

SOUTHWESTERN UNION

Record

FEBRUARY 2012



A DIVERSE PEOPLE, UNITED FOR A FINISHED WORK



GOD *Designed* His CHURCH FOR *Diversity*

8

In this Issue...

DEPARTMENTS

- CREATION Health 4
- Lead Your World 5
- Pass It On 6
- Visión Hispana 7

FEATURES

- God's Designed His Church for Diversity . . 8
- The Gospel to Every Nation 10
- Embracing People With Disabilities . . 14

NEWS

- Arkansas-Louisiana 16
- Oklahoma 20
- Southwest Region 24
- Texas 28
- Texico 32
- Southwestern Adventist University . . 36
- Southwestern Union 37

ETCETERA

- Classified Ads 40
- Announcements 44
- Obituaries 44
- MyFaith 46
- On the Record 47



10

14 Embracing People With Disabilities

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On the Cover

God has commissioned us to take the gospel to every "nation, kindred, tongue, and people." And the result? A marvelously diverse church, comprised of many different people of varying races, cultures, and languages, all of whom are united under one purpose: to finish the work on earth. "Unity in Diversity"—that's God's plan for His church!



Point of View»

BY BUFORD GRIFFITH, JR. » SOUTHWESTERN UNION CONFERENCE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY



Labor for Unity, Labor for Love

Jesus prayed, “That they all may be one....” (John 17:21) What a challenge! When we consider the diversity of humankind, how can we all be one? Our diversity extends not only to culture, ethnicity, and gender, but to worship styles and format, musical talent, preferences, and other “tastes” that are as varied as people. Christ speaks of unity in the midst of this diversity. A coming together of people from varied backgrounds to be a people united in faith.

Recently, I was reading a comment in Ellen White’s writings in which unity among God’s people was being addressed. The building of the Jewish temple was being compared to the building of God’s church. In the building of the temple, stones were hewed out of the mountains. “Every stone was fitted for its place in the temple, hewed, polished, and tested before it was brought to Jerusalem. When all were brought to the ground, the building went together without sound of ax and hammer. This is a representation of God’s spiritual temple, which is composed of material gathered out of every nation, and tongue, and people, of all grades, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned” (*Testimonies*, vol. 9 p. 180). What a fitting description of the church Jesus is praying for. Not a mass of dead substance to be fitted by hammer and chisel. No! But rather, living stones, quarried out from the world by the truth of God’s Word. Living stones being hewed and polished by the Master Builder, the Lord of the Temple. His Temple, when completed, will be perfect in all of its parts and will be the admiration of angels and of men.

Jesus prayed for unity in His church, in the midst of diversity. Unity is fostered by our willingness to learn from each other; to

appreciate and celebrate the differences among us. Therefore, as God gives us counsel and guidance, we must “mingle together and be one in judgment, one in purpose. Then the union that there is in Christ will be exemplified” (*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 181).

We, as the Remnant Church of God, have so much to offer the world. We have been granted the privilege of proclaiming the Three Angels’ Messages of Revelation 14 to every nation and tribe and tongue and people. It will take all of us, working together with all of our combined talents and skill sets, to accomplish that task, by the power of the Holy Spirit. We may not speak the same language or possess the same gifts, or even employ the same methods of carrying the gospel. But, we have the same Lord, the same faith, and the same message. The world will and must see a unified people empowered by the God of unity.

Our divine counsel: labor for unity, labor for love, and we will become a power in the world for the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Buford Griffith, Jr., Southwestern Union Conference executive secretary





CREATION Health

BY LYNELL LAMOUNTAIN

Choice: You Are The Umpire

A man was journeying through the desert and got lost. He was thirsty and his throat was dry; hope was running out. Just then, he saw a shack in the distance. Inside, there was an old-fashioned water pump with a handle and spout, and a jug of water beside it with a note that read, “Pour all of the water into the pump to prime it. If you do this, you will have all of the water you wish to drink.”

What to do, he wondered. It was all he could do not to grab the jug and guzzle every drop. The choice was severe. Trust the note and use the precious water to prime the pump—a pump that might not even work—or drink the water now and be satisfied immediately.

It took everything to lift the jug and pour some of its water into the pump. He worked the handle, but nothing happened. He

emptied the jug and kept working the handle but the pump only produced faint gurgling sounds; he was getting scared but kept working the handle ... and then water—cold, refreshing water—gushed from the spout and splashed all over the floor of the dusty shack.

He was overjoyed and drank until he thought his stomach might burst. When finished, he refilled the jug and set it beside the pump along with the note for the next weary traveler.

Every day we have many choices to make, big and small. And our decisions at these intersections of life either bless or damage us.

In the book, *Who You Are When No One Is Looking*, the author writes, “Every single day we make choices that show whether we are courageous or cowardly. We choose between the right thing and the convenient thing, sticking to a conviction or caving in for the sake of comfort, greed, or approval. We choose either to

take a carefully thought-out risk or to crawl into a shrinking shell of safety, security, and inactivity. We choose either to believe in God and trust Him, even when we do not always understand His ways, or to second-guess Him and cower in the corners of doubt and fear.”

Choice is a sacred gift that was given at Creation. It’s the first step toward improving our well-being. Before we can achieve positive changes in any area of our life, we must *choose* to do so. Conscious decision-making is key to experiencing the positive impact of good choices.

It’s important to remember that although we gladly surrender our lives to the indwelling presence of Jesus Christ, He has put us in charge of our lives by giving us the gift of choice. Jesus never intends for us to disengage our will and drift through life living in constant reaction. Although we live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, He chose to put us in charge of our lives.





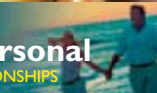


The story is told about an umpire who once called Babe Ruth out on strikes. Yankee stadium erupted with deafening jeers and boos, which prompted Babe Ruth to turn to the umpire and say: “There’s 40,000 people here who know that the last pitch was a ball, tomato head.” He expected the umpire to lash out in anger and eject him from the game, but instead, the cool-headed ump simply said, “Maybe so, Babe, but mine is the only opinion that counts.”

You are the umpire of your life.

God gives you the most wonderful gift of having the final say over your life. When it comes to the choices you make, you are in charge, whether you think so or not. And at the end of the day, your opinion is the only one that matters. So make your choices count and let your decisions be a blessing to yourself and others.

That’s CREATION Health!

Lynell LaMountain writes from Florida Hospital in Orlando, Fla.

- C** Choice 
- R** Rest 
- E** Environment 
- A** Activity 
- T** Trust 
- I** Interpersonal RELATIONSHIPS 
- O** Outlook 
- N** Nutrition 

CREATIONhealth.com

Lead Your World »»»

BY DR. PAUL HUNT » PASTOR, ACTS TWO CHURCH, PLANO, TEX.



Defining Success as You Lead Your World

In a business it's called the bottom-line, in sports, it's a score, in school it's a grade or a GPA, SAT or ACT, but in the church, what does it mean to win?

What is the difference between success as defined by the world and success in the Bible? In the world, it almost invariably comes down to a number. Most of us function in environments where the “win” is clearly defined. In a business it's called the bottom-line, in sports, it's a score, in school it's a grade, a GPA, SAT, or ACT, but in the church and our spiritual lives, what does it mean to win? How we handle this important question will impact the way we *lead our world*.

Whatever the goods or services being provided, in business, the primary focus is to create a profit. Nothing is wrong with this; wealth creation, in itself is not a sin. It often leads to jobs that positively impact the quality of life and fuel the economy. We also know that failing to be profitable in business will eventually lead to extinction. It's not complicated, winning *and losing*, are not difficult concepts, in general. The challenge for Christians is that this familiar way of understanding our world often shapes the way we think about church and our spiritual lives as a whole. How we define success can enhance or degrade our entire faith experience.

The problem is that we are tempted to apply the same way of thinking to the church as we do to other pursuits, such as businesses. Although seemingly rational, this can be a serious mistake. There are critical differences; one example is how we think about money: in business, financial investment is a necessary “input.” Money is invested with the express intent to create *more* money. Therefore, it is not just an “input,” but an *expected* “output.” However, in the church, finances are a necessary input, and similar to the business world, it fuels essential operations, but the similarity ends there. Money is not an expected “output” of the church. The primary objective of the church (unlike businesses), is not financial profit, but “transformed lives.” This is investment and wealth creation as seen from God's perspective.

Unfortunately, when we cannot reconcile the operation of the church with familiar business practices, we may be tempted to see the church (or those who

lead it), as ineffective at best or negligent and incompetent. Author and business researcher Jim Collins provides some insightful commentary on the issue. In his 2005 monograph, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, Collins is emphatic that, “we must reject the idea, well intentioned, but dead wrong, that the primary path to greatness in the social sectors (churches), is to become ‘more like a business.’” Christians should never blindly assume that adopting business practices is the key to success. Although good administration is necessary in the church, the purpose, objectives and environment are dissimilar to those of the business world.

The parable of the talents illustrates it best. (See Matthew 25:14-30.) One servant had ten talents and one had four, and both faithfully developed what they had, and each received exactly the same commendation and the same reward. Faithfulness with all your abilities therefore, and not numbers is at the core of God's concern. While God is not obsessed with numbers, He does care about fruitfulness. But in God's economy, results come as an outgrowth of faithful living from a vital a connection with Christ. Jesus was not oblivious to numbers or results either. He was the one asking for an analysis of what was at hand at the front-end of the miraculous feeding, and then asked for an inventory at the end of the exercise. (See Matthew 14:13-21.)

How do we know what winning looks like in our spiritual walk and our churches? It looks like *you* at your best; being *faithful* in all aspects of your life. Giving the best of who we are and what we have: our time, talent, and treasure. We also look to our leaders for evidences of faithfulness. Let's remember that we, too, are called to demonstrate faithfulness.

Most people define success by a number, and let's face it, monetary wealth is a universal standard of success. But can we be happy, successful and not wealthy? It's worth thinking about. Our faithfulness at work, school, or home is a great sign of spiritual maturity. Importantly, it brings honor to God and inspires others. So, whatever your life may look like, God calls you to “Lead Your World” faithfully and experience true success!





Pass it On...

A Monthly Focus on Evangelism in the Southwest

BY KIRCIO D. MOTA » VICE PRESIDENT FOR HISPANIC MINISTRIES, SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE

“Revive for His work; Reform for His coming”

We praise God for the Hispanic work that is taking place throughout the Southwest Region Conference. We give honor and glory to our Creator, for being our Leader and for allowing a great revival. We realize that it is only under the guidance of the Holy Spirit that our ministers, together with their leaders, will be revived and reformed for the Second Coming.

The strategy that we have developed in our conference is to form small groups according to the counsel in God’s Word: “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth” (Genesis 1:28), and “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. . . . And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:41-47, NKJV).

We think of the Deity as the first small group, and Adam and Eve as the second. Our small groups work as Action Units. One Action Unit is organized as follows: one leader (in charge of the unit), a sub-leader (an assistant to the leader), a secretary (keeps records of the unit activities and the addresses of the members and friends), a hospitality director (extends an invitation to friends and members of the action unit who attend the church, and helps them with their needs), and an evangelist (shares Bible lessons). When several Action Units have formed, an action unit coordinator is elected.

We believe that the small group model is the foundation for the development of the mission and completion of the work: “Moreover, you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you. If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace” (Exodus 18:21-23, NKJV). The counsel for this leader is still for us today. Ellen G. White adds: “The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by One who cannot err” (*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 21). If ever we should come close to this

ideal, we should do it through the Action Units, well organized for the winning of the lost.

We believe that the church, organized in units, well prepared to battle and eager to conquer Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas for our Heavenly Commander, is a work that demands hard work and much discipline. We have prepared various small group seminars and we have shared them with all of our ministers so that they may also share it with their local leaders and prepare all our leaders to fulfill the divine mandate.

Our vision is to form 200 Action Units in 2012. To date, we have formed 86 groups. We believe that this is God’s work and we should follow His methods. Jesus is the best example to follow in successfully reaching out to the lost. Ellen G. White explains it this way: “Christ’s method alone will give true success.” It is not



necessary to design plans that give no results. Jesus’ work plan was simple and attainable. He placed His mission in the hands of a small group of twelve men. He came to the world to “save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21), yet He chose twelve disciples.

This plan was so important to Him, that He spent an entire night in prayer before forming this fundamental group (Luke 6:12-16). We are recommending that leaders spend a month in prayer before presenting the plan to the church.

As we follow God’s method, we will develop our vision of new leaders, groups, and planting new congregations. “Revive for His work; Reform for His coming.”

Visión Hispana

UN BREVE NOTICIERO MENSUAL DEL SUROESTE

Revive Para su Obra; Refórmate Para su Venida

Alabamos a Dios por la obra hispana que se está realizando en la Asociación de la Región del Suroeste. Damos honra y gloria a nuestro Creador por ser nuestro director y permitir un gran reavivamiento. Creemos que sólo bajo la dirección del Espíritu Santo, nuestro cuerpo ministerial junto a sus líderes, será reavivado y reformado para la segunda venida.

La estrategia que hemos desarrollado es formar pequeños grupos aplicando el consejo de la Palabra de Dios: "...Reproduzcanse, multiplíquense, y llenen la tierra!..." (Génesis 1:28), y "Fue así como los que recibieron su palabra fueron bautizados, y ese día se añadieron como tres mil personas, las cuales se mantenían fieles a las enseñanzas de los apóstoles y en el mutuo compañerismo, en el partimiento del pan y en las oraciones. Al ver las muchas maravillas y señales que los apóstoles hacían, todos se llenaban de temor, y todos los que habían creído se mantenían unidos y lo compartían todo; vendían sus propiedades y posesiones, y todo lo compartían entre



todos, según las necesidades de cada uno. Todos los días se reunían en el templo, y partían el pan en las casas, y comían juntos con alegría y sencillez de corazón, mientras alababan a Dios y brindaban ayuda a todo el pueblo. Y cada día el Señor añadía a la iglesia a los que habían de ser salvos" (Hechos 2:41-47).

Creemos que la Deidad es el primer grupo pequeño, y Adán y Eva el segundo. Nuestros grupos pequeños trabajan como unidades de acción. Una unidad de acción está formada de: un líder (encargado de la unidad), un sublíder (asistente del líder), un secretario (mantiene los registros de las actividades y las direcciones de los miembros y amigos), un director de hospitalidad (extiende la bienvenida a los amigos y miembros de la unidad que asisten a la iglesia, y les ayuda con sus necesidades), y un evangelista (comparte las lec-

ciones bíblicas). Después de formarse varias unidades de acción, se nombra a un coordinador de las unidades de acción.

Creemos que el modelo de los grupos pequeños es la base para el desarrollo de la misión y la culminación de la obra: "...selecciona de entre todo el pueblo a hombres capaces, temerosos de Dios, hombres íntegros que aborrezcan las ganancias deshonestas, y ponlos al frente de ellos como jefes de mil, de cien, de cincuenta y de diez...si haces esto, y Dios así te lo manda, tu podrás resistir; y también todo este pueblo irá en paz a su lugar" (Éxodo 18:21-23). El consejo para este líder sigue siendo el consejo para hoy. Elena G. de White agrega: "La formación de pequeñas compañías como base del esfuerzo cristiano me ha sido presentada por Uno que no puede errar" (*Testimonios*, tomo 7, págs. 21, 22). Si alguna vez nos hemos de acercar a este ideal, tendremos que hacerlo por medio de las unidades de acción, bien organizadas para la ganancia de los perdidos.

Creemos que la iglesia, organizadas en unidades, bien preparadas para la lucha y deseosas de conquistar Arkansas, Luisiana, Nuevo México, Oklahoma y Texas, para nuestro Comandante celestial, es una tarea que demanda arduo trabajo y mucha disciplina. Hemos preparado varios seminarios sobre grupos pequeños y los hemos compartidos con nuestros ministros para que ellos los compartan con sus líderes locales, y así preparar a todos nuestros dirigentes para cumplir el mandato divino.

Nuestra visión es formar doscientas unidades de acción en el 2012. Hasta ahora hemos formado ochenta y seis. Entendemos que esta es la obra de Dios y debemos seguir sus métodos. Jesús es el mejor ejemplo a imitar si hemos de obtener éxito en alcanzar a los perdidos. Elena G. de White expone: "Sólo el método de Cristo dará resultados". Es innecesario inventar planes que no dan resultados. El plan de trabajo de Jesús era sencillo y realizable. Puso su misión en las manos de un pequeño grupo de doce hombres. Vino al mundo para salvar "a su pueblo de sus pecados" (Mateo 1:21), mas eligió a doce discípulos.

Este plan era tan importante para Jesús, que pasó una noche entera en oración antes de formar ese grupo fundamental (Lucas 6:12-16). Recomendamos que los líderes dediquen un mes en oración antes de presentar el plan a la iglesia.

Al seguir el método de Cristo, desarrollaremos nuestra visión de nuevos líderes, grupos, y plantaciones de nuevas congregaciones. "Revive para su obra; Refórmate para su venida".

Kircio Mota, Ministerio Hispano, Southwest Region Conference



GOD *Designed* HIS CHURCH FOR *Diversity*

Alex Bryant, North American Division secretary

Nature teaches us that our God loves diversity. The many species of trees, flowers, and animals, embody God's diverse nature and most importantly, His gospel of love. God's creation has obvious similarities yet distinct differences and uniqueness. For example, fish live in water and have the ability to swim and get their oxygen and nourishment from water. However, they are strikingly diverse in color, size, swimming patterns, eating habits, temperaments, and even reproductive habits. The diversity in the various species of fish is repeated in everything the hand of God has designed and created, including mankind.

God made the human species with similarities and differences. We all breathe air, are creatures of the land, are communal, and have the same reproductive habits. Yet, we are diverse in size, skin color, shape, temperament, gender, age, ideology, and the list goes on. God placed within the genetic composition of Adam and Eve the ability to produce a diverse population called "mankind." Every people group, with their unique characteris-

tics, all came from our first parents and reveal God's fingerprint of diversity. The breadth and scope of man's diversity are simply incredible! We are designed to reflect God's diversity as seen in nature.

Christ also left instructions for His church to "go to all nations," and "preach to . . . every nation and kindred and tongue and people" (Matthew 28:19 and Revelation 14:6). This proclamation shows that God intends to remove all barriers to include all of mankind in order to demonstrate His extraordinary love for all His children and to ensure that His church reflects His love by embracing diversity.

Also, when Christ gave the disciples the injunction to tarry in Jerusalem until the promise of our Father (Acts 1:4), the manifestation of the promise came through disciples speaking in the languages of other cultures—an "exclamation point" of God's desire and heart for a diverse family. And, God's first manifestation of His presence, power, and love with the disciples must





not be lost, because God is making a significant statement that He strongly values diversity, as it represents the essence of His gospel. Through His diverse creation, God is saying that His grace (love) belongs to everyone, and He wants His church to reflect this value for all individuals, no matter how different they may appear. God wants His Church to be as diverse as His creation. Most importantly, God wants His church to demonstrate how high, deep, and wide is His love for all mankind (Romans 8:39). In God there is neither Jew nor Greek, no bond nor free, no male or female (Colossians 3:11). In other words, within the heart of God, race, status, gender,—neither any human characteristic that makes us different from each other—does not exist. Man’s uniqueness merely speaks to God’s colorful palette, which paints a beautiful portrait of His family. Instead, God sees each of us as an extension of Himself, as His creative imagination, but most of all, as a representation of His unconditional love for all.

God knew that creating one church with various cultures would be challenging. From the inception of His church—which by design is comprised of 12 different personalities, backgrounds, spiritual challenges, etc.—various issues arose from their differences. Thus, early in its history, the church was put to the test on handling issues arising from diversity. For example, the issue of eating of meats offered to idols (1 Corinthians 8:4-8) was an ideological issue based on culture. But here, the admonition of Paul is to be sensitive to your brother or sister and the place or culture from which they come and to seek to understand them. He does not make the issue a “right” or “wrong” but rather an issue of love and concern for your brother or sister. In other words, homogeneity is not the goal, but rather living peaceably in love with one another is the witness that Christ is looking for in His church, even among our diversity.

“Diversity” is not limited to ethnicity and color but has a larger scope of definition, which exceeds human characteristics. God’s church is all inclusive of diversity in gender, age, disabilities, ideology. Does the “church” (you and I) make room for the diversity God has created within the church? Do we embrace the youth and their culture? Do we embrace women as equal partners? Do we make all ethnic groups feel welcome and whole in the church? Are we sensitive to and do we make accommodations for people with disabilities? Do we embrace those with differing viewpoints? Perhaps diversity is the greatest challenge facing the church! How can we live together as one family and embrace, value, appreciate, celebrate, and most importantly love our differences? Can we preach (live) the gospel by accepting diversity; by accepting God’s heart of unconditional love—the gospel?

My dear family (brothers and sisters in Christ), we must sincerely love each other and recognize that God’s family is multicultural and diverse. We may not reach the same conclusion on our viewpoints, but can we trust and surrender to the Spirit of God to lead us into truth—the gospel of love? Are we patient with one another and the Spirit, to allow God to do His work within His family (individually and collectively)? Is there enough of God’s Spirit of unconditional love within us to tolerate our individual differences and to see each other from God’s eyes and heart? Is there a point where we can meet together on our similarities and unconditionally accept our differences? Yes. I believe the point that bridges *all* divides is Christ! Christ in you (and I), the hope of His glory (Colossians 1:26-28). God invites and desires *all* to sup at His table; and He has a seat for each one; for you and me (John 3:16).



THE GOSPEL TO EVERY NATION

Jim Landelius

In Revelation 14:6, we see the Second Angel bearing “the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. . .” The pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church took the evangelistic mandate very seriously and to this day, men and women heed the call to spread the gospel to the four corners of the earth. But

it is not only outside the confines of the North American Division that mission work occurs.

In the United States alone, there are 565 federally recognized Native American tribes. There are hundreds more who are not recognized but nevertheless have their own distinct culture. While applauding the efforts of those who leave our borders to



work with people of different backgrounds in other countries, Native Ministries works to remind others that there is still mission work to be done here. Because of the high concentration of Native Americans in Oklahoma, Arizona, and New Mexico, many get the impression that these are the only states where outreach to the original inhabitants of the United States is possible. In fact, within 25 miles of every Tribal Nation, there is a Seventh-day Adventist Church.

One of the advantages in working with Native Americans is that, to a large degree, even those on the

reservations are familiar with Western culture. While many still speak their ancestral language, there are few who do not speak English. However, many still hold to the culture and practices of their ancestors, so familiarization with local customs is helpful. Another challenge in working with Native peoples is their distrust of outsiders. Due to the treatment that the various tribes have received over the years from government agencies, they are often wary of those not part of their tribe. To overcome



◀ A camper enjoys a healthy meal at the Native Diabetes Prevention Camp at Wewoka Woods Summer Camp.

Previous page: Several Native and other indigenous young people were baptized at the North American Division Pathfinder Camporee in Oshkosh, Wis.

▼ Campers have their blood sugar tested at the Native Diabetes Prevention Camp at Wewoka Woods Summer Camp.





Top: Michelle Meier preached an evangelistic series at the Stilwell, Okla., church during the Native Ministries summer evangelism program.

▲ Deivi Garcia helped with Vacation Bible School at the Coalgate church during the Native Ministries summer evangelism program.

Next page: Laura Bauder (left) and Michelle Landelius pick up trash at a Native Ministries-sponsored community service project for the youth class at Oklahoma Camp Meeting.



these obstacles, we must work as Jesus did. In the book *Gospel Workers*, Ellen White shares the secret to Jesus' success in reaching people. "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.' If conversion is our only goal, they will discern this and our efforts will be in vain. If, however, we minister as the Savior ministered to those in His day, they may very well accept Him."

While there are many avenues that a person can take to minister to Native peoples around them, there is one area that has proven extremely successful: the health message. The ancestors of today's Native Americans were primarily hunters and gatherers. Physical activity was a constant in their lives and their diet was simple. Today's Western diet has brought many health problems to everyone living in North America, but the tribes have been especially hard hit. Obesity and diabetes are rampant throughout the Native population and affect every age group. Many tribal leaders are familiar with the Adventist health message and one of Native Ministry's primary goals is propagating this life-saving information. Generally, this has meant teaching national tribal leaders, and then the leaders share information down the different levels until it reaches the individual.

In order to minister more effectively, we need churches and individuals who will learn how to teach and share this information locally. While we desire to see people be made whole physically,

our deepest desire is that they be made whole spiritually as well. Native Ministries has worked in various locations in Oklahoma. We've held Diabetes Prevention Camps for young people, health fairs, community cleanup and repair projects in high Native population areas, and other programs that minister to the needs of the individual tribal members. On occasion, we've partnered with the American Diabetes Association and helped with their events. Several churches and individuals have helped us with these projects and now we are ready to move ahead boldly. In addition to Native programs happening in Oklahoma and other conferences in our union, the Texico Conference is partnering with the Arizona, Nevada-Utah, and Rocky Mountain conferences to reach the Diné (Navajo), the largest federally-recognized tribe in the United States.

We've asked the Lord to "increase our territory" as Jabez did in 1 Chronicles 4:10. The tribes are more open than they have ever been in the past. The time to share the gospel is now. We see exciting things as we begin the New Year. Perhaps you would like to be a missionary without having to travel to a distant land. If Native Ministries can help you accomplish this, we encourage you to contact your local conference. The desire of the Native Ministries department is to equip you to reach people of every nation, kindred, tongue, and tribe for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Jim Landelius is associate director of Native Ministries for the Oklahoma Conference and pastor of the Sallisaw, Okla., district.

EMBRACING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Rita Belz Earhart

I looked into the microscope at a slide from a muscle biopsy of my four-year-old son. The doctor described all the black dots as destroyed muscle fibers. This confirmed the diagnosis of a serious muscle-degenerating disease. We didn't know what the future would hold, but I knew our life would be vastly different and perhaps very difficult at times.

My son quit walking at nine and at 23 was fully dependent on a ventilator to do his breathing, and now all functions of daily living must be done for him. However, we have been blessed beyond words. The biggest blessing has been the support and love of our church family.

Through the sensitivity of our church, he has been able to serve as an elder, participate as a church board member, preach on a regular basis, and be involved in numerous ministries. He has never felt excluded or shunned in spite of the difficulties of his mobility and communication. There have been interested folks along the way who have sought to accommodate his needs. For example, they've made reserved seating available just for him, since his large wheelchair is not easy to move and can really get in the way. Other ways people have worked to make him feel welcome are making sure the bathroom is accessible, providing parking, or opening doors.

Individuals who take the time to get to know him have been the



Douglas Mehling, who calls himself the bionic preacher, preaches regularly at his home church.

biggest blessing of all. Breathing by use of a mouthpiece makes it difficult to talk or to turn his head to greet people. With thoughtful consideration, many have sat down at his level and talked to him as their equal.

Many people are instinctively aware of how to interact with disabled folks. Others, however, are uncomfortable and don't know how to approach a person in a wheelchair. Perhaps the disabled person cannot communicate easily and you don't know what to



Douglas Mehling at his graduation from Southwestern Adventist University in 2007.

in the habit of helping someone, never become impatient or resentful. Sometimes people may get impatient because they get the impression that a disabled person is taking advantage of them. Another important point to consider is that a disabled person might sometimes feel guilty for requiring so much assistance. If you truly enjoy helping someone, reassure them that you don't mind all the trouble and work that it takes. One tip though, is to always ask a disabled person

expect. It is easy to ignore a person who seems different, especially if you don't know what to say.

A few years ago my son gave a presentation at a local high school with tips on better interaction with persons who are disabled. The following is an excerpt from this talk discussing principles of relating to the disabled as applied to church and school:

"I would like to discuss several key principles for how we should relate to those who have a disability. The first principle is inclusivity. Make every effort to include disabled individuals in different activities. Sometimes we might assume that because they cannot fully participate, they are not necessarily interested in that activity.

"Don't underestimate the ability of a disabled person. People may assume that a disabled person cannot do certain things, or be successful or productive. Through determination, many disabled people have done things that no one could have imagined they were capable of doing. I didn't think I could be a public speaker. I've always been terrified of such a thing, but for some reason I keep finding myself doing that very thing. Never discourage a disabled person or suggest that they cannot do something. Always encourage them to aim higher.

"Recognize a disabled individual as a person. Do not ignore them or consider yourself too good to interact with them. Also, do not ignore their disability or be afraid to ask them how they became disabled. Understanding the nature of a person's disability helps you to understand who they are and shows them that you are interested in them. At the same time do not totally dwell on their disability. Disabled people do not spend every waking moment thinking about their disability. They have a real life with real-life issues. Get to know them as a real person.

"Always be willing to help a disabled person. And if you do get

person first if they need help. For example, if you see someone moving their own wheelchair, don't automatically start pushing it for them.

"Look out for the rights and safety of a disabled person. If you see someone mistreating a disabled person, do not hesitate to help him or her. I remember one occasion in the eighth grade when I truly needed someone to intervene. I was in a study hall, but most students were sitting around playing board games. One student came up with the great idea of taping my mouth shut. He decided that wasn't good enough, though, so he also taped my arms to the armrests of my chair. During that particular class period, we had a substitute teacher who was playing checkers with another student in the same room. He was completely oblivious to what was happening. This story may sound funny, but it was very frightening to me. If you know a disabled person, look out for them, and make sure no one takes advantage of them.

"The last thing I want to emphasize is that of being courteous and respectful. This principle can apply to many different aspects of how you treat a disabled person. For individuals who use a wheelchair, you need to respect their personal space by not leaning on their chair or using it as a footrest. Many people who use a wheelchair are able to feel it when someone slightly touches or bumps their chair. Another courtesy is when you are talking to a person in a wheelchair try to get at their eye level instead of towering over them. However, you also need to respect their personal space by not getting right in their face.

"The most important thing is to just use common sense when you interact with people with disabilities. These people think and feel just like you do. Treat a disabled person the way you would want to be treated." — Douglas Mehling, in an address to high school students on interacting with people with disabilities.



A Personal Encounter With Diversity

ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA CONFERENCE

Both of my parents were Ukrainian by nationality. They learned to speak several other languages growing up (Polish, Russian, and German) but the Ukrainian language was what they always spoke at home. My bother and I learned to speak Ukrainian before we learned English. When we went to school, our first-grade teachers thought there was something wrong with us because they didn't understand us. After meeting and visiting with our parents, our teachers realized we weren't just speaking "mumbo jumbo," but we were actually conversing the best we could in the only language we knew at that point in time.

In the first grade, even though my brother and I looked pretty much like all of our classmates, we were considered very different. I didn't know anything about diversity; in fact, I had never heard the word.

However, I learned quickly what it meant to be "different."

When my sons were still little and they went to visit my parents on their farm, they would always get a dose of Ukrainian culture. To them, their grandparents were just a little strange. While they loved Grandma's cooking, it was very different. When it was time to eat, Grandpa and Grandma would stand to offer the prayer of thanks. Food was placed on the table in the pan in which it was prepared or heated. If you didn't take as much as Grandma thought you should, she would insist that your helping was too small and that you needed to get more. When the supper meal was over, Grandpa would not leave the table but would have a hot drink, and dialogue that was started over the meal would be just the beginning of that evening's conversation—at the table.

A few years later, after I took my family with me to hold an evangelistic series of meetings in Ukraine, my sons came to me and said, "We always thought Grandpa and Grandma were strange in how they did things, but while in Ukraine, we discovered that everything they did was an everyday, normal way of doing things." The diversity observed in their own context was quickly removed when they had the opportunity to see a bigger picture and context.

Perhaps if we could see people through the eyes of our Savior, what appears to be different or strange would quickly be seen as ordinary and natural. God does not evaluate us by the externals, but by our hearts.

Stephen Orian, president

Camp Yorktown Bay Launches New Task Force Program

MOUNTAIN PINE, ARK. » Three new task-force positions were approved by Camp Yorktown Bay's (CYB) board of directors during their regular August meeting session. The service learning positions are for students interested in any aspect of running a camp or retreat center. From grounds and guest services to marketing and business administration, students from all academic backgrounds are encouraged to apply now for Spring and Summer positions.

The new task force positions are divided into three areas of concentration: Administration, Grounds, and Hospitality. Though each position will have a spe-

cific area of work, volunteers will be encouraged to explore other facets of camp management as the need or desire arises. The task force program is part of Camp Yorktown Bay's strategic plan to increase usage in the off-season and to grow the camp's ability to support additional year-round staff. Conference youth director Ray House says, "We want to create a win-win situation in which students get a great practical education and get to flex their service muscles a bit. We also want to allow our current year-round staff to focus on their strengths while we develop new strategies for CYB's growth."

Though the long-term nature of the

task force positions is a great match for the camp's needs, the board encourages all forms of volunteer participation. "Retirees, bring your RVs and have a 'serv-cation' (service/vacation). Youth groups, come take ownership of your camp! Parents, come volunteer at the special place where your children learn about God," challenges board member Amie Regester. To apply for a task force or volunteer position, please contact Bertrille Schnell at the Camp Yorktown Bay office at 501.767.2333 or e-mail Ray House at rhouse@arkla.org. Forms are available online at www.campyorktownbay.com.

South Louisiana Pathfinders Go Camping!

BATON ROUGE, LA. » On November 18-20, 2011, the South Louisiana Pathfinders held their Area Camporee at Fontainebleau State Park. The clubs that attended were Baton Rouge, Gonzales, and New Orleans, and each one enjoyed 100 percent attendance.

On Sabbath, we had camp inspections and a parade to Sabbath School and church. We thanked the Lord for the beautiful weather, which could not have been more perfect—cool and sunny. For Sabbath School, we divided the Pathfinders into their AY classes and had them work as a team to role-play Bible stories to complete a part of the AY requirements.

The Baton Rouge Red Sticks led the church service, and Gonzales led the song services. On Sabbath afternoon, we hiked a trail and collected different leaves while answering questions for our tree honor.

The park provided us with a booklet of the trees in the park and we used it to identify the leaves we collected. The New Orleans Pathfinders presented our vespers. Saturday night was spent in fellowship and playing ball and other games.

On Sunday morning, our activity day, we had knot-tying relays, an Indian drag race, drill demonstrations and the compass puzzle. Everyone had a wonderful time and made great friends.

Debra Decker, South Louisiana area coordinator



Baton Rouge Pathfinders on a hike during their Area Camporee.

CONSTITUENCY NOTICES

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Notice is hereby given that the Thirty-third Regular Session of the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will be held Sunday, April 15, 2012, at the Shreveport South Seventh-day Adventist Church, 3217 Colquitt Road, Shreveport, LA. 71118. The first meeting will convene at 10:00 a.m.

The purpose of the meeting is to elect officers and departmental directors for the ensuing term and to transact such other business as may properly come before the session. Each church is entitled to one delegate, plus one delegate for each 25 members or major fraction thereof.

STEPHEN ORIAN, *president* | **DENNIS SHAFTER**, *secretary*

Arkansas Conference Association of Seventh-day Adventists

Notice is hereby given that the Constituency Session of the Arkansas Conference Association of Seventh-day Adventists will be held in connection with the Quadrennial Session of the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists on Sunday, April 15, 2012, at the Shreveport South Seventh-day Adventist Church, 3217 Colquitt Road, Shreveport, LA. 71118. The first meeting will convene at 10:00 a.m.

The purpose of the meeting is to elect a Board of Trustees for the ensuing quadrennial term and to transact such other business as may properly come before the Association. Delegates to the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference Session are also delegates to the Association Constituency meeting.

STEPHEN ORIAN, *president* | **TERRY MCCORMICK**, *secretary*

Louisiana Conference Association of Seventh-day Adventists

Notice is hereby given that the Constituency Session of the Louisiana Conference Association of Seventh-day Adventists will be held in connection with the Quadrennial Session of the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists on Sunday, April 15, 2012, at the Shreveport South Seventh-day Adventist Church, 3217 Colquitt Road, Shreveport, LA. 71118. The first meeting will convene at 10:00 a.m.

The purpose of the meeting is to elect a Board of Trustees for the ensuing quadrennial term and to transact such other business as may properly come before the Association. Delegates to the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference Session are also delegates to the Association Constituency meeting.

STEPHEN ORIAN, *president* | **TERRY MCCORMICK**, *secretary*

Father and Son Retreat at Camp Yorktown Bay

March 2-4, 2012

ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA CONFERENCE

MOUNTAIN PINE, ARK. » “Good morning, Sunshine!” My optimistic greeting garnered little more than a grunt from my groggy and recently-awakened son. It was Sunday, my one and only day off, and I was going to spend some much-needed “bonding time” with my son. I had an ingenious plan whereby I could get some log cutting, hauling, and stacking done, while also spending “quality time” with my son. Just to make sure that things would pan out with the father-son “bonding time,” I offered to pay him for his time. Surely that would make for a grand-slam Sunday success!

Fathers and sons, sadly, are family members who often experience some of the deepest frustrations. How many times have you heard the sighing remark from a father, “I just wish I spent more time with him.” My father was no exception, and was both physically and emotionally absent much of my childhood. My father’s father was also largely gone as he grew up. My notion as a boy was that this was normal male behavior. Even with the best of intentions, we make mistakes while teaching the boys in our lives to be men. Our only hope lies not so much in what we do as in knowing the Father of our fathers, who alone can take our broken lives, accept us as we are, and walk beside us in our struggles with manhood and see us through our journey of becoming what we were intended to be.

My bonding time with my son didn’t turn out like I had hoped. It is shameful now, looking back, how things went wrong that day. For one thing, I was hard to please. I still remember the things I said. “Don’t let the chainsaw hit the...oh, I knew it, now it’s dull!” “Don’t you know that logs stacked that high are going to... just like I was saying; now you’re going to have to start all over!” “Please go easy on the gas pedal, when you...son, you just peeled up my new lawn grass!”

Fathers, you know how it is. Let’s just say that we didn’t end up with any warm, touchy, feel-good sensations from our “bonding time.” Instead of spending qual-

ity time that day, I ended up losing my cool and stressing our already fragile relationship even further.

“Every man carries a wound,” says author John Eldredge in *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man’s Soul*. “I have never met a man without one. No matter how good your life may have seemed to you, you live in a broken world full of broken people.” Raising a child will bring out the raw edges of our brokenness faster than anything.

Do you know what the important things are in your son’s life? How are your son’s strengths different from yours? How are you encouraging your son to become the man he wants to be? What type of man do you want your son to be? How are you building trust in your relationship? What’s the most difficult part of being a father? There’s no better time than the present to

become the father that you always wanted in your own life. Start building a bridge that will heal wounds and set yourself and your son free so you can become the men God wants you to be.

To all of you fathers out there, I want to invite you to meet other fathers and sons at the Father and Son Retreat at beautiful Camp Yorktown Bay, March 2-4, 2012. We have planned a weekend of discovery, outdoor activities, interaction with other men and their sons, plenty of good food, good singing, lots of laughs, and maybe a few tears.

Go to www.campyorktownbay.com for registration information, and call Sylvia Downs at the Arkansas Louisiana Conference, 318-631-6240 ext.115 for more information.

Ray House, Arkansas-Louisiana youth director



Connect with your son at the Father and Son Retreat at Camp Yorktown Bay.

A Little Bit of Heaven!

Ozark Adventist Academy holds annual music festival

GENTRY, ARK. » Ozark Adventist Academy, home to many hardworking and spirit-filled teenagers, was the site of Ozark Music Festival 2011 for 5th-10th grade students, December 1-3. Approximately 200 students from Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma gathered together to share their talents and love for music with each other, the church, and the nearby community. The event culminated with a Christmas concert entitled "Heaven's Light," on Saturday evening at the Gentry church.

"It's always a blast!" said Elenoa Moala, a junior at Ozark, of the annual event.

Leandro Bizama,

music director at Ozark, directed the festival and was assisted by many dedicated volunteers. Participating students had only a few days to



▲ Leandro Bizama directs Ozark Music Festival 2011.

◀ Ozark Adventist Academy Music Fest Orchestra and Choir perform.



to play "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star," on the violin. Caroline is a pianist who also plays very well. Both girls enjoyed the weekend immensely and said that they look forward to attending Ozark someday.

After intense prepara-

tion, Saturday night finally arrived. The church was packed with people. The program started off with a moving orchestral arrangement, then, Ozark's touring choir, the Royal-Aires, sang two beautiful songs with the orchestra. Later, the students gathered on stage and sang with the Ozark orchestra and were joined by the academy's handbells, the Bell-Aires. The music was heavenly!

learn their songs and music pieces, and shortly after they arrived, students began to prepare for the Saturday-evening concert.

Two young ladies from Louisiana, Caroline and Maddie, stayed with me in my dorm room. It was great to be able to reconnect with them after having first met them at Camp Yorktown Bay this past summer. Maddie plays the violin superbly. She taught me how

At the end of the program, anyone who wanted to join in singing with the choir could do so. A few men handed out song sheets, and approximately 300 people came on stage to sing "The Hallelujah Chorus," by Handel. It was the perfect ending to an amazing weekend.

"Mr. Bizama does so much for our music and our school," said Kaitlin Pasco, an Ozark junior. We would like to give a special thanks to Leandro Bizama, because this special weekend would not have happened without his dedication.

Sylvia Westgate, Ozark Adventist Academy junior

Plan now to spend a restful weekend in the beautiful setting at Camp Yorktown Bay!

teach us 2 pray

[Without Ceasing]

An Arkansas-Louisiana Conference Prayer Ministries Event
Coming March 9-11, 2012

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- Learn to spend that thoughtful hour with Christ
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To register: Call Sylvia Downs @ 318-631-6240 Ext 115 or Marian Parson @479-549-8528
Conference fee only \$10.00. Meals for weekend \$30.00 for Lodging call CYB @ 501-767-2333

Unity in Christ



OKLAHOMA CONFERENCE

We know more about some of them than others. At least four of them were fishermen; one was a tax collector; and the others came from various walks of life. Bible commentaries generally agree that they were unschooled and from the common class of society. While we don't know much about them before Jesus chose them, we can learn much about them as we follow the gospel story. They seem selfish, quick to speak, and slow to listen. I think that if we had known them we would have seen that they were quite distinct in their temperaments. I know that any group of twelve people today would reveal different personalities, and I'm sure that it was

no different then. Knowing human nature as we do, it is not too much of a stretch to believe that they didn't all like the same food, have the same talents, or ascribe to the same political views. And yet the Book of Acts tells us, "When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1, NKJV). A marginal reference in my Bible reads, "one purpose or mind."

Jesus didn't choose them because they were alike, but used their differences in the establishment of an organization that would take the message of His love and sacrifice to the world. Their weaknesses and differences would highlight the fact that this movement was of God and not

the result of leadership skills in these individuals, but in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the beginning they tended to focus on themselves and what they wanted to see happen, but association with Jesus and focus on Him had changed them. Someone has said that the closer we come to Christ the closer we come to each other. We long for unity, but that unity must be based on the One who has called us and on whom we focus. That which makes us the same is greater than that which makes us different.

John Moyer, president

Broken Arrow International Dinner

BROKEN ARROW, OKLA. » In October, the Broken Arrow church sponsored an international dinner, inviting the congregation and the community to attend. Although the church has much diversity of culture in the congregation, everyone who attended was amazed at the abundance of dishes from various countries.

Each dish was labeled with its native language, so it was sometimes unclear what the dish was, but all of the food was unique and delicious.

Representing Chilean and Argentinian cultures were dishes made by missionaries Pablo and Haydee Tebes. Others bringing dishes from their native land were Tillie Christensen, England; Leo and Elena Vera, Mexico; Jennifer Buckley, Jamaica; Ulyssis and Jocelyn Negrillo, Philippines; Christy Harmon, Philippines; Gayla Yanev, Bulgaria; Cleo Darling, Bahamas.

Local church members celebrated their heritage by preparing dishes native to their

homelands or dishes experienced from their travels, such as: Janice Davis, Germany; Richard Wagner, Germany; Judy Marquette, France; Barbara Calvert, England; and Greg Marquette, Native American Cherokee dishes.

Still others found recipes gleaned from the Internet and joined in the celebration. Musical selections by artists from represented countries played softly in the background of the fellowship hall as guests dined and enjoyed the ambiance created by flags, collectibles, and native dress that members supplied. Many members expressed what a good time they had and that they were looking forward to the next international dinner.

Judy Marquette



Visitors to the international dinner enjoyed a variety of foods from many different cultures.

Oklahoma Academy Attends Generation of Youth for Christ in Houston

HARRAH, OKLA. » We are told that “A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs,” and “[t]o seek this should be our first work.” In planning for the school year at Oklahoma Academy, this was the theme chosen to shape every aspect of the academy’s program.

The year began with a beautiful communion service experienced through the sanctuary. Week of Prayer, conducted by Pavel Goya, author of *One Miracle After Another*, and John Baxter, from Adventist Frontier Missions, focused on the need for and power of prayer. In addition, the video series, *Battlefield Hollywood*, was screened

over a long weekend, allowing many students’ eyes to be opened to the schemes of the devil in these last days.

With all of this in mind, one can imag-

ine the academy’s excitement to be able to take students to attend and participate in Generation of Youth for Christ in December, especially with its theme, “Fill Me: Our Earnest Plea,” which was a continuance of the academy’s theme for the school year. Our students were challenged, inspired, humbled, and encouraged in their walk with God. The academy was privileged to help lead out in the Friday evening vespers service welcoming the Sabbath with the Oklahoma Academy Chorale and Bell Choir presenting music, bringing the congregation into a special day of worship.

Faculty and students at Oklahoma Academy are continuing to pray for revival and reformation on campus and in the church in participation with the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church in Operation Global Rain. Jesus is coming again soon! Let’s all be ready!

Karen Holland



▲ Oklahoma Academy students pose under the GYC sign.

◀ Oklahoma Academy students and faculty members at their booth during the GYC meeting in Houston.

▼ Oklahoma Academy’s Bell Choir performing during the GYC convention in Houston.



Baby Dedication at Yukon Church

YUKON, OKLA. » October 22, 2011 was a high Sabbath at the Yukon church. Pastor Vialo Weis officiated the baby dedication of little Florencio Carlos Bueno. It was truly a beautiful and moving celebration. Following the service the proud parents, Juan and Ysra Bueno, and family members shared a meal with the congregation. What a blessing to see young parents dedicate their child to God!

Mary Wilson

The Bueno family dedicated their newest addition, Florencio Carlos Bueno, to the Lord at the Yukon church.



Creation Seminar Reaches Tulsa Community

TULSA, OKLA. » The amazing story of earth's creation was the subject of a seminar presented November 7-12, 2011 at the First Seventh-day Adventist Church of Tulsa by the church's pastor, Daniel Ortega. Drawing from modern discoveries in biology, astronomy, geology, and paleontology, Ortega shared compelling scientific evidence pointing toward creation by design of our Creator God. The lectures included projected visual illustrations along with printed materials covering the information presented each evening. The presentations were video recorded, and each person who attended all seven meetings received a free set of the seminar DVDs. The DVD sets have also been made available for a small fee to cover the production cost. Those who came six or more evenings received a copy of *The Evolution Handbook*, an easy-to-understand book that exposes the theory of evolution.

Those who attended appreciated other features of the seminar as well, such as free childcare, nightly drawings for a variety of books and DVDs on the topic of creation, and tasty refreshments following each meeting. It was during refreshment time that our members had an opportunity to chat with the visitors, and everyone enjoyed getting to know each other better.

According to Ortega, one of the purposes of the seminar was to provide tools and resources for people to use when having discussions about creation and evolution. One young adult visitor commented, "I didn't know much about this subject before this seminar, and I'm glad to be learning things I can talk about with



my friends who believe in evolution."

Some who came to the Creation Seminar were visitors that attended the church's Prophecy Seminar last April. By reaching out to the Tulsa community with different aspects of biblical truth, we hope to share God's love and welcome many into our church family.

Judi Carrico

Hats On

BROKEN ARROW, OKLA. » When the ladies of the Broken Arrow church were informed that member Tammy Wagner had undergone chemotherapy to combat a diagnosis of cancer and had lost her hair, members were asked to wear a hat to show support for Tammy on the following Sabbath. Tammy, a long-time and vital member of the church, has worn many “hats” over the years in many different positions in our church, and the church was happy to show its support by wearing the hats that Sabbath. Tammy was surprised and grateful to enter the church, wearing her hat, to discover a majority of the congregation sporting their own fine styles. Many women wore hats belonging to their mothers or grandmothers, and a few men also participated. The church wishes for Tammy to know their prayers are with her and they are hopeful for a speedy recovery so that she can continue in the Lord’s service.

Judy Marquette



Members of the Broken Arrow church show their support for a member diagnosed with cancer by wearing hats.

A CONFERENCE FOR WOMEN

March 31, 2012

Imagine

HOPE, Love, Peace

- Carla Gober, Center for Spiritual Life and Wholeness, LLU
- Carla Baker, NAD Women’s Ministries Director
- Lunch and light supper will be provided
- Doors open at 9 AM; Program begins at 10AM



Location:
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Seats
\$50 Before February 14
\$60 After February 14
No registration accepted after March 5
To register call 405-721-6110 or email
lfrancisco@okla-adventist.org

PRESENTED BY
Oklahoma Conference Women’s Ministries

I Love You



SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE

In the book *Embracing Diversity*, edited by Dr. Leslie N. Pollard, he makes this statement in the opening paragraph of the first chapter, “The world is changing! Demographers say that the world of the twenty-first century will be more globally connected than at any other time in history. Communications, technology, media, immigration patterns, educational institutions, and travel are bringing diverse racial and ethnic groups into more intimate association than at any other time in history.” I like to describe the change taking place as a train headed downhill, and we can do one of three things—get on, get left behind, or get run over!

In my experience with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we generally track five to ten years behind world trends in multiple areas. We have reached many language groups and have provided ministries and resources that have impacted the lives of the people of the groups; however, our methods lag behind the best practices of reaching people.

I don’t want to sound too simplistic in this brief article, but the *best practice* is the one that came from the lips of Jesus centuries ago, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There in Matthew 22:39, Jesus quotes Leviticus 19:18 and it goes to show us that God never changes.

Ellen White in *The Desire of Ages*, page 823, states that, “Christ tears away at the walls of partition, [and] the dividing prejudice of nationalities, and teaches a love for all the human family.” A love for *all!* Not some who you like. Not for the group that does your bidding, but ALL! A Caucasian friend of mine in ministry once remarked that he would have loved to be a classmate of mine during the sixties. As you know that was a period when ‘equality and fairness’ were hard to find in America. My response was that he would not have liked me. “Why?” he asked. “Because I did not like your people,” I quickly said. He retorted with, “What changed? Because you don’t exhibit any of kind of hostility now?” I raised my eyes towards heaven and cried, “I met Jesus and He

changed my heart.”

“*I love you*” must become more than lip service if we are to embrace diversity and do ministry in and among the expanding people groups. We have regional conferences because prejudice and racism was prevalent in the Seventh-day Adventist Church at their formation, and now as I find myself as leader of one these conferences, on my leadership watch we will affirm and confirm, embrace and encourage all people groups within our territory. For far to long we have lived side by side without getting to know each other. I challenge each of you to forge an opportunity to learn and understand another people group. Begin dialogue that will exhibit the breaking down of the dividing partitions. As an organization, we need to stop patronizing and offer real solutions, such as administrative autonomy to all people groups within our territory to foster a greater and more impacting “telling of the Gospel.” I challenge all leaders to embrace Jesus’ *best practice*.

Samuel L. Green, president

New Title for Hispanic Ministries; New Ministerial Director Named

DALLAS, TEX. » The Southwestern Region Conference’s executive committee recently voted to rename the director for Hispanic ministries as vice president for Hispanic ministries. Samuel Green, conference president, said the change was needed due to strong signals of Hispanic ministries in Southwest Region Conference. He also stated that the Southwest

Region’s Hispanic constituency is growing and the leadership structure needed to facilitate the growth. Green also affirmed Kircio Mota, vice president for Hispanic ministries, stating that Mota will be able to “strengthen the vision of that growth.” Mota has been in leadership in Hispanic congregations for the past eight years.

The executive committee also named Gordon Jones as the new ministerial director. Jones has served the Southwest Region Conference since 2005, currently as the senior pastor of the Alpha Seventh-day Adventist Church in Austin, Tex. Jones has been a pastor driven by a vision to improve and enhance ministry, and has served as

a teacher, adjunct lecturer, youth ministries director, and religious liberty director. About Jones’ skillful leadership, Green said, “I believe that all outcomes are based on the type of leadership given.” Green says he desires an emphasis to be placed on pastoral leadership skills among pastors and local church leaders.

Jones is married to his college sweetheart, Wendy Ratteray, and they have served the Lord faithfully ever since. Their happy union includes the blessing of two beautiful children, Tia-Ashley and Zane-Bernard.

The Southwest Region Conference welcomes Gordon Jones to the leadership team and looks forward to working with both Kircio Mota and Gordon Jones as the conference positions itself to be used by God to hasten His coming!

Roger R. Wade



Far left: Kircio Mota, new vice president for Hispanic ministries.
◀ Gordon Jones, newly appointed ministerial director for the conference.

Friday Nite Live!

HOUSTON » It sure was “live” at the Bellfort church on December 30, 2011. Youth ministry leader Mamie Williams said that “it was going to be a tremendous evening of inspiration and love!” Over 200 hundred youth and the young at heart filled the sanctuary of the church. There was a buzz in the air, for the first night of this monthly ministry for the youth. Gospel artist and minister Von Won shared with his music that Jesus is the way by rapping to the well known song, “Everything’s Gonna Be Alright,” originally by Al Green. Everyone understood the message and encouraged him with applause.

The night was just starting when the

NFL’s safety Quintin Demps of the Houston Texans shared his testimony. He shared with the youth that he had straddled the fence for many years and eventually got tired of running after the world, drinking, smoking, and partying. He surrendered his life to God, but then everything went wrong. He said he questioned God, but did not leave God. He was drafted by the Philadelphia Eagles, but was cut from the team, which devastated him. However, God spoke to his spirit and told him not to quit, so he held on to the fact that he would play for another team. He began to realize that God is not a “Santa Clause type of God.”

“You don’t go to Him to be a pro bowler or a great player or get a new contract. You go to God for God!” he said. Things didn’t

begin to turn around automatically, either. It was a process. After 13 weeks, he received a call from the Houston Texans, and on that Sunday they were playing to extend their season.

Following Demps, Lanny Smith, former NBA Houston Rockets star, shared his story. Smith, a hometown celebrity among high school and college athletes, was destined for greatness. However, in the last year of his college career he broke his leg and doctors said he would not be able to play again. Smith, driven by the faith that his mother instilled in him and a love of the game, worked his way back to the top of his game and played for the Sacramento Kings and the Houston Rockets. Through many challenges, Smith drew closer to God and promised Him that he would do as God directed. Today he is a successful entrepreneur with his own Christian sports apparel line.

The night was not through yet. Allen Porter stood up and also shared his testimony. Porter found himself in prison for 19 years on charges for a crime he did not commit. It was not until the use of DNA testing became the norm that authorities were able to prove his innocence. He shared with those in attendance that after all those years he was not bitter, but showed forgiveness to those that really committed the crime. Now a contributing member of his community and church, he gives back to the youth, speaking and sharing his story.

At the end of the presentations, prizes were awarded to young people who were able to answer questions pertaining to what they heard during the evening. Bellfort’s pastor, Joe Grider, thanked all who came and recognized the youth ministry leaders, as well as welcomed the visitors, including youth from the neighboring Adventist community and six group homes that brought their young men to participate. Friday Nite Live will continue monthly to provide the youth a forum to experience God!

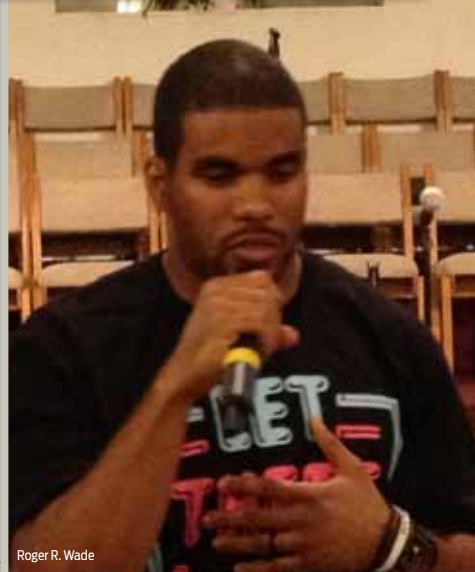
Roger R. Wade



Roger R. Wade



Roger R. Wade



Roger R. Wade



Roger R. Wade

Top left: Allen Porter, former prisoner, was freed after 19 years for a crime he did not commit.

Top right: Lanny Smith, former NBA Houston Rockets player

Above: The church was filled with the young and the young at heart.

Left: Quintin Demps of the NFL Houston Texans shares his testimony.

The Best Time of Your Life

SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE

BATON ROUGE, LA. » Some came because they had seen the invitation in the religion section of the daily newspaper, while others came because of a personal invitation. For whatever reason, they came. It was the Berean church's senior citizens' "The Best Time of Your Life" community banquet, and the intended audience was the local community along with the church's seniors. The program, designed with seniors in mind, featured local safety officials and social services personnel.

Berean church member Marian Wilson began proceedings with her humorous "Senior's Test of Intelligence." The five questions included, "What do you put in a toaster?" The audience promptly answered "toast." Wilson was quick to counter with the answer "bread," eliciting laughter. The remaining four questions proved as challenging.

Corporal Riley Harbor, with the Baton Rouge Police Department gave tips on what seniors need to know in order to protect themselves. At the outset of his presentation, the seniors learned that the brain is the greatest weapon in fighting crime. Harbor's instruction began with women and how they can protect themselves in public. He borrowed one woman's handbag and hung it carelessly on his shoulder in an effort to demonstrate how not to carry a

handbag in order to protect contents. The serious but humorous approach made for a lasting impression. Next was a "shopping trip" where instructions such as "park as near as possible to your destination, even if it means waiting until a closer parking space becomes available, and above all, be vigilant and always aware of your surroundings." These tips prompted some experience sharing, such as having forgotten where a car was parked. Additional tips included installing a door jam and half-inch deadbolt locks that are keyed from both sides in the home, as well as always closing vertical window blinds in an upright position.

Berean's own herbalist, Sherman Stewart, followed with information on how to reduce and eventually end our dependence on high blood pressure medicine and other medications. "Our bodies are not designed

for pills," he said emphatically. It was then time to dine on the scrumptious dinner of mock turkey with dressing and all the trimmings, which saw many community members asking for seconds "It's all about the preparation," said modest head cook, Doris Collins. Shirley Jones and Berean social worker Sylvia Scott rounded out the presentations with discussions on Alzheimer's disease, and exploitation of the elderly. Jones made it personal as she recounted her last years with her husband, a victim of Alzheimer's. "Many were the times when he didn't know me, and I didn't recognize the man I married," she said. Scott added tips on how seniors and their family members can recognize exploitation schemes and what families can do to avoid having their loved ones become victims. However, she cautioned, it is not uncommon for family members themselves to become the perpetrators. At the end of the program, seniors left feeling filled, not only physically, but mentally and emotionally as well, thanking senior citizen coordinator Bertha Stewart for a job well done.

Evelyn Edwards



Evelyn Edwards



Evelyn Edwards



Evelyn Edwards

Top left: Margaret Milton (standing) distributing fruit bundles to Bertha Patin and other seniors.

▲ Senior citizens coordinator Bertha Stewart addressing the audience.

◀ Corporal Riley Harbor, Baton Rouge Police Department, demonstrating carrying a handbag correctly.

Bible Bowl: Excited About the Word

DETROIT, MICH. » The clock counted down, seven...six...five. The two well-prepared Bible Bowl team captains answered questions back and forth. Five...four...three. The last question was asked: "In what manner did Agag come unto Samuel?" Dajah Swinton of the Southwest Region Conference Senior Youth team buzzed in simultaneously with the buzzer to end the game! Because she had buzzed in, she had to provide a response. Dajah gave her answer only to hear, "Your answer is incorrect."

There was silence in the room, as Southwest Region had a five-point lead and Northeastern Conference had an opportunity to win the game with the correct answer to the 10-point toss-up question! Frantz Fils-Aime of the Northeastern Conference buzzed in with his response, however, his answer, too, was incorrect! The answer they were looking for was "delicately" (1 Sam 15:32). Much to the Northeastern Conference's disappointment and the Southwest Region's relief, Southwest prevailed with a score of 225 to 220 to end one of the most exciting games in the Senior Youth Division at the National Bible Bowl Championship. The championship took place in Detroit on October 21 and 22, 2011.

For the Southwest Conference Senior Youth team of Dajah Swinton, Alexia Griggs, Jessica Giscombe, Walter Hall, Brianna

Daphnis, and Langston Swinton, 2011 was the breakthrough year. After coming tantalizingly close to winning in 2009 and 2010, they were thrilled to pull it off. Congratulations to the Southwest Senior Youth Team and coaches Adrienne Swinton and Pamela Daphnis.

The Southwest Region was also the champion in the Junior Youth Division. The Southwest Junior Youth team of Denee McClain, Christian Brown, Sasha Taylor, Kayla Grayson, and Olivia Brown did what no other junior youth team has ever done in Southwest Region Bible Bowl history: capture the championship trophy. They did so in impressive fashion by finishing the tournament with a perfect 4-0 record. They praised the Lord by demonstrating a thorough and deep knowledge of the Bible. Congratulations to the team and to Coach Michael Brown. It was Coach Brown's seventh year participating in Bible Bowl as coach.

That's not all! Southwest also was represented in two other championship final round games. The Southwest Pre-Junior team, out of the Houston Berean church, came into the championship round with no losses. They played a thrilling game, which ended in a dramatic tie. This necessitated a lightning round, which also ended astonishingly in a tie. A second lightning round was played and the Northeastern conference edged around Southwest. This meant

that both pre-junior teams had a loss and needed another tiebreaker to decide the championship. When all was said and done, Northeastern captured the championship and Southwest finished as first runner-up, an amazing achievement for their first

time at nationals. The Southwest Pre-Junior Team included Buhle Maposa and Kayla Rose, and was coached by Keith Rose and Marcia Vanhorn.

In the young adult championship, Southwest was represented again, making it to 4 out of 5 for championship rounds, another first for the Southwest Region. Once again, the Southwest Young Adult team, represented by the Alpha Austin Church, demonstrated excellence at the national level. For the fourth year in a row, and including the Youth Congress All-Star games, they have won two championships and secured three first runner-up trophies. The year 2011 was no different as Fabian Morgan and Trisharna Thompson placed as first runner-up in the Young Adult Division. Northeastern Conference reclaimed the championship trophy after giving it up to Southwest in 2010 in Canada. Congratulations to the team and coach Bruce Chatmon.

In the Adult Division, the Southwest Region, for the first time, was represented by the Hebron church from Houston. Team members included Linda Thompson, Alma Cooper, Suzette Hoyte, and Donovan Graham. This was their first time to participate as players; in 2009 and 2010 they represented Southwest Region as judges. What a job they did in representing Southwest Region Conference with class and grace, not to mention demonstrating a thorough knowledge of the Word. They also supported the other divisions at the championship games. Watch out for Hebron in the coming years!

Serving as judges were the Memorial church from Mansfield, La., and the Berean church from Houston. We are grateful for McLawrence Fuller, Velma Fuller, Tim Fuller, and Brandon Daphnis who came and offered their services. They greatly assisted in judging the games with their vast knowledge of the Word.

Truly the Lord's name was praised in Detroit by the study of the Word. For more information about the Bible Bowl, please contact Maurice J. Turner at 817.925.9569, or biblebowlsouthwest@yahoo.com.

Maurice Turner



Herman Daphnis

The Pre-Junior team with their trophies and medals.

Dream, Utopia, or Possibility?



TEXAS CONFERENCE

Unity in the church, in our local churches, in our organization and in the Adventist world—is it possible? When we think of our continued growth, the continuing challenges, and the fundamentals of our marked diversity, is it unrealistic to think that we can be truly united?

Is it an unreachable dream to think that one day we will truly work together, unhindered by our unique differences? Is it a fictional utopia to visualize a united and undivided church? Or is it a real possibility, an ideal, which we ought to address and that we should strive for and work toward? If it is a real possibility, is it optional for us, as members and leaders, to decide when to carry out this work? Is it a priority, before any more time passes, and before our attitudes and practices impede the Lord being able to use us in the best possible way?

I'm inspired and moved when I think of Jesus praying for His disciples, for us, and for His people, pleading, "That they all may be one...I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me,

and have loved them as You have loved Me." (John 17: 21-23, NKJV).

I sincerely believe that when Christ prayed, He was not hallucinating or dreaming, or even describing a utopian experience. He was praying because in Him and with the power of the Holy Spirit this has to be a real experience and a possible one. It is clear that the only reason why His prophetic prayer has not yet been fulfilled is because of us, and perhaps it may be one of the reasons why we are still here.

Are we not dismayed and concerned? Is it an idealistic dream to think that here in the United States, where our church was born, we can live out an experience of "perfect unity"? Is it unrealistic to think that we can work together despite our differences—hand to hand, arm in arm?

How can we experience this reality? Why have we not yet been able to achieve this ideal of Christ? Basically, we need love and a spirit of service. He taught us, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35, NKJV). It is clear that it is vital for us to pursue and complete the mission

entrusted to us. What is crucial and what empowers our testimony is our love.

Jesus also teaches us by example and tells us that dominion, authority, or human greatness are not part of His plan for our church. "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:26, NKJV). The more responsibility that is passed on to us, the more we serve, the more enabling we become, the more we help; and like our teacher, we give ourselves "as a ransom for many."

It depends on all of us—leading officials, pastors, leaders, and members. In God's hands and with the power of His Spirit, we can live a sincere experience of fervent love with a humble spirit of service, thus enjoying a perfect unity that will illuminate Texas with His glory. Only then will we be closer to seeing Jesus coming back for us and to living eternally, united in perfect harmony.

Osvaldo Rigacci, Hispanic Ministries and Spanish Evangelism director

50th Anniversary of Terrell Church

TERRELL » October 1, 2011 marked the 50th Anniversary of the Terrell church's establishment. This date will be remembered for a long time as one of the most memorable Sabbath days for church members, friends, and visitors.

According to church record historian Danna Doughty, the Terrell church was founded in 1910, but it was not until 1952 that it officially became a church. At its inception there were only 21 members. However, time passed, the congregation grew, and the building they diligently raised money for was dedicated, debt free, in 1961.

On a sunny October morning 50 years later, Terrell church members, friends, and the community came to worship, praise,

and dedicate the entire building to the cause of Christ and to the service of humankind. And while the Terrell church is considered small in size, it is a growing, mission-focused Bible church with a caring heart for its community and its members. Here in Terrell, we look forward to fulfilling our mission of discipleship and preparing as many souls as possible for Christ's soon return.

Rade Milosavljevic



Members of the Terrell church at its 50th anniversary celebration.

Tribute to Elder and Mrs. L. Frank Moore

BURLESON » Dozens of former students, colleagues, and friends paid tribute to Elder L. Frank Moore and his wife, Lillianne, for the Moores' positive influence in their lives during a special celebration held at the Southwestern Union office in Burleson, Tex., in November. Moore was also honored for his valuable contribution to the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a leader, teacher, and administrator.

About 60 people traveled from all over the United States and overseas to celebrate more than 47 years of

service the Moores have rendered to the church. Their service included 17 years as missionaries in the Inter-American Division territory in Mexico, Colombia, Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico from 1952-1969.

The program featured a special spiritual message by Angel M. Rodriguez, as well as a two-hour tribute honoring their legacy of guidance and inspiration given to so many in Inter-America and North America. Many who were not able to attend telephoned during

the program to express their appreciation to the couple.

Organizers said it was a wonderful opportunity to get together and reminisce about their own experiences with the Moores, honoring them as the Bible states in Hebrews 13:7 (NIV): "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith."

Jose R. Lizardo



Friends, family, and colleagues gather with Elder L. Frank Moore and his wife, Lillianne, to celebrate their years of service to North America and Inter-America.



A Life of Achievement

ALVARADO » Krizia Ovando is an American success story; proof that hard work and perseverance pay off. The daughter of immigrant parents, Krizia and her siblings are all standout students and citizens, as the family constantly gives back to the community through volunteerism.

As a member of the National Honor Society, she currently maintains a 4.2 GPA in an all Honors curriculum and is forecasted to be the valedictorian for her graduating class. In addition to her regular school

work, Krizia is taking a full load at the University of Texas at Arlington where she also maintains a 4.0 GPA in a pre-med curriculum. Based upon her current schedule, Krizia will be a junior in college by the time she graduates from high school. She also speaks four languages, including English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian. She has put these linguistic skills to good use as an interpreter at John Peter Smith Hospital, where she has volunteered 600 hours over the past three years. Krizia has boundless

energy, as evidenced by her incredible resume.

Krizia is also very active in her local church, Alvarado Spanish, where she is one of the children's teachers and a deaconess. She has also participated in youth meetings and has presented the devotional at Wednesday night prayer meeting.

Ysis España



Krizia with Congressman Bill Flores (R-Texas, 17th District), guest speaker at the event where Krizia's Bronze Cross of Achievement was presented.

Grand Prairie Construction Plans

GRAND PRAIRIE » Construction plans are under way! Grand Prairie church members have been busy planning the construction of a new church. There have been several activities to raise funds and meetings are being held at the new site where the original structure was renovated and transformed to hold small meetings. Once this was finalized, Pastor Tchakarov held a special ceremony to dedicate the building to the Lord. In the meantime, the old church has been sold and a homecoming service is being planned for the Sabbath before the big move. Grand Prairie church is renting a space to hold its Sabbath meetings. If you are in the area and want to join us in worship, please visit www.grandprairiesda.org for the address and/or directions.

Christina Santana



Grand Prairie's old church building has been sold as plans are underway to construct a new church.



Unity in Diversity—Partnership in Mission



TEXICO CONFERENCE

The logo for the Texico Conference has the following words inscribed on it: “Unity in Diversity—Partnership in Mission.” We are a diverse conference in geography and people. We have the majestic peaks of northern New Mexico, the flat farm and ranch lands of west Texas, as well as the desert sands of our southwest, and the oil wells of the plains.

We are a diverse people. We have businessmen, oilmen, cattlemen, farmers, nuclear scientists, and construction workers. We have nurses who teach and teachers who nurse. We have Mexicans, New Mexicans, Indians, West Indians, East Indians, African-Americans, Africans, and the list goes on. Our members range from no high school to PhDs plus. And yet we all belong to the same conference with the commission to reach our territory for Jesus.

Our diversity at times makes it difficult to have unity and partnership in mission, but as we embrace our differences and put them

to work to reach our world for Jesus, we will accomplish our mission. When my daughter-in-law, Sarah, visited with us, she liked the multicultural nature of our church and she liked the music. How do we as a people

And He has given us this command: “Whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:19-21, NIV). That, my friends, is the living fact of the gospel. Rhetoric means nothing without action.

This month as our nation celebrates its diversity, we should do the same by putting love into action. Our territory is filled with people who are different (diverse) from us. They are not Seventh-day Adventists; but they need to be! We must first love their diversity, then we must open the Bible for them in public evangelism and personal Bible studies. If we do not, their diversity may cause them to go to Christ-less graves.

My challenge to you who believe in diversity is to reach out to those who are different than you. Put your belief into action. Love them and make them your brothers and sisters who make up the diverse family of Christ known as the Texico Conference. Let’s be partners in this mission.

James Stevens, president



PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION

of such diversity get along? We must rise to God’s standard of love. “We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God who he has not seen.

Adventurers Learn to Share Christ with Others

ALBUQUERQUE, N.MEX. » The Albuquerque Three Angels Adventurer Club has been learning various ways they can share Christ with others on a daily basis.

Everywhere in our community and among our very own church members, there are those who need assistance in providing food for their families. The Adventist Community Services (ACS) department holds an annual food drive, where they collect non-perishable food items. These items are then used to make food baskets for all those needing assistance.

The children in the club wanted to do what they could to help stock the church pantry, so each child brought non-perishable foods from their homes, or from their friends and family. These items were then given to ACS.

This act of service gave the children a

good sense of how they can share Jesus and begin to form a habit of thinking and caring for others. This is just one of the many ways they are learning to show Christ to

those around them.

Alex Lujan, Jr., ACS leader



Albuquerque Three Angels Adventurers and staff display the food that they collected for needy families.

Texico Women's Retreat is a Blessing

ALBUQUERQUE, N.MEX. » The Texico Conference women's retreat was a wonderful experience. Ladies from Odessa, Tex., English church; Midland, Tex.; and Big Spring, Tex., churches attended the Women's Retreat held at the Sheraton Uptown Hotel in Albuquerque, N. Mex. We all came back blessed after a life-changing experience. Everyone enjoyed all the speakers and the music provided. Pastor Elizabeth Talbot, the keynote speaker in English and Spanish, spoke about finding purpose, assurance, hope, and praise at the feet of Jesus, and that we are called the *beloved* of God. Geri Morrison, English workshop speaker, known as "Prayer Button Lady," has a unique prayer ministry that she passes on so others can make it their own. We were blessed by her personal testimony of answered prayers, and her incredible

journey with the Savior. She introduced and gave out prayer request journals and "prayer buttons" that we can use to share, pray, and be witnesses for Christ to others. We also learned how to have a closer relationship with God and that we are all special to Him.

Lorene and Russell Ballew provided a beautiful, spirit-filled "prayer closet" that was greatly appreciated by many. Angela Spanbauer offered free massages to ease the ladies into a relaxing weekend. Spanish-language workshop speaker, Maribel Valdez brought inspiring messages to the Spanish-speaking ladies regarding their life

as a woman in Christ.

Our ladies came back to their home churches invigorated and on fire for Jesus. It renewed and strengthened our spiritual life. Our women's group in Odessa is meeting once a month. In our November meeting, after our devotional, each of us will be making our own Ebenezer box, or "prayer box," where we will put all our answered prayers, which remind us of God's goodness, mercy, and love.

Teresa Bledsoe, Odessa English Women's Ministries leader and **Roxanne Smyth**, Texico Women's Ministries director



Far left: Geri Morrison, workshop presenter

Left: Elizabeth Talbot (center back) joins the group of ladies from Odessa.

Below: Workshops were provided in both Spanish and English.

Bottom: Women at the retreat learned about finding hope, purpose, and assurance at the feet of Jesus.



Rio Rancho Welcomes 17 New Members

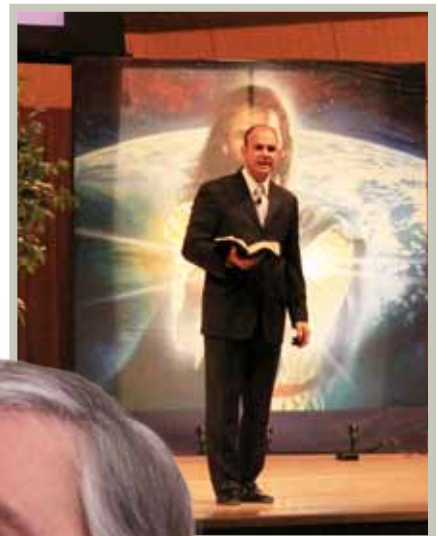
RIO RANCHO, N.MEX. » The Rio Rancho church recently finished an exciting four-week evangelistic campaign with evangelist Jason Morgan of Amazing Facts.

Church members and visitors alike were enlightened as the evangelist delivered the undiluted truth of God's Word with passion and clarity while our pastor, Eric Redic, and many of the church members worked together in support of the campaign. As a result, God blessed the joint efforts of His people by adding 17 new people to the church family through baptism and two rebaptisms.

The meetings concluded on a Sabbath morning, which yielded a full house of members and visitors. A celebratory potluck followed the service, with so many people that there wasn't enough room in the fellowship hall to contain them all.

The next time your local church has an evangelistic campaign, I encourage you to be a volunteer. You might provide transportation to the meetings for someone or support the meetings with your own attendance, at the very least. You will be glad you did as God reminds you of the exciting truth He has given and entrusted us with and as you witness the miracle of lives being changed right before your very eyes. As the signs of the times rapidly unfold, may we all be about our Father's business and may our laboring result in many more souls being won for Him.

Vanessa Wheeler



▲ Evangelist Jason Morgan of Amazing Facts



Seventeen new members were added to the church through baptism.

73 Souls Added and Counting

EL PASO, TEX. » During the month of September, the El Paso Montana district conducted several evangelistic efforts, and concluded with a final meeting in the Clint, Tex., church where the president of the Dunamis Club, Jesus Cortes, led a very successful crusade, baptizing 12 souls for the kingdom.

The Dunamis Lay Club is planning and preparing the ground for more evangelistic activities for 2012. We have a very defined philosophy of the mission of the church and every believer. The Montana church district comprises four churches and the Dunamis Club is comprised of volunteers from the district. Each year evangelistic meetings are celebrated and at the end of every cycle, the club is motivated and receives training. At the time of this report, we have baptized 73 souls for Jesus in our district.

Jose S. Padilla, pastor



These are just a handful of the 73 souls won for Christ in the El Paso Montana district.

An Active Mind: Searching for Truth

"I wasn't sure my professors were right, but I had a real desire to understand, to realize my personal faith."

Rob Davis likes to stay busy. At an early age he discovered that high energy levels and an active brain could either get him into trouble or be channeled into more productive avenues. Joining the Boy Scouts and quickly attaining Eagle Scout status, Rob was soon involved with training his fellow Scouts. Along the way he discovered that teaching was just as much fun as learning.

Fast forward a few years and you'll find Rob still energetically pursuing his philosophy of an active lifestyle. Moving from his hometown of San Diego to Texas for love, the newlywed enrolled in the nursing program at Southwestern Adventist University. While working at Huguley Memorial Medical Center, Rob graduated with an associate degree in nursing before deciding to continue with his schooling. Now a nurse in the cardiovascular intensive care unit at Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital in Cleburne, Rob is also attending school full-time as he finishes his BSN degree at Southwestern. He plans to graduate in May before continuing on to become a nurse practitioner. Eventually, he wants to teach.

Despite his best intentions, Rob laugh-

ingly claims his active mind and vocal opinions might have made trouble for him if his religion professors at Southwestern had been less patient. As Davis recalls, "There were two teachers in particular, Dr. Kilgore and Dr. Rico, who would stay after class and talk with me, sometimes for hours. I'm sure I drove them crazy with my arguments and concerns," he grins, "because I didn't always wait until after class. I grew up in the Catholic Church; I was an altar boy, I attended Catholic private schools. I wasn't sure my professors were right, but I had a real desire to understand, to realize my personal faith. They recognized that. They were so patient with me."

Dr. Kilgore has a slightly different perspective. "Rob is a bright young man with an inquisitive mind who wanted to examine his religious beliefs. What I appreciated most about Rob was that his questions were not simply a means for debate but he was sincerely searching for the foundations of his faith. He was a frequent visitor to my office and our conversations were always straightforward, honest, and refreshing. I wish every student was willing to explore the meaning of their faith as Rob did." Not long after these conversations,

the young scholar chose to rededicate his life to Christ and was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Now grounded in his faith and active in his local church, Rob's energetic mind does even more than drive him to work hard and go to school. This January, Rob's first article in a series on hypothermia, entitled "Big Chill," was published in the *American Journal of Nursing*. An active outdoorsman, Davis pitched the idea to the *Journal* when he realized that both he and others could learn more from his experiences and research. He also teaches a class on basic interpretation of EKG to fellow nursing majors at Southwestern. Because of some minor personal experience with hypothermia and his research on the subject, Rob is also on the Texas Health Resources Committee of Hypothermia Protocol.

For fun, Davis likes to canoe the Colorado and hike "fourteeners" (mountains over 14,000 feet) such as those topping his completion list, Mt. Whitney and Wheeler Mountain. Recently Rob decided to start training for a local half-marathon. The positive experience led him to sign up and start training for his first triathlon next October.

When asked what prompted this newest interest, Davis explained, "I wanted to be healthier than my patients. I wanted to tell them that a healthier lifestyle works and I'm proof. You need to feed your body and your mind." Rob grins, "You know the best part? All this training for the triathlon helps me study better."

Darcy Force



Rob Davis poses with one of the patient simulators in the Nursing Department at Southwestern.

Southwestern Union ASI Members Sharing Christ in the Marketplace

ASI (Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries) is a diverse group of people from many walks of life—business owners, professionals, lay people, administrators and staff of supporting ministries, and others, all of whom have one common goal: Sharing Christ in the Marketplace. In the Southwest, ASI members are very busy sharing their faith by helping to fund mission projects, going on mission trips, as well as inspiring and encouraging others to get involved in mission.

Over the past few years the Southwest Chapter of ASI has helped La Verdad Presente, a Spanish television ministry in South Texas, to upgrade their computer and camera equipment so that their witness over the airwaves and in evangelistic campaigns can continue. We have enabled Ouchita Hills College in Arkansas to purchase needed equipment, and together, we helped a newly-established mission project in Zambia, Africa, called Lushomo Health Education Centre, to get off the ground. Also, Centro Misionero de Salud, a health and education institute in Galeana, Mexico, has benefited by funds given through ASI for upgrading the living quarters for the students and helping prepare an area for doing the laundry. We also helped a mission in Nicaragua (Tasba Raya) with funds to restore buildings that had deteriorated due to a combination of storms, bugs, and time.

In 2011 the Southwest chapter of ASI sponsored a mission trip to Paraguay. In April 2011 at Easter time, a group of medical personnel that included doctors, dentists, nurses, and a pharmacist went to a remote area of Paraguay called Chaco Paraguayo. Entrance to the area is only by boat and the people of that area only have medical assistance once a year; therefore, it was an area of great need. The team worked for six days from the boat, attending to the people's medical as well as spiritual needs.

Plans for 2012 include another mission trip to Paraguay in April to complete a church ASI helped to start at Colegio Ad-

ventista Del Este de Paraguay. If you are interested in participating, contact Gracie Japas at gracie-japas@gmail.com.

Over the past three years, besides having rallies in San Antonio, Tex., El Paso,



Top: Mark Bond interviews Julia Hernandez about her dramatic conversion experience during ASI's popular Members in Action feature on Sabbath afternoon at the Houston meeting.

▲ Valley Grande Academy's choir was one of several musical groups that performed during the ASI chapter meeting in Houston.

Tex., and Tulsa, Okla., our annual chapter meetings have been held in Cleburne, Tex., Gentry, Ark., Houston, Tex., and this year it will be in Joshua, Tex., from March 1 to 4. Be sure to join us to hear the Members in Action testimonies, a special music seminar by John Lomacang of 3ABN, preaching by Ron Halverson, Sr., Bible lessons and character reenactments by Chaplain Dick Stenbakken, a financial seminar by John Mathews, NAD stewardship director, and more! For registration information, visit

www.asisw.org.

If you want to be involved in the mission of the church, ASI is your opportunity to get connected. You can become a member, an associate member, or just attend the meetings. ASI is the hub of activity for networking, training, inspiration, and finding outreach and witnessing opportunities. We look forward to your involvement!

Floyd Courtney, ASI Southwest Chapter president

Generation of Youth For Christ Fills Houston

They stand at a street corner, anxiously waiting for the light to change. After what seems like an eternity, they are finally able to cross. Entering the George R. Brown Convention Center in the heart of Houston Texas, they join the river of other young people who have come from all across the globe to attend this year's Generation of Youth for Christ in Houston, Tex.

"Fill Me, Our Earnest Plea" was the 2011 GYC theme, which was about asking for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Attendees had a plethora of great seminars from which to choose, such as Stephen Bohr's *Secrets of Revival and Reformation*, Ivor Myer's *The Power of the Spirit*, and Dwight Nelson's *The Gift: The Second Coming of the Holy Spirit*, along with many others. For two days, young people packed the seminars, eager to learn all they could on living lives that are filled with the Holy Spirit. The Thursday morning plenary session

speaker was Janet Page, assistant ministerial director for the General Conference. She talked about how prayer and having a personal friendship with God and the Holy Spirit are crucial.

With so many great presenters present at GYC, and the fact that the attendees were on fire about what they were learning, people could not stop talking about the great experiences they were having. Taylor Hinkle from Phoenix, Ariz., said, "It's wonderful to see this many young people coming together in one place to grow

spiritually and to seek a better relationship with the Lord." Friday was the highlight of GYC, as it was outreach day.

At the previous evening's meeting, Lisa Melchor, a young woman who had started Bible studies in her apartment building, along with Chelsy Schauer, vice president for evangelism for GYC, announced that on Friday afternoon, several of the 55 buses for outreach would be going to a little town not far from Houston called Alvin. Lisa explained that some months before, she had started a small group Bible study with oth-

er residents in her apartment building. A few months after they had started studying, three of the residents fully accepted the Seventh-day Adventist



Top: Lisa Melchor and Chelsy Schauer tell the attendees at GYC about going to Alvin to do outreach.

▲ Taylor Hinkle prays with Killory and Nikki Weis from Keene, Tex. Both are students at Chisholm Trail Academy.

◀ Matt Mundall, a student at Oklahoma Academy, tells a young lady about the academy.



▲ GYC attendees eagerly sit in the bus that would take them to Alvin to do outreach.

► A young lady gives a GLOW tract to a mother pulling her son in a wagon along a street in Alvin.

Far right: Sam Lam and Reginald Felix, both from Houston, walk the streets of Alvin, giving out flyers and Bible study interest cards.



message. The little group began to grow, and they soon outgrew the building where they were meeting. Amazingly, they found another place to meet for free. Once again they outgrew the building, and then they found a Baptist church building that they were allowed to use for free on Sabbath.

Lisa decided that she wanted to have a small two-day evangelistic series at the end of January 2012. She printed out 1,500 flyers, but she wondered how she and her small group of 15 were going to pass out the flyers in Alvin. Back in August, she heard that GYC would be in Houston. She contacted Chelsy and asked if GYC would be willing to help her out. The answer was an enthusiastic “Yes! You will be the first Adventists to do outreach in the history of Alvin.”

In the mad rush to load the buses, people were specifically asking which buses would be going to Alvin. The buses were loaded in record time and off they went. Once we reached Alvin, people were dropped off two at a time on different streets. For two hours they pounded the pavement blanketing the town of Alvin with flyers and Bible study interest cards. One team went into a convenience store to buy some water and told the clerk there what they were doing. The clerk asked them to leave behind some

flyers, and to go next door to the laundromat and leave some there as well. Another group met a mother and her two sons, who happened to have just been talking about spiritual things. They gave them a Bible study card and a flyer to attend the evangelistic meeting. We returned back to the Convention Center tired but singing songs and thanking God for the many opportunities that we had had that day.

Seth Shaffer

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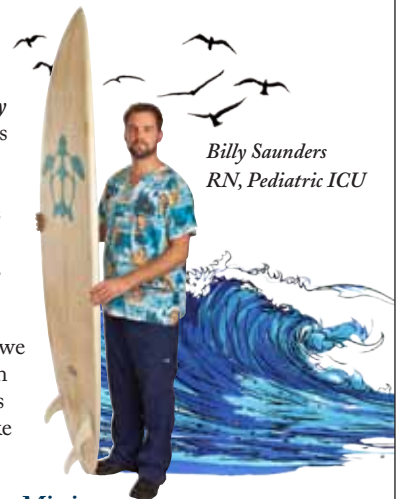
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Announcements

"Ye Olde" Cedar Lake Academy Reunion will take place June 14-17, 2012 for alumni and warmly welcomed school-mates of 1962 and earlier at Great Lakes Adventist Academy, Cedar Lake, Mich. Honor classes: 1932, 1942, 1952, 1962. Details will be forthcoming by postal service. Also, you may contact GLAA Alumni Office at 989.427.5181 or

visit www.GLAA.net for further information. Please do pass the good word.

Washington Adventist University celebrates Alumni Weekend, April 13-15, 2012. Join us for the grand opening of the Leroy & Lois Peters Music Center, April 14, at 8:00 p.m. Visit www.wau.edu/alumni for a list of events and activities or call 301.891.4133 for more information.

Southwestern Adventist University: Please plan to join us for Homecoming Weekend, April 12-15, 2012. For more information, call 817.202.6232, or write bevm@swau.edu.

Valley Grande Adventist Academy Celebrates 75 years! The Alumni Association invites all former faculty, staff, and students to our celebration during our Alumni Weekend to be held on March

30-31, 2012. Come sing with the Sylvan choir and visit with friends again. For more information, visit our Web site at www.vgaa.org or contact Robert Saldana: eyeguy@live.com.

Obituaries

BECK, Sherri June Cowan, was born July 19, 1935 in Glendale, Calif., and died September 27, 2011 in Batesville, Ark. She was a member of the Mountain View, Ark., church. Sherri and her husband, Carl Thomas Beck, moved to Mountain View in 1966, where she became an active member of the church as well as a number of organizations, including the Business and Professional Women's Club, the hospital auxiliary, the Dorcas Clothing Room, and the Airport Commission. In 1968 she became the first female airplane pilot in Stone County. She held that license for the next 24 years. She was preceded in death by her husband, Carl. Survivors: brothers, Lewis Cowan, Philip Cowan, and Mike Henry, all of California; sisters, Marcia Morris of Maryland and Connie McVey of California; children, Kim McCorkle and her husband, Larry, of Wideman, Ark., Scott Beck and his wife, Liz, of Mountain View, Kirk Beck and his

wife, Noelia, of Coca, Fla., and Andy Beck of Mountain View; nine grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

BERNHARDT, Alfred, was born December 30, 1924 in Altona, Okla., and died November 26, 2011 at his home in Altona. He was a member of the Okeene church. He was a farmer and a teacher. Survivors: wife, Millicent,; sons, Alfred G. Bernhardt, James Bernhardt, Merle Bernhardt, and Leslie Bernhardt; sister, Florence Clarambeau; and five grandchildren.

GARZA, Donna Mae Hall, was born February 14, 1929 in Enid, Okla., and died July 20, 2011 in Hendersonville, N.C. She was a member of the Hendersonville church. Donna was an avid learner, a creative educator, writer, and artist, a gifted musician, and much more, but above all, she was a mother devoted to her family and children. Her first priority was the salvation of her family. She was preceded in death by a brother, Alfred Leon; and sister, Mary Etta. Survivors: children, Hum-

berto "Samuel" Garza III and wife, Krystal, of Tennessee; Daniel L. Garza and wife, Myra, of Florida.; David M. Garza and wife, Tanya, of California; Susan R. Rowe and husband, Edward, of North Carolina; Stephen G. Garza and wife, LaDell, of West Union, S.C., and John A. Hall and wife, Marlys, of Idaho; sister, Wanda Lee Warner; ex-husband, Humberto S. Garza, Jr.; 28 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren; and many nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

HATCH, Lynda V., born June 8, 1940 in Monmouth, Ill., and died November 2, 2011 in Clarksville, Ark. She was a member of the Clarksville church. Survivors: daughter, Jackie Quentin Roberts, of Hillsday, Wyo.; three brothers and three sisters; and five grandchildren.

NEWTON, June Nickle, was born in St. Helena, Calif., on May 18, 1923, and died December 13, 2011 in Cleburne, Tex. She was a member of the Joshua church. June graduated

from Union College in Lincoln, Nebr., in 1947 and became a secretarial science teacher, receiving a M.Ed. degree from the University of Illinois in 1959. She married William Newton, and they later went to Puerto Rico as missionaries. He served as a dentist and the first job she was asked to do when they arrived in Puerto Rico was to fill in as acting administrator for the Bella Vista Hospital in Mayaguez until the regular administrator returned from a furlough and extended study leave. After that, Mrs. Newton resumed teaching and became head of the bilingual secretarial science department of Antillean Union College, also located in Mayaguez. She was preceded in death by her husband, William. Survivors: sons, James Newton and wife, Diane, of Cleburne, Tex.; Ronald Newton of Dallas, Tex.; stepchildren, Jerry Newton and wife, Joyce, of Crestline, Calif., Allen Newton and wife, Marilyn, of Cedar Glen, Calif., and Rashelle Newton Stirewalt and husband, Dennis, of Camarillo, Calif.; numerous

grandchildren and great-grandchildren; foster sister, Amelia Lopez and husband, Elias; and a niece.

ORIAN, Katherine, born December 9, 1926 in Krasnystaw, Poland, and died November 28, 2011 in Van Buren, Ark. She was a member of the Van Buren church. She was preceded in death by her husband, Peter Orian. Survivors: two sons, Nicholas Orian and his wife, Kathleen, of Dallas, Tex., and Stephen Orian and his wife, Micki, of Shreveport, La.; four grandchildren

and seven great-grandchildren.

SLOAN, Fairest Arland, born May 19, 1922 in Henley, Mo., and died July 27, 2011 in Sallisaw, Okla. She was a member of the Gentry, Ark., church. Survivors: daughter and son-in-law, Gail and J.P. Curtis, of Westville, Okla.; daughter, Connie Sloan of New York; sisters, Marie Bowles, of Siloam Springs, Ark., and Adolah Wright, of Bain Bridge Island, Wash.; two grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

TERRY, Yvonne L., was born January 12, 1926 in Amarillo, Tex., and died October 5, 2011 in Midwest City, Okla. She was a long-time member of the Choctaw church. She and her family ran Terry's Appliance Center since 1962. She was preceded in death by her husband, Harold Terry. Survivors: daughter, Vicki Wood and husband, Terry; son, Robin and wife, Cathy; son, Tracy and wife, Julie, all of Choctaw, Okla.; sister, Mary Artress of Smyrna, Ga.; six grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; one uncle, and many nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

WATSON, Thelma B., born November 12, 1927 and died December 1, 2011 in Malvern, Ark. She was a member of the Hot Springs church. Survivors: husband, Doyle Watson, of Malvern; daughters, Vickie Rioza of Malvern; Doie Dumas, of Hot Springs, Ark.; Judy and Tom Pedretti, of Hot Springs; and Johnna McKinnon, of Jacksonville, Fla.; sisters, Amy Byrd, of Springdale, Ark.; and Ruby

Cole, of Springfield, Mo.; three grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.

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SABBATH SUNSET CALENDAR

	Feb 3	Feb 10	Feb 17	Feb 24	Mar 2	Mar 9
Abilene, TX	6:12	6:19	6:25	6:31	6:37	6:43
Albuquerque, NM	5:35	5:42	5:49	5:56	6:04	6:10
Amarillo, TX	6:16	6:23	6:30	6:37	6:44	6:50
Brownsville, TX	6:14	6:19	6:23	6:28	6:32	6:36
Dallas, TX	6:00	6:06	6:13	6:19	6:25	6:31
El Paso, TX	5:40	5:47	5:53	5:58	6:05	6:10
Fort Worth/Keene, TX	6:02	6:08	6:15	6:21	6:28	6:33
Gallup, NM	5:34	5:50	5:57	6:04	6:11	6:17
Galveston/Houston, TX	5:59	6:05	6:10	6:16	6:22	6:26
Gentry, AR	5:44	5:52	5:59	6:06	6:14	6:20
Little Rock, AR	5:38	5:45	5:52	5:59	6:06	6:12
Muskogee, OK	5:49	5:56	6:03	6:10	6:18	6:24
New Orleans, LA	5:38	5:43	5:49	5:55	6:01	6:05
Oklahoma City, OK	5:58	6:05	6:12	6:19	6:26	6:33
Roswell, NM	5:29	5:37	5:43	5:49	5:56	6:02
San Antonio, TX	6:12	6:18	6:23	6:28	6:34	6:39
Shreveport, LA	5:48	5:55	6:01	6:07	6:13	6:19
Tulsa, OK	5:50	5:58	6:05	6:12	6:20	6:26

BY JUSTON WEIDMAN

Learning to Pray at GYC

IN 2010, I ATTENDED GYC IN BALTIMORE. When Justin McNeilus, the president of GYC, spoke, I felt God speaking through him. At that moment I decided I would always attend GYC, which I did again this past December in Houston.

While in Houston, I met many young people from around the world and enjoyed the fellowship of young believers. The speakers and testimonies that I heard also inspired me. Charissa Fong, from Sydney, Australia, was one who inspired me to believe that God could use me even if I feel like an ordinary person. She gave the morning devotions and set the tone for the day. She told about the people in the Bible who were ordinary and had many faults, and yet God used them. I realized, too, that God could use me no matter who I am. Through what she and the other speakers had to say, I learned to pray for the Holy Spirit and for revival and reformation for myself and for the church.

I was kind of afraid to go to the prayer room in Baltimore, but I decided that in Houston I would do everything I did not do in Baltimore. I went to the prayer room for about half an hour

and prayed, and also joined the group that prayed there over the New Year. We prayed for Houston and the Bible studies that we'd passed out, and we also prayed for our leaders and everyone who was at GYC.

Since going to both the Baltimore and Houston GYCs, I believe more in prayer. Seeing others praying and seeing that they didn't doubt God at all was very powerful. I now know that I have a connection with God and that I can pray every day and have a conversation with Him. I can ask for the Holy Spirit and I can pray for the people around me—my church, family, pastors—and I can pray for God to speak through me or through others at the right time.

My church is currently doing ten days of prayer, and at first I had a hard time, but on the first morning I prayed and asked God to help me with it. He impressed me to pick up Mark Finley's *Ten Days in the Upper Room*, which has gone along with the ten days of prayer. My prayer life has improved because of it.

God also really spoke to me about breaking down the walls that we build in our churches through Dwight Nelson's sermon about the topic on Sabbath afternoon in Houston. He said that there are many walls within our church that separate even the members, things like music, prayers, worship, or even racism. He gave a call and I went up, because I decided I did not want to be a wall builder, but rather a wall breaker. The things I learned and experienced at GYC have changed my life and I encourage any young person to attend the next one.



Front row, from left, Eden Ward, Colton Weidman, Juston Weidman, Isaac Heath, Dylan Armstrong. Back row, from left, Lisa Ward, Gerado Tucker, Kevin Weidman, Dean Prater, Timothy Machado, Antonio Correa.

On the Record »

BY PAT HUMPHREY » COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR, SOUTHWESTERN UNION



God's Church—A Symphony of Believers

I LOVE CLASSICAL MUSIC, ESPECIALLY ORCHESTRAL MUSIC. Maybe it's because of the many trips that I took as an elementary school student to hear the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra in concert at Severance Hall in Cleveland, Ohio, where I grew up. Or maybe it's because I spent so many of my school days as a second violinist in the school orchestra. Whatever the reason, I not only find the music of orchestras heavenly, but I think that the whole concept of an orchestra has a wonderful spiritual application.

Orchestras are comprised of strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion instruments, each adding its own unique sound and function as they blend together to create beautiful music. Some instruments have a softer sound, while others with their loud bellows add emphasis or provide a dynamic climax to a song. Other instruments, such as the drums, focus on rhythm. Some

musicians play the melody, while others add harmony; all blend together skillfully to make sounds that are pleasing to the ear. And of course, all the instruments of the orchestra, with their players, are led by a skilled conductor, whose purpose is to unify the performers, set the tempo, and shape the sound of the music.

Can you see where I'm going? I like to think of the church as a type of orchestra—it's made up of a variety of players, each having very diverse characteristics, roles, and functions, all of whom blend together with one unified purpose. In the Bible, Paul uses the analogy of a body to describe the church. He says in 1 Corinthians, beginning with verse 12 (NIV): "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts

form one body, so it is with Christ . . . Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many."

Focusing on our interdependence, Paul continues, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' . . . But God has put the body together, . . . so that there should be no division in the body."

Whether you think of God's church as a symphony orchestra or as a body, the message is the same: God's church is comprised of a kaleidoscope of people differing from one another in age, race, nationality, culture, gender, socioeconomic status, skill, talent, ability, and function, each having a vital role to play in carrying out the Great Commission.

If the thought has ever crossed your mind that you or another group of people are somehow less valued members of God's family, please banish that thought forever. Every part of the body of Christ is vital and without each one, the body is incomplete. Let's all unite together and finish the work so we can go home!

Pat Humphrey



Record

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