

Adventist World

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A Season of Forgiveness

BY BILL KNOTT

“Forgiveness is the rarest virtue, not because it is not widely available, but because it is so seldom sought.”

It is dangerous to generalize about any group of people, especially one so vast that its biblical mission statement reaches to include those of “every nation and tribe and language and people” (Rev. 14:6, NRSV). But many years of loving this church and serving it as a minister of the gospel have made me conscious of persisting characteristics across our fellowship—in all regions, each language group, and every nationality. Like every group of Christians since the first century A.D., we are *practicing* the faith of Jesus—meaning that we often stumble in the application of that faith to the realities of our life together. The formerly headstrong and irritable man who became the apostle Peter clearly grasped this reality. Two thousand years ago, he urged his readers to “grow in grace” (2 Peter 3:18, KJV). All generalizations must begin with the blessed truth that “God is not finished with us yet.”

But, in a word, we Adventists are not good at *forgiving*—especially each other, of whom we clearly have higher expectations than those not belonging to this end-time movement. We may ruefully smile and accept the apology of the unchurched neighbor whose cow ate half our garden, but grind our teeth and never release the member of our Sabbath School who dared disagree with us about a passage in Hosea. The pride we feel in forgiving the thoughtlessness and impatience of an uncivil store clerk too often becomes a seething anger at the brother or sister in Christ who acted similarly. The slights and humiliations we experience from fellow believers evolve into great controversies of our own.

Some wonder if our appropriate embrace of the Bible’s message about the perpetuity of God’s law has an unintended consequence: we are predisposed to a “judicial” attitude with each other. In this strange formulation, the grace of God is what we offer those who don’t know Jesus, while we tally wrongs from those within the household of faith—in effect, “counting their trespasses against them” (2 Cor. 5:19, NRSV). And so we struggle with each other, debating everything from the fabric chosen for the church’s curtains to the fabric of its Bible truths—wounding each other on the way. Paul wrote to the new church at Colossae words that should be emblazoned above the door of every Adventist congregation: “Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive” (Col. 3:13, NRSV).



That “everlasting gospel” we are called to carry (Rev. 14:6) is first a proclamation of the grace and forgiveness offered us in Jesus. It is of little value to a broken world if we proclaim the fallenness of Babylon and the dangers of the mark of the beast unless we are—at the same time—allowing grace to fundamentally change the ways we interact with each other.

Pray for a season of peace and forgiveness in the fellowship where you belong, for there is no higher qualification for belonging to the remnant than what Jesus gave us: “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

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.

Dressed in traditional attire, church members participate in the opening event of the Inter-American Division centennial celebrations in Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas, Mexico, on January 8, 2022. The church region that includes Mexico, the Caribbean, and northern South America was officially established in May 1922.

Photo: Juan Colina, Inter-American Division News



“This is a very special moment to inaugurate a [wellness] center such as this. It’s a missionary space in the city of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, where the plan of God to restore His creation will be presented and the soon coming of Jesus will be announced.”

—Ignacio Navarro, president of the Adventist Church in Chiapas, about the inauguration of a new wellness center in Chiapas, Mexico. The center can care for 100 patients at a time, and the facility features hydrotherapy pools, saunas, a gym, a chapel, an outdoor auditorium, and more.

34,000

The amount of plastic bottles used to build a new Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) center in Mauritania. The new building serves as a community center in Nouakchott, the capital city of the northern Africa nation. The bottles used in the construction, constitute the framework of the building. The building has three floors and will house medical equipment, equipment for media, and rooms for language learning, sewing, embroidery, and a library.

2022 General Conference Session

Official notice is hereby given that the postponed sixty-first session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will be held June 6-11, 2022, in the America’s Center in St. Louis, Missouri, United States. The first meeting will begin at 8:00 am, June 6, 2022. All duly accredited delegates are urged to be present at that time. This Session will also be accessible for delegates remotely by electronic means.

Ted N C Wilson, General Conference President

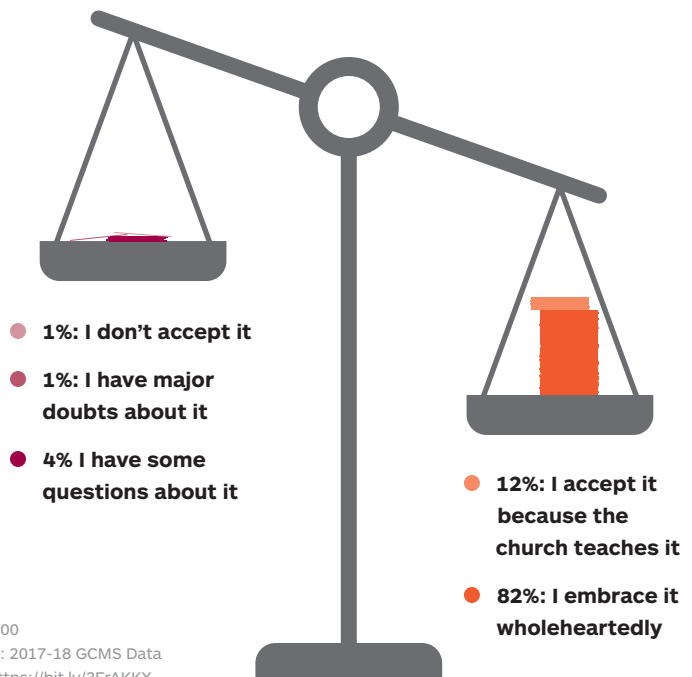
Erton C Köhler, General Conference Secretary

24

The number of artists that the Hønefoss Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway featured as part of a unique art gallery. Artists from five continents participated. The gallery focused on Bible prophecies, with all the paintings having a prophetic motive. The gallery was part of the church’s plan to create more contacts with its surrounding community, as members are gearing up to hold evangelistic meetings later this year.

Sanctuary

Participants were asked in the General Conference Membership Survey (GCMS) if they believe that Christ is acting as our advocate before God in the heavenly sanctuary right now.



N=56,300
Source: 2017-18 GCMS Data
URL: <https://bit.ly/3FrAKKX>

“Our [Pathfinder club] numbers went from a little more than 1,000 clubs to 700. We found out that the desertion of clubs was because directors in some of the regions were not prepared to use Zoom and technological tools, and many of the children had no access to the Internet.”

—Victor Martínez, youth ministries director for the Southeast Mexican Union Mission. To change the situation, the youth department offered leadership training events for all the church youth ministries directors. The efforts were successful, and the number of clubs has jumped to 906 in early 2022.

“Language lessons are essential to integrate. Fortunately, two former teachers from the Oud Zandbergen primary school were willing to provide the lessons at our location. Eventually, we started the lessons with 17 adults three times a week. These people had mastered the English language, and they are highly educated. They are now sharing their knowledge of the Dutch language with others in the emergency shelter.”

—Lydia van Rhenen, volunteer team coordinator, about the ADRA Share & Care initiative in Huis ter Heide, Netherlands. This initiative provides Dutch language lessons and other social activities for Afghan refugees.

“Nursing homes do not repair cars or dishwashers; they deal with people, who are helped with their weaknesses and fragility, with their feelings, their suffering, and, often, their hopes. You are a very important presence and, from what you told me, you are even thinking of increasing your investments, of adding space to care for more people. Thank you very much for what you do.”

—Stefano Bonaccini, Emilia-Romagna region president in Italy, during his visit to the Adventist retirement home Casa Mia.

Adventist Review Ministries Newsletter

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163

The number of graduates from Fulton Adventist University College. The graduates completed degrees in ministry, business, law enforcement, and tertiary lecturer. The graduation was held under strict health requirements. Because of the limitations on the number of attendees, the event was livestreamed on Facebook by Hope Channel Fiji, reaching more than 36,000 views. ➔



Photo: courtesy of John Mikiwai

Special General Conference Session Approves Constitutional Amendment

New section allows for virtual world church sessions as needed.

By Adventist World and Adventist News Network



Delegates to the Special GC Session follow the January 18 proceedings at the Adventist Church headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

Photo: Denis Peniche

Nearly 300 official participants at a Special General Conference (GC) Session voted to include a new section to Article V of the GC Constitution that will allow delegates at future GC Sessions to participate digitally if international disasters, pandemics, or unavoidable circumstances arise. The unanimous vote occurred during a one-day, one-item session at the Adventist Church's world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, on January 18.

The voted amendment allows official delegates to participate in the upcoming June 6-11, 2022, GC Session, even if they cannot physically travel to the venue in St. Louis, Missouri, United States, because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, church leaders said.

Because of current COVID-19 travel restrictions, the delegates for the special session were selected using primarily individuals who currently work at the GC headquarters in Silver Spring. These

delegations were approved by each of the church's world divisions and consequently voted by the General Conference Executive Committee on September 16, 2021.

The recommended amendment, voted by the GC Session delegates, reads as follows:

Article V. Sec. 4. Generally, regular or specially called General Conference Sessions are to be held in person and onsite. However, delegates when requested by the General Conference Executive Committee may participate by means of an electronic conference or similar communications by which all persons participating can hear each other at the same time, and participation by such means shall constitute presence in person and attendance at such a meeting. Votes cast remotely shall have the same validity as if the delegates met and voted onsite.

BACKGROUND TO THE VOTE

The January 18 Special GC Session had been voted on April 13, 2021, by the members of the GC EXCOM.

At the time, Adventist Church undersecretary Hensley Mooroooven detailed factors considered in presenting this proposal. According to Mooroooven, the GC Constitution stipulates that GC Sessions and all voting must take place in-person and onsite. Additionally, Article V, Section 1, of the constitution states that postponing a GC Session should not "exceed two years" beyond a regularly scheduled date. The possibility of another delay would put the General Conference out of compliance with its governing document. Mooroooven also explained that amendments to the GC Constitution and Bylaws can be voted only by delegates at a regular or special GC Session. He affirmed that the proposal introduced and voted at the April 2021 meeting stays within the appropriate provision of the GC Constitution and Bylaws.

In 2020, a meeting of the GC EXCOM had already voted to propose an amendment to the GC Constitution that would allow for virtual par-

ticipation when specifically requested by the Executive Committee.

Based on the authority granted to it in Article V of the Constitution to reduce the total number of delegates to a GC Session for reasons of a “major crisis within the church or international arena,” GC EXCOM had also voted on April 13 to reduce the total number of regular and at-large delegates to the January Special GC Session to 400 people. The allocated quota of delegates for the GC, 13 divisions, and two attached unions was approved as well. The motion included a request that divisions unable to send their allotted quota of delegates because of travel restrictions or other reasons be allowed to reallocate their unused quota of delegates back to the GC. The GC Administrative Committee then designated these positions to church members currently working at the GC headquarters or living in the immediate metropolitan area,

primarily from the divisions which shared their quota.

FEEDBACK FROM DELEGATES AND LEADERS

At the January 18 Session, GC secretary Erton Köhler read and moved the amendment to Article V of the GC Constitution. Several delegates then approached the auditorium microphones to weigh in on the proposed amendment.

GC Education director Lisa Beardley-Hardy said she appreciated the solution found, given the circumstances. “Things are going to get worse as we get to the end of time. This allows us to stay organized as we move forward,” she said.

Following the 59-minute meeting, GC executive secretary Erton Köhler responded to the day’s events. “I was impressed by the strong support the delegates gave to the motion,” he said. “In situations like these, it is usual to get different opinions, but we received just a few

observations. This shows to me that the church is united for mission.”

Köhler explained that the issue at hand was technical, unrelated to doctrinal or philosophical issues. “Still, it was important to approve it; otherwise, the work of the church may be hindered,” he said. “From the unanimous vote it was clear that delegates want the church to move forward.”

GC general counsel Karnik Doukmetzian also affirmed the significance of the brief meeting. “The vote to amend was significant in that it makes provision for the future in case meetings of the General Conference Session cannot be held in person to allow for individuals to be ‘present,’” Doukmetzian said. “World conditions may not allow for delegates to travel to be present in person, and this provision allows those delegates to participate and represent their territories even if they cannot physically travel to the site of the session.” ©

General Conference Executive Committee Votes to Allow for Hybrid 2022 GC Session

On Thursday, January 27, 2022, the General Conference (GC) Executive Committee met virtually to address items regarding the upcoming GC Session. After a short devotional and prayer time, members of the committee voted to enact the provision for hybrid meetings approved by the Special GC Executive Committee on January 18. The GC Session, which originally was postponed because of the pandemic and is now scheduled to convene in St.

Louis, Missouri, from June 6 to 11, 2022, will be able to be a hybrid meeting. While delegates will still be encouraged to attend in person, this provision allows delegates facing pandemic challenges, inability to procure visas, or other extenuating circumstances, to participate by electronic means.

Philippine Publishing House Moves to Its New Home

By Edward Rodriguez, Southern Asia-Pacific Division, and *Adventist World*

Who would have thought that a makeshift press in a broken-down stall would become one of Asia's largest Adventist publishing houses? One hundred eight years after it was established, prodded by its history of fruitful ministry, and amid the hurdles and challenges of the present time, the Philippine Publishing House (PPH) moved to its new home in Aguinaldo Highway, in Silang, Cavite, the Philippines, on January 19.

"After years of planning and construction, our dream has finally become a reality," PPH retiring president Florante Ty said. "At first the challenge seemed to be insurmountable, but I was reminded that nothing is impossible with the Lord," he said.

Faced by a worldwide pandemic, the inauguration program was held both in-person and virtually. Adventist leaders from the Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD), the three Philippine union church territories, the Department of Literature Ministries, and literature evangelists joined the dedication ceremony of the new facilities.

The inauguration holds a special place in the hearts of those who attended, leaders said. "The PPH stands as a witness to thousands of success stories and miracles in the lives of those who were made instruments to touch and be touched by the publishing work," they said.

In his welcome message Ty expressed his gratitude to those who supported and believed in the project. "What seemed to be an impossible feat has turned out to be an opportunity to highlight God's



The new home of the Philippine Publishing House is located next to Aguinaldo Highway, Silang, Cavite, Philippines

Photo: courtesy of Vinz Matias

generosity and providence throughout this project," he said.

"There is still a lot of work to be done. The work is not yet finished. There will always be challenges, but the Philippine Publishing House will continue to publish books so that more people will get to know [about] Jesus' soon return," Ty said. "The Lord's work shouldn't be hindered because of human factors, because the Lord is generous. The Lord provides," he added.

SSD president Saw Samuel, who said he believes in the publishing work's movement and effectiveness, commented that he was amazed to witness what faith can do in the Lord's work. He emphasized that as we place our trust in the hands of God, nothing and no one can be against us.

"Let us keep going, moving, and conquering," Samuel said. "Whether the outlook seems promising or discouraging, wherever God takes us, whatever He asks of us, whom ever He chooses to lead us, we will continue to serve."

Constituency meeting elects new leaders.

NEW LEADERS

After a successful inauguration and plant tour organized for the attending delegates and guests, PPH held its twelfth annual constituency meeting. Ty, who led PPH for 16 years, had expressed his desire to retire. After fervent prayers, the PPH nominating committee elected Leonardo Heyasa, Jr., as the new president and Joel Silva as the new vice president for finance.

Leaders said that in its new home, PPH will carry the mission to circulate books, magazines, and other reading and teaching resources through its 94 workers, 25 branches, and approximately 3,000 literature evangelists across the Philippines. Leaders said they will explore opportunities for modern digital evangelism, to send God's message to every household in the Philippines and beyond.

"The Philippine Publishing House is more than just an establishment. It is an instrument built for people preparing for heaven and those preparing people for heaven," they said. ©

4,637,159

Membership of the East-Central Africa Division (ECD) as of September 30, 2021

195

Number of students and staff from the Kajiado Adventist School and Rescue Center in Kenya who received a gift to go on a safari during the Christmas season. The Kajiado school was the focus of the Maranatha Volunteers International annual family project and the 66 volunteers that participated built a new dormitory and also ran a dental clinic that saw more than 50 girls in urgent need of dental care. 📍

“[Leaders] are calling upon all of us to go and preach the gospel. It is the theme of ‘I Will Go.’ It keeps being featured in almost everything we do. I think this clarion call is becoming part of our lives, part of a lifestyle. And I believe all of us are beginning to enjoy saying ‘I Will Go.’ ”

—Blasious Ruguri, ECD division president, during a sermon at the regional church headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, in October 2021.

“The people, what a tough life they have here, always looking for water. That’s how their life runs. They go into these dry riverbeds and they’re digging for water way down deep and just putting a little bit into a cup trying to survive.”

—Don Noble, president of Maranatha International Volunteers, about a monthlong expedition to drill water wells in an extremely remote and dry part of northern Kenya. The ECD had requested five years earlier for Maranatha to build churches for the Daasanach people. While constructing four churches in 2016, the Maranatha team became aware of the desperate need for water, which inspired the most recent visit in November 2021.

120+

Teachers and students that were taught on how to teach and learn using digital devices. The project operates in the Mahama refugee camp in Kirehe district in the Eastern Province of Rwanda and includes training on how to incorporate innovative skills, educational transformation, and digital education. It also involves live classroom instruction.



Photo: Maranatha Volunteers International

Focus

Sanctuary

101

Experiencing
God's presence

BY RICHARD M. DAVIDSON



M

any Adventists may wonder about the significance of the sanctuary message, especially in the troubling times we are currently experiencing.¹ In this we must rely on God Himself who points us repeatedly to this important biblical doctrine and summarizes the main point of the sanctuary message when instructing Moses to build a sanctuary: “Let them make me a sanctuary, that

I may dwell in their midst” (Ex. 25:8, ESV).² God wants to reside with His people and have intimate fellowship with them! The sanctuary doctrine is the unfolding of the Immanuel experience embodied in Jesus—“God with us” (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23).

MIND STRETCHING: INTO THE PRE-FALL HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

After instructing Moses to build a sanctuary (Ex. 25:8), God adds in the very next breath, “Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you” (verse 9, NIV). The Hebrew term for “pattern” implies that the resplendent earthly sanctuary was to be a copy (albeit only a faint reflection) of the vast and glorious heavenly original (compare Heb. 8:3-5).

According to Jeremiah 17:12 the heavenly sanctuary existed “from the beginning.” Before his fall the angel Lucifer served as “covering cherub” in the heavenly sanctuary, “in Eden, the garden of God,” “on the holy mountain of God” (Eze. 28:13, 14), also called the “mount of the congregation [or assembly]” (Isa. 14:13). Before functioning to deal with the sin problem, the heavenly sanctuary was a place where the inhabitants of the universe “assembled” as a congregation to worship and praise their Maker. In theological terms: “Before soteriology [salvation] was doxology [praise]!” Throughout Scripture this heavenly temple is portrayed as alive with praise, worship, and adoration offered to the King of kings, even in the midst of solving the sin problem (see, e.g., Isa. 6:1-8; Ps. 150:1; Rev. 4:8-11; 5:9-14).

The heavenly sanctuary in the Old Testament is often spoken of as a “temple” (see, e.g., Ps. 11:4; Isa. 6:1), that is, the residence of a deity. It’s described as God’s “habitation” or “dwelling” (e.g., Deut. 26:15; Ps. 68:5). Although the heavenly sanctuary indeed has a “throne room” (the most holy place), where the Ruler of the universe conducts the “affairs of state” and meets with His heavenly council (e.g., 1 Kings 22:19; Job 1:6), it functions primarily as God’s abiding place, His personal residence—His home. Visualize its furnishings—a table for food, a lampstand, sweet-smelling incense, an ark throne/footstool (see Rev. 4:5; 8:3; 11:19; cf. Rev. 19:9)—all are normal elements one would expect in a royal palace. We need to experience the warm, “homey” atmosphere of the heavenly sanctuary. Scripture portrays a personal Creator who comes down in space and time to reside among His unfallen intelligences in the universe. This biblical picture is a corrective to major Christian theological systems constructed around the platonic notion of a timeless God who is not compatible with space-time reality. We have the privilege of calling the world back to the biblical view of God as one who experiences intimate relationship with His creatures and invites them to His palace home for intimate fellowship.

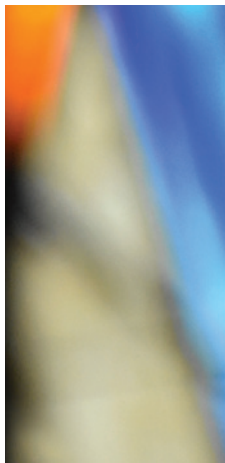
EARTH’S FIRST SANCTUARIES


It was noted earlier that the original heavenly sanctuary was located “in Eden, the Garden of God” (Eze. 28:13). When God created this earth, He

again planted “a garden . . . in Eden” (Gen. 2:8). The use of similar terminology intimates that the earthly Eden was a copy of the original heavenly Eden sanctuary. Numerous links between Genesis 1-3 and other sanctuaries in Scripture support the conclusion that the pre-Fall Garden of Eden (or at least parts of it) served as the original sanctuary on earth.³ To this garden sanctuary God came “walking . . . in the cool of the day” (Gen. 3:8), seeking intimate fellowship with Adam and Eve. Here He spent 24 golden hours communing with them every Sabbath, making the Sabbath holy by His presence (Gen. 2:1-3).

But there was an enemy lurking in the garden sanctuary. Lucifer, the fallen cherub (now called Satan), had been cast out of heaven after his rebellion (Rev. 12:9), and at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he channeled his lies about God through the serpent to Eve. Tragically, Adam and Eve believed these lies instead of the word of God and ate the fruit of the forbidden tree. The floodgates of woe were poured out upon this world. When God came walking in the cool of the day, instead of rejoicing in His fellowship, the couple hid in fear, guilt, and shame, and tried to cover their nakedness by the fig

The sanctuary doctrine is the unfolding of the Immanuel experience embodied in Jesus—“God with us.”





Before soteriology [salvation] was doxology [praise]!

leaves of their own works. But God did not forsake them. In love He came searching for them.

THE SANCTUARY ATONEMENT DRAMA UNVEILED

In the earthly Eden sanctuary, after Adam and Eve sinned, God unveiled to them the great drama of atonement (“at-one-ment”) that was to unfold in three great sanctuary acts in the life and ministry of the coming Messiah. These three acts of the atonement drama are foundational for the sanctuary message throughout Scripture with regard to solving the sin problem, although not always presented in the same order. In post-Fall Eden, God comes as judge, conducting the first “investigative judgment” in history. Adam and Eve’s testimony of excuses and accusations against God make evident their crime of high treason against their Maker (Gen. 3:9-14), deserving of the just penalty of death (Gen. 2:17).

But the unimaginable then happens! The guilty pair “look into [their] Judge’s face and see a Savior there.”⁴ The second great act of the sanctuary atonement drama is announced: the messianic Seed will die as their substitute (Gen. 3:15). “The instant man accepted the temptations of Satan, . . . Christ, the Son of God, stood between the living and the dead, saying, ‘Let the punishment fall on Me. I will stand in man’s place.’”⁵ There *was* a death that very day—an animal was sacrificed to prefigure the future substitutionary death of the Messiah (verse 21).

Priestly mediation, the third great at-one-ment act of the sanctuary drama, is also intimated in these two verses. God promises to mediate grace by putting a supernatural enmity toward the serpent (hatred of sin) in their hearts (verse 15), and He intercedes for them by covering their “nakedness” (not only physical, but consciousness of guilt and shame) with the robe of His righteousness (verse 21; cf. Isa. 61:10).

Even though Adam and Eve could no longer remain in the garden sanctuary, the presence of God, His Shekinah glory, was accessible at the “sanctuary” altar located outside the garden at its eastern gate, and God still came close to communicate with His erring children (Gen. 3:24; 4:3-7). Throughout the patriarchal era God often met and communed with His faithful servants where they constructed their sanctuary altars (e.g., Gen. 22:1-19; 28).

THE WILDERNESS TABERNACLE


What is intimated in the earthly Eden sanctuary after the fall of Adam and Eve is made clearer in the precincts and services of the wilderness tabernacle. The Mosaic sanctuary services provided real atonement but anticipating God’s greater atonement (“at-one-ment”) for repentant Israelites in the wilderness, in view of what Jesus Christ would later achieve during His incarnation and heavenly

ministry. They also prefigured the plan of salvation. The Bible calls these prefigurations “types.” Biblical “types” (Greek, *typos*) are (usually Old Testament) persons, events, and institutions (such as the sanctuary) that have been used by God to help us anticipate the fulfillment as it came in Jesus (“the antitype”).

The sanctuary and its services foreshadowed what Jesus would accomplish in His three acts of the atonement drama: substitutionary sacrifice, priestly mediation, and investigative/executive judgment. The first two acts are represented by the two altars in the courtyard and holy place respectively: one of “continual atonement” and the other of “perpetual intercession” (Ex. 27:1-8; 30:1-10). Blood and incense are both symbols of sacrifice and mediation. The animal sacrifices prefigured Christ’s death as a substitute for sinful humans. The incense offered up by the priest on the altar of incense represented Christ’s merits (or righteousness), which as high priest and mediator He imputes to the believing sinner.

The third act of the atonement drama took place on the Day of [Ultimate] Atonement (*yom hakippurim*) at the end of the Hebrew religious year, typifying the last-day judgment. Throughout the year repentant sinners had experienced at-one-ment with God through the sin offerings, but the sanctuary was defiled by the record of those sins transferred to its precincts (Lev.

The heavenly sanctuary is primarily God’s personal residence, His home, where He invites His creatures for intimate fellowship.



4). This transfer of forgiven sins to the sanctuary, God's residence, signified that God had taken upon Himself the responsibility for these confessed sins.

On the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16) the high priest sprinkled the sin-free blood of the Lord's goat in the most holy and holy places and on the altar, and cleansed the sanctuary. This foreshadowed the vindication of God as He demonstrates His justice in forgiving repentant sinners through the blood of Jesus' sacrifice. The Day of Atonement is a day of cosmic investigative judgment (Lev. 16:29, 31; 23:27-32) as the holy fruits of God's people affirm before the onlooking universe that their faith in the atoning work of Christ is genuine.

THE SANCTUARY IN DANIEL 7-9

The prophecies of Daniel 7-9 coincide with the three acts of the sanctuary at-one-ment drama, providing the *timing* of the atoning activities of the Messiah, ordered from effect to cause (as is common in Hebrew thought). We reverse the order here to fit Western cause-to-effect logic. Daniel 9 highlights the Messiah's sacrifice, providing the prophetic timing of the Messiah's substitutionary death, coming in the midst of the seventieth week of the 70-week prophecy, which, calculated according to the day-for-a-year principle implicit in the text, yields A.D. 31 (verses 24-27).

Daniel 8 focuses upon the priestly mediatorial ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary after His ascension. It reveals the time for the commencement of the antitypical (i.e., the fulfillment of the type) day of atonement, when the heavenly sanctuary would begin to be "restored/cleansed/vindicated" (Hebrew, *nitsdaq*, verse 14) at the end of 2,300 days (years).

This period began at the same time as the 70-week prophecy, 457 B.C., and ended on October 22, 1844, when the special *nitsdaq* work of Christ, our high priest, began in the heavenly sanctuary.⁶

Daniel 7 makes clear that this antitypical day of atonement is a time of judgment, in which God condemns the little horn power but gives a verdict "in favor of the saints" (verse 22). The judgment is good news for God's people: God is not only *with us*, but *for us*!


SANCTUARY TYPOLOGY IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

The central chapters of Hebrews (7-10) provide the most comprehensive biblical description of the fulfillment of sanctuary symbols in the three acts of the atoning ministry of Jesus. First, Christ's once-for-all sacrificial death is presented as the antitypical fulfillment of the entire Old Testament sacrificial system (Heb. 10:1-4, 11, 12; 9:13, 25, 26). Second, when Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary at His ascension, He entered to inaugurate it, to officially start up the services as priest-king, to begin his high-priestly mediatorial (*tamid*) holy place ministry: "He ever lives to make intercession for them" who come to God through Him (Heb. 7:25; cf. Heb. 10:20).

Third, from the point of view of the apostle in the first century A.D., the day of atonement work of judgment was still in the future: "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Heb. 9:27, 28; cf. Heb. 10:26, 31).

The book of Hebrews not only describes Christ's activities in the atonement drama; it also uniquely emphasizes what God invites His

people to experience during this time! Four times the author of Hebrews invites His people to come to the heavenly sanctuary: to "come boldly to the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16); to enter "the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus" (Heb. 6:19, 20); to "have boldness to enter the [heavenly] sanctuary through the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19, HCSB);⁷ and to realize that "you *have come* to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly




The earthly Eden was a copy of the heavenly Eden sanctuary.


Jerusalem, . . . to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant" (Heb. 12:22-24). God not only invites us to come occasionally by faith to the heavenly sanctuary; we are invited to *sanctuary life*, continually experiencing by faith the glorious presence of God in His heavenly sanctuary.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The book of Revelation is saturated with sanctuary language and is structured by seven scenes into the sanctuary. In these passages is embedded the same three-act sanctuary at-one-ment drama as found elsewhere in Scripture. The sacrifice of Christ is emphasized in chapters 1-3. His *tamid* mediatorial work is highlighted in chapters 4-8. The final judgment (antitypical day of atonement) is the subject of Revelation 10-20, including the pre-Advent investigative judgment (Rev. 11:1, 2, 19; 14:6, 7), the review judgment




The sanctuary services foreshadowed what Jesus would accomplish in the atonement drama as sacrifice, priest, and judge.



The judgment is good news for God's people: God is not only *with us*, but *for us*.

during the millennium (Rev. 20:4) and final executive judgment upon the wicked (verses 11-15).

A special contribution of Revelation to the sanctuary message is the “big picture” of the sanctuary throughout eternity after the end of the cosmic conflict, demonstrating the Immanuel experience—“God with us.” You may be wondering why the heavenly sanctuary may be needed once the plan of redemption has been successfully carried out. But follow me on this: Revelation 21:22 is used to support this view, where John records his vision of the New Jerusalem after the end of sin and sinners: “I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” John does *not* say that there will be no more heavenly sanctuary/temple! This would contradict Revelation 7:15, where John specifically states that the redeemed 144,000, after the end of sin and sinners, “are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple.” Rather, in Revelation 21:22 John says that he does not see a temple *in the city*.



He adds that the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the true temple. This has always been true. Ultimately the temple is where God is; His presence comprises the ultimate temple. But I think this does not necessarily do away with the existence of a temple in space and time where God dwells with His people, any more than the glory of God and the light of the Lamb do away with the sun and moon (see Rev. 21:23; 22:1; Isa. 30:26; 66:23).

In Revelation 21:2, 3 John describes the descent of the New Jerusalem out of heaven to this earth, and then records the explanation of that vision proclaimed by a loud heavenly voice: “Behold, the taber-

nacle of God is with men; and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.” The New Jerusalem is identified as the “tabernacle of God.” The Greek word for “tabernacle” is *skēnē*, the same term used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) for the sanctuary. John did not see a temple *in* the city, because the *whole city* was now God’s sanctuary.

This interpretation finds even more support later in the same chapter: the angel measures the dimensions of the city, and John gives the summary: “Its length, breadth, and height are equal”—the shape of a cube (Rev. 21:16). The only item mentioned elsewhere in Scripture in the shape of a cube is the most holy place of the sanctuary. I think the New Jerusalem is the tabernacle/sanctuary of the new earth; more exactly, it is the most holy place, with the ultimate Sanctuary—the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb—in its center.

The sanctuary of the new earth—the New Jerusalem—continues the



John did not see a temple in the city, because the whole city was now God's sanctuary!

heavenly sanctuary's original function of doxology, as the place where the saints serve in the Father's presence and the whole universe comes to worship and praise the King of kings and Lord of lords (notice the 14 doxologies scattered throughout the book). Revelation 21-22 describes life in the New Jerusalem in language referring to the Hebrew Feast of Tabernacles (see Lev. 23:33-43). The earth made new will be an eternal festival worship celebration of the Immanuel experience—the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb with us in the sanctuary.

GOD'S ETERNAL HOME—AND OURS

John 14:2, 3 records Jesus' promise to return a second time: "In My

Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also." "In My Father's house . . ." What is the Father's "house"? In light of what we have seen elsewhere in Scripture, the Father's *house* in heaven is the heavenly sanctuary. Jesus is going to prepare "mansions"—the Greek literally says "rooms"—in the Father's house. Even after the New Jerusalem descends to this earth following the millennium, our "city home" will be a mansion-like "room" in the most holy place of the sanctuary. God is actually inviting us to take up residence with Him

for eternity in His home. The Immanuel experience will never end—experiencing God's intimate presence in His sanctuary/temple forever. Maranatha—come soon, Lord Jesus! We can hardly wait! ☉

¹ For further discussion, see Richard M. Davidson, *A Song for the Sanctuary: Experiencing God's Presence in Shadow and Reality* (Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute; Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2022).

² Scripture quotations marked ESV are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

³ See Richard M. Davidson, "Earth's First Sanctuary: Genesis 1-3 and Parallel Creation Accounts," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 53, no. 1 (2015): 65-89.

⁴ "Jubilee," performed by Michael Card, written by Randy Lynn Scruggs and Michael Card, Sparrow Records, 1989.

⁵ *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 1, p. 1085.

⁶ Seventh-day Adventists believe that the 2,300-day prophecy associated with the cleansing of the sanctuary and described in Daniel 8:14 spans the significant period that begins in the Medo-Persian Empire (starting in 457 B.C. with the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall, based on Dan. 9:24-25) and ends in A.D. 1844 with the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and Christ's end-time work of judgment. For a more detailed discussion see Ángel Manuel Rodríguez et al., ed., *Andrews Bible Commentary* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2020), pp. 1036-1047.

⁷ Texts credited to HCSB are taken from the *Holman Christian Standard Bible*, copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.

We are invited to *sanctuary life*, continually experiencing by faith the glorious presence of God in His heavenly sanctuary.

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Cleansing— What and Where?

The question, What is the sanctuary? is clearly answered in the Scriptures. The term “sanctuary,” as used in the Bible, refers, first, to the tabernacle built by Moses, as a pattern of heavenly things; and, secondly, to the “true tabernacle” in heaven, to which the earthly sanctuary pointed. At the death of Christ the typical service ended. The “true tabernacle” in heaven is the sanctuary of the new covenant. And as the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 is fulfilled in this dispensation, the sanctuary to which it refers must be the sanctuary of the new covenant. At the termination of the 2300 days, in 1844, there had been no sanctuary on earth for many centuries. Thus the prophecy, “Unto two thousand three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed,” unquestionably points to the sanctuary in heaven.

POWER IN THE BLOOD

But the most important question remains to be answered: What is the cleansing of the sanctuary? . . . In Hebrews 9 the cleansing of both the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary is plainly taught. “Almost all things are by the law purged with blood: and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was there-

fore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these [the blood of animals]; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these” [Heb. 9:22, 23], even the precious blood of Christ.

The cleansing, both in the typical and in the real service, must be accomplished with blood; in the former, with the blood of animals; in the latter, with the blood of Christ. Paul states, as the reason why this cleansing must be performed with blood, that without shedding of blood is no *remission*. Remission, or putting away of sin, is the work to be accomplished. But how could there be sin connected with the sanctuary, either in heaven or upon the earth? This may be learned by reference to the symbolic service; for the priests who officiated on earth, served “unto the example and shadow of heavenly things” [Heb. 8:5].

THE CEREMONY

The ministration of the earthly sanctuary consisted of two divisions; the priests ministered daily in the holy place, while once a year the high priest performed a special work of atonement in the most holy, for the cleansing of the sanctuary. Day by day the repentant

sinner brought his offering to the door of the tabernacle and, placing his hand upon the victim’s head, confessed his sins, thus in figure transferring them from himself to the innocent sacrifice. The animal was then slain. “Without shedding of blood,” says the apostle, there is no remission of sin. “The life of the flesh is in the blood” [Lev. 17:11]. The broken law of God demanded the life of the transgressor. The blood, representing the forfeited life of the sinner, whose guilt the victim bore, was carried by the priest into the holy place and sprinkled before the veil, behind which was the ark containing the law that the sinner had transgressed. By this ceremony the sin was, through the blood, transferred in figure to the sanctuary. In some cases the blood was not taken into the holy place; but the flesh was then to be eaten by the priest, as Moses directed the sons of Aaron, saying, “God hath given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation” [Lev. 10:17]. Both ceremonies alike symbolized the transfer of the sin from the penitent to the sanctuary. . . .

God commanded that an atonement be made for each of the sacred apartments. “He shall make an atonement for the holy place . . . and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness” [Lev. 16:16]. An atonement was also to be made for the altar, to “cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel” [Lev. 16:19]. ©

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This excerpt has been taken from her book *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), pp. 417-419.

The Disease, the Vaccine, and the Solution



Your COVID-19 test results are positive,” my wife gasped as she broke the news to me two days before our yearly family Christmas trip. I froze in utter shock and dismay. It all made sense now. The “scratchy” throat sensation, the fatigue, the dry cough, the joint pains and muscle aches that I had experienced over the past few days—it suddenly all made sense! Being an infectious diseases physician, I had treated hundreds of COVID-19 patients over the past two years of the deadly

pandemic. Now it was my turn to be the patient.

The doctor becomes the patient. This will be interesting.

Being infected with the highly transmissible COVID-19 Omicron variant meant that I had to isolate myself from my loved ones to avoid infecting them. This meant that I could not spend time with my parents and grandparents over Christmas, as has been my family’s tradition. For the first time in my life I spent Christmas in bed, feeling down in the dumps physically and emotionally. Feeling alone, in despair, and isolated from others was even harder to bear than the body pains I was enduring. As is the case with many patients all over the world, the impact of COVID-19 on one’s mental health cannot be overstated.

Suffice it to say, I had been fully vaccinated six months prior to my diagnosis, and this played an enormous role in my rapid recovery from the disease once I contracted it. Within seven days my isolation period ended, and I was on my way to full recovery. Peer-reviewed scientific literature has confirmed the role of vaccination in reducing the severity of symptoms, preventing death, as well as hastening recovery in COVID-19 patients.


So this is how the vaccine works. Long before I had the disease, my body had been prepared to heal.

Long before humanity was diagnosed with the deadly disease called sin, God had already created the vaccine for this pandemic—the plan of redemption. This well-thought-out plan had been established through Jesus Christ for us “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). When Adam and Eve fell, God explained to them His vaccine offer for their healing. Thousands of years later Christ Himself would crush sin and Satan forever (Gen. 3:15). The way this plan was to be carried out was explained to Adam’s descendants, the Israelites, through the blueprints of the sanctuary. As David put it: “Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary” (Ps. 77:13). The procedures, ceremonies, and structure of the sanctuary pointed to Christ’s ministry, which was to come.

Furthermore, the sanctuary was a place of healing for the human patients who suffered from infectious diseases. When the sick had been isolated from their families and community for a minimum of seven days (as was my case), they would go to the sanctuary and present themselves to the priest, who would declare them healed and fit to reintegrate into society (cf. some examples regarding skin diseases in Lev. 13).

These thoughts were of great comfort to me during my illness, and even afterward as I sought my COVID-19 vaccine booster shot. Knowing that despite my feeling of isolation, I had a High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary who promises never to leave nor forsake us as He intercedes on our behalf (Heb. 4:14-16; 13:5). Being the vaccine to the deadliest disease of all—sin—Christ seeks to declare our healing, even before we fall. How did He accomplish this for us? “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). Our Great Physician became the patient. ©

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Global View

Let Them Make Me a Sanctuary

That I May Dwell
Among Them

It was an unforgettable night. A night that has come down through the ages as a symbol of deliverance and triumph. The well-known story, recorded in Exodus 14, tells how the newly escaped children of Israel went from horror to ecstasy as God delivered them from the pursuing Egyptian army by parting the Red Sea, bringing them through dry land to the other side, and then drowning their enemies by causing the sea to come crashing down on Pharaoh and all 600 of his finest horsemen and chariots.

Following this incredible experience, the Holy Spirit inspired Moses to lead the children of Israel in one of the most sublime songs in Scripture. Known as the “Song of Moses,” it begins in Exodus 15:1, 2: “I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He have thrown into the sea! The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation. . . .”

The song tells the story of God’s deliverance and looks forward prophetically to the conquering of Canaan and God bringing His people to “the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which You have made for Your own dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established” (verse 17).

It is in this prophetic passage that Scripture first speaks of a “sanctuary,” possibly referring here to the holy place of Mount Moriah, later known as Mount Zion. It also looks forward to the time when God’s people will dwell with Him in the Holy City, New Jerusalem.

Until then, however, God still longed to be with His people. So, as recorded in Exodus 25, He invited the people to bring their offerings of “gold, silver, and bronze” (verse 3), along with many other precious items (see verses 4 to 7), and tells Moses, “Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them” (verse 8).

A DWELLING PLACE

This sanctuary was not to be of any human devising, as God Himself provided the pattern they were to follow, giving very specific details, as recorded in Exodus 25 through 28. This special “dwelling place” became known as the “wilderness sanctuary.” Patterned after the heavenly sanctuary, it served as a vivid illustration of the plan of salvation, with every aspect of its services, every detail of its

The sanctuary doctrine and the judgment are important theological reasons Seventh-day Adventists are engaged in mission.

furnishings, every item of the priests, rich in meaning. It was designed to teach the world of Christ's death on the cross for our sins and the ultimate transference of sin to the one who deserves it—Satan. Through the initiation of the earthly sanctuary service, God instructed the world as to how Christ would handle the sin problem and care for the judgment.

Hundreds of years after the wilderness sanctuary was established, Asaph, a musician and choir leader for King David, referred to the sanctuary as he proclaimed, "Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary; who is so great a God as our God? You are the God who does wonders" (Ps. 77:13, 14).

The significance of the sanctuary is a theme through many of the psalms. "May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble . . . ; may He send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion; may He remember all your offerings, and accept your burnt sacrifice," wrote David (Ps. 20:1-3). And in Psalm 96:6 we read, "Honor and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary."

The services that had been carried out in the wilderness sanctuary continued in Solomon's temple, and later in what became known as the "second temple," rebuilt following the Babylonian captivity of 70 years.

TYPE MEETS ANTITYPE

It was in this temple complex, greatly enlarged by Herod the Great, where the young Jesus first witnessed the awe-inspiring sanctuary services. "He saw the white-robed priests performing their solemn ministry. He beheld the bleeding victim upon the altar of sacrifice. With the worshipers He bowed in prayer, while the cloud of incense ascended before God. He witnessed the impressive rites of the paschal service. Day by day He saw their meaning more clearly. Every act seemed to be bound up with His own life. . . . The mystery of His mission was opening to the Saviour."¹

Twenty-one years after that first visit to the temple, Christ Himself was the Passover Lamb. Type met antitype; the temple curtain was torn from top to bottom (see Matt. 27:51), indicating the purpose of the earthly sanctuary services were fulfilled and no longer needed.

HIGH-PRIESTLY MINISTRY

After His resurrection Christ ascended to heaven and began His special ministry interceding for us as our high priest. In Hebrews 4:14-16 we read, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore

come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (KJV). This was the lifesaving result of the cross and the nails.

We read in Hebrews 6:19 that Christ entered "into that within the veil" (KJV) in the holy place, doing His work of mediation for 18 centuries. Then, according to the prophecy of Daniel 8:14, "unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (KJV), He entered the most holy place to begin His final work of judgment and ministry on our behalf.

"For eighteen centuries this work of ministration continued in the first apartment of the sanctuary. The blood of Christ, pleaded in behalf of penitent believers, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father, yet their sins still remained upon the books of record. As in the typical service there was a work of atonement at the close of the year, so before Christ's work for the redemption of men is complete there is a work of atonement for the removal of sin from the sanctuary. This is the service which began when the 2300 days ended. At that time, as foretold by Daniel the prophet, our High Priest entered the most holy, to perform the last division of His solemn work—to cleanse the sanctuary."²

We are now living during Christ's final work—sanctuary cleansing, the judgment. The sanctuary doctrine and the judgment are important theological reasons Seventh-day Adventists are engaged in mission. Soon Christ will return and ultimately place the final penalty on Satan. The blood of Jesus Christ, our sacrifice on the cross, and the ministry of Jesus Christ, our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary, have one purpose—that you and I and all who submit to Him confess our sins and accept Him as our Savior, be made right with God, and have eternal life. We do not have to fear the judgment if we know the Lamb, if we know the High Priest, if we know the coming King! ☺

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 78.

² Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 421.

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Our parents told us, “Don’t take candy from them,” and “Don’t accept rides from them,” and “Don’t even talk to them.” Yet we want someone to talk to us when we are them. Sooner or later we will be them. Strangers, outsiders, aliens, foreigners—people whose complexions, or clothes, or customs, or accents, or occupation, or education level doesn’t fit in the surrounding community.

But when we come to think of it, we all have been strangers at one time or another. Do you remember the experience of being a stranger? How long were you guessing where to go or what to do before someone showed you some hospitality—or just basic kindness?

Perhaps it’s time to let go of our fear of strangers and

not pass them by but open our hearts to them. Could it be that the stranger is God’s defibrillator for the personal revival we’ve been praying for?

Here are six reasons God wants us to love the stranger:

1. The daily news gives us reasons for caution toward strangers, while the good news is reason for compassion toward strangers. God urges us to love strangers because He loves strangers. He loves us, after all—and we’re the ones who estranged ourselves from Him! By accepting the challenge to love strangers (and a challenge it is), we emulate God’s character. By rejecting opportunities to love strangers, we incur His rebuke: “He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and

God’s Human Defibrillators

Six ways to transform our lives by loving a stranger



loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing” (Deut. 10:18), and He “will be a swift witness . . . against those who turn away an alien” (Mal. 3:5).

2. Loving strangers builds our memory muscles and exercises our empathetic intelligence. “The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Lev. 19:34). “You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Ex. 23:9). What if when strangers cross our paths, we see them as God’s reminders that we were once the new kid at school? We were once new to a community—maybe surrounded by neighbors we didn’t seem to have much in common with. We were once the new person on the job, trying to remember our way around the building. We were once the new person at a church that allowed us to enter and exit without a “Hello” or a hug or a hand-shake or a bulletin or even directions to the bathroom. We were once strangers, and God wants that memory to motivate us to reach out to others.

3. Loving strangers is an expression of true worship. There is no true prayer and fasting or Sabbathkeeping without loving the strangers within our gates (Deut. 5:14, 15; Isa. 58). Our tithes and offerings don’t budge heaven’s scales compared to the weightier matters of justice, mercy, and faith (Matt. 23:23). God is not impressed by religious fanfare without loving strangers. Why? Strangers are part of the “quartet of the vulnerable.”¹ God repeatedly expresses special affinity toward these four people groups in such passages as: “Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Execute true justice, show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. . . .” But they refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders, and stopped their ears so that they could not hear. . . . Therefore it happened, that just as He proclaimed and they would not hear, so they called out and I would not listen,” says the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 7:9-13).

4. Loving strangers demonstrates our love for Jesus and readiness for kingdom living. ““Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for . . . I was a stranger and you took Me in’ . . . ‘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. 25:34-40). What if when we see people who seem to have nothing to offer to us, we suddenly sense the gaze of the One who is the source of everything we have? What if instead of seeing ourselves as sharing our

Do we really trust God as our reliant tour guide through this world? Are we confident that Jesus has handled the legalities of our documentation status in heaven?

riches with some poor nobodies, we see Jesus reaching to uplift us from spiritual poverty?

5. Both the Old and New Testaments remind us that we are strangers in this world, occupying rent-free land that belongs to God, as we await a better world. “The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me” (Lev. 25:23). “Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20). Do we really trust God as our reliable tour guide through this world? Are we confident that Jesus has handled the legalities of our documentation status in heaven? Does our generosity show that we see ourselves and our belongings as God’s possessions? Do we believe His heavenly hospitality outshines the hospitality He expects us to show?

6. The rewards aren’t just limited to promises of future blessings. As theologian Miroslav Volf argues in *Exclusion and Embrace*: “It may not be too much to claim that the future of our world will depend on how we deal with identity and difference. The issue is urgent. The ghettos and battlefields throughout the world—in the living rooms, in inner cities, or on the mountain ranges—testify indisputably to its importance.”² In a world currently convulsed by violent exclusion of strangers, we can offer the contrasting values of the world to come. By embracing strangers, we are the living proof that Jesus’ sacrifice has “broken down the middle wall of separation” between strangers of various backgrounds (Eph. 2:14).

Could there be a more powerful defense for faith in Jesus? Additionally, our earthly homes will become attractive to heavenly guests (Heb. 13:2). Peacemaking, societal reconciliation, and angelic visitation are available now as we invite Jesus to jolt the spiritual current of our hearts by loving the stranger. ©

¹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 76.

² Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2019), p. 9.

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The Campbell brothers
(from left): Frank, Nestor,
Nills, and Alvin

Feature

Faith of Our Fathers*

One stayed,
one strayed

Photo: Courtesy of Messenger

Both boys stood at the solemn baptismal service, excited as they contemplated the step they would soon take. But what would eventually cause Alvin, the older, to stay and Frank, the younger, to stray?

Pastor Riley S. J. Caesar, Sr., was conducting a series of evangelistic meetings in a tiny rural community in Guyana, South America. Alvin and Frank were invited. It was late 1959, and Alvin remembers vividly that it was a Wednesday evening. The young men, now aged 79 and 75, tell of the fervor with which the pastor delivered the Sabbath message that still tolls in their minds like an old resounding church bell.

Frank remembers the lucid message that distinguished Seventh-day Adventists from Christian Brethren, the congregation he'd been attending at the time. Seventh-day Adventists observed Saturday as sacred. This message intrigued him.

ALVIN'S JOURNEY

Why did Alvin remain a Seventh-day Adventist? "I was well prepared for the Adventist life," he says. Alvin fondly remembers Caesar's undying efforts to ensure that prospective members were given a thorough theological perspective of this new church. Although Alvin was now beginning his new walk, he had previously encountered the Sabbath teaching in an extremely unusual manner.

When asked where he first learned about the Sabbath, Alvin responds amid a hearty outburst, "My Sunday School teacher." He had run home to report that a Sundaykeeper was teaching the seventh-day Sabbath during Sunday School. The response he received from his aunt confused him: "He's right!"

Confused because his aunt was also a devoted Sundaykeeper, Alvin was left with a myriad of questions. Why would these two role models in his life encourage him to keep the seventh day as the day of rest while they faithfully continued worshipping on Sunday?

His aunt once received an invitation from "the Adventists" and decided to send all the children, but that Saturday morning Alvin deliberately tied one

of the stronger cows with a rotten rope. Learning from Alvin himself that there was a "runaway" cow that could damage farmers' crops, his aunt sent him to locate the cow.

"I knew where the cow was. Ruby was right near the house," Alvin recounts. Alvin had spent Sabbath School time watching Ruby chew contentedly on some fresh grass. He was confused because of the mixed messages he was receiving, and that's how his teen brain responded.

On Saturday, December 26, 1959, both Alvin, who is my father, and my uncle Frank were baptized. With no aesthetically designed church pools back then, they were immersed in a canal.

What caused my dad, Alvin, to stay? Dad remembers how he and his brother were allowed to take on important roles in the church. He became the Adventist Youth leader at 18. "Pastor was supportive and lent astute guidance to new converts," he says.

In addition, Dad talks about having conducted Bible studies with prospective members shortly after

his baptism, which promoted in him a love for the Word and reinforced the biblical doctrines he had studied during the new members' class. Inviting persons to evangelistic series was encouraged, and Alvin collected friends from villages far away and transported them on his bicycle. Pastor Caesar had convinced him that the Great Commission of Matthew 28 was not only to be memorized but also to be lived.

One day 18-year-old Alvin tried lifting up Pastor Caesar's small daughter in church. To Alvin's surprise, she felt much heavier than her frame would suggest. Her family was vegetarian, and since he had been led to believe that vegetarians were weak and scrawny, he was taken aback. Learning that vegetarianism and strength were not mutually exclusive, Alvin, at 18 years old, purposed to revert to an Edenic diet. Though he was faced with many challenges to sustain it, he remained vegetarian.

FRANK'S JOURNEY

Uncle Frank, too, did Bible studies with new converts and participated in the activities the church held. He drifted away, however, into a life of prodigal living and refrained from visiting some family members for fear that he would be lectured about his self-indulgent lifestyle.

What caused Frank to "stray"? While Uncle Frank drifted away from his newfound faith, he gained academic prowess and became involved in politics. He was the youngest ambassador of his native country, and the first resident ambassador to Cuba. He would also become the minister of information, representing the then-president of Guyana, Forbes Burnham, at many diplomatic gatherings. During these years he attended church only for funerals, weddings, and baby dedications. He had lost that "first

love" spoken of in Revelation 2:4.

By the time I was born in 1979, Uncle Frank had reached acclaimed status, and as I grew older, my admiration for him grew equally. I fondly remember the villagers relating tales of his helicopter trip back to the village and landing in the middle of a nearby playfield. I heard the story being retold several times, but with each retelling, my pride and joy surpassed the previous one.

As I matured into a young woman, I began to understand the truths about Christianity, and my heart developed a burden for Uncle Frank. I was not alone; Dad prayed for him during family worship.

The Holy Spirit was intervening in Frank's life, and he began to read his Bible and sing hymns from a hymnal he had received from my mom. The Spirit impressed his heart, and he started looking for a church. Strangely, he decided against a Seventh-day Adventist or Brethren congregation. His aim—find a church where he didn't feel any pressure to live holy all week.

Uncle Frank's job at that time as chief correspondent/United Nations bureau chief of Inter Press Service took him to live in New Jersey, and there he found a Presbyterian church. He experienced rich music, sermons, and delicious snacks, all of which enticed him to eventually become a weekly visitor. He was convinced to get baptized as a Presbyterian, but circumstances, divinely orchestrated, caused him to rejoin his family in Canada.

Though he attended many churches in Canada, he felt comfortable only at the Adventist church. As he sought counsel from God, each time he heard, "Stay where you are!" He made the bold step to rededicate his life in baptism. This news enveloped my heart with joy. After his rebaptism he received material that helped

him to thoroughly comprehend the truths about the Sabbath. He speaks of having received a book from a friend on answers to difficult Bible questions.

Today, Frank, apart from writing for a number of Adventist publications, has written the words for a hymn that God had impressed upon his heart as he walked into an Ontario park one Sabbath afternoon. This hymn, "I Ask Myself," has inspired many renowned musicians and Seventh-day Adventist congregations. The fact that he has never been known to have the gift of music is evidence that those lyrics were a gift from God. This is noteworthy to me, since Uncle Frank had been told at a young age that singing was not one of his talents.

Frank Campbell is also an elder at the Agape Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ontario, Canada, and spends time interceding for family members. Frank "the Stray" has now returned to stay.

The faith of these two fathers has enriched my faith!

*This article was first printed in *Messenger*, November 2021. Reprinted and photo used with permission.

Blondelle Campbell has been an educator for 25 years and is the principal of the only Seventh-day Adventist school in **Guyana**.

Get the Music

Download Frank Campbell's hymn "I Ask Myself" by visiting <https://www.adventistworld.org/i-ask-myself/> or by scanning the QR code with a smart phone.



Looking Back

In Light of Bereavement:

How Ellen White processed unexpected loss

The past two years have been filled with grief and loss.

Beyond the pain of losing a loved one, many are still processing the confusing swirl of emotions that come with careers upended, plans curtailed, and dreams unfulfilled in the chaos of the current pandemic. Pressing through the fog of these realities can be difficult.

After a sudden and significant death in one of my congregations, my mind gravitated to a statement that once hung on a wall in my in-laws' home—the cherished words, penned by Adventist Church cofounder Ellen White after burying her husband and ministry partner, were framed and visible to give encouragement after a tragic accident claimed one of their friends.

Could Ellen White's personal experience and inspired counsel provide direction for those struggling to process their own losses? I wondered.

THE CRUSHING WEIGHT

As Ellen White rode in a carriage from Battle Creek to Charlotte, Michigan, for a weekend speaking engagement with her husband, she was impressed with how God had restored him. He had experienced significant setbacks because of a stroke 16 years prior, but was now thinking clearly, moving freely, and speaking powerfully. She records him saying, "Now that God has given me renewed physical and mental strength, I feel that I can serve His cause as I have never been able to serve it before."¹

Plans were made to travel to Colorado and the Pacific coast, offering ample time to write. Beyond this, Ellen White stated, "We hoped that we might stand together to witness the triumphant close [of God's work at the second coming of Jesus]."²

James suffered a bit of cold exposure from an unexpected storm



on that summer trip, but didn't think anything of it. The following Sabbath he opened services in the Battle Creek Tabernacle with song and prayer. By Monday, however, he had become ill, and, after six days in the sanitarium, breathed his last.

Hopes dashed, Ellen White mourned, "The chosen protector of my youth, the companion of my life, the sharer of my labors and afflictions, was taken from my side, and I was left to finish my work and to fight the battle alone."³ "The shock of my husband's death—so sudden, so unexpected—fell upon me with crushing weight,"⁴ she wrote.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF ETERNITY

This was not the first time Ellen White had confronted significant loss. Her youngest son, John Herbert, died as an infant in December of 1860. Just three years later James and Ellen lost their oldest son, 16-year-old Henry. Both parents and the two surviving sons deeply mourned the youngest branch of their family tree, as well as the oldest, whose sweet songs were keenly missed.⁵ With each occurrence of loss, however, Ellen White fixed her eyes on the resurrection at Jesus' second coming.

Following Paul's counsel to the church in Thessalonica, Ellen White did not grieve "as others who have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13). She knew humanity's state in death and the promise of the resurrection. She fixed her eyes on the reality that death's earthly sleep will soon be reversed for those who love Jesus.

At one point in her ministry, Ellen White counseled a grieving minister who "hugged the grief to [his] bosom, . . . loved to dwell upon it, and . . . allowed [his] mind and thoughts to be seriously occupied with [his] grief."⁶ Finding herself in the same position, Ellen White

wrote, "I keenly feel my loss, but dare not give myself up to *useless* grief."⁷

Ellen White did not deny the reality of grief in the experience of others or even her own. She did not minimize the importance to work through these complex feelings. She did, however, make a distinction between the tendency to mourn loss in a self-centered, obsessive grief for which there is no remedy, as opposed to mourning in the light of God's promises, which are intended to give hope that days of sorrow will be transformed to joy. By faith in God's Word, this is an experience we can have today.

TAKING UP THE WORK AGAIN

White came to the place where she could "look with pleasure upon his resting place"⁸ as she anticipated that her sleeping husband would soon be brought forth from the grave. With this newfound peace, she determined to honor her husband's memory by continuing the work God had given her to do.

While at the beginning of her account she mourned the reality of moving ahead without her companion, at the conclusion she resolved to "take up my life work alone, in full confidence that my Redeemer will be with me."⁹

Indeed, she did take up her appointed work. Ten years after James's passing, she boarded a ship for Australia, where new ministries were established and important books were written. More than just accomplishing tasks, she desired that her ministry be characterized by kindness, gentleness, and patience. Her own bereavement made her more sensitive to the struggles of the living.

A CHALLENGE TO THE LIVING

Ellen White addresses two practical ways we can process grief. First, she commends us to greater

The scars of human grief will be fully healed when the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings.

resistance against sin and the powers of darkness, which have brought the sting of death and loss. Second, she encourages us to serve Christ more passionately, knowing that the scars of human grief will be fully healed only when the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings (see Mal. 4:2).

During a time of widespread grief and loss, those words my wife's parents memorialized in the form of a portrait offer a challenge and a positive step on the journey to healing: "The best way in which I and my children can honor the memory of him who has fallen," Ellen White says, "is to take the work where he left it, and in the strength of Jesus carry it forward to completion."¹⁰

We too can honor those whom we have lost by moving forward with renewed purpose, desiring to see their faces again, and chiefly, the face of our Redeemer, who makes this possible. ☺

¹ Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 249.

² *Ibid.*, p. 247.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 1, p. 103.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1977), vol. 2, p. 461.

⁷ E. G. White, *Life Sketches*, p. 253. (Italics supplied.)

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

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The God Who “Eats” and Shares

Q

Since the Bible speaks about God’s food, should I conclude that God needs to eat?

A

References to the food of God are easily found in the book of Leviticus. The book gives the impression that God ate the sacrifices and offerings of the Israelites. Let me respond to the question using three basic concepts.

1. FOOD AND SACRIFICES

References to the food of God are found in the context of the Israelite sacrificial system. The sacrifices are called “the food of their/your/his God” (Lev. 21:6, 8, 17, 21, NIV), or “holy food” (verse 22, NIV). The altar of burnt offerings is designated the “table that is before the Lord” (Eze. 41:22), “My table” (Eze. 44:16), and “the Lord’s table” (Mal. 1:7, 12, NIV). The language used in these passages is that of food served at a table for someone to eat it. The tabernacle itself is, properly speaking, the house of the Lord with a table on which bread and incense were placed before the Lord once a week (Lev. 24:5-7).

2. GOD DOES NOT EAT FOOD

Although the sacrifices are called “God’s food,” it is never said that God ate the food. In fact, God emphatically denies eating the flesh of the sacrifices: “If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. Do I eat the flesh of bulls and drink the blood of goats?” (Ps. 50:12, 13, NIV), expecting the answer “Certainly not!” The One who created the heavens and the earth, the self-existent One, has no need for food. Pagan gods had natural needs, and if the worshippers provided for their needs, the gods would grant them whatever they would want. This type of

sacrificial system was a way of pacifying and manipulating the gods. Not so in Israel. And yet there is such a thing as God’s food.

3. GOD CONSUMES HIS FOOD

What happened to the flesh of the sacrifices or to the meal offerings, the food of God? A portion of every one of them went to the officiating priest, who ate it. In other words, in the context where God’s food is mentioned, the one who eats it is the priest (Lev. 21:22; 22:7). However, another portion of the sacrifice or offering—the food of God—was burned on the altar of burnt offerings located in the courtyard of the sanctuary (Lev. 3:9-11). In the case of the bread of the presence, the priest ate the bread once a week, and the incense was burned on the altar in the holy place as an offering to the Lord. By burning a portion of the offering, God signaled that He accepted it. Through the fire the Lord consumed the offering, making it impossible for humans to retrieve it. It was absolutely His, and in accepting it, He accepted the offerer to fellowship with Him (Lev. 1:4; 7:18). In some cases a portion of the sacrifice was given back to the offerer, who ate it in the presence of the Lord (Lev. 7:16-18). God shared His food with the Israelites.

Many scholars interpret the image of God’s food as anthropomorphism—God is described doing what humans do. The intention is to demonstrate, not that God eats food, but that He enjoys having fellowship with His people in the same way that a host has fellowship with those invited to their table. The greatest fellowship has reached us through His Son, who on the altar of the cross became the true bread of life. ©

Angel Manuel Rodríguez is retired after a career serving as pastor, professor, and theologian.

One Size Fits All?

Not with healthful-living practices.

There are many advantages of a plant-based diet. As the congregational health leader in our local church, I want all our members to adopt a vegan diet. I'm encountering resistance, however, and it would help if the Adventist Church had a specific recommendation on this issue.

There's robust evidence in the scientific literature confirming the benefits of a plant-based diet. It's important to understand that the term "plant-based" does not necessarily infer a meat-free diet, but rather a diet comprising mainly vegetables, legumes, grains, fruits, and nuts. Specific examples of popular plant-based diets include the Mediterranean diet and also the DASH diet (dietary approaches to stop hypertension). Both encourage increasing fruits and vegetables and low-fat dairy, as well as less red meat, substituted with poultry and fish instead. These diets have been shown to decrease heart disease, strokes, and high blood pressure.

Many studies show the incontrovertible benefits of balanced vegetarian diets with the above benefits, as well as a decrease in some cancers. These include the total vegetarian diet, which has no animal products whatsoever (often referred to as vegan); the ovo-lacto vegetarian diet, which includes dairy and eggs; and the pescatarian diet, which includes fish. Adventist Health Study 2¹ showed increased longevity and significant health benefits with all these diets.

Widespread pollution of the rivers and oceans poses real dangers to the consumption of fish. Also, if dairy products are consumed, they should be low-fat and used in moderation to minimize saturated fats. Total vegetarians need to be intentional about supplementing vitamin B₁₂, which is not present in plant sources. Additional supplementation of vitamin D and calcium may be needed as well.

Because of all these caveats, the Adventist Church *has* a very specific recommendation on diet and nutrition, along with lifestyle practices in general, as recorded in the General Conference *Working Policy*:

"The church advocates that positive steps be taken to develop a healthful lifestyle, and encourages a *balanced vegetarian diet*. It requires of its members the nonuse of alcoholic beverages and tobacco. . . . The church encourages the avoidance of flesh foods. The use of coffee, tea, and other caffeinated beverages and all harmful substances are discouraged. Physical

well-being and clarity of mind are usually interdependent; clarity of mind is essential for discernment between right and wrong, between truth and error."²

The words "balanced vegetarian diet" take into account that we are a world church, and not all territories and regions have access to fortified foods and true dairy equivalents for essential nutrients, such as B₁₂.

The Adventist health message is holistic. It involves exercise, sleep, water, fresh air, sunshine, temperance, balance, and most important, trust in God—not just diet. Ellen White's wise and gracious counsel informs our service: "We don't make the health reform an iron bedstead, cutting people off or stretching them out to fit it. One person cannot be a standard for everybody else. What we want is a little sprinkling of good common sense. Don't be extremists."³ ©

¹ <https://adventisthealthstudy.org/studies/AHS-2>

² General Conference *Working Policy* 2016-2017 (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2016), p. 355. (Italics supplied.)

³ Ellen G. White, *Sermons and Talks* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), vol. 1, p. 12.

Peter N. Landless, a board-certified nuclear cardiologist, is director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference.

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“The Church Is Sinking!”



“May I Tell You a Story?”

BY DICK DUERKSEN

The church was pink, bright pink, planted in permanently frozen ground on a street corner in Utqiagvik (Barrow), Alaska. “On the edge of the freezing sea and close enough to the North Pole to confuse your compass.”

Unfortunately, the “permafrost” beneath the church was melting more rapidly than ever before, and the pink Seventh-day Adventist church was sinking into the ground. Someone had to do something!

Jim John, pastor of the Anchorage Northside church, 725 air miles southwest, heard God call his name.

“I had a large map of Alaska on my office wall, a map with a few spread-out dots showing our churches and schools, and

then this enormous empty space. There are more than 200 villages in Alaska with no Adventist presence. There are no roads, so the only way to reach those places is to fly, or to send ministry programs on radio.”

Radio is consistent and available to everyone, so the Alaska Conference has chosen to produce programs in local languages. Getting a low-power station “on the air” in each remote village requires a radio tower, specialized equipment, and a ton of permits. A perfect challenge for ministry-minded Adventists.

The Northside church joined the conference in raising radio towers in several remote villages and then chose to focus on Utqiagvik, home to the northernmost Seventh-day Adventist church in North America (and possibly beyond).

In 2020, when Pastor Jim and a small team arrived in Utqiagvik, they found an unexpected challenge. The church was leaning precariously, and the foundation was sinking!

“That changed our mission,” says Pastor Jim. “The building had been built on pilings above the permafrost ground, but those pilings had sunk down, and the situation was getting worse every year. Radio was still important, but first we had to turn the building into a respectable place for worship.”

The members were deeply discouraged. “It’s our church,” they said, “but it’s a big pink church that’s tilting and sinking.”

The repairs would have to be made in the brief time while Utqiagvik was experiencing the annual spring breakup. That’s when everything melts into a rubbery mush.

“We took measurements, made calculations, and got everyone involved,” recalls Pastor Jim, “and before long we

had the best possible team of miracle workers above the Arctic Circle. The right people who knew how to lean on God for the right solution!”

Designing that solution required a full year of planning, complex logistics, and a bargeload of miracles. Remember, there is no road to Utqiagvik. Every piece of wood, every piece of steel, everything you might need to raise a church, must come to Utqiagvik on a barge, a barge that comes only once a year.

The best way to “raise the church,” the team decided, would be to give it a new foundation, a giant spiderweb of 12 steel I-beams crafted with a full leveling system. Each I-beam would be fabricated in Washington State, then cut down to fit inside a 20-foot shipping container and sent to Utqiagvik on the yearly barge. It was an expensive and overwhelming challenge.

The conference did not have any money for the project, but Pastor Jim and others made phone calls and sent letters explaining the need. Pretty soon three churches and a group of praying friends chose to fund the church raising.

Everyone was praying constantly. “The sinking church weighs 42 tons. The I-beams weigh up to 1,200 pounds [544 kilograms] each. And nobody’s ever done anything like this in a place like Utqiagvik, where it’s cold and snowy and windy and muddy and where every shovelful you dig fills immediately with water. *Lord, please help us!*”

Seven mission-minded volunteers timed their trip to Utqiagvik to match the arrival of the yearly barge during the summer of 2021.

Before the steel could be placed beneath the church building, the



volunteers had to dig deep trenches so the network of I-beams could be wedged beneath the church. After unloading the I-beams from the container, they would have to bolt the steel together into the full web, a process that required great precision.

"This was a carefully engineered system of 12 interlocking I-beams," Pastor Jim describes. "There was only one way the beams could fit together, and the holes had to be exactly in the right place, not even one eighth of an inch [0.31 centimeters] off, or the church could not be lifted. This required using an oil-cooled high-speed drill that had been specially designed to drill 288 holes through the steel in the Utqiagvik weather."

All the workers were volunteers who had no experience with drilling precise holes in steel while their fingers were freezing.

Community volunteers came around to help. Even the Utqiagvik High School football team joined in digging the trenches.

"People stopped by and asked what we were doing," one of the workers remembers. "We'd laugh, and say that we were helping God raise the church! Then they'd ask us to come and work on their house next!"

When the trenches had been dug and the I-beams riveted into the perfect web, the volunteers tried to slide the new 30-foot-wide foundation under the church. But the web was too unwieldy, and the mechanical pulleys and jacks were too weak to do the job.

"I prayed all night," remembers Pastor Jim. "We needed a mechanical man-lift that could telescope out and push the steel web beneath the building. This lift was the only piece of equipment that would work. Without it, the project was doomed."

"The next morning I felt impressed to go down to see Scott, the director of the Public Works Department, and ask if he had the telescopic forklift we needed. That seemed a crazy idea. This equipment is very rare, and finding one in Utqiagvik would require a perfect miracle!"

Pastor Jim was filthy dirty, like a man who had been working in mud for weeks! But he shook off some of the mud, walked into the office, and asked, "May I talk to Scott?"

Scott listened quietly. "I've been watching you guys," he answered. "The barge came in a couple weeks ago with your stuff and ours. I think one of those machines came on the barge. Do you need an operator?"

"That would be awesome!"

"OK. We'll be over tomorrow."

It was a horrific job, but with a lot of pushing and shoving and shifting and pounding and welding, the big pink church moved to "level" and rode high on its new foundation.

Everyone cheered the public works guys. Then the operator turned to one of the volunteers and said, "It's really good that we got this done today. We've just learned that we only have this lift for one day. Tomorrow it goes on to its new owners! Glad we got this done with you guys!"

The volunteer team was stunned by the news. "God's perfect miracle arrived on the same barge as our steel," they marveled. "He was ahead of us all the way!"

Before the volunteers returned home, they put up the radio tower and painted the church blue. Pure blue, like heaven. ©

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

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Lessons From Luther the Lab

As a kid, like many of you, I wanted a dog. As it turned out, my family didn't get on board with that idea until I was 22 years old. And so it was that the summer after I graduated college, Luther the Labrador came to live with us.

By that point I had lost my fascination with wanting a pet. But Luther had come to us from another family, so he was well trained and a bit on the older side and very mellow. Therefore, there wasn't a whole lot we had to do with him. He was house-trained, and when inside, he would lie down and let us bury

our feet under him to warm them up. He seemed to enjoy running laps in the backyard and barking at the opossums scaling our fence at night, but was intimidated by the neighbor's Chihuahua that yapped at him all the time—even though he was four times that little dog's size.

Since Luther did a lot of running around in our backyard, we didn't have to take him on daily walks. But there was one time I attempted to. Luther was large and heavy. When he wanted to stop and look at something, I didn't have

the strength to drag him away. He also managed to slip out of his collar that was connected to the leash. Lucky for me, he didn't take off down the street. In fact, he stood there waiting for me to get the collar back on him. That's when I decided we just needed to go home before I really did lose him.

Luther had the shiniest black coat of fur. It was so dark that at night if there was no light in the yard, it was hard to spot him. Luther also liked to lie out in the shade of our lemon tree when it was hot outside. At night, when he came inside for bedtime, he

Match the dogs to their breeds:

Labrador Retriever

German Shepherd

Chow Chow

Poodle

Chihuahua



curled up in a big, soft dog bed, and he sometimes snored.

I got married and moved away the year after we got Luther, so I didn't have that much time with him. The memory of him running laps around our backyard still makes me smile.

While Luther was around for a short time, there were a few things he taught me that I'd like to share with you.

1 Animals are very special creatures. The way they sense things in people and provide comfort and companionship are gifts.

2 Luther might have been a big dog, but he was tender-

hearted, and we felt that. It's important to remember to have a soft heart for others.

3 It is important to be kind to animals, as they are creatures created by God. They have feelings too.

4 Having a big dog around, often acting in funny ways, showed me that God has a sense of humor. If you have a pet, you probably understand that.

5 God has much to teach us through our interactions with animals and the natural world—keep your eyes open!



Bible Treasure

“But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.

Job 12:7-10, NIV

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