

An Attitude of Gratitude (p. 7); Bird on My Shoulder (p. 22);
Unfailing Love (p. 17); And Then There Was Light (p. 30)

december 2016

Messenger

Canadian Adventist



My Christmas Wish

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heart to heart

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.”

—Ecclesiastes 3:1, ESV

Ends and Beginnings

I enjoy December. It's a time to take stock of the past and look forward to the future. It signals a time of change, a time of completion, in a way. Care to join me for a few moments of reflection?

First, how carefully have I integrated the spirit of Christ in my everyday life? And further, is that really one of my core values? I've begun thinking of carrying with me a little notebook where I can make note of my spiritual well-being from day to day.

How deeply do I understand the message of the Bible? Some who read this column may recall my reading the Bible through in less than two months a few years back. Good for an overview, but it needs to be enhanced by a slower, thoughtful read and reflection of God's word—sort of like putting soup to simmer in a slow-cooker. We benefit from the bringing together of all the parts. This coming year is my time to read the Bible slowly.

What about this one? Am I living a life of faith, or have I pursued something that I want so badly that I'm willing to swap who I am and what I have in Christ for the object of my desire? So many times accommodation comes at an incredible cost. And if I've made a decision that has taken me in a surprising direction, have I really considered the cost?

Who would those around me say that I am? Would the folks at work, the neighbours, my family, take notice that I've been with Jesus, or do my words or actions cause them confusion?

And finally, is there something that I need to make time for that will bring me closer to the peace that comes from a life of faith?

All good things to think about, don't you think?

Thus, at this time of closings and beginnings, perhaps it would serve us well to slow down a bit and bring Christ back into this season of the year in a very real and personal way. ■

Mark Johnson is president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada.



December 2016

3



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WHAT'S INSIDE

December 2016



FEATURES

- 18** **INTERVIEWS** Q&A with Rick Kajiura.
- 24** **COVER STORY** My Christmas Wish— The Szamko family share a bit of what missionary life is like far from home at Christmas time.
- 30** **ADRA FEATURE** And Then There Was Light

IN EVERY ISSUE

- 3** **HEART TO HEART**
- 6** **ADRA CANADA**
- 7** **PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE**
- 8** **TEEN TALK**
- 9** **CREATION CORNER**
- 10** **BURMAN UNIVERSITY**
- 11** **PLANNED GIVING & TRUST SERVICES**
- 12** **WHERE ARE THEY NOW?**
- 14** **A BETTER WORLD**
- 15** **THE CONNECTED CHURCH**
- 16** **REFRESH WITH TIA**
- 17** **PRAYER LIFE**
- 20** **ALMOST VEGAN**
- 21** **VOAR/ON THE ROAD**
- 22** **LITERATURE EVANGELISM**
- 32** **KINGSWAY COLLEGE**
- 33** **MAMAWI ATOSKETAN NATIVE SCHOOL**
- 34** **PARKVIEW PROFILES**
- 35** **EDUCATION**
- 36** **NEWS**
- 42** **ANNOUNCEMENTS/ADVERTISEMENTS**
- 46** **FROM THE EDITOR**





In the Wake of the Storm

TEN DAYS AFTER HURRICANE MATTHEW SLAMMED INTO HAITI causing massive damage, a truck carrying food and hygiene supplies for the survivors left Les Cayes. This was not the first aid distribution the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) would make in the region, and it would not be the last.

The roads leading from Les Cayes began in fairly good condition, but they deteriorated quickly. Damage from the hurricane lined the roads. Trees were downed. Houses were damaged and destroyed. Electrical wires and poles leaned at odd angles. Cell phone signals were quickly lost.

The journey itself was not uneventful. At one point the truck had to proceed ahead gingerly as a downed electrical wire was held up over it. A little further along, just after the truck crossed a bridge, the asphalt ended. As the truck started on the dirt road, it became stuck in mud. For over an hour the volunteers escorting the truck struggled to free it, only succeeding when some local villagers joined the effort.

The truck's final destination was a school in the community of Maniche where the food and supplies would be given to the villagers.

It never arrived.

To reach the school, the truck would have to ford a river, which it could not do. Instead, the truck stayed on the riverbank, and the villagers came to the truck.

Rexilia was one of the people who gratefully received the relief items. She was at home with her eight children when the hurricane hit. They were living in a flood-prone area, and soon

water began to stream into the house. Rexilia gathered her children, and they began to pray for the Lord's protection. Although her house was constructed of durable materials such as cement, it was not enough to withstand the wind, the rain, and the flooding. It was swept away. Fortunately, they all survived. They now live underneath a tarp provided by a kind neighbour.

Rexilia lost more than her house. She had a small business selling used clothing. Her entire inventory was lost with the house. Her husband is a farmer who grows potatoes, maize, and manioc. They were planning to harvest in November, but nothing remained after the storm. Hunger is a real fear, as they now have no source of income.

Rexilia waited on the riverbank. All of her possessions were gone. Even the clothes she was wearing at the time had been given to her by others after the storm. ADRA was able to give her rice, oil, a water filter, toothbrushes, soap, and other essential items. Her happiness was evident. She thanked God that her needs were being met.

"I am so happy to get something. I will share it with others who didn't get anything. That's how we will survive," she said.

ADRA Canada is grateful for the timely and generous gifts from our supporters that enabled people like Rexilia to receive emergency assistance in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Matthew.

Thank you for saving lives! ■

Sharmilla Reid is the donor relations director for ADRA Canada.



An Attitude of Gratitude

“What shall I render unto the Lord
for all his benefits toward me?” Psalm 116:12 (KJV)

One of my favourite verses in the Scriptures is Psalm 116:12. It reads, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?” (KJV). For me, one of the beauties of this verse is that it is a question, not an isolated or definitive statement. Why do I feel that way? Simple. A statement is an already defined view a person might have about something, whereas a question shows that someone is interested in listening to what the other person has to say about the matter. Also, a question allows us to express, in our own words, what we understand or how we feel regarding a situation or the challenges we may be having with it.

More can be said about the above verse. The psalmist is asking *himself* a question—that is what captivates me about this verse. Whenever I read the Word, I try to imagine that I am situated in the narrative and that the messages are directed to me alone. In my opinion, this exercise is not selfish but rather a way to personalize what I read and apply it to my own life. Therefore, I ask myself, just as David did, *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?*

Often we are afraid to ask hard questions, especially of ourselves. That can happen when we pretend that everything is all right or because we are afraid to face a challenging reality. Some describe this mindset as a state of being in denial, and this is a very dangerous state of mind for any person to be in when dealing with reality or facts that are difficult to confront. When we avoid asking questions and remain stuck in denial, we close ourselves off from opportunities to grow. I have often heard (and I agree with the statement), that “there are never wrong questions, but wrong answers.” Thus, asking ourselves how we can be more grateful to God, as David did, simply gives us the chance to evaluate our level of gratitude to Him.

David answers his own question by presenting what he thinks could be the most special way of showing gratitude: He suggests that he would even be willing to surrender his life (see verse 15) as a loving response to God’s goodness, love, and mercies shown to him as he wanted to continue to serve the Lord as a servant. Look at the attitude; it is one of a servant. And so here we have another gem in this psalm.

It is hard to believe that in a few days 2016 will be part of history! Despite some challenging moments we may have experienced this year (which could certainly be considered as character building opportunities given by God for our own growth), we should reflect and say, Thank you, Lord! The simple fact that we can read this message is a great reason to be grateful. May I invite all of us to seriously consider counting our blessings daily and have the same humble attitude of David, recognizing that all we have—the knowledge of His Word, being part of God’s family, our relatives, friends, shelter, food, and eternal life in Christ—comes from God. Consequently, our response should stem from a humble and serving attitude. We can confidently place the best we have on His altar of sacrifice with love, trusting that He completely owns and guides our lives.

I pray that God will continue to give us all a heart with an attitude of gratitude during this festive season, when we are especially reminded of God’s amazing love for us in Christ and throughout the new year to come! ■

*Wesley Torres is president of the
British Columbia Conference.*



teen talk

Q: I think I've gone too far. I feel disgusting.

A: That's a horrible feeling (((hugs))). Some of us have gone through that, and it sucks big-time. It's like looking at yourself in the mirror and being disgusted by what you see.

Behind the mirror there is a Person who sees you differently, though. You see a broken teen, perhaps somebody who has no future and can't be fixed. But Jesus sees an amazing miracle about to happen. You see all the same sins that you've committed over and over, even those that you did on purpose.

Jesus looks at you through the holes in his hands.

You look down. Jesus says, "Look at me."

You cry. Jesus cries too.

Yes, you may have gone far, but never too far. Psalm 139 says that even when we go to the other end, God is already there, waiting for us.

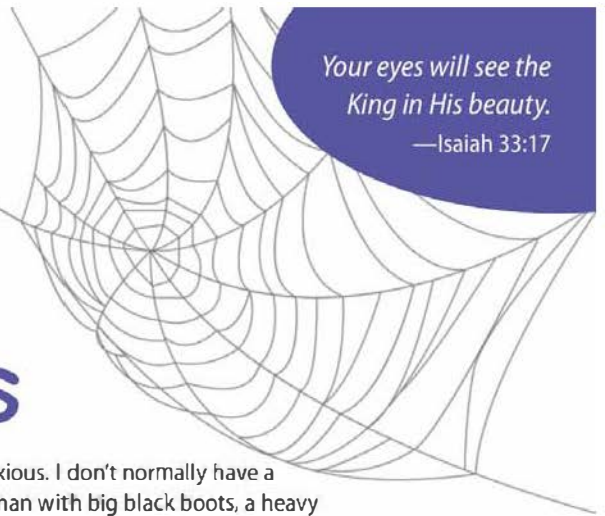
So look up, my friend. See Jesus' eyes. ■



Do you have a question for Pastor Josué Sánchez? Email it to messenger@adventist.ca.



Tarantulas



When I heard that our new pastor keeps tarantulas for pets, I felt anxious. I don't normally have a panic attack when I see a spider, but my heart raced as I pictured a man with big black boots, a heavy chain hanging from his pocket, and 40 treacherous tarantulas crawling over his own heavily tattooed hairy arms! I didn't know how I'd be able to focus on a sermon given by a pastor who looked like that.

Once Pastor Scott unpacked his spider houses, he held out a magnifying glass and pushed a big hairy spider toward me on the palm of his hand. "Just look at the colour of this pretty girl," he gushed. The spider stretched out a long, dainty leg as I had a close look.

"She's purple!" I was surprised to learn that pet tarantulas are gentle, don't give deadly poisonous bites, and can be beautiful shades of green, pink, purple, and blue.



Think about it.

I had been prejudiced; I had judged our new pastor and his pets before I knew anything about them. In the same way, many people are prejudiced against God, Seventh-day Adventists, or Christians in general. They believe things about God and His people that aren't true. Pastor Scott changed my mind about tarantulas because he showed me their beauty. Will you help change the minds of the people around you? Will you show the world the beauty of Christ?

Do it!

Take time to really get to know God for yourself. Pray that He will fill your heart with love for Him and for the people around you. Pray that the beauty of His character will shine through you.



Faith and Science



Pekka Määttänen

A QUICK GLANCE at Pekka Määttänen's professional experience and you will see over 10 years of research experience. With a PhD in Biology from McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Dr. Määttänen's research experience ranges from neuroscience and basic biochemistry to nutrition and host-pathogen interactions. In his own words, he is "highly motivated to uncover safe and cost-effective prevention and treatment strategies for chronic diseases." Given his wealth of academic knowledge and his aim to serve God, Pekka Määttänen is a great fit for Burman University.

Pekka and his wife, Sarah (Picknell), alongside their three-year-old son, Isaac, and eight-month-old daughter, Lilja, are the newest members of the Burman University family. Heading into his first year of teaching at Burman, Pekka is beyond eager to get into the groove of teaching. "I'm really looking forward to getting to know my students better and working with them more. I've already been inspired by them. I'm also excited because I have a lab where I can do some research projects I have been thinking about for some time. I have some talented students I'm working with now on two projects, and I'm already excited about these studies," says Pekka.

Having grown up in Ontario and gone through our Adventist educational system, Pekka has seen the value of Christian education and wants to contribute to that here at Burman. "I was fortunate to benefit from a Seventh-day Adventist Christian education in grade school [College Park Elementary School] and high school [Kingsway College]. My further education was at secular institutions.... My experiences there in the classroom and research were formative in my faith journey and also helped me recognize both the strengths and weaknesses of science, as well as the importance of critical thinking. Academics aside, challenges I faced near the completion of my doctoral studies really helped ground my faith and solidify my trust in God," says Pekka.

As he looks at how his students experience his classes, one theme stands out: the integration of faith in learning. "Of course, I want my students to learn the basics of biology, not just by memorization but through application. I want my students to have a faith-building experience and to learn to apply the knowledge they gain to health ministry or any ministry they enter in the future, no matter what occupation. Through their studies, I want them to understand the unique opportunities we as Adventists have to connect science with faith and inspiration. This experience, coupled with critical thinking, will help them tackle any challenges they face as they put their full trust in God."

In and out of the classroom Pekka is here at Burman to serve. "My highest aim is to serve God wherever He calls me. I never saw myself as a teacher when I was younger—in fact, I was very shy and nervous in front of people. However, God often has unexpected plans for us, and God led me to enjoy research, health ministry, and eventually teaching, through events too many to describe in a short profile. I have a passion for health ministry, youth ministry, and studying the wonders of God's Creation, and I feel that these fit well with the vision and mission of Burman." ■

Jr Ferrer is vice-president for marketing and enrolment at Burman University.

DENISE HAS BEEN PASSIONATE ABOUT THE PIANO SINCE CHILDHOOD. Although she became a history professor, her heart was always with the piano. As she got older, she wanted to do something for the music faculty and students at the university where she worked.

In December 2013, I spent an evening I will never forget at this university. It was magical. I was with my fiancée at the University of Montreal for a private piano recital in the old performance hall, an historic building with much character. The 80 or so attendees sat on the stage surrounding two grand pianos at this intimate event, during which students performed a variety of pieces for invited guests and donors. I had attended this type of recital before, but this one was special—it was dedicated to a couple to acknowledge the generous donation they had made to fund bursaries for piano students.

Let's backtrack a bit. In January 2008, I was asked to meet with two of the university's loyal donors, Denise and Claude, who wanted to set up something special for the music faculty. They knew about gift planning through the literature of the university, but they wanted to learn more.

Denise and Claude were in their 60s, married with no children, and were both retired history professors. Their wills said they were leaving everything to the university's history department; however, they wanted to do something for the music department as well.

Denise had already put in place a fund for the piano

sector of the music department, and the first bursary was to be given to a student at the doctoral level to pay for his tuition. Knowing this, I advised her to purchase a joint life insurance policy with her husband, so that the death benefit could be added to the fund, increasing the value of the bursaries.

When I went to visit them to deliver the insurance policy, I asked them, "I know that your first bursary will be given shortly. Are you looking forward to this event?" Their eyes glistened with emotion as they said, "To see a student receive our bursary, and have it make such a difference in this student's life, means a lot to us."

Back to December 2013.

The guests quietly took their seats on the stage surrounding the pianos. After a brief welcome, the dean dedicated the recital to Denise and Claude. Then, seven students went on stage, one after the other, to perform.

The magical moment was the grand finale—when Denise sat at one piano, and the student who had received her bursary for three years sat at the other. To see both pianists, playing back and forth, was deeply moving. My fiancée held my hand tight, and now, I had damp eyes. Watching and listening to this student play so magnificently with the one who had made his doctorate possible was nothing short of enchanting.

On that night I fully understood the magic of philanthropy. ■

Alain Lévesque is a specialist in gift planning and philanthropy in Sherbrooke, Quebec.

PASSIONS, PIANOS, PHILANTHROPY

"On that night I fully understood the magic of philanthropy."



where are they now

Where Are They Now



Messenger catches up with former leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada. In this issue we talk with Ron Nelson.

Interview by J.D. Victor Fitch, Messenger Staff Writer.



Ron and Sandra Nelson

Messenger: *Tell me where you were born and about your childhood.*

Ron Nelson: I was born and raised just south of Chilliwack, B.C., in a small valley called Ryder Lake. My father was a good man who worked hard and provided a modest, adequate lifestyle, but the greatest gift he gave me was an example of faithfulness. Mom struggled with depression and was institutionalized twice in my childhood. This cast a shadow on our otherwise happy home, and Dad's ardent love and devotion for Mom was inspirational to me.

M: *You were not born into an Adventist home. How did you come into the Adventist family?*

R: When I was a young boy, Mom had given me a New Testament and told me that if I wanted answers to this life's questions, I needed to read the Bible. My mother passed away suddenly because of an aneurysm in her heart on the second day of my Grade 12 school year. The shock of this was devastating to our family, but eventually I was led to study the Scriptures to determine truth. I have found answers that have strengthened my faith and informed my life.

Early in our marriage Sandra and I had a retail business in Kamloops, B.C., called Keen Kraft Music, where I sold guitars, amps, PAs, and drums, etc. One of my customers, Terry Martin, witnessed to us and eventually took us to church. Pastor Peter and Ruth Fritz and the congregation in Kamloops nurtured us, and we joined the Adventist movement as members in 1979.

M: *What led to your desire to become a minister and then to Burman University for preparation?*

R: Pastor Fritz had encouraged me to become involved in the church and to prayerfully come to an understanding of my spiritual gifts. I became very active, and it became evident to His church that God was blessing my efforts for Him. Through Pastor Peter's modelling and support, and the encouragement of the church members, we followed God's providence to attend Canadian Union College (now Burman University) to prepare for the ministry. Sandra and I are both ever so grateful for the influence of those who patiently taught us and led us into a deeper appreciation of Jesus. Our time at college set the tone for our ministry. It was a very special time for us as a family.

M: *Where and in what capacity have you served God and the church?*

R: We began our ministry at CUC, where I served (while still a student) as the director of employment and the director of student finance. After graduation, I served pastorally in the Alberta Conference and then accepted a call to British Columbia. Eventually, I was called to serve in the BC Conference office in the treasury department. Providence again led us back to the pastoral ministry and to the Maritime Conference, where I served as the ministerial director.

Most recently, we served the Manitoba-Saskatchewan Conference as the presidential couple. Ministry has been a very rewarding and personally satisfying journey.

M: *Ministry in the Adventist Church often requires working as a team. In what way(s) has your wife assisted in your ministry?*

R: Sandra has always been a tremendous support to me. Ministry has had its challenges and has been very difficult at times, but her steadfast and consistent prayer life has always encouraged us both to be found faithful to each other and to our call to serve His church. She has been, and is, a remarkable mother and wife, and her gift of hospitality has done much to make our home and churches a blessing.

M: *You retired earlier than you needed to. What led you to this decision?*

R: I was under deep conviction in November of 2010 to step out by faith to pursue a ministry focusing on my creative gifts as a singer/songwriter. I love evangelism and wanted a more focused opportunity to serve in this area. When I was asked to serve as conference president for the church in Manitoba-Saskatchewan, I set aside these convictions in favour of the revealed will of His people. I have no regrets. The people of the conference responded to God's vision, and we were able to do much to strengthen the conference administratively as it transitioned from a small to a large conference. It was a privilege to serve them and a wonderful way to conclude that chapter of ministry. I eventually answered those earlier convictions and am now working hard to fulfill God's will as a singer/songwriter and an inspirational speaker.

M: *Tell me about your family.*

R: Sandra and I have partnered together for 42+ years of marriage. And our three children, Jana (Luke Heimann), Holly (Brad Kay), and Brody (Vanessa Palamaruk), are now married and have blessed us with eight grandchildren. They have all chosen to make the Lacombe area home, and so upon retirement we joined them there.

M: *Where have you retired?*

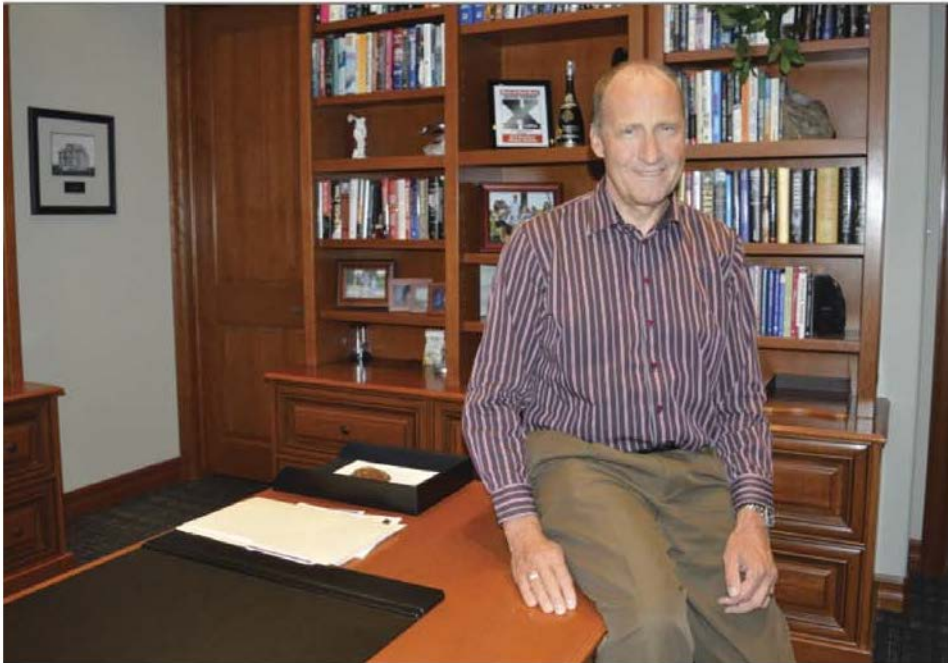
R: As I said, currently, we are in Lacombe, Alta., but following God's leading, our plan is to eventually build a home near Rimby, Alta.

M: *What do you see as your ministry now, and how will you still be serving the Lord and the church although not in a leadership role?*

R: I am actively engaged as a singing evangelist and have booked a full slate of concerts for this fall, including some dates with It Is Written Canada. Next spring is filling up with a scheduled evangelistic series and a concert tour into California. I want to model my love for Jesus in the centre of my deepest passion. I would hope to encourage others to serve ably and creatively for Him. In many ways, I believe that the most impactful days of my ministry are still before me. If others are interested to know more about my ministry and to listen to some songs from my new album, *On Holy Ground*, they can check out my website, www.ronnelsonmusic.com. ■

Man's 60th birthday

will honour A Better World Canada in a big way



After deciding to give a monumental donation in honour of his 60th birthday, Central Alberta businessman Gord Bontje aims to inspire others to give to A Better World Canada.

Thousands of children and people who are sick or poor in East Africa are seeing their lives changed because of committed sponsors working with A Better World Canada.

Gord Bontje is one such committed sponsor. For nearly two decades this Central Alberta homebuilder has partnered with A Better World Canada on effecting positive, sustainable change in Kenya and elsewhere. As with many donors his age and older, he is keen to leave a legacy.

As part of celebrating his 60th birthday, which happened on Nov. 27, Bontje will contribute \$500,000. Bontje, a humble man, said this donation isn't about him. His heart is set on "helping the developing world," and he hopes to inspire others to give to such a worthy cause, to leave a legacy and, in his case, mark a special occasion through a gift to A Better World.

"I've been blessed and had good fortune in my life," said Bontje at his Red Deer area office. "I want to give of my success."

Eric Rajah, co-founder of A Better World, says the international development organization is grateful for Bontje's donation supporting yet-to-be determined projects in Kenya, Rwanda, and Afghanistan. The money will be used immediately and as needs arise.

With this donation, A Better World can make long-term plans

and have well thought-out solutions.

"A larger donation like this helps us to also conduct deeper research before deploying the funds," said Rajah. "It also encourages and inspires others to be more compassionate and invest."

While Bontje's donation is grand, A Better World continues to search for potential sponsors.

"This will fund many projects for the long term and tackle some difficult projects," said Rajah. "Our budget is \$3 million per year, so every dollar, big and small, matters."

Bontje learned about A Better World in 1999 through a longtime friend who was already sponsoring projects. Bontje was impressed with the charity's efficiency at keeping each project on task to completion, the local community's buy-in requirement, and that all donors' money goes directly to a project.

He immediately donated \$5,000.

Bontje, his family, and Laebon Homes have been passionate supporters since then, financing everything from housing and water infrastructure to surgeries for children. The projects total 28, so far.

"He likes children and improving their lives," said Rajah. "It was very difficult to raise money for a school that would serve intellectually disabled children, especially in Lamu [on the east coast of Kenya], but now it is winning all kinds of awards and becoming a model."

The Bontje family sponsored new classrooms, a special learning classroom, a water system, dining area, as well as dormitory renovations.

Sometimes potential donors call Bontje, a well-known business leader in the area, to get his thoughts on A Better World. He tells them how much good they can do through this volunteer-driven organization.

"The delivery process is so pure," said Bontje. "It's done by volunteers and people of very high integrity. The projects are done very intelligently. I can give people and companies a great level of comfort that what they are supporting is really what they are supporting." ■

Laura Tester travels with A Better World and is a freelance writer for newspapers.



Worth It!

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED why God would care about measly human beings? He is the Sovereign God, the Creator of the universe. Why would He be concerned with our small problems? Most people have had the same question. In fact, King David poses this question many times in the book of Psalms. He asks in Psalm 8:4, *Why would you even consider us mere mortals?*

The Bible says that God loves all of us deeply. Jesus explained that God is interested in the small things; even the hairs on our heads are counted (see Luke 12:2)!

According to a news story from Australia, a woman became distressed when she noticed her goldfish was choking on a pebble. She took her pet fish to a local veterinarian and asked them to save the dying fish. Believe it or not, with the help of anesthetics, some gloves, and a tiny instrument, the vet was able to grasp a small, jagged rock and remove it from the goldfish's mouth. The relieved pet owner gladly paid the hospital bill of over \$500.


This may sound ridiculous. Why would someone spend that much money on a silly goldfish? For a fraction of the cost, the owner could have purchased a brand-new fish. Why would she take the time, energy, and money on such an insignificant goldfish?

God's perspective is like that of the owner of the goldfish. We may seem small and inconsequential to others. We may not even grasp our own value. And yet, God cares so deeply for us that He will do everything to save our life. In fact, He did! He gave up His own life so that we could have a second chance at life. You may not think you are worth much, but never discount how much God values you. He created you and desires for you to live your best life. ■

*Kumar Dixit is the former ministerial director of the British Columbia Conference. He currently serves as the chaplain of WGTS 91.9 radio in Takoma Park, Maryland. He is the author of *Branded Faith*, available on Amazon.com.*



The Prospect

 Words by God —Hebrews 12:1, 2, NIV

Another year is just around the corner carrying with it new adventures, life, and opportunities. What will 2017 hold for you?

The prospect of everything becoming new can seem overstated at times. However, I believe God is doing something new in us, desiring to let His love refresh our hearts and breathe new life into our bones. God isn't finished with us yet! We are confident in this, "that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6, NIV).

This season is one of reflection as we remember what God has brought us through and how He has led our lives. Take a moment to reflect: Who has God shown Himself to be in your life this year? How does His love make a difference in the way you treat others?

Think on these things throughout the month and ask God what He would like you to work on in your relationship with Him this coming year. Are there any adventures God has placed in front of you? For me, this will be a year of new adventures with school and opportunities to serve.

As you walk in faith in this journey, I encourage you to remember our "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7, NKJV). We serve a God who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, and that same God is working in our lives today. It is not just a hope we have but an active, breathing, and living

God who is working on our behalf and for our good.

When we look at the big picture of who God is and how He moves in our lives, it expels fear—because we believe with certainty that "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 3:14, ESV). If there is something God is leading you towards, do not let fear keep you from moving forward in the faith that you have now. Allow God to be your strength, your courage, and your voice.

Each one of us is called to follow after God, and He will direct our purpose. Whether it is serving in your local community or abroad, new job or school, reaching out to a friend struggling, opening your heart to healing, finding a cure to homelessness, or seeing a need and accepting the call to help. Whatever this year looks like for you, God will go with you and guide your steps as you follow His leading in your life.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith" (Heb. 12:1, 2, NIV).

Be Blessed. ■

Tia Lawrence is 20 years old. She is a member of the Comox Adventist Church on Vancouver Island. Tia's blog—refreshwithtia.com



 with Tia

 Watch "God Is on the Move" by 7evnth Time Down:
<https://goo.gl/5jVDgs>



Unfailing Love

"...rest assured, there is never a time when you are not loved."

Have you ever just sat at the base of a mountain and marvelled at how absolutely massive and majestic it is? As it rises up into the sky, cutting its jagged form into the air, I marvel at not only its size but also at a kind of beauty that is hard to explain. I am dwarfed in comparison, filled with a quiet awe as I try to absorb its majesty.

We are privileged each day to pause and marvel at the majestic attributes of God. I invite you to focus on a particular characteristic of God that appears throughout Scripture. I encourage you, with the help of a concordance or a Bible search function on your Bible app on your electronic device, to read the many verses that include the phrase "unfailing love." This exercise is heart-moving as you absorb the reality of this wonderful portrait of God. Let me whet your appetite with just a few of the highlights.

We are reminded that God loved us, even before He made the world (Eph. 1:4). While the Bible does not state exactly how long ago that was, we can know that even before this world was made, there was love in God's heart for you and me. From before the very beginning of anything on this earth, God's love was there. So rest assured, there is never a time when you are not loved.

David describes the magnitude of that love with the following comparison. "Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds" (Ps. 36:5).¹ In an age before we had space travel and are measuring just how vast the heavens are, David uses the heavens to try to illustrate that God's love is *that* vast, and not only that—it is unfailing.

There is nothing as unfailing as God's love. When something has failed us, we feel let down. Perhaps your health is failing, a friend has let you down, or the economy has collapsed and the political system has not come good on their campaign promises. Whatever it is that has failed you, know that God's love is not only unfailing but also as vast as the heavens. Plus, His unfailing love draws you to Himself (Jer. 31:3).

This God is so incredibly rich in mercy and loves you so much, that even though you are dead because of your sins, He gave you life when He raised Christ from the dead (Eph. 2:4, 5). He reveals His kindness and love by saving you, not because of any good things you have done, but because of His mercy. He has washed away your sins, giving you new life through the Holy Spirit. Not only that, but because of His grace He declared you righteous and gives you confidence that you will inherit eternal life (Titus 2:4–7). That is how unfailing His love for you is.

You may be tempted to despair, but take courage, for He is a God of forgiveness, gracious and merciful, slow to become angry and rich in unfailing love, who will not abandon you (Neh. 9:17). His goodness and unfailing love will pursue you all the days of your life (Ps. 23:6). His unfailing love and faithfulness come through Jesus, who is near to the Father's heart and reveals Him to you (John 1:17, 18).

So you can be glad and rejoice in His unfailing love, for He has seen your troubles and cares about what brings anguish to your soul (Ps. 31:7). ■

Warren Kay is a pastor and life coach in Alberta.

¹All Scripture quotations in this article are taken from the New Living Translation (NLT).

Q & A

BY STAN JENSEN

One of the many Canadians that serve in the General Conference is my friend Rick Kajiura. I value his passion and ministry in Global Missions, and after reading this you will understand why.



Rick and Robyn with their daughters, Kylie and Karina

EDITOR: *Tell us a bit about yourself.*

RICK KAJIURA: I grew up in a small town in Ontario. My family attended the Hamilton Mountain church, which overlooks the downtown area of Hamilton. I remember the poem on our bulletin's cover: "To this church set on a hill, whose light must shine abroad. We welcome you a valued friend, to this place, the house of God." It was penned by Ivan Prouty, one of the church elders at the time.

My wife, Robyn, and I met while we were at Andrews University. She's an Australian who grew up as a missionary kid in India. Robyn is the associate director for General

Conference Auditing Service responsible for the North American Division territory. We have two daughters, Kylie, attending Andrews University, and Karina, attending Kingsway College.

EDITOR: *What is your position at Adventist Mission? Have you served in other departments within the Church?*

RICK: I serve as communication director for the Office of Adventist Mission at the General Conference. If you read the mission stories in the Adult Bible study guide and the mission quarterlies, or watch the *Mission Spotlight* videos or *Mission 360* program on Hope Channel and 3ABN, you

have seen some of what we do.

We also operate the Global Mission program, which sends Global Mission pioneers to areas where there are few or no Adventists. These pioneers are local people, so they speak the local language and understand the culture. They are given a small living stipend and sent to start new groups of believers. Today many people would call them church planters.

I've had the privilege of serving in a variety of positions. I worked on the *Lake Union Herald* at the Lake Union in Michigan. I've also served as assistant director in the General Conference communication department, and as communication director for ADRA International.

EDITOR: *What do you like best about what you currently do?*

RICK: Probably my favourite part is meeting frontline mission workers. They are passionate about what they are doing.

In Sri Lanka I met a pioneer who used to walk through the tea fields at night for miles to give Bible studies. That might not sound bad until you realize there are no streetlights. He didn't have a flashlight, and there were leopards and bandits in the area. But he had faith and was passionate about giving Bible studies.

I've met many missionaries who make a difference in people's lives. One of them is Dr. Gillian Seton, a medical missionary who arrived in Liberia just before the Ebola crisis hit. The Ebola crisis was mainly under control in Liberia, and we asked her to come to San Antonio, for the Sabbath afternoon program at the GC Session. But she didn't want to leave unless there was a doctor to take her place while she was gone. Lorna Linda University president Dick Hart was able to get someone to fill in for her so she could share with the GC delegates the challenges and joys of serving in Liberia during one of the most frightening epidemics in years.

EDITOR: *Are there many Canadians actively involved in mission work (volunteer, paid, permanent, or temporary)?*

RICK: Right now there are 19 Canadians who are serving or who have served in 2016 in foreign mission. Nine are serving as regular missionaries or mission appointees, and 10 are serving as volunteers through Adventist Volunteer Services. Volunteers have served in places such as Mongolia, Thailand, Korea, and the Marshall Islands. Anyone interested in serving as a volunteer should pray about it and visit HeSaidGo.net and click on "Long-Term Missions."

EDITOR: *Are Adventist Mission workers needed anywhere right now?*

RICK: Yes, there is a great need for medical missionaries, and people can visit <https://am.adventistmission.org/career-openings> to see current openings. If you don't see something right

away, don't give up. Pray about it, and if you feel God is calling you, check back again, because needs change over time.

The church needs tentmakers, people who go into a difficult mission area and get regular jobs but who are missionaries—we call it Total Employment. If people want to learn more, they can visit TotalEmployment.org. In certain areas we need "Waldensian smdenes," young people who are willing to go to university in a mission area so they can be a living witness to their fellow students and even teachers. You can see a video about this program here: <https://goo.gl/8jwDHC>

EDITOR: *If someone's dream was to serve as a missionary, what is the roadmap they should follow?*

RICK: They need to follow God's plan for their lives, so the first step is to pray and ask God to show where they are needed. They should start getting involved in outreach where they are—be part of Total Member Involvement. Then serve for a year as an Adventist Volunteer Services volunteer. It's a wonderful way to serve and get experience in cross-cultural mission.

EDITOR: *How can readers of the Messenger be more active in supporting Adventist Mission in their local churches?*

RICK: Pray for the work, and pray for missionaries and Global Mission pioneers. Ask God what He would have you do for mission. Also remember mission offerings. Over the years, mission offerings have probably been the single most important factor in advancing mission around the world.

They can also support Global Mission pioneers and projects. One hundred percent of the funds go to support frontline mission work.

EDITOR: *Is it possible to give regular monthly donations using a credit card? How do you accept donations from Canadians?*

RICK: Regular monthly credit card donations for Global Mission can be made online at Global-Mission.org. However, donations through that website are currently processed in the U.S. Donations can also be done by cheque or completing the credit card donation form [included with this issue] and sending it to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada. Just mark the donation as "Global Mission."

EDITOR: *Is there a Bible text or promise that means something special to you?*

RICK: I like Micah 6:8. There are a many texts that talk about mission, but to me this is a mission verse too. If you treat people justly and mercifully and spend time humbly with God, He can use you, and people will see Him in you. ■

Stan Jensen is the communication director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada and editor of the Canadian Adventist Messenger.



almost vegan

Photo: Keith Chant

Almost vegan

Sometimes when you have a recipe that everyone enjoys, changing the recipe and trying something a little different can be daunting. However, you never know what the result will be until you try. Sometimes it doesn't work; sometimes it works beautifully.

Cornbread is an old favourite that our family loves, and since we like to experiment, one day we decided to try tweaking the recipe to see if we could improve it. The result is a recipe that we all now enjoy. The jalapeño doesn't add too much heat but does add a fair bit of flavour. This is good served warm with vegan margarine or with a variety of toppings. ■

Keith and Cheryl Chant, along with their son Ben, enjoy baking, cooking, and experimenting with flavours and recipes.

Jalapeño Cornbread

INGREDIENTS:

- ½ Tbsp (7.5 ml) coconut oil
- ½ cup (125 ml) frozen corn
- 1 cup (250 ml) cornmeal
- 1 cup (250 ml) flour
- ¼ cup (60 ml) sugar
- 1 Tbsp (15 ml) baking powder
- ½ tsp (2.5 ml) salt
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and minced
- 1 cup + 2 Tbsp (280 ml) almond milk
- ¼ cup (60 ml) oil
- 2 flax eggs*

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Heat coconut oil in a small frying pan, add frozen corn, and sauté until the corn starts to brown.
- Combine all dry ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Add corn and mix in.
- In a separate bowl combine jalapeño and liquid ingredients, mixing well.
- Add liquid mixture to dry mixture and stir until combined.
- Pour into greased 8-inch square baking dish. Bake at 400°C for 25 minutes. Serve warm.

* Each flax egg is 1 Tbsp (15 ml) of ground flax mixed in 3 Tbsp (45 ml) of hot water.

Family

As a Christian station, we have noticed that many of our listeners worry about their families. Over the last number of decades, the order and stability of the home has changed significantly. The challenges most of us faced as children have altered in nature and intensity. How do we respond to all that society throws at us to lure families away from the church?

Lois writes...

Dear VOAR,

I am writing to ask you to pray for my daughter Rhonda, who is 20 yrs. old. Rhonda has had many struggles in her life, and we as a family have had many struggles along with her. She is searching but doesn't know where to turn sometimes. She went to an Al-Anon meeting a couple of weeks ago, because she had asked me to take her. I believe that she is really affected by her father's drinking, and my behaviour from much younger years.

She doesn't seem to want to go to church yet. To be truthful, I haven't gotten grounded in any one church. Please pray for me, that I allow the Lord to lead me. I have attended the Salvation Army, where I was so blessed, and I also attended numerous women's retreats and couples' ministries with other denominations. However, it's been over two years since I have stepped inside any church.

I do continue to listen to VOAR, and I am so blessed by



your music and family programming. I just want you to know, with a heavy heart and yet a hopeful one, how much your station means to me. I know I could continue to be an anonymous listener, but I feel the need to tell you how much I need and truly appreciate what you bring into my home. Please keep all my family in prayer.

Thank you for being there for us 24/7 and for always pointing the way to our loving God!

Yours in Christ,

Lois ■

Christine Bergen is the secretary/treasurer for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Newfoundland and Labrador.



Rebecque Johnson

ON THE ROAD WITH

Becky

AT THE GARDEN ROAD AND BRIDGELAND CHURCHES IN ALBERTA.

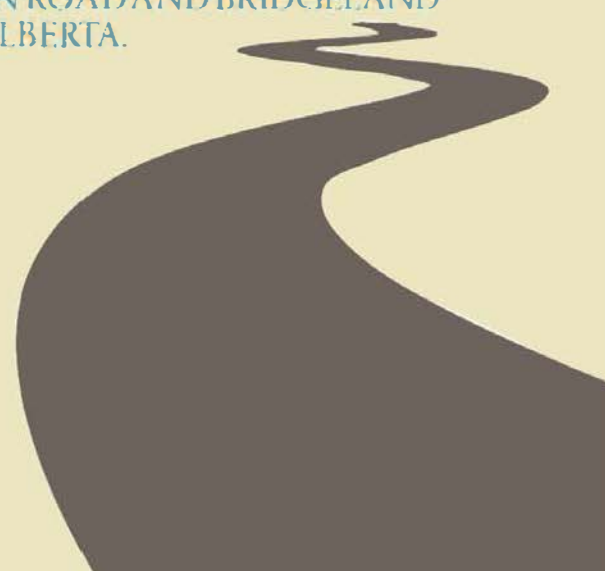
How do you find God?

Kayon Brevett: I go in my closet alone and sing and pray and just sit and talk like I am talking with my husband or best friend.

Elaine Marshall: Actually, I did not find God; He found me. I was lost in sin, and God found me, with the help of a neighbour who invited me to church. I gave my life and heart to Him. Thank God.

Sunila Sangam: [He is my] Rock [where] I [can] hide and shelter when the trouble comes.

Latoya Small: My grandparents [raised] me to know this man Jesus and from this I know and find God.





Bird on my Shoulder

How ordinary people
are touching our nation,
one door at a time.

It was a very hot day, and Simon, feeling tired and discouraged, had had enough. He had been knocking on doors all afternoon, and things had not been going well. So he decided to lie down under a tree, relax, and forget about this whole Canada Youth Challenge ordeal. Suddenly, from above, he heard the raucous sound of squawking. Looking up, he saw a black bird flying straight at him, and, to his astonishment, it landed on his shoulder, squawking loudly in his hear. “Shoo, shoo!” Simon shouted, waving his arms. But the bird simply circled the air and landed again on his shoulder, screaming.

Simon got up, the bird still perched on his shoulder. Then, stranger still, the bird seemed to point with its beak in the direction it wanted Simon to go. When Simon tried to go elsewhere, the bird would squawk and nip at his ear and neck until he followed orders. So Simon, with the bird still perched on his shoulder, went where he was led.

A woman answered the first door Simon knocked on, and when she saw him standing there with the bird, she stared in amazement. The bird was louder than Simon, and all Simon could say was that the bird was a new friend. For three doors, the bird stayed perched on Simon’s shoulder, fascinating the people who observed it. There were wide-eyed stares, lots of questions, plenty of laughs, and, at the end, a number of books were left with the people at the doors.

A Message of Hope

There is a quiet movement spreading all across the nation of Canada. The face of this movement is as wide and diverse as the world we live in. It is made up of people all ages, ethnicities, and life experiences. Its leader is All Powerful, its method is simple, and its purpose is unchanging—to win Canada for the kingdom, one door, one book, one soul at a time. This movement, the work of literature evangelism, is important to God because it fulfills a desperate need, a need to come close to the pain and isolation that so fills the hearts of our nation, and to share a message of hope:

- Hope for the woman whose emotional scar ran deeper than the physical one left when her husband, while committing suicide, tried to take her with him. To her, a message that left her in tears was given—God heals the deepest hurts and brings peace to the broken-hearted.
- Hope for the man who, suffering with diabetes, was shown how to manage his disease through simple lifestyle changes. To him, restoration was given as his illness was reversed.
- Hope for the young man who, receiving a GLOW tract, asked for Bible studies. To him new life was given as he found comfort and hope in the shelter of God’s promises.
- Hope for one of the many federal cabinet MPs who received a package from our office and took the time to say thank you. To them, an opportunity was given to come to know health of body and soul.

These stories, just a few of the many experienced this past year, demonstrate the impact of this ministry. It is a ministry whose methods have been ordained by God and whose ultimate success is guaranteed by Him, if we do our part.

The Methods of Our Ministry

We here at Lifestyle Canada have been given the incredible privilege and responsibility to head the literature evangelism movement in Canada. Our ministry, which operates throughout Canada and has covered all major cities across this nation, runs three programs:

GLOW, which stands for "Giving Light to Our World," is our *every member* ministry. Through the use of GLOW tracts, we train ordinary church members across Canada to share their faith every day, everywhere, and with everyone. Just last year ordinary church members distributed nearly one million GLOW tracts across Canada. Because of these efforts, our office receives weekly requests for prayer, more literature, and Bible studies.

iHeal is our professional health certification program. It trains ordinary members to become healthy lifestyle coaches, bringing the message of healing for body, mind, and soul to homes across Canada. Because of the service and dedication of iHeal coaches, a number of people have experienced health transformations, such as reversing diabetes, fighting cancer, and ultimately experiencing the reality of a God who heals body, mind, and soul.

Canada Youth Challenge (CYC) is our student literature evangelism program. Every year students from across Canada and around the world dedicate a summer of their lives to work for God. They knock on doors in neighbourhoods throughout our country, personally bringing the message of a Saviour's love to those who need to hear it most. This year CYC students visited over 300,000 homes, prayed for over 11,000 individuals, and gathered more than 1,000 interests for Depression seminars, Bible studies, Stop Smoking clinics, and other programs.

Literature—With a Personal Touch

Through our programs, we at Lifestyle Canada aim to come close to the hearts of Canadians. We offer literature with a personal touch, because it is only as we come close that we are able to bring a message of comfort to those who need it most.

If there is any doubt that the work of literature evangelism is important, remember Simon's story. Through feathers, beaks, and squawks, God sent Simon much-needed encouragement, putting him back on his feet and back at the doors where he could share God's message of love. This is how important this work is to God. All He needs are people who are willing to join the movement and go. ■



Jonathan Zita is the executive director of Lifestyle Canada, a charity organized to better fulfill the mandates of the literature ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church across Canada. To learn more about this ministry, please visit LifestyleCanada.org or contact us at mail@lifestylecanada.org



CYC students

My Christmas WISH

by Wesley Szamko

It is four o'clock Christmas morning. The nasal droning of a chanting monk over loud speakers from the nearby wat (Buddhist temple) abruptly startles me from deep sleep in the pre-dawn hours. In the coming minutes the sound penetrating our Cambodian home is mingled with the cacophony of competing blessings from surrounding wats, crowing roosters, waking neighbour children, and the national anthem played over the radio from across the wall. Towers of loudspeakers from a distant twin bon ceremony soon pump out a musical mix of traditional Khmer, Western "Top 40," and a few carols thrown in for good luck.

As I lay soaked by sweat, even in the cool season, I reflect on my childhood Christmases. My sister and I would eagerly bundle up against the cold and rip-toe from our beds to give the presents around the tree one more shake. While predicting their contents, we debated what my parents' plea of "Don't wake us up too early" meant. Now I, too, wished for just a bit more sleep. Merry Christmas ... 2009. My family's first Christmas far from home as missionaries.

We have since had eight Christmas days pass while serving God as International Service Employees for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. None of the events of that first Christmas had anything to do with Christmas. Cambodia is predominantly Buddhist (85.1 percent) and largely unreached by Christianity (3.2 percent Christian). The Seventh-day Adventist Church is growing, largely because of local workers such as Global Mission pioneers. Still, as of mid-2016 there is only one Adventist church/church company for every 464,324 Khmer. Like the other unreached countries in the 10/40 window,¹ Christmas is kept by most indigenous people only through commercialism, Western Christmas music, and an occasional Christmas tree or manger scene—frequently with Santa Claus as the dominant figure looking down at baby Jesus. Most people never stop to ask more about this

"Western holiday" beyond what they have learned from Hollywood movies.

Before we went to Cambodia, our family home was in Canada. I grew up in Calgary, Alta., and after my father passed away, we moved to Ponoka County near Burman University (then Canadian Union College, CUC). After graduating from CUC, I pastored at the Henderson Highway Seventh-day Adventist Church in Winnipeg, Man.; the Willowdale church in North York, Ont., (part of the greater Toronto area); the College Heights church in Lacombe, Alta. where I also served as campus chaplain at, then, Canadian University College; and, finally, as the senior pastor at the Edmonton South church in Edmonton, Alta.

My wife, Ivonne, was born in Iquitos, Peru and grew up on the campus of Universidad Peruana Unión, our Adventist university just outside of Lima, Peru, before attending medical school in Bolivia. We accepted the call to Cambodia through the General Conference while in Edmonton. When the call was finalized, we had two weeks to say goodbye to our church members, then one month of pre-embarkation to sell our house, get rid of our things we did not wish to take with us, wrap up our life in Canada, and say goodbye to our family in Canada and Peru. At the time our adventure was beginning, my



On the beach in Timor-Leste

wife had been sworn in as a Canadian citizen just a short time before the call came, our daughter was only three months old, and our son was not quite two years old.

After living for two years in Cambodia, we spent five years in the relatively new country of Timor-Leste (locally called Timor-Lorassae). A predominantly Catholic country (it is 91 percent Christian, 94.4 percent of whom are Catholic), Timor-Leste was officially entered by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1974—for only a few months. Political instability forced the Australian missionary to retreat as nearly 400 years of Portuguese colonial rule came to an end. After only a few weeks, the freshly discovered independence ended as Indonesia invaded. It wasn't until another 10 years or so before the Adventist Church re-established itself there. With the bloody end of Indonesian rule in the late 1990s, most Adventist members joined the flight from conflict and combat, leaving only five known Adventists in the country after Timorese independence was restored.

The church began again and has rebuilt to the 536 members, one church, three companies, and eight groups it has today. There is one Adventist for every 2,138 people in Timor-Leste. The Catholicism that exists in Timor-Leste is, for the most part, a syncretic blend of Catholicism, animism, ancestor worship, and spirit worship. There is

also strong resistance to change; about 97 percent of Adventists who convert experience some direct form of social, mental, or physical persecution.

Christmas in Timor-Leste was another new experience. While Catholics celebrate Christmas and life-sized nativities are a common sight in every suco (neighbourhood) throughout the capital of Dili during December, the Adventist faith in Timor-Leste largely rejected Christmas. Most Adventists believed it was wrong to observe Christmas. There were no decorations, presents, carols, or even Scripture readings about the birth of Jesus in the Adventist church during Christmas when we came to Timor-Leste. Unfortunately, while church members ignored the message of Jesus' birth in church, they frequently joined in the secular Christmas traditions when they went home to friends and neighbours.

As the mission president, I found it challenging to balance our church members' sensitive consciences along with their expectant confidence in our leadership with our personal wishes and plans to make our family time at home special and reach our own growing children about Jesus' gift to us. Over the years, we had several church forums discussing the dangers of Christmas materialism and secularism versus the wonderful opportunity, as suggested in the writings of Ellen G. White, to reach

our friends and neighbours with the true story of Jesus' birth and love.

Thanks to your 2015 Thirteenth Sabbath offerings, the Seventh-day Adventist Church began its first elementary school in Timor-Leste. Christmas 2015 was celebrated by a church full of parents and family members of non-Adventist students, blended with our Adventist members, joining to see and hear the students acting out, singing, and reading Bible passages about the great gift that God gave through Jesus, the hope of salvation, and the news of Jesus' soon return. Members throughout the country are now encouraged to plan community events at Christmas to tell the story of Jesus and proclaim His soon return.

The following are some of the highlights of the past eight Christmases our family has experienced: our Cambodian tradition of riding elephants on Christmas day; a special Christmas spent with AFM missionaries in the hill country of Mondulhiri, Cambodia; our one Christmas back in Canada during which our children experienced freezing cold (going from 35°C to -30°C), snow, frozen lakes, skating, snow forts, and dog sledding; seeing cuttlefish and sea turtles while snorkelling by Jaco Island in Timor-Leste (where with the only footprints in the sand were our own); and having my wife's parents visiting us one year from their country of Peru (including the "fun" part of nearly rolling our 4x4 Toyota Land

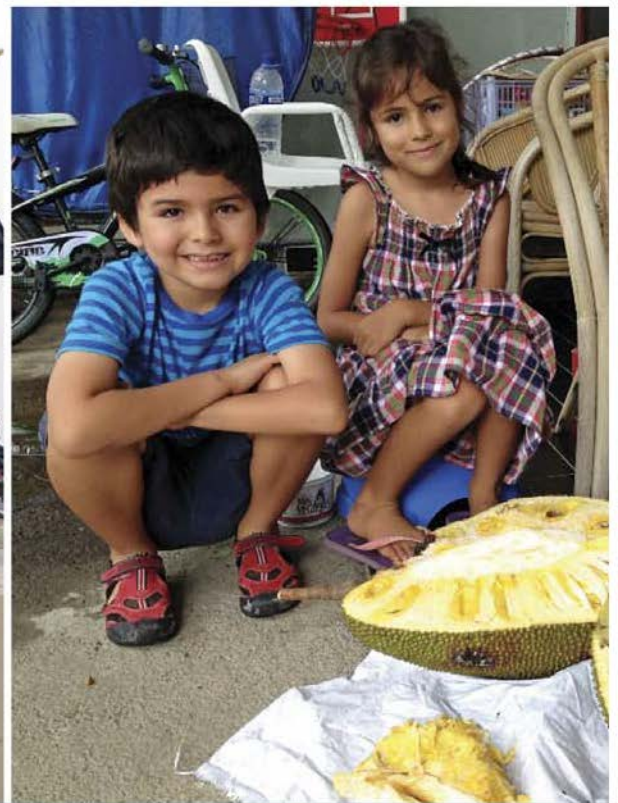
Cruiser Troopy on a washed-out back road right after a downpour). But the true gifts we treasure from those Christmases are the visual memories of the faces of each unreached person touched by the love of God throughout the year as His Holy Spirit breathed a spark of eternal life into their heart.

We have since moved to doing work based in the Philippines. With so many Christmases and years apart from our family, friends, and loved ones in Canada, the Christmas cards rarely find us, and at times we long for home. The temptation to return is great, but the need around us is greater.

Now, as the director of the Office of Adventist Mission for the Southern Asia-Pacific Division of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I am blessed and challenged to support leaders and to empower the work of mission to the least-reached people in 14 countries of South and Southeast Asia—the heart of the 10/40 window. As I visit the 42 largest cities in our territory, which range in size from 1 million to 28.1 million—often with few members; as I struggle and pray with those engaged in work in highly resistant communities where baptizing someone can result in imprisonment or death for both parties; as I listen to the Global Mission pioneers on the frontline in country after country appealing to me for a higher wage so they can feed their children and continue to serve God—



Christmas program at Timor-Leste Adventist school



William and Alyssia enjoying fresh jackfruit

while knowing we must choose between reducing the frontline work or keeping their wage the same; as I struggle with the immensity of the work left to be done among the unreached, and struggle knowing the few engaging in unentered areas in my territory ... what is my Christmas wish?

This Christmas I have three wishes:

1 I wish for every person reading this article to join me in giving at least 25 percent of what they spend on their family this Christmas to mission work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the least-reached areas of the world. Our church is highly engaged in mission on the very front line, but the resources are diminishing proportionally, not growing. Every day I see firsthand the amazing work and tremendous need of what is happening directly through the Adventist Church organization thanks to your tithes and mission offerings and your support of the GC Global Mission program.

2 I wish that every Seventh-day Adventist would commit to choosing one country in the 10/40 window and pray for it every week. Pray for the frontline Global Mission pioneers and missionaries. Pray for the pastors and leaders.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to be poured into the lives of the unreached to prepare them to receive the gospel and the three angels' messages in this otherwise *impossible* work. If you don't know where to start, visit www.Global-Mission.org and www.joshuaproject.net.

3 I wish that every committed Christian would commit to praying every day to ask God one question: "What can I do to join You in completing Your work?" And then do it in God's power.

A special thanks for the loving support and prayers of our family and friends in Canada and throughout the world. Please do not stop praying for us and for God's work. It is how we exist.

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."—Galatians 6:9, 10, NKJV ■

Merry Christmas from Wesley, Ivonne, William, and Alyssia Szamko serving God and the unreached in Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam.

All statistics taken from joshuaproject.net and 2006 Quarter 2 statistics of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



Cambodian tradition of riding elephants on Christmas Day



THANK YOU

We want to express our heartfelt gratitude to those who are remembering "Amazing Facts Ministries" with their amazing prayer support and donations for 2016. Your support enables us to continue sharing through literature, books, DVD's, radio and television — God's Message for this hour.



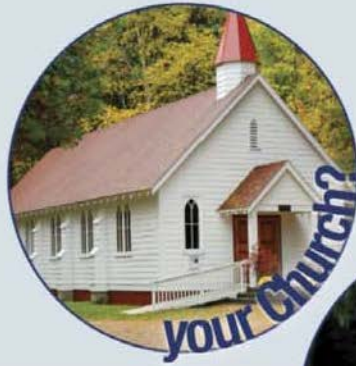
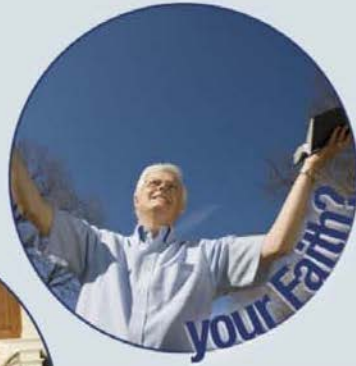
Right to left: Doug Batchelor (Pres. of Amazing Facts USA), Dr. Bruce Prokopetz (Pres.) and Rudy Harnisch (V.P. of Admin. and Finance) leaders of Amazing Facts Ministries Inc. Canada.

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Maria views one of the new windows installed in her ground floor apartment in Schastiya, Russia. Damage from the shelling is all too apparent.

Recently, I was reminded once again of the vast difference between reading about something and experiencing it firsthand. After reviewing the project documents for the Adventist Development and Relief Agency's (ADRA) work in Ukraine in preparation for my trip there, I thought I had a firm handle on what to expect.

ADRA has been working in Ukraine ever since the conflict began in 2014. Our current project is assisting people in the East, near the front line, with unconditional cash grants. This money enables them to meet their most pressing needs, whether it be repairing homes from shelling, or rent, medicine, or items for winter, such as clothing and coal. Most of the people with whom we work are pensioners, widows, widowers, and those who are simply unable to leave.

I went to Ukraine to report on our work and its impact. But nothing in black and white could prepare me for the people I would encounter—and their stories.

While in Schasriya, a small town not far from the front line, I had the honour of visiting Maria Voronkina. At roughly five feet tall, with wispy white hair and a face lined by life and laughter, she reminded me so much of my own *Baba*, my grandmother. Maria is 83 years old. She is a widow and lives alone in a small apartment on the ground floor of her building. Her two daughters live far away, one in Russia, the other across the front line. Maria doesn't hear much from the latter.

The day the shelling of Schastiya began, Maria was in the town centre. The shells fell without any warning, save the surreal *whoosh* before impact. Maria was struck by flying shrapnel, which severely wounded her leg. Somehow—and she can hardly recall how—Maria hauled herself home, where she promptly passed out on the floor.

Her neighbours acted fast, performing first aid and getting Maria to the hospital. She spent a month in the hospital, all the while praying that the shelling wouldn't start a war. She still had vivid, aching

memories of World War II. As she was telling me about this, she covered her head and rocked back and forth, tamping down the worst of the memories. "I know what war is," she said, her eyes looking out the window, seeing something I couldn't see. "It's extreme stress, and even worse, it's fear."

After spending a month recovering at the hospital, Maria was finally able to go home. She could hardly wait to return to her haven. But upon returning, she discovered gaping holes where her windows had once been. The same day she had been wounded, a shell had exploded outside her building, blasting through the windows and spewing shrapnel across her walls and ceiling. Her neighbours had come and cleared away the debris, but Maria couldn't keep herself from crying. What was she to do? She was a pensioner, barely scraping by. She had no savings to draw from for repairs. She had nowhere else to go.

Maria lived for a year and a half with just scrap board slapped across the holes.



Standing inside her apartment, Maria enjoys the sunlight now streaming through her new windows. Right and bottom photos show the devastation left by the shelling.

In Ukraine, with its long and harsh winters, living like this would be a hard task for anyone, let alone a widow of 83 living by herself.

"I barely managed," she said, shaking her head. "The room seemed to be very small and moist. It was always dark. I was very cold." From the way she told her story, I got the impression that the dark coldness had entered more than her apartment. I could sense that Maria had been in the midst of a struggle against depression and despair.

When she was told that she would receive help in the form of an unconditional cash grant from ADRA, she couldn't believe it. She couldn't believe that anyone would help. The first rays of hope glimmered in her heart, but they were not yet strong enough to put her faith in them. "Only the day I got the money on the card did I believe it," she confessed sheepishly.

The moment she had the money in hand, she purchased new windows and hired the labour to install them. When

I visited her, she had been enjoying her new windows for almost a week. "Only ADRA has helped me. I am beyond happy!" she beamed, crying at the same time. "I pray for ADRA every night," she said, crossing herself. "I pray that God will bless your project and your workers!"

My favourite moment with Maria was when she walked over to her brand-new, sun-soaked windowsill, looked up at the sky with tears of happiness, and exclaimed, "Rada! Rada! Rada!" This word, my translator told me, meant "joyful."

I didn't need project documents to tell me the impact of this project (though those are very important and crucial to our work). I could see the difference with my own eyes in the joy and gratitude emanating from Maria, bright and warm as the light from her window. I was humbled to know that our church, through the agency of ADRA, was touching her life and changing her dark coldness to warm light.

I believe in the work of ADRA,

though most of the time I see it only through the lens of black ink on white paper. Because of God's grace and blessing, I know we make a positive difference. My time in Ukraine showed me some of these improvements firsthand. I am so grateful to God that we are meeting the immediate, physical needs of our neighbours in distress. I am even more grateful that we are also bringing life-changing hope, healing, and light to hearts that have been darkened by immense loss and grief.

It is because of your prayers and support that this kind of work happens. Every heartfelt *dyakuyi* and *spasiba* ("Thank you" in Ukrainian and Russian) that was uttered to me I pass on to you. May God bless you abundantly, for you have been an abundant blessing. Thank you. ■

Heather Grbic is the church relations coordinator for ADRA Canada.

If you are interested in an Adventist Christian education at Kingsway College, contact the enrollment office at admissions@kingswaycollege.on.ca.



RAKtivists

Building connections can be tough, whether it is your first year at a new school or even just getting to know new classmates. For some, high school is the most memorable time; for others it can be such a challenge.

This school year at Kingsway College, Campus Ministries has introduced a new program called RAKtivists (Random Acts of Kindness). RAKtivists are small groups that meet in multiple locations on the campus. These groups consist of about 10 to 12 students and are led by a staff member. One of the goals is for students to build better connections within the smaller group and hopefully build long-lasting friendships.

Another goal is to help create a fruitful environment for connecting and partnering with various local organizations, such as Kingsway Pioneer Apartments (assisted living facility), ABC Christian Bookstore, and College Park Elementary School. One of the most recent activities RAKtivists took part in was baking cookies and greeting the seniors at Kingsway Pioneer Apartments. This act of kindness resulted in positive comments from our seniors and may become a regular activity—after all, who doesn't like freshly baked cookies once in a while?

The positive feedback from our community helps

students see the value of giving back and serving the community, as our motto at KC is "Service Not Fame," and it feels nice to give back to people who have, in many ways, contributed to our school.

Select RAKtivist groups participated in another activity that served as an educational component, namely, a conversation about mental health and awareness led by the school chaplain, Campbell Page. It was an eye opener, because some of these students didn't know the extent to which mental health is affecting people in Canada. The discussion was an avenue for students to confront some stigmas about mental health and, overall, gave the groups more knowledge on the topic. Being informed earlier in life means that our students share their knowledge and help improve other people's knowledge about this issue.

Overall, the groups have added a positive dimension to the student body because they serve as a space for connection, and potentially, they may even draw some of our students who aren't Christians to Christ. Please stay tuned for more updates on our RAKtivists, and hopefully we have inspired you to start your own groups! ■

Mana Martin is a Grade 12 student from Windsor. ●nt.

Construction begins on high school buildings



New campus incorporates traditional art elements: The main building of the new high school campus, adjacent to the elementary school, features the Ptarmigan Cree Cultural Centre (far right), funded by a private foundation in Calgary. A separate industrial arts building will house a welding shop furnished by the Canadian Welding Association Foundation. Architectural drawing and exterior design by Zayda Steinke.

After a tremendous amount of prayer and hard work, construction of Mamawi Atoskewan Native School's high school and industrial arts centre is underway. Excavation of the site began shortly after Mamawi Atoskewan Native School's (MANS) May 25 groundbreaking—an event that featured Native Council members, government officials, as well as the Grammy-nominated drum group Northern Cree.

A palpable sense of accomplishment and excitement pervaded as the footings for the school were poured. "We have been dreaming about and planning for a high school for a long time," says MANS principle Gail Wilton. "Finally seeing the ground work begin has created such a sense of excitement. The Lord is busy at work here at Mamawi, and we are eagerly looking forward as we watch His plans unfold."

The sentiment is one that construction manager William Piersanti shares. After five years of prayer, planning, and discussion, he was ready to begin construction. "The school is exactly where it needs to be, and I can't take the credit. I'm just the clay working in the clay," he says with a smile.

Reflecting on his involvement with the MANS project, newly retired Alberta Conference secretary, Larry Hall, echoes the principal's enthusiasm. "The MANS project is one of the most significant, timely, and relevant mission projects ever undertaken by a tremendous amount of dedication, work, and prayer over the past few years, and it is truly one of my greatest delights ever to finally see its construction begin.

The new project is having an impact on the community. "The Lord has truly blessed this project on behalf of a people who have experienced so much injustice in our country," Hall observes. "I recently chatted with several First Nations individuals who could hardly find words to express their joy and the sense of hope they have in the difference this MANS expansion will make to their community. Personally, I am very grateful to all who have contributed financially and otherwise to make it happen."

"The beginning of construction is the hand of God at work," says honorary campaign chair Larry Wilkins, "He still listens to the prayers of average people. He still acts on their behalf. He still performs miracles."

Wilkins, who is himself First Nations, expressed gratitude for the vision and commitment of Conference administrators Larry Hall and recently retired president Ken Wiebe. "I cannot thank them enough for giving everyone involved with this ongoing project the courage to believe. Their humble bravery solidified our faith in the question of not whether the school would be built, but when."

"When I am in my rocking chair," concludes Wilkins, "I know I will remember [Ken and Larry] and this time with joy and intense gratitude. I will be smiling like a Cheshire Cat for apparently no reason, but for now, it's back to work." ■

Myken McDowell is communications assistant for the Bridge Campaign, which funds the new high school buildings of Mamawi Atoskewan Native School.

Parkview Profiles

by Katelyn Ruiz

"I've really seen the Christian environment of learning in how the teachers want to have a personal relationship with their students."

Parkview Adventist Academy places great importance on the responsibility of being the first choice for Seventh-day Adventist students in Western Canada. The families who sacrifice and commit to placing their young people in the care of committed teachers are a valued support to learning here on campus. For the Johnson family from Port Hardy, B.C., Adventist education did not make the most sense, and yet every one of Audrey's 12+ years has been spent in a Sabbath-observant school where the teachers begin class with prayer.

"When I was starting kindergarten, my parents had to decide whether to send me to the public school that was one minute from my house, or to the Adventist school, which was a bit of a drive. My dad figured there was no harm in trying it out, so they sent me to Avalon Academy, just to see if I'd like it." She did.

Audrey's community has been built through her experience in Adventist education: "That's how friendships start," she says. "At PAA, I discovered the friends I'm going to keep after school. I mean, you are friends with whoever you're in classes with, but now I know I'm getting close to the people I'll see for 30 years as alumni."

The friendly tone of campus interactions begins with PAA's teachers, and for Audrey, that's what made the biggest impression on her growing faith. "I've really seen the Christian environment of learning in how the teachers want to have a personal relationship with their students. They're not just throwing work at them or essentially not caring. I had a friend who went to public school where the teachers make it apparent that they don't want to be there as much as the students, but here the teachers care and will do anything and everything to make sure you do well."

Audrey knows about this commitment firsthand because PAA's vice-principal, Rod Jamieson, along with his wife, Tracey, are the reason she was able to study. "I was getting ready for my Grade 10 year at Avalon, but something happened, and just before school started, they decided that they couldn't offer high school. So we were stuck with an educational emergency, and my dad, who used to fish with Jamieson, called him up. They made the plan for me to enroll in PAA right away, and that's



how I ended up leaving the town I grew up in and the school I had attended for 10 years, and moving to Alberta, which I had never even visited before."

The transition was made easier as Audrey found her fit. "I've never had a problem with making friends, but when I first got here, I was incredibly shy. I was new and didn't know anyone, but when classes started and there were tryouts for teams, and all that, it was easier to meet people. I've been on the volleyball team for three years now, which has helped me grow quite a bit as a player and a person."

Some of Audrey's favourite memories at PAA have been made while travelling to tournaments with her team, or attending class parties, banquets, and other campus events as a student, but there are a few special people who made her time here significant. "One teacher [facilitated] Discussion Fridays for Bible class, and I would get to ask random questions about God and stuff without any judgment. Another helped me with tutoring every day last year, which shows that they really, really care."

PAA provides a safe and caring learning environment that considers the strengths and struggles of every student. For Audrey, now studying at Burman University, this connection has proved to be invaluable. Sometimes the option that seems to make sense is not the one that makes a difference, and the difference is seen clearly at PAA. ■

Katelyn Ruiz is the director of public relations at Parkview Adventist Academy.

Using distributed learning to promote alignment in British Columbia



Students with their supervisor Brandon Holland (far right) at the Robson Valley Distance Learning Centre.

British Columbia is a REACH¹ conference, and we are always searching for ways to bring alignment between our churches and schools. One of the ways West Coast Adventist School (WCAS) promotes this alignment is through providing distributed learning. In addition to our students who school at home, WCAS also supports local churches in providing Adventist educational opportunities in locally organized learning centres.

A learning centre is a unique learning environment that pairs the local church with WCAS. In a traditional eLearning environment, students are supported in meeting the curricular objectives at home by their parents. In a learning centre, parents and the church come together to provide a classroom and a supervisor to help the students with their courses. These learning centres are autonomous in the running and hiring of the local supervisor, while WCAS provides teachers, curriculum, and provincial academic credits.

Approximately five years ago the McBride Seventh-day Adventist Church partnered with WCAS as an option for maintaining an educational presence in the Robson Valley area. At its inception, the learning centre provided courses for students from junior to senior high school, while the lower grades were taught at Robson Valley Junior Academy (RVJA).

Unfortunately, RVJA was not able to run as a school during the 2013/2014 school year. Instead, all 15 students attended the learning centre.

Through God's blessing, a teacher, Laura Kozak, accepted the call to the tiny community, and RVJA again opened its doors in September 2014 to 16 lower-grade and eight upper-grade students. Kozak taught the lower grades, and the upper grades remained as a learning centre with WCAS under the supervision of Brandon Holland.

This past September, RVJA had an enrolment of 29 students. Instead of hiring a new teacher, the church decided to run a Grade 1-6 classroom with 21 students and continue the learning centre through WCAS for kindergarten and Grades 7-10. Today, RVJA and the learning centre are flourishing under the direction of teacher Laura Holland (note the change of last name), secretary Irene Twiss, and the two learning centre supervisors, Brandon Holland and Cheryl Lipke.

The students have wonderful things to say about their learning centre experiences. Daniel shared that he "really likes the learning centre. It combines the Christian educational curriculum and kind teachers from West Coast with the structure of a school." Heather added that she likes "being able to interact with the younger

kids." Mathea admitted, "I love waking up every morning to go to school because I get to see my friends and learn something new each day." Nathan is "thankful for WCAS to be helping these learning centres across the province," and he hopes they continue until Jesus comes. Finally, Raylene shares that without WCAS and the learning centre, "we probably wouldn't still have this school running. God has definitely blessed our little school with the use of WCAS."

Through this partnership, God is blessing the McBride SDA Church, the learning centre, and RVJA. The church is full of children on Sabbath morning, and several of the parents have begun attending services regularly. WCAS is proud to be able to promote the BC REACH goals of alignment and educating for eternity while it partners with local churches to provide Adventist education to students anytime and everywhere. If you would like more information on providing school at home or on starting a learning centre in your church, please contact WCAS in one of the following ways. Call 877/853-5053, email office@wcasdl.ca, or check out our website at www.wcasdl.ca. ■

Lisa Clarke is the West Coast Adventist School principal and curriculum coordinator for the British Columbia Conference.

¹ REACH is an acronym that represents the following core values: (1) Revival and Transformation, which is about our relationship with God; (2) Education for Discipleship, which is about growing strong in Christ; (3) Alignment Within the Church, which is about collaboration; (4) Community Outreach and Evangelism, which is about witness; and (5) Healthy Leadership and Management, which is about effective organization.

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British Columbia

Charles Aguilar Joins ADRA Uganda



Charles Ed II Aguilar and his wife, Elizabeth

On Aug. 28, Charles Ed II Aguilar ended a four-year ministry as communication director of the British Columbia Conference to serve as the new country director for ADRA Uganda. Charles will begin at ADRA Uganda on Sept. 27, 2016, where his main responsibilities will encompass strategizing—vision, planning and design, resource management, and people development.

Joining Charles on this journey will be his wife of 16 years, Elizabeth, and their three children. Elizabeth, a registered dental hygienist, will serve ADRA Uganda and the Uganda Union of Seventh-day Adventists as a technical assistant for health; and Jewel (Grade 9), Jade (Grade 6), and Onyx (Grade 4) will continue their education via West Coast Adventist School, the British Columbia Conference's distance learning school.

Charles can be described as a Renaissance man, with a unique background—including a BA in Theology and a Diploma in Digital Design from Vancouver Film School—that has taken him places he never imagined. "I never dreamed of working for the British Columbia Conference office, much less as communication director. I worked as a Bible worker, youth pastor, school chaplain, church planter, and church pastor [in the conference] before accepting [the communications role]."

Each experience proved valuable as he helped various departments set and guide a communication strategy through the use of the web, print, video, social media, radio, and newsletters. He also facilitated communication workshops for colleagues and

churches on topics as wide-ranging as branding and marketing, fundraising, evangelism and community outreach, live-streaming, website maintenance, video production, and photography.

For his part, Charles is grateful for many of the unique projects he was involved in as the BC Conference's communication director. He cites his most outstanding memory as when the board of directors convened at Camp Hope to chart a tangible initiative for the conference's local churches and schools—"to REACH British Columbia and Yukon with a Christ-centred message of hope and wholeness." Charles thoroughly enjoyed being part of the process "from inception to conception to witnessing

the growth and application of REACH in the local churches and schools." He also loved his work on the frontlines with pastors, helping them with various projects and workshops, and equipping them with relevant media and communication tools.

Charles's co-workers have no doubt that he will continue to be a first-rare example in his ministry, carrying lessons learned and skills gained from the BC Conference to his work at ADRA Uganda. Wesley Torres, current BC Conference president, stated, "The members of the BC Conference were really blessed by the spiritual, committed, efficient, creative, and fruitful ministry of Charles for the last 11 years. He set an example of a faithful, friendly and hard-working servant as he ministered to God's people as a church pastor and for the last four years as an excellent communication director."

But while it's not easy to say goodbye, Charles is happy to expand his horizons. "Working for ADRA has been a dream of mine since college years. I am looking forward to the challenge of sharing the loving, just, and merciful character of God in situations and places with very limited resources." He is inspired by this quote: "In sympathy and compassion we are to minister to those in need of help, seeking with unselfish earnestness to lighten the woes of suffering humanity."¹ ■

—Karen Hemrich, Secretary,
Communications Department,
British Columbia Conference



Volunteers pitching in for Cranbrook SDA Church's first What-Can-I-Do-For-You day.

What-Can-I-Do-For-You? Day

The forecast for Sunday, Sept. 18, had been 90 percent chance of precipitation. The weather did not look promising for a group of church members from the Cranbrook Seventh-Day Adventist Church. The personal ministries team had picked this date for a community outreach event that had been planned for over 10 months. But when God's people pray, anything is possible! Prayers were answered when Sunday morning arrived with blue skies and sunshine! The group went out in their community, starting with the streets closest to their church, for their first What-can-I-do-for-you? Day. The church hopes to make this an annual and growing event.

Equipped with a trailer of tools such

as rakes, lawn mower, weed whacker, and so on, the group was ready to work. They went door to door wearing bright yellow T-shirts, with the question of the day written on the front, "What Can I Do For You?" Some people were curious about this free offer but had nothing outside their home that needed to be done, and others were surprised and grateful for the service. A few community residents expressed their hope to see the group return to their home every year to come.

The goal of this outing was to make people's day, to bring smiles to their faces, and most importantly to be Jesus' hands on this earth. We met many elderly persons in the community who were not able to

do some of their basic yard work anymore, and we encountered working parents who could use an extra hand. It was a joy for the group to brighten people's days and lives with not only their colourful T-shirts and warm smiles but also their service. It was an honour for the group to be able to go and represent their church and God in the community.

One gentleman whose property the group spent significant time cleaning up shared, "I probably shouldn't tell you this, but I'm kind of an atheist." The group quickly assured him that this was no barrier at all to the service and that they were delighted to be a blessing to him that day. After the group visited with him for some time, he concluded the chat with "I hope you guys come back every year, and maybe I'll come hang out with you guys if you don't preach at me." Some of the church members who met this man have been praying for him since and are excited to see how God may continue to use the church to bring this dear man to a relationship with Christ.

Mark 10:45 says, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." Although the primary purpose of this outreach was to serve others, it was undoubtedly a gift to the church members who participated. What a joy and privilege it is to show Christ's love to others through service. ■

—Tammy Molina, Co-Leader,
Personal Ministries,
Cranbrook Seventh-day
Adventist Church

Maritime

Maritime Conference Ordination

On the Sabbath of July 23, 2016, during campmeeting, the Maritime Conference ordained Paul Llewellyn and David Hamilton.

Paul Llewellyn was born in PEI and grew up in Toronto. He attended Adventist

schools for most of his elementary and secondary school years. Early on, he told the Lord that he would become a pastor, and while attending Andrews University, he became a teacher instead. The Lord slowly moved him into ministry from

teaching. Llewellyn taught in our school system for 13 years (nine of those years teaching religion). After being a youth pastor in Toronto he moved into administration at the Ontario Conference, where he spent four years as camp, assistant youth,



Cheryl and David Hamilton; Paul and Sonya Llewellyn.

and men's ministries director.

He and his wife wanted to raise their children in a more rural location and in 2009 received a call to come to Nova Scotia to pastor the Annapolis Valley churches. Within two years he moved to Halifax as superintendent of education, as well as youth and camp director, and also became the executive secretary of the Maritime Conference a few years later. He loves to serve the Lord and loves to see youth and young adults become active in ministry in the Maritimes.

Paul is married to Sonya, and they are now empty nesters. Their daughter, Jessica, is attending Red Deer College for nursing.

Their son, Daniel, is attending Burman University to pursue a degree in biology.

David Hamilton was born in Kingston, Ont., and grew up learning to operate heavy equipment. He attended Adventist schools for Grades 8–13. Upon graduating, David worked for his father's construction company and then decided to become a civil engineer. After graduation, with both a bachelor's and a master's degree in civil engineering from Queen's University, he worked in Kingston, then moved south to work for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

After 12 years of being totally immersed in his career, David woke up

to his need for God. He met Cheryl, who was speaking about ADRA in Cambodia at a camp meeting in the Gulf States. They married in August 2000. David graduated with a Master of Divinity from Andrews University in 2010.

David and Cheryl have three children: Nathan, Rebekah, and Andrew. The children are homeschooled and are always looking for ways to serve the Lord.

David and his family have been serving in the New Glasgow, Pugwash, and Truro church district since graduation, as well as a time in North Sydney, and is now working with members from New Glasgow to plant a new church in Antigonish. He also designed and oversaw the construction of the new church in Pugwash. His greatest passion is to study the Bible with people and help them prepare for the soon return of Jesus!

The ordination sermon and ordination charge was given by Daniel Stojanovic, vice-president of administration of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada. Mark Johnson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada, offered the ordination prayer. Roy and Penny Uffindell gave a formal welcome to the candidates and their wives. The Maritime Conference would like to congratulate Paul Llewellyn and David Hamilton and their families. We wish them God's blessing in their ministries. ■

Halifax Church AY in the Park

For the month of July and August, the Halifax Adventist Youth have been ministering in song at the public gardens on Spring Garden Road. The "Praise in the Park" first started on July 16 and was planned as a prayer walk, but as the group started singing, persons walking in the park joined them and started requesting favourite chorus or hymns. The youth decided to let the Holy Spirit lead, and the group ended up singing for two and half hours praising God. You could say that the program was hijacked, in a good way, by the Holy Spirit.

Onlookers were asking if the group would be back again next Saturday, so the group did the same activity two more Sabbath afternoons. Every time we ministered, tourists were present. We have met individuals from Connecticut, Illinois, from other provinces in Canada, and from other parts of the world. One couple from Illinois said that they had been yearning for praise music, and when they heard us in the park, they got so excited and followed the singing. We did not only minister in song but



also handed out GLOW tracts and had a prayer circle each time, inviting onlookers to join us. At the last Praise in the Park, in our prayer circle, everyone was given the opportunity to say something that they were thankful for. We praise God for His blessings and for the opportunity to minister in song. ■

Ontario

Service, a Lifestyle at Really Living

Ralph Waldo Emerson said it best when he stated that “the purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honourable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you lived and lived well.”¹

At Really Living Seventh-day Adventist Church, it is our goal to really live and do so by helping others in need. A major focus of our church is to have a presence in our local community, and a great way for us to do this is by providing various services for them. Some of the events that we have done so far this year include a Community Food Drive, Oil Change for Single Moms, Active Living Boot Camp, and a Mega Sports Camp. At Really Living, we identify well with the scripture “Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to the Lord” (Heb. 13:16). We count it a privilege to use our resources to bring glory to God.

Through our small-group ministry, on Saturday, May 28, 2016, several of our church members collected food from 3,000 different homes in the Hamilton community to donate to Neighbour to Neighbour Food Bank, an activity we do annually. The coordinator at Neighbour to Neighbour very much appreciated that we took the time to go out and collect donations. This community outreach was done collectively as a church and brought us even closer together as a church family.

One of the core values at Really Living Seventh-day Adventist Church is living a balanced life that focuses on mind, body, and spirit. We believe that our bodies are temples of God, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6:19. To honour God with our bodies, we held the Active Living Boot Camp. After a thorough interview process we brought on Marta Fowler as our fitness trainer. Two of our members, Bentley Rattray and Don DeMedeiros, spearheaded this event.

During the months of May and June we offered 16 workout sessions, as well as seven afternoon hikes on Sabbaths. The



Really Living's first-ever Mega Sports Camp led by children's and youth pastor, Daniel Madden.



Eric Hernandez servicing a vehicle for one of the moms who participated in the church's Oil Change for Single Moms.

hikes were a way for our church members and the community members to interact and get to know one another a little better. About 30 individuals participated in this event. A few of our members were a part of this program, but the major focus was to interact more with community members. The boot camp was free of charge and had a great community turnout. Survivors of the boot camp were awarded T-shirts for all of their hard work. Another boot camp is expected to begin sometime this fall.

Next, we had our Oil Change for Single

Moms, championed by our senior pastor, Francis Douville. This took place on Father's Day, Sunday, June 19, 2016. We had the opportunity to service 10 cars for single moms and also took the time to detail and wash their cars. In addition, face painting was offered for the children accompanying their mothers. The mothers were all so appreciative of getting their cars serviced for free. Different businesses donated oil and oil filters to make this effort a success, including Mountain Autotech, A&A Discount Auto Parts,

¹This quotation is commonly attributed to Emerson, but speculation as to its origin does exist.

Parr Source, and Tigercat Industries Inc. We also had help from other sponsors such as Tim Hortons, Costco, and Tik Tok Media. Many thanks to our church members who came out and volunteered. This event is scheduled to happen again on Oct. 30, 2016. As a church body, we had a great time interacting with the mothers and children who came out to this event.

Most recently, we conducted our first-ever Mega Sports Camp led by our children's and youth pastor, Daniel Madden. From July 25–29, we held a camp at our local Adventist school, Grandview Adventist Academy. Fifteen children

participated in either the sports camp or the drama camp, led by members from our church. Five children who came were not affiliated with our church and thus formed new friendships. We received great feedback and hope to bring back Mega Sports Camp next year with one or more additional sports and an extended time period. Because special interest in drama was expressed, our church may begin a drama club soon! After the camp finished, we culminated our fun together at Wild Waterworks here in Hamilton. Parents and children from the camp came along for the fun and even brought some

friends with them. We had a blast!

We at Really Living are committed to serving others in our community and building relationships with those outside of our church. We have more exciting outreach ideas that are just waiting for takers who want to see God lead them through that journey of serving others. We are excited for what the future holds and anticipate God doing great things through us as a church family. We would love to hear about some of the great things you are doing or plan to do in your communities and to know about how your church is really living! ■

Alberta

Alberta Conference Constituents Elect a New President and Secretary/VP for Administration



Almyra and Gary Hodder



Cheryl and Wayne Williams

Alberta Seventh-day Adventist Conference delegates gathered on Oct. 2, 2016, at the College Heights Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lacombe, Alta., to conduct their quadrennial constituency session. Along with numerous reports received and bylaw changes, Alberta Conference delegates elected Gary Hodder as president, Wayne Williams as secretary/vice-president for administration, and re-elected Keith Richter as treasurer.

Hodder (currently executive secretary for the Ontario Conference) replaces Ken Wiebe, whose retirement became effective at the end of the session, and Williams (currently a pastor in the Ontario Conference) replaces Larry Hall, whose retirement also became effective at the end of the session. Richter has been with the Alberta Conference since 2006, having served as treasurer since 2011.

Dan Jackson, North American Division president, started the day off by sharing a powerful message about Jonah. “God is in the people-changing business,” stated Jackson.

Delegates approved the following two major changes to the bylaws:

- Voted to implement a quinquennial (every five years) session in alignment with other Canadian conferences and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada (SDACC).
- Voted that departmental directors and associate directors be evaluated by EXCOM within a year after each regular quinquennial session.

Ken Wiebe gave some encouraging closing remarks before SDACC executive secretary, Daniel Srojanovic, dismissed the delegates with prayer.

The day's proceedings were posted live to Alberta Conference social media feeds such as Facebook and Twitter. Further comments or questions about the session can be directed to Keith Richter, treasurer. ■

>> SDACC REVOLVING FUND REPORT: As of Sept. 30, 2016, there were 427 depositors with a total deposit of \$30,093,604. There were 87 loans with a value of \$26,677,513.

For more information or to make a deposit, contact Girly Quiambao—quiambao.girly@adventist.ca; 905/433-0011.

SDA Church in Canada

Zimbabwe Adventist Women Abroad Conference

"I have not set foot in an Adventist church for 10 years..."

Thousands of miles away from landlocked tiny southern African country of Zimbabwe, 16 women from this country came together in Barric, Ont. Sharing their Zimbabwean heritage and Adventist faith, they came to spend time in fellowship, prayer, praise, and relationship building. At the end of the three-day retreat, I was struck by two comments from two young ladies.

The first, a baptized Adventist said, "I have not set foot in an Adventist church for 10 years. This is the closest I have come to church. Thank you for inviting me."

The second young mother shared, "I am a staunch Catholic and I don't know what my mother will think about me

spending time with you ladies." She later sent a text message of appreciation, saying, "It's funny how God works. I have been praying for group of God-fearing women that I could be comfortable with to pray and share and learn. This has been one of my constant recurring new year resolutions. And here you all are. Blessed I am."

This year marked the second retreat for the women meeting as Zimbabwe Adventist Women Abroad Conference (ZAWAC) Canada. Similar meetings have been held in the United States, where ZAWAC was born. The purpose of ZAWAC is to create a platform where Zimbabwean women can find one another while finding themselves in the diaspora.


The vibrant and harmonic acappella singing of the handful of ladies who sounded like a mighty choir attracted the attention of other conference centre guests. So beautiful was the music that the guests requested the women to minister to them in song at dinner time.

The conference centre's general manager sent a message: "Although I didn't have the pleasure of experiencing the singing myself, I am told by staff who did that your ladies had truly beautiful voices."

May God continue to bless this blossoming ministry as we seek out our sisters who are caught in the busyness that characterizes life in North America. ■

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The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada is now accepting nominations for the 2017 Excellence in Education Awards

The Process for Nominators:

- Must be a stakeholder (superintendent, principal, school board member, teacher, pastor, school staff member, parent, student, or church member).
- Must not be immediate family members of the nominee.
- If the nominee is a teaching principal, the nominator must select either Teaching or Administrator Award. All letters of recommendation must support the appropriate award they are being nominated for.
- *Important- please check with local conference or boarding academy to see if the teacher and/or administrator that you want to recommend fulfills the requirements for the Nominee noted below.
- Must complete the Nomination Form, Letter of Recommendation Form, and a Letter of Recommendation.
- Must find two other stakeholders (one from each of the two other categories), unrelated to the nominee, to complete the Letter of Recommendation Form and write Letters of Recommendation. For example, if the nominator is someone from the School Leadership category (Superintendent, Principal, or School Board Member), the remaining two letters of recommendation must be from each of the remaining categories, one from Colleagues (Teacher, Pastor, or School Staff Member) and one from School Community (Parent, Student, or Church Member).

Nominee:

- Must have a valid Standard, Professional, or Administrator denominational teaching certificate.
- Recipient of teacher award must have a minimum of one full year teaching experience in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada school system.
- Recipient of the administrator award must have a minimum of two years of administrator experience at the current school to be eligible for the administrator award.
- Must be a teacher or administrator who is employed at least half time for the Seventh-day Adventist Church In Canada school system.
- Must not have received an Excellence Award within the last five years.

{A list of teachers who have received awards are posted on CAT-net – <http://catnet.adventist.ca>}

It is our hope that the SDACC Excellence in Education Award will inspire our teachers and school administrators to always strive for excellence in teaching and service, and that those who are presented with this prestigious award will truly appreciate it as a token of our thanks for having them as excellent teachers in our school system.

Please take the time to nominate your Adventist School teacher or principal today. Nomination forms can be found on CAT-net, <http://catnet.adventist.ca> under Resources- SDACC- Excellence in Education Award or you may call the SDACC Office of Education at 905.433.0011 x2072.

Deadline April 15

Announcements

PROCESS:

- All announcements (non-profit events, new member notices, birth announcements, weddings, anniversaries, obituaries, and tributes) should be emailed to Aimee Perez (perez.aimee@adventist.ca) or faxed to her attention at 905/433-0982.
- Every individual named in the announcement must be aware of the submission and have granted the submitter approval for printing.
- Obituaries must be submitted on the appropriate form, completed and/or approved by a family member of the deceased. The forms (both printable and electronically submitable) are available at www.adventist.ca/messenger.
- The Messenger assumes no liability for typographical errors or responsibility for inaccuracies originating in submitted material.
- For more information about Messenger announcement policies, go to www.adventist.ca/messenger, click "Writers' Guidelines" then click "announcements."

Announcements

The Portage church is looking for the following missing members:

John Richard Brown, Kathleen Chandler, Lawrence Chandler, Clare Grace, May Grace, Judy Pashe, Alison Perchak, Wersdy Pierson. If you have a current phone number and address for any of these people, please contact Barbara Thomas at 204/857-6528 or barbaral7@shaw.ca

New Members

MARITIME

Ashley Boehner was baptized in Pugwash, N.S., on July 30, 2016, by Jared Browne. She is a member of the Halifax church.

Darren Brimble was baptized in Halifax, N.S., on May 21, 2016, by Kevin Scott. He began attending as a result of evangelistic meetings. He is now a member of the Halifax church.

Rose-Marie Cormier was baptized in Miramichi, N.B., on April 23, 2016, by Lise Luchman. She began attending as a result of health meetings in 2008 and Bible studies throughout the years. She is now a member of the Bouctouche company.

Paul Cranidge was baptized in Halifax, N.S., on May 21, 2016, by Kevin Scott. He began attending as a result of evangelistic meetings. He is now a member of the Halifax church.

Melanie Duguay was baptized in Pugwash, N.S., on July 30, 2016, by Météard Salomon. She is now a member of the Moncton church.

Randy Ebbett was baptized in Pugwash, N.S., on July 30, 2016, by David Hamilton. He is now a member of the New Glasgow church.

Benjamin Graves was baptized in Fox Point, N.S., on April 30, 2016, by Kevin Scott. He is now a member of the Fox Point church.

Rebekah Hamilton was baptized in Pugwash, N.S., on July 22, 2016, by David Hamilton. She is now a member of the New Glasgow church.

Katelyn Knight was baptized in Hampton, N.B., on June 11, 2016, by Ricky Schwarz II. She is now a member of the Maranatha church.

Kevin McGrath was baptized in Dartmouth, N.S., on June 25, 2016, by Kevin Scott. He is now a member of the Dartmouth church.

Aubaine Niyonkuru was baptized in Halifax, N.S., on July 16, 2016. She is now a member of the Halifax church.

Egide and Janet Niyonkuru were accepted on profession of faith in Halifax, N.S., on July 16, 2016, and May 21, 2016, respectively. They are now members of the Halifax church.

Alyssa Parent was baptized in Pugwash, N.S., on July 30, 2016, by Ricky Schwarz II. She is now a member of the Maranatha church.

BRITISH COLUMBIA AND YUKON TERRITORY

Natthakarn (May) Kitwattana-wong was baptized in Kelowna, B.C., on Aug. 27, 2016, by Cameron Koronko. She is now a member of the Rutland church.

Jacob and Isaac McPherson were baptized in Whitehorse, Y.T., on April 23, 2016, by Joseph Steel. They did Bible studies with Pastor Steel following an evangelistic series by Anthony Kern. They are both members of the Whitehorse church.

Births

Luna Talitha Marcinyk was born on April 27, 2016, to Jason and Leanne (née Adams) Marcinyk of Red Deer, Alta.

Emerson Ezra Richter was born June 12, 2016, to Derek and Rena (née Bannister) Richter of Edmonton, Alta.

Anniversaries

Ken and Celest Corkum of Paradise, Nfld., celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Aug. 14, 2016, with



family near Loma Linda, Calif. The Corkums have two children, Leroy of Africa and Lucinda of Loma Linda; and two grandchildren.

Helmut and Jana Krause of Abbotsford, B.C., celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Sept. 15,



2016. The Krauses have two daughters, Jarmila (Lance) Van Arsdell and Michelle (Corey) Redberg.

Wally and Dorothy Manweiler of Lower Nicola, B.C., celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on



Dec. 30, 2015, with family and friends. The Manweilers have two children, Rayette (Lonnie) Hetland and Trevor Manweiler; and four grandchildren.

Leon and Doris Tonn of Kelowna, B.C., celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary on July 2, 2016, with



friends in Kelowna as well as with family in Panorama, B.C. The Tonns have two sons, Diemar (Yolima) Tonn and Reinhard (Carole) Tonn; and four grandchildren.

Obituaries

David Astleford was born on April 24, 1929, in College Place, Wash., and died on Sept. 13, 2016, in Basingham, Lincolnshire, U.K. He studied at Oshawa Missionary College (now Kingsway College), Canadian Junior College (now Burman University), Newbold College, and Atlantic Union College. Starting in North America, he spent 43 years in church employment, over 33 of which were in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. David is predeceased by his parents, Lunney and Bessie Astleford; and brother, Marvin Astleford. Surviving: wife, Della Asdeford; sons, James (Debra) Astleford of Courrice, Ont.; John (Sharon) Asdeford of Basingham, Peter Astleford of London, U.K.; daughter, Pamela (Marcell) Humphries of Mudgeeraba, Queensland, Australia; brother, Joseph Astleford of Merritt, B.C.; sister, Mary Hilde of Lake Stephens, Wash.; nine grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

Audrey (née Boutillier) MacDonald-Pangborne was born on April 3, 1928, in Halifax, N.S., and died on Aug. 14, 2016. She was a faithful member of the Halifax church for over 75 years and taught for many years in the children's division. She was a foster parent for over 30 years, fostering more than 100 children in that time. Audrey is predeceased by her parents, Ainsley and Ida (née Casley) Boutillier; first husband, Donald MacDonald; second husband, Paul Pangborne; sister, Beulah MacBourne; and brother, Donald Boutillier. Surviving: sons, Donald (Jeannette) MacDonald and Tony (Melissa) MacDonald; daughters, Carroll (Jim) Ryan and Anita (Tüld) MacDonald-Arenburg; sister, Anita Lewin; brother, Tony (Betty)

advertisements

Boutilier; nine grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Joan Lorraine (née Squires)

Macvarish was born on July 23, 1938, in St. John's, Nfld., and died on Sept. 12, 2016, in Oshawa, Ont. Joan is predeceased by her son, Gary White; and parents, John and Phyllis Squires. Surviving: sons, John (Sheila) Fraser of St. Albert, Alta., Terry (Lisa) Fraser of Kelowna, B.C.; daughter, Linda (John) Mash of Oshawa; brothers, Doug (Florence) Squires of St. John's, John (Beverly) Squires of St. John's, David (Audrey) Squires of St. John's; sisters, Vera (Hugh) McGarvie of St. John's, Ruby (Bill) Ryan of St. John's; eight grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, and two great-great-grandchildren.

Irene (née Korpman) Marttinen

was born on June 6, 1924, in Tallinn, Estonia, and died on Sept. 17, 2016, in Brantford, Ont. She has been a home missionary assistant, assistant treasurer, and children's division pianist at various churches in the Toronto area. Irene is predeceased by her husband, Leo Marttinen; and

sister, Ellen Risman. Surviving: son, Andrew (Mia) Marttinen of Bradford; brother, Ralf (Vera) Korpman of Florida; sister, Helje Heinaja; and four grandchildren.

Earl Matthews was born on June 1, 1928, in Oshawa, Ont., and died on Aug. 16, 2016, in Windsor, Ont. He was a long-time member of the College Park church in Oshawa, serving as deacon and Pathfinder leader. He was also an enthusiastic member of the Outdoor Club. Earl is predeceased by his wife, Violet Matthews; and brother, John Maracle. Surviving: daughters, Paula (Dale) Hornia, chef of Windsor, Ont., Shelagh Mackay of Davis, Calif.; brother, Arthur (Ruby) Von Gunten of Bowmanville, Ont.; sister, Carol Ashby of Oshawa; and two grandchildren.

Irene (née Ross) McEachren-

Moore-Radcliffe was born on Jan. 29, 1922, in Brandon, Man., and died on June 27, 2016, in Loma Linda, Calif. Irene is predeceased by her first husband, Robert McEachren; second husband, Philip Moore; third husband, Robert Radcliffe. Surviving:

daughters, Heather McEachren of San Diego, Calif., Lyla McEachren of Forest Falls, Calif., Rhonda Ochoa of Forest Falls; three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Gwen Simmonds was born on Aug. 3, 1954, and died on Aug. 6, 2016, in Halifax, N.S. She was a pianist and Sabbath school teacher in the Dartmouth church and organized meetings for local Adventist singles. She was also actively involved in working with shelters for abused women. Gwen is predeceased by her parents, Donnic and Beatrice (née Jackson) Simmonds. Surviving: sons, Tesfa Simmonds, Danso Simmonds, Taayo Simmonds; one brother; and two sisters.

Clayoma (née Finney) Soloniuk

was born on Nov. 11, 1928, in Boulder, Colo., and died on May 4, 2016, in Loma Linda, Calif. She served with her husband in the British Columbia, Manitoba-Saskatchewan, and Ontario Conferences. Clayoma is predeceased by her father, Rodney Finney; and brother, Conrad Finney. Surviving: husband, William George Soloniuk; daughters, Gytha Mannen, Gaylene Tays, Glenda Spangler; brother, Terrence Finney; and two grandchildren.

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Union College seeks committed Adventist to establish and direct an Occupational Therapy Assistant Program effective summer 2017. Essential qualifications include a master's degree in Occupational Therapy (doctorate preferred), being licensed and registered, and five years of professional experience. Email letter of interest and CV to Rick Young, Chair of Emergency Management and Exercise Science, r2young@ucollge.edu. (12/16)

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from the editor

missions

THERE ARE SEVERAL GREAT ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, two of which I consider to be particularly stellar and make me proud of our church: one is ADRA Canada and the other, Global Missions.

This month's cover story is about one of the many Canadians in service overseas. Wesley Szamko; his wife, Ivonne; along with their children, William and Alyssia, are serving in places that do not necessarily boast the same comforts and pleasures we enjoy here in Canada. Personally, I would find it especially hard not to be with my family and close friends during the Christmas season, as that is the highlight of my year. And Adventist families serving far away from home set these pleasures aside so that they can serve and bless others.

The worldwide Global Mission team, including the Szamko family, have been faithful in ministry in every place they have served. Now it is our time to help and encourage them as they stand for us in places many of us would not risk going.

Our church is having more and more discussions about potentially keeping more tithe funds within the North American Division, thus reducing the amount going overseas. However, such a change may be detrimental to our frontline ministries, especially workers like the Szamkos. I think we need to make sure they are supported. If you agree, please make use of the envelope inserted in this issue to become involved with Adventist missions.

As families we can sit down at our respective Christmas tables, knowing that we are not only praying for "the missionaries and colporteurs" but also taking a concrete action to help them monthly in their important work. This year, my Christmas wish is that those who follow us find that we have faithfully supported Adventist Mission on a regular basis.

Pastor Wesley has but three requests at the end of the cover story. I ask that you re-read and consider them prayerfully. ■

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stan".

Stan Jensen, editor-in-chief
Canadian Adventist Messenger

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Giving a gift to It Is Written Canada will help spread the Good News of Jesus Christ throughout Canada and around the world

Jody Haywood, attendee of Discoveries in Revelation, shared that the ministry of It Is Written Canada intervened in her life at just the right time and helped her realize that God has a plan for her life. Jody and her husband were baptized in the Seventh-day Adventist church at the conclusion of the series. It is the gifts of our donors that make life-changing differences the lives of people like Jody and Lloyd.



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