



General Conference Executive Committee Newsletter

An informative publication for members of the General Conference Executive Committee as a service through the office of the Chair

JUNE 2020

We are living in unusual

times. The coronavirus has altered the world in a way that we never thought. In this time of isolation, I have asked myself “Is God calling our attention, individually and collectively, through this pandemic?”

I don’t think this pandemic is the end of the world, but it is a sign to awaken us from our spiritual lethargy. This pandemic is part of “the beginning of sorrows” predicted by Jesus Himself (Matt. 24:8). God is inviting us to lift up our heads, because our redemption draws near (see Luke 21:28).

As Seventh-day Adventists we have assurance and confidence that Jesus is coming soon. No virus, pandemic, or any other crisis should shake our faith in Christ and His Word. We must be ready, and help others to be ready, for Jesus’ soon return.

As the last day movement, we are needed more than ever in the world today. It is time for us to go “viral” for Jesus in these viral times.

We are to daily live and proclaim that Jesus could come at any moment. “Before the final visitation of God’s judgments upon the earth,”* we must passionately, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, proclaim the everlasting gospel. Let us fulfill our mission by sharing with the world the prophetic message that God has revealed to us, which must be proclaimed without delay.

ABNER DE LOS SANTOS
GENERAL VICE-PRESIDENT
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH

*See Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, 464.

EDITORIAL



THE WORLD NEEDS SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS NOW

BY GARY BLANCHARD, DIRECTOR
GENERAL CONFERENCE YOUTH MINISTRIES

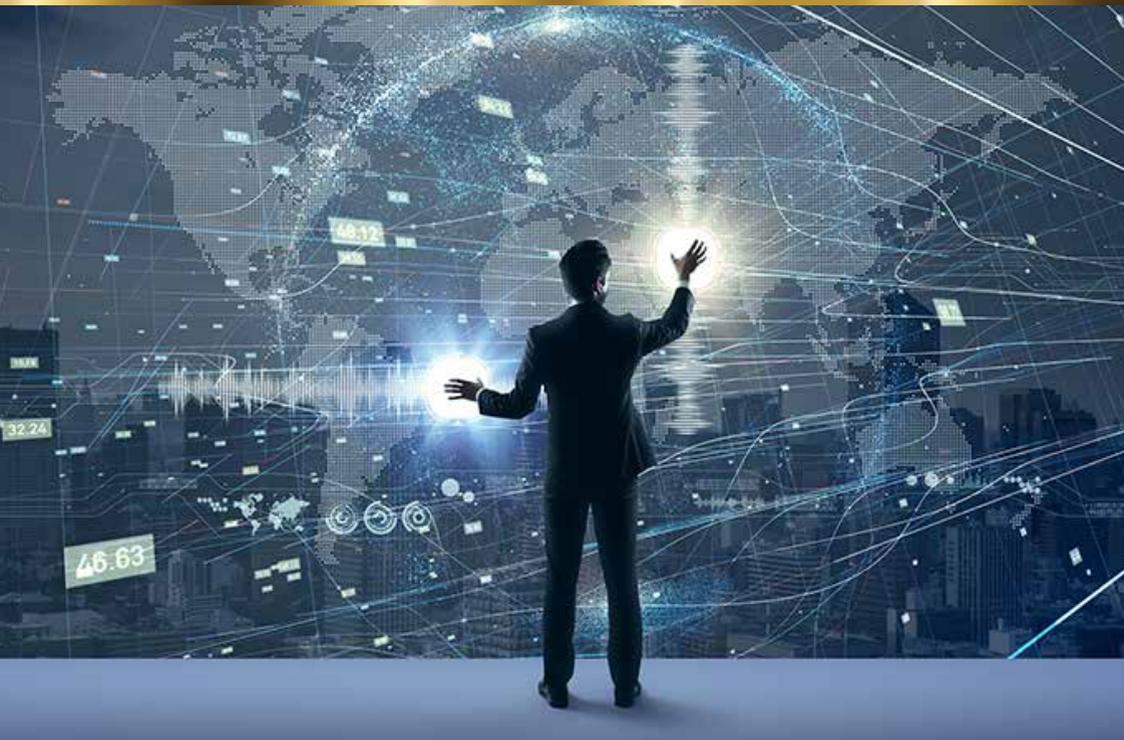
*T*here has never been a time when the world needed Adventists more than now. In 1910, Ellen White put it like this: “We carry too light a burden in behalf of souls unsaved. There never was a time when the world needed us more that it needs us now. All about us are cities unwarned.”¹

If this was true more than one hundred years ago, imagine how relevant it is now! As I write, millions are in the grip of

fear as the coronavirus pandemic is sweeping the globe—crippling health, destroying lives, and endangering the economy of nations. The world truly needs Adventists like never before—but why?

There are three wonderful things we bring to the table of a hungry world. Our knowledge of end-time prophecy, our present and future hope in Jesus (the everlasting gospel), and our keen understanding of enduring health make us the most relevant denomination in the world today!

—continued, next page



“

If political leaders didn't know before that they can unite and control the world, they definitely know it now!

1. END TIME PROPHECY

Seventh-day Adventists have been given amazing insight into last day events. For years we have taught “the last movements will be rapid ones.”² Nothing has proved this more readily than our current global pandemic. At first, the coronavirus was considered a one country issue, but how quickly it was declared a global pandemic, with the sick and dying multiplying daily around the world!

I am not saying this pandemic is the end of the world, but it may be a dress rehearsal for what is coming (Revelation 13). In just a matter of days we've seen various rights restricted and controls placed on what, when, and how much we can buy. In some places, you can be fined or even imprisoned for not complying. Of course, all of this is “justifiable” because of the contagious nature of the virus, but it seems to

many that we have crossed a line and entered into unprecedented territory. If political leaders didn't know before that they can unite and control the world, they definitely know it now!

We also know end-time prophecy teaches that the hearts of many will grow cold (see Matt. 24:12). Just recently I saw a YouTube video where two women were physically fighting over toilet paper! It got so bad the store manager called the police. I wonder, if people will fight over toilet paper, what will happen when their food and water is threatened? The reality is that humans become cruel quickly when their needs, even comforts, are restricted.

If there was ever a time for us to become students of Bible prophecy it is now! We need to dig deeper into Daniel, Revelation and *The Great Controversy*. Perhaps, rather than binging on

Netflix, we might take the advice of the angel in Revelation 10 and fast instead on God's prophetic word (verse 10).

Some say it takes approximately 70 hours to read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. So, why not invest that time in reading what Ellen White calls “our only safeguard.”³ Or, why not simply adopt the motto: “No Bible, no breakfast?” In other words, why not make a daily commitment to put spiritual food before physical food. Jesus Himself said, “It is written: ‘man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that precedes from the mouth of God’” (Matt. 4:4).

DOES PUBLIC EVANGELISM WORK?

Lately, I have noticed a trend to deemphasize the need to hold evangelistic meetings. Often, we hear the mantra, “public evangelism doesn't work.” Aren't



CLARK KELLEY PRICE

you glad Noah didn't believe that? For 120 years he faithfully preached the prophetic warning and many, no doubt, died in Christ before the flood because of him!

Moreover, because of Noah's faithfulness he effectively impacted the younger generation for Christ—he got to keep his children! Shem, Ham and Japheth and their young wives heeded his warning, walked in his footsteps, and were ultimately delivered from the flood! What powerful insights this gives to those who wonder “how can we reach and retain our Adventist youth?”

Here is one of the most powerful reasons we must never stop holding evangelistic meetings and preaching our prophetic message: “Noah's warnings had been rejected by the world, but his influence and example resulted in blessings to his family. As a reward for his faithfulness and integrity, God saved all the members of his family with him. What encouragement to parental fidelity!”⁴

I can imagine Noah not only involved his children in building the ark, but I am sure he shared the preaching pulpit with them as well. If you want to see young people get excited about the Three Angels' Messages, empower them to preach it in our churches, communities and around the globe!

Not long before the coronavirus struck, I visited a conference that empowered its youth to hold evangelistic meetings in homes, churches and on social media. I was able to attend their special baptism Sabbath and saw 400 souls baptized!

What the coronavirus is teaching us in these last days is that we must preach, and we must preach more passionately than ever before, for the world's sake and for the sake of the younger generation! Yes, we need to be innovative, and we need to use social media. Yes, we need to be creative. Yes, we need to plant seeds and cultivate them. Yes, we need to start needs-based ministries in our communities, and yes, we need to have a follow up plan, but we must not forsake preaching the prophetic word—especially when God has specifically commanded Seventh-day Adventists to “prophecy again” (Revelation 10:11).

2. THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

There is nothing like end-time prophecy to convict the world of its need of Jesus and His Word. No wonder God felt it best to use startling symbols in Daniel and Revelation; He wanted to get the world's attention so He could save them! Ellen White writes, “The testing message for this time is to be borne so plainly and decidedly as to startle the hearers and lead them to desire to study the Scriptures.”⁵

Perhaps you've read the story of Welles Crowther who laid down his life to save many on September 11, 2001 after the South Tower of the World Trade Center was hit by a plane. What made him so effective was the method he used to direct people out of the doomed tower. While others were telling the people to stay put and calm down, Welles did the complete opposite. He shouted, “Everyone who can stand now, stand now! If you can help others, do so!” He then led them to safety and re-entered the tower to rescue more.⁶

There has never been a time when the world needed Seventh-day Adventists more than now! The world needs us to wake them up with Bible prophecy and bring them everlasting hope in Jesus!

ONLY ONE CURE

I don't know if you've noticed, but in the midst of this pandemic we have lots of health protocols, but no cure. We are told to wash our hands, stop touching our face, keep a healthy distance, and self-isolate. And, we

“

There has never been a time when the world needed Seventh-day Adventists more than now! The world needs us to wake them up with Bible prophecy and bring them everlasting hope in Jesus!

should do all of this, but notice—we are not given any cures.

This is because the only real cure for mankind's problems, including the coronavirus, is Jesus! Ellen White puts it like this: “For earth's sin and misery the gospel is the only antidote. To make known to all mankind the message of the grace of God is the first work of those who know its healing power.”⁷

Many have compromised immune systems today because they do not know the peace, rest, joy, assurance, and forgiveness of the Gospel. They need to hear Jesus say to their troubled souls “. . . your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5).

The world needs Jesus and what he did for them on the cross! The world needs Jesus and what He's doing for them now as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. And the world needs Jesus and what He will do when He comes the second time to deliver His people and make all things new! Yes, the world needs Jesus, and because Jesus is the central message of the Adventist Church, the world needs Adventists now more than ever!

RELEVANT BOOK, RELEVANT PEOPLE

I have always been amazed at how relevant the Bible is and how relevant we become as a people when we teach our unique message in the power of the Holy Spirit.

There is a great story in Numbers 21 that speaks to the situation we are experiencing today and mankind's desperate need of the everlasting gospel.

The Israelites were experiencing a pandemic of sorts. They were being bitten by poisonous snakes and dying rapidly. The Spirit of Prophecy tells us that in almost every tent could be found the dead and dying.⁸

Finally, when they had exhausted every other means, they turned to the Lord for help. Spiritual procrastination is the fatal mistake of millions today as well. But God in his wonderful love and mercy urges all humanity to come to him without delay.

“And the Spirit and bride say, Come! And let him who hears come! And let him who thirst come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17).

“

Interestingly, there were many issues Daniel could have taken a stand on. He could have refused to go to the University of Babylon, but he didn't take that stand. He could have refused to be called Belteshazzar, insisting that his name was "Daniel," but he didn't take that stand either. Instead, Daniel chose to take a stand regarding food and drink.

When the Israelites finally came to the Lord in faith and confession, He gave them a symbol of Jesus and the everlasting gospel. This symbol is used today in the medical profession. God told Moses to set up a pole with a bronze snake attached. This was a beautiful symbol of Jesus who became sin for us and died in our place on a blood soaked cross. In John 3:14-15 we read, "As Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life" (NLT).

In the midst of our own pandemic, we must lift up Jesus as the only cure spiritually and physically. We praise God for all the ways he manifests His healing power through our selfless doctors, nurses and other medical professionals!

"ACTS OF KINDNESS SHOULD NOT BE EVANGELISTIC"

I have noticed a well-meaning but misguided trend in the church today, and in youth ministry in particular. The trend is to lead youth to do "random acts of kindness" without sharing or even mentioning the good news of Jesus.

"Well, we don't want them to think we have ulterior motives" is the reasoning of some. But wait a second! If our ulterior motives are for them to be healed physically and spiritually, isn't that a good thing? The redemption of the lost for an Adventist is more than just a motive— it's our mission! This is why Global Youth Day, Pathfinder Sabbath and other global initiatives are about being the sermon in word and deed! It's a lifestyle of loving others in Jesus name!



When Peter and John saw the lame man begging outside the temple called "beautiful" they didn't just help him up. If they had, their ministry would have lacked a dynamic and supernatural quality. Instead, the Bible says they helped him up in the name of Jesus. "Then Peter said, 'Silver or gold I do not have but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk'" (Acts 3:6).

So, preach Jesus boldly as you love others with action. While it is true that "Jesus healed more than He preached," notice what Ellen White goes on to say about this: "During His ministry, Jesus devoted more time to healing the sick than to preaching . . . The Savior made each work of healing an opportunity for implanting divine principles in the mind and soul. This was the purpose of His work." My sincere apologies to Francis of Assisi who got it wrong when he said, "Preach the gospel; use words if necessary."

3. ENDURING HEALTH MESSAGE

Perhaps one of the greatest examples of what it means to be a Seventh-day Adventist Christian in these last days is the prophet Daniel. Like Daniel, we

are living in a world that one well-known author described as “digital Babylon”¹⁰— an online world that mimics the godless, pagan, proud, perverted, and anti-Christ environment of Babylon.

But despite the Babylonian environment we live in today, God will have a people who, like Daniel, bravely preach the end-time prophetic message (Daniel 2, 7, 8, 10-11), compassionately lead others to the everlasting Gospel (Daniel 9, 12), and have keen insights into God’s enduring health message (Daniel 1).

Interestingly, there were many issues Daniel could have taken a stand on. He could have refused to go to the University of Babylon, but he didn’t take that stand. He could have refused to be called Belteshazzar, insisting that his name was “Daniel,” but he didn’t take that stand either. Instead, Daniel chose to take a stand regarding food and drink. The Bible says, “But Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself by eating food and wine given to them by the king” (Daniel 2:8).

We know there were a couple of reasons for this decision. First, to eat the food and drink the wine was a brazen act of pagan worship. Daniel correctly understood that while we, as Christians, are not saved by good works, those who are watching us, in a profound sense, are!

Jesus said “...let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). This was the first reason Daniel would not compromise and disobey God’s first two commandments (Exodus 20:3-6).

And the second reason is just as important for us today—to eat the king’s food would have weakened Daniel physically, mentally, and spiritually. It would “dwarf” his intellect and make him more susceptible to temptation.¹¹

Many today make excuses for not putting into practice the things we know are best for our enduring health and could protect us and others from viruses, pandemics, and more. We chuckle among ourselves

when we talk about our coffee, meat-eating, and excessive sugar addictions, although science today warns there’s a high price to pay for these unhealthy practices.

But Daniel refused to compromise his health. Instead, this young man guarded it and even risked life and reputation to maintain a clear and clean connection with God.



The coronavirus has inadvertently revealed the Seventh-day Adventist Church to be the most relevant and needed denomination in history.

PROFOUND EFFECTS

Seventh-day Adventists do not believe we are saved by what we eat or drink. But we do believe what we eat and drink profoundly affects our ability to hear and obey the voice of God. Seventh-day Adventists living in “digital Babylon” at the end of time are surely called to live like Daniel, who practiced God’s enduring health message.

God blessed Daniel for this dedication by not only strengthening his immune system so he could live and serve the Lord all the way to the reign of Cyrus, but he also made him better looking and ten times brighter and wiser than all his colleagues

(Daniel 1:15-21)!

Ellen White describes this healthy young man (and his three friends): “...among them all the Hebrew youth were without a peer. In physical strength and beauty, in mental vigor and literary attainment, they stood unrivaled. The erect form, the firm, elastic step, the fair countenance, the undimmed senses, the untainted breath—all were so many certificates of good habits, insignia of nobility with which nature honors those who are obedient to her laws.”¹²

Now notice what she says to young men and women today: “Through the fidelity to the principles of temperance shown by the Hebrew youth God is speaking to the youth of today. There is a need of men who, like Daniel, will do and dare for the cause of right. Pure hearts, strong hands, fearless courage, are needed; for the warfare against vice and virtue calls for ceaseless vigilance.”¹³

Indeed, through the life of Daniel, God is speaking to everyone today! I challenge not only youth, but

Adventists of all ages around the world to begin applying the health message we have been given in the book, *The Ministry of Healing*, not only to build immune systems to help withstand insidious viruses, but to be living examples of the health God desires for all His children! Yes, the world needs Adventists like never before! Adventists who not only teach God’s enduring health message, but perhaps more importantly, display its positive effects on them physically, mentally and spiritually!

VIRAL ON THE VIRUS

It’s time for the Adventist church to go viral on this virus! There are at least three positive things this pandemic has given us as a people.

First, it has given us an urgent incentive to become savvier and more innovative in regard to social media and technology. Adventists need to become experts

at invading “digital Babylon” with our contagious Christianity! Our hearts are thrilled to see initiatives like digital GLOW tracts, cell phone evangelism, 100 Days of Prayer and online youth-led Bible studies, ministry training, and evangelism!

The second positive thing to come from this virus is the importance it has placed on the younger generation in our local churches, conferences, unions and divisions. We desperately need their innovation and leadership now. Many of our youth are already experts at social media and technology, but until now have not been called forward “for such a time as this!” We need their help in taking the church into what many believe to be the final frontier of technology and social media.

Finally, as this article has attempted to show, the coronavirus has inadvertently revealed the Seventh-day Adventist Church to be the most relevant and

needed denomination in history. If there was ever a time when the world needed Seventh-day Adventists, it is now!

Now is the time to show the world we are not just another denomination among many, but a uniquely called denomination of destiny! No, I didn’t say we are better than other Christians—we definitely have our issues too—but, we do have a greater responsibility than other Christian denominations. Because of the great light we’ve been given from Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy, God has uniquely called us to share His end-time prophecies, everlasting gospel, and enduring health message with this world He loves so much! If there was ever a time when the world needed Seventh-day Adventists, it is now!



ENDNOTES

¹Ellen G. White, *Ministry to the Cities*, p. 26.

²White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 11.

³White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 593.

⁴White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 98.

⁵White, *Evangelism*, p. 40.

⁶Robert Jeffress, *Choosing the Extraordinary Life: God’s 7 Secrets for Success and Significance*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2018, pp. 29-30.

⁷White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 139-144.

⁸See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 429.

⁹White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 19, 20.

¹⁰David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock, *Faith For Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2019, p. 19.

¹¹See *Prophets and Kings*, p. 482.

¹²White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 485.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 488.



INSPIRED COUNSEL FOR LEADERS

The strength of an army is measured largely by the efficiency of the men in the ranks. A wise general instructs his officers to train every soldier for active service. He seeks to develop the highest efficiency on the part of all. If he were to depend on his officers alone, he could never expect to conduct a successful campaign. He counts on loyal and untiring service from every man in his army. The responsibility rests largely upon the men in the ranks.

And so it is in the army of Prince Emmanuel. Our General, who has never lost a battle, expects willing, faithful service from every one who has enlisted under His banner. In the closing controversy now waging between the forces for good and the hosts of evil, He expects all, laymen as well as ministers, to take part. All who have enlisted as His soldiers are to render faithful service as minutemen, with a keen sense of the responsibility resting upon them

individually.

Those who have the spiritual oversight of the church should devise ways and means by which an opportunity may be given to every member of the church to act some part in God's work. Too often in the past this has not been done. Plans have not been clearly laid and fully carried out, whereby the talents of all might be employed in active service. There are but few who realize how much has been lost because of this.

The leaders in God's cause, as wise generals, are to lay plans for advance moves all along the line. In their planning they are to give special study to the work that can be done by the laity for their friends and neighbors. The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work, and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers.

—*Gospel Workers*, p. 351

Wholeness In Our Brokenness: Vessels in His Service

BY DR. PETER N. LANDLESS, DIRECTOR, ADVENTIST HEALTH MINISTRIES

Editor's Note: During the first week of June, the GC Health Ministries Department presented a virtual Week of Prayer for those working at the world headquarters. The theme for the week was "Experiencing Wholeness." Presenters included Drs. Zeno Charles-Marcel, Torben Bergland, Katia Reinert, and Peter Landless. Here we present an abridged version of Dr. Landless' presentation, given on June 4, 2020. Elements of the oral presentation have been retained.

We are living in different, difficult, and exciting times! It feels as if everything is different – and much is! The way we work, worship, and play – all changed. And so quickly.

Today we will be looking at "Wholeness in Our Brokenness." We all have some brokenness or other; we get used to it. Whether it's looking at my hand—a reminder of God's miraculous saving intervention in my life—or looking in the mirror, I'm reminded of my brokenness.

COVID-19 reminds us of our mortality and lends urgency to our mission. Not all will be spared, BUT God has promised, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." This gives me courage and gets me out of bed in the morning.

We are living—however you choose to look at things—in the end times. And in this time, the reality of death becomes much less threatening when we frame the thought in the context of the Blessed Hope. We have nothing to fear—our Father is with us, through and to the end of our brokenness.

In our present world, ways of staying healthy preoccupy us—as they should. But as Seventh-day Adventists, we should be living this way, pandemic or not (see sidebar).

GOD WANTS OUR TRUST

Good health is important, but this is not what binds God's called together. It's our *weakness*! Moses had a speech impediment. Gideon had a courage impediment. David had a stature impediment (compare him to Goliath). Peter had an impetuosity impediment, as well as obvious prejudice.

In these very challenging times, God wants our trust. "Though He slay me..." He does not call the qualified, he qualifies the called. It is often an incredible task to trust and obey.

I am inspired by Elisha. When called by Elijah, he went home, greeted his parents, sacrificed his plough oxen (using the plough to make the fire) and followed. His mentor was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire. Elisha, however, succumbed to an illness and was buried...but, he had a double portion of God's Spirit! He raised the dead, performed miracles, brought peace—and even in death, was used to resurrect one more! God qualifies the called in every way.

LET GOD USE YOU

In today's world, what does it take to have peace, good mental health and emotional well-being, relational wellness, and physical wholeness despite our brokenness? It takes getting

HEALTHY LIVING

- Enjoy excellent nutrition: eat a rainbow plate, filled with healthy foods of many colors!
- Drink a lot of fresh, pure water.
- Sleep 7-8 hours every night.
- Read Scripture before screen!
- Exercise – intentionally and every day!
- Enjoy safe sunshine, fresh air.
- Be temperate in all things.
- Trust in God.
- Keep optimistic.
- Express gratitude.
- Take hot and cold showers (ending with at least 30 seconds cold).
- Judicious use of vitamins C and D may also be helpful.



“

You and I are God’s pots with our cracks (brokenness), inlaid with the precious gold of His grace. You are more beautiful because of the fault lines, mended by relationship with Him, a life spent looking at the Beautiful One—Jesus.

involved in what He has called you to do—even way over your head, completely—giving it your all (in a balanced way). We are admonished to “Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown” (Rev. 3:11).

Let God use you despite your brokenness—habits, struggles, even our physical frailties. We need to think about our reason for being where we are. Why did we come here? In my work, service, and commitments, am I allowing my work and worship to blur? Does Scripture come before screen? A great life comes not because we have never made mistakes or even avoided failure, but by how we handle failure, and remain in relationship with Jesus.

THE BEAUTY OF SCARS

An apt model would be that of Kintsugi pottery. Kintsugi is the Japanese art of repairing a broken bowl (vessel) by inlaying gold or other precious metals into the cracks. The newly repaired bowl is stronger than the old one. The scars are and make the design (think of Helen Keller, Fanny Crosby, Jean-Dominique Bauby—author of *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*). Your attention is drawn to how the cracks are mended. You and I are God’s pots with our cracks (brokenness), inlaid with the precious gold of His grace. You are more beautiful because of the fault lines, mended by relationship with Him, a life spent looking at the Beautiful One—Jesus! By beholding we become changed into His likeness.

I cherish the way The Message Bible translates 2 Corinthians 4:16-18: “So, we’re not giving up. How could we? Even though on the outside it often looks

like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace. These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us. There’s far more here than meets the eye. The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. But the things we can’t see now will last forever.”

And we are called to reach out and minister to others, particularly to those who are disadvantaged. This encouraging mandate comes from the pen of Ellen White:

“No soul who believes in Christ, though his faith may be weak, and his steps wavering as those of a little child, is to be lightly esteemed. By all that has given us advantage over another,—be it education and refinement, nobility of character, Christian training, religious experience, —we are in debt to those less favored; and, so far as lies in our power, we are to minister unto them. If we are strong, we are to stay up the hands of the weak... And in this ministry Christ’s true followers will co-operate.”

How do we do this? Through Christ, Who strengthens you, me, us (see *Philippians 4:13*). My prayer is, “Father, take us just as we are—but please, do not leave us that way. Complete the work You have started in us, despite ourselves. Please enable us to allow You to so do. You don’t necessarily want our plans and programs; You want us. Please give us wholeness in you, despite our brokenness.”

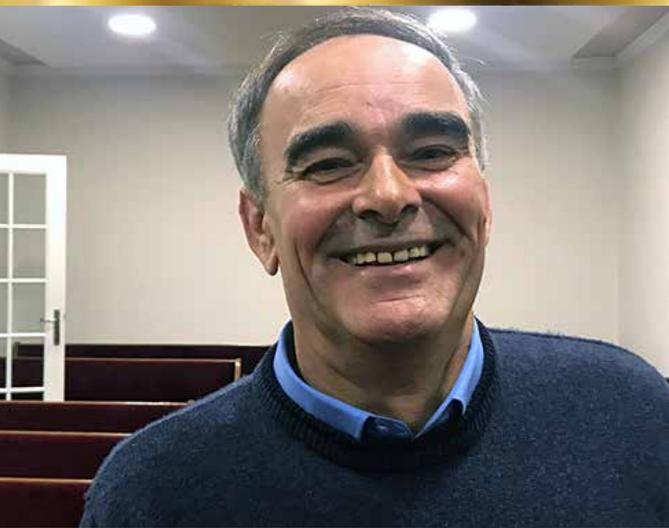
And now, may the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the sweet communion of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with you, until Jesus returns!

¹Justin Whitmel Earley, *The Common Rule: Habits of Purpose for an Age of Distraction*, p. 165, IVP Books, 2019.

²Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 440, emphasis supplied.

ONE ADVENTIST IN 10,000

BY ANDREW MCCHESENEY, ADVENTIST MISSION



Radenko Melovi

Going to the university was a great experience for Radenko Melovi. He left his parents in their village and moved 185 miles (300 kilometers) to a sprawling university dormitory with 10,000 residents in Belgrade.

Radenko had a lot of fun and didn't study much. The first year passed, and he did not take any exams. To avoid being expelled, he changed his major for the next academic year. The second year he did not take any exams and again changed his major. The third year passed, and he did the same. Instead of studying, he partied, drinking and smoking with friends. A popular student, he was elected student body president.

During his fourth year, tragedy struck. His sister died during childbirth. Radenko was crushed. For the first time, he prayed earnestly, asking God to reveal the right path for his life.

Among the 10,000 dorm students lived one Seventh-day Adventist, a young woman named Emilia. Shortly after his prayer, a friend introduced them.

Emilia immediately began to talk about God. She told Radenko she was a Seventh-day Adventist. He had never heard of Adventists. Emilia invited him to go with her to church on Saturday, and he accepted.

Radenko listened to the sermon and was stopped by the youth pastor as he was leaving. "Would you

like to study the Bible?" the youth pastor asked. Radenko had never read the Bible, and he agreed to meet with the youth pastor on Tuesday evening.

After the initial Bible study, Radenko felt as if he could fly. He had heard teachings that quenched a long-unfilled thirst. The two met week after week to study the Bible. Then they came to a study about the Sabbath. Radenko was shocked that the Bible identified Saturday as the Sabbath. The next day, he went to a priest to double-check the day.

"Do you know when Jesus was resurrected?" the priest asked. "Sunday," Radenko said.

"That is why we worship on Sunday," the priest said.

Radenko told the pastor about the conversation with the priest. The pastor explained that Jesus' death and resurrection hadn't changed the law. The fourth commandment still said the seventh day is the Sabbath.

Radenko returned to the priest, but the priest was nowhere to be found. Another priest listened to his question. "Our holy fathers decided on Sunday, and I am not questioning their opinion," the priest said. Radenko found the answer surprising.

"Who has higher authority, the Bible or the holy fathers?" he asked. The priest refused to answer. To Radenko, the Bible clearly had the higher authority.

Today, Radenko is 58, married, and a university graduate. He loves God's law. In his Bible, he highlighted the verse read at his baptism—Joshua 1:8, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

Emilie, his friend from the university, was surprised and thrilled when she learned 30 years later that a seed she planted had yielded fruit. She had left the university after meeting Radenko, and the two lost contact. Radenko believes Emilie's mission was to share the gospel with him.

"It was a real miracle to find the one Adventist among 10,000 people," Radenko said. "But that was God's reply when I asked Him to show me the right path to take in life."

Radenko is now an elder at New Belgrade Seventh-day Adventist Church, which will receive part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering to acquire its own building. The congregation met in a rented movie theater when it was established in 1993, and it now shares a building with another Adventist congregation near New Belgrade.

ADVENTIST CHURCH LEADERS GRAPPLE WITH DECLINING INCOME, BUDGET CUTS

Substantial reductions recommended, mostly in the headquarters in-house operations.

By Adventist News Network and *Adventist Review*



Faced with troubling projections pointing to steep declines in contributions from most regions of the global Seventh-day Adventist Church as a result of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, Seventh-day Adventist church leaders moved to recommend cuts in the world headquarters' operating budget, including a reduction of some personnel.

The General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM) voted in a June 16, 2020 morning session to recommend reducing 2020 Office Operating and GC Administered expenses by approximately 7 percent, having previously surveyed all departmental and entity leaders in the world headquarters about possible areas where expenses could be trimmed. Reductions voted included General Conference departmental budgets, a 50 percent reduction in travel budgets, and the elimination of a previously voted 2020 cost-of-living salary increase. Total savings are expected to amount to more than US\$5.5 million from the original 2020 World Appropriations and Allocations Budget. ADCOM recommendations for the elimination of budgeted staff positions will be considered at a previously called General Conference Executive Committee scheduled to meet on July 9.

According to the church's financial officers, even though all departments will somehow be affected by the reductions, the bulk of budgetary savings will affect in-house operations, or the regular running of the world church headquarters. At the same time, leaders emphasized they strove to keep a strong, clear focus on the church's worldwide mission.

"The Church is facing four areas of financial uncertainty: disruption of income, disruption of operations, worldwide economic slowdown and high unemployment," said Juan Prestol-Puesán, General Conference treasurer and the chief financial officer of the 21.5-million member denomination. "The Church is going to be facing these issues for the next 24 months or longer. What is new is the

urgency of addressing reductions immediately. We need to act deliberately. However, we deeply regret we have had to disrupt the lives of individuals who have served the Adventist Church faithfully for a long time in the Church's headquarters because of the economic downturn."

Human Resource director Lori Yingling affirmed support services were being offered to each affected employee, including a financial package, as well as emotional and spiritual support. "Decisions such as these are difficult and only done after a time of prayerful study," she said. "We continue to lift up the affected employees and their families in prayer daily."

Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson, who chaired the June 16 ADCOM session, acknowledged that although these were not easy decisions, they were necessary given the present circumstances.

"This is a difficult experience for us all," he stated. "Nevertheless, it is an opportunity for us to lean more and more on the Lord. He will guide us; He is not going to abandon His Church. In spite of difficult times, He's going to see us through to the end. Even though we may face financial challenges, pandemic challenges, and more — whatever we face, we know the Lord is going to take us through because we are living near the very end of time." Today's action is the third ADCOM decision in the last three months to recommend reducing costs at the world headquarters. The first, voted in early April, addressed the restructuring of General Conference income necessitated by the adjustments of tithe percentages received from North America and other world divisions that were voted in October 2019 at the Annual Council of the Executive Committee, the 340-member governing body of the denomination. A second stage of reductions came in May when administration recommended and ADCOM endorsed not filling certain positions which will become vacant when current employees retire or transition to other positions outside the headquarters at mid-year.



THE BACK PAGE

Directions: For more information on an item, click on the corresponding number on the map.

1 Nursing students at Union College in **Lincoln, Nebraska**, U.S.A., were given a unique clinical opportunity during the COVID-19 shutdown. Since in-person clinical experience was not possible, students in Elysia Ockenga’s mental health class met by phone with older individuals and those more vulnerable to illness who volunteered to participate in the four-week clinical assignment. The students connected with their volunteers by phone weekly, building relationships and providing a listening ear, as well as being given the opportunity to practice professional therapeutic communication.

2 Adventist hospital administrators and church leaders throughout IAD, headquartered in **Miami, Florida**, recently met via video conference to share and pray together as hospitals and medical personnel throughout the region have faced challenges due to the coronavirus pandemic. Although hospitals were forced to reduce staff, reduce elective surgical cases, and cut compensation by up to 50 percent for remaining staff, there have been no reports of deaths among physicians and staff, according to Dr. Elie S.

Honore, president of Adventist Health Services -Inter-America, in a recent article.

3 COVID-19 has had little impact on the wellbeing of Seventh-day Adventists in Germany, according to a recent study by the Institute for Holistic Wellbeing and Resilience in **Bremen, Germany**. “The survey also revealed that Adventists who felt the comforting and calming presence of God more intensely and more often in everyday life appear to be more ‘crisis-proof,’” according to an article published in the Adventist Review.

4 God is working miracles in **Laos**. Through much prayer and miraculous means, a church that had a wonderful beginning was destined to be shut down but has now

received full government recognition. Read more here.

5 Fulton Adventist University College in **Fiji** is playing a key role in the continuing professional development of instructors at the Fiji Police Academy. Quoted in an article in SPD’s Adventist Record, Dr. Malcolm Coulson, Fulton principal, said that the police academy chose to partner with the Adventist college because of “shared values and the philosophical foundations of our views on wholistic education, service to our communities, a sense of God’s calling . . . and the belief in our social responsibility to offer hope and purpose to those we meet.”



Pastor Walter L. Pearson, Jr., who served as the Speaker/Director for the Breath of Life TV ministry from 1998-2010, passed to his rest on June 7, 2020 at the age of 74. A much appreciated evangelist and proclaimer of God’s full Bible truth, Pastor Pearson was a blessing to many. He had a real zeal to communicate the gospel message, traveling to 57 countries on six continents to reach many thousands for Christ. In 2004, Pastor Pearson was the speaker for Breath of Life’s first live broadcast evangelistic series, which was uplinked via satellite to hundreds of churches across North America and around the world. “This man of God will be deeply missed,” said Pastor Ted Wilson in a Facebook post. “I want to especially extend my condolences to his family and loved ones, as well as to the Breath of Life TV family, and to all whose lives have been touched by the powerful ministry of Pastor Pearson. We praise God for the hope of seeing him again soon when Jesus returns.”