

# Record

June 2017

## Enhancing *Your Spiritual Journey*

Gratitude and Praise

**4** Daring to Dream  
the Impossible

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Praise



# Enhancing Your Spiritual Journey: Gratitude and Praise

# Record

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**Our Mission:**

The Mission of the Southwestern Union is to Equip and Inspire the Southwestern Union Territory with the Distinctive Adventist Message of Hope and Wholeness.

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## Editor's Note

Dragged into the marketplace to face judgement for the act of healing a slave and thus depriving the owner of financial gain, Paul and Silas were stripped, beaten with rods, flogged, and then thrown into an inner cell in prison, their feet locked in stocks. Their bodies were in pain and they were unable to move. But the Bible says they didn't complain. They sang! Acts 16 tells us that they prayed and sang hymns to God. The incredible story of Paul and Silas' release, and the redemption and salvation of their jailer tells us something of the importance of attitude.

In this issue of the Record, join us as we continue our quarterly theme, Enhancing Your Spiritual Journey, as we look at the importance of expressing our praise and gratitude for God in all circumstances.



Jessica L. Lozano, Editor

# Gratitude & Praise

## Committed to Enhancing Your Spiritual Journey



Larry Moore | President

**We serve an amazing God.** Isaiah 40:28 says that “He will not grow tired or weary.” I know that God never wearies of hearing our prayers, but I believe He also wants to hear our heartfelt thanks and praise for His abundant blessings. We can also benefit from giving thanks. As we say it either in prayer or in conversation we are giving the real credit where it belongs—to God. The Bible prompts us to “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, His love endures forever,” in 1 Chronicles 16:34. There is something about verbalizing it that makes the heart grateful. We should regularly recognize our source of all blessings. We naturally look to Him in times of need, but do we do so in times of plenty? Cultivating a spirit of gratitude is essential in our lives.

Teaching this to our children is also important. Worship and prayer times are excellent opportunities for us to share our gratitude to God in the presence of our children. We can tell them that just as we love to hear them give thanks to us as their parents, God loves to hear their gratitude as well.

I encourage you to set some time aside today and thank your Heavenly father for the blessings and challenges He has afforded you lately. Consider these words of praise in Psalm 28:7, “The Lord is my strength and my shield, my heart trusts in Him and He helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.”

**What is an attitude of gratitude?** Psalm 103 has been appropriately called the psalm of “The Attitude of Gratitude” in the book, *Deliverance in the Psalms*, by the late Dr. Hans K. LaRondelle. In the psalm, David expresses his deep appreciation of God’s goodness and blessings that he receives daily. As you read the psalm, you can feel his inner urge to express his gratitude to the Lord with jubilation.

Psalm 103:1-2 says, “Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” Praising God for His goodness is a form of prayer that rises above our crying and petitions. When we fail to praise God, we tend to forget all His benefits. Only those who praise remember His benefits. Our praise begins when we acknowledge God’s majesty and works, and then respond with an attitude of thankfulness that translates into a life focused on being faithful to God—the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Our reasons for praising God and thanking Him regularly are many and bountiful. The words of the psalmist in Psalm 103:3-5 remind us that it is He “who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”



Buford Griffith, Jr.  
Executive Secretary

**I can forget how blessed I really am.** Sometimes, I don’t even realize it. Last year, there was a lot of talk about the top one percent, who are considered the wealthiest Americans. According to the Global Rich List, a website that brings awareness to the worldwide income disparities, if you make over \$32,400 a year, you are in the top one percent worldwide. Can you believe that? Did you ever imagine you are probably on the list of wealthiest people in the world? If we are honest and look closely at our belongings, we can see that we have been blessed with so much. We all struggle, yet God provides for us daily and blesses more than we deserve. Whether with finances, health, work, or family, we can usually point at blessings along with our struggles. Paul reminds us in Philippians 4:6, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

Let’s stop and count our blessings more often. Think back on your life and how far God has brought you. Praise and thankfulness should be incorporated in our daily time with God. David reminds us in Psalm 100:4, “Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name.” I am so very thankful to my Heavenly Father and I praise Him for taking care of us daily.



John Page | Treasurer

God—inexpressibly holy, unimaginably creative, incomprehensibly loving, unshakably faithful, and astoundingly daring. I have concluded that there is such a thing as a holy dare and I believe God employs it more often than we realize. Admittedly, His dares include an element of guidance, instruction, and providence, and as such are to be regarded not as options, but as biddings. Not to be misunderstood for the trivial, God's dares are transformative. Once undertaken, they are critical to our spiritual growth.

# Daring to Dream the *Impossible*

The Bible is filled with true accounts of individuals who accepted God's dares. One Old Testament patriarch built a giant boat while preaching of a coming flood when it had never even rained. And he did this before mocking spectators for more than a century. Another man believed that God would give him a posterity as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand of the sea shore. But, he was 99 and his barren wife was at the ripe, old, and postmenopausal age of 90. One fellow, although initially hesitant and lacking in rhetoric, dared to stand before the world's greatest power and demand the immediate liberation and evacuation of millions of slaves. The Bible also tells of a young orphan girl who was led by the Lord to the pinnacle of earth's ruling empire to audaciously advocate for His people. These individuals bring to light the results of willful acceptance of God's bidding. Of Noah, the Bible says that he walked with God, (Genesis 6:9). Abraham was the friend of God, (James 2:23). Moses saw the very glory of the Almighty pass before him (Exodus 33:22, 23) and Esther was appointed queen "for such a time as this" in an act that changed the course of history (Esther 4:14).

Another real-life account that I would like to share is my own experience with the Lord. My parents emigrated from Angola



in the 1980s amid a civil war that lasted nearly three decades. The quest for Adventist education led us from Angola to Europe, and finally to Montemorelos, Mexico, where I grew up. When I was 10, we immigrated to the United States and began a new life in Texas.

Throughout this journey, we've had ups and downs. It hasn't always been easy and our family has faced a fair share of challenges. Nevertheless, as God has literally led us across the globe, He has opened doors and provided incredible opportunities along the way. Looking back, we're overwhelmed with

gratitude for His care and providence.

Several years ago, I decided to study medicine and become a physician. Although I was excited by the prospect, I had some insecurities. Sometimes I would question if I was competitive enough and if we could even afford the application fees, much less tuition. I wondered if this dream was even realistic. In response, God would refresh my memory of how He had provided down to the last penny when my sister and I were both obtaining undergraduate degrees. As international students at one of the local state universities, we could

not qualify for federal financial aid. By God's providence, my sister, Elisa, discovered a Texas bill that qualified us for in-state tuition. That was the first of many doors He had opened. I recall the times when the university would drop our courses after the late-registration grace period, yet we were compelled to continue to attend by faith. Each time, the Lord would deliver and we would be reinstated. During the thick of it, it seemed like these challenges were getting in the way of our academic pursuits. In reality, our college experience was the training arena where God

taught us to rely solely on Him. For that, I cannot be grateful enough. But God had a greater challenge, a greater dare coming my way.

One night, as I earnestly prayed for God's will regarding my desire to go to medical school, it fully dawned on me for the first time: my career goal did not make sense. The math did not add up. In fact, there was no math to calculate. I simply did not qualify for federal financial aid like all the other applicants, and I would be crazy to think that I could summon hundreds of thousands of dollars for tuition before enrolling the following year. The last thing I asked of Him that night was that He would clearly show me whether the desire came from Him or not.

During my prayer and study the next morning, there was no evident response. A short time later, however, I noticed an email with the subject line, *Go For It*. There it was, there was the dare! The email was a daily devotional that I often skipped. As God would have it, the day's topic was on daring to set forth on a seemingly impossible journey and trusting the Lord even when it seems preposterous and laughable from the human perspective (based on Luke 5:1-10). It concluded, "Most of the time it's not a matter of having the goods, but of hearing the bads. Don't give up, God is with you."

The message was clear and I resolved to move forward without looking back. I have come to understand Bible promises in a much deeper way. My faith was occasionally tested during medical school. Especially notable was the day the Dean of Students kindly urged me to sign a Leave of Absence since I had fallen behind on tuition payments, despite my family's strenuous efforts to keep up. It was the end of my third semester and the school had been very patient. I had to pay the outstanding balance

in full before I could continue my studies. It required a lump sum of over \$31,000 and we had 10 days. My family and I discussed and prayed. We had nowhere near that amount. In short, we came up with \$3,000 and God came up with the rest! God used a selfless couple, family, friends, and others in an incredible way during the toughest moments. To them, and for them, I am infinitely grateful.

I have seen the power of God's Word be manifested and open doors I once thought impossible. I praise Him immensely for blessing me with a community of family and friends that believed in what He could do. I praise Him for people like my mother, whose unmovable faith encouraged me to take God at His word. I praise Him especially for the trials; if it had not been for them I would not have understood how to lean and trust in God alone.

I have learned that every challenge, obstacle, and difficulty is a perfect opportunity for the Lord to show His sovereignty and unending love. That is of far greater value than any knowledge gained at any earthly institution. By God's grace, I obtained a medical degree in May of 2016 from the American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine. My journey is certainly not over and the lessons left to learn are still many. But this I know: what He has done for me, He will do for you and so much more. God—inexpressibly holy, unimaginably creative, incomprehensibly loving, unshakably faithful, and astoundingly daring. **R**

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*Edna Gouveia, M.D., is a post-doctoral research fellow at Ochsner Medical Center near New Orleans, Louisiana, and is in the process of applying for residency, where she plans to pursue neurosurgery. She is also a talented cellist and fluent in Portuguese, Spanish, and English.*



# Attitude of Gratitude

## 7 Simple Ways to Show Appreciation



Thank You

There are so many things to be grateful for: the air we breathe, our lives, our families, our experiences, and salvation! Yet, either because it is human nature to take things for granted, or because our lives tend to be so busy on a day-to-day basis, we often forget to show our appreciation to others, and sometimes even to God. The following is a list of simple ways to express gratitude to others, be it God, your loved ones, or even strangers. Expressing your attitude of gratitude releases cheer and kindness to those around you in a manner that will surely make somebody's day!

**1. Gratitude Prayers:** Have you ever prayed to God without asking for *anything*? Try it. Make a list of all the things He has blessed you with, from the roof over your head, to a recent promotion, or current challenge that is drawing you closer to Him. Take a few moments and just thank Him for all He has done for you.

**2. Volunteer:** Another way to show God how much you appreciate His blessings is by volunteering your time being His hands and feet. Whether at church or in the community, volunteers are always needed. Churches often struggle to find Sabbath School teachers and non profits are desperate for help sorting donations.

**3. Pay it forward:** Ever had someone pay for your order in a drive-thru lane? What a neat surprise to pull up and see your bill has been settled! Paying it forward is doing something anonymously or in way that can't be repaid. Consider paying for another table, buying fundraising cookies, or assisting a stranger with a flat tire.



**4. Words of Affirmation:** Famously discussed in the book *The 5 Love Languages*, verbal affirmation is a great way to show your appreciation. Thoughtfully express to your spouse how much you value them. Tell your family why they matter to you. Does your pastor, mentor, or parent know how much they mean to you?



**5. Thank You Notes:** They still work! This tried-and-true method still moves people. Very few people send mail these days, much less handwritten letters. Has someone done something kind for you lately? Consider sending them a handwritten thank you note and furthering the warm sentiment.



**6. Gift Your Gift:** Are you a talented cook, woodworker, or wordsmith? Many of us are gifted in creating, sewing, baking, building, etc. Consider gifting your gift for no reason at all. Bake cookies for a friend, crochet a blanket for the expectant mom in your neighborhood, build a bookcase for a teacher's classroom. Try it!



**7. Generous Gestures:** Consider leaving a tip that is more hefty than normal. Have you been considering making a specific donation? Don't wait, make a difference today! Generosity isn't limited to finances, either. Be generous in your affections, compliments, help, and time—especially if you are usually on the go.



# Keeping Count

## Remembering God's Blessings

By Pedro Rivera

✪ I did not grow up in the Seventh-day Adventist faith. I was 14 years old when I learned that Jesus was a real person with whom I could have a personal relationship, not just an image I prayed to when I needed protection or luck.

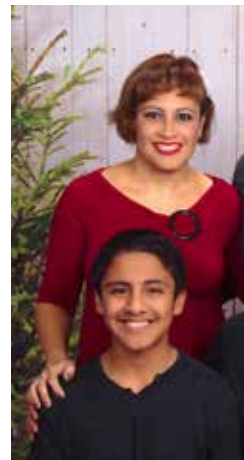
My late uncle “Memo” and his family had invited my siblings and me to a Vacation Bible School program, and since we lived far from their church, they opened up their home to my brother, my two sisters and me for the entire week. My parents were invited to the graduation program and although they felt a little out of place, the warmth and friendliness of the members soon made them feel as welcome as we felt at my uncle’s house with his family. Our lives were changed. Jesus had showed me through His word that He was in charge of everything in my life and that no matter the circumstance, He would always be there for me and with me.

A few years ago, as I was leaving work on a Friday afternoon, this truth was tested. My employer was struggling financially and our paychecks would not be available that day. I had enough gas to get home and either go to church that evening or the next day on Sabbath. I called my wife, Angelica, and told her to get ready for church. I reasoned that God never misses a day with me, so I wouldn’t miss an opportunity with Him. As I drove home, I kept an eye on the gas gauge praying silently for God to perform a miracle. Within minutes of praying, the gauge jumped from 1/8 tank to 1/2 a tank. I was astounded. The next day, on Sabbath afternoon, I received a check with payment from a previous job. That check paid for gas and food until I received my regular paycheck.

God has been good to us in so many ways. When we lived in California, the aforementioned company closed and I was laid off. We were very grateful to God for always taking care of us, so we knew that He had to have a plan for us. We prayed earnestly and sought His guidance. Soon, another uncle recommended we move to Arkansas. His family offered us their home until we could find a place of our own. We continued praying and felt God lead us to the Natural State. We packed and loaded our belongings into an 18-wheeler that happened to be heading in that direction. The cost to take all of our furniture would be \$800.

We made the 1,600-mile trip to Arkansas and our stuff caught up to us three days later. When the driver arrived, he said we owed him nothing. He simply said, “God bless you.” We were shocked and incredibly thankful. That same week we found an apartment which required the first month’s rent as a deposit. The total to be paid was \$800! Once again, God came through for us. No matter how difficult the situation, God has always, always provided for us. His providence and blessings haven’t always occurred in our time. However, we have learned to trust in His perfect and exact timing.

*Pedro, Angelica, and their sons, Pedro and Angel, live in Ola, Arkansas.*





# Contando Bendiciones

## Recordando las Obras de Dios

Por Pedro Rivera

**R** No crecí en la fe Adventista del Séptimo Día. A los 14 años aprendí que Jesús era una persona real con la quien podría tener una relación, no sólo una imagen a quien le oraba cuando necesitaba protección o suerte.

Mi tío “Memo” nos había invitado a la Escuela Bíblica de Verano de su iglesia. Como vivíamos lejos de allí, me invitó a mí y a mis hermanos a quedarnos con su familia toda esa semana. Mis papás fueron invitados al programa de graduación, y aunque se sentían un poco fuera de lugar, pronto sintieron el cariño y la amistad de los miembros. Se sintieron igual de bienvenidos como nosotros nos sentimos en la casa de mi tío con su familia. Nuestras vidas cambiaron. Jesús me demostró que Él estaba a cargo de todo en mi vida y que sin importar la circunstancia, siempre estaría allí conmigo.

Un viernes de tarde, hace unos años atrás, manejaba a casa y batallaba con una decisión. Dado a complicaciones financieras de la compañía, no había recibido mi sueldo ese día. Tenía suficiente gasolina en el carro para llegar a casa e ir a la iglesia esa tarde, o llegar a casa e ir a la iglesia el sábado. Llamé a mi esposa, Angélica, y le dije que se alistara. Iríamos a la iglesia esa noche. Decidí que Dios nunca falta un día conmigo y yo no faltaría una oportunidad de estar con Él. En el camino a casa oraba, pidiéndole a Dios un milagro. En unos minutos vi al medidor, que había estado a un  $\frac{1}{8}$  de tanque, marcar  $\frac{1}{2}$  tanque. ¡Estaba maravillado! Ese sábado de tarde, recibí un cheque de un trabajo previo. Ese cheque nos mantuvo hasta que pude recibir mi sueldo regular.

Dios ha sido increíblemente bueno con nosotros en muchas ocasiones. Cuando vivíamos en California, la misma compañía cerró y me quedé sin trabajo. Reconocíamos que Dios siempre nos había cuidado, y por eso sabíamos que Él tenía un plan para nosotros. Oramos y buscamos la dirección de Dios. Pronto después, otro tío recomendó que nos mudáramos a Arkansas. Su familia nos ofreció su casa hasta que pudiéramos conseguir una para nosotros. Sentimos que Dios estaba abriendo esta puerta y empacamos nuestras cosas en un semirremolque que justo viajaba en esa dirección. La mudanza costaría \$800.

Viajamos las 1,600 millas a Arkansas y nuestras pertenencias llegaron tres días después. Cuando llegó el chofer nos avisó que no debíamos nada. Simplemente dijo, “Que Dios los bendiga”. Estábamos asombrados e increíblemente agradecidos. Esa misma semana encontramos un departamento que requería el primer mes de alquiler como depósito. El total a pagar eran \$800. Una vez más Dios intervino al momento adecuado. No importa cuán difícil sea la situación, Dios siempre ha provisto por nosotros. Su providencia y bendiciones quizás no ocurren cuando queremos, pero hemos aprendido a confiar en Él y sus tiempos perfectos.

*Pedro, Angélica, y sus hijos, Pedro y Ángel, viven en Ola, Arkansas.*



# An Offering of Praise



**As a musician, I am constantly reminded of the value of practice.**

Whether it's in my own playing or among the friends, or the kids' ukulele group that I teach on a weekly basis, I can't ignore the fact that there is a marked difference between the people who just show up and the musicians who make a regular habit of spending quality time with their instruments. The combined results are difficult to describe. Sure, there's noticeable difference in the technical precision and ability of more seasoned players. The tone of their instrument is more mature. Their playing

is more fluid. Rather than relying on short, choppy impulses, rehearsed musicians produce fluid, dynamic phrases that seem to carry the listener effortlessly from one place to another.

Practice allows a musician to perform from a place of confidence rather than insecurity. Even their body language is different. In the hands of a seasoned musician, the instrument transforms from some clumsy noise-making thing to an extension of the musician's own self. In short, practice changes everything—not just for a single note, but beyond the life of an entire song.

In similar fashion, as a pastor and worship leader—and a human being for that matter—I am constantly reminded of the value of gratitude. Among the friends and acquaintances you meet every week, I think most would agree that there is a marked difference in the people who approach life from a place of thankfulness. I don't mean the kind of gratitude that we practice when we repeat empty platitudes about clouds with silver linings, or half-heartedly echo "God is good...all the time." I'll admit that we have to start somewhere, but there must be a better way to practice

the kind of gratitude that doesn't gloss over the reality of life's difficulty but still clings to the promise of God's goodness. There are some people who seem exceptionally gifted at maintaining an outlook on life that doesn't deny the pain of present circumstances, but all the while stays anchored in the hope of Jesus.

Imagine if I surprised one of my friends by asking her to perform a piece of music that she had never seen before in front of a small gathering of some of our mutual friends. Without warning, and with no time to prepare, it would be unfair of me to make that kind of request. But consider that we often take a similar approach when it comes to expressing our gratitude to God at church. Sure, we occasionally choose songs with lyrics that talk about how good God is, some of them might even be familiar enough that we'll remember them later in the week. But if we never really practice gratitude outside of our church walls, one has to question whether we can genuinely do so when we are together in the pews.

So while I am no expert in gratitude (my two kids, at two and five years old, are sometimes better at saying please and thank you than I am), I'd like to offer three practical ways that we can put our gratitude into practice.

**First**, commit to a week of not asking God for anything during your prayer time. I know this may sound strange at first, but think about how often our prayers consist of requests for things we want or need. Instead of asking for more, consider—simply as an exercise in gratitude—using that time to express thanks for all of the things that God is already doing in your life. This was the mindset of the Psalmist who wrote, "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever" (Psalm 118:1). These words, echoed in one of the most popular worship songs of the last two decades, remind us that before and after we ask, God is good.

**Second**, involve others in the gratitude party. It's one thing to thank the person who just held the door for me, but it's a game changer when you let

someone know that their presence in your life is something for which you are deeply grateful. Forget random acts of kindness. I'm talking about intentional acts of gratitude. At the grocery store or in the classroom or in the office, a little thank you may go a long way.

A friend reminded me lately that written thank-you notes need not be a long-lost art. Even if we think we're overdoing it by saying it to strangers, getting into the habit of saying thank you out loud might just be the reminder we need of how much we really have to be thankful for. The apostle Paul made this a regular practice in several of his letters to the early church. He opens a letter to the church in Philippi with the greeting, "I thank my God every time I remember you" (Philippians 1:3). That same spirit of gratitude flows through the rest of the letter. Even some of the difficult words of Paul's letter must have been easier for the church to hear because they believed, through it all, that Paul was grateful for God's work in their story.

There are some people who seem exceptionally gifted at maintaining an outlook on life that doesn't deny the pain of present circumstances, but all the while stays anchored in the hope of Jesus.

-Elia King

**Third**, we ought to practice gratitude together more often as the Church, and not just during the slotted time for the offering appeal. I believe that as a worship leader, when I lead people in worship I am giving them a platform and vocabulary to express their hearts to God. My experience has been that for some people, exercising their vocabulary is not a challenge. But others need some encouragement, some coaxing—even permission—to connect the dots between what is happening in life and the fact that God cares for them.

Although there are many approaches that can accomplish this goal in meaningful ways, I believe it is worth taking the time when we gather for worship to give our church the opportunity to practice singing, speaking, and hearing words of deep gratitude for the ways that God is still at work in real and powerful ways in our stories. This type of practice is not just good for us in the moment, but I believe it also helps to create the kind of lifestyle, rooted in gratitude, that Paul describes in his letter to the church in Rome:

"So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out" (Romans 12:1-2, MSG).

May we learn to practice gratitude so fluently that it changes everything, not just for a single note, but beyond the life of an entire song. **R**

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*Elia King is a singer, songwriter, designer, and guitarist, who has been leading music in worship settings around the world for over two decades. He is Associate Pastor at the Boulder Seventh-day Adventist Church. Elia and his wife, Dena, live in Estes Park, Colorado, with their two kids, Ellie and Anderson.*

# The Blessed Hope

## Unveiling a Masterpiece in Little Rock

By Stephen Burton, Superintendent of Schools for the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference. In his role, Burton supports and oversees a dozen schools with 450 students across the two states.



*The Blessed Hope by Nathan Greene, ©2010, All Rights Reserved, Used By Permission. [www.nathangreene.com](http://www.nathangreene.com)*

The artwork of Nathan Greene graces Seventh-day Adventist churches, schools, universities, and hospitals across the world. Some of his most famous Christian pieces include *Family of God*—where Jesus is depicted holding a child surrounded by people from every walk of life, and *Chief of the Medical Staff*—in which Jesus is shown standing with doctors, directing them in surgery. His latest masterpiece is a bright and inspiring work called *Blessed Hope* which captures the emotion and joy of Christ's return to redeem His children and take them home. Light and color beams break through a dark sky that is surrounded by angels. The image is described as a “scene [that] reminds us that this world is not our home, and that our hope and trust in Jesus' soon coming will be realized.” The original painting is the centerpiece of the “Eden to Eden” permanent exhibit in the atrium of the Seventh-day Adventist Church world church headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. The exhibit's 78 paintings portray Jesus' guiding hand in the activities of His people down through the ages and now in the Adventist Church.

Early last year an anonymous donor gifted extra large, digital canvas reproductions of the painting to the 13 Adventist Church divisions, as well as every Adventist high school in North America. In an interview with *Adventist Review* magazine, Greene said, “It was the donor's desire, and ours as well, to provide a visual reminder of the hope we have in the second coming of Jesus and the reality of the resurrection.” He went on to share, “Perhaps it will have a unifying effect and help all who see it to keep their eyes focused on what will be the greatest event of all times. Maybe it will give hope and courage to those who are worn down by life's struggles.”

The North American Division (NAD) Office of Education was contacted by donors who desired to see the painting shared with even more students and families, and now Greene's painting is being gifted to junior academies across North America as well. The NAD Office of Education says, “The hope of the blessed return of Jesus is central to the Adventist message. The strong desire of both Nathan Greene and the donors in this project is that we keep visually



before the students in our academies the reality of our Hope!” The image is a constant reminder of the “hope” that awaits us at the end of our spiritual journey.

In April, Little Rock Adventist Academy celebrated the unveiling of their *Blessed Hope* rendition. Parents, school board members, area pastors, and other guests gathered with eager students.

Two alumni, Donny Head and Brandon Head, unveiled the painting. While guests gazed at the art, Don Fortner, Little Rock Seventh-day Adventist Church pastor, spoke about the blessed hope that we all have because of Jesus life, death, resurrection, and soon return. The students of the school, led by Leah Cochran and Patricia Hall, then sang, “Lift Up the Trumpet.” Rusty Litten, a retired teacher who volunteers at the school, read the plaque that was donated with the painting. Joyce Fortner concluded the program with words of gratitude, hope, and thankfulness, stating that “the highest appreciation is not to utter the words, but to live by them in what we see and feel by beholding the *Blessed Hope*.” **R**

# Where Two or Three Are Gathered

## Enhancing the Sabbath School Experience

By Sonia Cano, Southwestern Union Sabbath School and Children's Ministries Director



I visited with a great group of Sabbath School teachers recently. We met together to review a training booklet and tips for adult Sabbath School classes. One of the participants was very touched by the words of Acts 20:28, “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”

Have you ever considered the Sabbath School teacher as an extension of the church pastor? The teacher is the shepherd of a class. Teachers lead, feed, and protect their flock. In order to do that, the teacher must know the students. John 10:3 says, “The sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them.” If you teach a Sabbath School class, how intimately do you know your students? What is the makeup of their family? What careers are they pursuing? What struggles are they facing or what challenges have they overcome?

Getting to know your students on a deeper level will help identify the spiritual needs of the individuals in your class. Here are three tips to help you and your flock go beyond surface level friendships.

### Next Level Friendships

#### Regular Intercession

In *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, Ellen White recommends the Sabbath School teacher be “...frequently in prayer...” A word spoken in due season may be as good seed in youthful minds, and may result in leading little feet in the right path. But a wrong word may lead their feet in the path of ruin.” Focus on learning, supporting each other, speaking kindly (even with disagreements), and praying. It is of vital importance that we pray for one another often.

#### Grow Together

In the same book, Ellen White goes on to say, “If teachers in the Sabbath School felt the love which they should feel for these lambs of the flock, many more would be won to the flock of Christ.” Students need more than a Bible lesson on Sabbath morning. We come to church for love, encouragement, and community. Approach the Sabbath School class with a willingness to grow, openness to learn, readiness to listen, and eagerness to share.

#### Inspire Others

Students can sometimes be fragile. Many have had a difficult week and arrive at Sabbath School longing to be refreshed. Shepherds and teachers have the best interest in mind for their flock. See how your class can lift each other up. Protect them from discouragement and make inspiration your goal. One training participant put it this way, “I love what the pastor does for me. As I teacher, I’m ready to do it for my class!”

# Unexpected Mercy

## A Cheater Meets Grace

I was caught, and I knew it. The test was almost over when I noticed Mr. Markham's shadow over my desk. I cringed as I looked up into his frowning face. I elbowed my friend Danny, who was still looking at his test. He jumped as Mr. Markham leaned over us and whispered, "I need to see you both after the test."

Mr. Markham's hands seemed to move in slow motion as he reached out to take the tests from our desks. As he walked back to his desk, Danny and I shared a scared look.

I had studied for the test. I knew the material. It was a Japanese language test. Mr. Markham had been a missionary in Guam at an English language school and had learned Japanese. He'd offered to teach it to the seventh grade, and the school had agreed. Throughout the year we'd been learning simple Japanese, from basic phrases, characters, and numbers to Japanese customs. We were in the middle of

the final test of the year when my friend Danny nudged me and whispered, "I don't know the answer to number eight."

I hesitated, knowing I shouldn't tell him.

But I didn't want him angry with me, either, so I scooted my paper over and lifted up my arm so he could see the symbols I had written. He carefully copied them down. As

I moved to return to my test, he nudged me again.

"I don't know the answer for number seven, either."

I sighed, scooted my paper back, and waited for him to copy all the answers he didn't have and then erase and rewrite the ones he had wrong. As he finished, I pulled my paper back and found myself staring up into Mr. Markham's stern gaze.

The bell rang, and the other students turned in their tests and filed out of the classroom for recess. When they were gone, Mr. Markham called for us to come up to his desk. He looked at me first, then at Danny, and then he asked me bluntly, "Were you cheating?"

My mind went blank, and I looked at Danny. He had his head down and wasn't about to say anything. I turned my face back to Mr. Markham. While we'd been waiting for the end of the test, I'd been coming up with dozens of reasons and excuses to explain our misdeed. But when he asked, I said the first and only thing that popped into my head. "Yes, we were."

His eyebrows lifted, showing a hint of surprise at my answer. "All right," he said, nodding. "Why don't you two go wait outside while I decide what to do about this." We nodded numbly and walked out to the playground. We sat silently in the grass watching the other kids play soccer.

"Why didn't you make something up?" Danny finally asked scornfully.

"I couldn't think of anything. Sorry." I shrugged.

I didn't know why I hadn't made something up. We went back to sitting in silence, waiting for Mr. Markham to come and tell us our fate. Finally we saw Mr. Markham walking toward us. He sat down next to us and waited until we were both looking at him. Then he said, "Here's what's going to happen. Because you told me the truth, I've decided that you won't be punished for cheating. I'm going to take this test out and average your grades."

Danny and I were shocked. A sense of relief flooded me. We both nodded numbly. Mr. Markham nodded and got up. As we joined the other kids playing, I realized that we didn't deserve to be forgiven so easily. We had cheated. But then I realized that Mr. Markham had shown us the same mercy God shows us when we do something wrong. Jesus had a lesson for me. When Mr. Markham asked if we'd been cheating, I couldn't lie. I wanted to, but when the words came out, they were only truth. I believe God wanted to show me the goodness and mercy that truth can bring.

*By Jessica Lozano, Editor*

6 WAYS TO SAY

**TRUTH:** 真实

CHINESE: Zhēnxiàng

JAPANESE: Shinjitsu

POLISH: Prawda

NORWEGIAN: Sannhet

ROMANIAN: adevăr

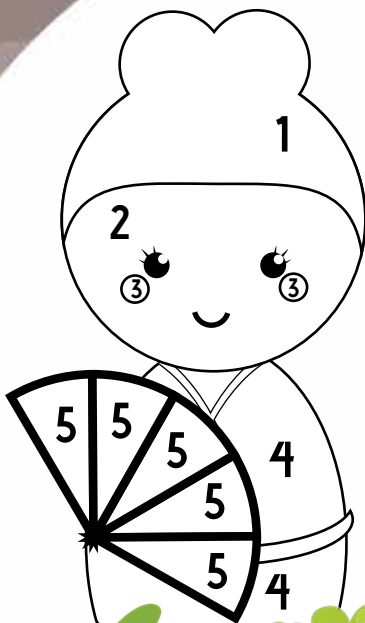
VIETNAMESE: Sự thật



由天小小 由西天 由谊友由西  
(Tell the Truth)

WHOEVER CONCEALS THEIR  
SINS DOES NOT PROSPER,  
BUT THE ONE WHO CONFESSES  
AND RENOUNCES THEM  
FINDS MERCY.

PROVERBS 28:13



**COLOR**  
the Japanese girl  
by number.

black



1

peach



2

pink



3

yellow



4

purple



5



# June Events

## May 31-June 3

**Texas Conference** Keene Camp Meeting | Keene, TX  
KeeneCampMeeting.com

## 9-10

**Arkansas-Louisiana Conference** Spanish Camp Meeting | Gentry, AR  
ArkLacSDA.org  
318.631.6240

## 9-17

**Southwest Region Conference** Camp Meeting (English and Spanish)  
Lone Star Camp  
Athens, TX  
MySouthwestRegion.org  
214.943.4491

## 11-July 2

**Arkansas-Louisiana Conference** Summer Camp | Camp Yorktown Bay | ArkLacSDA.org  
318.631.6240

## 11-July 28

**Oklahoma Conference** Summer Camp | Wewoka Woods Adventist Center  
OklahomaAdventist.org  
405.721.6110

## 11-July 16

**Texas Conference** Summer Camp Lake Whitney Ranch |  
TexasAdventist.org  
817.790.2255

## 18-July 2

**Southwest Region Conference** Summer Camp | Lone Star Camp  
MySouthwestRegion.org  
214.943.4491

## 29-July 2

**Texico Conference** Camp Meeting | Bonita Park Camp, Capitan, NM  
Texico.org | 505.244.1611



# July Events

## 14-22

**Oklahoma Conference** Camp Meeting | Wewoka Woods Adventist Center  
OklahomaAdventist.org  
405.721.6110

## 29

**Texas Conference** Church Leadership Summit | San Antonio, TX  
TexasAdventist.org  
817.790.2255

## 24-27

**Arkansas-Louisiana Conference** Pastors' Meetings | Camp Yorktown Bay | ArkLacSDA.org  
318.631.6240

## 31-August 16

**Oklahoma Conference** Youth Mission Trip  
OklahomaAdventist.org  
405.721.6110



For more events and information, including the sunset calendar, visit [SouthwesternAdventist.org](http://SouthwesternAdventist.org)



# Oklahoma Constituency

## Conference Holds 69th Regular Session

**Edmond, Okla.** » On April 30, 2017, the Oklahoma Conference of Seventh-day Adventists held its 69th Regular Constituency Session at the Edmond Seventh-day Adventist Church in Edmond, Okla. In attendance were 338 regular delegates and delegates-at-large. For the 2017-2021 quadrennial term, James Shires, formerly prayer ministries coordinator for the Oklahoma Conference, was voted as executive secretary, and Roger L. Driver was re-elected as treasurer. The position of president was voted and offered to Don Mackintosh, health director of Weimar Institute; however, Mackintosh graciously declined the position. The position was referred to the Oklahoma executive committee for action.

Newly elected executive secretary, James Shires, states that, "The Oklahoma Conference has a dedicated and Spirit-led group of pastors committed to the task of sharing the Three Angels' messages in the context of the everlasting gospel. Our church members and lay leaders are equally committed to the same task and we are working together in the mission field of Oklahoma. Both pastors and church members will be seeking the Lord, for Him to show us who He wants to be the next president off our Conference. We will be ready to support and work together with him

under God's leading and direction. We have complete confidence that God is in control and we are looking to Him, knowing that He is faithful and we soon will find the person that He is calling to lead us. The Conference officers will be working together with Elder Larry Moore to begin that process soon. Please pray along with us as we go forward."

Prior to the opening of the session, the nominating committee met at 7:00 a.m. to meet and confer with delegates regarding the nominating committee's report. While the nominating committee met, delegates enjoyed a mini-concert by the King's Heralds. At 10:00 a.m. Eduardo Canales, vice president for evangelism for the Southwestern Union, gave the invocation. Guest speaker Keith Gray, pastor of the Acts 2 Seventh-day Adventist Church in Plano, Texas, presented the devotional message.

Following the worship program, conference treasurer Roger Driver led the delegates in prayer, which was then followed by the King's Heralds performing special music.

Outgoing president John Moyer, who retired as of the session, and then-executive secretary, Rick Dye, called the meeting to order and for the seating of the delegates. The meeting was then turned over to Larry Moore, Southwestern Union president, who chaired

the business session. Also present were Buford Griffith, Jr., Southwestern Union executive secretary, and Rodney Grove, former Oklahoma Conference president and former Lake Union executive secretary, who acted as parliamentarian. Southwestern Union and General Conference Auditing Services staff assisted with the proceedings.

Delegates voted to add two churches, South Oklahoma City Spanish and Tulsa Zomi, to the sisterhood of churches. They also voted to dissolve the Hooker, Idabel, Madill, and Oklahoma City Northwest Spanish churches.

Conference officers presented a video report, giving an overview of the history of the Adventist Church in Oklahoma as well as an update of the current state of affairs in the conference.

Michael Merrifield, of General Conference Auditing Services (GCAS), presented the auditor's report, stating that the conference received the highest rating possible from GCAS.

In addition to the retirement of John Moyer, Jack Francisco, then-superintendent of education, and Linda Francisco, then-church clerk, announced their retirements from church work. Moyer and his wife, Donna, along with the Franciscos were presented with flowers and words of gratitude for their years of dedicated service to the church.



Also elected during the session were; Apple Park, Asian ministries coordinator and youth/young adult ministries director; Paula Mitchell, children's ministries coordinator; James Bokovoy, communication director; Stanley Buckmaster, community services director; Sherry Fisher, health ministries director; Hispanic ministries coordinator, Ciro Castillo; Jim Landelius, Native American ministries coordinator; Michael

Smith, prayer ministries coordinator; and Marjorie Green, women's ministries coordinator.

The following positions were referred to the executive committee: ASI liaison; education superintendent; evangelism coordinator; men's ministries director; ministerial director; ministerial spouse's director; planned giving and trust services director; public affairs and religious liberty coordinator; Sabbath

School/personal ministries director; and stewardship director.

Larry Moore, Southwestern Union president, says that "The Oklahoma Conference is poised for tremendous growth through God's guidance and providence. Let us continue to pray for and support the conference leadership in this time of transition. God has great things in store for Oklahoma."

— By *Jessica L. Lozano, Editor*

## Excellence in Teaching

### Eight Southwestern Union Teachers Awarded

**Burleson, Texas** » Each year the Southwestern Union Conference Education Department recognizes excellence among the teaching staff of over 300 teachers. This is accomplished at both the elementary and secondary levels.

Nominations are submitted by conference superintendents of schools (elementary) and academy principals (secondary) for those worthy of this award. The Southwestern Union Conference K-12 Board of Education is responsible for the final approval of the recipients.

In the book *Education*, Ellen G. White states when referring to teaching, "This work is the nicest, the most difficult, ever committed to human beings. It requires the most delicate tact, the finest susceptibility, a knowledge of human nature, and a heaven-born faith and patience, willing to work and watch and wait. It is a work than which nothing can be more important" (p. 292).

Each of the 2017 Excellence in Teaching Award recipients has exemplified excellence in spiritual credibility,

academic preparedness, classroom acumen, professional development, and commitment to the inherent values of Adventist education.

Each receives a pecuniary award, a plaque, and a certificate honoring their commitment to excellence.

The 2017 Southwestern Union Excellence in Teaching Award recipients are:

#### **Arkansas-Louisiana Conference:**

Rodil Capobres  
*Greater New Orleans Christian Academy*

#### **Oklahoma Conference:**

Amy Ward  
*Pioneer Adventist Christian School*

#### **Southwest Region Conference:**

Whitney Mack  
*Shiloh Adventist School*

#### **Texas Conference:**

Cindy Nuñez  
*Burleson Adventist School*  
Sylvia Angulo-Jang  
*South Texas Christian Academy*

#### **Texico Conference:**

Michelle Rico  
*Sandia View Christian School*

#### **Academy:**

Jim Sickler  
*Chisholm Trail Academy*  
Larry Camp  
*Sandia View Academy*



Rodil Capobres



Amy Ward



Whitney Mac



Cindy Nuñez



Sylvia Angulo-Jang



Michelle Rico



Jim Sickler



Larry Camp

# The North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists

## NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT

### For Seventh-day Adventist Schools, 2016-2017 School Year

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, in all of its church schools, admits students of any race to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at its schools, and makes no discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnic background, country of origin, or gender in the administration of education policies, applications for admission, scholarship or loan programs, and extracurricular programs.

A complete list of all academies and elementary/junior academies is listed below:

### Arkansas-Louisiana Conference

- Bentonville SDA School**..... 2522 SE 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Bentonville, AR 72712
- Colquitt Christian Academy** ...3217 Colquitt Road, Shreveport, LA 71118
- Ewing Adventist Jr. Academy** ..... 709 Adventist Church Rd., Bonnerdale, AR 71933
- Greater New Orleans Christian Academy**.....5220 Irving Street, Metairie, LA 70006
- Harrison SDA School**..... 4877 Hwy. 392 West, Harrison, AR 72601
- Hot Springs SDA School** ..... 401 Weston Road, Hot Springs, AR 71913
- Jones Creek Adventist Academy**..... 4363 Jones Creek Rd., Baton Rouge, LA 70817
- Little Rock Adventist Academy** ..... 8708 Rodney Parham, Little Rock, AR 72205
- Ozark Adventist School**..... 21150 Dawn Hill East Rd, Gentry, AR 72734
- Springdale Adventist School** ..... 4001 W. Don Tyson Pkwy, Springdale, AR 72762
- Umpire Christian School** ..... 164 School Street, Umpire, AR 71971

#### Academy

- Ozark Adventist Academy** .....20997 Dawn Hill East Road, Gentry, AR 72734

### Oklahoma Conference

- Ardmore Adventist Academy** ..... 154 Beavers Academy Rd., Ardmore, OK 73401
- Bristow Adventist School**..... 718 E. Jefferson, Bristow, OK 74010
- Heritage Adventist School** ..... 20555 S. 4170 Road Unit B, Claremore, OK 74017
- Ketchum Adventist Academy** ..... 35369 S. Hwy 82, Vinita, OK 74301
- Muskogee SDA Christian School** ..... 170 N. Country Circle Rd., Muskogee, OK 74403
- Parkview Adventist School** ..... 4201 Martin Luther King, Oklahoma City, OK 73111
- Pioneer Adventist Christian School** ..... 1710 N. East Street, Guymon, OK 73942
- Tulsa Adventist Academy** ..... 900 S. New Haven, Tulsa, OK 74112

### Southwest Region Conference

- Alfred Booker Jr. Academy** ..... 916 Richmond Drive, Alexandria, LA 71301
- Applegate Adventist Jr. Academy** ..... #4 Applegate Circle, Round Rock, TX 78680
- Bethel Adventist School**..... 489 South Kings Hwy. Texarkana, TX 75501
- Emmanuel Adventist School** ... 702 N. Cherry St., Hammond, LA 70401
- Excel Adventist Academy** ..... 7950 W. Fuqua, Missouri City, TX 77489
- Martin Luther King Jr Christian Academy** ..... 4295 Prescott Court, Baton Rouge, LA 70805
- New Orleans Adventist Academy**..... 4500 Gawain Drive, New Orleans, LA 70127

- Shiloh Adventist School**..... 2400 S. Maple St., Little Rock, AR 72204
- S.W. Adventist Jr. Academy** ...1600 Bonnie View Road, Dallas, TX 75203

### Texas Conference

- Adventist Christian Academy of Texas** ..... 3601 S Loop 336 E, Conroe, TX 77301
- Burleson Adventist School** ..... 1635 Fox Lane, Burleson, TX 76028
- Burton Adventist Elem. School** ..... 4611 Kelly-Elliott Road, Arlington, TX 76017
- Cleburne Adventist Christian School** ..... 111 Meadowview Drive, Cleburne, TX 76033
- Coggin Memorial School**...6645 Downing St., Corpus Christi, TX 78414
- Cypress Bend Adventist School** .....2997 FM 728, Jefferson, TX 75657
- Dallas Christian Academy**..... 4025 N. Central Expressway, Dallas, TX 75204
- Ft. Worth Adventist Jr. Academy** .....3040 Sycamore School Rd, Ft Worth, TX 76133
- Garland Christian Adventist School**..... 1702 E. Centerville Road, Garland, TX 75041
- Hill Country Adventist School**....611 Harper Road, Kerrville, TX 78028
- Joshua Adventist Multi-Grade**.... 1912 Conveyer Rd., Joshua, TX 76058
- Katy Adventist Christian School**.... 1913 East Avenue, Katy, TX 77493
- Keene Adventist Elementary** ..... 302 Pecan, Keene, TX 76059
- Killeen Adv Jr. Academy** ..... 3412 Lake Road, Killeen TX 76543
- Knowledge Seekers Chr School**..... 1471 W. Corporate Dr., Lewisville, TX 75067
- Maranatha Adventist School** ...2526 Goliad Road, San Antonio, TX 78223
- New Creation Adventist School** .....800 W. Hwy 6, Waco, TX 76712
- North Dallas Adventist Academy (Elem)** ..... 302 Centennial Blvd., Richardson, TX 75081
- Pineywoods Adventist Christian School**..... 4629 FM 1638, Nacogdoches, TX 75964
- San Marcos Adventist Jr. Academy** ...P.O. Box 801, San Marcos, TX 78667
- Scenic Hills Adventist Christian School**..... 11223 Bandera Rd., San Antonio, TX 78250
- South Texas Christian Academy (Elem)**..... 7001 N. Ware Rd., McAllen, TX 78504
- Stonehill Christian Academy** ... 4301 Kelly Lane, Pflugerville, TX 78660
- The Oaks Adventist Christian School**..... 11735 Grant Road, Cypress, TX 77428
- Triangle Adventist Christian School** .....P.O. Box H, Groves, TX 77619
- Tyler SDA School** .....2931 South S.E. Loop 323, Tyler, TX 75701
- Victoria Adventist Academy**..... 3103 E. Mockingbird Lane, Victoria, TX 77904

#### Academies

- Burton Adventist Academy**.... 4611 Kelly-Elliott Rd., Arlington, TX 76017
- Chisholm Trail Academy** ..... P.O. Box 717, Keene, TX 76059
- North Dallas Adventist Academy**..... 302 Centennial Blvd., Richardson, TX 75081
- South Texas Christian Academy** 7001 N. Ware Rd., McAllen, TX 78504

### Texico Conference

- Abilene Jr. Academy** ..... 2542 E. Overland Trail, Abilene, TX 79601
- Adventist Academy of Santa Fe** ... P.O. Box 28327, Santa Fe, NM 87592
- Crestview Christian Academy** ..... 6000 Ouray NW, Albuquerque, NM 87120
- El Paso Adventist Jr. Academy**..... 3510 George Dieter Dr., El Paso, TX 79936
- Lubbock Junior Academy** ..... P.O. Box 6277, Lubbock, TX 79493
- Sandia View Elementary**..... 24 Academy Dr., Corrales, NM 87048

#### Academy

- Sandia View Academy** ..... 65 Sandia View Lane, Corrales, NM 87048

# The Making of a Nurse

## Recent Nursing Graduate Named Employee of the Year



**Keene, Texas** » Denny James (pictured above), class of 2013, is an ICU charge nurse at Lake Granbury Medical Center. As a team leader and a team player, James is willing to go the extra mile for patients and coworkers. They often recognize him for giving outstanding care.

Now, James has been named the 2016 Employee of the Year at Lake Granbury Medical Center. It all began at Southwestern Adventist University.

“During my first year at Southwestern, I knew nothing about the nursing profession,” said James. “All I knew is that I wanted to do something with my life that mattered.”

Inspired by his uncle, Robin Houghton, class of 1993, James applied to Southwestern as a nursing major, without a clue of the actual work that nurses do. James observed that his uncle made a positive difference in patients’ lives as a nurse, and he decided that he wanted to do the same. Only while attending Southwestern did he truly begin to understand what nursing was all about, and he loved it. His professors promoted holistic care, and the clinical opportunities provided gave him a wide variety of hands-on experience.

“The clinical opportunities that I had were when things really started to come together and I truly started to fall in love with nursing as profession,” said James. “Our professors were very patient in teaching us ‘baby nurses’ how to tran-

sition into nurses that provide excellent nursing care.” Nursing professors taught James the skills he needed to care for patients as a whole person, rather than just focusing on specific medical problems.

Dr. Ron Mitchell was one such professor. Dr. Mitchell worked as his clinical instructor for the first two semesters that he was in the nursing program.

“I remember caring for a patient in a clinical. This patient was mentally unaware of what was going on around him,” said James.

“Dr. Mitchell still ensured that the student nurses protected the patient’s human dignity and that we treated the patient with the utmost respect, even though it was doubtful that the patient even knew we were in the room taking care of him.

“That impressed me and showed me the importance of providing compassionate Christ-like care to patients that are the most vulnerable.”

James learned that nurses are responsible for more than just a patient’s physical needs, but can also care for their mental and spiritual needs. Now, as a practicing nurse, James uses the skills he learned at Southwestern every day. Learning these skills at Southwestern is part of what’s helped him to succeed in his career. One of the stories the Medical Center shared, when announcing that James had won the Employee of the Year award, was a moment where James

went above and beyond. An elderly patient was dying, but his wife was coming to visit and it was their anniversary. James offered to go get flowers so the man would have something to give to his wife. The man passed away several days later but his wife says she will never forget James’ kindness.

“Denny represents our University and Department of Nursing very well with his kind and compassionate care,” says Dr. Mitchell. “We saw his potential as a student because of his openness and concern for patients while still maintaining a level of academic excellence.”

Whether helping a patient recover from septic shock, or comforting family members after a patient’s death, James strives to make a positive impact in people’s lives.

“Nursing can be very stressful, as well as physically and emotionally exhausting,” said James. “But I can’t think of another field that is more rewarding.”

At Lake Granbury Medical Center, patients and coworkers are able to fill out cards about staff they would like to recognize for giving outstanding cards. Cards began to appear more and more to thank James for the care he delivers. James had the most calls and notes into administration. Plus, his coworkers voted for him to receive the award.

As a result, the hospital decided to recognize James as Employee of the Year. The hospital then sent him and

his wife on a five-day trip to Nashville to stay at the Gaylord Opryland Resort.

"I felt overwhelmed and grateful," said James, "But ultimately, there's nothing more rewarding than feeling like you made a difference in a patient's life. That's what nursing is all about."

Southwestern's nursing department just graduated another class of nurses in May. Recent graduates (pictured, far left) have passed the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) with a 97 percent pass rate, putting them in the top 10 percent in the State of Texas!

Southwestern's nursing department excels at graduating nurses who, like James, are skilled and competent, as well as compassionate and caring nurses.

— *By Makala Coleman James*  
2015 journalism graduate

# Life After Graduation

## What Happens After the Cap and Gown?

**Keene, Texas »** In May, a total of 149 students graduated from Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU) in addition to four guest graduates from various schools. Nearly all the graduates held their breath in expectation of that long-awaited day. Most couldn't wait for the last few days of finals to be over so they could walk down the aisle in their cap and gown, get their diploma, and get on with life.

But what will happen to these graduates after they walk out of those doors? What is reality going to look like for

these students? Are they likely to get jobs or go to graduate school?

According to recent Southwestern studies and surveys, about 75 percent of graduates are working in their field, continuing graduate level education, or serving as missionaries. An average of 20 percent are unaccounted for or did not respond to surveys. In addition, 100 percent of recent graduates from biology, computer science, math, education, English, music and theology are employed or in graduate school (2017 graduate information is still being gath-

ered). There is also a 97 percent success rate with students passing their nursing boards on their first try.

"High job and graduate program placement rates suggest that our academic departments are doing an excellent job preparing Southwestern students for life after college," says Dr. Amy Rosenthal, vice president for academic administration. "These rates also indicate that Southwestern graduates have the character, knowledge, and skills that employers are looking for."

— *Julena Allen, sophomore journalism major*



Caressa Rogers Photography

## Meet Us @ Camp Meeting!

**Parents & Students** - Meet us and have all your academic, admission, and financial questions answered.

- April 14-15 | Louisiana Camp Meeting
  - April 22 | Target Houston - University Singers in Concert
  - April 21-22 | Louisiana Spanish Camp Meeting
  - April 27 | Scenic Hills Church Camp Meeting
  - April 28-29 | New Creation Christian Fellowship Church
  - May 30-June 3 | Ozark Camp Meeting
  - May 30-June 3 | Keene Camp Meeting
  - June 2-4 | Oklahoma Spanish Camp Meeting
- [swau.edu](http://swau.edu) | [enroll@swau.edu](mailto:enroll@swau.edu) | 817-202-6794

- June 8-10 | NW Arkansas Spanish Camp Meeting
- June 8-10, 16-17 | SW Regional English & Spanish Camp Meeting
- June 29-July 1 | Texico Camp Meeting
- July 14-15, 21-22 | Oklahoma Camp Meeting



**SOUTHWESTERN**  
ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY  
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**Alumni!**  
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# When Facing Trials

## Sing, Rejoice, and Praise the Lord!



Life can be challenging. Life can be tough, filled with disappointment, pain, suffering, and sickness. Life has its ups and downs and moments of frustration. Even when we are doing all we can to maintain our trust relationship with Jesus, those moments of trial will come. So sing! In 1 Peter 4:12 the Apostle Peter wrote, “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.” It is what Peter says next that is perhaps the most surprising and strange, “But rejoice . . . !”

Rejoice when you’re challenged? Yes! Sing when you face disappointment, frustration or sorrow? Yes! Because as long as the painful experience is a result of your endeavor to live faithfully before God, you will also be able to rejoice when Jesus comes again! We can’t escape evil any more than Job could escape the calamities that came upon him, but like him, we can say, “though He slay me, yet will I hope [trust] Him” (Job 13:15).

Peter says that because of the resurrection of Jesus, our heavenly inheritance is secure because we are guarded by the power of God. And that imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, “kept in heaven” inheritance will be delivered to us at the return of Jesus. Now that is something that we can rejoice and sing about! So even though you and I may suffer various trials, and our faith is tested by fire, we will be offering praise, glory, and honor to God (1 Peter 1:3-7).

When the three armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir banded together to assault the people of Judah, God instructed them to not be afraid, but rather send a choir in front of the army of Judah! A choir? Yes! Page 201 of Ellen White’s *Prophets and Kings* says, “These singers went before the army lifting their voices in praise to God for the promise of victory.” Indeed victory was theirs as God brought confusion to the three armies so that, rather than fighting Judah, they fought one another and destroyed each other. Songs of praise to God brought victory in a moment of despair and hopelessness.

“But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble. You are my strength, I sing praise to you; you, God, are my fortress, my God on whom I can rely ” (Psalms 59:16-17). Sing, rejoice, and praise the Lord!

*Stephen Orian, President*



# Mission to Romania

## Arkansas-Louisiana Members Hold Evangelism Series in Europe

**New Orleans, La.** » In February 2017 a group of 34 members and pastors from Arkansas-Louisiana traveled to Romania for a series of evangelistic meetings sponsored by the North American Division. As the pastor of the All Nations Group and the Fountain of Life Spanish Group in New Orleans, La., I was blessed to be one who was chosen to go.

I thank the administrators of the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference for allowing me to present a series of biblical evangelistic sermons in Romania in the

Eastern Europe Division. I spoke in the Targu Neamt Seventh-day Adventist Church, along with meetings presented on television within the city of Targu Neamt, Romania. Though the baptisms resulting from these efforts have been scheduled by the Romanian Union Conference for June, one member of the gypsy community insisted on being baptized before my meetings were over.

Thank God for the privilege of being there. I did not feel like a stranger in that beautiful country. I have been a

pastor to many members of the Russian and Romanian communities in Paris, France, and I had the privilege of working in the Eastern Europe Division for my Lord. Praise God for the Romanian language courses taken seven years ago! During the final night of the meetings, the local conference president, Florin Istrate, came to hear the sermon, and on the final Sabbath morning the meetings were attended by the local conference treasurer, Dumitru Lupu.

————— *By Libny H. Dubreuze-LeGrand*



# Blankets of Love

## Fort Smith Members Support Mothers and Children

**Fort Smith, Ark.** » Blankets of Love is an ongoing community outreach ministry by the ladies from the Fort Smith Seventh-day Adventist Church, led by Nancy Brennan. The group meets every three months to assemble layettes for underprivileged new mothers and babies.

Church members donate beautiful handmade blankets, receiving blankets, store-bought blankets, crocheted hats, onesies, and other items for newborns. In January, the group put together 12 layettes that were delivered to Heart to Heart Pregnancy Support Center in Fort

Smith. The Bible tells us that “Children are a heritage from the Lord,” (Psalms 127:3). The group is blessed to be able to serve these mothers and babies.

The group also held a knitting/crochet class with guest Inga Woods, who demonstrated European-style knitting, and Nancy Brennan, who demonstrated the American style. The knitting/crochet group plans to meet twice a month. What a wonderful way to learn new skills and spend time in fellowship, service, and learning.

————— *By Lea Treshnell*



# A Growing Congregation

## Clinton Church Celebrates New Members and Sanctuary

**Clinton, Ark.** » On Sabbath, October 22, 2016, members and visitors of the Clinton Seventh-day Adventist Church walked from their old church building, which seated around 60 people, to their new sanctuary, which seats 150. There the congregation held its first worship service and celebrated their new sanctuary, which was joined to an existing building on the same property. The idea is to “grow” our congregation!

The new sanctuary has been used frequently to do just that. From January 13 to February 10, 2017, Arkansas-Louisiana Conference Evangelist Tommy Blount held a prophecy seminar.

The community of Clinton (population 2,500) and the surrounding area received informative mailers inviting them to the seminars. During the eve-

nings of the 21 meetings, between five and 12 non-Adventists attended. On the last two evenings, when Blount called for those who wanted to accept all the Bible truths presented and unite with the remnant church by baptism, five precious persons went forward to take their stand and were baptized on Sabbath, February 11, 2017, by Ron Woolsey, pastor of the church. The church appreciates Blount and his wife, Kahne, for holding this seminar in the Clinton area, and uplifting Jesus, our hope.

Other outreach activities that have taken place were planned by the personal ministries and community service departments of the church. They included a healthy vegetarian cooking school; a “surviving disaster” preparedness class; a spiritual gifts seminar; a

marriage seminar; and a “How To Have a Successful Small Group Bible Study in Your Home” seminar. A seminar on purposeful witnessing is being planned for a future date.

By Karyn Whitley

*Top left: Baptismal candidates take their vows with evangelist Tommy Blount.*

*Top right: The newly baptized individuals pose with Tommy Blount (far left) and Ron Woolsey, pastor (far right).*

*Bottom left: The Clinton Seventh-day Adventist Church’s new sanctuary.*

*Bottom right: Ron Woolsey, Clinton pastor, baptizes a new member.*





# Questions and Choices

## What Will Challenge Your Foundation on Life's Journey?



James Bokovoy

The sound of a huge, crashing surf seems to melt into the beautiful evening light as it changes colors and begins to fade. Cool trade winds blow across the waves and lift the salty, ocean air up the steep cliffs of the mighty Na Pali Coast. I am standing in awe of the beauty of God's creation unfolding before me on the island of Kauai. Peace and gratitude fill my soul.

Looking up at the towering spires I am reminded of something I read some time ago: "If you don't stand for something, you will fall for anything!" This modern, anonymous quote should make us pause, think, and ask questions. Are you willing to stand for what is right and good, no matter what the storms of life may bring to you? Will you choose an attitude of gratitude, even during the storms of life? These life storms will often bring symbolic winds, waves and rains that will challenge you to your foundation on life's journey. Will you stand tall? Are you willing to be intentional about your life choices? Are you willing to step up and be a voice and advocate for those who have no voice? Will you love others and yourself no matter what? Are you choosing to praise God in all things? Will you let Jesus be your Rock and your Salvation? What will your testimony be?

To help my attitudes and perspectives on life, to deepen my relationship with my Creator, I choose to spend time in nature. While outside experiencing His Creation, I often think about and reflect on questions like these. These experiences are one way I choose to worship and praise my Creator and I am always filled with gratitude. As I spend time behind my camera, exploring and capturing the world around me, I soak up everything I can. While I can. Time is precious. Life is precious. You are precious.

Be thankful my friends, for you have been blessed with another day of life that can be filled with praise. Looking up at the sheer cliffs, rising up from crashing waves, I take note of the fact that they still stand tall and resilient in the face of adversities. It is a testimony for me. Time has brought countless number of storms with blowing rain, howling wind and huge, crashing surf to attack these mountains from their summits to their bases. Yet they are still standing tall, teaching me lessons of praise and gratitude. Choose your testimony well. 2 Corinthians 4:15 says, "All of this is for your benefit. And as God's grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory."

*By James Bokovoy, Communication Director*



# Serving the Servant

## Caring for His Children's Needs

**Stuart** » On one recent Sunday, I had the pleasure to visit with a special church member, Alpha Davenport. She lives out in the middle of nowhere in central Oklahoma in a town called Stuart. She is what one might call a pioneer.

She was baptized in 1990, and ever since that time, her greatest desire is to share the Gospel of Jesus with those who do not know about God. She buys Spirit of Prophecy books in bulk, as well as Bible Study lessons, and other religious literature, which she then gives away to people she meets. When she goes to doctor appointments, she asks if she can leave books and literature in the

waiting rooms, so others can pick them up. She is providing Bible study lessons for neighbors and friends that she contacts on a regular basis. She makes quilts to sell, so she can support mission work in Africa. She faithfully pays her tithes and offerings; I know this because she calls the Oklahoma Conference office regularly to fulfill what she feels is her "Godly responsibility."

Reading this you may surmise that she is living comfortably on a steady income, but you would be wrong. She is 80 years young—she is full of the love of God and love for life and people. She puts others before herself, and God has bless-

ed her with abundant answers to prayer. God even answers her prayers before she asks. That was why I happened to be at her home that Sunday.

A group of volunteers, in association with the youth department at the conference office, have decided to build her a deck and a ramp on the back of her home, so she has better access to her back yard. She has had recent surgeries on her hip and knee, and her freedom has been affected. God cares about His children's needs big or small—what can you do for someone else today?

— *By Susan Castillo, Communication Secretary*



# Fellowship Evangelism

## Wagoner Members Reach Out to Community

**Wagoner** » The members of the Wagoner Seventh-day Adventist Church are reaching out to their surrounding community, seeking to help those searching for biblical truth and those in dire need of various types of assistance.

Each quarter, the church members mail out 1,000 Bible study cards. This activity keeps the small group of members busy giving Bible studies.

An offering called the "Tree of Life"

helps those in need, including burn-out victims, people with medical emergencies, and other people who have been affected by disasters. The church's "Food for Kids" program helps public school children that lack proper nutrition obtain food during the weekend when they might otherwise go without sustenance.

Our budget is much assisted by member Gloria Mobley's stewardship program, in which members bring their

change from home every fourth Sabbath for our outreach activities. We financially support three prison ministries, plus provide literature to reach those who are looking to change their lives.

Every year we have services at Fort Gibson Lake where we come together to begin the new year to celebrate and look forward for what Christ would have us to do in His service.

— *By Jack Harris*

# Broken Arrow

## Church Members Commit to Finish Building Project

**Broken Arrow »** Several years ago, church members pitched in and built a huge fellowship building adjacent to the Broken Arrow Seventh-day Adventist Church. As years went by, and more requirements were assessed for its completion, and enthusiasm waned. That is, it waned until recently, when a group of dedicated believers decided it was time to complete the project for the needs of our members.

A request was made on a recent Sabbath for at least six men to come out early Sunday morning ready to work. Barbara Calvert volunteered to fix breakfast for the workers, and the leaders showed up that morning, faithfully believing that there would be enough volunteers to get the job done

Their faith was rewarded as more than double the requested workers showed up and cheerfully went to work.

Not only did they accomplish their mission, but all reported the building had already given these members and workers a great deal of enjoyment and fellowship. We expect to use our building for fellowship among our members and our community. We thank God for inspiration and faith.

By Judy Marquette



# Oklahoma Conference Campmeeting 2017

July 14th-July 22nd



**Elizabeth Talbot, Ph.D.**

Director of Jesus101  
Biblical Institute.  
(July 14th & 15th)

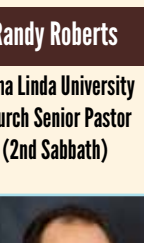
**Dr. Sung Kwon**  
North American Division  
Adventist Community  
Services Director  
(July 16th-18th)



**Dr. John Hyunsok Doh**  
E.G.W. Research Center Director,  
Sahmyook S.D.A. University, Korea  
(July 19th-21st)



The Kings Heralds



**Randy Roberts**  
Loma Linda University  
Church Senior Pastor  
(2nd Sabbath)



**Minner Labrador**  
Southwestern Union  
Conference Vice  
President  
(July 17th-20th)

**Buford Griffith Jr.**  
Southwestern Union  
Conference Executive  
Secretary

# Giving God the Praise

## Praise Him for Great Things He Has Done!



There are so many people who love the Lord and call themselves Christians. Some even declare, “I was raised in the Church and nobody can ‘out church’ me.” Some even like to testify that they have a relationship with God—that God has blessed their families, their finances, and their health, and they brag that if it was not for God, they wouldn’t know where they would be.

There are many who talk about their accomplishments, their degrees, their job, and their children. If you read between the lines, it appears that they are talking about what they have done and they take ownership for their accomplishments. But if we would be honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that we give more praise to our accomplishments and ourselves than we do to God.

I never will forget meeting a young lady whose every word that came out of her mouth was “Praise God.” She could not speak a sentence without a “Praise God” in front of it. And I admit it, it was annoying, but after living and experiencing life and seeing what God actually does for mankind, I have come to the conclusion that she did not have a problem. I had a problem, and that problem was that I did not praise God enough.

Praising God is not just a verbal response, not just a hand-raising time. Praising God is about giving Him credit for everything—the good, the bad, and the ugly. If one looks closely, one can see that there is always something to praise God for.

As church members and pastors we have to always remember that in everything we must give Him thanks, for our thanks and our praise to God is what He desires, not what He needs. God expects us to acknowledge Him in all of our ways. If we do that, we have the blessed assurance that God will cause us to ride upon High places, and our enemies will marvel at the blessings that come our way, all because we praise God—a praise that comes not with our voice only, but with the life we live.

*Calvin L. Watkins, Sr., President*



# Marriage is for Friends

## Southwest Region Hosts Marriage Retreat

**Camp Yorktown Bay, Hot Springs, Ark.** » The Southwest Region Conference Family Ministries Department held a “Marriage is For Friends” Retreat at Camp Yorktown Bay on March 24-26. Thirteen couples joined the Southwest Region Coordinators, W. S. and Wilma Lee, for a weekend retreat to renew, refresh, and restart their marriages.

During the weekend, time was spent working on skills for improving the

intimacy of their relationships with the Lord and each other. The weekend was spent strengthening marriages—making good marriages better for all attendees.

With a strong spiritual foundation, it was the privilege of all participants to re-create the Eden experience. As the retreat was set on the lovely grounds of Camp Yorktown Bay, it was our privilege to be able to walk in nature, as well as work on our relationships.

Marriage, one of the precious gifts given to mankind in Eden, is still ours to share today. It is an honor to God to spend time developing and strengthening our marriages. Our prayer is that marriages strengthened will be a witness of the power of God’s love. God’s redemption is manifested in our marriages and homes first.

By *W. S. Lee and Wilma Lee,*  
*Family Life Coordinators*



# Fresh Anointing

## Church Holds First Annual Hispanic Prayer Summit

**Houston, Tex.** » On April 9, 2017, more than 125 women attended the Central Regional Hispanic Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Fresh Anointing Hispanic Prayer Summit. This was the first time the church held such an event.

The prayer summit followed a week of neighborhood evangelism campaigns led by women of area churches including Central Regional, Houston Maranatha, Houston La Esperanza, Sugar Land, and Corpus Christi Hispanic.

The prayer summit began and ended with prayer. The women came from the Houston, Dallas, and Corpus Christi areas, and enjoyed a day of total com-

munion together with fellow believers and with the Heavenly Father.

The women were lifted up to God’s throne of grace through praise, testimonies, prayer sessions, and powerful messages presented by Hazel Marroquin, Enid Larriu, and Sonia Aguilar—women who were filled with the Holy Spirit as they presented the messages the Lord had impressed them to share.

As they shared their personal testimonies, they brought hope to the attendees and encouragement to continue trusting in the Almighty and allowing Him to guide and use His people, no matter the burdens they may be carrying.

The speakers reminded the women that the Lord gives them the privilege to seek Him personally in fervent prayer and to give their cares to the One with whom they are invited to have personal relationships.

The summit ended with an anointing service, a great blessing for all. As they were anointed, some women went to the cross of Christ where they poured out their souls to Jesus Christ. The women went home filled with the Holy Spirit and renewed with the purpose of being a light wherever they go.

By *Ana Acosta*  
*Hispanic Women’s Ministries Coordinator*

Guest Speakers



Dr. Ron C. Smith  
President  
Southern Union Conference



Elder Gustavo Squarzon  
Pastor & Author  
Texas Conference



Elder C. L. Watkins, Sr.  
President  
Southwest Region Conference



Dr. Larry & Carol Johnson  
Pastor & Shepherds Coordinator  
South Atlantic Conference

Guest Musicians



Hugo Yin  
Recording Artist



Grace Dorcey-Landy  
Recording Artist

# Tearing Down Walls

## Building Up the Kingdom

Camp Meeting | June 9-17, 2017  
Lone Star Camp, Athens, Texas



Southwest Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists | 214-943-4491  
www.mysouthwestregion.org | www.swrgc2017campmeeting.eventbrite.com/

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- track & field
- volleyball
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### Living Faithful



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For more information contact us at 214.943.4491 Ext. 209/210 Tyrone Douglas, Youth Director, SWRC, tdouglas@swrgc.org  
Lulleither Massiah, Administrative Assistant, lmassiah@swrgc.org, lscamp@swrgc.org

# An Attitude of Gratitude

## Recognizing the Presence of Christ in Our Lives



Psalm 100:1, 4 says, “Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs ... Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name.”

Chuck Swindoll once said, “The longer I live, the more I realize the importance of choosing the right attitude in life ... I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it.”

How true! In Psalm 100, David expresses how he discovered that the presence of Jehovah was what brought meaning to his existence. That is why he proclaims that we should serve the Lord with gladness and enter into His presence with praise.

It’s worth noting how many songs the Israelites had about thanksgiving. Those songs were reminders of the goodness of God. We tend to forget so easily all that the Lord does for us. Psalm 100 was an anthem of praise the Hebrews sang as they entered the temple. It served as a call to worship that set the tone and the attitude for their meaningful worship experience.

Indeed, the attitude that we bring to worship has everything to do with its relevance. An attitude of gratitude is expected from the believer as he or she approaches the throne of grace. Now, deciding to be thankful is not such an easy task. It takes some work. How often the sweeping tide of complaint and criticism overshadows the goodness and blessing that the Lord desires for His people. The spiritual blessing of the worship service in church is often undone and marred by the conversations in the parking lot or around the dinner table. Thus, David reminds us that we are His people, the sheep of His pastures. Planting, cultivating, and growing the seeds of gratitude and expressions of joy in our hearts and lives requires dedication.

Christian author Clovis Chappell said that the reason we are so thankless is because we are so thoughtless. It is intriguing that we must be reminded to give thanks. In Luke 17, we find Jesus on His way to Jerusalem. He enters a village and 10 lepers approach Him screaming. They request that Jesus heal them. He granted their request and they were healed! Yet, only one of the 10 returned to express gratitude for what Christ had done! Luke makes the point that the man was a Samaritan who had not been jaded by the formalism of practiced religion. He was able to see Christ as the author of all blessings!

The greatest work we can do to cultivate an attitude of gratitude is to recognize the presence of the blessing of Christ in our lives every day. The Apostle Paul reminds us in Philippians that, “Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think on these things!” Out with the negative, in with the praise!

*Carlos J. Craig, President*



# Shattering the Darkness

## Member Returns Home to Share Christ with His Community

**Houston/Gulfhaven »** On a recent Sabbath, the first elder of the Gulfhaven Seventh-day Adventist Church, Victor Amankwah, gave a most-inspiring testimony. He spoke about a recent mission trip to Ghana, where he and a team of volunteers spent time preaching and teaching, as well as building a pavilion for the local church members to use for worship services.

Amankwah was born and raised in a small village in Ghana. He received his nursing education in Ghana where he became a registered nurse. He later moved to Canada in 1986 to live and work there. One day, a co-worker invited him to attend her church. She was a Seventh-day Adventist. He attended, but was not too impressed at first. He said that he did not care to go back, but through his friend's encouragement and the Holy Spirit tugging at his heart, he continued to go and was convicted. He gave his heart to God, and was baptized.

Later, he heard a sermon based on Mark 5, which describes the story of a man possessed by demons. In the story, Jesus sends the demons out of the man, and the man was freed. The man was so happy and grateful to Jesus that he desired to stay with Jesus, but Jesus told the man to return home to his family and tell them what He had done for him.

The story of the demon-possessed man deeply impressed Amankwah. He said that the story reminded him of how

he was before he found Christ, as well as how he felt after he found Christ. He wanted to stay where he was and worship Jesus. He did not want to go back to Ghana. But, as he read the story in scripture, he became convicted to go back to his home in Ghana and teach his people about Jesus and what He had done for him.

Amankwah's went on his first mission trip to Ghana in 1992. He did not go again until 2002, when the conviction to go teach his people became so strong that he could not refuse God's calling any longer. Since 2002, Victor has returned to Ghana every three years, for periods of six weeks to two months.

In 2016, Victor decided to do something different on the mission trip. He, along with the pastors and lay people, decided to go by twos into the homes of the community members with 12 projectors, 12 laptop computers, and a 15-minute pre-recorded message for to invite them to an evangelism series.

"We went into the homes as an army of God to ask them to come to the meetings," Amankwah said. He had put a Bible study program on his computer and, using his projector to make a better presentation, he went to his brother's household and said, "I have something to show you."

His brother and family listened to the program. The next day, they asked to hear it again. Amankwah said that he

went to their home every night for 12 nights, but that it was not a hardship at all, because his brother and family were hearing God's message for the first time in their lives!

He said that it was such a thrilling experience to see the change in his brother and family members, and to see their hearts being transformed through the messages and by the grace of God.

Amankwah said their plans were to build two churches on the trip, but they were only able to build one pavilion at this time. They spent the daylight hours building, and would preach and teach at night. At the end of their first two-week crusade they baptized 90 people for God's kingdom.

In closing, Amankwah repeated John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son; that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

By Jean Hagen

*Below left: On a recent mission trip to Ghana, Gulfhaven Seventh-day Adventist Church member Victor Amankwah (center) and his volunteer team can't help but smile after working for the Lord.*

*Below right: The volunteers were able to build a huge pavilion for the local community to hold worship services.*







# FAMILY CAMP AT Lake Whitney Ranch

**Guest Speakers**



Pastor:  
Dan Serns



Pastor:  
Ruber Leal

**JULY 9-16, 2017**



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\*Flex days available | Minimum 50 people to hold event



# Running the Race

Ark-La-Tex Camp Meeting July 19-23, 2017



Errol Bryce



Del Johnson



Alden Ho



Music by Carolina Heartsong

## TOPICS: YOUR HEALTH & YOUR FINANCES

Facebook Page for updates: [ArkLaTex Camp Meeting 2017](#)

Reservation Lodging and Meals  
available through  
Jefferson Christian Academy.  
Contact Robin Tullock  
903-666-3973

Sponsored by East Texas  
ARK-LA-TX Churches  
Camp Meeting will be held at  
Jefferson Academy SDA Church  
3800 FM 728, Jefferson, TX

3 4 5 6

# Focus On Him

## Experience God Through Praise and Thanksgiving



**H**as God been good to you? I think we can all find many things in our lives to thank God for and to give Him praise. The scriptures are filled with examples of praise and thanksgiving. Praise is an act of our will that flows out of an awe and reverence for our Creator. It gives glory to God and opens us up to a deeper union with Him. It turns our attention off of our problems and on the nature and character of God Himself.

Psalm 65:1 reminds us that we don't need a reason to praise God; He simply deserves praise: "Praise befits you, O God, in Zion." God is holy, mighty, loving, generous, and merciful. He is the King of the universe and the Lord of our hearts, so we praise Him. When we praise God, we change our focus from our problems to God, who is bigger than any difficulty. "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God," (Psalm 42:5). God wants us to focus on Him because that is where true hope is found.

Thanksgiving is a necessary accompaniment of prayer and should never to be absent from our devotion (Philippians 4:6). It reminds us of past mercies and prepares us to receive further blessings.

While a prayer of thanksgiving solidifies your relationship with God, it breaks down the boundaries and obstacles that hinder you from experiencing God's fullness. The evil one is incapable of withstanding the joy you experience and is forced to depart from your presence. It allows you to experience breakthroughs in life as barriers are broken.

Paul himself set an example of constant thankfulness: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:3-5). Do you have a problem or a worry? Talk to God. Pour out your heart to Him. Let Him take control of your problems, illnesses, and difficulties. Ask for God's peace. Most importantly, praise God for His great goodness and always be thankful.

Dear God: We praise you today with our hearts and songs. We praise you for your faithfulness. We praise you for your great power and love. We confess our need for You. We struggle and worry, and get weary and worn, yet you never leave us. Thank you for Your presence. Thank you for Your care of us. Thank you that You breathe renewal into our souls. We ask for your Spirit to fill us, to draw us close to You, and to work Your purposes through us. In Jesus' name, amen.

*By Lee-Roy Chacon, President*



# Texico Heritage Series

## Early Seventh-day Adventists in New Mexico and Texas

**Texico »** The Texico Conference has published its first book in the upcoming “Texico Conference Heritage Series,” a historical account of Seventh-day Adventist history in the West Texas and New Mexico territory. Joe Reynolds, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor and descendant of New Mexican homesteaders, wrote the volume *Seventh-day Adventists in New Mexico and El Paso, Texas 1881-1909*. It is not a story, but a compilation of news about Adventists that Reynolds found in archived secular and church papers from that time.

Texico Conference President Lee-Roy Chacon’s first book on the early Adventist work in West Texas is currently underway, as well as two more volumes from Reynolds.

This will be a great collection of historical value for our church. Enjoy a sneak peek into this first volume and learn how to order your own copy by reading Carol Schoun’s description, which follows:

Religious Liberty Issues in New Mexico’s History: There were several happenings that affected the life of early Adventists settling in New Mexico Territory and the church’s evangelism: railroads; land grants and homesteading; and the national tuberculosis epidemic. Also, by 1890, most states had Sunday laws—restrictions on what people could

do on that day. It is the latter that is highlighted in this book.

In 1889, the first evangelistic series was held in Las Vegas, New Mexico. Two of the evening presentations dealt with the separation of church and state, with a special emphasis on the National Sunday Law, which Congress had tried to pass the winter before. The attendance to these meetings was large.

In late 1904, Governor Otero recommended that the Sunday law of New Mexico be enforced. Chief Justice Mills wrote to the sheriff of Colfax County, instructing him to do so. Knowing of this, Emery K. Cassell of Raton, wrote a letter to the Colorado Conference (which New Mexico Territory was under) advising them of his determination to defy the law and work in his blacksmith shop on Sunday, as a witness to the truth of religious liberty.

He did so and was arrested. Cassell appeared in court on March 31, 1905.

When asked why he had continued to work on Sundays, Cassell replied, “I am a Seventh-day Adventist, I work six days a week and keep Saturday as my Sabbath, therefore, I feel I am entitled to work on Sunday.”

When asked if he knew that the Sunday law was a law of the territory, Cassell said, “Yes, I did.” Again, the judge asked, “Then why did you work

on Sunday?” Cassell replied, “New Mexico law conflicts with the law of God, which requires the seventh day to be kept.” The judge did not accept Cassell’s arguments and sentenced him to 15 days in prison plus \$28, the cost of the court, which he could work off by spending another 28 days in jail.

H.M.J. Richards (father of H.M.S. Richards, Sr.), a Colorado Conference minister living in Loveland, Colorado, traveled to Raton in early April to see if he could help Cassell. He went into action by writing: (1) a letter to President Theodore Roosevelt; (2) an open letter to the citizens of New Mexico; (3) and another letter to the Attorney General of the United States.

In a short time, Elder Richards created so much pressure on all who had put Cassell in jail that the people of Raton became stirred up. After several townspeople paid his court costs, Cassell was freed from jail. The Colorado Conference also requested that Richards write a tract on this religious liberty situation. It has been reprinted in Reynolds’ book.

Copies of Reynolds’ book can be purchased for \$10.00 from the Texico Conference, P.O. Box 1366, Corrales, NM 87048 | Phone: 505.244.1611 | Email: [texico@texico.org](mailto:texico@texico.org) | Attention: Nancy Monge.

————— *By Sue Hinkle and Carol Schoun*



# Revival in Odessa

## Daniel and Revelation Seminar Brings 13 New Members

**Odessa, Texas.** » On February 4, 13 new members were added to the Odessa English Seventh-day Adventist Church by baptism and profession of faith.

Through the joint efforts of the Texico Conference and the Odessa Church,

Richie Halversen, an ordained minister from Mississippi, conducted a two-week Daniel and Revelation seminar from January 21 to February 4. The seminar was clearly a success in the city of Odessa to reach souls for Christ. "The

harvest is plentiful but the workers are few." May this precept resonate in our hearts so we will take a strong stand in the finishing of this work.

By *Dodie Pelopero*



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## Obituaries

**Barnes, Johnnie Lee;** born Oct. 6, 1925, Boley, Okla.; died April 21, 2017, Tulsa, Okla. Surviving: Dasol Mashaka, Michael Barnes, Lawrence Phillips, Debra Waterhouse, Terry Barnes, Don Phillips, Cheryle Rivers.

**Burton, Virginia Ann Quinnell;** born Nov. 8, 1931, Christiansburg, Va.; died April 3, 2017, Great Falls, Mt. Preceded in death by husband, Gordon. Surviving: Lenora (Allan) Ward, Charlene (Tore) Ingulfsen, Jay (Consuelo) Burton.

**Carter, Laura Mae;** born October 4, 1940; died March 13, 2017, Baton Rouge, La. Preceded in death by parents, Emma and Jack Wells, Sr.; sisters, Barbara Davis, Edna Wells, Vennie Jenkins; brother, John Wells. Surviving: son, Gregory Carter; daughter, Patricia Ann Carter; 12 siblings.

**King, Sandra Maria;** born May 27, 1953 in Fort Smith, Ark.; died March 12, 2017 Fort Smith. Preceded in death by parents and brother, Fred Stockton. Surviving: husband, Jim King; children, Larry and Dolly King, David King, Matthew and Amanda King, and Tom and Brandece King; six grandchildren; brother and sister-in-law, Keith and Valerie Stockton; sister-in-law, Judy Stockton-Reid.



**Hall, Patsy Johnson;** born October 21, 1930; died Feb. 16, 2017, Fort Smith, Ark. Surviving: daughters, Brenda Phillips, of California; Angie Johnson, of Sallisaw, Okla.; Tanya Todd, of Texas; Candy Eggert, of Fort Smith; Bridget Sonne, of North Carolina; step-son, Rick Hall, of Muldrow, Okla.; sisters, Sallie Peters, of Sallisaw, and Chiquita Roberts, of Fort Smith.

**Meharry, Gerald Frances (Jerry);** born April 09, 1938, Boring, Oregon; died Feb. 19, 2014, Tyler, Texas. Surviving: wife, Belinda Porras Meharry, of Rusk, Texas; son, Gerald F. Meharry II (Kristin); daughter, Olivia, of Flint, Texas; son, Kirk P. Meharry, of Tyler.

**Mundall, Stanley L.;** born Sept. 7, 1934, Phoenix, Ariz.; died Mar. 2, 2017, Harrah, Okla. Preceded in death by wife, Barbara. Surviving: Son, Lester, of Harrah; son, Lynn Young, and wife, Nancy, of Kentucky; three step-children; three siblings, eight grandchildren; two step-grandchildren; five great-grandchildren.

**Russell, Marilyn Jill;** born March 1, 1962, Arlington, Texas; died March 30, 2017, Fort Worth,

Texas. Surviving: daughters, Amanda and Amelia; brother, Bill; sister, Carolyn.

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