Ukrainian and Russian Adventists Issue Joint Statement

Adventist News Network reports that top Adventist Church leaders in Russia, Ukraine and other Eastern European countries have released a statement inviting church members and “all people of good will” to participate in the “ministry of reconciliation” as political turmoil in Ukraine deepens. Russian and Ukrainian Adventists in London (pictured here) sponsored a day of fasting and prayer, specifically praying for the on-going difficulties in Ukraine. Read more from the Adventist News Network and the Adventist Review.

Pacific Press Board Appoints New VP

The Pacific Press board of directors has voted to appoint Larry Johnson as the new vice president of production. He replaces Chuck Bobst who recently retired after 12 years of service in that role. Johnson is no stranger to publishing or to Pacific Press, serving there for eight years during the transition from Mountain View, Calif., to Nampa, Idaho. His
experience includes publishing work in Russia, associate publishing director for the Far Eastern Division and at the General Conference. He returned to Pacific Press briefly in the late 90s before being called to Color Press where he served as president for nine years. Johnson officially retired in 2009 but feels the time is right to once again work for the church. Read more online from Pacific Press.

It's Pathfinder Bible Experience Time

Pathfinders from around the Northwest look forward each year to the annual Bible Experience activities. This program invites Pathfinders to strive together as a team to demonstrate their Bible knowledge and get to know Jesus and the Bible better. This year's study focused on 2 Samuel, and teams from each club were tested at the conference level in February. This past Sabbath, March 8, Pathfinder teams from around the North Pacific Union Conference (including one from Castle Rock, Wash., pictured here) met for the union-level event at the Upper Columbia Conference headquarters in Spokane, Wash. Watch a short video report of this event and read more about the results at the Upper Columbia Conference website.

AMC Among Nation's 100 Best for Critical Care

Adventist Medical Center in Portland, Ore., has been recognized by Healthgrades as one of "America's 100 Best" hospitals for treating critical care and spine surgery patients. Healthgrades evaluated nearly 4,500 hospitals nationwide and identified the 100 best hospitals. The hospital's extraordinary achievement is part of findings released in American Hospital Quality Outcomes 2014: Healthgrades Report to the Nation, which demonstrates how clinical performance differs dramatically between hospitals and the impact on health outcomes. One dramatic finding is that from 2010–2012, if all hospitals surveyed from 2010–2012 had performed similarly to hospitals like Adventist Medical Center, on average more than 230,000 lives could potentially have been saved. Read more from Adventist Medical Center.
God's Closet Featured in 3ABN Interview

God's Closet is a community outreach program that brings practical help to hundreds of people around the Northwest each year. At the church in Vancouver, Wash., Laura Pascoe coordinates a host of volunteers who organize a regular event that provides essential clothing and other supplies to community people with needs. It has become so popular that area companies are beginning to join in the event as their own outreach. Watch a recent video interview from Three Angels Broadcasting Network about God's Closet, including Pascoe and Upper Columbia Conference representative Patty Marsh.

Global Youth Day is Coming This Sabbath

Eight million Adventist youth worldwide, including many from North America, are expected to “exit the church and enter the world” on Global Youth Day, Sabbath, March 15. They plan to “live the sermon” by joining in acts of kindness, donating blood, serving at shelters, and much more. Adventist youth can publish directly to the Global Youth Day website which will show exactly where they are on a world map, or via the iOS App, or Android App. They can also upload photos and videos to the Global Youth Day Facebook page and can use the Smartphone App to contribute.

The Anonymous Letter

The anonymous letter writer said he “would not be attending” the Islam and Christianity seminar at the Spokane Valley Church. Pastor Mark Weir couldn’t correct the writer’s mistaken impressions ... there was no return address. But when he read the letter one evening to the seminar audience, an interesting thing happened. Read Pastor Weir’s story online from the Upper Columbia Conference.
March 13: Pacific Press Appoints New VP

Currently at

- Hell and Mr. Fudge Shows in Boise
- An Interview with Creation filmmaker Henry Stober
- Washington Elders Called to be Faithful, Focused, Friendly
- Montana State University Campus Ministry

And More!

Looking Ahead

March

- 13: Castle Rock New Beginnings
- 14–16: NW Prison Min. Retreat
- 28: Oregon Prayer Conference
- 29: Seattle VegFest

More Events

InPrint

March

It’s a crisp, Montana morning, and Pastor Alan Newbold is heading to his French class. He’s not teaching but is there as a student, mingling, ministering and befriending on the campus of Montana State University (MSU). This month, the Gleaner explores secular campus ministry and an innovative project the Montana Conference has embarked on to reach the 15,000 students enrolled at MSU.

Read the March issue online.
March 13: Pacific Press Appoints New VP
Joint statement from Russian, Ukrainian Adventist leaders urges peacekeeping, prayer

Crimean Tatars hold a banner that reads, “No War” during a pro-Ukraine rally in Simferopol, Crimea, Ukraine on March 10. A Turkic ethnic group, Tatars make up 12 percent of Crimea’s population, the majority of which is ethnic Russian. [photo: Darko Vojinovic/copyright Associated Press]

Dispute over Crimea heightens tension in Eastern Europe

March 11, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | ANN staff

A statement released by top Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders in Russia, Ukraine and other Eastern European countries invites church members and “all people of good will” to participate in the “ministry of reconciliation” as political turmoil in Ukraine deepens.

Pro-Russian separatists in Crimea voted last week to secede from Ukraine and join Russia, just days after thousands of Russian troops began patrolling the disputed Black Sea peninsula. A region-wide referendum for secession is set for March 16. A majority of Crimea’s 2.3 million people identify as ethnic Russians.

Unrest in the region began in November when former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych backed away from a planned trade deal with the European Union in favor of a loan from Russia. The decision spurred months of street protests in Kiev and violent clashes between demonstrators and police. Ukraine’s democratically elected parliament ousted Yanukovych last month.

In February, Viktor Alekseenko, president of the Adventist Church in Ukraine, asked Adventists to pray for their country and avoid provoking hostility—on the streets and on social media, where he urged church members not to leave inflammatory comments.

Alekseenko is among church leaders to sign this latest statement, calling on Adventists and community members to help “restore human dignity, equality and unity through the grace of God.”

Excerpts from the statement:

_We call on all members of the Seventh-day Church to refrain from participating in political statements and actions that could escalate tensions. We invite all people of good will to join us in peacekeeping, incessant prayer for peaceful resolution of all conflicts, as well as to create an atmosphere of fraternity and cooperation, contributing to the understanding of different cultures and ideological systems to build good relations between people of all races, nationalities, religions and political beliefs._

_This is the official position of the church. Any other statement you may encounter outside the official church media should be seen as the views of private individuals._

The statement was signed by leadership from the Adventist Church’s Euro-Asia Division, Belarus Union of Churches, Caucasus Union Mission, East Russian Union Mission, Far Eastern Union of Churches, Moldova Union of Churches, Southern Union Mission, Trans-Caucasus Union Mission, Ukrainian Union Conference and the West Russian Union Conference.

Meanwhile, the Adventist Church’s official television network in Ukraine is broadcasting a live daily prayer marathon. “God Save Ukraine” airs on Hope Channel Ukraine during prime time and highlights stories from across the country that demonstrate unity and
forgiveness.

Hope Channel Ukraine is the only Christian television network in the country directly responding to the political crisis, Adventist media officials said.
Ukraine-Russian Unity in Russian-speaking Churches in UK

Adventists News

Posted March 11, 2014

By Victor Hulburt

Russian and Ukrainian Adventists in London have made a joint declaration, clearly stating that they do not want to be involved in tensions surrounding the current crisis in Ukraine. According to Russian-speaking pastor, Andrei Balan, this reflects the Adventist position in Russia and the Ukraine.

The Russian-speaking Adventist church in London is a community formed from multinational members. On March 1, 2014, the church sponsored a day of fasting and prayer, specifically praying for the on-going difficulties in Ukraine. “Although we cannot do much to change the political circumstances, we are supporting each other as a Christians,” said Balan.

Some members, such as Evgenii and Svetlana and the Baidiuk family have children in Ukraine. This adds some impetus to their prayers for peace. However, members are doing more than praying. On Sunday, March 2, they joined the Russian Spring Carnival, “Maslenitsa” in Piccadilly. They distributed DVDs and appropriate books.

Balan reports that although the political unrest in Ukraine seemed to be out of control on March 2, and Russia seemed to be preparing for military actions, “Here in London we continued to pray and focus on supporting each other in prayer, hoping that God will keep his children safe.”

Members have been in touch with fellow members from Ukraine, and continue to pray for unity and for ways to support each other. “That’s the Spirit we promote. We see no difference between any of us, regardless of our nationality or background,” Balan stressed.

Vasili Makarchuk, an elder of the Russian-speaking congregation at Newbold College, said, “Thank you for thinking about the situation in the Ukraine. May we request that our church in United Kingdom continue to pray together with us for peace in Ukraine, and around the word.”
Pacific Press® Board Appoints New Vice President

Nampa, Idaho (March 12, 2014) — The Pacific Press® Board of Directors has voted to appoint Larry Johnson as the new vice president of production. He replaces Chuck Bobst who recently retired after having served in that role for the past 12 years.

Johnson is no stranger to publishing or to Pacific Press®. He first joined the team in 1984, just in time to help with the move from Mountain View, Calif., to Nampa, Idaho. He served in that role for eight years before relocating to Russia where he helped set up and establish the publishing work there.

Johnson's experience includes serving as associate publishing director for the Far Eastern Division and also at the General Conference, headquartered in Silver Spring, Md. He has served as a consultant both in North America and internationally. He returned to Pacific Press® briefly in the late 90s before being called as president at Color Press where he served for nine years.

Johnson officially retired in 2009 but says he felt good about the call to return to serve the church. "Pacific Press® serves a distinctive purpose," he said, "that is why I came back." Although the changes in the publishing industry have been remarkable in the 15 years since Johnson last worked here, he said, "Printing is still a viable part of publishing. It will always be part of what we do - it is part of our worldwide culture as Seventh-day Adventists."

Dale Galusha, president, said "We are thrilled to have Larry Johnson on board. With his keen sense of mission and his vast experience, we look forward to the invaluable contribution he will make to the ministry of Pacific Press®."

Regarding the challenges currently facing the publishing work, Johnson said, "Books will continue to be an important vehicle for sharing the truth, for those in the church and, especially for those who long to know the truth."

###
Pathfinders hold last minute quiz session before the Bible Experience started.

UCC Pathfinder Director, Wayne Hicks, asked the quiz questions for Bible Experience.

SPOKANE, Wash., March 8, 2014 -

Nine Pathfinder teams from around the Northwest gathered at the Upper Columbia Conference office March 8, 2014 for the North Pacific Union Pathfinder Bible Experience event.

Teams of four to six young people were asked 90 questions from the book of 2 Samuel. Questions ranged from troop numbers to specific names of people and locations to specific wording for verses. These were not basic Bible trivia questions, but illustrated just how well the Pathfinders had studied Scripture.

To prepare, many Pathfinders study the featured Bible book on their own free time, for up to 13 months. Most memorize between four and six chapters. They get together with their coach once or twice during the week to quiz each other. In addition, the young people raise money to travel to the union or North American PBE events.

“These Pathfinders inspire me,” said Wayne Hicks, Upper Columbia Conference Pathfinder director, “and God blesses them by hiding His Word in their hearts!”

This year’s book was a particularly difficult book to memorize but the Pathfinders rose to the challenge. One young participant said, “My favorite part about studying 2 Samuel was how God forgave David, even when he messed up so many times.”

Seven of the nine teams that participated in the North Pacific Union event are now moving on to the division event that takes place in Maryland April 12, 2014.

“I was so incredibly impressed by each Pathfinder” said Paul Hoover, Upper Columbia Conference president. “They’ve worked so hard studying a challenging book of the Bible and everyone did so well.”

The results from the regional North Pacific Union PBE event are as follows:

**Idaho Conference**
3 – Baker Valley Mountaineers

**Oregon Conference**
1 – Fort Vancouver
1 – Castle Rock
1 – Pleasant Valley Panthers

**Upper Columbia Conference**
2 – Pend Oreille Valley Wildcats
1 – Ponderosa Pathfinders
1 – Walla Walla City Church Sunrise
1 – Wind Valley Arrows

**Washington 1 Conference**
1 – Cascade Eagles
Adventist Medical Center Named America's 100 Best Hospitals for Critical Care and Spine Surgery

Adventist Medical Center has been recognized by Healthgrades as one of America’s 100 Best hospitals for treating Critical Care and Spine Surgery patients. Healthgrades, a leading online resource that helps consumers search, compare and connect with physicians and hospitals, evaluated nearly 4,500 hospitals nationwide and identified the 100 best hospitals.

“We are constantly challenging ourselves to deliver the highest quality care in a safe, timely, effective and efficient patient-centered environment,” says Tom Russell, President and CEO of Adventist Medical Center. Better outcomes are the result of coordinated care between patients, physicians, nurses, therapists, and the entire caregiving team. Treating Critical Care and Spine Surgery patients requires a highly skilled team. “Because our mission calls us to excellence in relationships which translates into better patient care, our staff has adopted a practice of treating every patient as if they were part of their own family,” continues Russell. “This focus helps reduce infection and complication rates, resulting in better patient outcomes”

The hospital’s extraordinary achievement is part of findings released in American Hospital Quality Outcomes 2014: Healthgrades Report to the Nation, which demonstrates how clinical performance differs dramatically between hospitals and the impact on health outcomes. For example, from 2010-2012, if all hospitals, performed similarly to hospitals receiving 5-stars as a group, on average 234,252 lives could potentially have been saved and 157,418 complications could potentially have been avoided. A 5-star rating indicates that Adventist Medical Center’s clinical outcomes are better than expected when treating the condition or conducting the procedure being evaluated.

For its analysis, Healthgrades evaluated approximately 40 million Medicare-patient records for nearly 4,500 short-term acute care hospitals nationwide, assessing hospital performance relative to each of 31 common conditions and procedures.

More information on the American Hospital Quality Outcomes 2014: Healthgrades Report to the Nation, including the complete methodology, can be found at www.healthgrades.com/quality.

About Adventist Health

Adventist Medical Center (AMC), located in southeast Portland, is a nonprofit, 302-bed acute care facility, offering a full range of inpatient, outpatient and emergency services throughout the Portland/Vancouver metropolitan area is the flagship of Adventist Health services in the Portland area. Adventist Health-Portland, is staffed my more than 2,000 employees and includes 37 primary care and specialty clinics in the metro area.

Adventist Health-Portland is part of Adventist Health, a faith-based, not-for-profit integrated health care delivery system serving communities in California, Hawaii, Oregon and Washington. Our workforce of 28,700 includes more than 21,000 employees; 4,500 medical staff physicians; and 3,000 volunteers. Founded on Seventh-day Adventist health values, Adventist Health provides compassionate care in 19 hospitals, more than 150 clinics (hospital-based, rural health and physician clinics), 14 home care agencies, six hospice agencies and four joint-venture retirement centers. We invite you to visit our website at www.adventisthealthnw.com for more information.

###
by Mark Weir

"I will not be attending your Islam and Christianity meetings," said the anonymous letter to the Spokane Valley Church.

Photo of the Spokane Valley Adventist Church in much nicer weather. During the Islam and Christianity seminar there was snow nearly every night.

Spokane Valley, Wash., March 12, 2014 - “I will not be attending your Islam and Christianity meetings,” the opening line of an anonymous letter read. I received this letter several days after the beginning of our recent seminar with Tim Roosenberg. As I read on, I began to smile. This anonymous letter was filled with so many assumptions.

We were accused of “stirring the pot” by only focusing on the fringe elements of Islam. We were accused of making demands on society and trying to control people’s behavior. We were told that we offended with our advertising and that we were kooks, especially since our speaker was from Idaho. We were told that our literature was offensive and that we don’t care about the poor.

I decided to read the letter one evening to all the guests who were present. If there had been a name or a phone number, I would have contacted that person privately. But since I couldn’t do that, I shared the letter with the audience because many coming to the seminar had probably heard similar things from their friends.

As I read through the letter, I stopped several times and asked if what was being done in our meetings fit the descriptions found in the letter? Other than our speaker being from Idaho, everyone agreed the accusations did not match reality. Especially since the only literature we used was the Bible.

Over the course of the next couple of days, the letter became a source of good-natured humor. The next night, a guest brought me a cartoon about the origin of religion (based on the Easter Island statues), and with a smile on his face, wanted me to be sure to know that he had signed his letter. Another man gave a sheet of paper with some questions on it just before the meetings began. I had the letter in my hand as I walked to the platform to begin our meeting and upon seeing this, again with good-natured humor, a different man asked if I had gotten another anonymous letter. We all got a good laugh, but it gave me the chance to share a very key truth. The people coming to our seminar are people who are willing to interact, to listen and learn, to dialogue and disagree. I find this to be a very healthy and helpful aspect of life, especially our spiritual life.

On the final night, Tim Roosenberg issued a challenge. People were asked to either a) bring changes within their current church that it would more closely follow the teachings of the Bible; b) join a church that more closely followed the teachings of the Bible; or c) start a church that would more closely follow the teachings of the Bible. Many people indicated their plan to do one of the three, with several saying that this is the church home they want to check out.

On Thursday night, there was a chance for people to ask questions, and did they do that! So many people had something they wanted clarified. A few had certain perspectives they wanted to voice. One individual was wrestling with why Sabbath matters so much to us. He said that everyday is a day of worship to the Lord. He brought up several passages of scripture that he believed challenged the need to worship on Sabbath. Tim Roosenberg read the passages and answered the questions. No anger or hostility. Instead, simply sharing and
stating that each person must study for themselves and be convinced in their own minds.

A little later, this same gentleman asked why we say all non-Sabbath keepers are going to hell. I carefully shared that we do not believe all non-Sabbath keepers are going to hell. However, I went on to urge that when it comes to our beliefs and behaviors, we need to make sure we are never in rebellion against God. God is the One to convict hearts. The wonderful thing about the entire interaction was just that. It was Interaction.

When I compare an anonymous letter about what someone thinks is happening to a healthy exchange of ideas and perspectives and implications, I know which I prefer. Ideas, if they have value, can stand scrutiny. And if they don’t have value, they need the scrutiny.

In our society, we are moving away from interaction and towards sound bites and witty, pithy put-downs. How sad. But I am convinced that it doesn’t have to be that way. The visitors who attended our meetings came to interact and gain understanding. From my experience with our church family, I can say with certainty, our church desires the same thing. May we continue to be a people who value interaction over anonymity.

**P.S.** This story was written by Pastor Mark Weir of Spokane Valley Adventist Church, was published in *The Valley Venture*, March 2014 Spokane Valley Church Newsletter and reprinted by permission.
Hell and Mr. Fudge Shows in Boise

When Stephen McPherson was Idaho Conference president, the question he often was asked by non-Adventists was, "What happens when I die?" When he discovered that his longtime friend James Wood was co-producing a movie on just that topic, a plan began in his mind to bring it to area theaters.

McPherson introduced his idea to the Boise Central congregation, who agreed that it was a great idea. Not only would it answer people's questions about death, it would dispel the misconception of a vengeful God who tortures sinners in hell forever.

_Hell and Mr. Fudge_ premiered at the Egyptian Theatre, which is a historic site in Boise's downtown area. The title on the marquee was quite an attention-grabber. Showings were scheduled for Jan. 25 at 7 p.m. and Jan. 26 at 2 and 6 p.m. A week and a half before the showing, posters were posted and postcards were handed out. Approximately 400 people attended. Children under 10 were admitted free. Of that total, it is estimated that 100 were not Seventh-day Adventists.

McPherson and Wood answered audience questions after each show, and tables set up in the lobby with publications on the topic. The _Signs of the Times_ magazine on "The Truth About Hell," another featuring "Benefits of Belief" and Danny Shelton's booklet "Does God Burn Sinners Forever?" were given away. The definitive textbook by Edward Fudge, _The Fire That Consumes_, and the DVD of _Hell and Mr. Fudge_ sold out, and orders were taken for more. Fudge's book of his personal journey on the project, _Hell, the Final Word_, and the book _The Benefits of Belief_ were also for sale.

The movie is based on Edward Fudge's theological and historical search for biblical truth about the false belief of an eternal hell and the reactions he received from attempting to correct that false doctrine. For more information, go online to hellandmrfudge.org.

Eve Rusk

Idaho Conference communication director
Elders Called to Be Faithful, Focused and Friendly

Washington Conference hosted its first-ever elders’ retreat in February with more than 100 church elders in attendance.

“We want our elders to understand that they are part of our ministry team,” says Bill McClendon, Washington Conference vice president for church growth. “Elders serve a crucial role in providing leadership to the local church. In order for the church to reach its greatest potential, elders must be willing to live out their God-given calling.”

Dan Serns, pastor and retreat presenter from Richardson, Texas, shared with church elders how “every leader needs to be faithful, focused and friendly.”

Serns led elders through a series of interactive activities through which they shared how God brought them to this place in life. The storytelling exercise was eye-opening and introduced elders to the power of a personal story.

“Your church is full of stories,” Serns says. “You need to find and share these stories with your congregation. These stories will transform and strengthen your church.”

The two-day retreat of inspiration, practical training and fellowship began on Saturday afternoon and concluded on Sunday afternoon to allow elders to fulfill their ministry responsibilities at their respective churches.

The retreat also introduced an elders’ leadership certification program with modules for visitation, preaching, leadership, Bible studies, evangelism, worship and church organization.

Heidi Baumgartner

communication director

Heidi Baumgartner serves as communication director for Washington Conference.
Christ's Method Alone

Alan Newbold walks onto campus like any other student. But he’s not any other student. He’s a pastor like few others. And more often than not, he feels all alone on this mission he has accepted. It seems too big, too impossible. But Scripture anchors his world, that with God all things are possible. So here he is, in Bozeman, Montana, in his own unique mission field.

On this particular crisp, cold Friday, he rises, grabs breakfast and heads to his 9 o’clock French class on the campus of Montana State University (MSU), home to 15,000 university students. He’s attending classes for one main reason — it’s where the students are. He’s been spending his days at MSU since 2012, when the Montana Conference decided to move a dream into reality by placing a full-time pastor into secular campus ministry.

But this is not what you might think. It’s not a short-term push for student converts, not a benchmarked goal for baptisms. This is a focus on building or rebuilding relationships that lead to an ultimate and personal partnership with Jesus Christ. And relationships take time. They don’t always follow familiar pathways. And, hence, Alan’s challenge to answer the question: How many students have you baptized this year? It’s the wrong question for this particular outreach, at this particular stage.

This is the suggested cover.

Alan Newbold joins in an impromptu cello piece with Julia Cory-Slovarp, MSU assistant visiting professor of cello and faculty sponsor of Merge, the MSU chapter of Adventist Christian Fellowship.

Molly and Jere Cypher, Bozeman City Church members, are part of the support crew who regularly open their home as a gathering spot for Alan Newbold and the Montana Conference campus ministry.

Preparing for the Friday evening gathering with 15–20 hungry students means a quick supply trip to the local Costco.

Running a campus ministry solo means collaborating with others in similar ministries. Here, Alan Newbold meets downtown with Julie Helwig, team leader for the MSU chapter of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.

The Friday evening gatherings are important times to connect with university students, build relationships and develop a desire for spiritual truth.

So with relationship-building in mind, Alan heads after his early morning class to The Daily, a coffee shop across from the university. He’s got a 10 o’clock rendezvous at a table there with Justin, a freshman business/marketing major. Justin’s had a rough background including a period of homelessness, but he’s determined to turn his life around. Alan is an encourager and friend. Where will Justin be six months from now? 12 months? It’s anyone’s guess, but Alan is investing the capital of time, a listening ear, a friendly presence, with no hidden agendas. He believes it is what Jesus would do.

By the stroke of 12, Alan has made his way back across campus to the music building. He is in the select chorale, and today there are sectional rehearsals. In room 217, he and five other young men lay out the music for an upcoming concert. MSU has no particular empathy toward religion. But on this bright fall day, the Christmas-themed songs have religious themes that would resonate with any Adventist. Even a secular campus sees value in religious culture. Many students have Christian backgrounds. They may even occasionally attend church with their parents when home on vacation. But Christianity as a cultural experience is very different than following Christ as a daily journey of faith. And that is what Alan is here to encourage, little by little, step by step, relationship by relationship.

Practice over for the day, Alan is off to a brief meeting with the faculty sponsor of his on-campus group — Merge — a chapter of Adventist Christian Fellowship, a loose affiliation of campus ministries across the country. Julia Cory-Slovarp, MSU assistant visiting professor of cello, claims no particular faith tradition of her own, but Alan has often played in one of her cello groups, and she sees value in what he is trying to do on campus.
It’s Friday, so that means a planned get-together in the evening at one of the local church member's homes. So, after a quick goodbye to Julia, Alan is back in his Subaru, headed toward Costco — to pick up supplies for a weekly gathering for students hungry for food and fellowship. He loads up the cart with tomatoes, lettuce, pesto, buns — a good indication that it’s going to be a burger night. Alan’s place has one good refrigerator and well-used freezer. They are both stocked with food — not for him, but for them, the collegiate men and women to whom he is both friend and pastor.

After the Costco supply run, this frenetic Friday continues in a short collaborative meeting with Julie Helwig, team leader for the MSU chapter of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF). In contrast with Alan, who is the first and only full-time Adventist pastoral presence at MSU, IVCF has an entire team, with student leaders throughout the campus. They’ve been at it since the 1940s. So you can understand when Alan sometimes feels all alone in this fledgling Adventist campus effort. Certainly church members and conference folk have been invaluable as mentors and financial supporters. But there are precious few Adventist friends of Alan’s age as a personal support group for him — with whom he can “defrost,” who share his values and zest for life. He’s passionate about what he is doing, but he has chosen a lonely road.

During the remaining couple hours in a waning afternoon, Alan heads back home to regroup with his own thoughts and plans for the evening. Who will come? What will they want to talk about? What will come up in the passage of Scripture they read? Will they have enough food?

Jerry and Molly Cypher, Bozeman City Church members, have opened their home for this week’s Friday evening gathering. The food is prepared and laid out. As the sun slips low on the snow-covered mountains around the Bozeman valley, the group begins to arrive. Some consider themselves Adventists; others have a former Adventist connection. A few are just there for the food and the friendship. Alan surveys the room, moves from person to person, watches for an opening, waits for an opportunity. The Sabbath has begun, and Alan’s parishioners have come.

One thing seems clear. Alan is respected and liked around campus. And in the brief but sustained relationships he is building, there is a growing respect for the belief system he holds. This is the nature of relational outreach. Alan believes in the need to listen and understand someone else before you have the right to suggest, before they can accept, life-changing principles.

Remember Justin, Alan's morning appointment in the coffee shop? He has since added "spiritual things" to his list of priorities. He even plans to join Alan's Merge group headed to Thailand during March to help Adventist Disaster Relief Agency (ADRA) install a gravity-fed water system for a remote Karen hill tribe community. This group will include students like Justin, just now open to a quest for spiritual meaning, and others who are not yet ready even for that. Does this sound like a reason for prayer support from all Northwest members? Yes, I believe it does.

In the world, but not of the world: That’s a familiar mantra to Adventists. But some of us have become so adept at avoiding the “of the world” part that we have ceased to be effective “in the world.” Jay Jutzy, one of the primary instigators of this campus ministry, believes Adventists need a rebirth in the gospel commission. “As followers of Jesus,” he says, “we have a wonderful obligation to leave our comfort zone, our church pews, and mingle with people who need to know Him. But, when you follow Jesus, get ready for the ride of your life. He doesn’t just open doors; He pushes us through closed doors.”

That thought may be well kept in mind this March as conference leaders determine the future of this important endeavor. It's important to note that this effort has moved forward because rank-and-file members realized they could keep talking about the need or start doing something about it. They put their collective toes in the water, and God added His miracles. Spiritual seeds have been planted in the hearts and lives of students. Will the watering continue?

Will the story continue at MSU and in campuses around Montana? Will the spirit be caught and re-enacted in church groups and in university communities across the Northwest and beyond?

The question is a simple one. If Bozeman, Montana, can step out in faith, why not us?