

SOUTHWESTERN UNION

Record

SEPTEMBER 2012



FAITH *Through*
the FIRE

HOLDING ON WHEN YOUR WORLD IS CRUMBLING



8

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STILL FAITHFUL
EVEN THROUGH THE FIRE



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GOD IS WITH ME.
I'M SURE OF IT!

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On the Cover

When wildfires raged through Bastrop, Texas, in September 2011, Todd Jordan, a member of the Elgin church, lost everything—except his faith. Read Todd's compelling story—and the stories of others—whose faith didn't falter when tragedy struck. [Photo © 2011 Chase A. Fountain, TPWD, Courtesy of Texas Parks and Wildlife]



Point of View»

BY LARRY MOORE » SOUTHWESTERN UNION CONFERENCE PRESIDENT



Not If, But When

As a pastor, I have seen literally hundreds of people go through difficult times, from divorce to death, or poor health to financial meltdown. The question is not *if* we will experience these challenges, but *when* will we experience them. Maybe you are going through a faith test right now. It's important to recognize the source of our pain, thus enabling us to cope with our suffering. Often God is blamed for all the bad that happens. I often hear people say that it must be God's will that we suffer or that a person dies. I believe the Bible teaches that God wants us all to prosper and be in health. Satan wants to discourage and destroy, and loves it when we blame God.

Remember Job? He had it made; he was living the good life and was a righteous man. Satan came to God and insinuated that Job was only righteous because God was blessing him. God granted permission for Satan to test Job. His children were slain, his flocks were taken, and he got boils from the top of his head to the soles of his feet—even his wife told him to curse God and die. His friends were no help, so all he could do was hang on to his God. He said, "Though He slay me yet I will trust Him." There is the answer to surviving life's tragedies. *Trust*. When your life is falling apart, trust Him. Job got it all back and then some. So will we, if we trust

in God. If we do not get it in this life, then we will in the next. God will take care of you.

I want to share my favorite text with you. I have used it many times myself and given it to others. It's God's promise to the suffering. Claim it, use it, share it. Isaiah 41:10 (NKJV) says, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Larry Moore





CREATION Health

BY LYNELL LAMOUNTAIN » SENIOR MANAGER OF MISSION DEVELOPMENT, FLORIDA HOSPITAL

Enjoy The REST of Your Life

Over committed. Overloaded. Overwhelmed. Ring a bell?

When was the last time you felt bone-weary, exhausted, and depleted?

More and more stuff gets crammed into each 24-hour day. Businesses run at an ever-quickening pace. People, cell phones, texts, e-mail, faxes, social media tweets, and updates find us wherever we are in the world with their flood of demands that never let up! Which begs the question, are we missing out on life because we are so busy living? Are we in charge of life, or is life in charge of us?

Pick the word that best describes you:

- Fatigued or energetic.
- Hurried or calm.
- Anxious or secure.

Are you happy with your quality of life? For many people, overscheduled lives are eroding their peace and happiness. They wake up stressed, go to work stressed, and then fall asleep (eventually) stressed.

Let's talk about sleep for a minute. According to the National Sleep Foundation, more than 100 million Americans suffer from sleep deprivation. More than 40 percent of Americans sleep less than six hours a night, and as many as one in three are so sleepy during the day that it interferes with their performance and activities at least two to three days each month.

weariness. He rested simply *to enjoy life*.

Are you enjoying life? Do you feel fully alive? Do you *savor* the moments?

This only happens when *you* decide to slow down and create space in your life for rest. You need adequate sleep, the weekly Sabbath, and an annual vacation.

In an interesting nine-year research study of more than 12,000 men conducted by Drs. Gump and Matthews, it was discovered that annual vacations were associated with a reduced risk of all-cause mortality, especially mortality from coronary heart disease.

Vacations can come in all shapes and sizes. You can still get that vacation glow by taking your vacation time in small intervals, such as 2 to 4 days. Fatigue, neck pain, and head or back aches are all signals that it's time for a break.

Take your vacation time. You'll feel better, be healthier, and more productive.

Isn't it time that life stopped passing you by in a frenzied blur? Here are five tips to begin enjoying greater rest in your life:

1. Choose to get 7-8 hours of sleep *tonight*.
2. Start an ongoing conversation with God—give Him your problems and concerns.
3. Receive God's gift of His weekly Sabbath rest.
4. Schedule your annual vacation(s) *and* mini get-a-ways.
5. Take frequent daily breaks (five to ten minutes in the sun and fresh air will recharge your mind).

English author and cartoonist Ashleigh Brilliant said, "Sometimes the most urgent and vital thing you can possibly do is to take a complete rest!"

Are you in urgent need of rest? Is your life out of balance? Is the way you are currently managing your life sustainable over the long haul?

If not, then decide to make a change today and get the rest that you deserve. Because when you do this, you will enjoy the rest of your life.

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 

How much will we take before finally declaring, "Enough!?" The Bible says in Genesis 2:2 (NLT), "On the seventh day having finished his task, God rested from all his work." God didn't rest because of physical, emotional, or mental



Lead Your World »»»

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



To Lead or to Manage, That is the Question...

Imagine for a moment that you're boarding a plane to some sunny, exotic destination. While on board, the service is excellent. The crew is attentive to your needs and exceeds your expectations. After a few hours, the plane lands smoothly and you disembark, only to discover—to your horror—that the plane has landed in the wrong destination! You have just experienced outstanding management and simultaneously, terrible leadership.

Leading and managing are often seen as interchangeable. What's the difference? Does it really matter?

UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP

The major concern of leadership is destination. Leaders address the question, "Where are we going?" Without knowing this, purpose is unclear. Perhaps more than any preceding generation, we spend more personal time and energy trying to figure out where our lives should be headed. This is why we look to leaders who are clear about where they are going. They offer a sense of security that many find elusive. In any successful life or organization, it's vital to have the sense of security that direction and vision bring. When the destination is unknown, it's easy to become frustrated, confused, and lost. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18, CEB).

Leadership can be compared to using a ladder. Knowing where the ladder needs to be placed before attempting to climb is basic. Leadership is about knowing which wall needs to be climbed, and where to place the ladder so that people can climb safely to the other side.

UNDERSTANDING MANAGEMENT

In a very basic sense, management is about helping people climb the ladder once it is in the right place. In practice, managers are rarely involved in deciding where the ladder of the organizations they work for should be placed. Their task is not to set the direction. The genius of great management is helping people understand their role and providing direction, organization, and motivation for the climb. Management is important, but leadership is what gives meaning to management.

Our confidence in organizations and those who lead them usually hinges on two things. First, knowing where we are headed, and second, being clear about how we are personally involved. Great leaders and managers are indispensable when it comes to providing these answers. Leaders do the right thing, managers do things right.

WHY SHOULD LEADING AND MANAGING MATTER TO US PERSONALLY?

Since the industrial revolution, leadership has been equated to management. In fact, the words "leader" and "leadership" have been notoriously difficult to define. The distinctions between them were largely missed back then—it was far easier to just focus on results.

This problem continues today. We frequently see leadership as management, and applaud those who are efficient and skillful at managing because they tend to get visible results. Leadership and management are two different things. Although initially impressive, results are never enough if we are headed in the wrong direction because of poor leadership.

Israel's first monarch, Saul, was initially a success. He certainly got visible results, winning many battles. If we understand anything about leadership, Saul was, in reality, a manager led by an all-knowing God. The prophet Samuel briefed him regularly. God had already placed the ladder in the correct place. Instead of sticking with God's agenda, Saul made adaptations to God's instructions that seemed harmless in his own eyes. These choices, however, ultimately put him and his entire nation on the wrong path.

There are many successful people today who are outside of God's will. Clearly, results alone are never an indication of God's hand or blessing in our lives. Some, like Saul, give only selective obedience and reason that God must be blessing because the results look promising and disaster has not struck. We don't have to look very far to see skillful yet ethically challenged "leaders" who fail to lead their personal and corporate lives with honor and dignity. Their skill may show results for a while, but ultimately, they place themselves and the organizations they lead at great risk.

It wasn't just important to God that Saul got results; how he got them revealed his level of trust in his Lord. Today, we are surrounded by countless gadgets and applications designed to help better organize and manage our lives—management is still a preoccupation of our times. There is nothing wrong with managing your life efficiently, but the crucial question of our generation is not "Are we well managed?" but "Are our lives well led?"

Henry David Thoreau hit at the core of leadership when he said; *"I would give all the wealth of the world, and all the deeds of all the heroes, for one true vision."*

The good news is that God is in the vision business. He provides faultless direction so that we can live with meaning and purpose. Ultimately, knowing the difference between leading and managing our lives is vitally important. If nothing else, it helps us understand that the best way to "lead our world" is to surrender to Him.

Paul Hunt writes from Plano, Tex..



Pass it On...

A Monthly Focus on Evangelism in the Southwest

BY BILL AND SUSAN WAGONER

One Day at a Time

We can only keep what we have by giving it away. Twenty-five years ago we were inspired to bring a program of recovery known as the 12 Steps, which originated with Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.), to the Handley, Texas, church. We shared the experience, strength, and hope that we'd received as a result of working the program, adapting the format and contents to meet the needs of anyone struggling with or affected by addiction.

We joined the Joshua, Texas, church in 1994 and have since held our meetings there every Monday evening at 8:00 p.m. Our meetings, while based on the 12 Steps of A.A. and Al-Anon (for family and friends whose lives have been affected by someone else's addiction), also incorporate other resources, including the Serenity Bible.

The types of addictions are too numerous to mention, and the causes too difficult to explain, but there is one common cause for all of them. The addictive substance or behavior starts out as a solution to an underlying problem, or, if you will, a "defect of character."

Addiction is addiction, and the solution is the same for all: a total acceptance of powerlessness over it, and a total reliance upon God. The solution includes having a spiritual awakening produced by a searching and fearless moral inventory, asking God to remove these defects of character and cleaning up the wreckage of the past.

The only requirement for our meetings is a desire for change and a willingness to go through the 12 Steps process necessary for recovery. How do we do this? Through the H.O.W. acronym—honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness. Our motto is, "Who you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here; so all can share in total confidence." We close our meetings with the Lord's Prayer, then conclude with "Keep coming back; it works if you work it!"

Tom's (not his real name) testimony is proof of the 12 Steps program. Here is his testimony: "My name is Tom and I am an addict. I was raised an Adventist and went to an Adventist school through fifth grade. We moved from California to Texas when I was 11. I never felt like I fit in with others; I was always on the outside looking in. A friend offered me beer when I was 12. After drinking a couple of beers, I suddenly felt different.

"For the next 23 years, I chased the illusion of that feeling. For me, one is too many and a thousand is never enough. Once I

start drinking or using drugs, I lose all control.

"In 1986 I lost everything, and it was the beginning of the end for that out-of-control lifestyle. I would wake in the morning, smoke methamphetamine and marijuana and drink beer all day long. If I wanted to sleep, I would take narcotics to pass out, only to rise the next day and start the cycle over. In that one year, I lost everything I had worked for—my business, my family, my home, and any signs of sanity, and ended up in a treatment center where I was introduced to the 12 Steps program.

"Only by the grace of a loving, forgiving, God of mercy, did I awake this morning rather than coming to. Praise be to a wonderful Lord and Savior!"

The program we've created has worked for our participants. Here are a few things others said about it:

"It has taught me the importance of surrendering my life to God."

"The 12 Steps program taught me how to surrender my life to God. It helped me to get past the hurdle of admitting I was not surrendering my life to God."

If you'd like more information on the 12 Steps program, contact the Joshua, Texas, church at 817.645.3086.



Visión Hispana

UN BREVE NOTICIERO MENSUAL DEL SUROESTE

¡Bástate Mi Gracia!

Uno de los personajes bíblicos que yo mas he admirado a sido el apóstol San Pablo por su amor, fe y gran dedicación para con la obra que Dios le encomendó. El cargaba en su ser un gran peso de desesperación, por lo que en cierta ocasión el Señor tuvo que decirle ¡bástate mi gracia!, de ahí, muchos pensamos que se trataba de su ceguera, el gran aguijón del cual deseaba poder estar libre.

Yo empecé a perder la vista seis años atrás. Como pastor, sentía que todo el peso del mundo caía sobre mí, me preguntaba ¿como voy a poder hacer la obra de Dios? Veía sombras y siluetas alrededor de mí, me sentía solo, perdido y sin apoyo de aquellos que mas necesitaba. Bajo la desesperación perdí la confianza en mi mismo y caminaba



Miembros del grupo de Shattuck (izquierda) y Woodard (derecha) con el Pastor Alex y su esposa Miriam Rodriguez en la derecha.

con pasos inseguros. Mi esposa Miriam se convirtió prácticamente en el todo para mí. Ella es quien maneja el auto, así que para disminuir la carga pensé retirarme del ministerio, esos eran mis planes, no los de Dios. Por muchos años he venido estudiando la vida de Pablo, pero hasta ahora las palabras de “bástate mi gracia” han impactado mi vida. He llegado a comprender lo mucho que el apóstol debió haber padecido, pues ahora yo también soy víctima de la misma condición. Estoy legalmente ciego, por lo que muchas veces me encuentro haciéndole el mismo pedido al Señor y como al apóstol, siento que me dice: ¡bástate mi gracia!

Después de un tratamiento intensivo para personas invidentes aprendí a utilizar el bastón, a vestirme, bañarme, a cocinar sin quemar las cosas, a manejar la

computadora y con la ayuda de un aparato que me lee las etiquetas puedo ir de compras. Como invidente tuve que aprender también a ignorar a esos individuos que se disgustan al ver personas con bastón. Me ayudaron a poder llevar una vida útil y con la ayuda de Dios volví a tener el valor de servirle. Y en el medio de la meditación y orando sin cesar se presentó un llamado para la iglesia americana del pueblo de Shattuck en Oklahoma, trabajando al lado del Pastor Rick Mercer en su distrito, como encargado de la obra hispana. Tenía mucho temor, y no sabía si me aceptarían, por mi condición, pero otra vez el Señor contestó “¡bástate mi gracia!” Todo marchaba bien durante la entrevista por teléfono, pero yo estaba desesperado y al presentarse la oportunidad les comuniqué que yo era legalmente ciego. Entonces se produjo un silencio, y después de unos minutos, uno de ellos dijo, “Pablo también era ciego,” esas palabras me dieron aliento, pues habían visto mas allá de mi condición.

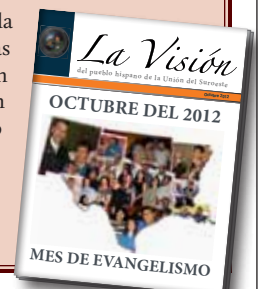
Hoy mi esposa y yo nos gozamos sirviendo a Dios, porque aún dentro de mis limitaciones e incansables luchas tomo la mano de Jesús para seguir adelante. Mi Señor me a permitido servirle en varios ámbitos en la comunidad, desde ferias de salud, seminarios, campañas evangelísticas y hasta en un ministerio en la prisión. Hoy estamos creando vínculos, por medio de un ministerio de inglés como segunda lengua (ESL), en Shattuck, OK con la comunidad hispana y se han formado dos grupos uno en Shattuck y otro en Woodward, para un total de 17 hermanos.

Para este año próximo tenemos varios proyectos que esperamos con su ayuda poderlos realizar. Mi consejo para todos aquellos que viven con un impedimento físico es que no dejen que les ahoguen los pesares, inquietudes, ni pruebas, depositen todo en las manos de Dios, Él conoce todas las cosas y les sacará victoriosos, y como a Pablo, les dirá: “¡bástate mi gracia!”

Alex Rodríguez, pastor

La Nueva Revista Hispana llegará a tu Iglesia Pronto, ¡espérala!

Estimados hermanos tenemos buenas noticias para toda nuestra hermandad hispana. *La Visión* ¡llegará a sus iglesias en el mes de octubre de este año! *La Visión* es una publicación trimestral gratuita para los miembros Adventistas de la Unión del Suroeste. Si usted es parte de un pequeño grupo hispano dentro de una iglesia de habla inglesa, comuníquese con su pastor y pida que la revista sea enviada a ustedes. Para más información comuníquese con nosotros electrónicamente a lavision@swuc.org o por teléfono al 817.295.0476 ext. 339.





STILL FAITHFUL EVEN THROUGH THE FIRE

Pat Humphrey, Editor

In early September 2011, raging wildfires ripped through Bastrop, Texas, destroying more than 1,600 homes and 34,000 acres, and taking the lives of two people. This fire is now known as the most catastrophic fire in Texas history. When the flames of the Bastrop fire began to kindle, Todd Jordan, a brand-new member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, had no idea that his world was about to be turned upside down.

Not long before joining the Adventist Church, Todd, who was raised a Catholic, was on his way to becoming a priest. He had purchased a little condo with the intention of retiring and immersing himself into the ministry. His plan was to be self-sufficient so that

the parish wouldn't have to take care of him. In preparation for the ministry, Jordan prayed earnestly, "Oh, Lord, my heart is ready."

Then, while engaging in the study of God's Word, Todd's life took a surprising turn. "Step by step, line by line, God's law was revealed to me. No one was knocking at my door. It was simply through my own Bible study and the books that I had surrounded myself with that God led me to the truth," Todd says. One by one Todd became convicted on the Ten Commandments, including the fourth, which admonishes us to worship God on the seventh day. He immediately began searching for a church whose members observe the Sabbath. "I was looking for a synagogue, for any-

one else that was actually keeping Sabbath,” Todd recalls.

Unable to find a Sabbathkeeping church, Todd began to keep the Sabbath at home. This continued for a year before his baptism in January 2011 at the Elgin, Texas, church. Todd continued to study and, little by little, God revealed additional truths to him, giving him a correct biblical understanding on the state of the dead, purgatory, patron saints, celibacy, and other topics.

During this time Todd also began watching 3ABN and discovered that the network’s preachers confirmed the very things he had been studying. He eventually learned that 3ABN was operated by Seventh-day Adventists and was able to locate an Adventist church in nearby Elgin. On the day he was baptized, he told the pastor,

Church. “I only had two things left and that was my physical life and my health,” Todd recalls.

Nevertheless, Todd was faithful, determined to live and share his newfound faith. So one Sabbath he presented the idea to his church family of conducting a Sabbath billboard campaign that would ask the question, “What is the Lord’s day, Saturday or Sunday?” The church loved the idea and began making plans to carry out the campaign. But the very next morning, Todd woke up hearing the voices of people saying, “Todd we have to get out, the fire is here!” The rest is history.

The Bastrop fire wiped out all 12 homes in the condo community where Todd was living. It took four months and the help of many volunteers just to remove the tons of ash. “So after four months of that, I needed a sabbatical,” Todd says. “My creativity was gone. The good Lord saw fit to unmake my life, so I know it is within His power to remake it. I had to make my peace with that. I knew that if I was going to remake my life, that I had to do it as an Adventist.”

Facing the future with very few earthly goods, Todd decided to study at Amazing Facts College of Evangelism (AFCOE). “My family was very upset,” he says. “But my pastor’s wife, Mary, happened to be studying at AFCOE during the fire. So her AFCOE class was praying for me. And the pastor told me that the course at AFCOE would teach me how to evangelize. As a Catholic, I didn’t know how to lead people to Christ.”



Todd Jordan's home before (above) and after (right) the destructive force of the fire passed through.



“Pastor, I want you to hold me there for a little while. I realize there is no purgatory and I want to be able to praise God from the grave.”

Having joined the church and changed his views on celibacy, Todd soon found himself in a romantic relationship that seemed promising for marriage, but that relationship ended in disappointment. Adding to the emotional turmoil he was experiencing, Todd’s family was not very supportive of his new faith, puzzled and a bit angry because he had abandoned the Catholic



Reflecting on his experience of losing everything, Todd says that it was the Bible that helped him to maintain his faith. “Adventism helped to establish the authority of the Bible in my life. It was definitely a trust in Scripture. I trusted that consent was given in heaven that this destruction was allowed to happen. I didn’t understand it, but I wrestled with God. I remembered the story of Elijah and how he went to the widow of Zarephath. But each one of his places of refuge dried up. I clung to that story.”

The clean-up process for Todd actually became a therapeutic experience. “As I was cleaning up, every now and then I would look down at my feet and a Bible passage would come to mind. . . . To sit there in the ashes and do morning and evening prayer—it all brought me back to the Bible. So somehow through that experience, my love for the Bible continued to grow.”

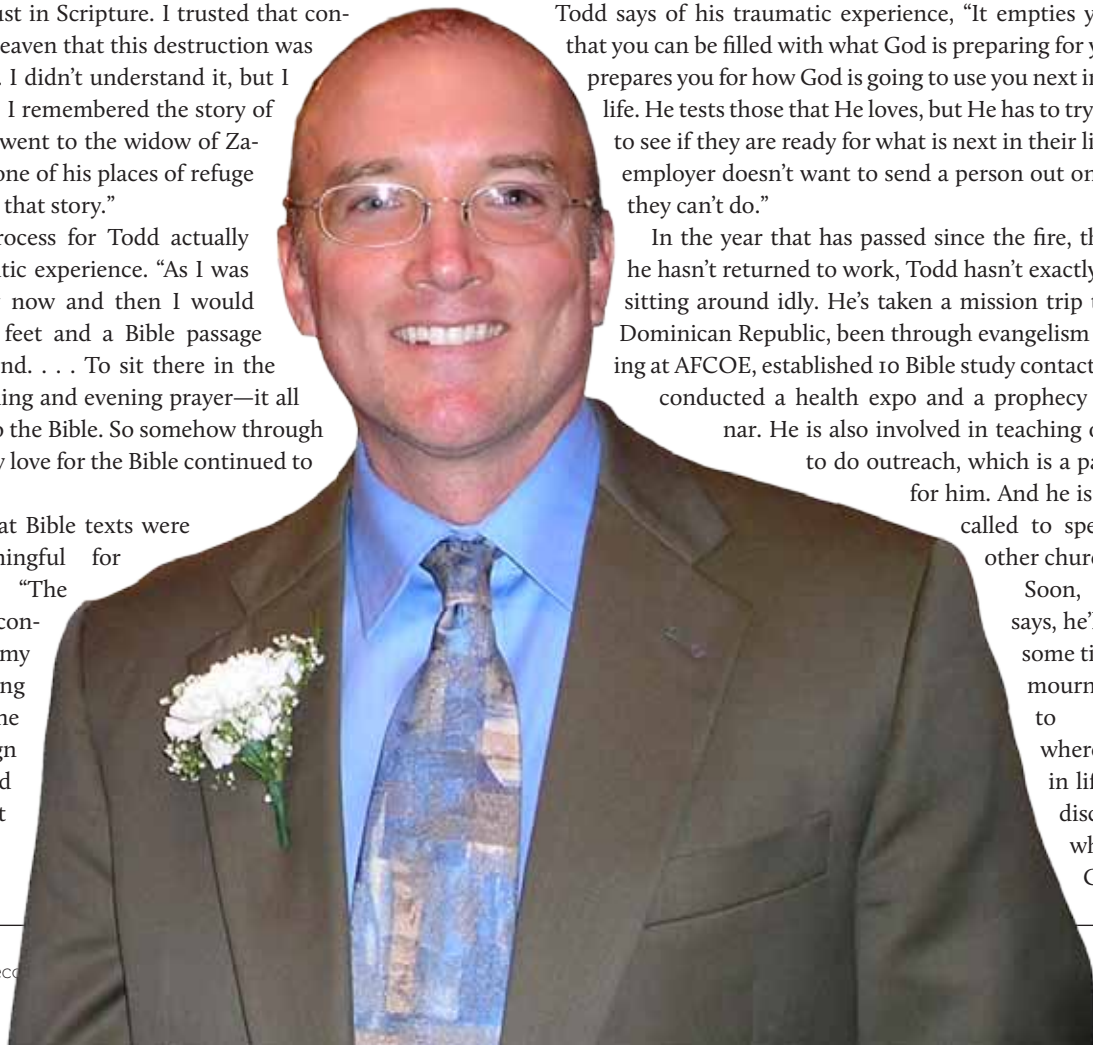
When asked what Bible texts were particularly meaningful for him, Todd says, “The Psalms were the constant source of my strength. Knowing I had presented the Sabbath campaign to the church and then the very next morning the county where we were

going to do it erupted in flames. . . . It helped me to understand that we are involved in a great controversy and to see where we are in the stream of time.” Todd’s favorite Bible text is John 14:15.

Todd says of his traumatic experience, “It empties you so that you can be filled with what God is preparing for you. It prepares you for how God is going to use you next in your life. He tests those that He loves, but He has to try those to see if they are ready for what is next in their life. An employer doesn’t want to send a person out on a job they can’t do.”

In the year that has passed since the fire, though he hasn’t returned to work, Todd hasn’t exactly been sitting around idly. He’s taken a mission trip to the Dominican Republic, been through evangelism training at AFCOE, established 10 Bible study contacts, and conducted a health expo and a prophecy seminar. He is also involved in teaching others to do outreach, which is a passion for him. And he is often called to speak at other churches.

Soon, Todd says, he’ll take some time to mourn and to assess where he is in life and discover where God





Previous page: The Bastrop wildfires did immense damage to the condominium community in which Todd Jordan (**below**)—a brand new member of the Adventist Church—lived, including his own residence. Where beautiful homes once stood, the fires left nothing but ashes.

Above left and left: After losing his home in the Bastrop fire, Todd Jordan decided to engage more fully in the Lord's work. Selling the property upon which his home once stood, he took the proceeds to fund a mission trip to the Dominican Republic. "I might as well give Him everything," Todd said.

▲ As the fire approaches and ominous smoke fills the sky, residents prepare to evacuate.

BIBLE PROMISES FOR YOU

- "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles" (Psalm 34:15, 17, NKJV).
- "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling" (Psalm 46:1-3, NKJV).
- "He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3, NKJV).
- "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4, NKJV).

is leading from here. An architect by trade, Todd also wants to spend some time volunteering to repair the homes of people who can't afford the expense. He's also working on a manuscript that tells the story of his life.

His advice for others? "My advice to someone who experiences tragedy in their life," says Todd, "is to remain connected to God, remain in His Word, continue to pray, and know that He mourns with you."

GOD IS WITH ME. I'M SURE OF IT!

Jessica Lozano, Associate Editor

In January 2011, Melissa Esquivel was a stay-at-home mom in Joshua, Texas, who homeschooled her young son and made girls' hair bows in her spare time for extra income. Her husband, Marvin Romero-Pineda, worked doing construction. Because of the falling demand for construction in the area at the time, they'd decided that Marvin would go work with his brother in south Louisiana, where much of the rest of his family also lived.

On the evening of January 29, Melissa called Marvin's cell phone. When he didn't answer, she became concerned. Marvin usually called several times a day to speak with their son. When repeated calls the next day went unanswered, Melissa and Marvin's family knew that something was wrong. They filed a missing person's report that evening with the Marrero, La., police department. Within two weeks, Marvin's body had been found and two men had been charged with his murder.

These two men had senselessly attempted to rob Marvin, not realizing the small amount of cash he had on him. When he tried to fight them, one of the men shot him, killing him. The two men drove Marvin's body to the home of the man who had shot him, where they attempted to remove evidence of their crime and con-

ceal his identity. They then dumped his remains near a landfill, hoping he would never be found.

"My son and I had been studying the childrens' Sabbath school lesson the week before Marvin's disappearance, and we continued studying even as he was missing," says Melissa. "I didn't realize it at the time, but the Bible verses that we studied in those weeks were meant to be a comfort to us." It was Melissa's son who pointed it out to her. "We'd studied about the lost sheep, the lost coin, and about Jesus calming the storm. When Marvin was missing, I had hope that he would be found. When his body was found, I realized that God had been preparing me to have peace. And I did have peace. Even though it was the most pain I've ever had, I know that God gave our family strength and peace."

Since her husband's disappearance and death, Melissa has faced emotional ups and downs, but her faith has remained strong. God has helped her successfully grow her business into an online girls clothing boutique that has both kept her busy and provided sufficiently for her and her son's needs.

"The one thing I can't reiterate enough is that God is bigger. He just is. He is bigger than anything that you can imagine," she says.

“I’ve been amazed at the things He has done for us in the year and a half since Marvin’s death, and at the people He has put in our path to give us strength and courage.”

Another widow was able to help her with the practicalities of life as a widow, while others offered emotional and spiritual stability and encouragement. Melissa also counts the confession of the driver, and subsequently, his testifying against the other man to be God at work. She says that had the driver not come forward with the information, the other man would not have remained in custody.

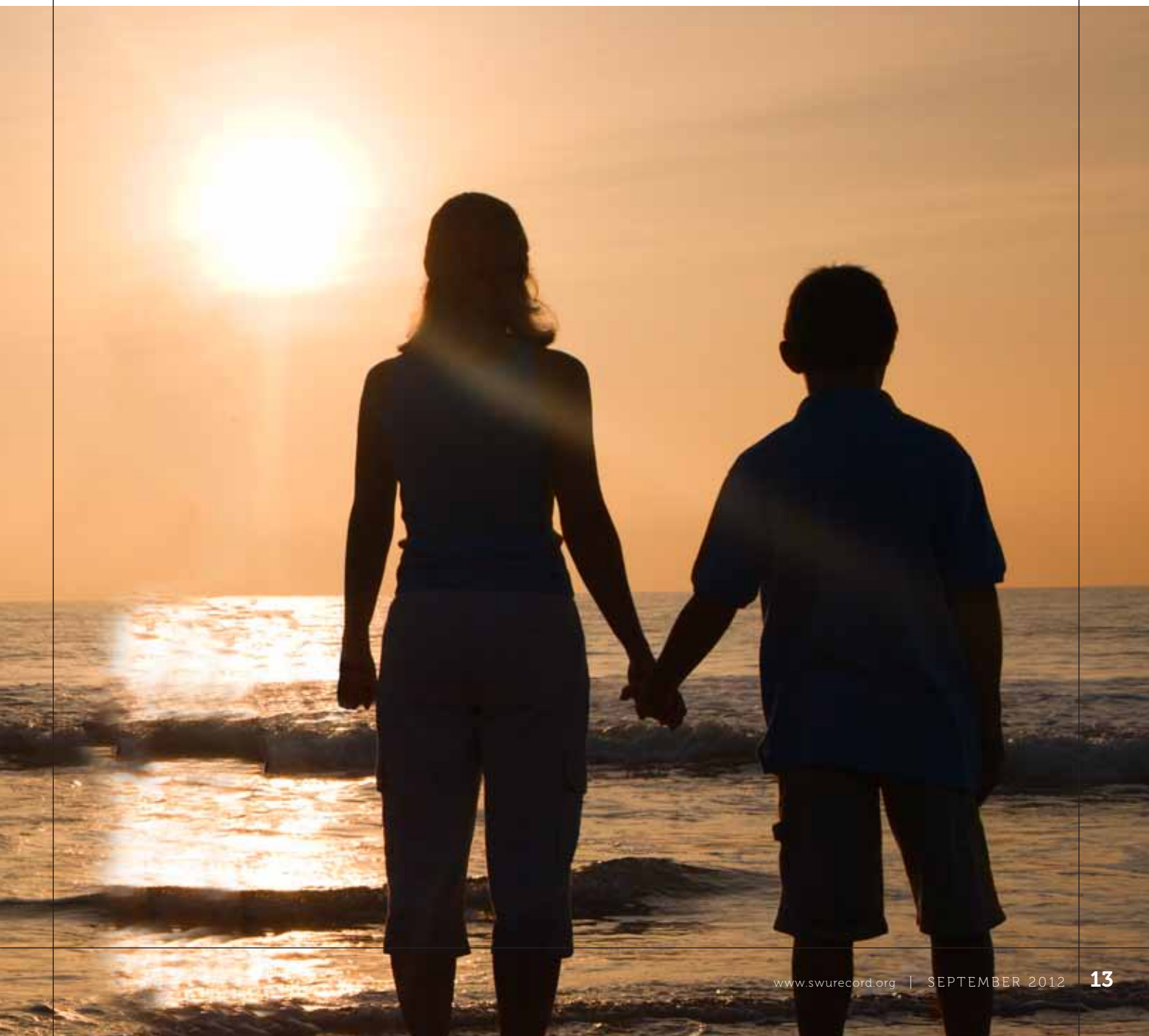
A year after Marvin’s death, Melissa and Marvin’s mother attended the trials of the two men. Though it was very difficult, she felt she needed to be there. She recalls that, in order to prevent a mistrial, no one in the courtroom was allowed to show any emotion that would sway the jury. “No gasps, frowns, tears—nothing

was allowed,” she says. “We prayed for strength to be able to sit through it, so we were able to maintain our composure.”

She says that she could see God working in all aspects of the trial, from how evidence that could have easily been destroyed by the suspects was found days after the arrests, to how the driver, after his conviction of 40 years in prison without parole, turned to her and said, “I’m sorry.”

Melissa’s daily journey with God since the loss of her husband has not necessarily included dramatic events that changed her faith. Rather, it has been a steady renewal as she sees Him working in big and small ways every day for her and her family, as well as for the men who committed this horrendous crime against them.

“My faith in God has become stronger,” she says. “I’m more sure than ever that He is with me.”



LOVE GOES A LONG WAY

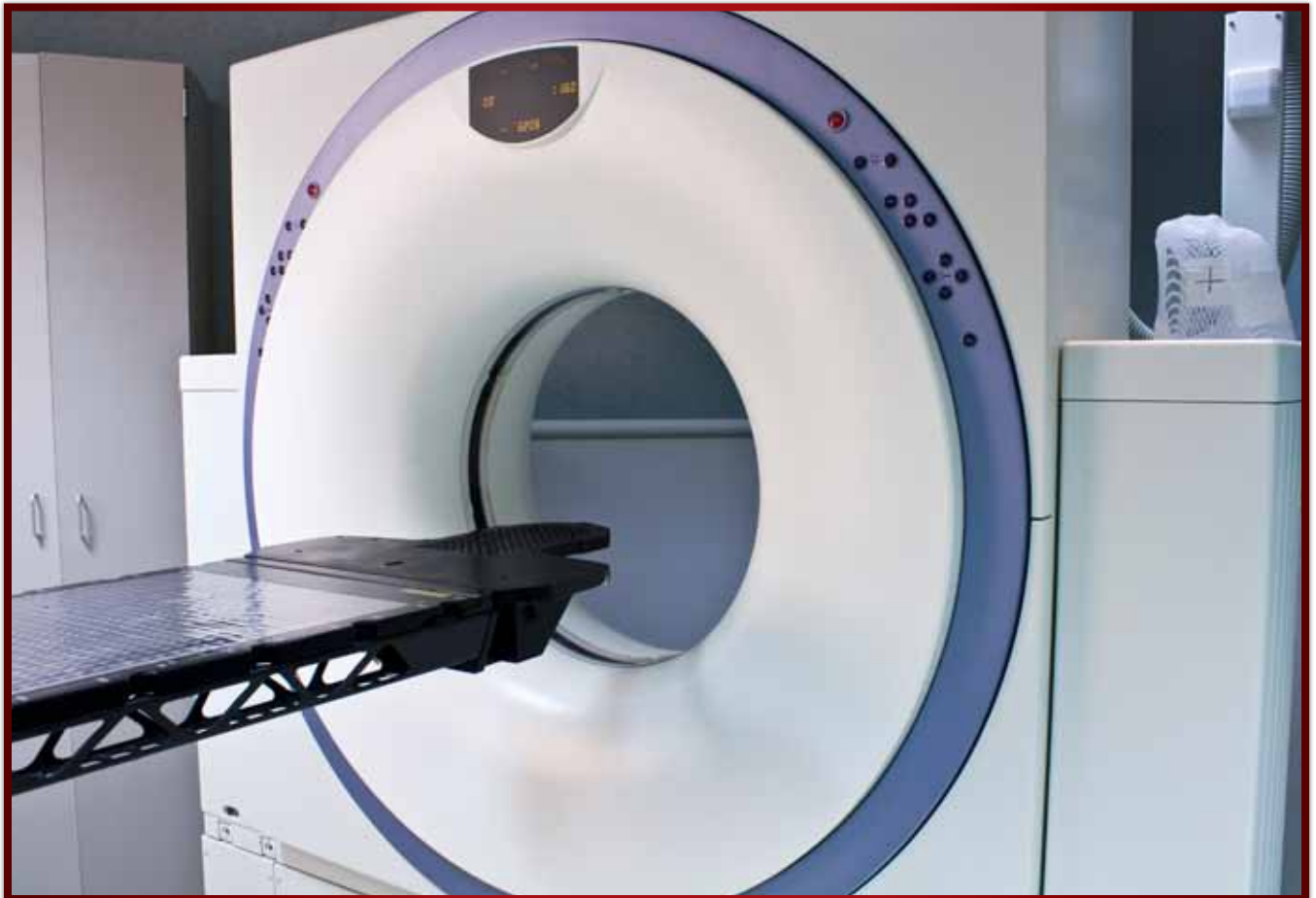
William Kilgore, Southwestern Adventist University

Driving home from my recent yearly PET scan gave me time to think again about how cancer has impacted my life over the past eight years. I remember the initial doctor's visit to examine the large lump under my right arm was encouraging for my wife, Leslie, and me. We were told there was a 95 percent chance of it simply being a fatty tumor, which was quite common and easy to remove. An out-patient procedure was scheduled for the day before Thanksgiving in 2004. The results were not what we expected. I was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and my first PET scan revealed tumors in my lymphatic system from my ears to my ankles.

The first month after the confirmation of the tests is still a blur. What stands out in my mind is the loving support of my family and the phone calls, emails, and letters from extended family, col-

leagues, church family, and even strangers who wanted to assure me of their prayers and remind me of God's love for me. We were even "flamingoed." We awoke on the Sabbath morning of graduation in May, 2005—when I was finishing my first round of treatment—to find our front yard covered in pink, plastic, flamingos with Bible verses attached to each one. It was an uplifting reminder that people cared and wanted to show their support. Three or four days later the flamingos left as mysteriously as they had come. Kindness does not cure cancer, but it does help to relieve fears and soothe the soul.

Although I am a participant in the disease, I am not an expert on cancer nor the outcomes of its treatment. Chemotherapy was a dark tunnel, but it made several things very clear to me. First, treatments do not offer any guarantees. Leslie and I prayed about



the method of treatment offered and after consulting other opinions decided to stay local for the eight months of chemo.

Over the past eight years, I have seen patients receive chemo, go into remission, and live; others have not been as fortunate. The same is true of those who chose alternative methods. Some found success and others only grew worse on the treatments. Cancer has taught me to be leery of any treatment that promises a cure for everyone if followed carefully.

Second, I have learned through this ordeal that living a healthy lifestyle has obvious benefits and rewards and can place someone in a category that puts them at a lower risk for cancer, but it is still not a guarantee. I hurt for individuals who have done everything right through the years, such as diet, exercise, and even daily devotions, and still things go wrong with their health. They often feel betrayed by God and wonder why God is doing this to them. It would be easy for any of us to fall into that trap.

I have come to the conclusion that I cannot answer the big “why” question in my own experience or anyone else’s life when faced with catastrophic events. But, I do have an assurance based on Scripture that I can know the how, where, and when regarding God’s plan to ultimately bring His healing to all of His people. God loves us, not because of what we do but because of who we are. As His redeemed children He has promised that we will never be out of His sight, even though our vision may be blurred and our grip is weak. There is nothing that a test can reveal to a doctor that our God does not already know. Assurance does not cure cancer, but it does promise its ultimate end.

As a pastor I have repeated the wedding vows for hundreds of couples through the years. It is one thing to love someone when they are dressed in their finest and standing before a church altar. It is a whole other thing to love, honor, and cherish in sickness and in health—standing by them when they are kneeling, bent over a commode. I have sat through eight-month sessions of chemotherapy twice. After five years of remission, in 2010, the cancer returned. Not once in all of those treatments have I ever sat alone. Leslie has always been my companion. My children have always been there and spoiled me at times, and I have loved their attention. Sadly, I have seen patients who came on the bus or took a cab to their treatment, and a neighbor is called to come and get them when it is over. I was reminded that



there are cancer patients who suffer and walk through the tunnel alone. Those folks have been there all along, but I never saw them as I do now. Compassion does not cure cancer, but it provides a friend for the journey.

God has strengthened me with a prayer that David prayed when he was running for his life from his son Absalom, who was invading Jerusalem. It is found in Psalm 61:1-2 and it says, “Hear my cry O God; listen to my prayer. From the ends of the earth I call on you, I call as my heart grows faint, lead me to the rock that is higher than I.” Until there is a cure, we have kindness, assurance, and compassion as guides to uplift others facing the uncertainty of cancer—leading them “to the rock that is higher than I.”

Would I Have Remained Faithful?



ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA CONFERENCE

In 1991, one year after the "Iron Curtain" fell in the former Soviet Union, Micki and I, along with our boys, had the privilege of going to Ukraine to conduct evangelistic meetings. After 70 years of religious oppression and persecution under a godless communist rule, people were hungry for the Word of God. We watched with astonishment as people received their Bibles at the end of the series of meetings; they would clutch them in their hands and hold them over their hearts. We saw the tears well up in their eyes as with gratitude they received their first-ever Scriptures. It was truly amazing to witness the emotion and passion that was demonstrated in receiving a Bible.

During the series I had the privilege of visiting with the Central Ukraine Conference president, Pastor Nikityuk. He shared with me stories of what it was like to live under Communism and yet seek to remain faithful to the Lord. Faith was

truly tested by fire every time a believer would seek to worship God. Churches were closed and confiscated by the government and worship services were banned. Church members would gather on Sabbath in different homes to sing and pray together, and if they were fortunate enough to have a Bible, would read and study Scripture together. Bedding or towels were placed around windows and at the base of every entry door to muffle sound so that a passerby or a communist soldier would suspect nothing. If detected, fines would be paid and the homeowner could be imprisoned.

One dared not carry a Bible openly for fear of imprisonment and having the Bible confiscated by police. Baptisms would take place secretly on moonless nights at a river, lake, or pond to avoid being hauled off to jail.

Bibles were copied on typewriters using multiple sheets of paper and carbon paper to maximize the effort. Again, doors and windows were covered so that the sound of the typewriter could not be heard. If discovered, the typewriter would be taken, the pages of typed Scripture would be destroyed, and the person would be fined.

As I listened to Pastor Nikityuk, I wondered if I would have remained faithful during those times. Yet prophecy reminds us that those days will be revisited. To be found faithful then, I must be faithful today when there is no threat of fines or imprisonment in living for Jesus.

Steven Orian, president

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference

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Sharing Adventist Literature in South Louisiana

Janet and Glen Miller have made sharing literature a life mission

FRANKLINTON, LA. » Approximately four years ago Janet and Glen Miller felt impressed by the Holy Spirit to become involved in spreading the truth of the Lord's soon return. But what could they do? They prayed and were impressed that they could hand out books. They began by sending 8,800 books, *Ten Commandments*, *Twice Removed*, through the mail to two zip codes in the town of Franklinton, Louisiana.

The Lord impressed them to do more, so they purchased seven newspaper display boxes and placed them at business locations in Hammond, Louisiana, including Wal-Mart, Winn Dixie, Big Lots, a local coffee shop, a motel, and a truck stop. But they didn't stop there. They began distributing *Ten Commandments*, *Twice Removed* by going door-to-door in subdivisions, apartments, mobile home parks, and RV parks. They purchased clear plastic door-knob hangers, and 9" x 15" plastic bags. The books fit perfectly in these holders, and they are protected from rain and moisture. The books also contain cards for the readers to request Bible studies.

When the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference began their conference-wide thrust to distribute 100,000 copies of *The Great Controversy*, the Millers incorporated their ideas into this special outreach. To date the Millers have handed out approximately 1,560 copies of *The Great Controversy* and approximately 16,030 copies of *Ten Commandments*, *Twice Removed* in Franklinton, Hammond, and Covington, Louisiana. They recently bought 12 cases of *The Great Controversy* to hand out in the Baton Rouge

area. That's a lot of heat, sweat, tears, and muscle ministry for the Lord in South Louisiana. The Millers shared that the Lord has always supplied their needs and continues to provide funds when they've needed money to purchase more books and/or the assistance of other members to help hand out books at various times. Janet said they stuff bags at night, pray, map out their streets, and start walking.

The Millers' prayer is that their method of sharing Jesus will inspire others to begin a ministry in their area. They feel this is "so simple that you can do it too." But the important thing to remember is that the Holy Spirit will be there to work through you! You can be the person who supplies the books and water to those doing the actual walking. If we earnestly pray, God will show us what



Janet Miller with one of her door-hangers.

He has in mind for us to do. "By giving the gospel to the world, it is in our power to hasten our Lord's return" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 633).

Dennis Shafter, evangelism coordinator

Springtown Church Meets Community Needs

GENTRY, ARK. » The Springtown church has begun an "Aging, Alzheimer's, and Dementia Support Group for Caregivers." At one of the church's women's Bible study groups, it was discovered that at least five women in the group were facing difficulties with a loved one with Alzheimer's dis-

ease. The group then met to lay plans for a monthly support group.

A recent meeting of the support group featured Gary Linker, medical director of a geriatric dementia unit, and Peggy Martin, mobile assessment specialist, both of the Vista Health Center in Fayetteville. If

anyone is interested in attending this free support group, information and directions to the church can be obtained by calling 479-549-5599.

Larry Yeagley

Prophecy Seminar Brings 10 People to Christ

BENTON, ARK. » David Steward, an evangelist from Amazing Facts, recently completed a prophecy seminar at the Benton church. Steward had just finished the morning message when he made an altar call. Members waited anxiously, silently praying that those who had heard the message over the past five weeks would be touched by the Holy Spirit, and make a decision for Christ. It didn't take long for people to stand up. A couple of families stood up together. In the end, there were 10 people who accepted Christ as their Savior. What an awesome day to see God working in such a powerful way.

The following Sabbath, district churches Monticello and Pine Bluff were invited to join Benton for a special Sabbath with guest speaker Ray



House, Arkansas-Louisiana Conference youth director. Activities included a baptism, fellowship lunch, and an outreach project of distributing *The Great Controversy*. Linda Uptigrove, who was one of the new 10 converts, had been preparing for this day. As she was baptized, many eyes filled with tears of joy.

The Benton church is excited about what God did through the seminar and the many opportunities that God has provided to witness to others.

Francis Caple

A new member, Linda Uptigrove, is baptized by Travis Walker, pastor.

The Entering Wedge

AMITY, ARK. » When I gave my heart to the Lord, I started praying and searching how to best serve my Savior. As I was studying, I came upon this quote, "I can see in the Lord's providence that the medical missionary work is to be a great entering wedge, whereby the diseased soul may be reached" (*Counsels on Health*, p. 535).

A few years ago, I was able to go to India with a group teaching about the medical missionary work. One of our activities was running a health exposition. The turnout was amazing! One of our booths was about trusting in God. I was curious about how the Hindu people would respond to it, but the student in charge of the booth told me that the people had been anxiously listening to the messages and that many had taken the offered book, *The Ministry of Healing*. The people were so interested in the health tips that they requested that we come back and offer a health training class.

On a visit to Nepal, we found we could

enter various homes by offering to take the family members' blood pressure for free. One family was so excited by this that they quickly started inviting others to come and have their blood pressure taken, as well. At the end of an hour, we were able to leave them some literature and even had prayer with this Hindu family. In a country where so many people are slaves to their gods, it was amazing to see God working on their hearts and lives.

Even in the United States, the medical missionary work is an entering wedge. In my father's medical office, a man walked in one day and asked if he could help him lose weight. My father explained about having a simple, plant-based diet, and about the need for water, rest, sunshine, exercise, and trust in God. He told him that our church held a cooking school once a month, and that he would be welcome to come. He seemed very interested and thankful for the invitation. The man came

back a couple weeks later, and my dad explained how having a healthy lifestyle will bless you not only physically, but spiritually, as well. This was a new thought, something that the man had never heard before. It turned out that the man was the pastor of a small evangelical church, and that he, along with his congregation, wanted to be at the next cooking school.

You, too, can be a medical missionary. There are many ways in which to apply this precious and needed work. With a simple knowledge and personal practice of the eight natural remedies (*Counsels on Health*, p. 90), you can help bring souls to the feet of Jesus by using this entering wedge. It is very rewarding work, and the benefits are out of this world!

Natalie Cordova, junior at Ouachita Hills College

Spring River Church Spreads Literature Like the Leaves of Autumn

WILLIFORD, ARK. » As a small country church with a membership of nineteen and an average attendance each week of seven, the Spring River church members were moved to do something to bring the urgency and the love of our Lord to the small country community around us. We discussed evangelistic meetings but soon realized there was no way we could financially support such an event.

Our church is located on Highway 63, just south of Hardy, Arkansas, which is on the historical list of quaint and interesting towns to visit, and draws many tourists and visitors each weekend. It was suggested that as a church we could set up a table on Main Street and have free Bibles and beautiful spiritual tracts to hand out to folks as they pass by. We decided to do this every other Sabbath afternoon. So with the

mayor's permission and much prayer, we set up our first table on April 7.

What a joy and blessing to see the people that Jesus draws to our table for His truth and His love. We answer questions, if asked, and have prayer with those who are hurting and in need. We find great joy in giving the Bibles and the beautiful, laminated Ten Commandments which are about 14" x 18" and very easy to read. It just goes to show that any church—large or small, city or country—can do something to help spread God's Word.

God is blessing our church. On most weeks we have many more guests visiting than we have members present. If you are ever in our area, please stop in on the Sabbath and share with us in the study of God's love.

Meredith Jean Paul

On the street with God's love! The Spring River church decided to set up a table every other Sabbath afternoon on Main Street in the nearby historic, tourist-attracting town of Hardy, Arkansas, to pass out literature and Bibles.



Attendees Baptized After Searcy Evangelistic Series

SEARCY, ARK. » At the end of our church evangelism series, in March 2012, several participants committed their lives to follow Christ Jesus and were baptized by Tommy Blount, pastor. Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Many more are in the valley of decision. We pray for them each day.

Herman Clements

Several attendees of the Searcy church's evangelistic series chose to be baptized by Tommy Blount, pastor. Many others are still in the valley of decision.



“Call to Me, and I Will Answer You”



OKLAHOMA CONFERENCE

In Jeremiah 33:3 we read, “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” When these words were spoken to Jeremiah he was “still shut up in the court of the prison” (Jeremiah 33:1). I have never experienced the situation that Jeremiah was in at that time, but I am sure that it would be an understatement to say that it was not pleasant. As a messenger of God, his circumstances must have made it difficult for him to have a positive outlook for God’s people or for himself. I think we tend to gauge the possibilities of the future by what we see as the present realities. Have you been there? We don’t like adversity. We don’t relish hardship and trial, and we are sure that we know just the way that God should deliver us from our current “prison” and pave our way into what lies ahead.

In the early years of my married life, I didn’t have a lot of problems, just one, but it seemed huge. I was having a very hard time supporting the family. Donna

and I had only been married for five or six years, but our family was already starting to grow. With a committed Christian wife and three beautiful boys, you would think that I should have been counting blessings instead of focusing on negatives. I had no training or education to qualify me for anything other than minimum wage (not the way to start a family), and we had made a decision that Donna’s responsibilities in our marriage would be that of a wife and mother. It was my part (I thought), to provide for the needs of my family. I needed a better job. Understand, it was not just that things were hard. It was almost impossible to make ends meet in our situation.

At that time I heard that a large corporation was going to build a new facility in my hometown. They were going to be hiring a lot of people, they would train those hired in the necessary skills, and the pay would be good. I made a trip (that I couldn’t afford) to interview for one of those positions. After taking several tests and being interviewed by several com-

pany officials, I was presented with an incredible offer. They wanted to train me to be one of three individuals who would be the directors of the new plant and the pay was more than I could even imagine.

Then I remembered something that I needed to tell them. Because of my commitment to God I would not work during the Sabbath hours. The representative said it would not be possible, so I must make a choice between my religion and the opportunity of a lifetime. I made the right choice, but for years I could not understand why God had not intervened. Why hadn’t it been like the stories I had heard? If I was faithful and stood up for what I believed, I should have gotten the job—I thought. Well, the years have shown that God had a better plan for my life, even though I couldn’t see it then. I had a struggle, but ultimately learned the truth of that adage, “God always gives His best to those who leave the choice with Him.”

John Moyer, president

Bible Studies in Prison

LAWTON » Nine years ago, while pastoring the Altus district, Ryan Neil invited Mickey Thompson to accompany him to the jail for a Bible study. After one Bible study, Neil assigned the studies to Thompson, who then promised God that as long as he had one student, he would be faithful.

For the first year, he had one student, and sometimes, two. Now a member of the Lawton church, Thompson continues to provide these studies with his wife, Pat.

“God has been our co-pilot all the way,” says Thompson. “About 40 inmates have been baptized in a nine-year period.” The Thompsons testify that the inmates in their Bible study are a great blessing to them, and that they are grateful for the support of O.J. Jackson, pastor, as well as the Altus, Duncan, and Lawton churches, and “The Sabbath Keepers” motorcycle ministry.

O.J. Jackson, pastor



Fishing Derby in Broken Arrow

BROKEN ARROW » The first annual Pathfinder fishing derby was recently held at the Calvert ranch. Fishing was done at their stocked pond. The wind was blowing fiercely and the big fish were not biting, but the looks on the faces of children and adults as they reeled in small fish was priceless.

Prizes were awarded in different categories: Mary Jones caught the most fish and Sarah Moon caught the first one. For many, this was the first time to fish. Pathfinders want to express their gratitude for those donating food and time to this event. They are striving to raise enough money for all to attend the upcoming Pathfinder Camporee in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Judy Marquette



Top: Sarah Moon caught the first fish.

Above left: Pablo Tebes with his son, Ethan, our smallest fisherman.

Above middle: Mary Jones with one of the six fish she caught during the Pathfinder fishing derby.

Above: Wayne Calvert and granddaughter fishing the easy way.

Far left: Megan Foreman had no success in catching a fish during the Pathfinder fishing derby, but she had a good time trying.

Left: Elizabeth and Roberta Glovatsky spent the day grilling veggie hamburgers and hot dogs.

Baptisms in the Broken Arrow Church

BROKEN ARROW » One sleepless night, Linda Cupps turned on the television, and found a Christian station featuring Doug Batchelor of Amazing Facts. She had a long-standing desire to be used by God and was always praying for wisdom and instructions. While growing up, she had attended the Free Methodist Church and the Nazarene Church. Later, she married and moved to Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, where she attended Victory Christian church, operating the church's video camera and doing photography for their prison ministry for over six years.

After viewing the Amazing Facts program, she felt God leading her to search for an Adventist church. She found her

home church in Broken Arrow and her life has never been the same. She knows this is where God wants her to be, and everyone is so thankful that God led her to join this church family. She is a recently baptized member of the Broken Arrow church, along with Linda Jones, who also came in through Adventist television program-

ming. Others baptized on this exciting day were Silas Harmon, who just turned nine and has been attending this church since infancy, and Lori Calvert, who recently married the pastor's son, Kelley Calvert, and Jonah Garrett, who was re-baptized.

Judy Marquette

OKLAHOMA CONFERENCE



◀ Linda Jones was recently baptized by Calvert, pastor of the Broken Arrow church.

Far left: Jonah Garrett being re-baptized, assisted by Mike Moon, elder.

Bottom left: Lori Calvert was recently baptized into the Broken Arrow church.

▼ Mike Moon with Silas Harmon, Jonah Garrett, and Sonny Harmon.



From Bulgaria with Love

BROKEN ARROW » Over 20 years ago, Vania Kehayona was admitted to a hospital in Bulgaria. Her roommate was a Seventh-day Adventist, and Vania was intrigued by what she learned about the Bible. She found an Adventist church close to her and was baptized. Her fervent prayer was to see her daughter, Gayla, baptized, but that possibility seemed to fade when she moved to the United States.

Recently Vania came to the U.S. to visit Gayla and her granddaughter, Simona. She wanted to attend church on Sabbath. Since Vania spoke little English, she had Gayla's family accompany her to the Broken Arrow church so they could translate the service for her. After Vania returned to Bulgaria, Gayla requested

to learn how she could be baptized. She studied the Bible with Barbara Calvert, Janice Davis, and Angela Moon.

The joyful answer to a mother's prayer came on the day of Gayla's baptism, but she was disappointed that she would not be able to see her daughter's baptism. That is when the young people of the church spoke up and made it possible. Megan Foreman set up Skype, which is an online video chat program, which allowed Vania to watch the baptism live on the Internet. Vania was very thankful that she could witness this special occasion. Never underestimate the power of God or the power of a mother's prayers.

Judy Marquette



Gayla Yanev was recently baptized after her mother, Vania Kehayona, who lives in Bulgaria, prayed many years for her to accept Christ as her Savior.

OKLAHOMA CONFERENCE

Nathan Greene Print Donated to Primary Department

TULSA » Longtime member of the First church in Tulsa, Alice Goss, recently surprised the church's primary Sabbath School department with a wonderful gift—a framed print of Adventist artist Nathan Greene's *The Lion and the Lamb*. Alice said she was drawn to the picture because it portrayed children, not only with a lion and a little black lamb, but also with Jesus, the Lamb of God. She said that she thought the children in the primary department would enjoy looking at the picture.

Jonelle Jensen

A Blessed Sabbath at the Yukon Church

YUKON » The Yukon church was recently blessed during a Sabbath worship service to have Jack Francisco interview Jason Sharon, a young man who has been doing mission work in Myanmar (formerly Burma), followed by Pastor Nuamboih, formerly of Myanmar, who shared his story.

The Burmese children from the Guymon church, along with their teacher, Myra McKinnon, presented the worship program. Following worship, the church celebrated communion and then fellowshipped together over lunch. After lunch, church members passed out 500 packets of literature, bringing the total of reached homes in Yukon to 1,900.

Mary Wilson

Why Me, Lord?



Tragedies, accidents, sudden illness, loss of loved ones, loss of a job, unexpected medical reports, community crises—the list could go on and on. The truth is that there is not a life on this planet that is not touched by some sort of malady or mayhem. There are reasons for this truism, the first being that we are all sinful creatures and we are sometimes victims of our own choices and actions. The second is that there is an evil agent named Satan in this world, and all of God's creation is the focus of his distraction. How we deal with life's tragedies depends on understanding not just who we are, but *whose* we are. We are all children of God. Some are obedient and some are disobedient.

The difference in how we handle the aforementioned incidents is determined by whether we are in a relationship with God and have an active faith in His providence or not. Believe me, a relationship with

God, or lack thereof will determine whether a problem will make us bitter or better. The Scriptures are full of examples in which God has given His children unexpected victories that seemed unimaginable given the circumstances.

I have a painting in my office titled "Divine Assistance." It is the image of a woman who has fallen down from her labors in a cotton field. A gentleman is assisting her up from the fall, but silhouetted behind them is the image of an angel. To this painting I added Psalms 119:50, "My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life" (NIV). I can say with no hesitation that I have found His presence and promises to be true.

Samuel L. Green, president



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“Iron Chef” Cook-off at Forest Hill

FORT WORTH, TEX. » The Forest Hill church in Fort Worth held its annual blood drive on July 8. However, instead of combining this event with a health fair as usual, the cooking club members, in conjunction with the health ministry, decided to do something different and host a cooking demonstration and “iron chef” group cook-off. The American Red Cross blood donation staff were on hand at 9:00 a.m. to collect the precious gift of life from willing donors. This effort was a grand success and will save many lives.

The cooking demonstration segment showed the preparation of a quick bread made from a mixture of whole grain flours, yeast, and baking powder, and vegetarian gumbo served with brown rice. Samples of these items were devoured immediately.



Top right: Chaya Woolcook and Teshon Jackson seriously concentrate on food preparation during Forest Hill’s “iron chef” cook-off.

Above: Kiki and the youth formed one of the six groups in the “iron chef” cook-off.

Top left: The grand prize winner of the “iron chef” cook-off, Eddie Woolcook, with one of his three dishes.

◀ The judges determine who will receive the designation “iron chef.”

Next, six groups of three members each competed in the “iron chef” cook-off. More than 50 healthy food items and spices were stocked and available in the cook-off pantry. Each group had to pay the small registration fee, follow the rules, and prepare three dishes comprised of an appetizer, entrée, and dessert.

As you can imagine, competition was fierce during the 30-minute time allowed for each dish. The three judges had the difficult task of choosing the grand prize winner, as well as winners for taste, presentation, nutritional value, and creativity. Cash prizes were awarded, and the “iron chef” designation went to Eddie Woolcock’s

team. At the end of the event, the consensus was that Forest Hill members are the best vegetarian cooks in the Metroplex. Thanks to all participants who made this event a grand success, and for supporting the church’s vision to be a healthy church.

Karen Smith

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Campmeeting 2012

SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE

ATHENS, TEX. » Campmeeting 2012 was an uplifting spiritual journey for the people of God. It commenced Wednesday night, June 13, with Dr. Abraham Jules of the Northeastern Conference, headquartered in Jamaica, New York. Jules' messages were centered on personal revival, reform, and practical godliness. He encouraged the attendees to get back to basics in their relationship with God. Study and "eat up" the Word of God, living out its principles daily in our preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, he said.

Eddie Hypolite from London, England, a very popular speaker worldwide, was the guest minister for our young people. At age 15, Eddie Hypolite was deemed uneducable by an educational psychologist. In his own words he shares: "Months later, this led to my permanent expulsion from school. This uneducable label hung over me for the next ten years. However, in the process of living, I've learned that while people may write you off, life and providence always have a bigger pen. I've discovered that the opportunity will come our way to see new

pictures of ourselves and to realize new potentials. Then we can make choices based on this new reality. These opportunities empower decisions and define direction. So whether the opportunities were great or small, significant, or insignificant, I used them as stepping stones and building blocks, knowing that the greatest decisions we make are the ones about who we are and who we choose to become. It is within this context that we empower change and create alternatives."

In his own unique way of preaching the



Top left: Bobby Todd, a Baptist pastor and childhood friend of our Conference president, addresses the crowd.

Top middle 1: Larry Moore, Southwestern Union president, extends greetings to the congregation.

Top middle 2: Dr. Abraham Jules gives a presentation.

Top right: A couple reflects on praise and worship.

Bottom left: The Belfort Praise Team provides beautiful music.

Bottom right: The All Nations Choir performs for the crowd.



Top left: A mother and daughter who travelled from San Antonio to attend the 2012 Camp Meeting.

Top right: Little Miss Taylor enjoys the activities at Kids' World, a place offering fun and learning for children at the 2012 Camp Meeting.

Middle left: Many children enjoyed the fun and learning offered at Kids' World as a part of the 2012 Camp Meeting.

◀ The 2012 Southwest Region Conference Camp Meeting was well attended by people from all over the conference.

gospel of Jesus Christ, Pastor Hypolite encouraged the young people to give their lives to Jesus, submit their wills to Him, and live for Him in the midst of a culture that is unconcerned with Jesus and His Kingdom.

Other special guests included Jesse Bevel, Jr., noted pastor in the areas of Evangelism and Family Ministries and Samuel Thomas, Jr., director of marketing for *Message Magazine* at the Review and Herald Publishing Association. The guest praise team for divine worship was from the Belfort Church in Houston, Texas. The guest choir for Sabbath services was the Arlington All Nations Church Choir from Texas. Both groups were dynamic as they led us in praise and celebration of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Another exciting thing for the people of God was the changing face of the campground. Construction was in the air! There were signs of it everywhere. As attendees entered the beautiful grounds of Lone Star Camp, they drove through the new entry that is still under construction. Farther down the road, across from the adult pavilion, they saw the foundation for the new welcome center. Missing from the grounds were the ministers' quarters and all the rustic cabins. They were part of the demolition that has taken place at Lone Star.

Samuel Green, Southwest Region Conference president, shared with the constituents the camp's master plan. It consists of four phases:

Phase I - 2012

Eight to ten duplex cabins; front gate; welcome center with bathrooms, water, and sewer systems; demolition of some cabins; one seniors' unit (eight rooms).

Phase II - 2014

Meeting room (3,000-person capacity); two seniors' units (16 rooms); storage building at the gym; RV park; ball fields; direc-

tor's cabin; remodel north and east cabins.

Phase III - 2016

Nature center; tennis courts; equestrian center; new barn; five duplex cabins; new cafeteria.

Phase IV - 2018

Lodge (cap. 50 rooms); five duplex cabins. Camp meeting concluded on Sunday morning, June 17, with a commitment by the people of God to labor for the Master, prepare for His coming, and walk continuously according to His will. By His grace, we are looking to another exciting camp meeting in 2013. To God be the glory!

Billy Wright, pastor, Cleburne Emmanuel church

Faith Through the Fire



TEXAS CONFERENCE

In Psalm 12:1 (NKJV), the psalmist writes, “Help, Lord! For the godly man ceases, for the *faithful* disappear from among the sons of men!” Luke 18:8 reads, “Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall He find *faith* on the earth?”

I like the way Vance Havner puts it in *Hearts Afire*: “God is faithful, and He expects His people to be faithful. God’s Word speaks of faithful servants, faithful in small things, faithful in the least, faithful to their Lord! What terrible times we have in our churches, trying to keep people faithful in attendance and in service. How we reward and pamper, coax and tantalize church members into doing things they really don’t want to do, but which they would do if they loved Jesus! The only service that counts is faithful service. Not everyone can sing or preach, but all can be faithful.”

The lack of faithfulness in our churches today is appalling! The strife and contention that so easily arises gives evidence to the division that exists within our own hearts, which leads to division among the saints.

Dale Johnson in *Why Attend Church?* tells the parable of an American who was shipwrecked and stranded on a distant island in the Pacific for many years. Finally, a boat showed up and the man frantically waved to draw the skipper’s attention.

When the boat was anchored and the crew came ashore, there was an intriguing exchange that took place.

“What are those three huts you have here?” the captain asked.

The stranded man replied, “The one in the middle is my house, and the one on the left is my church.”

One of the rescuers insisted, “What about that other hut?”

The man quipped, “Oh, that’s where I used to go to church.”

Faith that is cultivated by the Spirit of God in the heart and soul develops and matures into a productive lifestyle within the Kingdom of God. We are no longer slackers, cookie-cutter Christians, or show boaters. The fire of God’s Spirit purifies our motives and inclinations.

I love what Winston Churchill once said: “It’s not good enough that we do our best; sometimes we have to do what is required.” Hence the significance of the words of Micah 6:8 (NKJV), “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Bill Gothard once said, “Faithfulness is fulfilling that which I agreed to do, even though it requires unexpected sacrifices.” A case in point—one of college basketball’s biggest rivalries is between the University of Kentucky and the University of Louis-

ville. Several years ago, at one of the “big games” between the two schools, a gentleman noticed an empty seat beside an elderly woman. Curious, he made his way over to her during a timeout and inquired into the reason for the empty seat. She replied that it had belonged to her late husband and that they had been season ticket holders for 28 years. “But surely you could have found some relative or friend to accompany you to the game today.” Her reply was, “Are you kidding? They’re all at my husband’s funeral!”

The dedication and faithfulness of some individuals toward relatively meaningless human pursuits is at times amazing! The Bible counsels us toward a much higher calling and devotion. In 1 Timothy 6:11, 12 we read, “But thou, O man of God ... follow after righteousness, godliness, faithfulness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.” Then, of course we find in the very last book of the Bible, Revelation 2:10, the timeless admonition to “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!” Finally, consider the words of Ellen White, “The approval of the Master is not issued because of the greatness of the work performed, but because of the *faithfulness* in the small things” (*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 647).

Carlos J. Craig, Texas Conference president

Heritage Revisited

CLIFTON » The Norse Seventh-day Adventist Church, the oldest standing Adventist church in the Texas Conference, invites you to its 29th annual church service at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 13, 2012. In honor of our liberty, there will be a special ceremony to raise a U.S. flag on a cedar pole. This will be the first time that an American flag will be displayed in front of the church for this service.

Healing Heart, along with director David Anavitarte, will sing for the program. Music will also be presented by Joe Martin, a well-known optometrist from Cleburne. He is an accomplished pianist and will share his

beautiful arrangements of hymns. Steve Hubbard will give a talk entitled Ripples on the Pond. The sermon will be given by Paul Lundgrin, former pastor of the Keene church. Following the church service there will be baptisms and a potluck lunch.

The Norse church in Clifton is about a 90-minute drive from Keene. From Keene, find State Highway 174 in Cleburne and take it south through Meridian. Turn right through town to Highway 6. Turn left on Highway 6 for about eight miles toward Clifton. Turn right on FM 2136, travel about three miles and turn left on CR 4155, then drive another mile. The church is located



on the left.

If you have questions, contact Marjorie Stowe at 817.517.7001 or Yddo Ortiz at 817.517.4650.

Marjorie Stowe

Dare to Be a Daniel

SPRING » As the song says, “Dare to be a Daniel and dare to stand alone; dare to have a purpose firm and dare to make it known!” On June 11, 94 young “Daniels” from the Spring Tomball Spanish and Northwest Houston communities gathered together for the weeklong Vacation Bible School camp under the leadership of

Karen Miranda, Treece Gross, and Jennifer Fuentes to relive the experiences that Daniel and his friends encountered.

The theme for the week was “Daniel’s Courage in Captivity,” and each day’s activities had more than 50 children in attendance. The hands-on experience, along with the daily Bible verses, taught children how to be courageous, how God leads, protects, and guides, as well as how to stand firm as Daniel and his friends did, despite the adversities they faced in their captivity.

A Saturday culmination for VBS was celebrated with heartfelt songs, poetry, and a drama presentation, which reminded the children to have faith, to trust and obey, and to stand firm as God delivers!

Shareen A. Williams



Children enjoyed the activities and learned about the courage of Daniel at the Spring Tomball Spanish and Northwest Houston churches’ weeklong Vacation Bible School held in early June.



Lyford Church Reaches Youth and Parents Through Year-Round VBS

LYFORD » Elida Delgado, Vacation Bible School director for the Lyford church, proposed a plan to keep the message alive throughout the year. The plan was for VBS lessons and activities to continue once a month on Sundays from 3:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m. during the year. VBS included Bible studies for parents waiting for their children, which provided opportunities to know them personally.

Some families were provided food from the food bank and relationships have grown by a yearlong activity that has blessed both the community and church family. The church board plans to continue its youth evangelism initiative for the 2012-2013 term.

Christine Vargas



The Lyford church plans to continue VBS activities once a month, throughout the year, as part of a year-round youth evangelism initiative.

Triple Blessing at Gulfhaven

HOUSTON » The Gulfhaven church recently experienced three blessings with “The Names of God” seminar series, Gulfhaven Junior Academy’s first alumni reunion, and a baby dedication—all over the course of one weekend!

The Names of God seminar series, presented by Rob Sheppard and Ernie Pyle of Knowing God Ministries, was a study of God’s names, which gave tremendous insight into His extensive love. It began on Friday evening and continued on Sabbath. Scripture seemed to come alive as never before as the seminar revealed the character of God in unique ways.

For the academy’s alumni reunion, Jim Moreno, a former Gulfhaven teacher, and Danny Roberts, a former student, were invited to the platform. Both gave testimonies about the importance of Adventist education. Roberts said that “Going to school at Gulfhaven was like hanging out with family,” and that the experience had a lifelong impact. When all of the alumni

were invited to the platform for a prayer, another former student gave the testimony of her mother’s sacrifice to send her seven children to the Gulfhaven School. She said that she believed they would all be in heaven as a result of this dedication to Adventist education.

The third blessing of the weekend was a baby dedication. Surrounded by family, proud parents Daniel and Mildred Mabilirizi dedicated their son, Zachary, to the Lord.

Jean Hagen



Top: Rob Sheppard of Knowing God Ministries presented the Names of God seminar.

Middle and bottom: Gulf Haven Junior Academy’s Alumni Reunion drew many former students, who were then asked to come to the platform on Sabbath for a special prayer.

TEXAS CONFERENCE

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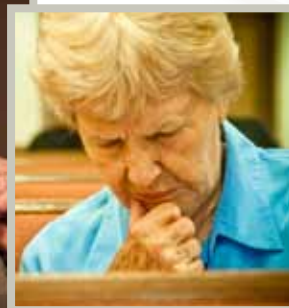
Arlington Church Celebrates 61st Annual National Day of Prayer

ARLINGTON » On May 3, the Arlington church hosted its second annual National Day of Prayer community event in recognition of the importance of prayer and of the National Day of Prayer.

The event included musical performances by the TOLD quartet, as well as accomplished gospel music recording artist Jeff Hensley. Tom Grove delivered a poignant, timely message concerning the importance of prayer, and how prayer is an integral part of American heritage.

Arlington church's intercessory prayer leader, Sarah Jane Raffety, spoke on the history of the National Day of Prayer, and her husband, Clyde, attended to the American and Christian flags.

Community members attending the event included a current candidate for the U.S. Senate, who requested special prayer. Arlington church members Lyneita Leopold and Katherine Loudermilk served refreshments immediately following the



event. The following evening, the church held a seminar on how to pray. The church plans to continue celebrating the National Day of Prayer and looks forward to participating next year.

Trent Leopold

The Arlington church celebrated the National Day of Prayer with patriotic and gospel songs, as well as messages about the history of the day and about prayer as an integral part of American heritage.

Tender Plant Ministries

KEENE » Isaiah 53:2 talks about Jesus being “a tender plant from a dry ground.” So it’s not much of a stretch to think of our children as “tender plants,” as well.

And then, if you think of your children and grandchildren as tender little plants, it’s not hard to figure out where the Sankey family got the name “Tender Plant Ministries.” Howard and Inez Sankey have a veritable garden of tender plants, a total of seven, that they have transformed into an amazing ministry.

Howard says that he realized his grandchildren had an incredible sense of rhythm, and could sing like children far beyond their years, some of whom were only three and four years old at the time. Soon, they were ministering with their voices at churches. As time passed, other grandchildren joined. Their musical programs began to include preaching short sermons.

The Sankey family has tried to provide all of the children with a Christian education, and the children have also worked to help raise money to meet their needs by mowing lawns and doing other odd jobs. This has also become a ministry in itself for the children.

When an elderly lady told the boys that she would love to have her lawn mowed, but didn’t have the money to pay them, they just mowed it for free. The children have learned the lesson of giving to those who are in need while trying to meet their own needs.

While these “tender plants” live in Keene and are members of the church there, they often visit Grandview and have contributed a lot to the Grandview church.

As Jesus said, God’s Kingdom starts small, like a mustard seed, but it miraculously grows into something amazing!



The “tender plants” of Tender Plant Ministries.

Tender Plants Ministries would love to come to your church to share their love for God in word and song. They can be reached at 817.202.8465.

Jhan Beaupre

TEXICO NEWS

Faith Under Fire



TEXICO CONFERENCE

For those of you who read this column regularly, you know that I was a United States Air Force pilot who flew 95 missions in Vietnam. My wife and I had just become Adventists prior to my deployment there. When I returned, my assignment was KC-135 refueling tankers. The upgrade training was at Castle Air Force Base in Merced, California. While there I experienced strife over my Sabbath keeping for the first time. There were 45 crews taking training with one night flight out of 12 training missions. Guess what night my flight came on? Friday night! I explained to my instructor that I don't believe in doing routine duties on God's holy Sabbath day. He said not to worry about it. After six or eight weeks passed I asked my instructor, "Have you done anything about this flight yet?" He said, "No, I haven't done anything." I said, "We've got a problem, because I'm not going to go."

He sent me to the flight scheduling officer. When I told this Lt. Col. that I would not fly on the Sabbath, what do you think he said? Praise the Lord? Not hardly. He figuratively waved the American flag in front of me and told me about all the money the Air Force had spent on me, so I ought to do what the commander says. I said, "Sir, I have been to Vietnam and have done my part in defending this country. My religious freedom should be honored. I believe I ought to put God first. He would not reschedule my flight and sent me to the squadron commander who was also a Lt. Col. I said, "Could you please let me fly on a different night? I need to have Friday night off." That commander sent me to the ranking base chaplain, a Colonel.

The chaplain, an ordained minister, was very cordial. For an hour he tried to talk me out of believing the Sabbath and keeping it. Finally I said, "Chaplain, you can save you and me and everybody else on this base a lot of trouble if you just call that other Colonel and tell him to let me off on that day. If he doesn't reschedule me for a different day, then we are going to have a lot of trouble. I am not going to do routine du-

ties on God's holy day. If it's an emergency, I'll do anything, but if it's not an emergency, I'm not doing routine duties on that day." So he called and told them to let me off. I could have been court-martialed for not flying.

The scheduling officer was angry. He scheduled me to fly with a Lt. Col. who

and was glad to see his Vietnam buddy. He said, "You are going on the same mission I am."

Just then the feared Lt. Col. entered. Everyone came to attention. After everyone was put at ease, the navigator friend of mine said, "I want you to meet my friend,



Jim Stevens, former United States Air Force pilot, flew 95 missions in Vietnam.

gave the check rides to the instructor pilots. He was known as one of the most difficult officers there and had a reputation for being very demanding. They said he used to have two lieutenants for breakfast every morning. Even the skilled instructors feared him. I wondered, "Why is God letting me get the worst person possible when I have been faithful to Him?" But God had a surprise for me.

The day before the flight, I went in for the flight planning session. I noticed a Major (Navigator Instructor) who was there. He was a friend of mine in Vietnam and we had flown many missions together. I greeted him and he said, "It's good to see you!" I said, "What are you doing here?" He replied, "I'm going to fly on this mission tomorrow, and will be taking my Navigator Instructor check ride." He was an experienced navigator, knew most everyone on that base,

the Lt. Col." He took me over and introduced me as the best co-pilot that he'd ever flown with in Vietnam. I was instantly greeted warmly by the feared check pilot and the flight the next day was one of the best that I ever had.

When you take your stand for God, He will work things out for the best. Sometimes we can't see it immediately, but good will come. First, I had to be faithful, then the Lord worked things out. God is faithful! Don't be afraid to put your trust in Him.

To watch the video of James Stevens' conversion story, visit www.texico.org/elderstevenssabbathevening, or you can read the entire script at www.texico.org/site_data/774/assets/0021/6954/Pilot_to_Preacher-9-8-2011.pdf.

James Stevens, president

Midland English Welcomes 19 New Members

MIDLAND, TEX. » In mid-February, the Midland English church began a month-long prophecy seminar with guest speaker Jason Morgan, senior evangelist at Amazing Facts. Some members became worried that there would be poor attendance when there was a mishap with invitations not reaching people through the mail. Many prayed for a good attendance for the opening night. God answered the prayers,

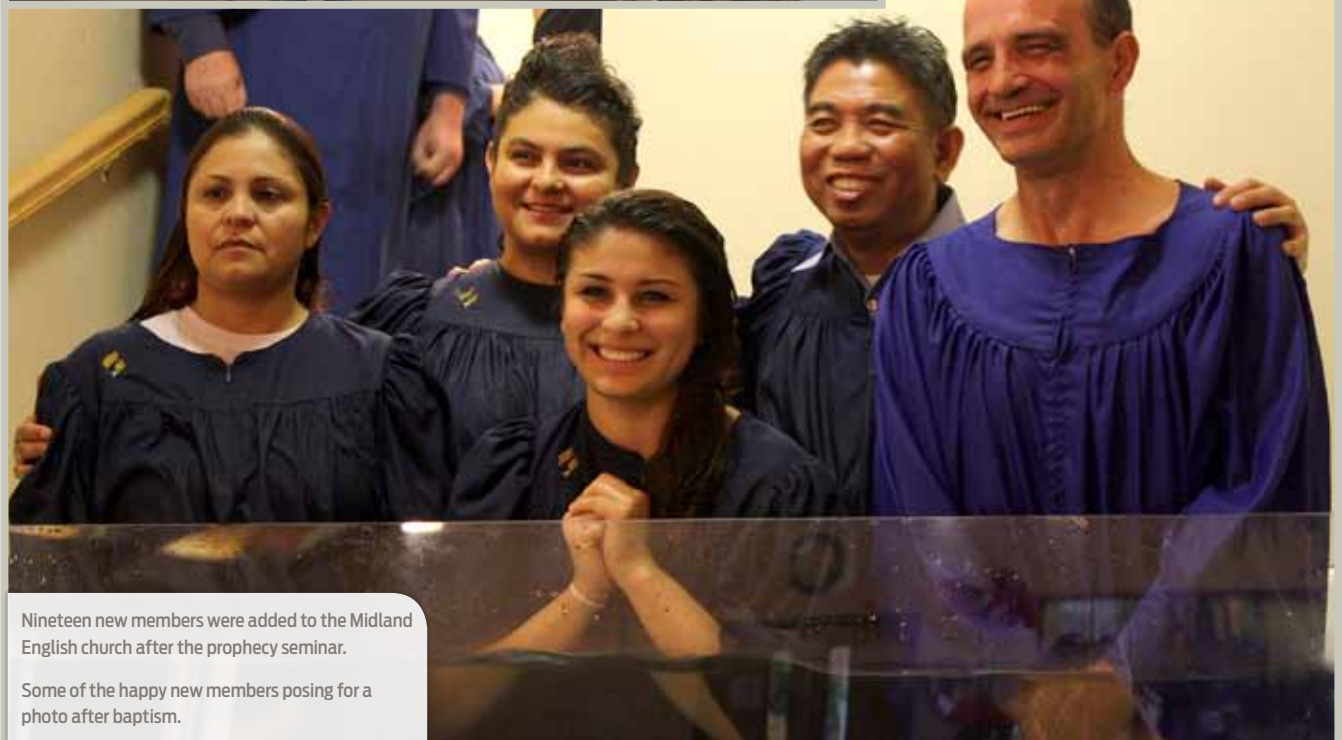
and in spite of the mishap, there were 76 visitors on the first night. The church leaders, led by head elder Sam Baron, and his wife, Susie, rallied together to make the meetings a success. The church members showed their support, helping in various capacities as ushers, greeters, prayer warriors, registration attendants, parking attendants, and many more.

The church was revitalized and revived

as members pulled together in unity and service for the Lord. At the conclusion of the meetings, the church's pastor, Abner Razon, baptized 18 and accepted one by profession of faith. March 17 was a high Sabbath as the 19 new members were accepted into church fellowship. The potluck committee, led by Patty Duke, hosted a church luncheon to welcome the new members that day. "Truly the Lord has blessed us. This is a happy occasion," said Razon.

The church is currently holding a follow-up Bible study and prayer session using Daniel and Revelation prophecy study guides. Attendance during these Wednesday meetings has tremendously improved, and the old and new members alike are on fire for the Lord.

Nefritire Razon



Nineteen new members were added to the Midland English church after the prophecy seminar.

Some of the happy new members posing for a photo after baptism.

Las Cruces Spanish Conducts Their First VBS

LAS CRUCES, N.MEX. » The Las Cruces Spanish church had their first Vacation Bible School in the history of the church from June 18-23. God was truly manifested in this VBS. Every night they had about 26 children and half of these kids were not church members. These visitors had received an invitation to attend the VBS at a community park where church members decided to pass them out.

Each night, the children learned about the life of Jesus and experienced an encounter with our Savior. This VBS was not only organized for children in the community and in the church, but also for their older relatives and parents. The head deaconess had crafts prepared for the mothers to create, while the church youth played basketball with those who were interested in sports.

The children that attended

VBS did not want the week to end and are eager to come back to church for more activities at next year's VBS. The Vacation Bible School volunteers are very grateful to our wonderful God



▲ The Las Cruces Spanish church had their first-ever Vacation Bible School with many children from the community.

◀ The children display the fun crafts they created during VBS.



for making it possible for them to serve in this ministry, and are also looking forward to future VBS programs.

Mayra Montes

Odessa Christian Women's Ministries

ODESSA, TEX. » Every first Sunday of each month, the door to our fellowship hall opens and members of the Odessa Christian Women's Ministries enjoy spiritual encouragement and fellowship. We meet at 9:00 a.m., and begin with a delicious spread of breakfast goodies prepared by our leader, Teresa Bledsoe, and other ladies.

After this special meal, we get down to the reason we have gathered together. We share our blessings and burdens with our fellow sisters. We talk about our praises, make

prayer requests, and then spend time praying together.

After prayer time, the group spends time discussing an inspirational book during each session. We have just completed *Who Do You Think You Are?* by Doug Batchelor. Currently, we are reading another book, *Surprised By Love*, written by Eliza-

beth Talbot.

We are so blessed to have a group of Christian women on whom we can depend, no matter what comes our way. If your church does not have a women's ministries program each month, I would advise that you form one. You will experience special blessings when you spend time uplifting and encouraging one another.

Darlene Simmons



The first Sunday of each month is a special time of fellowship and spiritual enrichment for the ladies of the Odessa Christian Women's Ministries group.

Santa Fe Churches Give Single Parents a “Night Out”

SANTA FE, N.MEX. » Many of us think of summertime as that easy time of the year when families go on vacation, kids head for the public swimming pool, or spend time playing ball in the corner lot. But with school out and children with time on their hands, summer can be especially stressful for single parents. The Santa Fe Community Service Taskforce, made up of representatives from the four Adventist churches in the city, decided to give single parents a break this summer.

During the months of June and July, church volunteers operated a “Single Parent’s Night Out” program. Every Tuesday from 4-8 p.m., church members opened the Rabbit Road church to activities for children, ages 4-9, so their parents could have four hours to themselves for shopping, running errands, or just taking a relaxing break from child care. The activities included music, crafts, games, stories,

do by themselves without having to watch their kids constantly.”

One of the parents said she was able to get some needed shopping done and got it done faster with time left to sit down in peace for a few minutes. Another parent was asked what she was able to accomplish during her free time, and she said, “I just

many children—so this was a very happy birthday party for the 6-year-old and his new playmates at the Parent’s Night Out program.

How did it all come about? “We just went to the city and asked what we could do to help the community,” says program coordinator Joan Castellano, who first brought



▲ Andrea Steele shares stories from the Bible during the “Single Parent’s Night Out” program.

◀ Bernadette Lopez, community service director at the Rabbit Road church, welcomes the children to an evening of fun.



snacks, and a meal. There were regularly a dozen or more children in attendance.

“We enjoyed seeing the smiles on parents’ faces when they came to pick up their kids at 8 o’clock,” said Bernadette Lopez, community services director at the church. “We could see that the break helped them catch up on many things they needed to

making a birdfeeder out of seeds and cardboard, hearing a Bible story about the birth of Christ, playing jump rope, or sinking their teeth into a slice of juicy watermelon. This time together became the highlight of their week. One child’s mother baked cupcakes for his birthday party—they’d recently moved to the city and didn’t yet know

went and sat quietly in the park.”

Meanwhile, at the church, the children were having fun associating with others in the planned activities:

up the idea. “They said this is something we could do that wouldn’t require licensing or official approval by the city. So we decided to try it out during the summer. We put ads in the local newspaper and single parents responded to the offer.”

An exciting climax to the activities was Vacation Bible School during the last week of July. The Rabbit Road VBS has become known as a children’s extravaganza when the entire church family decorates the church elaborately, and about 30-40 children enjoy five nights of Christian educational entertainment.

Allen Steele

Southwestern: It's Always Been Like Family

Whether faculty, student, or constituent, our history has always been rich with connections and support.

Amanda is a senior nursing major. Her brothers attended Southwestern and her mother is an alumnus. Amanda has been working for the Planned Giving Department all four years and received merit scholarships for three years. "Southwestern has been a wonderful experience for my family. And the scholarships I received were not only a blessing to our finances but encouragement for my good grades."

Duane Valencia graduated from Southwestern with both an undergraduate degree in 2008 and a masters in business administration with an emphasis in finance in 2010. While working on his masters, Duane worked for Walgreens, intending to move up the corporate ladder in finance. However, with the birth of his firstborn, priorities began to change for Valencia. He felt it was important to invest his time in a

career that is more emotionally and spiritually rewarding.

Not sure where to turn next, Valencia and his wife prayed about their future. Then, during a trip to Southwestern's student finance office in search of financial assistance, he found his answer. He was offered both financial assistance and a job!

Now the student accounts advisor at Southwestern, Valencia spends his days counseling students as they seek an education and the funds to pay for it. "The miracles I've witnessed in the course of my job just blow me away," confides Valencia. "Students will come to me with seemingly insurmountable issues, both in their personal life and with their finances. I'm used to working with numbers, but I marvel at how God works the numbers. It changes my perspective on life daily. As a student

walks out of my office, it's my habit to immediately say a prayer for them. And I've seen God answer those prayers again and again."

Valencia's experience with Southwestern is also a family affair. His father, Roberto Valencia, has been an assistant professor for the Department of Modern Languages since 2006. His sister also worked for Southwestern for several years. Now, there's a whole new generation of Valencias, some still in diapers.

"For my family and me, Southwestern consistently has afforded serendipitous opportunity," explains university library director Cristina Thomsen. Between 1963

Amanda shares some history. The photo on the left is from 1921; the photo on the right is of current students.



Darcy Force



and 1982, Thomsen's father became a linguist, university professor, and vice president for Southwestern, none of which could have happened had he remained a high school teacher. Thomsen's mother learned the joys of philanthropy from Southwestern, chiefly through scholarship fund-raising after her husband's death. According to Thomsen, former students and colleagues continue to remember their enthusiasm, hospitality, and commitment to all things Southwestern.

"My sister and I experienced small classes," Thomsen continues. "We relished independent study projects and the joys of responsible employment while at Southwestern. She went on to medical school, and I to graduate school, both thankful for the academic and social opportunities that Southwestern fostered."

Unexpected opportunity brought Thomsen back in 2004. "I did not know how much it would mean to share serious conversations with students about life, and their future plans, or about the joys of discovery. I did not anticipate that my work would include travel to Africa, or accommodate classes in Greek, or enable me to support an observatory. For my family and I, Southwestern has always been equivalent with opportunity. Looking back, perhaps this has not been serendipitous, but rather God-given."

Kristine Lemons, assistant vice president for advancement, loves to chat with alumni from the 40s and 50s, because chances are they knew one of her four aunts or her father, all of whom graduated from what was either the academy or Southwestern Junior College. In addition to those five siblings, Kristine's husband currently attends Southwestern, as well as more than a dozen extended family members.

"My family has a long history in the Texas Panhandle, and at Southwestern. My aunt Ivagene, the second oldest in a family of six, was the first in the family to come, and she became a teacher after graduating," Lemons explains. "She's been a huge blessing to hundreds of students during her career. One after another, the sisters came to Keene and followed, finally, by my father. They all recognized the value of Christian education, and I don't know that they would have considered any other



David Pollock

school.

"Now my husband will graduate this December with a degree in business/accounting. I work in the Office of University Advancement. To my family, we might be the 'next generation' we so often talk about, but in the work that I do, I'm thinking not just about the students we have on campus, but all young people in the union—are we making Southwestern a place they'll be able to attend? Where they can get a solid education, with a foundation built on our unique Seventh-day Adventist beliefs? In the Southwestern Union, we all have a part in helping to make that happen. My son,

Duane Valencia and his family, with the youngest Valencia sporting his "Southwestern Future Grad" shirt.

Micah, is just six months old—talk about planning for his future!"

The historical connection between faculty, students, and the constituents of the Southwestern Union weaves a rich tapestry. It's family. It's generations of education, involvement, and support. It's a history that is also our future.

Darcy Force

Will Preaching Change Your Own Life?

Have you ever wondered why students, as well as adults, are challenged to preach evangelistic meetings, both within our union and overseas? Let me share just a few of our young people's experiences.

Three years ago, Elizabeth Marin was a broke, pre-med university student when she heard about an opportunity for a \$2,500 scholarship, if she would only preach a series of evangelistic meetings in Arkansas. "What a deal," she thought. She

was not prepared, however, for how the event would change her own life.

Elizabeth had never preached before; she did not know much about the Bible, nor did she really care. She also did not want to get involved in the church. However, God had big plans for Elizabeth that would surprise her. Elizabeth really had no knowledge about prophecy, so day after day, as she prepared the message that she would preach at night, her own life was being changed and converted. She found herself wanting to read the Bible more and more, even into the wee hours of the morning. Finally, her roommate said to her, "I think you should be a pastor."

Elizabeth would not hear of it. After all, she was go-

ing to be a doctor. But the Holy Spirit kept wooing her. After the meetings, she went back to her home and even her family was surprised at how interested in the Bible she was. When Elizabeth started back to school in the fall, she visited with not only her pre-med advisor, but also with the head of the theology department at Southwestern Adventist University about changing her major.

Today, Elizabeth is a theology major. She not only preached in Arkansas, but has just returned from preaching a series in Iquitos, Peru. The trip to Peru made such an impact on her life that she has decided she wants to be a medical missionary. So often God uses the messages we are preaching to convert others to convert ourselves.

In a hotel in Iquitos, Peru with 41 other "international evangelists," there came a knock at our door. Opening the door, we



◀ Karen Garza (left), a student at Southwestern Adventist University, and Elizabeth Marin (below), a theology major at Southwestern, preach sermons during the evangelistic mission trip to Iquitos, Peru.

Below left: Eddie Canales, Southwestern Union vice president, had his messages aired throughout all of Peru and available online worldwide, thanks to Adventist World Radio. Read Vision Hispana next month for Eddie's amazing story. There will be a link given for the English version of his story, which will be published online.

Next page, top: Every church in Iquitos, including the Guayabamba church pictured, displayed this attractive banner promoting the city-wide evangelistic series.

Next page, bottom: The team that preached, translated, and assisted with evangelistic meetings in Iquitos, Peru, in July 2012.



greeted a young man, one of the young preachers, who was eager to talk. With tears in his eyes, he told me that he wanted to be re-baptized.

This young man, Samuel, shared that he had been baptized when he was younger, but preaching these messages has changed his life. For the first time in his life he understood why he was an Adventist. He had also learned, day by day, as he prepared the messages to be preached night by night, that not only was the Holy Spirit converting other people's lives, but also his own. He also asked that we pray for his father that he, too, would surrender his life to Jesus.

"Come here, Pastor McKey, Karen wants to share something with you," I heard as I was walking to where the Iquitos group was eating their meal after the evening meeting. Karen shared with me how she had made a call at her meeting that night, but it seemed no one was interested in coming forward. She had said to her audience, "If none of you will come forward, then I will."

Karen proceeded to share her experience. Four years ago, she, along with her 15-year old brother and some others were driving to a youth event. Very sadly, they were in a bad car accident. Not only was Karen's brother's life taken, but Karen was not expected to survive. Karen said that after that accident she went to church but was actually mad at God. Studying messages about the great controversy and about

the second coming of Jesus touched her life, and she decided when she answered her own call that she was going to be re-baptized and fully surrender her life to Jesus.

Karen shared the experience of the accident with the audience, telling them that they may have plans for their own future, but they really don't know what the future holds. She asked, "Why not surrender your lives at this moment?" Another young man answered the call, and others followed.

Thirteen-year-old Fulton Milam was preparing to leave for his meeting in Iquitos one evening, but he did not feel well. He and his translator, Melissa Depaiva, a student at Southwestern Adventist University, arrived at the church. When the elder found out that Fulton didn't feel well, he suggested that Melissa preach the sermon and it would not have to be translated and Fulton could go back to the hotel. Fulton said, "No, I have to preach for Pablo. I want him to give his heart to Jesus and be baptized."

Pablo had been attending the meetings every night but had not made his decision to follow Jesus. Fulton did not want the meet-

ings to end without Pablo accepting Jesus and being baptized. That very night, the last night of the meetings, Pablo stood for Jesus. Fulton and Melissa came back to the hotel ecstatic! The very next day, on Sabbath, Fulton said to Pastor McKey, "See, that's Pablo getting ready to be baptized."

What a Sabbath it was on July 14 when Duane McKey baptized Samuel Rodríguez and Karen Garza, two international evangelists from Southwestern Adventist University. Everyone waited for these two to be baptized, and then the other Peruvian pastors got in the three baptismal tanks and continued baptizing. Included in that group was Pablo. The international evangelists are so grateful for the 935 baptisms so far! So often we see others take their stand for Jesus and are on fire. What would our churches look like if each one would pray, "Lord, revive me again?"

Duane and Kathy McKey



Classified Ads

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Summit Ridge Retirement Village is an Adventist community in a rural setting but close to Oklahoma City medical facilities and shopping. Made up of mostly individual homes, the village has fellowship you'll enjoy. On-site church, assisted living, nursing home and transportation as needed. Website: <http://www.summitridgevillage.org> or call Bill Norman 405.208.1289.

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Home for sale in Arkansas mountains – 2,765 sq. ft. home on 85 acres has 4 bedrooms, large family room, game room, 2 ½ baths, and double insulated garage. Nearest neighbor 1 mile away. \$225,000, as is, needs some repairs. For information, contact Mary at 585.755.1065.

Home and 10 acres for sale near Ketchum, OK – 1,140 sq. ft. home with attached 880 sq. ft. garage. Property has water well that produces 51 gallons per minute. Located 10 miles from ten-grade Ketchum Adventist Academy. Asking price: \$80,000. For information, contact Jerry Mayes at 918.257.1934.

EMPLOYMENT

Adventist University of Health Sciences (formerly Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences) is seeking applicants for the position of Program Director for a new Physician Assistant program. A Master's degree is required; doctoral degree is preferred. Florida Hospital College is a faith-based institution which seeks candidates who fit the unique culture and mission of the college. Please e-mail CV to: Dr. Len M. Archer, Associate Vice President for Academic Administration, Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences, 671 Winyah Drive, Orlando, FL 32803, len.archer@fhchs.edu.

Adventist University of Health Sciences, Orlando, FL is seeking a Physical Therapist Program Director beginning 2013. The Pro-

gram Director will provide overall academic leadership developing this program and salary will be competitive. Qualifications: Minimum doctoral degree from regionally accredited school, senior faculty status, understanding of higher education and contemporary clinical, eligible for FL PT licensure, PT academic experience. Submit letter of interest, curriculum vitae, three references and/or letters of recommendation to Dr. Don Williams, don.williams@fhchs.edu or fax 407.303.5671.

Adventist University of Health Sciences is seeking a Curriculum Coordinator to work with both the academic departments and faculty on curriculum, mapping and course development in a blended learning environment. Qualifications: Ph.D. in Curriculum Development

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preferred with ten years of successful teaching in higher education. Send inquiries to Dr. Don Williams, Sr. VP Academic Admin., Florida Hospital College, 671 Winyah Drive, Orlando, FL 32803; 407.303.5619; don.williams@fhchs.edu.

Adventist University of Health Sciences in Orlando, FL, seeks an Assistant Program Administrator for the Nurse Anesthesia Program. Qualifications: CRNA with current recertification, eligible for FL licensure, minimum of master's degree from regionally accredited institution with doctoral degree preferred, academic experience. This is a faith-based institution which seeks candidates who fit its unique culture and mission. Submit letter of interest and CV to Dr. Alescia DeVasher Bethea, alescia.devasher@fhchs.edu

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MISCELLANEOUS

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Prison Ministry Training, October 26-28, 2012, Southwestern Union, 777 S. Burleson Blvd, Burleson, TX 76097. Topics: Spiritual Warfare, You Qualified to Work for the Lord, Anatomy of a Setup, Do's and Don'ts, Ministering in Prison, Operations and Support Programs, How to Start and Run a Half-way House, Funding, Work Opportunities. For information: office@newdiscoverybibleschools.org, 817.760.2288. Sponsored by New Discovery Bible Schools, A New Life School, Florida Conference Prison Ministry, and Southwestern Union Conference.

For sale. 1996 Neoplan Coach Bus. Seats 54 passengers. 310,000 actual miles. Series 60 Detroit diesel engine. Four-speed Allison automatic transmission. DVD and VHS players with 5 video monitors. Cruise control and flushing toilet. Michelin tires with 80% tread remaining. \$29,500. Contact Dale Anderson at Chisholm Trail Academy. 817.641.6626.

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A New Addition to the Record "Family"



Emma Kate Lozano was born on July 24 to our associate editor, **Jessica Lozano** and her husband **Rodrigo**. Join us in congratulating Jessica and Rodrigo on this momentous occasion and in welcoming little Emma to the Record "family!"



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Announcements

Reclaim Your Brain at the SWAU Bible Bee. The purpose of Reclaim Your Brain is to encourage Bible study and memorization as an active part in the Christian life. Scholarships of \$20,000, \$10,000, and \$5,000 will be awarded for first, second, and third place. To register, and for more information, visit www.swau.edu and go to the Campus Ministries link.

Oak Park Academy Alumni Weekend will be held September 28 -29, 2012, in Gates Hall, 825 15th St., Nevada, I.A. All alumni and former faculty and staff are invited to attend. For more information, contact Mary Dassenko Schwantes at 636.527.0955, or maryschwantes@sbcglobal.net. Send us your email—postage is too expensive! Send it to Warren Woolledge at warrenw2u@gmail.com, or call 402.570.0346.

Sheyenne River Academy/ Dakota Adventist Academy Alumni Weekend, October 5-7, at Dakota Adventist Academy, 15905 Sheyenne Circle, Bismarck, N.D. Come and renew your friendships! Honor Classes: '38, '43, '48, '53, '58, '63, '73, '83, '88, '93, '03, '08. For more information call 701.258.9000 ext. 236, or visit our Web site at: www.dakota-adventistacademy.org/alumni/alumni-events.

Sandia View Academy Alumni Weekend will be held October 11-13 in the Sandia View Elementary gym, located on Academy Lane, Corrales, N. Mex. All alumni and former faculty and staff are invited. For information, contact Jenny Larsen at 505.453.8152, or Larsen.virginia@gmail.com, or go to the alumni Web site at www.sandiaviewacademyalumni.org for details.

Calling all teens grades 7-12. Plan now to attend "my Life

360," a weekend planned especially for teens to discover new life in Christ, held on the campus of Ozark Adventist Academy, October 25-27, 2012. To register: visit ozarkacademy.org/TeenPrayerConference. Enjoy a weekend with friends, great speakers, and wonderful music.

Let's Move Day, an event sponsored by the NAD, is September 23. In the Fort Worth/Burleson, Texas, area, Huguley Hospital, Southwestern Adventist University, Southwestern Union, and several area churches will host a 1K run/walk, health expo, and activity stations at Huguley Hospital from 7 a.m. until noon. For more information, call 817-680-4910.

Self-supporting Missionary Couple Needed to Run Baby Home in Africa. Cradle of Love Baby Home in Tanzania is in need of new leadership. Founded in 2004, Cradle of Love provides interim care for orphaned and abandoned infants. Attributes needed for this job are: love for small children, administrative skills, adaptability to new culture and language, and capability to be self-supporting. For more information, contact Davona Church at: director@cradleoflove.com.

Obituaries

BROWN, Mildred Froelich, born August 20, 1914 in Optima, Oklahoma, and died December 14, 2011 in Loma Linda, California. Survivors: daughters, Arletta Brown, Priscilla Bolling, and Martha Brown.

COLEY, Mildred Louise, born September 8, 1925, in Leary, Texas, and died July 9, 2012. Louise devoted her life to her husband, family, and church. She worked many years at Jefferson Adventist Academy as a dietician. She was a member of the Longview church. Survivors: daughters and sons-in-law, Elizabeth and Randy Patton, Rhonda and R.K. Coley, Janet and Acasio Turrietta, Dawn and Carter Leach; sisters, Maebell Phillips, Thelma McKee; brother, William Morgan; many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

SCHULTZ, Norma Jean, born November 2, 1930 in Enders, Nebraska, and died October 25, 2011 in Imperial, Nebraska.

SCHULTZ, Joe William, born April 16, 1918 in Lamar, Nebraska, and died January 20, 2012 in Wauneta, Nebraska.

From nursing student to nursing professional.

Studying to become an RN at Loma Linda University requires hard work. So does a full-time job as a certified nursing assistant. *Maria Corona* manages both roles with ease and is already looking forward to obtaining her nursing credential. She knows that her efforts will lead to her future success. Maria is one of the people that help to make Loma Linda a center of clinical excellence and supportive faith-based care.

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SABBATH SUNSET CALENDAR

	Sep 7	Sep 14	Sep 21	Sep 28	Oct 5	Oct 12
Abilene, TX	7:58	7:48	7:39	7:29	7:20	7:11
Albuquerque, NM	7:27	7:17	7:07	6:57	6:46	6:37
Amarillo, TX	8:08	7:58	7:47	7:37	7:27	7:17
Brownsville, TX	7:44	7:37	7:29	7:22	7:13	7:06
Dallas, TX	7:46	7:37	7:27	7:17	7:08	6:59
El Paso, TX	7:24	7:15	7:05	6:56	6:47	6:38
Fort Worth/Keene, TX	7:48	7:38	7:29	7:20	7:10	7:01
Gallup, NM	7:35	7:25	7:15	7:05	6:55	6:45
Galveston/Houston, TX	7:38	7:29	7:21	7:12	7:04	6:55
Gentry, AR	7:39	7:29	7:19	7:08	6:57	6:47
Little Rock, AR	7:29	7:19	7:10	6:59	6:49	6:40
Muskogee, OK	7:42	7:32	7:22	7:11	7:01	6:51
New Orleans, LA	7:17	7:08	7:00	6:51	6:42	6:34
Oklahoma City, OK	7:50	7:41	7:31	7:20	7:10	7:00
Roswell, NM	7:17	7:08	6:58	6:49	6:38	6:29
San Antonio, TX	7:50	7:42	7:34	7:25	7:16	7:08
Shreveport, LA	7:34	7:24	7:15	7:05	6:56	6:47
Tulsa, OK	7:45	7:35	7:25	7:14	7:03	6:53

BY GABRIELLE E. SALDANA

One Thing Can Make a Difference in Your Life

GROWING UP WITH A PARENT WHO HAS A SERIOUS ILLNESS ISN'T THE EASIEST THING TO DO. I am a 16-year-old girl whose mom struggled with kidney failure in not just one, but both kidneys. On top of that, my mom, Sara, also became visually impaired. My dad's name is David, and I also have twin brothers, Nicholas and Christopher, one of whom is currently attending Andrews University.

My mom's illness was hardest on my dad, I think, because my mom worked for him. But when she became sick and couldn't see, she was not able to work. It was stressful because our family is kind of big, so we needed the income to fulfill our household needs as well as my mom's medical needs.

My mom had to do something called peritoneal dialysis every night. It is basically a machine that worked as her kidneys at night while she slept. Now, with her being blind, I had to be around a lot to help tend to her needs. A lot of my time was spent helping her around the house and making sure her needs were met. My life was nothing like it used to be. I am not saying it was worse, but I definitely had to learn how to put everything in God's hands.

I know that God works things for the best, but sometimes I wondered when the good things would start to come. My mom taught me so much, but most of all I looked up to her because she was very strong. Not only was she strong emotionally and physically, but she had a strong faith in God. My mom knew that she would never be cured, but she still continued to live life to the

fullest, and that's amazing! She always made sure that God and her family were placed first in her life, even with her struggles.

As things began to worsen for my mom, we had to make the decision to put her in hospice. That was definitely tough, and I witnessed a lot that most teenagers don't see every day.

Today my mom is resting in God's hands, waiting to be awakened with a new and restored body! I have grown a lot from this experience, and I am stronger because of my mom. She is my forever role model and the example of how I want to live my life! I never heard the words "I am giving up" come out of my mom's mouth. She *never* gave up faith, and I know that her faith will be rewarded with eternal life. I miss my mom greatly, but I will be seeing her soon in heaven!

So many people will always remember her! She was a very giving person and most people will tell you that she always gave everything she had. God was working through her, and He was shown to many people through her! I am no longer sad because of my loss; I look back and smile because her time may be up on earth, but I will have eternity to share with her in heaven. Never give up your faith and always pray about what you may be struggling with and leave it all in God's hands.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jer. 29:11, NIV). God has a plan for us all!

Gabrielle E. Saldana is a student at Chisholm Trail Academy in Keene, Texas.





On the Record »

BY PAT HUMPHREY » COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR, SOUTHWESTERN UNION

Why, Why, Why?

ON MONDAY, JULY 23, 2012, FOLLOWING THE INFAMOUS MOVIE-THEATRE MASSACRE IN COLORADO, the headlines on the front page of *USA Today* read like this: “Tragedy in Aurora: The search for ‘why?’” This is the age-old question that inevitably surfaces whenever such a horrible and unexplainable tragedy occurs. Someone whom we least suspect goes berserk, commits a heinous crime, innocent lives are lost, and the survivors’ lives are forever changed. Such atrocities are unfathomable, unthinkable, and beyond our human ability to understand.

I’ve often found myself scratching my head, trying to make sense of such situations, but left without any reasonable explanation for people’s wicked acts. As Christians, we do have God, to whom we can turn for comfort and answers, and we also have the hope of one day being reunited with our loved ones in heaven. But I often wonder how those who don’t know God or have a solid relationship with Christ manage to cope in such trying circumstances. And where do they turn for answers to that burning question: “Why?”

I am so thankful that God has revealed to us His plan of salvation. The Bible tells

us that sin originated with Satan and that he is responsible for all the crime, wickedness, and human misery that sin has brought. The good news is that God sent

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17, NKJV).

His Son, Jesus, to save us from sin and He has a plan to redeem us and to restore our

world to the beautiful and peaceful place that He intended it to be. Oh, how I look forward to that day when all our sorrows and tears will be no more!

Whether or not you’ve experienced a tragedy in life, the stark reality is that if you live long enough on this sinful planet, to a greater or lesser extent, you probably will. And if you ever have to face a horrendous experience, remember, God can uphold and comfort you in this life, and He has even greater plans for your future, life everlasting.

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:17, NKJV).

Pat Humphrey

Record

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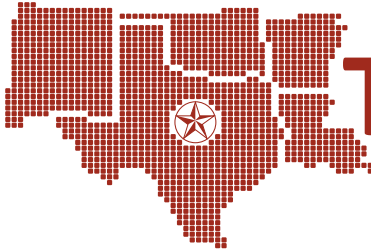
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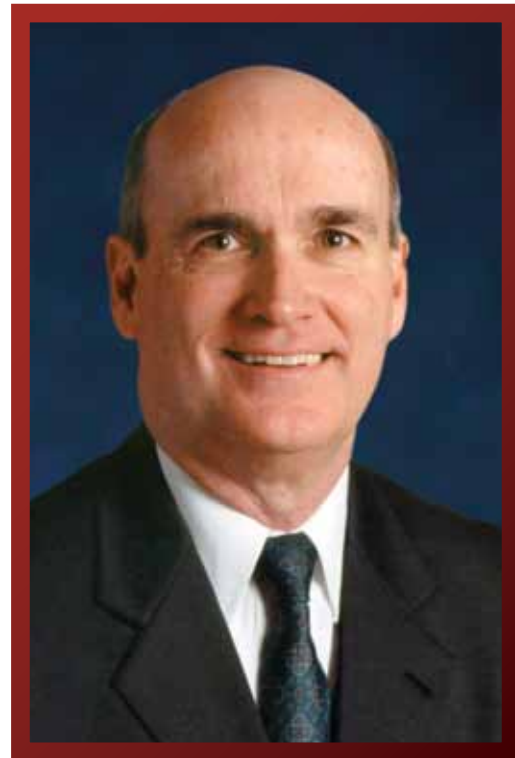


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southwestern sabbath



Class of '70



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Larry Moore
*President, Southwestern Union Conference
of Seventh-day Adventists*

