

Record

July | August 2021

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Planting a Seed

Let the Little Children Come to Christ

Let the Little Children Come to Christ

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Record

July | August 2021
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Editor's Note

Matthew 19:14 says, "Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'" If the kingdom of heaven belongs to the little children, why not the churches on earth? What if we let the little children come...and pray and serve and preach and even lead! How can we teach the children in our churches about God's love and Christ's sacrifice, and also give them opportunities to be involved and lead out? How can we plant a spiritual seed, but also nurture growth?

In this issue, we take a look at the importance of creating environments to nurture children and their families, and we learn some concrete steps that we can take in our homes, churches and communities that will promote that growth. We also explore the ways that we can encourage young people to participate and lead in our churches through outreach programs, preaching and more. As you read, consider what steps you might take to help the spiritual growth of these little ones, and what lessons you might learn from observing their growing love for Jesus.

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Jessica L. Lozano

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Our Mission:

The Mission of the Southwestern Union is to equip and inspire the Southwestern Union territory with the distinctive Adventist message of hope and wholeness.

Planting a Seed

Let the Little Children Come to Christ



Carlos Craig | President

Christ makes a riveting statement in Matthew 19:14. The King James Version says: "Suffer the children, and forbid them not, to come unto me..." It's old English yet the message is clear. Jesus emphatically commands that we not drive away children and youth from His person or presence at any time for any reason! He uses children as accurate descriptions and embodiments of the kind of citizens He desires for His kingdom. Notice how He states that "theirs" is the kingdom of heaven.

If your quest is to live with God throughout eternity, then you must aim and strive to be as simple and transparent as a child. I am reasoning that the Lord is lauding the innocence of a child. The forgiving and forgetting spirit of a child. The child's ability to look beyond superficial differences, and to trust and to follow. Children are harmless and inoffensive, free from rancor, malice and judgment. They are born without sentiments of ambition and desires of aggrandizement.

It becomes strikingly evident as we read these passages that children are chosen by God, His special little people, the apple of His eye! It is a most precious thing to witness the work of the Holy Spirit upon their little hearts. Let us never dismiss, much less forget, the value of children and youth in God's eyes and their role in our Church and in the kingdom of God.

Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world! That simple children's song reminds us that Jesus values and prioritizes children. Furthermore, He commands us to value and prioritize children too. Matthew 19:13-14 (NKJV) says, "Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'"

Perhaps the disciples felt that Jesus had limited time and energy not to be squandered on children; He had more important things to do. Jesus rebuked His disciples for suggesting that children were less important to the kingdom of God. No one should hinder nor neglect the children that Jesus loves. In fact, we should be intentionally creating opportunities to bring children to Jesus. In her book *Testimonies on Sabbath School Work*, Ellen G. White says, "Never rest till every child in your class is brought to the saving knowledge of Christ." Southwestern Union Children's Ministries Director Sonia Canó shares five practical steps in helping children to grow in Jesus: teach them to pray daily; teach them what to do about guilt; teach them to grow through Bible study; teach dependence on Jesus and help them to serve. May God bless us as we become a blessing to His children.



**Stephen Brooks
Executive Secretary**



John Page | Treasurer

I love the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000. The story has so many lessons—first the power of Jesus healing anyone in the crowd that needed healing. Then, as the day goes on, He is teaching and wants to feed the people. He tests His disciples about how the people can be fed. John 6:8-9 says, "Another of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, 'Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?'" I find it interesting that out of 5,000 people only a child came prepared. What if Andrew would have overlooked the boy? Do we sometimes overlook the potential of the kids in our churches?

As a church one of the most important goals we should have is to help children in our churches develop a relationship with Jesus. We should also find ways to give leadership early and often to our young people. I am thankful that my local church recently asked my 11-year-old daughter to be involved with the video ministry in our church. We need to get our kids involved—they will feel more connected and a part of our church. Matthew 19:14 says, "Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'" Jesus can do amazing things when we allow His children to lead out and be involved in ministry.

Let the Little Children Come

Empowering the Youngest in Discipleship and Ministry



People often think that Children's Ministries only serves or reaches out to children. I have the privilege and responsibility to minister to parents, leaders and children. I have been involved with Children's Ministries for 41 years, seven of them in leadership at the Southwestern Union.

My passion is helping parents in the labor of educating children for heaven. It's a joy to encourage leaders in this ministry, providing ideas, resources and workshops to help them be successful in their homes and churches. I believe the most important element in Children's Ministries is teaching each child about Jesus and His plans for their life.

Discipleship describes the process of growth in Christ; it's a posture of learning, a relationship, devotion, journey, a new perspective. It is the Spirit-imbued life.

We must not fool ourselves into thinking that discipleship can only begin in adulthood. As soon as children learn to walk, talk and read, they can learn about the love of Jesus and begin their discipleship process. I've found the *Children's Ministry Manual*, formerly *Children's Ministries Ideas and Techniques that Work*, to be very helpful for leaders in this ministry. It outlines five steps to help children grow in Jesus, and discipleship is growth in Christ.

GROWTH IN CHRIST

Teach Them To Pray Daily. I think this is one of the most precious privileges we have. Whether you're the parents at home, leader at church or teacher in Christian school, you are able to share with them powerful Bible promises about prayer and feed their faith with moving Bible stories of prayerful people.

Teach Them What To Do About Guilt. This is one of the greatest needs, especially for our primary and preteen kids. The enemy uses guilt to keep us away from God's grace and love. Our children need to know that Jesus loves them and that He takes away those feelings when we ask for forgiveness. Affirm that He loves to listen to us no matter the situation.

Teach Them To Grow Through Bible Study. We are so blessed to have the GraceLink curriculum (GraceLink.net) for children's Sabbath School. It includes a Bible lesson for every week, memory verses and happy worship songs designed for each age group and learning style. All adults need to do is take a few minutes to read, study and share the Word of God with our little ones—the Holy Spirit will do the rest! Parents and caretakers, don't forget to take the kids to Sabbath School!

Teach Dependence On Jesus. Sounds easy, right? Even adults often have a hard time doing this. Kids need to know that trying to make good choices on our own doesn't work, but we can make good choices with God's help—asking Him every day to show us the best way to live.

Help Them To Serve. You and I bear witness about Jesus' love in what we say and do. Service is love in action. Like everything else in life, we learn at home first. It is important to teach kids how to serve at home in the family. This will prepare them to serve at school, at church and in the community.

LOVE IN ACTION

Teaching kids to serve can begin with simple activities or projects such as helping to set the table before meals, learning to fold laundry, participating in chores and helping other family members with their tasks. Talk to them about the importance of these simple acts of service. Celebrate with them with a big thank you or affirmation, letting them know they are serving with love. In her book *Christ's Object Lessons*, Ellen G. White shares, "Parents should teach their children the value and right use of time. Teach them that to do something which will honor God and bless humanity is worth striving for. Even in their early years they can be missionaries for God."

At school, teachers have a unique opportunity to put together teams to serve. There is nothing better than friends helping and serving together. One opportunity is through the ministry

of song and music. Ellen G. White says in her book *Christian Service*, "Students who have learned to sing sweet gospel songs with melody and distinctness, can do much good as singing evangelists. They will find many opportunities to use the talent that God has given them in carrying melody and sunshine into many lonely places darkened by sorrow and affliction, singing to those who seldom have church privileges."

The ministry of song is not only genuine but powerful. In my experience, every time we've taken children singing and visited the elderly, they light up the room. Everyone is smiling, eyes are bright and hands are moving in all directions. Joy! Simple joy! School teachers, church teachers, let's share this joy with others.

The best and safest way to serve your community is to invite the whole family to serve. This could be serving at the food bank, cleaning a park near your church or preparing back to school packages for kids in need. Check with the community services department of your church for ways to involve kids in their projects in a way that is fun and educational.

ENGAGED IN CHURCH

My favorite Sabbath at church is Children's Sabbath. This is celebrated on the first Sabbath in October across the North American Division. Resources are available for download for free that include a full program, ideas and tips for celebrating children in your local church.

I love to see little ones at the door greeting us. They proudly put the church bulletin in our hands, saying "Happy Sabbath!" With happy voices and big smiles, deacons and deaconesses in training are ready to serve, paying attention to the adult leader to guide them to do a perfect job for Jesus. They can't wait to serve at church.

The praise team is usually made up of sweet voices, ready to praise God. They lead out singing and invite us to sing with them. I don't know about you, but this is heaven for me! The sermon is often presented not by one or two but three or more kids. The time and dedication that the Children's Ministries leaders put into this is evident. The children speak clearly, read portions of the Bible and even tell stories to make us understand the message of the day.

How can children serve at church? There are many ways! Children's Sabbath is just one way to start. For more information on this special day visit ChildMin.org. Can you provide even more opportunity and the training for children to serve in church? Children attend church weekly and are often eager to get involved, if only someone would just invite them.

In the Southwestern Union, our goal is to help children know, love and follow Jesus. May the Holy Spirit guide you in making little disciples of Jesus! He is coming soon! Heaven is waiting! Let's work together to be ready for it. **11**

By Sonia Canó. Canó is the Children's Ministries Director for the Southwestern Union.

Church for Everyone

11 Ways to Engage Your Kids and Families in Ministry

By Allison Casillas, Arlington Seventh-day Adventist Church Children's Ministries Pastor

As a church, we want our kids to grow in relationships with Jesus. We want them to know that God loves them and that there is a place for them within His family. Sometimes it is hard to communicate these things to kids in effective ways. In my experience as an educator and principal, and now as a pastor, I've found the following approaches to be effective in reaching and engaging kids and their families in ministry. We want to partner with families in a way that acknowledges their everyday lives while helping them to become more intentional at home and more connected to a community of faith. We want every child to feel loved and secure within the body of Christ.



Creating an Environment

Well-decorated rooms and intentionally-themed programs are wonderful. Kids feel valued when there is a unique environment that they recognize is for them.

1

If Vacation Bible School (VBS) is the annual evangelistic event for your children's ministry program, go all out with the whole church. Make VBS a part of your corporate worship and don't be afraid to disrupt even the platform look for this special time.

2

It's great when kids are able to participate in the creation of their space. Whether they choose colors, set-up classroom verses and themes or create artwork for display, kids' engagement in the process creates a sense of belonging.

Make It Real

People struggle when the things they learn don't have a practical tie to their everyday lives. This is why it is so important to involve kids in what the body of Christ looks like in action.

3

The most important environment we can create in a church is a relational one where kids feel like they are important and are active participants in what they experience. Kids can do anything if we'll take the time to train them. Whether it's running media, taking offering or being a greeter, trusting kids to use the talents the Spirit has given them has an impact on how they see both the church and God.

4

Give kids experiences that allow them to put themselves in someone else's shoes and see things from other perspectives. Gathering toys and Bibles for migrant children or supplies for the homeless engages kids with people whom God loves but with whom they might not otherwise have the chance to interact.

5

Put kids in charge of creating their own worship experiences. Be flexible. You may end up with something completely different than what you've done before, but it will be an expression of worship in which the kids are interested and personally invested.

Ask the Right Question

If our primary worry is about "what" we're teaching kids, we may be blind to what they are already learning or missing out on. "How are we teaching them?" is often-times the more pertinent question. What are the things they should be experiencing that will set them up for how they will process faith as adults? If we focus on telling kids the correct things about Jesus rather than helping to discover Him themselves, there's a good chance that they're going to miss the point.

6

Don't ignore activity-based learning. Kids need a tangible experience to launch their understanding. The Bible is full of this kind of learning (the sacrificial system, Pass-over, baptism, the Lord's Supper, etc.). For example, a family-oriented communion or anointing can be a powerful experience for both parents and kids.

7

Teach kids in a way that builds critical thinking. Be intentional in modeling how to ask questions that lead not just to intellectual understanding, but also to emotional understanding and empathy. Remember, the Bible story isn't really over until kids have the tools to know what to do with it—until they are able to find out how it applies to their life.

8

Listen to kids' questions and answers (both their own answers to questions they ask and answers peers might provide). Discuss the thought processes together. Don't just provide the "correct" answer. Help them to grow and be willing to learn from them.

Partnering with Parents

Most people's first thought when they begin working in Children's Ministries is probably not, "I'm here to partner with parents!" But maybe it should be. The reality is that no one has more influence in the life of a child than a parent. This is part of God's design and yet it is not always something that we take into consideration when we develop our children's ministries strategies.

9

Design some of your worship experiences to be family oriented rather than drop-off or age grouped. Have kids lead out not only in elements like prayer and music, but also involve them in planning or delivering the message creatively.

10

Set up programs so that families can engage in experiential learning and conversation and grow together. "Messy Church" is a good example of this type of program. At the Arlington Seventh-day Adventist Church, "Messy Church" is a once-monthly time when families come together to enjoy being together, making things together, eating together and celebrating God together through His Word, through music and through prayer. It is a worshiping community of all ages, centered on Christ—giving people a chance to express their creativity and have fun within a church context.

11

Ask parents about areas where they are struggling, where they need ideas or guidance, and help provide resources that support them in their parenting journey. This may be expert speakers, books and other media, or simply connecting them to other families within the community who can walk the parenting road together. 





Lessons from Little Ones

Youth Encouraged to Share the Gospel from the Pulpit

Out of the mouth of babes. Last November, for the very first time, eight young people ages nine to 18 joined in a youth challenge unlike any other in the Oklahoma Conference: a challenge to preach the word of God. This event, called the “iPreach 4 Him” challenge, was live-streamed over the Oklahoma Conference Facebook page, gaining over 1,000 views. In addition, several young people responded by asking how they, too, could get involved in preaching.

Oklahoma Conference Youth Director Daniel Ortega and then Oklahoma Conference Children’s Ministries Director Yesenia Ortega, a husband and wife team, felt blown away by the response. They immediately scheduled a second event for Spanish-speaking churches that took place in February 2021. Yet, this time, even more youth requested to get involved after watching the challenge online.

“I had no idea how many kids were interested in and passionate about preaching,” said Yesenia. “It was an eye opener to see... God is working in them and we need to provide preaching opportunities for them.”

The challenge will now be held as a regular event in the Oklahoma Conference. Each year there will be two challenges, one in English and one in Spanish. In the future, the events will be held in person, if possible.

“We want to see kids get excited about preaching and about sharing God’s word,” said Daniel. “This is an opportunity to empower our young people. They are learning about their relationship with Christ.”

The inspiration for this event came from Daniel and Yesenia’s nine-year-old son, Isaac. One day, without any prompting, Isaac approached his parents with a very serious invitation. He announced, “We are going to have a family worship program and I’m in charge. Please come.”

“We don’t typically do an entire service for family worship,” said Daniel, explaining that their family worship is usually fairly simple. Yet, when they gathered together that night, Isaac not only prepared a sermon, but he also planned out an opening song, a scripture reading and a skit which he performed with his 12-year-old brother, Benjamin.

This inspired the Ortega family. They wanted to see if other children were also interested in preaching and they wanted to discover new ways to empower youth in ministry. Now, with two “iPreach 4 Him” challenges complete, they are even more enthusiastic about creating opportunities for this type of mentorship and discipleship. “We need to be intentional about mentoring children and helping them through the process,” said Daniel. “If we are intentional about helping them to succeed, it will help inspire and encourage them to continue.”

The two events garnered participation from a total of 14 children and teens. Their names, ages and the churches they represented are listed on the opposite page. The youth in the first challenge preached on the parables of Jesus. The youth in the second challenge preached on encounters with Jesus. Daniel’s oldest son, Benjamin, hosted the events with the help of his father. In addition, four Conference and Union pastors served as judges, giving feedback and encouragement.

Each participant received an Amazon gift card and the first, second and third place participants received trophies. In the first event, Isaac, Daniel and Yesenia’s son and one of the youngest of the participants, earned first place.


“You know what? I was not even thinking that would happen,” said Yesenia. “I told Isaac, ‘This is not about winning. It’s about participating. At the end of the day, it’s not a competition. It’s about you wanting to preach and follow what God’s asking you to do. Try not to be disappointed if

you don't win.' And I told Daniel, 'Please don't be a judge!' If Isaac did win, I didn't want him to feel like he only won because his father was the judge. I wanted it to be fair. I'm really proud of him."

"I was kind of nervous and excited at the same time," said Isaac. "I talked about how the foolish man built his house on the sand and the wise man built his house on the rock."

In the second event, 18-year old Marvin Arodi Lopez Barrientos earned first place. "I'm from Honduras and when I was 12 my mom taught me a lot about the Bible and how to preach," said Marvin. "So, when I heard that I had a chance to preach in Oklahoma, I said, 'I want to do it.' God can do great things with us if we let Him. I have learned that we must give Him all our lives in service to do His work."

To build off this event, Daniel and Yesenia plan to create specific preaching and training opportunities for children. While these ideas are still in the preliminary planning stages, the Oklahoma Conference will soon offer even more support for the mentorship of young people in ministry.

"We are really making it an opportunity to minister to the kids," said Daniel. "Yes, the kids are ministering by preaching but, ultimately, by focusing on them and giving them the attention of something positive that is spiritual and Biblical in nature, they are being ministered to." 

By Makala James. James is a freelance writer based in North Texas. Watch the iPreach 4 Him sermons at [Facebook.com/OkAdventist/videos](https://www.facebook.com/OkAdventist/videos) and [Facebook.com/MinisterioHispanoOklahoma/videos](https://www.facebook.com/MinisterioHispanoOklahoma/videos).



iPreach 4 Him Participants

Katia Andino, 17

Bonham Spanish Mission Group (Texas)

Marvin Arodi Lopez Barrientos, 18

Oklahoma City Central Spanish Church

Emmanuel Bartolon, 17

Garnett Spanish Church

Derek Abraham Bello, 10

Midwest City Church

Eddy Devia, 13

Independence Spanish Church

Allen Gamas, 11

Tulsa Spanish Church

Daniel Orellana, 15

Three Angels Church

Isaac Ortega, 9

Oklahoma City Central Church

Samuel Osorio, 10

Edmond Church

Angel Perez, 9

Independence Spanish Church

Adam Plank, 17

Three Angels Church

Ramon Loyo Plata, 13

West Siloam Springs Church

Abraham Velasquez, 16

Independence Spanish Church

Alex Vasquez, 14

Durant Spanish Church



Leadership Camp

Mentoring and Empowering Young Leaders in Adventist Schools

By Becky St. Clair, Record Contributing Writer

Proverbs 22:6 is often quoted in Sabbath School rooms, parenting workshops and school atriums: “Start children off on the way they should go, and when they are old, they will not depart from it.” The Southwestern Union applies this concept intentionally in their work with young people.

“We want to train our student leaders to become as efficient as they can be, so they can share what they learn and become not only better leaders on their campuses, but also carry these qualities into college and life beyond,” explains Southwestern Union Director for Secondary Education Mike Furr.

As a high school student in the 1970s, Furr attended Leadership Camp, which today is still going strong. Leadership camp is a weekend-long training retreat for high

school students who are in leadership positions in Adventist schools in the Southwestern Union. Many students who attend Leadership Camp—such as Furr—later become leaders in the church, but Furr says it’s important to note that not all leaders are up front or carry business cards with fancy titles under their names.

a close relationship with God, following the examples of other successful leaders and being willing to put in the work to get things done. But they also strive to be those examples.

“We as leaders want to lead in a way that makes others want to follow in our footsteps,” Furr notes. “A good Christian leader is someone who can

effectively point people in the right direction in a Christ-like manner, with a willingness to serve.”

Furr also emphasizes that today’s young people are not only tomorrow’s leaders; they’re today’s leaders, too.

In her book *Gospel Workers*, Ellen

G. White wrote: “In order that the work may go forward in all its branches, God calls for youthful vigor, zeal, and courage.” In her book *Messages to Young People*, she said, “Preachers, or [laypersons] advanced in years, cannot have one-half the influence upon the young people that the youth...can have upon their associates.”

“We should not just allow our youth to lead, but encourage them to do so,” Furr states. “We as current leaders need to become ‘guides by the side, rather than sages on the stages.’ We must be willing to serve and support, pointing others to Jesus all the while. Because He, the ultimate leader, lived to serve. And so should we.”

EMPOWER YOUNG LEADERS

“No matter where they are or what their occupation may be, chances are they’ll be a leader of some kind,” he explains. “It may be in a specific role at church, on the job, or within their community, but more often than not, it means someone leading quietly and gently through the way they live.”

So what makes a leader a good Christian leader, and how do you foster those characteristics in young people? Furr says some of the topics covered at events like Leadership Camp are listening, service,



Vegan Vanilla Spelt Donuts

Quick and Fun Treats That the Whole Family Can Bake and Enjoy Together

Recipe and photos by Ashley Melillo of BlissfulBasil.com

These vegan vanilla spelt donuts offer a delicious dose of cheery fun to morning dining! Requiring just 30 minutes of time, these baked donuts come together in a flash. Super soft, fluffy and spring-y vanilla donuts are dipped in glaze and playfully decorated with rainbow sprinkles. Serves 12!

INGREDIENTS

2 cups spelt flour or all-purpose flour
 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
 1 teaspoon baking soda
 1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt
 3/4 cup plant-based milk
 1/2 cup organic cane sugar
 1/2 cup expeller-pressed grapeseed oil
 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
 2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar
 Glaze + Topping
 2 cups powdered sugar, more if needed to thicken
 4 tablespoons plant-based milk, more or less as needed
 Vegan sprinkles

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350F. Lightly grease two small (or one large) donut trays.
2. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the spelt flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Add the milk, sugar, oil, vanilla, and vinegar and stir until incorporated. Do not over-mix.
3. Spoon or pipe the batter evenly into the prepared donut trays, gently smoothing as you go.
4. Bake for 13 to 17 minutes, or until golden, a toothpick inserted into one of the donuts comes out clean and the sides of the donuts begin to pull away from the pan. (My oven bakes these in 15 minutes flat.)
5. Let cool for 5 minutes in pans. Meanwhile, place a sheet of parchment paper under a wire cooling rack. Carefully remove the donuts from the pans and transfer to the cooling rack.
6. Cool completely. When the donuts are nearly cool, prepare the glaze.
7. In a medium shallow mixing bowl, whisk together the powdered sugar and milk until desired consistency is reached. Important: Start by adding 2 tablespoons of the milk and work your way up from there one tablespoon at a time until a very thick but pourable glaze consistency is reached. The total amount of milk needed will depend on a variety of factors, including the specific type of plant-based milk you use as well as the humidity level in the air.
8. One at a time, dip the top of each donut into the glaze. Note: If you find that your glaze is too thin, whisk in more powdered sugar until desired thickness is reached. If you find that it's too thick, whisk in more milk until the desired thinness is reached.
9. Transfer to the cooling rack and generously top with sprinkles. Repeat.
10. Allow the glaze to set completely before moving.
11. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to three days.

Find more delicious vegan and vegetarian recipes at BlissfulBasil.com.



A Fascinating Flickering

When I was nine years old, my mom told me to not play with or blow out the candle that sat in the middle of our house. I loved being the one who got to light the candle with a match or lighter because it made me feel like a grown-up. But one Saturday afternoon, as mom was going to take a nap, she told me not to mess with that candle!

I agreed, but when she went to lay down, I tip toed over to the table where the candle was sitting, flickering away. The magnificent glow of the flame was so captivating. At first I was just admiring the view; but then I thought, "Maybe I should blow it out." My thinking was, "If I'm not going to be monitoring it, then it probably shouldn't keep burning." So I inhaled the biggest amount of air I possibly could and blew out the candle. "AHHHHHHH!" I screamed. The hot wax from the candle had splattered all over my face. I was so scared. Panicked, I ran to my mom's room crying. I woke her up screaming and crying. I could feel the wax hardening on my skin!

She calmly got up and we rushed to the bathroom, where she washed off my face. She had tried to tell me not to play with the candles. But I didn't listen—I did it anyway. I looked at her repentantly and said, "I'm so so sorry."

Even though I disobeyed her, my mom was calm. She showed me love and forgave me. How was it so easy for her to forgive me even though I disobeyed

her so quickly? How was she so calm in this situation when I was completely freaking out!?

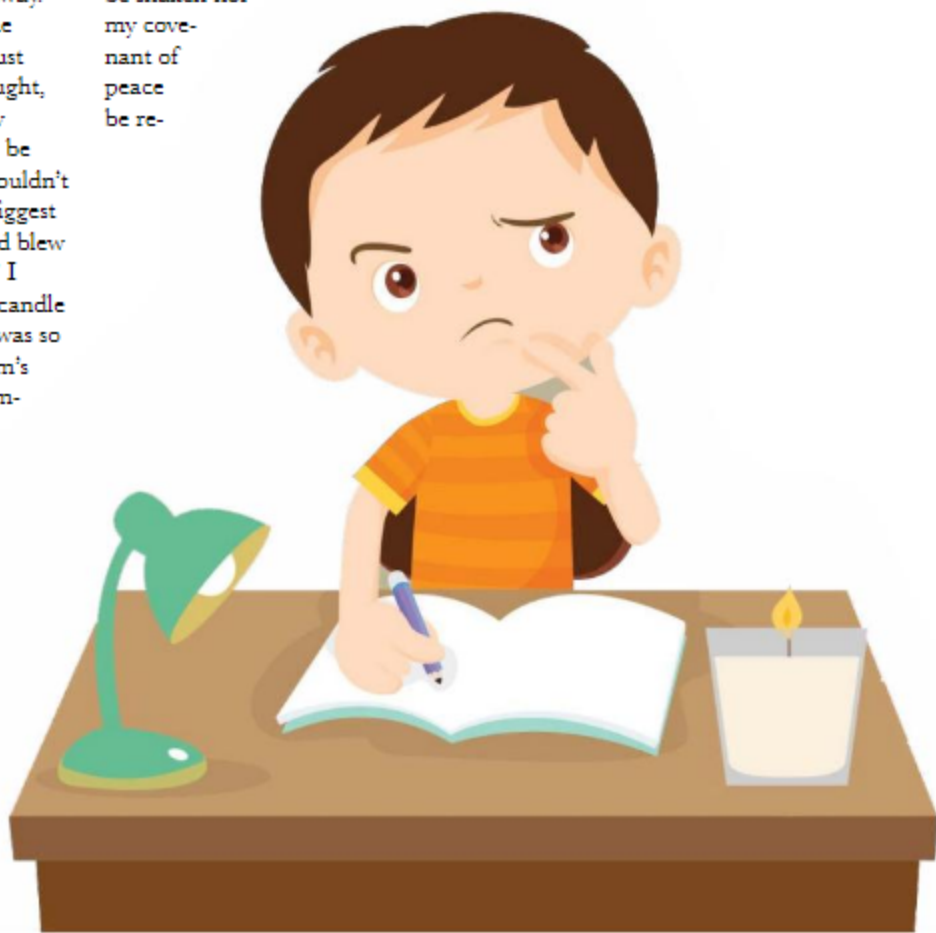
This was one of the first times I started to understand what God's love was really like, through my mom. The love she showed me went beyond anything I could comprehend.

Isaiah 54:10 says, "Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be re-

moved," says the Lord, who has compassion on you."

No matter what mistakes we make, we know that God's love will always be abundant! He will be there ready to forgive us and help us clean up our messes.

By Zack Posthumus, Record Designer



July Events

June 27-July 2 9-17

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference: Tween Camp, Camp Yorktown Bay, Mountain Pine, Ark.
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Oklahoma Conference: Camp Meeting, Wewoka Woods Adventist Center
OkAdventist.org/campmeeting

4-5

Independence Day Holiday: Conference and Union offices closed.

4-9

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference: Teen Camp, Camp Yorktown Bay, Mountain Pine, Ark.
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11-16

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference: Family Camp, Camp Yorktown Bay, Mountain Pine, Ark.
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23-25

Oklahoma Conference: Spanish Camp Meeting, Wewoka Woods Adventist Center
OkAdventist.org

August Events

2-5

Southwestern Union: Teacher's Convention, Round Rock, Tex.
KAmparan@swuc.org

For more events and information, visit SouthwesternAdventist.org.



He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in His arms, He said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."

Mark 9: 36-37

New Executive Secretary

Southwest Region Conference's Stephen Brooks Joins Union



BURLESON, TEX. – On April 25 Stephen Brooks, formerly the executive secretary for the Southwest Region Conference, was elected to serve as executive secretary and public affairs and religious liberty director at the 31st Constituency Session of Southwestern Union.

“It’s truly an honor to be chosen to serve the Lord in the Southwestern Union in this capacity, and I’m humbled to take on this role under God’s guidance and direction. I look forward to working with the Southwestern Union and conferences as we work together

to finish the work that the Lord has set before us. I thank those who have come before us, who have laid the groundwork for where we are today in this ministry,” says Brooks. Brooks shared his gratitude for the work of his predecessor, Buford Griffith, Jr., as he takes on this new role.

Brooks was born in Spring Valley, N.Y., and raised in Anderson, S.C. As a young man, God gave him opportunities to become a leader in his local church as a youth and young adult, serving in nearly every position of the local church, including Adventist Youth leader, deputy Pathfinder director, Sabbath School teacher, personal ministries leader, treasurer, deacon and elder. He has also served as an officer for the Youth Federation. At the age of 23, he became the youngest first elder in the South Atlantic Conference at that time. He holds a master’s degree in business from Western Governors University and an undergraduate degree in religion from Southern Adventist University, having spent three years at Oakwood Adventist University.

Brooks pastored numerous churches for the South Atlantic and the Allegheny

West Conferences, and served as the youth director for the South Atlantic Conference.

Brooks served the Southwest Region as pastor of the Tenth Street Seventh-day Adventist Church in Oklahoma City, Okla. (now Voice of Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church) before being named Southwest Region Conference Executive Secretary in 2015.

As a pastor, he has been involved in community, civic and municipal organizations with the intent of improving the community, serving on the Interdenominational Ministers Alliances in most cities in which he has pastored. He has served as a member of a County Chamber of Commerce Committee. In 2012, Brooks was recognized by both the Oklahoma City and the Tulsa Interdenominational Ministers Alliance.

Brooks’ adult children include Eliot and Rachel, and his late daughter Stephanie. He has four grandchildren. Brooks is married to Kennetia and they reside in Desoto, Tex.

By Jessica Lozano, Editor

WM and Ministerial Spouses

Edna Leticia Craig Joins Southwestern Union

BURLESON, TEX. – Edna Leticia Craig is the new director for women’s ministries and ministerial spouses. Craig holds a master’s degree in early childhood education from the Universidad de Montemorelos. She was a teacher and pediatric case manager in California before serving as the Texas Conference youth department administrative assistant in 2000.

In 2009, she became the administrative assistant for accounts payable, treasury and risk management. In 2011, she added the position of director of ministerial spouses.

Craig assisted in women’s ministries events in Texas, including annual English and Spanish retreats. “I pray that we will be able to minister to women in unique and creative ways. I look forward to collaborating with the conference ministerial spouses’ team in order to support them in their important role,” says Craig.

She is married to Carlos Craig and they reside in Cleburne, Tex. They have three adult children, Danette, David and Daphne, and three grandchildren.

By Jessica Lozano, Editor



VP for Multicultural Ministries

Oswaldo Rigacci Joins Union From Texas Conference



BURLESON, TEX. – At the 31st Constituency Session held April 25, Oswaldo Rigacci was elected to serve the Southwestern Union as vice president for multicultural ministries. He served as the vice

president for Hispanic ministries and Hispanic evangelism in the Texas Conference since 2019 and director of those departments since 2011.

Rigacci shared that he is humbled by this opportunity and that he will continue to serve God at the Southwestern Union with enthusiasm and dedication. He is committed to continuing the many contributions of his predecessor, Eduardo Canales.

He looks forward to working with the Southwestern Union administration and the leadership of its five conferences under the Lord's direction and wisdom in order to increase and expand God's kingdom, not only for growth and improvement, but to finish our commission and to be ready for Jesus' second coming.

Rigacci graduated with a bachelor's degree in theology from the Universidad Adventista del Plata in Argentina. He pastored several multi-church districts in Argentina, helped plant several churches and baptized more than 500 individuals. In 1988, Rigacci joined the Texas Conference, pastoring in McAllen, Dallas, Garland and Keene. He continued to plant churches, mentor new pastors and baptize several hundred members before being called to conference leadership.

Rigacci will complete his master's in pastoral ministry from Andrews University in August 2021. He is married to Monica and they have two adult children, Fernando and Anniella, and six grandchildren.

— By Jessica Lozano, Editor

VP for Church Ministries

Tony Anobile Joins Southwestern Union from NAD

BURLESON, TEX. – Tony Anobile, most recently vice president for the North American Division (NAD), is the new vice president for church ministries.

"I'm humbled and honored to serve the Southwestern Union, its conferences and members. I'm looking forward to partnering with our conferences and leadership to fulfill the gospel commission. It's all about kingdom growth. The way it's going to get done is to work together and I'm excited about the possibility," says Anobile.

Anobile joined the NAD in 2018, serving in the area of multilingual ministries. Prior to his appointment there, he served as a vice president for the Pacific Union and as president of the Arizona Conference.

He graduated with a bachelor's degree in theology from the Universidad de Montemorelos in 1986. He joined the Southern California Conference

working as a pastor, youth and young adult director, pathfinder director and assistant to the president. Anobile earned his master's degree in religion from Loma Linda University in 1993. He joined the Arizona Conference in 2003 as its youth and family ministries director and executive secretary before accepting the role of president in 2008.

As a youth and young adult director, Anobile says it was his passion to bring every young person into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. As a pastor, it was his desire to have every member involved in active ministry, and as an administrator it has been his mission to have every entity of the division/union/conference involved in three specific areas: bringing new members into the church through evangelism, keeping members in the church through Christian nurture, and keeping members healthy and active through involvement

in church and school. He also believes passionately in evangelism having conducted series in many countries as well as at home in North America.

Anobile is married to Lisa and they have three children, Tony, Aurianna and Andrew.

— By Jessica Lozano, Editor



Pathfinder Camporee

Register Now for the Union-wide Camporee, Oct. 28-31

BURLESON, TEX. – The 2021 Pathfinder Camporee is taking place at Lone Star Camp in Athens, Tex., on Oct. 28-31, 2021. Many have been eagerly waiting to see if the camporee would take place this year. While the Union had planned for this camporee to take place in April of this year at Lone Star Camp, the decision was made to postpone the event due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As things began to change and slowly open, we prayed, asking the Lord for guidance as we planned for a new date. We are so excited that we will be able to host the Union-wide camporee in its originally planned location this October.

I want every Pathfinder to know that it's their time to shine for Jesus Christ, it's their time to stand up for what is right, it's their time to give Bible studies,

it's their time to live for God! Our theme for this Camporee is: It's My Time.

The registration is now open and you can go to SWUCamporee.org to register your club. There, you will find the cost of regular registration for \$55 per camper until Sept. 16, 2021. After that date, the price will go up to \$70. Have your Pathfinder Club director register your club and purchase the tickets now to save money.

We are planning a dynamic worship experience that all five of our conferences can take a part in, from singing to drama presentation, to sermonettes by Pathfinders! Also, many honors are being planned and placed in the program. There will also be special event activities, such as horseback riding, a huge obstacle course and so much more that you will not want to miss.

What should you bring to camporee? You know you must bring a tent, and you can't put up the tent unless you bring yourself! We want your club to register right away. The first 500 Pathfinders who register will receive a free pin.

Please note that we are following the local and CDC healthcare guidelines for the state of Texas. We are planning a state-of-the-art nurse station. We believe in keeping our children safe and healthy, and we are doing everything to be as safe as possible.

Get ready, get ready, get ready for the It's My Time Camporee! Register today—I hope to see all of our Pathfinders very soon to worship and learn together!

*Helvis C. Moody,
Young Adult/Youth Director*



**SOUTHWESTERN UNION
PATHFINDER CAMPOREE**

★ OCTOBER 28-31, 2021
LONE STAR CAMP | ATHENS, TEXAS

★ REGISTRATION:
WWW.SWUCAMPOREE.ORG



The Success Closet

Union, SWAU and ACS Partner to Assist Students



KEENE, TEX. – Interviews are hard. I remember my first interview, and it was terrifying. My palms were sweaty; my voice was shaky and my heart was pounding in my chest. First-time interviews can be nerve wracking; there are many things to be worried about, but occupation-appropriate attire should not be one of them. This is why Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU), the Southwestern Union, our local conferences, and Adventist Community Services (ACS) have partnered together to launch “The Success Closet” at SWAU, with the mission of providing young professionals in need the wardrobe to dress for success.

We saw a need at SWAU, with many of our students not having the financial resources to purchase professional attire for interviews or for their first jobs. Then we began to realize that this need was not only limited to our campus, but the need exists in our local community.

“The Success Closet” will be open Sept. 20-23, 2021, which is the week

just prior to SWAU’s Annual Path Expo Career Fair. “The Success Closet” will be open to SWAU students, local community college students and the community. Interim President Ana Patterson is excited about this new initiative.

“Having access to professional attire provides a young adult with the confidence they need to pursue new career opportunities. We are looking forward to hosting ‘The Success Closet’ on campus and believe that this initiative serves not only the needs of our students but also our extended community,” says Patterson.

“The Success Closet” is not a private initiative; numerous local entities are teaming up to make this a community project. Helvis Moody, youth and young adult director for the Southwestern Union, shares his enthusiasm and support of the project: “The young adult department is encouraging all who are able to participate to do so! It’s exciting to see that a plan has been put in place to support young adults getting ready

for life outside of the university setting.”

Marshall Gonzales, director of Texas ACS says, “Our goal at Texas Adventist Community Services is to follow Jesus by being in the community and providing for those who are in need. This initiative has been a God-inspired dream of mine for some time, and I am glad to see it come to fruition.”

Adventist Community Services is currently accepting donations of new or like-new professional clothing for “The Success Closet.” Specifically, they are collecting dress slacks, dress shirts, professional blouses, men’s and women’s blazers, suits and dress shoes.

All are invited to participate in this ministry and can mail donations to: P.O. Box 35, Keene, Tex., 76059, or send packages to Southwestern Adventist University to the attention of Austen Powell at 100 West Hillcrest Street, Keene, Tex., 76059.

By Austen Powell

Giving More

A Young Alum's Success Story



KEENE, TEX.— The average financial advisor is 56 years old. Tony Seery, Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU) grad and a financial advisor with his own Edward Jones Investment office, is in his 20s. His experience at SWAU not only prepared him for success, but also solidified his faith in God. Now, Seery gives back to the university both financially and with his time as a member of the SWAU alumni board.

"I accepted the position because I want people my age to understand what SWAU is doing and why they should be involved," Seery says. "I want to give back in any way I can because I love this school."

As a third-generation SWAU alumnus, Seery graduated in 2015 with a Bachelor of Business Administration and a concentration in finance. Though he started his studies at community college and was offered a full ride at Texas Christian University, he chose to complete his degree at SWAU.

"I could have gotten an education elsewhere," he admits, "but I don't know if there's any better place in the world

I could have deepened my relationship with God."

In addition to finding spiritual mentors, Seery says the variety of people who taught his classes really gave him a broad perspective for his future. It was his Profiles of Entrepreneurship course that was not only his favorite, but that also led Seery to his current job.

One of the presenters that year was an Edward Jones financial advisor who talked about a training program they offered for seniors in college. Though he was a junior, Seery stayed behind to talk to her about it. The following year, she referred him to the home office to become a financial advisor.

"To be successful in this line of work, you have to have resiliency, determination and good work ethic," Seery says. "That, among other reasons, makes me so glad to have chosen SWAU for my education, because it was there that I learned and enhanced all of those things in myself... With the support of the people of SWAU, success is not only likely, but probable."

This is why Seery gives to SWAU.

Not only has he contributed to specific projects and to students who needed an extra boost in their finances to get them to graduation, but he has also given toward the general Southwestern Fund. In addition, Seery has recently started serving on the SWAU alumni board.

"When I think about what I've been given, it's God who's given me everything," he says. "I hope to continue to give more throughout my life, because I want to have a positive impact wherever I can."

Seery sees himself giving more not only financially, but also of his time. He hopes to eventually serve on the Board of Trustees and perhaps teach a finance class or two at some point.

"I just want to do more," he says. "I want to ensure more people can continue to have the same experience at SWAU as I did. I love the teachers; I love the leadership and I want to see it be even better than when I was a student. That's what giving to SWAU is to me—doing what I can to make a great thing even better."

By Becky St. Clair

Missions in the Midst of A Storm

Pursuing God's Calling While Navigating Life

KEENE, TEX. — Growing up immersed in the small, college-town life of Keene, Deanna Camacho felt comfortable in her choice to attend Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU). After all, that's what her friends were doing. Yet, it would take a category five hurricane in a different country for her to realize that SWAU was more than just a comfortable choice. For Camacho, the decision to study at SWAU was an active choice to follow God's calling in her life.

Spending the rest of her childhood in Keene made the town a familiar home. When it came time to attend college, she followed her friends and decided to stay local, pursuing a nursing degree at SWAU in 2013. At the time, all Camacho cared about was "having fun and living the college life."

Yet, after a few semesters, things didn't feel right to Camacho. At that time, she believed it was in her best interest to live in Puerto Rico with her grandfather and continue to pursue her nursing education there.

Little did she realize, a move to Puerto Rico could not have come at a more dangerous time. In 2017, Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico, destroying the island and leaving Camacho, along with many others, heartbroken. "I wouldn't have lived if it wasn't for God's protection," she says.

Due to the unfortunate storm, Camacho moved back to Keene in 2018 and felt she needed to change her path in life. Returning to SWAU, Camacho knew she wanted things to be different. This time, she chose to come back for herself, starting a new degree in Radio-TV-Film. Coming back, she says, "If God wasn't in control of my life, I wouldn't be where I am today."

Camacho also got involved with and got to know the members of Spiritual Life and Development (SLAD), where she learned more about what it means to be a student missionary.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Camacho felt that God was calling her overseas to be a student missionary. Camacho graduated from Southwestern Adventist University in August of 2020 with her Bachelor of Science degree in Communications with an emphasis in Radio-TV-Film. Soon after, Camacho packed her bags and left to follow God's calling in Korea where she currently teaches kindergarten.

Most, if not all, of her students do not come from a Seventh-day Adventist home. "Being able to teach them about God means the world to me and them wanting to know more keeps me going," she states.

Through this experience, Camacho has been able to gain a strong rela-

tionship with God and a better understanding of the workplace, and how to connect and network with people.

When Camacho returns, she plans to use the knowledge and passion she has gained as a student missionary to work hard and serve her community and hopefully one day own a film studio of her own.

Going through a major storm and learning to pursue God has put much in perspective for Camacho. She has seen God moving in her life as she stepped out of her comfort zone and will continue to lean on Him.

To learn about how SWAU integrates service across the learning experience, visit SWAU.edu/slاد.

By Kaitlyn Lively



Speak Wisely

Plant Words for the Future



Words are powerful! If you don't believe it, remember what the Bible says: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host. For He spoke, and it was done, He commanded, and it stood fast." Psalm 33:6, 9 (NASB). Indeed, words are significant. Words have moved nations to war. Words have comforted in times of loss and words have shaped the hearts of men and women for centuries.

And it is the power of words that become a seed in the hearts and minds of children. These words can either be for good or bad. One's choice of words and their tone will often shape the viewpoint and character of a child.

My grandfather was a great modeler of words. Words of encouragement. Words of kindness. Words of Jesus. Especially Jesus! He would often speak of the loveliness of Jesus. He would relate the stories of the Bible in such vivid words that I could imagine what it was as if I had been there.

Grandpa was never afraid to speak words that would cause you to think and ask questions. And when you would ask questions, he rarely would give you an answer; instead he would ask, "What would Jesus do?" And then we would look up Bible verses and discover the answer from the Bible. While it is true that many young children growing up want to be a doctor, fireman or policeman, my grandfather made such an impression on me that I heard the call to ministry at a very young age.

As a young minister, he gave me much encouragement through his words and his actions. He reminded me not to be worried about my youth, but keep looking to Jesus and keep following Him! Great counsel!

His words not only affected me but have been passed on to my sons and many other young folk along the way. I am enjoying in others what grandpa saw in me long ago.

The words of Paul to Timothy still make sense today. "Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith and your purity!" Timothy 4:12 (NLT).

May you also plant words of Jesus that will spring up in the lives of young folk, that will become the motivation to serve the Master for life.

By Richard C. Dye, Sr. President



Go, Grow and Multiply

An Incredible Time at South Louisiana Camp Meeting



HAMMOND, LA – Missing out on camp meeting last year because of the COVID-19 guidelines, we have continued to meet “virtually” as much as possible, but many have missed the in-person interaction. Once the governor lifted the restrictions on religious group meetings and we knew we could have 100 percent capacity in attendance, the Conference officers decided to move forward. Our South Louisiana Camp Meeting in mid-April was about to happen. It was a wonderful blessing to be together again at the Conference Convention Center in Hammond, La.

Although it poured down rain for several days leading up to and during the event, complicating preparations and leaving things very soggy, we had an incredible turnout. We even had a brave couple that set up their tent and camped on the grounds. There were nearly 300 guests counted in all and especially enthusiastic were the young people.

The young peoples’ tents were surrounded by a moat, due to the rains. However, wooden pallets left behind from recent supplies for our disaster relief team in that area were recycled to make a footbridge from the graveled lot through the “swamps.”

David Craig, Arkansas-Louisiana Conference youth director, had a tent full of youth/young adults who were excited to be involved. Joyce Fortner,

Arkansas-Louisiana Conference children’s ministries coordinator, led out in the Primary and Junior tent, under the theme “Where is Grace?” Retired pastor Don Fortner showed up dressed as Jesus to help answer that question. The Kindergarten tent showcased “Under the Sea” with the guidance of Regina Wilson and volunteers of Baton Rouge. Later, as the little ones looked up to see seahorses and stingrays and other fishy things in the “waters” overhead, they decorated their very own boats in which they sat and listened to lessons and even did exercises.

The overall theme of camp meeting was “Go, Grow and Multiply.” Southwestern Union Vice President (now Texas Conference President) Elton DeMoraes (pictured above, right) was the guest speaker, and the Holy Spirit empowered him with a timely call to action as we individually and corporately responded to the Lord’s commission and call to our hearts!

We were blessed by the actions of the Baton Rouge Pathfinders who, under Debbie Decker’s direction, organized sack lunches for Sabbath afternoon at a time when regulations kept us from making use of full-fledged cooking and serving facilities. It was a simple meal, but everyone was fed.

After lunch, DeMoraes again participated in the ordination of one of our



young pastors, Michael Cerda, currently with Zachary and Baton Rouge Seventh-day Adventist churches. Throughout the meetings we were blessed by the musical talents of many members, in particular Liz Mendoza, who provided special music. We had a couple of special numbers from Richard Dye, and Marjorie Belizaire graciously played the piano for the group singing. We finished the afternoon with a concert, “A Louisiana Homecoming,” pulling together the talent of many from the various churches. Notable were the children from New Iberia, who never fail to provide a couple of songs for our Louisiana camp meeting. E.J. Collins, pastor, was able to join us toward the end and give us a few songs on the piano.

We were introduced to two of our new pastors, Jerson Sical and Hillis Jeffries III, who have recently joined the team in Louisiana. Jonathan Escobar, who was unable to attend, is new to Hammond. We want to express our gratitude to all who helped make this camp meeting a success, especially those who worked behind the scenes. It was a joyous occasion. We know we will all be able to come together as a great big family upon Jesus’ return, but we are happy we were able to meet once again in South Louisiana.

By Frances Alcorn
Communication Director

Showing Appreciation

Pathfinders Provide Gift Bags to Local Sheriff's Office

MOUNTAIN VIEW, ARK. - The Mountain View Pathfinders' most recent community service project was to show their appreciation to the Stone County Sheriff's Office in Arkansas. Pathfinders first filled gift bags full of snacks and drinks. They included cards with an encouraging note and Bible verse that were signed by each of the Pathfinders. Then the gift bags were carried to all the county deputies in the Sheriff's office.

Chief Deputy Dammon McGilton welcomed the visit, noting that most days he and his staff need snacks on

hand in their vehicles. In fact, just the day before, he worked a very long shift without the opportunity to stop and eat for twelve hours. He sighed, "I wish I had one of these bags yesterday. I could have really used it."

McGilton then gave an unexpected tour around the department and certain portions of the jail. He spoke about the importance of making wise choices as a young person and his life as a deputy. Pathfinders also met other personnel of the department and investigators from the state police.

Most of the Mountain View Pathfinders have close relatives or friends who previously served as deputies in this same department and are aware of some of the challenges of law enforcement. Long hours, lack of food and drink and difficult situations can really take a toll. Pathfinders wanted to show their gratefulness for their incredible service to the community. This community service project turned into a memorable experience and the Pathfinders look forward to doing this project again.

By Esther M. Doss



I Send You!

Women's Ministries Sabbath in Heber Springs

HEBER SPRINGS, ARK. - The Heber Springs Seventh-day Adventist Church celebrated Women's Ministries Sabbath with the theme "I Send You!" Jennifer Graham led the service, sharing spiritual insights that God had given her. It was an uplifting Sabbath as she led the congregation in stories of women in the Bible. Despite the chaos going on in the world with the pandemic, God's workers are forging ahead with plans to share the gospel and the good news of our Savior's soon return.

By Judith Newton



From COVID to Converts

New Orleans First Church Baptizes 25



NEW ORLEANS - It was March 2020. We were less than four months away from evangelistic meetings at New Orleans First Seventh-day Adventist Church when I scheduled a board meeting in preparation for the meetings. However, the COVID-19 pandemic was beginning to shut things down and both the church board and the church at large were not comfortable visiting anyone during this time. We knew God wanted us to have this meeting, but it didn't seem it would happen anytime soon.

Fast forward to 2021 and the pandemic showed no sign of slowing; however, talk of a vaccine was in the air and we began to be more optimistic about holding the meetings. We began to pray in earnest again, and decided to move forward. Bible workers arrived and began their work in earnest. They worked hard with their masks on their faces as they met people, studied with them and invited them to become followers of Christ. The evangelist for the meetings, Alfred Miller, arrived and the meetings started. Church members were inviting friends, family members and coworkers; individuals who were studying with and who were thinking of joining the church themselves were inviting and bringing friends and family members to the meetings. We prayed while we took temperatures; we prayed while we offered masks to those who were coming; we

had potlucks and went into the neighborhoods for prayer walks and to pass out literature. We were on a mission and COVID-19 could not stop the forward march of God's work.

As the meeting progressed, what seemed like an impossibility was now a reality. As we approached the last Sabbath of the meetings, the focus shifted to the people who were to be baptized.

On April 17, 2021, Miller preached his final sermon. As he preached, hearts were touched, commitments were made and 18 people were baptized, four people joined the church on profession of faith and several more indicated an interest in studying the Bible for future baptism. Among those baptized were three families, a mom and her four children, a mom and her daughter and a dad, mom and their son. All the individuals who were baptized have their stories, but the one we want to end this report with is that of a little girl named Priscilla. Her mom, dad, grandmother and grandfather are church members. On the day of the baptism, Priscilla told her mom that she wanted to be baptized. Her mom said, no, you must be at least 10 before you can be baptized. She was not happy with that response, so she went to her dad and her dad said yes, she asked her grandmother and she said yes, but when she asked her grandfather, he said no. No, because it is not our gen-

eral practice to baptize children at her age. But Priscilla wanted to be baptized and she began to cry. Seeing her tears, her mom and grandfather relented and gave their consent. With the scripture, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven," ringing in our ears, Priscilla was prepared for baptism, and on that day, she was baptized with mom, dad, grandpa and grandma standing by renewing their vows to continue to raise her to fear God and give glory to Him.

The Lord was not yet done. On Sat., May 1, 2021, another three souls were baptized.

What an awesome experience we had! What a harvest of souls! As the new believers stood up front at the end of the service, we said a prayer of consecration. We know that the work has only just begun. We had impressed on them that this was the beginning of the journey; there will be stumbles and missteps and even some falling, but the good news is that with the help of Christ, we can get back up again and continue the journey with Christ until He comes and takes us home. What a day that will be when our Jesus we will see! The harvest is ripe, and now there are 25 more workers for the vineyard of Christ. What a blessing!

By E.J. Collins, Pastor

New Pastors

Slidell and Zachary Churches Welcome New Pastors

SHREVEPORT, LA. - The Slidell and Zachary Seventh-day Adventist Churches both welcomed new pastors recently. The Slidell church welcomed Jerson Sical (pictured, right) on April 24, 2021. Sical received a warm welcome from the church, and the women's ministries department surprised him with gift bags packed with gift cards, household items, food staples and toiletries.

Sical said, "I already can feel the love from the Slidell church. I'm 100 percent confident God brought me here for a blessing to me and to this church."

On Sabbath, March 20, the Zachary church welcomed their new pastoral family, Michael, Marlene, Elis and Benaiah Cerda (below left). In addition to welcoming them, the church members showed their appreciation for their service by sharing gift baskets with the family.

The Zachary church is happy to have Michael Cerda as their new pastor to lead them as they move forward, and are praying for God's richest blessing for the Cerda family.



In Gratitude

Conference Thanks Don Fortner as He Retires

LITTLE ROCK, ARK. - After 29 years of service to the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference, Don Fortner has retired. On Feb. 29, 2021, he was honored with a service of appreciation in the Little Rock Seventh-day Adventist Church.

During the service, he was gifted with a plaque by Richard C. Dye, president of the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference.

By Debbie Burghart



Plant a Seed

Let the Little Children Come



If you are a gardener, you know that it takes time and effort for your plants to mature into a fruit- and vegetable-producing garden. Preparing the soil to accept the seed and protecting the new plants as they come up out of the soil from wind, rain, insects and other elements that threaten to destroy the small seedlings is necessary if we want our plants to reach maturity. Just the right amount of water and sunlight are needed to produce the best possible plant. That tiny seed has God-given power so that it can and will grow up into a plant that produces food for us to eat as well as seeds which can be planted for the next crop.

Likewise, our children need the best possible environment to grow and mature their faith. Our churches should be places where children are welcome to grow their faith and be able to share it. Have you noticed how enthusiastic small children can be about their love of Jesus? Their ability to memorize Bible verses, the joyful music they make while singing, the simple faith they have when talking about Jesus' love for them and the uninhibited way they pray to their heavenly Father should be inspiration to us and our sometimes less-than-enthusiastic ability to share our faith in the same way.

Are we providing an environment in our churches that encourages the growth of our young children into fully mature adult Christians, bearing fruit that will not only be a blessing to the church family but plant seeds in the hearts of others as well? Do we give opportunities for them to pray, sing and preach? If we discourage them from sharing their simple faith when they are little, they will not want to share when they get older and more sensitive to the pressure of peers and the fear of making mistakes.

Are we afraid that the mistakes they make might detract from our worship experience? Our churches should be the safest place on earth for our children to learn and grow and be able to make mistakes while learning! I encourage you to make your church a place where children can grow the talents that the Lord has given them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14. My prayer is that our churches can be filled with the sound of young voices praising our heavenly Father in the way only they can do.

By Norma Shepherd, Children's Ministries Coordinator Assistant



Go Do It

Youth Rally Brings More Than 230 to Tulsa



TULSA, OKLA. – Over 230 young people representing 18 different churches came together on the weekend of March 19-21 for the conference-sponsored youth rally titled “Go Do It,” which was held at Adventist Fellowship in Tulsa.

On Friday evening, the young people arrived to an outdoor program where they sat with friends on hay bales around a big bonfire. The program opened up with a few ice breakers and door prizes, then led into an inspiring song service by a group of young women.

Before the message began, the program took a small break for hot chocolate and apple cider to go along with some Mexican pastries on that chilly evening. Following the break, guest speaker Eliab Quinones, a pastor from El Paso, Tex., introduced the weekend with an encouraging and engaging message and concluded with a special moment of prayer.

Saturday morning began with an interactive Sabbath School. The youth were divided into groups to discuss various questions asked by the moderators regarding the call for young people to serve at their local church.

The program led into a church service, which consisted of another round of inspiring music led by Larry Seery and a group of young people from Adventist Fellowship.

Quinones continued his series reflecting on the life of Christ, especially as to how He responded to the temptations of the enemy. After the service, the young people were gifted with a healthy and filling sack lunch.

That afternoon, more than 100 of the young people met at Turkey Mountain Park to hike down some of the many trails and enjoy the beautiful weather.

Later that evening, the youth regrouped to close out the Sabbath hours back at the church. After an interactive Bible game through the digital platform Kahoot!, the Zomi Seventh-day Adventist Church youth worship team led the youth into music worship once again.

Quinones closed out with his final message making an appeal at the end of the sermon, giving young people an opportunity to come forward. Many came forward wanting prayer for challenging situations in their lives, while others expressed a desire to be baptized in the near future.

Some of the area pastors were present to pray with and encourage those who had courageously stepped forward.

After the close of the program, everyone reconvened outside to a nice setup with a stage and round tables where Larry Seery hosted a panel of five young people from different churches and answered live questions that came in through texting from their peers.

As the sun set and the Sabbath came to a close, a couple of food vendors set up and made dinner available to the attendees.

Many stayed back to play basketball, play social games, nine-square in the air or simply hang out and chat with friends they had not seen in a while.

On Sunday, a small group came back once again to put together some food items that the Tulsa Twisters Pathfinder Club had previously collected, loaded up the vehicles and set out to one of the nearby apartment complexes.

The youth went door to door offering these bags of food to families in need and praying with them when the opportunities arose until all the bags were handed out.

With much joy in their hearts, the small group returned to the church for a final meal together. As the weekend came to an end, the young people were already asking, “When is the next one?”

*By Daniel Ortega
Youth and Young Adult Director*

Tackling Tumbleweeds

Guymon Pathfinders Help Their Community

GUYMON, OKLA. – The Guymon Hornbills Pathfinder Club has an ongoing elderly service project. They have helped elderly people around Guymon with many different yard and home projects. During the pandemic they have not been asked to come help as much. In November, the Pathfinders were passing out literature and met a man in great need. Later, the spring high winds brought in large armies of tumbleweeds and had filled up yards and streets. This man could not take care of the tumbleweeds, so the Pathfinders came to help. The

tumbleweeds were up to five feet high in his backyard, so the kids came up with different ways to flatten the weeds before bagging them up. The Pathfinders jumped on them, broke them and placed ladders on them and jumped on the ladder. The bags filled with the squashed tumbleweeds filled the dumpster and a truck with a trailer, but the yard was now empty of the tumbleweeds. The gentleman was so thankful for the help and telling others that we can help them also.

By Amy Ward



Remaining Faithful

Week of Prayer at Independence Spanish Church

TULSA – “An Adventure Outside the Portal” was the theme experienced by the children of the Independence Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church in Tulsa during their Children’s Week of Prayer on April 10-17.

The objective for this week was to present the message of salvation in a way children could understand.

As the pastor recounted the sad experience of two children who turned away from God, allowed sin to enter their lives and were taken prisoners by the

enemy; the children identified with each of the characters of the story and with the wonderful plan of redemption.

We encouraged all leaders to turn their eyes to the little ones in our church, for they have a big part in the growth of our church and upon them will be the task of keeping up this glorious torch of the Adventist message.

As we concluded with the week of prayer, the children were dressed in white and we invited them to remain faithful in the ways of the Lord until

we can finally be together on the sea of glass praising our creator and redeemer for eternity.

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” Mark 10:14.

By Damaris Prieto



Children Lead Out

Children's Sabbath at Tulsa Zomi Church

TULSA— On March 6, the Zomi Seventh-day Adventist Church held children's Sabbath with children conducting the worship service, song service, special music and picking up the offering. Sonia Canó, Southwestern Union children's ministries director, gave a beautiful sermon about the importance of family Bible study, and Yesenia Ortega, Oklahoma children's ministry director, gave the children's story. Following the worship service, Canó held a seminar for parents about families and their needs.

By Yesenia Ortega



Learning to Lead

Teens Attend Leadership Retreat

WEWOKA, OKLA.— Though the weather kept us from our original plan, God blessed our Teen Leadership Retreat with an awesome experience!

Thirty-one Teen Leadership Trainees (TLTs) attended the retreat at Wewoka Woods Adventist Center in Wewoka on March 12. During the retreat we investigated what leaders are and what they do.

This retreat was a capstone to the new monthly sessions on leadership that several TLTs have been attending virtually on Zoom, with the goal to gain an understanding of what it takes to be a great leader, to learn their leadership styles and to take these skills and apply them in their lives and clubs.

Between sessions, TLTs were challenged with team and leadership-build-

ing activities that challenged them to communicate and work together.

We defined what a leader is and we looked at the responsibilities of a leader and how we can grow as leaders. The goal is not only to develop these teens as leaders in Pathfinders but to equip them for leadership in any direction that God calls them.

By Sarah Shepherd



Adventurer Camp

Families Gather for Fun and Fellowship

WEWOKA, OKLA. – April 22-24 found Adventurers and their families from across Oklahoma gathered at Wewoka Woods Adventist Camp for the Oklahoma Conference's second annual Adventurer Family Camp.

After a long year of not being able to get together, it was especially joyful to see and be with other Adventurer families. There were a total 10 of Adventurer clubs that participated with a total of 185 children, parents and staff.

Because the forecast showed heavy showers, the clubs set up their tents in the auditorium. The weather was so bad at our first Adventurer Family Camp two years ago that tents were destroyed in the wind and rain. We did not want to have a repeat of that situation! Sure enough, the rains came Friday night, but

everyone was safe and dry and warm and able to worship together.

Our Adventurer Bible Experience took place Sabbath morning with seven clubs participating. Much like the Pathfinder Bible Experience, but geared to the Adventurer level, our teams studied Genesis 1-13 (excluding chapter 10).

Worship was led by Oklahoma Conference Youth Director Daniel Ortega, who talked about ants and emphasized Proverbs 6:6. "Go to the ant, you slug-gard; consider its ways and be wise!"

As the day progressed, the weather cleared and we were able to spend time with family activities outside. The Adventurers were given "bug catching kits," and as they went from station to station, they earned plastic bugs to fill their kits.

Families did all the activities together and it was a blessing to see families have time to bond together.

Sunday was our traditional Adventurer Fun Day. Bob Holbrook, pastor, had the feature program, teaching the brand-new Adventurer Award "Ants."

We give a big thank you to Claudia Andujo, Oklahoma Conference Adventurer director, for this Spirit-filled, family-oriented program.

— *By Norma Shepherd*
Children's Ministries Coordinator Assistant



The Law of the Harvest

Long-Term Results of Sowing Good Seed



We can all probably agree that this COVID-19 pandemic season has presented several challenges for both parents and children. While there were many downsides resulting from having to shelter in place during the pandemic, the upside is that it gave many families the opportunity to spend quality time together in creative ways. The time parents spend with their children is invaluable, particularly where teaching and modeling the values and principles of heaven are concerned. The seed we sow in our homes with our children will either produce a wonderful, bountiful harvest for eternity or lead to eternal destruction.

This was a lesson Jacob had to learn. Despite his great love for his son, Joseph, he sowed bad seeds by being partial and overly indulgent with him. His unwise course of action set the stage for the cruel actions of the older brothers towards their younger sibling. There were traits in Joseph's character that needed to be corrected. God in His providential leading would do so over time.

On what must have been the darkest day of his young life, while Joseph was bound (literally and figuratively) for Egypt as a slave, his heart surely turned to his parents' God. Years earlier, as a child, some good seeds were also sown as he was taught to love and fear Him. Bright-eyed and filled with anticipation, he listened intently as Jacob recalled the vision God had given him when he was all alone, exiled from his beloved home. From early childhood Jacob had instructed Joseph that the God of heaven always kept His promises to protect, provide and care for His children. The greatest of these promises was to provide a redeemer to save all humanity from their sins.

All of the precious promises of God that Joseph had learned in his childhood flooded his heart and mind. In his most distressing moment Joseph made the decision that the God of his parents would be his God too. He prayed earnestly that the God who created heaven and earth would be his God and be by his side.

During the course of his early life, Jacob had not always made the best decisions, but here's what he got right: In his home, while his children were young, he decided to maintain an altar of worship to ensure that they learned about the love of God and His redemptive plans for His earthly children. Jacob made it a priority to sow good seed among his sons to counteract the allurements of the world and the evil work of the enemy. As parents, let us invite our children to the family altar in our home and sow good seed.

By Tyrone Douglas, Children's Ministries Director



Develop Your Leadership Skills

Servant Leaders in Training

DALLAS - The Bible is clear that God had only one Son, Jesus Christ, and that He became a leader in His church and community. Jesus left the glory of heaven and the fellowship of His Father to save lost humanity. He came to earth to reveal the love of God to a rebellious planet, to model divine principles to a sinful world, but above all, He came to be our example of the perfect leadership style, "Servant Leader." What a great example of leadership!

On Sundays, April 18 and 25, 2021, the Southwest Region Conference Women's Ministries district and local leaders across Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, New Mexico and Texas gathered via Zoom for Women's Ministries Leadership Training. It was an outstanding opportunity to network and learn,

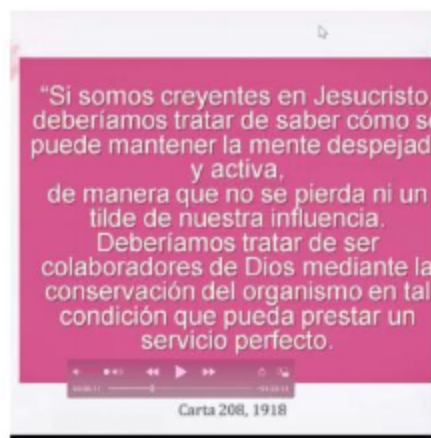
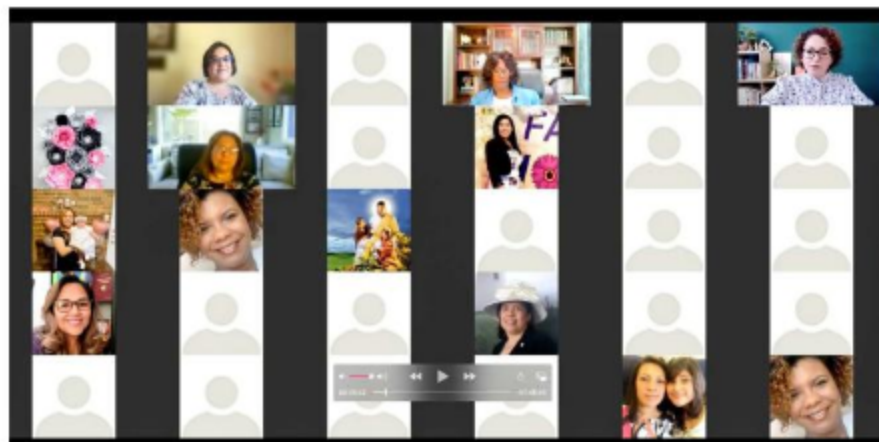
be inspired and inspire others, but most importantly, to share the love of God.

Anysia Archibald, Southwest Region Conference Women's Ministries coordinator, shared a welcome and opening remarks. Inspiring and encouraging devotionals were presented by Gwendolyn Garrison of New Orleans, La., and Leslie Soupet of North Central Texas. Various leaders and artists presented prayers and musical selections and we thank God for their ministry. Guest speakers (English) Gordon Jones, D.Min., Nadine Collins, Ph.D. in Education, Linda Penick, chaplain; (Spanish) Yaqueline Tello Ayala and Nicole Brise presented in three areas: 1. The Role of a Leader, 2. Defining Your Purpose - Balancing Home and Work, 3. Self-Awareness/ Self-Care. There was a special farewell

celebration for Ana Acosta, who served as assistant coordinator focusing on hispanic churches. We wish Ana and her family God's continued blessings.

Our sincere gratitude to all the presenters and participants for their contribution and the success of the virtual Women's Ministries Leadership Training. It is our prayer that women across the Southwest Region Conference, Southwestern Union and the North American Division become rejuvenated, empowered and motivated as we declare the theme, "I Will Go; That They May Come." Come, Lord Jesus.

By Anysia Archibald
Women's Ministries Coordinator



NAD Appoints Vice Presidents

Calvin Watkins, Sr., Newest Assignment

DALLAS - On April 29, 2021, the North American Division Executive Committee convened and elected three vice presidents, two directors, an associate director, Liberty magazine editor and the president of the Guam-Micronesia Mission. These newly appointed leaders will serve until 2025, when the twice-postponed 61st General Conference Session will reconvene in St. Louis, Mo.

As a result of April's election, Calvin Watkins, Sr., president of the Southwest Region Conference, was chosen to become the Vice President for Evangelism

and Regional Liaison. Watkins comes to this position following the 2020 retirement of Alvin Kibble.

A native of Dayton, Ohio, Watkins is a proud product of Christian education and has served for over 40 years in ministry as a pastor, evangelist, departmental director and most recently as a conference president. Throughout his decades of service, he has established more than 17 churches and baptized over 8,000 souls.

By Norman J. Jones
Communication Director



From Corporate to Conference

Welcome, Norman J. Jones

DALLAS - Southwest Region Conference welcomes Norman J. Jones as the new Communication Director. Jones has owned, operated and served as the lead creative and multimedia producer in his own companies, now consolidated into *Norman J. Creative*, for the past 15 years.

Jones has always had a heart for ministry, so although he has had corporate clients, he has always concurrently used his creative gifts to further the Gospel in multiple churches around the country.

A product of Christian education, he graduated from Great Lakes Adventist

Academy and attended Oakwood University, where he majored in Theology and Social Work. Jones' understanding of, and love for, God's people shines through in the thoughtfulness of his work. For him, it is not only about "putting out good work," but very much about connecting others to Christ.

He now brings his creative and technical expertise to the Southwest Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, where he serves as the Communication Director. He looks forward to working alongside the administration, staff and

constituents to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and hasten His anticipated return.

He is a devoted husband to his lovely wife Vinessa and a living jungle gym to three beautiful girls, currently residing in Rockwall, Tex.

By Conference Communication Team



Union Executive Secretary

New Assignment for Stephen Brooks

DALLAS—The Southwestern Union held its most recent Constituency Session on Sunday, April 25, 2021. During this quinquennial session, the nominating committee met and presented names for key positions within the conference. Among the nominees were Carlos J. Craig for the position of president and Stephen Brooks for executive secretary. Craig accepted and was elected the new President of the Southwestern Union Conference.

Brooks, who was serving as the executive secretary of the Southwest Region

Conference, also accepted his nomination. Upon acceptance, the constituents voted to elect Brooks to the position of Executive Secretary of the Union.

Brooks, who started his ministry in the South Atlantic Conference in 1997, has served as a pastor, youth director and executive secretary. He was called to pastor in the Southwest Region Conference in 2010 and to the secretariat in 2015.

By Norman J. Jones
Communication Director



New Community Book Club

The Eagles Who Thought They Were Chickens

NEW ORLEANS—New Orleans Adventist Academy (NOAA) along with New Orleans East Seventh-day Adventist Church will launch its first community book club. Students and church members passed out flyers in the community to announce the launching of the book club.

Our community friends were invited to attend a special story hour every Sabbath in the month of April. On April 24, our students and community children presented a skit from one of the

stories, titled “The Eagles Who Thought They Were Chickens” by Mychal Wynn. Community guests and others were invited to this special presentation.

We are grateful to God for helping NOAA to provide this book club resource for our community friends.

By Carla Drake
Principal

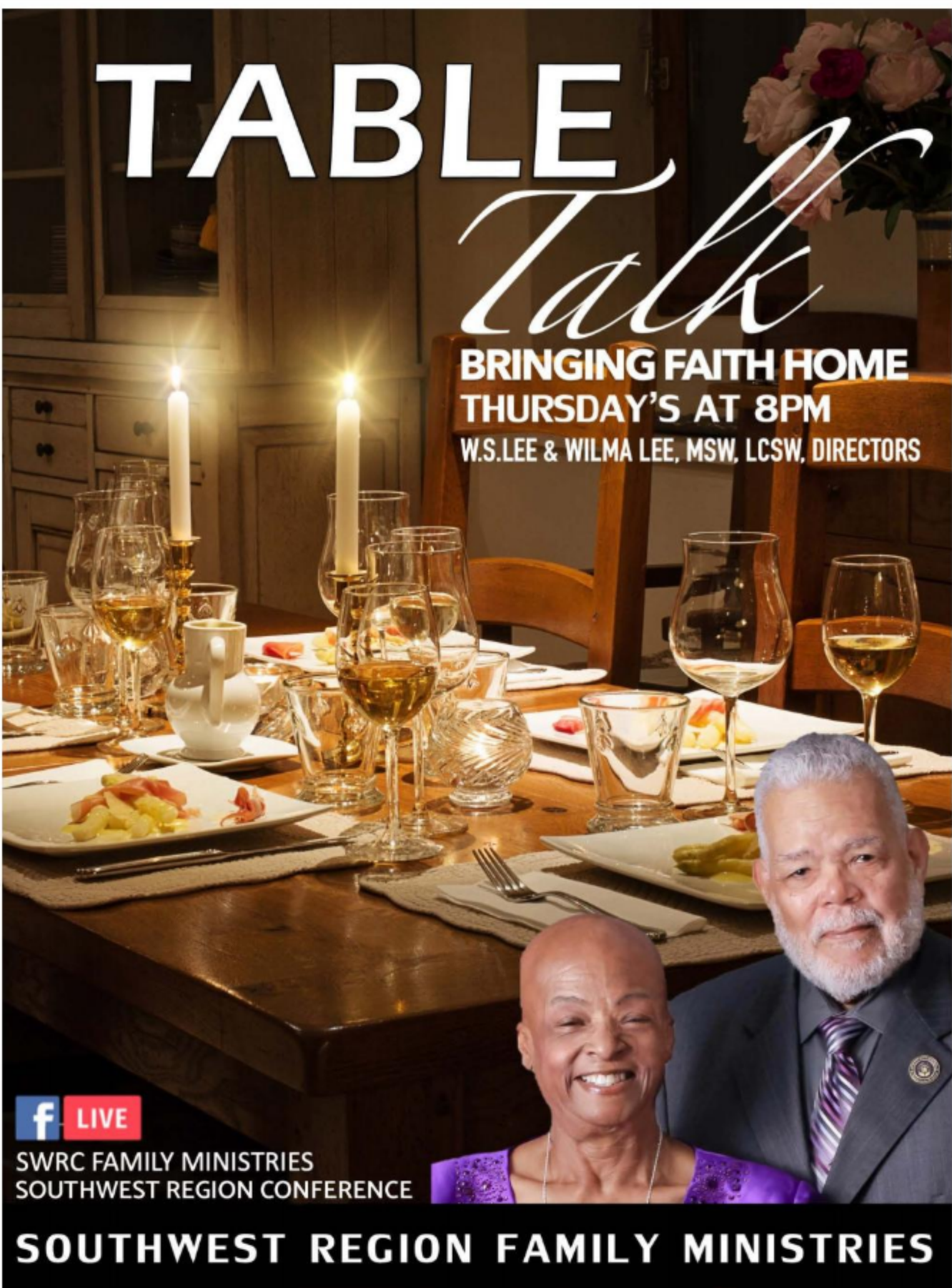


TABLE

Talk

**BRINGING FAITH HOME
THURSDAY'S AT 8PM**

W.S. LEE & WILMA LEE, MSW, LCSW, DIRECTORS



SWRC FAMILY MINISTRIES
SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE

SOUTHWEST REGION FAMILY MINISTRIES

Be the Church

Empowering the Next Generation for Ministry



Matthew 19:14 says, "Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'" If the children were involved in the ministry, what would it be like for them to "be" the church rather than being "done" by the church?

Children's Ministries does not intend to hinder children. We are grateful for Children's Ministries and all of the volunteers involved in this vital ministry. If we only view this ministry as an auxiliary arm of the church, something that happens "off the radar" of church leadership and the body, we hinder their spiritual growth and the church's collective growth as a whole.

While peer-based ministry is essential and necessary, it is not enough to foster a child's spiritual growth.

With each passing generation, we're already witnessing a decline in church attendance. A Pew Research study found that 31 percent of millennials aren't affiliated with any church at all. Research by Barna indicates that children have their spiritual moorings set by age nine and their spiritual identity by age thirteen. For kids to join the body of Christ, we must first introduce them to it.

The church must first seek to impact children if it wishes to leave a lasting impact on the next generation. In *Counsels to Teachers and Parents*, Ellen G. White asserts that "In the closing scenes of this earth's history many of these children and youth will astonish people by their witness to the truth, which will be borne in simplicity, yet with spirit and power. They have been taught the fear of the Lord, and their hearts have been softened by a careful and prayerful study of the Bible. In the near future many children will be endued with the Spirit of God, and will do a work in proclaiming the truth to the world, that at that time cannot well be done by the older members of the church."

The next generation must be included and empowered to participate in the church's mission and ministry. Jesus says, "Let the little children come." We want to keep them coming!



By Elton DeMoraes, President

Adventist Book Centers

From Tract and Missionary Societies to Online Evangelists

KEENE, TEX.— The work of the Adventist Book Center is one of the earliest ministries of the Advent movement. It started with the first organized institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church: a publishing house. As each new conference was organized, the first departments often to be appointed were tract and missionary societies. These departments later evolved into Book and Bible Houses and then Adventist Book Centers (ABC).

Today, ABCs are how the printed word gets into the hands of Seventh-day Adventist Church members and non-Adventists alike. In each store, every day, the staff are being used by the Holy Spirit to connect the right book or tract with the right person, often never knowing this side of Heaven how it has changed a life.

As ABC manager for the Texas Conference, and a true believer in the ministry of the printed word, I am always amazed how God can use an author, a publisher and a store to get an important message to one of His children.

Many of us can trace our roots in the Seventh-day Adventist Church to a book, a magazine or a piece of literature. I get to see it every day, but it's easy for some to forget just how important the work of our ABCs are in advancing God's Kingdom.

The mission of the Texas ABC is to

provide Seventh-day Adventist Church members with truth-filled books for their own spiritual growth as well as literature for them to share with non-Adventists.

Health food is also a part of the ministry of many ABCs. The Texas ABC has one of the largest selections of health foods in the Southwestern Union Conference, including meat and milk substitutes, dried fruits, nuts, grains and other natural grocery items. We even sell fresh baked bread made daily. We enjoy helping church members find what they need to stay healthy and live for God.

In addition to Texas Conference members, the Texas ABC services customers throughout the Southwestern Union Conference, helping those customers reach out to others with the message of God's love.

Throughout the year, you'll find the Texas ABC displaying books and food at camp meetings, women's ministries retreats, men's ministries retreats, constituency meetings, ministries conventions, workers' meetings and marriage retreats both in English and Spanish.

Texas ABC also supports events for the five conferences as well as the Southwestern Union. Our staff goes to meet people wherever they are to get God's Word out. We want to help churches and members meet their ministry goals and share their faith.

As the only ABC left in the South-

western Union, we want to service our sister conferences as well. To do that, we created a program to deliver products to churches known as "Direct to You" or D2U. Pre-ordered food and other materials are delivered on a predetermined schedule — based on the response of members — to churches, schools and members throughout the Southwestern Union for a nominal delivery charge of \$5. We currently operate nine routes across the five states that make up the Southwestern Union territory.

These are challenging times for publishing houses and ABCs as more and more resources are available online only. Many ABCs, such as our previous sister ABCs, had to close their doors due to poor sales figures.

We are grateful for the support of our five conferences and union administrators, church staff, school employees and church members alike. We couldn't exist without you.

We have three websites to inform you of events, provide updates on D2U delivery scheduling and offer the convenience of shopping from your home: ABCKeene.com, ABCKeene.org, and AdventistBookCenter.com. You can also order by calling our toll free number at (800) 333.1844.

Thank you for supporting your ABC.

*By Mickey Johnson
Adventist Book Center Manager*



Never Feel Ashamed

Be a Church the Community Can Count On

LAREDO, TEX. – Dayron Batista, pastor, along with some church members from the Laredo Spanish North Seventh-day Adventist Church, regularly take their new box truck the church purchased with grant money from the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists and Texas Conference Adventist Community Services to pick up donated food for their local food pantry:

A few hours later, cars line up to receive the much-needed food. Some members, helping from start to finish, are there almost 12 hours.

The Laredo Spanish North church has been sharing food distribution for quite some time now, but when the pandemic hit the number of clients multiplied. Now, they serve 300 to 460 families each week.

My wife, Julie, and I had the privilege to see the wonderful ministry in action. Agents from the Food and Drug Administration were also on hand to perform their five-year inspection, which they passed with flying colors!

One gentleman in a bright, shiny new car would hardly speak to the volunteer taking his information. The church member asked the gentleman if he was doing okay. The gentleman replied, "I feel ashamed coming to ask for help in my new car. Just after I bought it, I lost my job. I didn't think you would help me when you saw me in this car."

The church member assured him that he did not have to feel ashamed and that they were there to help everyone no matter what situation they were in. The man raised his head, grinned and

said, "Thank you for not making me feel judged. You have actually helped me feel better." They invited him to return.

God has blessed the church's efforts! The local food pantry gave them two commercial refrigerators because of the work they do, knowing the community can count on them, when needed.

Laredo Spanish North church members are doing what Jesus did! They are meeting people's needs, helping them where they can and demonstrating to them the compassion, the mercy and the love of Jesus. Serving communities in Christ's name is what the mission of Adventist Community Services is all about! More information at Texas-ACS.org.

— By Marshall Gonzales

Texas Adventist Community Services Director



Changing Lives

Adventist Education Prepares Students for Eternity

Texas Conference Schools

1. ADVENT RIDGE ACADEMY
adventridge.org
2. BURLISON ADVENTIST SCHOOL
burlisonix.adventistschoolconnect.org
3. BURTON ADVENTIST ACADEMY
burtonacademy.org
4. CHISHOLM TRAIL ACADEMY
ctaschool
5. CLEBURNE ADVENTIST CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
clcburadventistchristian22.adventistschoolconnect.org
6. COGGIN MEMORIAL SCHOOL
facebook.com/cogginmemorial
7. CONROE ADVENTIST ACADEMY
conroeademy.org
8. CYPRESS BEND ADVENTIST ELEM SCHOOL
cbes.org
9. DALLAS CHRISTIAN ACADEMY
dallaschristianacademy.org
10. FT WORTH ADVENTIST JR ACADEMY
www.fwcaja.org
11. GARLAND CHRISTIAN ADVENTIST SCHOOL
gcaschoolonline.org
12. HOUSTON ADVENTIST ACADEMY
housaa.org

13. JOSHUA ADVENTIST MULTIGRADE SCHOOL
jms.joshuaed.org
14. KATY ADVENTIST CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
kathyadventistschool.com
15. KEENE ADVENTIST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
kees4kids.com
16. KILLEEN ADVENTIST JR ACADEMY
mykaja.org
17. KNOWLEDGE SEEKERS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
miller22.adventistschoolconnect.org
18. LAREDO ADVENTIST CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
Email: lacs@texasd.org
19. NORTH DALLAS ADVENTIST ACADEMY
ndaaacademy.org
20. SCENIC HILLS CHRISTIAN ACADEMY
scenichillsschool.org
21. SOUTH TEXAS CHRISTIAN ACADEMY
stca.org
22. STONEHILL CHRISTIAN ACADEMY
stonehill.school
23. TYLER ADVENTIST SCHOOL
taschool.org

Find links to all the school websites at
texasadventist.org/schools

ALVARADO, TEX. – It won't be long before our young people are filling the classrooms in our Texas Conference schools.

The pandemic challenged teachers, students and parents alike, but they rose to the occasion and safely focused on quality education with the spiritual emphasis that makes our schools so special.

As our teachers make preparations for another school year, we would appreciate your help in encouraging the young people in your church and community to attend a Seventh-day Adventist school.

It saddens our hearts to hear of young people who don't think they can afford a Seventh-day Adventist education and don't even apply. Yet, there are countless individuals willing to help support young people who truly have a desire to have an Adventist education. For many, the friendships and spiritual foundation are immeasurable.

I will be forever grateful to my mom, a single parent, for her dedication to my education. We did not have a lot

financially, but she was determined that it would be worth the sacrifice for me to have a Seventh-day Adventist education, and she was right!

As Texas Conference Vice President for Education, my focus now is to pass along that passion to our church family. It would be such a thrill to see our Texas Conference school enrollment double as more and more people realize the value of Seventh-day Adventist education.

If you are concerned about the finances, the Lord says to test Him. "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.' Malachi 3:10.

One way we are corporately trying to assist students is by raising funds for Adventist education through the Texas Conference DETERMINED campaign. It is aptly named for all those determined to see young people receive an

Adventist education.

A group of serious cyclists will draw attention to this campaign as they ride from McAllen, Tex., to Richardson, Tex., from Sept. 12-24, 2021.

The rest of us can walk, run or cycle in our own neighborhoods, creating personal walk-a-thons for people to donate to DETERMINED. Visit the website: TexasAdventist.org/Determined for more information or to sign up or donate.

The map above features our Texas Conference schools. School names and contact information is included as well.

Please join me in praying over each of these schools, for the staff and students on each campus and for the many young people who need that spiritual foundation that our Seventh-day Adventist schools can provide.

*By Kisha Norris
Vice President for Education*

WALK RUN

OR CYCLE TO
SUPPORT
ADVENTIST
EDUCATION



Join us in raising \$1.5 million for an
Adventist Education endowment.
Find more info at

TexasAdventist.org/Determined

For the serious cyclist, join the 14-day official cycling
tour from McAllen, Texas, to Richardson, Texas.

Let's be DETERMINED together for our health and our kids!



Children's Ministry

Planting Seeds for the Future



In a world where culture is obsessed with perfection and performance, how do we teach a child that their worth is in Jesus and He is the best friend they will ever have? It is our mission to teach them that they are loved and accepted by Jesus, to help them experience His love for them. They need to know that they can be real with Him and they will never have to fear His rejection; they can tell Him anything. After all, He is their best friend!

Children's Ministries was a priority for Jesus. He always made time to teach the children a valuable lesson, and He never turned them away. Children's Ministries is a place and time to teach our children about their best friend and nurture a relationship with Him. Ask someone what Children's Ministries is and they will likely say it is Sabbath School, but it is so much more!

Those working in Children's Ministries can tell you what a pleasure it is to minister to a kid at the most critical time of their lives and show them God's unconditional love. We have the opportunity to have an impact in the lives of the kids we serve and are instrumental in helping kids to know Jesus as their best friend.

Children's Ministries should not be condensed into one day a week but multiple programs throughout the year to lead a child to Jesus and disciple them in their daily walk with Him. Children have many different gifts, and offering them a variety of programming will allow them to learn in a way they can best understand and grow. There are many programs to choose from, such as Sabbath School, Vacation Bible School, Children's Church, Adventurers, Children's Choir, Children's Week of Prayer, Children's Sabbath, Puppet Ministry and Service Projects to name a few.

How many teachers ever thought one of their students would one day be leading other kids to Jesus? I have experienced it firsthand and it ignited my faith in so many ways. At the end of the day when you sit down to assess your program and you realize you did everything you were supposed to do but nothing seemed to be working, remember you planted a seed. And with love and care that seed can grow into a child knowing that Jesus loves them.

The Texico Conference Children's Ministries Department is here to help you achieve this by offering training, resources and encouragement to those who teach and lead children in their local churches.

By Kathy Clifford, Children's Ministries Director



Appreciation for the Blue

North Valley “Shares Love” with Police Officers

ALBUQUERQUE – Almost a year after starting the “Comparte Amor” or “Share Love” initiative, the youth from the Albuquerque North Valley Church are continuing to share God’s love and encouragement with church members and the community. In February, many of them were heartbroken after a 28-year-old New Mexico State Police officer was fatally shot in an interstate shootout that was captured on video and made national news.

“It is so tragic, he was so young,” said Aimee Monge. “We have two church members that are also active in our youth ministry that are police officers. This prompted us to want to show them, and as many officers as we could, our appreciation for risking their lives every day for our safety.”

In March, the North Valley youth filled more than 200 bags with treats and a special note and delivered them to several sub-stations of the Bernalillo County Sheriff’s Office. Although they were not able to interact directly with the officers, the youth got special access to visit the buildings and leave the bags in the officers’ meeting rooms.

The following Sabbath, the youth paid a special tribute to the two officers who are part of the youth team during the AY service. They received a special gift that included a devotional for Law Enforcement. Saul Flores, North Valley pastor, also had a special prayer asking God for His continuous protection, and he thanked them for their service.

The “Comparte Amor” team plans to continue sharing God’s love and is cur-

rently leaving goodie bags in mailboxes for mail carriers and plans to work with the homeless in the near future. Praise God for young people with loving hearts who purpose to do His will!

By *Debby Márquez*
Communication Director



Lead the Way

Española Valley Church's Simple Approach to Outreach



ESPAÑOLA, N.M. – On a sunny, yet chilly Sabbath afternoon this past spring, my family and I were heading home after the church service. Although we were tired and hungry, we opted to take the longer route home that would take us through the beautiful San Juan mountains and through a small town called Peñasco. What I did not know is that God had a divine appointment for us on that alternate route.

While driving through Peñasco, my wife witnessed a man falling from his electric scooter outside his home. We quickly turned the car around to help the man who was still on the ground struggling to recover.

After helping the man, I learned his name was Michael Garcia. We had a wonderful conversation and agreed to meet again and hopefully have the opportunity to share the Gospel with him and his family.

As I drove home, I began to realize how God had directed us on that path. I believe God guided each decision that led us to Michael, the same way He led Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-39.

I continued to think of that as I made my way to the Española Valley Bilingual Seventh-day Adventist Church that same afternoon. While holding a meeting about our next outreach event, it became very clear to me that in order to

have success in this event, the Spirit of the Lord would have to guide the process the way He had directed me earlier. That afternoon the church approved an outreach activity that moved us away from the usual practice of going door-to-door to hand out literature or offer Bible studies. We started the Española "book challenge," which consists of a few simple steps.

1. Members, together with their families, pray and ask God to bring to mind a person that would be blessed to receive a book from a collection of Christ-centered books provided by the church. The books cover different topics such as health and prophecy, as well as spiritual encouragement and emotional well-being.

2. The members pray for the person receiving the book and dedicate the book with a personal, thoughtful and encouraging thought.

3. On a designated Sabbath, the books are distributed throughout the day and only on that day.

4. After distributing the books, the church family gathers for a praise and thanksgiving service.

So far, this activity has encouraged members to be intentional with sharing the gospel with those they know and has motivated many who typically do not engage in outreach. We have also seen many people rejoice because someone is

thinking of them.

I am not pretending to think that this is an innovative or revolutionary evangelistic method, it is not. It is simple. However, when I look at God's Word, it also presents simple yet powerful methods for us to reach others. God is calling His church to mobilize and do something, anything for His cause. As long as we are guided by His grace and Spirit, He will lead us to souls that are thirsting for the good news of a Savior who died, was resurrected and is coming soon to save them.

I have no doubt that as a result of this book challenge, we will soon start to witness lives changing because we are allowing God to lead us. I give all the glory and honor to God because His Spirit is the only one that can lead us to the Michaels of this world. May the Lord bless you and may He encourage you to start your own book challenge, or do something simple and intentional to share His love.

— Jerry Pinzon
Pastor

Following the Path

Central Sentinels Pathfinders Stay Active in 2020/2021

ALBUQUERQUE— Like many, the Albuquerque Central Church's Pathfinder Club grappled with whether or not it should stay active in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the newly appointed director, I assembled a team, and we decided that the club was a vital ministry. The church leadership and board agreed. We moved forward with planning outings and events that adhered to COVID-19 safe practices.

The new staff took a kayaking trip down the Rio Grande river that allowed us to practice team building skills essential for working together. One of our first challenges was to find a video chat platform and develop rules to support our virtual club meetings. God provided and we pressed forward.

In the fall, the church held a special

induction ceremony on World Pathfinder Sabbath conducted by Fred Daniel and supervised by the Northern New Mexico Area Coordinator, Nora Graham. I had the pleasure of being invested as a Master Guide while many pathfinders were inducted into their Pathfinder groups. Jim Wilson was also appointed as Deputy Director and Central's pastor John Abbott was inducted as club pastor.

The Sentinels participated in a virtual campout in which each pathfinder set up tents in their own homes or yards. In the spring of 2021, they went further into nature and did an overnight campout as part of the hiking honor and participated in a physical camping trip in the New Mexico Manzano mountains. The club has been active with snow-

shoeing, hiking, identifying different animal tracks and swimming activities, as well as taking part in completing the sanctuary and pizza maker honors. We have also been active in community outreach through a program headed by our outreach coordinator Clyde Marlin that distributes "Brown Bag Lunches" to the homeless and those in need in our local neighborhood. The Sentinels also placed third in the area/conference Pathfinder Bible Experience events in February and March of 2021.

Although challenging, the 2020/2021 Pathfinder Club year was full of blessings. Our goal is to keep striving and further challenge, and inspire, our Pathfinders to keep moving on the right path towards Jesus.

By Richard Wical



Light to Others in a Dark World

Corrales Reaches Community During Easter

CORRALES, N.M. – After the Sabbath, at the dawn of the first day of the week, a small group of believers stood outside of Jesus' tomb. It was empty except for strips of linen lying there.

While reminiscent of this glorious scene over 2000 years ago, this particular experience took place this past Easter morning at the Corrales Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, the small group looking into the empty tomb was a family from a neighboring community who made it their plan to visit a resurrection display that the Corrales Church had created as part of their Easter celebration. The display featured a large empty tomb and three crosses. The week before, the father of the family said he had been watching the scene being constructed while on his

daily commute to work and back home. He told his wife, "That's where we are going on Easter morning!", and they did. While barely light on Easter morning, the family stood with an open Bible before the scene, recounting the story of our Lord's great sacrifice and victory on mankind's behalf.

Many others in the community were also touched by the display, one even taking the time to write to the church to express how thankful they were to have this beautiful reminder of God's great gift as they passed by each day. The idea of the empty tomb scene came to me as I recognized the need for churches to raise the banner of hope to a fearful world after the events of 2020 and 2021.

We know that God was behind this project as people, to help, and the

material, to build the display, were easy to come by: Fellow church members Al and Lydia Montes de Oca jumped in enthusiastically and built the crosses, and I had no trouble getting assistance from my family as well as students from Sandia View Academy.

For two weeks, travelers in either direction saw signs proclaiming, "HE IS RISEN!" and then were led up to the scene of an empty tomb. My hope is that we may keep His victory over sin and death ever before us and be a very visible light to others in a dark world.

By Roxanne Wagner



Classified Ads

EMPLOYMENT

STALLANT HEALTH, a rural health clinic in Weimar, Calif., is accepting applications for a Psychiatrist, Family Practice physician and an NP or PA to join the team. Interested individuals should contact Marva by email: Marva@StallantHealth.com.

Union College, Lincoln, Neb., seeks candidates for a Business Program professor to prepare professionals for Christian service in the business world. MBA or master's degree required; doctoral degree preferred. Full job description and instructions for application under faculty jobs at UCollege.edu/employment.

Union College, Lincoln, Neb., is seeking applicants for a Religion Program faculty with an emphasis on discipling. M.Div. or masters in a related field required, D.Min. or Ph.D. preferred. Full job description and instructions for application at under faculty jobs at UCollege.edu/employment.

MISCELLANEOUS

Move with an award-winning agency. Apex Moving & Storage partners with the General Conference to provide quality moves at a discounted rate. Call us for all your relocation needs! Adventist beliefs uncompromised. Contact Marcy Dante' at 800.766.1902 for a free estimate. Visit us at ApexMoving.com/Adventist.

NEW/USED Adventist Books: TEACH Services helps authors publish their book, including editing, design, marketing and worldwide distribution. Call 800.367.1844 for a free evaluation. For new book releases visit LNFBOOKS.com for used books and your local ABC or TEACHServices.com.

FREE PLANNED GIVING: Maranatha Volunteers International Foundation can help with your estate planning needs. Personal consultations, online wills, trusts, annuities, providing protection for you and loved ones at no cost to you. For more info 916.774.7700; Email: Estates@maranatha.org. Visit Maranatha.org/PlannedGiving.

Trying to figure out how to evangelize during COVID? Consider sponsoring a Facebook lead generation ad campaign. Reach thousands. It's easy. You don't have to have a Facebook page, like or do social media, or even be computer literate. Project *Steps to Christ* does all the work for you! Contact us at 1.800.728.6872 or go to ProjectSTC.org/Facebook-Evangelism.

Online Christian Services, a 501C Non-Profit Prison Ministry, is putting large print Bibles and discipleship books into Prisons—because no one should feel forgotten. In order to make a difference, we rely on the support of generous individuals like you! Changing lives by doing God's kingdom work

together. "Thanks for the large print bibles... *Steps To Christ* saved me." (By M-TX Prison). We are grateful for all contributions.

ADVENTIST TOURS 2022. Israel in Jesus' Steps, March 9-17 & June 12-21 (optional Jordan/Egypt); New Testament Alive/7 Churches, June 2-12, African Safari & Service, May 24-31; Germany-Austria: Luther to WW2, June 22-July 1 (includes Oberammergau Passion Play); Thailand, July 27-Aug 7. All tours are Adventist-led with excellent rates and beautiful experiences for all ages. \$1,750+/person. For full details, contact TabghaTours@gmail.com or [Facebook.com/TabghaTours](https://www.facebook.com/TabghaTours) or call 423.298.2169. "The best trip I've ever had! Nothing comes close." "Fabulous!" "The Bible comes alive." "An awesome experience!"

Looking for someone to assist my partially disabled wife with transportation and possibly with light food prep in exchange for a place in the country. Rural country setting with creek, trees and large area for a garden or small farm operation. Will provide a 31-foot travel trailer for living quarters. Located in south central Texas near the town of Shiner. If interested, please call 361.401.0613. Ask for Robert.

Wellness Secrets 2-week Health Retreat could be the most affordable, beneficial and spiritual

vacation you ever experience. Get help for hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes, cancer, obesity, depression or stress. Treatments include: hydrotherapies, Sauna and hyperbaric chamber. Situated in beautiful NW Arkansas. Call 479.752.8555 or visit the website WellnessSecrets4u.com.

REAL ESTATE/HOUSING

Summit Ridge Retirement Village, an Adventist community in a rural setting, offers affordable homes or apartments and caring neighbors, with a fellowship you'll enjoy. On-site church, planned activities and transportation, as needed. Also, Wolfe Living Center offers independent living and nursing homes. Contact Bill Norman 405.208.1289 or visit SummitRidgeVillage.org.

Country property for sale near Mena, Ark. Lovely views of the surrounding mountains. Long growing season and borders property owned by Mena Mission Ministries, an Adventist-owned health and wellness education ministry. To learn more and for photos and pricing, call 479.216.9771 or email ChGillam@yahoo.com.

Milestone

On Aug. 22, 2021, David and Gwen Bentley of Terilton, Okla., will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary.



They were married while college students at Loma Linda University/La Sierra Campus (now LaSierra University) and then began serving the church as teachers in Gentry, Ark., when their son Eric was born. Then they moved to North Puget Adventist Junior Academy in Burlington, Wash., where daughter Amber entered the world. They are members of the Bristow Seventh-day Adventist Church and proud grandparents to four grandchildren. Avid travelers, they will visit their 50th state, Vermont, to celebrate their 50th anniversary.

Obituaries

Blake, Arthur E., born May 6, 1934, Michigan; died Jan. 17, 2021, Harrah, Okla. Church membership: Summit Ridge Seventh-day Adventist Church. Preceded in death by parents; two sisters, Dorothy Magnant and Naoma Marvetz; two brothers, David and Johnny Blake. Survivors: wife, Anna; brother, Phil Blake; children, Trent Blake, Karla Dreadfulwater and Joy Baylon; and numerous grandchildren.

Donnelly, Grace, born July 1, 1930, Albany, N.Y.; died April 16,

2021, Tyler, Tex. Church membership: Chandler Adventist Fellowship. Survivor: brother, Bob Donnelly.

Headley, Marion Cheree, born Aug. 19, 1940, Dallas, Tex.; died Dec. 24, 2020, Harrah, Okla. Church membership: Summit Ridge Seventh-day Adventist Church. Preceded in death by husband, Glenn; daughter, Renee; and parents, Curtis and Daisy Ledbetter. Survivors: son, Ray (Laura) of Yukon, Okla.; brother, Rev. Ray Ledbetter (Dianna) of Duncan, Okla.; brother-in-law, Rev. Clyde Headley of Lawton, Okla.; two grandchildren, one great grandson and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, extended family and friends who loved her dearly.

Marquette, Ronald Otto, born Feb. 20, 1933, Okarche, Okla.; died Dec. 27, 2020, Tulsa, Okla. He served as an Air Force/Navy Military Veteran from 1951-1959. Preceded in death by his parents, Grant and Irma; wife, Rosetta Marquette; three brothers, Grant, Wesley and Kenneth Marquette; sister, Roberta; son, Ronald Kevin; two grandsons, Rodney and Donny; and four great grandchildren. Survivors: three brothers, Russell, Maurice and Marvin; sister, Virginia; and his six children, Rodney Keith, Renee Karen, Rhee KaAnn, Randal Kerry, Russel Corey and Ramon Kelly; along with many grand, great- and great-great grandchildren.

McMurry, Michael "Mickey" Blair, born July 25, 1944, Valparaiso, Fla.; died Nov. 19, 2020,

Victor Leroy Finster III, beloved husband and father, passed away at home on Wednesday, April 28, 2021, on his 80th birthday.

Vic was born on April 28, 1941, in Hollywood, Calif. After graduating from Burbank High School, he attended Glendale College, where he took a two-year course in technical illustration. His first marriage, to Kristin Aud Rasmussen, resulted in two children, Vic and Jill. After their divorce, he married Linda Joyce Austin in 1976, with whom he was united until his death. He worked first as a technical illustrator and then later as Art Director of Hughes Aircraft Missile Systems Group, where he managed 20-some artists, oversaw a million dollar a year budget and was involved in top secret military projects.

In 1983, Vic and Linda moved to Woodward County, Okla., where Linda's parents lived. After a few years of getting settled in their country home, Vic began his second career at Oklahoma's Action Rehabilitation Centers. He worked at a variety of jobs there, ending up running the woodshop. He retired after 29 years at the age of 77.

In his spare time Vic loved reading his Kindle and building things. He made model boats and airplanes and once built a full-size wooden sailboat and taught himself to sail.

Vic remained active in the Seventh-day Adventist Church throughout his adult life. In addition to his role as a church elder, he also helped many years in the children's classes. He loved the children and they loved him back. Although at first meeting he might seem quiet and reserved, people quickly discovered his never-ending sense of humor, his kindness and his generosity.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Victor LeRoy Finster II and Beatrice (Kiehl) Finster, as well as his brothers, Lawrence Allen Finster, who died as an infant, and Grant Henry Finster, who died in 2018. He is survived by his wife Linda of 44 years of the home, his son, Victor Leroy Finster IV of California; daughter, Jill Marie McElroy and spouse Tom of California; granddaughter, Sigrid Elizabeth Sanoja and spouse Luis; grandson, Patrick Victor McManus; three great-grandchildren, Elizabeth, Erik and Samuel Sanoja, all of California; and many nephews and nieces.

Harrah, Okla. Preceded in death by his parents; son, Rodney McMurry of Oregon. Survivors: wife,

Kathie of McLoud, Okla.; stepsons, Kevin (Cassie) Delling and their children Kaden, Kynadie and Amelia



Charlyne Marie Humphreys, 91, passed away in her Harrah, Okla., home with family by her side April 23, 2021.

Born in Indiana, she lived her childhood years in Muscatine, Iowa, near the Mississippi River. Charlyne developed many excellent character qualities as she worked in her mother's in-home bakery after school.

From an early age, she took over the cooking and cleaning to be helpful to her busy mother and always liked a clean house and became an excellent cook. Her competitive fighter spirit may have come from the scuffles with her Golden Glove Prize fighter brothers or being one of seven children.

Her mother's faith was a seed planted in her heart that grew throughout her life. She treasured her years at Oak Park Adventist Academy and Ozark Academy. She made sure that all four of her children had the opportunity of a Christian education and all four graduated from her alma mater, Ozark Academy. Because of her encouragement and sacrifice, all four children earned degrees from Christian universities.

On a trip to Oklahoma to visit her sister, Charlyne met Ray, her future husband, and she soon became a life-long resident of Oklahoma. Early in their marriage, Charlyne and Ray dedicated their lives to God and were active lay leaders in the Chickasha Seventh-day Adventist Church. Charlyne's gifts of leadership and music were appreciated as she led out in many areas and was a wonderful church pianist. Her gifts of hospitality and generosity were known by all as she always brought people into her home for a meal after church, hosted socials and tended to the needs of all. She and Ray have been instrumental in loving many people into the faith.

Charlyne had a variety of work experiences when young but was a dedicated home maker until it was decided they wanted to give their children a Christian education for their high school years. She worked as a warehouse employee at Tinker Air Force Base initially. She was determined that she could work harder and faster than anyone, and she was soon awarded a truck driving position, which merited the family with entertaining stories. Her coworkers called her "Charlie" and enjoyed her stories and looked as forward to her life

events as she did. She eventually became known as "Gramma Charlie" as she became one proud grandma. She later transferred to FAA where she worked in the Film Library. In retirement she and Ray continued their love of gardening with the self-sufficiency it provided freezing, canning and sharing their produce. Charlyne loved flowers and had beautiful flower gardens from which she would provide cut arrangements to the sick and elderly.

All who knew Charlyne knew she was a "go-getter" in every aspect of her life. She was always ready for the next adventure and enjoyed visiting her children and traveling with them. She has been coast to coast and border to border. She enjoyed a week-long cruise to Cancun, Mexico. Another highlight of her life was a trip she took with her sister, Bonnie, to Europe in 2004. One of her last big adventures was traveling by car to California for her 89th birthday. She enjoyed this reunion with her three siblings, nieces and nephews. Living life with no regrets seemed to be her motto.

Charlyne had a life-long love of learning and was an avid reader and book collector. She read her Bible and devotional books daily for her own spiritual growth. In addition to reading through her Bible many times, in later life she journaled and summarized it chapter by chapter. Her prayer life is an inspiration to her children, as they often found her on bended knee praying long for every family member individually. In later years, as part of her bedtime routine, she would sing "My Jesus, I Love Thee" in a private audience with her Lord. She was at peace knowing her time on this earth was coming to a close. She was not afraid of death and reminded her children that she would just be sleeping and it would seem but a moment when she would awaken at the sound of the trump at the resurrection and see the face of Jesus, her Savior. She looked forward to heaven and desired that the circle be unbroken.

Charlyne was preceded in death by her husband of 50 years, Ray; a twin brother and four siblings.

She will be sorely missed by her children, Pamela Bickell (Calvin) of Burleson, Tex.; Julie Drew (David) of Harrah, Okla.; Connie Opeka (Mike) of Ava, Mo.; Peter Humphreys of Harrah, Okla.; grandchildren, Brandi Bickell, Jeremy Bickell, Joseph Drew, Sarah Drew, Michael Opeka, Jennifer Opeka and Grace Humphreys; seven great-grandchildren; her sister, Bonnie King of Loma Linda, Calif.; mother and brother of Grace, Jane Kistner and Carlos Mejia whom she loved as family and many other family and friends.

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of Bethany, Okla.; Brian (Cortney) Delling and their child Brian Jr. of Oklahoma City, Okla.; his son, Jason (Donna) McMurry of Round Rock, Tex.; sister, Cheryl Allgood (Dean) of Cleburne, Tex.; nephew, Michael Allgood (Terina) of Lakewood, Colo.; niece, Rebecca Allgood-Mercado (Robert) of Baldwin, N.Y.

McReynolds, "Bud" Carl Stephen, Jr., born March 12, 1931, Houston, Tex.; died April 13, 2021, Amarillo, Tex. Church Membership: Amarillo Seventh-day Adventist Church. He served in the Air Force for more than 20 years

and worked at the Veterans Administration Hospital for over 21 years. Preceded in death by son, Danny Joe McReynolds; daughter, Penny McReynolds; and sister, Mary Shiviers. Survivors: wife, Joann McReynolds; two sons, Steve McReynolds (Nancy); Tony McReynolds; daughter, Terri Morgan (Mark); 11 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

Miller, Eugene, Jr., born Oct. 5, 1936, St. Francisville, La.; died March 21, 2021, Baton Rouge, La. Church membership: Baton Rouge Seventh-day Adventist

Church. Preceded in death by wife, Lubertha Gant; parents, Florida Cage and Eugene Miller, Sr.; father and mother-in-law Genie and Nancy Gant; brother, Jimmy Miller; sisters, Ruby Miller, Eleanor Myles and Zorelda Johnson. Survivors: daughter, Jennifer (James T.) Spears of Baton Rouge, La.; sisters, Glenda Peeler of St. Gabriel, La. and Loretta Robinson of Walker, La.; Bettye (Paul) Cleveland of Mableton, Ga.; brothers, William Miller of St. Gabriel, La., Emerson (Patricia) Miller of Dallas, Tex., Robert (Wilma) Miller, Elmo Miller and Charles (Sonya) Miller all of Baton

Rouge, La.; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and other relatives.

Percic, Darla Kay (Ray), born June 5, 1974, Chandler, Okla.; died March 11, 2021, Miami, Okla. Church membership: Miami Seventh-day Adventist Church. Preceded in death by father, David Danker of Wellston, Okla. Survivors: mother, Diane Lawson of Miami, Okla.; husband, John Percic; daughter, Amber (Timmy) Matthews; son, Bobby (Samantha) McCoy; son, CJ (Bailey); brothers, Jason Case and Earl Lawson; families of Miami, Okla., and many grandchildren.

Maxine Smith was born on July 8, 1931, near Hot Springs, Ark., to Arley Smith, Sr. and Velma Pittman Smith (Estell). Sadly, she died on March 2, 2021, at the age of 88 in Edinburg, Tex. She was raised by her mother and stepfather, Willis Estell. The family, which included three daughters, moved to Fort Worth, Tex., when Maxine was a teenager. She graduated from Jefferson Academy, now known as Jefferson Christian Academy, in Jefferson, Tex., in 1949.

Following her interest in teaching, she graduated from Union College in Lincoln, Neb., receiving her B.S. in Elementary Education. Affectionately known as Miss Smith, she taught in Seventh-day Adventist Church schools for many years.

She later pursued a second career, becoming a nursing home administrator, operating several facilities including Retama Manor Nursing Center in Edinburg, Tex. She also taught nursing home administration at Texas Southmost College, now known as Texas Southmost College-Gorgas, in Brownsville, Tex.

She then traveled for many years around Texas as a nursing home administrator. Eventually, she became the first administrator for the brand-new Huguley Nursing Center in Burleson, Tex.

Missing her beloved Valley, she returned to McAllen, Tex. and worked in Home Health until she retired. She considered the Citrus Mobile & RV Park, a retirement community, in Edinburg, Tex., home until her hospitalization earlier this

year.

She was preceded in death by her father, Arley Smith, Sr.; mother, Velma Estell; stepfather, Willis Estell; stepmother, Marie Smith; one half-sister, Joan-Marie Smith Cook; two half-brothers, Arley Smith, Jr. and Stephen Smith; one brother-in-law, Charles Cook; one niece, Stephanie Haak and one niece-in-law, Gayle Tucker. Miss Smith is survived by many family members who have worked or are currently working for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in various positions.

Survivors include her two sisters: Arlene Smith Tucker (Duane) and Donna Estell Hines (Bobby); two sisters-in-law, Sharon Lee Smith and Sherry Smith; four nieces, Vicki Tucker (Paul), Kristen Tyler (Gary), Polly Cook (Nick Henk) and Carrie Smith; seven nephews, Donald Hines (Melody), Timothy Hines (Meredith), Craig Smith, Eric Smith (Sharon Ann), Michael Smith (Martha), Jonathan Smith (Jennifer) and Mike Tucker (Pam); grandnieces and grand-nephews, Allison Casillas (Peter), Cade Haak, Madeline Haak, Marley Haak, Gabriel Henk, Jesse Hines, Andrew Smith (Emily), Elizabeth Smith, Elliott Smith, Hannah Smith, Hudson Smith, Joseph Smith (Brandy), Marian Smith, Sawyer Smith, Daisy Tyler, Carly Tucker, Jordan Tucker, Hudson Tyler, Michal Anne Whitcomb (Levi); grandnephew-in-law, Jason Haak, and many other beloved family members.



Terry St. Clair, pastor, passed away on Sat., Feb. 27, 2021, in Cleburne, Tex. He was born on Nov. 9, 1949, in Mexico, Mo., to Mary Louise (Parker) and Dale Grant St. Clair. He married Cheryl Westphal on June 20, 1971, in Menard, Tex.

St. Clair graduated from Enterprise Academy in Enterprise, Kan., Southwestern Adventist University

in Keene, Tex., and Cambridge University in Cambridge, Mass. After graduation he started in Petosky, Mich., where he was principal and taught grades 5-8.

After serving as a singing evangelist, Terry pastored the Bowden Country District in North Dakota for two years. Then we went to Malawi, Africa, serving Mulangi and then Blantyre as Ministerial Director and Book and Bible House Manager. Then we went to the wide open spaces of Nebraska, where Terry pastored a four church district that stretched from the Wyoming border to the middle of

Nebraska. It was a long drive preaching four sermons each Sabbath. Then on to Massachusetts where he pastored the Warren-Quinebaug, district during that time building a new church in Warren. A call came to be pastor of the Taunton-Middleboro district and we spent another five years there. Then he moved to Joshua, Tex., where he pastored 11 years. Terry enjoyed old cars and antiques, and had a big influence on the start of Pathfinder pin trading.

St. Clair was preceded in death by his triplets, Mary, Amy and Ronald; his son, Christopher; parents and one sister, Karen Owen.

Survivors include his beloved wife, Cheryl St. Clair of Cleburne, Tex.; son, Richard St. Clair and wife, Nadia of Niamey, Niger in Africa; daughters, Melissa St. Clair and partner Jake Ryan of Leominster, Mass.; and Janelle Lawrence and husband Mike of Cleburne, Tex.; grandchildren, Tony Rivas, Alyssa Rivas, Madalyn Lawrence, Aspen Ostasewski, Bradyn Lawrence, Jacqueline St. Clair, Hunter St. Clair, Jacob Ryan, Safedin St. Clair and Marwan St. Clair; brother, Dan St. Clair and wife, Janna of Loma Linda, Calif.; sister, Nanette Clapp and husband, Lloyd of Decatur, Ark., and a host of other relatives and friends.

Purkey, Janice Elaine Bardo, born Dec. 23, 1941, Phoenix, Ariz.; died April 8, 2021, Columbia, Mo. Church membership: Moberly Seventh-day Adventist Church. Preceded in death by parents, William L. Bardo and Mildred Bardo Pettit. Survivors: husband, Kenneth Purkey; son, Douglas (Kelly) Purkey of Moberly, Mo.; daughter, Susan Cysneros of Phoenix, Ariz.; brother, William J. (Patty) Bardo of Phoenix, Ariz.; sister, Eva (Elmer) Sundean of Chandler, Tex.; step-siblings, Paulette (Tom) Murphey of Lincoln, Neb., David Pettit of Dallas, Tex. and Esther (Jeff) Visbal of Calimesa, Calif.; four grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Smith, Kathy Jo, born Oct. 11, 1959, Oklahoma City, Okla.; died Dec. 30, 2020, Shawnee, Okla. Church membership: Shawnee Seventh-day Adventist Church. Survivors: husband, Dale Smith of Home, Okla.; daughter, Lindsay (Tadd) Lewis of Midwest City; son, Dustin (Shelby) Smith of Moore, Okla.; parents, Stanley and Carol Buckmaster of Norman, Okla.; two brothers, James (Charlotte) Buckmaster of Graham, Tex., and Chuck (Marla) Sawyer of Harrah, Okla.; one sister, Gina (Bud) Ward of Oklahoma City, Okla.; four grandchildren and numerous other family members that loved her so much.

Spiva, Leonard L., born May 11, 1941, San Antonio, Tex.; died Feb. 6, 2021, Tyler, Tex. Church membership: Chandler Adventist Fellowship Church. He was preceded in death by his parents, Dorothea Hubenak and Leonard L. Spiva, Sr.; brothers, James, Ron and Larry Spiva; grandson Nicholas Spiva. Survivors: wife, Betty; daughter, Robin Tingle; sons, Trey and Tracy Spiva; 10 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Upson, Donald, born Sept. 22, 1950, Cheshire, Conn.; died April 11, 2021, Joplin, Mo. Church membership: Jay Seventh-day Adventist Church. He was an ordained minister who served the

Seventh-day Adventist Church for 41 years. He was preceded in death by his parents, Edgar Upson and Harriet Upson; brothers Richard Upson, Ted Upson and Robert Upson. Survivors: wife, Janet Upson; sons, Donald Upson, Michael Upson; daughter Traci Jamieson; 10 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

William, James Leon, Sr., born Aug. 22, 1945, Shreveport, La.; died March 20, 2021. Church membership: Shreveport First Seventh-day Adventist Church. Preceded in death by his parents, Fate Richard Williams, Sr. and Mary (Whitt) Williams; and brother, Fate Richard Williams, Jr. Survivors:

wife, Alice M. (Houston) Williams; two daughters, Jane Williams and Shenika Obinyan (Oko); two sons, James Jr. (Charlotte), Jeffrey Sr. (Kedra); and son/great nephew Perseus Pugh, Sr.; sister, Ruby Lee (Williams) Henderson; one aunt, Pinkie "Sweetie" Wiggins; 15 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren and a host of relatives and friends.

Yocum, Lily Ann, died March 11, 2021, Horatio, Ark. Church membership: Beacon Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church. Survivors: daughter, Eva Lanette Rogers of DeQueen, Ark.; brother, Jerry Conatser of Lockesburg, Ark.; brother, Joe Conatser of Mena, Ark.;

sister, Mary Holmes of DeQueen, Ark., and leaves five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Zigo, Bonnie Ruth, born Sept. 25, 1934, Asher, Okla.; died March 25, 2021. Church membership: Ardmore Seventh-day Adventist Church. Preceded in death by parents, Joseph Benjamin and Fanny Lavurn Brockett; husband, William George Zigo. Survivors: daughters, Cheryl Penrod (Willard), Sandy Turner (Jay), Stephanie Povendo (Chris) and Valarie Zigo-Huebsch; sons, Stephan Zigo (Deborah) and Daniel Zigo (Shea); brothers, B.J. Brockett (Jeannie), Bob Brockett, Cecil Brockett (Nona) and

Eddie Brockett (Shirley); sisters, Margaret Reynolds and Teresa Williams (Mark); grandchildren, Billy Owens, Jerry Roskam (Mika), Johnny Owen (Lindsey), Summer Odom (Jason), Brandon Turner (Kelsi), Austin Teders and fiancé Jocelynn, Cassidy Zigo, Samantha Zigo, Nathan Povendo, Tori Huebsch and Noah Zigo; 11 great-grandchildren as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

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