A Christmas Promise for Today

God’s intimate connection with our world didn’t end 2,000 years ago. While we await the Second Advent for an ultimate end to sin and suffering, we take comfort in knowing heaven is still near to those willing to listen. Ellen White’s comments from The Desire of Ages ring true for us today. “Heaven and earth are no wider apart today than when shepherds listened to the angels’ song. Humanity is still as much the object of heaven’s solicitude as when common men of common occupations met angels at noonday, and talked with the heavenly messengers in the vineyards and the fields. To us in the common walks of life, heaven may be very near. Angels from the courts above will attend the steps of those who come and go at God’s command.”

Safety in Adventist Schools

With the news last week of the shootings in Portland, Ore, followed Friday by the school in Newtown, Conn., the safety of our children has been high on many people’s minds. North American Division (NAD) and Union education officials met recently with

Looking Ahead

December

20: The Christmas Gift from UCA, 7:30 p.m.; Martin Woldson Theater, Spokane, WA.
25: Christmas Day
31: New Year’s Eve
28–Jan. 1: GYC Seattle
security specialists from the United States Army to review school safety plans already in place across the Division. Adventist education departments across North America will be conducting seminars in multiple unions to offer continued training. "We have a unique system in which many of our schools are small schools. We may never have large electronic security systems in some of our schools," said Larry Blackmer, NAD vice president for education. "However, at the same time, we need to do everything to ensure the safety of our children in a sinful and dangerous society." Read more about the plans and find resources at NADAventist.org.

**Upper Columbia Academy Christmas Concert**

Upper Columbia Academy presents its sixth annual “Christmas at the Fox” concert, featuring their Symphony Orchestra, Concert Band, and Choral groups performing Christmas standards, both classical and popular, sacred and secular, at Martin Woldson Theater at The Fox on Thursday, Dec. 20 at 7:30 p.m. Admission is free and open to the public. Directions to the concert and more information is available.

**January**

9-19: Ten Days of Prayer

Current Issue

December

This month in the GLEANER, we feature the Yakima Church food bank and the ministry happening there each week. The second feature is the story of the Oregon Adventist Men's Chorus recent tour to South Africa. You won't want to miss a thing! Download the issue today!
Reading the Christmas Story

While it would be impossible to truly know how many people are reading the Christmas story, YouVersion, the makers of a popular smartphone Bible app and online Bible, have created a Christmas Story Tracker. Each time someone reads one of the Christmas story verses in their app or website, a star lights up on the map and a counter is incremented. Why don't you take a few minutes now to read the Christmas story, whether on a phone, the computer, or in your tried-and-true paper Bible: Luke 2.

An International Christmas Message

Ted N. C. Wilson, Adventist world church president, has recorded a special Christmas edition of "Revival for Mission." In the half-hour special, Wilson tells of our loving God and His pursuit of a relationship with humanity. During the program, he is joined by Nancy, his wife, who tells the story of the original Christmas through the eyes of a young shepherd. The video also features a new Christmas-medley with dozens of performers and instruments from around the world. Take some time over this Christmas holiday to watch this special Christmas message.
**Healthy Holidays**

The holidays are filled with fun, family and friends, and yes, food. While everyone loves a good meal, it seems that too often, we rush though the eating and end up consuming too much! The *Full Plate Diet* blog has a tip that will help you enjoy your meal longer, give you more time to enjoy your family and leave you more relaxed: [Holiday Weight Loss Tip: Eat a 4-Course Meal](#).

**When Life is Unfair**

In the face of recent tragedies, many ask, “Where was God?” The Pacific Press is releasing a new resource by Mark Finley that shares the unique understanding Seventh-day Adventists have on the great controversy which lies behind faith-shattering events which happen here on earth. The 16-page booklet, *When Life is Unfair*, will be released the first week in January. Orders for individual copies or larger quantities for sharing may be placed through local Adventist Book Centers or [online at AdventistBookCenter.com](http://adventistbookcenter.com).
Adventist Health Personnel Honored

During its inaugural Business Excellence Awards luncheon Thursday, Dec. 7, the Gresham (Ore.) Chamber of Commerce honored two Portland area Adventist leaders. Tom Russell, Adventist Medical Center-Portland (AMC-P) president and CEO, was presented with the Excellence in Business award for companies with more than 50 employees. Ed Hoover, AMC-P Wellness Services manager, was named Golden Note Volunteer of the Year. In addition to their civic and volunteer activities in the community, both Russell and Hoover are active in their respective churches.

Read more about the awards from the Portland Tribune.
12-15-2012 Safety in our Adventist Schools

Recently, North American Division and Union education leadership met with a security specialist of the United States Army. As a result of the conversations, the education leadership has coordinated several seminars in multiple unions on how to improve the safety in our Adventist schools.

Currently, the education departments in the nine unions and one mission of the North American Division have crisis management procedures for educational institutions. For crisis management resources for educational institutions, please visit http://circle.adventist.org/files/jae/en/jae200972013406.pdf and http://circle.adventist.org/browse/resource.phtml?leaf=5213

"We have a unique system in which many of our schools are small schools. We may never have large electronic security systems in some of our schools," said Larry Blackmer, vice president for education for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. "However, at the same time, we need to do everything to ensure the safety of our children in a sinful and dangerous society. Many of our schools have already begun implementing safety plans."

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America operates a system of more than 900 elementary and secondary schools and 13 colleges and universities. The primary aim of Seventh-day Adventist education is to provide an opportunity for students to accept Christ as their Savior, to allow the Holy Spirit to transform their lives, and to fulfill the commission of preaching the gospel to all the world.

Officers and directors of the North American Division were in the midst of departmental meetings when they found out about the shootings at the elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, this past Friday. "Our hearts ache over yet another senseless shooting within the past few weeks," said Pastor Dan Jackson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. "We pray that God's Spirit will break through the ghastly shadow of death to bring comfort and support to those who are grieving and broken."

Taken from North American Division NewsPoints
UPPER COLUMBIA ACADEMY CONCERT

Performances

Thu Dec 20 7:30 PM - 9:30 PM

Event Details

Upper Columbia Academy presents its sixth annual "Christmas at the Fox" concert, featuring a Symphonic Band, a String Ensemble, a mass Choir and a small choral ensemble performing Christmas standards, both classical and jazz, sacred and secular. Admission is free and open to the public.

Ticket Information

This concert is free and seating is general admission. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.
Awards honor those making an impact locally

Gresham chamber recognizes local business and nonprofit organization volunteers

It seems fitting that in keeping with the season of giving, the Gresham Area Chamber of Commerce took a moment to acknowledge those who don't wait for a holiday to make their community a better place.

During the inaugural Business Excellence Awards luncheon Thursday, Dec. 7, the chamber honored volunteers from local businesses and nonprofit organizations, as well as an Entrepreneur of the Year. Chamber members were nominated, with winners selected for their exceptional volunteerism.

The event replaces the Golden Note Awards, which recognized individual volunteers with a nonprofit organization. This year's addition of excellence in business awards expands the chamber's recognition for volunteerism within the business community, said Chamber CEO Alison Hart.

"We thought it was important to acknowledge the diversity of our membership by including both our business and nonprofit members," Hart said. "The winners exemplify the caliber of businesses in this region and their volunteers."

This year's winners for the Excellence in Business Awards were:

- **Large Business (companies with more than 50 employees) — Adventist Health.**

Adventist Health's mission is to administer compassionate care to all patients while providing a regional presence that serves the community's needs. The hospital has been recognized nationally for its exceptional services in gynecological and spinal surgeries, and regularly provides workshops, seminars and support groups for community members with health issues. Adventist Health's president and CEO, Tom Russell, has advocated for the needs of patients to state legislatures and various government officials and recently was presented with the 2012 Grass Roots Champion Award for his leadership.

- **Small Business (companies with fewer than 49 employees) — Riverview Community Bank.**

Serving the community's financial needs may be the purpose of a bank, but supporting those who live within its service area is equally important to Riverview Community Bank. Led by Casey Ryan, vice president and branch manager, Riverview's presence in East County is felt by numerous charities, nonprofit and service organizations. The bank is a corporate sponsor for community events and festivals from Gresham to Corbett, while Riverview's employees have given numerous volunteer hours to the Teddy Bear Parade, SnowCap Community Charities and local school functions. Riverview also supports local businesses through the Gresham chamber’s Try Local First program and annually, helps steer the Fill-A-Bag campaign to feed the hungry during the holidays.

- **Golden Note Volunteer of the Year, supported by business — Ed Hoover, Adventist Health.**

With more than 1,700 volunteer hours to his name, Hoover has been described as "an inspiring coach and mentor to others and an advocate for those in need." By teaming up with churches, schools and health plans, Hoover has been able to
establish alternative access for health screenings and services needed by uninsured or underinsured members of the community. To date, Hoover has reached more than 2,300 people through health education classes, health fairs and other events.

• **Golden Note Volunteer of the Year, supported by a nonprofit organization — Merlin Aufdengarten, SnowCap Community Charities.**

Aufdengarten’s passion for those who have come upon tough times has led him to devote more than 1,215 volunteer hours to those in need. He has delivered food to hundreds of senior citizens and disabled people and helps acquaint newbies to his style of volunteerism. But his pet project is aiding convicted felons in finding employment. He developed an employment seminar for felons, assisting them with their résumé and interview skills, and now helps employers consider the person’s past work experience to provide him or her with a second chance.

• **Entrepreneur of the Year — Sue Piazza, Take Shape for Life.**

For the past five years, Piazza has coached others in their efforts to achieve their optimal health goals. Her independent business has grown to more than $6 million in annual sales, and she now assists 450 other coaches in their Take Shape for Life businesses. But in June 2011, Piazza launched the Fab50 Project to raise $50,000 for five local charities in honor of her 50th birthday in June 2012. With the support of nearly 400 people and 100 businesses, her project raised $78,000 in 12 months, which allowed her to present checks for $13,000 to six different charities at her birthday party.

Judging this year's awards were Travis Stovall, executive director, East Metro Economic Alliance; Mike McLaran, CEO, Oregon State Chamber of Commerce; and Erik Pozzo, Oregon Entrepreneurs Network and Angel investor.

The chamber’s Try Local First Committee presented Community Newspapers President Mark Garber with its fourth annual Champion Award. The award is in recognition for The Outlook’s efforts to encourage support of local businesses through the newspaper’s editorial and advertising departments.

For information on next year’s Business Excellence Awards, call the Gresham Area Chamber of Commerce and Visitor’s Center at 503-665-1131.