

Record

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Embrace Growth
Choose to Flourish Through Life's Changes

Choose to Flourish Through Life's Changes

Embrace Growth

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January | February 2021
Vol. 120, No. 01

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Editor's Note

Many people strongly dislike change and will go to great lengths to prevent any variations in their routines. But change is an inevitable part of life and an opportunity for growth! Children grow, flowers bloom, vegetables sprout and fruit appears on trees. None of these blessings would occur if change were not a part of life. A tiny acorn cannot become a mighty oak if it does not first fall from the tree, endure the loss of its protective covering and become buried in the soil.

Fear of change and a desire to be in control lead us to distrust God's guidance in our lives, and can keep us from the many blessings He has in store. In this issue of the Record you'll be challenged to put your plans in God's hands and embrace the sometimes unpredictable journey that He has in store for you.


Jessica L. Lozano

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EDITOR/DESIGN

Jessica L. Lozano
jlozano@swuc.org

MANAGING EDITOR

Kristina Pascual Busch
kpascual@swuc.org

CONTRIBUTING DESIGN

Zack Posthumus
zackposthumus@gmail.com

CIRCULATION

Tammy G. Prieto
tprieto@swuc.org

ADVERTISING

Bradley Ecord
becord@swuc.org

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA

Frances Alcorn, news@arklac.org

OKLAHOMA

Daniel Ortega, news@okla-adventist.org

SOUTHWEST REGION

Leslie Soupet, news@swrgc.org

TEXAS

Kenn Dixon, news@txsda.org

TEXICO

Debby Márquez, news@texico.org

SOUTHWESTERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

Timothy Kosaka, tim@swau.edu

Southwestern Union Conference

P.O. Box 4000
Burleson, TX, 76097
Phone: 817.295.0476
Email: Record@swuc.org

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.

Embrace Growth

Choose to Flourish Through Life's Challenges



Larry Moore | President

Change is inevitable, but growth is optional. I've always believed that one should bloom where they are planted. Regardless of our season or situation, we always have the option to bend, stretch and grow though it. Even Jesus experienced growth while on the earth. Luke 2:53 says: "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

Not only do we grow as individuals, but we also grow as a family. During these times of discovery and learning, we should be gracious with each other and lean on God for wisdom and guidance. As we face changes in the workplace, at church or at school, our families must also learn to bend and stretch and grow through perhaps uncomfortable times. The best way to foster growth, however, is through God's tender love. No matter who we are, where we are or even how old we are, we can continue developing our charter in Christ and our relationship with our Savior. He longs to grow closer and closer to us, to take us by the hand and give us a hope and a future. And as we grow, and stretch and bend, we know we are not going through it alone. Joshua 1:9 reminds us to, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." May the Lord bless you as you take the steps to grow closer to Him each day.

Without a doubt, everyone's prayer and hope are for a better year in 2021. This past year has been wrought with many challenges: the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating effects, increased social unrest, intensified racism and a contentious national election, just to name a few. However, regardless of what we have seen or experienced, we can declare with gratitude and praise that God has seen us through.

Looking back at 2020, I am reminded of the words of Jesus Christ in John 16:33, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Considering this text and in the context of the events and occurrences of this past year, what lessons were learned? What spiritual growth was experienced? Did you pray more with intentionality? Read the scriptures with greater interest? Experience a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ? Enjoy a closer relationship with your family? Seek to communicate creatively with friends and neighbors? Worship regularly online? Develop a habit of family worship? In God's Word we are admonished "to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3:18. The year 2020 was bad in many ways, but it was good if we came from it with a renewed determination to live and grow in the Lord.



Buford Griffith, Jr.
Executive Secretary

Thinking back to the beginning of 2020, we probably had goals, expectations and an idea of what that year would look like. Then two and half months into that year, the world changed into something we hadn't seen in our lifetime. In 2020, we experienced different types of turmoil, but I also saw how God blessed our family and our church in so many ways. Even though we don't know what is going to happen in 2021, we do know we need to focus more on Jesus and to constantly seek His plan for our life.

When I look at Peter's story in the Bible, I see a tremendous amount of growth. Matthew 4:19-20 says: "'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' At once they left their nets and followed him." Peter could have stayed a fisherman the rest of his life, but Jesus came along and exposed Peter to something different. Peter saw that Jesus had something that he wanted. As you read the gospels and the book of Acts, we get to witness the growth of Peter throughout his life because he was "all in" with Jesus.

It is time to set goals and to make plans. In 2021 let's focus on growing closer to Jesus and allowing Him to give us a heart and eyes to see the needs of people around us. Let's ask Jesus to give us opportunities to share with others about what God had done in our lives.



John Page | Treasurer

Inevitable Changes

The Creator's Plan for Growth

There is no better example of a brand new creation-miracle than a newborn baby. Not only is this little person cute and cuddly, it is also delicate and vulnerable, fully dependent on an external support system for survival. From the moment of conception this little one begins to experience change through an amazingly intricate and continuing process of becoming someone who is similar, yet very unique, within the human family.

When my wife and I had our first child we were no different than most new parents, we were excited and proud and very anxious to see our son move through all the various phases of development. We were ecstatic when he began to recognize us, and our hearts melted at his first smile.

With every new thing he did we celebrated his “grand accomplishments.” We even allowed ourselves to think that our little one was the first baby to ever achieve what we later came to understand were very normal milestones of development. He was doing what babies do, and experiencing such a normal process of a child’s growth brought his parents much joy and happiness.

Life's Changes

Changes come along in a variety of ways. Sometimes changes that we experience have a very dramatic effect on us, and sometimes we may not even be aware of some of the ways that we change. There are at least three different types

of changes that we will likely encounter during our lifetime. There are changes like those that a baby experiences in the process of its growth and development.

These changes are really the result of the Creator’s plan and have been programmed into each cell; they occur without any conscious input. These physical changes continue throughout our lives and can even be confirmed in the mirror as we see the effects of growing older.

“Growth is a very natural phenomenon. It was God’s idea in the first place and He created every living thing with a plan for growth.”

Another type of change occurs when something out of our control happens to us. Experiencing a personal accident with lasting physical or emotional injuries or perhaps the loss of someone close to us either through death, or a broken relationship, can impact us deeply. These changes can be so profound that they cause a

lasting effect on the way we experience our lives. We may even wrestle with very difficult options in our attempts to relate to these situations in a way that allows us to be able to move on with life.

The third type of change is one in which we exercise a conscious choice. This can be initiated by deciding that we want to pursue a different course of action that will lead to a better situation or outcome. We can also experience this type of change when we choose to respond to an event that we didn’t initiate in a way that brings about growth and improvement.

We have all experienced countless changes over the years and we are certainly living examples of how these changes have impacted us. It has been said that change is one of the constant factors of life. Change is all around us.



My Response

People change, seasons change, there are employment changes, geographical changes and relationship changes, just to suggest a few examples. We may even choose to make these changes, and although we can't always control what happens, we can choose to be intentional in how we respond. We can just let life happen to us, or we can decide to take the situations we experience and use them to become everything that we were created to be. We can choose to grow in, and through, the experiences of life.

Growth is a very natural phenomenon. It was God's idea in the first place, and He created every living thing with a plan for growth. Growth is really evidence that there is a degree of health, and we understand that healthy organisms grow. Jesus taught His listeners that seeds grow into plants, plants grow to maturity and then they produce fruit. That is the way the Creator meant it to be from the beginning. And, as God's people, we have been called to grow in grace and to increase in faith.

We are to grow up into Jesus and to become spiritually mature and bear fruit with our lives.

We will experience changes for as long as we live; some of them will be greater than others. However, it would be a really good thing for us to make a conscious decision that we will evaluate the situations and circumstances that we face and then pray for wisdom to grow as a result of these changes. As we do, we will see that our relationship with God is growing. Our relationship will be growing as well.

May God bless us all in this new year. May it be a time for growth as we keep our eyes on Jesus. May we also grow in His grace and then share the fruit that He produces in us with each other. **R**

By Phil Robertson. Robertson is the Secretary/Treasurer of the Texico Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He lives in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, with his family.

Home Garden

Growing Healthy and Sustainable Food for Your Family

By Leslie Soupet, Southwest Region Conference Executive Administrative Assistant and Gardening Enthusiast



Leslie Soupet

Seven years ago, my husband, Jose, and I decided to start a home garden. We were impressed by the Lord to embark on this journey to try to produce most of what we consume. It has been quite a ride and our garden has seen great success over the last two years. Gardening has become our passion. This summer, during the Southwest Region Conference Virtual Camp Meetings, we shared a testimony about our experience with gardening and country living. Jose and I were taken aback by the response.

Text and Facebook messages from church members who had been motivated to start their own home gardens began pouring in. Others, who had had a garden for some time, reached out to us to share their experience. It was exciting to connect with brothers and sisters who were encouraged to start their own journey, as well as those who are already doing it.

One online friend got excited and started with something easy for the beginner gardener—radishes and beets. Although she was discouraged to

discover that some animal had feasted on her root vegetables this summer, her perseverance and patience produced her first harvest of beetroots and radishes this fall. Another person shared that after throwing some pumpkin seeds in the yard and making no effort to maintain it, she came to harvest several pumpkins. Among other messages and calls, we were asked what growing methods we use, how we make the compost and how we resolve certain problems.

Connecting with Others

The flood of responses laid a burden on Jose's and my heart to create a personal ministry through which a virtual community could connect new and experienced gardeners to share their experiences and exchange ideas and methods. We planted the seed and the ministry has begun to grow.

Our online community meets through a Facebook Group called "Tiempo de Siembra - Sowing Time." Our main vision is encouraging families to establish



Marlene Hudson-Sanders

and eat from their own gardens. We believe God has a beautiful plan for each family to be able to rely on their gardens for much of their food.

Before sin, God placed the first couple in a garden where He assigned them the work and responsibility of working and eating from the earth. In addition to benefits to their health and physical well-being, the garden became the home of Adam and Eve. There, they also gained spiritual benefits, because it was the place where they met with God, and exercised faith in Him by eating from the tree of life.

Inspiring Others

Of all the activities that man can undertake today, having a garden provides maximum benefits: 1. Cultivating the earth helps regenerate it so that it produces more; 2. Working the garden allows us to exercise arm muscles, as well as upper and center torso, abdomen and legs; 3. Planning and applying principles, harvesting and preserving helps exercise the brain and mind; 4. We produce healthy foods, free of pesticides and modified organisms; 5. We do not have to rely entirely on commercial agriculture for our fresh produce; 6. We learn spiritual lessons expressed in the wonders of nature and the laws that govern God's world.

A home garden is vital for families who want to live and eat healthily. Establishing one is possible on front and back patios, roofs, walls and even in pots. It only takes intention and planning, simple calculations to know how much to sow and basic knowledge of methods and their region, etc. After practice, care and perseverance, any family can declare victory in their garden!

We would love to connect with you and connect you to other gardeners. These photos are of our new friends and their crops. Join our community as we journey on this road together through conversations, tips, workshops and training.

To view our testimony and join our group, visit us at [Facebook.com/groups/TiempodeSiembra.SowingTime](https://www.facebook.com/groups/TiempodeSiembra.SowingTime). 



Leslie and Jose Soupet



Maurice Theriot



Jose Soupet



Leslie and Jose Soupet



Leslie and Jose Soupet



Vilma Rosales

Faith *Restored*

Kimberly's Journey of Growth and Conviction

Kimberly DeGracia grew up in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her parents converted when she was just five years old, and she enjoyed Adventurers and Bible Bowl at her home church in Houston, the Metropolitan Seventh-day Adventist Church. As she grew older, DeGracia found she felt lukewarm in her beliefs. It took leaving home and nearly leaving the church for all that to change.

“My parents were really focused on my academics growing up,” says DeGracia. “Then, I left home and moved out to attend college at the University of Texas at Austin. Being away from home for the first time, my faith was challenged.” Because of the large, public school setting, there were few restrictions on DeGracia’s life. The University of Texas at Austin, where DeGracia studied biochemistry, was a completely different environment than her home in Houston.

Keeping the Sabbath didn’t seem like a big deal anymore, especially compared to the stress of college classwork. As a result, DeGracia began to put her academics before her relationship with God. She stopped attending church, and spent Sabbath studying or attending extracurricular activities. “I was trying to find satisfaction in that instead of in Christ,” says DeGracia.

Everything changed when a stranger approached her one Sabbath morning. Outside of the computer lab, a young person handed DeGracia a survey about God. It was from a Christian organization on campus.

“The school was really big and I felt really lonely. I didn’t have many close friends,” says DeGracia. So, when the stranger invited her to a game night, DeGracia accepted. They spoke about her relationship with God and DeGracia agreed to start studying the Bible with this group.

“That was the first time I really saw people my age



Crystal Tseng Photography

intentionally living out their faith and wanting to share with others on a secular campus. I got to know the people in this organization really well, attending Bible studies and becoming part of their small group.”

That’s when DeGracia had a stark realization. Her relationship with God had been lukewarm. It needed to change. Studying the Bible and going to church with this group taught DeGracia how to grow her relationship with God. Yet, it was a very different church than the one she had grown up in. DeGracia missed going to church on Sabbath, so she decided to look for an Adventist church nearby.

There was one small problem: DeGracia didn’t have a car. God, however, had a plan in place before DeGracia even knew she would be looking for a new church. A quick search online revealed that the Austin Central Seventh-day Adventist Church was just two blocks away. They were actually renting a church building on campus, easily within walking distance!

It was there that DeGracia began to build a firm biblical knowledge. “I’m really grateful for the Austin Central church. That church really grew my faith in Christ and helped me understand the Adventist message better.”

Because of the personal study and support of her new church, DeGracia developed a better understanding of Biblical teachings. Things that had previously felt like rules and commands now began to make sense and to even be a cause for joy. “They really taught me to find joy in Sabbath, and to realize that it’s all about having a relationship with Christ. Spending time with Him, with each other, and having outreach in the community.”

After graduating with a B.S. in biochemistry in August of 2013, DeGracia wasn’t sure what to do next. She only knew for sure that she wanted to intentionally live out her faith, just like that first group of students who had reached out to her.

DeGracia took a year off from school and really questioned God about her future, but her faith in Him never faltered.



She was accepted at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio to study macromolecular science and engineering, and she was determined to use her time in school to be a witness. “I wanted to introduce others to Christ who may not know him,” says DeGracia.

At the school, advisers worked with groups of students. They studied together, worked in the lab together and shared an office. These groups became like a family. One girl in the group stood out to DeGracia.

Li Na seemed lonely to DeGracia, a feeling that she related to. This, DeGracia felt, was her opportunity to witness. So, she took Li Na on as a project. “After hanging out, our friendship grew,” says DeGracia. “We were able to have deeper conversations and talk about what it was like for me to grow up in the United States as a Christian, and for her to grow up in China, a very atheist country. Really it opened up my eyes to her worldview.”

When Li Na noticed that DeGracia never attended lab on Sabbath, she began to ask questions. They had conversations about God, talking about why DeGracia prayed and read the Bible. It felt exciting for DeGracia to see God at work.

Then Li Na’s attitude changed. She became more negative

and stopped showing an interest in talking about God. Things were busy and stressful, and DeGracia wondered what she had done wrong. “That’s when God woke me up,” says DeGracia. “I realized that it’s not my job to convert anybody. The Holy Spirit is always working on someone’s heart, I just need to be there for her as a friend. I don’t need to always preach a sermon.”

DeGracia graduated in 2019. Now, she takes her life experiences and continues to build on them. Even though she may not know what will happen in Li Na’s life, or even her own, she trusts that God is in control of every moment, growing her into His likeness.

“God doesn’t like us to stay the same,” says DeGracia. “He wants us to continue to grow, to really develop our character. Before I knew Christ personally, I was too scared to bring Him up in conversation or to even say something as simple as ‘I’ll be praying for you’ to a friend going through a hard time. Now, I definitely feel more confident in my relationship with God, but I know there is still more growing to do.” **R**

By Makala James. James is a freelance writer and lives in Granbury, Texas. Kimberly DeGracia is currently based near Columbia, Maryland.



My Intergenerational Church

Mentorship Matters More Than You Think

By Justin Yang, Texas Conference Young Adult Director and Southwestern Union Growing Young Adventists Representative

There's no such a thing as a self-made person. To take it further, there's no such thing as a self-made Adventist. As the saying goes, it really does take a village (er, a church).

Drawing upon hundreds, if not thousands of conversations I have had over the course of my ministry, I still have yet to meet a person who came to Christ, grew and matured all by him or herself. The common thread in every conversation I have with seasoned leaders is that they can always pinpoint that one person or few people that have mentored them and invested in their lives when they were young adults.

Studies show that there is a 5:1 ratio to consider when it comes to faith retention and leadership development. That is, if a young person is surrounded by a tribe of five seasoned mentors that are consistently speaking into their life, it's much more likely that they will resiliently hold onto their faith and grow into the leaders God has created them to be.

Notice, not one seasoned leader for five young adults, but five seasoned leaders for one young adult.

One of my all-time favorite metaphors of the church is family. It conjures up the image of generations that are growing and maturing together in Christ Jesus. Families can get messy. (I can testify.) But because we're family, we stick together and continue to love on each other. Instead of assuming the worst about one another, we empathetically listen and seek to understand and support each other intergenerationally.

It's interesting to note that God, through His Spirit, will do this work in the last days to help us finish the work. In Malachi 4:6 we read, "He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children



to their parents." In Joel 2:28, as the Spirit is poured out, we witness generations that are collaborating together to finish the work: "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions."

It will take all of us, all generations, to finish the work. With that being said, what is mentorship and how can we come to a place where we can intergenerationally reconcile and collaborate with one another? To start off, mentorship is a relationship. And a relationship is all about doing life together. Being on the same journey together.

Contrary to what many may believe, mentorship is not about a wise sage dumping all kinds of wisdom and


insights into a young protégé. Rather, it's a relational dialogue that takes place between generations while doing life together.

The key is to consistently show up, deeply care and listen. Not to respond but to really understand. And when they sense you really care, you'll receive the

permission to speak into their lives.

This is a journey that every church can take through #GrowingYoungAdventists, a journey where generations come together

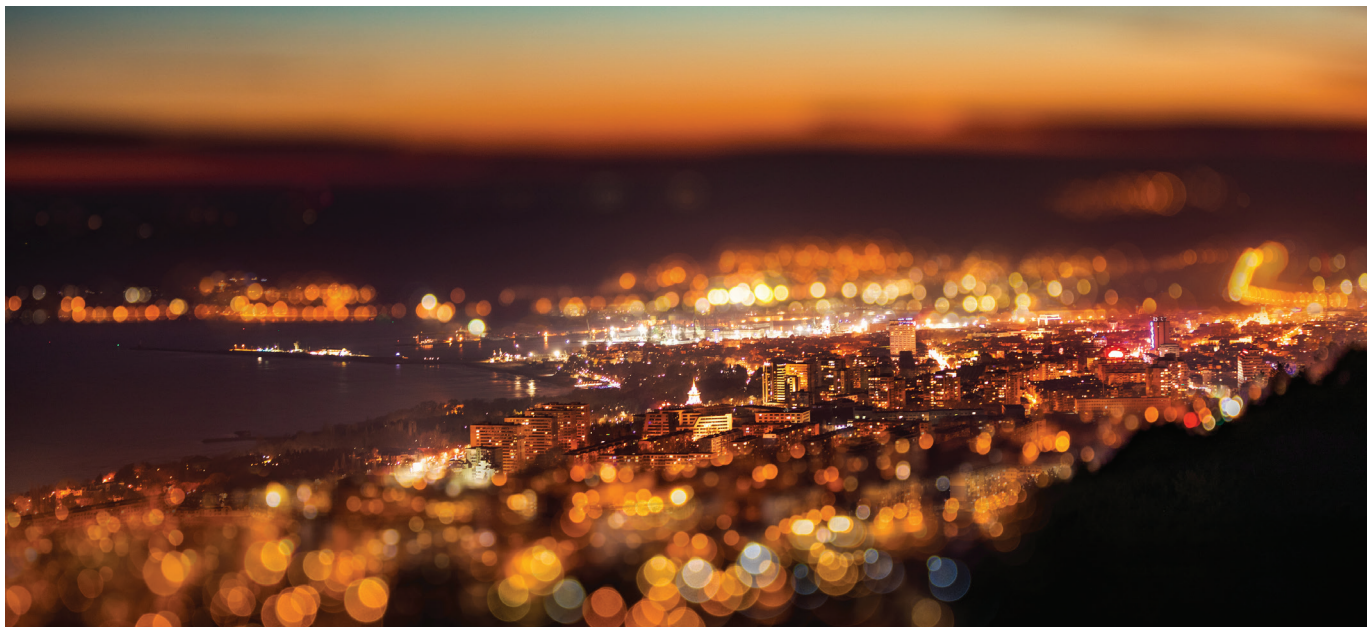
to dialogue and envision a church where all generations grow and thrive together as a body of Christ.

Visit GrowingYoungAdventists.com for more information and to get involved. 

"THE KEY IS TO CONSISTENTLY SHOW UP, DEEPLY CARE AND LISTEN. NOT TO RESPOND BUT TO REALLY UNDERSTAND."

Grow the Glow

The Light of the World



My wife and I like to travel. I remember the first trip my wife and I made to Guadalajara, Jalisco in Mexico. After several hours of driving through the night across a dark mountain range, I knew our destination was near. In the distance, I caught a glimpse of a great glow. Once we reached the top of the mountain, we were able to contemplate an impressive panoramic view. In front of us we beheld a large, well-lit city.

This experience reminds me of what the Lord said in the historic Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:14-16: “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

The purpose of light is to erase the darkness. Today we live in a world full of spiritual darkness. Around us, we see hatred, envy, violence, fear, insecurity and a host of things associated with sin that affect our lives. In this environment, Jesus calls us to be the light of the world. This means that our mission is to enlighten those around us.

I have often asked myself, “How can I have a positive effect on the lives of those around me?” By analyzing my life, my talents and my abilities, I have come to the conclusion that I

myself do not have the ability to make a difference in the lives of others. But Jesus, who tells me to be the light of the world, has the power to make a difference in the lives of others through me. In John 8:12 he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” If I allow Jesus to come into my life and transform it, then I will have the light of life. Then my life can have a positive effect on those around me as I share the light of Christ, not so much by what I preach, but by the testimony that my life will bear. Most people are already tired of hearing a theoretical gospel; people want a practical gospel. They want to see what Jesus has done in your life and in my life, and if what they see in us is positive, then our testimony will have an effect on their lives.

Jesus made it clear that light should not be hidden. If the light of Christ has reached your life, that light should shine. You should grow your glow by sharing that light with others. I encourage you to accept this challenge from Jesus to be the light in our world. Let us experience the joy of being carriers of hope and blessings to those around us. **R**

By Eduardo Canales. Canales is the Southwestern Union Vice President for Evangelism and Multicultural Ministries and Personal Ministries Director. He lives in Alvarado, Texas, with his family.

Timeless and Timely

Adventist Education in the Southwestern Union Territory

By Carol Campbell, Southwestern Union Vice President for Education

“...No exact pattern can be given for the establishment of schools in new fields. The climate, the surroundings, the condition of the country, and the means at hand with which to work must all bear a part in shaping the work,” says Ellen G. White in *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*.

Change is all around us. How does Adventist education respond? Whereas our mission for Adventist education remains timeless and unchanged, how we deliver the mission—our vision—should be continually improved to remain timely and relevant for each generation.

The Southwestern Union PK-16 Task Force, a special group called together to assess and improve Adventist education from grades Pre-K through college, has just completed their work creating an evidence-based vision for Adventist education. The group worked from the premise that a vision is the desired future state of an organization in terms of its fundamental objectives relative to key, core areas—curriculum, instruction, assessment and environment.

Professional learning is an essential strategy in fulfilling that vision. Continuous school improvement requires change and change requires learning. The Southwestern Union is committed to engaging our educators in the development of knowledge and skills that will deepen their learning, provide clarity of practice and impact teaching and learning. Professional learning is organized around the goals in a Continuous School Improvement (CSI) Plan.

Based on data analysis, a plan is developed to transform the vision of excellence into strategic goals and action steps that introduce change related to areas of need. The PK-12 CSI Plan has three goals critical to excellence in teaching and learning.

#1

Continuous School Improvement Planning: Collaborate with conferences and schools in the use of data for continuous school improvement.

Three years ago, the Southwestern Union educational leadership was introduced to the concept of continuous school improvement. This was followed by a webinar series on the four stages of the CSI Cycle, reinforced through a digital workbook. A common language has begun to develop as schools put in place collaborative structures to support continuous improvement.

#2

Academic Excellence: Improve academic excellence for learners by bringing coherence to curriculum, instruction and assessment practices through a standards-based approach.

We are beginning the process of transitioning to standards-based practices, which will be phased in over the next four years. Standards-based refers to integrated systems of instruction, assessment, grading and reporting that are based on students demonstrating understanding or proficiency of the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their education. Leadership were first introduced to the concept two years ago. A webinar series is ongoing on related topics, reinforced through a digital workbook.

#3

Leadership: Strengthen the leadership skill of superintendents, principals, school leaders and those who support them in leading learning.

Excellence by Design, our new branding, endeavors to build a culture that embraces coherence and continual, planned improvement. In July 2020, 83 education leaders in the Southwestern Union joined virtually for a week-long Leadership Institute, *Leading the Journey*, focused on both academic leadership and operational responsibilities. The learning was shaped by the three stances of a good leader: change, implementation and sustainability. Change, in particular, is a key concept in leadership; leaders must have the capacity to respond continuously to change. The COVID-19 pandemic provided a ready example of how our system can successfully adapt to change, in part because we have a coherent center—a mission—which allows us to sustain our practices during challenging times.

Read more about Adventist education in the Southwestern Union territory at SouthwesternAdventistEducation.com. 

Sofia's Scary Day

It was a warm sunny day and Sofia the Raccoon was looking for a safe place to have her kits (that's what baby raccoons are called). She spotted a house with green grass, colorful flowers and tall trees that provided lots of shade from the hot sun, and thought this would be a great place to have her kits. She crawled up the side of the house, across the roof and down the chimney she went. She looked around and decided this would be a nice, quiet place to set up her nursery.

She worked hard to get everything ready for her new kits and had just fallen asleep when she was awakened by a loud noise. There, standing in the fireplace, was a dog barking at her. Sofia was so

scared she couldn't move, but finally, the dog walked away, and it was quiet again, so Sofia decided to close her eyes and finish her nap. She had just started dreaming about the fun she would have with her new kits and all the things they would do together, like chasing butterflies and exploring new places, when she again heard a loud noise.

This time someone was banging on the fireplace and yelling at her to get out. She jumped up, yawning and stretching her furry arms. "Why would someone be so mean to me when all I wanted to do was provide a place for my kits to be born, I'm not hurting anything," thought Sofia. The man kept banging and yelling-he just wouldn't stop! Sofia was so scared she ran up the chimney as fast as she could, across the roof of the house, down the side of the house and across the street. Sofia would have to find another place to have her kits, a quiet, kind and friendly place.

There may be some scary things going on around you that you don't understand; perhaps you worry something may happen to you. When we are afraid,

we can always turn to Jesus. The Bible tells the story of Jesus' friends sailing in a boat on the lake.

The winds started blowing hard and the boat started rocking back and forth. Peter, one of Jesus' friends, saw Him walking on the water towards them and decided to go out and meet Jesus, but then he started to worry that he would fall into the water.

When he took his eyes off Jesus, he started to sink like a rock, but

Jesus grabbed his arm and saved him. He told Peter, "Do not be afraid, take courage, I am here."

Jesus is always with us and He gives us courage when we are afraid. His love can make our fears disappear because He is bigger than anything that scares us.

By Kathy Clifford, Texico Conference Children's Ministries Director



January Events

1

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

7

Southwestern Union:
Protecting Children from
Abuse/Adventist Screening
Verification Virtual Training
SCano@swuc.org

9

Texas Conference:
"Mejor Que lo Digan
Ellas" First Spanish Men's
Ministries Virtual Summit
Presented by Women
TexasAdventist.org

10-12

**Arkansas-Louisiana
Conference:** Ministers
Meeting, Shreveport
First Church
FAicorn@arklac.org

16

**Arkansas-Louisiana
Conference:** Virtual
PAC Meeting
DCraig@arklac.org

17-22

North American Division:
Religious Liberty Week
LibertyMagazine.org

18

**Martin Luther King, Jr.
Day Holiday:** Southwestern
Union office closed.

23

North American Division:
Religious Liberty Sabbath
LibertyMagazine.org

29-31

**Arkansas-Louisiana
Conference:** English Men's
Retreat, Camp Yorktown
Bay, Mountain Pine, Ark.
LDye@arklac.org



February Events

5-7

**Arkansas-Louisiana
Conference:** Spanish
Couples Retreat
Camp Yorktown Bay
Mountain Pine, Ark.
LDye@arklac.org

6

North American Division:
Christian Parenting Sabbath
HelpImaParent.org

6-13

North American Division:
Christian Family Week
NADFamily.org

13

North American Division:
Christian Marriage Sabbath
NADFamily.org

15

President's Day Holiday:
Southwestern Union office
closed.

18-20

**Arkansas-Louisiana
Conference:** Academy
Creative Arts Festival, Camp
Yorktown Bay, Mountain
Pine, Ark.
SBurton@arklac.org

19-20

Southwestern Union:
Public Campus Ministries
Young Adult Leadership
Virtual Training
APosthumus@swuc.org

27

**Arkansas-Louisiana
Conference:** Conference
Level Pathfinder Bible Bowl,
Shreveport South Church
JRHuff1@cox.net



For more events and
information, visit
SouthwesternAdventist.org

Texas Health Mansfield

New AdventHealth Facility Opens in North Texas



MANSFIELD, TEX.— The North Texas community of Mansfield now has its all-new, all-modern health care campus, Texas Health Hospital Mansfield. The health care campus, which opened Dec. 1, offers comprehensive services including emergency care, general surgery, critical care, women’s care, orthopedics and cardiovascular services. The four-story, nearly 200,000-square-foot hospital has an initial capacity of 59 beds. At a total cost of \$150 million, the campus also includes an 80,000-square-foot medical office building that will offer primary care and specialty practices.

The hospital is built on the health care tradition of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which began offering whole person health with an emphasis on caring for a person’s mind, body and spirit.

Texas Health Mansfield is a joint venture between Texas Health Resources and AdventHealth. This collaboration allows Texas Health Mansfield to have the expertise from two elite health care systems. “Texas Health Mansfield’s pur-

pose is simple: We are Caring People, Caring for Incredible People,” says Texas Health Mansfield President and CEO Kenneth Rose. “Our hope is that every patient that walks through our doors will experience that love of knowing that they are truly incredible.”

The core of Texas Health Mansfield’s identity stems from its mission statement of extending the healing ministry of Christ. Its faith-based heritage allows the hospital to provide hope, health and healing. Texas Health Mansfield’s calling is to be more than just a hospital, it has also determined to be a community resource that enhances and restores health.

In lieu of a grand opening celebration, Texas Health Mansfield donated the money that would have been used for a grand opening event to five local nonprofits: Mansfield Independent School District, Harvesting in Mansfield, Mansfield Mission Center, Toys for Tots and Mansfield Cares. Texas Health Mansfield is asking the community to partner with the hospital in assisting

these organizations during this challenging time by visiting www.TexasHealth.org/Locations/texas-health-mansfield/Take-a-Virtual-Tour to unlock bonus donation funds.

Texas Health Mansfield is a 38-acre campus located on the southeast corner of U.S. Highway 287 and Lone Star Road in the Johnson County area of Mansfield. Covering 50 square miles, Mansfield is located primarily in southeastern Tarrant County, with areas stretching into Ellis and Johnson counties. The city has expanded rapidly in recent years, with a population growth rate of more than 10 percent from 2011-17. The city is expected to grow from 228,244 residents in 2017 to more than 251,000 by 2022. To address this future growth, all elements of Texas Health Mansfield have the capacity to grow, using an efficient, cost-effective design model.

For more information about Texas Health Mansfield, visit TexasHealth.org/Mansfield.

Union Staff Update

Busch Accepts New Position with AdventHealth

BURLESON, TEX. – Kristina Pascual Busch, associate communication director for the Southwestern Union and managing editor of the *Record* has accepted a call to Texas Health Huguley Fort Worth South, a member of the AdventHealth system, as their communication manager. She will begin in her new role on January 4, 2021.

In her new role she will focus on collaborating with hospital leadership to develop communication strategies. She will work to promote the hospital, foster internal communication, and work to

extend the healing ministry of Christ in the community.

Busch joined the communication department in 2016 and played a pivotal role in bringing award-winning innovation and prayerful guidance to the management of the *Record* magazine and its channels. While we will miss her in the office, we know that God has brought her to this new position, which she will aptly fulfill with her signature professionalism and expertise.

————— *By Jessica Lozano, Communication Director and Record Editor*



Body, Mind and Spirit

January 24: Family Ministries Virtual Series Continues

BURLESON, TEX. – On November 8, 2020, the family ministries department of the Southwestern Union kicked off a series of virtual events focused on mental health and wellbeing for families.

The event featured guest speakers Alanzo Smith, D.Min., Ed.D., LMFT, June Smith, CSW, Ph.D. and H. Jean Wright II, Psy.D., for a live and interactive presentation, “The Impact of

Trauma in the Faith Community.”

The series continues on Sunday, January 24, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. CST with H. Jean Wright II, Psy.D., mental health director for the City of Philadelphia, Pa., clinical psychologist and author, with another interactive virtual event titled “Body, Mind and Spirit: Health and Wellness in the 21st Century.”

“The response to our last event has

encouraged us to continue the series as we see how relevant mental health in the family is, especially in challenging times such as these,” says Buford Griffith, Jr., Southwestern Union executive secretary and prayer ministries director.

This event will be streamed live on the Southwestern Union’s Facebook and YouTube Channels.



Executive Committee

Meeting Highlights Healthcare, Education and Ministries

BURLESON, TEX. – The Executive Committee of the Southwestern Union met for its last regularly scheduled meeting of 2020 on Nov. 12 through the Zoom digital platform.

Alex G. Bryant, North American Division president opened the meeting with a powerful devotional message focused on Psalm 46, which served as a stirring reminder that God is our refuge and strength, and that we should always call on Him in times of trouble

Following the devotional message, Richard C. Dye, president of the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference presented a conference report, highlighting the conference's growing membership, which was 12,516. Dye noted that there had been 150 baptisms and a tithe increase in 2020 despite the COVID-19, pandemic.

Southwestern Adventist University

Ken Shaw, president of Southwestern Adventist University, shared several updates and highlights about the university, including a positive report about the university's financial status. The university has a composite financial index of 6.7, compared to the Adventist college and university average of 4.1. The university has an unallocated net worth of more than \$6 million.

Academically, the university's nursing program's current NCLEX passing rate is 91 percent, and the university is currently offering a fully online RN to BSN program. Students graduating from the university's teaching programs are passing at 100 percent on core subject exams and 90 percent on pedagogy and professional responsibilities exams.

Shaw reported that the university has received positive rankings from U.S. News and World Report's Best Colleges, stating that the university ranks 11th in the West Region, and ranks 2nd in social mobility in the West Region.

Shaw also shared that the university

has created a new department and team for student success after the university was given a \$2.5 million Title V grant from the U.S. Department of Education over five years. The university also recently hired a new vice president for enrollment, Rahneeka Hazelton.

AdventHealth

Penny Johnson, president and CEO of Texas Health Huguley Fort Worth South and AdventHealth's Southwest Region, reported on the smooth construction and permitting process for the opening of the Texas Health Mansfield hospital, AdventHealth's newest facility. Texas Health Mansfield is a 59-bed facility based in Mansfield, Tex.

Additionally, Johnson shared that Texas Health Huguley has expanded its capacity by opening its sixth floor with another 38 beds.

Evangelism Report

Eduardo Canales, Southwestern Union vice president for evangelism and multicultural and personal ministries director, shared that the Southwestern Union will be partnering with Adventist World Radio to bring more than 200 meetings to the Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston areas in 2021 in partnership with the Texas and Southwest Region Conferences.

Treasurer's Report

John Page, Southwestern Union treasurer, presented the September 30, 2020, operating financial statement and revolving fund reports. Page noted interest rate changes for revolving fund accounts, lowering loan accounts to four percent, and deposit accounts to two percent, effective January 1, 2021. There were no changes to Southwest Estate Services and SWUC endowment accounts.

The committee voted to approve these reports and changes, and also approved the distribution of operating gains

for 2021 to be split between the five conferences and the union's seven senior academies.

Ministries Report

Elton DeMoraes, vice president for ministries and men's ministries and stewardship director, presented on the Equipped for Ministries virtual training event that would take place on Nov. 14, sharing that the event was intended to provide specific ministries training using digital platforms, as has become a necessity and assisted many in ministry who have been unable to meet in person.

DeMoraes also shared that the in-person Equipped for Ministries meetings planned for the first months of 2021 in Houston, Albuquerque, and Bentonville, Ark., would be canceled due to the ongoing pandemic.

Constituency Sessions

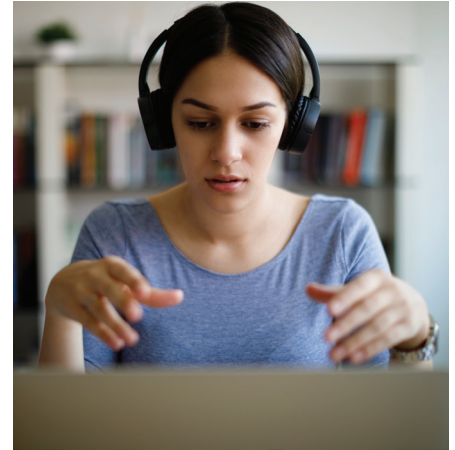
Buford Griffith, Jr., Southwestern Union executive secretary presented an update on the planned 2021 General Conference Session in Indianapolis, Ind., in May, sharing that General Conference administrators will meet on Jan. 7, 2021 to determine the viability of holding the session in 2021. An update will be given regarding the session after Jan. 7.

Griffith also shared the following dates for constituency sessions in the Southwestern Union territory in 2021: Oklahoma Conference, April 18; Southwestern Union Conference, April 25; Southwestern Adventist University, April 25 (immediately following the Southwestern Union Conference session); Texas Conference mid-term constituency session, May 16; Arkansas-Louisiana Conference, June 27; Texico Conference, Oct. 17.

The meeting was adjourned with prayer by James Winegardner, pastor. The next executive committee meeting will take place on March 17.

Virtual Training

Equipped for Ministries Virtual Event a Success



BURLESON, TEX. – In mid-November 2020, the Southwestern Union held a special, virtual edition of its ministries training event, Equipped for Ministries, which is normally held at various locations within the territory throughout the year with hundreds in attendance.

According to Elton DeMoraes, vice president for church ministries and men’s ministries and stewardship director, this virtual edition was planned in order to provide training while in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We also wanted to focus in on an aspect of ministry that has become vital in the past year: the practice of using virtual and online platforms to supplement already-vibrant ministries, or to help people start brand new ministries using these platforms,” said DeMoraes.

Nearly 500 people registered and learned from live presentations with Mark Finley, Carlton Byrd and Luis Goncalves, alongside more than 30 presenters who are experts in their various fields of ministry as well as active and

successful practitioners of online and digital media.

“While we plan to host in-person training as soon as we are able, these digital platforms have proven to be useful tools in the hands of our members as they continue to share the gospel with their communities,” said DeMoraes.

More Equipped for Ministries virtual and in-person events are planned for 2021. For the latest events and information, visit SouthwesternAdvent.org/Training.

Giving Thanks

Southwestern Union Provides Meals for Healthcare Workers

BURLESON, TEX. – The Southwestern Union recently partnered with Texas Health Huguley Fort Worth South, a member of the AdventHealth system, to provide meals to more than 1,100 healthcare workers at the Fort Worth hospital as a way to show appreciation for their dedicated service to extending the healing ministry of Christ. The meals were delivered to hospital staff during their shifts on Dec. 1, 2020.

“It’s been a difficult year for many, and healthcare workers have had an especially heavy burden to carry during

the last few months. We wanted to share a token of our appreciation for their dedication by sharing a meal with them, and letting them know we care about them. We were able to share a letter with each meal, stating that the Seventh-day Adventist Church appreciates them and that we are praying for them and for their families as they continue to serve our communities.

“We truly are so grateful for their service and we pray that God will bless and watch over each of them,” said John Page, Southwestern Union treasurer.



Pathways to Student Success

SWAU Receives \$2.5M Grant and Launches New Office

KEENE, TEX. – Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU) has been awarded a Title V grant by the U.S. Department of Education’s Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program. Over the next five years, SWAU will receive around half a million dollars each year for a total of just over \$2.5 million, which will be used to improve student outcomes through “Pathways to Student Success.”

“We saw a need. We knew a large portion of our students were the first in their family to attend college and would benefit from a strong support system. We sat here and dreamed of all the things we could do if only we had the money, and now we have the opportunity to make those things happen,” shares Renata Ocampo, director of the Center for Academic Success and Advising (CASA), who was part of the team that drafted the grant application.

Thanks to “Pathways to Student Success,” the Office of Student Success has been created to serve as a space where students can seek guidance and learn

skills that will prepare them for life after college. This office will collaborate with CASA as they oversee the grant’s four elements: first-year experience, internships, and both academic and career guidance.

The First-year Experience Program will guide students through their first two years of higher education. Led by CASA, this program will work in tandem with student success coaches and will be supported by the faculty who teach the general education courses needed by first-year students. This will allow for students to have a successful experience during their first two years, as they will have more resources available to them.

Currently, academic coaching/tutoring is available at CASA, and its collaboration with the Office of Student Success will give students more resources to address both their academic and career needs.

The Office of Student Success will facilitate a variety of workshops cover-

ing topics such as how to write a resume, how to dress for an interview and how to look for employment in the current global market.

Lastly, the Office of Student Success will help students who are seeking internship opportunities and guide them through that process. The student success manager will collaborate with academic departments to review current internships and develop relationships with other entities to provide more opportunities for students.

There are several goals SWAU hopes to meet by 2025, including an increase in four-year graduates, institutionalizing academic support services on campus and expanding career development.

“This really is such a blessing,” shares Donna Berkner. “When we heard we were recipients of this grant, we were so grateful! This is truly an answer to prayer, and it will open so many doors for our students.”

—By *Brisa Ramirez*
Social Media Manager



No Student Left Hungry

Professor Leads Weekly Food Pantry

KEENE, TEX. – On Wednesday afternoons, Judy Miles, retired adjunct professor of business, can be found in the Southwestern Adventist University Student Center as she runs a food pantry for students who need extra groceries to get by. While at a graduation party a few years ago, Miles heard one graduate share briefly that tight finances meant she often did not have enough to eat.

“No student should go to school hungry,” says Miles. “Students should not sit in class with their stomach growling.”

The food pantry began out of Miles’

office, where students would drop by and pick up groceries. As impact grew, James The, vice president for Student Services, agreed to designate space in the Student Center to store and distribute food. In the spring of 2020, when classes moved online, Miles adjusted by providing curbside pickup. With students back on campus, the Student Center continues as the food pantry’s distribution site, making a difference from a team of hidden heroes.

— *By Brisa Ramirez*
Social Media Manager



Pursuing Christ

Stories from Student Week of Prayer

KEENE, TEX. – Southwestern Adventist University held its annual Student Week of Prayer from Oct. 5-9, featuring messages from members of the SWAU family who spoke on the theme, Pursue.

Kyle Barrow shared that he realized he had done good for selfish desires rather than keeping his relationship with Christ at the center of his motives. Barrow called on students to reflect on their pursuits and appealed to them to give everything to God.

As a recently returned student missionary, Kayla Goodman shared about

her time in Pohnpei. She was able to witness and experience God’s goodness as He transformed her life. Although Kayla couldn’t finish her year as a missionary due to the global pandemic and has experienced reverse culture shock, God has continued to work in her life.

Ivan Franco shared about his journey with depression, sharing that nothing can stop people from receiving blessings from God, despite their conditions.

“This has been a powerful week on campus,” shared Russ Laughlin, vice president for spiritual development.

“Usually we bring a guest speaker to campus in the fall for our Week of Prayer. Due to the pandemic, we felt like it would be best to have our students speak. What a blessing! Each student’s message was biblical, practical and powerfully delivered.”

These are highlights of three of the nine messages shared during this semester’s Week of Prayer. To watch each powerful message from Student Week of Prayer, visit www.SWAU.edu/live.

— *By Brisa Ramirez*
Social Media Manager



The Choice is Yours

Focusing on What Matters in a New Year



My grandmother, Granny, as we called her, was a wise woman. Granny was a schoolteacher, nurse and simple country girl during her lifetime. I vividly remember her speaking of her life, beginning with horses, buggies, Ford's Model T and John Deere tractors and ending in the information age of the Internet, email and the Space Shuttle orbiting the earth.

During her lifetime, she had experienced knitting washcloths and towels for the soldiers of World War I, survived the 1918 flu, endured during the Great Depression and worked through World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. And in her life personally, she had watched childhood friends give the ultimate sacrifice in war. She knew what it was like to have a failed marriage and raise a son. She knew what it meant to have to take care of parents in failing health and then watch them be laid to rest. She watched my dad struggle with cancer, and it was tough.

But Granny never lived a gloomy life. She was cheerful and robust. She lived life to the fullest. She didn't let challenges get her down. She was positive and focused—and her focus was Jesus. She could see all the things going on around her but would always come back to the fact that God had things in control.

I remember she would always tell me that I could find both good and bad in life. But the wise decision was to intentionally find the good and let Jesus guide me on seeking the best. Great counsel!

As we begin a new year, I want to acknowledge that 2020 had a lot of challenges—COVID-19, a grueling election campaign and a bruised economy—but my faith remains very positive. We have also witnessed God's miracles financially and witnessed many new believers joining the family of God. We've had intensely deep personal Bible study. What a blessing! God is still in control. God is still working in the hearts of men and women! I know He is coming soon!

Let's keep moving by faith and believe in His promise. Hebrews 12:1-2 says, "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (NASB). Keep looking up to Jesus in 2021!

By Richard C. Dye, Sr., President



Loving Our Community

Adventist Community Services On the Ground in Louisiana

SHREVEPORT – It’s interesting that while the COVID-19 pandemic slowed down a lot of things in the world, it didn’t seem to faze the winds and waves of destruction of natural disasters on the southern Gulf Coast.

During the summer and fall of 2020, Arkansas-Louisiana Conference Adventist Community Services Disaster Relief Director (ACS DR) Lavidia Whitson and her team had to adapt to some of the new safety regulations put in place by the government due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Instead of running a warehouse for supplies for other teams and entities as they normally would do, they themselves had to become a mobile unit and take the needed supplies to the affected areas for direct distribution. Volunteers became the manpower to take supplies out to the ravaged areas.

During this time, our team was contacted by Southwest Region Conference members in the Lake Charles, La., area. We learned that their new ACS director had a stroke and they were in need of assistance. One of their Pathfinder directors came to the warehouse in Hammond, La., and was given a crash course on how to screen callers and take down the proper information on paper in order to satisfy state requirements; then they formed a new

team of volunteers to help get supplies out of the Hammond warehouse to the disaster sites. It was a wonderful working relationship.

Three Southwest Region Conference churches banded together and hired a U-Haul to work as a mobile unit. They served 21 families that were in need of supplies. We had eight donated pallets of all new clothing: gym shorts, t-shirts, dress shirts, new shoes and some baby clothes. It is difficult to put these things on the mobile units for distribution, but the Southwest Region Pathfinder Clubs in the area were able to plan a successful local giveaway.

During a drive-through distribution that we held in Rayne, La., we met one woman who shared that she’d had minor damage with Hurricane Laura, but then when Hurricane Delta hit, she’d lost a large number of shingles from her roof, allowing rain to damage everything in her home. She was very grateful for the cleaning supplies we were able to give to her.

Another woman in Lake Charles reached out for help after she lost her home. Her mobile home had been severely damaged by Hurricane Laura and she’d had to evacuate. When she could come back to her home, she’d found that, beyond the storm damage, people had broken in and stolen every-

thing of value. They had broken her doors and windows. Everything was wet and scattered and just an overwhelming mess.

She had no family nearby to help, but she remembered that Adventist Community Services had helped rebuild homes in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. While cleaning up the mess, she found a phone number for Minnie McNeal, who was an ACS director from the Columbia Union Conference, who has now retired. Minnie called the Arkansas-Louisiana disaster team in Hammond and told us of this woman’s plight. Another friend whom we worked with during the rebuild had a vacant rental home. We all worked together to provide her with a place to stay and needed items. She is so thankful and wanted to share her gratitude with everyone who helped with the relief efforts. We have been able to give her blankets, bed linens, towels, dishes, silverware, pots and pans, kitchen utensils and a knife set. Others have found her some furniture and two beds.

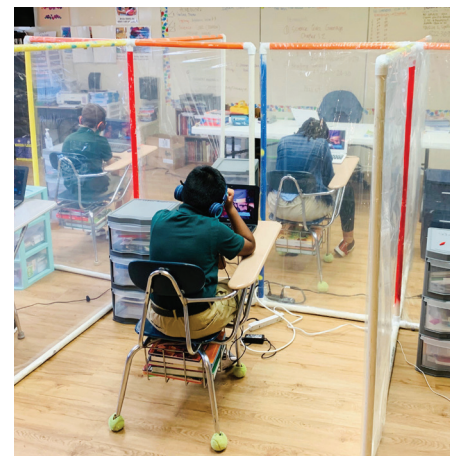
“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Matthew 25:40.

—By Lavidia Whitson
Adventist Community Services
Disaster Relief Director



Safety and Learning

Greater New Orleans School Prioritizes Students



NEW ORLEANS – Everyone has felt the harsh impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and children have especially felt it due to stay-at-home orders to prevent it from spreading. But as cases diminished, governments began to slowly lift stay-at-home orders and reopen public establishments such as libraries and schools. While the government has allowed schools to reopen, it's up to the schools to establish their own procedures and ensure a safe environment for students.

At Greater New Orleans Christian Academy (GNOCA), we've taken steps to ensure the students' safety and provide a quality education for stay-at-home students. The safety of at-school students is the school's number one priority. When the students arrive, they

are ushered inside a designated lobby to change their shoes from outdoor shoes to school shoes. Temperatures are checked at the entrance, backpacks are sprayed with disinfectant and students are required to thoroughly wash their hands upon entry. All at-school students are required to wear a mask both indoors and outdoors and are encouraged to practice social distancing. The classrooms have been cleared of all extra furniture. Clear plastic barriers separate the desks and each student has personal hand sanitizers.

While the school necessitates a safe environment for the children, they also corroborate high-quality education. The standards of learning in GNOCA have not diminished as a result of the pandemic, but we have used it

as an opportunity to grow. We utilize every available resource to benefit the students' education by using websites and advocating tutoring programs. This goes for both at-school and stay-home students. All stay-home students follow a well-planned curriculum for their Zoom classes and send their work online or bring it to school.

GNOCA has combated the difficulties and struggles that this COVID-19 pandemic has brought with well-thought-out educational curriculums, a clean environment and safety precautions for all students. Thanks to the collaboration of the parents, educators, students and church, our school has thrived despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

—By Rodil Capobres

In Gratitude

Slidell Church Recognizes Long-time Officers

SLIDELL, LA. – On Oct. 17, 2020, the Slidell Seventh-day Adventist Church recognized Bobby and Evelyn Teal for their more than 30 years of service as treasurer and church clerk, respectively, for the church.

They both stepped down from those positions this year. The church presented them with a plaque with their names and years of service engraved, a card and two gift certificates to local restaurants. They were also given a bundle of roses from the current treasurer, Vernella Rogers, in appreciation for

the offices they held for so many years. Bobby Teal said they are still planning to be a part of the church and help out in any way they can.

He said being a treasurer didn't come easily for him because he doesn't like dealing with numbers, but God has blessed them both with talents of service and helpers. The church is grateful for them and we thank them for their many years of faithful service to our church.

————— *By Vernella Rogers*



A Search for Truth

New Members Received at Central Louisiana Church

PINEVILLE, LA. – Sept. 26, 2020, was a special day as Cody and Kristina Mitchell, along with their sons, Nicholas, Ty and Jaxson, were received into the membership of the Central Louisiana Seventh-day Adventist Church in Pineville, La., by profession of faith. The Mitchell family had been baptized two years earlier when they began attending another Christian church. But their baptism did not bring an end to their Bible study and search for truth.

In their search, Cody and Kristina became convicted of many Bible truths,

especially the Sabbath truth. This led them to find the Seventh-day Adventist Church that they started attending in January of 2020.

Stephen Orian, pastor of Central Louisiana church, started studies with the family in March, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not until July that the studies could be resumed.

On Sept. 26, Orian preached a message entitled, "Precious Living Stones," showing that while Jesus is the rock upon which the church was established, as members, we are also

living stones that make up the rest of the structure. At the close of the service, Sandra Hebert, head elder, presented each member of the family with a rose, and church members added a stone to the bowl that represented the church to which the Mitchells were now also precious lining stones founded on the cornerstone of Jesus.

The Central church is delighted to have the Mitchell family along with their youngest son, Casper, as a part of its fellowship.

————— *By Stephen Orian, Pastor*



In Concert at Ozark

Master Violinist Jaime Jorge Shares Music and Testimony



GENTRY, ARK. — He stood there on the stage, his cheap little violin clasped in his ten-year-old hand. Whether or not he was trembling in that nearly empty concert hall that day, he did not say. But as he lifted his violin and the notes from Beethoven’s Violin Concerto echoed across the room, he didn’t just play for the two gentlemen auditioning students for their conservatory. He played for a heavenly audience. As the notes struck the hearts of his listeners, he did not see then what he can see now. He didn’t see how that one movement from Bee-

thoven’s Violin Concerto that he had learned without a book or a teacher, but only by practicing with an old donated record player and a single record, would gain him a full scholarship to the conservatory. He didn’t see that one of the judges had been a student of the violinist on that record.

Jaime Jorge, now a master violinist himself, told this story during the vespers service at Ozark Adventist Academy on Oct. 16, 2020. His concert was combined with personal stories of God’s guiding hand in his life. He shared that,

at times, the path in front of us may look as if our life is falling apart and God is not working on our behalf. But it is just as it says in Romans 8:28, “That in all things God works for the good of those who love him.” Towards the end of the concert, nine students grabbed their instruments, from violins to saxophones, and joined him for several songs. It truly was an awesome evening and was a reminder of the words of the hymn, “Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.”

—By Debbie Upson

A Joyful First Baptism

New Tontitown Group Celebrates Lives Dedicated to Christ

TONTITOWN, ARK. — The angels were singing sounds of joy in heaven on Sept. 5, 2020, as members of the Tontitown Seventh-day Adventist Group met with the congregation of the Fayetteville Seventh-day Adventist Church for a baptism and child dedication. Haleigh Cunningham, after much study, decided that it was time to commit her life to Jesus. Rodney Weyer, pastor of the Fayetteville church, baptized Haleigh as she began her new spiritual walk.

We were also honored to have Jeff Villegas, ministerial director of the Ar-

kansas-Louisiana Conference, available to dedicate Oakleigh, Haleigh’s daughter, to God. Haleigh and Oakleigh were joined by family members Rickey and Brenda Long, Rick and Kara Smith and Kymberly Cook and her extended church family members. This was the first baptism and child dedication for the Tontitown group since their formation three years ago.

All praises and glory to God as we witnessed another soul commit their life to Jesus.

—By Rick Thames



Growing by Shrinking

A Lesson from John the Baptist for the New Year



It's hard to let go of power and popularity. Human beings like to be the center of attention. This applies even for a prophet of God. John the Baptist was the most well-known man in his country at one time. Everyone came to see him, for they believed he was a prophet, speaking for God and telling people of the coming Savior. In *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen G. White wrote, "For a time the Baptist's influence over the nation had been greater than that of its rulers, priests or princes."

Satan was now ready to take advantage of this popularity. White continues, "Every consideration that appeals to the ambition of the world's conquerors Satan stood ready to urge upon John the Baptist. If he had announced himself as the Messiah...priests and people would have flocked to his standard." The temptation was strong for John to keep the attention on himself.

But John knew something that we need to constantly remember—that we grow by turning our attention and the attention of others away from ourselves and onto Jesus. As Jesus' ministry grew, more people were coming to Him and leaving John. John's followers were becoming jealous and came to him with a commentary on the changing situation. "They came to John and said to him, 'Rabbi, that man who was with you...is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.'" John 3:26.

John's reply gives one secret of spiritual growth. "John replied, 'A person can receive only what is given them from heaven...I said, "I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him...." He must become greater; I must become less.'" John 3:27-30. John knew that self becoming smaller allowed Jesus to become bigger, both to self and to others as we seek to share Him.

We can find this principle many times in the Bible. Jesus said it clearly: "Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3. When we recognize our smallness or poverty without Him, we are then ready to receive His fullness and riches. The danger for the last-day church is that it thinks too highly of itself and too little of Jesus. In fact, Jesus is outside and knocking to get in. This church is described as thinking too highly of itself. It thinks that it is rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing. But it doesn't know that it is blind to its pride and self-sufficiency.

John had it right. We grow by letting the Holy Spirit remind us that He must increase and we must decrease. My greatest need in the coming year is described by the song in our hymnal, "More About Jesus." My prayer is for self to shrink and Jesus to grow me into His likeness. That's a great recipe for growth this new year.

By James Shires, President



On a Mission to Serve

Parkview Students Help Distribute Food to Community



OKLAHOMA CITY – The students at Parkview Adventist Academy participate in community service all year. Continuous community service is a reflection of who we are, and teachers are intentional about inspiring students to serve like Jesus.

On Sept. 11, 2020, students and teachers went into the community to hand out flyers. They told everyone they saw to come by the school on Sept. 13 to receive a fresh produce box.

Sunday was a beautiful day! God granted us perfect weather and we had

more volunteers than we expected. We were blessed to serve our community with over 2,000 boxes of fresh produce! Students, teachers and parents joined forces that day to be the hands and feet of Jesus, ministering to the needs of the community one car at a time.

Our location is considered to be a dry area because there aren't any grocery stores here. For us to be able to provide food for our community was a blessing!

Individuals came by Parkview to get boxes, and we had a team that deliv-

ered to the elderly in the neighborhood who weren't physically able to come to the school. We were able to serve 900 families. We were blessed to have an opportunity to put our mission into action: Educating, Inspiring and Serving.

It would not have been possible without the help of all our amazing volunteers, Bill Carlile and GoFresh USA, who provided the produce. We are looking forward to doing this again in the near future!

————— *By Youlander Clarke*

A New Church in Durant

Conference Officers Celebrate with Church Members

DURANT, OKLA. – On Sept. 12, 2020, the Durant Seventh-day Adventist Church had a very special celebration. With infinitely grateful hearts for our powerful and majestic God for His wonderful blessings, the Durant church had its official opening ceremony of its new church building. Oklahoma Conference President James Shires, Executive Secretary Apple Park, Ciro Castillo and many others were present to officiate.

Moises Kindelan, pastor of the Durant church, shared with the congregation, "It has been a victory that God

has given us, a miracle and blessing of heaven. Undoubtedly God has brought a revival to our souls and we fully trust in the power of the Holy Spirit so that more people may be reached and give their lives to our God. God has a time for everything, and His times are perfect. I am reminded of 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

————— *By Jessica Vasquez*



Pathfinder Camporee

Inspirational Weekend Teaches Trust in God

WEWOKA, OKLA. – The Oklahoma Pathfinders had their fall camporee on Oct. 23-25. The theme of the camporee was “Trust in the Lord,” based on Isaiah 40:31: “But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” Thirteen Pathfinder clubs attended the camporee and one Master Guide Club, totaling 235 people.

During the Sabbath morning worship service, Daniel Ortega, youth and young adult/communication director for the Oklahoma Conference, challenged the Pathfinders to put their trust in the Lord and not on the earthly and temporal things of this world when facing struggles, temptations and challenges. After lunch, the Pathfinders participated in

the raptor honor, which consisted of dissecting owl pellets, observing various raptors fly across the lake as the observation was led by naturalist Bob Holbrook, and seeing five amazing live raptors up close and personal. The live raptors were brought in by the Black Prairie Raptor Center from Texas.

That evening during the worship service, as a huge bonfire behind the stage area lit up the evening panorama, 10 young people came forward as a response to a call for baptism. A special prayer of dedication was had for those who came forward as their director stood with them in support.

Sunday was a day full of challenges of outdoor activities, such as an obstacle course, knot tying and lashing, bird matching and tent set-up, just to name a

few. The morning was topped off with a raft race where each individual club was responsible for building and racing their raft across the lake. All the pathfinders joined together in cheering for each club’s raft regardless of whether the raft was fast or even able to stay afloat.

Though the weekend manifested cold nights with mild winds, the Pathfinders stood brave and courageous through the weekend and enjoyed the fellowship, activities and new learning experiences.

We praise God for His safety and guidance for our young people during the camporee and we pray that our young people will continue to trust more and more in our God! May they soar like eagles as they follow Him.

—By *Yésenia Ortega*

Communication Administrative Assistant



You Saved My Life

One Small Act of Love Makes a Huge Impact

VINITA, OKLA. – Bruce Johnston has a heart for witnessing through literature evangelism. God has miraculously intervened in his life and he is eager to share Jesus’ love with others. The following is a remarkable story, told in his own words:

It was the summer of 2017. Every morning, before I leave the house to sell literature, I pray that the Holy Spirit will go before me and give me divine appointments. I had finished my work for the day, so I decided to go for a walk. I passed a stranger that was seated on a bench and felt impressed to talk with

him. He said, “The end is near.” And I agreed and handed him a Glow Tract titled “A Love Letter from Jesus.” As I walked away, I sensed the Holy Spirit say, “Go back and pray with him.” I returned and told him I would like to pray for him. I shook his hand as he told me he had just recently become a believer and he really appreciated the prayer.

A couple of months passed before I saw him again. When I approached him, he said, “You’re the man who saved my life!” I said, “What are you talking about?” He replied, “The day

you prayed with me, I was going to commit suicide. You saved my life!”

As Bruce returned home, he thanked the Lord for that divine appointment. Today, three years later, I am sure that precious memory spurs him on to share with others life-saving literature.

May his story inspire each of us to commit ourselves afresh to the Lord each day that He may give us divine appointments to share His love and help Him save souls for eternity.

—By Kay Mayes



OFFICIAL NOTICE

OKLAHOMA CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Notice is hereby given that the Seventieth Regular Session of the Oklahoma Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will be held at the Edmond Seventh-day Adventist Church, located at 4701 East Danforth Road, Edmond, OK 73034, on Sunday, April 18, 2021. The purpose of this meeting is to elect officers and directors for the ensuing quadrennial term and to transact such business as may properly come before the session. The meeting will convene on Sunday at 10:00 a.m.

According to the bylaws, each church is entitled to one delegate for the organization and one additional delegate for each thirty (30) members or major fraction thereof. Delegates must hold membership in the local church which accredits them.

James Shires, President
Jung-Wook Park, Executive Secretary
Carlos Portanova, Treasurer

Staying Healthy

Young People Test Their Might on Fitness Day

TULSA/OKLAHOMA CITY – The Oklahoma Pathfinders and Adventurers participated in their annual Presidential Youth Fitness Program on Oct. 4, 2020. Normally this event takes place at the Bristow, Okla., public high school's track and field, with nearly 600 individuals in attendance.

However, this year in an effort to reduce the large number of people at one place (due to the COVID-19 pandemic), it was decided to host the event at two separate locations. Both Parkview Adventist Academy in Oklahoma City

and Adventist Fellowship in Tulsa were happy to host our young people for that day. Approximately 150 young people and staff attended each location, where everyone tested their strength, endurance and flexibility through the various physical tests.

The goal of this program and event is to promote exercise and healthy living among our young people while doing it in a fun and interactive way.

— *By Daniel Ortega*
Youth and Young Adult Director



Children's Sabbath

Children and Families Enjoy Outdoor Activities

TULSA – The North American Division (NAD) Children's Ministries Department celebrated its annual Children's Sabbath on Oct. 3, 2020. Many of the Oklahoma churches planned programs or had an emphasis on children that Sabbath. A few churches even gave the children opportunities to share sermons from their pulpit.

On that Sabbath, the Oklahoma Conference Children's Ministries Department organized a couple of special children's outdoor programs with emphasis on participating as a family.

Tulsa area leaders Debbie Childress, Damaris Prieto and Glenda Sweezey worked together to host the event on the grounds of Tulsa Adventist Academy, while in Oklahoma City, Norma Shepherd, Cinthia Portanova and Yesenia Ortega organized the event at the Stars and Stripes Park at Lake Hefner. Both locations had about 100 attendees, which included mostly children and their parents.

Both locations offered crafts, Bible games, activities and prizes for both children and adults (sponsored by the NAD

and Southwestern Union). Samson Sambeba and Daniel Ortega shared fun, spiritual messages of encouragement.

For many of the kids this was the first time having any kind of in-person interaction with other kids their age since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though there were limitations and restrictions in an effort to keep everyone safe, just being in the outdoors with their friends and family was a blessing for all who attended.

— *By Yesenia Ortega*
Children's Ministries Coordinator



Growing Experiencing God Continually



Second Peter 3:18 says “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.” This growth and maturing in Christ, as with all successful relationships, will require a continual growing in experiences. Academic knowledge gives a place of reference and prepares one for trivial discussions about a person or event, but the true way of knowing someone is through experiences with that person. True knowledge comes from true experiences.

I remember as a young adult that a public evangelistic series was conducted by evangelist Joe Hinson. Sixty persons were baptized during that series of meetings and it was a very exciting time. Not only were we excited as we witnessed the souls which were won, but also because, on the following Sabbath, after we left the series, we entered a new church building that was a significant upgrade from the one-room building we had used previously. The facility was not new, and our pastor shared with us that we would not be able to use the building on Sundays nor Wednesdays until the previous congregation, another denomination, had moved out when their new facility was completed.

That same day, I offered to drive home a senior woman who had just been baptized. While in the car, she remarked with disappointment, “Those people are something else. They take up the church all day Sunday and make us have church on Saturday.” Even though the truth of the Sabbath had clearly been taught and preached, she lacked the experience of the Sabbath and was confused at that moment. By the way, she was a faithful member who died in the faith. It is important to restate, growth and maturing in Christ, as with all successful relationships, will require continual growing through experiences. Growing is not a “one-time success and done.” Growing in Christ is progressive. We grow continually in stages as we continue to have new experiences with Christ. There was a man who, after 25 years with one company, was still in the same position and drawing the same salary. Finally, one day he went to his boss and told him that he felt he had been overlooked and neglected. “After all,” the man said, “I’ve had a quarter of a century of experience.”

“My dear fellow,” sighed the boss, “you haven’t had a quarter of a century of experience. You’ve had one experience for a quarter of a century.”

As we continually grow in Christ, we will reach new heights of holiness and plunge into new depths of his love. My prayer for the year 2021 is “Lord Jesus, keep me growing. Keep me growing in You.”

By Stephen Brooks, Executive Secretary



Shiloh Excel Christian School

Dedication of School Campus and New Facilities

LITTLE ROCK – Shiloh Excel Christian School in Little Rock, Ark., held a campus dedication service on Oct. 3, 2020. The event celebrated the latest phase of a project that establishes a school campus and places onsite two facilities for the delivery of Christian Education. While observing COVID-19 guidelines for physical distancing and outdoors events, the program was broadcast live through Zoom for church membership and guest participation. On hand, joining Principal Dawn Smith, the school board and selected students in the celebration, were the speaker for the event, Southwest Region Executive Secretary Stephen Brooks and Education Superintendent Buford Griffith III, who dedicated the campus to the service of youth evangelism.

Through God’s grace, the Holy Spirit and by His many miracles, doors have been opened for this project that is sponsored by the host church, Shiloh Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Lord has led as the school, church and local firms have partnered to make the campus a reality. The Holy Spirit impressed firms such as Garver to donate countless hours of architect and engineering support. With Garver’s leadership assistance the school’s plans are moving forward. The school has been blessed by “Garver-Gives,” the company’s corporate giving program which has donated resources and funds for the project. Construction is performed in partnership with Tri-States International Building Systems, a respected minority-owned firm and Alessi Keyes Construction, a prominent

Arkansas construction firm. Both firms are teaming with subcontractors as community service or at the firm’s cost only.

“We believe that evangelism and education go hand in hand,” according to Kerwin Jones, pastor. “This project is part of our mission to serve the community and equip children with the necessary skills and knowledge to be effective contributors to society and prepare them for the world to come.”

We encourage you to support Christian education and to help us keep moving forward by donating to our scholarship fund at Cash App \$shilohexcel or sending your donation directly to the Shiloh church online through www.AdventistGiving.com.

—By A. J. Brown, Chairmen
Shiloh School Board



My Pathway to Health

Healed and Blessed by Walking in God’s Full Light



FORT WORTH – My journey began on Sept. 19, 2018, while volunteering with the Your Best Pathway to Health Mega Clinic in Fort Worth, Tex. I decided to become a vegetarian. I was happy with the results and decided to start leaving off eggs and dairy. My blood pressure and weight continued to be a problem. In August 2019, the Owner’s Manual Health Ministries held a summit at my church, Emmanuel Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Cleburne, Tex. They talked about many things, including the eight principles of health and their

importance. The Holy Spirit got my attention, and let me know, “This is your time, Isolde. Walk in this light and be healed and blessed.”

Adhering to all eight principles, proper nutrition, exercise, water, sunshine, temperance, air, rest and trust in God, has allowed me to lose more than 60 pounds, and I am on only 1/4 of my blood pressure medication. My goal is to be off my blood pressure medication by the summer. To God be the glory!

—By *Isolde Bell*

The Pivot

The New Normal of Voice of Hope



OKLAHOMA CITY – 2020 was to be a banner year for the Oklahoma City Voice of Hope Seventh-Day Adventist Church with our 100-year anniversary celebration scheduled for May. Instead, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we did “the pivot.” We pivoted to online worship services and Zoom meetings, and partnered with Adventist World Radio to host a digital evangelism meeting.

Betty Taylor, our community services leader, pivoted from a monthly food pantry schedule inside of our facilities to a weekly drive-up event.

Our community services team serves approximately 30 families a week. Pam Allen, our health ministries leader, pivoted from health seminars and cooking classes to supplying the University of Oklahoma (OU) dermatology clinic with much needed personal protection equipment (PPE).

Members Shirley Ellis, Emma Street and Twila Calhoun teamed up to make 193 masks. Sheila Shavers and the deaconesses were accustomed to visiting the sick and shut-in to bring hope and joy. They pivoted to sending out 133



greeting cards to church members, sharing love and giving encouragement. Additionally, our family ministries team led by Lottie McClain sent out 189 birthday and holiday cards.

Michele Keyes and the personal ministries department gave away over 200 God’s Goodie Bags of Blessings from the back of a truck at shopping areas where the bags were received with joy and thanksgiving.

Still, there is much to learn about “the pivot” in this new normal.

—By *Beverly McCoy*

iTouch Fort Worth

Community Transformation by Touching Hearts and Lives

FORT WORTH— The Grace Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church embarked upon touching 120,000 people within Fort Worth, Tex., through random and intentional acts of kindness during the 2020 fiscal year. We called this outreach “iTouch Fort Worth.”

Our purpose was to create sensitivity for community consciousness and service. To facilitate that, we modified our Sabbath School and worship times on Saturdays to allow members to meet at the church in the morning to pray and then go out to participate in several outreach services.

These services programs included: “Praise at the Pump” (giving away gas cards), “Loads of Love” (providing coins for laundry), “Gracious Groceries” (bagging groceries), “Adopt-a-Block” (clean-

ing a block near the church), “Adopt First Responders” (praying for our first responders), participating in our local Meals on Wheels or helping out at our local homeless shelters. In addition, we “adopted” nearby Dunbar High School and got involved in “Dads for Dunbar.”

Other service programs were performed on weekdays and on special days such as: “Layla’s Lunches,” “Feed My Starving Children” and bike giveaways, to name a few. Our food pantry also led the way in feeding hundreds of people and providing much-needed face masks, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the service programs have motivated us, it has been the stories about caring for our community that have inspired us. For example, we met a homeless woman at a shelter who had

received a care package, a meal and prayer. After receiving these tokens of kindness, she teared up because she realized that people still care.

The pandemic has not stopped us. We are still serving our community and touching hearts and lives. Our goal is to touch 120,000 by the end of 2020. But most importantly, our goal is to see community transformation. In *The Ministry of Healing*, Ellen G. White says, “The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted... Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit... that this type of work ‘will not, cannot be without fruit.’”

—By Johnny McKenzie



Trusting in Jesus

Aftermath Recovery Projects

NEW ORLEANS – We have faced many challenges in 2020 and I would like to thank you for your continued support as God guides us through it. On behalf of the South Louisiana Federation Officers and its constituents and the Hurricane Laura Project, we would like to thank all of you for your support and prayers.

We had support starting with a U-Haul truck obtained by the Westbank United Seventh-day Adventist Church and the churches that brought items to pack and provided gift cards to the victims of Hurricane Laura. We made our caravan to the Lake Charles area on Sept. 8, 2020. We received gift cards from the South Louisiana Federation, Ephesus Seventh-day Adventist Church and Glen and Sherlette Burkhalter. Donations were made by the following

Seventh-day Adventist Churches: Westbank United, Ephesus at Covington, Glad Tidings, Ephesus at New Orleans, Berean, Faith, Caffin Avenue, Fondren, Smyrna, Emmanuel (at Hammond) and the following individuals and entities: Norbert Doxon, Vera Ragland, South Louisiana Youth Federation, Clio Place Baptist Church, St. Claire Oliver, American Red Cross, NENA's, Feeding Ministry of Mandeville, La., City of New Orleans Neighborhood Engagement and Baptist Community Ministries. As a coordinated effort we were able to serve 400 people. On Sept. 13, 2020, the Fondren Seventh-day Adventist Church of Houston, Tex., traveled to Lake Charles in order to provide items and water for the entire family. We were blessed with a special visit from the North American

Division Disaster Response Director W. Derrick Lea.

A spiritual hats off to all of our pastors, especially Durandel Ford, community services director and Calvin Watkins, president, for their support and communication. Let us continue in unity and prayer in support of our community as we change lives and transform our community. Thanks to our trusted team: Irene H. Williams, coordinator; Lyn Hakeem, assistant coordinator; Leslie Hutchinson, assistant coordinator; Sherlette Burkhalter, treasurer; Lucinda Keller, advisor; Carrie Cyprian, advisor; Gwendolyn Garrison, recording secretary; Stephanie, reporting secretary; Arlene Mossey, chaplain.

—By Irene Hughes Williams
Adventist Community Services Coordinator



Playing for Change

The Power of Music to Break Down Barriers



Being a music lover, I came across a unique movement titled “Playing for Change.” It is an initiative created to inspire and connect the world through music, stemming from the belief that music has the power to break down barriers and overcome distances between people. You and I live in the midst of a moment in history where “change” has been so accelerated that we begin to see the present only as it disappears in the rearview mirror. Things are quickly changing right before our eyes. Time is of the essence. Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NKJV) states, “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven.” Philosopher Henri Bergson stated, “To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly.” Now we have come to understand that people must have reasons for change. First, they must see the value of the change. Second, the plan for change must be clearly understood by them. Three, they must be involved in the process. The renowned American preacher Donald Barnhouse once stood before his congregation and stunned them by saying, “Prayer changes nothing!” You could have heard a pin drop that morning. He proceeded to clarify by pointing out that it is effectively God who changes things, yet He often deploys His children here on earth, led by His spirit to be those agents of change. So, let us be mindful when we pray for change. We, then, become either a part of the solution or a part of the hindrance. I leave you with these thought-provoking words from author Ellen G. White from *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*: “As the rays of the sun penetrate to the remotest corners of the globe, so God designs that the light of the gospel shall extend to every soul upon the earth. If the church of Christ were fulfilling the purpose of our Lord, light would be shed upon all that sit in darkness and in the region and shadow of death.” I can sense a change is coming. This past spring and summer as we watched thousands upon thousands descend upon the streets of this nation to protest social injustice, I couldn’t help but think when God’s church rises up and takes the gospel with that fervor and energy to the world, the end will come. That day is quickly approaching. Will you and I be involved?

By Carlos J. Craig, President



A Step Ahead

Dual Program Helps Students Learn Two Languages

HOUSTON – Knowing the best time to learn another language is when children are learning to read and write in their native language, Houston Adventist Academy (HAA) incorporated English and Spanish for all students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The Dual Language Program (DLP) allows for any two languages to be taught: HAA chose English and Spanish since Spanish is already taught in grades seven to 12.

Taking on a new program during a pandemic could have been daunting, but HAA teachers embraced it and complet-

ed the summer training. The third and fourth grade teacher, Sarai Gonzalez, said, “Growing up with dual languages wired my brain to be equally fluent in both English and Spanish.”

Since schools go through a transitional period when starting a new curriculum, DLP emphasis will begin with Pre-K/Kindergarten students this year and then grow with the students in each class over the next several years.

Since I did not grow up hearing Spanish spoken, I feel more comfortable reading Spanish. As a teacher of first

and second grade students, many of my students come from homes where Spanish is spoken, but they don’t know how to read Spanish (or, for some of them, English), so we are learning from each other! At press time, my students are finishing the Spanish alphabet and reading *Arroz con Leche/Rice Pudding*, a bilingual book, for Language Arts.

Creating a bilingual program at HAA offers students the opportunity to grow academically and culturally and to witness spiritually.

—By Jean Valdenegro



Mid-term Constituency

Pandemic Creates Challenges for Large Group Gatherings

ALVARADO, TEX. – It’s hard to believe it has been almost two years since we gathered together for the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Constituency Session. Plans are underway for the mid-term session usually held in the spring.

Just before press time, we finalized the date, May 16, 2021, and location, Brazos County Expo in Bryan, Tex., where we met in 2019. We scheduled the meeting in May since the Southwestern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has its constituency session in April and some of our members have to

be at both events. It also allows General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists auditors time to complete the financial audit for the union and other conferences having constituency sessions in the spring.

With the ongoing pandemic, it was hard to know what to do when health officials recommended limiting large group gatherings.

Going back to Bryan will give us room to socially distance. We may also have to limit the number of people meeting in-person with streaming options for

the rest. Another option is to reduce the delegation number while still giving appropriate representation based on church size.

Once everything is finalized, the churches will be notified to select their delegates. When we have the names and addresses of the delegates, we will communicate with them by mail. General information will be shared on the TexasAdventist.org website.

Thanks for keeping these meetings in prayer as we gather safely together.

—By Carlos J. Craig, President

Education 360°

Video Camera Provides Full Classroom Experience

ALVARADO, TEX. – In our current climate, education has had to make significant changes to adapt to a multitude of protocols and regulations. Many of these adjustments are seen in the virtual realm more than in the physical sense.

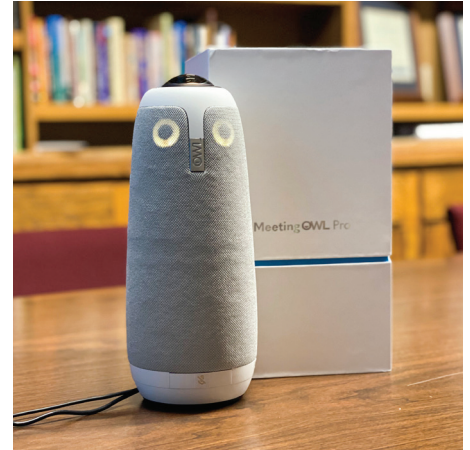
As the Texas Conference Office of Education has worked to support schools with virtual education, Meeting Owl Pro video conference cameras were purchased to assist with a fully immersive distance learning experience. These innovative cameras provide a 360-degree experience for anyone watching

virtually. The owl will automatically shift the camera to focus on whoever is speaking. The result is an experience that nearly feels like you are sitting in a classroom.

While these cameras will be purchased and rolled out on a trial basis, this is just one way that we are striving to make the educational experience seamless for all students.

Thank you for keeping our students and staff in prayer.

—By *Kisha Norris*
Vice President for Education



Sell a Fish, Gain a Fish

An Online Fish Sale Leads to Baptism

CONROE, TEX. – Buddy Olvera (being baptized below) wanted a taxidermy fish to display in his home. Finding one for sale online, he first verified it was from a bona fide seller. Searching seller Tabita Stomberg's (bottom right) profile, he noticed she frequently posted "Happy Sabbath" on her timeline. That intrigued him. He and his family kept the Sabbath at home for several years, ever since they learned about it viewing Bible videos online. He had no idea that other people kept the Sabbath, especially in the Conroe area where they lived.

Buddy contacted Tabita and told her he was interested in the fish. He then asked her about her "Happy Sabbath" posts. She said, "I'll tell you all about it when you come to pick up the fish." When he came by her workplace to pick up the fish, she invited him in and told him about the Sabbath. He was so interested that the conversation led to Tabita sharing about the Seventh-day Adventist message and inviting Buddy and his family to the Conroe Seventh-day Adventist Church in Conroe, Tex., the upcoming Sabbath.

Buddy and his family accepted the invitation and were able to witness the baptism of Tabita and her husband Steve's son the next Sabbath. They also discovered an entire church family that was as serious about following Jesus and all His Bible truths as they were.

A few months later, on Sabbath, Aug. 15, 2020, Buddy, his wife, Leslie and their son, Buddy Jr., were baptized and united with the Conroe church family. "Who knew you could sell a fish and gain a fish," Tabita shared.

—By *Dan Serns*, English Evangelism Director



Ingathering Time

In Texas, Ingathering Happens Year-round

KEENE, TEX. – Ingathering has been a long-standing tradition within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Members, old and young alike, would collect funds from neighbors, community members and businesses, especially at the end of the year, to help those in need.

Recognizing the year-round needs, Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists members focused on Ingathering year-round, with funds going to Texas Adventist Community Services (Texas ACS). That way the funds donated helped people in our own backyards.

It is easy to think of Texas ACS as those people who help in times of disaster, because we are there. But, we are also there to assist churches who are providing a hand up to those in their community. That could be with food, clothing or hygiene kits for the homeless.

We are so appreciative of our regular donors who support Texas ACS every month, but the needs are becoming greater than the donations received.

Knowing more and more things are happening online, we joined an online platform to offer texting options for

giving. Now you can text TXIngathering to 41444 to donate or set up recurring (monthly, quarterly, etc.) donations.

Written donations are still accepted and appreciated and can be mailed to P.O. Box 35, Keene, Texas, 76059.

Find more information on our website at Texas-ACS.org, email acs@txsda.org or call 817.641.7679.

Your support is so helpful, so we can have the resources available when they are needed.

—By Marshall Gonzales
Texas Adventist Community Services Director



More Than The 3Rs

Journalism Class Becomes Media Arts Production Team

CONROE, TEX. – This year has become one of the most exciting years at Conroe Adventist Academy (CAA) in Conroe, Tex., as Principal Michelle Battistone introduced a media production class as a new elective for the ninth and tenth grade classes.

Never before have I seen a journalism class transformed into an exciting Media Arts program. It has been thrilling to assist the students as production coordinator.

Students personally create informative “Bible Verse” segments that air weekly

and are heard globally. We are excited that they are providing a positive impact to our community as well as other countries such as Kenya.

CAA is leading others to Christ through school-produced programs with our various teams: High School News, Bible Verse and Prayer, Fun Facts and Photography.

All programs are shared on the school Facebook page, which streams on the school website at ConroeAcademy.org.

Learning to create videos and audio shows is just one of a few of the exciting

assignments the ninth and tenth grade media team completed.

One of December’s assignments was to produce an old-time Christmas radio show. Needing extra voices allowed other students to join the CAA media team. It is so rewarding to see the creativity and imagination of the students and teachers alike.

What a blessing to see that CAA places God first in all things.

—By Tina Lockhart

Go the Distance

Determined Campaign Benefits Adventist Education

ALVARADO, TEX. — There are very few Seventh-day Adventist schools, if any, that are not struggling financially. Any extra funds a school receives are often directed to help a student attend who couldn't otherwise. Many schools would not survive without the generous support of their constituent churches who help financially each month to keep the school going. The incredible life-changing stories from students, parents and staff alike make the sacrifice worth it. Only in Heaven will people realize their support.

Having been a teacher and staff on several academic campuses, Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Vice President for Communication and Public Relations Kenn Dixon is very familiar with the struggle. He has also been a part of several campaigns to raise

funds for Adventist education. When he suggested creating a cycling tour to raise funds for Texas Adventist education, I was supportive (of the fundraising part, not so much the cycling since I am not a rider). Then when he said we could have walkers, runners, Pathfinders earning their bike honors, schools joining with bike-a-thons and more, I was even more excited. (Email communication@txsda.org to join the fun!) In addition to liking to walk, one thing I have learned in my short three-and-half years in the Texas Conference is that Texas church members help when there is a need. I have never forgotten taking pictures of the Master Guides helping in Houston following Hurricane Harvey in 2017.

Dixon created a lofty goal for this campaign: \$1.5 million with \$500,000 assisting Texas Conference schools and

\$1 million starting a Texas Conference Adventist Education Endowment fund. The interest from this fund would annually support those in need attending Texas Conference schools. The fund would also provide a way for people to remember Adventist education in their wills and trusts.

Dixon is still looking for cyclists to join him in riding this almost 800-mile tour from South Texas Christian Academy in McAllen, Tex., to North Dallas Adventist Academy in Richardson, Tex.

My goal is 800 miles before the ride begins Sept. 12, 2021. You can view my progress at app.mobilecause.com/vf/TexasRide/TamaraTerry and then sign up to join me!

—————By *Tamara Michalenko Terry*
Associate Director for
Communications and Public Relations

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Growth

An Imperative of Life



In eternal wisdom and with incomprehensible love, this world was created to grow! Throughout the many works of creation, this growth was divinely designed to point in a positive, upward direction—trees developing to produce fruit; plants becoming harvest-heavy with grain; flowers budding and blooming. More specifically God’s perfect blueprint for the crowning masterpiece of creation, His human children, was that this growth be always morally, physically, and spiritually elevating. Adam and Eve, as they daily walked with their Creator, grew exponentially in understanding and moral aptitude. Jesus grew “in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” Luke 2:52. It is only due to the horrific taint of sin that we now grow disinterested, unfaithful, weary and old.

It is the beginning of a new year, a time where resolutions are hastily made and just as quickly abandoned! From our perspective as Seventh-day Adventist believers who see prophetic events unfolding, should not our resolution be to grow ever closer to our Lord and Savior? As we watch and experience the relentless incursion of evil in this mortally wounded world, should we not fervently pledge to “come out of her my people”? Revelation 18:4. Should we not be filled with an urgency to share God’s hope, forgiveness, peace and healing with those stumbling in the darkness all around us? In light of the steady diet of deception that is being fed to us by this fallen world, should we not instead have a craving for “the pure milk of the word, that [we] may grow thereby”? 1 Peter 2:2 (NKJV).

It is the fervent hope and desire of the Texico Conference that every member, pastor, student and teacher will, under the direction of and in total cooperation with God’s Holy Spirit, experience amazing spiritual growth during this next year! Growth cannot happen without conviction and surrender on an individual basis.

It is simply not enough for any of us to set our sights on just being a good person. We must aspire to be Godly people! As believers who claim to be both anxiously awaiting and actively preparing for the soon return of our Lord, we need to be intentional about promoting a revival of primitive faith and godliness.

Growth is an absolute imperative of life! Any living organism that stops growing soon stops living! Together let’s make the choice to grow, and to do so in a way that brings glory to our creator and advances His perfect, eternal kingdom.

*By Jeff Metherell, Director of Stewardship
Religious Liberty and Estate Planning*



Bittersweet

Corrales Church Bids Farewell to Pastor and Family

CORRALES, N.M. — Our Texico Conference church family is ever changing. Some are born into the family, others are baptized into it and sadly, at times, we have to see some go.

On Oct. 3, 2020, Andre Arrais preached his final sermon as pastor of the Corrales Seventh-day Adventist Church. Following the worship service, members and friends of the Corrales church gathered to bid farewell to Arrais, his wife, Natalia, and their children, Noah and Stella, as they move to take up new pastoral responsibilities at the New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church in Fulton, Md.

For the past five years, Arrais led the Corrales church and was also the leader for young adults within the Texico Conference.

As a certified presenter for the Growing Young Adventists initiative by the North American Division intended to nurture intergenerational relationships, he took this training to numerous churches around the conference. He plans to continue its critically important goal of full inclusion of all generations, especially the youth and young adults, into meaningful church ministry and leadership responsibilities.

“I want to thank the Corrales Seventh-day Adventist Church for embracing me and loving me during my time here. I couldn’t have asked for a better church in which to begin my ministry. You allowed me to be myself, and I am thankful for that. We experienced so much together, and I learned so much from you,” said Arrais.

The farewell event was bittersweet, but members of the Corrales church are grateful for the gifts Arrais imparted to them and pray that God will bless him and help him realize his calling.

“Above all else, I’m forever grateful to Pastor Andre for giving me a perspective on Jesus’s grace that I had never seen.” said Rico Flores, head elder of the Corrales church. “What do you say to someone who helped you see the world from the very eyes of Jesus and changed your relationship with both God and man? I now know a different Jesus by the workings of the Holy Spirit through Pastor Andre and am left forever changed. Thank you, Pastor Andre, for always pointing to the cross.”

—By *Debby Márquez*
Communication Director



New Pastors

Two Pastors Join the Texico Conference



CORRALES, N.M. — The Texico Conference and members of the Albuquerque Heights Seventh-day Adventist Church and Los Ranchos Seventh-day Adventist Company were pleased to welcome Antonio Cano as their new pastor on Oct. 1, 2020.

Cano has served as a pastor for more than 20 years. His experience includes leading churches in California, serving as an evangelist for the Central California Conference and working with multiple Adventist schools and academies.

Cano moved to Albuquerque with his family in January of 2020, but he is no stranger to New Mexico. As a young man, Cano lived in Southern New Mexico, where his father pastored several districts. His wife, Melanie, is very supportive of his ministry and is cur-

rently teaching at Sandia View Christian School. They have two children, a daughter, Eliana, and a son, Lucas.

Cano's passion in ministry is to have an intimate personal relationship with Christ and meet the needs of people while discipling others to do the same. The Cano family is excited about the opportunity to share their love as they serve in New Mexico.

"We are excited to be in Texico and are looking forward to what God has in store for us here at Albuquerque Heights and Los Ranchos," said Cano. "We are trusting in Him as we work to accomplish His purposes in these churches and the surrounding communities."

Also joining the Texico Conference is Raul Alvarez, who will be serving the Southern New Mexico district,

which includes the Las Cruces Spanish, Deming Spanish, Deming and Silver City Seventh-day Adventist Churches. Alvarez is a recent graduate of Southwestern Adventist University, where he served as student association president. He double-majored in theology and business. Alvarez is originally from Cuba and his family currently lives in Florida, where his father is also a pastor. Alvarez is a wonderful pianist and is looking forward to serving his new churches and making lasting memories.

We are very grateful that God has led the Cano family and Alvarez to the Texico Conference. It is our prayer that God will bless them greatly as they share their ministry gifts and their hearts.

—By Debby Márquez
Communication Director

Faith on Fire

God's Love Shines in Uncertain Times

CARLSBAD, N.M. – One evening in March 2020, Marisol Delgado was awakened by a knock on her door. It was her sister, Claudia, who had just received news that Marisol's house in Farmington, N.M., was on fire. Marisol and Claudia were currently in Carlsbad with their families during a temporary work engagement for their husbands. Marisol and her husband, Adrian, departed to Farmington as soon as they could, and they asked the Carlsbad Seventh-day Adventist Church members to pray for them. The eight-hour trip felt like an eternity and their only hope was that the fire had not been severe.

"While we were on the road, we thanked God that there was no one in the house," said Marisol. "My daughter often stayed there while we were away."

Marisol and Adrian were not prepared for what they saw when they arrived at their house. As they stood there in shock, a firefighter handed them something.

"He told me that this was one of the few things that had survived the fire," said Marisol. "It was the Bible that my husband had received on the day of his baptism. At that moment I felt God was reassuring me, it seemed that He was telling me that He was there with us and that everything was going to be OK," said Marisol.

During the months after the fire, Marisol and her family learned that someone had set the fire intentionally. They also found out that their home insurance plan did not cover personal property damage.

"It is hard to lose everything and have to start from scratch," said Marisol. "But there was no doubt in our minds that God was with us and that things work for good for those who love Him."

The Delgados and the Carlsbad church family continued to pray for the situation and were thrilled to learn in August that the insurance company had reviewed their case and had decided to pay them for their total loss.

"Words cannot express my gratitude," said Marisol. "We have experienced a difficult year, but God remains in control. He loves us beyond measure. I do not know what problem you may be facing but believe me when I say that God is good. He will never leave you, all you have to do is claim His promises."

————— *By Jonathan Gonzalez, Pastor*



Answering the Call

Church Raises Visibility by Donating Blood

ALBUQUERQUE – Heeding the call for more blood donations in Albuquerque and for the greater New Mexico area, the Albuquerque Heights Seventh-day Adventist Church hosted two recent blood drives.

In partnership with Vitalant Blood Service Providers, a non-profit organization that provides blood and blood services across the United States, donation goals were met or exceeded at both drives. Donors from throughout Albuquerque, including Heights church members, turned out to make these drives a success.

Raising the visibility of the church in the surrounding community, providing a necessary service for the citizens of New Mexico and following the compassionate ministry of Jesus to those in need has been a community service goal for the Heights church in 2020.

Vitalant Blood Service Providers and the Heights church, along with its members, have pledged to continue their partnership to work together to meet future needs.

—————*By Antonio Cano, Pastor*



Choosing Him

One Young Man Commits His Life to Jesus

RATON, N.M. – With all of the challenges that we encountered last year, it has been incredible to find resourceful methods to adapt. For example, conducting Bible studies through video chats proved to be a blessing, especially for one young man from the Raton Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In early 2020, Will Warder, 12, expressed interest in taking Bible studies and baptism. We were looking forward to studying together; however, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented us from meeting in person. Fortunately, the Tex-

ico Conference Youth Department began to provide weekly virtual programs through Zoom. Will quickly became an active participant. Will and I were able to start doing our own Bible studies through Zoom and we met weekly to dig into the Bible. Each time, we had great discussions and Will always wanted to be sure he understood the topic and asked questions to gain a deeper understanding of God's Word.

When we reached the end of our studies, I asked Will why he wanted to get baptized.

He said, "At first I wanted to get baptized because I knew I wanted to commit my life to Jesus. But now I realize that I not only want to be in a committed relationship with Jesus, but I also know that Jesus is coming soon. I want to serve Him and share the Gospel with others."

Will was baptized at the Raton church on Oct. 3, 2020. With so much uncertainty in our world, it was amazing to see a young man be so decisive about his dedication to Jesus.

—————*By Isai Ramírez, Pastor*



Classified Ads

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MISCELLANEOUS

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Obituaries

Baker, Rita Massey, born Nov. 28, 1934, Gypsy, Okla.; died Oct. 10, 2020, Tulsa, Okla. Church membership: Bristow Seventh-day Adventist Church. Preceded in death by parents, Orville and Evan Massey; sister Orvilene Schaublin; grandson Nicolas Hyde. Survivors: husband, Johnnie Baker of Bristow, Okla.; sister, Doris Turnbull of Gypsy, Okla.; three daughters



Ruby Edwards, age 94 of Malvern, Ark. died Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2019, asleep until Jesus comes. She was born in Malvern, Ark. on July 10, 1925, the daughter of the late Lewie Newt and Verna Ellen Shockey. Ruby's religious faith was Seventh-day Adventist. Her grandparents accepted the Adventist faith in 1873 while homesteading on the prairies of Lincoln, Neb. They moved to Malvern in 1886 and established the local Malvern Seventh-day Adventist Church. Ruby continued to follow in their Christian outreach, witnessing and serving her fellow man. She was an elementary school teacher. Most of her career was in the Adventist parochial school system. She taught in Malvern, Benton and Hot Springs, Ark., Carlsbad, N.M., and Bourbon, Mo. She did volunteer work, delivered Meals on Wheels and helped those in need. Ruby was a lover of nature and travel. She enjoyed knitting, gardening, and camping. She was involved in prison ministries with her second husband, C. L. Bozema two days a month. Ruby was also preceded in death by siblings Twila, Floy, Claude, Johnny and Jack Shockey; her husband of 50 years, Roy H. Edwards and their infant son, Doyle Roy; and second husband, C. L. Bozeman. Left to cherish her memory are her two children, Twila Walker (Henry) of Malvern, Ark. and Ralph Edwards (Donna) of White Hall; three grandsons, Clay Walker, Andy Edwards and Chris Stephens and three great-grandchildren. In 2009, Ruby went to live in the Alzheimer's Unit at Arbor Oaks. The funeral service was officiated by Ron Ray, pastor.



and their spouses: Sylvia (Osman) of Broken Arrow, Okla.; Rebecca Johns (Judd) of Bristow, Okla.; and Laura Weber (Tom) of Bristow, Okla.; and seven grandchildren

Beem, Jerry D., born Oct. 5, 1932, Little Rock, Ark.; died Sept. 8, 2020, Oklahoma City, Okla. Church membership: Summit Ridge Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Jerry served 40 years of distinguished service to God—most recently in the Southwestern Union Conference. Preceded in death by parents, Arthur and Albertine Beem; and his first wife, Margaret Lucille Beem. Survivors: four children, Cindy Hiday, Jereilyn Moench, Arthur Beem and Alan Beem; second wife, Myrta Rivera Beem, and 12 grandchildren.



Evelyn LaDell Fisher died at her home southeast of Bristow, Okla., on Nov. 16, 2020, at the age of 90. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, a service celebrating her life will take place at a later date. She was born to Leo and Ruby Kinder on Dec. 8, 1929, in Clovis, N.M., where her father directed the literature evangelism work. She was also the

granddaughter of early Oklahoma Seventh-day Adventist minister, Clifford Dart. The Kinder family eventually settled in Vinita, Okla., where they operated a cookie shop. She attended school at Ozark Adventist Academy, near Gentry, Ark. and Southwestern Junior College in Keene, Tex. She met Russell Fisher during her school years, and they married June 27, 1948 in Vinita. After marriage, they settled on the Fisher farm close to Slick, Okla., where Russell raised cattle and farmed. LaDell became a farm wife and a mother of five. She gardened, canned, sewed, cooked and cleaned. But she never lost sight of her calling. LaDell was a dedicated mother who patiently strove always to raise her children to love God.

For LaDell, the central pillar of life was God and her strong faith. Precious morning times with God led to a life aglow with love and service. Her life continually changed to be more and more God-like, and this example before them had a powerful effect on her children and those around her. She was a woman of sterling character and impeccable integrity, yet tender and generous, kind and helpful. LaDell was known for her smiles and faithfulness. She and Russell were charter members of the Bristow Seventh-day Adventist Church and remained active there until the mid 1970s when they were instrumental in establishing a Seventh-day Adventist Church in Okmulgee, Okla. LaDell was also a strong promoter and supporter of Christian education and the Bristow Adventist School. She worked with Pathfinders for many years. She gave Bible studies, taught classes and was enthusiastic about healthful living. LaDell was preceded in death by her husband of 54 years, Russell Fisher, her parents, two brothers, one sister and one son-in-law. She is survived by one sister, one brother, her five children: Howard Fisher and his wife Edwina; Frances Cook and her husband Michael; Myrna Anderson; Lois Matthews and her husband Kenneth; and Kenneth Fisher and his wife Debby; as well as 19 grandchildren and 28 great-grandchildren.

Bessey, Anne, born Sept. 15, 1940; died July 2020, Jefferson, Tex.

Bishop, Chelsea Rae, born Jan. 10, 1994, McAlester, Okla.; died Sept. 27, 2020, Kansas City, Mo. Church membership: Antlers Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Hackaway, Betty, born Sept. 25, 1944; died June 19, 2020, Harrah, Okla. Church membership: Summit Ridge Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Hoskins, Donald, born Aug. 20, 1930, Loyal, Okla.; died Sept. 25, 2020, Keene, Tex. Church membership: Alvarado Seventh-day Adventist Church. Survivors: wife, Carrie Robinson Hoskins of Keene, Tex.; son, Terry Hoskins (Sharan) of Keene, Tex.; daughters, Debbie Dodd and Wynona Beucler (John) both of Cleburne, Tex.; a brother, a sister, 10 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Owen, Gary, born Sept. 26, 1945, Ardmore, Okla.; died Aug. 11, 2020, Ardmore, Okla. Preceded in death by his parents, Faydene and Roy (Buck) Thomas, Jr.; sister, Judy Henderson; brothers, James (Slick) Thomas, Bill Thomas and Pete Thomas. Survivors: sister, Glenda (Charles) Henderson; brother, Wayne (Lenabeth) Musgrove; sister, Betti Taube; friends, Charles (Barbara) Dunlap and Ray Dewberry.

Seery, Becki DePas, born Feb. 10, 1958, St. Joseph, Mich.; died Oct. 19, 2020, Alvarado, Tex. Church membership: Keene Seventh-day Adventist Church. Survivors: husband,

Kenneth Seery; sons, Nathan (Pam) Seery; Larry (Alex) Seery; Tony (Bethany) Seery; Alan Seery; sisters, Shirley (Jim) Davis; Lynn (David) Ripley; Lori (Paul) Moore; Angel DePas; brother, Laddie DePas; and a host of grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

Shaw, Latrelle, born May 11, 1933, Cheek, Okla.; died Oct. 23, 2020, Canyon, Tex. Church membership: Amarillo Seventh-day Adventist Church. Preceded in death by parents, George and Annabelle Morgan Shaw; and wife, Janette Davis. Survivors: daughters, Lee Ann Shaw and Bekah (David) Sellers; son, Bill (Amber) Shaw; brothers, George Shaw and Bennett Shaw; sisters, Gayle Miramontez, Linda Roberts, Lorelle Ward and Judy Dowd; nine grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren.

Thurman, Jo, born Oct. 8, 1934. Church membership: Antlers Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Webster, Lee Roy, born July 22, 1954, Snow, Okla.; died Nov. 4, 2019. Church membership: Antlers Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Hinkle, Georgia B. (Haffner), born Feb. 14, 1926, Hitchcock, Okla.; died Nov. 1, 2020, Kingfisher, Okla. Church membership: Okeene Seventh-day Adventist Church. Preceded in death by parents, John and Beatrice Haffner; husband, Willis; brother, Wesley Haffner; sister, Hulda Means and grandson, David May. Survivors: daughters, Mary May and Virginia Edsall; four grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

A POWER STRONGER THAN WITCHCRAFT

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Read, Barbara Harris, born Oct. 26, 1936, Henderson, Tex.; died Nov. 9, 2020, Longview, Tex. Church membership: Henderson Seventh-day Adventist Church. Preceded in death by parents, Bryan and Esther (Craig) Harris; husband, Wallace Read and brother, Donald C. Harris. Survivors: her children, Carol (George) Woerndle of Red River, N.M. and Dr. Jeff (Beth) Jones of Longview, Tex.; grandchildren, Daniel (Julia) Madewell, Dr. Travis Jones, Rebecca (Patrick) Marsh and Caroline Jones and fiancé Matt Stewart; four great-grandchildren; as well as a host of nieces, nephews.

GROW in the
grace and knowledge
of our Lord and Savior
Jesus Christ.

TO HIM
be glory both
now and forever!

AMEN.



2 PETER 3:18

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