

Record

January | February 2020

- 4 A Heart for Worship
- 5 Progress, Not Perfection
- 6 Accepting Change, Looking Forward
- 8 The Call to Ministry



A New Chapter

Embracing Beginnings and Looking Ahead

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A New Chapter

Features	{	4	A Heart for Worship
		5	Progress, Not Perfection
		8	The Call to Ministry
Columns	{	3	On the Record
		6	Education: The Next Chapter
		7	Equipping: A Clean Slate
		10	Wholeness: A New Challenge
		12	Little Readers: Snip! Snip!
News	{	13	Southwestern Happenings
		14	Southwestern Union
		20	Southwestern Adventist University
		22	Arkansas-Louisiana Conference
		27	Oklahoma Conference
		32	Southwest Region Conference
		37	Texas Conference
Back Pages	{	47	Classified Ads
		49	Announcements
		49	Obituaries

Editor's Note

Just as every new dawn brings the opportunity of a fresh start, a new year and a new decade bring the chance to begin a new chapter in your life. What has this last chapter looked like? Thinking about the accomplishments, losses, blessings and trials of the past, is there anything you want to approach differently in this new chapter? What is God calling you to do this year, this decade, to make a difference in your home? In your church? In your neighborhood?

God has promised to make all things new, make a way in the wilderness and create a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit within us. In this issue of the Record, we consider what it means to have God lead us into new chapters in our lives.



Jessica L. Lozano

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.

A New Chapter

Embracing Beginnings and Looking Ahead



Larry Moore | President

Here we stand at the verge of a new year, as well as a new decade. I always wish that Jesus will come soon and we won't have to face many more new years. But He hasn't come yet. How do we relate to that? I believe we need to look back and assess the past year to see if we have made progress in personal development as well as corporate growth. The Southwestern Union has made good progress in evangelistic growth as well as tithes and offerings. We thank God for His leading in our lives for without Him we could do nothing.

I do believe that after a brief review of the past we should look to the future year as an opportunity to allow God to do His will for us and the church as well. God promises to give us all things for our good. We of course must quit trying to do things ourselves and allow His Holy Spirit to lead us.

When I am faced with trials and uncertainty I refer to Isaiah 41:10, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

God keeps His promises. You can count on Him. Will you join me in trusting God with the future? Jesus will take care of you and His church. By God's grace, may this year be great. And yes, I will still be found praying that Jesus will come soon.

A new year begins and a new decade unfolds. Many will look back on the past year and celebrate accomplishments and praise the Lord for bountiful blessings, which is never out of order. Others may lament goals not achieved or intended projects not realized, but the watchword for the followers of Christ is always forward. The new year which ushers in a new decade is filled with new opportunities and possibilities.

We must respond as the apostle Paul, "...forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13-14, ESV. This straining forward involves inflicting some serious questions to ourselves, questions such as: What can I do to impact the kingdom of God this year? What individuals in my circle of influence will I seek to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with? Realizing that I don't need a church initiative to propel me to action, I seek the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit to ignite a fire within my heart that fuels my energy, zeal and enthusiasm to make a difference in someone's life. The kingdom of God advances as we dedicate and commit ourselves to hastening the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!



Buford Griffith, Jr.
Executive Secretary

Most of us at this time of year both reflect and set goals for the future. Reflection can be a very important part of worship. When we reflect on the blessings over the last year, we can praise God for leading us. Having gratitude is not only important for giving the credit to God, but it will give us a positive outlook into the future. Ephesians 5:20 says, "always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." If last year was a tough year, Paul wrote something that maybe could encourage you in Romans 8:8, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

As we start a new year try making some GOD-sized dreams and goals for the new year. God-sized means that we are fixing our eyes on dreams and goals that only God can make happen. Maybe there are some family members or friends that you are asking God to bring close to Him or maybe you have been feeling God's call to step out in faith on something He wants you to do for Him. How can God use us in ways that will increase His Kingdom? Proverbs 16:3 is a great verse to memorize as we start the new year, "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and He will establish your plans."



John Page | Treasurer

A Heart for Worship

The band starts to play. As the worship leaders greet the audience, the churchgoers rise to their feet. It's time for worship at Younger Generation Church, the young adult service and ministry of the Arlington Seventh-day Adventist Church in Arlington, Texas.

This is my home church, and I know the drill. Our voices ring out, hands lift in adoration and praise fills the room. This is an intimate moment, shared with a community of believers. It isn't long before I see him.

This moment wouldn't be complete without the presence of one of our steadfast members. His name is Chris Doss, and he has become the unofficial worship leader at Younger Generation (YG) church.

Chris is moved by the engaging music and the worship atmosphere at YG church. He rarely misses a service and on any given Saturday morning you can find him seated on the first pew. That is, if he isn't walking up and down the front row shaking hands and hugging his fellow church members. His worship is sincere, it is honest and it is pure.

I admire Chris and wonder how different my worship would be if I expressed myself with the same reckless abandon. Is there something I can learn from Chris's approach to worship? What would change if I regularly approached the throne of grace as wholeheartedly as he does, and encouraged those around me to get excited about God as he does?

Randy and Vickie Doss tell me their son loves going to church and he is the first one ready to go in the morning. The Doss family has been a part of the Arlington church for decades. "It was much smaller back then," Randy says. Yet, they have welcomed the growth of the church and its diversity of people and worship styles. "Even though it's a large church,

there is still a family atmosphere. Small groups keep it intimate. We each have our Sabbath school classes that we prefer and Chris has YG," he affirms. "There is a lot of variety," Vickie adds. "Everybody's needs can be met in some way."

Chris' worship also manifests itself in his involvement at YG events. He is always eager to volunteer for special weekend conferences, concerts and social events. He is an excellent greater and often helps the teams distribute books and other materials to the participants.

"Chris is the epitome of YG" says Allan Martin, YG church teaching pastor. I ask him about a tradition of theirs that I have witnessed. He laughs and says, "During the worship set, Chris makes it a point to come over and encourage me to sing along with him. Both of us are off key, but that really doesn't matter. There are times the details of the program distract me, or I'm mulling over a part of my sermon, but I can always count on Chris to come over and give me a high-five, a hug, or a look that reminds me to join in worship. He inspires me to be present, engaging Jesus in worship."

Why did Chris want to be baptized a year and a half ago? "Because Jesus loves me," he told Kevin Wells, Arlington church senior pastor. Vickie shares how Chris once asked to lead out in family worship. "What are you going to talk about?" she asked. "Jesus loves," he assured her. "And I love because Jesus loves."

Jesus' love is at the heart of Chris' worship. And like Chris, I want Jesus' love to always be at the heart of my worship too. R



By Kristina P. Busch. Busch is the Southwestern Union Associate Communication Director and Record Managing Editor. Busch lives in Arlington, Texas with her husband, Jason.

Progress, Not Perfection



One of my biggest challenges as a writer is starting a story. Beginnings are hard, whether we're writing a news story, learning a language, entering a new relationship, starting a new job, joining a new church or any number of beginnings we encounter throughout life.

Despite their challenge, however, beginnings also offer opportunity. From a writer's perspective, a blank page is full of potential; no restrictions save the size of the page. This is why taking a writer into the journal section of a bookstore can be dangerous; the enormous amount of potential nestled on those shelves can make us forget the reality of our bank accounts!

When writing, once I finally get words on the page, I push myself to just keep writing. Even if it's not perfect, it's progress, and I can evaluate its value later. It's much easier to tweak a few things than it is to start over; I just have to start in the first place. Similarly, the key to a fresh start in a new year is to just do *something*.

Every January, I make a short list of things I want to improve over the next 12 months. Past years have included Read more books; pray more often; commit to fewer responsibilities; be gentler with my children; eat more vegetables. The point is to take action right away. I can always edit as I

go; it's easier to tweak here and there than it is to start over.

At the end of every year, I review the past 12 months. What went well? What added stress to me, my family or my relationships? What brought me closer to being the person I want to be? How did I show Christ to others?


There are always mistakes to cringe at, choices to question, behavior to regret. But I've come to appreciate new beginnings--especially those in the past. Looking back, I can see the changes I made, and even if they weren't perfect, they were progress.

Unlike my writing, I can't go back and change things in my life before anyone sees them, but I can edit my trajectory. Just a little

nudge here, a tiny tweak there, and I'm headed in a new, and hopefully better, direction.

This month we enter two new chapters at once, entering both a new year and a new decade. And a lot can happen in 10 years. In my own life, the last decade has held three major moves, six different homes in four states, two additions to our family (and a miscarriage), a major shift in my career, countless new friends, and one iPhone dropped in the toilet. (I learn from my mistakes—it only happened once!)

Take some time to review the past 12 months and the past 10 years. What brought you joy? What was harmful? What gave you a clearer picture of God? What hid Him from you? What made you a better person? What dragged you backward into old habits?

Then, like a writer in the journal section of a bookstore, allow yourself to be still for a moment and soak up the enormous potential before you. And honestly, there are no restrictions, save the size of your determination. 

By Becky St. Clair. St. Clair is a freelance writer and lives in the Napa Valley area of California with her husband, Jason, and their three children, Kayla, Lizzy and Gabe.

The Next Chapter

Accepting Change and Looking Forward to What Lies Ahead

By Darren Joseph, Southwestern Adventist University Communication Senior



This time next year I will graduate from Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU) with a bachelor of science degree in communication. As this chapter of my life enters its final stages, I can't help but reflect on everything that I've experienced in the last four years of college.

If I had to use one word to describe it all, that word would be change. Although I didn't know it in the beginning, being enrolled at SWAU would mean so much more than receiving a diploma. I can vividly remember the feelings I had when I first arrived on campus for freshman orientation.

As a Virginia native I was absolutely abused by the Texas heat, but I was also very anxious because I didn't know

anyone and was completely unfamiliar with my surroundings. Early on, I discovered that what I thought was just general Southern hospitality, was really the familial atmosphere that defines the university.


Looking back, it was the exact environment that I needed to feel comfortable enough to grow both personally and spiritually. It was through that growth that I began to see a lot of changes in myself.

Upon exiting high school, despite growing up in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and attending an Adventist high school, I didn't really have a solid relationship with God. I came to SWAU not caring at all about God or His plans for my life.

But throughout my time at SWAU I would often see Christ in many of my friends and professors. I started going to more of the university's spiritual events, and before I knew it, I found myself on my knees ready to start my spiritual journey with Christ. It wasn't always an easy road to follow, but as I grew in Christ I also grew in character.

I wanted to add to the family atmosphere from which I'd so greatly benefited. I started becoming more involved on campus by joining clubs such as Enactus, where students work to find entrepreneurial solutions to poverty-related issues of struggling communities. I also worked as a resident's assistant in the men's dorms, helping on-campus students with their daily needs. From those experiences and other leadership opportunities, I learned how to be an effective part of a team, to depend on the people around me and, most importantly, to trust that God will guide me in everything I do.

Looking forward, I can proudly say that there isn't a single part of me that isn't ready for what comes next after graduating college. However, closing this chapter of my life is bittersweet, because it means leaving behind a time filled with so much positive transformation.

I can only hope that I will continue to grow in the future and carry with me the lessons that I've learned. Otherwise, I'm very excited to see where God takes me and how He plans to use my life in this world. 

A Clean Slate

How to Make Room in Your Heart and Mind in the New Year

By Jason Busch, Record Contributor

Around this time last year, the show “Tidying Up with Marie Kondo” launched. Marie Kondo, known for her book *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* focuses on decluttering a few key areas (clothes, books, papers, miscellaneous and sentimental items) rather than tackling your house room-by-room, which she has found to be more effective long-term. The main goal isn’t necessarily to rid yourself of all your things, but rather to keep only what sparks joy.

The show became an instant success and sparked interest in tidying up around the country resulting in, among other things, a 20 percent increase in Goodwill donations during the show’s peak.

As someone who has jumped head-long into this life-changing process, I know how beneficial it can be. However, what if we set aside the focus on material things and altered the concepts to govern our spiritual lives instead? What would that kind of tidying up look like?

Tidying Our Thoughts

With the beginning of a new year, new thoughts should also be one of our top priorities. The Bible tells us in *Philippians 4:8*, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”

Make the choice to feed your mind the kinds of things that benefit it, such as healthy food, exercise, fresh air and time in God’s Word, and marvel as your thoughts begin to tidy themselves.



Healing Our Hearts

A new year is also a great time to start healing what is on your heart. *1 Peter 5:7* says to, “Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.” Whether it was an unkind word, never-ending deadlines at work, family strife or health issues, God stands ready to shoulder our burdens for us. With the amount of external stressors on us increasing all the time, it’s important to remember that God can bring peace beyond understanding to whatever negativity dominates our hearts.

Restoring Our Relationships

Finally, there’s no time like the present for tidying up our relationships. The psychology and medical communities are littered with papers outlining the positive impact of having strong interpersonal relationships, something the Bible corroborates in verse after verse. *Proverbs 17:7* says that, “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.” Take the time today to reevaluate and either restore meaningful relationships or remove harmful relationships in your life.

In *Matthew 22:36-39*, Jesus said, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” Use the new year to tidy these areas, so that the Holy Spirit can work through us to accept God’s love for ourselves and to share it with others. **R**

The Call to Ministry



I'm not one to generally lay out a fleece before God. While I strive to keep daily communion with Him and discover His will for my life, as His Scriptures reveal combined with impressions of the Holy Spirit. There have been special circumstances in my life when I've had to seek Him in stillness and perseverance until His answer comes. Only twice, however, have I felt compelled to set a fleece before Him—when I asked for confirmation to marry my husband and when I made a career change in 2014. The latter fleece propelled me into a new chapter in life.

After high school, I enrolled at Southwestern Adventist University with the hopes of pursuing elementary education. My junior year, I was diagnosed with clinical depression and found it necessary to drop out. I had hoped to return when I was better, but a relapse broke my hopes of completing my education. A few years later, I was in full recovery and doing well. However, I chose not to complete my degree, but rather dedicate myself to a full-time job while devoting the rest of my time to my local church in various capacities.

Seven years later I married my husband, Jose, and shared with him my desire to complete my degree one day. We agreed that I would enroll as soon as my stepdaughters, Janet and Marlise, obtained their degrees. The girls graduated with nursing degrees and I began contacting potential universities. I was excited and anxious, but not at peace. I tried to ignore the feeling, but it intensified with each day. I could no longer disregard it and felt the Lord was telling me something that I did not really want to hear. Doubts began to inundate my mind as I wondered if He did not approve of me completing a degree, or if the degree itself did not align with His will.

As the weeks passed, I felt impressed that my choice was not God's choice. I tried to fight the impression by arguing with God. But then, God brought to my mind all that He had done for me and everything that He had brought me through. I reflected on His grace and mercy that had kept me alive. I

decided that I would give God an opportunity to speak clearly and not just go by my impressions. I was determined to understand what His plan was for me.

So, in December 2013 I prayed one of those prayers that we often don't want to pray for fear that God will ask something of us that we don't want to hear or do. Yet, I prayed, "God, I'm not sure if I'm understanding what you are telling me. I need to make sure that it is You who speaks and understand what it is that You are telling me. So, I ask that you please speak to me thru others in a clear and direct way. I need to hear three times over the next year either:

1) an encouragement to do what I think You are saying, 2) a question from someone asking me if I have considered pursuing what I think You are saying, 3) an affirmation that I'd do well doing what I think You are saying. I'll give you a year." That was the prayer. I laid the fleece at His feet and walked away. I didn't think much of it the rest of the month. As the new year started, I would occasionally remember the prayer and then dismiss it.

By the end of March the following year, I received the first affirmation. Even though I didn't give it much thought at first, my father, a retired pastor, mentioned to me that I could be a good pastor. He invited me to attend a lay evangelist event in April and when I heard the speaker share that we should "discover the call, embrace it and share it," I clearly understood what God was telling me to do.

In July, a new pastor was assigned to our five-church district. He asked to meet with me and shared his plans for our local church. He asked if I would help him lead as the first elder. I was humbled and committed to pray about it for a few days. With God's leading I accepted the charge. From that decision, and the work that followed at my local church, came affirmations in July, August and October from my own pastor who said, "You will be like a pastor here... You can do your pastoral practice here... If you want, you can later pastor this church." I was amazed by the choice of his words and understood it as a response to my fleece, but I kept these things in my heart as I continued to serve as the first elder.




In December of 2014, my local pastor invited me to attend PELC—Pastoral Evangelism Leadership Conference in Huntsville, Alabama. I traveled with him, another pastor and my stepdaughter, Janet. The 22-hour round trip gave us an opportunity to share experiences and challenges about pastoral ministry. On our return home, doubts were taking over my mind. I wondered if I had ever said anything to my pastor that had led him to say the things that he had earlier in the year. While the others rested in the car, I asked the pastor if I had ever suggested to him that I wanted to go into ministry. This

would be my last opportunity to confirm if God had spoken through him and what God's plan was for me. My heart beat fast as I waited for his response. He answered, "You never said that to me, but I can see that you are good at ministry and that you enjoy it very much." I was speechless.

As the year came to a close, I couldn't contend with God anymore. I finally let go and let my plans in God's hands. But when I did, I became afraid and I cried for many days.

In the midst of my fears God reminded me with love and tenderness that He was the One calling me and that He would be with me every step of the way. It took me about three months to fully embrace the call, and when I did, I felt a peace that cannot be explained. Remembering one of the messages from the Messengers of Hope event that April, I had discovered the call and embraced it and now, asked God to help me share it.

I enrolled at Southwestern Adventist University in the summer of 2015 and I graduated in August 2019 with a B.A. in theology and a minor in biblical languages. I'm ready and waiting on God to open a door to fulfill the call. While I wait, God reminds me that He is the One who called me and that He will lead me to the place He has prepared for me. He is still holding my future and I'm trusting Him. 

By Leslie Soupet. Soupet is the Executive Administrative Assistant for the Southwest Region Conference President, as well as several other departments. She lives with her husband, Jose, in Joshua, Texas.



Prayer

Pray for someone every day of the challenge. Prayer is uplifting, and it's a meaningful way you can express gratitude and ask God to give comfort to others. Beyond just saying or thinking about your prayers, consider journaling them or jotting down things for which you're grateful throughout the day.



Gratitude

Think of someone for whom you're grateful and tell them. Recognize those who make a difference in your life and show them some appreciation, it can positively impact both of you. Whether it's through a conversation, a note or even a phone call, take the time to let someone know what they mean to you.

Plants

Plant something. Find an area outside to bring new life to your outdoor environment, or a nice spot on a shelf where you can care for a succulent. Grow herbs you can use when cooking.



Healthy Meals

Make a healthy meal you've never tried before. Get excited to cook outside your comfort zone. Put a fresh twist on a dish you've always loved, or find a new ingredient and introduce yourself to some exciting flavors that are low in calories.



Exercise

Try a new exercise with a friend: It's easier to stay motivated and try new things with a good workout buddy. Beyond feeling accomplished, exercise also leads to better quality of sleep, a lower resting heart rate, less stress and more energy.



Snip! Snip!

Making Mistakes and Finding Forgiveness

It was just after Christmas and Emma and Mommy were packing up all the holiday decorations. Three-year-old Emma was lying on her tummy behind a stack of boxes, elbows on the floor as she quietly cut tiny plastic pine needles into even tinier pieces. She'd found the scissors amongst the packing supplies and, although she remembered Mommy said she shouldn't use adult scissors, she thought, "Mommy won't mind if I'm careful. She likes it when I try new things!"

She leveled the scissors in front of her eyes, watching them open and close, and listening to the snip snip snip as she gleefully cut up the coniferous leaves. Her hair fell across her face and into her eyes. She brushed it aside and it fell into her eyes again. She huffed in frustration, but then inspiration struck. She knew the solution. Mommy had just been saying that Emma needed a haircut!

Snip! Snip! With just two quick swipes of the scissors she could see out of one eye. As she reached for another handful of hair, her eye fell on the freshly cut locks lying lifelessly on the floor. Immediately she knew she'd done something that she couldn't change. She put down the scissors. She felt like she'd done something wrong and she suddenly felt scared. Mommy would know what she'd done. She'd know that she used the adult scissors and she would see the missing hair.

Emma heard Mommy moving around in the living room nearby and decided to keep very quiet. Why had she thought it was a good idea? She never wanted to use scissors again! Mommy noticed that the house had grown very quiet. Too quiet. She called, "Emma? Where did you go?" There was no answer.

Mommy could see two small feet poking out from behind a few storage totes. "Em?" She called again,

stepping closer. The toes of the feet scrunched up but there was no answer. She slowly walked forward and as Emma's head came into view, Mommy saw her small face crumple and the tears start to flow. Mommy gently asked what had happened as she reached down and picked Emma up.

"I thought it would be good to cut my hair" Emma warbled out in confession. She sucked in a breath, and finished, "but it wasn't good." She then buried her face in Mommy's neck and cried.

Mommy hugged her tightly and forgivingly said, "It's only hair—it will grow back. I'm just glad that you didn't accidentally cut off your nose!"

Mommy soothed Emma's tears and assured her that even though there was no gluing the hair back on or hiding the blank space from her forehead to her ear, it was just a mistake. She'd have to live with that mistake, but Mommy wasn't angry. Mommy said that everyone makes mistakes, and that mistakes can be good lessons.

The Bible is full of people who made mistakes. But it's also full of examples of how much God loves us despite those mistakes. Psalm 103:8 says "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love," just as Mommy had been compassionate and patient with Emma! Verses 11-13 say, "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father [or a mother] has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him." Emma couldn't hide from Mommy, and we can't hide from God, but how wonderful it is to know that God is waiting for us to admit to our mistakes so that He can forgive us and compassionately help us learn from them!

Emma's hair eventually grew back and she learned that Mommy was just trying to keep her safe. She used rounded scissors from that day forward and still enjoys snip snip snipping away at things with Mommy's supervision.

By Jessica L. Lozano, Emma's Mommy



January Events

1

New Year's Day Holiday: Union and Conference offices closed.

18

Southwestern Adventist University: Adventist Theological Society Presents Alberto Timm, Southwestern Adventist University, Keene, Tex. SWAU.edu/events

18-19

Southwest Region Conference: Church Officers Training Meeting, Lone Star Camp MySouthwestRegion.org

22

Southwestern Adventist University: Adventist Theological Society Presents Lael Caesar, Southwestern Adventist University, Keene, Tex., SWAU.edu/events

22-25

Southwestern Adventist University: 25th Annual Hoops Classic, Southwestern Adventist University, Keene, Tex., SWAU.edu/events

24-26

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference: Hispanic Men's Retreat, Camp Yorktown Bay, DLCastellanos@arklac.org

February Events

1

Southwestern Adventist University: Nurses Dedication, Southwestern Adventist University, Keene, Tex, SWAU.edu/events

1-2

Southwest Region Conference: Church Officers Training Meeting El Paso, Tex. MySouthwestRegion.org

8

Southwestern Union: Equipped for Ministries Training, North Dallas Adventst Academy, SouthwesternAdventist.org

9

Southwestern Adventist University: A Night at the Meyerson, Meyerson Symphony Center, Dallas, Tex., SWAU.edu/meyerson

7-9

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference: Spanish Couples Retreat Camp Yorktown Bay DLCastellanos@arklac.org

15

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference: South Louisiana Teen Prayer Conference, Hammond Conference Center SDDowns@arklac.org

21-23

Texico Conference: FESJA Texico "Por Fe," Bonita Park Campground, Capitan, N. Mex., Info@fesjatexico.org

22-23

Southwest Region Conference: Church Officers Training Meeting, Baton Rouge, La. MySouthwestRegion.org

29

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference: Pathfinder Bible Bowl, Shreveport South Seventh-day Adventist Church, DCraig@arklac.org

For more events and information, visit SouthwesternAdventist.org.



Engaging Little Hearts

March 6-8: Children's Ministries Training and Retreat

BURLESON, TEX. – The Southwestern Union invites all children's ministries leaders to attend its fifth annual children's ministries training and retreat on March 6-8, 2020, "Engaging Little Hearts" at Camp Hoblitzelle in Midlothian, Tex.

The event begins on Friday, March 6 with a fellowship and worship session. On Sabbath, attendees will be inspired by devotionals and will meditate on the Word of God together. Afterwards, seminars

will be presented, as well as certification for Track 1: Understanding Children, of the North American Division's Certification for Children's Ministries.

On Saturday evening, there will be a celebration with food, games and prizes to let our leaders know how much we value them. On Sunday, March 8, each of our attendees will become a child again with Vacation Bible School training. They will learn all about the new VBS program,

"Heroes," stage decorations, songs and music, Bible stories content, craft ideas, games and snack testing.

The Adventist Book Center and AdventSource will be onsite to show attendees the resources that are available.

Super early bird registration of \$99 ends Jan. 10. To register, please visit SouthwesternAdventist.org/Children.

By *Sonia Canó*
Children's Ministries Director



Executive Committee Report

Southwestern Union Executive Committee Meets

BURLESON, TEX. – On Nov. 14, 2019, the Southwestern Union executive committee met for its third and final meeting of 2019. The meeting began with a devotional by Cedric Belcher, D.Min., pastor of the Grace Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church in Fort Worth.

The committee heard special reports highlighting the Texas Conference and Southwestern Adventist University. Buford Griffith, Southwestern Union executive secretary, shared the current membership report for the Southwestern Union, which stands at 122,754.

Eddie Canales, vice president for evangelism, reported that the union's

Field School of Evangelism is scheduled for May-June 2020 in the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference, and that the annual union-sponsored Fall evangelism project will take place in Albuquerque, N.M.

John Page, treasurer, shared that tithe appropriations would be returned to the conferences in 2020 in order to support evangelism and Adventist education.

The committee also heard reports from Elton DeMoraes, vice president for church ministries, regarding the numerous training events provided by church ministries training program, Equipped for Ministries, throughout 2019; Sonia Canó, children's ministries and Sabbath

School director, regarding the union's partnership with mission work on the island of Pohnpei; and Carmen Griffith, women's ministries director, regarding a project to provide personal items for the homeless in Orlando during the 2019 NAD's Women's Ministries Conference.

Buford Griffith also reported that the Southwestern Union has been allocated 18 delegates for the upcoming General Conference Session in Indianapolis.

The meeting adjourned with prayer by David Montoya, Texas Conference executive secretary. The committee will next meet in March 2020.

Good Stewardship

Four Symposiums on Stewardship Planned for 2020

BURLESON, TEX. – “What is stewardship, and how does it relate to me, my community and to my church? Many members aren’t really sure,” says Elton DeMoraes, Southwestern Union vice president for church ministries.

In 2020, DeMoraes has planned for four opportunities for members in the Southwestern Union to learn and discuss what stewardship is all about. These meetings will take place across the Southwestern Union territory in Albuquerque, Dallas, New Orleans and Oklahoma City.

“We hope that this will be a starting point to learn about a lifestyle of good. This symposium is designed for all who are ready to make a difference in the Kingdom of God by becoming sound in what the Bible teaches about finance.

Attendees will gain a biblical view of financial stewardship, discuss and receive practical ideas to help them get their finances in order and be equipped to help others with practical application in the local church,” says DeMoraes.

For dates and information, visit SouthwesternAdventist.org/Stewardship.



Equipped for Ministries

Dallas Area Training Scheduled for February 8

BURLESON, TEX. – Equipped for Ministries, the church ministries training program from the Southwestern Union, will occur on Feb. 8 in the Dallas area at North Dallas Adventist Academy in Richardson, Tex., just north of Dallas.

This bilingual event is for all members who would like to learn more about particular ministries, such as family or children’s ministries, as well as enjoy fellowship and learn from fellow ministries colleagues in their local area.

On Saturday, Feb. 8, more than a dozen ministries leaders from the South-

western Union, Texas Conference and Southwest Region Conference will join with area churches to present devotional and worship services for their individual church services and will also join in with their fellowship meals.

Beginning at 3:30 p.m. on Saturday, attendees are invited to participate in the training sessions at North Dallas Adventist Academy in Richardson, Tex. The sessions will continue through 7 p.m.

The evening will end with a prayer of blessing for the local ministries and light refreshments will be served.

Training will be held in English for the following ministries: Children’s Ministries; Community Services; Elders, Deacons, Deaconesses; Family Ministries; Prayer Ministries; Preaching; Sabbath School; Stewardship; Treasury; Women’s Ministries; Youth Ministries; Young Adult Ministries; and more. Sessions will also be held in Spanish.

For more information and a full list of seminars, see the ad on page 48, and visit SouthwesternAdventist.org/Training.

EQUIPPED FOR MINISTRIES
Training Day for Ministry Leaders and Teams

Cowboys and Bikers

11th Annual Camp Meeting

ATHENS, TEX. – The Southwestern Union’s 11th Annual Cowboy and Biker Camp took place Oct. 18-20, 2019 at Lone Star Camp. This spiritual retreat is an opportunity for individuals, families and friends who enjoy motorcycles and horses to just to be in fellowship and praise God together in a natural setting. Our Seventh-day Adventist members took the time to get in tune with God and witness to their friends while enjoying the beautiful Piney Woods region of East Texas. Bikers made the trek from Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and many of the major metro areas in Texas, including Houston and San Antonio and the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex.

This year’s theme was “I Serve” focusing on how these groups can serve their unique communities.

During a ministries spotlight time, several lay-led biker ministries from the Southwestern Union territory were prayed over for God to bless them as they continue to do His work. The different ministries that are organized into groups are the 3 Angels Motorcycle Ministry, the Sabbath Keepers Motorcycle Ministry and the Adventist Motorcycle Ministry; and there are others who ride who are not a part of a specific ministry, but they do great things for God in their communities.

Guest speaker Andre Campbell, pastor from the Southeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, discussed how his former church in St. Petersburg, Fla., served that community. Jacquelyn Martin was in charge of Kids World, a special program just for kids that focused

on how kids could serve their churches, communities and families.

The bikers ministries and the horse ministries took a horse and a few motorcycles to a local nursing home and let the residents come about and see the motorcycles and pet the horse, which they very much enjoyed.

On Sabbath the attendees enjoyed a musical concert by musician Mark Bunney. The weekend was packed with spiritual enrichment and fun for all, from fishing to enjoying nature trails to horseback riding to a hayride through the woods.

If you have never been, we invite you to consider Cowboy and Biker Camp 2020.

By Helvis C. Moody,
Youth/Young Adult Director



Albuquerque Hosts SAC

Southwestern Union Communicators Win Awards

BURLESON, TEX. – Communicators in the Southwestern Union won several awards at the 30th annual Society of Adventist Communicators (SAC) convention, held Oct. 18-21 in Albuquerque, N. M.

The Society of Adventist Communicators is an organization for the professional development, continuing education, recognition, networking and nurturing of Christians with careers in communication. The annual convention includes media tours, networking and career opportunities, seminars and spiritual fellowship.

The Southwestern Union hosted the convention in its territory this year and was tasked with assisting to make the event a success. Three professionals who presented seminars included Dallas-Fort Worth locals Aaron Thomas, freelance

photographer and director of photography (pictured left); Zack Posthumous, freelance graphic designer; and Kenn Dixon, Texas Conference vice president for communication and public relations.

On Friday evening, Texico Conference Executive Secretary/Treasurer Phil Robertson greeted the attendees before a riveting worship session by Tiago Arrais, pastor of the Advent Life Seventh-day Adventist Church in Santa Fe, N. M. (pictured right).

The event closed with an award ceremony and banquet. The Best in Class award in the website category went to the Southwestern Union Communication Department along with Micah Johnson, freelance web designer, for the new Record website (SWURecord.org). The department, which includes Jessica Loza-

no, communication director; Kristina P. Busch, associate communication director; Reggie Johnson, assistant communication director; and Tammy G. Prieto, administrative secretary, also received an honorable mention in the category of comprehensive campaign for its work with Elton DeMoraes, Southwestern Union vice president and men's ministries director for the 2019 EPIC men's ministries convention. Lozano received an honorable mention in the category of short form feature writing as well.

Southwestern Adventist University also won an honorable mention in the category of video for departmental promotional videos (read more on page 21).

The SAC convention will be held in Chicago next year. For information, visit AdventistCommunicator.org.



Public Campus Ministries

Making Sense of it All at Third Annual Retreat

BURLESON, TEX. – The Southwestern Union’s young adult department hosted its third annual Public Campus Ministries retreat in Lubbock, Tex., on Oct. 11-13 at the Lubbock Seventh-day Adventist Church. Public Campus Ministries empowers Seventh-day Adventist students to be Christ’s Ambassadors on secular college and university campuses around the world. The weekend’s guest speaker was Anthony Bosman, PhD, an assistant professor of mathematics at Andrews University, who served as a campus ministry leader while a student

at Stanford and Rice University and finds his greatest joy in helping students to recognize Christ as “the center and circumference of all truth.”

The retreat, themed, “Making Sense of it All” began on Friday, Oct. 11 with a meet-and-greet session. On Sabbath, Oct. 12, attendees enjoyed discussions and sessions on topics that began with, “How to Make Sense of...” and included “Christianity” “Campus Life” “The Universe” “Life Decisions” and more.

For more events like this, follow us on Facebook at Southwestern Union Youth.



Honoring Those Who Serve

Union Hosts Day to Honor Service Organization Members

BURLESON, TEX. – In an effort to show appreciation to the service of the military personnel, peace officers and firefighters in our communities, the Southwestern Union held its first National Service Organization Day on Sabbath, Nov. 9, at the Mansfield Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mansfield, Tex. “Holding this special day was a way to recognize and honor those in our communities who sacrifice of themselves to serve others,” said Helvis C. Moody, Southwestern Union youth and young adult/prayer ministries director, who coordinated the

ministry opportunity. A special effort was made to invite local community servants.

Themed, “In Honor of Their Service” the day began with Sabbath School and worship services with a focus on service and recognition of those who serve. Special guests included William Cork, assistant director of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries for the North American Division and a chaplain in the Army Reserve and many others.

In the afternoon, several seminars were presented to provide encouragement and educational information, with

topics including being informed prior to signing up for military service; how to keep happy, healthy marriages when a spouse is deployed; best practices for interactions with peace officers and how to stay positive, encouraged and excited about the future. Following the seminars, guests enjoyed refreshments and making new friends.

“I encourage all of our churches to hold ministry opportunities such as these to share our appreciation and brotherly love for our community servants,” said Moody.



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Partners for Health

Southwestern's New Center for Wellness Integration

KEENE, TEX. — The Center for Wellness Integration (CWI), a new Southwestern Adventist University initiative, is already actively collaborating with various local organizations to promote whole-person wellness as it seeks to involve students, faculty, staff and the community to improve the overall health and wellbeing of the surrounding area.

The center's mission is to "Partner with community representatives and agencies to provide support for the well-being of our neighbors."

Educated in community health and faith community nursing, Terri Gibson is an associate professor for the university's nursing department and the creator and director of the center. Gibson has found an outlet in the center for her passion of promoting whole-person wellness.

"I'm most excited about the intentionality behind the center," says Gibson. "We're intentionally partnering with local agencies while providing opportunities for our students to be actively engaged in the community."

What does this intentionality look like? Last year, the university ran a diabetes reversal program that influenced 130 local residents and produced statistically significant reductions in weight, body-mass index and systolic blood pressure for two cohorts of participants.

For the fall of 2019, the university's religion department began offering a class called Integrated Wellness Connections, specifically designed to take a whole-person approach to therapeutic communication. The center recently launched its website focused on wellness

education and event promotion.

To truly advocate for whole-person wellness, Gibson knew that all aspects of wellness needed representation in the center's leadership. She invited five faculty members to join her on the center's leadership team, each from a different discipline related to one of the five aspects of whole-person wellness—economic, physical, social, emotional and spiritual. Many of these faculty members were already engaged in programs that aligned with the center's mission. Now, as part of the CWI, these community-focused wellness programs have a central hub for coordination and event promotion.

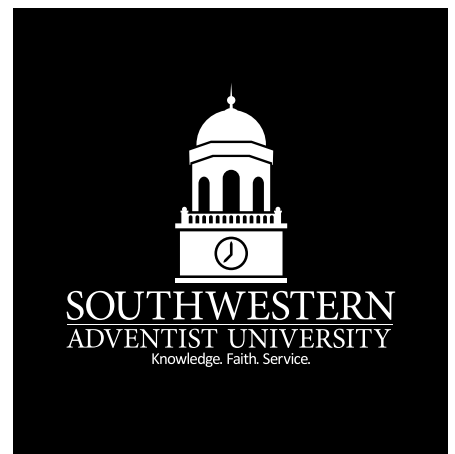
Visit SWAU.edu/CWI for more information, or follow the center's Facebook page at [Facebook.com/SWAUWellness](https://www.facebook.com/SWAUWellness).

By *Brianne Michalski*



Video Series Wins Award

Team Receives Honorable Mention at Adventist Convention



KEENE, TEX. — Southwestern Adventist University’s marketing team was recently awarded with the Video: Web Honorable Mention award during the Society of Adventist Communicators 2019 awards banquet in Albuquerque, N.M. They were honored for their work in telling the story of Southwestern and its offerings through a series of videos.

The university’s departmental video series features a collection of 11 videos showcasing the academic opportunities that Southwestern Adventist University offers. This included its music, kinesiology, history and social sciences, business administration, mathematics and physical sciences, computer sciences, nursing, education and psychology, religion, English and biological sciences departments.

Exhibiting the all of the degree programs available to students, viewers experience how the university’s personalized and competitive degree programs allow students to explore their passion as they prepare for their career.

The videos highlight various aspects of the university programs, including its professor-to-student ratio of 1:12 and the fact that 100 percent of recent graduates in biology, computer science, math, education, English, music and theology are employed or in graduate school. Additionally, the university’s high NCLEX pass rate for nursing students; career options and opportunities for each degree; and how the university’s integration of faith and service into student daily life provides a framework for a life of service.

“Videos are an integral part of telling our story,” said Tim Kosaka, interim director of marketing and public relations. “This series showcases how our individually tailored academic opportunities integrate knowledge, faith and service while preparing students for a successful future.” The departmental video series was produced by Southwestern students and graduates. It was produced by Michael Demiar and written by Julena Allen with videography by Fern Isaleen Haylock-Youngberg, Eliangel Fermin and Princess Musick, with logistical support by Taylor Tucker.

Experience Southwestern Adventist University through video by visiting us online at SWAU.edu/live.

By *Tim Kosaka*
Interim Marketing and PR Director

20/20 Vision

Focus on the Opportunities for Christ in the New Year



The first time I was in the ophthalmologist's office, as a little boy, I was shown a 3D image. The physician asked, "What do you see?" I responded, "I see only a blob." With that he smiled and said, "I'm not surprised." Not only was I suffering from near-sighted vision, but also a condition called strabismus. My two eyes drifted far apart and never worked together, thus seeing a 3D image of what was supposed to be a fly was simply a blob. I envied my classmates who always bragged about 20/20 vision. They seemed to see everything that moved or breathed. It came so easy to them. Oh, how I wanted to be able to see like that!

Candidly, I have decided many Christian believers are handicapped by spiritual nearsightedness. Believers are often stuck on what has been instead of "what if" by looking with faith to "what can" become. My Bible tells me that "with God all things are possible." Through faith in Jesus and the unction of the Holy Spirit, nothing is impossible for God's people.

Many years later I had surgery on my eye to help bring it into line and movement with my other eye. What a thrill to see things differently! With the addition of corrective contact lenses—wow, 20/20 vision! Incredible! How precious are our eyes!

The same is true spiritually. When we have on the glasses of the Holy Spirit, we too can see with heavenly insight, heavenly vision. As Christian author Chuck Swindoll has penned, "The word insight is translated from a Hebrew verb that means to be prudent, that is to be wise, to have foresight, to be shrewd in the practical management of one's daily affairs. It includes the qualities of discernment and keen awareness. Another word for insight is vision."

He continues, stating that leaders "must be able to see the big picture, to envision the tomorrows of any undertaking, to visualize the future consequences of today's decisions, to calculate risk and develop contingencies. He or she must look farther down the road than those who follow. No leader can afford to remain entangled in only the tedious details of today." This applies not only to leaders in the conference, but also applies to all God's leaders in every local congregation.

The year 2020 is a brand new slate. It is an opportunity for 365 fresh new days to do great things for the cause of Christ. Our conference theme is 20/20 Vision: Evangelism; Youth/Young Adults; Education; and being Spirit filled and Spirit led. May your EYES be connected to the Holy Spirit this year to seize the opportunity to go forward in great faith to advance the Advent movement.

By Richard C. Dye, Sr., President



Mission Minded

Why Go on Mission Trips?

SHREVEPORT, LA. – I just returned from another mission trip; this time it was in Entre Rios, Bolivia where we completed the block work on a classroom. Some have asked me, “Why go on mission trips?” Jesus tells us to “go” into every nation and make disciples. In the local church, many times we focus on how to get other people to come to us rather than going to them. I have found that the best use of our effort is to go where the Spirit of God is working.

Some have asked me, “What happens when you go?” When you go, you become the hands and feet of Jesus. What does that look like? Well it can be different on each trip, but for many of the trips I have been on, it looks like Vacation Bible School in the local area with children who have very little in

terms of material items but who have a great appreciation of your efforts to show them love. It can look like building cinder block structures that will serve as houses of worship and school classrooms or even clinics. It may even look like providing free medical or dental care. You are also able to participate in worship with some incredible believers in a different culture and often in a different language.

These trips will break down preconceived notions and prejudice. They help you realize that we are all in this together and the great big world seems a little smaller.

On these trips you leave more behind than a sturdy classroom or worship center, you leave a piece of your heart because as you minister to the needs of

others, they in turn minister to a need you never knew you had.

The Arkansas-Louisiana Conference is planning a mission trip to Kanchanaburi, Thailand from Nov. 18 - Dec. 3, 2020. We will work with an orphanage and do construction and evangelism. We will also be hosting eye and dental clinics and Vacation Bible School programs in local churches. If you are interested, you can register at ArkLac.org/Ministerial. The \$2,500 cost includes airfare, lodging, ground transportation and part of the construction costs.

If you are wanting to organize a trip for your local church or join another mission group that is part of the Adventist system, you can visit Maranatha.org for information.

By Brandon Westgate



Bringing People Together

Health Fair Ministry Blessing Beyond Expectation



TEXARKANA, ARK. — Three years ago, Jimmy Lindsey, a former Adventist, walked by the Texarkana Seventh-day Adventist Church's booth at the fair. He was invited back to church that Sabbath and he hasn't missed one since. A group of prayer warriors meet every Sabbath at 8:30 a.m. to pray for every member of the church. The prayer group added their new member's special prayer request for a soulmate.

A man at Shannon Carpenter's Sunday-keeping church stated that Saturday is really the true Sabbath,

and Carpenter felt impressed to find a Sabbath-keeping church. She began attending the Texarkana church and was baptized on July 6, 2019. Lindsey met Carpenter as she studied, and they began dating. They were married on Aug. 4, 2019 with John Taylor officiating.

Brenda Litchfield serves as the Texarkana church's personal ministries leader and operates the fair booths. The joining of Jimmy and Shannon together as a couple and as members has been a blessing for her and the church to see.

By Loretta Johnson

Alma Church Demolished

Church Deemed a Loss After Contractor's Mistake

ALMA, ARK. — It is the decided purpose of every congregation to see the church built up. But sadly, the congregation of the Alma Seventh-day Adventist Church stood by as their church home of 11 years was torn down. The demolition was deemed necessary due to a contractor excavating near the church which undermined the church's foundation resulting in the collapse of the church's south wall.

"There was no way anyone was going to take liability and responsibility for letting someone in that building once that

wall started to collapse and fall down," Jerry Martin, Alma mayor said.

All of the walls and windows of the church were boarded up immediately and access to any of the building's contents was forbidden, due to the unstable conditions.

The massive demolition equipment rolled in and in a matter of a few hours the church was reduced to a pile of rubble. Many tears were shed as the congregation reflected on their journey of lovingly renovating the downtown storefront into a house of worship.

The Alma congregation is not discouraged. The First United Methodist Church down the street let the congregation use its facilities so they haven't missed a single week of worship.

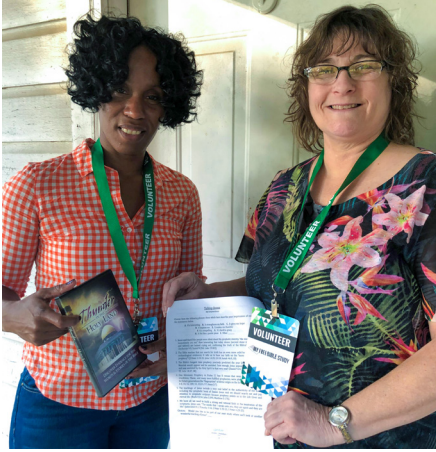
The Alma church is taking monetary donations and donations of building materials to assist with rebuilding. The church is also asking any electricians, plumbers and carpenters that would be willing to donate their time to contact Burnham Rand at 479.353.0606. Your help will be appreciated.

By Burnham Rand



Cycle of Evangelism

Best Methods for Effective Local Ministry



SHREVEPORT, LA. – At the beginning of 2019, the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference made a few changes to the way evangelism is funded, asking churches to do pre-work and consider the following:

Depend less on mailers: Statistics show that for every 1,000 invitations mailed out, only one person attends a meeting. People are not comfortable attending a meeting when they are not familiar with the organization. Would you want to attend an event if you knew nothing about the people or the intent? Our handbills have far greater success when coupled with a personal invitation. People may be willing to attend, not so much because of what is being presented, but because of the relationship.

Invest in discipling people: The process of accepting Christ and our message takes time. We must build relationships first! One of the best ways is to know the needs of your community and meet the needs. What can you do to better the lives of those in your community? The other equally important component to the success of a discipleship program is follow-up. One of the crises that is affecting our church is the low retention rate of new members. Statistics show that within the first six months of their conversion new members make the decision to remain a member or not. Most of the time their decision is based not on the new truths they have learned

but rather on friendships made in church. The more they feel a part of the family, the greater the possibility they will remain in the church. In addition, as new members integrate into the life of the church and learn how to become disciples of Christ, they grow in faith.

Establish a healthy small group ministry: A church with a vibrant small group ministry will have greater success in the growth of the church (spiritually and numerically). Three to four months prior to any evangelistic effort, the church needs a healthy small group ministry. Small groups are a non-threatening way to help nurture relationships, serve others, evangelize and grow in the knowledge of God. This is also a great way to evangelize your own members.

Mail Bible study cards: One of the most effective ways to share the message of Christ and establish an ongoing presence in your community is to mail Bible study cards. Any person who takes the time to respond to the invitation to receive Bible studies is already interested in spiritual matters. These cards put church members in direct contact with an interest.

By making these changes, the conference can contribute more money to the pre-work and follow-up. Churches can request these funds months in advance of the meeting; encourage churches to use other means of advertisement (social

media, television and radio advertisement); and increase member participation through small groups.

Tangible results: Participating churches have witnessed great results. In most cases, they have 70 or more Bible study interests, several in-person Bible studies and the members are participating more. The New Orleans Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church recently baptized 16 people as a result of their small group ministry. The Monticello Seventh-day Adventist Church, which is situated in a rural area, is experiencing a mini revival among their members. They have been using the Sermon View Interest Tracker Generator and Discovery Centers from the Voice of Prophecy while going door-to-door to hand deliver the Bible studies that have been requested in their community. Consequently, they are building relationships with these individuals while hoping some will accept in-person Bible studies and attend their meetings.

Our New Iberia Seventh-day Adventist Church is also using Sermon View Interest Tracker and Bible study interest cards. Because of the large volume of interest, the Lafayette Seventh-day Adventist Church has partnered with New Iberia church to deliver the studies. To God be the Glory!

By Jeff Villegas
Ministerial Secretary

Bring Them Back

Heber Springs Reaches Out to Missing Members

HEBER SPRINGS, ARK. – After much prayer, the Heber Springs Seventh-day Adventist Church came up with a novel idea to reach out to missing members and bring them back! Members wanted to let their missing members know just how much

they were missed. Church members got together and took a group picture of them waving. Then the picture was put on a card with an encouraging note letting them know how much they were missed. These cards were then mailed

out to those missing members.

The church family hopes the dear missing ones will be encouraged to come back to their church family. God is busily searching for His lost sheep.

By Judith Newton



New Website!

How it all Began...

The History of the Seventh-day Adventist Work in Arkansas & Louisiana

"Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls."

- Jeremiah 6:16 -

FLINT CREEK SCHOOL, 1923

SPRINGDALE CHURCH, 1885

HOPE VILLA CHURCH, 1890

BATON ROUGE SCHOOL, 1942



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Love God, Love People

Profoundly Simple Resolutions for the New Year



Here we are again at the beginning of a new year. Most, if not all have given some thought to it. I have read words like, “The pages of a new year lie before you. It is in your power to decide what will be written upon them.” Pretty amazing, the power to decide or choose the path we will take and what our life will be like. This causes us many times to reflect on what the past year has been like and what we would like to see for the new year. I think of the familiar phrase, “You get what you aim for.” I believe it is a true maxim, a truth that describes reality. We become our priorities.

So, what is my aim for the new year? What is the priority, the goal for my life, my family, for the Oklahoma Conference in 2020? I like the way the Word of God has a way of saying much in a few words. It has a way of simplifying life by pointing out what is most important to seek. Let me give you a few examples. The apostle Paul said, “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before.” He is saying in effect, I’m putting the past behind and focusing on the future. He did add the goal was to seek for the prize of the high calling of Christ. His aim was to keep going forward in his goal of seeking to know and follow Christ. Joshua said, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” In other words, no matter what anyone else was going to do, his family was going to be all about the Lord. Both of those are great aims or goals and ones we would do well to imitate.

But the one that came into my mind for 2020 are found in the words of Jesus Himself. When asked what is the greatest commandment in the law or what is most important to Him, His answer was, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind” and the second is, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” It was not a new thought. He had given it to Moses for God’s people during that time. Jesus said, seek for and find an experience with God that will lead you to love Him with all of your being and lead you to love people in your family, neighborhood, church and the world. This is my aim, goal and focus for the new year, to love God in deeper, greater ways and to love people more and better. After all “by this shall all men know that we are His Disciples if we love one another.” We can’t do that without first experiencing God’s love and loving Him, for we love Him because He first loved us.

So, how do we accomplish this goal, to love God and people? I believe we have to ask Him for it. He has promised much to us. He said ask and you shall receive. He has also promised to do it for us, for we cannot do it for ourselves. He has promised this to us through the prophet Jeremiah and the apostle Paul in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews 10:16 states, “‘This is the covenant I will make with them after that time,’ says the Lord. ‘I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.’” God actually promises that if we ask Him and desire it, He will accomplish His greatest desire to enable us to love Him with all our heart and love our neighbors as we love ourselves. This is my New Year’s resolution for me, my family and my Conference. I am asking God to fulfill His promise and I believe that He will.

By James Shires, President



Enid Group Celebrates Congregation Achieves Company Status

ENID, OKLA. – After eight years as a group, the Enid Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Group was blessed to become a church company on Sept. 21.

The new company was privileged to receive the visit of **Ciro Castillo**, Oklahoma Conference Hispanic ministries coordinator, and **Apple Park**, Oklahoma Conference executive secretary (pictured, left).

Park officiated the ceremony. Park encouraged the church to make a difference in its local community and families and to remember that the company is

chosen for His calling, to work in the community, just as Moses and David were called by the Lord.

The company was also blessed to have **Pamela Fraser**, **Susan Castillo** and **Annette Park** present during the special ceremony. The church received the status change with 35 members, 15 of whom hold leadership positions.

We thank God for His wonders and for the leading of the Holy Spirit, who guides us every day in the growth of the church for His purpose.

By *Gregorio Avilés*



Press Forward

Anniversary Celebration for Arbuckle View

DAVIS, OKLA. – On Sept. 21, the Arbuckle View Seventh-day Adventist Church held a celebratory event for their 10th anniversary. They celebrated the joining of the Davis and Sulphur churches 10 years ago, the completion of their new building, as well as their exciting future together as one church family.

Following opening hymns, **Ricky Seiler** shared the story of how the Arbuckle View church began. The generous gift from the late **Carroll Shoffner** and building delays helped facilitate the joining of the Sulphur and Davis

churches. After the heartening story and sharing of memories, Seiler introduced **Carroll Shoffner's** wife, **JoDee Shoffner**. She played one of Carroll's favorite hymns, "Shall We Gather At The River" on her violin.

Daniel Ortega, the first pastor of Arbuckle View, was a guest speaker at the event. One of the experiences he shared was when he was mistaken for the pastor's son by one of the church members. Ortega encouraged the church's efforts to pray for the Holy Spirit and reach out to the community.

Head Elder **Dan Braun** shared about the church board's prayer journal. The church board had been praying for the filling of the Holy Spirit, and for God to reveal how to become involved within the Davis and Sulphur communities. Braun followed this with a re-dedication for the church and an invitation to join in praying for those important topics.

James Shires, Oklahoma Conference president, came to enjoy the festivities along with many families who are acquainted with the church members.

By *Lisa Anthony*



Parkview Celebrates 120 Years of Adventist Education in Oklahoma City

OKLAHOMA CITY – In 1899, before statehood, faithful parents and members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church opened a church school for the training of their children called the “Oklahoma School.” Because of that great determination and the determination and conviction of other parents and church members through the years, covered with the blessings of God, Parkview Adventist Academy (PAA) celebrated its 120th Homecoming!

Alumni from as far as California came together beginning on Thursday,

Sept. 26, with a banquet. On Friday, the celebration continued with vespers. A welcome and prayer was given by alumnus Dasher Stinson. Special music was provided by alumna Jennifer (Smith) McMains, and was followed by a message from Oklahoma Conference President James Shires.

On Sabbath morning, alumnus James Daman taught the adult Sabbath School, which was then followed with violin music by current Parkview student Angelin Abraham, and then a sermon by Apple Park, executive secretary.

Many stories of times past were shared and enjoyed. PAA would like to thank all who have ever attended, their parents and the others that have taught, donated, volunteered and supported in any other way.

PAA celebrates 120 years because of you and the hand of God. We pray that He comes very soon, but until He does, our prayer is for more children to go through our school and learn of His undying love for them.

By Annette Park



Fall Retreat

Young Adults Enjoy Fun and Uplifting Weekend

WEWOKA, OKLA. – Oklahoma young adults enjoyed a wonderful Young Adult Fall Retreat at Wewoka Woods Adventist Center the weekend of Sept. 26-29.

Samson Sambeba was the guest speaker and moderator for the weekend which was themed "Rescued." Young adults were given the opportunity to share and study as a group about how God desires to rescue us, no matter the circumstances that we are in.

They also had the opportunity to fellowship in nature and participate in outdoor activities that the camp provides,

including horseback riding, swimming, canoeing, tubing and hiking.

Attendees also enjoyed dining and socializing together with a wonderful banquet on Saturday evening.

More than 30 young adults attended the retreat, including a couple of non-Adventist visitors who expressed how blessed they were by the Bible discussions and activities. The Fall Retreat was a great event for all involved.

By Yesenia Ortega
Communication and Youth Secretary



God's Project

Looking Back at a Lifetime of God's Leading

KETCHUM, OKLA. — It is very evident that God was leading Kathy Powell very early in her life. At the tender age of seven, her parents' home broke up and Kathy was taken into the home of Lyman and Cathy Williams, a Seventh-day Adventist couple, who lived in Gentry, Ark. Although Kathy only lived with the Williams family for a short time, she learned about Jesus and His Word.

The guiding principles of the Williams would impact the rest of Kathy's life. Kathy returned to live with her mother and her father was no longer a part of her life. As young as she was, she was given the responsibility of caring for siblings. Her life was most miserable as she experienced hunger, beatings, verbal and emotional abuse. She became very angry at God, for how could a God of love allow this to happen? As she turned away from God, she was plunged into the deepest darkness. Depression, anxiety and feeling absolutely worthless led her to feel that life was not worth living.

However, angels were watching over her—seeking to lead her back to a loving, trusting, relationship with her heavenly Father. In 2006, Kathy was led to a yard sale in Claremore, Okla. There, the woman who was having the sale gifted her with the *The Passion of Love* by Ellen G. White.

As she read, her life began to change. The reading of that book marked a new

way of life. Kathy was on fire! All she could talk about was the love she had for her Savior. She no longer had any desire to end her life and her walk with God was such a dynamic part of her life that others noticed the change in her.

In 2008, as her daughter and her husband were tearing down an old, abandoned trailer in Salina, Okla., Kathy opened a hall closet and, to her utter amazement, it was filled with all kinds of truth books: books about the Sabbath, Adventist *beliefs* and Bible studies. Kathy began sharing with others the things that she was learning—the truths which had changed her life.

In 2015, Kathy had a providential meeting with Rex Shores from Jay, Okla., and he continued to share the truths of God's Word with Kathy. Shores took Kathy and another friend to a leadership conference where she met Tommy and Kathy Beats who, when they discovered Kathy lives in the Salina area, encouraged her to visit the God Project, a church-plant in Salina. There she met Rick and Deb Cole, who took her into their hearts and made her feel welcome. The Coles loved Kathy and desired so much for her to make a full surrender to Jesus. They gave Kathy a DVD set of Bible prophecy lectures by David Asscherick.

Kathy took copious notes of every lecture and shared with relatives and

many others the wonderful truths she was learning. When she watched the presentation, explaining that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's final movement to prepare a people for the return of our Savior, she felt the call of God to become a part of it.

You can imagine the joy that filled her heart when she learned that Asscherick would be one of the speakers for 2019 Oklahoma Camp Meeting! She could meet him and thank him personally for the part he had played in her decision to become a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

I must share a little of Kathy's testimony: "I know I have a call on my life. On Aug. 10, 2019, I was baptized, giving my life to God through Jesus. Above all I am a child of the Most High God and a member of the Body of Christ—by definition, I am a Seventh-day Adventist. This is what the love of Jesus has done for this sinner. I am nothing without Him. I encourage all who will, to answer the call. God bless you."

Although Lyman and Cathy Williams are now asleep in Jesus, in heaven they will see that their love and the principles they taught little seven-year-old Kathy began a long journey that led to a glorious outcome.

————— *By Dame Toews and Kathy Mayes*



Making an Impact

Tulsa High School Students Volunteer at Food Bank



TULSA – Every year, Tulsa Adventist Academy (TAA) students in grades 7-12 volunteer at the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma in north Tulsa. For many, it is repeat experience but for those who attend the first time, it is always a surprise that it is so rewarding. TAA recently attended its first of several volunteer days this school year. The day’s assignment was sorting fresh corn into five-pound bundles, weighing it and collecting it.

In all, the 26 students and several teachers and staff sorted more than

3,300 pounds of corn that could be served at 3,317 meals. With the food deserts in Tulsa, meals with fresh vegetables are highly valuable. Food deserts are areas where there is little-to-no access to fresh produce and wholesome food, such as at a grocery store.

According to the Tulsa-area food bank, there are more than 35,000 children in Tulsa County who are “food insecure” meaning those children do not know where their next meal will come from and poverty is closely tied to food insecurity. Volunteering at the food bank

helps TAA students work in small teams and also provides awareness that not everyone is on equal footing. One freshman noted that she had never considered being wasteful with her food until she sorted the corn with her classmates. “We should make sure we only get what we will eat. There are people starving near my school and I didn’t even know it,” she continued. TAA students look forward to serving Tulsa County through its food bank at several more events through the school year.

By Caroline A. Fisher

Youth Leadership Training

250 Receive Specialized Training at Annual Event



WEWOKA, OKLA. – Wewoka Woods Adventist Center hosted its annual Youth Leadership Training Weekend on Sept. 13-15 with 250 in attendance, during its weekend themed, “Preparing Young People for the Second Coming.”

Special guests included Juan Robledo, a pastor from Garland, Tex. and Rich Aguilera, also known as the “Mud Guy,” who writes a column called “Mud” for *Guide Magazine* and has programs for children on 3ABN and Hope Channel.

The weekend offered nine different

tracks which included Pathfinder Staff Training, Adventurer Staff Training, Pathfinder/Adventurer Instructor Certification, Pathfinder Counselor Certification, Pathfinder/Adventurer Director Certification, Leadership Certification, Master Guide, Children's Ministries and AY (Sociedad de Jóvenes).

We were thrilled to see so many leaders from different areas of youth ministries dedicated to preparing our young people for the Second Coming!

By Yesenia Ortega
Communication and Youth Secretary

Turn the Page

It's Not Too Late to Start a New Chapter



Our lives are like books—some chapters are beautiful and awesome while others we wish to skip or erase. Every day we add a line, a sentence, a paragraph or a page to our journey. Until the last sentence has been written, we will always have an opportunity to change our story. When we look back at some pages, we run into emotions, actions and different circumstances. We had ups and downs, we cried, we won, we lost, we failed, we achieved, and grew up in every single way.

Have you stopped to think about what your book will say about you? Who were you as a person? What were your values, what did you achieve, what gave meaning and sense to your life? Will your life's book be powerful and compelling, or will it be just a bunch of pages that had no impact to you or those around you?

Here we are today, about to start a new chapter as our life story continues to unfold. As you consider what to start writing on your new blank page of life, here are two things I encourage you to remember: The past is the past, but you have power over the present. Many people are stuck in the “What if” and just lose time and energy. What's done is done, my friend. You cannot change it. You can assess the past to build for the future, but spending time going backwards is not productive. Paul expressed it, “But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead.” *Philippians 3:13*.

Today will never happen again. Your future success, in all aspects of life, is prepared for in the present moment—today. Don't let five years or even one more year go by while you keep looking back with regret. Make things happen now. You can't control the past, but you can change the present for a blessed future. “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” *Matthew 6:34*.

As you continue to write your life story, consider all that has happened up to this point in your character development. Now allow God to build on that and write something new. “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” *Isaiah 43:18-19*.

God wants to write something new in your life. He wants to demonstrate that, “You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ.” *2 Corinthians 3:2-3*.

By Vanston Archbold, Diversity Coordinator



God's Oasis of Love

Voice of Hope Church Touches the Community

OKLAHOMA CITY – On Aug. 3, 2019, the Voice of Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church held its first annual Community Expo. Spearheaded by the church's health ministries department under the direction of Pamela Allen, the Expo served the needs of the community outside of the four walls of the church in tangible ways.

Held from 10 a.m.—2 p.m. under a huge white tent adjacent to the church, ministry teams shared the love of Jesus in a variety of ways. Terrell McCoy greeted the community attendees and was ever-present to offer prayer and encouragement to those in spiritual need.

Over 300 adults and children registered and proceeded to the health ministries booth where they enjoyed fresh fruit, healthy snack bars, health

pamphlets and free blood pressure and wellness checks. Pediatric oral hygiene checks along with dental goody bags were provided. A representative from the Oklahoma City County Health Department shared smoking prevention and cessation information, health tips for children and lots of giveaways including fruit and veggie stress relief sponges, lunch bags and pencils.

Family magazines, legal pamphlets from the Oklahoma Law Association, Senior “Be Ready” bags and voter registration applications were available. Workforce professionals were on hand to share tips on getting a job as well as how to prepare for a successful interview. Children's ministries and the education department joined forces and gave away backpacks filled with school supplies and

a “Jesus Loves Me” button pinned on the pocket.

In addition to these fun-filled activities, the OKC Fire Department gave fire truck tours to kids and a coloring book with fire safety tips. Our friendly police officer also showed the children the inside of his police car. Men's ministries sponsored free haircuts with the help of two generous barbers. Prayer and inspirational tracts were offered by the personal ministries team where many people signed up for Bible study. Our community services ministries team gave away an abundance of food and clothing. All in all, our entire church family was blessed to be “God's Oasis of Love” to our community. We look forward to next year's Community Expo!

— By Beverly McCoy and Pamela Allen



And The Winner Is...

Hebron Team Wins National Bible Bowl Championships

DALLAS – The Southwest Region Adult Team from the Hebron Seventh-day Adventist Church won the National Bible Bowl Championships on Oct. 26, 2019 in Atlanta, Ga.

The team consisted of Linda Thompson, Alma Cooper and Suzette Hoyte. The coach was Velma Fuller.

With this win, the Southwest Region Conference has now won the National Championship in all five divisions at least once in the last 10 years.

By Maurice (Mo) J. Turner



Gospel Explosion

Making Disciples at Westbank United Church

NEW ORLEANS – Psalm 127:1 tells us, “Except the Lord build the House, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (KJV). From Sept. 1-28, 2019, the Westbank United Seventh-day Adventist Church experienced a Gospel Explosion with Gordon Fraser, a pastor from the Illinois Conference. Nearly every evening, members and visitors came ready to listen. They came to get answers from the Word of God. Before listening to the message, the visitors had the opportunity to ask questions. Among

the visitors was a minister from another denomination who enjoyed asking questions. He was always satisfied with the answers he received from the evangelist.

Musical selections were brought to us by Fraser’s wife; Westbank church’s choir; the 7AM singing group under the direction of Hezekiah Brinson; the renowned soloist Bridget Basile; and different choirs from other churches.

David Hinds, after greeting the members and visitors, distributed giveaways such as gift cards and gasoline cards. At the end of the Gospel Explosion, Hinds

gave away two 50-inch flat screen televisions to encourage the visitors to tune into Hope Channel. Hinds commented, “The presence of the Holy Ghost was in this place.”

As a result of the evangelistic meetings, seven people have decided to follow Christ by baptism. We have fulfilled the text in Matthew 28:19 that says: “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.” May God be praised!

By Mathieu Cherenfant



Dallas City Temple Centennial

Homecoming Week Celebrates Church History, Legacy

DALLAS – The City Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church recently celebrated its 100th anniversary with events that highlighted its rich history and also set the path toward the future.

In June 2019, the church kicked off its celebration with a “Feed the City” outreach. During this event, members made more than 1,500 meals to share with the community within one hour.

The church’s women’s ministry, Women of Worth, continued the celebration with a tea party on Aug. 4.

Another event, a golf tournament raising funds for Southwest Adventist Junior Academy, was held on Sept. 15.

Homecoming Week was held Oct. 5-12. Each Sabbath and for four nights that week, former pastors of the church gave powerful charges to lead the remi-

niscent congregation into a readiness to continue forward. The musical selections paid homage to years past, while also embracing and celebrating the young and young at heart.

The following day, the church held its 100th Anniversary Gala at the Highland Hotel in Dallas, again raising funds for Christian education.

The night was graced with good food, music and laughs, with Jonathan Slocumb as its dynamic master of ceremonies. Members young and old enjoyed the festivities, including the church’s oldest member, Christina Jackson.

City Temple has been a fixture in the Dallas community since 1919 and, by God’s grace, it looks to continue the work until He returns.

By Clifton Jessup

Top left: In June 2019, the City Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church kicked off its 100th anniversary celebration with “Feed the City” outreach. Members made more than 1,500 meals within one hour.

Top right: The women’s ministries department held a “Women of Worth” tea party on Aug. 4 as a part of the 100th anniversary celebration.

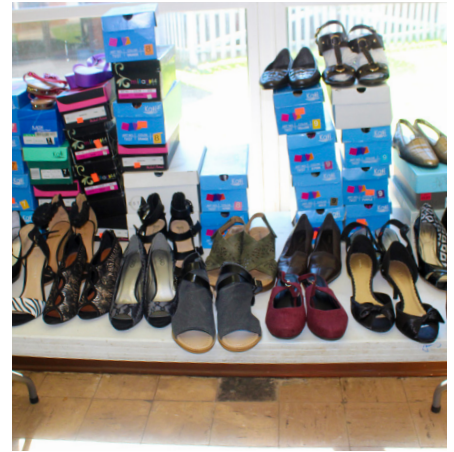
Bottom left: Christina Jackson (left), the City Temple church’s oldest member, and her daughter, Gloria Price (right) enjoyed the 100th Anniversary Gala at the Highland Hotel on Oct. 13, 2019.

Bottom right: Members of all ages enjoyed the 100th Anniversary Gala on Oct. 13.



Clothing Giveaway

Baton Rouge's "Shopping Sprees" for Women



BATON ROUGE, LA. – The Baton Rouge Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church's women's ministries department recently hosted the first of its scheduled women's clothing giveaways. To assure that the program went smoothly, Carla Chevies, coordinator, visited five area first-day churches where from each she obtained the information for 10 women who had

demonstrated a need for assistance. With the 50 names in front of them, the team organized the array of items donated by Berean members and others along with monetary donations solicited from two retail stores. On the designated Sunday, several of the chosen women reported to Berean's "store" in the annex where they went from area to area selecting items

to be placed in their shopping bags at "check-out." Expressing gratitude to the ministry, each woman left satisfied with her shopping spree.

"We humbly thank everyone who participated in our first women's clothing giveaway and look forward to the next one being even greater," said Chevies.

— *Article and photos by Evelyn M. Edwards*

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www.universityofthesaints2020.eventbrite.com

Is Good Enough?

A New Year Provides a New Opportunity For Excellence



Philippians 1:6 (NKJV) reads, “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” As we begin yet another new year, a year of promise, of opportunities as well as challenges, we would do well to set our sights on visualizing that which the Creator and Redeemer has deemed as the target and objective for our lives both individually and corporately.

Recently, I read about an old Persian legend in a sermon by Steve Shepherd. The legend told of four angels observing as God created the world. One of the angels said, “Why did God make it?” Another questioned, “How did God make it?” Yet a third angel inquired, “Can I have it?” But the fourth and final angel asked, “Can I make it better?”

Someone once stated, “The greatest enemy of excellence, is good.” Perhaps individually and corporately, what we have done or accomplished can be described as “good.” But is “good” what God has required? I believe that if we are honest, in the deepest place of our spiritual fiber, we know that He has asked for excellence. Thus, the question arises, How do we achieve “excellence” in our spiritual life as well as our everyday existence while here in this world?

Second Corinthians 4:7 (NKJV) reads, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”

Notice carefully where the excellence in our lives comes from—the continual presence of God with us. “Emmanuel” means God with us. So often as we go about our daily lives, we settle for “less than.”

Perhaps in 2020, we can earnestly take strides toward fulfilling God’s divine purpose for us, both individually and as a church, that as the days roll by, they not fade into the distance within the definition of “good,” as opposed to “excellent.”

May the Lord’s richest blessing and guidance be yours as you forge ahead in works and deeds that bring honor and glory to the King of the universe.

By Carlos J. Craig, President



YouthRush

Seeing The Fruit Of Our Work

FORT WORTH, TEX. – “As I was canvassing (sharing inspirational books) with the Texas Conference YouthRush one day, I approached a lady to show her the book called *Peace Above the Storm*, a version of *Steps to Christ*. As I looked at her face, she was just looking at me with a smile. She said she already purchased the book and always keeps it by her side.

“This book has been a blessing to me,” she said. “It has lifted up my spirit and helped me to keep going.”

She opened the book and showed me how she highlighted the first three

chapters in pink. Then she told me that one of her friends wanted to read it after her and when she finished it, she would pass it on to her friend.

I shared with her that she didn't have to wait; I had another copy for her friend.

As I walked away, I was amazed to see the working of God and His Spirit with the people we meet. People are taking the books, reading them and being changed by them.

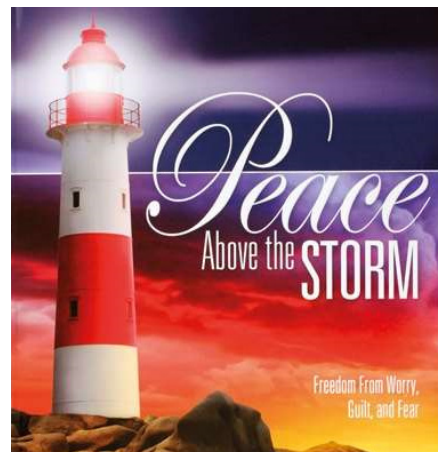
It is not often as literature evangelists that we get to see the fruit of our work,

but we are promised as it says in Isaiah 55:11, “so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

This was one instance where we got to see the impact that our books are making in the homes of the people that receive them.

Find information about the Texas Conference student literature evangelist program at TXSDALiteratureMin.com.

By Karen Jimenez



Following a Dream

Letting God Lead to Find the Truth

FORT WORTH, TEX. – As a Bible worker and the southeast quadrant leader for the Texas Conference evangelism initiative “Multiply Tarrant County” in Fort Worth, Tex., I studied with Quinneth Anthony.

I remember Anthony sharing that God revealed to her through a dream that she was to go to the Mansfield Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mansfield, Tex.

As we continued studying the Bible, it was evident that her desire to commit to God was incredible and inspiring.

We continued the Bible studies and she was convicted of the Bible truths. Anthony was baptized in June of 2019 by Sean Harris (left), pastor of the Mansfield church.

It's so beautiful to see people coming to Christ and making that decision through baptism.

For me, what is more incredible is seeing Anthony continue to grow as a follower of Christ, a disciple and a leader for the next person.

By Erick Alvarez



20th Church Anniversary

Celebrating Two Decades of God's Leading in Fairview

FAIRVIEW, TEX.— Mosaic Christian Fellowship Seventh-day Adventist Church in Fairview, Tex. will celebrate its 20th Anniversary on Jan. 24-25, 2020.

These past two decades have been a witness to God's leading and blessing our congregation and it is our desire to honor and praise Him for His many blessings. We also want to show our thanks and reunite with those who stepped forward in faith to start our church plant, as well as to those who have been instrumental throughout the years in "carrying the torch."

If you have been a part of our congregation over the years, please join us as we remember the past and share our dreams for the future. The weekend will commence with a Friday night service of songs, Psalms and praise as we reminisce over the beginnings as a small congregation at Metro North in Plano, Tex. On Sabbath, the celebration will continue with several services as we highlight God's leading in our present facility in Fairview. We look forward to spending this special time with you.

By Cosette Goodnight



NDAA Dedication

Canyon Creek Campus Dedicated for God's Glory

RICHARDSON, TEX.— On Sept. 21, 2019, the Canyon Creek campus was officially dedicated for use to glorify God.

Purchased in Jan. 2017, the 186,000 square-foot building offers much-needed room for North Dallas Adventist Academy (NDAA) who had reached capacity at their Centennial Boulevard campus. In addition to the classroom space, the facility includes a 1,400-seat sanctuary, two gymnasiums, a cafeteria and commercial kitchen and two fully stocked science labs along with its contents—everything from laboratory beakers and

microscopes to musical instruments and a library full of books. Because of this huge blessing, NDAA was able to share classroom and office furniture with six other Adventist schools in Texas and one in Mexico.

Dedication audience members were challenged by Carlos Craig, Texas Conference president, and Terry Foster, NDAA head of school, to bless others through this beautiful facility. The academy's orchestra, middle school choir and upper school choir performed. The program ended with each attendee

lighting a candle and sharing the flame with their neighbor, symbolizing their commitment to sharing the gospel with those around them.

The Canyon Creek facility is currently home to the Canyon Creek Project Church, North Dallas Adventist Academy (grades K4-12), Spring Valley Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church, Dallas New Life Korean Seventh-day Adventist Church, an independently owned and operated daycare and two additional renter churches.

By Leona Harder



Soul Winning Festival

Embracing Those Who Recently Learned About Jesus

RICHARDSON, TEX. – Four hundred people gathered together at the Canyon Creek Project Church in Richardson, Tex. for the biannual Soul Winning Festival to encourage and celebrate those who have recently chosen to follow Jesus and recognize new churches planted in the area over the past five years.

Manuel came with his church family, the Plano Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church, to the Dallas-area event. Following the testimonies, music and presentation by Chris Holland, Adventist World Radio world evangelist, vice

president of outreach for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and Living Hope School of Evangelism director, Manuel decided to be baptized.

His church family rallied around him and set up a preparation plan so he could be baptized at his home church on Nov. 30, 2019.

Praise the Lord for focused, energetic, loving and action-oriented church families who prepare people for baptism and mentor them after baptism.

By Dan Serns
Evangelism Director



True Fishermen

Church Uses New Beginnings Series to Share the Gospel

AUSTIN – A sermon title etched itself into my brain many years ago. While the details have faded, the essence remains, “When Fishers Don’t Fish, They Fight.”

When our pastor, Anthony Raybourne, came to the Austin South Seventh-day Adventist Church in Austin, Tex. he quickly ascertained a problem with our lack of outreach.

To remedy the situation, he encouraged us to get out of our comfort zones and get into active outreach and evangelism. It worked. As we excitedly prepared for baptisms, we were embar-

rassed when the water in the baptistry ran red from rust in the pipes. It had obviously been a long time since the baptistry had been filled.

Focused on giving Bible studies to missing members and their unreached families, we realized we needed a 21st century way to connect with them.

Raybourne discovered the New Beginnings evangelism resources from Adventist-laymen’s Services & Industries (ASi), a Seventh-day Adventist organization of supporting ministries, businesses and professionals who are responding to

the call of God to actively share Christ’s love and hope with the world (ASIMinistries.org/NewBeginnings).

A Spanish-speaking group was established in the home of a newly baptized member. The concept was proven and we were hooked.

Barbara Taylor, national ASi coordinator of *New Beginnings* training, conducted a training session. Since then multiple groups have been established and baptisms are scheduled. Our youth are also being trained.

By Sean Carney



Austin Knights Pathfinders

Young People Renewed and Energized by Camporee

PFLUGERVILLE, TEX. – Twenty-seven Austin Knights Pathfinders and staff, including Ann Marie Dyer, club director and Toni and Claudia Peña, camporee coordinators and family members from the Stonehill Seventh-day Adventist Church in Pflugerville, Tex., were part of the 55,000+ who attended the 2019 International Pathfinder Camporee in Oshkosh, Wis. this past summer.

The group creatively fundraised through fireworks sales, landscaping, gym nights and painting sidewalks, in addition to receiving donations.

Even though the group had flight and bus delays, it was worth all the fundraising work as the group flew to Chicago, Ill. and then rode a bus to Oshkosh.

The Pathfinders enjoyed the evening program, especially seeing the live sheep, the adoration music, the wide range of nationalities and the play. The final message of empowerment gave them a sense of belonging to Christ.

During the day, the Pathfinders completed honors and activities including flight simulation, aviation, pickleball, dinosaurs, robotics and space.

On Aug. 17, 2019, most of our Pathfinders were able to join the 13,309 people wearing blue hooded jackets to form the largest human image of a cross as confirmed by Guinness World Records. Our Pathfinders were renewed, happy and proud to participate.

One of the most exciting parts of the camporee is seeing the desire by these young people to grow closer to God and study for baptism. When they develop that relationship, they have a hope.

By *Thania Castanaza*



Plastic Canvas Honor

Austin Knights Director Teaches New Honor at Camporee

PFLUGERVILLE, TEX. – While directing a Vacation Bible School program many years ago, two of my senior church members taught the kids to make baskets from plastic canvas. I was fascinated by the flexibility and durability of the material. It soon became my new hobby.

Eventually, one of my Pathfinders suggested I submit this hobby to the North American Division for approval as an Adventist Youth Arts and Craft Honor. The Plastic Canvas honor (and Plastic Canvas, advanced) was finally approved in 2006.

This past summer, I taught the honor at the 2019 International Pathfinder Camporee in Oshkosh, Wis. along with three of my Austin Knights Pathfinder staff members, Thania Castanaza, Judith Iram and Dania Estrada, from the Stonehill Seventh-day Adventist Church in Pflugerville, Tex. More than 200 attendees completed the honor with others observing or waiting to complete the honor. It was a wonderful experience both teaching a valuable skill and meeting people from all over the world.

By *Ann Marie Dyer*



The Greatest Resolution

Chiseled in Stone and Written Upon Our Hearts



As we turn the pages of our calendars, we stand on the threshold of both a new year and a new decade. And at this time, perhaps it would be well to invest in a few minutes of personal reflection. If we are like millions of people during this season we may have already done our annual check-up of our lives and perhaps have a list of “New Year’s Resolutions” available to either implement or discard. The Bible writers often use the word covenant which has similar meaning to a resolution. While we may write our resolutions on paper, when God makes a resolution, He is willing to write it in stone because He is unwavering in His commitments to His people. As we look back over our lives, perhaps even this past year, we remember times of prosperity, health and joy. We may also remember that we faced some challenges along the way, maybe even some that were so overwhelming that it is hard to imagine that a covenant-making God is still present in our times.

An illustration of this is found in the story of Job. Job understood the covenant promise of God to send a Redeemer to rescue His people; he was living with that hope in the light of God’s incredible blessings. Yet, in the midst of his version of *It’s a Wonderful Life* the most unspeakable tragedy struck him and his family. This is a story of profound loss: family, livestock, possessions and, ultimately, Job even lost his health. In the Bible book that bears his name, Job gives an overview of the damages he suffered at the hands of all the people remaining in his life. He even laid a significant portion of that on God Himself.

In chapter 19, we find a very important passage of scripture. It’s like Job reached deep into his soul to muster every remaining bit of strength to make a declaration—sort of his testimonial resolution of faith. It is so important that he wishes that he could chisel it in stone and fill it with lead so that it will never be forgotten. Here are his words: “I know that my Redeemer lives, and in the end he will stand on the earth.” Job was confident that the promised Redeemer would stand in his place, restore his life and reclaim all that he had lost. It might not be anytime soon, but he was seriously holding to this confident hope and belief.

What about us? What kind of resolution would we make that would capture our greatest commitment to what we believe is so important that we would want it carved into rock to be remembered forever. The resolution that holds the greatest importance to me is found in the words of the apostle Paul recorded in 1 Corinthians 2:2, “For I resolved to know nothing ... except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

Jesus Christ—Redeemer, Savior and Friend! My challenge to each of us today is that we will resolve to let our Redeemer write His love upon our hearts as we walk with Him every day of this new year.

By Phil Robertson, Executive Secretary/Treasurer



Focus on Connecting

Women's Retreat Gives Emphasis to Connection

ALBUQUERQUE – More than 200 women from around the Texico Conference were given the opportunity to connect with each other and become skilled at connecting with others during the 2019 Texico Conference “Connect” Women’s Ministries Retreat.

The three-day event, which included general sessions, breakout seminars and worship services, was held in Albuquerque, N.M. on Oct. 25-27, 2019. The convention also featured a full program in Spanish as well as a program for teens.

“The primary goal was to bring the women of the Texico Conference together so that they might be inspired to connect with God and each other with deeper intimacy,” said Tracie Metherell, co-director of the Texico Conference Women’s Ministries department.

A common theme highlighted by the general session speakers was the importance of drawing close to God: needing, knowing, believing and trusting Him.

June Price, a professor, former chaplain, and marriage and family counselor, was the keynote speaker for the English

program. “I hope the women walked away with a deeper relationship with God and a true understanding of what His primary mission regarding us is,” Price said.

For the Spanish program, Nessy V. Pittau, associate director of La Voz de la Esperanza, gave a hands-on presentation on Sabbath afternoon about the Japanese art of kintsugi or “golden joinery” which involves repairing broken pottery by mending the areas of breakage with powdered gold, silver or platinum. Pittau told stories of women whom she has encountered during her ministry that have faced great suffering and trials, but she reminded the audience that “we are not broken, we are kintsugi. God uses the brokenness of our lives to make us beautiful.”

Approximately 15 girls participated in the teen track, which covered topics of bullying, anxiety, identity and self-image. Guest speaker Heather Thompson-Day, a professor, author and speaker, encouraged the girls to persevere through difficult times.

An important highlight was a communion service. In her final message during the service, Pittau stated that “memories keep us connected with people and events in our lives” and she recounted a story of when she and her missionary parents visited the Maraú tribe in Brazil. She remembers that experience as being one of the most memorable communion services she’s taken part in because the tribe’s respect towards each other—humility, willingness to forgive and their reverence during the service—really made a lasting impression. Her words seemed to resonate as that same spirit of forgiveness and restoration filled the room while the women celebrated the special service of remembrance that was instituted by Jesus.

“It was a blessed weekend,” said Nancy Monge, co-director of the Texico Conference Women’s Ministries department. “I hope that the women that attended were reminded that they are loved by God and that they have the power to influence others with that same message.”

By Debby Marquez
Communication Director



Our Home!

Sandia View Academy's New-Old Campus

CORRALES, N.M. – Last year when I arrived at Sandia View Academy (SVA) as principal, it didn't look like a typical high school. There were two buildings: one, a church fellowship hall; tan-brown and shaped like a house with a gable roof and small windows, three classrooms, a kitchen, an office and a central lobby. The other, a portable unit strategically placed on the Corrales Seventh-day Adventist Church's parking lot occupying eight parking spaces.

The fellowship hall and modular building served as home for the SVA Knights for the past nine years, while decisions were made about building a brand-new academy. Last summer, renovations to the old gym began and in just slightly over 100 days, SVA was back home! SVA has the Texico Conference,

Paul Chavez and family and Geoffrey McMahon to thank for their generous investments of financial resources and leadership in moving us back home.

Our "new-old" campus comes with many memories from former students who attended the old campus. Today, current students look forward to making new memories. God is at work and is doing great things. We are here in New Mexico to Educate for Eternity!

Brianna Chavez is a senior at SVA, and shares her excitement for the new facilities: "I'm a senior at Sandia View Academy. I am a four-year student and I attended SVA when the school was down by the church. To be honest, it didn't have much appeal because it was in a church fellowship hall. I thought we were never going to move out of

the old building. I think I can speak for most of the students when I say that we wanted a change. Last year, God heard our request. We got a new principal, and thanks to all the volunteers and donors, we now have our old gym back, new classrooms and plans for a new Sandia View Academy campus on the horizon.

"Now that we are on the 'new-old' campus, the seniors are enjoying it as we spend our last year together. The underclassmen are also enjoying it and we are happy to leave them in this 'new-old' school that is a fun and spiritual place."

Many thanks to Corrales Seventh-day Adventist Church for sharing their space and supporting local students and staff. We were blessed by your patience and generosity!

_____ *By Chanda C. Castañeda*



Preaching Hope

Evangelism Series Provides Comfort in Time of Distress



EL PASO, TEX. – “Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest?’ I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.” John 4:35

I have heard it said many times that the hearts of this world are too cold for evangelism to work. However, what I have come to understand recently is that this statement couldn’t be further from the truth.

On Aug. 3, 2019, the city of El Paso, Tex. experienced a terrible tragedy as a lone gunman entered a crowded Walmart and unloaded his weapon into a crowd of back-to-school shoppers. As a result, 22 people died while many others were injured.

As the events of the El Paso shooting unfolded, I was only a few miles away preaching. Alerts of an active shooting filled the cellphones in the sanctuary and the church was temporarily put on lockdown.

As unreal as that was, the days following the tragedy weren’t any easier. There was a sense of fear and hopelessness that permeated the city of El Paso. However, what Satan means for evil, the Lord is always able to turn into good. For it was in that moment that the city needed to hear that this world and all of the pain it causes is not our home.

The evil things of this world were never intended for us to endure but

because of one man’s sin, death spread to the entire world.

I truly believe that it was divine providence that God foresaw that the El Paso Central Seventh-day Adventist Church would be hosting an evangelistic series a month after the shooting.

We would be preaching the hope that Jesus will return to first resurrect those who have died in Christ and then we who are still alive will be gathered with them! As a result, we will be with the Lord forever, never to feel the awful effects of sin ever again.

I admit that on the opening night of the evangelistic series, I was not as optimistic as I should have been. An hour before the meeting, the senior pastor and I were discussing details and I encouraged him to put some chairs aside so it would not look empty when the program began.

But with patience and wisdom, he responded, “Don’t worry, they will come.”

Minutes before the program, the gym was practically empty. However, it was not long before people began to flood the room. What had once been an empty gym, to my amazement, quickly turned into a room full of hungry strangers longing for the hope that is found in the Word of God!

I could feel the anticipation from the audience. Night after night, the Holy Spirit showed up and inspired

the evangelist’s messages of Christ’s imminent return and what we should do when we see evil and experience pain in this world.

Five weeks after the evangelistic series began, 19 people gave their lives to Christ. Since then, the newly baptized members have continued to cultivate their relationship with Jesus through Wednesday Bible study.

What I learned from this experience is that what is impossible for man is possible for God. No matter what may be going on in our world today, we have this hope that gives us peace that surpasses all understanding.

I can say that evangelism is not dead! It is up to us to carry out the mission that Jesus confidently entrusted us with. It is an honor to share the hope that is found in the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ with our brothers and sisters that are longing for that hope!

By Eliab Quiñones

Five weeks after the El Paso Seventh-day Adventist Church began an evangelism series on hope in the wake of the El Paso mass shooting tragedy, 19 people gave their lives to Christ through baptism.

Hope in the Midst of Tragedy

Odessa Church Lends Support After Mass Shooting

ODESSA, TEX. – On Aug. 31, 2019, less than a month after a mass shooting in El Paso, Tex., the town of Odessa, Tex. experienced heartbreak and fear like never before. Seven lives were lost and dozens more were injured as a gunman opened fire while driving through the streets of Midland and Odessa.

On Sept. 8, local community members planned a city walk towards a memorial where crosses had been placed. The Odessa English Seventh-day Adventist Church quickly sprang into action and reached out to the coordinators of the walk. As a result, the church's Community Service ministry along with the Odessa

Lightbearers Pathfinder Club worked to provide refreshments for those who walked the two miles from a park to the memorial. Once participants arrived at the memorial, Daniel Morales was asked to lead the opening prayer. With solemn spirits and broken hearts, attendees bowed their heads as he prayed for God's strength, peace and hope.

The Pathfinders were proud to participate. "This is about being helpful, supporting and caring for, and loving one another," said Nayeli Rivas. Neveah Morales said, "It makes me want to cry seeing everyone work together. Happy tears and sad tears at the same time."

As West Texas continues to heal from this tragedy, the church is grateful to the first responders, hospital staff and city leaders for their service during this tragedy. The Odessa church is also happy to have had the opportunity to come together with the community during a difficult time. We look forward to God's promises and the glorious day that is described in Revelation 21:4, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." We can't wait!

By Natalie Baeza



Making a Difference

Los Ranchos Company Reaches Out to Neighbors

ALBUQUERQUE – The Los Ranchos Seventh-day Adventist Company is demonstrating that even small congregations can have an impact in their communities. Los Ranchos has approximately 60 members who are using home improvement, food distribution and other outreach methods to help their neighbors. "We call it 'church outreach' because it involves our entire congregation," said Joe Trujillo, Los Ranchos member. "We recently in-

stalled a new water heater that we provided in a neighbor's house. She was so happy that she came to our Sabbath morning worship service to thank us."

Installing water heaters and cleaning houses/yards are just some of the ways that Los Ranchos members are lending a hand. They manage a food pantry, participate in the To'Hajiilee Child Hunger initiative which helps the Navajo To'Hajiilee Community School. They also provide care packages to the

homeless, coordinate clothing drives and visit hospitals and nursing homes.

"Our goal is to reach and help as many people as we can," said Trujillo. The Los Ranchos company is demonstrating that outreach is more than preaching and hosting evangelistic meetings and can be accomplished in different ways such as reaching out and showing God's love through kindness.

By Debby Marquez
Communication Director

Classified Ads

EMPLOYMENT

Union College Invites Applicants for an Accounting Teaching Faculty Position. Qualified applicants will be committed members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and have a master's/doctorate degree or significant experience and willingness to pursue a master's degree. Find more information at UCollege.edu/faculty-openings or contact Lisa Forbes at Lisa.1.Forbes@UCollege.edu.

Fletcher Academy, Inc. seeks experienced Director of Information Technology, responsible for all IT functions enterprise wide. At least a Bachelor's in relevant field, plus technical and leadership experience required. Must be comfortable leading a team from a highly visible position, a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in good standing, and enjoy working with young people in a boarding academy setting. Position is salaried exempt with full benefits package. Send cover letter and resume to Gary Carlson, CEO, at GCarlson@FletcherAcademy.com.

Andrews University seeks Faculty – Music. Full-time tenure track position. It requires 24 teaching credits per year and it entails teaching music classes at the undergraduate and graduate levels, being responsible for the orchestral studies area and preparing and conducting the concerts

of the AU Symphony Orchestra (AUSO). Andrews.edu/admres/jobs/show/faculty#job_6

Andrews University seeks Faculty – Social Work. Teaching areas are primarily in graduate-level clinical practice, with particular expertise in treatment of children and families, school social work, trauma-informed care and treatment of adult mental disorders. Other responsibilities include coordination of the Dual Degree programs with the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, coordination of the School Social Work certification and academic advising and service to the department, University and the surrounding community. Andrews.edu/admres/jobs/show/faculty#job_12

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Announcements

The Fairview Mosaic Christian Fellowship Church at 571 Lakeridge Drive in Fairview, Tex., announces its 20th anniversary celebration on Jan. 24-25, 2020. If you have been a part of our congregation over the years, please join us as we remember the past and share our dreams for the future.

Obituaries

Brown, Arville Leroy, died Sep. 30, 2019. Church membership: Benton Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Calvert, Barbara, born July 29, 1944, London, England;

died Oct. 27, 2019, Broken Arrow, Okla. Church membership: Broken Arrow Seventh-day Adventist Church. Preceded in death by parents, Donald and Tillie Christensen; daughter, Carrie Sue Calvert; brother, Alan Christensen. Survivors: husband, Clayton Calvert; son, Clayton Calvert, Jr. (Francine) of Broken Arrow, Okla.; son, Robert Kelley Calvert (Lori) of Broken Arrow, Okla.; daughter, Danita "Dani" Carr (Chad) of Burleson, Tex.; sister, Beverly Deardorff of Kansas; brothers, Paul Christiansen of Washington, and John Christensen (Kris) of Washington; 11 grandchildren.

Davis, Carol Joan, born Nov. 9, 1943, Shattuck, Okla.; died Oct. 16, 2019, Tulsa,

Okla. Church membership: Sands Springs Seventh-day Adventist Church. Preceded in death by sisters, Betty Jane Kayler and Mary Beth Wheeling. Survivors: husband, Richard Lee Davis of Sand Spring, Okla.; son, Richard Scott Davis of Bedford, Tex.; daughter, Amy Sunshine Hyde (John Hyde), granddaughter and grandson of Broken Arrow, Okla.; one sister, Kay Lynn Sikes of Mounds, Okla.; one stepbrother, Delbert Joyner of Enid, Okla.; one stepsister Barbara Long of Enid, Okla.

Harmon, Barbara Nell, born Sept. 23, 1936, Goldston Community, Tex.; died, Nov. 8, 2019, Amarillo, Tex. Church membership: Amarillo Seventh-day Adventist Church. Preceded



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Back Pages

in death by parents, Selkirk and Lorine McAnear; husband, Ralph Harmon; sons, Douglas Bruce Harmon and David Roy Harmon; son-in-law, Thomas Bittle, Jr.; brothers, Jimmy McAnear and Cody McAnear. Survivors: daughter, Teresa Bittle, Amarillo, Tex.; sisters, Judy Monk (Bill), Amarillo, Tex.; Sheliah Babbitt, Amarillo, Tex.; Brenda Barrett (Jerry), Canyon, Tex.; Deborah Land (Steve), Panhandle, Tex.; Pat McAnear, Clarendon, Tex.; six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Klopfenstein, Clarence, died Oct. 21, 2019. Survivors: wife, Sue Klopfenstein.

McKee, Norma Jean Jeffers, died Aug. 29, 2019. Church

membership: Monticello Seventh-day Adventist Church. Preceded in death by her husband, Orvis McKee; granddaughter, Cassandra McKee; parents, John Calvin and Ollie Maude Knight Jeffers; brothers, Harold Jeffers, Melvin Jeffers and Donald Glenn Jeffers. Survivors: sons, Damon McKee and Dennis McKee (Judy); daughter, Shannen West (Mitch) of Crossett, Ark.; eight grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, two great-great grandchildren.

Wolcott, Patsy Ann Griffin, born March 16, 1929, Shreveport, La.; died Sep. 29, 2019. Church membership: Beacon Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church. Preceded in death by her husband, Roy

Wolcott; daughter, Betty Gail Wolcott; sisters, Betty Jean Winton and Catherine Newell Montgomery. Survivors: sons, Jerry Jerome Wolcott of De Queen, Ark. and Steven Odis Wolcott

(Carla) of De Queen, Ark.; one daughter, Linda Ann Wolcott Williamson of De Queen, Ark.; eight grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren; six great-great grandchildren.

Submissions

Back Pages: To submit family milestones, obituaries, announcements or address changes, visit SWURecord.org or call 817.295.0476.

The *Record* also accepts expanded obituaries. For submission and cost information, contact Record@swuc.org or call 817.295.0476.

News and Articles: Send your local church news and high-resolution photos to your local conference communication representative listed on page 2.

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