

Adventist World

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The Cost of Caring

BY BILL KNOTT

"Jesus said, 'Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me'" (Luke 8:46).

I still remember the morning when I learned the real meaning of compassion.

In my daily time with God, I was reading a volume on the healing miracles of Christ. Each morning, I reveled in a deeper understanding of the social and cultural context of Jesus' many miracles; the remarkable sensitivity He showed to those marginalized by society; the willingness of the Gentle Healer to craft His caring to the unique needs of each individual.

But when I reached the story of the woman in the crowd healed by touching the fringe of His robe, I stopped to absorb the commentator's pivotal insight.

It cost Jesus something to heal the hurting, the author noted. Energy went out of Him, and He knew it.

Like many of my Adventist peers, I had identified "compassion" with the easy things we did in service to our community. We sang in "sunshine bands" at local nursing homes. We collected canned goods from neighbors for distribution to those falling through the social safety net. We stood on doorsteps in December ice and snow to ask for "dollars for the needy" in the annual Ingathering campaign.

But beyond the occasional discomfort of a bone-chilling night ringing doorbells, there was very little cost to me or my peers. It was our *extra* we invested—the excess of our time and energy—and then usually when it fit within existing schedules of work and play and study. Compassion as we practiced it certainly blessed the senior citizens and the lonely; the families hurting through tragedy and loss; the far-off victims of poverty and war. But mostly it gave us that warm, comfortable sense of having done something that resembled Jesus' caring.

On that morning long ago, I began to realize the yawning gap between the easy giving of my extra and the deep sharing of Himself that Jesus brought to those in need. How could I, in the words of a Christian song, "*offer anything that cost me nothing*"?



And so, through grace, my world began to change—often slowly, sometimes slowed by pride or haste. I came to value Christ's compassion as the gift of His caring and His time—both of which cost Him, and would cost me. I came to treasure the godly men and women who practiced the compassion of Jesus by costly sharing of their time and love with me. I saw in them the image of my Saviour and my Healer, and I learned to pray for those beyond the circle of my friends.

Compassion, like every other virtue, is always a "work in progress." In grace, we learn the deeper meaning of things we thought we knew. Our vision gets clearer; our hands unclench; our hearts grow warmer. We open more than our wallets and purses. And in the laboratory of each congregation, we begin to practice skills of kindness and self-giving that must yet move out into neighborhoods, favelas, boroughs, arrondissements, barrios, and shantytowns.

The church I want to belong to is . . . *compassionate*.

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.

A cylinder-shaped stone with an inscription discovered in a 3000-year-old temple in Khirbat Ataruz, Jordan, referring to a battle waged and won by Moabite king Mesha in revolt against a king of Israel. It is possibly the earliest known written mention of the name “Hebrews.” The stone was found by La Sierra University professor and archaeologist Chang-ho Ji, along with several La Sierra students.

Photo: Christopher Rollston



“While clergy is a somewhat understudied group, it is critical that we gain greater insight about their mental and emotional well-being, and ways to mitigate issues where present. Our ultimate goal is to understand better how best to care for and support our clergy and the communities they serve.”

—Martin Shaw, lead researcher for a new study led by Florida-based AdventHealth University and AdventHealth, one of the largest faith-based health systems in North America. The study aims to better understand the health and well-being of pastors and chaplains.

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

150

The number of attendees to a recent health-care leadership conference held in Pune, India. Loma Linda University Health, along with Adventist Health International, organized the event, which brought together health-care leaders from India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and the United States. The conference addressed five health-system building blocks: strategic planning, staff development, health information systems, finance, and leadership. Attendees participated in peer consultations designed to improve an identified institutional challenge.

“From the day that I was put in prison, I prayed that God would use the situation to glorify His name to all Angola. God has done just that.”

—Burns Musa Sibanda, treasurer of the North-Eastern Angola Union Mission, who spent 62 days in prison. Four pastors, including Sibanda, and two lay members were falsely accused of kidnapping and extortion in a case that church leaders and the government have linked to epidemic corruption in the country. On a recent trip to Angola, Seventh-day Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson visited with Angola president João Lourenço and other officials to thank them for intervening in the case.

Notice of Regular Meeting of Members of the General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists

Notice is hereby given that the next regular meeting of the members of the General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists will be held in the Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, Indiana, on Sunday, June 28, 2020, for the transaction of any business that may come before the meeting. The members of this corporation are the delegates to the sixty-first session of the General Conference.

Daisy Jane F. Orion
Corporate Secretary

“Our mission as a church is to serve, and we do not want children to miss their school year more than they have already.”

—José Rodríguez, president of the Puerto Rican Union Conference church region. In the aftermath of a series of earthquakes in early 2020 that forced more than 800 public schools to close, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Puerto Rico offered free enrollment at its church-operated schools. More than 130 students registered. Some of the church schools that were partially destroyed or damaged are finishing the school year in specially built temporary tents.

2,150

The number of square meters (23,142 square feet) that comprise the newly expanded Adventist National School in the Middle Eastern country of Jordan. The Adventist school has been operating for 78 years in Jordan and recently doubled in size as it grows its curriculum to include after-school classes on health, language, and music for the local community. English-language classes will also be offered by the school, located in a popular dining and shopping area near downtown Amman.



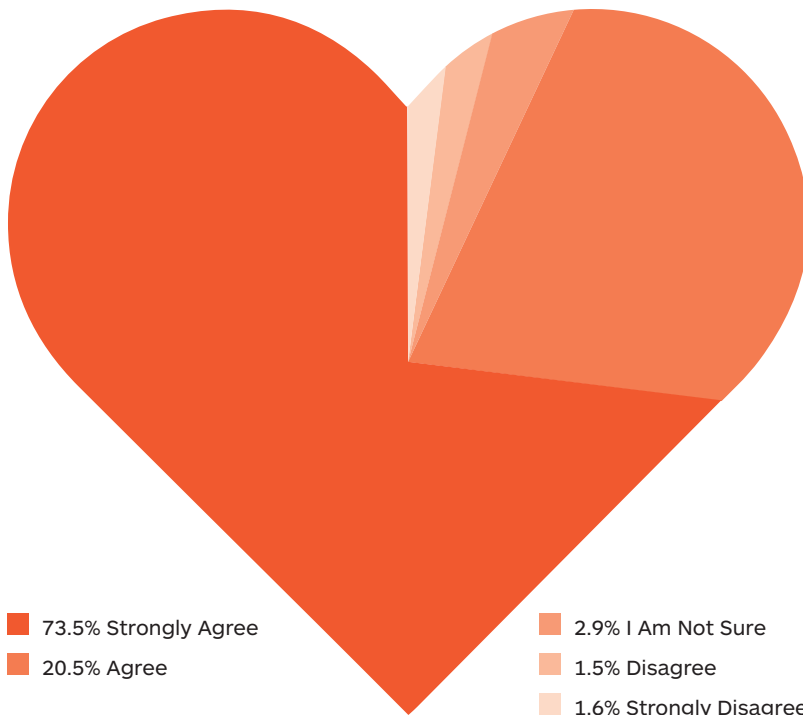
Church leaders and others cutting a red ribbon at Adventist National School in Amman, Jordan, on January 29, 2020.

Photo: Chanmin Chung, MENA

Personal God

Source: Adventist Global Member Survey 2018, n = 57,520

Adventists around the world were asked, "Do you believe in a personal God who seeks a relationship with human beings?"



“Our brothers and sisters in China are leaning daily on the strength of the Lord. They are also doing all they can to support hospitals and frontline health workers during this difficult time.”

—Robert Folkenberg, Jr., president of the Adventist Church’s Chinese Union Mission, as part of a message announcing the death of the first Seventh-day Adventist member in China from the novel coronavirus COVID-19.

Correction

In the March 2020 issue (page 24) we incorrectly identified the wife of John Loughborough. His wife Maggie died in 1875, three years prior to his service in England. He later married Anna Mariah Driscoll. She is the one pictured standing behind her husband.

Lower Meat Consumption a Key to Fighting Global Warming, Study Says

By Larry Becker, Loma Linda University Health News

A global transition to a vegetarian diet would have significant impacts in the battle against global warming and other environmental concerns, according to research conducted at Loma Linda University Health.

Food production has been identified as a major contributor to increased greenhouse gas emissions, consumes 70 percent of fresh water, and is responsible for 80 percent of the world's deforestation. Improving agricultural technology and reducing food waste have been put forward as potential solutions to these environmental concerns. But Joan Sabaté, professor of nutrition and epidemiology at Loma Linda University School of Public Health, found that changes in food choices and diet patterns would have a far greater positive effect on environmental sustainability.

"Vegetarian Diets: Planetary Health and Its Alignment With Human Health" is a meta-analysis of 49 published research studies that focused on the impact that vegetarian and vegan diets have on greenhouse gas emissions and water and land use. When data from the

49 studies were combined, Sabaté found that shifting from current dietary norms to ovo-lacto-vegetarian and vegan diets would reduce greenhouse gas levels an average of 35 percent, reduce land use for food production by an average of 42 percent, and agricultural water use by an average of 28 percent.

"Many other studies have clearly demonstrated the health advantages of vegetarian and vegan diets. This analysis confirms that switching to these types of diets is also significantly eco-friendly as well," Sabaté said.

Sabaté directs the environmental nutrition research program at Loma Linda University School of Public Health. This program explores the interrelationships between the environmental and health impacts of food choices and ultimately seeks to improve the sustainability, health, and equity of food systems. He is the editor of the book *Environmental Nutrition: Connecting Health and Nutrition With Environmentally Sustainable Diets*, published in 2019.

One early sign that people are increasing in their commitment to

Changing diets would reduce greenhouse gases, land and water use.

making dietary changes because of concerns about climate took place in January 2020. By choosing to serve all-vegan meals to hundreds of celebrities and guests, two major entertainment industry award shows—the Golden Globes Awards and the Screen Actors Guild Awards—increased public awareness and conversation about the link between sustainable agriculture and climate change.

While the field of sustainable diets and environmental impacts is still in its infancy, Sabaté says he has participated in a number of research studies that show a clear connection between diet and climate factors. In 2017 he was part of a group that published a well-known study on the climate benefits of replacing meat with beans in diets. Sabaté and other researchers working in Loma Linda University Health's environmental nutrition program have published more than 30 papers that examined the relationship between food choices, environmental sustainability, and population health.

Sabaté says additional research is needed into how changes in agricultural approaches impact the environment in low- and middle-income countries. He also points to needed research comparing large-scale agricultural operations with small-operation family farms practices.

"In societies where daily meat consumption is the social norm, drastically reducing meat consumption is a major challenge," Sabaté said. "In low- and middle-income countries, eliminating meat could adversely affect those populations' already marginal nutritional status." ©



Photo: Sven Scheuermeier

Two Papua New Guinea Missions Plant Nearly 800 Congregations in 2019

By Maryellen Fairfax, *Adventist Record*

Bible reading programs, branch Sabbath Schools prove successful, church leaders say.



Attendees at a ministers' training event in Papua New Guinea (PNG) enjoy reading the Bible together.

Photo: Danijela Schubert Facebook, *Adventist Record*

Data collected at recent ministers' meetings and discipleship training events held across Papua New Guinea (PNG) has revealed significant church growth during the past 12 months, thanks to the implementation of Discovery Bible Reading (DBR).

As a snapshot, Eastern Highlands Simbu Mission has planted 592 "branch churches," and Madang Manus Mission has planted 185 in the past year.

Church leaders have been training churches in PNG to implement clear and simple disciple-making building strategies, including DBR, which is followed by nearly all new branch churches and branch Sabbath Schools in the country.

"Disciple-making is multiplying across those cities, towns, and regions of Papua New Guinea where the simple, reproducible, no-cost methods of Jesus are being followed," said Peter Roennfeldt, who conducted some of the discipleship training events. "Over the past three years the South Pacific Division Discipleship Ministry Team (DMT) has consistently used

DBR as the foundation. Now new groups are multiplying into new church plants."

In the Eastern Highlands Simbu Mission, 222 organized churches have planted, between them, 592 branch churches, including church plants and small groups. Most of this growth has occurred during the past year, thanks to the intentional creation of branch Sabbath Schools.

"Branch Sabbath Schools are conducted by Sabbath School class teams, gathering families near their homes to sing and read the Gospels using the DBR method," Roennfeldt said.

A total of 158 of the 222 organized churches in the Eastern Highlands Simbu Mission have restructured to facilitate branch Sabbath Schools, splitting their classes into smaller groups according to geographical location.

The story is similar in the Madang Manus Mission, where 62 organized churches have planted 185 new churches between them. A total of 51 of the 62 organized churches in the Madang Manus Mission have restructured to facilitate branch Sabbath Schools.

"The data outlines some amazing multiplication as a result of progressive equipping over three years," said SPD DMT stewardship director Christina Hawkins, who conducted training in Goroka. "Continuity pays dividends for the kingdom."

In addition to Roennfeldt and Hawkins, Danijela Schubert, Nick Kross, and Leigh Rice also conducted training across PNG—including in Madang, Manus Island, Alotau, Goroka, Wewak, Vanimo, Port Moresby, and Central Papua Conference—during January 2020.

"I was in Madang, and people traveled from all around the province, some through the night, to attend the training," Schubert said. "They slept in little tents, crammed into small classrooms, under the trees, around the building on concrete. Such dedication."

Presenters focused on implementing clear and simple disciple-making building strategies, including DBR and other simple processes, including enlisting elders to baptize, having regular Communion services in different locations, and introducing new resources. ©

178,829

The membership of the Inter-European Division as of June 30, 2019

“We do not succeed if we do not pay attention to the needs of the society that surrounds us. We must be attentive to how we reach the hearts of the people we contact.”

—Mario Brito, president of the Inter-European Division (EUD), addressing the EUD executive committee. Brito highlighted the church’s mission and called leaders and members to be consistent in living out that mission, focusing on that which unites the church.

“Don’t criticize those who are making new disciples out of secular people. It is just a different way of preaching the gospel.”

—Wayne Krause, director of church planting, discipleship, and Mission to the Cities in the South Pacific Division region. Krause was invited to speak to the EUD executive committee about contextualized ministry to secular populations.

100

The number of years that the Adventist Church in Germany has been involved in organized work for the deaf community at the Grindelberg Advent House in Hamburg, Germany. The centennial commemoration celebrated the ministry’s achievements and drew attention to the situation of the hearing-impaired within the Adventist Church.

“This is surely the best investment for the Adventist Church: to have young people involved in evangelism through media.”

—Corrado Cozzi, EUD communication director, about a media academy organized in Bulgaria to improve the use of communication skills to reach people with the gospel. Guest speakers talked to the group about the role of media in the church’s outreach activities; how to get local church events into the news; how to avoid the traps of fake news; and how church members and volunteers could become full-time media employees.

“When we see the altruistic behavior of these Pathfinders, we can be sure that being sensitive to the needs of others is part of their character.”

—João Martins, ADRA Europe executive director, about Pathfinders who gathered for the EUD Pathfinder Camporee. Pathfinders earned rewards (called talents) for participating in various activities throughout the event, and were given the choice of spending them on themselves or donating them to ADRA for a specific project. Kids donated 76,951 talents, almost eight times the original goal. 🙌



EUD youth director Jonathan Tejel helps to exhibit the “talents” young regional Pathfinders gave away to support a social responsibility project.

Photo: courtesy of ADRA Europe

Perspective



Photo: Clay Banks

Trans-European Division Apologizes for Racial Bias in the Past

Following a series of consultations and a time of reflection, the Trans-European Division issued a formal apology.

The year 2019 marked the ninetieth anniversary of the formation of the Trans-European Division as one region of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Initially established as the Northern European Division, it has gone through several reconfigurations over the years. Starting as a predominantly Scandinavian and British Isles-based unit, it has grown to now encompass countries in central and southeastern Europe, and over the decades it has also had a specific mission impact in West Africa, Pakistan, and the Middle East.

While the heritage of our division was European, the gift of mission from our early pioneers until the present has led us to grow into a highly multicultural and diverse entity, comprising 22 countries with an even greater multitude of cultures—each rich and to be valued and reflected in our worshipping congregations.

Yet sadly and all too often, a breadth of diversity does not always lead to a richness of unity, or necessarily of understanding.

As we have celebrated the milestone of our 90-year history of mission and outreach even through the difficulties of two world wars, regional conflicts, and persecution in the Communist era, we note other parts of our history, parts for which we express sincere regret. We recognize that unconscious bias, ignorance, prejudice, human fears, resentments, and suspicions have affected the church, most specifically within the British Union Conference.

Commenting on such issues, Ellen White was clear: “This grieves the heart of Christ.” She counseled: “We have the same heavenly Father and the same Redeemer, who loved us and gave Himself for us all, without any distinction.” She then urged: “When the love of Christ is cherished in the heart as it should be, . . . there will be no caste, no pride of nationality; no difference will be made because of the color of the skin.” She concluded: “The color of the skin is no criterion as to the value of the soul. . . . God has taken us, all classes, all nations, all languages, . . . and brought us into His workshop, to be prepared for His temple.”*

While we cannot rewrite history, as leaders of the Trans-European Division we acknowledge that actions were taken that were not in harmony with God’s ideal. We apologize for the failures of the church in this regard.

As we focus on mission across the rich geographical, cultural, historical, and constantly changing diversity of our division, we commit to providing

a leadership model that will benefit all communities, regardless of background, in exactly the same way that Jesus modeled positive relationships, whether to high-ranking Nicodemus, the despised Samaritan woman, the outcast blind beggar, or Simon the Pharisee. These examples found in a series of Gospel stories lead toward Jesus’ wonderful prayer of unity found in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John—that we can be one, united together, just as Jesus and the Father are one. That is something that we want to take to heart and seriously desire and strive for.

While our apology is from the heart, we recognize that an apology is not enough. We must work vigorously and intentionally to eradicate any traces of prejudice and intolerance that continue to exist. Together with our officers, field presidents, and our division executive committee, we are reviewing policies and focusing on our strategic framework for the next five years in order to enhance our leadership and decision-making processes.

Our prayer as the leadership of the Trans-European Division is that Seventh-day Adventists in this division may indeed “be one,” embodying the union of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that we will “put on love” and so be bound “together in perfect unity” as we allow God to mold us in His workshop, regardless of our class, race, gender, nationality, or language, so that we may, together, achieve the mission that Christ has given to us. ©

*Ellen G. White to W. S. Hyatt, Feb. 15, 1900.

COMPASSIONATE

The venerable English *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* defines *compassion* as the “sympathetic consciousness of others’ distress together with a desire to alleviate it.”¹ Antonyms include “callousness, coldheartedness, hard-heartedness, or heartlessness.”

Nobody likes to be called “hard-hearted” or “callous.” But we frequently wonder what compassion really looks like. Responses to the continuing refugee crises around the world from politicians and religious leaders often include references to compassion. Unfortunately, there are also other reactions, including fear, rejection, or nationalism. What is compassion to some means “selling out” to others. Compassion seems to be a hot-button topic, often resulting in passionate conflict.

“I HAVE COMPASSION”

Jesus’ ministry was filled with compassion—and with conflict. The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) contain repeated references to Jesus’ compassion for the people that He met. As Jesus moved around Judea and Galilee and saw the multitudes following Him, “He was moved with compassion for them” (Matt. 9:36; see also Mark 6:34). This compassion was

a response to the needs of people surrounding Him.


Jesus saw them and knew that they were “weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36). Sheep can be stubborn and stupid—and they are lost without a shepherd caring for their needs. Jesus really *saw* people around Him. He didn’t just glance or skim the crowd. He knew their individual hurts, their guilt, their diseased hearts and bodies. Compassion drove Him to heal their hurts, to forgive their sins, and to renew their hearts and restore their bodies (Matt. 14:14). Compassion moved Him to feed a crowd of more than 4,000 who had followed Him for three days (Matt. 15:32-38; Mark 8:1-10).

But Jesus’ compassion wasn’t limited to crowds or an anonymous “world.” He engaged people individually. He touched two blind beggars outside Jericho and healed their blindness (Matt. 20:34). He touched and healed a leper pleading for restoration (Mark 1:41, 42). Touching a leper made Him ceremonially unclean. He could not enter the temple unless He underwent ritual purification. When Jesus saw the

Compassion and Conflict

Exploring the Jesus model





grief of a widow who had lost her only son (and, consequently, her only financial support), compassion for her plight moved Him to action. “Do not weep” (Luke 7:13) really meant that death could not prevail. “Young man, I say to you, arise” (verse 14) anticipates sure victory. Jesus raised a number of individuals during His time on earth. These resurrections all demonstrated His all-encompassing compassion and commitment to save lost and dying people.

Jesus knew about the power of compassion. Motivation and attitudes featured profoundly in His teaching. In one of His most famous stories, the parable of the good Samaritan, the lack of compassion distinguishes the good guy from the bad guys (Luke 10:33). It’s the Samaritan, the hated outsider, who has compassion and takes care of the injured man—not the priest, nor the Levite. That’s not how stories were told in first-century Judaism. Priests, Levites, and scribes were the ones doing God’s will—at least, that’s what they publicly and repeatedly claimed to do.

COMPASSION IN CONFLICT

Jesus’ engagement with Jewish leadership was complex. He took time to nurture Nicodemus’ nascent faith during a nighttime conversation (John 3). He healed the daughter of Jairus, the ruler of a local synagogue, in response to her father’s plea (Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56). He ate repeatedly in the homes of Pharisees (Luke 7:36-50; 14:1). Jesus knew that *all* the world—including Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes—needed His grace.

Often, however, He found Himself in conflict with Jewish leadership. They followed His every move; they laid traps and dreamed up ploys to make Him say the one thing that would finally get Him killed.

Jesus didn’t thrive on conflict,

even though He never compromised on issues. Rather, He cried over those who had vaccinated their hearts against the softening influence of God’s Spirit (Luke 19:41-44; Matt. 23:37-39). When He spoke judgment against the Jewish leaders of His time (Matt. 23:13-39), He had tears in His eyes.² While He never wavered under their unrelenting criticism, His heart yearned for their transformation.

Jesus’ compassion encompasses not only the Jewish nation. Salvation is aimed at “the world” (John 3:16). His final command, reported in the Gospel of Matthew, urges His followers to “make disciples of all the nations” (Matt. 28:19). He never thought small or limited His offers of grace.

THE MIND-SET OF JESUS

Paul’s hymn describing the mind-set and attitude of Jesus in Philippians 2:5-8 is key to understanding the compassion of Jesus. The Creator of the universe, coequal with God, made Himself “nothing” (NIV), “taking the very nature of a servant” (NIV), and humbled Himself “to the point of death” (NKJV).

How is this possible? This kind of commitment is possible only when it’s driven by love—unselfish, always-giving, never-changing love. We see glimpses of this kind of love as we peruse the story of Jesus in Scripture. We get hints of this commitment as we see Jesus engaging His world—including His enemies. Jesus’ love, God’s love, is the only viable engine driving compassion for a world that was bent on hurting Him and, ultimately, killing Him.

Ellen White summarized this kind of love perfectly: “All the paternal love which has come down from generation to generation through the channel of human hearts, all the springs of tenderness which have opened in the souls of men, are but

Jesus really saw people around Him. He didn’t just glance or skim the crowd. He knew their individual hurts, their guilt, their diseased hearts and bodies.

as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean, when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God. Tongue cannot utter it; pen cannot portray it. You may meditate upon it every day of your life; you may search the Scriptures diligently in order to understand it; you may summon every power and capability that God has given you, in the endeavor to comprehend the love and compassion of the heavenly Father; and yet there is an infinity beyond. You may study that love for ages; yet you can never fully comprehend the length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of the love of God in giving His Son to die for the world. Eternity itself can never fully reveal it.”³


I need that kind of love in my life! ☺

¹ See www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/compassion, accessed February 6, 2020.

² See Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 620: “Divine pity marked the countenance of the Son of God as He cast one lingering look upon the temple and then upon His hearers. In a voice choked by deep anguish of heart and bitter tears He exclaimed, ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . .’”

³ Ellen G. White, “The Inestimable Gift,” *Review and Herald*, Oct. 22, 1908.

Gerald A. Klingbeil is an associate editor of *Adventist World*.



Jesus' Blueprint

Compassion
is simple.

As the French woman gently massaged her rough hands, Hamia* felt tears well up in her eyes. She was *so* tired and worried. After fleeing her abusive husband in North Africa, she now waited anxiously in this small village in France. Would her petition for asylum be granted? Would she ever see her children again? She had felt her heart shatter when she had to leave them behind.

But for these few minutes, she could release her worries and soak in both the tenderness from her new acquaintance and the lavender aroma from the lotion.

"To offer these hand massages may sound like a small thing, or even silly," says Marie-Jo Guth, one of the women's ministries volunteers from the Adventist church in Anduze, who spends time with Hamia and other women from the shelter in the village.

"But to have this opportunity for physical contact, to have a soft touch and soft talk, is something they really like. In all cases their hands are coarse. These are not computer women's hands; they work in the fields or do cleaning work, so they have old hands. And they're not used to hand cream. It's far too expensive for them; it's a luxury."


The main activity of these weekend gatherings—which take place several times a year—is actually card making and paper crafts. "We choose supplies with very lively, joyful colors," Guth says. "These women have no income, no place to go, and in most cases, they barely speak French. But focusing on a creative activity gives them a diversion from their problems . . . at least for the afternoon."

COMPASSIONATE GIVING

Guth and her fellow church members are a beautiful example of compassion in action, what some call compassionate giving. It's the familiar but still-powerful notion of following Jesus' blueprint: stepping outside church walls, spending time with people where *they* are, and meeting their needs with no other agenda.

In our oh-so-busy lives, it's easy to feel we can't add one more thing to our schedules. Or we may not know where to start reaching. But here are some ideas for inspiration, and a look at the unexpected benefits that may very well circle back to you.

Build on Your Passion. One of the most natural ways to connect with people is through a mutual interest. What are *your* talents, *your* passions? Can your favorite hobby serve others?



When Roberto Valencia was a design professor in the School of Arts and Communication at Montemorelos University in Mexico, he and his students experimented with community service activities that utilized their unique creative skills. They came up with a plan to provide photo portraits to members of the community who didn't typically have such keepsakes.

"These were low-income people who were so busy just trying to earn a living day by day. Having their portrait taken was the last thing they were thinking about," Valencia says. "But when new generations of a family come along, they want to know where their parents or grandparents came from. A picture can evoke so much and be a starting point for sharing these stories. The families with children are the ones who stand out the most in my memory. The parents were hardworking and didn't get to spend much time with their kids. They were grateful for their portraits, and it was very special for them."

Listen to your heart. There are countless needs in the world, and one person can't tackle them all. So pause and focus on where your heart is leading. Do you absolutely love to read and can't imagine not having that ability? There are likely adults in your community who have missed the opportunity to master this vital skill; your tutoring could transform their world. Visiting seniors who are losing vision and reading to them would be a gift beyond measure.

Feel free to start small. It can be daunting to commit to a weekly activity, or even a monthly one. Instead, look for one-time mini projects that you can tackle more easily.

Seasonal outreach is a good opportunity for this. My sister created

Valentine's Day cards with her young daughter and delivered them to elderly veterans. At Christmas they packaged pairs of warm socks and took them to a local homeless shelter. If you are an enthusiastic cyclist and have a knack for mechanics, perhaps you could set up a one-day bicycle repair clinic in your town. A loaf of home-baked bread can be a great conversation starter with your neighbor down the street.

Be a follower if you prefer. Not everyone is called to be a leader, and that's perfectly appropriate. "In different activities, you can have different levels of involvement," Valencia says. "I often saw that just by being present, it encouraged others who were much more capable to give meaningful help."

Not all opportunities for service need to be found within the church setting. Many organizations do amazing work and have deep expertise in their chosen niche. By partnering with them, you can increase their impact, have a rich learning experience, and build relationships with both fellow volunteers *and* those you serve.

Realize that Jesus is your partner. Many of us have different comfort levels when it comes to witnessing out loud. Know that Jesus is always by your side. He will bring people to you if you cultivate an open heart, and give you the words to share when you talk to them.

"When we were with Hamia, she mentioned God's name several times," Guth says. "We took that opportunity to talk about God, to share that we have the same God."

Get ready to receive blessings. "We all have challenges," says Philip Stanley, director of community outreach at the Southern Asian

Seventh-day Adventist Church in Maryland, United States. "But often when we help people, when we come into contact with them and their circumstances, those challenges quickly dim. Hands-on service transforms you internally. It's very rewarding."

Community service can also transform congregations. For years, Stanley has organized service opportunities for collegiate Sabbath School members, feeding those who are homeless, taking mission trips, and partnering with national organizations.

"Often church becomes a revolving door for that age group," he says. "In addition, our young people may not feel comfortable bringing a friend who is not an Adventist to our church services. But community outreach is a perfect opportunity for them to invite their friends to join an Adventist activity and serve together."

Guth echoes this testimony: "Our church has only about 100 members, but we have activities every Sabbath and weekend. It's very attractive for our teens' non-Adventist friends, and every year we have two or three or four baptisms because of that. Now we have too many requests to join the Pathfinder group! Our church building is too small to handle them all"

Reaching beyond the walls of your church to serve your neighbors? And eventually finding that those walls have become too small to encompass everyone who wants to join your church family? Now, that's a vision worth embracing! ©

* Not her real name.

Shelley Nolan Freesland writes from Columbia, Maryland, United States.



Mercy for All

Compassion is part of our DNA.

When we went looking for Adventists involved in serving their communities, we didn't have to look far. Adventists in practically every town and village are involved in compassionate ministries. We chose these four to illustrate the creativity and variety of those around the world who demonstrate Christ's character of compassion.—Editors.

ARGENTINA

Most days I work as a nursing home assistant in Buenos Aires, Argentina. I have a second job, however. As Community Services director of the Palermo Seventh-day Adventist Church, I collect clothes and food items to assist people in need.

For two hours every Wednesday, my team and I assist about 25 individuals who come to our local church, many of whom live in the area. We keep a registry of those who come, and write down what we give to each one of them, to be as fair as possible. We also support other Adventist congregations.

One week, church members from Nueva Pompeya, in the southern end of the city, came and took all the clothes and food we had collected to assist people in their neighborhood. Also, some Adventist families have relocated to work in the impoverished north of Argentina and, after becoming aware of the needs around them, have gotten in touch with us to find out what assistance we were able to provide.

More important than what we do is why we do it. Our team's goal is simply to follow Jesus; something that requires not only preaching but doing the Word, with the ultimate goal of helping people to know Jesus. Along with food and clothes, we offer Bible studies. Every year several people ask to be baptized as a direct result of this ministry.

For us, the key is this verse from the apostle John: "Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). ☺

Margarita Sandoval is Palermo Seventh-day Adventist Church Adventist Community Services coordinator in **Buenos Aires, Argentina**.

UNITED STATES

In 2008, when a financial recession hit the United States, members of the Paradise Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church in San Diego, California, felt led by God to begin a food ministry for its community.

Will James, then pastor of the church, says, "That ministry opened the church's eyes to the fact that San Diego is home to more than 250,000 refugees. We soon discovered that these refugees needed more than food, so we began a ministry now known as Friendships for Hope (FFH)."

James adds: "FFH tries to become the family these refugees left behind when they fled for their lives. We teach them English, give them job training opportunities at our thrift store, and walk with them as they learn how to live in a new culture. We're there to help them learn about the health-care system, provide them with food and clothing, even teach basic hygiene."

During the past 10 years FFH has helped more than 300 families gain sufficient language and job skills so that they are able to support their families and become productive citizens.

Each week FFH distributes more than 10,000 pounds of food and 400 articles of clothing. It offers classes in English as a second language five days a week. In its community garden, refugees grow foods native to their homelands.

This ministry has forever changed the Paradise Valley church. Individuals representing more than 60 nationalities worship together, with Sabbath School classes in French, Creole, Laotian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Swahili. ☺

Learn more about this ministry at FriendshipsForHope.org.

GHANA

I love to help people. I started helping others as a child. I would bring little kids together and do things for them. As a teenager, I sewed dresses for people. When I started working, I shared my salary with people in the community who didn't have enough. I liked sharing my food. When I came to know Christ, His love polished that innate desire to help others.

God directed me to choose a profession in social work. With my husband's help we formed Ponacka Kids Club in 2011. *Ponacka* is an Indian word that means "still waters." Our aim is to encourage children to be leaders. Our motto is "Leaders in the Making."

Each Sunday afternoon about 60 kids come to our house for about three hours. Activities include choreography, music, leadership development, and occasional visits to places of interest. We've taken kids to visit the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation's Curious Minds program, which features children discussing diverse issues. One of the children sent the following message:

"Mummy, thank you for the special training you helped me get at Ponacka. It's taking me places."

When we came to live in Ashiyie in 2011, we realized that several families lived as squatters in unfinished buildings. We referred 10 children

from three of such families to some friends from the Netherlands who run an NGO called KAEME. All of the children now receive various kinds of support from students of Valley View University.

During a visit we came across a 7-year-old girl whom we had prayed for. The girl attends a school wherever and whenever someone is willing to teach her. KAEME is putting up a six-classroom school that will be known as God Is Good Academy at Agormeda.

My family visits the Dodowah Hospital on Sabbath afternoons to pray for the patients. We usually go with theology students from Valley View University.

We lead a team of social workers and psychologists in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare. We identify children who are in orphanages because of poverty, not because they have no families. We reunite children with their families and support them so that they can enjoy family life instead of institutional life. We have reunified 119 children from various orphanages in Ashanti, Greater Accra, and central regions of Ghana. They now live with families in eight regions. ©

Helena Obeng-Asamoah is a former director of the Department of Children, Ministry of Women, and Children's Affairs.

CHINA

In January 2020, 180,000 Chinese working and doing business in the city of Wuhan returned to their homes, bringing with them the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Unfortunately, one nearby Chinese city got the distinction of having the highest number of confirmed cases of the virus outside of Hubei province. With nearly the whole country mobilized to help stop the spread of illness in Wuhan, medical institutions in other cities began to seek help from both local and global communities.

We asked members of the community involved in fighting the epidemic what we could do to help. Then we encouraged church members to donate money and pray for God's guidance and protection. We raised about US\$9,000 and used it to buy face masks, hand sanitizer, goggles, infrared thermometers, and instant noodles.

On February 20, the first batch of supplies, together with 10 boxes of instant noodles, was sent to local personnel involved in the campaign in various neighborhoods. This small act won praise from people in the community, the police department, and members of the community involved in fighting the epidemic. Some of those involved in fighting the epidemic expressed their willingness to attend church services after the epidemic is no longer a threat. A few even accepted Jesus as their Saviour.

We were honored to serve Christ as we served our community, as reflected in Jesus' promise: "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matt. 25:40). ©

This article is based on a report received from China in March.

—Editors

Photo: Frederick Asamoah





Global View

Faithfulness to God and His Church

Abiding in Christ

The following is adapted from a keynote presentation at the Global Leadership Summit in Cape Town, South Africa, on February 4, 2020.—Editors.

Through the ages, even before the creation of this world, God has required faithfulness and loyalty to Him. But He has not demanded it. Faithfulness and loyalty are not forced, but are automatic responses to God's saving truth and love that melt receptive hearts in complete and humble submission to God. Faithfulness and loyalty are results of a connection with God and a love for Him.

Not until Lucifer began to doubt God did disloyalty insidiously begin. Since the fall of humanity, there has been an element of distrust and disloyalty pervading human existence. It has only accelerated as Satan spreads his half-truths and cynicism into the very core of human existence and into God's remnant people, the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The only remedy for unfaithfulness and disloyalty is to humble ourselves before Christ, who epitomizes faithfulness and loyalty to truth. The personal connection and spiritual blessings that come with knowing Jesus Christ, His teachings, His truth, and His mission inoculate us against the latest and ever-evolving satanic virus of disloyalty and rebellion. Only by taking on the "mind of Christ" (Phil. 2:5-8), and abiding in Him as the vine at all times (John 15:1-8), are we provided, through His grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, a sure way of aligning ourselves on God's side of faithfulness and loyalty.

CALLED TO FAITHFULNESS

We are called to be faithful and loyal to God, His Word, His truth, His church, His mission, and to our designation as disciples of Christ and proclaimers of His Word. Total commitment to Him is required as we face the very last days of earth's history.

The historicist, prophetic understanding of Daniel and Revelation tells us the second coming of the Lord is imminent. Within the framework of God's last-day message to the world through His chosen people, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we find our place of faithfulness to His Word and loyalty to its proclamation.

The ultimate demonstration of our personal commitment to God's complete biblical truth and His commission to proclaim it will present itself as an amazing opportunity to declare to the world and the universe our faithfulness and loyalty.

God's end-time people will be tested with the same test that confronted Lucifer. Ultimately, those who are true and faithful will demonstrate their complete allegiance to God, His Word, His truth, His church, and His mission. It will not be a blind loyalty, but a profound and humble loyalty that will not be swayed by any

prevailing political correctness. God calls us to humble our hearts before Him. This complete faithfulness and loyalty will not partake in multidirectional confusion and self-centered demands for personal rights and prominence. It will not participate in misguided, self-centered, humanistic-leaning, and existential relativism as demonstrated in various tendencies, including emergent church developments.

A FOCUSED PURPOSE

God's true, faithful, and loyal people will have a singleness of heart and focused purpose born of a deep familiarity with the Word of God and His Spirit of Prophecy instructions. The people of God's Advent movement will proclaim with holy boldness His truth and the heaven-born mission of the three angels' messages (Rev. 14:6-12), and the fourth angel (Rev. 18:1-4) as entrusted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These characteristics and messages will prevail in His people, demonstrating their unfiltered and unfettered loyalty.

Their loyalty is pure gold produced from taking the message given by the True Witness to the Laodicean church, with complete seriousness (Rev. 3:14-22). This is the powerful result of complete and humble trust in the leading of the Holy Spirit to produce the ultimate demonstration of faithfulness and loyalty to God.

Ellen White wrote: "I asked the meaning of the shaking . . . and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to . . . pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this is what will cause a shaking among God's people. I saw that the testimony of the True Witness has not been half heeded. The solemn testimony upon which the destiny of the church hangs has been lightly esteemed, if not entirely disregarded. This testimony must work deep repentance; all who truly receive it will obey it and be purified."¹

If we are to see the latter rain in the near future, we must humble ourselves and look to Christ and His all-sufficient righteousness to work in us through His justifying and sanctifying power. Our submission to Christ and our proclamation of the straight testimony of God will provide the pathway toward the outpouring of the latter rain of the Holy Spirit.

POWERFUL EXAMPLES

Throughout the Bible, God has provided numerous illustrations of faithful and loyal followers: Job, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Deborah, Samuel, Elijah, Esther, Peter, John, Paul, Dorcas, and many more.

God also uses demonstrations of disloyalty and disrespect to point out our need for humility in loyally serving

Faithfulness and loyalty are results of a connection with God and a love for Him.

Him. One of the most dramatic accounts is the newly appointed prophet Elisha's being mocked by a group of 42 youth (2 Kings 2:23).

Making fun of anyone is inappropriate, and showing disrespect to spiritual leaders is siding with evil efforts to destabilize the church. So Elisha confronted the faithless, disloyal hecklers and pronounced a curse on them (verse 24). Two bears came out of the woods and killed 42 of the youth. Although Scripture does not elaborate, Ellen White does.

She wrote: "Had Elisha allowed the mockery to pass unnoticed, he would have continued to be ridiculed and reviled by the rabble, and his mission to instruct and save in a time of grave national peril might have been defeated. This one instance of terrible severity was sufficient to command respect throughout his life. . . . Even kindness should have its limits. Authority must be maintained by a firm severity, or it will be received by many with mockery and contempt. The so-called tenderness, the coaxing and indulgence, used toward youth by parents and guardians, is one of the worst evils which can come upon them. In every family, firmness, decision, positive requirements, are essential. . . . Reverence should be shown for God's representatives—for ministers, teachers, and parents, who are called to speak and act in His stead. In the respect shown them, God is honored."²

Faithfulness, loyalty, and respect for one another on the part of young and old are signs of our direct connection with God as we demonstrate the vital spiritual elements of transparency, integrity, faithfulness, accountability, and loyalty.

Let us fully recognize our need of Christ and His all-encompassing righteousness to form characters in His likeness. Then may we be faithful and loyal to God and His church as we enter the very last days of earth's history with a sense of urgency to proclaim the three angels' messages and Christ's soon coming. ©

¹ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1882, 1945), p. 270.

² Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1917), pp. 236, 237.

Ted N. C. Wilson is president of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. Additional articles and commentaries are available on Twitter: @pastortedwilson and on Facebook: @Pastor Ted Wilson.

Preserving Adventist History

Editors soon to launch *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*

BY SANDRA A. BLACKMER

For the past five years, Seventh-day Adventist scholars and administrators worldwide have been collaborating to produce the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists (ESDA)*, a new online reference work that the General Conference (GC) Executive Committee authorized during its Spring Meeting on April 14, 2015. The *ESDA* is not an update of the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, which was originally published more than 50 years ago in 1966, with a second edition released three decades later. Rather, it's a totally new reference work.

Headed by Adventist Church historian David Trim, director of GC Archives, Statistics, and Research and editor of the US\$1.6 million project, and managing editor Dragoslava Santrac, the *ESDA* Online Edition will be launched at GC session 2020 in Indianapolis, Indiana, United States, with an initial 2,000 articles. The project is slated to be completed by the end of 2022.

"God has led in the history of this church in a wonderful way," Trim says. "At the same time, Adventists have sometimes fallen short of His plans. The *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* will tell, truthfully and authoritatively, the stories of what Ellen White called the 'struggles, defeats, and victories' of God's church and of God's end-time people in ways that can move us to revival, reformation, repentance, and renewed commitment to the prophetic mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church."

Drawing on the expertise of thousands of scholars, teachers, and authors from numerous world regions, the editors see the *ESDA* as a truly international resource. About 20 regional editors and others from all 13 divisions and the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission have teamed up on the project.

The *ESDA* editorial committee—of which Trim serves as chair—meets annually. It brings together the regional assistant editors, along with editorial consultants and advisers, and the web designer. At its last meeting this past January, "we reviewed the beta version of the new website, and all the editors were excited by its functionality and its



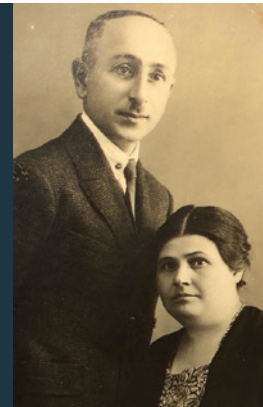
Adventist Historical Nuggets

How much history do you know?

COMPILED BY DRAGOSLAVA SANTRAC



Francis Dolphijn, in 1888, was one of the earliest indigenous Adventist converts in Ghana. Like many others in those times, Dolphijn accepted the Adventist message through literature evangelists. *Dolphijn's Hand*, a monument on the coast of Apam, the native home of Francis Dolphijn, commemorates the efforts of literature evangelists and the origins of the Adventist Church in Ghana.



Amalia Galladzheva-Löbsack and her husband, **Aleksei Galladzhiev**, were pioneer workers in Georgia and Armenia. When Aleksei was imprisoned during times of massive religious repression in the former Soviet Union, Amalia continued caring for their church. She, too, was imprisoned, then

executed on February 4, 1942. Amalia represents many women from the former Soviet Union who served the Adventist Church in trying times and whose names we don't know.

modern, clean, and attractive look,” Trim says.

Santrac describes the project as historic, because the *ESDA Online Edition* will be the Adventist Church’s first online reference work—and it will be free.

“When *ESDA Online* launches at the 2020 GC session, it will already have more articles than the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, but thousands more articles will be added over the next few years,” Santrac says. “So while a lot has been achieved, there’s still more work to do. Nothing that we do seems too hard, however, in light of the sacrifices and legacies of the people whose stories we want to preserve and share.”

Santrac’s hope, she says, is that the *ESDA Online* will “help us remember, commemorate, and communicate our spiritual heritage with our young people and the world. We also want to inspire people to preserve the history of their local churches so it won’t be forgotten.”

“Seeing a broad picture of God’s leading in history helps us see our place, and not only for the present,” Santrac adds. “It gives us hope for the future.” ☺

To find out more, e-mail encyclopedia@gc.adventist.org, go to www.adventistarchives.org/encyclopedia, or follow *ESDA* on Twitter @[EncyclopediaSDA](https://twitter.com/EncyclopediaSDA).

ESDA—A Work of Diversity

The *ESDA* project is drawing on the expertise of about 20 regional editors worldwide. We asked a few of them to answer two questions:

1. In what ways do you see the *ESDA* as an asset to members in your division?

2. Are there elements unique to your region that you see as especially relevant contributions to the world church and beyond?

Here are their responses.—Editors.

Barry Oliver, South Pacific Division

For many people, persons and places in our past are at best vague and mostly unknown. The *ESDA* gives opportunity for our history to come alive as accurately as possible from the primary sources of information.

The story of the Adventist Church in the South Pacific is an amazing saga of providence and perseverance: very small boats on very large oceans; small aircraft diving through gaps in the clouds to reach remote villages; sun and sand mixed with hurricanes, earthquakes, and volcanoes; and people of faith, hope, and vision willing to sacrifice their lives for the sake of the gospel.

Myrna Costa, Inter-American Division

The *ESDA* brings hope and unity to members of the Inter-American Division (IAD) as we read about what has been accomplished in the division’s territory. We praise God as we learn the stories about our forefathers, missionaries, and local laypeople as they opened the path into unentered areas.

The IAD is thankful for its role of evangelizing and spreading the gospel under God’s guidance since its inception in 1922. The division has grown significantly since the 1996 *SDA Encyclopedia* and now serves 42 culturally diverse countries—thus contributing additional information to the 2020 *ESDA* regarding its territory.

Passmore Hachalinga, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division

The *ESDA* will give members in my division a deeper knowledge and understanding of the origins and development of the Adventist Church in southern Africa and other parts of the world. It will also provide a reflection of the Adventist Church’s successes and challenges.

The *ESDA* will present Adventist history in southern Africa from an African perspective, and provide an accurate explanation of our cultural issues. It will also offer theological reflection on issues unique to our region. ☺



A “**fingerfone**” is a small plastic gramophone that played vinyl 45 rpm records and was “finger-driven.” It became a primary evangelistic tool in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and elsewhere during the 1950s and 1960s. These inexpensive metal “cake-tin” gramophones enabled missionaries to share Bible lessons in 40 PNG languages.



Salam Fargo served as a home missionary in her country of Iraq. She was baptized in Mosul in 1923. Known as “Dorcus,” Salam supported the poor between the two world wars on her own meager income and distributed thousands of tracts.



Refugees seek assistance from ADRA Bosnia and Herzegovina.

 Faith in Action

World Refugee Sabbath

How can we acknowledge this special day?

BY SANDRA A. BLACKMER, WITH REPORTING BY VICTOR J. HULBERT AND CORRADO COZZI

Acknowledging the dire plight of refugees and the need to raise awareness of their situation worldwide, the United Nations (UN) in 2001 established World Refugee Day, to be recognized each year on June 20. In 2016, the Seventh-day Adventist Church added its own emphasis by establishing the first World Refugee Sabbath, set for the Sabbath preceding every World Refugee Day. This year both fall on the same date: June 20.

The UN defines a refugee as “someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence.” They have “a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group”; and “most likely cannot return home or are afraid to do so.”¹ The leading causes cited for their flight are ethnic, tribal, and religious violence.² In 1950, the UN General Assembly established the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to take the lead in protecting these most vulnerable of people by safeguarding their rights and well-being.³

Statistics indicate that more than 70 million people have been forcibly displaced worldwide, with 37,000 fleeing their homes each day because of conflict or persecution. The largest number come from three nations: South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Syria. Europe is host to some 17 percent of all displaced people.⁴ A recent airstrike and escalated fighting in Syria’s Idlib province resulted in close to a million refugees

streaming into Turkey and on to Greece.⁵

TED AND EUD EMBRACE THE CHALLENGE

Although refugees can be found in many world regions, because of the large concentration of refugees within their territories the Trans-European (TED) and Inter-European (EUD) divisions particularly embrace the opportunity to serve refugees and to recognize World Refugee Sabbath.

“I’ve been involved with World Refugee Sabbath for the past four years, talking with refugees in France, Greece, Italy, and Serbia and coordinating reports from across Europe,” says Victor J. Hulbert, director of TED communication and publishing departments. “I’ve seen the humanity in these people and how today’s businessperson can, through no fault of their own, become tomorrow’s refugee. Christian compassion forces us to act.”

TED and EUD communications are providing numerous materials, resources, and reports to their unions and the wider Adventist community for the event. The materials will be translated and made available in various languages (see sidebar).

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

One World Refugee Sabbath report focuses on Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country on the Balkan Peninsula in southeastern Europe, which is experiencing a particularly desperate situation regarding their refugee population.

“ADRA [Adventist Development and Relief Agency] is highly respected in Bosnia and Herzegovina following their impartial service during the Balkans crisis of the 1990s, including the siege of Sarajevo,” Hulbert explains. “Together with the Red Cross, it’s

Statistics indicate that more than 70 million people have been forcibly displaced worldwide.

one of the few charities providing desperately needed support for the forgotten refugees stuck in Bosnia and Herzegovina in desperate winter conditions.”⁶

ADRA is actively providing support to refugees at Ušivak camp near Sarajevo, established in 2018 in an old military base. Before this, migrants camped in vacant buildings or slept on streets, even in winter conditions.

“Conditions at the camp are less than perfect,” Hulbert says. “But ADRA is committed to help as best it can.”

Many migrant children are attending an elementary school next to the camp, together with local children. Even though it’s a poor community, local residents are partnering with ADRA Netherlands to provide food and clothing for refugees.

In neighboring Serbia, ADRA runs a community center in Belgrade that facilitates education for children who have dropped behind in their schooling, operates women’s services and apprenticeship training, and offers a safe space for people who need to recover from their difficult pasts. Students from the Newbold College’s Year in Service and Mission program in England are among those who volunteer.

DUNKIRK, FRANCE

As a result of a change in local government leadership, previously enjoyed assistance for refugees is

no longer forthcoming.

“The refugee situation has deteriorated a lot in recent months,” says Claudette Hannebicque, director of ADRA Dunkirk in northern France. “Last winter [city leaders] of Dunkirk opened a center for families and a gymnasium for single men, but this year it’s not so.”

Some 700 refugees have traveled to that region in search of help. Medical teams such as Médecins du Monde and the Red Cross, they say, are overwhelmed by the needs.

“There is limited water available for them, no toilets, and only a few showers,” notes Corrado Cozzi, communication director for EUD. “These are very, very insufficient to supply their needs.”

“Refugees are taking more and more risks to try to reach the U.K. by canoe, and there are often rescues at sea, and missing and dead people,” adds Hannebicque. “It’s difficult to even tell the stories.”

EVERY CHRISTIAN A MISSIONARY

Let’s remember that “every Christian is to be a missionary. In sympathy and compassion we are to minister to those in need of help, seeking with unselfish earnestness to lighten the woes of suffering humanity.”⁷

Let each of us strive to live and serve as Jesus did. ☺

To learn more, go to adra.org or check with your local conference or union office.

¹ www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts

² *Ibid.*

³ www.un.org/en/events/refugeeday/un-action.shtml

⁴ www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts

⁵ apnews.com/9dd7b9b3674a5a635f789c0d9489cc66

⁶ www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50700345

⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 104.

Sandra A. Blackmer is an assistant editor of *Adventist World*.

Resources for World Refugee Sabbath

TED and EUD communications are providing numerous materials, resources, and reports to their unions and churches for World Refugee Sabbath, including the following:

- a full sermon script and a refugee sermon video with preacher Marjukka Ostrovljanovic. Ostrovljanovic, a specialist in Old Testament and originally from Finland, is pastor of a district in Germany that has the opportunity to help many refugees in the community.
- a series of short video reports to feature in churches and share on social media. The reports will highlight activities and stories about:
 - local churches and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Germany;
 - a Pathfinder Club in Ireland made up totally of refugee and migrant children;
 - a church in Dunkirk, France, where members provide physical and social support to migrants who sleep on streets and in woods as they wait to cross the English Channel to the United Kingdom; and
 - Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country on the Balkan Peninsula in southeastern Europe, which is experiencing a particularly desperate situation regarding their refugee population (see main article).

Business as Usual

Can we learn anything about General Conference sessions from the past?

Delegates to the thirty-eighth General Conference session in 1913 met in a tent in Takoma Park, Maryland, United States.¹ In the six days since the session began, they had listened to reports, speeches, and statistics. Delegates attended from the 48 U.S. states, as well as nearly every continent and several islands.

On May 21, 1913, delegates heard a proposal for a European Division Conference. It was the first time a division of the General Conference (GC) would be formed. A new division constitution was read, followed by a proposed change of the GC constitution. As soon as it was proposed, a motion was made to defer action so delegates could study the document. That day, seven lengthy reports of work around the world were read. Nearing the end of the day, delegates were tired. It was time to adjourn.

J. N. Loughborough, 81, had other ideas. He expressed his desire to speak.

"I want to tell you about the birth of a little child. . . . This one was born 50 years ago this very day, May 21, 1863." To what was he referring? The beginning of the General Conference itself. Fifty years earlier, to the day, 20 delegates voted the Seventh-day Adventist Church into existence.

Reading the revised GC constitution 50 years from the day it was read the first time, no doubt, stirred Loughborough's nostalgia.

A. G. Daniells, GC president, admitted he knew of the anniversary. Some had discussed the idea of a "jubilee celebration." But church leaders thought the best way to celebrate was to simply keep working.

"We have laid before the delegates these wonderfully encouraging reports from distant lands," said Daniells, suggesting the reports might be celebration enough. But Daniells continued. "Now, if some of the brethren had not gotten a vote in here quickly this morning to defer action on the report on the organization of the European Division Conference, I would have made a motion to go right ahead, so that we might have organized the European Division Conference on the jubilee day of the General Conference history." In other words, the action taken earlier that day to postpone the vote to the next day wasn't what he had in mind. Voting the first division on this special day would be appropriate.

One by one delegates voiced their opinion. E. R. Palmer was first. He thoroughly commended Daniells, agreeing entirely. He made an enthusiastic motion—let's vote!

W. A. Spicer spoke next. The

intent was noble, but waiting would be wiser, he said. One after another argued either to vote for a division that day or that leaders were being swept away with emotion. An attempt was made to lessen the motion, but to no effect. Debate continued until *Review* editor F. M. Wilcox abruptly moved to adjourn. One protested, but the chair called for a vote. The meeting ended. The European Division Conference was voted, but not on May 21. Instead, it was on May 22—50 years and one day after the founding of the General Conference.

This is how General Conference sessions work. Wherever two or more are gathered, decisions get complicated. Add in different languages, cultures, and perspectives, and decisions become more challenging. They eventually found a solution in 1913, but it took compromise—the division was formed, but not on the date proposed.

The 2020 General Conference session will have a full agenda. The issues will be different from previous sessions, but one thing will not change—the prayerful appeal for the Holy Spirit; that God will guide the church as He did in the past, does today, and into our future. ©

¹Read the full account of this meeting in the 1913 *General Conference Bulletin*, pp. 95-101.

Merle Poirier is operations manager for *Adventist World*.

Which Church Do You Belong To?



What kind of church do I want to belong to? I have asked myself.

could I respond to that question, considering what had been going around in the media? Television, newspapers, and radio stations in my country had been awash with stories of infighting among local church members, some even violently expressing themselves over contentious issues.

How could I defend my church in the midst of the public display of anger, bitterness, and conflict of some of its members? Wasn't this the very opposite of basic Christian foundational principles? I needed a lot of courage to stand up for my faith and my church community and be a

Which church do you belong to?" For most of 2019, I dreaded this question. Every time I attempted to answer the question truthfully, the reaction I consistently received made my heart cringe. It didn't matter where I was—at work with colleagues, among family members I hadn't seen for a while, with my classmates, or even among strangers at the local barbershop. Their responses varied, but they always went in the same direction.

"Why would you go to that church?"

"With all the negative things being written and heard about your church members, why do you still profess their faith?"

"Are there really Spirit-filled Christians in your church?"

"I've always respected Seventh-day Adventists, for they have always been solid, sober, loving Christians with sound doctrine. What happened to them?"

This last response from a fellow doctor in my hospital felt like an arrow right through my heart. I was tongue-tied. How

faithful flagbearer, especially when the flag had been tainted by news stories of fellow church members fighting each other.

As a young boy I grew up knowing that Adventists have always been considered a "peculiar" people in my part of the world (that is, "weird," and not as used in 1 Peter 2:9)—known mostly for their love of soy and their refusal to participate in school and work activities on the seventh day of the week. Right now, at the beginning of 2020, popular sentiments of Adventists have a lot more attached to them than I ever imagined.

What kind of church do I want to belong to? I've asked myself. I want my church to be known for its love and acceptance. As a Seventh-day Adventist, I want to be known for my compassion toward all. I want to be known for inclusivity—accepting all people without fear, favor, or prejudice. I want to be known for my kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and gentleness, among other fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23). I want to be known for my integrity, loyalty, generosity, warmth, and joy.

Most important, if Jesus were an Adventist living in 2020, what would He want to be known for? Surely not for the local feisty disputes of 2019. Instead, He emphatically reminds us, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). This love starts with you and me. How do we treat the people around us—even when no one is looking? Do we maintain our calm, and proclaim Christ's message of love in our actions? Are we known first and foremost for being the most loving Christian denomination on earth? Or are we known mostly for our staunch proclivity to our opinions at whatever cost?

The church I want to belong to is . . . compassionate.

The church I want to belong to has love at the center of it all. ☺

Frederick Kimani is a consultant physician in **Nairobi, Kenya**.

The Twin Principles of Systematic Benevolence

Early support of the gospel ministry—and more



Those familiar with Adventist history will recall that our Seventh-day Adventist pioneers adopted a financial plan for giving known as “Systematic Benevolence,” as a precursor to our current practice of tithing.

Such Sabbatarian Adventist ministers as John N. Loughborough and John Nevins Andrews struggled to support themselves financially as they traveled preaching the gospel. As some ministers abandoned the work in discouragement, early church leaders quickly realized the gravity of the situation.

A REMEDIAL SYSTEM

To remedy ministerial burnout and facilitate gospel preaching, church leaders adopted a plan known as Systematic Benevolence in 1859. In retellings of our heritage, historians emphasize that the Adventist tithing system is rooted in the financial support for ministers who actively preach the gospel. This “standard” narrative is only half true, however. One of the twin principles of our tithing system has, unfortunately, been forgotten, at least in the retelling of our history.

According to religious historian James Hudnut-Beumler, many Christians in the United States began to promote Systematic Benevolence in the mid-nineteenth century. Systematic Benevolence was rooted in “two great purposes that God had placed before humanity: to take care of the poor and to spread the gospel.”¹ Adventist leaders were aware of these developments, and, after carefully studying the issue, they formally adopted Systematic Benevolence at the General Conference session held in Battle Creek, Michigan, in June 1859.

Like their non-Adventist contemporaries, Adventists emphasized that this new plan would systematize the

mission of the church through focused attention on “the two great objects” of benevolence: financial and material support for poor individuals, seniors, widows, ministers, and missionaries.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN INITIATIVE

During the summer of 1859, Ellen and James White undertook a new publishing initiative to promote the twin principles of Systematic Benevolence. The new paper was titled *The Good Samaritan*. Unfortunately, only three issues are known to exist today. The first issue is among those missing, but it probably appeared in early August 1859, about a month after Adventists adopted Systematic Benevolence.

This quarterly paper promoted this new plan for financial giving and was “issued almost wholly with reference to the relief of the needy and distressed” under the motto on its masthead, “Thou Shalt Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself” (Matt. 22:39, KJV).²

The Good Samaritan was readily endorsed at a business meeting held in Battle Creek, Michigan, on August 7, 1859, and a committee was appointed “to receive donations of money or articles of apparel for the poor.” That committee was composed entirely of women, and included Harriet N. Smith, Ann J. Kellogg, and Huldah Godsmark.

Women, in fact, were the driving force behind Systematic Benevolence (which may be one reason it became known as “Sister Betsy” in Adventist circles). The first action of this committee was to appoint 48 agents—all women—in every state with an Adventist presence to collect money and clothing for ministers and laypeople in need.

Ellen White, a de facto co-editor of the paper, personally reported and published the actions of the



Neighbor as Thyself."

IGAN, DECEMBER, 1859.

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compassion from him, how
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MY DIARY.

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Ann J. Kellogg



Huldah Godsmark



Harriet N. Smith

When Lois J. Richmond first read *The Good Samaritan*, she wept. She believed that this was God's plan for His church.

committee in the second issue of *The Good Samaritan*, which appeared in December 1859.³

Over the next several months, Ellen and James White "pled the cause of the needy," gave "force to this call to others," and "set the example by giving largely themselves." Their actions inspired others to champion the twin principles of Systematic Benevolence.

Abigail Palmer, of Jackson, Michigan, for example, bought a record book so that "each member of the family, or church" could record their weekly donations for "the widows, and fatherless, and the poor among Sabbathkeepers."

When Lois J. Richmond first read *The Good Samaritan*, she wept because she believed that this was God's plan for His church. Richmond was among the poor herself, but she was convicted that she could still contribute to the cause. She did so by organizing a group of adults and children who devoted about three hours per week to braid palm-leaf hats that could be sold to purchase "clothes for the poor and needy." Within a month, Richmond's braiding circle had raised "a little more than four dollars in money and clothes," which she mailed to Ellen White to

distribute among the underprivileged and oppressed.⁴

The Good Samaritan was apparently published with some regularity until early 1861. In March of that year, James White lamented that not enough written material had been submitted for publication, and that it was practical to publish the paper only occasionally. After the Civil War erupted in April, it became even more difficult to support three Adventist periodicals. The last known issue of *The Good Samaritan* appeared in June 1861.

A CONTINUED SYSTEM

Systematic Benevolence did not die with the paper, however. Adventist pioneers continued to emphasize and act on its twin principles as the church officially organized and continued to grow.

Today, many Adventists have forgotten that our tithing system developed out of a collective compassion for those who were poor, widows, fatherless, and seniors, as well as for the support of ministers and missionaries. These twin principles are what make our mission systematic—a mission of compassionate benevolence that serves both body and soul. ☺

¹ James Hudnut-Beumler, *In Pursuit of the Almighty's Dollar: A History of Money and American Protestantism* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), pp. 6-31; R. F. Cottrell, "From Bro. Cottrell," *The Good Samaritan*, December 1859, p. 8.

² J. N. Andrews, G. H. Bell, and U. Smith, *Defense of Elder James White and Wife: Vindication of Their Moral and Christian Character* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Steam Press, 1870), pp. 18, 19; Joseph Bates and U. Smith, "Business Meeting of B. C. Church," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Aug. 11, 1859, p. 96.

³ Bates and Smith; E. G. White, "[Business Meeting of the B. C. Church]," *The Good Samaritan*, December 1859, p. 6; James White, "Eastern Tour," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Sept. 1, 1859, p. 116.

⁴ Abigail Palmer, "From Sister Palmer," *The Good Samaritan*, February 1860, p. 12; Lois J. Richmond, "From Sister Richmond," *The Good Samaritan*, December 1859, p. 8.

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Thoughts on Meditation

Q

What does the Bible teach about religious meditation?

A

For some, meditation is an inner experience that transcends conceptualization. It has been directly related to mysticism in that it promises to transcend personal experience or perception. Even among some Christian traditions, meditation is considered an effort of an immortal soul that is captive within a material body to achieve union with a God who is detached from the material world. In some world religions, transcendental meditation has no specific object to direct the movement of the self; it offers to empty the self of its consciousness, perhaps in order to become part of a mystical cosmic consciousness.

The biblical understanding of meditation is radically different.

1. ITS CONTENT

Biblical meditation is not an attempt to encounter God by escaping the world in which we live. On the contrary, it is grounded on God's self-revelation. Communion with God through meditation is always mediated through His statements preserved in the written Word. It is an inner reflection, occasionally described as "the meditation of my heart" (Ps. 19:14), understood as a person's rational and volitional center. This by itself suggests that the rational element and the human capacity to make decisions are not transcended or made irrelevant in the act of meditation. The specific content of meditation is identified as divine "precepts" (Ps. 119:15) or "decrees" (verse 23, NIV), that is to say, God's Torah or instruction (cf. Joshua 1:8; Ps. 1:2). The purpose was to learn about God's will in order for people to live in harmony with Him and others.

People also meditated on God's "promises" (Hebrew *'imrah*, literally "word" [Ps. 119:148]). They took these promises deep into their being and meditated about their content to strengthen their trust in God, enrich their spiritual lives, and experience inner peace. They also meditated on God's mighty acts of salvation on

their behalf (Ps. 143:5; cf. Ps. 77:13). The human mind was occupied with God's past redemptive works, and this infused faith in the psalmist who needed deliverance from the oppression of enemies (Ps. 143:3, 4). God's past and present providential saving deeds, particularly His saving work in Christ, continues to fill hearts with joy and contains healing power.

"The love which Christ diffuses through the whole being is a vitalizing power," wrote Ellen White. "Every vital part—the brain, the heart, the nerves—it touches with healing. . . . It frees the soul from the guilt and sorrow, the anxiety and care, that crush the life forces. . . . It implants in the soul . . . joy in the Holy Spirit—health-giving, life-giving joy."*

2. A WHOLISTIC EXPERIENCE

Biblical meditation does not deny the goodness of the physical nature of humans. It is not the experience of an eternal soul residing within a human body, but the experience of the whole person. It is interesting that the Hebrew verbs translated "to meditate" also mean "to tell, to talk, to muse" (*siakh*), and "to utter, to speak" (*hagah*). Meditation is not only an inner mental experience—it is also a physical activity. Those who meditated memorized passages and recited them in a low voice while pondering their meaning. Two persons engaged in the act of meditation: the worshipper and the Lord, whose voice was heard through His Word. The differences between these two persons was clearly understood by believers who did not seek to merge into the divine but to strengthen their faith in Him, to know Him better, and to experience His saving power.

There is healing in Christian meditation in the sense that by reflecting on God's self-revelation, preserved in the Scriptures, believers experience acceptance, forgiveness, and joy. We cannot separate meditation from the work of the Spirit that enlightens our inner being through the reading of the Bible, which provides its content. ©

* Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn, 1905), p. 115.

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Coronavirus

Ways to avoid being infected

I'm worried about the new virus beginning to make its way around the world. Can we avoid being infected?

In December 2019, a new and aggressive form of respiratory infection was discovered in Wuhan, Hubei province, China, and recently has been named COVID-19. The virus is a coronavirus and of the same family as the virus that caused the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) epidemic in 2002-2003.

Transmission occurs through droplets spread when infected people cough or sneeze, and it gains access to the body through the respiratory tract (lungs). The symptoms include fever, cough, muscle pain, shortness of breath, and fatigue; some patients may have diarrhea, and others very mild to no symptoms at all. Progression of the disease may lead to severe pneumonia, with lung-tissue destruction and death. It has spread outside China, and there's no way of predicting how widespread and severe this outbreak may yet become. Many countries have put measures in place to contain the spread, including quarantine.

The infectious period is between two and 14 days. The time period for quarantine (isolation from others) is two weeks.

No vaccine is yet available, and treatment is symptomatic. No known COVID-19 antiviral medications are presently available. The production of a vaccine—although a priority—may take up to a year to prove efficacy and safety. Those who haven't been immunized against influenza seem to have more severe symptoms and worse outcomes. It's difficult to accurately assess the death rate from COVID-19, as not every case has been reported, but it's presently estimated at 2 percent.

Please practice the standard universal precautions:

- Clean hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub.
- Follow the coughing and sneezing etiquette: sneeze into the folded arm; cover your cough. Take masks with you when traveling. In situations where people persist in coughing and sneezing in a confined space and you cannot leave, you may wish to use a mask. Remember that the use of a mask has been shown to prevent those who have infection from spreading the virus but is not protective generally.
- Maintain a social distance—at least one meter (three feet)—between yourself and other people. Avoid close contact with those who are coughing or sniffing.
- Avoid touching/rubbing your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- If you develop a cough and experience changes in your breathing, seek medical help early and share your travel history with health-care providers.

For more information:

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19)—www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

Advice for the public—www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public

Travel advice—www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/travel-advice

Risk communication and community engagement—[www.who.int/publications-detail/risk-communication-and-community-engagement-readiness-and-initial-response-for-novel-coronaviruses-\(ncov\)](http://www.who.int/publications-detail/risk-communication-and-community-engagement-readiness-and-initial-response-for-novel-coronaviruses-(ncov))

Proper handwashing technique—www.who.int/gpsc/clean_hands_protection/en/

Science behind handwashing techniques—www.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-handwashing.html

- Avoid open markets and direct contact with animals/animal products.
- Follow careful food-safety practices (well-cooked food, clean produce, pasteurized milk, etc.).
- Get the flu vaccine.
- Avoid travel to endemic areas; check out the WHO and CDC travel advisory regarding travel restrictions.*
- If you think you've been exposed by travel or contact with an affected individual, seek advice from your primary-care physician. There's global awareness, and this isn't the time to panic, but rather to quietly trust in God. ©

* www.who.int/ith/2020-24-01-outbreak-of-Pneumonia-caused-by-new-coronavirus/en/

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When Oksana Believed



“May I Tell You a Story?”

BY DICK DUERKSEN

On a warm summer day in 2012, Misha Kovach took his wife, Oksana, on a day trip from their border hometown of Uzhhorod, Ukraine, to Nyíregyháza, Hungary. “It was like a special date,” Misha says, “We went to do some shopping.”

Misha had recently become a Christian, but Oksana had refused the idea, thinking that Misha had lost his mind believing in such fantasies.

Misha parked their car at the train station, and they boarded a train in the nearby city of Chop in western Ukraine near the borders of Slovakia and Hungary. Chop is just across the river Tisza from the Hungarian town of Záhony, and there are very strict border checkpoints on either side of the bridge crossing the river.

The train took Oksana and Misha through Záhony, and then 65 more kilometers (41 miles) to their destination, Nyíregyháza, Hungary, where they spent the warm summer day walking all over the city, and shopping in various stores. For Oksana, this was no small task since Ukrainian culture dictates that she needed to be dressed up and in high heels. Before long, they were both exhausted.

When they had finished their shopping, they took the train from Nyíregyháza back to Záhony, where they faced

a major scheduling challenge. The train that was to take them across the river and the remaining six kilometers (four miles) to where they had left their car in Chop was late and would not arrive for more than four hours.

The delay would be a major problem, because they had left their two young girls, 10-year-old Anastasia and 3-year-old Sophia, home alone. They needed to get back quickly and were desperate to get home as soon as possible.

Oksana, exhausted and anxious to get home to her girls, did not want to wait four hours for the next train!

“How far away is our car?” she asked Misha.

“It’s about 1.5 kilometers [one mile] to the border, then five kilometers [three miles] more to the car,” he answered. Oksana was determined, worried, tired, stressed, and a bit grumpy. Besides, the summer heat was still intense, hovering around 30 degrees Celsius (85 degrees Fahrenheit).

Oksana went from grumpy to downright unhappy. The nicely planned date wasn’t fun anymore. “Why did you plan this date?” she shouted at Misha. “Now we have to walk 1.5 kilometers to the border, find someone who will drive us across, then walk five more kilometers!”

They walked a tense 1.5 kilometers together to the border, where they began asking for a ride across the river. But

The driver got out of the car, looked at them curiously, then asked, “Are you getting in or not?”

every driver said, “No, I can’t pick you up,” afraid that they might have drugs or other illegal contraband that would send them all to prison.

When none of their attempts worked, Misha turned to his wife and said, “Oksana, we have a God who knows our problems. We can just pray to Him, and He will stop a car for us.”

“You’re crazy,” Oksana said. “I don’t want any part in your delusion that a God would do anything about stopping a car for us. But let’s see who can stop a car first, *me*, or *you* with your God!”

With that said, Oksana walked about 15 meters (49 feet) away to the other side of the road, determined to “show Misha.”

“Father,” Misha prayed, loud enough so Oksana could hear, “You know that we need a car to stop and give us a ride across the border so we can get home to our children. Please send us a car. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Neither Oksana or Misha waved down the next oncoming car, but about 60 seconds after Misha prayed, a car slowed to a stop between Misha and Oksana. The driver got out of the car, looked at them curiously, then asked, “Are you getting in or not?”

“Do you know this man?” Misha asked Oksana.

“No! I’ve never seen him before. Do you know him?”

“No,” Misha answered. “I don’t know him either.”

“Are you inviting us to get into your car?” Misha asked the driver.

“Yes!” the man answered.

After the Hungarian checkpoint, and still on the bridge, the driver turned to the couple that sat in the back seat of his car and said, “I must tell you something. I’ve never stopped for anyone before because it’s very dangerous. But as I was approaching the border, I heard a voice telling me to stop now and pick up these people. You probably think I’m crazy, hearing this voice, but . . .”

“You’re not crazy,” Misha said quickly. “I *know* you heard that voice, because 60 seconds before you stopped, I asked God to find you and have you stop for me and my wife.”

The driver was shocked that God spoke directly with two different yet interconnected people. “It must have been God answering your prayer,” he said. “Only He could make connections like that.”

The driver, still in shock, drove Misha and Oksana directly to their car in Chop, Ukraine. Upon arrival, he got out of his car and bought them each something to drink. Misha protested, saying, “You should not buy us anything; we should buy you something to drink.”

“Oh, no,” the driver said. “Absolutely not. I am buying, for today, for the very first time in my life, I know 100 percent that my God talks to me!”

Looking back on the day, both Oksana and Misha remember it as one of their best dates ever. Oksana later became a Christian, citing this event and her husband’s faith as her first experience in knowing that God is real and that He genuinely cares about each one of His children. ☺

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

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Seventh-day
Adventist Church

Strawberry Kindness

Bright-red strawberries are among the prettiest fruits in the world. In a contest of favorite fruits, many would vote that the strawberry is the sweetest fruit in the whole world. Although they're grown in many countries of the Northern Hemisphere, most people would probably agree that the best strawberries are the ones you pick yourself, straight off the plant.

Whether you grow your own strawberries or buy them at the market, fresh strawberries are yummy. Here's an easy way to prepare them.

- Wash them under running water.**
- Remove the stems and any bruised or overripe sections.**
- Slice them (have an adult help you) into a bowl or use a chopper to cut them into small pieces to release the sweet juices.**
- If they are already sweet, you don't have to add sugar. If they need a little extra sweetness, add sugar a little at a time.**
- You can serve strawberries in a salad, on a kebab stick with other fresh fruit, with cereal or toast, with pancakes and waffles, on ice cream, in a smoothie, or with cake.**

Strawberry season (or any season of whatever your favorite fruit may be) is an ideal time to show friendliness to people your family doesn't know very well. There might be a newly baptized member at your church who is trying to fit into a new church home. What about the neighbors who have recently moved to the area? They might welcome the opportunity to meet you.

It might seem a little funny, but strawberries and friendship seem to be good partners. Sharing something you love might pave the way to a wonderful friendship that Jesus would be proud of! ☺

This article was first printed in *KidsView*, May 2011. Visit www.kidsview.com for more fun kids' content!





Bible Treasure

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends”

(John 15:12, 13).

Think About It

How can you use strawberries, or anything else you enjoy, to show hospitality to others?

Try This:

Take a picture of you holding your favorite fruit and send it to us with your name and where you are from. Along with your photo, tell us how you will use this fruit to brighten up someone’s day. If we get enough photos, we’ll print them in an upcoming Growing Faith section. Be sure to get your parents’ permission and send them to KidsView@Adventist-Review.org.



**EVERY CHILD.
EVERYWHERE.
IN SCHOOL.**

#EveryChildInSchool

**TODAY,
15,000 CHILDREN
UNDER 5 DIED
FROM MOSTLY
PREVENTABLE CAUSES.**

Join the Adventist-led, global movement to ensure education for children everywhere by signing the petition at **ADRA.org/InSchool**.