MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

“Almost”

W illiam Hyatt was found in the Mojave Desert with his face and hands buried in the sand seeking moisture. The 62-year-old’s car had broken down and he had walked 22 miles, crawling the last two on his hand and knees, until he died. Just over the hill, a half a mile away, was the Saratoga Spring which could have saved him. He was almost there, but he fell short and died.

The Webster’s dictionary defines the word almost in this manner: “Very nearly but not exactly or entirely.”

Most of the time when we use the word almost, it is connected with a most unfortunate experience because it expresses the reality of not quite attaining the goal. For example: “I almost got the job;” or “We almost made it on time;” “They almost got out when the fire broke out…”

As the Apostle Paul shared his conversion testimony before King Agrippa II, the last of the Herods, the King is quoted as saying, “…almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” Acts 26:28

What an unfortunate statement from a man so close to being a Christian, yet he was so far. Being almost does not make you one. He had an earthly position, but not one in heaven.

The reality is that there are still those kinds of people today. People who hear the Word of God, people who study the Bible, who study prophecy, who see and sense that the end of the world is near, and yet they remain unrepentant.

Almost does not make the cut, doesn’t get us anywhere. You and I can’t almost follow Jesus—almost misses the mark.

I don’t want to be an almost Christian, an almost good husband, an almost good father, an almost effective president of this Central California Conference. Because almost is filled with tragedy, disappointment and despair.

• When you almost made it out of the fiery building, means you’re dead.
• When you almost won the game, means you lost.
• When you almost boarded the plane, means you were left behind.

When I think about it, almost just needs one thing for you and me to take the next step, to give the next burst of effort, to not settle, to do as the Apostle Paul testified:

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” 2 Timothy 4:7

Let us not be almost Christians, but steadfast finishers instead. Let us be faithful to the call God has entrusted, be it a member of the lay priesthood of all believers, clergy, teacher, or administrator.

Jesus is not in the business of almost anything—He does all with fullness of effort, completeness of purpose and totality as His goal. Of Jesus Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:21, “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps.”

Let us follow His example fully here in Central is my prayer.

Trust in Him,

Ramiro Cano
Vibrant and active are two words to describe women’s ministries at the Lemoore Adventist Church. Sprinkled among the monthly meetings are successful fundraisers. Ten percent of the profits are given to the church budget. The 90 percent remainder is used for Women’s Ministries.

“We want as many women as possible to attend the conference women’s retreats,” says Stephanie Davis, co-leader of women’s ministries at Lemoore. “We pay whatever is needed.”

Women’s Ministries has made a difference in the church. “We’re not a click. This is a family,” says Jessica Tello, co-leader. “This has brought women of all ages together and is family oriented.”

Two church sponsored women’s weekend retreats are also planned each year. In 2010 they were in Monterey and at Camp Wawona. “I am a 4th generation Adventist. I’ve heard all that stuff. Retreats bring me back home with a deeper spiritual experience, bonding with Christ and other women,” Davis says.

Three years ago, a Christmas community service project was added. This past December, a Fresno organization that supports female veterans and their children was selected. Church member Tracy Meres, a social worker at the facility, explains, “This is a place for women to get back on their feet. Many have children and need extra support. They get a place to live and the opportunity to go through rehab, go back to school or look for work.”

A large collection container was placed in the church lobby. It quickly filled with donations of toys, book, toiletries, and clothes. Some gave cash gifts which allowed shopping for the women. Adopting a child was also an option.

A truck was needed to get all of the donated items plus the new gifts for the women and children to Fresno. “My favorite part was seeing the children’s eyes light up as we came in with armload after armload of presents!” Davis says. “They had known we were coming, but I don’t think they expected so much. We sang Christmas carols together (thanks to Steve Davis and his guitar), read the story of Jesus’ Birth from the Bible, prayed, and then they opened their presents. Wrapping paper was flying everywhere!”

“It was far more than we imagined. The women veterans were just blown away by what we felt was a little something. This [outreach project] blessed our ladies above and beyond what we had imagined,” says Tello.

San Jose Radio Program Puts Families First

By Shenalyn Page

Julio Galloso is passionate about sharing the gospel on the airwaves. The self-employed mechanic has urged four Central California Conference churches onto the air. He recently joined the pastoral couple of his San Jose Hispanic Church, Dr. César and Carolann de Léon, in a weekly family life program called Tu Familia Primero (www.tufamiliaprimero.com).

The church began Tu Familia Primero when a new Spanish radio station, FM at 104.9, went on the air last spring to serve the Bay Area’s international Hispanic community. Recognizing an opportunity to help their fellow Latinos, the de Léons developed Tu Familia Primero from their years of experience in marriage and family counseling. In demand seminar speakers, the de Léons’ energetic presentation style, personal stories, and practical tips have made the show a hit among listeners.

The de Léons share biblical principles for marriage, parenting and satisfying relationships in the first 15 to 20 minutes of the hour-long program. Then they answer callers’ questions. Galloso serves as public relations coordinator and announcer, offering a variety of free family life resources.

“More people call in needing help than we have time for each week,” says Tu Familia Primero co-host and church elder Marcos Terron. “We’re praying we can pay for more time on air because we want to help more people fix their lives with Jesus.” Church members provide the program’s financial base.
Free Snow Cones Leads to Baptism

By Shenalyn Page

Fresno’s Central Valley church moved into its new home with a splash this past August. Church members wanted to meet their new neighbors so they went door-to-door with requests for prayer and literature, washed cars for free, gave away snow cones, and hosted the Waves of Grace series with Pacific Union Conference Vice President Arnold Trujillo.

The free snow cones drew long lines of sweaty kids, several community members attended the three-week series, and one man was baptized. “We decided to give out snow cones because God gave us property between an elementary and a high school,” says youth leader Dean Gallego.

He and the youth put a canopy on the church lawn, made big signs and gave away snow cones as kids left school. Grown-ups pulled off the road to cool off too. “Why are you giving away free snow cones?” people would ask.

“We just moved into the community and want to let everyone know we’re here,” answered the youth. “We’re here to serve you as a church. If you need anything please let us know and we’ll see how we can help you.” Each person received a meeting invitation and GLOW tract with his or her snow cone.

“I was really blessed by the outreach,” says 17-year-old Dawn Gaje, who is now attending the Amazing Facts Center of Evangelism. “It was fun to make the snow cones and talk to the kids.”

One boy brought his Uncle Javier for a snow cone. The youth invited him to the Waves of Grace meetings. He came and was warmly welcomed. Sensing God leading him back to church, Javier was baptized at the end of the series. He immediately began sharing his new faith and reaching out to the homeless.

“It was a great outreach to let everyone know we were here,” says Gallego, who also serves as an elder and church clerk.

“The church [building] had been empty for over a year and people didn’t realize it was church.” The youth gave out 200-300 snow cones each week from August to October.

Gallagos and a few youth have been giving out hot cocoa and fruit since the weather turned colder. They continue to make friends with those they serve. Recently a former member of the Fresno Central Church promised to return to church over her hot cocoa. “God works in many ways,” says Gallagos. “All He wants from us is a willing heart.”

Nicole Samila and Marilou Misal, part of the church’s youth group, and friends Jon Kratz and Marina Ortega serve snow cones to children from a neighborhood elementary school.
The Miracle of the Traveling Money

Weekend friendship games are filled with activities – special speakers for Friday night and Sabbath, dynamic worships and Sabbath afternoon outreach. On Saturday night and Sunday team sports are played. This past November the game was volleyball and Monterey Bay Academy (MBA) hosted teams and their families from six conference academies.

Collecting coats for the homeless in Santa Cruz County was the Sabbath afternoon ministry for all team members. “I was driving a group of Modesto kids,” says Jay Cox, English teacher at Central Valley Christian Academy (CVCA) in Ceres, Calif. “Because we were using our school van filled with the students’ gear, this jacket got mixed in with our stuff.”

Back at CVCA*, the donated jacket was unloaded with the students’ clothing. A week later with clothes still piled in his classroom, Cox insisted his students pick up their belongings. A few days later, there still was one ladies coat that no one had claimed. Cox decided to give it to whoever wanted it.

Liza Dalton was handed the coat to try on. When she put her hand in the pocket, she discovered an envelope filled with money. It so happened that Dalton was one of the students who had collected the coat.

There was $2,200 in the envelope! Commotion in the classroom erupted. “There was never any serious discussion about keeping the money for themselves,” Cox says. “Although they quickly figured out what they could buy with $2,200.00.”

Cox contacted MBA and learned a lady had called about the envelope in a donated coat.

The Lady’s Story

She had been saving so she could move out of her home. Her debts were paid off and she was living a much simpler life with no credit cards. “When the money accidently went out with the jacket, I was shocked,” she shares. “I had been tithing this past year and my first thought was ‘I wasn’t going to tithe anymore.’”

Immediately, she felt impressed by the Holy Spirit to sit down and write her tithe checks for the month. “I knew that what was happening was not about me losing $2,200, but rather about witnessing the glory of God in this situation,” she explains. “So I let it go and really didn’t expect to see the money again.”

But God surprised this lady of faith with a miracle. In a letter to the students and teacher at CVCA, she wrote: “You were the people God used to bless not only me but everyone involved including yourselves. You demonstrated how Jesus has told us to live. You became the hands that were used to give glory to God so that we all can bear witness that we are in the world but not of the world…thank you for your honesty and integrity…you have been instrumental in increasing my faith in God’s promise.”

*CVCA was formerly known as Modesto Adventist Academy.

**SPRING VOLUNTEER PROJECTS**

Soquel Conference Center
May 1-4, 2011

Camp Wawona
May 15-18, 2011

Come for one day or more to help prepare our facilities for their summer ministries. Food and lodging included.

For more information, go to ccc.adventist.org or contact Caron Oswald at coswald@cccsda.org or call (559) 347-3181.

**Web sites Worth a Visit**

- [ccc.adventist.org](http://ccc.adventist.org) for news, coming events and camp meeting details plus The Camp Meeting Channel

- [www.campwawona.org](http://www.campwawona.org) for summer camp information, for weekly news visit blog.campwawona.org

- [www.goglow.org](http://www.goglow.org) for the latest news and training opportunities for GLOW