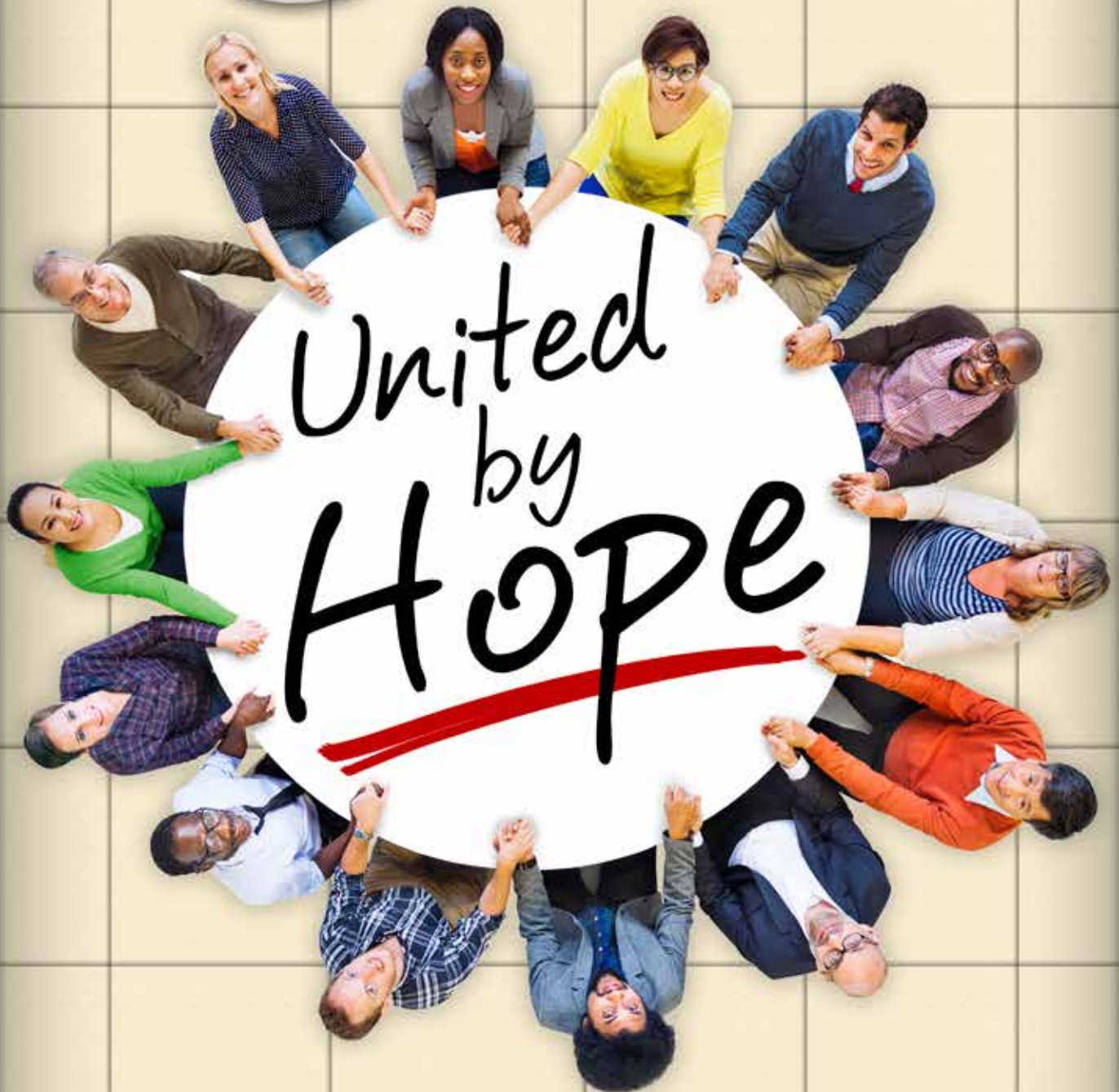


SOUTHWESTERN UNION

# Record

FEBRUARY 2015



STRENGTHENED BY UNITY—ENRICHED BY DIVERSITY



*In this Issue...*

**DEPARTMENTS**

To Your Health . . . . . 4  
 MyFaith . . . . . 5  
 Pass It On . . . . . 6  
 Visión Hispana . . . . . 7

**FEATURES**

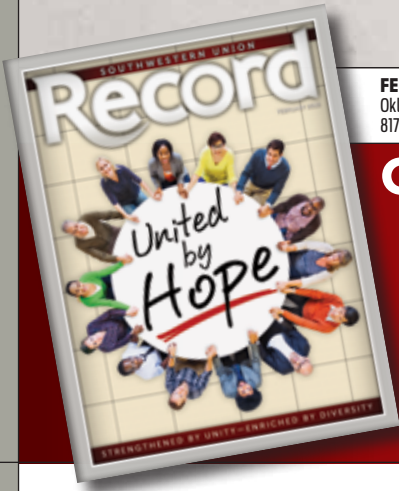
Help! I Care About My Church . . . . 8  
 Just Be Nice . . . . . 12  
 5 Suggestions for Nurturing Unity . . 14  
 Statement on Civil Discourse . . . . 15

**NEWS**

Arkansas-Louisiana . . . . . 16  
 Oklahoma . . . . . 19  
 Southwest Region . . . . . 22  
 Texas . . . . . 25  
 Texico . . . . . 28  
 Southwestern Adventist University . . 31  
 Southwestern Union . . . . . 32

**ETCETERA**

Classified Ads . . . . . 34  
 Announcements . . . . . 37  
 Obituaries . . . . . 37  
 On the Record . . . . . 39



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**On the Cover**

Love and compassion are the foundation of unity in the body of Christ. By showing unconditional love to all He came across, Jesus led by example, showing His church the true meaning of love, acceptance, and grace. This issue of the *Record* demonstrates how the body of Christ can be strengthened by unity and enriched by the multiplicity and diversity of its members. Flip through to find encouraging stories, messages, and advice to help unite the church in hope, purpose, and mission, all for the glory of God.



# Point of View»

BY LARRY MOORE » SOUTHWESTERN UNION CONFERENCE PRESIDENT



## United by Hope at the GC Session

**Did you know that early Adventists** debated whether or not to become an organization? It was not until the need arose in the early 1860s that Adventists formed as a recognized organization and chose the name Seventh-day Adventist. The church grew tremendously in the coming years, and rather than having power remain in the hands of a few, in 1901-1903, following Ellen White's counsel, the church chose to restructure and allow for local autonomy through divisions, unions, and conferences. Today the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is made up of 13 divisions, 124 union conferences and union missions, 601 local conferences and local missions, and approximately 18.1 million members!

In July approximately 2,600 delegates representing each of the unions and major church institutions will attend the 60th General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas, where they will vote on important matters that will affect the future of our church. The session's theme, "Arise! Shine! Jesus is coming!" highlights our church's mission to share our hope of Jesus' second coming with the world.

During the General Conference, a day will be spent discussing the theology of ordination and how it relates to gender. The discussion follows the report of the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC, commissioned at the 2010 GC Session), which was presented to the General Conference Executive Committee at Annual Council last October. The TOSC reported, as they were unable to reach 90 percent agreement, that there were three positions on the matter. The **first** position rejects women's ordination completely on the basis of Scripture; the **second** position, also Scripturally based, supports women's ordination on a division-by-division basis; the **third** position states that the Bible is not clear on the matter, and that the church has the authority to decide and should do so on a division-by-division basis. Ted Wilson, GC president, has urged church members to study the issue for themselves.

Other items on the voting agenda will include editorial changes to the Statement of 28 Fundamental Be-



*Arise! Shine! Jesus is coming!*

liefs—the most significant being the addition of a "literal six-day creation" phrase added to the Belief on Creation. Editorial changes to the Constitution and Bylaws will also be voted, as well as editorial changes to the *Church Manual*—the most significant being the disciplinary protocol for sexual misconduct. Also, newly-created unions will be accepted through a vote, and leaders will be nominated and elected.

Remember that the Lord will protect His church. Let's pray together that as we approach this General Conference Session we will humbly uplift Christ and keep Him and His love in every action. We are united by the hope that Jesus is coming soon and it is our greatest imperative to share that hope with the world.

Arise! Shine! Jesus is coming!

*Larry Moore*





# To Your Health

BY PAT HUMPHREY » SOUTHWESTERN UNION HEALTH MINISTRIES DIRECTOR

## Four Things Happy People Have in Common

If you were to make a wish for the one thing that would bring you the most happiness in life, what would you wish for? If your wish was for wealth, good looks, education, a high IQ, landing your dream job, or never experiencing a bad event, you are looking for happiness in all the wrong places, according to the latest research.

So, exactly what is the path to happiness? What makes some people seemingly happy in spite of adverse circumstances while others dwell in misery despite their good fortune? Studies indicate that we can boost our happiness by practicing several key behaviors:

### GRATITUDE

Dr. Robert Emmons of the University of California, Davis, along with Michael McCullough of the University of Miami, conducted a study on the effects of gratitude. Each week, a group was asked to write five things for which they were grateful. At the end of the two-month study, those keeping the journal, compared to a control group, were more optimistic and happier.

Emmons recommends that we all develop a practice of counting our blessings. "To begin," he says, "think about three good things that went well recently and then write about how you are grateful for those things....Every waking moment provides an opportunity for gratitude. Becoming grateful leads people to find more things to be grateful for," Emmons said.

### OPTIMISM

Are you an optimist or a pessimist? Optimism is defined as a hopeful, positive outlook on the future, yourself, and the world around you. Studies show that optimists tend to be happier and healthier than pessimists, and optimism has been scientifically shown to protect against many ailments, such as heart disease, depression, and others.

In *Authentic Happiness* Seligman says that pessimists view the bad things that happen to them as permanent, but optimists view bad events as temporary. When a weight-loss plan fails to show results after a few months, a pessimist might say, "I'll never lose weight," while an optimist might say, "Maybe this program isn't for me. I should try another."

### ACTS OF KINDNESS

Sonja Lyubomirsky, author of *The How of Happiness, A New Approach to Getting the Life You Want*, says that doing a variety of acts of kindness boosts happiness.

In a study she conducted, acts of kindness affected people's happiness: "Asking some employees to be generous to a randomly chosen list of colleagues produced huge benefits (for increasing happiness, connectedness, flow, and decreasing depression), not just for the givers, but for the receivers and even for observers. The recipients of kindness 'paid the kind acts forward' and even acquaintances of the givers became happier and were inspired to act more generously themselves."

### FORGIVENESS

In *The How of Happiness*, Lyubomirsky says that people who forgive "are more likely to be happier, healthier, more agreeable, and more serene. They are better able to empathize with others and to be spiritual or religious. People who forgive hurts in relationships are more capable of reestablishing closeness. Finally, the inability to forgive is associated with persistent rumination or dwelling on revenge, while forgiving allows a person to move on."

Regardless of what may have happened in your past, by refusing to forgive, you may be blocking your pathway to happiness.

Do you want to be a happier person? Gratitude, optimism, acts of kindness, and forgiveness are just a few of the habits and ways of thinking you can cultivate to pursue a happier life. And as you journey on your own path to happiness, you'll discover that it brings a lot of joy to others along the way!

*This article was first published in the January/February 2014 issue of Vibrant Life and reprinted (with the author's permission) in the January 2015 issue of Signs magazine.*



## Humbled at the Cross: GYC 2014

**AT THE CROSS.** This is where the value of mankind was redefined, where every seeking sinner finds their reason for existence, because this is where the Majesty, Creator, and Ruler of all things made gave His all to a fallen and utterly undeserving race. Jesus, the One who was equal with God, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and with this gesture displayed the greatest declaration of love the world has ever known.

How often do we slow down and meditate on what took place at the cross? Although we cannot truly grasp it in its entirety, the subject of the cross should be the one theme to enthrall our minds and grip our hearts. Perhaps many of us have grown accustomed to hearing about Jesus dying on the cross. We recite John 3:16 time and time again (and if you are like me, you may even have done so absentmindedly), almost as if Christ's sacrifice was the original plan. As if the King of the universe, one with the Omnipotent God, should risk His very nature for humanity as to oblige an original script. No! We need to step back and pray that God enables us to understand the meaning of the events at the cross, its implications, and its utmost relevance in our day.

I had the privilege of attending "Generation of Youth for Christ (GYC) 2014," themed "At the Cross" December 31, 2014-January 4, 2015 in Phoenix, Arizona. GYC is an annual conference organized by and for Adventist young adults. It was the tool God used to deepen my understanding of Christ's sacrifice. Based on 1 Peter 2:24, which says, "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed," each day had an early start with personal devotional time, breakfast, followed by a general morning devotional. The rest of the schedule included one-of-a-kind seminars, unbelievable testimonies, and on Friday afternoon, thousands of young people hit the Phoenix streets reaching the community in different ways by distributing *The Desire of Ages*, gathering Bible study requests door-to-door, helping at a community outreach center, and so much more.

I will confess that prior to arriving at GYC, I wondered how a straightforward theme such as "The Cross" was going to

be stretched into a five-day program. I had too quickly forgotten that, "the cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity" (*Our Father Cares*, p. 343). God in His mercy and through the Holy Spirit spoke in the form of powerful expository sermons that expanded on events at the cross, such as I had never heard before. In my mind's eye, I saw Christ and God the

Father, who had been One from eternity, ripped apart for the first time for our sake. That Christ, all the while fulfilling His Father's will, would for a moment choose *us* over His own, that He would be separated from the Father and be joined to man. And, even more, that we should be reconciled and reunited with our Father. What a thought! It is no wonder that it will take nothing less than eternity to behold such a humbling scene.

GYC 2014 has come and gone, but by God's grace, the life-changing lessons remain. In light of these lessons, hundreds of young people responded to appeals, publicly stating that their lives would reflect God's undeniable love. Please pray for those who responded and for those who are still



From left: Barbara Boakye, Edna Gouveia, and Rosibel Ordóñez at GYC 2014.

battling indecision.

If you are a youth or young adult, I invite you to plan for GYC 2015, "Called, Chosen, Faithful" (Revelation 17:14) in Louisville, Kentucky, on December 30, 2015-January 3, 2016. Attending these conferences has changed my life, and I have seen the lives of loved ones also changed. Please, come. For more information, visit [www.gycweb.org](http://www.gycweb.org).

**Edna Gouveia** is from Keene, Texas. She is currently a third-year medical student at the American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine.





# Pass it On...

A Monthly Focus on Evangelism in the Southwest

BY HYVETH WILLIAMS

## Fighting the Good Fight

**T**he story is told that during the battles between British and French forces in colonial Canada, the commander of the British fleet was told to anchor near the city of Quebec and wait for British land forces, then support them when they attacked the city. His fleet arrived early, and as the admiral waited, he became annoyed by the statues of saints that adorned the towers of a nearby cathedral, so he commanded his men to shoot at them with the ship's cannons. No one knows how many rounds were fired, or how many statues were destroyed, but when the land forces arrived and the signal was given to attack, the admiral was of no help. He had used up all his ammunition shooting at the "saints."

Saints who shoot saints or fight with each other use ammunition and resources that should be aimed at the devil. "If you bite and devour each other," wrote the apostle Paul, "watch out or you will be destroyed by each other" (Galatians 5:15). In such situations everyone loses.

Animosity and argumentation, instead of harmony, is not a new phenomenon in the body of Christ. First-century believers also faced the racial, religious, gender, and genealogy prejudices with which we struggle today. The evidence is clear that the apostle Paul dealt with intolerance in Galatians 2:11-16. He underscored the significance of harmony in the body of Christ, asserting that "there is neither Jew nor Gentile [division created by ethnic diversity], neither slave nor free [division founded on socially constructed barriers], nor is there male and female [division based on gender bias], for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

Author Caleb Rosado wrote, "Paul saw this lack of unity in Christ as the biggest obstacle before the church. Thus the biggest threat to the church's survival beyond the first generation came from within, not from without."<sup>1</sup>

God has relentlessly pursued harmony within His church that was established for all people. Yet disharmony continues to be "the biggest threat" from within. It is delaying, if not destroying, the quest to accomplish true heart revival. To accomplish the goal of unity, the following should be considered:

**First**, the biblical meaning of "unity," for which Jesus prayed in His final prayer in John 17:23, must be practiced. According to A. T. Robertson in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, the Greek word *henoteita*, translated as "unity," means "oneness of faith or trust in Christ."

**Second**, harmony is defined as the blending of different qualities, decisions, or characteristics of a group to reach agreement in opinion and/or action. It is not uniformity; it is the freedom to be different while being in conformity with the principles or system of beliefs of an organization. Where necessary, provisions can and should be made, or variances granted according to a society's standard of living that does not conflict with the Word of God.

**Third**, God is doing what He promised when He said several centuries ago through the Prophet Isaiah: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:18, 19).

**Fourth**, as "hot potato" issues are debated, remember that Ellen White said: "There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people is not proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No doctrine will lose anything by close investigation."<sup>2</sup>

**Finally**, the apostle Paul said there is an acceptable time for everything (2 Corinthians 6:1-3, NKJV). I am convinced that despite the many challenges facing our twenty-first-century church, this is the acceptable time to deliberately move from the reproach of one another that mars our message and good works.

Together we can achieve the harmony and revival we pray for and preach about.

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Reprinted from the November 15, 2012 issue of *Adventist Review*. Used with permission.



# Visión Hispana

UN BREVE NOTICIERO MENSUAL DEL SUROESTE

## Unidos a pesar de la Distancia

INTERCAMBIO EVANGELÍSTICO ENTRE LA UNIÓN DEL SUROESTE Y COSTA RICA, CA

Cuando pienso en la misión de la iglesia, se me viene a la mente la comisión que El Señor Jesús nos dejó en Marcos 16:15-16. Él dijo, "Id por todo el mundo, y predicad el evangelio a toda criatura. El que creyere, y fuere bautizado, será salvo; más el que no creyere, será condenado." La Unión del Suroeste, junto con las cinco asociaciones de nuestro territorio, estamos comprometidos a cumplir con esa misión. En los últimos años, hemos estado llevando a cabo un método de evangelismo que ha probado ser efectivo y de gran bendición para nuestros obreros, un intercambio

evangelístico con otros campos, donde los cinco campos de nuestra unión han participado enviando a obreros de sus asociaciones para dictar campañas evangelísticas. Este año, el intercambio fue con la

Asociación Sur Central de Costa Rica. En el mes de julio tuvimos la primera etapa del intercambio evangelístico, donde viajamos a Costa Rica con un grupo de 27 pastores y administradores de nuestro territorio con representación de las cinco asociaciones de nuestra Unión del Suroeste. Fue maravilloso ver cómo los pastores y hermanos del campo que visitamos, se prepararon y prepararon el territorio por medio de grupos pequeños para las campañas evangelísticas que se llevaron a cabo del 11 al 19 de julio. En cada iglesia se pudieron ver milagros de conversión. Al concluir la semana de evangelismo en las iglesias, más de 280 preciosas almas se entregaron al Señor Jesús por medio del bautismo, y un par de semanas después, el

número de ellas sobrepaso los 300 bautismos. ¡Gloria a Dios por el poder del Evangelio! La segunda etapa del intercambio evangelístico se llevó a cabo del 7 al 15 de noviembre, cuando los obreros de Costa Rica vinieron a dictar campañas evangelísticas en iglesias de nuestro territorio de la Unión del Suroeste. Las iglesias recibieron a los predicadores costarricenses con gran entusiasmo por los mensajes que compartirían en las conferencias. Confiamos que nuestro Dios bendijo grandemente el esfuerzo y la dedicación de nuestros pastores y de nuestros hermanos de iglesia. ¡Oremos por las almas de esta gran cosecha!

**Eduardo Canales**, Vicepresidente y Director del Ministerio Multicultural



El grupo de pastores y administradores que viajó a Costa Rica visitó, iglesias, pequeños grupos en casas y en áreas remotas. Mostrando que en todos los rincones de esta tierra la necesidad de Jesús es buscada y recibida con los brazos abiertos llevada por los mensajeros que están dispuestos a tomar la misión dada desde antaño hasta nuestros días.



# “HELP! I CARE ABOUT MY CHURCH!”

## The Value of Unity and How We Can Promote It

By Thomas Lobitz

*“I am . . . a stranger to my own mother’s children; . . . for zeal for your house consumes me” (Psalm 69:8, 9).*

**T**he man approached me hesitantly at the booth of the German Seventh-day Adventist publishing house. We had many people browsing through books and looking at special offers. After paging through a few books, he finally plucked up his courage and spoke to me. He wanted to know if I thought that our church was facing a deep crisis. Then he went on to list everything he thought was wrong—in his local congregation and in the church at large. Before I could answer, he walked away.

This encounter reminded me of Psalm 69:8, 9. Apparently there are people among us who feel the same way David did when he wrote this psalm. They worry so much about the church that one has to worry about them. Eventually some end up alienating themselves from their brothers and sisters.

### The Many Faces of Church

Is it helpful to worry about the future of our church? It definitely is human to worry about the things that are important to us.

Some Adventists compare the church to a *toddler*. In their eyes the church is immature, unprofessional, and constantly making mistakes. Leadership is either incapable or overwhelmed. And the regular church members are not much better. They can be blown this way and that way by “every new wind of doctrine” (see Ephesians 4:14), are inconsistent in their walk with Jesus, or fanatical.

Others liken the church to an adolescent going through puberty. Terrible music is played, something new is tried out continuously, and traditions are denigrated or even eliminated. Only one thing can help—a solid sermon calling all those who have gone astray back to (the old) order.

Still others think of the church as an *adult* who cares mainly about his or her career. There is a flurry of inward activity and outward indifference. Mission? *No time!* Service for others? *Sorry, no volunteers are available, since we need them all to keep our local church running smoothly.*

Finally, some see the church as a stubborn *old man* who is intent on preserving the status quo. Any attempt to adapt to changing times is suspicious. Change is viewed negatively.

### What Then Is Church?

The New Testament word for church (*ekklesia*, “the ones called to come out”) was used to describe a gathering of believers. Church involved fellowship (Acts 2:42), worship of God, and service to others (1 Peter 4:10). The church is God’s instrument to spread His good news (1 Peter 2:5-12). Those who earlier did not know God are transformed and become







committed disciples, using their gifts and abilities for the mission and ministry of the church.

The church is neither a rigid institution nor a building; it is a living organism, and, therefore, difficult to describe with a single concept. It's no wonder that biblical writers used many images to illustrate the nature of the church: It is described, for example, as a "flock" (John 10; Acts 20:28), a "holy nation" and "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9), or as the "bride" of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:22-32; Revelation 19:7; 21:9; 22:17).

The most famous image, though, must be the "body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-16). Christ is described as the head of this body, and members of the church—according to their gifts and tasks—as the "body parts." This image underlines the unity of the body of Christ, requiring all members of the body to fulfill their God-given functions. The driving force behind all this is love.

## The Unity of the Church

Many who care about the church think about the unity of the church in terms of the cohesiveness of its members. But of what does the unity of the church consist, and how is it manifested?

A Dutch theologian has formulated some helpful statements regarding the unity of the church that I will summa-



rize: Talking about the church is not talking about our opinions of how the church should be. The church is one, and unity of faith should be assumed—despite its often-visible disunity—because the church is by its very nature and origin one. Its inner turmoil is a sign of sin. The Trinity is an analogy for the unity of the church. Unity is both a gift and a task, a gift and a responsibility, a reality and a responsibility. Just as the human body forms a unit, so the church is one.

## Unity in Diversity—Limitless?

In April 2002, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists highlighted three core values for the leadership of the global church: growth, unity, and quality of life. Taking into account the common denominators of doctrine and organization, it was also recognized that there are ethnic and cultural differences that affect the interaction of church members. In reality, our churches and church members are very different, despite many similarities.

Even the human body (as the body of Christ symbolizes the church) has many members with various tasks. Depending on the perspective, one and the same body can look quite different from different angles. Does this jeopardize the unity of the church?

Note this statement by Ellen White: “We cannot then take a po-

sition that the unity of the church consists in viewing every text of Scripture in the very same light. The church may pass resolution upon resolution to put down all disagreement of opinions, but we cannot force the mind and will, and thus root out disagreement. These resolutions may conceal the discord, but they cannot quench it and establish perfect agreement. Nothing can perfect unity in the church but the *spirit of Christ-like forbearance*.”

In other words, Ellen White says that a diversity of perspectives is quite compatible with the unity of the church. She emphasizes that an attitude of *Christ-like forbearance* is crucial in keeping the church together. This helpful concept may mean that we may not always have to be right, and that others may not always have to agree with our ideas. In this statement Ellen White clearly advocates the appreciation of diversity of opinion.

But what are the limits of “unity in diversity”? Diversity should not become an excuse for the division of the church, or it would make this sin a virtue. Diversity makes more evident the need for unity. Only diversity where fellowship is not destroyed is acceptable. Christian fellowship is the expression and sign of the unity of the church. Unity does not mean egalitarianism or separateness. The image of the body of Christ excludes rivalry, strife, and division, and instead calls for unity, harmony, and community.



## Participate—Rather Than Worry

If we're worried about the church, see it going the "wrong way," or fear division; we can react in different ways. Some church members write passionate letters to the church board or send the letter immediately via e-mail to their entire mailing list. Others start their own activities parallel to church organization, because they view the church's work as mistaken or imperfect.

I doubt whether all this can help the cohesion of the church or may be part of the effort to "guide [them] into all the truth" (John 16:13)—which, quite apart, is the task of the Holy Spirit. If we truly are concerned about the unity of the church, there are numerous ways that may help us achieve it. Here are some suggestions:

*Focus on a deep and personal relationship with Jesus.* Numerous articles on spiritual growth have been published in the *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* magazines. There are also several helpful books on the subject, such as *Steps to Christ*, by Ellen G. White; *Knowing God in the Real World*, by Jon Paulien; *Conquering the Dragon Within*, by Marvin Moore; or *95 Theses on Righteousness by Faith*, by Morris Venden. Small groups also support spiritual growth through fellowship with other believers. The unity of the church is thus promoted in a *spiritual way*.

*Speak and preach about the importance of unity in the church.* Together with the pastor of your church put this important topic on the preaching plan of your church. What is church unity? Why is it so important? How can it be promoted? This shared thinking about the unity of the church provides an *intellectual way* of engaging this important topic.

*Take part in the social activities of the church.* Whether fellowship meals, social meetings, excursions, or the celebration of important church landmarks—participate in the social life of your local church family. These types of activities bring church members closer to one another, and help us understand each other better. The unity of the church is promoted on an *emotional level*.

*Share in the mission of the church.* Participate in an

evangelistic effort, a cross-cultural ministry helping those in your community who are far away from home, or hands-on service to help the disadvantaged in your community: You are part of God's mission to this world. This participation creates a feeling of connectedness and allows the unity of the church to be promoted in a *practical way*.

I wish that Psalm 69:8, 9 would become less and less of a reality in our churches. Wouldn't it be nicer rather to join in the magnificent chorus of Psalm 84:4: "Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you"?

I plan to sing that song in church.

Reprinted from the December 26, 2013 edition of the *Adventist Review*.

Used with permission.





# JUST BE NICE

*A story of hope from an imperfect church*

**Larry Moore, Southwestern Union president,  
with Indiana Meléndez, Southwestern Union communication intern**

We are imperfect people, and therefore, we are an imperfect church. Why? Because we are human. We have such different opinions, tastes, and ideas, and at times we find ourselves butting heads over inexplicable things. However, when barriers are built that hinder the fulfillment of the mission Christ has left for us, and threaten the unity of the church, handling those situations with care is imperative.

A couple of years ago, I got a call from the conference, asking if I could help out with a conflict in one of our churches. Because of differences in tastes of worship, among other things, there was a division between the members. One

group, preferring the traditional worship style over the more contemporary style the church was creating, formed their own church elsewhere. The remaining church was very low in attendance and morale. They were seeking help and were very open to change.

When I came on board as pastor, I met with the elders of the church and discussed options for solving the problem. Initially, I really wanted to bring the two churches back together. I had suggested having two worship services. One catering to the more traditional members with hymns and a more reverent service, and the other catering to the younger, more contemporary members. This idea, however, still maintained a sense of division. So instead, we managed to create one service that I consider middle-of-the-road, with a blend of different worship music and program features. Although it didn't bring the two churches back together, it was a great success. Attendance bounced back almost immediately. In six months the church had as many members as it did before the conflict, and it really goes to show that God can bring good out of any situation.

After this experience, and many others throughout my lifetime, I thought about how much of an impact we can have on each other based on our differences. In this case, both churches had ideas on where things should go, but I wouldn't fault either one of them—I think sometimes we think that everyone has to look, think, and act like we do, and if they don't, we think that they're not mature Christians, but that's not the case. A lot of times people, even older people, need understanding and a friendly face, a nice greeting, and someone to talk to. We are all human. We have our faults and we have our preferences. But the way we handle situations and each other is worth thinking about.

Two years into pastoring that church, I preached a







healed people and spoke to them. He formed relationships with them. It says in a couple of places in the Spirit of Prophecy that Jesus saw their needs, he ministered to their needs, and then he told them “Follow me.” From His example, we can learn that in the end, it all comes down to the relationships we have with people, and therefore, in order to show Christ’s character, we just need to be nice to each other. We can apply this to our relationships at work, at school, in our homes, and in our churches. Practicing friendliness and compassion can easily bring about unity in a church.

Now, I want to make it clear that there is a difference

sermon titled “Just Be Nice.” I felt it was needed, not just by people in one church but by Adventists overall. We need to be a little more understanding of people’s tastes and their likes and dislikes. I’m not talking about throwing away principles or anything, but just being a little more open to the differences we have as brothers and sisters in Christ. The Adventist Church has a lot of young people, young families, and tremendous cultural diversity among its members, and I feel that we need to be more understanding of their lifestyles and upbringing. Instead of being upset and getting all uptight when something is not quite to our taste, try just being nice and realize that not everyone is the same. We don’t have the same tastes in music. We don’t have the same tastes in a lot of things, so if we would just be nice, it would have an effect on other people. People normally come back at us the way we are to them. If we’re nice to them, they’ll be nice back. If we’re very stern and not giving, then we should expect that attitude in return.

It’s not only about churches and how people react to one another, but also how we witness to people. A lot of times we want to witness to people by giving them a piece of literature or telling them they’re going to church on the wrong day, but if we’re just nice to people, I think we’d share a greater testimony than we might be able to express in words alone. That’s the way Jesus worked. He



between unity and uniformity. Unity, in the Adventist church, speaks more of the fact that we have biblical doctrines that we, through a lot of study, prayer, and time, have kind of shaken down to 28 fundamentals and hold those as biblical truths. As a church, we are unified in that aspect. We are also unified in the understanding of the health message. We try to maintain healthy bodies, since our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we do not eat unclean foods, such as pork, shellfish, catfish, or lobster. Some of us strive for a vegetarian diet, but it is not a test of faith

if we do. In other words, a person chooses of their own free will to become vegetarian or not. Unity in the body of Christ does not imply that everybody sees things the same way, eats the same foods, or even dresses the same.

Uniformity, on the other hand, implies a forcing into a mold, to fit into a certain way. Unity doesn’t have to be forcing people into a mold. Uniformity has the idea that everybody needs to talk, act, and walk the same, but that’s not required by scripture or the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As Adventists, we value diversity and should, therefore, be more open to one another.

In the end, it all comes down to just being nice. We can solve and avoid so many situations, if we simply follow and practice the



example Jesus left for us.

If you do need help with a current unity situation at your church, however, here are three steps you can take.

Have an open attitude for those who differ with you. Try to resolve the problem locally, by discussing alternatives or solutions with an open mind.

If the situation becomes threatening to the life of the church, the pastor and elders should give it attention, so that the church doesn't fall apart. Going to your local conference can help out in many ways. They usually have a ministerial director who can go out to local churches and give counsel that would be helpful.

If it's a serious issue that becomes divisive in the church, sometimes an outside party can come in, and listen to what people are saying with a nonbiased perspective. Because they are not part of the local church or conference, they can maturely look at both sides of an issue and supply advice. Usually, however, most issues can be solved locally, and should attempt to be solved locally.

Although differences may seem to separate us into categories in our society and our church, we are all the same selfish, flawed, and undeserving human beings that have fallen into sin. We are no greater than our neighbor and should treat everyone with love, as God loves us. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength...Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:30-31). If we embrace the incredible love God has for us, even though we are filled with sin, and we really take that in, we can empathize with those around us, to create a unified family of brothers and sisters all united for the same purpose: to love and glorify God, and to complete the mission He left for us.

**Remember, just be nice.**

# Nurturing Unity

Delbert W. Baker

Here are five suggestions for nurturing church unity. Think PEACE:

**1. Prioritize love.** Think and implement the practical aspects of loving and preferring one another. When tempted to resent someone who disagrees with us, we must discipline ourselves to love. Turn to these and other biblical passages for counsel: 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:22; John 15:12; Romans 13:8; Hebrews 13:1; 1 John 4:7; 1 Peter 1:22; John 17.

**2. Exalt unity.** Beyond polemics, model unity. Christian writer Adolph E. Knoch wrote: "The highest evidence of a close communing with God is not a haughty holding of the truth and a separation from all who do not see it as we do. . . . Truth, too often, has been held in hate. Truth *in love* is the key to the approval of God and to the hearts of His saints. . . . [Truth] is often grieved, but does not retaliate. Above all it does not, like Peter, cut off the ears of those who oppose, for it is patiently waiting for the time when the ears will be healed, not hurt."<sup>1</sup>

**3. Agree to focus.** Christians united are difficult to divide. Seek agreement and build bridges. If we plan on spending eternity together, we can't allow peripheral issues to divide us on earth.

**4. Cultivate peace.** Respect principle and pursue peace. Psalm 133:1 proclaims the goodness and pleasantness of dwelling together in unity. Rather than being satisfied with the good that is unpleasant, or the pleasant that is not good, seek that peace that is both pleasant and good. Respect principle, build peace, and value relationships in the bonds of love. This will promote the peace of Christ and resist the strategies of Satan.

**5. Evaluate attitudes.** Let's examine our attitudes and give others the benefit of the doubt. Notice Ellen White's counsel: "Conversation has been protracted for hours between the parties concerned, and not only has their time been wasted, but the servants of God are held to listen to them, when the hearts of both parties are unsubdued by grace. If pride and selfishness were laid aside, five minutes would remove most difficulties."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Adapted from Adolph E. Knoch, "Presenting the Truth in Love," *Unsearchable Riches*, vol. 56, no. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1882), p. 119.

This article is excerpted from an article entitled "Maintaining Church Unity," by Delbert W. Baker, general vice president of the General Conference, published in the July 24, 2014 edition of the *Adventist Review*. Used with permission.



# DELEGATES VOTE STATEMENT ON CIVIL DISCOURSE

**Julio C. Muñoz**

**T**he North American Division (NAD) Executive Committee unanimously adopted a statement that encourages “respectful, Christ-like dialogue” between Christians, particularly in regard to the upcoming 2015 General Conference Session vote on women’s ordination.

The motion stemmed from a concern expressed earlier in the division’s Year-end Meetings. NAD President Daniel R. Jackson and many of the attendees expressed concern about the tone of the debate that has been raging at various levels of the Seventh-day Adventist world church. But as Christians, Jackson reminded delegates, we are called to discuss issues with the understanding and compassion modeled by Christ.

“I don’t think it’s part of our mission to start attacking each other just because we don’t agree,” Jackson said during Sunday’s discussion on the ordination of women. “I’m not saying for a moment that we don’t have the right to disagree, but God has given us the responsibility to share His love.”

In response to Jackson’s call for civility of discourse, the delegates approved a statement that includes the following guidelines:

1. We resolve to encourage expressions of disagreement that are honest and open based upon a sincere desire to arrive at truth as expressed in Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy;
2. We resolve to first communicate with those with whom we disagree and listen non-judgmentally to their positions so that we can represent those positions accurately before critiquing them;
3. We resolve to avoid the use of sarcasm, cartoons, anecdotes, parody or any other form of insinuation to diminish the reputation or personhood of others;
4. We resolve to refrain from sponsoring or countenancing online or offline dialogue that vilifies or depreciates the good name of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in general or the reputations of its individual members in particular.

*We, therefore, resolve to avoid participating in, or being party to, all forms of unhealthy and demeaning discourse. Our aim is to govern our communication according to the high standards of Christian conduct found in the guidelines of this statement so that God may be glorified in all we say and do.”*

Jackson asked that the North American church members seek “higher ground” during these challenging times while the discussion about ordination builds up as the General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas, approaches.



# Ending Up On The “Same Page”



ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA CONFERENCE

Can you imagine inviting 40 men, all about the same age, living in the same community, having a similar economic standing, and all of the same educational background, and asking them to each write a treatise on the same assigned topic? Regardless of how similar each of those 40 men might be, the outcome of their writing would probably be quite predictable. You would more than likely end up with 40 different approaches and ideas on the same topic. It is very doubtful that you would find any common thread that you could tie all their concepts together into a united whole.

On the other hand, just think of what happened when 40 different men of varying age, living at different times under different political situations, cultural practices

and economic conditions over a 1,500 year time span, and having vastly different levels of education, each wrote a portion of the Scriptures. Under the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, what came about was a united whole describing the great controversy between good and evil and God’s remedy to the issue of evil through the plan of salvation. It is an absolutely incredible example of how such a varied group of men could all end up on the “same page” in describing God’s love for mankind and how He designed to save them.

Comparing these two sets of 40 men helps us to realize that it is not a matter of removing all aspects of diversity that will ultimately lead to unity. Eliminating differing philosophies and approaches to life issues will not guarantee that everyone

will see “eye to eye.” What brings about unity in the face of exaggerated differences is the influence and power of the Holy Spirit. It is by the Spirit of God that hearts are softened and subdued to let go of preconceived ideas, long-held traditions, and personal preferences and pet ideas—none of which may be wrong or bad in and of themselves—but which may stand as an obstacle to allowing people to find common denominators that will allow them to move forward together in a united way. Unity doesn’t mean that we are all alike, but rather in spite of our differences we are still willing to unite for a common goal or purpose. The Holy Spirit will do this for you (and me) if we are willing!

**Stephen Orfan**, president

## Benton Pathfinder is Baptized After Surviving Rare Condition

**BENTON, ARK. »** During the summer of 2013, 13-year-old Kali Hardig went swimming and contracted a deadly microscopic condition known as primary amebic me-

ningoencephalitis, a rare condition caused by an amoeba (one-celled parasite) that lives in warm water. Of the 128 cases reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Pre-

vention in the United States from 1962 to 2012, only two people had survived. Kali’s family, friends, and people from around the world prayed earnestly for her recovery. After nearly two months in the hospital, Kali became survivor number three!

Kali is a fearless young lady who wants to serve Christ. She is a member of the Benton Jesus Warrior Pathfinder Club and was able to go to the Forever Faithful International Camporee in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, this past August. Halfway through the week, following one of the nightly programs, Kali expressed to me, with tears in her eyes, her desire to be baptized. On October 11, 2014, Kali was baptized in the Benton Seventh-day Adventist Church, where she serves as a reminder to all of us that God is the ultimate healer and the “odds” do not matter with Him! Matthew 19:26 says, “With man this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.” We praise God for Kali’s miraculous recovery and for her testimony to the world.

**Francis Baumbach**



Michael Wolford, pastor, baptizes Kali Hardig at the Benton church.



# Youth Seminar at Deridder SDA Church

**DERIDDER, LA. »** During the week of July 19-26, 2014, John Newlove, pastor, spoke to the youth and members of the Deridder church with a seminar entitled “i Witness.” Newlove, a youth pastor from Fayetteville, North Carolina, delivered an amazing message and kept everyone’s attention. Taking the Bible story of the prodigal son, Newlove brought out the plan of salvation and the way to come to Jesus.

**Nell Miller**



John Newlove, pastor, from Fayetteville, N.C., with church member Enied Varela.

# My Story: Bible Study Recruitment

**SLIDELL, LA. »** I was raised a Baptist, but I can remember at the age of seven taking Bible studies from the Voice of Prophecy. I really enjoyed them—I would fill out the questionnaire and mail it back and the next week I would get a new study guide and receive the old guide back with the correct

answers checked. I remember being happy to receive my Bible study completion certificate. I was quite curious about the Sabbath and asked about it, but I never seemed to get the right answers.

In the early 1980s, my husband and I moved to Texarkana, Arkansas, and I began searching for a church home. I attended many churches, but nothing felt right. I prayed that God would lead me to a church that studied the Bible and that followed the biblical commandments.

While attend-

ing training in Fort Lee, Virginia, in 1987, I found a Bible study card on my hotel dresser. I filled out the card and sent it in. Approximately six weeks later, after I had returned home, I heard a knock on my door. A middle-aged couple stood there with the card in hand, and asked me if I remembered filling it out and if I was still interested in taking Bible studies. I said, “yes” and “yes.” They asked when I would like to start. I asked them, “How about now?” They agreed, and my daughter and I began our studies with Harold and Ida Hiday that day.

We took 24 weekly Bible study lessons with them. After we completed the Bible studies, we would meet every Friday evening to pray and play Bible Scrabble and other Bible games. We attended a prophecy seminar hosted by the Texarkana church, and in March 1988, we joined the Adventist church. I still keep in touch with Harold and Ida, and I am thankful that God sent them to study with me—and that He answered my prayer.

**Vernella Rogers**



Vernella Rogers was baptized into the Adventist Church in 1988.

ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA CONFERENCE

# Women Called: For Such a Time as This

**NEW ORLEANS, LA. »** Approximately 100 Hispanic women from around the Arkansas-Louisiana Conference attended the Hispanic Women's Ministries Retreat held at the Sheraton Metairie in New Orleans, La., September 19-21, 2014, with the theme "For a Time Such as This You Have Been Called."

The retreat was richly blessed with Sarita O. de Bullon's Christ-like and profound presentations. She spoke of the urgency of His care in our spiritual growth, as well as the importance of presenting a clean, healthy appearance, with good physical hygiene. Some of her topics were "How to Be Wise in Taking Care Of Our Husbands"

and "How to Be the Helpmate That God Always Planned for Us." Wilma K. Lee also presented on domestic violence, "How to Say No to Domestic Violence," and "How to Get Out of Sexually, Physically and/or Mentally Abusive Environment." God used Liz B. Mendoza to provide beautiful, angelic music.

The younger women dealt with current, important issues such as: "How to Deal with Eating Disorders" and "Anti-Driving and Texting"

Arkansas-Louisiana's Hispanic Women's Ministries Department, led by Ana Álvarez, with the support of administrators, local women, and her powerful women's team, envisioned a plan to distribute more than 700 copies of *The Great Controversy* on Sabbath afternoon throughout the streets of New Orleans and the famous French Quarter district. The books were ordered, donations received, and everything was

falling into place—but Satan was not happy with this plan. He began to pull some strings, but the women and girls at the retreat received a crash course on how to be good colporteurs. God was in control, and at the appointed time, Sabbath, September 20, 2014, at 2:00 p.m., the women started showing up, filled

with the Holy Spirit, to do His job. They were ready with their books, and armed with beautiful smiles. In less than two hours all the books had been distributed! Glory and honor to our God and King!

**Dalia Castellanos**



▲ Learning together as women in Christ.

◀ Crash course in colporteur ministry.

▼ Taking the Word to the people.





# One Family



When I was a young minister I had the privilege of becoming the fourth pastor that a particular church received within one year's time. This little church had gotten the reputation of being a tough place to advance the Kingdom. It was well-known for being insensitive and intolerant. Here they were, living in the shadow of a large, well-known public university, and the 15 or so members often acted like a gated community. They guarded their turf with pride. They were hesitant to let anyone become a part of the church, even pastors!

I remember that my first series of sermons was from the gospel of John. We traced the life of Jesus. We spent several weeks looking at the many different experiences that John recorded about the Savior. I remember constantly encouraging the church family that we were simply to be the extension of Jesus' hands, feet, and voice. We were to love like the Master and to uplift Jesus always.

I remember after several weeks of interacting with them, this church was changing. It wasn't anything I was doing—it was what God was doing through the power of the Holy Spirit. Little by little the members' guards were dropping and their willingness to reach out grew.

After a few months, the church decided that it was good to be a family, and that the family needed to grow. They began all

kinds of little activities and socials to reach out to the community and to the university. To their amazement, there were people who were interested in what they had to say. When new people came to the church, instead of checking their pedigree, the members welcomed them with open arms. I remember, one of them said to me, "Pastor, it's just like you said. We're to love like Jesus and keep on seeking those who are lost!" Wow! I was joyous over the transformation.

It wasn't long before the small church had difficulty in housing the attendance. What a change!

Our little church now consisted of several nationalities and cultures: Anglo, African-American, Korean, Native American, and others. What was even more significant was the fact that the church not only embraced diversity, but also never made it an issue! They were one family! They were brothers and sisters in Christ. That was all that mattered. They were a part of the great Advent movement.

Maybe that's the key. While they were proud of their heritage and roots, that became secondary to what was most important. They were a part of the family of God. That was their focus and that was their mission. They simply told of what Jesus had done for them, and invited *all* to become a part of the family, anxiously awaiting the soon return of Jesus!

I share this experience with you be-

cause I am convinced we all need to hear once again the great treasure from the Word of God. Paul makes some powerful statements that should be riveted into our hearts and minds.

"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:12, 13, NASB). And remember this one: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:28,29, NASB).

Those passages of scripture challenge me, encourage me, renew me, and anchor me. I recognize the fact that we face some great challenges today and there will be even greater challenges in the future, but nothing is impossible for God's people to handle if we can remember we are His people. We are more than members of the church. We are a part of the great Advent movement. We are one family in Christ! One in Christ is what makes it work. Like I asked many years ago of one of those members of that little church, "I'm in, how about you?"

**Richard C. Dye, Sr.**, executive secretary

## Women's Ministries at Tulsa Adventist Fellowship

**TULSA** » "Women Making a Difference for God" is Adventist Fellowship's women's ministries motto and mission!

Our first event was a tea party and luncheon where approximately 100 women and girls attended. Many dressed up for the occasion in hats and gloves. Our men's ministries team very willingly prepared and served the luncheon and tea and did

a great job. We were honored to have a special guest speaker, Dorothy Enns, who shared her amazing and inspiring story of God's miraculous healing. Stephanie Murrill of Fletcher, North Carolina, blessed the women with special music.

Our group has many plans for the future. We have an outreach project, Bible studies, and more events planned so that

we may invite our family and friends. Our prayer is that this ministry will make a difference for God, because that is why we are here on this earth.

**Joyce Carlile**

# Young People Are Our Church's Future—and Present!

**CHOCTAW** » The Choctaw church experienced a special treat recently. We were able to attend a week-long evangelistic series conducted by four of our youth! Church members and visitors enjoyed listening as these young men did a wonderful job of presenting Bible truths each evening. Adam Faulkner, Daniel O'Connor, Jacob Fay, and Haydn Fay shared speaking duties. Each presentation shared some aspect of Bible truth filtered through the lens of Jesus' great love for each of us.

This was truly a group effort by our young people. Other youth presented special music and greeted guests each evening as they arrived. Everybody pitched in and did a great job of keeping the meetings running smoothly. Many attendees commented on the wonderful job each of our youth had done in helping with the meetings.

We received an added blessing a week after the close of the series when two people who have attended our church regu-



▲ Leighton Holley, pastor, welcomed Kayla Thompson and John Douvillier into church membership.

◀ Haydn Fay presented the topic "What Happens When We Die?"

Far left: Daniel O'Connor presented the topic "How to Start Over."

Below left: Jacob Fay presented the topic "God's Indestructible Sign."

▼ Adam Faulkner presented the first night's topic at the evangelistic meetings, "How Can You Know the Future?"



larly for the past couple of years became members. Kayla Thompson, who helped with greeting duties at the meetings and is a member of the church's Earliteen/Youth class, was baptized. John Douvillier joined our church on profession by faith.

It is a joy to see our church grow, both numerically and spiritually. God has blessed us abundantly over the years, and He continues to do so. It is a joy to know that we have another generation ready to

step up and help spread God's Word to a hurting world.

Robin Sagel

OKLAHOMA CONFERENCE



# International Sabbath Celebration

**OKLAHOMA CITY** » On November 1, 2014, the Oklahoma International Church hosted its annual international Sabbath. Members were encouraged to wear clothing representative of their heritage and homeland. Area churches were invited and many came representing almost every continent. The Oklahoma International church is home to many African immigrants from Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, and other African nations. We had visitors from the Philippines, Mexico, and other countries, as well. The guest speaker, Mark Tshuma, is originally from Zimbabwe. Before retiring, he was pastor of two large churches in Arlington, Texas.

After worship, members and guests shared a delicious fellowship luncheon with traditional foods from the various nations represented. The gymnasium was beautifully decorated and an area was set up to display artifacts from

several nations.

After the luncheon, a concert was held featuring the female group, Undivided, selections from the duet Guy Nembhard and Lisa Amukaya, and soloists, Sheila Davidson, Kelly Morrell, and Ouachiat Tervil.

After the concert, many remained for the evening to share dinner and games. This event revealed to all what God has in store for us when we are

united in heaven to enjoy the blessings of family from all corners of the earth.

Peggy Devinish



## Preserving the Unity of the Spirit



SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE

Unity can be very hard to achieve because it never happens on its own. Our challenge is that our unity or oneness should exist not in spite of our diversity, but because of it. As we rapidly approach the 60th General Conference Session, and our own Constituency Session, when delegates will assemble to elect leaders, discuss and vote on constitutional changes, and report on activities within the territories, our conduct must be dictated by our calling. The apostle Paul under divine inspiration insightfully insists, “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bear-

ing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-3, NKJV).

Paul, having developed the theological foundation for our calling in the first three chapters of Ephesians, turns his attention to demonstrating the practical application for our conduct in the final three chapters. First, he advocates that we are not called to create unity, but to preserve that which has been created by the Holy Spirit. Second, the apostle carefully delineates that the wonderful differences we share and celebrate, when properly functioning, contribute to the effective and efficient working of the body (the church). It is out of this working together

that we attain an even greater and deeper unity in maturity.

There are three essential concepts to preserving the unity of the Spirit. First, is understanding its importance to mission; without it our mission cannot be accomplished. Second is practicing the qualities necessary for its preservation; lowliness, gentleness, longsuffering, and bearing with one another in love. Finally, exerting the effort to preserve it; each of us personally devoted to its safeguarding.

**Gordon Jones**, ministerial director

## Strings of Praise at Baton Rouge Berean Church

**BATON ROUGE, LA.** » Psalms 150:4 directs us to include “...with the strings...” in our praises to our God. Recently, our music ministry was obedient in this regard via its ministry guest, gospel jazz artist, Roland Gresham.

“After 27 years of God’s miraculous lead-

ing,” Gresham’s passion for stringed music finally found its way to the Baton Rouge Berean church, where he shared with the audience his love for God through his guitar. He began by humbly revealing that, except for his deceased father having taught him a “few basic chords,” he is self-taught and does not read music.

The concert began with “El Shaddai” and his recounting a performance engagement that turned out differently than he expected. “From this experience I learned that when things look

bad, God is setting you up for a blessing. My blessing was an enormous check from a total stranger.” What followed were songs from two of his CDs, “Roland Gresham, Melodies from Heaven” and “The Best of Roland Gresham,” with each interspersed by a testimony that either prompted the song or provided inspiration in and of itself. “Great Is Your Mercy toward Me” was the result of his car breaking down on a deserted stretch of highway and how God sent someone to his rescue.

“Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart” was preceded by the story of his lending assistance to a stranded motorist who drove off without even uttering a mere “thanks” in the end. And as the evening wore on, so did the testimonies followed by their respective tunes. A most fitting “How Great Is Our God” brought the grand evening to a close. As we followed Gresham to the foyer where we could purchase some of his wonderful CDs, we couldn’t help but reflect on the psalmist David and his admonition on utilizing this genre to praise our Lord. We applaud Roland for allowing our Lord to use him in this manner.

**Evelyn M. Edwards**



▲ Gospel guitarist Roland Gesham doing what he does best.

► Roland Gresham (left) with the Berean church’s pastor, Robert L. Davis (right).





# Biggest Loser Weight Loss Challenge at Casalita Drive Church

**GARLAND, TEXAS** » On October 18, 2014, the health ministries department of the Casalita Drive church, in conjunction with Tour de Youth 2015, launched a “Biggest Loser” Weight Loss and Lifestyle Change Challenge. The program is designed to bring awareness to obesity in America. Under the leadership of Maxine Theriot, co-chair of the health ministries department at the church, the challenge is modeled after the hit TV show, *The Biggest Loser*. Twenty-eight individuals from across the Dallas area have signed up to participate in this fun and spirit-filled program.

The teams are divided into groups of three, consisting of church members, family, friends, and co-workers. Weigh-ins are held at the church or a designated facility where fitness challenges can occur. On

opening night the group came together for the first official weigh-in. All 28 contenders combined had an initial weight of 6,669 pounds and an average weight of 238. By the end of week two, the combined weight had dropped to 6,603 pounds with a total weight loss of 66 pounds! To God be the glory, great things He has done!

*The Biggest Loser* challenge ran for 90 days. Individual gifts and prizes have been awarded along the way, but the team who loses the greatest percentage of total body weight will win a \$1,000 grand prize.

Obesity is a growing problem in America. That’s why the health ministries department at Casalita has teamed up with the 2015 Tour de Youth Ride for Life Campaign. This is a 325-mile road race that will begin at Southwest Region headquarters

in Dallas and finish in San Antonio, Texas, to coincide with the opening of our 60th General Conference Session. As an added bonus to Biggest Loser candidates, the Tour de Youth Campaign will donate an iPad mini to the contestant who has lost the greatest percentage of body weight by the next weigh-in!

We invite you to keep all contenders in your prayers as God continues to break the chains that bind, and our lives are used as a living testimony for Him.

**Maurice Theriot**

Some of the 28 participants in the weight loss challenge hosted by the Casalita Drive church.



# The Vine Outreach Serves Homeless Children in Baton Rouge

**BATON ROUGE, LA.** » For some time, Ericka Jones had felt compelled to do more for ministry—to do her part to help those in need. Even though numerous food programs existed in her area, she was persuaded that they could do more—especially when she observed the large number of children accompanying their adult parents to local feeding programs. With Yolanda Adams' song, "What About the Children?" on her mind, the Holy Spirit impressed Jones that she had a role to play. What resulted is a food program that caters to homeless children who reside with their parents under an interstate bridge that crosses a portion of Baton Rouge.

"Now that I knew what I wanted to contribute to God's ministry, I needed a

name for it." Jones recalled how, in route to a grocery store, she noticed a vine on the parking lot. Upon exiting the store, there on the ground was that same vine. Confirmation that the Holy Spirit was indeed leading, she had the name for her homeless children's feeding program, "The Vine Outreach." Realizing that there is strength in numbers, she didn't hesitate to involve Berean's Martin Luther King Academy, where her mother, Ivy Jones, is assistant principal. The first Sunday monthly feeding sees the Jones family, along with teachers Delores Newman, Yvonne Pondexter, and Marian Wilson reporting to the bridge with sandwiches made by Ericka and soup made by her mom. Beginning December 1, the ministry embarked on a toy drive

for the homeless children. The academy's patrons were elated to give gifts. On December 21, just in time for Christmas, the group distributed its gifts. The children, as well as their parents, were delighted. "The indescribable spirit of warmth that permeated the air left us enjoying the giving as much as the children enjoyed the receiving," exclaimed Ericka. We thank our Heavenly Father for Ericka's vision and for those who faithfully support it.

The Vine Outreach Group team poses with toys collected for homeless children. From left: Delores Newman, Ivy Jones, Ericka Jones, Marian Wilson, and Yvonne Pondexter.





# One Church, Undivided and Indivisible



The apostle Paul initiates his thoughts in Ephesians 4 with the following words: “I beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called. With all humility and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love. Endeavoring to keep the *unity* of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Because there is one body and one Spirit” (Ephesians 4:1-4, emphasis supplied). It is evident that there are very few things more important to Christ, in reference to His church, than unity.

If the God of the universe gave Himself to save a people from their sins, it would certainly seem that He, the Lord, would have a vested interest and be profoundly dedicated to fostering unity and cohesiveness among those whom He has gone to great lengths to save! I love and cherish these words of God’s servant, Ellen White, “I am instructed to say to Seventh-day Adventists the world over, God has called us as a people to be a peculiar treasure unto Himself. He has appointed that His Church on earth shall stand perfectly *united* in the Spirit and counsel of the Lord of hosts to the end of time” (*Selected Messages*, v. 2, p. 397, emphasis supplied).

So we ask ourselves, what are those vital points of unity upon which we are grounded and secured as a people? First,

we are united in *Christ*. The church has one foundation. There is only one cornerstone. There truly is only one name given to humanity in which we find salvation. “that He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, *in him*” (Ephesians 1:10, emphasis supplied). Crystal clear, despite all our diversity, we become one in *Christ*.

Secondly, we are united in *doctrine*. The clear and concise teachings of the Bible bring us together upon one platform. We are naturally scattered by race, culture, economic realities, educational opportunities or the lack thereof, yet we can be united by truth.

“We are established (grounded/united) in the present truth” (2 Peter 1:12, interpretation supplied).

Third, we are united as members of God’s remnant *church*. Notice carefully the words of the apostle Paul, “I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

As we come into the church, we come from many backgrounds and persuasions, but once we step under the banner of Christ and are united into His body, we are compelled to leave relational, altering differences aside. Once in the family of God, we should no longer be black or white, rich or poor, educated or not, we are one in Christ!

Finally, we are united in the *blessed hope!* “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

As I have thought about the privilege we have to anxiously await His return, there is a stark reality that surfaces within the waiting. If we are serious about living in heaven, we must know that, by all indications, there will be no neighborhoods there. No “other side” of town. No conservatives or liberals. No segregation. No “us and them” scenarios. No “VIPS,” no privileged or deserving. Just sinners, saved by grace!

There is an objective to God’s plans and provisions for mankind. Ephesians 4:13 underscores that objective: “Till we all come to the *unity* of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (emphasis supplied).

Notice the explicitness of the wording, “till we all (plural = church)...come to the *unity*...to a perfect man (singular = Christ).” It’s all about us being crafted into One = Christ. His will, His objectives, His honor, His glory.

“As we near the final crisis, instead of feeling that there is less need of order and harmony of action, we should be more systematic than ever before” (*Selected Messages*, v. 3, p. 26).

**Carlos J. Craig**, president

## Revival Series, Jesus Is the Answer, at Arlington Southern Worship Center

**ARLINGTON** » Dana Edmond, president of South Central Conference, was set to be the speaker, and the date was set for July 30 to August 2. As cars drove by the church each day for a couple of weeks before, drivers were alerted of the coming revival with a large banner displayed on the fence outside of the church. The summer revival series, Jesus Is the Answer, was approaching.

When the date finally arrived, anticipation filled the air. Everyone was set to hear Edmond’s spiritual feast. The first night, Wednesday, July 30, he gave an amazing and amusing demonstration of the topic,

“When You See Nothing.” The second night, Thursday, July 31, the topic was, “Get Out and Stay Out!” It was a witty and eye-opening directive on how to keep Satan out of your life. When the sermon was over on Wednesday and Thursday nights, attendees were welcomed with light refreshments and the chance to mingle.

On Friday night, Edmond expounded on the topic, “The God of the Graveyard Shift.” We learned that Jesus does some of His best work at midnight. “Your midnight is your test. You’ll either give up or look up.” He also informed us that we

should not give up on God, because He will never give up on us. God wants to give us a new heart.

Each night the attendance grew, as the word was passed along about how interesting the speaker was. By August 1, there was nearly a full house.

The final day of the revival was Sabbath morning, August 2. He wrapped it up with: “He’ll Do Anything For You.”

Three people responded to the call to follow Jesus all the way through baptism.

**Spencer Anderson**

# Family Enrichment Seminar Results In Ten Baptisms At Gulfhaven

**HOUSTON/GULFHAVEN** » On October 25, 2014, Alanzo H. Smith, a licensed marriage and family therapist, mental health counselor, and psychotherapist, presented a two-week family enrichment seminar to an enthusiastic audience of members, visitors, and guests, resulting in 10 precious souls being baptized on the last Sabbath of the series, which ended November 8.

The focus of Smith's meetings was to learn simple strategies and principles designed to take relationships to the next level. He covered pertinent and interesting subjects that encompassed this broad topic. His winsome and humorous personality was a plus for his pinpointed, practical, and passionate preaching and teaching.

As the baptismal group left the floor to prepare for their baptism, Smith made a final altar call. He asked for all those in the congregation who had never been baptized to raise their hands. Then he asked for all those who had been baptized, but had drifted away and would like to come back, to raise their hands. He then asked those who had raised their hands to come forward. A large number of people came down the aisle to the front of the sanctuary to meet with Smith

and Noel Lazarus, Gulfhaven's pastor. By the grace of God, we will be looking forward to another large baptism in the very near future.

The newly-baptized members, Michael Alexander, Catherine Fuentes, Tristan Fuentes, Yvette Fuentes, Kathy Kibort, Robert Mensah, Frank Pina, Gary Sigler, David Willock, and Sonia Zamora, received a "Welcome to Gulfhaven" heritage book and a beautiful Bible, along with their baptismal certificates and many hugs and congratulations from family, friends, and church members. We are thankful to God for pouring out His Spirit and leading these dear people to make the choice to belong to God's family.

Two weeks prior to the start of the meetings, several prayer groups met at the church or at home and prayed and fasted for God's Spirit to reach out to those whose hearts were open to the message. There was always one of these prayer groups who met at the church every night before the meeting began to continue praying for the outpouring of God's Spirit, which helped to bring in this rich harvest of new believers.

The church building had gone through an enormous renovation to prepare for this timely and unforgettable seminar. In the church foyer, a beautiful welcome center has been built to replace the old literature room. The update has provided space for a new evangelism room to store and organize all the literature, books, magazines, Bible study guides, etc. Two large electronic bulletin boards and other regular boards were installed on two walls in the foyer. Our heartfelt thanks goes to Hector Bertheir, who faithfully worked many hours to complete these projects in the foyer before the series began. There were many other faithful workers who used their skills and sacrificed their time to help in so many ways to accomplish this task. David Wilburn, together with other helpers, placed many beautiful live plants and flowers in and around the platform at the front of the sanctuary. He also replaced all the silk plants in the church's large planter in the foyer with gorgeous live plants in pots and hanging baskets. This very attractive feature provided a warm and inviting atmosphere as people came night after night to the family life seminars.

As members, visitors, and guests arrived each night, they were directed by the greeters to the beautiful new welcome center where they received a warm welcome and their attendance cards were posted. A welcome bag filled with information about the church was given to all visitors who came for the first time. A total of 186 new visitors and 136 regular non-member attendees, came to the meetings, excluding the many guests that came from some of the other churches in the area.

Jean Hagen



Front row from left: Michael Alexander, David Willock, Frank Pina, Sonia Zamora, Tristan Fuentes, Yvette Fuentes, Catherine Fuentes, and Kathy Kibort. Robert Mensah and Gary Sigler are behind Catherine and Kathy.



# From Perceived Tragedy to Baptism

**MANSFIELD** » In 2012, Adama started working in Ike and Gloria's home to take care of their sick child. Adama had been raised a Muslim. As she worked, the 3ABN network was always on and she watched most of the programs presented by Mark Finley, Doug Batchelor, Dwight Nelson, David Asscherick, and many other presenters on 3ABN. As she watched she started asking questions about the truths that were presented, and Ike and Gloria would

discuss these truths found in the Bible with her.

"We had Bible studies with her and she became even more interested in the doctrines that were being preached," said Ike. "When our son passed away, we continued to pray for Adama, that God would continue to bring to remembrance the things that she had already been exposed to before our son's death and her services were no longer required at our home."

At this time, she became pregnant, and

after giving birth to her child, she continued to show interest and hunger for the truth. Ike and Gloria took her to a three-week evangelistic meeting held at the Mansfield church with pastor Steve Wohlberg. After the evangelistic series, she started having Bible studies with elders Zephrin and Walton. Walton gave her a series of Amazing Facts study guides which she quickly finished.

On October 25, 2014, Adama was baptized into the McKinney church.

We thank God for how the church family has welcomed this new member and pray that God will continue to feed and nourish Adama with the bread of life.



Derek Lazarus, pastor, baptizes Adama at the McKinney church.

# Mission Hope Becomes a Church

**MISSION** » On November 8, 2014, the air was crackling with enthusiasm and holy joy. Scarcely three years after forming the Mission Hope Company as a witness to the southernmost area of Texas, this vibrant and loving company was dedicated as Mission Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church with 71 members on the books. Encile Brown, who is the lay leader, smiled with gratitude seeing their audacious dream becoming a reality.

The heavens smiled too, the joyous day became a warm and sunny jewel in a week of unusual dreary weather. Boyan Levterov, church planting coordinator, and Elton DeMoraes, Texas Conference ministerial director, had the honor of moving the company to church status under the grateful eyes of a large group of members, friends, and visitors.

This whole endeavor had

started as a small group in the homes of Encile and Marlene Brown and Dona Cooper, Nelson Dockery, and others. A company was officially started in December 2011 and a series of evangelistic meetings in the Border Theater by evangelist Jim Reinking. Afterward, several series of evangelistic meetings in the church itself added a few precious souls each time.

In his opening remarks, DeMoraes said that ninety percent of all attempts to be-

gin a new company peter out. This one, he added, succeeded gloriously. The sermon itself also kept us on our toes, especially as we had to check the book of Acts repeatedly.

The weekly potluck followed, which is the secret ingredient to allow fellowship, communication, love, and dedication to flourish. Your prayers for this young congregation will be appreciated, especially now that the serious business of erecting our own church building on a donated piece of land nearby will once more tax resources to the limit. But our God is able to do more than we can ever ask or think.

Ria de Kock



The Mission Hope company in Mission, Texas, recently became a church.



## Unity or Uniformity?

TEXICO CONFERENCE

In His final review session with the disciples recorded in John chapters 13-17, Jesus is particularly concerned that we know that love is the very foundation of who He is and the relationship that He longs to have with each of us. He extends the importance of this message to the relationship that He wants His disciples to have down through the ages. In fact, He says, "This is My command: love each other."

In the conclusion of this message to the disciples just before going to the cross, Jesus prays for Himself, for His disciples and for all believers—and that prayer includes even us today. There is something very special about someone praying for you, but when that someone is Jesus, then it is nothing short of incredible. The request He made of His Father in that prayer for us is that "they (we) may be one" just as He and His Father are one.

Yes, Jesus' prayer was that we would be united in love and that we would live in the unity of our faith in Him. This kind of unity is not only God's desire for us but it is something that can *only* be a reality through the working of His Spirit *in* us.

And while love is a powerful force to bring people together, He knew there would also be a strong natural tendency for us to be distracted from His love and allow the differences that exist within us to become our focus.

Sometimes when we try to develop our own ways to come together as one, we often get this desired unity confused with uniformity. These are two very different concepts indeed. Uniformity suggests that some thing is an exact replica of something else, while unity is bringing all our parts—differences and similarities—and combining them into one purpose through the Spirit of love.

We know that because of our varying cultures, experiences, personalities, and perspectives, we will likely see and appreciate a variety of opinions as the best way to accomplish a task. However, it is through our *shared mission* that we are called to move forward within the context of our *diverse perspectives*. We often refer to this as "Unity in Diversity." This is the motto of the Texico Conference. We celebrate the diversity that exists among the family of faith, yet remain united as "Partners in

Mission."

Uniformity would prescribe that we always do and see everything exactly the same, but since each of us is a unique creation, that is not our reality. The unity that we experience is the result of the petition of Jesus that we may be one as They are one. In this, we can remain ever focused on His mission and work together in the context of our diversity.

The words of an old hymn seem appropriate:

"Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love;  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above."

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience...And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." (Colossians 3:12,14)

May we each choose to allow Jesus' prayer request be fulfilled in us today!

Phil Robertson

## Deming Couple Celebrates 50 years of Marriage

**DEMING, N. MEX. »** Deming English church members Bill and Wanda Beach recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. They were blessed that this special day was on Sabbath, August 30, 2014, and they could share this event with the congregation of the First Seventh-day Adventist Church of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Some of these folk attended their wedding in the same sanctuary in 1964. Daniel Ortega, pastor, offered a prayer, rededicating their lives to the Lord's service. They have three sons and daughters-in-law who have blessed them with seven grandchildren and one great-grandson.



Bill and Wanda Beach celebrate 50 years of marriage.



# It All Begins With Prayer!

**GALLUP, N. MEX. »** It was a Thursday afternoon in July 2014 at 7:24 p.m., when I received the most exciting text message of the year! It was Texico Conference president Lee-Roy Chacon, and he was relaying the sweetest news a pastor could hear: “The Southwestern Union Conference is willing to help financially with a Native American evangelistic campaign. Are you interested in having a meeting this year?”

Was I ever! Just the day prior, Kenneth Lane, elder, and I had taken the time to evaluate the situation at the Gallup All Nations Seventh-day Adventist Church. We had lost three of our most solid couples within the first six months of the year and one last couple was also making plans to leave. Some moved due to retirement, others for career changes, and the last couple would soon leave to work full-time in an Adventist mission field in Papua New Guinea. Within months our already small congregation was significantly reduced.

That afternoon, Ken and I encouraged each other, and discussed plans for doing a small evangelistic campaign in October. We decided to leave everything in the Lord’s hands and finally we knelt down and prayed. The very next day I received the wonderful text message: “The Southwestern Union Conference is willing to help.”

Our plans to hold a small evangelistic effort quickly turned into a great event, with a major mail-out that reached the entire population of Gallup and all the surrounding areas as far away as 60 miles around the town and into the Navajo reservation. The Southwestern Union provided the services of experienced evangelist Scott Hakes, and with a combined fund from the union and the Texico Conference, we were ready to have a full-scale evangelistic campaign.

Our main goal was outreach to the Native American population surrounding the Gallup All Nations Church. The Gallup

church is strategically located between the largest Native American reservation in the United States and the city of Gallup. The area where the church is located is the only hub for services and commerce for at least 100 miles around the reservation. The city itself, with a population of 21,000, is home to almost 8,000 Native Americans. These statistics are also reflected in our church membership, where more than 50 percent of our members are Navajo.

Rather than just giving a report concerning our meetings, I want to also reflect on the power of prayer. The Lord moved in

everything begins with prayer. The Bible clearly presents this often-neglected principle. Jesus shares the secret of victory when He tells us to “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation” (Matthew 26:41). Paul bids us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The apostle also takes the concept of prayer in Ephesians 6 and expands its significance in the context of the Great Controversy. He presents to us the method through which God turns a simple human into a true warrior, a prayer warrior.

The invitation is for us to walk in a prayerful attitude of constant communion before the Lord. Our lives ought to be a constant prayer in every way.

It all begins with prayer! As I write this, I have just recently had one of the most wonderful days of my life. At the end of October, 2014, we baptized 20 people. Our meetings in Gallup began and ended as an answer to prayer, and not just mine and Ken’s prayer, but everyone’s prayers that have been lifted up concerning the work in Gallup. The Spirit of the Lord moved so powerfully it would have made a believer out of any skeptic who witnessed what took place.

Every single thing I asked the Lord, He gave it and more. Of the 20 who were baptized most of them are Native American Navajos. There are a few more who have expressed interest. We literally fought against the devil for this victory; we fought on our knees and the Lord gave us a tremendous triumph. We live in a place that is surrounded by souls who do not believe in Christ and whose religion is centered in spiritualism. Here in Gallup, Ephesians 6:11 takes on a whole new meaning, but we know that all begins with prayer.

**Jerry Pinzon**



**Top:** Individuals come forward to accept the Sabbath truth.

► Twenty new members were added to the Gallup All Nations church after meetings conducted by Scott Hakes.

such a powerful way in Gallup that all we can do is worship His Holy name and recognize His Holy Spirit for moving ahead of our prayers. Ever since the Lord called me into ministry, I have faced several challenges that have led me to bow the knee continually.

Very quickly after leaving a military career to go into ministry, I realized that

everything begins with prayer. The Bible clearly presents this often-neglected principle. Jesus shares the secret of victory when He tells us to “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation” (Matthew 26:41). Paul bids us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The apostle also takes the concept of prayer in Ephesians 6 and expands its significance in the context of the Great Controversy. He presents to us the method through which God turns a simple human into a true warrior, a prayer warrior.

# Rio Rancho Youth Send Cookies Around the World

**RIO RANCHO, N. MEX. »** The youth from the Rio Rancho church are enjoying participating in a “cookie ministry.” They have been sending homemade cookies, cards, and small items with love to members who are serving in the military, and also to other young people from the church who’ve gone away to school. To date, the cookies have been sent to Japan, Afghanistan, England, Texas, Missouri, California, and

Michigan. The youth have been very excited to reach out to our missing members here and around the world! They’ve also prepared bags of cookies for our local fire department.

Roxanne Smyth



▲ Olivia Shainin, a student at Oxford University in England, was excited to receive a care package from home that included cookies and a picture from the “Cookie Ministry.” She thanks her mom and loving church family back home for thinking of her.

◀ The Rio Rancho youth enjoy making and shipping cookies to church members in many parts of the world.

# A Wonderful Experience at Women’s Convention

**AMARILLO, TEX. »** Sitting in a chair on Thursday night at the NAD Women’s Convention in Orlando, Florida, I listened intently as the God in Shoes outreach event for Friday was explained. My traveling companion, Maxine McCullin, and I had no idea what this event would entail, but we volunteered for the “Clean the World” project.

There were 14 God in Shoes project sites in Orlando that benefitted from the nearly 800 volunteers. The 14 project sites were: Pace Center for Girls, an alternative school for girls; Orlando Rescue Mission; Coalition for the Homeless; Women’s Residential Center; Florida Hospital’s cancer floor, where 550 caps for women were delivered; Covenant House; Clean the World (the

largest global recycler of hotel amenities); Aspire Rehab Center for recovering drug dependency individuals; Harbor House, a “safe house” for domestic violence victims; and five Seventh-day Adventist churches. The five churches visited were Mt. Sinai, North Orlando, Patmos, Mt. Olive, and Forest Lake.

The services that the volunteers performed ranged from free spa days, which could include facials, manicures, and neck and shoulder massages, to distributing clothing, landscaping, sorting through different donations, and sorting hotel amenities to be recycled. Not only were the recipients blessed from the services they received, but the volunteers were blessed by the many smiles of the recipients.

The highpoint of the Sabbath worship service was the “I Arose” message delivered by Dan Jackson, president of the North American Division. Another Sabbath treat was “The God Who Sees His Daughters” message delivered by Douglas Tilstra, director of outdoor leadership and education programs at Southern Adventist University.

All too soon it was time to return home. We have been empowered, inspired, and energized to return to our home church communities to continue spreading the gospel in this generation.

Anna Swingle



## Baptism is a Witness

*Excerpts from the sermon Ingo Sorke, professor of religion at Southwestern Adventist University, preached after he baptized student Tabatha Azua at a vespers service last fall. After the baptism and sermon, a dozen more students came forward, expressing interest in baptism. The story was featured on the cover of the January 8 issue of the Adventist Review. The entire sermon transcript can be found at [www.adventistreview.org/tabatha-2.0](http://www.adventistreview.org/tabatha-2.0).*

Baptisms are special, and we therefore make them special. We call the special day a baptismal Sabbath. Everything is centered around Jesus and the baptismal candidates. So I will speak on Tabitha. That's right, Tabitha, with an "I." But it's for you, Tabatha. Tabatha never knew about Adventists until she "Googled" and came up with Southwestern.

Here's the text, Acts 9:36-42: "Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did. And it happened at that time that she fell sick and died...But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, 'Tabitha, arise.' And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her

prayers of the faithful! We better pray non-stop because the moment we stop praying, we stop living. So we pray until we can't breathe any more.

"When we permit our communion with God to be broken, our defense is departed from us. Not all your good purposes and good intentions will enable you to withstand evil. You must be men and women of prayer. Your petitions must not be faint, occasional, and fitful, but earnest, persevering, and constant. It is not always necessary to bow upon your knees in order to pray. Cultivate the habit of talking with the Savior when you are alone, when you are walking, and when you are busy with your daily labor. Let the heart be continually uplifted in silent petition for help, for light,

sent her alive."

- The hope of the resurrection changes everything. Everything.
- It changed Jesus' life.
- The resurrection gave birth to the church.
- The resurrection convinced Paul—an ardent persecutor of the church—to turn his life around.
- The resurrection fueled the hopes of Abraham, Jacob, Job, Moses, and all the saints.

The resurrection makes a passionate appeal to the life of every believer: "Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" (1 Corinthians 15:34, KJV).

"It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord."

Check out our Youtube Channel—SouthwesternAU—for more stories of students learning of Christ and choosing baptism during their time at Southwestern.



Jorge Velez



Jorge Velez

▲ Southwestern worshipping together following Tabatha's baptism.

◀ Tabatha Azua's baptism. "On the first day of class she announced to the professor that she knew nothing about Jesus but didn't want to fail his class. He smiled and said, 'This is a great place to learn.' 'I fell in love with Jesus and really enjoyed that class,' Tabatha said. 'I also decided to stay at Southwestern' (Catch the full story on the cover of the January 8 *Adventist Review*).

alive. It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord" (NASB).

Now notice that Peter knelt down and prayed. He could have easily said, "Well, we already tried prayer. It's no use. Prayer doesn't work."

But check this out: He prayed after people thought the prayers were over. He started praying when others stopped. At some point death is no match for the

for strength, for knowledge. Let every breath be a prayer" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 510).

Acts 9:40, 41: "And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he pre-

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# Health Impact Day 2015

April 18, 2015 has been designated Health Impact Day throughout the Adventist Church worldwide, when millions of copies of the 2015 missionary book, *Health & Wellness: Secrets That Will Change Your Life*, will be distributed. In the following article by Peter Landless, M.D., director of the Health Ministries Department at the General Conference, you'll find numerous ideas for sharing the gift of health and wellness in your community in conjunction with Health Impact Day or throughout the year. This article originally appeared in a newsletter published October 28, 2014 by the General Conference Publishing Department. For more ideas or information on additional resources, contact the Southwestern Union Health Ministries Department at 817.295.0476. To watch a video about the 2015 health missionary book and to find a link where you can purchase copies, go to [southwesternadventist.org/health](http://southwesternadventist.org/health).

Health is precious. It is important to everyone and is only complete when, despite our brokenness, we are physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially whole.

During Health Impact Day, every church is invited to take part by conducting health programs and distributing the book *Health & Wellness: Secrets That Will Change Your Life*. What do we expect health leaders to do on that day?

Health Impact Day can be a great opportunity to show our communities we care about their well-being and at the same time share the gracious gift of good health and God's unconditional love for all. How can we do this?

- Share the promotional video

with each church to get members involved in the project.

- Share also our Christ-centered messages of health, hope, and healing. Celebrate the natural remedies God has given, and share that we can enjoy wholeness even in our brokenness.

- Invite friends and neighbors to a healthy, tasty, vegetarian dinner.

- Show the "Adventists 2" DVD at a public function to share the global health outreach of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

- Arrange a special nature walk to emphasize the benefits of exercise and the enjoyment of God's amazing creation.

## Every church is invited to take part by conducting health programs and distributing the book *Health & Wellness: Secrets That Will Change Your Life*.

- Screen blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels in a community center or at the church.

- Prepare a youth-oriented evening about health that includes presen-

tations about illegal drugs, tobacco, and alcohol.

- Host a Breathe-Free 2 initiative to help people quit smoking.

- Start a health/exercise club for the community with weekly Sunday morning walks.

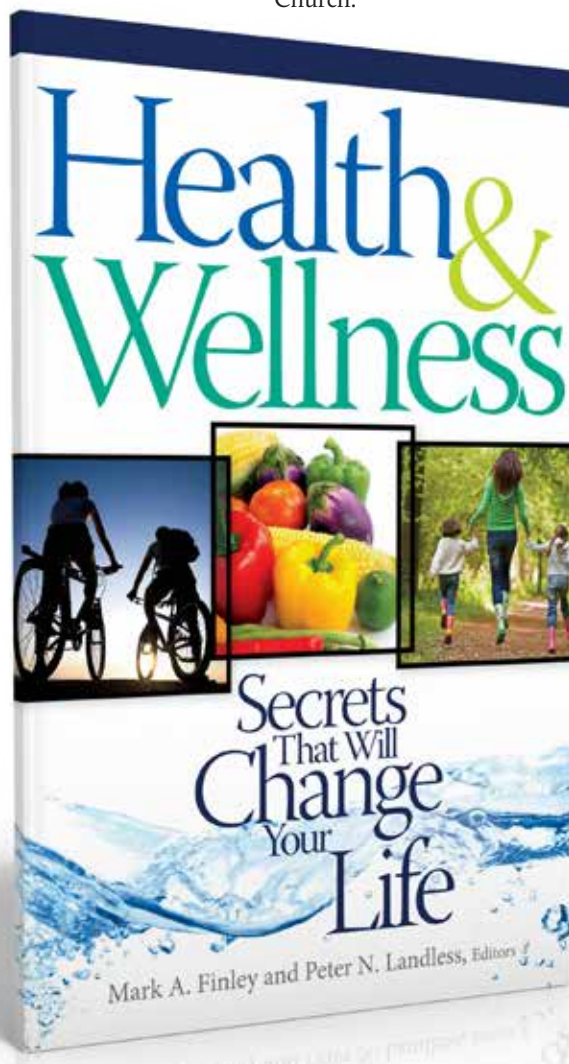
- Arrange opportunities to take youth groups to prepare meals for homeless groups and distribute them with the assistance of adult church members and mentors.

- Give out *Health & Wellness* books at each event.

- Start a recovery program/group in the same week as the Health Impact Day, using Journey to Wholeness materials. These should continue into the future as well.

- Host a health emphasis event at least once a month throughout the year. An excellent resource for this is *Celebrations*, available at [Healthministries.com](http://Healthministries.com) (along with sermons, lessons, and PowerPoint presentations; all free of charge). There is a children's version of *Celebrations*, as well.

- Subscribe to the daily health hint from [PositiveChoices.com](http://PositiveChoices.com).





*Your Best*

# PATHWAY *to* HEALTH

*San Antonio*

Join *Your Best Pathway to Health*  
in San Antonio, Texas, April 8-11, 2015.

3-day Adventist Medical & Dental Mission Trip and Convention

**1,500 Volunteers Needed**

Dentists, Dental Hygienists & Assistants, Ophthalmologists,  
Other Physicians, Other Medical and Non-medical Volunteers

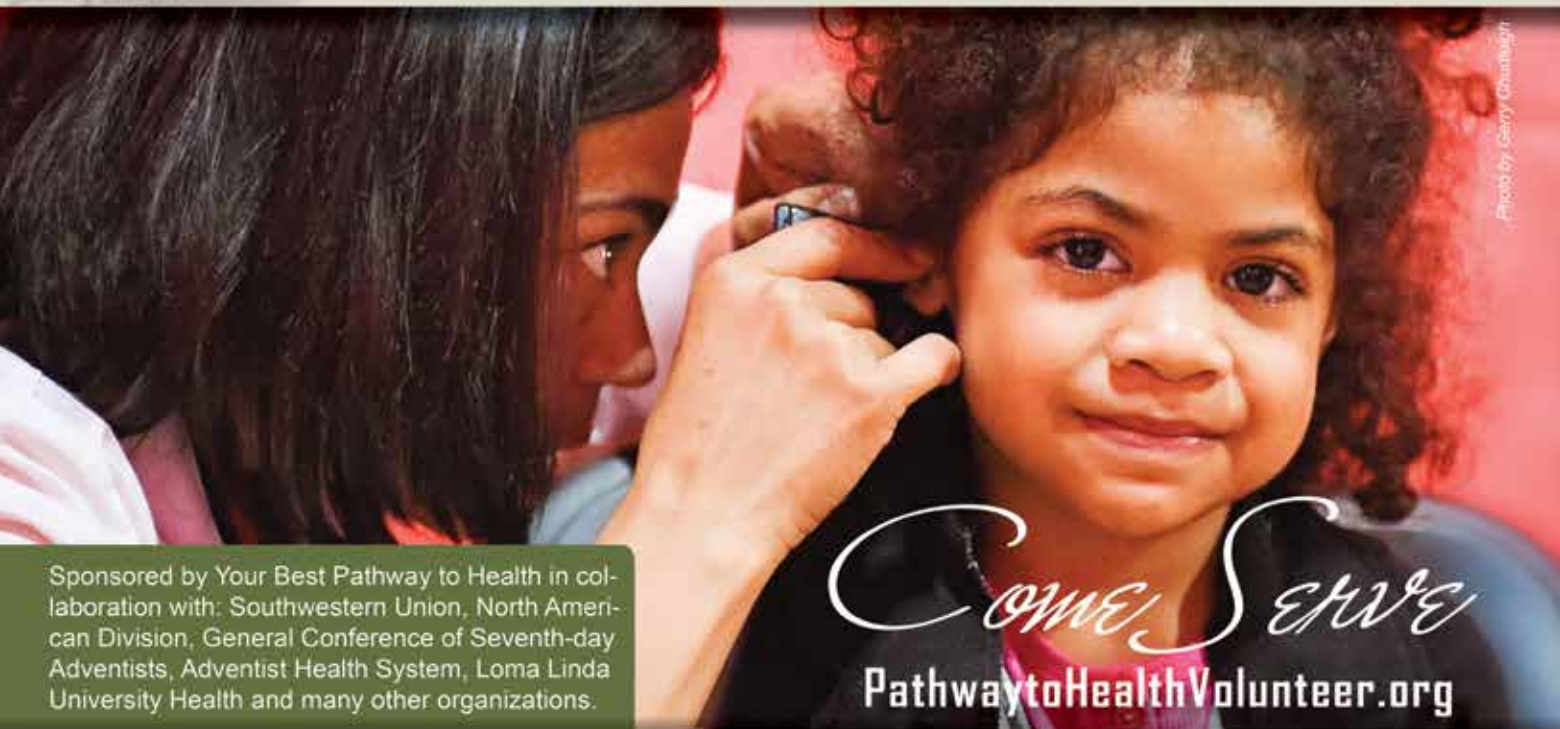


Photo by Gerry Chastang

Sponsored by Your Best Pathway to Health in collaboration with: Southwestern Union, North American Division, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Adventist Health System, Loma Linda University Health and many other organizations.

*COME SERVE*  
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Special convention continues through Sabbath, April 11  
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### EMPLOYMENT

**Southwestern Adventist University** Education and Psychology Department seeks full-time qualified psychology professor beginning July 1, 2015. Doctorate degree is required. Please

submit CV and cover letter to Dr. Marcel Sargeant at [sargeant@swau.edu](mailto:sargeant@swau.edu). Position is open until filled.

**The Kinesiology Department at Southwestern Adventist University** seeks full-time physical education professor to begin July 1, 2015. Master's degree required; doctoral degree preferred. Submit curriculum vitae and cover letter to Human Resources office. Must have some teaching experience. Contact Mr. Vesa Naukkarinen at 817.202.6684 or [vnaukkar@swau.edu](mailto:vnaukkar@swau.edu).

**Adventist Health System** is seeking a Summer Associate to work in their Corporate Legal department for eight weeks in 2015. Candidate must be in top 25% of class. Interest/experience in health-care industry preferred, but not required. Duties include

legal research and other projects, totaling 40 hours per week. Pay is \$20-\$25 per hour; reasonable relocation expenses will be reimbursed. Please send transcript and resume to [Manuela.Asaftei@ahss.org](mailto:Manuela.Asaftei@ahss.org).

**Serve God as a web developer from home!** K3 Integrations creates interactive Web sites for Adventist ministries. We are seeking programmers who want to make a difference in the world. We focus on Ruby on Rails but we are willing to train the right candidate. More info: <http://bit.ly/K3-i>.

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desired. Must have teaching experience. Send cover letter and CV to Michael Agee at [magee@swau.edu](mailto:magee@swau.edu).

**Southwestern Adventist University** seeks a full-time nurse educator to serve as Nursing Department Chair beginning Fall 2015. Doctoral degree and three years of university/college teaching experience required. Must have an unencumbered Texas nursing license. Send cover letter and current CV to Dr. Amy Rosenthal at [arosen@swau.edu](mailto:arosen@swau.edu).

**Employment Opportunities: Wewoka Woods Adventist Center** is looking for a permanent, part-time Food Service Director and a permanent full-time Camp Ranger. Direct all inquiries and resumes to the Oklahoma Conference Youth Department, P. O. Box 32098, Oklahoma City, OK 73123,

or call Pastor Apple Park at 918.605.0348 for more information.

**Andrews University** seeks a faculty member to teach full time in Department of Communication. Qualified person should have a PhD/doctorate in Communication, Journalism, Public Relations, or related subfield with significant teaching experience. For more information and to apply, visit [https://www.andrews.edu/admres/jobs/show/faculty#job\\_2](https://www.andrews.edu/admres/jobs/show/faculty#job_2).

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Larry Moore

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Sabbath 11:00 a.m. speaker: Larry Moore, Southwestern Union president  
Special Guest: Duane McKey, Southwestern Union vice-president

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**The Wildwood Lifestyle Center** can help you naturally treat and reverse diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, obesity, arthritis, osteoporosis, fibromyalgia, lupus, multiple sclerosis, chronic

fatigue, cancer, substance abuse, stress, anxiety, depression, and many more. Invest in your health and call 1.800.634.9355 for more information, or visit [www.wildwoodhealth.org/lifestyle](http://www.wildwoodhealth.org/lifestyle).

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**Spring 2015 Medical Missionary Convention March 20-22, 2015:** This year's theme: FINDING BALANCE—Commercialism, Professionalism, Spiritualism, Legalism, Fanaticism, and Separatism. Speakers: Dr. Norman McNulty, Harold Lance, Wilbur Atwood, Lew Keith, and more. Meetings, limited accommodations, and meals are free. For more information or to register online: [www.butlercreekhealth.org](http://www.butlercreekhealth.org), or call Lew Keith at 931.724.2443.

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**Announcements**

**La Sierra Academy Alumni Reunion is April 24-25, 2015.**

Friday evening reception at 7 p.m.; Sabbath worship at 10:00 a.m.; registration at 9:30 a.m. on campus. Class reunions TBA. Honor Classes '55, '65, '75, '85, '90,

'95, '05. For more information, visit [www.lsak12.com](http://www.lsak12.com), e-mail: [JNelson@lsak12.com](mailto:JNelson@lsak12.com), or call 951.351.1445, ext. 244.

**Laurelbrook School (Dayton, Tennessee) Homecoming April 2-5, 2015.**

Honor Classes are 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010 and new grads 2015. A fun-filled weekend of events is being planned. Theme for weekend is "The Time is Now." For more information, contact the school, alumni officers, or email Phillip Walton at [alumni@laurelbrook.org](mailto:alumni@laurelbrook.org).

**Southwestern Adventist University's Alumni Homecoming Weekend is April 9-12.**

For the latest updates and information, visit [www.swau.edu](http://www.swau.edu) or contact Bev Mendenhall, Alumni Director, at 817.202.6236 or [bevm@swau.edu](mailto:bevm@swau.edu).

**Obituaries**

**BOHANNON, Vivian Imogene,**

born October 21, 1918, and died January 4, 2015 in Tulsa, Okla. She was a member of the First Seventhday Adventist Church in Tulsa for 68 years, where she was one of the church pianists. She attended Miami Junior College and Northeastern State University. She taught school for several years and also was an accompanist for the physical education program in Tulsa public schools. She volunteered at Hillcrest Hospital for many years. Vivian's greatest joy was her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Vivian was married for 64 years to the love of her life, Clinton Joel Bohannon, who preceded her in death in 2005. Vivian was the most wonderful, kind, gentle, and loving mother and "mumsie" that anyone could ask for. She will be forever remembered for her close walk with God, her deep faith, and her sincere prayers for her family and friends. Survivors: daughters, Judy Beth Bond of Longwood, Fla., and Joyce Jean Carlile and husband, Dennis, of Broken Arrow, Okla.; son, Donald Joel Bohannon and wife, Carolyn, of Orlando, Fla.; seven grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; sister-in-law, Erma Bohannon; many cousins, nieces, and nephews.

**BOWERSOX, Debra Joann,**

born September 26, 1961, in Orange, Calif., and died October 2, 2014 in Cleburne, Tex. She was a member of the Alvarado church. Survivors: husband, Don; daughters, Christina and Alisha.

**BROWN, Margret Marie,**

born September 16, 1947, in Marble Falls, Tex., and died December 16, 2014 in Hot Springs, Ark. Margret was a home health caregiver and a member of the Arkadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her husband, Larry Lee Brown, preceded her in death. Survivors: daughter and son-in law, Vanessa and Jim Riley, of Gurdon, Ark.; daughter, Shondra Brown, of Harrison, Ark.; son, Stoney Cox, of Marshall, Ark.; son and daughter-in-law, Michael and Kathy Cox, of Edmond, Okla.; brother, Milton Mitchell, of Harrison; sister, Marsha Dearen, of Kingsland, Tex.; 14 grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren.

**COLLUM, Justin Blake,**

born March 6, 1994 and died December 3, 2014 in Fort Worth, Tex., in a motorcycle accident. As a young teenager, he and his sister were baptized into the Keene church. Survivors: mother, Teresa, sister Sarah, and grandparents.

**CURTIS, Leah M.,**

born January 14, 1918, in Otsego, Mich., and died October 3, 2014 in Tontitown, Ark. Leah was a resident of Siloam Springs, Ark., for 10 years. She moved there from Wyoming, where she lived for 56 years. She was a member of the Springtown church. Survivors: husband of 77 years, Emer Curtis; daughter, Linda Enochs and husband, Kenneth, of Harper, Kan.; daughter, Carol Shain of Siloam Springs, Ark.; one sister, Wanda Stauder of Three Rivers, Mich.; five grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; and three great-great-grandchildren.

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**FAULKNER, Sally Haley**, born August 29, 1934, in Bunkie, La., and died November 29, 2014, in Mena, Ark. Survivors: children, John, DeeDee, Wayne, and Ed, and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

**FERRIER, Brenda Nell**, born August 5, 1949 in Pendleton, Ore., and died October 14, 2014 in Whitney, Tex. She was a member of the Hillsboro church. Survivors: son, Kenneth, and daughter-in-law, Vicky.

**FIKES, Houston "Hootie" J.**, born March 16, 1921, Hot Springs, Ark., and died November 11, 2014 in Little Rock, Ark. Houston was known by "Hootie" most of his life. He was one of nine children and lived all of his life in Hot Springs. He was a knowledgeable carpenter and mechanic and was sought after for his fine work. His wife of 71 years, Frances Bass Fikes, preceded him in death. Survivors: daughter and son-in-law, Linda and Tom Olyer of Maitland, Fla.; son and daughter-in-law, Jack and Lynn Fikes, of Royal, Ark.; daughter and son-in-law, Lola and Richard Hartsell of Hot Springs; a sister in-law, Martha Fikes; eight grandchildren; and 13 great-grandchildren.

**HAYWARD, James Lloyd**, born March 7, 1924 in Naugatuck, Conn., and died August 16, 2014 in Hot Springs, Ark. He was a member of the Bonnerdale church. During World War II, he served as an army medic for three years, including a year in England. Following graduation from Atlantic Union College, he served as

pastor of the Boston Temple, and in Atlanta, Fort Worth, Phoenix, and at the Battle Creek Tabernacle before serving as Michigan Conference secretary, Wisconsin Conference president, and Voice of Prophecy manager. He retired after 40 years of formal church service but continued serving as needed as an interim pastor and special speaker for at least 12 more years. In retirement he served as interim pastor of the Keene church for six months and then for seven other churches in Texas. He served the Fallbrook, Calif., church for eight months. He also traveled 91,000 miles for 20 camp meeting series and other preaching appointments in 94 cities in the United States and Australia. While he was pastoring, administrating, and speaking, Jim was also studying the Spirit of Prophecy. In 1963 he compiled a book, *Thy Saving Health*. In 2009, American Christian Ministries published his 623-page compilation, *The Time of the End*. There was a second printing in 2013. He was preceded in death by, Jane, his wife and helper of 64 years, and all of his siblings including his twin brother, John. Survivors: wife, Wanda Davis Hayward; two sons and daughters-in-law, Jim Hayward, Jr., and Shandelle, and John Hayward and Faye; a granddaughter; and three great-grandsons.

**LAPHAM, DAVID Wendell, Sr.**, born October 20, 1946, in Oklahoma City, Okla., and died January 2, 2015, in Harrah, Okla. He spent most of his childhood in Choctaw and Forest Park. David attended Parkview Adventist Academy and then

Ozark Adventist Academy. On May 31, 1970, he married Margaret Kay Whitford in Oklahoma City. They established their home in Harrah. As a young man, David worked several jobs in the manufacturing, machine shop, and automotive fields. David was a lifelong lover of automobiles and the people who drove them. He had vast knowledge of just about every automobile built from the 1940s all the way to the present. This passion ignited the idea to devote himself full time to not just repairing cars, but helping people by working on their cars and giving them advice on automobile purchases. In June 1979, he launched Wooded Acres Auto Service and set up his shop next to their home. David worked in his shop until the non-Hodgkin's lymphoma that invaded his body in May of 2014 rendered him unable to continue working. To all who knew David, he was known as a man of honesty, integrity, and faith. He loved his Lord and Savior, Jesus

Christ, and was devoted to following Him. He was also a loving a devoted husband, father and grandfather. Survivors: daughter, Sherry Campbell and husband, Jody Campbell, of Oklahoma City; son, David Lapham, Jr., and wife, Sandra Lapham, of Cleveland, Tenn.; and Daniel Lapham, of Yukon, Okla.; six grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

**RYAN, Dorothy L.**, born May 20, 1923 in Kansas and died November 20, 2014 in Kansas City, Mo. Survivors: sons, Roy Ryan, Michael Ryan, and Roger Ryan; daughter, Eugenia McCullough; 10 grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren, and two sisters.

**STOCKTON, Fred Leo**, born January 24, 1951 in Fort Smith, Ark., and died October 2, 2014 in Fort Worth, Tex. He was a member of the Alvarado church. Survivors: wife, Judy; sons, Sam and Josh; brother, Keith; and sister, Sandy.

## SABBATH SUNSET CALENDAR

	Feb 6	Feb 13	Feb 20	Feb 27	Mar 6	Mar 13
Abilene, TX	6:16	6:22	6:28	6:34	6:40	7:45
Albuquerque, NM	5:39	5:46	5:53	5:59	6:06	7:12
Amarillo, TX	6:20	6:27	6:34	6:40	6:46	7:52
Brownsville, TX	6:16	6:21	6:26	6:30	6:34	7:37
Dallas, TX	6:04	6:10	6:16	6:22	6:27	7:33
El Paso, TX	5:44	5:50	5:56	6:01	6:07	7:12
Fort Worth/Keene, TX	6:06	6:12	6:18	6:24	6:30	7:35
Gallup, NM	5:47	5:54	6:01	6:08	6:15	7:20
Galveston/Houston, TX	6:03	6:08	6:14	6:19	6:24	7:28
Gentry, AR	5:49	5:56	6:03	6:10	6:16	7:23
Little Rock, AR	5:43	5:50	5:56	6:03	6:09	7:15
Muskogee, OK	5:53	6:00	6:07	6:14	6:20	7:26
New Orleans, LA	5:41	5:47	5:52	5:57	6:02	7:07
Oklahoma City, OK	6:02	6:09	6:16	6:23	6:29	7:35
Roswell, NM	5:34	5:40	5:47	5:53	5:58	7:04
San Antonio, TX	6:16	6:21	6:26	6:31	6:36	7:41
Shreveport, LA	5:52	5:58	6:05	6:10	6:16	7:21
Tulsa, OK	5:55	6:02	6:09	6:16	6:22	7:29

Note: Daylight Savings Time begins at 2:00 a.m. on March 8.





# On the Record »

BY PAT HUMPHREY » COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR, SOUTHWESTERN UNION

## Let's Answer Christ's Prayer

**AN AESOP'S FABLE TELLS THE STORY** of four bulls that were great friends. They constantly enjoyed one another's company as they ate, rested, and conversed together. These bulls were so close that if any danger came near, they would confront it as a group.

Always lurking around, however, was a hungry lion that was determined to get these bulls. But the lion knew that he was no match for the four bulls as long as they stuck together. If he could corner them individually, though, he would have the advantage. So the lion prowled around, watching for his opportunity. Whenever he noticed that one of the bulls lagged behind as the others grazed, the lion would slink up to the bull and whisper that the others had been saying unkind things about him. The lion did this every time he got the opportunity—until finally, the four friends began to feel uneasy. Each bull began to think that the others were plotting against him. Eventually, the four friends lost their trust of one another and wandered off by themselves. Their friend-

ship was broken.

Now that the lion was able to accomplish his aim of dividing the group, he was ready to attack. One by one he killed each of the bulls. His strategy? By creating disharmony among the group, the lion successfully captured his prey and enjoyed four good meals.

We are told in 1 Peter 5:8 (NKJV) to "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." I believe that in the same way that the lion worked to divide the four bulls, Satan is working to divide the church. We, as church members, need to remember that the enemy is not our brothers and sisters in Christ, even if we don't always agree with them. The real enemy is Satan, and

his tactic today is the same as it has always been: divide and conquer.

I'll close with the following quote from Ellen G. White, who so eloquently expresses a vital message that I believe our church needs today: "As members of the visible church, and workers in the vineyard of the Lord, all professed Christians should do their utmost to preserve peace, harmony, and love in the church. Mark the prayer of Christ: 'That they all may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou has sent Me.' The unity of the church is the convincing evidence that God has sent Jesus into the world as its Redeemer" (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 619, 620). Let's help to make Christ's prayer a reality as we unite together to spread the good news about Jesus!

*Pat Humphrey*

## Record

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### Submissions

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