Christmas.

We've all found health, friendship, and a relationship with God.

Several members of our group shared their impressions with us, including a woman named Irina. "I began to participate in the Nordic walking group, and it gave me health," she said. "I have a good mood and feel better after Nordic walking and other physical exercises."

"I like that all classes begin with a prayer," said Svetlana. "Our instructors are believers, and they are also professionals. They show how to do the exercises correctly and find the individual plan of exercises for each person. They always show a friendly attitude. My health has become better."

"We have relevant, useful, effective exercises under the guidance of a coach," Galina said. "There is a wonderful friendly atmosphere, excellent conditions for classes. I met new friends; I invited my relatives and friends. Several times I was at the worship service, and I really liked it." ©

Elena Borovkova serves as administrator and instructor of physical training at the Siberian Urban Center of Influence Health Center Sequoia.

"I have the best job in the world," says Wesley. "It helps me meet people and present to them the love of Jesus."

Felicity is a rural community surrounded by sugarcane and rice plantations. Even in this peaceful town are painful stories: children without much food, people afflicted by illness, and families struggling to stay together.

Wesley helps provide food, clothing, and other basic necessities for those in need. He also offers counseling to the families he meets. Once, Wesley spent two days handing out free snow cones to 400 children in the area.

He does all this to serve a greater purpose. "Sometimes people stop me on the street, and we pray right there," says Wesley. "We enter their home; we read scriptures; and I give words of encouragement. Then I invite them to church."

"He's the best person at giving moral support," says Wesley's friend Nirmal. "We love him. . . . While some do nice things with strings attached, he does them without any."

Wesley has earned the respect of the entire community. He offers physical and spiritual support to more than 30 families. Through this snow cone ministry, the local Adventist church has had many visitors. ©

Flavio Ferraz was a producer for Mission 360° TV in Brazil when he reported this story.



Matheus (right), who served as an AVS volunteer, poses with students and another teacher when he taught Bible in Brazil.

Want to Change Your Life?

Consider Adventist Volunteer Service.

It was in serving others and in sharing hope that I found meaning and purpose during the most difficult years of my life." This statement and others similar to it are sent again and again from thousands of volunteers around the world to the office of Adventist Volunteer Service (AVS), headquartered at the General Conference office in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States. AVS exists to provide service opportunities for Seventh-day Adventists who want to share in the joy of taking the gospel to the world, matching their talents, gifts, resources, and professional expertise with defined needs.

AVS draws a variety of volunteers—college students, professionals, trades people, and academics—to sign up for either short-term or long-term mission opportunities. Short-term assignments can range from one day to two months; long-term programs may last up to two years or longer.

Areas of service include medical/dental, administration, pastoral/evangelism, education, construc-

tion, and orphanage work, to name a few. Volunteers can either serve in a country within their home division or be stationed in another division.

ONE VOLUNTEER'S STORY

Matheus, an AVS volunteer, wasn't sure what career he wanted to pursue until he signed up with AVS to conduct evangelistic meetings and teach the Bible to students living on the banks of the Amazon. He says that through acts of service and sharing hope with the people there, he became convinced that God was calling him to ministerial work. Matheus now studies at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Michigan, United States, preparing to become a full-time missionary.

"The experience of going out of my comfort zone was not easy," Matheus says. "I needed to develop resilience, perseverance, flexibility—but most of all, a deep communion with God through prayer and Bible study. I thought I was going to save and change the world; but in the end, the world that changed was mine."

A GROWING EXPERIENCE

Ellen White wrote: "The spirit of unselfish labor for others gives depth, stability, and Christlike loveliness to the character and brings peace and happiness to its possessor. . . . Those who exercise the Christian graces will grow. They will have spiritual sinew and muscle, and will be strong to work for God. They will have clear spiritual perceptions, a steady, increasing faith, and prevailing power in prayer."

The volunteer experience develops leadership and boosts professional careers. It shapes character and adjusts priorities. It helps fulfill the commission to take the gospel message to all nations. Most of all, it draws those who accept God's call to mission service into a closer relationship with their Lord. ☺

To learn more about AVS, go to www.adventistvolunteers.org.

* Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 5, p. 607.

Elbert Kuhn is an associate secretary in the General Conference Secretariat.

How Can We Grow Our Churches Spiritually?

Become church planters!

The Seventh-day Adventist Church began as a church-planting movement, and it will keep growing only as it continues to be a church-planting movement. Church planting is:

- **A Biblical Mandate.** The Great Commission is a call to make disciples, and the biblical way of doing that is to “spiritually grow” them in groups of believers. The book of Acts is essentially about church planting, and the apostle Paul’s writings are letters to mentor and support new groups of believers.

- **Central to Adventist Heritage.** Ellen White wrote, “Upon all who believe, God has placed the burden of raising up churches.”¹ In 1874, her husband, James, wrote, “Our churches are scattered and small, and our people do not enjoy regular preaching. Our ministers do not locate. They ‘go into all the world, and preach the gospel,’ and raise up new churches.”² From our earliest days, church planting has been the natural way the Adventist Church goes about its mission.

- **Successful.** Academic studies and experience demonstrate that church planting multiplies growth and is also healthy for existing churches.

PORT MACQUARIE, AUSTRALIA

Adventist pastor Obed Soire is developing leaders focused on reaching people in the community. Each Friday night a youth center attracts many young people, including students from the local university. A Bible study group also meets Sabbath mornings in a shed. One church leader has organized a house church that’s

reaching unchurched people from his workplace. Their vision is to establish a house church on every street in Port Macquarie.—*Sven Östring, church-planting director, North New South Wales Conference.*

CHIDENGUELE, MOZAMBIQUE

In 2017, Global Mission pioneer Titos Boaventura Langa went to Chidenguele, Mozambique—located about 275 kilometers (170 miles) from the nation’s capital, Maputo—to start a new group of Adventist believers. Through house-to-house visitations, prayer, Bible studies, and children’s programs, Chidenguele now has a company of 40 baptized members.—*Silas Muabsa, Adventist Mission director, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division.*

VEILED COUNTRY³

In 2014, church leaders sent a couple to an unentered area to teach English and to plant a new church. A house was purchased and turned into an English classroom. Today, more than 300 church members are worshipping in six groups, and thanks to Thirteenth Sabbath Offerings, a school was recently constructed.

In 2019, five police officers carrying guns, chains, and ropes arrested the two church planters.

The district pastor immediately gathered the church planters’ families and other church members, and they prayed for the church planters and each other.

Within a few days the church planters were freed and shared the story of how they had witnessed while in prison. During their time there, eight fellow prisoners accepted Jesus as their Saviour. ©

For more information about church planting, visit www.AdventistMission.org.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Medical Ministry* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn, 1932), p. 315.

² James White, “The Camp-Meetings,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 26, 1874.

³ Christian witness is restricted in veiled territories, and are unnamed for security reasons.

Gary Krause is director of the Office of Adventist Mission at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in **Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.**



In 2018, a new Seventh-day Adventist Church was established every four hours—plus many more companies and small groups.



In 2019, 1,625 Global Mission Pioneers were planting new groups of believers in 100 countries.



In the past 10 years the South American Division has planted an average of two new churches per day.



The North American Division set a goal to plant 1,000 new churches from 2016 to 2020.

The Tiny Speck

Does everyone really matter?

Remember seeing a picture of a starry sky with galaxies and planets of different sizes and shapes. It was projected on a giant screen covering an entire wall. The wall looked radiant blue, all covered with amazingly beautiful designs of planets. A ray of light went from top to bottom, and somewhere in the middle of that thin ray was a small, almost invisible speck. That was our planet! So tiny in an immeasurable macrocosm. So small, but so precious to God that He came to redeem it!

Jesus created the church, His own microcosm on earth, to redeem people “from every nation, tribe, people and language” (Rev. 7:9, NIV).

As congregations differ in size and composition, they also differ in atmosphere and in their approach to nurture and discipleship.

Everyone on this planet matters to Him. That’s why mission should matter to us. Here are some inspiring details of the mission report of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for 2018:

- Church work has been established in 213 out of 235 countries and areas of the world.
- More than 1 million new members have been added every year during the past 15 successive years.
- About every 23 seconds a new member joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church family during the past two years.

■ Nearly 59,000 former members were baptized and rejoined the church.¹

These are good figures. Especially encouraging is the number of former members who returned to the church. This number should grow. Member retention, discipleship, and reclaiming are matters of crucial importance.² But in spite of more than 1 million new members in 2018, net growth was only 687,432. We lost 611,467 members! This loss comprised about 44 percent of accessions and is slightly higher than in 2017, when it was 42 percent.³

Who are these people? Missing for many years but still on membership lists of local congregations? Those who moved out and did not reconnect with the church? Those who left struggling with difficulties, temptations, or conflicts in their congregations? Are they young people, new converts, or long-term members? Does everyone really matter to us?

As congregations differ in size and composition, they also differ in atmosphere and in their approach to nurture and discipleship. We should be concerned about how people feel in our congregations. We need to make sure that they receive grace-filled support for their spiritual journeys and everyday challenges, because every person matters. What’s the most desirable outcome of the mission of the local congregation? Is it not that the people it reaches will be part of the great multitude on the sea of glass—every one of them?

Remember, every person on this tiny speck matters to God! ☺

¹ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, *2019 Annual Statistical Report*, new series, vol. 1, pp. 2, 30, 92.

² See the 2019 Nurture and Retention Summit Material at https://www.adventistresearch.org/nurture2019_summit and relevant ASTR blogs at www.adventistresearch.org/blog.

³ David Trim, *Statistical Report 2019: Mission Trends and Resources*, PowerPoint presentation given at the 2019 Annual Council, documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/Presentations/2019%20Annual%20Council%20Statistical%20Report.pdf

Galina Stele, D.Min., serves as research and evaluation manager of the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research for the General Conference.

Photo: Paige Weber

The Real “Genetics” of Our Hearts



My mom was recently diagnosed with cancer.

Although her smile and positive spirit have not changed, frequent visits to the hospital have become a common part of our lives. We have also become more familiar with different types and colors of headscarves, specific dietary restrictions, and the basic care needed to help her go through the process of healing as well as possible.

In spite of this trial, God has shown us, every single day, reasons to be happy.

We have received the loving support of many people, as well as the opportunity to share our faith with others along the way.

When we go through dark valleys, we tend to believe more firmly that God is faithful, and that His Word is reliable. From the very beginning God promised that things would not always be easy, but that He would go with us every step of the way.

Sometimes we don't want to talk about life-threatening disease. The word “cancer” encompasses so much suffering and helplessness that it seems better not to mention it. Words in general have power, but the power of God's Word bests them all.

Hollywood sells us images of happiness that require beauty and long hair flying in the wind to portray freedom. God reminds us that abstract concepts such as happiness, beauty, or freedom find their true definition only in Him.

When we first heard the diagnosis, I started reviewing notes I had taken when studying medicine. I remembered the specific genes that “controlled” this cancer, and I suddenly also recalled a Bible verse I love.

A few years ago one of my best friends passed away unexpectedly. This particular verse was one that I discovered thanks to her. It gave me hope

when I grieved her loss. Now, all of a sudden, this text was coming back with an even more powerful message for this time.

My medical training reminded me of the fact that I had a high chance of having the hereditary mutation that would make me more prone to this type of cancer. But that's not what I thought about most. I was comforted by the thought that there is a “genetic” heritage that is more powerful than any bad genetic heritage I may carry in my body: God has planted eternity in the human heart.

“Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end” (Eccl. 3:11, NLT).*

Who are we to argue? Who are we to pretend to understand?

It's comforting to know that God has made everything for its own time. It's even better to realize that we are incapable of understanding and seeing everything here on earth, so that we may always cling to Him in daily dependence.

I marvel at the power of the word “yet.” It reminds me of Habakkuk's expression of faith in the face of persecution and destruction: “Yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation! The Sovereign Lord is my strength!” (Hab. 3:18, 19, NLT).

We all experience tough times. We all walk through dark valleys. But no matter the challenges we face, God's promises have proven true and will continue to comfort us until the very end.

That's the real genetics of our heart.
That's the DNA of eternity. ©

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Carolina Ramos studies translation, teaching English, and music education at River Plate Adventist University in **Argentina**. She is passionate about mission and enjoys working with children and teens.

Despite his many administrative responsibilities, Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson spends at least a couple weeks each year leading revival and evangelistic meetings around the world. During a recent stint as lead speaker at evangelistic meetings in southern Asia, Adventist World senior news correspondent Marcos Paseggi sat with Wilson to ask him what motivates him to engage in evangelism, why it's important for every member to get involved, and whether we can do it better.—Editors.



Get Involved!

After so many years of taking part and leading in revival and evangelistic meetings around the world, people sometimes wonder why you keep doing it. What's your motivation? What drives a busy church administrator to stay actively involved in evangelism?

There are two reasons to hold evangelistic meetings and help people understand the Bible better. The first one is that Jesus is coming very soon, and all of us are supposed to be involved in some kind of service to people. It's an opportunity for me and [my wife] Nancy to participate in very direct evangelism. I am usually involved with lots of administrative activities and many official meetings, but this brings us to a very frontline operation. It's so exciting and so wonderful to be part of it! I love

to teach these [biblical] messages! I am preaching *The Revelation of Hope* series, by Mark Finley. I have preached it many times. But every time I do, I am essentially reconverted again, reaffirmed in my faith in the Bible and its precious message.

The second reason is to help all church leaders and members to recognize that we need to be actively participating in sharing the gospel ourselves.

So the first is to assist this whole process through the power of the Holy Spirit and do whatever we can to touch the lives of people. And the second is to set an example, to say simply, "It's possible to do this, and it's something that will refresh you as an administrator." Traveling to meetings and chairing meetings—there are all kinds of things



you spend your time on almost 50 weeks out of the year. But you can take two, three weeks, and participate in frontline evangelistic activities. It will be so rewarding; it is for me every time.

You mentioned that you've preached the same message in different places. Do you think that "one size fits all" in evangelism? Do you ever see a need for adapting the message to a specific culture?

The beautiful thing about the gospel message is that the core of it is found in the key denominator of all cultures, and that is the holy Word of God. So yes, in terms of illustrations, of how you explain it, how it may be formatted—to some extent, you can adapt that to culture. But the beautiful thing about God's Word and the Bible truth is that it cuts through all cultures, all language groups, all people groups, because it's a message from heaven.

I read some time ago that other regions where you preached in the past got so energized that now they are organizing evangelistic meetings by themselves, even in places where public evangelism was not often practiced before. Do you think this is common to all places?

Yes. I believe the same thing can happen in any place where people are truly dedicated to sharing the Lord. It occurs when people allow God to work through them and use their creative energy to reach out in every possible way, using comprehensive health ministry, community service, ADRA [Adventist Development and Relief Agency], approaches to young people and families, helping people with different seminars that give them a better life. Depending on the culture, you have to find ways to rub shoulders with people, establishing centers of influence in the cities, helping young people to

The beautiful thing about God's Word and the Bible truth is that it cuts through all cultures.

do literature evangelism work. All these different contexts are to be used so that people may know that there is truth, and that there are people willing to help them.

Technology today is amazingly helpful. Even through telephone evangelism now, through different websites that help people. All of this works together. And the Holy Spirit binds it to touch the hearts of people who are seeking the Lord.

The main thing is: In the name of Jesus, do something! We shouldn't just sit back and say, "It won't work in our culture," or "This is inappropriate." If that specific method is inappropriate, what could be appropriate? Find out, and do it!

As you reflect on what our church is doing, do you think we're working to the best of our abilities? Is there something we're not doing, something we could do better?

Looking forward, I see that many more churches and organizations need to at least understand and contextualize the whole concept of Total Member Involvement [an initiative of the world Adventist Church that seeks to get every member involved in sharing Jesus with their friends and neighbors]. It's not professional ministry or church [leadership] directions that are going to accomplish the work. It's everybody working together, and laypeople feeling just as much a part of this great work as those who get paid to do it. Everyone is to be involved.

On a specific note, we need to implement for the cities more of

the plan that the Spirit of Prophecy outlines for working the cities, which includes "outpost centers." We are developing these city centers of influence. But connected to them is supposed to be organizations outside the city where you have a place where city workers and others can live, where you have training schools for people who are working for the Lord in the city. In those places you can have a small lifestyle health center, where you can bring people from the city, help them to clear their minds, and learn what it really means to live a healthy life, including a spiritual life. Then we introduce them in some way to mission work.

I can see where we could do better. At the same time, do you think of anything we're simply missing in our outreach and evangelistic endeavors?

One very important aspect, as we come to the end of time, is that we need to pray for the latter rain, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Even though the Adventist Church is growing around the world, the world population continues to grow at an even faster pace. We will never finish the work by ourselves. We need to realize that it's only going to be the Lord preparing our hearts, helping us to fully be conformed to His will, that will make us ready to receive God's Holy Spirit. Then the message will go out like wildfire.

We must get ready, because when the Holy Spirit is poured down on us, it's going to be unbelievable! ©

A Mind for Mission



like stories that unfold slowly, instead of ones that announce themselves with horns and banners, urgent and dramatic. I prefer to discover, like a child who first hears something that delights her, how one thing is connected to others by filaments no one could see when the narrative began.

And that's how I came to know the story of a man whose passion for the mission God has given him continues to unfold, expand, and touch even more lives.

I couldn't see where this story pointed when I first met him two years ago on a sunny afternoon in the small village of Štětkovice, an hour south of Prague in the Czech Republic. We sat in the welcome shade of his gazebo, focusing on "macro" things: the world church; the projects needing funding; the causes to which we had committed our lives.

As our business drew to a close, Radim Passer invited me to go walking with him. There was a park on the west side of Štětkovice he wanted to show me, he said, giving no hint that this 40-hectare open space and playground was his gift to his community. Only as we walked the manicured gravel paths and greeted neighbors did Radim's story begin to emerge.

It was true, he said, eyes studying the gravel: he had made all this—this lovely place where children laughed and couples strolled. We stopped with others to read the large, clear plexiglass tablets on which are scribed the stories of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Yes, he admitted: he had written all the text himself, and funded the construction of the gracious, rolling park in which they stand as silent witnesses to Bible truth. On the eastern margin of the Great Controversy Park, he annually preaches an evangelistic campaign in a classic white tent. There the people of this tiny town find meaning, Bible studies, and companionship.

We wandered a kilometer toward the center of Štětkovice, watching the lengthening shadows of late afternoon spill across a central pond, a small community store, a town office building, and the 60-seat Adventist church. Yes, he had built them all, he said when I pressed him for the story. Around a corner, an

amazing “transportation park” lets children in toy cars practice intersections, crosswalks, stoplights, and railroad crossings. A scale train—sized perfectly for children—circles on warm summer afternoons. Beside it, a model train museum worthy of some grand urban mall comes to intricate, detailed life when a switch is thrown, when whistles sound and engines move.

I brought a film crew with me 12 months later. By then, I had read more of the story of Radim Passer’s remarkable life, and sensed there might be even more to learn. I now knew things he would have been reluctant to tell me for fear of sounding boastful. Radim and his company, PASSERINVEST, are some of the best-known names in real estate development in Central Europe. The narrative of his remarkable ascent from a loose-living, would-be football star in Communist-dominated Czechoslovakia to one of the most influential businessmen in his region is filled with moments of both heart-stopping pain and personal triumph. Penniless, he swept the streets of Prague at 24. Today his investment company owns some of those same streets on which high-rise corporate office buildings house world brands—Microsoft, UniCredit Bank, HP, and others. Undergirding all his story is a profound and moving testimony to the grace and goodness of God.

But even in the BB Centrum, the “city within a city” business park on which he has spent 30 years of his life, surprises wait at every turn. A 160-student Adventist elementary school—with a long waiting list for enrollment—thrives in what was once a decrepit public building. Students at the adjacent Adventist middle school eat lunch in a vegetarian cafeteria some colleges would long



to operate. Fountains, winding walks, and rooftop relaxation spots create a small-town feel for 15,000 employees who work in BB Centrum’s corporate offices. A vegetarian restaurant; a complete, well-equipped fitness center; an Adventist Book Center; and a neat, well-designed Adventist church are all within easy walking distance to the thousands who work there five days a week, and the hundreds who live in the business park’s apartments and condominiums.

Yes, he nods, when I press him for an answer: he built it all. “Jesus saved me,” Radim says quietly, “and I hope someone else will find Him too.” Through one of these approaches—food or fitness, education or work environment—someone might be led to seek the God who turned his life around and gave him business success beyond his furthest imagination. “I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22, NRSV).*

Film crew members turn to me with gleeful stares as pieces of a story we never glimpsed come clearly into view. “This is bigger than we knew,” they murmur. “How can we tell all of this in just a one-hour documentary?” I shake my head, and pray that somewhere in those 60 minutes God will touch more hearts, inspire more witness, and bring a right-sized mission into view for all who watch.

Few will ever have the reach Radim Passer enjoys, but all will have a story they can tell. It may be written on a tablet in a park, or shared across a pew at church. It might embrace the needs of children, or be focused on the elderly too often left behind in modern haste. A meal may bring someone to Jesus. Others will discover Him in classrooms or in Sabbath Schools.

When mission multiplies, God’s church will grow. “Day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47, NRSV).

The documentary we made—Radim’d—a story of loss, redemption, and giving everything to God—will be available to Adventists around the globe this month. Visit www.artvnow.com with friends to watch online: bring open hearts and handkerchiefs. Find Radim’d on your favorite Adventist media outlet, in English and with subtitles in several major languages (Portuguese, Spanish, and French). Ask leaders of your church and region for how it can be shared with those you love, with all who ask, “What can I do for Jesus?” ©

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Bill Knott is editor and publisher of *Adventist World*.



What We Believe

The Church

Be the Church

—and live kind.



Some months ago I listened to a thought-provoking sermon by Nathan Stickland, pastor of our small St. Albans, United Kingdom, church across the street from the offices of the Trans-European Division (TED). He titled his sermon “Don’t Date the Church.” “Daters are looking for a product,” he said, then went on to compare such an approach to worship with online dating services, in which one shops for the ideal of a suitable date. Someone who “dates” the church is self-centered, always wondering, “What can I get out of church?”

The apostle Peter, writing to a scattered community of believers living throughout Asia Minor, quotes from the Old Testament and reminds his readers what church is all about: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). Church is not about us. Church centers on the worship and proclamation of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light, in whom “all things consist” (Col 1:17). Church is also a community where we come together to offer encouragement to each other. While we need to be encouraged, we should also ask ourselves: “How can I encourage someone in our worship of God?”

A FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT

Perhaps it’s time to make a shift in our perception of church, from its being “something you go to” or “show up for” to something more. Some may ask, “Church has a place in my life; isn’t that good enough?” The truth of the matter is: if we don’t get involved, we’re just “flirting” with church, because we want to keep our “options open.”

Since church is not a building but a community of broken sinners who are being made whole by Jesus, we really cheat ourselves when we lack passion and commitment for church. In his sermon, Stickland highlighted three particular areas:

First, we cheat ourselves because God wants us to be a blessing to others. Something good happens in us when we can share God’s grace with people around us. Without being connected to the church, we miss out on being that conduit of God. Jesus is the world’s only hope (John 3:16), but we have a part to play in God’s plan, which takes more than just “turning up.”

Second, we cheat our church community when we just turn up, because they miss out on what we have to offer. We all have something to offer. We can’t all be cooks, preachers, or musicians, but we can all find a place of service. That’s God’s intention for us.

Third, we cheat the world. God’s purpose is to save people who are lost. God is in the business of rescuing fallen humanity, and He wants us to be involved. How will anyone know the good news unless we tell them? If we can’t even pray with fellow believers, if we can’t even open our Bibles and talk with fellow believers, what hope is there for the world through us? When we can’t do



it in church, it's not likely to happen through us outside of church.¹

A CHANGE OF MINDSET

A little more than a year ago my eye caught a provocative title as I was glancing through the *Adventist Record* magazine available in our office. "Why I Don't Go to Church," was written by the magazine's assistant editor, Maritza Brunt. It made me stop in my tracks.² Maritza was raised Adventist, is currently employed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and is also a pastor's wife. She realized, however, that going to church wasn't helping her spiritually, emotionally, mentally, or physically. "There were days when I'd cry just thinking about having to go to church," she wrote. "It got so bad that I even started questioning the need for church."

What made the change in her life was her decision to remove the barrier of a bad attitude. She stopped viewing church as four walls. She started caring about her fellow church members and the joys and challenges of their lives.

She pushed herself to go to church, knowing that God could use her to be a blessing to others. When she received a kind word or hug, she was the recipient of that blessing from someone else.

Church is not just a theological concept—something abstract. Neither is church a sheet full of numbers and statistics. Based on statistics from 2017, we know that 42 percent of newly baptized members will eventually leave the church,³ so it's important to celebrate, encourage, and disciple the ones who stay. As a young person herself, Maritza stated that Millennials believe in the church and want to see it grow.

A KIND AND LIVING CHURCH

Instead of asking what we can "get" out of church, God calls us to "be the church." I was inspired by a new project entitled "live:kind," coordinated by TED family ministries director Karen Holford. The project has collected 31 creative ideas from family ministries teams across Europe about how we can

show kindness in church.⁴ As I read through this list of very creative ways to engage with church, I remembered the quiet ministry of Marilyn Petersen, the recently deceased mother of *Adventist World* operation's manager Merle Poirier.

Marilyn was confined to a wheelchair during the last 10 years of her life. She wrote cards to homebound people, people mentioned in the bulletin of her local congregation, people she hadn't seen in a while, people she'd just seen, new members who'd transferred—she wrote to any and everyone. She told my colleague that she rarely received anything back, or heard from anyone. Yet Merle collected a basketful of cards from people appreciating the love and care they felt when they received a card from Marilyn after people heard about her death. She had made an impact. We clearly need to keep our sights on heaven's reward and not what happens here. "My mom would have been amazed at the cards," said Merle.

Proclaiming God's goodness doesn't only mean preaching. Think about how you could show kindness in church—and do it. We will, most likely, not see an immediate impact, but every kind act will draw us closer together. Jesus Himself taught us that unity and care are the hallmarks of God's church family on earth (John 17:20, 21). So live kind. ©

¹ The full sermon can be watched at www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCID-BxWJPw.

² Maritza Brunt, "Why I Don't Go to Church," *Adventist Record*, Feb. 16, 2018, p. 10, documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/AAR/AAR20180217-V123-03.pdf

³ See Gerald A. Klingbeil, "They Still Leave," *Adventist World* January 2019, p. 9.

⁴ Check out the list at ted.adventist.org/images/Family/Kindness_at_church.pdf.

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Our Mission Mandate

To serve and to save



Mission unites people," a local leader confided in me as he faced some challenges with his congregation. But when the members put their energy into missionary projects, all their problems became irrelevant.

There's a special blessing in mission. This is not a recent discovery, nor is it the result of some new strategy. It's the message of the Bible, and the focus of a 70-year ministry that resulted in 100,000 manuscript pages left by Ellen White when she died.

These inspired messages still help the church to remember that everything we own, and everything we are, should be used in preparing people to meet their Lord. Ellen White's writings suggest a mission outline for the church understood in the following 10 concepts.

WHAT MISSION DOES

Mission confirms the reason for our movement. We are a modern extension of Christ's ministry to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

Ellen White wrote: "In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. . . . There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention."¹

Mission exalts Jesus. "Of all professing Christians," wrote Ellen White, "Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world."² Our structure, message, and mission remind us: "On it [the cross] depends our every hope."³ She wrote further: "Only the work accomplished with much prayer, and sanctified by the merit of Christ, will in the end prove to have been efficient for good."⁴

Mission is directly related to our identity. The quality of our identity defines the intensity of our mission. For Ellen White, total member involvement is an end-time imperative. "We are living in a special period of this earth's history," she wrote. "A great work must be done in a very short time, and every Christian is to act a part in sustaining this work."⁵

HOW MISSION ACTS

Mission should be our priority. "Those who have the spiritual oversight of the church should devise ways and means by which an opportunity may be given to every member of the church to act some part in God's work."⁶ When Ellen White noticed pastors only taking care of the church instead of training and involving members, she wrote: "Every church should be a training school for Christian

workers.”⁷ She also called on leaders to prioritize the mission by reaching new territories, urban areas, and all classes of people.

Mission calls for bravery. Ellen White wrote: “God will have men who will venture anything and everything to save souls,”⁸ because “God did not design that His wonderful plan to redeem men should achieve only insignificant results.”⁹ She encouraged believers to plan boldly and creatively.

Mission involves everyone. For Ellen White, everyone—men, women, and children—has a role in reflecting God’s light to the world. She saw personal contact as one of the most effective means of reaching people with the saving power of the gospel. “Personal influence is a power,” she wrote. “We must come close to those whom we desire to benefit.”¹⁰ She maintained that young people are a powerful force in reflecting God’s love. She wrote that when rightly trained, youth and young adults could quickly take the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour to the world.¹¹

Mission integrates all areas of the church. While there is much that divides us as a church, efficient and effective mission has the potential to unite us. Ellen White called for personal and regional interests to be put aside, so that mission becomes a priority in every church activity. Her vision was that the church members would emulate the example of the early Christian church, cooperate with one another, and “together . . . carry the work forward to completion.”¹²

Mission balances local action and global vision. In the first three decades after 1844, our pioneers did not devote much attention to mission outside North America. But Ellen White encouraged balance between “local missions” and

“foreign missions.” She personally devoted 11 years of her life to ministry in Europe and Australia, confirming the responsibility of the whole church to reach the whole world.

She wrote: “The home missionary work will be farther advanced in every way when a more liberal, self-denying, self-sacrificing spirit is manifested for the prosperity of foreign missions; for the prosperity of the home work depends largely, under God, upon the reflex influence of the evangelical work done in countries afar off.”¹³

Mission presents the truth without raising barriers. Ellen White acknowledged that sometimes in their zeal, believers can come across as harsh and unyielding. To that she wrote: “The Lord wants His people to follow other methods than that of condemning wrong, even though the condemnation is just.”¹⁴

Instead, she suggested coming near people, and laboring for them in love. She even recommended setting up centers of “holy influence.”

Mission follows Christ’s example. Ellen White was clear about the most effective methods in reaching people with the gospel. She wrote: “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”¹⁵

FINDING A BALANCE

There should be balance in Adventist mission: to serve and to save. If we serve only, we’re nothing more than a humanitarian agency. If we offer only the cold letter of salvation, we risk being inefficient and irrelevant.

We need to open our arms to meet the physical needs of those

The quality of our identity defines the intensity of our mission.

around us. But we also have to raise our voices to present the message of Christ’s return.

Ellen White described what’s at stake: “Every day the probation of some is closing. Every hour some are passing beyond the reach of mercy. And where are the voices of warning and entreaty to bid the sinner flee from this fearful doom? Where are the hands stretched out to draw him back from death? Where are those who with humility and persevering faith are pleading with God for him?”¹⁶

May we say with the prophet Isaiah, “Here am I! Send me” (Isa. 6:8). ☉

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

² Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 156.

³ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 209.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 362.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 125.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 351.

⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 149.

⁸ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 63.

⁹ E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 667.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 36.

¹¹ See Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1930), p. 7.

¹² E. G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 276.

¹³ E. G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 27.

¹⁴ E. G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 373.

¹⁵ E. G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143.

¹⁶ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 140.

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Keeping the Sabbath in Ancient Israel

Q

Did all the Israelites come to the temple during the Sabbath to worship the Lord?

A

The short answer to your question is “no.” Perhaps the next question is: what then did the Israelites do for worship during the Sabbath? The question is difficult to answer, and this has led some to conclude that the Sabbath was only a day of rest. Here are some suggestions to consider.

1. A HOLY CONVOCATION

The Sabbath is called a day of “sacred assembly,” suggesting that people came together to worship during that day (Lev. 23:3, NIV). Some have suggested that the phrase should be translated a “sacred proclamation,” and that it was an announcement of the arrival of a festival. This cannot be applied to the seventh-day Sabbath, because it arrived every week. The text suggests that the Sabbath was a day people assembled for worship. This was to happen in all their “dwellings” (verse 3), which could designate their homes or the settlements in which people were dwelling. The implication of the passage is that during the Sabbath, people gathered to worship.

2. COMMUNAL WORSHIP

One could assume that people living in Jerusalem, and perhaps in adjacent cities, would come to the temple to worship and to be instructed by the priests. General communal worship occurred mainly during festivals, particularly during the pilgrimage festivals—the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. 16:16). These were moments of rejoicing before the Lord, when male Israelites came to the temple from all over the land to worship. If the feast included a seventh-day Sabbath, there would have been a communal day of rest and worship. The Israelite

temple was God’s residence, and only the priests had access to it; consequently, worship occurred mainly in the courtyards of the temple.

3. FAMILY WORSHIP

It is probable that during the Sabbath Israel’s extended families would gather to pray and be instructed by the head of the family. This was one of Abraham’s responsibilities as the head of his family (Gen. 18:19). The Lord clearly instructed the Israelites to teach their children about His will for Israel. This was to be done as often as possible: “You shall teach them diligently to your children . . . when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deut. 6:7; cf. 4:9; 11:19). Since the Sabbath was a day of rest for all family members, it would have lent itself to be an excellent occasion to teach children about the mighty acts of God on behalf of His people, and also about the covenant law.

4. LEVITICAL CITIES

God chose the tribe of Levi to be in charge of the sanctuary services. As their reward, God apportioned to them the tithe of the people. They did not possess any land, but instead the Lord assigned to them 48 cities, known as Levitical cities, located at strategic places throughout the land. Priests and Levites obviously dwelt in these cities. The religious purpose of these cities is not clearly stated in the Bible. They may have functioned as teaching centers. Priests and Levites were responsible to instruct people not only concerning how the Lord guided Israel in the past but also about the law of the Lord (Lev. 10:11; Deut. 33:10). This was extremely important, because every Israelite was responsible before the Lord to observe the law. I suggest as a possibility that during the Sabbath, Israelites came to these cities to worship and to be instructed by priests and Levites. ©

Angel Manuel Rodríguez has served the church as a pastor, professor, and theologian, and as former director of the Biblical Research Institute.



Health & Wellness

Alcohol and Pregnancy

Is it unsafe for the father, as well as the mother, to drink alcohol?

I'm a 30-year-old female. My husband and I are planning a family. He says I should not take any alcohol during pregnancy. We seldom drink alcohol at home, but my husband sometimes drinks with his friends. Does his drinking also pose a danger to our unborn baby?

Alcohol is a known teratogenic agent, which means that it can and does cause abnormalities in babies in the womb. It's long been known that maternal alcohol consumption is significantly associated with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). Babies with FASD have congenital abnormalities; retarded (delayed) growth; and mental, behavioral, and learning disorders. They also may have characteristic facial features.

Approximately 25 percent of children with FASD have congenital heart defects (CHDs), confirming alcohol as a cause. The mental and behavioral disorders become more apparent as the child grows and develops. It's been accepted that these CHDs were related only to the alcohol consumption by the mother. Last year (2019), however, a large data analysis was done to determine whether the father's (paternal) alcohol-drinking pattern may be related to an increased risk of CHDs. This was a meta-analysis, looking at combined (pooled) data from large studies. The data used were drawn from large scientific databases in China, Europe, and the United States relating to CHDs and parental alcohol exposure. The number of subjects (people) analyzed included 41,747 drinkers and 297,587 controls (nondrinkers). The study was published in the *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*.*

A key finding is that paternal drinking significantly increases the odds of a newborn having congenital heart abnormalities. It's thought

that alcohol damages the DNA and RNA in the sperm. This effect increases as the amount of alcohol consumed increases. To reduce the chances of CHDs occurring to the level of that of nondrinkers, a male needs to stop drinking a number of months before conception occurs. This is interesting and important data.

The answers to your questions are therefore "yes," and "yes"! Yes, the data are showing there are dangers to your baby if your husband takes alcohol up to three months before conception occurs. And yes, there are also the added dangers to your baby and child as time passes, related to all the issues related to alcohol consumption generally by men—and also women.

Alcohol kills more than 3 million people globally every year, and is responsible for 5 percent of the global disease burden. This leaves many orphans and widows. Alcohol is a known teratogen (increases congenital defects). It's also a known carcinogen (cancer-causing agent).

There's no safe level of alcohol intake. It's addictive and associated with accidents, drownings, crime, domestic violence, and numerous diseases, with almost no organ system escaping the dangers of alcohol use, including the seat of reason and choice—the brain.

Ultimately, the compelling reason to avoid alcohol is to keep our minds clear and sensitive to the speaking of God's Spirit. In this, as with many other health decisions, prevention (not consuming alcohol) is the cure. ©

* Senmao Zhang, Lesan Wang, Tubao Wang, et al., "Parental Alcohol Consumption and the Risk of Congenital Heart Diseases in Offspring: An Updated Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*, journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2047487319874530?journalCode=epcr.

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The Prison Chaplain



“May I Tell You a Story?”

BY DICK DUERKSEN

I couldn't read or write, so they threw me out of the second grade. A new teacher divided the class into sections. She started me out in the 'advanced' section, but quickly moved me to the corner of the room and sat me all alone, forgotten, all by myself.”

Those are the words of Air Force sergeant Terry Johnson, who today is a successful minister, teacher, radio host, chaplain, and spiritual leader. Terry is a second-grade failure whose life has been a hard trail of tragedies, failures, and victories in Jesus. One of his good friends says, “Terry knows about salvation personally, and is a man God uses to share the good news of grace to the powerful and the weak. Get close to Terry, and he'll show you that God loves you personally and is eager to perform miracles in your life.”

“As an Air Force sergeant, I served in the president's honor guard for three United States presidents,” Terry says. “Each of them knew I loved God.”

Terry stumbled through elementary and secondary school and then into the Air Force, where he finally understood the learning disabilities that had kept him from learning. Determined to help others who faced similar challenges, he began taking speaking appointments during which he could encourage young people to succeed. On one of those appointments a friend asked him to speak at a local prison, the Oregon State Penitentiary in Portland, Oregon.

“A lot of these guys get into prison because no one helped them conquer their learning disabilities,” the friend told Terry. “They just got discouraged, got into trouble, and ended up here. Come talk to them.”

Terry agreed, especially since Portland was his home, the city where he had been thrown out of second grade.

“When I got to the prison,” Terry describes the day, “they took me into the assembly area and told me they had decided to bring all of the prisoners together. The officer told me that the prison was full of gang members who hated each other, so they were adding guards for the event. Then the officer gave me the rules: you stand up and speak when we tell you. You quit when you're done. You stay on the platform. You do not come down to the prisoners. You do not pray, and you do not make

“You don’t remember me, do you?” the prisoner asked.

a call for commitment or change. Just speak and leave. That will be all.”

“OK,” Terry answered.

The room quickly filled with hundreds of prisoners.

“When everyone was sitting down, three guards brought in one last prisoner—the worst case in the penitentiary. His legs were chained together, and another chain ran from his legs to his neck so that he could hardly move. They sat him in the very back, far from all the others, and guards stood around him, guns ready.”

Terry poured his soul out to the guys. He started with second grade and described his life of failures, trouble with the school, trouble with the law, and trouble with himself. He also told about the constant love and prayers of his mother.

“It finally hit me,” Terry told the crowd, “that God loved me even when I was bad, and that He was always right there to help me live like I was His own son.”

They listened. Rugged prisoners with tears flowing freely as they relived their lives through Terry’s story. At the end Terry heard God telling him to pray for the guys, even for the guy in chains in the back. He didn’t ask permission. He just raised his hands and reminded the men about how his mother had prayed for him every moment of his entire life.

“Most of you have a mother, a grandmother, a father, aunt, uncle, or someone else who loves you and has been praying for you the way my mother prayed for me,” Terry said. “Now if you’d like me to pray for you, please stand right where you are and raise your hands high like this. Is that OK with you?”

The room was quickly filled with men who were standing, weeping, and raising their hands, begging for Terry to pray for them. Even guards stood, arms raised high to God.

“I prayed,” says Terry. “Oh, I prayed! I used words I knew their mothers had been praying for them. We cried together.”

As he prayed, Terry stepped off the platform and began walking back through the crowd toward the man in chains at the back of the hall. Toward the prisoner who had tried to stand, only to be shoved back down by armed guards. Toward the weeping man who was struggling to raise his shackled arms to God.

Terry cannot tell this part of the story without pausing, his own eyes filling with tears. “The prisoners were crowding around me and thanking me as I walked through them toward the back. When I got to the prisoner in chains, I asked everyone to stand aside and let me talk to the man. I crouched down, and he leaned into me, getting right in my face.”

“You don’t remember me, do you?” the prisoner asked. “But I remember you. Twenty years ago, back there in second grade, before you were sent to the chair in the corner, I was the boy who sat next to you in the third row. You listened to your mother’s prayers, and let Jesus pull you out. I didn’t listen. By the time I was 15, I had been arrested 17 times. At 18 I started living on the streets, where I was known as the human calculator, because I could keep track of all the drug deals in my head. They finally caught me, and now I’ll never get out. Terry, can Jesus love me here?”

The room filled with cheers as Terry shouted, “YES! He already does!”

Randy, the prisoner in chains, was baptized a few months later. Though he is still serving out his 60-year sentence, he is now called the prison chaplain, for the way he shares his new life in Christ. ©

Dick Duerksen, a pastor and storyteller, lives in **Portland, Oregon, United States**. You can read Terry Johnson’s life story in the book *Aim High*.

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Seventh-day
Adventist Church



Kicked Out of Church!

As a teenager, Ellen Harmon (White) was worried that she was not ready for Jesus to come. William Miller and others preached enthusiastically about Jesus' soon return (Second Advent). And although young Ellen was excited by the thought of His coming, she was concerned that Jesus had not forgiven her sins.

For three weeks Ellen could hardly eat or sleep, and her worries deepened. One night during this state of despair, Ellen had a dream in which she

met Jesus. He was so kind and loving that she wanted to stay in His presence forever. Ellen then understood that she could reach out to Jesus anytime, and that He would hear her prayers and accept her. Ellen had never been so happy!

At the next meeting with other Advent believers, Ellen stood up and gave her testimony about the peace that Jesus had given her. Many were amazed that Ellen, who had previously been shy and quiet, could speak so openly of her

love for Jesus and her belief in Christ's soon coming.

Back at her old church, though, most people were unhappy about Ellen's testimony. When she spoke about Jesus' coming, some people coughed on purpose so that others wouldn't hear her. A few even scooted their chairs around so that their backs were to Ellen!

Church elders even urged Ellen and her family to quit talking about Jesus' second coming. But Ellen determined not to abandon her faith. She loved Jesus with



Bible Treasure:

“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him”

(James 1:12).

all her heart, and she longed for Him to come and take her to heaven. Her depression was gone, and her spiritual life had completely changed.

Not long after this, the minister of her church came to visit the Harmon family. He told them sternly that if they did not stop speaking of Jesus' second coming, they could not be members any longer. When the Harmon family said their beliefs were in the Bible and that they would not abandon them, the church called a trial. The following

Sunday the church elder read off the names of the Harmon family and announced that they were no longer members.

The family found a text that seemed to be written just for them, and they continued to witness joyfully about Christ's second coming. You can find their special text in Isaiah 66:5. ©

This article first appeared in *KidsView*, December 2012.

Discuss:

What would you be willing to do to stand up for God?

How can we support and encourage those who face hard times for being loyal to God?

WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH GREAT WEALTH?
MEET RADIM PASSER. THIS IS HIS STORY.



RADIM'D

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