

Record

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My Great Commission
Personalizing Discipleship

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Editor's Note

How can we personalize the Great Commission and take ownership of the blessing and the charge set before us in Matthew 28:18-20? What if we viewed the Great Commission as MY Great Commission? We explore that idea in this issue of the magazine through the eyes of a preacher turned teacher, a high school educator, a nurse and a chaplain.

We challenge you to search your heart as you read these stories and ask yourself, "as a disciple/student of Christ, am I making other disciples/students of Christ?" What does it mean to be both a disciple and a disciple-maker? If my commission is to make more disciples, not make more church members, what does this mean for my approach to sharing Jesus with others? How can my story, my testimony, inspire others to become students of the Lord Jesus?

Kristina P. Busch

Kristina P. Busch

Cover Photo by Record Staff

The Record is an official publication of the Southwestern Union of Seventh-day Adventists.

MANAGING EDITOR
Kristina P. Busch
kpascual@swuc.org

DESIGNER
Rachel A. Ortiz
info@rortizdesign.com

CIRCULATION
Tammy G. Prieto
tprieto@swuc.org

ADVERTISING
Bradley Ecord
becord@swuc.org

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA
Frances Alcorn, news@arklac.org

OKLAHOMA
Daniel Ortega, news@okla-adventist.org

SOUTHWEST REGION
Norman Jones, news@swrgc.org

TEXAS
Kenn Dixon, news@txsda.org

TEXICO
Deby Márquez, news@texico.org

SOUTHWESTERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY
Timothy Kosaka, tim@swau.edu

Southwestern Union Conference

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

Our Mission:

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



Being Disciples and Disciple-makers

Have you ever had something incredible happen to you? Totally unexpected, God has done something for you. You have to tell somebody the good news, so you tell your spouse and your friends. In Mark 1:40-42, Jesus heals a man of leprosy, and in verse 43-45, “Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: ‘See that you don’t tell this to anyone... Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news.’” Imagine the best thing that has happened to you in your life; I probably would have been like the man healed and told everyone also. Do you blame the man? He had probably been suffering for a while, praying until he wondered if God would answer him.

The disciples were at a point of desperation—Jesus had died, and they didn’t understand what would be next. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus has one last important message—the Great Commission: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Jesus now asks His disciples to make more disciples. Could you imagine their excitement that day? They went from having

a pit in their stomach that felt awful to being on top of the world. They had to tell somebody! Wow, can you believe Jesus wants you and I to be disciples and to make more disciples?

This message from Jesus was not just for the disciples; it is directed to us as well. What does it mean to be both a disciple and a disciple-maker? Matthew 7:7-8 helps us to understand where we can start with being a disciple: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.” It is all about what Jesus can do in us when we fully seek Him.

How can we share that with others? C.S. Lewis, in his book *Mere Christianity*, states, “When you teach a child writing, you hold its hand while it forms the letters: that is, it forms the letters because you are forming them. We love and reason because God loves and reasons and holds our hand while we do it.” This sounds like discipleship, sharing what Jesus has done for us. If you are like me, you may wonder, what

could I share? Your testimony can be powerful.

Being a disciple is a life-changing journey with Jesus. Being a disciple changes the way we think and changes our actions toward the people in our home, in the workplace, at school and in the church. As disciples, we become part of a movement through which Jesus intends to change the world and prepare people for His Kingdom. He is calling you and I today to be disciples and disciple-makers. [®]

*John Page
Treasurer*



A Glimmer of Hope

for Patients and Families

Martha Bravo helps children have a better quality of life. A pediatric nurse in home health care, Bravo spends 12 hours of her work day caring for a child with a chronic illness in their home. She helps manage that child's medication and take care of them throughout the day using medical equipment like ventilators, nebulizers, and suction machines. Because she works in the same space where her patients and their families live, she spends a lot of time around these families. She gets to know them well and connects with them.

Bravo's patients are often chronically ill children and are usually bedridden. Most of the families she works with receive home health care through Medicare and also receive other government assistance in order to have proper medical care. The parents of these patients struggle to find hope

in their situations or to keep their positivity as they find out the types of lives their children will likely lead. Meanwhile, the children are often frustrated, depressed or simply bored. She talks to them about God and prays with the children and their family to help take away the emotional and physical pain. Bravo shares her faith with them.

Being at home with a patient means being in their space. Now, with precautions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bravo spends her days wearing a mask and trying as much as possible to maintain social distance from patients' families. This can be tricky since there is not always a lot of room. She has also felt the impact masks and social distance have made on her ability to form relationships with the families. While she might normally shake hands or pat the back of a



distressed parent, she is not able to do so as much anymore. She continues to do her best to comfort families but has had to make adjustments in order to protect their physical health.





“When we have hope and we know that there is someone that can take care of us and give us strength, that is the best support we could ever ask for.”

Sharing Hope

In addition to caring for her patients, Bravo educates their families on natural remedies and proper nutrition. Her primary purpose in this role is to care for patients’ physical needs, but she doesn’t stop there. Bravo strives to use the opportunity to serve their emotional and spiritual needs too. She views this job as a way to minister through her actions and her attitude, showing the families she works with the hope and love she has because of her relationship with Jesus Christ. She loves her job because it connects her to people that she would not have otherwise met, which gives her more opportunities to share God’s love with others.


Bravo has enjoyed helping people and taking care of them from a very young age. She enjoyed learning about anatomy and physiology in school because she wanted to further understand the body’s systems. She also felt closer to God as she understood more about what He had created and all the little details that

went into His work. She is grateful that working as a nurse provides her with the ability to help people manage the frustration and sadness of having a family member that is sick their entire life. She also rejoices that she is able to treat their emotional needs by sharing about the hope she has in God.

“God is my support,” shares Bravo. “I pray to Him before getting out of bed every morning and ask him to help me go the extra mile and beyond. I pray that others will see Him through me.” Her prayers have been answered; parents sometimes mention that they see something different in her. She takes this opportunity to share the hope she has with them. “When we have hope and we know that there

is someone that can take care of us and give us strength, that is the best support we could ever ask for.” She knows the only way she could share hope is by pointing her patients to Jesus.

“We need to always keep moving toward preparation for Jesus’ second coming and make sure we can talk to as many people as possible,” shares Bravo. “We need to give ourselves to God constantly. It’s easy to separate ourselves from Him, but we need to lead a good Christian life in order to set a good example for the people around us.”

While her job can be emotionally draining and requires long hours, she loves it for all it allows her to do. Bravo is grateful to have a job that gives her the ability to share God’s love with others and take care of their physical needs, while addressing their emotional and spiritual needs as well. 

By Brisa Ramirez. Ramirez is a freelance writer based in Texas.

Making Disciples, Transforming Congregations

By Osvaldo Rigacci, Southwestern Union Vice President for Multicultural Ministries



Matthew 28:19 says, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...” We were not called to make “members,” but rather to specifically and evidently make “disciples.” It is them, those that we disciple, whom we will baptize and teach in preparation for the advent of our Lord Jesus. The categorization of “member” does not help our movement, but rather favors the institutionalization of the spiritual experience of individuals and of our churches.

The understanding of the call, the acceptance and the decision to follow Jesus, the joy of learning from Him, opting to imitate Him, reflecting His character, the commitment to the entrusted mission and the completion of the work—all of this only makes sense within the framework of discipleship, as a privilege of our relationship with Christ.

In contrast, none of this is possible in the context of membership. Members

do not need to change and improve; however, those who follow Jesus as His disciples always experience transformation and growth.

We want to lead individuals and congregations to a healthy, dynamic and joyful experience in Christ under a new paradigm. The Southwestern Union Discipleship Project seeks to do that within the framework of the “3 C’s Strategy.” The initiative, in its concept and in its practice, challenges us to be disciples of Christ Jesus, living and behaving as disciples, but, above all, shining as disciples to glorify our Master and prepare ourselves and others for His glorious coming.

The purpose: to intentionally develop and grow our participants, congregations and territories.

This dynamic places Christ in the center, and we live *consecrated* to Christ. In Christ, we live with *compassion* towards others, especially towards those we want to reach for

His kingdom. So, in Christ we *commit* ourselves to the mission, to the church and to the completion of the work.

3 C’s Strategy

A strategy of 3 C’s comes from the fact that there can be no Christian discipleship without *consecration* to Christ, through connection, communion and dependence on Jesus.



Consecrated to Him, we are in an ideal position to feel *compassion* for others, which moves us to take an interest in their needs and help them through service.



Only consecrated to Christ and with compassion for souls will we be able to make a *commitment* with the mission and be aware of the urgency of this crucial hour.



The spiritual experience of the disciples of Christ is not achieved by position, hierarchy or authority, rather, it is enjoyed in a service of selfless

love for Christ and our neighbor. In this learning journey, the fact that we are sent as “ambassadors and open letters” prevails. Jesus is always the Teacher and our example, motivating us to come together to complete the mission that He entrusted to us “in this generation.”

The process is essentially an experience of transformation and sanctification. Our message and banner are Christ-centered. The instrument the Spirit uses is witnessing. The distinguishing signs are the fruits of the Spirit. The learning experience is eternal. Our constant motivation is our love for Christ and our desire to live for Him. The opportune time is today and now, before the door of grace closes. The goal is not baptism or membership, it is being a true disciple.

This project has come to be because it is extremely important to establish a specific and intentional *discipleship program* in our congregations. This will help those who participate to establish and maintain close relationships with Jesus and with one another in a way that favors their maturity and growth. As a result, the fulfillment of the mission will be promoted by growing and expanding the Kingdom of God.

This plan is not a book or compendium of recommendations, just a simple and clear program that is easy to apply in any congregation, regardless of size, culture or location. Today, and at this prophetic time, it is not an option, it is a pressing need. To learn more about the Discipleship Project, visit SouthwesternUnion.org or email ORigacci@swuc.org. [®]

The spiritual experience of the disciples of Christ is not achieved by position, hierarchy or authority, rather, it is enjoyed in a service of selfless love for Christ and our neighbor.



21st Century *Disciple*

Preacher, Teacher & Friend

When Buster Swoopes, Jr., was five years old, his dream was to be a pastor. “My parents recently reminded me that I would play baptism with my stuffed animals, my sister’s dolls, and my G.I. Joes. I’d have them all sitting like they were being preached to during a church service, and then they would all be baptized,” says Swoopes. While his dream to become a pastor did become reality, God has led him to a ministry he never expected, as a professor at Southwestern Adventist University. Not only is he

teaching religion classes, but he has the opportunity to encourage, guide, and support students at a critical time in their lives.

Swoopes’ father was a singing evangelist, and the family spent weekends traveling to different areas in Oklahoma and Texas. His father would give a concert, usually ministering in tandem with an evangelist. The family joined him, and this is where Swoopes says he came to understand the many different aspects of ministry. During an evangelistic meeting when he was 13,

he first felt God truly calling him to the ministry. “I remember leaning over to my mom and telling her. After that, I never looked back.”

As a junior theology student at Southwestern, he remembers professor Bill Kilgore, the man whose position he would once be asked to fill, challenging him, saying, “If you can do anything else in your life—do it. You won’t be satisfied in pastoral ministry.” Swoopes remembers returning to his dorm room that night and praying earnestly, “God, if you want me to be here, I need you to





re-call me.” Within two weeks, a pastor called him unexpectedly, saying, “I’m not sure why, but I feel compelled to tell you that you need to stay where you are. You’re on the path that God has called you to.” That was confirmation.

It was at Southwestern that he met his wife, Lauren, who became a partner in life and ministry. When they moved to their first assignment, a church plant in San Antonio, Swoopes was excited to finally follow the commission God had given him. But it didn’t go well, he says. In the first year, the church went from 18 to 12. He was discouraged, but attended a church growth summit with Joseph Kidder, who encouraged him to pray.

So he prayed. He went to the church on Wednesdays and spent the day in prayer, and that is when things began to change. People began coming to the church. “A deacon moved from Oakwood, a head elder came from Houston, and the person who mowed our grass said, ‘I know this woman

who is looking for a Sabbath church.’ She became our church clerk!” says Swoopes. The little church began to grow rapidly, and in two years there were more than 120 people attending.

Swoopes went on to pastor in Houston before attending seminary, then returning to Texas to pastor the Crowley church. It was then that he and Lauren, now with their two children, Neal and Raina, began to pray for more opportunities to reach beyond the member sitting in the pew, to reach people who aren’t connected to God yet. Several months later, a few weeks before school started, he got a call from Southwestern, suggesting that he think about transitioning to teaching. He knew this was God calling him again.

Though he had little time to prepare, he says it was a blessing, as it forced him to adopt a dialogue-based classroom style, something Swoopes wouldn’t change because of the deep and authentic interactions that students

have found encouraging. For Swoopes, it’s amazing to see young people who may know about God come to actually know Him.

In one of his classes, students are asked to write down a personal vision statement, an understanding of their life’s purpose according to the will of God. They can refer back to the statement and talk to God about it throughout their journey. Part of that is understanding that God can and will use them. Beyond his classes, Swoopes thinks of his own family, his children, in these moments as he encourages and prays for them to follow God’s call. Though he once felt differently, Swoopes says he now understands how important a desire to serve God is. “It’s important to want to serve God, and to be open to the call He has for you. If you tell God you want to be used by Him, He will use you,” he says. ¹¹

By Jessica Lozano. Lozano is a freelance writer based in Texas.

5 Steps to Becoming a Digital Evangelist

By Jamie Jean Schneider Domm, Digital Marketing Consultant
& former North American Division Digital Strategist



Only 20% of Americans regularly attend church, and only two in 10 millennials consider regular church attendance important. The Church no longer has the option of embracing change or leaving it to the next generation. The time is now; otherwise, we will become irrelevant. Change is

never easy, but anything is possible with the Lord (see Matthew 19:26).

People search online for answers to their problems. They turn to the internet for companionship, understanding, information, anonymity and more. We must be the voice that answers back, online, to share our

message of hope and wholeness. Our digital presence may be the only exposure to the Gospel many people receive. We must recognize that the mission field is online, and just as legitimate as traditional evangelism.

We need an army of digital evangelists dedicated to carrying the Gospel to the digital mission field. Here are five steps you can take to become a digital evangelist:

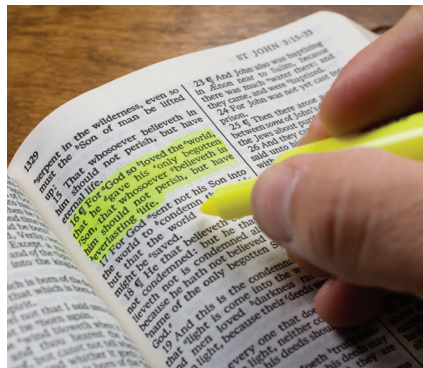
1. Determine your target audience and platforms.

The first step in reaching your audience is to develop a clear picture of who you are talking to. Seek to understand their felt needs and core values. Become a student of their culture. You must go where they spend their time and speak the language they speak.



2. Develop a strategy.

Define your purpose for being on social media and utilizing digital tools. Then frame your strategy accordingly, identifying key performance indicators for success.



3. Research relevant content ideas.

When it comes to digital evangelism, content is made to inform, educate and inspire. The Church should be the leader in creating content that improves the lives of others, and supports their spiritual growth.



4. Make time for engagement and community building.


The church experience should extend beyond the confines of time and space in a building to an involved community that provides 24/7 support, not only to members but also to our broader contacts.

5. Engage in digital door-knocking.

Digital door-knocking is when you share spiritual content on your social media profiles or through messaging and email to create an opportunity for people to engage with you about your faith.



The life, character and gift of Jesus Christ should be on display in your digital content and interactions. Jesus came not to uplift Himself, but to reveal an accurate picture of God’s character. It’s not about how many followers you have on your digital platforms, but how people can and do discover Jesus through you. Jesus sought first to fulfill people’s needs; He then invited them to follow.

We can use social media and digital tools to achieve our mission of spreading the Gospel and helping people by creating content that focuses on mental, physical, and spiritual needs first. Once this foundation is established, we can invite our audience to “taste and see that the Lord is good.” Psalm 34:8. When used for digital discipleship and evangelism, this shift in focus is a way we can follow Jesus’ example for everyday ministry to real people. We can use social influence for kingdom building while utilizing modern tools and technologies. 

Discover more ways you can get involved with digital evangelism and find resources for yourself, church or ministry at SDAdata.org/blog.

This article was originally published on SDAdata.org/blog.

Lives Transformed, Health Restored in PlantWise Film

By AdventHealth



She grew up in the country living a vegetarian lifestyle and only rarely eating meat. As a substitute, she ate a lot of cheese, eggs and processed foods. Shortly after getting married, however, she started having health issues that eventually escalated with her first pregnancy.

"At the 27-week mark in the pregnancy, the doctor ordered a glucose tolerance test. I failed the test quite significantly," said Karene Bejarano, a registered nurse. "They told me I had gestational diabetes and I was going to have to see an endocrinologist and do food counseling. They said, 'But don't worry; it will go away. You'll just have to be careful. If you exercise and keep yourself healthy, you'll be just fine.'"

But after giving birth, Bejarano experienced terrible muscle weakness, intermittent blurred vision and high blood sugar levels, leading to a diagnosis of Type 1 diabetes.

"It was very disheartening, and I went through a lot of denial," she said. "I was truly grieving a loss. I was losing my health, which is part of what all of us have the right to enjoy in life."

Bejarano is one of six individuals who share their health transformation stories in the recently released film *PlantWise*. In the documentary, the six showcase their struggles with debilitating health conditions often caused by poor lifestyle choices.

The turning point for each of them is the decision to change what they put on their plate by embracing a whole-

food, plant-based diet. For Bejarano, while she couldn't completely eliminate her medication for Type 1 diabetes (an irreversible condition), her improved lifestyle allowed her to lower the amount she needed to take.

"When I made the switch to a whole-food, plant-based lifestyle, I started experiencing significant changes rather quickly," Bejarano recounted. "Within six months, I had lost 40 pounds. My doctor said my blood pressure was quite low and that they were going to take me off my blood pressure medication. My cholesterol was dropping too, so he said I wouldn't need my cholesterol medication anymore. In fact, I was able to get off the majority of my medications."

Nearly half of all Americans suffer



“I thought I was free, but I didn't really understand what freedom was until I changed my lifestyle.”

from at least one chronic disease, which is responsible for 1.7 million deaths every year, according to a study published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. National lifestyle medicine experts believe that exposing the results of unhealthy food choices and revealing the benefits of a whole-food, plant-based lifestyle could significantly help to slow this trend.

“A plant-based diet is the best diet available for humans. When minimally processed plant food is consumed, it can be incredibly health-promoting and even therapeutic, to the point of reversing disease,” noted George Guthrie, MD, MPH, a lifestyle medicine physician at AdventHealth who is also the author of *Eat Plants, Feel Whole*, a health transformation book. “The average American is deficient in potassium, magnesium and fiber. Those eating a whole-food, plant-based diet do not have this problem.”

Bejarano recalled how adopting this healthy eating approach made her feel so much more alive. “I thought I was free, but I didn't really understand what freedom was until I changed my lifestyle,” she said. “You have more energy, you're more vibrant and you're happier. When you really decide you're going to change your lifestyle and you stand firm with that decision, it radically changes your life for the better, and you'll never want to go back.”


The film *PlantWise* stems from AdventHealth's desire to explore using documentary films in inpatient and outpatient settings as a catalyst to inspire patients to make lifestyle changes. It is a powerful motivational tool that can give viewers a new vision and fresh hope for their condition, and help them experience vibrant wellness through embracing a healthy lifestyle.

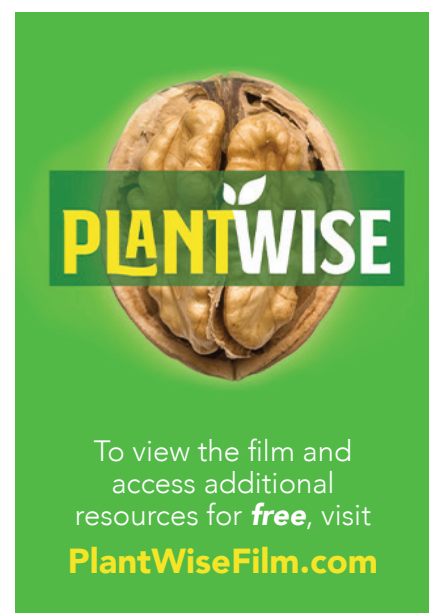
Speaking on the vision of the film, Todd Chobotar, editor-in-chief at AdventHealth Press and executive

producer of *PlantWise*, said the film was created not only to share transformative patient stories, but also to detail solutions to chronic health conditions and to support physician-patient engagement.

“It is our hope that *PlantWise* will positively impact people's health when it is viewed by many audiences across the globe, including health care employees, inpatients, outpatients, medical providers, consumers, churches and other community organizations,” Chobotar noted.

PlantWise is a 48-minute film with subtitles available in 18 languages. Sponsored by AdventHealth, Ardmore Institute of Health, American College of Lifestyle Medicine and EatingYouAlive.org, the film features 18 leading lifestyle medicine experts from 14 specialties and disciplines.

Hans Diehl, DrHSc, MPH, who is the founder of the Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP), calls *PlantWise* “the best plant-based film out there.” And T. Colin Campbell, PhD, who co-authored *The China Study*, said it's “inspiring and meaningful. Exactly what people should see!” 



AN EDUCATOR'S DREAM: A Heart of Service for Students

By Markie Bazy,
Ozark Adventist
Academy English &
Drama Teacher



"Yes! I would be happy to," I said in response to Mitzi's request for a donation to the school's mission trip.

"Really?" She seemed surprised at my quick response.

"Of course! It is my pleasure to help you go on this mission trip." As a former missionary who served 12 years in the mission field, it is indeed my pleasure to see my students excited about participating in a mission trip—even if they are a high school senior and it's their fourth trip.

As an educator, not only do I teach in my subject area, but I also desire for my students to experience God in every way possible on an Adventist academy campus—especially through mission trips. The benefits of being

part of a mission trip are numerous for students. There are things we teach in the classroom that are reflected in service through mission work: empathy, teamwork, life choices and spiritual growth.

Empathy

Throughout the New Testament, we read that Jesus had compassion for the people He met daily. For a student who is stressed by homework and daily life in a first-world country, compassion may not be a frequent occurrence. But send that same student on a mission trip, whether national or international, and they see the struggles of people who just need the basics: food, water, shelter. Morgan Wolzen, a 2020

graduate of Ozark Adventist Academy (OAA), says, "Mission trips opened my eyes to what exists beyond my 'Adventist bubble.'"

Teamwork

Educators include group work in their classroom to facilitate working as part of a team. Mission trips do the same. Whether coordinating a Vacation Bible School, evangelistic series or building project, the team members have to work together to accomplish their goal. Derek Timms, current Religion teacher at OAA and 2005 graduate, participated in building a church in Mexico. Since his team was mainly OAA students, they already knew how to work together, and they were able to

have church in the church they built the last Sabbath of the trip. Timms says, “We got to see what ‘Be Strong in the Lord’ meant to the faces of the people of Cleneguillas, Nuevo Leon.”

Life Choices

High school is a time where students often discover their career choice. Mission trips can alter this choice or define it. After graduating from OAA, Timms went on to serve as a student missionary in Norway and Ethiopia. Upon returning to college, he told his academic advisor “to sign me up for whatever it’s called that helps people learn more about the Bible.” Those experiences as a student missionary led Timms to choose a career as a Bible teacher. Jake Krein, a 2016 graduate of OAA, had a similar experience. While on school mission trips, he faced new places, new faces and new challenges, which drew him to education. Krein is now the science teacher at OAA. While not everyone will choose education after being on a mission trip, it often

creates a “heart for service,” as Krein said. And that’s what we desire in our students.

Spiritual Growth


The Adventist academy experience is education and spiritual growth. As teachers, we desire for our students to have the opportunity to grow spiritually while on our campus. While this is a different experience for each student, academies do provide opportunities for a personal relationship with God to develop. One of these opportunities is through mission trips.

Wolzen felt that her spiritual life was on a higher level when she returned home from a mission trip. “When I am serving and doing what I can for others is when I feel most connected to Jesus,” she says.

Each student has their own experience. Timms felt that he didn’t change spiritually from the mission trip, but “it changed everything else in my life, and those influences changed my spiritual life.”

Spiritual growth often happens when a student returns from the mission trip. This is why Adventist academies have worship services, Bible classes, community service, small group studies and encourage personal devotional time. It is important to have these in place to help a student maintain that spiritual high from a mission trip.

Krein believes that he grew spiritually because of personal reflection. He says, “It’s a hard thing to get in front of people and deliver a message. Naturally, a person might not think themselves to be ‘worthy’ or ‘good enough.’” After these mission trips, Krein often found himself experiencing internal scrutiny, as he put it. “I asked myself hard questions about my spiritual life, and didn’t always like the answers. In the end, those honest and ugly answers really helped me grow.”

Mission trips and education go hand-in-hand. After all, it is why we teachers teach—we desire to see our students succeed in all aspects of their journey on this earth. 



Connecting Head and Heart for the Gospel

By Ingrid Hernandez, AdventHealth Stakeholder Communications



Combining his love for education and ministry, Chaplain Jacob Atuahene-Nsowaah came to learn that, “The gospel is not always about preaching—not sharing ‘over’ but sharing ‘with.’”

That’s one of the key lessons Atuahene-Nsowaah has learned over his years in pastoral care. He considers the work of a chaplain sacred, as they’re often the last individual patients connect with before passing. These final moments offer opportunities to reflect and share stories, which Atuahene-Nsowaah said helps to deepen his own faith.


As the chaplain educator at Texas Health Huguley Hospital Fort Worth South, Atuahene-Nsowaah supervises the clinical pastoral education (CPE) program, training the chaplains who will be working on the units visiting patients. He said THAT working with interns, residents and clinical mission integration specialists at the faith-based hospital helps him to see the mission field at home.

“As a CPE instructor, you become the subject matter and look inside yourself,” he said. “It is healing, and it helps me to integrate the head and the heart.”

Atuahene-Nsowaah has always considered himself a teacher, but his calling to ministry work wasn’t immediately obvious. He said they were more like “nudges.” In the late 1960s, the Seventh-day Adventist Church hosted a three-week evangelistic mission in his hometown, and Atuahene-Nsowaah attended for the entire three weeks. He said that was what first warmed his heart to ministry.

Another nudge came when he was studying in Virginia in the 1990s. Atuahene-Nsowaah was adjunct teaching and completing a program in biblical studies and Christian education when a CPE student from Ghana spoke to him about chaplaincy. Seeing and hearing about the experiences of the CPE students led to his decision to not only train as a chaplain, but to teach as a chaplain.

Since then, Atuahene-Nsowaah has worked in various hospitals, enjoying the small-group learning process with students. “When I share, I receive more understanding. Chaplain education is my mission,” he said.

If you are interested in discovering the calling God has for your life, Atuahene-Nsowaah shared the following advice. First, pray that you will be in the will of God. Next, listen to His voice. Then, pay attention to your gifts. Look for what gives you a sense of inner peace and joy. Finally, be open, and come as you are. 



March Events

1
SOUTHWESTERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY
 Presidential Inauguration
 SWAU.edu/inauguration

4-5
SOUTHWESTERN UNION
 Fanning the Flames of Evangelism
 Avivando la Llama del Evangelismo
 Embassy Suites, Oklahoma City, Okla.
 SBrooks@swuc.org

5
SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE
 "Overcomer!" International Women's Day of Prayer
 Franklin Ave. Baptist Church, New Orleans
 AArchibald@swrgc.org

6-12
SOUTHWESTERN UNION
 More Compassion Mission Trip
 South Louisiana
 MMauk@swuc.org

11-12
ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA CONFERENCE
 OAA Alumni
 Ozark Adventist Academy
 Information@ozarkacademy.org

11-13
SOUTHWESTERN UNION
 God Made Me!
 Children's Ministries Training Retreat
 Lone Star Camp, Athens, Tex.
 SCano@swuc.org

19
SOUTHWESTERN UNION
 VBS and Children's Ministries Area Training
 El Paso East Spanish Adventist Church
 SCano@swuc.org

20
SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE
 Adventist Robotics Tournament
 Lone Star Camp, Athens, Tex.
 BGriffith@swrgc.org

26
SOUTHWESTERN UNION
 Pathfinder Bible Experience
 Keene, Tex.
 MMauk@swuc.org

31-April 3
SOUTHWESTERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY
 Alumni Homecoming
 SWAU.edu/advancement/alumni/homecoming

April Events

1-3
SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE
 Growing Together Women's Ministries Leadership Training
 Lone Star Camp, Athens, Tex.
 AArchibald@swrgc.org

1-3
SOUTHWESTERN UNION
 The Conscience and Faithfulness Conference
 Albuquerque Marriott
 Pyramid North Hotel
 SBrooks@swuc.org

2
SOUTHWESTERN UNION
 VBS and Children's Ministries Area Training
 Shreveport First Adventist Church
 SCano@swuc.org

8-9
ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA CONFERENCE
 South Louisiana English Camp Meeting
 Hammond Convention Center
 FAlcorn@arklac.org

9
SOUTHWESTERN UNION
 Children's Ministries Sabbath School Training
 Adventist Fellowship Church and Independence Spanish Adventist Church, Tulsa, Okla.
 SCano@swuc.org

10
SOUTHWESTERN UNION
 VBS Area Training
 Adventist Fellowship, Tulsa, Okla.
 SCano@swuc.org

15
SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE
 Women's Ministries Journey to the Cross
 Virtual Meeting
 AAmparo@swrgc.org

15-16
ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA CONFERENCE
 South Louisiana Spanish Camp Meeting
 Hammond Convention Center
 Arklacsa.org

22-23
ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA CONFERENCE
 OAA Academy Days
 Ozark Adventist Academy
 RPatterson@ozarkacademy.org

22-23
ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA CONFERENCE
 Pathfinder Camporee and Bible Bowl
 Camp Yorktown Bay
 jrhuft1@cox.net

23
SOUTHWESTERN UNION
 VBS Area Training
 Missouri City Adventist Church
 SCano@swuc.org

24
SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE
 Women's Ministries Seniors Empowerment
 Virtual Meeting
 AAmparo@swrgc.org

29-May 1
SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE
 Men's Ministries Summit
 Lone Star Camp, Athens, Tex.
 LMassiah@swrgc.org



Lozano Accepts New Position

BURLESON, TEX. — Jessica Lozano, who served as the communication director/*Record* editor for the Southwestern Union, has accepted a new position. Lozano is now a senior account executive at PAVLOV Agency, a full-service marketing agency based in Fort Worth.

Lozano graduated from Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU) and, after serving as the university’s graphic design manager, became SWAU’s marketing/PR director in 2009. After serving in that role for two years, she transitioned to Texas Health Huguley, where she worked in the marketing department. In 2012, she was called to serve as the associate communication director for the Southwestern Union. She became the communication department director/*Record* editor in 2016. Reflecting on her 10 years at the Southwestern Union, she says, “I’m

grateful to have met and been inspired by so many members across the territory, to have worked with great teams and have been able to share incredible stories of hope and inspiration.”

In her new role, Lozano manages relationships between clients and the agency, ensuring their multimillion dollar projects and campaigns are successful. At PAVLOV, she works with a team of creatives and strategists. Among them is fellow SWAU alumni, Allan Cardozo, PAVLOV’s chief operating officer and interactive director. PAVLOV is involved in every aspect of marketing and public relations—brand strategy and development, marketing planning and creative direction for print, digital, social and video campaigns; managing public relations strategy; website development—and more±—for clients across the globe



including airports and transit systems, healthcare systems, cities, major cultural events and cultural destinations, nonprofits, schools, and more.

“We are thankful for Jessica’s leadership and service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” says Southwestern Union Treasurer John Page. “We wish her the best in her new role and pray for a career full of blessings.”

By Kristina P. Busch
Managing Editor



SAVE THE DATE

 May 20 - 21

 New Orleans

 southwesternadventist.org

Union Hosts Camp Professional Retreat in Arkansas

The Southwestern Union Young Adult and Youth department has held a retreat for camp professionals every other year. This year's retreat took place in Hot Springs, Ark., during the first week of February. At the attendees request, the Union plans to do this annually moving forward.

The retreat serves as a gathering and equipping session for the youth directors, camp managers and camp rangers of the conference campgrounds in our Union. These are Camp Yorktown Bay in Arkansas, Wewoka Woods in Oklahoma, Lake Whitney Ranch in Texas and Lonestar Camp, also in Texas.

The retreat offers an opportunity to discuss how to better handle camp ministries during the COVID-19 pandemic, housing capacities, safety and

programming. Because our camps are in Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas, we make sure we are in compliance with the rules and regulations of each state. We also discuss camp improvement and brainstorm ways to grow with limited budgets. We share testimonies of donations and praise God for the funds allocated to camp ministry.

Southwestern Union President Carlos Craig led out during our worship time as we prepared our hearts to serve not just the Lord, but His children. Southwestern Union Ministerial Spouses and Family Ministries Director Letty Craig also presented to the spouses and the children of the camp professionals. We wanted our leaders and their families to know that they are loved and that they are appreciated!

It's our desire to have the greatest

camp; in order to do that, we believe in supporting and pouring God's love into our camp professionals, as they put their lives on the line daily to provide a safe haven for all.

Camp ministry is more than just preparing a place to have fun, it's a place where lives are transformed for Jesus Christ. The Southwestern Union is glad to report that each camp has been and continues to be a tremendous blessing to their local communities.

Whether you use the campground for a retreat, summer camp or camp meeting, it's my prayer that you will have a great experience with the staff and that the grounds will give a glimpse of heaven.

*By Helvis C. Moody
Young Adult and Youth Director*



Commissioned to Disciple the Next Generation



KEENE, TEX. – Imagine the scene of Jesus, resurrected, waiting to see His disciples. The women saw Him and worshiped Jesus immediately! He instructed them to find His brothers and meet in Galilee. It is there that the Great Commission is given. “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 28:19.

This is the last encounter recorded in the book of Matthew between Jesus and His disciples. The first, about three years earlier, takes place walking beside the Sea of Galilee. Jesus calls out to Peter and Andrew. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” Matthew 4:19. At this point, Peter and Andrew may not have understood what Jesus was asking, yet they left their nets and followed Jesus. From the first invitation to the Great Commission, Jesus transformed a group of diverse people into disciples. Discipleship took place between “Come, follow me” and “Therefore, go.”

The mission statement of Southwestern Adventist University is “inspiring Knowledge, Faith and Service through Christ-centered Education.” Being purposeful about putting Jesus Christ at the center provides an opportunity to model discipleship through education. A discipleship model for education can become a catalyst to fulfill the Great Commission. Why is this essential? Because Christian educators are positioned to

fulfill a commission to disciple the next generation.

Jesus came to earth on a mission of salvation, yet how He spent His time reflects what was most important. His ministry was spent not only teaching but also healing and serving. He lived life with His disciples so that they could learn how to disciple others.

In the same way, our schools have a mission of delivering education, but our goal is to make disciples. This goal is reached by following the example of Jesus who was relational and intentional. If we can provide an experience that reflects the love of Jesus, we will make disciples who will launch from our schools prepared to serve a world that needs them.

“Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” Matthew 9:11-13.

Jesus loved being with people. His time on earth was limited, but He purposefully spent it in proximity to others. Jesus was setting the example for His disciples of how to be in community with each other. How can we apply this example to education?

Effective educators build relationships. Jesus taught us that to be an effective teacher, we should look at the whole person and meet their needs. When someone was sick, Jesus healed them. When they were hungry, Jesus

fed them. When they were discouraged, Jesus provided encouragement. It was through relationship that His most effective teaching took place. Through relationship Jesus created disciples.

“Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” John 4:13-14. The interaction that Jesus had with the woman at the well was intentional. He approached her and initiated a conversation that would change her life.

Adventist education should also strive to be intentional. The experience should be not only Christ-centered, but also Christ-forward. He is the living water that leads to eternal life. This is the greatest lesson we can share with students, co-workers and our community.

Christian education provides a catalyst for transformation through relational and intentional discipleship. Education is our mission, but the goal is that students will experience Christ, accept the call to follow Him and be inspired to share the gospel with others. This is true discipleship. It begins with the invitation to “Come, follow me” and leads to the Great Commission to “Therefore, go.” A commission to disciple the next generation through Christ-centered education.

*By Ana Patterson
President*

Making SWAU Possible: The \$3,000 Freshman Scholarship

KEENE, TEX. – “I never thought I’d go to college at all,” says Daniel Herrera, first year theology major at Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU). “The Freshman \$3,000 Scholarship made it possible for me to be here, and has opened doors to experiences I never dreamed I’d have.”

Herrera is one of many first-year students who have benefitted from this scholarship, which is made possible thanks to many committed church member donors throughout this region. Open to any student from the Southwestern Union: Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico, the fund is stackable—meaning it can be added to any other financial aid awarded—in order to provide more students with the gift of a Christian education at SWAU.

“My professors have really made my experience at SWAU a positive one,” says Gladys Barrios, freshman biochemistry major and scholarship recipient. “All of them record their lectures so if we have a question or want to review a specific topic after class, we can. They’re also very accessible,

friendly and responsive.”

The SWAU experience isn’t just the classroom; it’s holistic. Students find their place not only academically but spiritually and socially as well. The Freshman Scholarship offers full-time first year students the chance to expand their horizons and explore opportunities they may not otherwise have.

“SWAU really helped me realize who I am,” says Herrera. “I thought I wasn’t good at meeting new people and assumed that I’d just stay in my own little corner as a freshman. But there were so many opportunities that I quickly got involved not only on campus, but doing off-campus events at conference churches, as well. I never thought I’d do something like that at all.”

Kevin Roblero, freshman music education major who was awarded the \$3,000 Freshman Scholarship, also found himself growing in unexpected ways at SWAU.

“As a Hispanic violinist, I’ve done a lot of playing in Spanish churches, but that’s about it,” shares Roblero, freshman music education major. “Since I’m

involved with SWAU’s orchestra, I’ve been able to play in a variety of settings, and every time I play somewhere new, I’m blown away. I constantly ask myself how I got here, able to praise God with my music in so many different ways and places.”

Over the past three years, SWAU’s Freshman Scholarship has made it possible for students to experience God in new ways, including unique worship opportunities, spiritually centered student clubs, expressions of faith, volunteer opportunities and more. The fund has awarded nearly a million dollars to SWAU students.

“All of our teachers take the time to pray before starting class, so God is guiding us through every lecture,” explains Barrios. “There are also different worship opportunities nearly every night, plus vespers, church and small groups. I have been built up spiritually so much, even in the short time I’ve been on the SWAU campus.”

Visit SWAU.edu/3000 to learn more about the \$3,000 Freshman Scholarship fund.

By Becky St. Clair





Be Available for Opportunity

I remember finishing a conference on Friday afternoon on the West Coast. By the time I arrived at the airport, checked in and got to the gate, it was already Sabbath. I prayed and asked the Lord that morning to help me be available for His service that day. As the sun set and I was soon to board the airplane for home, I asked God to help me be focused on His day, the Sabbath. I asked the Lord to let me be in a quiet place on the airplane. I wanted to spend my time with Him, not the usual chatter that goes with flying.

I looked and wondered and wondered how many would be on my flight; it looked like a nearly empty flight. As we boarded, the flight attendant told us we could sit anywhere on the plane. I rejoiced that God had answered my prayer. I found a spot in the back corner of the plane and settled in.

With almost everyone boarded, a husband and wife made their way to the back and sat down across the aisle from me. Next, a young woman came and sat down in front of me. All were quiet.

We took off and I pulled my Bible from my briefcase and began to read some passages out of the Psalms. Within a matter of moments, the young woman turned around and asked if that was a Bible. I replied, "Yes." She asked to see the Bible. I handed her my Bible and she browsed for several minutes. She returned it and asked if I believed what the book said. I told her, "Yes, I believe not in the book, but the Author of the book." She continued to quiz me about Christianity. After a while, she asked what she had to do to invite Jesus to be her Lord and Savior. What a privilege to encourage her, pray with her and hear her give her heart to Jesus.

I did not realize that the couple across the aisle were watching and listening. Not long after the young woman had accepted Jesus, they asked if I was a pastor. I told them I was. They then poured out their grieving hearts to me. They were ministers of the Pentecostal faith. They had been in ministry for many years and had received the sad news from their physician that she had terminal cancer. They

asked if I would pray with them and for them. I did and the young woman also joined us. We prayed, sang a chorus or two and worshiped the Lord together. What a beginning to Sabbath!

The gospel commission is to each one of us. It must become personal. Everyday life presents great opportunities for Christ. The key is to commit to being available for Jesus. May you be willing, and may He bless you with opportunities!

By Richard C. Dye, Sr., President



Make Your Mission Count

MOUNTAIN PINE, ARK.— I will never forget the face of a teen camper who was sponsored by his church to attend Camp Yorktown Bay Summer Camp last year. He had never been to any camp. He had never really strayed too far away from his inner-city neighborhood. All he knew was the routine life he was living, and he never really stopped to think of possibilities outside of what he knew.

When his family arrived at camp to drop him off, I approached to greet them. I'll always remember the huge

ear-to-ear smile on his face as he got out of the vehicle. He was looking past me at something in particular. That's when I heard him say, "Yo, you guys have horses? Will I be able to ride one?" I told him that he absolutely would. The big smile remained, he said, "Man, I already know this is going to be the best week ever."

That is what summer camp is about—putting smiles on kids' faces as we teach them about Jesus, horses, nature and many other things. As much as we love seeing their smiling

faces, we know that Jesus does also.

Summer Camp registration is now open online at ArklaYouth.com. Don't miss your chance to save \$25 with the early bird discount, in effect until April 15, 2022. For older teens, applications to work at camp are also on the website. I hope to see your kids at camp this summer!

*By David Craig
Youth and Summer Camp Director*

Reflections on My Great Commission

SHREVEPORT, LA.— I remember the day I received my great commission. I was attending a Pathfinder camporee at Camp Yorktown Bay (CYB), serving as one of the leaders of the Malvern Skyhawk Pathfinder Club. We were enjoying an activity in the gym when the conference youth director called me to the side of the gym and asked if I had ever thought about working with kids full-time?

"What do you see me doing?" I responded. He replied, "I see you being a teacher."

This took me totally by surprise. You see, I had declared as a fifth grader that I would never become a teacher. But the Holy Spirit had other plans for my life. After several weeks of wrestling with the idea of becoming a teacher, I made the decision to quit my construction job and accept an interim ranger position at CYB, with plans to attend college at the beginning of the next school year. The thought of going to college six years after my high school graduation was scary.

While working at CYB, I met and fell in love with Rebecca Gunter. She happened to be living in Keene, Tex. How convenient! We got married and enrolled at Southwestern Adventist

University, where we attended together until we graduated with our teaching degrees. Our daughter was born one month before my graduation in 1983.

We accepted teaching positions in Santa Anna, Tex.—a full-time position for me and a half-time position for my wife. Next, I accepted a call to Mena, Ark., to teach at a one-teacher school. By then, we had a son, and Rebecca was a full-time mom.

During our eight years at Mena, I taught several students to read, including my children. As a new teacher who had never taught someone to read, I was nervous, to say the least. Praise the Lord, all my students became exceptional readers. My students and I were like a family. We enjoyed schoolwork, playing together, doing mission projects and school programs. One time, some church members brought sewing machines and taught the students to make little quilts for nursing home residents.

My last teaching position was my longest. We moved to Gentry, Ark., and I taught fifth grade while Rebecca taught first grade at Ozark Adventist School (OAS). Over the next 17 years,

I taught in both the fifth and sixth grades. The last nine years, I was also the principal. During this time, I had the opportunity to touch many young lives. In my later years at OAS, I got to teach the children of some of my former students.

Now in my twelfth and last year as conference superintendent, I get to serve on school boards and the board of education with my former students. As I think back over the 40 years of service that I will complete as of my Aug. 1, 2022, retirement, I remember something I read in Ellen G. White's *Ministry of Healing*: "God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him."

Only the records in heaven will reveal the full extent of the glory of the purpose of God's great commission for my life. No, I wouldn't choose to be led otherwise.

*By Stephen Burton
Superintendent of Schools*




Camp Yorktown Bay

“Make it Count”
EPHESIANS 5:15-16

SUMMER CAMP -- 2022

 CAMPS	 DATES	 PRICE
Cub Camp	June 12-19	\$340
Junior Camp	June 19-26	\$340
Tween Camp	June 26-July 3	\$340
Teen Camp	July 3-10	\$340
Family Camp	July 10-17	\$250~Adult \$150~Child

www.campyorktownbay.com/summercamp



My Passion, My Mission

SHREVEPORT, LA. – Matthew 28:19-20 says, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

This is not just the mission statement of an ecclesiastical institution, but a statement given by God individually and personally to all those who profess to be His followers.

There is a big difference between the mission of any institution and my mission. When we read the word “me”, the determining possessive form of the first-person singular comes to our mind, which indicates that the name it accompanies belongs, is related and associated. This perspective can seem somewhat selfish or self-centered.

However, there is quite a difference between selfishness and belonging—selfishness is the attitude of someone

who shows excessive love for themselves, someone who only cares about their own interests and what benefits them, without paying attention to the needs of others. In contrast, belonging describes something that is owned by someone, that is to say that it has an owner.

Is the great commission my mission? Have I taken the words of Jesus so personal that they belong to me? Do I live my mission every day?

Once Jesus gives the order to “Go”, the responsibility for compliance becomes my mission. Therefore, the invitation to make disciples is made in a spirit of belonging—to my family, my friends, my neighbors and my co-workers. They all need to hear the precious news that in Christ we are saved by His sacrifice on the cross, in addition to the precious and imminent promise that Christ returns to earth.

God gave the mission to His disciples, and today to you and me. It

continues to be God’s mission; He is the owner and creator of this solemn invitation to work and reach those who live without hope in days as critical as these.

He promises, “And behold, I am with you every day, until the end of the world.” It is at this moment when the words of Jesus become a daily reality in the life of the disciple.

Let us live with a deep sense of commitment to the words of Jesus when He said: therefore, go and make other disciples, let us live baptizing and teaching knowing that the Almighty and His divine Spirit accompany us every day until the last day, according to what He promised. Let us live like we are truly experiencing “my mission.”

By José Antonio Pagán
Ministerial, Evangelism and
Multicultural Ministries Director

Renewed Vision in Texarkana

TEXARKANA, TEX. – As we began the new year, the Texarkana Seventh-day Adventist Church leadership looked back with gratitude, mingled with the sadness of illnesses and deaths. The church looks toward 2022 with expectation as we continue the well-established ministries that have been laid out in the past.

Vacation Bible School (VBS) and Pathfinder leaders, Luz Salinas and Stacy Sowers, made it through a couple of VBS cancellations and rescheduling, but it got done and they now plan for the new year. Community services, led by Sally Birl, continued its annual gathering of items for holiday food baskets for distribution in November and December 2020 and 2021, and this will stay in place for 2022.

The Texarkana church personal ministries, supported by the local

Texarkana Spanish Church, distributed literature at nine different fairs and festivals this year, and since we know ‘no borders’ for God’s work, they accepted an invitation from Mt. Pleasant, Tex., and the Mt. Pleasant Seventh-day Adventist Church assisted with the festival booth Texarkana had set up there. The year 2022 looks good for this ministry, and leader, Brenda Litchfield says, “If they keep inviting us, we will go.” She also stated, “It has been a great blessing and we have seen many ways God has worked with us. The best blessings come when we have someone ask for prayer and we are able to pray with them on the spot.”

Many Bible studies and prayer requests come from the fair booths and the festivals. The church’s Discover Bible Center, coordinated by Loretta Johnson, follows up on the study

requests, and all prayer requests are acknowledged by mail, which include a book of prayer promises and GLOW Tracts. The goal for 2022 is to continue expanding this work in partnership with the personal ministries’ department.

In spite of COVID-19, David Farmer, pastor of the Texarkana church, led a well-attended evangelistic meeting in the trying times of 2021, and another is planned for the spring of 2022. Even with the fear of new viruses and some continuing sicknesses, the church’s prayer groups, study groups, personal ministries, community services, VBS and children’s ministry will continue on; although possibly on a smaller scale, they will work with the satisfaction of knowing it’s a job well done for the Master.

By Loretta Johnson



Hammond Church Joins in Disaster Relief

HAMMOND, LA. – Some of us from the Hammond Seventh-day Adventist Church have had the privilege of spending the day with Adventist Community Services (ACS) “down on the bayou” in Dulac, La., helping with disaster relief. I know it has been several months since Hurricane Ida made landfall, but even with so much time having passed, the needs are still great. I am reluctant to share the few pictures I was able to take because they don’t do justice to what we witnessed. Not only the devastation I could see with my eyes, but the heart wrenching stories from the lips of the survivors as they continue to try to move forward. The roadsides are nothing but piles of debris that used to be possessions. Things that used to be important to someone are now reduced to rubble.

Most of the people I spoke with were still displaced from their homes. Some were in tents because their houses were too moldy to be habitable. Some were living in their cars, many were staying in FEMA provided lodging, while others had been staying

with friends and family. The neighborhoods (the lucky ones) are a sea of blue tarps, while others have no roofs at all. Many people told us their homes are unrepairable and a complete loss.

But the spirits are surprisingly upbeat. Many organizations are helping where they can. The local fire-station provided free lunches as did several churches we passed. A boy with a four-wheeler was making deliveries to people who couldn’t come get their free meal.

Our group helped in a less expected way. We had volunteers from Arkansas and Louisiana and even Michigan. We showed up in a Penske truck and handed out large trash cans, buckets, cleaning supplies, toiletries, blankets, cots and boots. These are all needed items in “Hurricane Central.”

I can’t tell you how happy people were to get trash cans. It seems like a little thing, but a trash can means you can clean up, you can start making a difference. It represents starting over... a new beginning. The same for buckets and cleaning supplies. Apparently, people were hard pressed

getting their hands on supplies like that, and when they found out we had them, they came.

A number of people showed up barefooted or with nothing but sandals. They were overjoyed at the free boots. One lady said she was tired of the mud squishing up between her toes because all she had to her name were flipflops.

Just because Hurricane Ida is now old news, doesn’t mean everything is back to normal. It’s not! Please continue to keep South Louisiana in your thoughts and prayers, and consider making a donation or volunteering. The needs are still great... anything helps.

The Arkansas-Louisiana Adventist Community Services Disaster Response (ARKLA ACS DR) team is on the ground in Louisiana and in Arkansas. Before we are finished with one area another area is experiencing difficulty. You can donate online anytime and if you would like to volunteer, contact Lavida Whitson, ARKLA ACS DR director at 501.317.9007.

By Linda Vicaro





My Great Commission

Before I took notice of the Great Commission verses in Matthew, Mark and Luke another verse spoke to me about helping others. The first time I read the parable of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25, it impacted me and led to my first active part in ministry. It was my first experience making the Great Commission my commission.

In verse 36, Jesus mentions, "I was in prison and you came to visit me." When I read that part, it was like a voice spoke and said, "I want you to go into prison and visit people." I had never been to a prison, but knew that some of my relatives had spent time in prison. I wondered how they felt alone, friendless and without family in a cell. Through a series of providences, God opened the door to allow me to visit first one inmate, then later to be part of a prison ministry. I did this for many years and had countless opportunities to help in making disciples—my personal part in the Great Commission. It was one of the most rewarding things I have ever done.

Jesus spoke to the disciples who were following Him and instructed them to go and tell and teach others. This message was not just for great preachers, teachers, evangelists or missionaries; it was given and is given to each one who follows Him. Those first disciples responded, and the gospel went around the world.

How do we make it personal and do our part in our day? For me, it was a result of spending time with Jesus, responding to His call to "come and see," spending time learning about Jesus and committing to be His disciple. Then I was called to "go and tell" others what I had seen, heard and learned of Jesus. We are first disciples ourselves and then we can help others to be disciples as well. It can happen in the context of family, friends, neighbors and people we work with as well as a particular calling in a specific ministry.

I believe we first have to make the Great Commission our personal commission and take ownership of it. Then

we can ask God to show us the "what" and "how." I know from personal experience He will help us find our part in the Great Commission. Wouldn't it be amazing if everyone in the Southwestern Union churches made the Great Commission their personal commission asking God to lead and empower them. I think He would be pleased.

*By James Shires
President*



Healing Bodies and Winning Souls



OKLAHOMA CITY— Jesus says, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.” What better way to show love than to help people experience the more abundant life that Jesus intends for us to experience? On Sunday, Dec. 19, over 135 people attended the “Diabetes Undone and Anxiety and Depression Relief” training sponsored by Oklahoma Native Ministries. Lonnie Carbaugh, pastor of the Oklahoma City Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, commented that it was thrilling to see so many people eagerly learning how they could be more effective in ministering to the needs of others.

Representatives from nearly 40 Seventh-day Adventist churches in Oklahoma were present at this conference-wide training session held at the Oklahoma City Central church. The training was for pastors and health ministry leaders to learn how to effectively teach classes on health to their churches and communities. Experts were brought in from different parts of the country: Danny Kwon, J.D., the executive director of “Life and Health”

(LifeAndHealth.org), broke down in easy steps exactly how to teach a “Diabetes Undone” workshop. Jennifer Jill Schwirzer, LPC, Ed.D., with Abide Network, taught about the relevant topics of anxiety and depression, and scientifically proven methods of recovery that can be used in conjunction with professional treatment.

Resources and training were made available for the Spanish-speaking community as well. Jennifer Jill Schwirzer presented her message about mental health, which was translated, and afterwards Joaquin Cazares, M.D., and his wife Aida spoke about the “Diabetes Undone” program, as well as living a healthy lifestyle. The Hispanic Coordinator for the Oklahoma Conference, Luis Prieto, said six pastors and members from 12 Hispanic churches were present. He says the meetings made him feel good because they touched on a health topic that affects so many, and both the invited speakers and the materials will cover the needs of the church. He felt the Holy Spirit’s presence because the meeting was very spiritual, and every-

thing that was discussed focused on God first and foremost as our Restorer. “The meeting was important because it was the first time the Hispanic sector was involved, and it touched on a disease that is common among us. We are so grateful for the gift of the materials and tools provided. It will now be our challenge to share what we learned with our community.”

Carbaugh believes these programs have the potential to make a huge impact on people’s lives. “Here at Central church we now have seven people trained and looking forward to running these programs in our community.” In Matthew 9:37-38 Jesus says, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field.” Please join us in praying for church members as they conduct numerous health meetings in their communities, that many souls will be won for the Kingdom of God.

By Lauren Via, Luis Prieto and Lonnie Carbaugh

Youth Rally Draws Over 200 in Moore

MOORE, OKLA.— On Nov. 12-13, 2021, the Oklahoma youth department hosted its second youth rally of the year. This time it took place at Hope Adventist Fellowship in Moore, Okla. The program was organized and executed with the help of the Oklahoma City area youth leaders. After an initial meeting over lunch, they mobilized their youth to prepare for this event. Over 200 youth and young adults from 20 different churches attended the rally, themed “Be The Church.”

The weekend began with an outdoor vespers program behind the church building. The weather was quite chilly that evening; however, the young people were able to remain warm with not just one or two bonfires, but with six of them. This was quite an experience. Clusters of youth sat around one of the various fires, sipping hot chocolate during the program.

Sabbath was a festive day. Sabbath

School kicked off the day with group discussion focussed on the weekend’s topic. The worship service was composed of inspiring music by a group of Southwestern Adventist University students, a live painting demonstration and special music plus message by guest pastor, Joshua Ramirez from the Texico Conference.

After lunch was over, the young people participated in a hike at Martin Park Nature Center, while others par-

ticipated in a community service project downtown, giving out clothing and basic supplies to the homeless. Upon their return, the weekend concluded with a final vespers program and a food sale by the Moore Mustangs and Edmond Eagles Pathfinder Clubs. We look forward to more area events hosted by local church leaders working together.

*By Daniel Ortega
Youth and Young Adult Director*



Oklahoma Hosts “Pray Big” Prayer Conference

WEWOKA, OKLA.— The weekend of Nov. 5-7, Oklahoma church members enjoyed a prayer conference at Wewoka Woods Adventist Center. The speakers were Southwestern Union Presiden Carlos Craig, Vicepresidents Tony Anobile and Osvaldo Rigacci and Prayer Ministries Director Helvis Moody, along with Oklahoma Conference Youth and Young Adult Director Daniel Ortega. A music group from Southwestern Adventist University blessed the participants. The theme

was “Pray Big” because we have a great and awesome God, with whom nothing is impossible, and we should not be hesitant to ask God for great things for His glory and purpose and our needs and ministries.

The format was short devotionals and then quality time to pray together in small groups about the message, asking God to do something special in our families, churches and state. Many prayers were sent up to God and we believe they are already being

answered. During Sabbath afternoon, there was a special training time by the Union officers for the elders from the Spanish churches. What a blessing that was for the leaders and pastors of those churches. Many others went into Wewoka praying with people door-to-door to pray and hand out literature. It was a great weekend of spiritual teaching, prayers, training and mission work.

*By James Shires
President*



Tulsa Spanish Pays Off Half Million Dollar Mortgage

TULSA— In 2017, the Tulsa Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church owed a \$500,000 mortgage debt. At the time, Luis Prieto, pastor, came together with the church board and decided to create a plan to pay this debt called “Partner with God” by the end of 2021. It was an ambitious plan, but they put their trust in God and with great faith they moved forward with a big goal ahead of them.

In the first year, they were able to gather \$150,000. Each year they would get closer to their goal. The church scheduled countless food sales and sport tournaments, and children received piggy banks to take home so they could also contribute. By the end of November 2021, the church’s

debt totalled \$55,000, which was an amount five times more than what they would normally gather in a month. The church decided to commit themselves and find ways to gather that amount by the end of the month. The plan motivated the church and on Dec. 11, the church received \$41,000 in generous offerings and \$25,000 in promises, surpassing their goal with \$65,000 total. The church is overwhelmed with joy for they will be able to pay off the mortgage. Prieto says that the church is making plans to have a special ceremony to celebrate with the whole church.

*By Yesenia Ortega
Communication Admin. Assistant*



Healthy Living Sabbath at Oklahoma City Central Spanish

OKLAHOMA CITY— On Saturday, Dec. 11, the Oklahoma City Central Spanish Church and the health ministries department hosted a special Sabbath dedicated to healthy living. The central theme was titled “That You May Have Health.” A complete program of Sabbath School, divine worship and presentations.

Through the Oklahoma Lions Health Screening mobile van, 32 people received free medical tests including vision, glaucoma, blood pressure,

glucose, cholesterol, lung function and body fat composition. The collaboration of church volunteers was led by Doris Pérez, APRN, BCNP.

Adventist hospital chaplain and psychologist Eliel Rosabal from Texas Health Huguley Hospital in Fort Worth, Tex. led the Sabbath School lesson review with his wife, Leydis Rosabal, an oncological registered nurse. The divine worship message was presented by Andrea Chávez, LPC.

The afternoon continued with two

talks. Sandra Bajaña, M.D., PHD, presented “Science and Vaccine in the Time of COVID.” The lecturer in health and nutrition, Emma Marlenis Alfaro, discussed the topic “Why We Get Sick.”

The health department provided a bicycle to encourage physical activity, an air fryer to encourage low-fat food preparation, a personal blender and healthy recipe books.

By Nancy Flores



Bartlesville, Ponca City and Nowata Celebrate Baptisms

BARTLESVILLE, OKLA. – The Bartlesville Seventh-day Adventist Church Christmas program lasted not one, but two Sabbaths. Eileen Stinson had been praying for years that her husband, Paul, would choose to be baptized. They had attended many Adventist churches in the past, but it wasn't until they began attending the Bartlesville church that Paul began to consider baptism seriously. On Dec. 18, 2021, Paul, along with Cale Schnell, Ariel Schnell and Mandie Schnell, all from the Ponca City Seventh-day Adventist Church, were

baptized at the Bartlesville church. With forecasted temperatures as low as 21 degrees and a 40-gallon water heater to heat a 500-gallon baptistry, we knew we would need a miracle to get the water warm for our baptism. Ponca City members drove an hour and a half to the Bartlesville church so that Cale, Ariel and Mandie could be baptized. Nowata Seventh-day Adventist Church lent their water heater to the Bartlesville church for the baptisms. On the same Sabbath, along with the four baptisms, there was

plenty of music, poems and a Christmas-themed sermon.

On the very next Sabbath, Dec. 25, the baptistry was filled once again for Norman Barlow and Leah Soderstrom's baptisms. The church also celebrated the first advent of Jesus with special music by many different church members, as well as a special offering for ADRA and a food drive for a local family. Not a bad way to end the year at all!

*By Dominique Alipoon
Pastor*





Will You Make the Great Commission Yours?

Imagine this scene. You're standing among the disciples, marveling at the resurrected Jesus. The light of heaven on His face. He begins to speak, giving you instructions for the future. Listen carefully. Hang on every word. This is His plan for you. The Great Commission is yours: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

Let's break down Jesus' command. When Jesus called out to the disciples at the beginning of His ministry, what did He tell them in Matthew 4:19? "Follow Me." These two simple words invited each disciple into a relationship with the King of Kings. As they answered His call, Jesus taught them how to become "fishers of men." He taught them the truth about who He was, why He came and about sin, forgiveness and heaven. He taught

them how and why to obey God and observe His commands. Then, as they lived with Him throughout His ministry, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, Jesus taught them how to live on earth in light of heaven.

That's what being a disciple-maker is all about. We are called to invite everyone we meet to follow Him, to know the love and hope of the Gospel, accept Jesus as Savior and begin a relationship with Him. Then comes baptism, making a public profession of faith, saying, "I belong to Jesus!"

We teach the truths of Scripture through word and deed. We disciple one another as we seek to walk through life according to God's Word and will. We pray and model the reality of His light in our lives. Every part of Jesus' command to us is personal. It's not some overarching "the church should," "theologians can," and "full-time missionaries are supposed to" kind of command. It's personal.

Now, I know that God called me specifically to full-time ministry, teaching and preaching the Gospel. That's

my Great Commission. God has an incredible plan for your life, too! The Great Commission is personal! You become a disciple-maker! You say, "Follow Jesus with me!" You teach God's Word! You live according to His will! You model His love! Be God's love letter to the world through your words and actions! Make it your Great Commission every day!

*By Carlton P. Byrd, D.Min.
President*



Houston Fall Revival Reaches Dallas Couple

DALLAS – Three of the four essential areas of emphasis of the Southwest Region Conference are public evangelism, media and digital ministry and youth and young adults. These three areas of emphasis create the perfect blend for building the Kingdom of God in this present age. From Oct. 23–Nov. 6, 2021, Carlton P. Byrd, D.Min., Southwest Region Conference president, conducted “The Future Is Now” Fall Revival in Houston, Tex.

The services were viewed by thousands on various media platforms. Among those viewing the services online was Taylor Radcliff of Dallas,

Tex. She was so moved and inspired by the preached word that she invited her boyfriend, Quinn Sutton, to view the nightly programming with her. They were both so inspired by the Holy Spirit, particularly with the presentation of the sermon on the mark of the Beast, that they invited Quinn’s parents to view some of the previously presented sermons in the series. They too, were blessed by the preaching of the gospel while viewing online.

At the conclusion of the revival, over 150 individuals onsite at World Harvest Outreach Seventh-day Adventist Church in Houston made the decision

to be baptized and accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Radcliff was so excited to receive the truth that she wanted to drive from Dallas to Houston to be a part of the big baptism at World Harvest Outreach Center. Circumstances did not allow for her to make the trip. However, her dad, Johnny Young, who serves as an elder at the Dallas City Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church in Dallas, shared with her that while it was not possible to be baptized at the conclusion of the revival in Houston, she could still be baptized at City Temple church. The pastoral staff was contacted and the preparation for her baptism was made. On Dec. 4, 2021, Taylor and her boyfriend, Quinn, were both baptized and became members of the Dallas City Temple church family. We praise God for the moving of His Spirit through the perfect blend of public evangelism, digital and media ministry and for the impact it made in the lives of these two young adults.

*By Tyrone Douglas
Pastor*



Houston Maranatha Welcomes New Young Member

HOUSTON – Embracing the call to preach the Gospel and hold in-person meetings, the Houston Maranatha Seventh-day Adventist Church embarked on its evangelistic adventure, joining the initiative of Adventist World Radio, the Southwestern Union and the Southwest Region Conference.

The youth of the church actively participated and demonstrated their leadership skills. They invited their friends to the meetings, took the lead and participated in the praise teams and were instrumental in reaching others and bringing them to the experience of salvation. One of our young ladies invited Carlos, her boyfriend.

Carlos and his girlfriend attended together the first two nights; He did

not miss a single night. When the evangelist made an appeal in the middle of the week, my eyes focused on Carlos. Moved by the spirit of God, I approached and said to him, “If you want to go forward, I will go with you.” Carlos jumped to my side and hugged me, and this was the beginning of a personal relationship with him.

On the day of the baptism, Carlos confirmed his desire to give his life to Christ and be a member of the praise team and the Maranatha Multi-Media Ministries (MMM).

Carlos now travels from Austin to fulfill his obligations at church. His mother has turned him away from the house, but his faith has been affirmed even more in the Lord and often

brings a family member or friend to the church. Carlos has more than just a voice to sing in the praise team—he has a powerful testimony in Jesus.

By Kessle Hodgson, Pastor



God's Daughter

DALLAS— Scripture reminds us that God loves us so much that He adopted us and made it possible for us to call Him the most intimate of names—Daddy. 1 John 3:1 (CEB) says, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us in that we should be called God's Children, and that is what we are!"

The English translation of "Abba Father" is "Papa" or "Daddy"—often the first word a baby utters once they learn to talk. "Daddy" is an intimate term that Jesus Himself used when He prayed to His Father. Jesus taught us that through our relationship with Him, we could know God intimately as our Daddy, too.

God's Daughter is a discipleship initiative for girls ages 10 to 21 that seeks to create a legacy of women guiding girls in the church and community on a path to become spiritually mature

women. Our goal is simple: To see every young girl move forward into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and to understand her importance and potential in God's kingdom.

God's Daughter seeks to meet girls where they are developmentally, helping them build solid Biblical foundations while experiencing fun and engaging activities.

The curriculum promotes self-awareness, life skills, financial literacy, career goals, etiquette, community service and more.

We desire to help girls become confident, godly women who are leaders within the church, home and world, by using projects, adventures, meetings and outings as opportunities to connect them with the Creator and His plan for their lives. The bottom line: relationships.

Southwest Region Conference Women's Ministries department wants every girl to know that God loves them, they are royalty and He wants a relationship with them. For more information on the 2022 God's Daughter curriculum, please email Amparo Rumaldo at Arumaldo@swrgc.org

*By Anysia Archibald
Women's Ministries Coordinator*



A large, vibrant poster with a space-themed background. The text is centered and reads: "SAVE THE DATE" in large white letters, followed by "2022 SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE CAMP MEETING" in smaller white letters. Below that, "THE FUTURE IS NOW" is written in very large, bold, white letters. At the bottom, "JUNE 15-18, 2022" is in yellow, "LONE STAR CAMP, ATHENS, TEXAS" is in white, and "SOUTHWESTREGIONS.DA.ORG" is in white. The background shows a view of Earth from space with a bright light source creating a lens flare effect.

Let's Talk: Open Discussion with Youth and Young Adults

HOUSTON – On Dec. 11, 2021, the Southwest Region Conference administrators engaged in open and transparent dialogue with the youth and young adults at the Fondren Seventh-day Adventist Church in Houston, Tex. This was the first in a series of “Let’s Talk with Our Administrators” sessions. The event allowed the administration to take one of the first steps as part of the goal to better engage the youth and young adults in church participation and to prayerfully retain this segment of our constituency to help the conference “Move Forward.”

Carlton P. Byrd, D.Min., Southwest Region Conference president, along with three members of his administration, Jason North, Vanston Archbold and Philip Palmer, answered questions posed live as well as prior to the event. Leslie Soupet, as the moderator for

the session, presented questions on church structure, youth and young adult participation at the local and conference level and how to better develop a personal relationship with God.

The overwhelming number of questions raised during the event spoke volumes of its success. So much so that the 90-minute session was not enough to cover everything that our youth and young adults were eager to learn from their Southwest Region leadership. Gracious and transparent to the end, not only will there be a forum setup to address the unanswered questions from this event, but Byrd has indicated plans to continue the “Let’s Talk” series in other areas of the region so that our youth and young adult’s voices can be heard across the conference.

As we work toward kingdom building and hastening the coming of Christ, this population segment is critical to moving the church forward and growing our church as the Lord has commanded us to do. It is inspiring and important that a stated goal of the conference is executed in a way that allows for the inclusiveness our youth and young adults have longed for.

As we continue to re-engage this almost lost, yet so very critical population of our churches, I pray that we are willing to be open and listen and learn in the same way that we are asking them to be, so that we can grow from our shared experiences and desires for a closer relationship with Christ and each other.

By Adrienne Lee-Jones

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Praise Party and Puppets, SWAJA Celebrates 92 Years



DALLAS— Southwest Adventist Junior Academy (SWAJA) celebrated its 92nd birthday on Sept. 1, 2021. Started with the purpose of educating Black children in segregated times, the school has withstood the tests of time. It is the oldest, Black Christian school in Dallas. On Sept. 18, 2021, the constituent church, Dallas City Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the students, staff and school board members honored this milestone and distinction with a Sabbath celebration.

The students were tasked with leading out in every aspect of the service, including creating the visual aids on the screen. The program included even the youngest of learners, as the Montessori Pre-K/Kinder class shared a summary of the Three Angels' Message from the new conference-wide curriculum penned by Sandra Doran, Ed.D. By the close of service, every student had spoken or sung in the microphone.

Smiles and applause filled the build-

ing as the band and students crafted an energy-rich song service, full of praise that demanded participation. For the sermon, SWAJA was blessed with an opportunity to work with "H.I.S. Hands" Ministries (Heavenly Inspired Stories), the brainchild of Bonnie Hawkins Jordan and her husband Dariel, a former teacher at SWAJA. The Jordans met with the students over two days and gave them a crash course in puppetry. The performed story captured what the students had been studying about Creation and aimed to solidify their belief in the Biblical account of how the world came to be.

The service culminated with a Kahoot quiz about the past 92 years that both in-person and online viewers could participate in. One of the questions highlighted the vision of Lallage Egleston, great-great-great grandmother of six of the current students of SWAJA. She was responsible for implementing a children's offering col-

lection that would subsidize the cost of Adventist Christian education. Other questions revisited the experiences and legacy of Beulah Seventh-day Adventist School, Oakland Seventh-day Adventist Elementary, Southwest Region Academy, City Temple Elementary and City Temple Junior Academy—all former names of the institution.

After the school song and benediction, patrons were invited to tour the school safely and enjoy birthday party treats, such as balloons and donuts. While SWAJA's Sabbath Celebration was not a traditional service, Tyrone Douglas, Dallas City Temple church associate pastor, declared, "Praise God for different!"

You can watch the service on Dallas City Temple's Facebook page. We invite you to subscribe to Jewel and Friends on YouTube for more puppet adventures! We look forward to more unforgettable experiences during year 92 and beyond.

By Kymerly P. Mayes, Principal



We Should Make Disciples, Not Just Go

The Gospel Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 is one of the most memorable portions of the New Testament. It's so significant that the church's life, mission and multiplication are directly linked to its message.

This command encapsulates the mission that Christ started and then urged us to continue. Its ramifications are many. It challenges us to make mission the "whole" of the church while trusting in the "all" of Jesus.

First: "All" authority. Going in the name of the Lord provides the power to open doors, break down walls, reach insensitive hearts, solve insoluble problems, lift the discouraged and rescue what is lost.

Second: "All" nations. Our work is local, but the vision needs to be global. For this reason, we are not an independent, congregational church. We have a mission to fulfill here in our field, but we also need to make sacrifices to send people and resources to support global projects. We need to reach people both across the street and around the world.

Third: "All" the things I have commanded you. We preach a comprehen-

sive, distinctive gospel with a prophetic foundation that alters life on earth and prepares each one for eternal life.

Fourth: "Every day." This is the certainty that the Lord will be with us whether the mission is easy or difficult, whether we are joyful or unhappy, whether we achieve the desired outcomes or are frustrated, whether we are praised or ridiculed.

If the word "all" in the Great Commission reminds us of its vastness, the verbs in this mandate reveal its concentration. The requirement to "make disciples" is emphasized by Christ. He didn't just say "go."

In this regard, the Great Commission might become a great omission if we limit ourselves to spreading the message without giving discipleship sufficient importance.

Note that Christ's command to make disciples did not involve any new or complicated tasks, but only an appeal to the apostles to repeat what they had already experienced.

This teaches us that discipleship is first being and then doing. Therefore, if someone is not a true disciple, however much they promote, encourage

or command, they will not make other disciples.

It is imperative to develop a proper understanding of discipleship. It is not about launching a new church program or expanding the church's creative structures, materials, gatherings, logos or titles that merely amuses or dilutes the biblical message. Discipleship is conversion and spiritual growth, authentic relationships and, most importantly, faithfulness in the complete execution of the Great Commission.

By Elton DeMoraes, D.Min., President



Richardson Seventh-day Adventist Church Honors Its Military Members

RICHARDSON, TEX.— Sabbath, Nov. 13, 2021, was a special day, thanks to the efforts of Euree Estell, Paul Blocker, Don Beck and Minta McKinney, all military veterans. Richardson Seventh-day Adventist Church in Richardson, Tex., honored several of our members for their service in various branches of the United States Military Forces. Bagpiper, Jimmy Mitchell, played several hymns including “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” and “How Great Thou Art” to introduce guest speaker, Chaplain William Cork.

After the congregation joined with the praise team in singing our national anthem, Estell introduced William

Cork as assistant director of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries in the North American Division, with responsibility for the Great Plains Region, consisting of the Mid-America and Southwestern Union Conferences. Chaplain Cork spent 20 years as a chaplain in the National Guard and the United States Army Reserves. In his final assignment, he was part of the Strategic Initiatives Group at the Office of the Chief of Chaplains. In 2013, he deployed to Kuwait in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Chaplain Cork retired at the rank of major.

He also has 11 years experience in full-time public campus ministry, and

taught world religions at a Houston area community college. He pastored for five years in the Texas Conference.

Chaplain Cork graduated from Atlantic Union College, began graduate study in church history at Loma Linda University and received his master’s in church history and his MDiv from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. He is currently a Master of Public Health student at University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston, and is an active member of state and national suicide prevention organizations.

By Sharon Petchkurow



Growing As a Body of Christ



ALVARADO, TEX. – The Texas Conference is proud to be one of the leading conferences in the North American Division for church planting. The dream to intentionally plant churches in our territory began more than 12 years ago and more than 123 new congregations have been planted that are still in existence today.

Ten new congregations were added to the sisterhood of churches in the Texas Conference in 2020, and 12 new congregations were formed in 2021. The most amazing part is the variety of cultures, ethnicities and languages planting new congregations, which included: Burmese, Congolese, English, Korean, Nigerian, Portuguese, Span-

ish, Thai and Tongan. All of them are engaging and enjoying the beautiful diversity of the Texas Conference.

To achieve our goals and be successful in church planting and preparing new congregations to receive newcomers, our committee created five principles for church planting in the Texas Conference. First, Jesus has to be the center. Second, nothing is more important than an unsaved person. Third, love and compassion have to reign. Fourth, young people must be in church leadership. Fifth, there must be a focus on serving the community. We feel these principles are the bases for a healthy new congregation, the foundation of a long-lasting structure

and the pillar of a church that will give birth to a healthy daughter (another church plant).

The church plants in the photos above, from left to right and top to bottom, are White Settlement Mission Group, Bryan-College Station Spanish Church, DFW Myanmar Seventh-day Adventist, McAllen Infinite Life Seventh-day Adventist Church, Houston Brazilian Mission Group and Richardson Unity International Mission Group. We pray for God's continued guidance and wisdom as we work to enhance the Kingdom of Heaven.

*By Robin Lopez
Pastor, Church Planting and
Volunteer Lay Pastor Director*

Media Ministries Innovation

ALVARADO, TEX. — When the 2020 global pandemic required most ministries to figure out a way to share online content, the Lord had already set in motion a studio setup for Texas Conference Communication & Public Relations.

Camera equipment was ordered at the end of 2019 with the goal of traveling around the conference to share incredible stories from our churches and schools. When travel wasn't an option, the worship room in the Texas Conference became a recording place to share music and messages online.

Two years later, the Lord is expanding on that dream as the Texas Conference now has a mobile media truck. Kenn Dixon, Texas Conference vice president for Communication & Public Relations, believes the Lord wants us to dream big, especially when it comes to sharing the gospel with those within our conference and around the world.

"The Lord has really blessed me and the Texas Conference," Dixon shared. "It is amazing to see the time-lapse footage showing the conversion of the worship room to a studio setup. Only with God's help could we have done that during a pandemic. I have certainly learned a lot in the process."

What used to provide worship for up to 50 people, now broadcasts all over the world in both English and Spanish. The mobile media truck will now enable the conference to share programs from other locations.

"Digital evangelism is no longer a buzzword," Elton DeMoraes, Texas Conference president, shared. "It is the way we need to embrace finishing God's work. People may not enter our church doors, but they can find hope in God's word from the programs we share online."

During the first part of this year, leadership training has taken place

virtually in our pastors' meetings and during our church leadership training events at various locations around the conference.

"We want every church in the Texas Conference to be actively involved in digital evangelism," DeMoraes added. "That will mean different things for different churches, but all should be intentional about reaching their community both in person and online."

The best part of online programming is the reach is huge. Only the Lord knows the seeds it will plant for eternity. We just need to do our part in planting those seeds. View some of the Texas Conference programming at [YouTube.com/TexasAdventist](https://www.youtube.com/TexasAdventist) and be a digital evangelist by sharing those programs with others.

*By Tamara Michalenko Terry
Communication & Public Relations
Associate Director*



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Participating in the Great Commission

Jesus came to save the lost. That was Christ's primary mission, and He charged us to do the same. Matthew 28:18-20 says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The Great Commission is for every believer, not just pastors, evangelists and missionaries. Jesus lovingly instructed us to be involved in the mission He came to fulfill. We each have a God-given role in helping to accomplish the Great Commission. We are to help reach a world that desperately needs to hear about His hope and salvation. The challenge is that not all of us feel equipped to participate. The command may feel daunting. We may be wondering how we can reach others and do what Jesus has asked.

The apostle Paul did not always seem fit for spreading the gospel. Yet once he learned that God had chosen him specifically, his perspective changed, and he accepted God's call-

ing. Paul could persuade and motivate Romans, Greeks and Jews alike. His logic was sound, his emotional appeal powerful. However, his ability to find common ground with people and bring them to Christ was what made him most effective.

We could learn a lot from Paul. Making disciples involves preaching and ministering to a world far beyond our church walls, interacting with people from all walks of life. The key to Paul's success in reaching people was that he went beyond superficial contact.

In Acts 27, Paul comforts and encourages his shipwrecked companions first: "Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head." Acts 27:34. Then, "after he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves." Acts 27:35-36. Paul acknowledged their current state before even mentioning God.

We can imitate this approach and connect with others; but before we begin to share the good news, we should consider exploring the needs

and concerns of people first. We need to respectfully consider the customs and cultural differences of the people we wish to reach. Paul is showing us that we can bridge the gaps that divide us by letting God's greatest command, to love one another, be at the core of our actions, allowing Jesus to shine through our attentiveness and flexibility.

As we move forward in 2022, I pray that God will help us embrace this concept and give us opportunities to reach people the way Paul did.

By Lee-Roy Chacon, President



Big Spring Church Opens New Food Pantry

BIG SPRING, TEX. – Last year, Aprille Ransom was asked to oversee the Community Services ministry at Big Spring Seventh-day Adventist Church. Ransom is familiar with the ministry since her father worked for Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). “I have always sought different ways to serve the Lord,” she said. “I felt honored and eager to do my best.”

Ransom reached out to Collette Newer, associate director of Adventist Community Services at the General Conference to ask for guidance and learn more about the latest efforts in Adventist Community Services. Filled with many new ideas, she asked the Holy Spirit to lead her as she prepared to start her work in the ministry. Through fervent prayer and direction from Abner Razon, pastor of Big Spring church, his wife Nefritire and the Texico Conference, Ransom made

plans for the Big Spring church to host a food pantry.

On Nov. 12, 2021, Ransom and her church family stood together as they received their first shipment of food. Several days later, the food pantry officially opened. People started arriving at 9:45 a.m., and by 12:15 p.m., they had run out of food.

“Greg Clark, a director of the West Texas Food Bank, was very surprised and told me that food pantries don’t usually run out of food on their opening day,” said Ransom. “However, it was not a surprise to me. I knew that Jesus was leading the way. We gave out 150 boxes of food that day!”

More importantly for Ransom, she was thankful to have the support of her church family. The head elder and his wife named the food pantry the Three Angels Food Pantry, and several other ministry leaders helped with supplies.

More than 20 church members joined together to make the launch of the food pantry, and its first day of operation, possible. Several of them even took time off from work to be involved.

“None of it would have been possible without their gracious love and support,” said Ransom. “Our goal is to continue providing food to the community through the food pantry and perhaps even open a Wellness Center in the future.”

God is leading Ransom and the Big Spring church. As they continue to pray, they are expecting to see amazing things happen through this ministry. The Big Spring church invites you to join them in prayer as they ask the Lord to make them a beacon that shines brightly for Jesus Christ in their Big Spring community and beyond.



Santa Fe Serving Women Through Difficult Times



SANTA FE, N.M. – The last two years have been very difficult for many families. As the wife of the pastor of two Spanish speaking congregations in Santa Fe, I have heard of and seen many women who are increasingly overwhelmed by their battles with anxiety, fear, grief and depression.

Last year, I decided I wanted to help, but I was not quite sure how. After spending time in prayer, God impressed upon me to host a virtual revival program on behalf of the Santa Fe Marcy Park and Santa Fe Airport Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Churches. In March, with the help of their Women’s Ministry directors, we were able to plan a 7-day Zoom webinar titled “Jesus Heals your Mind.”

During the planning and coordination of the event, we saw God direct every detail. In less than a day, we were able to confirm the participation of seven notable guest speakers! We were blessed to hear powerful presentations from speakers such as Carmen Esposito, Leniha Bullón, Claudia Pretell, Martha Martinez, Brenda Nieves-Ramos, Carla Rangel and Raquel Arrais. They spoke on important topics that affect women’s mental and spiritual health.

Not only were we blessed by their participation, but word spread and many women from North, Central and South America joined. It gave us all a wonderful opportunity to connect and encourage one another.

We were blessed indeed, and it proved that women need to connect, be in community, use their spiritual gifts in service, be mentored/disciplined and gather in friendship and support. It is important to acknowledge that while we face new challenges as a result of the pandemic, God is there to help us to become more creative in empowering and equipping women. We praise God for the opportunity this event provided. If anyone wishes to hear the recorded event, it can be found on the Marcy Park YouTube page.

By Jennifer Espinoza-Ruiz

Santa Fe Spanish Churches Experience the Power of Prayer

SANTA FE, N.M. – Two years ago, at the start of the pandemic, the Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Churches in Santa Fe joined to create a prayer group that started meeting via Zoom each morning at 6 a.m. Since then, the group has not missed a day to intercede for church families and friends of the community. They also study God’s word and enjoy sharing stories of the work God is doing through their prayer ministry.

“Pandemic is a terrifying word, and it has impacted us in different ways,” said Laura Terrazas, member of the prayer group. “However, we have experienced many blessings, and witnessed miracles, during this time of things we thought were impossible.”

In late 2020, the group prayed for Luis Tena who had received Bible studies from his wife but was still undecided about giving his life to Christ. At the time, Luis was hospitalized with COVID-19, and his condition was critical. He later told the prayer group that one night, when he was struggling to breathe, he told God that if his health was restored, he would give his life to Him. That night, his condition improved, and he was sent home a few days later. Over several months, members continued to see answered

prayers. A mom in the group prayed for her son one morning then later found out that he had been spared from a life-or-death situation that day. A wife who had been praying for her husband for a year, shared that he had decided to be baptized. A daughter whose mom was told by doctors that she only had a few months to live, enjoyed her mom’s presence for two additional years, then found comfort and peace after her passing. Youth who had stopped coming to church were starting to visit again. These are just some of the testimonies the prayer group has witnessed since they began to meet.

Moreover, in early 2021, their ministry expanded to more than meeting to pray. The group heard about Dori, a newly baptized single mother who was sick and had several needs. The prayer group collected groceries from church members and took her food.

“When we arrived at the house, we saw that her bedroom windows were sealed with cardboard. We could not believe it. It was cold, so it made sense why she was sick and suffering with bone and joint pain,” said Terrazas.

This need opened a new opportunity for ministry that we call “Manos al Rescate” or “Rescue Hands.” Mem-

bers of the prayer group, along with other church members, jumped in to help purchase and install new windows while singing and praising God. The “Rescue Hands” ministry is still helping those in need today, repairing homes and working with emergency projects. The ministry not only helps with local projects but has expanded to assisting people in the neighboring city of Albuquerque, even going as far as Dimmit, Tex., to assist people.

The prayer ministry is growing, and they now have several groups that pray for more specific concerns like marriages and youth that have left the church. “It is an honor to be part of this prayer group,” said Terrazas. “In spite of the challenges of the pandemic, it has brought hope to our church. Our goal is to reach those in need of prayer, love and support, and to learn more of what God can do in their lives.”

The group continues to be encouraged by what they have witnessed, and they are committed to let God work as He leads them in their ministry. Nevertheless, the group has learned firsthand that God has no limits and when we go to Him with an earnest heart, His power has an eternal impact.

By Alex Ruiz, Pastor



The “Dinosaur Man” Visits the Gallup All Nations District



GALLUP, N. M. – Last November, the Gallup All Nations Seventh-day Adventist Church was thrilled to host renowned scientist Art Chadwick, Ph.D., for a series of lectures. Chadwick is a professor of Biology and Paleontology Specialist at Southwestern Adventist University. He also holds the title of director of a dinosaur research project in the Lance Formation of eastern Wyoming.

During this series of presentations, Chadwick shared the scientific evidence that supports Genesis and its explanation of the origin of the earth. Topics included “Dinosaurs and the

Bible,” “How Did Life Originate?” “Why Does Creation Matter?” “Recent Discoveries in Paleontology”. In addition to these public presentations, Chadwick assisted the Gallup church youth in starting a Pathfinder dinosaur honor.

This series was a district-wide event and included many who attended via Zoom. Art Chadwick, dubbed the “Dinosaur Man” by his longtime friends, encouraged the youth to have faith in the Bible, as well as not to be confused by theoretically weak evolutionary theories. Besides the careful attention of more than 80 attendees, tasty meals

were provided by the members and the support of the Texico Conference.

Those in attendance were also blessed with special music by Thomas Breece from the Gallup church and several songs by Megan Martinez from the Pie Town High Country Seventh-day Adventist Church. All present thanked God for scientists like Art Chadwick, who practice exemplary science and share their faith in God’s Word.

*By David Merling
Pastor*

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ANNOUNCEMENTS MILESTONE

Edwin and Ria de Kock, of Edinburg, Tex., celebrated their 67th wedding anniversary on Dec. 26, 2021. They got married in Bloemfontein, South Africa. Praise His glorious name!

Obituaries

Holland, Noel King, born Aug. 1, 1928; died July 5, 2021, Harrah, Okla. Church membership: Summit Ridge Seventh-day Adventist Church. Survivors: husband, Charles W. Holland; son, Brian L. Holland; four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Lovell, Brenda Delaine, born Aug. 9, 1949, DeQueen, Ark.; died Dec. 1, 2021, DeQueen, Ark. Church membership: DeQueen Seventh-day Adventist Church. Survivors: Joe Lovell; sons, Glen and Kelin Lovell; mother, Mae Wolcot; brother, Steve Stuart; sisters, Debbie Smith

and Glenda Icenhower, of Lockesburg, Ark.; two granddaughters.

Meier, Charleyne Aletha (Overacre), born July 23, 1923, Fairland, Okla.; died Jan. 8, 2022. Church membership: Okeene Seventh-day Adventist Church. Preceded in death by parents, William and Ola (Jones) Overacre; husband, Harold David Meier; sisters, Earnestine Harris, Ardyth Moran and Twilla Moore; brother, Keith Overacre; and son-in-law, Don Schneider. Survivors: sons, Charles Meier and Kenneth (Patsy) Meier; daughter, Harolene Schneider; seven grandchildren, thirteen great-grandchildren and one great-great grandchild.

Submissions

Back Pages: To submit announcements, milestones, free or paid expanded obituaries or address changes, visit SWURecord.org or email Record@SWUC.org.

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News and Articles: Send local news for your church or school, along with high-resolution photos, to your local conference communication department listed on page 2.

If you are interested in writing for the *Record*, email Record@swuc.org.

Therefore **GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.



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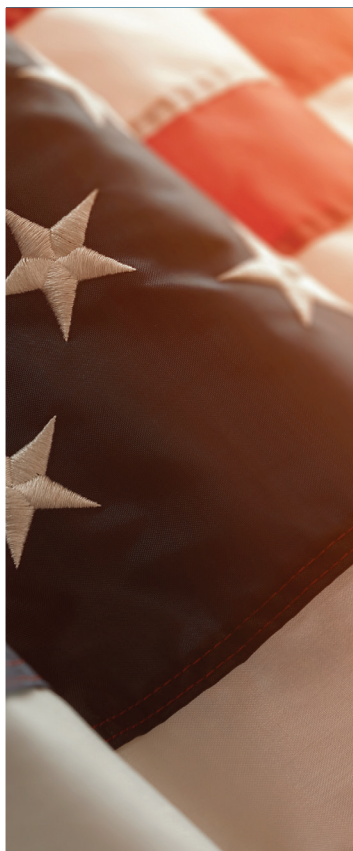
We need medical professionals and non-medical volunteers (translators, etc.) For more information, contact **Suzanna Facundo**, AWR's Assistant Director for Medical Outreach.



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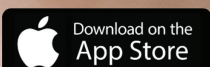


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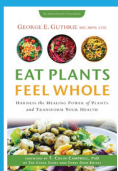
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