

# OUTLOOK

DECEMBER 2014



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## ON THE COVER

Dick Stenbakken shares his talents in a unique ministry of portraying Bible characters in first person. Photo by Peter Field Peck.

## MANAGING OUR GIFTS

*In this final issue of 2014 we're focusing on the responsibilities of disciples. We know that as Christians we are God's stewards, managers of His gifts. What we sometimes forget is that stewardship is a relationship—between ourselves, our communities and God.*

*To follow Jesus takes priority over all earthly relationships and possessions. God doesn't want to be a part of our lives, just one piece of the pie. He wants to be the whole thing. He wants 100 percent of our commitment and trust. Why? Because He cares deeply about our salvation and He knows that the only way to eternal life is placing our undivided focus on what He calls us to be—perfect adorers of Jesus Christ.*

*The whole concept of discipleship is to love Jesus so much that we choose every day to surrender to His will, and to spend our time, energy, influence, talents and resources helping others see the wonderful gifts that await us in Christ. That's what Dick Stenbakken does (story on p. 6).*

—BRENDA DICKERSON, editor



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Same-sex marriage: Is desire justification?

<http://bit.ly/CalledAudible>





# Do YOU own it? Or does IT own YOU?

by Thomas Lemon



**N**early everyone I know would admit to having too much stuff. I certainly do. Some years ago during a move, I came across a box marked, “Do not open this box, just take it with you.” Since I recognized it as having survived several moves, I tried to remember what was in it as I cut it open—miscellaneous do-dads of some sentimental value to me but to no one else. I would never do anything with them. Not exactly a numismatic treasure box.

As my accumulation of “stuff” has developed over the years, it has occurred to me that if the Lord does not come first and consume it, someone will sort through it after my demise and wonder why I kept these things. With some nudging from my wife, Jan, I actually threw away three boxes of stuff recently. She has put it on my list to do again.

Now, I have never been a hoarder and I don’t think I’m obsessive/compulsive. But I do have too much stuff. If I haven’t read a given book or even opened it in three decades, why do I spend the energy to move it around? And if I’m

not moving, why do I let it take up space on the shelf just to impress... whom?

I have also discovered that with accumulation comes the problem of maintaining stuff. And I have begun wondering—do I own it, or with the time I invest in making it run, keeping it clean, painted, trimmed, repaired or whatever, does it really own me?

The last church of which I was pastor had an \$800,000 loss due to a fire. The accumulated dust in the attic was the fuel for an over-heated air conditioning fan bearing. That memory has been the launching pad for this last editorial of 2014.

Is the stuff I own (or that owns me and my time) merely an accumulation for the fire? If so, I should shed some of it. And if the cleansing fires of the end time are delayed, shouldn’t I spare my family of having to do what I haven’t? It won’t exactly be fun for them.

Nebuchadnezzar also had too much stuff. Massive buildings, a three-lane-wide city wall, an endless water supply, gardens, palaces and more. It all became a source of pride that deprived him of seven years of his prime time as king while he ate grass like a cow. Being proud of your stuff can be even more damaging than simply being owned by it.

When I think seriously about this, I

realize I don’t truly own anything. It is loaned to me for this time of my life. As I write, the American Markets on Wall Street are on an amazing roller coaster of uncertainty. That value, too, can evaporate like a desert mirage.

So what’s the point? We are not owners but managers—of our time, our talent, our relationships, our health, our stuff and our resources. We don’t own any of it. At this stage in our annual cycle, it is good to stop and consider. I would encourage us to take inventory of what we manage, or what manages us. As a steward/manager, ask, *What really matters? Have I let “stuff” get in the way of what the Lord expects?* A steward must take the time to rebalance priorities.

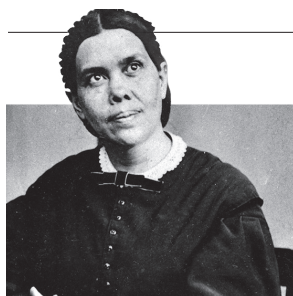
Perhaps it’s time to make confession. Perhaps it’s time to square up accounts. Maybe it’s time to let the real Owner direct the process and inform us of His plan.

I wish for you the abundance of the presence of the Lord in your life as we look forward to 2015. ■

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Thomas Lemon is president of the Mid-America Union.





# Using Our Gifts for God's Glory

by Ellen White

**G**od desires His workers to look to Him as the Giver of all they possess, to remember that all that they have and are comes from Him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. The whole family of God are included in the responsibility of using their Lord's goods.

It means much, very much to us to be strengthened by His rich grace day by day, to be enabled to understand His will, to be found faithful in that which is least as well as in that which is great. When this is our experience, the service of Christ will be a reality to us. God demands this of us, and before angels and men we should reveal our gratitude for what He has done for us. God's benevolence to us we should reflect back in praise and deeds of mercy.

The idea of stewardship should have a practical bearing upon all the people of God. Practical benevolence will give spiritual life to thousands of nominal professors of the truth who now mourn over their darkness. It will transform them from selfish, covetous worshipers of mammon, to earnest, faithful coworkers with Christ in the salvation of sinners.

The parable of the talents, rightly understood, will bar out covetousness, which God calls idolatry. God has lent men talents—an intellect to originate, a heart to be the place of His throne, affection to flow out in blessings to others, a conscience to convict of sin. Each one has received something from the Master, and each one is to do his part in supplying the needs of God's work.

Speech is a talent. Of all the gifts bestowed on the human family, none should be more appreciated than the gift of speech. It is to be used to declare God's wisdom and wondrous love. Thus the treasures of His grace and wisdom are to be communicated. An indwelling Saviour is revealed by the words. Manifest the gentleness of which Christ has given us an example in His life.

Strength is a talent, and is to be used to glorify God. Our bodies belong to Him. He has paid the price of redemption for the body as well as for the soul. We can serve God better in the vigor of health than in the palsy of disease; therefore we should cooperate with God in the care of our bodies. Love for God is essential for life and health. Faith in God is essential for health. In order to have perfect health, our hearts must be filled with love and hope and joy in the Lord.

Influence is a talent, and it is a power for good when the sacred fire of God's kindling is brought into our service. The

influence of a holy life is felt at home and abroad. The practical benevolence, the self-denial and self-sacrifice, which mark the life of a man, have an influence for good upon those with whom he associates.

If men will put their trust in Him, if they will recognize His compassion and benevolence, and will walk humbly before Him, He will cooperate with them. He will increase their talents.

God has left us in charge of His goods in His absence. Each steward has his own special work to do for the advancement of God's kingdom. No one is excused. The Lord bids us all, "Occupy till I come." By His own wisdom He has given us direction for the use of His gifts. The talents of speech, memory, influence, property, are to accumulate for the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom. He will bless the right use of His gifts. **U**

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Compiled from *Counsels on Stewardship*, 112-117

# MANAGING TALENTS



Peter Field Peck

**Dick Stenbakken lives in Loveland, Colorado with Ardis (Dick), his wife and partner in ministry since 1962. They have two adult children and four grandchildren. His newly released biography, *The Man with the Reversible Foot* by Susan Phelps Harvey, details his life story.**

**D**ick Stenbakken calls himself a Denver kid, having grown up on South Downing Street in the home of his adoptive parents. Born premature to a single mother, he overcame his unpromising start in life and flourished under the guidance of godly mentors. People who spurred him to excellence through the years included Bill Garrison at Mile High Academy, C. M. Maxwell at Union College and Earle Hilgert at the seminary in Berrien Springs. By watching, listening and evaluating, he learned which manners, actions and attitudes could build up or hamper quality ministry.

## SOAKING UP LIFE

While attending Campion Academy in 1958 he felt—and responded to—a call to ministry, and has never looked back. Stenbakken graduated with a theology degree from Union College in 1962. He has since earned four master's degrees and a doctorate in Family and Community Education, saying he pursued a broad education because he “wanted the widest possible potential for blessing people.”

His first pastorate in Worland, Wyoming taught him much about how to work with people and how to build a team. “Ministry is my dream, my passion, my

inspiration, my joy. I couldn't not do it,” he states.

In 1969 Stenbakken began active military duty with the United States Army. His year of combat service in Vietnam further solidified his goals. As he watched skid-loads of bodies being sent to the morgue in Saigon to be returned for burial, he realized the fragility of life and determined to milk every ounce of joy out of every single day. “I also made the decision to never continue any line of work or activity that did not bring real and lasting fulfillment and pleasure,” he says. “Life is too short and too precious to just go through the hoops. Life needs to be fun, full and fulfilling. I remember, after returning from Vietnam, standing at the bedroom door and just watching our two kids sleep. Just to be there, just to watch them, was an insurmountable joy.

I learned not to take anything for granted, but to soak up every positive experience possible, then to pass that joy on to others so they can find fulfillment and balance also.”

After returning to the States, Stenbakken served as director of Family Life Ministries for the Office of the Chief of Chaplains. His responsibilities included administering the U.S. Army Chaplain Board's \$2.7 million budget.



# AND OPPORTUNITIES

## REAL-LIFE DISCIPLE: DICK STENBAKKEN

BY BRENDA DICKERSON

### MINISTRY MAKES SENSE

In 1992 the General Conference invited him to serve as director of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries. As he and his wife, Ardis, considered the offer, they realized that going to the GC made no financial sense. “My military pay would have kept going up, and my retirement would be linked to my last and highest pay while on active duty,” Stenbakken said. “The same with Social Security, which is figured on the highest years of your earning.”

But the move made ministry sense, so they said yes. “We have no regrets,” Stenbakken adds. “All the DVDs, the books and my ongoing first person ministry would probably not have happened if I had elected to stay in the military. I went into the military to minister and serve, so leaving to minister and serve the church was definitely in line with our thinking regarding stewardship. One does not do ministry for money. You either have a passion and calling for ministry or not.”

### KEEP THE RADAR RUNNING

Since retiring from the GC in 2005, Stenbakken has produced 25 TV first-person presentations of biblical characters that are currently being broadcast worldwide. He’s also recorded a DVD series on the *Christian Armor* of Ephesians 6 and an 8-part

TV series *Soldiers of Destiny*, just released this year. Three more sets, featuring both Old and New Testament characters, are forthcoming. All income from current books and DVDs goes to the Student Aid fund at Campion Academy.

Aggressively active in retirement, Stenbakken periodically teaches freshman Bible at Campion Academy and co-sponsors the Drama Club. He and Ardis are also heavily involved in ministry at their local church. In between working on another book, he accepts speaking engagements with various denominations across the U.S. and Canada.

### LOOK OVER THE HORIZON

Stenbakken’s philosophy of ministry, in a nutshell, is *Quality ministry from and in a balanced life*. He says the basis for this is ongoing learning, both formal and informal. “It includes academics, self-directed learning, observation and experience, as well as deep study into ministry. And, yes, part of the learning process is from mistakes. To make mistakes is inevitable. To learn from them is a choice.” Stenbakken adds that the most basic learning of all is being in the Word—continually studying deeply.

Regarding a balanced life, Stenbakken explains that ministry is not about being self-centered, but yet a successful person must be centered

and balanced. “For me, that balance comes from hobbies, passions and experiences. Being well-rounded helps me avoid the traps created by a one-dimensional life—even if that dimension is ministry.” He asserts that being involved with creative processes empowers him and propels him beyond the immediate. “Creativity is in my DNA. That’s why I make nearly all my own costumes for first person presentations—designing, sewing and even making the Roman armor.”

One of Stenbakken’s life mantras is to look beyond the obvious. “Look at the potential all around you,” he says. “Stewardship, like life, requires God’s blessing. But it’s not incidental or accidental. It requires intentional looking and planning.”

For Stenbakken, quality ministry in a balanced life also means being filled to overflowing with Christ and His mission and methods and allowing Him to direct, lead, expand and share that quality ministry in ever more creative and effective ways. “It’s a process, not a destination, and it unfolds more and more every day,” he concludes. “I don’t think my story is common, but it could be. All my life I’ve tried to take every opportunity as God sends it. And He blesses me so I can bless others.”

Brenda Dickerson is editor of OUTLOOK.

### THE CENTURION

BY DICK STENBAKKEN

As I began to study deeper into the military life of first-century Roman soldiers, I started to see shades of meaning from the Gospels that had eluded me before. These discoveries brought a new focus. My hunger to know more about Roman military and culture became the impetus for constructing my own armor, writing a book titled *The Centurion* published by Pacific Press, and producing a DVD set.

We now have a “Roman room” at our house—a mini museum of ancient artifacts and reproduction pieces. In summary, presenting the centurion prompted an interesting hobby, provides a unique ministry and is tax-deductible. Not a bad combination!

For more info and to view clips visit [www.biblefaces.com](http://www.biblefaces.com).

# MANAGING RESOURCES

BY DOUG HARDT

## PERSPECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

Photos courtesy Doug Hardt



Healthcare is a major concern among refugee populations. A large part of AFM's ministry will include teaching practices that promote health.



The recent media reports filled with details of the atrocities carried out by ISIS were more than just news for me. As I watched the images from ISIS's rampage through Iraq, my mind went to all the Iraqi religious minorities living in my hometown of Lincoln, Nebraska, the capital of the Yazidi diaspora in America.

In the past three years I have become friends with many Yazidis and Shi'a Muslim Iraqis in my work at the Good Neighbor Community Center. The people I saw on my screen looked like my friends and their relatives. My heart was touched, and I called one of my best friends from the center, Jamal, a Yazidi lawyer from the Sinjar region of Iraq who was a translator for the U.S. Army before immigrating to start a new life in this country.

When I asked how he was doing, Jamal told me he had dropped out of his English classes and was spending most of his time at home. He wasn't able to concentrate on his classwork because his thoughts wandered to his homeland and the events transpiring there. He said that his immediate family had escaped, but two of his uncles were missing along with one

of his best friends. He also said that every one of the 200 Yazidi families in Lincoln had lost someone. Their sadness is compounded by the fact that through this unfathomable tragedy the Yazidis are losing their homeland that they have inhabited for thousands of years.

### A CLOSER VIEW

A few days later my friend Conrad Vine, president of Adventist Frontier Missions, asked if I would accompany him on a trip to Arbil (in Kurdistan in the north of Iraq) to explore the possibilities of AFM launching a humanitarian project with some of the 1.8 million refugees in Iraq. We flew to Arbil a day and a half after he called.




The trip was emotionally overwhelming. Besides the reality that we were near a war zone and there was a risk of car bombs or kidnapping (Arbil is only 50 miles from Mosul, the biblical Nineveh, which is controlled by ISIS) we witnessed tens of thousands of displaced people seeking shelter in vacant lots, abandoned buildings, schools, church/mosque yards, and even in the streets. We listened to their stories of how ISIS chased them from their homes, patting them down on

AFM hopes to provide tents for the 18 families currently living here after they are evicted from this abandoned building.





## IS-led Sunni rebel activity areas

-  **Control**
-  **Support**
-  **Attacks**

Map information source:  
Institute for the Study of War

their way out so they escaped with only the clothes on their backs. However, they all felt fortunate to be alive—many of their neighbors, friends and relatives were not so lucky.

We met five of the 10 Adventists in Kurdistan. In all of Iraq, with a population of over 33 million people, there are only 30 Seventh-day Adventists. We also met with United Nations officials and officials of other humanitarian organizations. AFM had already raised some funds, and we were able to arrange installation of a second row of toilets, showers and kitchen facilities that would serve 1,500 people in a mini-camp in Arbil.

### LONG-TERM OPPORTUNITIES

I returned home with a great desire to see God's people show His love for those who have been deprived of almost everything in this life. At this point, AFM is planning a long-term project there since the vast majority of refugees will end up living in the camps for a decade or more. Most refugees we spoke with said they had lost faith in their former neighbors and could never again feel safe in their former homes.

AFM is currently laying plans to invite two local families, one Kurdish speaking and one Arabic speaking, to begin meeting the physical needs of these

displaced people and, most importantly, offering them the greatest gift of all—hope for eternal life.

Doug Hardt is director for the Union College Center for Interfaith Studies and Culture and outreach coordinator for the Good Neighbor Community Center. He served for eight years as a missionary in the former Soviet Union and the Middle East.

### What can I do?

Since this will be a long-term project, monthly donations to the Refugee Ministry are the best way to help.

**Visit:** [bit.ly/RefugeeMinistry](http://bit.ly/RefugeeMinistry)



# MANAGING PRAYER TIME

## PRAY ONE MILLION

BY DON JACOBSEN

So here's the deal. I've got this prayer list in hand with a lot of names on it. Nearly every non-believer I'm close friends with, and many friends who are believers. Family members. Colleagues. Neighbors. My pastor. The lady I met at the supermarket last Thursday whose name I don't even know but who asked me to pray for her. Many others. Maybe a dozen or a hundred.

I regularly pray through the list, but because there are so many it's more a reading of the names than a conscious focusing on specifics. However, through our church's Year of Prayer focus, I sense Jesus asking me to select one (for now) for whom I will intensify my intercession. He will help me choose the person He has in mind, and together He and I

will concentrate our earnest pleas on behalf of that one—since He and the Holy Spirit are both interceding on their behalf already (Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:26).

### ONE MINUTE FOCUS

Rather than just read over the names, I will take some additional time, one minute at least, and be specific with my requests. Maybe it's my teenage niece. I might begin by asking Jesus to show me how He is interceding for her. I might pray that God will give her a glimpse of His wonderful plan for her life. I might ask Him to show her how to attract godly friends. I might request that He will give her the strength to live pure in a dark world. I might ask that God will bring influences and circumstances and people into her life that

will help her understand how profound His love is for her. I most likely will include a plea that God will show me how I can be the influence in her life that will make an eternal difference. One minute isn't very long when I'm focusing on those kinds of issues.

I'm not going to pray with a stopwatch, understand. This isn't about the clock. It's about identifying a specific person and co-interceding for them with the Savior. It's about deepening my investment in those God lays on my heart. It's about remembering that God chooses to do some things when I pray that He does not do if I don't pray (*The Great Controversy*, 525).

### ONE MILLION HOURS

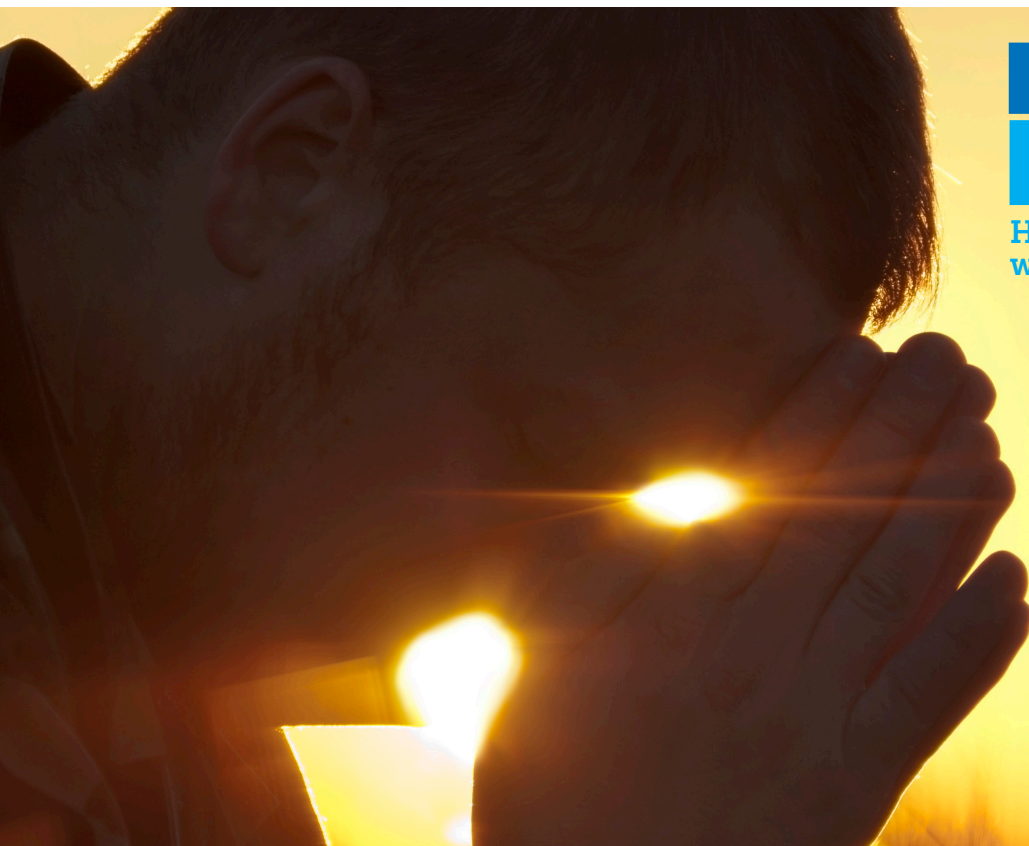
Because this is an invitation encouraged by our leadership and extended to my church

family across North America, I believe others will join me. If even half of us embrace this practice, every 14 weeks we will bring one million hours of intercession before the throne.

I suspect God is not keeping time here either, but it blesses me to know that by one simple adjustment in our prayer schedule you and I can be part of a movement with eternal consequences. I hope you find that as motivating as I do.

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Before retiring, Don Jacobsen served as president of AWR and taught at the Adventist seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan. He and his wife, Ruthie, now work together in Prayer Ministries at the North American Division.

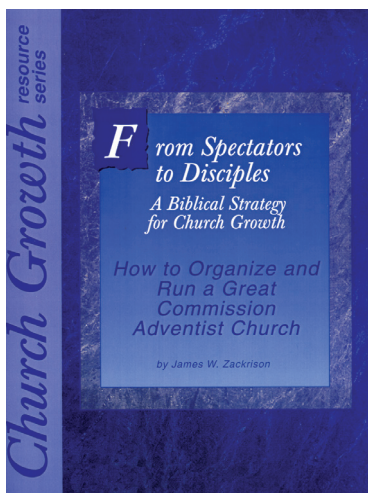


# PRAY ONE MILLION

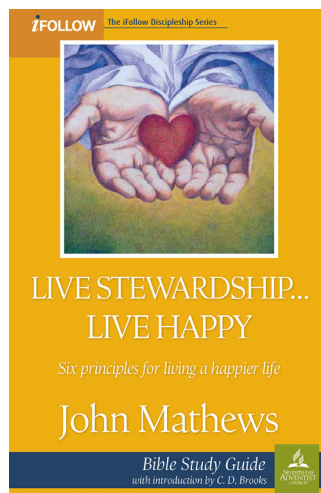
Helpful Resources at  
[www.PrayOneMillion.org](http://www.PrayOneMillion.org)



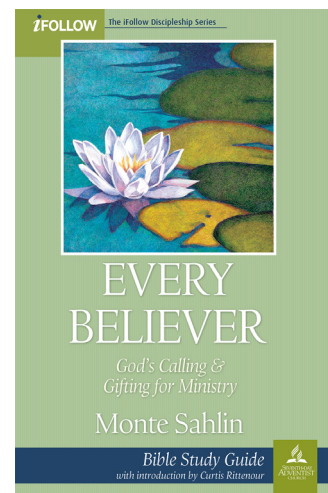
# RESOURCES FOR MANAGING YOUR GIFTS FROM ADVENTSOURCE



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***Live Stewardship, Live Happy: Six principles for living a happier life.*** This Bible study will help you lead a group through assessing the concept of stewardship in each individual's life.



***Every Believer: God's Calling and Gifting for Ministry.*** Learn what the Bible says about spiritual gifts, discover your gift mix and learn how to share them with others.



## Forbid Them Not...

*Children's Ministries conference empowers local leaders*

by Hubert Cisneros



Photos: John Trelio

Church leaders who assisted in presenting the seminars included (l-r) Brad Forbes, Debra Brill, Phyllis Washington, Melanie Cruz and Hubert Cisneros.

In October, 136 enthusiastic Children's Ministries workers attended the first annual Mid-America Union Children's Leadership Conference to learn how to minister to God's boys and girls. All attendees earned the North American Division certification for Basic Track One. Guest speaker **Debra Brill**, a vice president of the NAD and former Children's Ministries director for the Potomac Conference, encouraged and inspired attendees with the importance of their ministry.

This year's conference was the last event before retirement for **Phyllis Washington**, NAD Children's Ministries director. Associate director

**Melanie Cruz** and **Sherri Uhrig**, Children's Ministries director for the Oregon Conference, assisted Washington with the presentations. **Elder Justo Morales** and **Rosa Morales**, Children's Ministries directors for the Illinois Conference, provided seminars in Spanish for Hispanic attendees.

Workshops for Basic Track One included: Meeting the Needs of 21st Century Kids; Learning Styles, Cycles and Modes; Jesus and the 28 Fundamental Beliefs; Bible Learning; Temperaments; GraceLink; Teaching Children to Think; Teaching from Nature; Memorization; and Crafts Lab. The craft lab utilized the AccuCut

roller machines and die casts that were set up in the workroom. A representative from the AccuCut company, based in Omaha, demonstrated how to use this outstanding tool. Hundreds of die casts for the cutouts were available for ready use. A dedicated AccuCut room at the Mid-America Union Conference office is now available for Children's Ministries leaders.

Plans are underway for the 2015 Mid-America Union Children's Leadership Conference to be held in Lincoln, Nebraska Oct. 9-11 at Union College. Attendees will receive the Basic Track Two course certification. On Sunday the GO FISH Convention will equip

children and their parents to be evangelists for Jesus. Participants will receive their own GO FISH tackle box filled with "tools" designed for their particular ministry of choice. GO FISH workshops include: Puppetry; Praise and Worship; Gospel Ballooning; Clown Ministry; Fitness Fun; Interactive Storytelling; Gospel in Nature; Little Preachers; Kids in Simple Service; Face Painting with a Message; Prayer Warriors; Ventriloquism: One Puppet Can Help; Science Illusions and Gospel Object Lessons; and Drama.

Hubert Cisneros is director of Church Ministries for the Mid-America Union.



**Melanie Cruz**, assistant director for NAD Children's Ministries, interacts with participants.





# Mid-America Pastoral Interns Focus and Connect

by Mic Thurber



Photos: Brenda Dickerson

**Elder Mic Thurber (standing) engages with pastoral interns and their spouses during the first union-wide retreat.**

The first MAUC-wide pastoral interns retreat was held Oct. 2-5 at Mid-America's offices in Lincoln, Nebraska. Twenty pastors attended from four of our six conferences, along with 15 spouses and 18 children. Weekend presenters included our own president, **Elder Thomas Lemon**, former General Conference president **Dr. Jan Paulsen**, and **Dr. David VanDenburgh**, professor of religion at Kettering College.

Our goals for this event were straightforward: to create a cohort of friendly support, provide time to recharge and realign, and offer a clear picture of the Seventh-day Adventist World Church. "We wanted to create an environment where pastoral interns could speak honestly about the heart of ministry and where we as union leaders could come alongside and support them in their own leadership journeys," said Lemon.

In addition to speaking for church on Sabbath morning, Elder Lemon led an "Ask the President" session where pastoral interns and their spouses could dialog with him about church structure and current church issues.

Elder Lemon's descriptions of how each level of church structure works together were very helpful, especially for the half of the group who are first-generation Adventists.

Dr. VanDenburgh's emphasis on pastoral theology and his experience as a fully accredited Clinical Pastoral Education supervisor provided a rich background from which the pastors drew insights and counsel. He also provided an atmosphere where interns and spouses could freely talk about the Biblical "whys" of ministry as well as the impact ministry has on them personally and on their families.

Because they are still new in the ministry, many interns and their spouses are finding ministry to be quite different than they anticipated. The nature of VanDenburgh's sessions gave opportunities to process some of those experiences and refocus on why we do our work.

The social aspect was also important. Every spare minute during the retreat found them connecting with each other in small groups. My wife, **Jana**, a pastoral spouse for 34 years and a pastor herself on staff with me for 11 of those years, led a time with the spouses where they became acquainted and shared experiences, which the spouses found very valuable.

Due to a serendipitous schedule coincidence, our

group was able to enjoy listening to Dr. Jan Paulsen on Sabbath evening for worship followed by a Q & A session. Those 90 minutes were a highlight of the weekend for many.

According to attendee evaluations, other highlights were the Friday evening communion service, the opportunity to ask questions, and "the refreshment that came from being open with people who understand and go through the same things." Their suggestions for future retreats include dealing with pastoral burnout, more group activities and adding an extra day so the schedule is less intense.

Mic Thurber is ministerial director for the Mid-America Union.



**Dr. Jan Paulsen answers a wide array of important questions during the Sabbath evening session.**



## If My People...

Need for healing inspires theme of weekend prayer event

by Jimela Jones



Adventists from various St. Louis area churches joined together recently for a weekend of prayer, fellowship and service to residents of Ferguson, Missouri.

A racially diverse congregation packed the pews Sabbath morning for the third annual St. Louis camp meeting themed *If My People...* at Northside Church in St. Louis, Missouri. The conference, organized by Area Ministers & Pastors of St. Louis, also held services Friday night, Sabbath afternoon, and a prayer breakfast on Sunday morning.

Guest speakers included **Pastor Gary S. Collins** of the Sharon Church in Omaha, Nebraska and our president of the North American Division, **Elder Dan Jackson**.

The theme was chosen due to a great need for healing in St. Louis County and the Ferguson, Missouri area. The pastors began the

service on one accord—kneeling in the middle of the sanctuary in prayer. Immediately the spirit of prayer was evident. This spirit resonated throughout the service.

After President Jackson preached from the Word, one of the eyewitnesses of the death of Michael Brown took her stand to become a Seventh-day Adventist. **Paget Crenshaw** was supposed to work that Sabbath but was convicted to attend services. According to **Karen Lewis**, a member of the Tabernacle of Praise Church and mentor to Paget, she had already accepted the Sabbath. Paget's decision to become a Seventh-day Adventist energized the

tone for the rest of the prayer conference.

During the weekend members fulfilled the request of the St. Louis Clergy Alliance of Adventists by providing items for the infants of Ferguson and surrounding counties. Donations from local churches, and as far away as Kansas City, helped provide pallets of diapers

Prayer unites us with one another and with God. Prayer brings Jesus to our side, and gives to the fainting, perplexed soul new strength to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. Prayer turns aside the attacks of Satan.

—*Christ's Object Lessons*, 250

and other infant items.

Area Seventh-day Adventist churches affiliated with A.M.P.S. are Agape, Berean, Central, Korean, Light House, Mid-Rivers, Northside, Tabernacle of Praise and West County.

Jimela Jones is communication director for the Northside Church.

Photos: Michelle Hansen







# Collaboration Produces Major Results for Health Initiative

by Compton Ross, Jr.



Courtesy: Central States Conference

Let's Move, a campaign to end childhood obesity in the United States, was initiated by **First Lady Michelle Obama** to help address the growing problem of childhood obesity. Launched by the White House in 2010, the initiative focuses on healthier food in schools, better food labeling, and more physical activity for children.

Central States Conference has taken this initiative very seriously and since 2012 has organized three events around walking, running and biking. Let's Move Day in September offered beautiful weather around

the conference, and many of our churches in the St. Louis, Lincoln, Des Moines and Kansas City areas held events.

This year was special because the North American Division Health Ministries Department chose the Mid-America Union as the host site for its annual Let's Move event. This allowed Central States Conference to partner with Mid-America's Hispanic Ministries, the Iowa-Missouri Conference, and Shawnee Mission Health to host a joint event in Kansas City. This year yielded the biggest turnout due to the joint effort.

Let's Move is also a great witness to our communities. It brings families together and it sets a good example in encouraging an active lifestyle. Often these events are held in parks and other public spaces and we are able to witness to strangers who stop to ask about the event and the church. Some even join in and participate.

We give God the glory for another great year of promoting healthful living.

Dr. Compton Ross, Jr. is Health Ministries director for the Central States Conference.

Participants in Des Moines, Iowa enjoyed nice weather for their Let's Move Day activities last September.



# Dakota Conference Welcomes Three New Pastors

by Jacquie Biloff



Jodi Dossenko

Casey Bartlett

Pastor Casey Bartlett, a California native, graduated from Walla Walla University in 2013.



Courtesy Peter Simpson

Ella and Peter Simpson

Pastor Peter Simpson, born and raised in South Africa, most recently served in the Ohio Conference.

## CASEY BARTLETT

**Pastor Casey Bartlett** comes to the Hurley-Mitchell-Platte-Yankton District from Walla Walla, Washington where he has spent the last three years studying and working with the youth of the Walla Walla University Church.

He graduated from Walla Walla University with a theology degree in 2013. A southern California native, Casey enjoys surfing and nature. In his spare time he loves to read and write and be with people.

Pastor Bartlett's twin sister, **Carla**, will be getting married in December. His older sister, **Chelsea**, is a nurse in Loma Linda, California, as is his mother. His father is principal of Desert Adventist Academy (the other DAA) in Palm

Desert, California.

While embarking on his own journey of discipleship, Pastor Bartlett hopes to inspire and lead others into the same journey of a life lived in radical submission to Jesus Christ.

## PETER SIMPSON

Born and raised in South Africa, **Pastor Peter Simpson** and his wife, **Ella**, started working for the Transvaal Conference after graduating from Helderberg College in 1978 and completing a two-year stint in the South African Defense Force serving, amongst other work, as an Army chaplain. In 2003, after working with the Sedaven congregation of that conference (which catered for the local boarding school, a large assisted living complex,

and the ACS headquarters) they decided to come to the United States.

They were hired by the Ohio Conference and worked for five years at the Mount Vernon Hill Church that serves the academy there, as well as the conference office. Later they moved to the northwest corner of Ohio and pastored a three-church district, completing the building of a new church in Defiance. After six years in that district, they joined the Dakota team at the beginning of October, pastoring the Williston and Watford City congregations. Appreciating the challenges of the growing oil fields and their impact on the churches there, Peter and Ella are looking forward to helping grow the kingdom

of God through the grace and enabling of Jesus Christ.

## JAMES VENEGAS

**Pastor James Venegas** was born in Sydney, Australia to Chilean-immigrant parents who formed the first Spanish-speaking Seventh-day Adventist congregation on that continent. The group came to be regarded as one of the most dynamic and fastest growing churches of the early '70s.

Pastor Venegas has since been involved in music/media evangelism and pastoral ministry for over 20 years, and holds a bachelor's degree in ministry and theology from Avondale College.

As a young adult he toured and recorded with the Australian-based Christian music





Daniel, James, Kaylene and Leticia Venegas

Jacquie Biloff

Pastor James Venegas, of Chilean heritage, comes to Dakota Conference by way of Australia and Los Angeles.

group *Endless Praise*, traveling full-time throughout Australia, the South Pacific Islands and North and South America. While in the group he met a talented alto singer by the name of **Kaylene Hanly**. Together with a group of like-minded young people, James and Kaylene enjoyed a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to minister through music to many thousands around the world. James and Kaylene eventually married and, during their years at Avondale, had two children, **Daniel** and **Leticia**.

More recently Pastor Venegas accepted an appointment as senior pastor of the Community Adventist Fellowship in Los Angeles, California, home of *The Carter*

*Report* evangelistic ministry.

This year the family relocated to Jamestown, North Dakota where Pastor James and Kaylene serve the Jamestown and Cleveland churches, as well as the Hillcrest Adventist Elementary School. Daniel and Leticia now board and study at Dakota Adventist Academy in grades 11 and 9, respectively. The Venegases are enjoying a new life in the Midwest, and remain both excited and apprehensive about their first winter here.

Jacquie Biloff is communication director for the Dakota Conference.



**March 13-15, 2015\***

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## God's Small World

*Bible studies reveal prior connections*

by Harry Scanlan



Harry Scanlan

Pastor Joe Arellano welcomes Hope Hellige (seated), Sandy McCollum (in yellow) and Mildred Rempe into the Ft. Madison Adventist Church on profession of faith.

I was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church in October 1967 at the Marshalltown (IA) Church. What brought me to attend a Saturday keeping church after already being baptized into a Sunday keeping church? "The perfect girl." If I wanted to see **Sharon** on Saturday, I had to go to church with her. I obliged, but struggled with some of the doctrines that were drastically different from what I was raised to believe.

In time Sharon Reid became Sharon Scanlan. As I got to know my new mother-in-law, **Gen**, I learned about **Grandma Hendrix**, who was "a sermon in apron strings," as Gen put it. Grandma Hendrix was a loving woman who led Gen to Christ and the

Adventist Church. Grandma Hendrix would feed her neighbors and the local hobos during the Great Depression. If she didn't have the food or money, she would borrow it so no one went hungry.

My wife and I are now members of the Ft. Madison Church and in 2011 we were asked to take over a Bible study (for someone who was moving away) with a lady who had learned of our church from watching 3ABN. We began studying with her weekly at the retirement facility where she lived.

One day while leaving after our study my wife thought she recognized someone. She approached the woman and asked if she was **Bud McCreedy's** sister. Indeed, the woman said she was Bud's sister, **Hope Hellige**. Bud, who passed away 10 years prior, had been an elder in our church and my mentor and dear friend.

We chatted with Hope for an hour about her life and how she had been baptized into the Adventist Church at age 10 but stopped attending when she got married. As we were leaving Hope expressed her wish to rejoin the Adventist Church after being away for more than 70 years. She started attending our Bible study and invited a friend to join us. Hope rejoined the Adventist Church on May 24 along with **Sandy McCollum**.

Here's the fun twist. Grandma Hendrix led an estimated 50 people to Christ—one being Sandy

McCollum many years ago. As I learned more about Grandma Hendrix it turns out she is not related to my wife at all. She was the real grandmother of Hope Hellige

and Bud McCreedy. God has an awesome way of bringing people together in His name!

Harry Scanlan is a member of the Madison Church in Iowa.



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## Dying to Self

*Baptism marks complete surrender*

by **Samantha Nelson**

"I can't believe I'm standing here! It's hard to die to self, but God is helping me," said **Shona Hargens** as she shared a brief testimony before her baptism by **Pastor Steve Nelson** on Sept. 30.

It was a day many in the congregation had been waiting for with eager anticipation. Not only was it Shona's actual birthday, but this was the day she was to be reborn in Christ. Having attended the Council Bluffs Adventist Church for many years, and being married to an Adventist, Shona knew what the Church and her husband believed. However, accepting those truths proved to be challenging for her.

During prayer meetings when the topic of God's transforming power would



Brad Plesley

**Alyssa Niedermeyer shares the song she wrote for Shona Hargens as Shona holds the mic on the day of her baptism.**

come up, Shona would listen intently and yet struggle with the idea that she didn't have to "do" anything to earn God's favor; she simply had to surrender her life to Him and allow Him to do the work in her that He deemed necessary. Understanding the difference between works and allowing God to transform—doing it in her own strength

and power versus allowing the power of the Holy Spirit to cleanse and transform—took time and was often a frustrating topic for Shona.

"As Pastor Steve told me many times, my job is to surrender my life to Jesus and let Him change me," Shona continued.

After the baptism Council Bluffs member, **Alyssa**

**Niedermeyer**, played a song on her guitar that she wrote for Shona. The song was called *Shining Star* because Shona signs her name with a star for the letter "a" at the end. The song was an encouragement to hold fast to Jesus, let Him fight the battles and never give up.

Shona's baptism is a victory for Christ and the Council Bluffs Church is blessed to have her as an active member of its community.

Samantha Nelson is a pastor's wife who loves serving alongside her husband, Steve. She is also the CEO of The Hope of Survivors, a nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting victims of clergy sexual abuse and providing educational seminars to clergy of all faiths.

## Young People Breathe New Life Into Church

by **Dottie Thompson**



Dottie Thompson

**Christopher, Alan and Gabby helped paint a local charity building during the Great Day of Service for Neosho that area churches hosted.**

Not long ago the Neosho Church in Granby, Missouri had only a handful of adult members and no children. That changed in the spring

of 2012 when two families with a total of three children began attending.

Before long the children, **Gabby Schlueter**, now age 10,

**Alan Schlueter**, age 11, and **Christopher Cormier**, also 11, were regularly participating in the church services by providing special music, offering prayer and telling the mission story. A Pathfinder club was formed and this year they teamed up with the Joplin club and earned a second place award at the North American Division Bible Experience.

Gabby, Alan and Christopher have also been active in serving their community by collecting cans for the local food bank and participating in the

Great Day of Service for Neosho that area churches hosted. They, along with other children and adults, painted the outside of the Crosslines building, a charity that provides food, clothing and shelter.

The Lord is answering our prayers for church growth and blessing us greatly through these young people.

Dottie Thompson is communication secretary for the Neosho Church.



# Concert Benefits Victims of ISIS

by Vanessa Schaecher



Ryan & Jessica Lindbeck

The College View Academy Chorale, under the direction of Lisette Deemer, was one of the groups participating in the concert.

*Sometimes we feel like what we have to offer isn't enough.* Those were College View Academy music teacher **Lisette Deemer's** thoughts as she sat in a pew at Lincoln's Piedmont Park Church listening to **Doug Hardt** share stories about the 1.8 million Iraqi refugees driven from their homes by ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria).

During his report, Hardt, who directs Interfaith Studies at Union College, asked for funds to help Adventist Frontier Missions send medical missionaries. Deemer felt impressed that God can use all gifts for His good, which inspired her to employ the gift of music to help families in the middle of a war zone by raising funds for AFM.

Joining in her inspiration, College View Academy and

Union College students, as well as local musicians, recently gave a benefit concert at College View Church.

Lincoln mayor **Chris Beutler** spoke at the concert, praising the musicians' efforts and encouraging continued support. A local Yazidi resident shared firsthand stories from refugees in Iraq.

Deemer said, "The goal was not just to put on a concert, but to try to set an example for others across the country that whatever little we have we can put into action. We bring what we have and God multiplies as He sees fit."

To date, more than \$10,000 has been raised.

Vanessa Schaecher is communication correspondent for Piedmont Park Church.

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# Students Visit Nebraska's Biggest Classroom

by Regina Harvey



Regina Harvey

Platte Valley Elementary students are amazed at the height of Rock-It the Robot near the new Nebraska Building, an interactive learning facility on the State Fair grounds.

Platte Valley Elementary School students recently toured the State Fair grounds in their hometown of Grand Island, Nebraska. To represent our school on this field trip, the students decided to decorate their own school T-shirts using tie-dye. As we strolled around, people stopped, smiled and complimented us on our creativity.

Grades 3-5 had appointments at the Red Cross booth for the Pillowcase Project. Students were able to take home items placed in a pillowcase for emergency preparedness.

The new Nebraska Building was awesome. We enjoyed activities at the Edgerton Science Center,

learned how to drive a combine simulator, shared many laughs at the high-diving penguin show and were impressed by the wolf exhibit.

The students were in for a shock when Rock-It the Robot strolled by. At 11 feet tall, Rock-It is a high tech body puppet that spoke and sang to us. He uses hightech speech and digital sound to talk and even has his own scooter—quite intimidating. With so much to see and learn about, the State Fair is definitely Nebraska's biggest classroom.

Regina Harvey is a teacher at Platte Valley Elementary School.



Doris Reile-Kneller

## Students Share Musical Drama

Great Bend Elementary School students presented *God Will Take You Through*, a musical about Moses and how God led him to bring the people of Israel out of bondage. The play also encouraged present day followers to trust God in whatever obstacles they may encounter. Under the direction of teacher **Betty Hay**, the musical was shared at the Sterling House Assisted Living Center and with the English and Hispanic Adventist churches.

The Kansas-Nebraska Conference office family wishes all members a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year.

Thank you for being part of our Conference family!





# Minnetonka Shares the Light at Open House

by Michelle Rosas



The Minnetonka Church lit up the community the night of Oct. 7 during the annual Minnetonka Fire Department Open House. Church staff braved cool weather to give away free flashlights with the church website printed on them and served complimentary hot chocolate and apple cider to families who gathered for the annual fireworks show.

Youth pastor **Vanessa Pujic** said, “Since the public regularly parks in the church lot and fields during city events, this ministry was a natural opportunity to make connections with people as they walked to and from their cars. The intention was to be a positive presence in the community while asking for nothing in return.”

Volunteer **Charlene**

**Lashier** reported that the church served well over 200 cups of hot chocolate and apple cider and gave away 100 flashlights. The flashlights were a big hit, especially with the kids, some of whom were dressed as firemen. “We could tell who had been at the booth because we could see them lighting up the night sky as they walked in the dark,” Lashier said.

**Gary Davis**, principal at Minnetonka Christian Academy, also distributed 100 mints with cards bearing the school’s name and address and stating “You were mint to be at MCA.”

Many people stopped to talk to volunteers at the church booth, both to express appreciation for the freebies and to ask about the church campus.

Even after the flashlights had all been given out, people still stopped. Pastor Pujic said she was struck by how many people were excited to visit with church volunteers and just engage in friendly conversation.

Many expressed hope that the church would return to the event next year and pass out more flashlights. According to church staff, that’s definitely the plan. “When you put yourself out there to do something nice with no expectations of someone having to pay or give something in return, it’s amazing how people’s guards come down,” Pastor Pujic shared. “People are receptive to kindness.”

Michelle Rosas is communication secretary for the Minnetonka Church.

Even after the flashlights had all been given out, people still stopped. Pastor Pujic said she was struck by how many people were excited to visit with church volunteers and just engage in friendly conversation.







# Lifting Up Jesus in Marshall

Prayer brings five people for Bible studies

by Tyson Kahler

The Southwest District of Minnesota, which includes the Artichoke, Marshall, Pipestone and Windom churches, invited **Karen Lewis** to speak for our District Rally in August. She graciously agreed to drive the three hours to the Windom Church to train our members on how to do personal evangelism. As always, her presentations were stirring and inspiring for everyone in attendance. Her unique Bible study approach of *Lifting Up Jesus* before presenting any doctrine or prophecy has been very effective in anchoring people in God's Word and in faith.

The following week I met with our head elder in Marshall to pray for God to use us and to help us apply the things Lewis had just shared. We poured out our hearts and opened ourselves to the Holy Spirit's leading. While I was at the church, some other members came as well. As we were visiting, a man named John\* walked in and began to tell us his story.

"Six weeks ago I was fed up with the life I have been living so I decided to douse my TVs and electronics in gasoline and set them on fire!" John said. What came next absolutely shocked me and the other two members. He said, "I kept one TV and after hooking it up to my antenna I was able to get two channels: NBC and 3ABN." At that moment I could not help myself from



Courtesy/ Karen Lewis

**Karen Lewis recently presented a personal evangelism training seminar at the Windom Church.**

grinning ear to ear. John continued, "Every day I take notes while I watch **Pastor David Asscherick** on 3ABN, followed by two hours of reading my Bible to see if what he said is true." I was in disbelief—God was answering my prayers!

After a few more minutes of talking with John we found out that he quit his job because he wanted to honor the Lord's Sabbath; he went to the library to look up the closest Seventh-day Adventist Church; and he thinks Ellen White is a "really neat lady" and asked if we had a copy of *Steps to Christ*. "Of course we do," I blurted.

I have been studying with John every Tuesday for the last three weeks and he has come to church two weeks in a row—hallelujah!

But my story does not end there. After prayer meeting that evening I stopped by a church member's apartment whom

I had not seen for a while. He was not home, but his two roommates were. Both men are in their 20s and I had seen them before when they visited our church. Since I had spent a year in Kenya, it was easy finding things to talk about with a Kenyan and Rwandan my age. They were surprised that I am a pastor because I am so young. And somehow that led to a discussion of what Adventists believe.

Two hours later we were wrapping up an impromptu Bible study on the validity of the Bible and the importance of the Sabbath. We prayed together at the end and I asked them if they would be interested in studying more about the Bible on a regular basis. They both said, "Yes! We would love to."

I have now been studying with Franklin and Joshua for three weeks and they are as excited as ever. To date,

God has sent five people for me to study the Bible with. Up until three weeks ago I had not had one Bible study in the city of Marshall since I started working in this district. I am convinced that Jesus was absolutely serious when He said, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32). The Lord was waiting for me and the Marshall Church to lift Him up.

If we are willing to be instruments, used by God, He will gladly bring us in contact with just the right people who are ready to receive Jesus.

*\*Names have been changed.*

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Tyson Kahler pastors in the Southwest District of Minnesota.



# Women's Retreat Leaves a Legacy of Prayer

by Kay Wakefield



Photos: Mona Fellers

**Naomi Striemer (right), musical guest for the weekend, poses for a snapshot with DeeAnn Bragaw.**

On the first weekend of September nearly 200 women gathered at Glacier View Ranch to explore what God wants to do in the hearts of women through prayer. They examined what it means to create a legacy of prayer and to accept, as well as to bestow, this exceptional heirloom intended for every human being.

Guest speaker **Janet Page** is a much sought-after presenter for prayer and women's events around the country. "Do you ever feel your prayer life is getting dull?" she asked and then

openly shared how she once felt that her prayers never went any higher than the ceiling and that God's Word was boring and dry. Then Janet described her subsequent encounter with the power of God through prayer in her life and the lives of others. They saw lives being changed when people prayed.

A Saturday evening concert featured musical artist **Naomi Striemer** who, at age 18, signed a multi-million dollar contract with Sony. Naomi shared her testimony of a conversation

with someone who heard a message from an angel saying, "Naomi should leave everything and follow Jesus." She was moved to follow the angel's instruction, and left her contract with Sony. Since sharing the love and joy of Jesus through music, Naomi's heart and life have changed forever.

An abundance of heirlooms including quilts, antique furniture, pitchers, sewing machines, lace, baby carriages and more graced the platform of the auditorium, while the third floor conference room was transformed into a serene 24-hour prayer room with soft lighting, candles and scriptural inspiration offered at tables where women could sit, kneel, meditate and pray.

In addition, women joined their voices in inspirational music,

participated in "friendship circles" and enjoyed the beauty of nature that Glacier View Ranch offers.

Comments from attendees reveal that a legacy of prayer will impact generations to come:

"Loved the friendship circles."

"Janet was excellent."

"Love, love, loved Naomi Streimer."

"Beautiful and relevant prayer room."

"Enjoyed my weekend and will plan on coming again."

"Very spiritually-filled weekend."

"Praise God for this retreat!"

"Thank you for giving to the Lord through this ministry."

Kay Wakefield is a member of the Denver South Church and writes from Castle Rock, Colorado.



Meals are a time to make new friends and enjoy spiritual conversations.



Janet Page was the keynote speaker for the recent RMC women's retreat held at Glacier View Ranch.





# From Mission to Action

RMC introduces initiatives for 2015

by Mark Bond

Rocky Mountain Conference leaders are introducing two exciting initiatives for 2015. In keeping with the new RMC mission statement, *Knowing Christ and making Him fully known*, the leadership team has adopted a two-part strategy to bring their mission to action. The first part focuses on “knowing Christ,” and the second on “making Him fully known.”

As to the first part of the strategy, the Rocky Mountain Conference has dubbed 2015 the Year in the Word. A corresponding campaign will be launched to encourage each member to spend personal time in the Word. Daily Bible reading plans are available in PDF format on the conference website: [www.rmcsda.org/bibleplan](http://www.rmcsda.org/bibleplan). Printed copies are also available free at the Rocky Mountain Adventist Book Center.

“We spend a lot of time talking about evangelism, and that’s a good thing,” said conference president **Ed Barnett**, “but it’s equally important for us to have a growing, thriving, personal relationship with Jesus. I don’t know of any better way to know Christ than to prayerfully spend time in His Word each day.”

The second part of the mission statement pertains to sharing Christ in our communities. Making Him fully known reflects Jesus’ command to “go and make disciples of all nations”



**2015 is the Year in the Word for the Rocky Mountain Conference. Members are encouraged to spend time each day reading a portion of Scripture.**

(Matt. 28:19). Reaching our towns and neighborhoods with a message of hope and love is not just an option—it’s our Great Commission.

With that commission in mind, the RMC leadership team has adopted the lofty goal of reaching every home in the conference in a meaningful way by the year 2020. They are calling this effort their “2020 Vision.”

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14). RMC leaders are asking each of us to commit to meeting this God-given challenge by carrying out the 2020 Vision within our territory.

“We don’t want to dictate exactly what it means to reach every home in meaningful ways,” said Barnett. “We just want to

ask each church to connect with all the homes in their surrounding zip codes over the next five years. That may mean volunteers going door-to-door, or churches sending out gift copies of *Steps to Christ* or *The Desire of Ages*. The main thing is that we all get involved and pray for unique and meaningful ways to touch our neighbors with the love of God.”

It is our firm belief that as we allow our mission to take action in our lives—as we spend time in the word, and as we then go out and share His love—our hearts will grow closer to Him and our churches will grow as we approach the soon coming harvest.

Mark Bond is communication director for the Rocky Mountain Conference.

**The RMC leadership team has adopted the lofty goal of reaching every home in the conference in a meaningful way by the year 2020. They are calling this effort their “2020 Vision.”**





# Student-led Summit Seeks to Reconnect Young Adults with Adventist Church

by Stefani Leeper



Natalie Bruzon spearheaded the NAD Youth Retention and Involvement Summit held at Union College Oct. 23-25.

A lifelong Adventist and daughter of missionary parents, **Natalie Bruzon** was tired of seeing youth walk out during a sermon—and sometimes joining them. Feeling disconnected from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, she even considered attending a nondenominational Christian church.

Having witnessed the implications of a walk with God led astray through disconnect to the Adventist Church, Bruzon was determined to see something change. She became the driving force behind the development of the North American Division Youth Retention and Involvement Summit held at Union College Oct. 23-25.

Conceived and developed by Bruzon and other Union students, the summit gave her peers around the country the opportunity to discuss ways that Adventist young adults can

stay connected with their church—and how the church can stay connected, too.

The students invited all the Adventist colleges and universities in North America to send two delegates and also invited young adult leaders for the North American Division and elsewhere around the country to be a part of the discussion.

“The meeting was a lot bigger than we anticipated,” said Bruzon. “We had between 40-70 people at each think tank.” In addition to devotional sessions on Thursday night, Friday night and Sabbath, the young adults gathered in think tanks to answer four key questions:

*Why do young adults stay in the Adventist Church?*

*Why do young adults leave the church?*

*What can we give the church?*

*And what would we like the church to give us?*

The answers, voted on by all the summit attendees, were summarized in a document which **Debra Brill**, a North American Division vice president who attended the event, presented to church leaders at NAD year-end meetings.

“Now the church has a document that represents the voice of young adults who attend Adventist universities,” she explained, noting that only about 30 percent of Adventist young people attend Adventist colleges. One theme that stood out for her is that “a lot of people want to get back to our core values as a church—and connect with older generations.”

Bruzon knows the importance of staying engaged after a successful event. She plans to use what she has learned for a project in one of her research writing classes. “I hope this leads to more conversations that can help bridge the gap between young adults and both older generations and church leaders,” she said. “This weekend was all about ideas and conversations. But it is kind of pointless if it is not used.”

## Being part of the solution

In 2013, student government leaders from Seventh-day Adventist colleges from around the country were invited to sit in on a North American Division leadership meeting. “The ASB presidents felt that

the Adventist church needed more young adult support,” said Bruzon. “One of the big issues in the church right now is that 60-70 percent of our young adults, 18-30 years old, are leaving.”

The Union College student senate embraces the idea and examined different possibilities, events and other ways they could create awareness about the issue. Feeling that they needed something different from the usual campus activities geared toward spiritual awareness, the senate realized they needed a long-standing solution in the form of a committee. Passionate about her new-found goal, Bruzon formed a committee of Union students to figure out how to reach students of all majors and ages. The committee is not directly affiliated with Campus Ministries or the student government, but works independently.

“Our purpose was to discuss issues that we see in the church—reasons why we would not want to stay in the church—to bring to light this problem of young adults leaving.” Out of these discussions came the idea for the summit.

## Getting social

The students also launched a social media campaign on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, with the hashtag #iAmTheChurch. This hashtag was intended to raise awareness about the summit, but organizers





hope the campaign will also initiate critical thinking by the students, asking them to consider what role they will play in the church five years in the future. “We are the church of tomorrow. What are we going to be doing in five years?” ask students in the video. “Are we going to be passively sitting on the pews and complaining about everything we don’t like, or are we going to be actively part of the solution?” The students hope the representatives of

the other Adventist schools will continue the movement across North America.

“The committee members are really passionate and have done all the work to make this possible,” said Bruzon. “It’s been amazing the way every single one of them has stepped up, taken on a project, and volunteered to be a part of something. The support we have gotten from **Pastor Rich Carlson**, Union College chaplain, and **Dr. Linda Becker**, vice president for

Student Services, has been monumental.”

Bruzon would also like to see committees like this in other schools. “I would love to see us take part in our own problem and be proactive about it,” she added.

As for Bruzon’s five-year plan, she sees herself still actively and passionately involved with the committee and its mission to reach young adults struggling to connect with the Adventist Church.

To learn more or read the document that summarized the results of the summit, visit [www.ucollege.edu/iAmTheChurch](http://www.ucollege.edu/iAmTheChurch).

Stefani Leeper is a sophomore communication major from Lincoln, Nebraska.

## Spread the Bread

*Students make and distribute lunches to Lincoln’s homeless*

by **Elena Cornwell**



Photos Courtesy Union College

Standing in the grocery store line with three carts full of peanut butter, jelly, bread, water, apples and bananas, **Veena Tharayil** attracted a lot of attention. A 19-year-old sophomore pursuing general studies at Union, Tharayil has always been inspired by her mother’s compassionate and giving spirit. This helped form Veena’s passion for the homeless that fueled her to gather a bunch of friends to give sack lunches to over 150 people on Lincoln’s streets one Sabbath afternoon in October.

Good friend **Lyndsey Cowin**, a junior nursing

major, has learned to admire Tharayil’s dedication to her mission. “Veena’s passion for the homeless is huge,” said Cowin. “Whenever we are out driving, if we see a homeless person on the side of the road, we will stop, every single time. Everything that is in that car is given to whomever is outside. She cares so much—it really is inspiring.” During the entire week preceeding Spread the Bread, Cowin helped her friend recruit students for the activity.

Using the event as a project for her Creative Leadership class, Tharayil set out collection boxes in Union Market for students to fill with granola bars and fruit. They gathered donations at Sabbath school and chapel services. Tharayil’s entire family gave money to support her cause. Her friends brainstormed for name ideas and other

creative ways to bring attention to the project. All this culminated in making Spread the Bread better than anyone could have hoped.

Tharayil used gifts of food, money and manpower to stuff and hand out bagged lunches of sandwiches, granola bars, a bottle of water and fruit. More than 100 students met to fill and deliver the bags. Tharayil assigned addresses and areas of downtown Lincoln to different students for delivery.

“We saw one older gentleman sitting on a bench,” said Cowin. “First, my friend walked over to give him a lunch. We had some extra bags though, so I grabbed another bag and took it to him, too. He was a refugee from Sudan and was so grateful for the bag we brought him. He cried as he told us he didn’t want the second bag because there were others who needed it.

He kept reminding us that if we take care of the poor then God will take care of us. We asked if we could pray with him, and after he said yes, he proceeded to pray for us.”

Inspired by their experience that Saturday afternoon, Cowin and Tharayil saw that making a difference really is possible.

“I’ve read in the Bible of how Jesus always helped the underdogs and less fortunate even when people looked down on Him,” Tharayil said. “He inspires me to go against what society teaches—and instead help others and do good.”

Students already have plans for another event, thanks to \$200 left over from all the collections.

Elena Cornwell is a senior at Union College.



# Changing Lives From the Inside Out

by Mark Bond



Photo courtesy Douglas County Living magazine

**Josh and Sharmini Long, both physicians serving at Parker Adventist Hospital in Colorado, utilize Adventist health principles in their treatment of patients who struggle with obesity.**

Bariatric surgery brings hope to many who struggle with obesity and have reached a sense of hopelessness in their attempts to control their weight. They feel trapped in their bodies. They feel trapped in their current state of health.

**Dr. Josh Long** is a bariatric surgeon who has dedicated his life to helping those struggling to lose weight. But more important than just helping them physically, he believes that his calling is to bring whole-person health to the patients he serves. And those are the kind of changes that start on the inside and work their way out.

Josh and his wife, **Dr. Sharmini Long**, an endocrinologist, serve at the Bariatric and

Metabolic Center of Colorado at Parker Adventist Hospital. Together, they bring hope and healing to those who struggle with weight and metabolic challenges. With both surgical and non-surgical solutions, they work closely with patients to provide the best options for each individual. Sharmini also serves as co-host for *Lifestyle Magazine*, a television program hosted by **Mike Tucker** for *Faith for Today*. Their weekly program airs on TBN and many other national and local networks.

As a young man, Josh envisioned becoming an entrepreneur, but his vision shifted when he served as a student missionary for a year in India with Adventist Frontier Missions. While

there, he witnessed firsthand the extreme physical needs that so many faced, and he decided he wanted to make a difference by joining the medical field. Josh feels like being called to serve as a physician is an honor and privilege. He believes that he is just as much a missionary today as he was during his year in India.

You might think that using a bariatric surgical approach seems like a strange implementation of the health message, but studies show that surgical solutions are much more effective when used in combination with lifestyle changes. That's why Josh believes that a multi-disciplinary approach brings the greatest chance for success. Josh offers many non-surgical weight loss treatment options for patients who are interested in or may not be candidates for surgery.

The multi-disciplinary strategy to weight loss integrates experts in nutrition, health counseling, exercise and even spirituality. This brings a body, mind and spirit method to achieving each patient's goals. Among other things, Josh encourages his patients to embrace a plant-based diet and to eliminate processed foods.

"Our Adventist health message has advocated a plant-based, whole foods diet for more than a century, and it's interesting

that medical science now agrees. And this diet gives our patients a tremendous advantage in their weight loss journey to a healthier life," explains Josh. "We are also incorporating principles of a program called CREATION Health that advocates a total wellness approach to weight loss."

Total wellness is not just making the dietary choices. There is a faith element as well. Josh continues, "When our patients embrace health principles such as daily exercise and vegetarian diet choices, they tend to enjoy greater success. And with adding trust in God into the mix, we are currently studying how faith impacts long-term results."

Josh is always looking for ways to more fully integrate the eight principles of health into every aspect of his practice. "Spending time and energy educating our patients is not easy," says Josh, "but it's the best way to effectively treat our patients. It's all a part of *Extending the healing ministry of Christ*."

This article was submitted by Stephen King, senior vice president for the Rocky Mountain Adventist Health/Centura Health, where he serves the five Adventist hospital campuses in Colorado. It was written by Mark Bond.





**Fetters, Bob**, b. Nov. 1, 1919 in Milo, IA. d. Sept. 23, 2014 in FL. Member of Osceola, (IA) Church. Survivors include sons Ron and Larry Fetters; several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

**Hartman, Aaron P.**, b. Nov. 24, 1924 in Java, SD. d. Oct. 30, 2014 in Bowdle, SD. Member of Bowdle Church. Preceded in death by parents; 1 sister. Survivors include wife Darlene; daughters Kay Stover and Michelle Hartman; sons Leslie, Paul, Jason and Daaron; 1 brother; 9 grandchildren; 3 great-grandchildren; 2 great-great-grandchildren.

**Leiby, Ralph**, b. Oct. 14, 1928 in Columbia County, PA; d. Sept. 13, 2014 in Harrisburg, MO. Member of Sunnysdale Church. Served in the Army from 1946-1948 with the 511th Division of the 11th Airborne in Japan. From 1966-1990 was plant manager for S & S Plastics and Packaging Corp. at Sunnysdale Adventist Academy. Preceded in death by wife Phyllis; 6 siblings. Survivors include daughter Carla Fraga; sons Kevin and Roy; 4 grandchildren; 1 great-grandchild.

**Paulson, Charlene K.**, b. Feb. 22, 1940 in Minneapolis, MN. d. Sept. 28, 2014 in St. Louis Park, MN. Member of Minnetonka Church. Preceded in death by husband. Survivors include 1 sister; numerous nieces and nephews.

**Porter, Dortha**, b. June 5, 1928 in Alanthus Grove, MO. d. Sept. 22, 2014 in St. Joseph, MO. Member of Three Angels Church. Preceded in death by husband Paul; daughter Pauline; son Dennis; 6 siblings. Survivors include daughters Paula Porter and Sharon Hord; son Randy; 1 sister; 1 grandchild.

**Reeves, James A.**, b. Aug. 26, 1922 in England. d. Oct. 22, 2014 in Minneapolis, MN. Member of Minneapolis First Church. Survivors include daughters Lila Chambers, Betty Lane and Donna Loreth; son James Jr; 16 grandchildren.

**Sidmore, Lawrence**, b. Apr. 12, 1948 in Waterloo, IA. d. Sept. 17, 2014 in Boonville, MO. Member of Sedalia, (MO) Church. Preceded in death by father. Survivors include wife Sara Sue; daughters Lauri Hettig, Jennifer Dallas and Sara Athey; son Joseph; mother; 2 siblings; 6 grandchildren; 1 great-grandchild.

**Stewart, Larry**, b. May 26, 1954 in Burlington, IA. d. Dec. 3, 2013 in Iowa City, IA. Member of Burlington, (IA) Church. Preceded in death by 1 brother. Survivors include wife Ruth Ann; daughter Sarah; son Matthew.

To submit an obituary visit [outlookmag.org/contact](http://outlookmag.org/contact). Questions? Contact Raschelle Hines at 402.484.3012 or [raschelle@outlookmag.org](mailto:raschelle@outlookmag.org).

**"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Sprit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."**

**—Rev. 14:13**



## SUNSET CALENDAR

| Colorado            | Dec 5 | Dec 12 | Dec 19 | Dec 26 | Jan 2 |
|---------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| Denver              | 4:35  | 4:36   | 4:38   | 4:42   | 4:47  |
| Grand Junction      | 4:52  | 4:52   | 4:54   | 4:58   | 5:03  |
| Pueblo              | 4:38  | 4:39   | 4:41   | 4:45   | 4:50  |
| <b>Iowa</b>         |       |        |        |        |       |
| Davenport           | 4:32  | 4:33   | 4:35   | 4:38   | 4:44  |
| Des Moines          | 4:44  | 4:45   | 4:47   | 4:50   | 4:56  |
| Sioux City          | 4:53  | 4:53   | 4:55   | 4:59   | 5:04  |
| <b>Kansas</b>       |       |        |        |        |       |
| Dodge City          | 5:21  | 5:22   | 5:24   | 5:28   | 5:33  |
| Goodland            | 4:23  | 4:24   | 4:26   | 4:30   | 4:35  |
| Topeka              | 5:00  | 5:01   | 5:03   | 5:07   | 5:12  |
| <b>Minnesota</b>    |       |        |        |        |       |
| Duluth              | 4:21  | 4:20   | 4:22   | 4:26   | 4:32  |
| International Falls | 4:19  | 4:18   | 4:19   | 4:23   | 4:30  |
| Minneapolis         | 4:32  | 4:32   | 4:34   | 4:37   | 4:43  |
| <b>Missouri</b>     |       |        |        |        |       |
| Columbia            | 4:46  | 4:47   | 4:49   | 4:53   | 4:58  |
| Kansas City         | 4:56  | 4:56   | 4:58   | 5:02   | 5:07  |
| St. Louis           | 4:40  | 4:40   | 4:42   | 4:46   | 4:51  |
| <b>Nebraska</b>     |       |        |        |        |       |
| Lincoln             | 4:59  | 4:59   | 5:01   | 5:05   | 5:10  |
| North Platte        | 5:14  | 5:15   | 5:17   | 5:20   | 5:26  |
| Scottsbluff         | 4:24  | 4:24   | 4:26   | 4:30   | 4:35  |
| <b>North Dakota</b> |       |        |        |        |       |
| Bismarck            | 4:55  | 4:55   | 4:56   | 5:00   | 5:06  |
| Fargo               | 4:39  | 4:39   | 4:40   | 4:44   | 4:50  |
| Williston           | 5:01  | 5:01   | 5:02   | 5:06   | 5:12  |
| <b>South Dakota</b> |       |        |        |        |       |
| Pierre              | 5:02  | 5:02   | 5:04   | 5:08   | 5:14  |
| Rapid City          | 4:15  | 4:15   | 4:17   | 4:20   | 4:26  |
| Sioux Falls         | 4:51  | 4:50   | 4:52   | 4:56   | 5:02  |
| <b>Wyoming</b>      |       |        |        |        |       |
| Casper              | 4:31  | 4:31   | 4:33   | 4:37   | 4:43  |
| Cheyenne            | 4:30  | 4:31   | 4:33   | 4:37   | 4:42  |
| Sheridan            | 4:27  | 4:27   | 4:29   | 4:33   | 4:39  |



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## EVENTS

**La Sierra Academy Alumni Reunion**, April 24-25, 2015. Registration: Friday at 9:30 am, on campus. Friday evening reception: 7 pm. Sabbath worship: 10 am. Class reunions TBA. Honor Classes: '55, '65, '75, '85, '90, '95, '05. Info: visit [www.lsak12.com](http://www.lsak12.com), email [JNelson@lsak12.com](mailto:JNelson@lsak12.com), or call 951.351.1445 x244.

## NOTICES

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## OUTLOOK'S 2015 THEMES AND DEADLINES

- January:** Adventist Church Identity/Structure (11/24)
- February:** Student-Produced Issue (12/22)
- March/April:** Current Adventist Challenges (1/26)
- May:** Helping Marginalized Populations (3/23)
- June:** Global Persecution/Religious Liberty (4/27)
- July/August:** Education and Technology (5/26)
- September:** GC Session Report (7/27)
- October:** Youth/Young Adult Retention (8/24)
- November:** Union College Focus (9/21)
- December:** Environmental Stewardship (10/26)



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**Hyveth Williams**  
Professor & Church Planter  
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