

MID-AMERICA SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST NEWS & INSPIRATION

# OUTLOOK

OUTLOOKMAG.ORG

JAN 2021

CELEBRATING  
THE GIFT OF  
PEACEMAKING

Adventist Education

Helps

*Calm the Storm*

p. 10





# OUTLOOK MAGAZINE

JAN 2021

## PERSPECTIVES

- 4 **A TIME TO HEAL**  
—Gary Thurber
- 5 **PEACE MAKING OR PEACE KEEPING?**  
—Cryston Josiah

## FEATURES

- 6 **WATER IN THE DESERT**
- 8 **WHAT'S YOUR STORY?**  
HEATHER THOMPSON DAY
- 9 **WHAT'S YOUR STORY?**  
THOMPSON KAY
- 10 **ADVENTIST EDUCATION HELPS CALM THE STORM**

## NEWS

- 12 MID-AMERICA UNION
- 14 CENTRAL STATES
- 16 DAKOTA
- 18 IOWA-MISSOURI
- 20 KANSAS-NEBRASKA
- 22 MINNESOTA
- 24 ROCKY MOUNTAIN
- 26 UNION COLLEGE
- 28 **ADVENTHEALTH**
- 30 **FAREWELL**
- 31 **INFOMARKET**

OUTLOOK (ISSN 0887-977X) January 2021, Volume 42, Number 1. OUTLOOK is published monthly (10 months per year) by the Mid-America Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 8307 Pine Lake Road, Lincoln, NE 68516. Printed at Pacific Press Publishing Association, Periodical postage paid at Lincoln, NE and additional offices. USPS number 006-245. **Postmaster: Send all undeliverables to CFE.** Free for Mid-America church members and \$10 per year for subscribers. ©2017 Mid-America Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Unless otherwise credited, all images are iStock. Adventist® and Seventh-day Adventist® are registered trademarks of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. **CONTACT us by email: [info@maucsa.org](mailto:info@maucsa.org) or phone: 402.484.3000.**



20



26

**“We can have peace in times of storm or strife. Whatever challenges we may face are bearable when we trust in God.” —p. 23**



17



12



**When Life Gets Too Tough**  
[outlookmag.org/i-am-struggling](http://outlookmag.org/i-am-struggling)



**Aaron Oswald and the Union College Medical Corps**  
[outlookmag.org/his-final-act-of-heroism](http://outlookmag.org/his-final-act-of-heroism)



**Forgiveness Can Be So Hard!**  
[outlookmag.org/when-you-dont-want-to](http://outlookmag.org/when-you-dont-want-to)

**OUR 2021 THEME:  
 CELEBRATING GOD'S GIFTS**

As we approach the New Year you may be asking, *With all the loss, the turmoil and trouble whirling around us, why would the theme for 2021 be about celebrating?* Good question! Here are four foundational reasons to focus on celebrating:

1. Celebrating re-energizes us by highlighting the positive things in life. I don't know about you, but I could use more positive energy right now.
2. Celebrating promotes reflection and thankfulness. Gratitude is the basis of many other virtues, and we are instructed in Scripture to remember God's great deeds and be thankful.
3. Celebrating creates joy in our lives. Deep, abiding joy is the gift that comes from God as we choose to celebrate His goodness, regardless of circumstances.
4. Celebrating acknowledges the power of the presence of God's Spirit in our hearts and minds—the greatest gift possible and the one we long for most.

This month, as we celebrate the gift of peacemaking, our prayer is that your heart will overflow with God's divine peace.



**BRENDA DICKERSON**  
 editor



**ON THE COVER**

**Esther Nduwimana, a seventh-grader, is happy to be attending Andrews Christian Academy in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.**

More on p. 10.  
 Photo by Julie A. Olson

**MID-AMERICA UNION CONFERENCE**

- President**  
Gary Thurber
- Secretary**  
Gil F. Webb
- Treasurer**  
Troy Peoples
- Church Ministries**  
Roger Wade
- Communication**  
Brenda Dickerson
- Education**  
LouAnn Howard
- Hispanic Ministries**  
Roberto Correa
- Human Resources**  
Raylene Jones
- Ministerial**  
Mic Thurber
- Religious Liberty**  
Darrel Huenergardt
- Women's Ministries**  
Nancy Buxton

[midamericaadventist.org](http://midamericaadventist.org)

**OUTLOOK STAFF**

- Editor:**  
Brenda Dickerson
- Digital Media Manager:**  
Hugh Davis
- [outlookmag.org](http://outlookmag.org)

**DESIGN**

Hallock Writing & Design  
[brennanhallock.com](http://brennanhallock.com)

**CONFERENCE NEWS EDITORS**

**Central States**  
**Cryston Josiah**  
[josiah.c@central-states.org](mailto:josiah.c@central-states.org)  
 913.371.1071  
[central-states.org](http://central-states.org)

**Dakota**  
**Jodi Dossenko**  
[j.dossenko@gmail.com](mailto:j.dossenko@gmail.com)  
 701.751.6177  
[dakotaadventist.org](http://dakotaadventist.org)

**Iowa-Missouri**  
**Randy Harmdierks**  
[rharmdierks@imsda.org](mailto:rharmdierks@imsda.org)  
 515.223.1197  
[imsda.org](http://imsda.org)

**Kansas-Nebraska**  
**Stephanie Gottfried**  
[sgottfried@ks-ne.org](mailto:sgottfried@ks-ne.org)  
 785.478.4726  
[ks-ne.org](http://ks-ne.org)

**Minnesota**  
**Savannah Carlson**  
[scarlson@mnsda.com](mailto:scarlson@mnsda.com)  
 763.424.8923  
[mnsda.com](http://mnsda.com)

**Rocky Mountain**  
**Rajmund Dabrowski**  
[rayd@rmcsda.org](mailto:rayd@rmcsda.org)  
 303.733.3771  
[rmcsda.org](http://rmcsda.org)

**UNION COLLEGE**

**Ryan Teller**  
[ryteller@ucollege.edu](mailto:ryteller@ucollege.edu)  
 402.486.2538  
[ucollege.edu](http://ucollege.edu)



# Heal *A Time to Celebrating the gift of peacemaking*

There is much talk in our country right now about healing the wounds that divide us. And there are plenty of wounds to heal. The racial wound still needs much tending, and the political divide is as strong as I have ever seen it.

Unfortunately, our church body is not immune from the need of experiencing healing as well. There are differences in the way we live, eat, dress and worship that some people want to raise to the level of rebellion or evil if someone differs from their point of view.

I have noticed when we experience great tragedies that often our differences melt away because we have a bigger problem to deal with. I have never seen our country so united as right after 9/11. The stories told about how people helped each other through that event still inspire me today. It didn't matter the color of your skin, the way you were dressed or the job you held—everyone was just helping everyone survive that

day. I have seen similar behavior when natural disasters hit like hurricanes, tornados or massive flooding.

The other major way I have noticed we move beyond our differences is when grace appears. God's grace not only helps us see how we are forgiven for our shortcomings, but allows us to forgive others for the wrongs done to us.

Grace also offers us another tool to aid healing; it helps us keep a clear perspective about differences of opinion. "Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3).

I believe this passage also is saying we must leave room for the possibility we are wrong and someone else might be right.

### Respectful disagreement

There were two professors at the seminary when I attended back in the early 1980s who were the best of friends. Their families ate Sabbath lunch together every Sabbath. They vacationed

and traveled together, celebrated holidays together and worked side by side for years at Andrews University. Dr. Dederen and Dr. Maxwell loved each other and loved working together. All of us students had great respect for them and their intellect and academic prowess.

What made this friendship so meaningful is they disagreed completely in the area of the nature of Christ ... one of the most hotly debated areas of Christology. Years ago Ellen White implored us that whenever we approach this subject we need to take off our shoes, because we will be "on holy ground."

In other words, perhaps this might be one area we will study throughout eternity with Christ Himself as our professor. Yet these two professors modeled so beautifully to all of us students how you can strongly disagree and still love and respect each other at the same time.

### Sharing the gospel; living out grace

So, church family, I want to proffer two ideas that I believe—if we allow them to permeate our church—will unite us to the point the devil will be running scared. First, while we may not be facing an imminent disaster that might unite us, we are in the last days of this

world's history. The Great Controversy is coming to a climax and the magnitude of this event should help us keep our focus on the most important things. Now more than ever the world needs to hear the certainty of the Three Angels Messages. The reality of this urgent work should bring us together.

Secondly, I pray that the very grace spoken of in the Three Angels Messages will also fill our hearts and minds. The grace that Christ showed on the cross in forgiving all those who had wronged Him is the same grace available to us to put others' opinions above our own and help us work together in love and harmony ... even if we see some things from a different point of view.

May the Lord help us be those people Christ referred to when He said, "Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples" (John 13:35). **O**

### GARY THURBER

is president of the Mid-America Union.





# Peace Making or Peace Keeping?

**W**hich one of us would like to be called a peacemaker? We all, at some point in our lives, have either been an actual peacemaker in our families, communities or churches, or we would love to claim being a peacemaker because it sounds like a wonderful characteristic to possess.

However, is it possible that we might be guilty of confusing *peacemaking* with *peacekeeping*? Sometimes, in order for true peace to be made and realized it takes difficult conversations and personal or cultural compromises, so that the collective group can grow and rise together.

One short narrative in Scripture that I believe exemplifies how peace can be made even during an intense standoff is found in Acts 15. The Jews were certain that according to the law, “unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” Interestingly, the Jews had a good point based on the fact that in the Old Testament that requirement was considered an everlasting

covenant in God’s own words. In addition, there was no place in Scripture until this time that God had ever said anything differently or appeared to have changed His mind. Based on this reality, God allowed for the Holy Spirit to be made manifest on the Gentiles, who were uncircumcised, thus clearly revealing that salvation could come to them as well, even if they were “law-breakers” of that Jewish covenant.

We are able to witness in this passage a difficult conversation, personal and cultural clashes, but also compromise that was Spirit-filled, and that led to a peaceful solution.

How? James, who was the Jerusalem “conference president” of the time, recognized that at the foundation of this new church, this new body of Christ, a belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus and a decision to accept Him as their Savior and Lord was at the heart of their union.

Whereas peacekeepers may want to avoid conflict and arguments to keep the peace, peacemakers are willing to acknowledge the

differences in opinions and practices, but also identify the common ground on which the collective group can stand.

James listened to both sides and realized that based on the Holy Spirit’s outpouring on the Gentiles, God had given them a sign that what the Jews held as salvific was simply not the case. Consequently, in Acts 15:19-20 James declares, “Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God. But that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.”

## Principles vs culture

There it is, ladies and gentlemen. James’ conclusion was, *Let’s agree to foundational, core values and principles, based on the Word of God, and leave the cultural leanings to the individual cultures, if they are not in violation of the Word of God.*

The Jews did not have to stop being circumcised, and the Gentiles were not required to be circumcised; yet both could accept Jesus as their Savior and be saved if they believed on His name.

James was the ultimate peacemaker, in my book. There was no committee vote or constituency meeting called. God granted humility, patience and wisdom to this leader

of the early church, and when he made that spiritual recommendation all the people said “Amen.”

In Revelation 14, John describes God’s church, His remnant people, as being from every nation, kindred, tongue and people. They will look different, talk different, dress different, eat different and certainly worship God different. However, if they have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, have kept all of God’s commandments and have faith in Jesus Christ, then they are all saints of the Most High God.

May we be willing in this New Year to be peacemakers, and have the difficult conversations, yet quickly find our common ground. In doing this, Mid-America Union will reflect what Jesus prayed for in John 17:21: “that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” **0**

## CRYSTON JOSIAH

is vice president of administration for the Central States Conference.





# Water in the Desert

## FORGIVING THE UNFORGIVABLE

### I grew up in the church.

My early memories are filled with private school and summer camp, Pathfinders and Adventurers, Sabbath hours, and a serious martyr complex by the time I reached Junior High.

I was living for God, and as a kid that meant doing a lot of things that made my public school friends raise their eyebrows.

I now know that many of my peers viewed me as a “goody-two-shoes” during my school years. But despite being baptized early and exposed to every Adventist doctrine available, I didn’t feel close to Jesus.

I’ve since learned that relationships tried by fire are those that end up forged in strength.

When my most important earthly relationships were under fire, the furnace seemed to burn my relationship with Jesus too.

The most difficult road to walk as a Christian is the road of forgiveness. The world says to “forgive and forget.” The Bible says to forgive “seventy times seven” times (Matt. 18:22).

Our heart says to love. Our head says to hate. The Bible says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).

### Anything?

It’s been over a decade now and I can recall that day as if it was hours ago.

I rocked and sobbed on the phone with my mom, thinking that tried-and-true promise from Phil. 4:13 was a lie. Absurd. Whoever wrote *that* (the apostle Paul) obviously

never tried to forgive the unforgivable—or forget the unforgettable.

I retreated into a shell of the once-happy Christian that knew her Redeemer, and questioned everything I’d ever known about God.

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:11). Suddenly, God’s plan was meant for the person I had been, not who I had *become*.

This new person was angry.

After weeks of suspicions, my world exploded one night when I found out my husband had fallen in love with my best friend. Despite all my suspicions, I was shocked. Most of all, I was hurt and sad. I felt betrayed in the deepest way possible—betrayed by him and betrayed by her.

Wayne\* and Joy were my two best friends in the world ... and in a moment I had lost them both.

### For Forgiveness’ Sake

Looking back, I think I decided to fight for our marriage because at the moment I just wanted to *fight*. It wasn’t about “seventy times seven” and it wasn’t about being a good Christian.

The war had come to my front door and I wasn’t going down gently. At the very least, I wasn’t going at it *alone*.

As Wayne and I began to heal the rupture in our marriage, another problem raised its head out of the ashes. I couldn’t be angry at him, because I forgave him—right?

### Peace-Faking

As Christians we’re told to forgive, but we aren’t told how. As children we’re told to apologize when we hurt someone or do something wrong. We’re told to forgive



# “I learned about forgiving my enemies, but I never learned how to forgive my friends.”

people if or when they hurt us. Through stories of missionaries and early Christian martyrs, we're told to forgive even if it kills us. We're even told to *forget*.

What I did with Wayne, and what I realized some-time later I did with Joy, was fake it.

You've heard the saying “fake it 'til you make it.” I was a professional faker by the time I realized I'd never forgiven at all.

I didn't know *how* to forgive. I just knew I had to, so I did—or thought I did.

As my husband and I began the arduous work of mending what was broken in our marriage, our love gradually rekindled. The desert wasteland that had become our marriage was being watered ... slowly, carefully. Pockets of joy sprang up where there had been only pain. We made baby steps in recovery, watering the earth with drops of tears and sweat from grit and hard work.

We were many months into this healing process when one mirage after another kept evaporating. As we kindled new life in our little corner of the desert, a mirage of lies was fooling us both.

White hot anger still burned inside me. The anger—and what I finally recognized as hatred—for Joy had changed me into something ugly.

Unforgiveness is a poison you drink hoping someone else will die.

As I withheld forgiveness for Joy, the heart of my marriage was poisoned more deeply than adultery, broken vows or any kind of deceit could have done.

My church and family began to see a change in me.

I said I forgave and patted myself on the back for that forgiveness. Yet all the while a hatred burned inside me like an infection, moving through my whole body and strangling out the life.

## Seeking Wise Counsel

It can be very difficult to navigate a wasteland like unforgiveness on your own—even more so to find your way out of the wasteland with the same people who led you into that wilderness in the first place! Sometimes, when you're lost in the desert, you need to look to someone new—someone who carries the map you need.

Eventually I reached out to a mentor from childhood, someone I hadn't seen in years, and someone completely disconnected from my family and the situation.

She listened to every tearful word. She prayed with me not as a mentor, but as a sister-in-Christ. She related not as a Christian, but as a sinner.

Then she asked me if I was willing to reconcile. *Reconcile? I can't even forgive!* I thought.

She laughed an airy laugh. “I'm going to send you an email,” she said.

## The Peacemaker

Growing up in the church I had learned Bible stories and memorized scriptures. I learned about forgiving my enemies, but I never learned how to forgive my friends.

When my mentor emailed me, she sent me the name of a book: *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande. It was a book I had picked up before. I had tried to read it, but it didn't speak to me in the least. This time when I picked it up, page after page was water for my weary soul in the desert.

God spoke to me on every page, and through biblical conflict resolution I learned how to forgive the unforgivable.

When I admitted I was a peace-faker, God turned me into a peacemaker. He helped me restore not one, but two covenant friendships.

He was my husband, but our marriage was in a deep valley.

She was my best friend, but our relationship was built on a bedrock of deceit.

When I let go of the anger and truly forgave, I was able to climb mountains with these two.

While I can never truly forget, I am now able to keep the four promises of forgiveness:

- 1. I will not dwell on this incident.**
- 2. I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you.**
- 3. I will not talk to others about this incident.**
- 4. I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.\*\***

Will I always remember that awful night? As long as I'm here on earth I will. You will remember the worst days of your life as well. To be honest, I hope we never forget. It's not until we stare down the impossible that we can truly see how God has done good work in our lives.

If you are lost in the desert wasteland of dead relationships—of whatever type—you can reclaim that land for a bountiful harvest. Through your testimony, God may be watering a world of thirsty soil with an experience only you can share. **O**

.....  
Desert Rose is a pseudonym.

\*Names have been changed

\*\*grow.peacemakerministries.org/legacy-resources

# What's Your Story?

We're starting an initiative this month that we hope will be a blessing to everyone in our territory. We're beginning conversations about people's diverse experiences and their life journeys. Our desire through these interviews is to learn, to grow, to understand and treat others better. —Mid-America Union president Gary Thurber

## Heather Thompson Day

*Called to do a holy work*

### **Heather, please tell us about your background.**

I grew up in an interracial family. My father is black and my mother is white. We lived in Berrien Springs, Michigan, which has a very diverse culture that impacted my experiences.

### **And what are you doing now?**

Currently I teach communication at Colorado Christian University, a very conservative, mostly white school. The field of communication has changed so much. It's the vehicle of human interaction, which is really about relationship building. During my master's studies I learned about

communication theories we can apply, and now I'm nearly finished with my PhD in education.

### **What has life in the Adventist Church been like for you?**

I always understood that there is prejudice and racism, even within the church. And I'm passionate about understanding the journey. It's holy work. It takes time, patience and forgiveness on both sides to navigate a conversation that is largely misunderstood, and not talked about until you *have* to.

Minorities often get "tokenized" to speak for their peers. Micro-aggressions are common, and your experience

is not validated. You have to learn to assimilate yourself toward whiteness in order to be successful.

The race issue is largely a Christian issue, because white Christians as a group are not acknowledging racial problems. The church could, if it chose to, largely impact the entire conversation in the country.

### **What specifically could we do as a church to help everyone on this journey?**

Adventism is unique. We have the opportunity now to lead—to challenge the conversation.

I've realized the gifts we've been given and how things could change if we activated

from an organizational level. We need to teach pastors how to have these conversations. We should also be teaching classes for the community about the rights of families in regard to public education.

Adventism started as a very culturally relevant movement. We are part of a global church with diverse leaders at all levels. Our message to everyone should be: You are a human being made in the image of God and you matter!

### **Where could we begin?**

There's a continuum in the process of persuasion. You will never move someone more than two steps at a time outside their current anchor point. So I need to



**Heather Thompson Day** is an interdenominational speaker and associate professor of communication at Colorado Christian University. Her new book will be released in the spring: *It's Not Your Turn: What to do while you wait for your breakthrough*. Connect on Twitter: **heathertday** Watch the full interview at **YouTube.com/MidAmericaOutlook** and subscribe to our weekly eNewsletter myOUTLOOK at **bit.ly/myoutlook** to receive the next interview.



# Thompson Kay

*“Enjoy me for who I am, not what I look like.”*

ask, “Where do you currently stand? How can I lead you two steps further?”

Conversations—like the one we are having now—are the foot in the door. And then time and relationship are required to move those two steps. Most people just aren’t willing to do this difficult yet holy work.

## **What should Caucasians know?**

We would all be better if we were truly listening instead of just waiting to talk. Also, take the time to educate yourself. Watch documentaries and read books to help in understanding this conversation.

## **What would you say to your African American church family?**

I would validate their exhaustion. And also urge them to realize that people *are* opening their minds and hearts. Look for the similarities. Pray for the grace to go on the journey. Grace is always a gift you did not earn and do not deserve. It’s choosing to serve a person who doesn’t deserve it.

## **Any final thoughts?**

I love making sure I share with people the understanding that biologically there is no such thing as race. Race is a social construct that we have created in order to justify a lot of the atrocities of our nation’s past.

We are all human beings. But right now, talking about “race” is allowing people to talk about their experiences. We need to say, “Tell me more. How did that affect you? I want to learn.” 0



**Thompson Kay** graduated from Oakwood College (now University) and Ohio State University, and is still called on for assistance by the General Conference Deaf and Possibility Ministries team. [possibilityministries.org](http://possibilityministries.org) Watch the full interview at [YouTube.com/](https://www.youtube.com/) **MidAmericaOutlook** and subscribe to our weekly eNewsletter myOUTLOOK at [bit.ly/myoutlook](http://bit.ly/myoutlook) to receive the next interview.

## **Tell us how you started out in life.**

Atlanta is my home. I grew up there, married there and my children were born there. My parents instilled in me early the value of education. “You’re a people person,” they told me, “but we want you to be educated because the world isn’t fair. People aren’t the same. They won’t treat you equally. Don’t expect them to. When you’re educated, people cannot take that from you.”

They also taught me to make sure I treated people kindly. My mother always said, “You do to others as you would want them to do to you.” My parents were telling the truth. I’ve found in my workplace, at school, in my social situations—time and time again—I’ve experienced that. Sometimes when they see me, people will wait for the next elevator or clutch their purses or hold onto their children. At restaurants my order often will take longer; it may not come the way I ordered it.

At church when I’m the only

black person it seems difficult for people to greet me and ask how I’m doing. I have even been reminded that there is another church across town. I can come to church and sit in a pew and people move down or completely away from the area.

## **How does it make you feel when people do things like that, or lock their doors when you come around?**

I feel very uncomfortable. Where’d they get the idea I would enter their house uninvited? People often choose their actions based on lack of knowledge. They just assume.

## **How have you seen racism in the Adventist Church?**

In my employment, I’ve been working with the deaf for years. My master’s degree is in special education with an emphasis in deafness and sign language. Most individuals gradually move up in their careers. That didn’t take place with me.

White attitude in the church

is I want to be the leader and I want you to be the follower. I expect you to wait for me to initiate your role. Even as a director, I was told what my responsibilities were, as if I wasn’t intelligent enough to know. That’s a problem many blacks still face.

## **It’s been 40 years since you started the deaf ministry. Has it gotten any better?**

Yes it has. I feel the church is becoming more aware of the things it has done, or could have done and didn’t. But I don’t think the church has arrived at the place where what you want for yourself you also want for me. The church is improving, but we still have a lot to do in becoming a family.

When you see things happening in the church that are unkind or uncomfortable, do something to stop it! Don’t allow it to continue.

You know the most beautiful thing about a bouquet of flowers? Variety. There are roses, lilies, pansies. You can have all that. The more diverse, the more beautiful. We should all accept each other and be grateful for the differences.

## **What are some of the major barriers that still exist in the church?**

The idea that I’m in my own bubble and if something doesn’t involve me I don’t have to be concerned. At church we must be concerned about everyone. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we were all treated kindly, nicely, without barriers? Wouldn’t it be wonderful to fellowship with everyone and get to know them? 0

# Adventist Education

## Helps

# *Calm the Storm*

## Passion for students shines through devastation

### Aug. 10, 2020 started out as an ordinary day

for the people of east-central Iowa. Students, parents and teachers were eager to start school after five months away due to COVID-19. At Andrews Christian Academy (the Seventh-day Adventist elementary school in Cedar Rapids, Iowa) teachers Julie Olson, Ashley Schebo and Kelley Glazier were preparing for the first day of school by taping Xs on the sidewalk to show proper social distancing for the students when they arrived.

No storms were forecast for the day, and no sirens

were blaring to warn of the impending disaster. There was no apparent cause for concern when clouds suddenly rolled in—until winds began to blow so strongly that they caused a tree in front of the school to bend over and send branches flying, denting Mrs. Olson's car and smashing her windshield. The teachers raced to the safety of the storeroom at the back of the school to wait out the storm and then

fought to keep the door shut by pushing against it as the storm intensified.

The winds and rain roared and increased to hurricane strength. The storm, called a derecho, recorded sustained wind speeds of 110 to 140 mph.

### Chaos and destruction

The storm was still raging when Mrs. Olson received a phone call from a very frightened student. This

student heard the same roaring wind and rain, saw the lights and power go off, felt the rumbling and creaking of the building he and his family were in, and then watched as the roof of his apartment building was lifted with a massive jolt. He needed to hear his teacher's reassuring voice. Mrs. Olson made sure he was headed to a lower level, then prayed and gave him the reassurance and encouragement he

**(left)** Students, families and friends of Andrews Christian Academy have traditionally gathered for a back-to-school party in the Olson's 100-year-old barn. This photo from last year's event will be the final one, as the historic structure was destroyed by the derecho.

**(right)** This apartment building in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, lost its entire roof during the Aug. 10 derecho, leaving many families without shelter.





needed to get through the rest of the storm.

Mrs. Olson states that bonds of trust and confidence have been forged between the students and their teachers, helping the students to gain a sense of assurance and stability in life's storms. During the storm, the students knew that God and their teachers cared about them.

The derecho raged for more than half an hour before finally subsiding, but the rain and lightning continued. Just as the teachers were finally able to check outside, Mrs. Olson's husband, Loren, called for her to come home because of the devastation on their farm. Animals were trapped under their fallen barn. Their house also sustained extensive damage when the roof of a large out-building landed on it, letting in rain and debris. Almost every structure, including their huge barn, had given way to the storm. Most trees were down and, sadly, some of the animals did not survive. Ms. Schebo, family members, church members, friends and neighbors gathered to help Julie and Loren.

In the following evenings, despite the chaos at the Olson's home, Mrs. Olson and Ms. Schebo went to see their students and take food and comfort to their families. Seven families had serious damage to their homes and were displaced. Several lost their vehicles because trees or poles snapped and fell on them. Power lines littered the streets, as well as downed trees and building debris, but the teachers continued to check on their students

and tried to meet their basic needs of food, clothing and other supplies.

Almost every home and business in Cedar Rapids and the surrounding areas sustained some type of damage, and most were without power from one to three weeks. Grocery stores and homes lost thousands of dollars' worth of food due to spoilage.

Needless to say, classes had to be delayed for two weeks.

### Prioritizing needs

As the teachers, students and their families recovered, plans were made to ensure the students could get back to school as soon as possible. The teachers felt it was important not only for the students to learn but to talk and work through their frightening experiences.

The students were eager to return to school, not only to see their friends but also because they knew it was a safe haven—a place where their lives would have a normal routine again and where they would be loved and supported. The first day back was a joyful reunion, and every student was happy to be in school.

The Cedar Rapids Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Iowa-Missouri Conference have worked together to provide for the immediate needs of the displaced families following the storm. Two of the seven families lost everything, including one family who suffered a devastating fire before they could remove their remaining belongings.

Now, months later, the cleanup and repairs continue. Debris remains along many



Photos: Julie A. Olson

streets, and numerous homes, businesses, stores, churches and schools still need repairs. Many of the church's refugee and immigrant families had already lost their jobs due to COVID-19, and now, because of the storm, some families are still seeking housing.

However, the parents are grateful to have their children back in school and are committed to Christian education for their children. They are doing whatever they can to make it happen.

### The greatest mission

Mrs. Olson says, "We are trusting God to help us guide this school through the midst of a pandemic and the aftermath of a derecho. As teachers, we have a real passion to develop Christian characters in our students—not only for their lives here on earth but

also for heaven—and grow their faith. While we teach a thorough curriculum, building their relationship with Jesus is our greatest mission. Though our lives have been shaken, our confidence in God's love for us and His plans for our future are still strong!"

Students, teachers and parents are all very grateful for the aid given by individuals and the Iowa-Missouri Conference to help the school's students and families. But there is still need. If you are interested in helping Andrews Christian Academy, or any other schools in the conference, please contact the Iowa-Missouri Conference Office of Education at 515.223.1197 or [imsda.org](http://imsda.org). **0**

Jeanette Rawson is a former teacher at Andrews Christian Academy.

# Hubert J. Morel Jr. to Serve as VP of Administration for MAUC

During its year-end meeting on Nov. 19, the Mid-America Union Conference Executive Committee voted (unanimously) to invite **Dr. Hubert J. Morel Jr.** to serve as vice president of administration, following the retirement of **Elder Gil F. Webb** on Dec. 31, 2020, after eight years of faithful service.

The MAUC search committee's process included gathering 13 names and resumes, checking references and interviewing the top three candidates.

"Conference presidential experience was something we were looking for," said

MAUC president **Gary Thurber**. "Hubert Morel has served our church with distinction as a pastor, departmental director, conference secretary and as a conference president. He brings many years of understanding and wisdom to our union. He is known for his gracious and thoughtful nature and I am excited for this part of God's vineyard to be exposed to his passion and love of the Lord and His church."

Morel will officially begin his work as vice president of administration in January 2021.

## A strong foundation

Dr. Morel grew up in New York City and received his elementary and high school education at Brooklyn Temple Seventh-day Adventist Elementary School and Northeastern Academy. He is a graduate of Oakwood University in Alabama with a bachelor's degree in theology, and earned a master of divinity degree from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan. In addition, Morel holds a D.Min. in biblical counseling from Trinity Theological Seminary in Newburg, Indiana.

Morel began his pastoral service in the Southeastern Conference in 1981. Over the years, he has ministered to 12 congregations in Florida and two in Georgia. His administrative experience includes serving as Church Ministries director and executive secretary for the Southeastern Conference headquartered in Mount Dora, Florida.

In April 2008, Dr. Morel was elected president of the Southeastern Conference, making him the fifth president in the history of the conference. He served with distinction as president until 2016 (two terms as allowed by the conference's bylaws).

Since then he has served as senior pastor of the Maranatha Seventh-day Adventist Church in Apopka,

Florida, and the Bethel Seventh-day Adventist Church in Orlando, Florida.

Pastor Morel loves people and seeks to serve the Lord Jesus Christ in every aspect of his life. "Being called to serve as vice president of administration for the Mid-America Union is an opportunity to serve the church on a wider level to help advance the soon return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," said Morel. "It is an opportunity to stand with a team of workers who are eager to grow the kingdom of God."

Morel is married to **Raquel (Howell)** of New Haven, Connecticut. She is a graduate of Columbia Union College (now Washington Adventist University) with a bachelor of science in nursing. She holds a master's degree in nursing education from the University of Central Florida in Orlando.

Together they have two adult sons, **Hubert J. Morel, III (Trey)**, of Orlando and **Harrison J. Morel** of Denver. They also have one granddaughter, **Melodie Jordyn Morel**, who will celebrate her first birthday in January. **0**

Brenda Dickerson is communication director for the Mid-America Union Conference.



Photos Courtesy Hubert J. Morel Jr.



## Q&A with Dr. Morel



### What does it mean to you to be voted as vice president of administration for the Mid-America Union?

First of all, I want to give honor to God for the impression He placed on Elder Gary Thurber's heart to entertain my name for this distinguished position.

Secondly, I am honored and humbled to even be considered for this position. It is evident that God is still in control of the affairs of men, especially my own. Being voted as vice president of administration for the Mid-America Union means that there is still more I can do for God and His church.

### What is your first memory of knowing Jesus as your Savior?

My first memory of knowing Jesus as my Savior was at the age of 10. Subsequently, I was baptized by **Pastor George Timpson**, who is actually a former executive secretary of

the Mid-America Union. My father, a solid Christian man, made sure we had morning and evening worship at home. I also attended Adventist schools, which added to my knowledge of God.

### What is a verse that is meaningful to you right now, and why?

Psalm 37:4-5: "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass."

This verse is one of my favorites. It gives me encouragement. I love the Lord and I am willing to do all that I can to honor and appreciate Him. He has promised if I enjoy my relationship with Him He will give me the desires of my heart.

In reality it is not what I desire but what He desires for me. Then He continues to say that if I commit or pledge my allegiance to Him and allow

## What Does the VP of Administration Do?

(partial list of roles and responsibilities)

- Works with the president and vp of finance to create a vision and plan for growth and development of the union
- Collects data on baptisms and membership numbers
- Prepares agendas for union meetings
- Records official minutes of all union meetings
- Oversees MAUC employee handbook policies, employee credential cards and applications for ministerial internships
- Chairs the union's Constitution and Bylaws Committee
- Serves as vice chair of the Union College Board of Directors
- Represents the Mid-America Union on approximately 10 other committees/boards
- Coordinates the MAUC Constituency Session every five years
- Assists local conferences with their constituency sessions
- Preaches in local churches as requested (post-pandemic)

Him to take charge of my affairs He will in return bless me with bountiful blessings.

### You are not only a man of God but also a family man. Please tell us how you met your wife.

My wife was attending Washington Adventist University when I met her on the phone. There was something about her voice that

caught my attention. That led me to call her back, and a long distance romance began.

We dated long distance and we got married a year and a half later. This coming March we will celebrate our 36th anniversary.

### What do you like to do in your spare time?

I enjoy fishing and playing golf.

## Strive for Greater

### Providing new and relevant ministries throughout 2020

Even though the doors will stay closed, the Linwood Boulevard Church in Kansas City, Missouri, remains open, alive and active during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Pastor Joseph T. Ikner** recounts, “It seems the Lord was prophetically preparing our church for COVID-19 through a six-part sermon series entitled *We are the Church*.”

The messages emphasized the need to understand that the church is not a building, but instead the church is the people. It challenged members to love each other and focus on people over policy, and unity over personal preferences. The series ended Feb. 9, 2020 and the doors of the church building were closed March 14.

Undaunted by this relentless, global, invisible enemy, the church embraced its mission *We are the Church* and quickly adopted the slogan “We are built for this.” Under the leadership of Pastor Ikner with his wife **Nordia** and the church’s united and committed leadership team, Linwood Boulevard

Church continued all year to Strive for Greater, the 2020 mission statement.

Even though COVID-19 has been destructive, causing nationwide sickness, death, isolation and loss, Linwood Boulevard Church has experienced greater togetherness with a creative ministry that spans across all its age groups. Thank God for technology!

In July Linwood began worshipping outdoors via a drive-through service. Services were held every three weeks.

Over the summer and fall months there was a large increase in attendance. The atmosphere was alive and exciting; a live band with praise and worship singers could be heard along with soul-stirring and thought-provoking sermons.

Members have been happy to see each other, and very compliant with wearing their masks and socially distancing. Most members remain in their cars honking their horns to say “Amen!”

Linwood Live, the church’s

online service, has resulted in four baptisms thus far. Also, the Kansas City, Missouri, mayor joined for worship in August, where the church honored and prayed for him.

In addition to the engaging live stream Sabbath services and the Wednesday prayer services, the church has been active in providing supportive and relevant ministry for its seniors, young adults, children, men and women, and its surrounding community at large.

#### Senior citizens ministry

The senior citizens, an especially vulnerable population to COVID-19, are not forgotten. They often live alone and have been largely sheltered in place—often lonely. *Senior CHAT with the Pastor* was created for the seniors. Every Wednesday, seniors call in and have a chance to connect with each other and communicate any of their personal needs. Practical health and wellness tips are presented during the weekly calls. Seniors express great appreciation for the time carved out just for them.

#### Young adults ministry

The young adults have also been active during the pandemic. They have hosted early

morning devotional times designed for and led by young adults. There is also a Sunday evening book club that brings them together.

#### Children's ministry

The children’s ministry has remained active by hosting two programs weekly via Zoom. *Can You Hear Me Now?* is a Sabbath afternoon worship program designed to help kids understand God’s message during this pandemic and in every season of their lives. The *What’s Up Wednesdays* program teaches kids how to build a practical, abiding relationship with Jesus Christ. These programs also allow children time to connect with each other.

During the pandemic, several children have given their hearts to Jesus Christ, some are currently in baptismal classes, and three have been baptized.

The children’s ministry has also hosted two virtual parent brunches addressing the mental health of kids during this pandemic, including the increased rate of depression and suicide among kids while they shelter in place among racial unrest and injustice toward African Americans.

#### Women's ministry

The women’s ministry has continued its biweekly vespers and Bible studies, which are geared toward bringing women together for fellowship, connection and spiritual uplifting and empowerment.

In September, the church also hosted a four-day virtual women’s conference

Pastor Joseph Ikner and his wife Nordia Ikner lead out in praise and worship at the Linwood Boulevard Church in Kansas City, Missouri.



Photos Courtesy Central States Conference



entitled *Metamorphosis—Experiencing Victory from Defeat, Peace from Pain and Beauty from Brokenness*. It was viewed all across the world, and many women experienced healing and transformation in their lives.

In addition, the women's ministry and men's ministry collaborated for Father's Day and Mother's Day. On Mother's Day, the men of Linwood Boulevard Church personally delivered fresh roses to all the women of Linwood. On Father's Day weekend, the women delivered gift bags to the men. Some were even serenaded at their doors during the special delivery. The gift bags included fresh home-baked cookies and mugs designed just for dads. Both men and women expressed great appreciation for the kind gesture and the chance to see each other during social distancing.

### Community services ministry

The food pantry, which is a crucial component of the church, has not missed a beat. It continues to serve families in need two Sundays a month, and even provides food on an as-needed basis. Members volunteer using PPE and social distancing guidelines.

While we do not know when this pandemic will end, we are prepared to continue to adopt new methods to share the same gospel. We are committed to staying active and alive in spite of COVID-19.

Nordia Ikner is the wife of Pastor Joseph Ikner and the Children's Ministry director and assistant praise and worship leader for Linwood Boulevard Church in Kansas City, Missouri.

## Super-human Forgiveness Turns Tragedy to Triumph

Last October **Tawnya Harris**, a member of our Philadelphia Church in Des Moines, Iowa, called me with terrible and frightening news. With great concern in her voice, she said, "Pastor, I need you to pray for us. My grandson has been shot and is in the ICU." Her daughter, **Breon Merrett**, the mother of the victim, is also a faithful member of our church.

This news was so disturbing that I did only what I know to do in these types of situations—pray. Church members joined virtual prayer sessions to plead for the life of Alston Edwards. We knew he was a good young man. Challenges he had experienced led him to make some choices he would regret, but his life was turning around. He had just received his electrical technician certificate and was about to begin a promising new career. He was dedicated to his mother, grandmother and the mother of his unborn child.

After multiple prayer sessions, members of our district were hopeful Alston would survive. We knew the presence of God was with us and He was hearing our prayers.

Unfortunately, later that morning Alston was unable to be sustained by doctors, and he passed. Family and friends, along with church members, were devastated.

### But the story goes on

When I met with his mother (pictured right) after Alston's death, I noticed she had a peace that "surpassed understanding." She was grieving, but with hope.

I learned that before her son took his last breath he accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. As she and Alston's grandmother retold the story, it hit me: God answered our prayers to save Alston's life! He didn't save his physical life on this earth, but God saved him so he could experience eternal life.

Sister Breon and Sister Tawnya soon began to utilize their loss as a way to glorify God. They called an outdoor community candlelight prayer vigil where friends, family and the neighborhood could pray for unity, and they delivered messages of hope and forgiveness.

The Holy Spirit used the family to present powerful messages to the crowd of nearly 100 people who came to MLK Park to show support. Sister Breon's message was especially touching. She called out the name of the murder suspect and declared that she forgave him, she loves him, and she wants to see him in heaven.

As we lifted balloons in the air to commemorate Alston's life, there was a sense of hope and celebration—not over his



Photos Courtesy Central States Conference

horrific death, but because God had brought triumph out of tragedy. Alston had given his life to Jesus, and his mother's forgiveness quelled any future attempts at retaliation.

After the funeral, multiple people inquired about changing their lifestyle and joining the church. Alston's death was a tragedy, but—to God be the glory—Sisters Breon and Tawnya showed our community that God can bring triumph out of tragedy!

Pastor Brian Irby serves the congregations of New Life Christian Ministries in Waterloo, Iowa, and the Philadelphia Church in Des Moines, Iowa.

# Dossenko Voted Conference Communication Director

Jacquie Biloff



The Dakota Conference Executive Committee voted last September to invite Jodi Dossenko to serve as communication director in addition to continuing to work in the Education Department.

Dakota, Dossenko is the daughter of **Marvin** and **Penny Gottfried**. Dossenko and her husband, **Ben**, were in the same class at Dakota Adventist Academy and have been married for 18 years. Ben is a middle school computer teacher, and together they are slowly renovating an old home.

Dossenko continues to work part time in the Education Department and is loving the communication addition. She says it makes her feel “challenged and fulfilled.”

Psalm 91 is Jodi’s favorite

chapter in the Bible; she loves how it talks about when the Lord is our dwelling place; we are safe. His angels are given charge over us and will protect us. “I have read this promise hundreds of times and every time it reminds me that God is in control,” she explains.

Dossenko also enjoys music. She sings and “can marginally play several instruments,” but she especially loves the ukulele.

Brenda Dickerson is communication director for the Mid-America Union Conference.

**Jodi Dossenko**, who has worked at the Dakota Conference office in various roles for the past seven years, was voted to serve as director of communication following the retirement of **Jacquie Biloff** last fall.

Dossenko graduated from Union College in

Lincoln, Nebraska, with a degree in elementary education and taught grades 1-3 at Hillcrest Adventist Elementary School in Jamestown, North Dakota, for five years before moving to Bismarck to work in the conference office.

Born and raised in North

**DAKOTA CONFERENCE**  
**26TH ANNUAL MEN'S RETREAT**  
 dakotaadventist.org

**A SON OF THE FATHER**  
 MARCH 12-14, 2021

**SPEAKERS:**  
 Jony Hajaj  
 Larry Priest  
 Mark Weir

**ROUGH RIDER HOTEL**  
 301 3RD AVENUE  
 MEDORA, NORTH DAKOTA

PHOTO BY CHRYSTAL RITTENBACH



# Executive Committee Names Mark Weir President

## Blooming in the Dakota winter

**M**ark Weir was elected Dakota Conference president following Neil Biloff's retirement, and took office Oct. 1, 2020. Shortly after Weir accepted the position, Jodi Dossenko sat down with him to ask a few questions.

### Describe your journey to Adventism.

After my father died, our family moved to Colorado. Mom wanted me to attend the Adventist school; I wanted to go to public school. In an attempt to end her constant urging, we made a deal: I would attend the Adventist school for two days. I showed up with an attitude—a new kid who didn't think he fit in. The teacher was kind and gracious regardless, which was the main reason I chose to stay in that school. That choice is one of the primary reasons I am in our church today. It was in this classroom I met my future wife, **Judy**.

My grandmother sent me a New Testament for Christmas. Inside the cover she wrote "Books are like friends; choose them wisely." I thought, *Grandma! I don't want a Bible—where's the money?* so I put it on the shelf. Several years later, while looking through the home library for a title I had not read more than once, I picked up the long-forgotten Bible. As I began reading, I discovered a different Jesus than I had in my mind, so I

continued to read and study.

I was attending church school, but it wasn't personal; it was just something I did. I wondered about the Adventist Church and their teachings, so I began to dive into my studies. I found the church and its biblical foundation through my own investigation and it became mine.

### When did you realize the Spirit was leading you to a life of ministry?

I realized during my senior year of academy that I enjoyed people and helping people find better answers to life. When I told my parents, my stepdad—an agnostic who felt I was wasting my life by serving the Lord—left the table and never brought up the subject again. If this is a waste of my life, I wish more of us would waste it in service of the Lord.

### What have you observed since coming to the Dakotas, and what is your vision for the future?

I would like to see prayer made a priority across this conference. There is a lot that God can do when the saints pray. We need to be a people calling upon God to work in our midst in a mighty way. We have a changing landscape across the Dakotas: small towns are shrinking and larger population centers are growing. I ask myself,



Courtesy Judy Weir

Mark and Judy Weir have been married for 38 years and have three adult children.

### How do we spread the gospel in this environment?

We are an aging church in a young society. We need to start addressing this reality, because if each of us is not intently working with someone who will take our place, not just in ministry but in the pew, then not only are our days numbered, but this church's life is as well.

### What new challenges do you think the role of president will bring?

The biggest challenge is people need to know who I am, and I need to know who they are. This is the Dakotas, and while I am a Midwest kid, this is not Nebraska or Minnesota—this is us. I want to know who the people of our conference are—the people in the pews, the thought leaders, the influencers—and

I am going to work hard to meet and get to know them.

Our move to the Dakotas has been an interesting journey. I came here to help Neil Biloff and serve as vice president of administration and education superintendent.

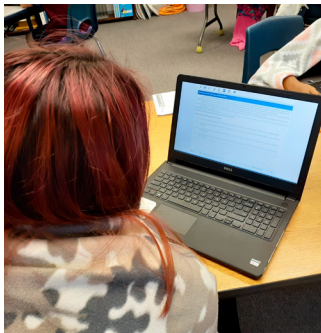
I had no idea what was on the horizon, but I am thankful for the privilege to serve here. I have never wanted a title or accolades. All I want to do is serve faithfully and bloom where I am planted. It may be winter in the Dakotas, but there are still things blooming here. I know if we are united in this effort there is no challenge God cannot overcome.

Jodi Dossenko is communication director for the Dakota Conference.

# Conference Elementary Schools Transition to Computerized Standardized Tests

Iowa-Missouri students in grades K-9 recently completed their first testing session using the new MAP Growth materials.

For many decades prior, students would take the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (later known as Iowa Assessments), a hard-copy test for grades 3-10, once a year in the fall. The



Judi Thompson

results provided teachers with information on each student's achievement level and gave parents information on what their child's percentile rank was among all students tested and at what grade equivalent level the child was performing.

MAP Growth is all computerized, with the ability to test students in grades K-12 in the areas of math, reading and language usage. Science will be added next year as the North American Division Office of

An elementary student at Prescott Adventist School in St. Joseph, Missouri, completes a test using MAP Growth.

Education works with the Map Growth group to develop test questions aligned with the Adventist Church's creation curriculum standards.

Unlike the previous Iowa Assessment test, MAP Growth testing isn't timed. Students work at their own pace, with most finishing within 50 minutes (students needing longer are given that opportunity).

Another exciting feature of MAP Growth is that students are assessed not just once but three times each year, with the results available to their teachers within 48 hours. This provides more complete data on the growth of each student and helps teachers focus on areas in which a student may

need remedial help or more challenging lessons. It also allows students and their parents to better track academic growth and achievements throughout the school year. With a database of 10,000 questions for their grade level, students receive a different test each testing session. Test sessions occur after the fourth, 20th and 32nd weeks of school.

Joe Allison is education superintendent for the Iowa-Missouri Conference.



Learn more about MAP Growth at [nwea.org/map-growth](http://nwea.org/map-growth).

## Andrews Christian Academy Receives First Matching Grant for Pandemic Relief

Andrews Christian Academy, an Adventist elementary school in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, recently became the first Iowa-Missouri Conference school to receive a matching grant designed to aid schools and families with expenses during the coronavirus pandemic.

The grant, which provides

\$200 per student to any of the conference's 12 elementary schools that raise the same amount, is funded partly by the conference and partly from the Mid-America Union.

During a special Sabbath service at the Cedar Rapids Church, ACA principal **Julie Olson** was presented with a

check for \$6,000 in matching funds for their 30 students. The combined funds of \$12,000 will go a long way in helping support the school and these students during these challenging times.

The school also received seven **Nathan Greene** prints depicting the seven days of

creation. The prints were donated by the Hart Institute as part of a division-wide effort to keep the creation story daily before students in Adventist schools throughout North America.

Joe Allison is education superintendent for the Iowa-Missouri Conference.

(left) Education superintendent Joe Allison presents principal Julie Olson with the matching grant.

(right) Students at Andrews Christian Academy display Nathan Greene creation story prints along with the matching grant.



Photos Courtesy Joe Allison





# 2021 Calendar

Our sincere hope is that each of these events may safely move forward in one way or another, but if the past year has taught us anything it's that plans can change in a moment's notice. For the most up-to-date information visit [imsda.org/events](https://imsda.org/events). These events are also included in our official 2021 printed calendar, "The Lord is My Fortress," featuring majestic castles from around the world set in beautiful landscapes. Calendars were sent free of charge to every Iowa-Missouri member household for which we have a current address on file. If you're an Iowa-Missouri member and haven't received your free calendar visit [imsda.org/contact](https://imsda.org/contact) or call 515.223.1197.

## January

- 1 New Year's Day (Conference Holiday)
- 4 Elementary 3rd Quarter Begins
- 11 Sunnydale 2nd Semester Begins
- 16 Iowa/Area PBEs
- 18 Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Conference Holiday)  
—No Elementary School—
- 23 PBE Make-up Day
- 30 Conference PBE
- 31 Executive Committee

## February

- 3-6 MAUC Music Festival
- 8 Elementary Teacher Inservice
- 11-14 Sunnydale Home Leave
- 15 Presidents' Day (Conference Holiday)  
—No Elementary School—
- 17-21 Union College Basketball Tournament
- 27 Union PBE

## March

- 5-7 TLT Retreat
- 7 Executive Committee
- 12 Elementary 3rd Quarter Ends
- 12-14 Sunnydale Spring Break
- 15-19 Elementary Spring Break
- 21 Adventurer Award Day
- 21 K-12 Board of Education
- 22 Elementary 4th Quarter Begins
- 26-28 Missouri Honors Weekend
- 27-28 Iowa Honors Weekend
- 28 Sunnydale Board

## April

- 2-3 Sunnydale 2020 Alumni Weekend
- 8-10 IA-MO Music Festival
- 13 GC Spring Meeting
- 15-18 Sunnydale Home Leave
- 16-18 NAD PBE
- 23-25 Sunnydale Parent's Weekend
- 25 Executive Committee
- 29-May 2 IA-MO Spring Camporee

## May

- 7-9 Union College Graduation Weekend
- 14 Last Day for Elementary
- 20 Last Day for Sunnydale
- 20-25 GC Session
- 21-23 Sunnydale Graduation Weekend
- 26 NAD Elections
- 31 Memorial Day (Conference Holiday)

## June

- 8-12 Iowa-Missouri Camp Meeting
- 13-July 4 DiscipleTrek Program at Camp Heritage
- 13-20 Cub Camp
- 20-27 Junior Camp 1
- 22 Executive Committee
- 27-July 4 Junior Camp 2

## July

- 5 Conference Holiday
- 6-11 Family Camp
- 11-18 Teen Camp
- 18-25 Teen Canoe Camp
- 30-Aug 1 Adventurer Family Camp

## August

- 1-4 IA-MO Teacher's Convention
- 15 Sunnydale Move-in Day
- 16 First Day for Sunnydale and Elementary Schools
- 23 Executive Committee
- 27-29 Women's Retreat

## September

- 3-5 Hispanic Family Camp
- 3-6 Sunnydale Home Leave
- 6 Labor Day (Conference Holiday)  
—No Elementary School—
- 10-12 Pathfinder Leadership Weekend
- 12 MAUC Constituency Session
- 13-15 Outdoor School
- 19 K-12 Board of Education
- 19 Sunnydale Board
- 24-26 Adventurer Leadership Weekend
- 26 IA-MO Constituency Session

## October

- 1-3 Sunnydale Alumni Weekend
- 1-3 Iowa Fall Camporee
- 7-13 GC Annual Council
- 15 Elementary 1st Quarter Ends
- 17 Executive Committee
- 18 Elementary 2nd Quarter Begins
- 28-Nov 2 NAD Year-end Meetings

## November

- 15-18 MAUC Year-end Meetings
- 23-28 Sunnydale Thanksgiving Break
- 24-28 Elementary Thanksgiving Break
- 25 Thanksgiving Day (Conference Holiday)

## December

- 6 Executive Committee
- 17 Elementary 2nd Quarter Ends
- 18 Sunnydale Christmas Concert
- 20-TBD Sunnydale/Elementary Christmas Break
- 23 Conference Holiday
- 24 Conference Holiday



Photos Courtesy Piedmont Park Church

# Piedmont Park Church Lights Up the Dark for a Decade

This was Piedmont Park Church's 10th year to offer Light Up the Dark to our community. As a Christ-centered, family-friendly, free event held on Halloween evening, LUTD shares about Jesus in nearly every activity. Sometimes people are introduced to Jesus for the very first time!

Typically, Light Up the Dark takes over nearly the entire church building as well as several of the green spaces outside, with 600-800 people attending. Each Sabbath school room tells a different Bible story, Women's Ministries provides a craft, live music is shared, food is prepared and enjoyed in the fellowship hall and bouncy houses are

filled with jumping, laughing children.

But this year was different. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, gathering a large group of people together indoors in enclosed spaces was not recommended. So for Piedmont Park, as for most everyone in church ministry, 2020 has been a year of questions: *Can we still do that program? How? What is the safest way to bring people together? Do we have enough volunteers to make it happen?*

We were reminded just how much of a tradition the event has become for many families when a young child called the church office asking, "Are you still going to have Light Up the Dark?"

So, as summer ended and we looked ahead to Oct. 31, **Pastor Michael** and **Jeanette Halfhill** (LUTD ministry chair) began talking to various church members, gathering ideas and figuring out how we could still bring Light Up the Dark to life for our church and community.

## Who, what and how

After much prayer and consideration, it was decided that we would host this year's LUTD as a drive-thru, much like our annual Journey to Bethlehem Live Christmas Nativity each December. As attendees drove through, they would view the scenes while they

listened to the narrated story on their car radio. The theme would be the story of Daniel with four scenes spaced out along the church driveway and parking lot:

- Daniel and his friends being brought as slaves to Babylon
- Daniel and his friends being offered unhealthy foods at the king's banquet
- Daniel and his friends refusing to bow down before the golden image and being joined by Jesus in the fiery furnace
- Daniel praying three times a day and being thrown into the lion's den but being saved from the lions by an angel



Even though Light Up the Dark is a traditional annual event, since it was being done in a brand new way, preparations were intense! Many new décor items needed to be created, and our fantastic Family Bible Adventure design team came through with pieces like an amazing paper mache roasted pig on a platter and a lion's den with giant yellow lion eyes staring from the blackness. **Cheryl Wallin**, Piedmont's costume designer, pulled from her costume stock, but also made several brand new beautiful costumes for the actors.

**Adam and Miles Schaecher** recorded Pastor Halfhill narrating Daniel's story, and 15-year-old Miles edited it and added sound effects. **Darrell Daniel** and our audio team made sure the recording was coming

through loud and clear on 90.5 FM.

It is wonderful when young and old can be involved in ministry together, and over 40 actors of all ages did just that as they brought scenes to life for the full two-hour event. Women's Ministry members helped hand out bags with treats and literature at the end of the drive-thru, and many volunteers helped with setup and cleanup. Overall, an estimated 70 volunteers came together to make the event a success.

Pastor Halfhill greeted the carloads of people before they left, and he said, "I wish everyone could have been with me to hear all the wonderful comments and thanks from our guests. People were so excited!"

As we continue to live each day during this unique time in history, we hope that

the choices we make and the events we offer at Piedmont Park Church are a light to our community providing hope and encouragement. We pray that the 675 people who drove through Light Up the Dark were drawn

closer to Jesus and that their hearts felt Him calling to them as they experienced Daniel's story in a new way.

Vanessa Schaecher serves as communication secretary at Piedmont Park Church in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, Piedmont Park Church adapted their annual event hosted at the church on Halloween evening to feature four outdoor scenes from the life of Daniel. Over 670 guests participated in this two-hour drive-thru event, listening to a narrated story on their car radio while nearly 40 actors of all ages portrayed the events.



# Peace on Earth

What will it look like in 2021?



Photos Courtesy Minnesota Conference

Local Twin Cities pastors and friends participate in the March for Justice Youth Rally in Minneapolis last summer during the racial protests.

**2020** was a year full of strange events—from the drone strike that killed General Qasem Soleimani to COVID-19 to the death of George Floyd and the presidential election, to name a few. Where was the “peace on earth” the angels proclaimed at Jesus’ birth?

If the events of 2020 teach us anything, it’s that peace continues to be elusive. Will we ever be at peace with one another? Will we have a lasting response to the racial upheaval we experienced in 2020? In this new year I wonder what peace on earth will look like for my beloved Adventist Church.

## What is the role of the church?

The answer to this question varies from region to region and from individual to individual. And that is because

the root cause for the absence of peace goes much deeper than just communities getting along. I believe the cause is a three-letter word that has begun to drop out of our mainstream vocabulary: *sin*. Sin is the breakdown of the “cross” relationship—first the vertical relationship that links man to God; second, the horizontal relationship that links man to man.

According to the Scriptures, peace is a matter of choice. First, God chose to be born on earth to bring salvation, healing, and thus mend this vertical broken relationship. We all need to choose that healing because only God can heal our broken personal world; only God can make peace with us.

Second, Emmanuel “emptied” himself into the infant of Bethlehem to bring peace as a gift to mankind. Speaking of this

peace mission, the prophet Isaiah said, “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6).

Finally, the current challenge is for the church to do some serious thinking. If we are to identify with Christ and be part of this peace mission, we must incarnate ourselves into communities that are different from us.

## Proactive actions

In the Minnesota Conference office I have witnessed two of our white sisters ask what they can do to help. It was a powerful gesture for our Youth Ministries director and our Human Resources director to involve themselves in community

service and a march for peace last year in the affected area of Minneapolis during the aftermath of the riots.

I talked to them after their experience with their fellow African American Adventists in the event for racial reconciliation. Their testimony of “listening to the stories and empathizing with the pain” was impactful. I believe their act of stepping outside of their comfort zone to engage a community different from theirs is a microcosm of what the Adventist Church needs to do.

I believe the events of 2020 tell us that God wants to deal with us on the basis of Christ’s birth, and that *now* is the time for the church to be proactive and act on behalf of God. We have been talking about this serious issue of race relations since the 1800s!

The question now is when will the angelic proclamation “Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth” (Luke 2:14) mean something to a world that is racially divided?

It is time for *you* to proactively move out of your



comfort zone and cross the racial line, bringing the gift of peace with you. That's what Christ did for us when He came into our world. And maybe that's what He meant when He said, "Go and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:37).

For our political leaders, I think that means reaching across the aisle. And for church members it means becoming Christ-like.

Let's go out of our way to give the gift of peace in a more practical manner.

We have an opportunity in 2021 to see God do an incredible work—something new. The Lord wants His church to change and grow. God wants us to love our neighbors enough to challenge them to be part of God's kingdom.

Let's not wait until another crisis hits us. Let's give the gift of peace to our communities—black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Native American—every person caring for and being accountable to each other. Then we can truly experience peace.

.....  
Brian Mungandi is vice president of administration and communication director for the Minnesota Conference.

## A Peace Beyond Understanding



**A**n army of angels proclaimed it long ago and far away over the hills of Bethlehem: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men" (Luke 2:14).

In these times which seem filled with strife, it is assuring to know that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to bring peace to people everywhere. Perhaps it is difficult to see, know and experience peace right now. However, all the promises of God are sure and true.

We can have peace in times of storm or strife. Whatever challenges we may face are bearable when we trust in God. Jesus said to His disciples—and I believe that includes us—"Peace I leave with you, my peace

I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

If anyone is struggling with anxiety, discouragement or fear, Jesus desires for you to have peace in Him. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). Even as the things of this life swirl around us, we can have peace. Even as people proclaim "peace, peace" and there seems to be no peace, we can still have peace with God.

If we will accept by faith the gift which has been given us in Jesus Christ, we will experience a peace which is beyond understanding: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7).

Peace to you, my brothers and sisters in Christ!

.....  
Justin Lyons is president of the Minnesota Conference.

**We can have peace in times of storm or strife. Whatever challenges we may face are bearable when we trust in God.**

# Lonnie Hetterle Retires as RMC Education Superintendent

In a presentation filled with tears and laughter, **Lonnie Hetterle**, vp of education, announced to RMC employees during their monthly staff meeting in October his desire to retire at the end of December 2020.

Holding back tears, Hetterle struggled to read the statement, recalling the past 25 years of education in RMC. He moved to his

present position as RMC superintendent of education after serving as RMC assistant superintendent of education from 2001-2003. Prior to joining the conference, he worked at Mile High Academy, where he served as principal.

“The book of Ecclesiastes gives us the guidance that for everything there is a season and a time,” said Hetterle.

“What it does not do, nor can do, is interpret the specific season and time for each of us individually. That is something that each one of us has to prayerfully and, with counsel and input, make for our own individual lives in specific situations.”

Educators across the conference were notified via email that afternoon of the pending retirement.



Jon Roberts

When **Michelle Velbis**, Springs Adventist Academy principal heard the news she started crying. “When

## Making Your Life Pleasant to Negotiate

### Advice for thriving during and after the pandemic

In the era of social distancing we are encouraged, even regulated, to keep our distance in social gatherings. During the days when we were meeting and enjoying each other’s company, we traveled in buses, trains or trams packed to the brim. We went to camp meetings and church worship and sat next to each other.

In recalling the good old days, I also remember print newspapers. While living in Washington, D.C., I enjoyed reading *The Washington Post*.

One day, a picture caught my attention—an evening scene with a man kissing a woman’s hand. She was full of happy laughter. The caption read, “Ron Miller, aka the Compliment Man, kisses the hand of Lyn ...” The story reminded me of days when men let women go through doors first; when women would be served first at a

dinner table; when they would be offered seats on a crowded bus or metro car.

**Ron Miller** was known as the Compliment Man and spent years walking Washington’s 18th Street “offering rapid-fire flattery for masses,” as the *Post* reported.

A description of Ron’s vocation made me stop and read again: “He works a crowd like an evangelical minister, pacing the sidewalk, waving, trying hard not to let a young lady go without hearing she’s got on one smart outfit. The locals know him well. Those who watch him work the street testify that it would be hard to dispute his presence, considering the traffic jams he creates.

“Drivers stop to wave and call out his name. Women converge on him two or three at a time, waiting for a greeting or, in many cases, a kiss on the hand.”

Ron spent many hours

making people feel better and happier, and he didn’t ask for money. He was employed and had time to volunteer at a local church.

“Miller insists he wants only ‘to meet and greet’—his way of paying back to the community that supported him when he was broke and jobless several years ago,” the *Post* continued.

This reminder makes me pause today and review my own compliment routine, considering a practice route first—a spouse, a daughter, an assistant.

The other day someone commented: “Ray, you are such a European!” Yes, of course I am. In Europe we still greet

women by kissing their hands, though this custom is slowly disappearing. This might not be a big deal, but at least it makes our lives more pleasant to negotiate.

Taking scriptures as a guide, we can easily interpret the Pauline admonition: “Build each other up,” we read in 1 Thess. 5:11. Our homes, churches and communities will be well served, and through kind words we might even find a way to make our social distancing more bearable.

Rajmund Dabrowski is communication director for the Rocky Mountain Conference.





## Chopped Brighton Adventist Academy Style

Photos Courtesy Brighton Adventist Academy

I began my teaching career, Lonnie took a chance on me and hired me without any previous experience,” she said. “Through the years he has mentored, inspired and empowered me to become a better teacher and a better human being.”

Hetterle explained his decision to leave in the middle of the academic year, saying, “It is always better, if possible, to be hired by someone who will be your boss than to be hired by someone who then leaves. If I leave Jan. 1, the new individual will be able to be involved in all the new hires for the 2021-22 school year.”

The accomplishments made in the education department by Hetterle were quickly recognized and applauded by many.

“Lonnie has been a tremendous blessing to our entire conference. He has done a fabulous job of letting our teachers know that they are loved and supported. He will be missed and always loved for the great job he has done,” commented **Ed Barnett**, RMC president.

Barnett stated that conference administration will be searching for a replacement and asked all RMC members to keep the search process in prayer as they seek God’s guidance in filling this important role.

Jon Roberts is communication/media assistant for the Rocky Mountain Conference.



How do you successfully hold a school fundraiser when you can’t gather together in large groups? Of course, you host an online version of the television show *Chopped*.

Typically, Brighton Adventist Academy holds a fall festival fundraiser with food, games and socializing. That wasn’t an option in 2020, though, so we came up with a simplified version of the Food Network show *Chopped*.

On the show, contestants are given a basket of about five ingredients to create a dish. Instead of a mystery ingredient basket, BAA families paid \$25 to get a bag of six mystery ingredients. The bags also contained a can of a veggies, fruit or beans—with the label torn off for extra mystery.

Items included apples, potatoes, sweet potatoes, onions, corn muffin mix, instant potatoes, pop tarts, pudding, graham cracker crusts, mustard and saltine crackers. Contestants had to use all their ingredients.

The *Chopped* bags were handed out Thursday and families could make their dishes any time before

Saturday evening.

In a Zoom version of the show, Saturday night participants shared their creation with guest judge and BAA alumni/former teacher **Molly Santana**, who is currently Campion Academy girls’ dean. Since taste testing wasn’t an option for Santana, winners for four categories were chosen based on presentation: Best Overall, Prettiest, Most Creative, and Most Nervous to Try.

Contestants did find willing—or unknowing—volunteers to taste their creations. In a video posted to BAA’s Facebook page, one of the volunteer taste testers reacted by saying, “All right ... a little leery of this [smelling the dish several times]. It’s not bad. What’s in here?”

The online fundraiser attracted 35 participants and BAA was able to raise a little over \$1,000 for the student aid fund.



Students enjoyed the unique experience. “I think it was really nice because I got to spend time with my family, and I think my dish turned out delicious,” said sixth-grader **Brooklyn Hill**.

**Irene Nishimwa**, also in sixth grade, commented, “It was fun because we got to use our imagination to make something creative.”

Third-grader **Sienna Radu** said, “I got to put black beans and sweet potatoes into the blender and bake it. I learned that it is really fun to cook.”

Melissa Hoos is Brighton Adventist Academy treasurer. Alana Hill is co-Home and School leader.



See pictures and videos at [facebook.com/BrightonAdventistAcademy](https://facebook.com/BrightonAdventistAcademy).

# You Can't Beat Learning Face-to-Face

Photos: Scott Cushman/Union College

Spring 2020 was rough for Diana Celaya, a junior computing major from Houston, Texas. When COVID concerns shut down Union College and much of the United States in March, she returned home to take classes online.

Then she broke her ankle. The combination of pain and prescribed medication made her uncomfortable and sleepy, and it was hard for her to stay focused and study.

Her extroverted nature made quarantining even harder. “I managed to finish the semester the best I could,” she said, “but it was challenging. Some subjects are easier to learn in person—especially mathematics.”

Celaya admits that parts of online learning weren't so bad. Taking classes from the comfort of her own home was a perk, as was daily access to her mom's cooking. And classes went as well as they could have. She says her teachers took extra steps to make remote learning work.

“They had office hours on Zoom as much as they could, and some teachers even gave us their personal phone numbers so we could text them



and get answers faster than email,” she said. “They spent a lot of time with us, and some were even more gracious when it came to work and turning in assignments.”

When August rolled around, she was back on her feet and, like the rest of Union's student body, back on campus.

“It's so good to be back,” she said. “The environment here—worship, Student Association events, talking to professors face to face—it's not the same online. This semester is different because we have to use masks and distancing, but seeing my professors face to face and being in the same room and in the same place with my classmates makes a big difference.”

She says she especially enjoys being in proximity with her fellow students and

professors, soaking up the unique feel of life and interpersonal relationships at Union.

“My professors have truly shown me who Jesus is,” she said. “Through their teaching—making sure we understand the content, even making sure that our necessities as students are being met as a person, that we are okay physically, emotionally and spiritually—that's different from other colleges.”

## An acceptance package, a piqued interest and a calling

Celaya was born in the United States but her family moved to Mexico when she was a baby. They made their home there until relocating back to Texas when Celaya was 13. When it was time for college, she applied to two Adventist schools closer to home and one abroad, but she agreed to have her transcripts sent to other Adventist colleges.

While she was waiting on an acceptance letter from

the college she thought she most wanted to attend, she received an acceptance package in the mail from Union that changed her life's trajectory. “I was so happy I cried,” she said. “It was a big milestone for me.” While she'd initially had her heart set on attending college abroad, she ultimately chose Union.

Celaya started her college experience as a communication major, but changed her focus to computing with an emphasis in web development after taking a web development basics class and falling in love with it. She decided to minor in communication as a way to balance her logical and artistic sides.

After graduation, Celaya plans to seek a career in the IT field. News of recent cyberattacks and hacking events have piqued her interest, and she sees helping others as part of her life path. “I want to find a job where I can serve God through technology,” she said. “I want to help people navigate safely



Diana Celaya, a junior computing major from Texas, was thankful to return to face-to-face learning in August.



online. I know I can't help end cyberattacks, but I can contribute as much as I can."

Even though spring 2020 didn't go as she'd planned, Celaya admits that online courses helped her stay on track with her studies despite the difficulties of living through a pandemic and facing an unexpected injury. And she says she learned an important lesson—that while social media and devices can distract and disconnect us when we're together, they can bring people closer when we're forced to be physically distant.

But she says she wouldn't deliberately choose to trade live classes for online education, even though she still misses her mom's cooking. "There's something about being tactile and being together that you can't get virtually," she said. "It's how God created us to be—around people, being present."

Lauren Schwarz is a Union College graduate and a freelance writer based in Bozeman, Montana.



Union will be open for in-person classes in Spring 2021, starting Jan. 11. For more information about how Union College is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, please visit [ucollege.edu/covid-19](http://ucollege.edu/covid-19).

## Union Again Earns Top Ranking by *U.S. News*

Union College has once again been ranked among America's best colleges and universities by *U.S. News*. This year, Union also rated highly in the publication's lists for best value, social mobility and diversity.

These 2021 rankings mark the first time institutions in Union's category of Midwest regional colleges have been listed by social mobility, with Union College coming in at number 20. Based on the percentage of low-income students who graduate on time from an institution, this score is meant to serve as a shorthand for which colleges do the best job of improving the economic status of their graduates.

"It's really gratifying to see Union recognized for something so close to our hearts," said **Vinita Sauder**, Union College president. "I believe our focus on services like life coaching and personal tutoring helps to level the playing field for first-generation students who don't have family members to turn to when they have basic questions about academics and college life."

This is the third year the publication has included a list of "Best Value Schools," and the third year Union has ranked highly on that metric (25th in its category). Only top tier schools are included in the list, and the score is based on

a comparison of the school's overall ranking with its average cost of attendance. The better the quality of the education and the lower the tuition, the higher the rank.

"Where *U.S. News* sees value, I see all the behind-the-scenes sacrifices and small miracles working together to keep a world-class education accessible to students from many economic backgrounds," said Sauder. "I will never be able to say 'Thank you!' enough to Union's dedicated alumni, employees and other supporters."

### Consistently high ranking

In the overall rankings, Union landed at number 38 out of nearly 100 in its category this year. The college's score reflects its commitment to student success. Many of the measurements in which the college excels relate to the personal attention given to each student, such as small class sizes and a low student-teacher ratio.

Though not a factor in the overall rankings, *U.S. News* lists Union College as the second

most diverse school in the category of Midwestern regional colleges, and the college is in the top 10 most diverse schools in the Midwest out of all categories. That means Union College students are far more likely to interact with and form friendships outside of their own racial group than almost anywhere else in our region. Of the handful of Midwestern universities that score higher than Union, most are located in the Chicago metro area.

"The key to Union's diversity is really the friendly and welcoming environment prospective students experience when they visit campus," said **Michelle Velazquez-Mesnard**, vice president for Enrollment and Student Financial Services. "Success often hinges on how well you work in a diverse team, and Union really does prepare students to reach across differences, pulling together to achieve the callings God has given them."

Scott Cushman is director of digital communication for Union College.

Union was ranked as a top college in its category for the 15th year in a row by *U.S. News Best Colleges Guide*.



## Michael Knecht Leads Through Faith as President of AdventHealth Shawnee Mission

In February 2020, **Michael Knecht** took on the role of president of AdventHealth Shawnee Mission, just as hospitals in the U.S. were preparing for the coronavirus pandemic. With his background as a pastor and hospital executive, he knew the importance of focusing on mission and providing a clear line of communication.

With the uncertain times, Knecht wanted to make sure that all team members felt connected and informed. Along with chief medical officer **Larry Botts**, MD, he began doing live updates every week for all team members to log in and hear about what was happening at the hospital.

“It’s been a year where there are understandably a lot of questions, and things are happening so fast,” says Knecht. “We wanted to be completely transparent with where things stood and address any concerns as best we could.”

Knecht and Dr. Botts have continued to do the live updates throughout the year. Knecht starts off the videos with a dose of humor and an upbeat song. They feature team members from different departments in the hospital, as Knecht introduces them

and thanks them for the care and commitment they bring to their patients.

Each update covers a wide range of topics. Knecht answers questions and provides detailed information about the status of personal protective equipment, the number of COVID patients or other statistics from partners around the Kansas City area. He always ends the update asking team members to bow their heads as he leads them in prayer.

### From church pastor to faith-based healthcare administrator

Knecht’s ability to lead his team with faith began with his work as a pastor. He graduated with a master of divinity degree from Andrews University in Michigan, and later became a pastor at Azure Hills Church in California. While there, he founded a branch of Azure Hills called Crosswalk Church in Redlands, California, which started as a young adult ministry and grew to become its own church in 2003.

In 2009, a hospital executive at Loma Linda University Medical Center asked Knecht if he would be interested in working in

healthcare. The executive had attended Crosswalk and told him they could use his leadership skills.

“They said if you can lead, we can teach you the business side,” says Knecht. “I wasn’t sure at first, but I ended up talking to him for about a year. After that time, I decided I was ready for the next step in my career with Loma Linda.”

Loma Linda University Medical Center is a faith-based institution, founded by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1905. Knecht was named project manager in the department of mission and culture. He went on to become chief experience officer at Loma Linda in 2012. While there, he received his master of business administration degree from Claremont Graduate University in 2014.

In 2015, he made the move to the Kansas City area. Knecht became senior vice president and chief operating officer at AdventHealth Shawnee Mission before being named president in 2020.

In his time at AdventHealth, Knecht says he’s been impressed by the mission and faith-based principles of the health



Courtesy AdventHealth Shawnee Mission

system as well as the team members who make that vision a reality.

“The most rewarding part is seeing how our caregivers can change people’s lives,” he says. “I’m really proud of our culture here. Spirituality is ingrained in who we are.”

Ann Muder is a freelance writer and editor for Shawnee Mission Health.



For more information about AdventHealth Shawnee Mission, visit [AdventHealthKC.com](http://AdventHealthKC.com).



## Kidney Transplant Recipient Meets Her Donor

What would you say if you had a chance to meet the person who agreed to save your life, even though they'd never met you or knew your name?

One October morning in Denver, **Noemi Aguilar** pondered what she would say moments before meeting the stranger who gave her the ultimate gift a few months earlier.

"I don't think there are enough words in the English language to express my gratitude, my sense of wonder that someone would do that," she said. "Every day I wake up and I'm just so grateful that someone was that kind to give me a chance."

Aguilar's journey to that day began years earlier when she was told during a routine health exam that she had end-stage kidney disease and would need a transplant to survive. The news was

especially difficult since her brother died waiting on a kidney. She couldn't bear the thought of her parents losing a second child if she ran out of time too.

"When you're facing a terminal illness, you really don't know," said Aguilar. "You stop planning for the future because you don't know what it will bring."

Without a viable donor in her family, and facing a long waiting list, Aguilar's roommates helped her create a website to advertise her need. She worked with a videographer to tell her story in hopes that someone, somewhere, would be inspired to help.

### Five hours to new life

Meanwhile, **Becky Bussey** was already thinking about donating. She had heard a story on the news about living organ donation and it stayed with her.

"I thought it was amazing to see those people and wondered how they were able to do that," Bussey said. "So many people have done so many things for me that I felt I needed to give back."

She reached out to Centura Transplant at Porter Adventist Hospital in Denver, where she was evaluated and told she would be a good candidate when a viable recipient was ready for transplant.

Aguilar was referred to Centura Transplant as well, and in June 2020 she received the call that changed everything. Soon, both women were in surgery, and Bussey's kidney was transplanted successfully.

"It's a small incision and they pull it out through your belly button," Bussey recalled. "I feel really good. The scar from the surgery is getting really small, and this whole journey has been such a blessing. I've gotten way more out of it than I thought I would."

Those feelings multiplied when Aguilar and Bussey finally got the chance to meet in October 2020. Due to patient confidentiality, they didn't know each other's identities until they saw one another face to face.

"It's so nice to meet you!" Bussey said as she walked into the conference room where Aguilar was waiting. "Someday I'm gonna hug you. It'll happen."

Aguilar responded, "Thank you so much. You don't know how grateful I am."

Even though they had to stay 6 feet apart due to COVID-19 precautions, they instantly became close.

As they spent some time getting to know each other, Bussey said, "I love your soul. We're so lucky we get to be a part of each other." Then she added: "We want to do the Kidney Walk next year. Maybe I'll get her out backpacking!"

Aguilar said, "I was nervous when we were waiting. It was like a blind date. I can see the kindness emanating from her, so it's been wonderful."

Aguilar said she hopes their story will inspire others to do what Bussey did. "I just hope there are more kind people out there willing to give of themselves to give somebody else a chance at life," she added.

Submitted by Lindsay Radford, director of External & Field Communications for Centura Health.

Noemi Aguilar (left) meets her living kidney donor, Becky Bussey, for the first time since the surgery at Centura Transplant that saved Aguilar's life.



Courtesy AdventHealth Rocky Mountain /Centura



For more information on organ donations visit [centura.org/locations/centura-transplant/living-donor-kidney-transplant](https://www.centura.org/locations/centura-transplant/living-donor-kidney-transplant).

# FAREWELL

**Behrens, Richard Travis**, b. Feb. 7, 1963 in Fresno, CA. d. Oct. 3, 2020 in Basalt, CO. Member of Brighton (CO) Church. Survivors include spouse Debra; daughter Julie Lancaster; son Michael; 2 sisters.

**Bunger, Verdella K.**, b. Aug. 14, 1934 in Onaka, SD. d. Oct. 17, 2020 in Ravenna, NE. Member of Kearney (NE) Church. Preceded in death by spouse LeRoy. Survivors include daughter Angela Bontz; sons Jerry and Dean Helm; stepchildren Craig Bunger and Deb Greuter; 1 sister; 1 brother; 11 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren.

**Burns, Agnes J.**, b. July 13, 1924. d. Sept. 27, 2020. Member of Marshalltown (IA) Church. Preceded in death by spouse Lester; daughters Donna Mancillas and Darlene Lundgren; 23 siblings; 2 granddaughters. Survivors include daughters Diana Allison, Debra Klemm, and Debbie Warner; 20 grandchildren; numerous great-grandchildren; numerous great-great-grandchildren.

**Carrick, Ray**, b. Nov. 1, 1941 in Harper, KS. d. Oct. 5, 2020 in Topeka, KS. Member of Topeka Wanamaker (KS) Church. Preceded in death by twin infant sons; 1 sister. Survivors include spouse Linda; sons Brad, Greg, Randy Arvidson, and Mike Arvidson; 1 sister; 11 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren.

**Daniels, Eric Dane**, b. May 18, 1992 in Pipestone, MN. d. May 7, 2020. Survivors include parents Dan and Sandra; 1 sister; grandparents Sharon and Ivan Johnson.

**Dickie, David**, b. March 29, 1935 in St. Peter, MN. d. Sept. 19, 2019 in Kasson, MN. Member of Owatonna (MN) Church. Preceded in death by 1 sister. Survivors include spouse Shirley; daughters Shari Welsh and Susan Welsh;

2 brothers; grandchildren; great-grandchildren.

**Fandrigh, Alma**, b. Feb. 15, 1927 in Denhoff, ND. d. Nov. 30, 2019 in Tomball, TX. Member of Goodrich (ND) Church. Preceded in death by spouse William; 3 brothers. Survivors include daughter Carolyn Lehmann; son Curtis; 6 sisters; 1 brother; 4 grandchildren; 2 great-grandchildren.

**Friestad, Rosalea "Tillie,"** b. Dec. 14, 1947 in Nevada, IA. d. Dec. 16, 2019 in McCook, NE. Member of Dakota Conference Church. Survivors include spouse Lawrence; 1 sister.

**Furst, Connie Thompson**, b. May 18, 1950 in Fargo, ND. d. Sept. 22, 2020 in Fargo, ND. Member of Fargo Church. Preceded in death by spouse Harland Thompson; 1 sister. Survivors include spouse Robert "Bob"; daughters Kim Meyer and Kristine James; son Reade; parents Kermit and Jean Harmon; 6 grandchildren.

**Gibson, Lillian "Lil,"** b. Sept. 9, 1959 in Iloilo, Philippines. d. Nov. 2, 2020 in Lincoln, NE. Member of College View (NE) Church. Survivors include spouse Jim; sons Jared and Justin; 1 sister; 3 brothers.

**Glade, Merlin F.**, b. Jan. 17, 1935 in Fontanelle, IA. d. Sept. 14, 2020 in Des Moines, IA. Member of Guthrie Center (IA) Church. Preceded in death by 3 siblings. Survivors include daughters Diana Flora and Darla Pollock; sons David, Darwin, Dwight, and Douglas; 2 siblings; 15 grandchildren; 8 great-grandchildren. Served in the Iowa Army National Guard.

**Gray, Joyce V.**, b. Aug. 29, 1925 in Grand Rapids, MN. d. Nov. 3, 2020 in Norfolk, NE. Member of Norfolk Church. Preceded in death by 1 sister. Survivors include spouse Fred; daughter Linda; sons Wayne

and Roy; 3 grandchildren; 2 great-grandchildren.

**Herrera, Cleo**, b. July 30, 1937 in Pine Ridge, SD. d. May 15, 2020 in Osseo, MN. Preceded in death by daughter JoAnn; 5 sisters; 3 brothers. Survivors include daughters Sherri Escobar, Laura Rodriguez, and Toni Herrera; sons Joe, Ben, and Frank; 1 sister; 1 brother; 16 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren.

**Hume, Albasha**, d. June 14, 2020 in St. Paul, MN.

**Jackson, Nancy "Fern,"** b. May 18, 1931 in Glover, MO. d. Oct. 12, 2020. Member of Fredericktown (MO) Church. Preceded in death by spouse Vernon Sr.; children Jody and Cheree; 4 siblings; 1 stepbrother. Survivors include sons Vernon Jr. and Victor; 14 grandchildren; 29 great-grandchildren; 10 great-great-grandchildren.

**Johnson, Jennifer**, b. July 26, 1971 in Fargo, ND. d. July 11, 2020 in Fargo, ND. Survivors include spouse Mark; stepdaughter Jade Gilmore; parents Jerry and Ann Lehmann; 2 brothers.

**Kabambe, Francis**, d. Aug. 26, 2020. Member of Minneapolis First (MN) Church. Survivors include spouse Chimuka; children Cathrine, KK, Titi, Tebuho, Nalukui, and Trevor.

**Mekelburg, Ann**, b. June 19, 1935 in Topeka, KS. d. Sept. 4, 2020 in Yuma, CO. Member of Yuma Church. Survivors include spouse LeRoy; children Mark, Michael, Marty, Marilyn, LeRoy Jr., Lorinda, Lana, and Lynn.

**Nyangau, Moses Makori**, b. Jan. 10, 1956 in South Mugirango, Boige Lacion, Ekona Village. d. Sept. 11, 2020. Preceded in death by 3 siblings. Survivors include spouse Grace; daughter Doreen (Miriam); son Duncan; 7 siblings.

**Rabens, Neil Walter**, b. June 27, 1929 in St. Paul, MN. d. May 18, 2020 in Mora, MN. Member of Cambridge (MN) Church. Preceded in death by 3 sisters; 1 brother. Survivors include spouse Darlene; daughters Marcie and Eva; sons Michael and Martin.

**Refugia, Junnette Tayko**, b. June 8, 1958 in Siaton, Negros Oriental Philippines. d. Oct. 12, 2020. Preceded in death by 1 sister; 1 brother. Survivors include daughter Karen Werner; 1 sister; 2 brothers; 3 grandsons.

**Reiswig, Jeremy**, b. Nov. 27, 1973 in Youngstown, OH. d. Oct. 19, 2020 in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Member of Turtle Lake (ND) Church. Survivors include spouse Maritza; daughter Emilie; parents Stanley and Paulette; brothers Kerwin and Ryan.

**Sinkler, Bonita**, b. May 6, 1928 in Eagle Grove, IA. d. Oct. 7, 2019 in Nevada, IA. Member of Nevada Church. Preceded in death by 6 siblings. Survivors include spouse Gerald; daughter Susan Ellison; son Craig; 1 sister; 4 grandchildren; 5 great-grandchildren.

**Van Meter, Frances Mae**, b. Dec. 6, 1930 in Fort Morgan, CO. d. June 29, 2020 in Highlands Ranch, CO. Member of Denver South (CO) Church. Preceded in death by spouse Lewis. Survivors include daughters Debbie Petrie and Dana Delaney; 2 granddaughters.

**Wilson, Shirley A.**, b. Nov. 27, 1932 in Delphos, KS. d. Oct. 13, 2020 in Enterprise, KS. Preceded in death by daughter Kelly. Survivors include spouse Eugene; daughter Cheryl Mohr; sons Pete and Brent; 1 sister; 10 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren.



SERVICES

**Looking for a new career or ministry?** Why not take the Massage Program at Black Hills School of Massage? With our new hybrid program you take the first four months online and then come to our campus for the last three months. AND at a REDUCED Price! Our next program starts Jan. 18. Don't pass up this opportunity. Call today! State-recognized and MBLEx-eligible! Call 423.710.4873 or 605.255.4101.

**Move with an award-winning agency.** Apex Moving & Storage partners with the General Conference to provide quality moves at a discounted rate. Call us for all your relocation needs! Adventist beliefs uncompromised. Contact Marcy Danté at 800.766.1902 for a free estimate. Visit us at [www.apexmoving.com/Adventist](http://www.apexmoving.com/Adventist).

**New/Used Adventist Books:** TEACH Services helps authors publish their book, including editing, design, marketing, and worldwide distribution. Call 800.367.1844 for a free evaluation. Visit [www.LNFBOOKS.com](http://www.LNFBOOKS.com) for used books and your local ABC or [www.TEACHServices.com](http://www.TEACHServices.com) for new book releases.

**Summit Ridge Retirement Village:** An Adventist community in a rural setting that offers affordable homes or apartments and caring neighbors with a fellowship you'll enjoy. On-site church, planned activities and transportation as needed. Also, Wolfe Living Center offering independent living and nursing home. Website: [www.summitridgevillage.org](http://www.summitridgevillage.org) or call Bill Norman at 405.208.1289.

FOR SALE

**Adventist coin dealer again open in College View** just two blocks from Union College. Buying estates and coin collections. Call 531.333.6858 to set up an appointment or email me at [lawrencejlee42@gmail.com](mailto:lawrencejlee42@gmail.com).

**Caskets for Adventists.** Highest quality 20-gauge steel, Second Coming picture and Ten

Commandments in the head panel, 1 Thess. 4:13-18 below the head panel, plus Three Angels Message at the end of casket. Under \$800. Website up mid-November. Call our office: 865.882.0773 or Marv's cell: 865.809.1428 or Harriet's cell: 865.804.2388.

**Choice mountain land inside Cherokee National Forest** in beautiful East Tennessee. Four tracts ranging in size from 10-50 acres. Large creek, cleared land, mixed forest, mature trees. On county-maintained road, utilities on-site. 50 miles to Southern Adventist University. 60 miles to Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Near scenic rivers, lakes, trails. Ideal retreat, country living, retirement. Call, text, email for info and pictures. 301.332.8237 or [kathyrr777@gmail.com](mailto:kathyrr777@gmail.com).

EMPLOYMENT

**Southern Adventist University seeks qualified candidate for Director of Adult Degree Completion.** The Director of Adult Degree Completion is responsible for collaboratively developing and implementing the adult degree completion program. For a complete job description and for qualifications please visit: [southern.edu/jobs](http://southern.edu/jobs).

**Stallant Health, a rural health clinic in Weimar, California, is accepting applications** for an optometrist as well as an NP or PA to join the team. Interested individuals should contact Marva by email: [marva@stallanthealth.com](mailto:marva@stallanthealth.com).

**Walla Walla University is hiring!** To see the list of available positions, go to [jobs.wallawalla.edu](http://jobs.wallawalla.edu).

NOTICES

**Enrollment for 2021 at Atlanta Adventist Academy is now open!** Atlanta Adventist Academy offers excellent Adventist education locally (Atlanta, Georgia) as well as virtually through our live online program for homeschoolers and distance campuses. To enroll your student, call 404.699.1400 or visit [aaa.edu/admissions](http://aaa.edu/admissions).

**SUNSET CALENDAR**

	JANUARY 2021				
	JAN 1	JAN 8	JAN 15	JAN 22	JAN 29
<b>COLORADO</b>					
Denver	4:46	4:52	5:00	5:08	5:16
Grand Junction	5:02	5:09	5:16	5:24	5:32
Pueblo	4:49	4:55	5:02	5:10	5:18
<b>IOWA</b>					
Davenport	4:43	4:50	4:57	5:06	5:14
Des Moines	4:55	5:02	5:09	5:18	5:26
Sioux City	5:03	5:10	5:18	5:26	5:35
<b>KANSAS</b>					
Dodge City	5:32	5:38	5:45	5:53	6:00
Goodland	4:34	4:40	4:48	4:56	5:04
Topeka	5:11	5:17	5:24	5:32	5:40
<b>MINNESOTA</b>					
Duluth	4:31	4:38	4:47	4:57	5:07
International Falls	4:29	4:36	4:46	4:56	5:07
Minneapolis	4:42	4:49	4:58	5:07	5:17
<b>MISSOURI</b>					
Columbia	4:58	5:04	5:11	5:19	5:28
Kansas City	5:06	5:13	5:20	5:28	5:36
St. Louis	4:50	4:56	5:04	5:11	5:19
<b>NEBRASKA</b>					
Lincoln	5:10	5:16	5:24	5:32	5:40
North Platte	5:25	5:32	5:39	5:47	5:56
Scottsbluff	4:34	4:41	4:49	4:57	5:06
<b>NORTH DAKOTA</b>					
Bismarck	5:05	5:13	5:22	5:32	5:42
Fargo	4:49	4:57	5:06	5:15	5:26
Williston	5:11	5:19	5:28	5:39	5:50
<b>SOUTH DAKOTA</b>					
Pierre	5:13	5:20	5:28	5:37	5:47
Rapid City	4:25	4:32	4:40	4:49	4:59
Sioux Falls	5:01	5:08	5:16	5:25	5:34
<b>WYOMING</b>					
Casper	4:42	4:49	4:57	5:05	5:14
Cheyenne	4:41	4:48	4:55	5:04	5:12
Sheridan	4:38	4:45	4:53	5:02	5:12

**OUTLOOK** [www.outlookmag.org](http://www.outlookmag.org)



**OUTLOOK**

PO Box 6128  
Lincoln, NE  
68506-0128

PERIODICALS

*Ruth's*  
VEGETARIAN  
GOURMET

**REAL. SIMPLE. GOOD.**

INSPIRED BY BELOVED FAMILY RECIPES



*Delicious*

**VEGETARIAN FOOD FOR YOUR WHOLE LIFE!**

**FOR RECIPES, WHERE TO FIND OUR FOOD AND FOR OUR COOKING SHOW**

**RUTH'S SIMPLY VEGETARIAN**

**RUTHSGOURMET.COM**