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Cover: The cover design includes a photo from iStockphoto (center) and photos from Dawin Rodriguez.
From the Treasurer

"All we have to do to receive God's grace is to open our hearts to it."

It is considered by some to be the oldest argument on earth since the world was created, "That's not fair." Adam and Eve's two boys, Cain and Abel, brought their offerings to God. God accepted Abel's offering and rejected Cain's offering. Cain said, "That is not fair," and it resulted in the first murder in the world. Children use the phrase "that's not fair" often. When something does not suit them they say it is not fair. That is why some families split after the Will and Trust documents are read. It is not fair that he or she gets more than me.

Jesus told a parable in Matthew 20:1-16 about a landlord who went out early in the morning, about six o'clock, to hire workers for his vineyard. This was a common practice in that part of the world, particularly during the harvest season. Storms could easily ruin the crops and it was important to get the harvest in as quickly as possible. The work was hard and tiring, working from dawn to sunset. The wage was a standard one, a denarius or silver coin a day.

During the harvest, men who wanted to work would go to the marketplace and stand around. It was like going to an employment agency in the morning to look for a job for the day. The landowner agreed to pay these workers the standard wage.

About noon he went back to the marketplace and saw some other men standing around doing nothing. He told them, "You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." He went out again about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. About five in the afternoon, the final hour of the work day, he went out and found still others standing around. The landlord asked them, "Why are you standing idle?" Their response was, "Because no one has hired us." He told them go and work in his vineyard also.

When quitting time came, the owner of the vineyard said to his accountant, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going onto the first." The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. Can you imagine how happy these workers were? A full day's wage for only one hour of work. They would be able to feed their families. They would be able to pay their bills.

When those who were hired first came to be paid, they knew how generous the landlord had been with those who had worked only an hour. They expected a huge bonus. Can you imagine their disappointment when they also received a denarius? They began to grumble and question. "Those who were hired last, worked only one hour," they said, "and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and heat of the day."

The landlord answered, "I am not being unfair. Did you not agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I have the right to do what I want with my money. Are you envious because I am generous?"

Then Jesus added these piercing words, "So the last will be first and the first will be last." This is a parable of the generosity of God. God pours out His grace fully and completely on all who will receive it. We who have labored in the vineyard as Seventh-day Adventist Christians for most of our lives would like to think that we get an extra measure of grace in return for our many years of service, but it will not happen. Understand that grace is not a retirement benefit. It cannot happen that way. The Father's love is without limits. He pours out His grace without reservation on all.

God's grace is poured out in infinite quantities on you and me. It is totally unearned and undeserved, whether we have labored for Christ 40 years or four years. All we have to do to receive God's grace is to open our hearts to it. To some people, it does not seem fair, but it is a fact. No wonder it is sometimes referred to as "Amazing Grace." God's grace is shocking, it is amazing, it is wonderful, and it is free. And because we did nothing to deserve it, it is fair. It cost Christ His life on the cross of Calvary—God's way of being just and yet justifying the ungodly. He is simply unbelievably generous with His grace. It is all yours and mine for the taking and is sufficient for us all. ¶

Leon Thomassian is the Atlantic Union Conference treasurer and trust services director.

That's Not Fair!

at www.atlantic-union.org Atlantic Union GLEANER, April 2015
December 2014 was a month of turmoil and conflict in many New York City neighborhoods. After the grand jury decision to acquit the police officer charged with the choking death of a Staten Island man, and the shooting of two New York City Police Department (NYPD) officers, tensions in the community were mounting. Church leaders felt it was time to join forces and be a voice for peace and reconciliation. A sizeable crowd gathered on January 18 at the Flatbush church in New York City to come together as a community and pray for hope and healing. The program was also streamed live on auam.tv. Cosponsored by the Greater New York and Northeastern conferences, the event was an opportunity for the church to take a proactive role in fostering unity during very difficult times.

“Over the past few weeks, the city has been roiled by tension,” said Northeastern president, Daniel Honoré. “We still mourn the loss of Eric Garner. We still mourn the loss of [Wenjian] Liu and [Rafael] Ramos. Society, however, has presented us with a false choice,” Honoré adds. “It has told us, ‘Either you support community rights, or you support the police.’ Today I want to categorically reject that choice.” Greater New York president G. Earl Knight remarked that in light of the recent events dividing the city, “As a faith community, we cannot sit in idleness, twiddling our thumbs in despair. We are a people of hope, not despair . . . We believe that God can heal the brokenhearted; He can heal our broken relationships.”

Tying in with celebrations to commemorate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Hope and Healing for Better Police and Community Relations program featured representatives from the NYPD and elected officials from both state and local levels. Emceed by Allen Martin, pastor of the Bethel church in Brooklyn, the historic occasion included prayers for city officials, protection for the more than 35,000 city police officers patrolling the streets, and God’s healing balm to ease the hurt and suspicion rampant in the community. During one part of the service, the audience—comprised of a variety of races and ethnicities collectively rising to their feet—enthusiastically applauded eight-year-old Nathaniel McKenzie, after his passionate recitation of Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream Speech.”

Introductory remarks came from honored guests: New York City Public Advocate, Letitia James; United States Representatives Yvette Clarke (9th Congressional District); and Hakeem Jeffries (8th Congressional District); representing Mayor Bill de Blasio was Harold Miller of the Community Affairs Unit; and NYPD First Deputy Commissioner, Benjamin Tucker. Representative Clarke commended the denomination for coordinating this “timely gathering for dialogue and discussion.” She added, “You have decided that church takes place seven days a week. From that understanding of the gospel, we can transform life in real time. Not only in the spiritual realm, but indeed we can make a change in the secular realm.”

Many in attendance were youth and young adults. In another cooperative effort, youth directors from both conferences, Andres Peralta (Greater New York) and Roger Wade (Northeastern), presented the audience with cards containing information about how one should respond when stopped by the police, as well as information about citizens’ rights and responsibilities. “Prayer is not the only thing we can do,” said Wade.

The Greater New York Conference communication director and assistant to the president for strategic
planning, Rohann Wellington, moderated a panel discussion. Invited elected officials and the NYPD First Deputy Commissioner were joined by the president of the 67th Precinct Clergy Council, Gilford Monrose, and Greater New York and Northeastern conference pastors Shane Vidal and Allen Martin to field questions from Wellington and the audience.

When asked about what steps need to be taken to bridge the divide as a result of recent events, Monrose cited examples of clergy activism during the Civil Rights era in the 60s and 70s. “Members of the clergy have a specific role to play, but we also have to put our feet to our faith. . . We have to do work and be that liaison between the police and our communities.” Adding that while anger and frustration are inevitable, the clergy can be that “voice in the middle” to maintain the flow of communication on both sides.

Martin pointed out the more reactive approach that communities have had and shared his experience while visiting Ferguson, Missouri, after the shooting of Michael Brown. Emphasizing the need for public engagement before tragedies happen in the community, Martin said, “We have elected officials on the podium, but elected officials represent us. . . Our responsibility is to hold our officials accountable. He added, “We can’t sit back and let things just go and not raise our voice of concern. And we can’t wait for there to be a shooting, or there to be some tragedy, to be engaged.” Pastor Shane Vidal called for a new paradigm of policing that would enable police officers to focus not on how many arrests are made, but on how many lives they can transform by their daily encounters.

Recommendations from the panel discussion will be prepared and presented to the office of the Mayor of New York City.

Closing remarks were presented by Abraham Jules, pastor of the Community Worship Center church (formerly Springfield Gardens). Using Christ’s parable of the Good Samaritan, Jules reminded the audience that those who have been wounded often have a greater capacity to become healers. Future plans are being made to build upon relations formed from this event and to provide a continued proactive presence in the neighborhoods affected by these tragedies.

Debra McKinney Banks is the communication assistant for the Atlantic Union Conference.
Members of the Atlantic Union College Board of Trustees recognized Dwayne M. Cady, M.D., at their regular meeting on February 23 in South Lancaster, Massachusetts. Donald G. King, Atlantic Union Conference president, presented Cady with a plaque in recognition of his untiring, dedicated, and sacrificial service to Atlantic Union College (AUC) as interim president. He served from November 2012 to December 2014.

During Cady’s presidency, AUC received approval from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (MDHE) to offer two degree programs in theology/religion and biology/health science. Additionally, the MDHE is considering approval for certificate programs in nurses aide training (NAT) and culinary arts, which AUC hopes to start in the fall. Currently, AUC operates, on its campus, a community music program (Thayer Performing Arts Center), English as a Second language, and the Northeast Evangelism Training School (NETS), which is jointly sponsored by Atlantic Union Conference and AUC.

Lois King, Atlantic Union Conference Women’s Ministries and Ministerial Spouses director, recognized Cady’s wife, Joyce, for her ministry and her support of her husband.

“We owe a great debt of gratitude to Dr. Cady for his selfless commitment to Atlantic Union College during this transition. We pray that God will continue to bless him in his endeavors as he ministers to others,” said Donald King.

—Ednor A. P. Davison, Gleaner editor

Pre-kindergarten Student Shares God’s Love

Early childhood education facilitates the growth and development of children academically and spiritually. Its ultimate goal is to help even the youngest child to understand people, objects, and challenges in their environment. Early childhood teachers understand that the home is the ideal place where learning occurs, but when this environment is not available, it is our responsibility as a church and as a school to nurture and care for the little ones.

I was at the Bay Knoll School in Rochester, New York, a few weeks ago where my heart was touched by a little child. As I walked into the school I was greeted by a younger student with a cheery hello and a warm smile. After the welcome, the student wanted to know who I was, where I was from, and why I was at their school. I answered all of the questions.

Before I could be asked more questions, the school was called to order. The day began with worship. The students sang and recited long verses and chapters of the Bible that they had memorized. During worship my little buddy sat nearby and just smiled and waved. She knew me now and we had become friends. When worship was over she introduced me as her “new friend.” She accepted me as a member of the family and became my friend. She shared with me that she loved Jesus and Jesus loved everybody, even me.

There it was, the gospel was shared with a smile and a simple message. Jesus is love and He loves everyone. How many people would come to know Jesus if everyone, like this little child, shared the simple message of love? Even at the tender age of four and five, children are eager to share the love of God with others and welcome new friends into the family.

—Marlene Alvarez, Early Childhood Education and Care assistant director, Atlantic Union Conference

Young students learn to share the good news of the second coming of Jesus in word and in song.
St. David’s Church Sponsors Bermuda Institute Day

The St. David’s church members saw unity, excellence, and passion on Sabbath, January 24 as Bermuda Institute (BI) faculty and students conducted the morning services. From Sabbath School with its song service, led by Cynthia Tucker, physical education teacher, to the end of the worship service with the Bermuda Institute Choir, under the leadership of Owen Simon, vice-principal and music teacher, the entire program was outstanding.

Science teacher Randall Metellus taught the Sabbath School lesson. His warm, congenial style mixed with thought-provoking questions kept the church alert and interested. Also, of special note during Sabbath School was the Senior Spotlight when students shared what they appreciated most about the school. The seniors agreed that BI is a spiritual place where a family-like atmosphere permeates the campus and students feel comfortable confiding in teachers and administrators.

After viewing BI Reflections, a media production, members listened to BI’s principal, Lois Tucker, who appealed to everyone to support BI. While holding her granddaughter, Tucker left no question as to where the toddler would be attending school in the future—Bermuda Institute, of course!

One of the benefits of attending BI is the training of students to serve, to give, to minister, rather than just merely to receive. Likewise, in his sermon, seventh-grader Chaziah Brown challenged the congregation to “A New Beginning.” Certainly with every child attending BI, it would truly be a new beginning, because Christian education is not limited to calculated community service hours; it is about a lifetime of committed service for earthly good and in preparation for heaven.

Presently, the St. David’s congregation has three students at BI—Joshua Cox (high school), Mikhail Nisbett (middle school), and Milan Nisbett (elementary school)—all honor students. Since BI Day, there is additional interest from others in attending Bermuda Institute and experiencing the unity, excellence, and passion exemplified on January 24. Well done, Bermuda Institute!

—Iva Wilson, communication secretary, St. David’s church

St. David’s Church Members Encouraged to be Health Angels

Good health isn’t for keeping to oneself, according to a health presenter as he encouraged his audience at a recent health series to be “health angels” in taking the message to others. Appearing nightly at the Warwick church in Bermuda and twice on Sabbaths in mid-February, Ein Kirk, a pastor and a public health graduate of Loma Linda University in California, presented his listeners with 10 themes to capture their attention and provide—you guessed it—food for thought.

Interspersing his “Greater Health in 10 Days” discussions and explanations with catchy tunes and topical lyrics, the folksy preacher from Tobago with his Caribbean lilt brought smiles to people’s faces with humorous anecdotes and made learning fun in a combination lecture-sing-a-long.

“I’m not a fancy preacher,” he said to about 100 people on his first day, “I’m a simple preacher.” As promised, each talk was a “golden link in a golden chain to put off an early funeral.”

Topics spanned prevention (“a stitch in time saves nine”—making smart choices at the right time), being overweight, gateway drugs (alcohol, tobacco), high blood pressure, stress, curative measures (water, exercise, fresh air), and sex. Time and again Kirk linked good health to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Creator, putting Him at the center of one’s life and health. “Jesus,” he said, “forgives sins and heals diseases.”

Central to the preventative components of his talks, the speaker shared that a vegetarian diet is superior in promoting health. (Did you know that meat can remain in your digestive system for up to three days, rotting before digestion and producing colon cancer?!) The pastor, who looks 10 years younger than his 60 years, observed: “God made us for His pleasure and He wants us to be happy—being healthy helps to make us happy.”

—Coggie Gibbons, communication secretary, Warwick church
On December 2, 2014, nonprofit organizations around the globe joined together to raise the volume on philanthropic giving. The tradition began just two years ago after several nonprofit organizations and corporations recognized the need to switch the focus back to giving following the Thanksgiving holiday. With Black Friday and Cyber Monday calling consumers to shop, Giving Tuesday reminds us what the season is all about by calling individuals to give.

Last December the Greater New York Conference Planned Giving and Development office and the Youth Ministries department collaborated to organize a social media giving campaign, joining in the Giving Tuesday movement. The focus of the campaign was to help Cuban families, many of whom survive on just $20 of income per month. The campaign also provided aid to students seeking to further their education and restoration projects for local churches in Cuba.

The hashtag #givingtuesday and the global online campaign were so successful that the giving portal Web site crashed for several nonprofit organizations, including Greater New York Conference, but the giving never stopped. Conference leaders, churches, and individuals from across Greater New York joined in the giving spirit, encouraging their friends, families, and social network communities to do something for Cuba. More than $16,000 was raised in direct aid to Cuban families, students, and churches in need. Universal Business Solutions, a print management company, generously made a matching donation of $5,000 for Cuba.

A group of 57 youth, young adults, and pastors later traveled to Havana, Cuba, in February to work in collaboration with conference leadership from the Delegación Adventista de la Habana. Daily evangelistic meetings were held in 15 locations across the city along with 16 Vacation Bible School programs, resulting in 90 baptisms and more than 277 requests for Bible studies.

Donations continued to come in, providing literature, youth ministry supplies, and several scholarships for students pursuing pastoral education at the Seminario Adventista de la Habana. Teams rotated through various service projects, including the delivery of more than 350 food packages to homes. Tears of joy streamed down the face of one elderly woman as she witnessed a new roof installed on her home that was previously damaged by rain water. Donations big and small resulted in a cumulative impact Cubans will never forget.

For a full report, visit www.gnycyouth.com.

—Janice Da Silva, Planned Giving and Development associate director, Greater New York Conference

#GivingTuesday Campaign Raises Thousands for Cuba
Greater New York Conference Seeks to Better Serve People with Disabilities

“Where can I find programs in the church that will serve my child with Down’s Syndrome?” “How can I learn more about Autism as I serve my congregation?” These and similar queries were voiced by the more than 48 expectant participants at the first-ever Disabilities Ministries Workshop sponsored by the Greater New York Conference (GNYC) on February 7, to answer the question, “How do we better serve persons with disabilities?”

Hosted by Manuel Rosario, Greater New York Conference Personal Ministries director, at the Community Health Services and Media Center in Woodside, Queens, New York, the event is a part of the 2015-2020 evangelistic thrust of the GNYC Personal Ministries department to “light New York with the loud cry.” Charlotte L. V. Thoms, Atlantic Union Conference Disabilities Ministries director and coordinator for the Commission for People with Disabilities for the North American Division, conducted sessions that raised awareness, motivated, and equipped the participants with global standards of best practice in the religious community. She outlined the categories of disabilities as: Cognitive, Hearing, Hidden, Mobility, Psychiatric, and Speech.

In his message on the importance of genuine love, Rosario called for “amor.” The mission overview entitled “The Marginalized, the Missing, and Our Message,” was presented by Cheryl C. Silvera, the event organizer. Four projects to equip attendees and the Disabilities Ministries Quick Start Guide from AdventSource were shared: The Quilt Project, to reflect the passion of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the cause of people with disabilities; Sabbath School resources, emphasizing Christian Record Services; a ministry with people who are homeless; and a community-based telephone support group for individuals “hidden” within their homes. A Disabilities Expo for June 7 was announced. The day ended with a charge from Rosario to “send a gleam across the wave.”

—Cheryl C. Silvera, Disabilities Awareness Ministries

Greater New York Conference Seeks to Better Serve People with Disabilities

May 1-3, 2015

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at www.atlantic-union.org

Atlantic Union Gleaner, April 2015
Bay Knoll Students Experience Mid-Winter Space Camp

While most students in upstate New York were holed up at home during the cold winter break, Bay Knoll school students in Rochester, New York, experienced an amazing week of Space Camp. Homeschool and public school students were also invited to take part, and several participated. With the help of two teachers and many volunteers, Sharon Pitcher, principal and Grade 1-4 teacher, put together a program that was out of this world.

Each morning the students would arrive and go to Mission Control (chapel) where they would get their instructions for the day. Worship included singing, memorizing scriptures, and learning about how the stars tell the story of salvation.

Glen Kowski and Jeffrey Crisp worked with younger and older students on space science from the new “By Design” science curriculum, while Mrs. Pitcher took groups of students into the star dome she had created. The students were engaged in the reading and writing process by writing questions and answers and documenting their information sources. They learned about constellations. They learned about astronomy. Most importantly, they learned how the stars tell about Jesus.

“One of the most exciting parts of the space camp was the sleepover,” exclaimed one student. Not everyone got to experience the space camp sleepover, but those who did were treated to an amazing presentation from Mr. Kowski on the power of fusion. The students were also treated to a healthy breakfast the next morning before they started another fun-filled day.

Several volunteers really made space camp run smoothly. George Silver, a regional Pathfinder official for the New York Conference, made sure that the students got the hovercraft built and operational. Alicia Hopkins and Erin Van Gelder ran the fitness program, and Erin also helped the students build Estes model rockets.

Space bucks also helped things run smoothly. The students could earn them by following directions and completing projects. They could use them to purchase play time with space toys, or buy items for sale. Sometimes space campers had to pay space bucks for not having their packets organized or leaving things where they shouldn’t be. Overall, the space buck economy was a positive learning experience.

Space camp culminated with a home and school function on Sabbath evening, February 21. Parents and church members were invited to witness the story of the stars as the students sang powerful songs of God’s Word, took a stand on scripture, and presented amazing discoveries from their week of space camp. The highlight of the evening was going to the gym where everyone could experience the star dome, ride the hovercraft, play with the space toys, shoot off the stomp rockets, answer scientific questions, and praise Jesus for our amazing universe.

—Jeffrey Crisp, grades 5-8 teacher, Bay Knoll school
God Works Miracles for Utica International School

“Miracle on Main Street” was the title of the 2014 Christmas musical drama by the Utica International School. The students presented a full-length show, complete with costumes, scene changes, full-stage backdrops, singing, and script. The theme of the night’s portrayal was the miracle of God moving hearts. The message was appropriate when one considers the great steps of faith that this little church has taken over the past couple of years. Schools are expensive. Finding staff is complex and stressful. When it seemed the school was not going to be an option, God continued to work His plan in Utica.

Members of Utica church are committed to providing quality, Christian, Adventist education. Currently, 20 of the 23 students attending the school are English-learning refugees from camps in both Thailand and Rwanda. This church truly is a family of believers who earnestly strive to share the love of Christ. The challenges of funding and staffing needs continue. God has certainly led thus far, and will not abandon His children. Please keep the Utica church and school in prayer as the mission continues. May God’s miracle in Utica be a light on the hill for all to see.

—Bradley Booth, superintendent of schools, New York Conference

Union Springs Academy
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May 1-3, 2015


For more information, visit www.unionspringsacademy.org

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June 7–12, 2015

www.unionspringsacademy.org
Agape Church Finds New House of Worship

Northeastern Conference administrators joined the Agape church family and Joshua Deonarine, the church’s pastor, on Sabbath, January 31, for the official inauguration of their newly-acquired church building at 97-25 Lefferts Boulevard in the Richmond Hill section of Queens. The property, acquired last September, previously housed the All Saints Episcopal Church and also includes an adjoining parish house that will be home to a community center in the near future.

The sermon entitled “We Have Something to Say” was delivered by Larry Griffith, M.D., a surgeon who led the church’s building fund drive for two years before relocating to Trinidad. Following the message, the conference administrators proceeded with the litany and prayer of consecration for the building. A new pulpit was dedicated during the service. Another highlight included special music by Agape Bhajan, a typical Indian singing group that sang traditional hymns in the Hindi language.

Agape began nearly 23 years ago as a mission of the Flatbush church and was organized as a church in 2005. Since its inception the congregation met in basements and storefronts, and in recent years rented a Methodist church for its services. The building was purchased at a cost of $1,345,000, and church members raised $500,000 for the project through sacrificial giving. During the three months prior to the inauguration, the members donated time and resources to renovate the fellowship hall and office space.

Special guests for the inauguration service included the three Northeastern Conference executive officers and Norman Whitmire, Jr., who serves as rector of the All Saints Episcopal Church, that has merged with another parish in Woodhaven. Whitmire expressed satisfaction that his former church now houses a vibrant congregation instead of being razed for development.

The membership of 178 is comprised mostly of people from Guyana and Trinidad, and the members trace their heritage to East Indian roots. As a result, the congregation sees its mission as reaching the hundreds of thousands of Southern Asians and Hindus who reside in Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park with the Adventist message.

—Daniel Honoré, president, Northeastern Conference

Conference Appoints New Hispanic Ministries Coordinator

The Northeastern Conference Executive Committee has appointed Hector Ramos to serve as Hispanic Ministries coordinator for the conference, succeeding Jose Burroughs.

Ramos has served as a pastor in the conference since 1987 and has led several multi-church districts in New York City, Western New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. He pastored 21 Northeastern Spanish-speaking congregations during this period.

Ramos says he felt the call to ministry shortly after accepting the Adventist message as a young man living in Providence, Rhode Island. He registered at Antillean University, in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, and obtained a bachelor’s degree in theology in 1986.

Ramos and his wife, Rosmary, are the proud parents of three adult daughters and grandparents to three grandchildren.

In one of his first acts as Hispanic Ministries coordinator, Ramos led the Hispanic church officers training in November 2014 that was attended by over 400 people at Camp Victory Lake.

—Daniel Honoré, president, Northeastern Conference

Hector Ramos serves as the Hispanic Ministries coordinator for the Northeastern Conference.
Former Northeastern Members Pledge Support for Camp Victory Lake Development Project

More than 100 former members of the Northeastern Conference who now reside in the Huntsville, Alabama, area gathered on the campus of Oakwood University on January 24 to pledge their support for the redevelopment of Camp Victory Lake. Northeastern Conference president Daniel Honoré and Camp Victory Lake Development Committee members, Milton Haynes, M.D., and Nigel Lewis, pastor of the New Life church in Brooklyn, New York, hosted the fundraising event.

Attendees were shown a video presentation of the proposed master plan and were given information packets promoting the project. During the program, several former members shared their testimonies of enjoying youth camp and camp meeting programs at the camp through the years. The local coordinator for the function was Tim Allston, who works with the Oakwood University MAPS (Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies) program.

Honoré says he was delighted to be introduced to the gathering by Wilma Germany, who was his sixth-grade teacher at the Berea school in Boston. She is retired and resides in Birmingham, Alabama. Other notable guests included former Northeastern

Two Spanish Congregations to Merge Across Conference Lines

In an unprecedented move, two Spanish-speaking congregations, one in the Northeastern Conference (NEC) and the other in the New York Conference (NYC), have agreed to merge in the city of Syracuse, New York. The Syracuse Spanish church (NYC) and Syracuse Latino American Mission (NEC) will be reorganized in the near future under the auspices of the Northeastern Conference. The former consists of approximately 20 members and the latter has about 60 members.

New York Conference president Elias Zabala and Northeastern Conference president Daniel Honoré held a joint meeting with both churches to discuss the proposal intended to create a stronger Hispanic Adventist presence in Syracuse. Consolidating also helps avoid duplication in salary and services needed to support parallel churches in the same community.

After discussing the proposed merger, both congregations overwhelmingly voted to proceed. Both conference executive committees have also approved the merger. Under the agreed terms the New York Conference will transfer ownership of the Syracuse Spanish church located at 341 Delaware St., Syracuse, New York, to the Northeastern Conference Corporation. Northeastern Conference will provide pastoral leadership to the new church in the person of Yenci Casildo. The churches have been worshiping together since November 2014 while waiting for the formal organization to take place.

—Communication department, Northeastern Conference

Nigel Lewis, pastor of New Life church in Brooklyn, New York; Kenny Anderson, event chair; Jessie Bradley, presenter; Daniel Honoré, Northeastern Conference president; Milton Haynes, development committee member; and Tim Allston, event organizer.

Conference president George R. Earle, who gave closing remarks and prayer, and former treasurer Larry Word. The Camp Victory Lake Development Committee plans similar events in other cities with significant numbers of former “Northeasterners.”

—Communication department, Northeastern Conference

Jorge Baez, New York Conference Hispanic Ministries coordinator; Elias Zabala, New York Conference president; Daniel Honoré, Northeastern Conference president, and Yenci Casildo, Northeastern Conference pastor of the newly-consolidated church.

at www.atlantic-union.org Atlantic Union Gleaner, April 2015
Portland’s White Memorial Church Opens New Office and Education Center

The White Memorial church in Portland, Maine, recently opened its new office and education center. The new center offers innovative programs and services to the community using office space vacated in 2013 when the Northern New England Conference office relocated to nearby Westbrook.

Now remodeled and repurposed, the building is dedicated to serving the community, but the changes needed were substantial. The old, inefficient oil heating system was converted to natural gas to reduce the cost of heating. Church members supported a whole series of Sunday work bees over six months to refurbish and repaint the interior. Old carpet was removed and replaced, and new fire safety equipment was installed.

White Memorial church routinely distributes 8,000-10,000 pounds of food every week to 200-250 low-income households (representing about 700 individuals). The church also provides free used clothing for 40-60 people each Monday at the church’s community center.

“Our Church has done a great job in recent years in providing ‘fish’ for our community,” says Paul Hutchinson, director of the extensive food distribution program. “But now, with additional office and classroom space, and with experienced pastoral leadership in this area, we can focus more on teaching people how to fish, which can decrease or eliminate their need for government or non-profit assistance.”

The first program in the Office and Education Center is Jobs for Life (see www.jobsforlife.org for information about this program). This is a 16-session, Bible-based class that assists people in finding satisfying employment. Janet Warren, who currently is the primary instructor for the class, reports that the class is full (20 students enrolled), and five more have already signed up for the next available class.

It should be noted that about half of the current Jobs for Life students are not Seventh-day Adventists, but they are becoming friends with members. “One student that hadn’t even attended our church before came to the class and mentioned to one of our new members that he was interested in baptism,” says Glenn Holland, volunteer pastor for Community Ministries. “It’s amazing to see what can happen when people with needs find help in the context of positive relationships with people who love Jesus.

When our members become involved with helping people in our community, we find natural opportunities to discuss our faith, our hope, and our beliefs, and it is exciting for our members as well as the people we are able to serve.”

—Communication department, Northern New England Conference
Portland’s Community Ministry: Brilliant

Every once in a while an idea comes along that is simultaneously brilliant and obvious—the kind of idea that makes people stop in their tracks and admire both its elegance and its sensibility. The White Memorial church in Portland, Maine, recently identified and implemented such an idea and is putting it to use in working with the local community. Their efforts are meeting with striking success.

Here is the idea: serve local at-risk populations (the unemployed, underemployed, homeless, refugees, and more) by offering life-skills training as a way of preparing people for employment and full engagement in society. Now for the brilliant bit: design the entire program to be based on the Bible—the greatest source of life-skills lessons and wisdom in the history of man.

Under the leadership of Glenn Holland, volunteer pastor for Community Ministries at Portland’s White Memorial church, the program was introduced in early January of this year. Titled Jobs for Life, the program was developed by a church in Raleigh, North Carolina, and used by Holland when he pastored in Maryland. When Holland came to Portland and assessed the needs of the local population, he proposed the program to members, who quickly volunteered to help lead and support the program.

“I love the fact that this program works—it really does help people to prepare for a productive and employed life in society,” says Holland. “But what I really love is that the program is based on the Bible. During the class, there are Bibles in front of every student, and these Bibles are often opened so that stories and their life-skills lessons can be studied. It is amazing and joyful to see non-Christians studying the Bible and discussing and appreciating what they have read. And some of those discussions are continued in church when program participants decide they want to attend church.”

The program builds relationships on several levels. Pastoral staff and members are involved in teaching the classes (along with community members), so relationships are formed. Portland has a large refugee population and there are some church members in the class, and these members form relationships with the non-Adventist community members. And then, of course, the Word of God is opened and studied and people who did not previously have a relationship with the Word find not only useful wisdom, but also joy from those studies. “It is so thrilling to be helping these precious people gain skills and get jobs, and it is even more thrilling to be introducing them to Christ,” said Holland.

The current program will end in a couple weeks and Holland says that they will definitely conduct a second one. Program participants have been talking to their friends, who have in turn been calling the church and asking when the next program will be held, and asking that their names be added to the waiting list for the next class. Imagine that! An Adventist church-based Bible study class that helps people on several levels and has a waiting list. Brilliant.

—Scott Christiansen, communication director, Northern New England Conference
The Peoples Place Community Center, an enterprise established by the Gardner church, is excited to announce that it just celebrated its first anniversary on Sunday, February 8.

The leading of the Holy Spirit is evident for this venture, as demonstrated by what has been accomplished in just 12 short months. The mission of the Peoples Place Community Center has been to establish a facility to provide educational, social, recreational, spiritual, and service-oriented support programs to the residents of the Greater Gardner community. Program development has been accomplished by utilizing qualified volunteers from the local church and through collaboration with local community agencies.

Since its inception on February 8, 2014, the community center has offered bluegrass/gospel jam sessions, needlecraft for kids, Bible study groups, a professional smoking cessation program, AA meetings, weight loss programs, vegetarian cooking classes, and family budgeting seminars, not to mention three or four more programs that are in the planning stages.

The center has been blessed with tremendous support from the mayor and local civic leaders, along with local radio and television stations, and newspapers. The Gardner educational television station recently filmed a 20-minute segment that will be broadcast daily for a two-week period.

Please pray for continued success as church members seek to establish friendships with the residents of Gardner.

For more information, check out the Web site at www.thepeoplesplaceofgardner.org.

—Dale Spencer, marketing and publicity director, Peoples Place Community Center, and member, Gardner church

Supporters celebrate the first anniversary of the Peoples Place Community Center in Gardner, Massachusetts.

A Spring Cleaning Checklist

What a brutal winter we’ve endured! Thankfully, the winter of our discontent is beginning to show signs of coming to an end. The weather is slowly warming. The snow is beginning to disappear. Springtime brings the promise of new beginnings and fresh starts.

2014 was one of those school years where I found myself reevaluating many aspects of my life. New people have entered, both at work and in my personal life, and old ones have left. I’ve realized more of who I am this year than at any other point in my life. I realize my strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes; and that has caused me to be more honest about the paths I am on and where they are leading me.

With this in mind, let’s take this spring as a new beginning in our own lives. This checklist I plan on using in my own life; I hope it can be of some help to you.

Physical—Life has a way of becoming more and more hectic as time moves on, doesn’t it? Ever since graduating from college and beginning a full-time job, my physical well-being has become a secondary focus. The excuse always seems to be “not enough time” after work obligations have been completed. It’s an easy excuse, and I’ve used it religiously. I’d love to find myself in an unhealthy state, a place in which I never wanted to be again.

One of those aforementioned realizations I came to this year is that successful people define their lives by filling it with accomplishing what is important. If I want to be healthy, have a clear mind, and an active mind, I need to spend less time with the other pursuits we engage in just to meet with my teachers was concerned about my “make-believe” scenarios with parents about my “make-believe” scenarios with friends at recess.

As a writer, or at least give it a shot and have no regrets, right? Since this decision I’ve begun writing a book, been published in a national magazine twice, and written articles for a major Web site. This...
First Springfield Celebrates International Sabbath

The annual International Sabbath at the First Springfield church on January 31 was a celebration of many cultures, that included the very rich colors of native customs and with all the country flags unfurled. Luisa Cabana shared from the church roster that, of the 13 world divisions that make up the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the First Springfield church has representation from each of these areas.

The worship service began with the Spanish praise team trio, Saved by Grace, leading the song service. The morning prayer was spoken in four languages: Spanish by Luis Tapia, French/Creole by Berline Guirand, Romanian by Viorica Baciu, and English by Donald Moore. Special music was presented by the Haitian group singing in their native tongue, Saved by Grace sang in Spanish, and Mihial Baciu, the church’s pastor who represented Romania, concluded with a violin solo of the song “The Lord and I.”

The special guest, who represented the Dominican Republic, was Dionisio Olivo, Atlantic Union Conference vice president of Hispanic and Portuguese ministries. His message was from 1 John 1:3-7 and he spoke of fellowship and its true definition. He suggested that fellowship is a companionship and association with others who have common interests, ideas, and beliefs, like a brotherhood. In addition, he said that it is Christ’s blood that has opened the way for them to have fellowship with God, but this can only happen if they first have Christ-centered fellowship and love with their brothers and sisters here on this earth.

Spiritual—In college I decided that I truly wanted to be a Christian. It was the first time in my life I felt that I had come to that conclusion, not those around me. I made a promise that if I would truly become a follower of Christ, I needed to act like one. I didn’t want to be a Christian once a week, or by family association, or a Christian according to my own interpretation. Real Christianity to me is a verb.

If my actions don’t have the outcome of glorifying Christ, I’m wasting my time and His. Like all Christians, my relationship has seen peaks and valleys.

Let the Spring be the beginning of true action with our faith. Let us involve ourselves in activities that let us live our faith and not just “know” it.

—Jeffrey Lambert, teacher, South Lancaster Academy

At the First Springfield church’s International Sabbath are, from left, Luisa Cabana, Mihail Baciu, the church’s pastor, and his wife, Viorica Baciu; Dionisio Olivo, Atlantic Union Conference Hispanic Ministries coordinator; and members Brittany Penner, M.D., and Melody Tapia.

This Haitian group presented special music in their native tongue during the January 31 worship service at First Springfield church.

What is the result of achieving Christ-centered fellowship? 1 John 1:4 says, “That your joy may be full.”

Realizing that Jesus is coming back very soon, God’s people must work united, in Christian love and fellowship, caring for each other so they will all be ready for that glorious day.

Revelation 7:9 says that John saw “a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” Olivo reminded the members that it does not matter which language they speak or how they dress, but if they fellowship with man and in turn with God, they will be there, before the Lamb, as a part of that great redeemed multitude.

The service concluded with the singing of the old Christian hymn “When We All Get to Heaven.” This was the theme for this International Sabbath, reminding everyone again what a great day it shall be.

Lunch after the worship service included foods from the many nations represented.

—Belinda Behnava, communication secretary, First Springfield Church

at www.atlantic-union.org
Hints of spring are all around us and our thoughts turn to sunshine and warmer days. Summer is just around the corner, and if you are a parent, guardian, or grandparent, you are probably wondering how your child will spend their vacation once school is out. Camps are a viable cost-effective solution that many turn to as a means for children and teens to be in a safe environment, make new friends, get plenty of fresh air and sunshine, and, of course, have loads of fun. With so many camps to choose from, why decide on a Seventh-day Adventist camp?

Choosing a camp that supports and reinforces the beliefs that are taught at home is vital to reaffirming a child’s faith in God. “Summer camp is important,” says Josue Feliciano, Southern New England Conference youth and family ministries director. “There is no other time in a child’s life when the gospel is put in a language they understand for a concentrated week of time.”

Each day a child has one or several opportunities for connecting with Christ. “Some daily spiritually-focused activities include prayer, devotion, scripture memorization, group worship, Bible study, mini devotions before activities, and worship through drama,” Feliciano adds.

“Many campers come to our camps who have never experienced worship in the home,” says Robin Venters, camp director and manager at Camp Victory Lake in Hyde Park, New York. “Every day they come together and have worship, sing songs, and share testimonies. Also, we always make sure we have an appeal on Sabbath to close out the week. Many want to recommit themselves to God or give their heart to the Lord. At the end of camp each summer, we usually have two or three that are baptized.”

Within the Atlantic Union there are four conference-owned summer camps operating this year: Camp Cherokee (New York Conference); Camp Lawroweld (Northern New England Conference); Camp Victory Lake (Northeastern Conference); and Camp Winnekeag (Southern New England Conference). Each camp is accredited by the Adventist Association of Camp Professionals, a ministry under the North American Division. While the camps may vary with activities and amenities, each is dedicated to developing and strengthening the whole person: physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Staff and counselors are carefully chosen who are experienced and committed to help each camper have a full, enriching summer while emulating the love of Jesus Christ. Nestled in picturesque, rural lake-front settings, the Seventh-day Adventist summer camps in the Atlantic Union are places where children and youth can get away from it all and come back with a richer experience in Christ.
I love your programs very much. I listen every night with complete delight. I earnestly follow Jesus Christ and offer my life to Him. I have one desire, and that is to spread the gospel in my country. I hope that God will work with me in this pursuit. From a far distance, but with a heart that is near, I bid you farewell.”

– Listener in the Middle East
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 Gal  6:8

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South Lancaster, MA  7:47  7:55  8:02  8:09  8:15
Pittsfield, MA  7:53  8:01  8:08  8:15  8:21
Hartford, CT  7:49  7:57  8:04  8:11  8:17
Providence, RI  7:44  7:52  7:59  8:06  8:12
New York, NY  7:52  8:00  8:07  8:13  8:19
Albany, NY  7:54  8:02  8:09  8:16  8:22
Utica, NY  8:02  8:10  8:18  8:25  8:31
Syracuse, NY  8:06  8:14  8:22  8:29  8:35
Rochester, NY  8:12  8:20  8:28  8:35  8:41
Buffalo, NY  8:16  8:24  8:32  8:39  8:45
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ATLANTIC UNION CONFERENCE

Summer Camp Schedule 2015

CAMP CHEROKEE
Contact: For more information, call the New York Conference Youth Department at (315) 469-6921, or visit nyconf.org/cherokee.
Teen Camp ................................................. June 28–July 5
Junior/Tween Camp ........................................... July 5–12
Adventure ........................................................... July 12–19
Family Camp 1 .................................................. July 26–August 2
Family Camp 2/Health Professional Retreat ............... August 2–9
Family Camp 3/Home School Camp ....................... August 16–21

CAMP VICTORY LAKE
Contact: For more information, call Camp Victory Lake at (845) 229-8851, or visit www.campvictorylakenec.com.
Session 1 ............................................................... July 12–19
Session 2 ............................................................... July 19–26
Session 3 ............................................................... July 26–August 2
Session 4 ............................................................... August 2–9
Full Session ........................................................... July 12–August 9

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Contact: For more information call, the Northern New England Conference Youth Department at (207) 797-3760, ext. 216, or visit www.lawroweld.org.
Junior Camp ..................................................... June 28–July 5
Blind Camp ....................................................... July 5–12
Teen Camp ...................................................... July 12–19
Family Camp I ................................................... July 19–26
Family Camp II ................................................... July 26–August 2

CAMP WINNEKEAG
Contact: For more information, call the Southern New England Conference Youth Department at (978) 365-4551, or visit www.campwinnekeag.com.
Adventurer ....................................................... June 21–28
Junior Camp ..................................................... June 28–July 5
Tween Camp/Teen 1 Camp ................................. July 5–12
Teen 2 Camp ................................................... July 12–19
Family Camp 1 ................................................... July 19–26
Family Camp 2 ................................................... July 26–August 2

Visit the Atlantic Union Conference Adventist Youth Ministries online for information on youth and young adult events, activities, and other ministries at auyouth.com, facebook.com/atlanticunionadventistyouthministries, and twitter.com/auyouth.

Photos courtesy of the camp staff from the camps in the Atlantic Union.