

Southwestern Union

Record

September 2017

- 
- 4** Rooted In Love
 - 7** Deconstructing the Dating Scene
 - 8** Discover the Path to Family Success
 - 11** Putting an End to Abuse
 - 13** Budgeting for the Future

Household Faith
Creating a Roadmap for Success

Roadmap For Success

Household Faith

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.

- Features: { 7 Dating Deconstructed
8 Mapping Success
11 No Longer Taboo
- Columns: { 3 On the Record: Roadmap For Success
4 Inspiring: A Story Rooted in Love
12 Education: Bolstering Adventist Education
13 Equipping: Family Finances
14 Little Readers: God's Plans Never Fail
- News: { 16 Southwestern Happenings
17 Southwestern Union
18 Southwestern Adventist University
20 Arkansas-Louisiana Conference
23 Oklahoma Conference
26 Southwest Region Conference
29 Texas Conference
32 Texico Conference
- Back Pages: { 35 Classified Ads
36 Announcements
37 Obituaries

Editor's Note

When setting out on a journey, it's important to be prepared. Whether on a road trip, a hiking adventure, or on the journey of life, the path can be smoother and the difficulties fewer if we heed the advice and guidance of those who have gone before. With this helpful information, we can create a roadmap for success.

This month, as we wrap up our quarterly theme, Household Faith, we focus on finding a Roadmap for Success for our families, with a final destination of our heavenly home with Jesus. It's never too late to reorient yourself and your family on the path to success.



Jessica L. Lozano

Cover photo by Jorge Moya Photography

Household Faith

Creating a Roadmap for Success



Larry Moore | President

The pilot's voice came over the communication system. Addressing the passengers on the flight, he said, "I have good news and bad news. The bad news is that we're lost; the good news is that we're making excellent time." This joke may be silly, but the reality is that with no plan, there is no success. This holds true with our spiritual lives as well. If we set no direction on our course, we are bound to fail in our endeavor. However, if we plan to pursue God and stay focused on growing and learning, through His grace we will reach our heavenly destination.

We are not on this journey alone. It is important to involve every family member when we create a roadmap for success in our home. As our families grow, both children and parents alike should collaborate in this effort. If children understand that their words and input matters, they will feel ownership. Family worship won't be a drag, but rather something to look forward to.

Spouses should also come together regularly to share ideas and dreams on bended knee. Many times we depend on one spouse more than the other for certain family tasks. However, in leading the family closer and closer to Christ, both spouses should join forces in decision-making and prayer. The more we work together the better it will be, and God will bless your efforts.

In 1914, British explorer Ernest Shackleton set sail aboard a ship named Endurance. He was seeking the last unclaimed prize in polar exploration: crossing the Antarctic continent on foot. The journey was long and hazardous but the goal was achieved without the loss of one of his crew. Shackleton's motto was "fortitudine vincimus," or, by endurance we conquer.

In the delicate work of establishing Christ-centered homes, we need God's power, determination, and commitment. God has more than enough power to carry us through. To receive this power, James 4:2 tells us we must pray for it. "You do not have because you do not ask God." With God's enabling power in our lives, we can succeed in building the homes that reflect God's character.

An attitude of determination, like Shackleton's, is needed for the healthy upbuilding of our homes and families. Difficulties will come. We can count on that. Seemingly insurmountable roadblocks will hinder our progress, but God stands ready to fill us with determination—if we would simply ask.

A covenant relationship means committing to putting others' needs before our own. It involves every member learning to put the interest of other family members before their needs and desires. This flushing out of selfishness cannot be accomplished in our own strength. The power of the "covenant relationship" is God Himself. He is our enabler and the One who creates the commitment for us to follow His roadmap for family happiness.



Buford Griffith, Jr.
Executive Secretary

A farmer in Texas was born during the first year of the Civil War. When an evangelist came through town, he led the farmer to the Lord, and later the man became a minister. His passion was to win people to Christ—especially his own family. He began praying specifically for the spiritual welfare of his family, not only for his two daughters, but for future generations. He did this for one hour every day during the last few decades of his life.

"I'm in fourth generation, and every single one of them was either a minister or was married to one. I am the first one in four generations that wasn't called into the [pastoral] ministry," Christian author and psychologist Dr. James Dobson laughs. "That's the legacy that I was given." Toward the end of his life, Dr. Dobson's great-grandfather made an announcement that God had promised him that every member of four generations would be Christians.

The best way to grow our families spiritually is to pray diligently and consistently for them. We need to be very specific in our prayers. We need to intercede for the battles that our family members are going through, we need to pray for every aspect of our children's lives (friends, safety, school, career, future spouse, etc.) and we need to pray that God will reveal Himself to them daily. I have been claiming the scripture promises in Matthew 21:22, "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer," and Hebrews 2:13, "I will put my trust in Him."



John Page | Treasurer

A Story Rooted in Love

Conviction Before Romance

By Kristina P. Lockhart, Managing Editor and Southwestern Union Associate Communication Director.

“Never date anyone you wouldn’t marry,” Karla says. “My high school Bible teacher told us that in class and it always stuck with me.” The love story that almost didn’t happen was rooted in friendship and Karla’s conviction to date for marriage.

Karla Lopez grew up in San Diego, California in a big Mexican family full of musicians and active members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In Houston, James Dechavez had a similar upbringing. Part of a large Filipino family, he began singing in church when he was two years old. This Texas boy came to know this West Coast girl at Southwestern Adventist University.

Their sophomore year, Karla joined Crossway, a singing recruitment group that James was a member of. The group travelled together visiting churches and schools across Texas and the young students became friends. Over time, the two found they had many things in common, from their love of music and ministry, to big family gatherings

after church and on holidays. Their friendship grew and the pair remained in contact over the summer. James had family in San Diego, and on a trip to visit his cousins, he reached out to Karla. Unbeknownst to them, their extended families had met in church many years ago. “I went to Sabbath school with his cousins!” Karla remembers.

Although they admired each other, they were strictly friends. “I didn’t want to just date anyone. I had so many friends that dated guys they knew they wouldn’t marry and that just didn’t make sense to me,” Karla recalls.

“James was a great guy, but he was not ready to settle down. He had too many things going on. So, dating him was not an option.”

James comes from a family of medical professionals. His mother is a nurse, as are some aunts, uncles, and cousins. So, he knew he was destined for nursing. However, he wasn’t ready for the commitment and challenges of nursing school. He graduated

with an Associate’s degree in General Studies, and then received a Bachelor’s of Science degree in Psychology the following year. That same year, Karla graduated with a communication degree and began working full time at the Advancement Office at Southwestern Adventist University.

“Being involved in church wasn’t that important to me in college. I had graduated, but was in a dead-end job, running from what God had for me. After realizing what I needed, I went back to what I knew—a great and loving God,” says James. “I went back to my DNA. I went back to what my parents taught me from watching them in ministry, and being part of a great community of believers who valued their young people.”

James and Karla served as leaders at YG Church, the young adult ministry of the Arlington Seventh-day Adventist Church. They were very active in different areas of ministry, yet their strongest connection was leading worship together. Another area of recal-



Alan Darmody Photography





Jorge Moya Photography


bration in James' life included going back to school to pursue his nursing degree. He was very fond of Karla, but needed to focus on his career path and goals before engaging in a serious relationship.

Their friendship changed a bit though when Karla began dating a young man who was looking to settle down. Although he was a good Christian prospect, the relationship did not materialize. That incident set off warning alarms for James. He was a year away from graduating with his Associate's degree in Nursing and knew that Karla was the girl he wanted to marry. She wouldn't wait for him forever, and he couldn't lose her in his life. He finally asked her out on a proper date and the two discussed their feelings and their future. They would date intentionally; their goal was marriage and they would undertake the relationship with that in mind. They would seek out God's guidance in their relationship and Christian counsel. They were married two years later in a big, beautiful ceremony surrounded by countless friends and family.

James and Karla recently celebrated their eighth wedding anniversary. The first chapter of their love story set the groundwork for starting a family rooted in God. Their son, Eli, is a sweet, friendly, truck-obsessed toddler who turns three in December. "Having a kid is the most difficult and challenging thing I've ever done emotionally," says Karla. "Eli's formative years are in our hands. What I teach Eli now is what he's going to take into the rest of his life. So, I pray harder than I've ever prayed before."

Although their ministry schedules are a bit calmer now that they are parents, James and Karla know that ministry is engrained in their being. It was a seed that was planted in their hearts by both of their parents and they seek to do the same for Eli. In order to do so, their relationship with Jesus and with each other must continuously be nurtured. "I see Jesus in James every single day," Karla says. "The way James treats me and the way he treats others inspires me to seek Him."

"I think there comes a time in your life when you take your stand for Christ," says James. "In committing to that, I told Him whatever you have for me—I'm in." This year, through sacrifice, dedication, and the love of his family, James obtained his Master's of Science degree in Nursing, and will soon practice as a Family Nurse Practitioner.

As the family grows, they are taking cues from Scripture and their youngest member. "Eli gives us insight into the character that Jesus inspires us to have. I had never understood the true meaning of Jesus's words, 'unless you become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of Heaven' until I had a child of my own. Eli knows no hate. He loves everyone, even the little girl who bites him at school. He hugs her and gives her stickers. That makes my heart happy," Karla says. "It allows me to understand that we should have that same love towards others." 

James, Karla, and Eli Dechavez attend the Arlington Seventh-day Adventist Church and live in Fort Worth, Texas.

Dating Deconstructed

Relationships with Purpose



Dating means different things to different people.

The human perception of dating is shaped by culture, religion, age, social status, and moral standing. In the midst of all the factors which shape the perception of dating, the question remains, what is dating?

The Merriam-Webster dictionary notes one of the definitions of dating as, “an arrangement to meet between two people usually with romantic feelings for each other.” In other words, dating has become a practice in which the focus is simply two people expressing their romantic feelings.

Another word that is usually used interchangeably with dating is courting. This word is considered old-fashioned and is rarely used anymore. The dictionary defines the verb “court” as, “to seek the affections of; especially: to seek to win a pledge of marriage from.” This word is the best to describe Christian dating. The main difference between dating and courting is the intentionality towards marriage. Dating without any responsibility or outlook to marriage is like playing a purposeless game just to pass the time.

Christians should do more courting and less dating. This would lead to more meaningful relationships, stronger marriages, and less heartbreak. Courting involves not just the couple, but their families. This creates accountability for both parties, which also leads to the preservation of godly standards for romance and encourages good familial communication.

Christian Courtship

The right type of Christian courtship is, first and foremost, Christ centered. Both parties involved should spend time seeking the will of God for their relationship and future.

They should do this by having a solid personal relationship with God. Daily prayer and Bible study should take precedence for the couple both individually and together.

The main purpose of the relationship should be to honor and glorify God with every interaction, conversation, date, and thought. There are three important points that any person seeking a godly and intentional courtship should keep in mind.

First, in seeking great purposeful courting, one should earnestly seek the will of God. The Bible bids the believers to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you” (Matthew 6:33).

Second, know what you want or desire in a future spouse. To step into a relationship without knowing the character traits that are negotiable and non-negotiable in a potential spouse is a squandering of time and resources. If you don’t know what you want, you will never get it.

Third, one must set limits and standards in the relationship. The person that fails to put limits will always end up in situations that will compromise or threaten their morality, integrity, and Christianity. Without these limits and standards, there is disorder. This creates an “anything goes” attitude in the relationship which eventually will lead the relationship astray.

As Christians, we are called to courtship and not just dating. The more courtship that is done, the better the chances of having an outcome of a healthy marriage. As humanity puts forth effort to do the best with what has been given to them, God will bless and demonstrate His sovereignty and mighty providence in each life and relationship. [®]

Christian Ponciano is the Associate Youth Pastor of the McAllen Central Valley Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church. He has a Masters of Divinity degree from Andrews University with an emphasis in Youth Ministry. Christian and his wife, Marileny, live in McAllen, TX.

Everyone desires success. We want it in our education, in our careers, and in our homes. But what are the parameters for success in a family? Is it a lack of problems? Every family faces challenges, unexpected curveballs, and periods of highs and lows.

Mapping Success

Tips to Nurture a Healthy Family

Is it fitting the mold of the conventional family makeup? That traditional picture consisting of a dad, a mom, and two children is no longer the norm. All families are different. They are made up of couples without children, single parents, blended families, grandparents raising children, foster families, and several other configurations.

The formula is not the same for every family. There are so many elements that can affect the health and success of your family that defining it in one statement could never do it justice. Consider instead the following ingredients that can contribute to the health and success of your family. Whatever the makeup of your family unit, work together to grow closer and stronger. As inevitable problems arise, weather the storm together.



Realistic Expectations and Preparation

“Know also that wisdom is like honey for you: If you find it, there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off” (Proverbs 24:14). Many couples do not understand what marriage truly means. The belief that just being in love is enough to keep their marriage strong and to keep them together forever is naive. A good marriage takes time and effort, skill, flexibility, patience, compromise, determination, and a commitment to each other and to God. Christian premarital counseling helps prepare a couple for the reality of holy matrimony.

Different Needs of Men and Women

“Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves” (Romans 12:10). It should come as no surprise that because men and women are different, their needs are going to be different. A need is defined as an

essential thing, not simply a desire or a want, something necessary to a person's health and well-being. Much more than the physical needs, a husband or wife will do well to meet the most important emotional needs of their spouse in order to strengthen their overall intimacy.

Christ's Example

“The husband is the head... as Christ is the head of the church... and he is the Savior” (Ephesians 5:23). The key element here is to remember that the model for the head of the home is Christ Himself. Husbands need to lead their homes in the same way that Christ is head of the church, leading as her servant with love, patience, and forgiveness.

Children's Needs

“Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him”

(Psalms 127:3). A parent's first priority is for their children to hear the gospel and have the opportunity to come to know Christ. At the same time, parents must be sure to meet the emotional and physical needs of your children which will ensure they grow up healthy and strong.

Communication is Essential

“The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice” (Proverbs 12:15). Successful families communicate by using words that are bathed in love. At the same time, they practice active listening trying hard to understand the words, the message, and the feelings the other is trying to express.

Conflict Resolution

“In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry” (Ephesians 4:26). Conflict is a

normal, natural part of every relationship. Often Ephesians 4:26 is understood to mean that you should not go to bed angry. But what the apostle Paul was saying was that problems will not go away if you ignore them. Again, conflict is not the problem but rather ignoring it, hoping it will simply go away on its own, or the way you manage it.

Forgiving and Letting Go

“But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:15). The person who gains the most from forgiveness is the person who does the forgiving. Forgiveness involves letting go. Remember playing tug-of-war as a child? As long as the parties on each end of the rope are tugging, you have a war. But when someone lets go, the war is over. When you forgive, you are letting go of your end of the rope. No matter how hard one may tug on the other end, if you have released your end, that war is over for you.

Spiritual Families

“As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). What does it mean to be a spiritual family?

- Worship together. The spiritual family chooses to attend and be involved in a church that teaches the Word of God from the pulpit, from each Sabbath school class, and from every platform of leadership.
- Honor God's Word and apply it in your home. Recite scriptures to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise (Deuteronomy 6:7).
- Make prayer a regular part of your home life. You may remember a familiar slogan, “The family that prays together, stays together.” The statement is more vital today than ever. Remember, a prayerless family is a powerless family.

Truth about Money


“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). Children need to understand, from our example, that everything belongs to God and we’re simply stewards of everything He gives us. The system of tithes and offerings, besides being a way to support the ministry and mission of the church, helps us to be less selfish and more generous.

Recognize and Reach Out

“Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand” (Matthew 12:25). The constant cycle of repeating arguments about the same problems is a clear sign things aren't working and you need help. Successful families are not afraid to seek help when needed. After all, getting help is not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength.

Positive Memories and Traditions

“So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Traditions provide cherished family memories. Some of the traditions of successful families may include spiritual elements such as daily family worship, church attendance, and volunteer service. But there are many other ways of building positive memories such as how we celebrate birthdays, family vacations, and other special events.

It may seem overwhelming to look at this entire list of ingredients and attempt to tackle them all at once. So, we encourage you to add one ingredient at a time. Little by little, your recipe will take on the form of a healthy, successful family whose members will share eternity in heaven. 

Drs. Claudio and Pamela Consuegra are the Family Ministries Directors of the North American Division.



No Longer Taboo

Adventists Say No to Abuse and Violence

Family is a gift from God. Since the beginning of time, Satan has set out to destroy and harm that precious gift. More than 3.6 million claims of abuse are made to child protection agencies involving more than 6.6 million children every year. This averages out to one report of child abuse every 10 seconds (childhelp.org). The National Coalition of Domestic Violence reports that 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have been physically abused by an intimate partner. On a typical day, domestic violence hotlines nationwide receive 20,800 calls.

Seventh-day Adventists must face a hard truth: we are not immune to these jarring statistics. Domestic violence within the church has been documented to follow the same trends in non-Adventist populations. In 2009, Adventists launched enditnow, a global initiative to raise awareness and advocate for the end of violence around the world. enditnow seeks to increase personal awareness, responsibility, and involvement to effectively help end violence in every family and community. Today, the initiative is supported by the North American Division Women's Ministries, Family Ministries, Children's Ministries, Chaplaincy Ministries and Communication Departments.

According to Debra Brill, NAD Vice President for Ministries, “enditnow began as an ADRA initiative bringing attention to the global crisis of abuse. We want our churches, homes, and schools to be places where people experience God's love, where everyone feels ‘safe and secure from all alarms!’ The reality is that churches reflect our broken society. Understanding the threats of abuse and being intentional about solutions can lead us to become healing communities. NAD is targeting pastoral education, for they are often the first responders to members in crisis. What is

our responsibility to a member shattered by verbal and physical battering by their spouse? How should we respond when a child says another child is ‘hurting’ them? What systems are in place to guide leaders when violence is reported? When a convicted sex offender comes to church, what do we do?”

In Our Homes

What does abuse within the home look like? According to the Joyful Heart Foundation, domestic violence can take many forms such as:

- **Physical.** Any use of force that causes pain or injury, such as hitting, kicking or slapping
- **Sexual.** Abuse can include sexual harassment, sexual assault or manipulating a person into having sex by using guilt or threats
- **Emotional and/or verbal.** Constant criticism, threatening to hurt loved ones or harassment at school or in the workplace
- **Economic.** Controlling a person's income or financial assistance, misusing one's credit or making it difficult for a person get or maintain a job
- **Psychological.** Minimizing or blaming a person for the abuse, intimidation and/or threats or destroying property

If you or someone you know is in an abusive relationship, seek help. Confide in someone you trust, or use the resources listed.

In Our Churches and Schools

According to Brill, “Adventist Risk Management (ARM) has paid over \$30M in abuse claims. But the dollar loss pales in comparison to the human suffering perpetrated not only by the abuser, but by those who deny the importance of caring for the abused.”

John Page, Southwestern Union Treas-

There are resources available for you. You are not alone. In an emergency, call 911.

National Child Abuse Hotline

1.800.422.4453

www.childhelp.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1.800.799.7233

www.ndvh.org

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network

1.800.656.4673

www.rainn.org

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline

1.866.331.9474

www.loveisrespect.org


National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1.800.273.8255

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

urer, has worked with ARM and has liaised with families and churches devastated by these events. “We're committed to creating a safe environment. Our goal is to have zero abuse situations in our churches, schools, and families, which is why it is of the utmost importance that we use the tools that we have to protect them,” says Page.

One of those tools is a system of vetting volunteers. Every church and school has access to and is charged with using Verified Volunteer, a background-checking system that should be used to verify every volunteer.

Another tool is education. enditnow is currently focused on educating pastors and leaders with its free, online Pastors' Summit on Abuse (September 11, 2017), which will provide vital information and education to church leadership. Find more information at enditnow.org and enditnownorthamerica.org. 

Looking Forward

Bolstering Adventist Education in Oklahoma

By Tim Kripps, Oklahoma Conference Superintendent of Education

Adventist education provides children with incredible training, both for this life and for life eternal. In the Oklahoma Conference, we are bolstering this training through commissioning teachers, building a new school facility, hiring new school administrators and focusing on systematic prayer. We look forward to the new school year full of excitement and determination.

At camp meeting this year, four teachers were honored with Commissioned Ministry of Teaching Credentials. To receive this credential, selected teachers must demonstrate a lifelong commitment to the church's educational system. They must have at least six years of proficient service in education, in addition to holding denominational professional certification; a keen sense of Christian responsibility for nurturing and leading students to accept Jesus Christ as Savior; positive interpersonal relationships that help create an environment of social, spiritual and emotional stability; and consistently uphold Christ as the focal point of curriculum and instruction.


The Commissioned Ministry of Teaching Credential is the highest level of credential that an Adventist educator can receive and we are proud of the continued excellence that these educators share daily with their students. The four teachers were Charise Sandoval of Muskogee Seventh-day Adventist Academy, Amy Ward of Pioneer Adventist Christian School in Guymon, and Victoria Toews and Kimberly Bokovoy of Tulsa Adventist Academy.

In a time when many schools are facing challenges with student recruitment, Muskogee Seventh-day Adventist Academy is projecting a growth in enrollment. In fact, they're building a new school facility. And, once the new



building is completed, the academy plans to add more grade levels to better serve their community.

Two new school administrators were introduced at camp meeting this summer as well. Shaun Lazarus is Tulsa Adventist Academy's Principal and Annette Park is Parkview Adventist Academy's Principal. Both have stressed the importance of making the spiritual component of Adventist education prominent this coming year. One way that TAA plans on making a lasting spiritual impact is through student-led evangelism. Annette Park plans to continue a daily prayer focus with her students highlighting, PAA's theme for the year, "We Are Called."

As Superintendent of Education for the Oklahoma Conference, there are two things that I will ask the Oklahoma teachers to implement this coming year. The first is that teachers should find a way to pray systematically with each student. When students see teachers modeling a prayer life, and they witness the power of prayer in their lives, prayer becomes a powerful weapon in their arsenal for future use. The second important item: teachers need to share with students the importance of choosing God daily. There is no grey area; it is either God or not. As we prepare our students to excel in this world and into eternity, we need to make sure everyday, that we choose God. 

Family Finances

Planning to Succeed

By John Page, MBA, Southwestern Union Treasurer

Finances can produce stressful situations for families and cause conflict between spouses. However, finances can also be a part of family life that is carefully managed together to ensure positive outcomes. Financial planning should be a priority for every family, whether you are just starting out or already have grandchildren. Regardless of your wealth, you can plan accordingly and take steps to achieve or maintain financial stability. Consider the following areas as you prepare for financial success:

TITHE AND OFFERINGS



God has blessed every one of us with so much. Often we have so many blessings that it's hard to even begin to count them. God has provided everything that we have. When we look at our personal finances with gratitude and love in our hearts, the first thing to remember is to return our tithes and offerings to God as an act of our love for Him.

Additionally, this is an important principle to teach children. If your kids earn an allowance or make some cash by helping your neighbors, teach them the importance of tithes and offerings. As this becomes part of their way of life, they can mature to become grateful adults who understand the concept of returning to God a portion of His blessings to us.

MAKE A BUDGET



With money, just like everything else in life, you should begin with a plan. A budget is a plan of how you will use any funds that you receive. Many people don't want to take the time or effort to create a budget, but when families work with a budget they will be more likely to meet their financial goals.

Developing and following through with financial plans together can also help strengthen your marriage. If you don't know where to start with a budget, check out the free Christian online budgeting tools at EveryDollar.com and Crown.org. You may also want to consider going to seminars and classes on Christian finances.

WAIT UNTIL YOU HAVE THE MONEY



Along with having a budget, have a goal of never making a purchase that you don't have the money for. Many times a low monthly payment on a loan, rather than paying with cash on hand,

can be enticing, but I would challenge you to save for those purchases instead.


It is easy to become overextended financially when taking on too many monthly or long-term obligations. When purchasing a home, the best practice is to save for a down payment that would allow for a 15-year or less mortgage.

COLLEGE SAVINGS



It may seem that your children were just learning to crawl and walk, but in no time they will be ready to go to college. Start saving for college now—regardless of their age. One of the best ways to save is to set up a 529 account. It allows you to set aside funds for qualified college expenses. The growth of the investments, and qualified withdrawals, are tax free. A 529 account can be set up with almost any investment company.

SAVE FOR RETIREMENT

It is important to systematically prepare for retirement and the unexpected expenses that can come with it. If your employer has a retirement contribution matching plan, take advantage of it by contributing your part to receive the full employer match. Regardless of your age, sit down with a financial planner to look at your individual needs. Retirement may be quickly approaching and the earlier in life you can contribute, the more time your money has to grow. 

God's Plans Never Fail

When I was six my family planned a vacation to Colombia. We lived in Ecuador at the time, which is a bordering country with Colombia, and decided to make the most of our trip by making it a road trip. We planned all the cities and towns we would visit along the way, where we would stay, and even which restaurants we would eat at. It would be a long trip and we knew we were going to spend several hours



in our car, so we prepared and brought along pillows, games, and snacks.

When we began our road trip, we were so excited! Everything was going smoothly and as planned. We made it to Colombia without any trouble and began our tour of the country. We stopped to see beautiful waterfalls, swim in the rivers and eat amazing Colombian food. Two days into our road trip on a Friday night we decided to stop for a picnic dinner along the way because it was getting late and we were hungry. We enjoyed our picnic and at sunset we welcomed the Sabbath with happy hearts. We weren't far from where we would be staying that night so we didn't hurry to get back on the road.

Later, dad turned the key in the ignition, but the car did not turn on. At this point the sun had set and we were in the middle of nowhere. Dad tried to do all he could think to do, but the car would not start. We were tired and worried. The roads at night are not the safest place. We found ourselves lost, frustrated, and we felt stranded. "How could this have happened to us?" Dad said in frustration. He had been careful to take the car to the mechanic before the trip to make sure everything would run smoothly.

We decided to give up for the night, sleep in the car and wait until morning to get help. We felt sad and defeated. As we got back in the car, we prayed that God would send His angels to protect us during the night and went to sleep.

Not even an hour had passed when we heard a knock on the window. Dad rolled down his window to see a policeman standing outside. "Pastor, what are you doing here?" the policeman asked. Dad went on to explain the situation. Dad and the three policemen who had

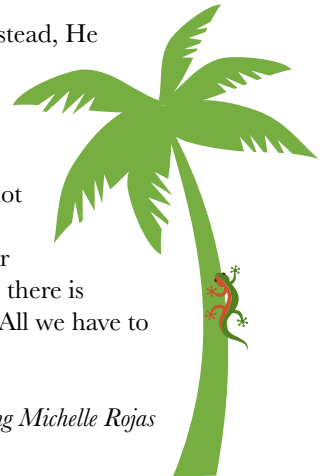
come to our rescue began looking at the engine of the car again to figure out the problem.

The policeman said, "Pastor, your car has an electric problem, this is what you need..." and he proceeded to tell us the exact battery type the car needed and what we would have to do to fix it. Within minutes of the policemen arriving, our car was working once again.

You see, even when we plan for the most minute details, things don't always work out as planned. Sometimes plans have a way of giving up on us and we are left stranded. It is these times in which we must rely on God, because His plans never fail. When we come to him with our needs He will be sure to provide for us. That night we asked God to send His angels

to protect us as we slept; instead, He sent His angels as policemen with the talents of mechanics to get us out of there. The policemen had never met us before, but they called my dad "pastor" nonetheless. They could not have known that my dad was a pastor unless they were sent by God. When our plans fail, we must turn to God because there is nothing God is not willing to do for us. All we have to do is ask.

By Darling Michelle Rojas



Commit
your way
to the Lord,



Trust also
in Him,
And He shall
bring it to pass.



Psalm 37:5



FUN fact

Ecuador is the smallest country in South America and is named after the Equator (*the imaginary line around the Earth that splits the country in two*). Ecuador is roughly the size of Colorado and is bordered by Colombia and Peru.



God sent angels as policemen
to help Darling's dad.

**Finish drawing the other
half of the policeman.**



September Events

1-4

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference: Youth Rally, Camp Siloam, Siloam Springs, Ark., ArkLaCSDA.org, 318.631.6240

6-7

Texico Conference: Outdoor School, Texico.org, 505.244.1611

8-10

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference: Pathfinder Leadership, Camp Yorktown Bay, Mt. Pine, Ark., ArkLaCSDA.org, 318.631.6240

15-17

Texas Conference: Spanish Women's Ministries Retreat, Hilton Americas, Houston, Texas, TexasAdventist.org, 817.790.2255

15-17

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference: Women's Ministries Retreat, Camp Yorktown Bay, Mt. Pine, Ark., ArkLaCSDA.org, 318.631.6240

15-17

Texas Conference: AMEN Health Clinic, Dallas First Church, Dallas, Texas, TexasAdventist.org, 817.790.2255

16-17

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference: Youth Rally, Location TBD, La., ArkLaCSDA.org, 318.631.6240

29-Oct. 1

Texas Conference: Master Guide Camporee, Lake Whitney Ranch, Clifton, Texas, TexasAdventist.org, 817.790.2255

29-Oct. 1

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference: Teen Leadership, Camp Yorktown Bay, Mt. Pine, Ark., ArkLaCSDA.org, 318.631.6240

29 - Oct. 1

Oklahoma Conference: Men's Retreat, OklahomaAdventist.org, 405.721.6110

29 - Oct. 1

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference: Bonnerdale Cowboy Camp Meeting, Bonnerdale SDA Church, Bonnerdale, Ark., ArkLaCSDA.org, 318.631.6240



October Events

13-15

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference: Adventurer Family Camporee, Camp Yorktown Bay, Mt. Pine, Ark., ArkLaCSDA.org, 318.631.6240

13-15

Texas Conference: Spanish Men's Retreat, TexasAdventist.org, 817.790.2255

20-22

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference: Hispanic Women's Retreat, Camp Yorktown Bay, Mt. Pine, Ark., ArkLaCSDA.org, 318.631.6240

27-29

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference: Teen Prayer Conference, Camp Yorktown Bay, Mt. Pine, Ark., ArkLaCSDA.org, 318.631.6240

27-29

Texico Conference: Women's Retreat, Albuquerque, N. Mex., Texico.org, 505.244.1611

For more events and information, visit SouthwesternAdventist.org

A Life of Service

Gilliam Retires After 41 Years as Adventist Educator

Burleson, Texas » Randy Gilliam, who has served as the Vice President for Education at the Southwestern Union since 2012, retired on July 31, 2017, after spending 41 years in Adventist education as a teacher, principal, and administrator.

“Randy has been an enthusiastic champion for Adventist education for more than 40 years. His life’s work has made an impact on thousands of people throughout his career, and I am grateful for the dedication and leader-

ship he has shown,” says Larry Moore, Southwestern Union President.

Gilliam spent his first year as an educator for an Oklahoma Conference elementary school, where he later became principal in 1981. He left the Oklahoma Conference to become a teacher at Burton Adventist Academy in the Texas Conference in 1985. He worked at Burton as a teacher until 1992, when he became the school’s principal. He served in that role until 1998 when he joined the staff of Southwestern Adventist

University as an assistant professor, becoming the Chair of the Education Department in 2002. In 2012 Gilliam was called to be the Union Education Director (now Vice President of Education) for the Southwestern Union.

Randy and his wife, Dana, currently live in Burleson, Texas, and have three sons, one of whom is also an Adventist educator, and three grandchildren.

— *By Carlos Griffith,*
Southwestern Union Communication Intern

James Bokovoy



New Director of Education

Carol Campbell Returns to the Southwestern Union

Burleson, Texas » Carol Campbell, Ph.D., was recently voted and accepted the position of Director of Education for the Southwestern Union. She will begin on October 1.

“I am very pleased that Carol is returning to the Southwestern Union and look forward to seeing her leadership and vision,” says Larry Moore, Southwestern Union President.

Campbell is currently the Director of Elementary Education for the North American Division, a position she has held since 2010. From 2002 to 2010, she

was a professor of education at Southwestern Adventist University, and from 1997 to 2002 she was the Associate Director of Education for the Southwestern Union. Previous to those positions, she worked as an educator, mostly in the Southwestern Union.

Campbell’s specific areas of interest include: literacy development across the grade levels, concept-based learning, faith and learning integration, inquiry-based learning, differentiated instruction, and thinking/comprehension strategies.

— *By Jessica Lozano, Editor*



A Life of Education

Berkner's Love For Teaching Inspires Students

Keene, Texas » Whether teaching first grade or college, Dr. Donna Berkner, Chair of the Education and Psychology Department, strives to share applicable, real-life knowledge. She offers mentorship and friendship whenever possible, drawing from years of experience and from her time as a Southwestern Adventist University student, class of 1992.

"I love teaching," says Berkner. "I love the student interaction and watching students have an 'aha' moment. That happens whether teaching first grade or college."

Berkner taught for twelve years at a variety of grade levels and eight years as the Keene Adventist Elementary School Principal. Her teaching style is inspired by Southwestern professors, but one professor in particular, Fran Mosely, stands out to Berkner.

"She was honest with us," says Berkner. "She had a genuine love for education, and she lived what she said. I think of Dr. Fran Mosely often when I am with students. I want to give real-life experiences like she gave to me."

Berkner takes pride in helping students succeed. As a first grade teacher, she taught children to read. One day, the students went on a field trip to a skating rink. One student worriedly told Berkner, "We can't take our lunch boxes inside!" She looked up to see a sign that stated no food would be allowed on the

ice. Happy that the child read on his own, outside of the classroom, Berkner told him that his lunch box was safe.

Teaching different ages and working as a principal offered unique challenges. Through it all, Berkner made it her mission, working at private Christian schools, to let students know that Jesus loves them. Christian education is important to Berkner. When Berkner decided to pursue a career as a college professor, her goal was to teach at Southwestern.

"Education sets the tone for our lives," says Berkner. "That's why Southwestern is important. I created friendships at Southwestern with both faculty and friends that set the tone for my life, and even my children's lives. There's a generational giveback that matters."

Berkner started teaching at Southwestern in 2011. During her first year, she had an admittedly surreal experience. A large group of Berkner's original, first grade students happened to be students at Southwestern that year. They got together and took a "class reunion" photo.

Berkner became chair of the Education and Psychology department in July 2017. She enjoys using social media to connect with friends and students. The hashtag #iamSWAU often appears on Berkner's Instagram and Twitter posts. She even has photography competitions

with fellow professors at Southwestern.

Ultimately, Berkner attributes her success to God. She wants to set a Godly example for students, and to be a mentor to help them make good choices.

"Students at all ages need affirmation and to know that there is someone fighting for them," says Berkner. "They still need to know that they are loved and accepted. I want these young people to have adults in their lives that believe in them."

There is so much value in christian education. I pray that parents would prayerfully consider christian education at all levels."

Learn more about the education and psychology undergraduate and graduate program at swau.edu/edpsych.

By Makala Coleman James,
2015 journalism major, freelance writer

Below left: Dr. Berkner with her original first graders, now graduated from SWAU. Back, from left: Kyle Parrish, Ben Cheever, Andrew Marvin, Jordan Spivey, Seth Fisher. Front, from left: Caroline Shockey, Dr. Berkner, Brian White.

Below right: Dr. Berkner with her education majors in the classroom. Photo courtesy Caressa Rogers.



Alumni Profile

Finding the Core of Success

Keene, Texas » Allan Cardozo, Southwestern alumni, believes that hard work is the key to every success story. Starting as an intern Flash developer, Cardozo is now the Interactive Director at Pavlov Advertising Agency. He encourages Southwestern students to work hard and rise to the top of each respective field.

“We Southwesterners, as Seventh-day Adventists, are to be at the top of our careers,” says Cardozo. “We have to show that we have the chops to be both business- and Christ-oriented. When students work hard and allow God to lead, they will succeed.”

As a computer science student, Cardozo found great interest in learning how to use software, such as Flash. Dr. Daryl Thomas, Chair of Computer Science, gave advice that Cardozo still clearly remembers. He told Cardozo that it’s good to learn software, but that they will not be around forever.

“What you need to learn is the actual base,” said Thomas. “The tool behaviour, rather than just the software. That way you can keep moving along as software changes.”

“That actually opened my eyes and I have seen it over my professional career,” says Cardozo.

One day, a shy friend asked Cardozo for help with a job interview at an advertising agency called Concussion, Blow to Conventional Thinking. His friend got an internship, which led to a full-time job. The open and creative work environment of Concussion impressed Cardozo. Six months later, he eagerly accepted an internship when that friend put in a good word.

The internship led to a full-time position. Leaders at the company encouraged Cardozo to try new things. Cardozo began to branch out and bring new ideas to the table, studying and improving in website design. He worked hard and continued to learn. Cardozo even decided to study for an MBA at Southwestern.



“There are two ways to get to the top,” says Cardozo. “One is to work your way up over a long period of time. Another is to bring great ideas to the table and show your worth. One of the quickest routes to this, in my opinion, is to get a master’s degree.”

Cardozo is now the interactive director of that company, rebranded to PAVLOV, Stimulating Response. It’s inspired by Ivan Pavlov and his stimulus response for dogs.

With an open work environment and creative team members, Cardozo is right at home. The company is a small firm, but works on big projects. For example, Dallas Fort Worth International Airport is one of Pavlov’s clients. Cardozo leads design for the airport’s website.

Southwestern prepared Cardozo to be a determined and hardworking person. He learned timeless skills that guided

him toward success. He continues to look out for Southwestern students, encouraging them to apply for internships, often at his own firm. In addition, Southwestern taught him important spiritual values. Some of Cardozo’s favorite memories include attending Afterglow at Evans Hall.

“There is a sense of Christianity at Southwestern,” says Cardozo. “I’ve found that really made a difference to me. The University gave me opportunities and prepared me for the future. I encourage Southwestern students to keep looking forward. The sky’s the limit to us.”

— By Makala Coleman James,
2015 journalism major, freelance writer

Above: Allan Cardozo at his desk, with his amazing view from the PAVLOV Advertising Agency, overlooking downtown Fort Worth.

Blueprints

Talkin' 'Bout Heaven *and* Goin' There!



Some time ago I heard Mark Lowry sing the song, “Everyone’s talking about heaven, but no one wants to die.” A little further into the song, the words went like this: “Well I long for the day when I have two births, But I love livin’ down here on earth.” I discovered there are actually several variations of this song, and one of them is: “Everyone talkin’ ‘bout heaven ain’t goin’ there.” Frankly, for me, I’m tired of living here. I want heaven!

It seems like the inspiration for these songs comes from Matthew 7:21 where Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” So it’s true. Just talking about heaven isn’t going to get us there! Put another way, it’s not about the *talk*, but rather it’s about the *walk*!

God is extremely interested in seeing all of us saved. The Apostle Peter reminds us that He is “not willing that any should perish.” (2 Peter 3:9). Even more than *we* may desire heaven, *He* wants us all in heaven with Him.

I find it of great interest that one of the principle designs for the family is that it should be the vehicle that fits and prepares each member to be a part of the heavenly family. “The family here must, as far as possible, be a model of the one in heaven... Children should be taught that they are only probationers here, and educated to become inhabitants of the mansions which Christ is preparing for those who love Him and keep His commandments.” (*Adventist Home*, p. 146). So the whole process of “wanting to go to heaven” should begin at home. Everything that happens in the home should be as a foundation stone that has built upon it the blueprint for ultimately living in heaven. Lessons learned, joys experienced, and victories gained in the context of the home should be of such a nature that one would not want any other kind of existence. Loving relationships steeped in kindness, patience, and a forgiving spirit that is anchored in a walk with Jesus should be practiced and experienced in the home. The practical lessons of trust, honesty and integrity, and Christ-centered ethical values are all taught, modeled, and developed in the home.

So as John wrote, “No greater joy can I have than this, to hear that my children follow the truth,” (3 John 4) I would also add, “and to hear that my children are talkin’ ‘bout heaven *and* goin’ there because they have learned to love Jesus and have accepted Him as their Savior!”

By Stephen Orian, President



Adventurer Sabbath

Baton Rouge Hosts Area-wide Investiture

Baton Rouge, La. » On May 6, 2017, the Baton Rouge Adventurer Club celebrated Adventurer Sabbath with Arkansas-Louisiana Conference Adventurer and Pathfinder Director, Lloyd Clapp, who also spoke for the morning service. The Adventurers were in charge of car-

rying in flags, saying pledges, picking up offerings, reading scripture, and special music. Clapp preached about David and Goliath. Later that afternoon, the Baton Rouge Seventh-day Adventist Church hosted an area-wide Investiture. The Metairie Spanish Adventurer Club

joined the Baton Rouge Adventurers and Pathfinders to participate in this event. Several awards and honors were received by our young members, who worked hard during the year.

————— *By Damaris Dupertuis*



Texarkana Baptisms

Intern's Work with District Pastor Wins Souls

Texarkana, Ark. » Isaac Privett, an intern from Ouachita Hills College, worked with Daniel Supler, district pastor, for several weeks as they ministered to the area.

Assisted also by Personal Ministries Leader Brenda Litchfield, Privett distributed literature, visited, and gave Bi-

ble studies. Patti Sedwick and her son, James, were visiting one of Privett's contacts and decided they wanted to study, too.

Marian Smith, daughter of members Eric and Sharon Ann Smith, attends church and Sabbath School,

is a Pathfinder, and has completed a Bible study course.

Patti, James, and Marian were baptized on May 20, 2017. The church gifted the candidates with study Bibles and bouquets at their baptisms.

————— *By Loretta Johnson*



“Why Pray?”

Church Sign Question Brings Baptism

Texarkana, Ark. » The Texarkana Seventh-day Adventist Church sign, “Why Pray When You Can Worry?” intended as a play on words and food for thought, caught the eye of passerby Simi Gamble, who stopped in to let the

church know the sign was wrong. In the words of Daniel Supler, pastor, “Simi came in to correct us and he hasn’t left us yet.” Supler explained the intent of the sign and Gamble began faithfully worshipping with his new

church family, attending their study groups and prayer groups. Gamble was baptized June 17, 2017, as a member of the family of God and the Texarkana Seventh-day Adventist Church.
— *By Lorretta Johnson*

Safety Sunday

Motorcycle Ministry Hosts Bike Rodeo

Ozark, Ark. » On June 25, 2017, the Northwest Arkansas Chapter of the Sabbath Keepers Motorcycle Ministry, along with the help of members from the Ozark Seventh-day Adventist Church sponsored a Bike Rodeo for the community. This event was designed to help the attending children, ages 6-14, learn the importance of bicycle safety. A

nine-station course was laid out to test the skills they learned and put them into practice. While the young people waited their turns to participate, they enjoyed some time in a bounce house and free popcorn as a snack. The local fire department participated as well by bringing one of their fire-fighting vehicles and allowing each

of the children to take a turn at the fire hose while learning safety at this event. Many thanks to Rex Anderson, Ken Blundell, Junior Scoggins and many others for helping make this event a success. It is through events such as these that we can witness to the community as we work to share the gospel with others.
— *By Rick Thames*



Family Time

Camp Meeting Memories for a Lifetime



Would you invest in a week to spend with your family if you knew the spiritual dividends could last a lifetime? We invest in weekly church attendance, even twice with prayer meeting, and even more with our church offices and responsibilities. But one of the best investments families can make is in each other. What better time to invest in your family than during summer camp meetings?

“Some of my best childhood memories are from attending camp meeting,” is a phrase you hear often from adults who attend Oklahoma camp meeting. “Now I want my children/grandchildren to have the same experiences I had, so I am bringing them here.” At Oklahoma’s camp meeting, you can stay in a tent or an RV (even nearby hotels), go swimming, ride horses, go canoeing, visit a top-notch nature center, eat snow cones and last but not least, hear applicable spiritual encouragement several times a day! The price? Nominal compared to most vacations, and priceless when you consider the return on investment of strengthening your family’s faith.

One of the many blessings of camp meeting is hearing your favorite speakers from 3ABN, It Is Written, Amazing Facts, and other well-known programming, live! Many church college professors, music artists, physicians, psychologists and other experts present seminars with material you can take home at a discounted rate from the on-site Adventist Book Center. The knowledge gleaned at camp meeting can then be shared when you return to your homes and churches. Re-playing speaker presentations on DVDs is a wonderful gesture for those couldn’t attend camp meeting, and those who are homebound. In this way, the spiritual impact has a ripple effect from your family to your church family, friends, neighbors and co-workers.

In the Oklahoma youth departments, pastoral teams bring biblical stories to life and lots of fun activities from the flagpole to the classroom and back. From newborn to young adult, active and relevant spiritual lessons are taught in ways that encourage talking to Jesus and sharing Him. Teenagers often get to help lead with song service by singing or playing their instruments. They even get up early to meet with the pastors for a meeting held at 7:30 a.m. because it’s just that good!

Another blessing of attending camp meeting is reconnecting with friends and church members from across the state, and often state lines. For youth, this is very important; they text ahead to be sure their friends will be there! For adults, it’s a time to catch up on friendships and make new friends from other churches. It’s also one of the few times you’ll see pastors in jeans and no ties, enjoying their own church members and friends in a less formal environment than church. You can even stop by the office to meet your conference staff.

Sadly, many families do not equate camp meeting with quality family time as they would a vacation in a secular environment. Staying on a camp ground soaking up dust and drinking in the auditorium air conditioning for up to 10 days does take fortitude, but it is possible, and blessings abound even with a shorter stay. Remember that camp meeting is for families; it has spiritual impact; it instills love for God and church in youth; it connects church members and pastors; and it helps families strengthen their faith. Try investing in your family in a God-centered environment and experience the joy of a summer family faith adventure.

By Caroline A. Fisher

36 Baptized

Community Involvement Precedes Lawton Revival

Lawton » In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

These are the Master's words and commands. And, we are doing just that in this area of the Lord's vineyard. The hour is late, and time is far spent; therefore, we must be about our Father's business.

The Lawton Seventh-day Adventist Church will never be the same. On June 3, 2017, Gregory L. Stinson, pastor, along with the church's members, were blessed with the privilege of facilitating the baptism of 36 individuals.

However, the prayers and work began several weeks before the special baptism

Sabbath. We began a church community involvement program on May 21 by inviting the community to an outdoor event.

During this event, church members provided clothing, food, health screenings, and an outdoor gospel concert for more than 250 people. This event gave the community an opportunity to interact with the church and its members prior to the opening night of the church's revival series, and gave the church members the opportunity to invite the community to the revival.

It has been said that the work is too difficult to win souls in Lawton, but Stinson begs to differ! We praise God for His tremendous blessing in these meetings and the blessings to come.

Stinson was especially happy for the Moore family, who were youth leaders in their former church. Now we have

additional young people who were baptized that add tremendous talents to our church family and our youth ministry at the Lawton church. The Lord blessed us to baptize a mother who had been watching the local 3ABN channel. Through power of the Holy Spirit, our revival led her to follow the Lord completely.

Lawton church members indicated that they had never seen this many people baptized at one time in their Lawton church. These baptisms have truly made history. To God be the glory! This is the beginning of great things for the districts of Lawton and Duncan churches.

— By Gregory Stinson

Lawton Seventh-day Adventist Church pastor Gregory Stinson baptized 36 individuals on June 3, 2017, after a season of community involvement, including evangelism.



VBS Success!

Broken Arrow Church Transforms to Ancient Rome for VBS

Broken Arrow » The fellowship hall of the Broken Arrow Seventh-day Adventist Church recently became an ancient Roman marketplace for Vacation Bible School. Vendors dressed in costume manned booths selling baked goods,

pots and pans, and various items. Roman soldiers and slaves reenacted stories of life during Biblical times. On Sabbath morning VBS leader Mike Moon shared experiences and videos, and song leaders Tina Muglia and Kay-

la Marquette led the children in songs. Many hours of planning paved the path towards this highly successful Vacation Bible School. Many thanks to those who volunteered and participated.

— *By Judy Marquette*



Daniel and Revelation in Song

Givhan and Millea Present Prophecy Concert

Bristow » Musicians Lee Givhan and John Millea recently presented the books of Daniel and Revelation through spoken word and music in Bristow. The two met through Adventist counselor, author, and songwriter Jennifer Jill Schwitzer, of Lesser Light Collective (LLC).

LLC has produced two albums, “The Lamb Wins” on the book of Revelation

and “The King Dreams” on the book of Daniel. Both albums feature Givhan and Millea, along with other artists from around the U.S. and the world. The members travel the U.S. and often stay with local musicians and Adventist church members.

Givhan and Millea, who is Bristow’s head elder, both played guitars and sang,

while Givhan, a former Quaker-turned-rap-artist-turned-baptized-Adventist, also recited spoken word pieces. Millea incorporated his harmonica. For more information about Lesser Light Collective, visit www.thelesserlightcollective.com.

— *By Caroline A. Fisher*

Left: Lee Givhan; right: John Millea



Roadmap for Success

Creating Time for Families



Often we get bogged down in dealing with life's challenges that seem to take our focus off of what is important. We go through our day-to-day activities sometimes routinely and without much thought. Family time sometimes gets overlooked and pushed aside because we are too tired or preoccupied with our work, chores, and hobbies. However, this is not what God wanted for our lives and our families. It is essential that we never get so occupied with the distractions of life that we lose our daily connection with God. It is imperative that we spend quality time with our Savior each day. This is essential to having a successful relationship with God.

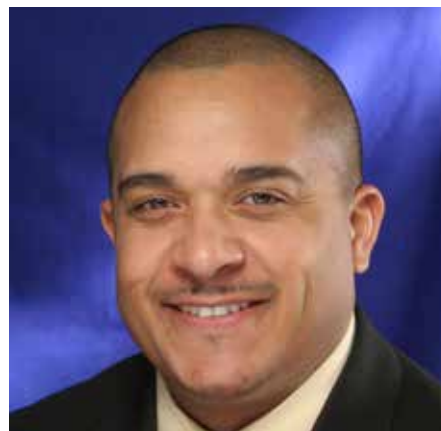
It is also necessary that as we continue to develop and grow our relationship with Christ that we include our family members. For families with children, it is imperative to teach them what a relationship with God looks like and how it is maintained. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." With the influences from social media, issues on the job, economic challenges and the pressure to "fit in," family units need to have a strong connection with God. And yet, through all of the issues that this world presents us, those who profess to be Christians have no family worship. In *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7, Ellen White writes, "The idea that prayer is not essential is one of Satan's most successful devices to ruin souls. Prayer is communion with God, the Fountain of wisdom, the Source of strength, and peace, and happiness" (p. 42). Families should plan for both morning and evening devotion.

As school is now underway, it is important that families make it a priority to spend time together and with God. It is proven that when families have a strong connection with God, their unit as a family will also be strong and that their successes throughout the days, weeks, months and years will be high. Spending time with Him together can be easily accomplished when you make it a priority. But shouldn't spending time with God be our priority anyway? Here are some helpful tips on how to accomplish this endeavor:

1. Wake up earlier than normal and have breakfast together at the table.
2. Text each other throughout the day with encouragement or scripture passages.
3. Eat dinner together at the table without any electronic devices.
4. Have daily evening worship as a family.
5. Turn the TV off for at least an hour and do something as a family.
6. On Sabbath, take the family for a walk in a park and enjoy God's beauty.
7. Have weekly memory verses, individually and as a family.

These simple tips are just a few things that a family can do to strengthen their relationship with God and each other. Let's make it our priority to make sure we do this.

By Buford Griffith, III, Superintendent of Education



Berean Graduates Seven

Speaker Encourages Students to “Wait On the Lord”

Baton Rouge, La. » “Class of 2017, you are representatives of the number seven: God’s number of perfection,” stated Sybil Jordan, principal of Martin Luther King Academy, to the seven graduates. It was at the end of the ceremony that Jordan made these remarks. The address to the graduates by speaker Buford Griffith, III, Superintendent of Education for the Southwest Region Conference, preceded Jordan’s remarks.

The evening’s ceremony began with the sixth- and seventh- grade classes forming the honor guard for Berean’s blessed seven. The graduates in their

blue gowns with white stoles chose as their theme “Wait on the Lord” with the scripture of Psalm 27:14.

Griffith’s address to the graduates reminded them that their educational journeys would not necessarily end at graduation. “Don’t let this robe be your last, but make it the beginning of at least three more—high school, college, and grad school. But none of this can be accomplished without staying with God..Go to God for direction, but be sure to follow the direction.”

“Now is not the time to stray from God” was his final challenge to

graduates. Then, he called up retiring teacher Ivy Jones and recognized her years of service. Next was the awarding of diplomas. Both Jordan and Jones contributed to the dialogue on each graduate.

Capitalizing on Griffith’s address, Berean’s pastor, T. Ron Weegar, introduced the fourth robe, “the robe of righteousness that each of us should be striving toward.” And the audience acquiesced with a resounding “Amen.”

—By Evelyn M. Edwards



Celebrating Black History

Church Promotes Community, Optimism, and Progress

Texarkana, Texas » The Bethel Seventh-day Adventist Church recently hosted an interactive service where people learned facts and figures of African-American heritage. The program highlights included dramatic presentations focusing on African-American history, including hymns, a skit, a poem, and a speech.

Bethel’s choir sang hymns and aroused the congregation to joyful praise. After the hymns, Debra Taylor and her daughter, Tatianna Mathis, performed a Black history drama. The

drama enlightened and stirred the congregation to promote community, optimism, and progress.

Aija Powell recited a poem titled “The Average Black Girl” by Ernestine Johnson. Powell was a guest from Faith Temple in Dallas, Texas. Ann Turner presented a brief speech about creation. A main point here is that we are a valuable creation of His marvelous work, so we are not ordinary but uniquely designed to fulfill His purpose.

—By Veronica McCullough



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Home

Where Success is Born



As I stood at the front door watching my son, David, walk briskly back to his car my heart warmed within my chest. Working alongside the youth director at summer camp, he had just returned from taking his wife to the airport. Before rushing back to his responsibilities at the camp, he took time to drop by and wish me a Happy Father's Day! That pop visit meant the world to me! The words of Psalm 127:1, "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it" quickly came to mind. Indeed, it had been the Lord who intervened and overruled over the years in the development of my son's spirituality and walk with the Lord. As a father, the mistakes and blunders on my part are countless. Yet the goodness and guidance of the Lord in my son's life have been breathtaking to behold. As parents, we invest the best we can in the spiritual foundations of our children—Uncle Arthur's Bible story books, Sabbath School, VBS, Adventist education, and youth programs. But in the end, the God of Israel takes our meager investments and creates resounding returns for His honor and glory. Far more joyous than anything that has been a part of my 30 years of ministry were those moments when my son was given his first pastoral assignment. Then later, the joy of witnessing his graduation with a Master's of Divinity degree from the seminary at Andrews University. Later, participating in his ordination to the gospel ministry in the Keene church and, most recently, 11 years after I left the youth department of the Texas Conference, watching his appointment to serve the Lord and the youth as the associate director of that same department is overwhelming to my soul!

“Unless the Lord build the house....” Had his mother and I labored for his salvation and spirit of service? Of course, but without a doubt if there are elements of his service to the Lord which can humanly be seen as “success” they proceed from the working of the spirit of God that began in the home that God put together some 32 years ago. The first layer of the spiritual foundation was laid by his mother taking time every morning and evening to read the Bible stories. The second tier was his Adventist teachers throughout the years at East Valley Adventist School, California; San Gabriel Academy, California; Chisholm Trail Academy, Texas; Southwestern Adventist University, Texas; and Andrews University, Michigan. The third layer, a Godly wife in Brittany, who is the very best daughter-in-law a man could pray for. Finally, the experiences of ministry have produced growth and maturation in him! Praise God, He always knows what is best for each one of us and puts the spiritual house together stone by stone, layer by layer! So, as I watched him drive away I found myself praying to the God of heaven, thanking Him for allowing me to see His goodness and mercy in my son, and for granting me the assurance that indeed He still remains in the business of building houses for His Name's sake! What a God we serve and praise! Let us never forget that the success of the church is born and bred in the lives and experiences of our children and young people.

By Carlos J. Craig, President



DFW 1:1

Experiencing the Heart of Jesus

Arlington » People of all ages enjoyed “The Heart of Jesus” DFW 1:1 event held at the Arlington Seventh-day Adventist Church. The event’s purpose was to help people, especially next generations, deepen their relationship with Jesus, and foster positive relationships with their community.

“It was refreshing to be in a space with people, young and mature, who were excited to hear and speak about Jesus,” stated Lola Moore Johnston, South Central Conference young adult ministries director.

Johnston was among the featured speakers that included David Frank-

lin, senior pastor of the Miracle City church in Baltimore, Maryland, and co-host of Hope Channel’s *Let’s Pray*; and Alex Bryan, senior pastor of the Walla Walla University church in College Place, Washington.

Following the general sessions, the event offered time for participants to process their thoughts on the various presentations/reflections, and to begin engaging in practical applications.

“I was immensely blessed by my experience at DFW 1:1,” Cece Cobb, a 27-year-old software engineer from Dallas, Texas, shared. “The speakers were dynamic and the messages thought-pro-

voking..Each session concluded with honest and heartfelt conversations about how we as individuals, and as a community, could more fully develop the heart of Jesus.”

DFW 1:1 also offered *generation One* (ages 13-17) and *TOP kids* (ages 4-12) to help bring teens and children into a closer relationship with Jesus through fun, interactive activities and social events.

By A. Allan Martin

People of all ages enjoyed “The Heart of Jesus” DFW 1:1 in Arlington, Texas. More photos and information can be found at YGchurch.com.



Elizabeth Begley Milburn, Near the Light Photography

Enriched Learning

Panthers Leap into the 21st Century

McAllen » South Texas Christian Academy (STCA) in McAllen, Texas, is pushing the envelope for technology so much that Apple had to modify software to meet the needs of the school.

Each student in grades five to 12 receives an iPad to enrich their learning as STCA strives to provide a meaningful Christian education. As a result of this program, paper usage was reduced by more than 70 percent. The students no longer need to make poster boards. Instead, they use apps on their iPad to

create colorful, moving, and engaging presentations. They create videos for worship presentations, create music and art through the latest apps, and engage each other in online class discussions.

The move away from traditional pencil and paper education will cement STCA as an important academy for today and in the future as the staff strive to educate students now, and most importantly, for eternity.

By Eric Enright, Sebastian Castillo, Criselda Flores, Eric Pena



Witnessing Through Music

The OAKS Choir Performs National Anthem

Houston » The Oaks Adventist Christian School choir, under the direction of Koral Martinez, sang the national anthem for the Houston Rockets and Houston Astros games this past school year. James Friesen, The Oaks athletic director at the time, arranged for the performances. Friesen is now The Oaks Adventist Christian School 9-12 grade principal.

Even though the students were nervous to perform at such large arenas, the experience was definitely one of the highlights of their year.

One student remarked that it would be “so cool” if someone at the game heard them sing, decided to attend The Oaks, and eventually met Jesus because of their performance. “Growing Leaders who Follow Christ” is not just The Oaks motto, it is what the staff strive for every day.

————— *By Becky Hanson,
The Oaks Adventist Christian School Registrar*

The Oaks Adventist Christian School choir sang the national anthem for the Houston Astros game this past summer.



Becky Hanson

Engage Conference

RESET for the Future

Keene » Forty-two people accepted the call for baptism during the Engage Conference at the Keene church in Keene, Texas. During the two-day event, June 16-17, 2017, more than 850 young people from Texas to Arkansas gathered together to honor the promise of Matthew 18:20, “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

Motivational speakers Jeremy Anderson and Willy Ramos encouraged

attendees to live for God each and every day and to prepare their lives for His second coming. Utilizing the theme, RESET, they challenged attendees to reset addictions, reset bad habits, reset relationships, and reset their spiritual lives. They promoted the ultimate reset: giving your life completely to Jesus and trusting Him to guide the way.

The Engage Conference is designed for youth and young adults to come

together to worship, connect with God, and fellowship with each other.

The Sabbath afternoon outreach activities provide a wonderful opportunity for the group to work as a team. The event concludes with church athletic tournaments at Southwestern Adventist University.

————— *By Deborah Gendke,
Youth and Young Adult Administrative Assistant*



Family Success

Is it a House or Home?



How do you measure success in your family? Is it based on some financial consideration—how much money you have in the bank? Is it based on the house that you own or the car that you drive? Do all or any of these things determine whether a family is happy and successful? The answer is no. A family can have many riches and luxuries and appear to be very successful, but what good does it do if the family is dysfunctional? And how do you explain families that live in poor huts with no worldly goods who seem to be perfectly happy? Perhaps the better question to ask is, how is success in a family genuinely measured?

I have come to find that true family success is not determined by what you own or how much wealth you have accumulated; it really comes down to where you live. Do you live in a house? Or do you live in a home? The key is learning the difference between the two. For most, a house is merely a structure that accommodates a family. It is filled with nice furniture and the latest entertainment gadgets, but it is not used for anything else than for eating, sleeping and coexisting.

A home, by contrast, is a warm, welcoming place that feels safe, where families do not focus on what they have or do not have. Instead, they aim to make it a place that offers unconditional love and where they can share good values, create memories and establish lasting relationships. More importantly, a home is where God's love dwells, and is demonstrated in each member of the family. A home is where families pray, worship together and experience God's joy.

Ellen White writes, "a home where love dwells and where it finds expression in looks, in words, in acts, is a place where angels delight to dwell. Parents, let the sunshine of love, cheer, and happy content enter your own hearts, and let its sweet influence pervade the home. Manifest a kindly, forbearing spirit, and encourage the same in your children, cultivating all those graces that will brighten the home life. The atmosphere thus created will be to the children what air and sunshine are to the vegetable world, promoting health and vigor of mind and body" (*The Adventist Home*, p. 426).

A Godly home is definitely a powerful testimony. It can be a "light to the world" that reveals God's power to change lives. Therefore, as we continue to strive to have successful families, it is important to focus on what matters most: putting Christ at the center of our homes. Let us be "ambassadors" for Christ in our homes so that others can see Christ in, and through, us.

By Lee-Roy Chacon, President



Vacation Bible Xperience

Albuquerque Churches Host Summer Youth Programs

Albuquerque, N. Mex. » Summer is a great time for children to recharge, relax and learn more about Jesus. This summer, several churches in the Albuquerque area took the opportunity to reach out to kids in their communities and teach them about God in a fun and exciting way through Vacation Bible School (VBS), now called VBX, for the unique eXperience it provides. Rio Rancho, Corrales, North Valley, and La Roca churches hosted VBX programs.

The Rio Rancho church became a

secret service agency and every night, children turned into God’s secret agents on earth and learned to serve those around them including their neighbors, parents, church, and community.

Corrales was next to host a fun adventure-themed program called “Passport to Peru,” with 34 children attending. North Valley and La Roca then hosted their VBX programs and were happy to pair them with a two-week evangelistic campaign. As parents discovered new Bible truths, up to 45 kids at North

Valley embarked on a cowboy-themed adventure called “Cactusville.” They learned that they were called to be different, to be faithful, to give, to serve and to forgive. At La Roca, the VBX meetings invited kids to “Come Meet Jesus” while they journeyed through the Bible. From Genesis all the way to the Gospels, kids learned more about Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross.

— *By Debbie Márquez*
Communication Director



New Communication Director

Welcoming Debbie Márquez to Texico

Texico Conference » It is with great pleasure that we introduce and welcome Debbie Márquez as the newest team member of the Texico Conference. Márquez is originally from Albuquerque, New Mexico, and has more than 10 years of media outreach and communications experience. Previously, Márquez worked for the local Univision network affiliate station as an Associate Producer. Fluent in English and Spanish, her experience includes working at the Adventist Television Network, as well as for the Hope Channel. Her most recent assignment

was as a Bilingual Health Communications Manager where she supported various contracts for the National Institutes of Health, including the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases and the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. We are grateful that God has brought Debbie to the Texico Conference and look forward to working together.

— *By Phil Robertson,*
Executive Secretary and Treasurer



A Gift of Music

Two Friends Reunite to Share Their Music Ministry

Albuquerque, N. Mex. » Jon Schriver and Darrell Dady have blessed the lives of many over the course of their musical partnership. Their friendship began in Florida in the early 1980s while attending church together and sharing a mutual love for the saxophone and music ministry. In the

late 1980s the two embarked on a journey playing for churches and people of all beliefs. Many people who seemed to be searching for truth, light, and meaning of life, attended these concerts.

Since then they have separated but their friendship has remained strong

and they recently played a series of concerts throughout New Mexico. Sharing the love of Christ through their gift of music has enriched many lives and they hope it won't be long until they can do it again.

————— *By Janet Van Why*



Texico Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Notice is hereby given that the 41st Regular Constituency Session of the Texico Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will be held at the Albuquerque Heights Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Albuquerque, NM, on Sunday, October 22, 2017. The Organizing Committee will meet at 7:30 A.M. and the Session will commence at 9:00 A.M.

The purpose of this meeting is to give reports from the quadrennial period then ending, to elect officers for the ensuing term and to transact such other business as may properly come before the Session.

Lee-Roy Chacon, President

Philip Robertson, Secretary/Treasurer



Texico Conference Association of Seventh-day Adventists

Notice is hereby given that the Texico Conference Association of Seventh-day Adventists will hold its annual Association meeting at the Albuquerque Heights Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Albuquerque, NM on Sunday, October 22, 2017. The meeting is called to begin at 9:00 A.M.

The purpose of this meeting is to give reports from the quadrennial period then ending, to elect officers for the ensuing term and to transact such other business as may properly come before the Session.

Lee-Roy Chacon, President

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The Constituency Session and Association meeting will be held concurrently.

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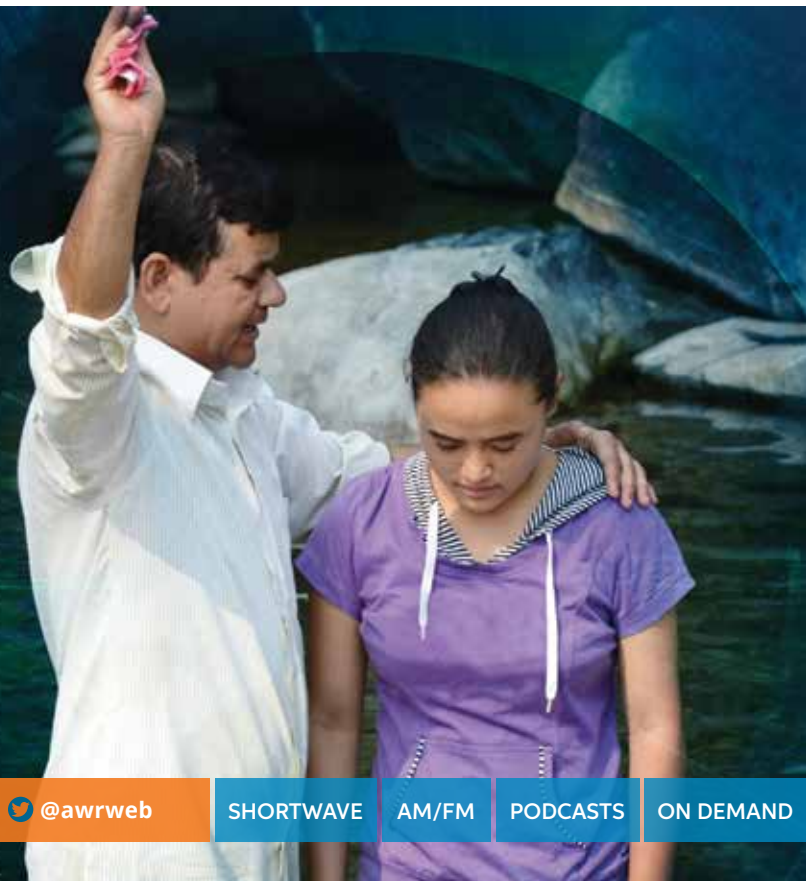
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—Ty Gibson



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Timothy R. Jennings, M.D.

Board certified Christian psychiatrist, master psychopharmacologist, lecturer, international speaker and author of multiple books.

Obituaries

Anderson, Margaret Ann; born March 10, 1938, Coushatta, La.; died May 29, 2017, Shreveport, La. Church membership: Shreveport First, Shreveport, La. Surviving: husband, David Huey Anderson; sons, Kevin Anderson and Keith Anderson; sister, Beatrice Harper (Ed); brother, John Byrd (Yvonne); Casey Carrington (Robyn); three grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Cutrer, Mary Ruth Smith; born Sept. 11, 1919, Fryeburg, La.; died June 8, 2017, Bossier City, La. Church membership: Shreveport First, Shreveport, La. Surviving: son, Jerry W. Cutrer (Lorreta) of Hilton Head Island, S.C.; daughter, Susan Cutrer Parker (Dickie) of Bethany, La.; sister, Lillie Smith Hernandez; four grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; 11 nieces and nephews.

Barrett, Anna Mae; born February 22, 1926; Portales, N. Mex.; died July 7, 2017,

Harrah, Okla. Church membership: Summit Ridge, Harrah, Okla. She was preceded in death by her husband, Richard Barrett. Surviving: son, Dennis Barrett (Joyce); son, Edwin Barrett (Charlene); seven grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren.

Fisher, George Henry; born May 22, 1929, Slick, Okla.; died May 19, 2017 in Siloam Springs, Ark. Church membership: Gentry, Ark. Fisher served as an Adventist educator as President of Indonesia Union College, 1964-1970; Principal of Far Eastern Academy, 1970-1974; Principal and Teacher at San Antonio Junior Academy, 1958-1959; Teacher, Vice Principal, Ozark Adventist Academy, 1952-1956, 1959-1964, 1974-2004. Surviving: wife, Ella Fisher; daughter, Annette Graves (Kevin), of Burleson, Texas; daughter, Phyllis English (Richard), of Elkhart, Ind.; son, Doug Fisher (Amy) of Siloam Springs, Ark.; six grandchildren; and two brothers, Ernest Fisher and Helton Fisher.

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Hunter, Kenneth Lee, Jr.; born August 11, 1948, Rome, New York; died June 17, 2017, Fort Worth, Texas. He was preceded in death by his parents, Kenneth Lee Hunter, Sr. and Jeanette (Payte) Hunter. Church membership: Alvarado, Texas. Surviving: wife, Glenda Hunter; daughter, Luci Henry, Joshua, Texas; stepmother, Shirley Hunter, Hampton, Va.; brother, Ronald Hunter (Trish), Poquoson, Va.; sister, Linda Jean Rhyme (Clyde), Sumter, S.C.; uncle, Max Hunter, Claremore, Okla.; brother-in-law, Richard Miles (Mary), Cleburne, Texas; Lonnie Miles, Rogers, Ark.; sister-in-law, Mary Nell Simurdak (Frank), Rainbow,

Texas; Colleen Matthews, Cleburne, Texas.

Wolcott, Fred Edward; born June 25, 1929, El Dorado, Ark.; died June 16, 2017, De Queen, Ark. Church membership: Beacon Hill, Ark. Surviving: wife, Mae Evelyn Burrow Wolcott, of De Queen; son, Dennis Wolcott, of Salt Lake City, Utah; son, Steve Stewart, of De Queen; daughters, Brenda Lovell, Glenda Icenhower, and Deborah Smith, of De Queen; 13 grandchildren, 24 great-grandchildren, and eight great-great grandchildren.

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