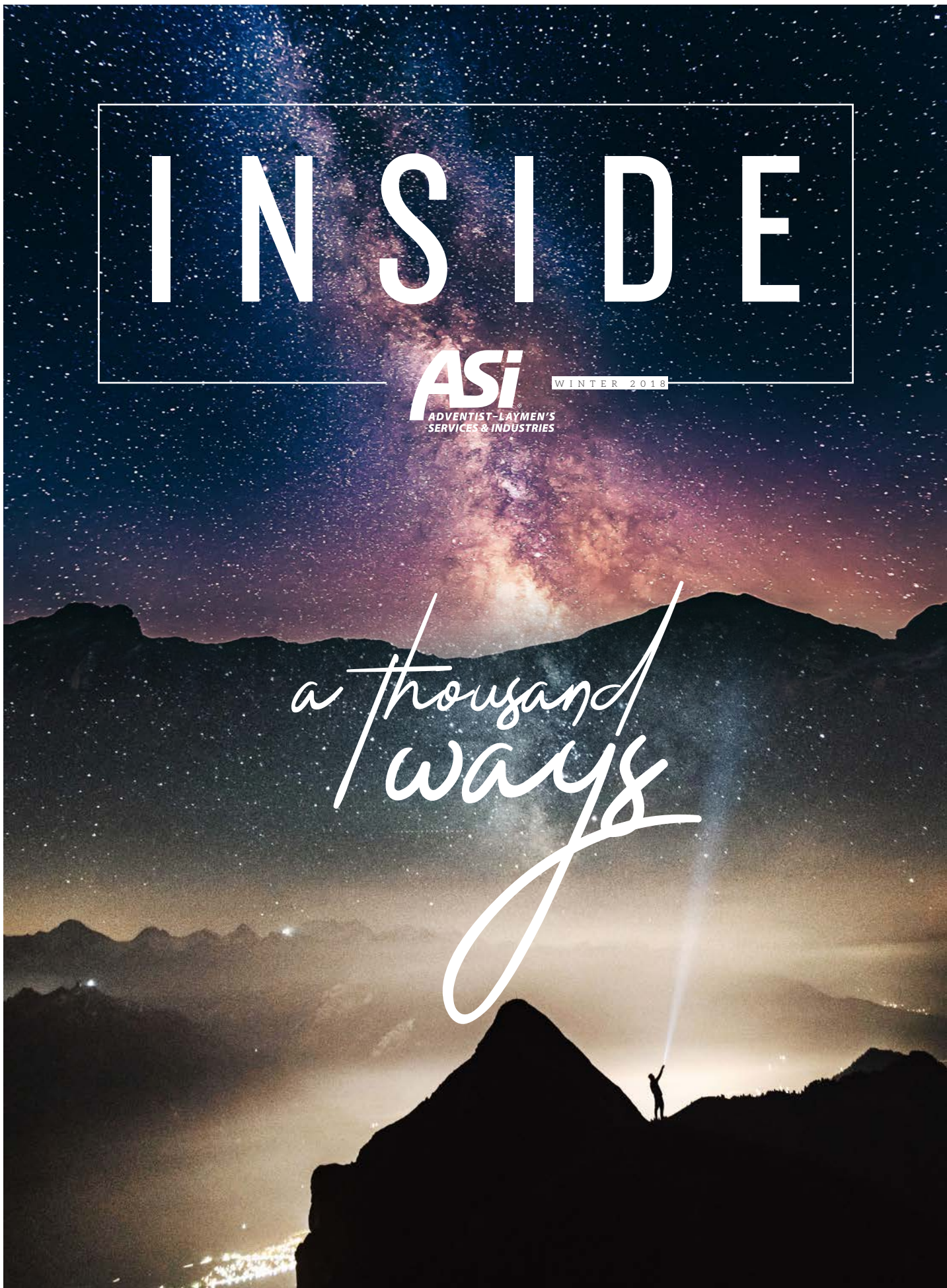


# INSIDE

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My first trip to the Holy Land was over 36 years ago and that trip will forever stand out in my mind. I had such a greater interest in and understanding of God's Word after that. I made a decision then that I would return and bring others with me. This will be my 38th tour since, and every time I learn something new. I truly enjoyed my last trip more than my first, and look forward with great anticipation to this next one.

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

Many people today debate the extent to which God is involved in the lives of humanity. Is He an active participant? Or is He a passive observer? Does He still perform miracles? Is there meaning behind life's coincidences?

I contend that God holds humanity in His gentle hands; that He has a purpose and plan for every soul on the planet; that through divine intervention and miraculous events, He actively participates in and guides the lives of His children.

"Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing."  
— Ellen G. White

As editor of *Inside ASI*, I've had the honor and privilege of reading dozens of stories that attest to this fact. Divine intervention and God's active participation in our lives are the foundation of countless stories I receive from dozens of people around the world. Our Father in heaven, who knows the hairs on each head, looks down on us in love — unmeasurable, incomprehensible, matchless love — and says to each soul that He will never leave nor forsake them (Deuteronomy 31:6).

I pray that, as this beautiful truth comes alive throughout these pages, you will experience the fullness of God's love, leading, and active participation in your life. Your existence is rife with meaning and purpose, so much so that the King of the universe knows you by name, holds you close to His heart, and has a thousand ways to provide for you of which you know nothing.



Kristi Jensen, Editor

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# TITHE AND THE MORTGAGE PAYMENT

by Michelle Pitts



**Michelle Pitts**

Michelle Pitts presently resides with her husband, David, in Denver, Colorado. Michelle is a member of the Denver South Seventh-day Adventist Church, where she has served in the past as a prayer ministry coordinator. Her current role at church is a leader of compassionate Care Ministries. Michelle is passionate about ASI, community service and urban ministry.

**W**hen my husband, David, could no longer work due to a catastrophic disability from a major car accident, we lost our primary source of income. While we were waiting for social security disability income to be approved, my job was our only source of support. Suddenly, we were faced with an unforeseeable financial crisis that left us having to make extremely difficult choices in our expenditures. It was not long before we had exhausted our savings and all other emergency funds.

One afternoon in 2009, I found myself struggling with a spiritual battle of whether to pay tithe or our mortgage payment. I had recently explained our unfortunate circumstances to the mortgage company and had been granted a temporary modified payment to keep from defaulting on our loan. However, my paycheck was short that pay period because I had to take a few days of unpaid leave to care for my husband, who was in the process of being evaluated for in-home long-term care services.

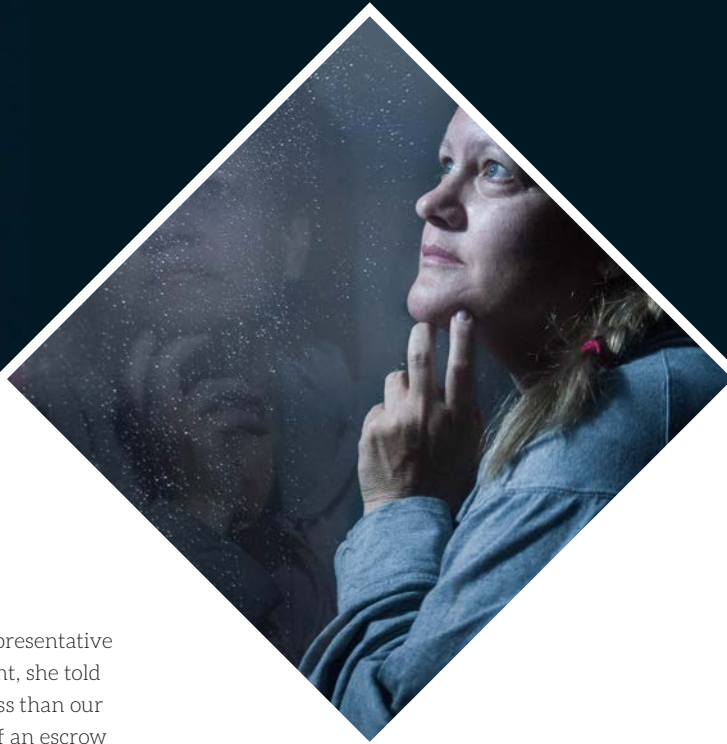
Having been a faithful tithe-payer for many years, I had already experienced countless acts of God's mighty provision. I knew that withholding tithe, for any reason, was wrong. I also had firsthand experience proving that God's Word is 100 percent

trustworthy. And yet, when faced with the choice of breaking my agreement with the mortgage company or stealing from God to meet our temporal need of shelter, I found myself in an intense spiritual battle with self and Satan.

As I struggled, I began to pray earnestly about the decision. At first, I complained to God that tithe was the payment that I was not behind on! I asked Him how I could possibly be expected to make such a difficult choice. Couldn't I be exempt due to the circumstances? How were we going to live on only 40 percent of our former income? We couldn't even cover our bare necessities and there was nothing else I could do to keep us afloat! I did not know where to turn for help, other than God!

After a while, I realized that my fear was really a sinful lack of faith in God's promise to provide for our needs. I confessed and repented of my selfish unbelief! I further expressed my sorrow for being more afraid of the potential consequences of not making the mortgage payment on time than I was of stealing from God. I asked Him to give me the strength to take my eyes off of circumstances and simply believe His Word.

It took several hours of praying, but God won the battle and I paid the tithe. Afterwards, I called the mortgage company to pay them the money that I had remaining.



Before I could explain to the representative that I only had a partial payment, she told me that the amount due was less than our agreed upon amount because of an escrow overage that had already been applied as partial payment. The amount she told me to pay for that month was EXACTLY what I had left over after paying tithe!

I hung up from the call praising God, in shock at how easily He had solved my seemingly impossible difficulty! He had parted the Red Sea, so to speak, as soon as I had obediently put my foot in the water. Ellen White has said, "Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 330). "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history" (*Life Sketches*, p. 196).

Nothing is impossible with God! Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Like the widow woman in 1 Kings 17:13 who gave her last meal to Elijah, I was supernaturally sustained after giving first to God! "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5, 6).



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# REDEMPTION AND RESTORATION

by Dianne Wagner and Kristi Jensen



**Dianne Wagner**

Dianne Wagner lives in western North Carolina with David, her husband of 36 years. Together they have four grown children. Dianne partners with Antionette Duck in Mafgia Ministries.

**I** tell my story because it needs to be told—I am only one of millions who have walked this valley of trouble. After decades of lonely incompleteness, I have experienced the Lord's redemptive power in my life. I pray my journey will give others the courage to address their stories and experience the Lord's redemption and restoration.

Six months before my wedding day, I found out I was pregnant. My fiancé and I had only been intimate one time—one time too many. I had recently had a series of x-rays on my lower back for work. I wondered what the radiation would do to the fetus. Life quickly became a frantic blur. I was afraid, embarrassed, and didn't know what to do. I didn't want to break my grandmother's heart and I didn't want anyone in my church to know. I called several doctors in the area and asked about the radiation from the x-rays. Every single one said I should abort.

Abortion—a word that had never before entered into my personal thought processes. In a panic, I called the clinic. They told me how much it would cost and how far along in the pregnancy I had to be. I set a date.

The day of my appointment, I had to meet with a counselor. She assured me that “it” was only a small fuzzball and I had nothing to worry about. The procedure was a nightmare. Something inside me died that day—literally—and I became emotionally numb.


The joys of preparing for my wedding day faded

and I found myself wanting to run from it all. Matters worsened when one day, our wedding photographer locked me in his studio, attempted to hold me down and rape me. I was able to escape, but never said a word about the incident. Had I lost my self-value? Did I now deserve this kind of treatment?

The choice to abort my baby just about destroyed me. I had no clue how it would impact me, my marriage, my family, and relationships. What was supposed to have been a solution to a crisis only created a larger-than-life crisis for me. I felt convinced I was a failure and could never be a fit mother, so when I got pregnant a second time after I was married, I had another abortion.

My husband and I went to counseling, only to be told that our marriage couldn't be saved. I began taking drugs for depression. One night, in desperation, I called an abortion hotline: “Christian help for the post-abortive woman.” I told the woman on the other end of the line what I had done and that I needed help. Her first response was, “You know that abortion is murder, don't you?” I quickly hung up the phone. Soon after, my husband and I visited a local church with friends. The sermon was on abortion. The pastor ranted and raved, finally declaring that God would not and could not forgive a woman who had aborted her baby. He confirmed how I felt about myself, and I fell deeper into despair.

The shame was unbearable and I was entirely alone—I had nowhere to go, no one to turn to. I



became bulimic. Food began to control me. I would binge-eat until I could hardly swallow another bite, then I would purge. The eating disorder only added to my shame, proving to me that I was a failure.

The years passed and I finally did become a mother. I had three beautiful children, a son and boy-girl twins. I was in love with my babies and I had each one dedicated to the Lord. But I was still a broken woman. I was insecure, bulimic, and my marriage was in shambles.

My sister suggested I visit a Christian woman who was an acquaintance of hers. This kind woman earned my trust and I told her about my abortions. She did not condemn or shame me but encouraged me to repent of those sins. She assured me God would forgive. Together we prayed. After that moment, I never struggled with bulimia again and I had renewed strength to fight for my marriage.

Although I believed God had forgiven me, I still felt miserable. When a baby dies because of an abortion, the mother often feels too ashamed to grieve. It would seem hypocritical for her to grieve a death she had control over. My unresolved grief and emotion continued to surface in other areas of my life. I continued to carry my heartache.

It wasn't until 20 years later, at a Generation of Youth for Christ (GYC) conference, that I realized I needed to grieve. I met Antionette Duck and became acquainted with her ministry, Mafgia. Antionette addressed the issue of abortion and she was like a breath of fresh air to me. I left GYC with hope. My story wasn't over yet. I had experienced redemption, but I wanted more. I wanted restoration.

As I researched abortion recovery programs, I realized I wasn't alone. My pain and emptiness were not uncommon

and there was help! My desire for restoration continued to grow. I wanted a full life. I wanted all the Lord had in store for me.

I finally attended an abortion recovery weekend retreat and was blessed beyond words. I had already shed tears of regret for what I had done. At the retreat, I was given the opportunity to shed tears of grief for what I had lost. I took my babies out of the sea of statistics, gave them names and claimed them as my own. There will always be a scar, but there will no longer be an empty hole.

Since then, I have had the privilege of joining Antionette as co-speaker with Mafgia Ministries.

We offer hope, redemption, and restoration through Jesus Christ for those who have been impacted by an abortion. In a compassionate, non-condemning atmosphere, we seek to educate and equip those who have a burden for this issue. We encourage those in leadership positions to take up this cross and break the silence. We believe abortion would never be considered an option for many, if our young people were properly educated about the nature of abortion and given a chance to explore their own personal values.

If you have an interest in scheduling a speaking engagement or would like more information, we would love to hear from you. Contact us at: [info@mafgia.com](mailto:info@mafgia.com).

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"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." - Romans 12:21



# FROM A LOS ANGELES STREET GANG TO THE FAMILY OF GOD

by Mark Dubon



**Mark Dubon**

Mark Dubon has served as a Bible worker in Louisiana and Southern California. He has also done door-to-door colporteur work in multiple states across the US. He attended Ouachita Hills College, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in Theology. He has been privileged to serve as a district pastor for the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He and his wife, Ana, have four wonderful children. Mark enjoys studying God's Word and spending quality time with his family.

**I** was born and raised in the city of Los Angeles. My parents migrated from El Salvador, chasing the American dream and seeking a prosperous life. However, my father was killed and my mom ended up having to fill both parental roles. I did not have a positive family environment at home, so I sought a family on the streets and ended up joining a Los Angeles street gang.

I went from carrying my school bag and books to carrying guns and knives. My life as a gang member eventually led me to using drugs and tattooing the gang's name on my body to prove my loyalty. Juvenile hall and camp facilities became my second home, and sleeping on a concrete slab did not feel like such a big deal anymore. By the age of 15, I had been shot and was heavily addicted to drugs. Nevertheless, God's mercy was with me.

I was arrested for strong-armed robbery and the same judge who had been dealing with me since I was 12, saw me for the last time. He sentenced me to five-and-a-half years with the California Youth Authority.

While waiting for time to roll by, I became bitter, angry, and confused, with no sense of purpose in life. The unavoidable law of nature became true for me. What I contemplated, I became. I fed my mind with corruption until my character bore the likeness of Satan. Sin took its toll on me and my heart became hardened. At age 19, just as I was close to finishing

my sentence, I got into trouble again. I was involved in a felony case inside the correctional facility, was tried as an adult, and required to serve four more years in the California State Prison. Taking into account prior time served, I was finally released at the age of 21.

I had lost my teenage years to prison. Since I went in as a child and came out as an adult, I didn't know how to act in the outside world, so I went back to the streets. When I got arrested and sentenced to a rehabilitation center, God, through a counselor, began speaking to my heart. I successfully completed the program and began working at a restaurant.

In the process of trying to better my life, my past came back to haunt me. I found myself surrounded by sheriffs, re-arrested, and taken to the Los Angeles County Jail. Now, I was facing a consequence that would literally end my life: the death penalty. Tired and broken, I just wanted peace. God saw the turmoil of my soul and provided me with a small Bible from another inmate in my jail cell. I began to read:

"Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, Bound in affliction and irons—Because they rebelled against the words of God, And despised the counsel of the Most High, Therefore He brought down their heart with labor; They fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, And He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and

the shadow of death, And broke their chains in pieces. Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He has broken the gates of bronze, And cut the bars of iron in two (Psalm 107:10-16, NKJV).

As I read that small Bible, I fell in love with Jesus! I was changed by God's Word! I fell on Jesus the Rock and was broken. I surrendered my life to Him and repented of my sins. The power of His saving grace began taking away my filthy language, my anger, my pain, and my bitterness. Christ took over my heart and gave me the joy of His salvation! He gave me peace! God began using me to hold Bible studies and prayer circles with other inmates.

I prayed that God's will would be done in my case. Whether I should spend the rest of my life in prison or be released, I purposed in my heart that I would serve Him.

My lawyer told me that the district attorney was dropping the death penalty, but was still pushing for a sentence of life without the possibility of parole. After two years of fighting

my case, the district attorney wanted to cut me a deal of 20 years in prison if I pled guilty. "No, let's fight to the end!" I said. Eventually, after three years and three months, my case was coming to a close. The judge came back with a verdict: not guilty.

I can imagine Satan standing in the courtroom accusing me before God the Father, and Jesus Christ standing next to me interceding for me saying, "This is my son. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? I have redeemed him with My blood. I have washed away his guilty stains; I have paid the ransom."

I was released on October 24, 2006 in an all-white jumpsuit (imagine that). A day prior to my release, I committed a fast to the Lord. During my three-day fast, the Lord convicted me of the Sabbath truth. On the first Saturday of my release, I decided to go to a Seventh-day Adventist church some of my relatives attended. I began taking Bible studies with an elder there and was baptized on February 10, 2007. I later had the privilege of going back to the streets of Los Angeles and sharing the good news of God's love and forgiveness.

I never graduated from junior high, high school, or college, but by God's grace, I was able to get a G.E.D. I attended Ouachita Hills College and graduated with a B.A. in Theology. I currently serve as a pastor for the Texas Conference.

The moment I was truly free was not when I was physically released from prison, it was when I accepted God's grace, forgiveness, and peace!

There are many today who live behind the prison walls of sin and fear, but Jesus wants to give them peace and set them free. We all stand guilty before a Holy God (Romans 3:23). We are all facing the death penalty. No one is exempt. At one point or another, you have to recognize you are alone on death row. Let Jesus be your advocate. He will plead on your behalf. Time is running short, friend! The Bible says that one day, all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). How will you stand on that great day? Will Jesus declare you "not guilty," or will you be weighed in the balance and found wanting? Surrender your life to Jesus today. Let Him be your Savior and friend, so that you may be found wearing the wedding garment of His righteousness.

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# REVERSE HEART DISEASE

by Ron Giannoni



**Ron Giannoni**

Ron Giannoni is the former director of the Reversing Diabetes program at Weimar Institute. He currently works with Weimar as their director of Guest Services. Ron has actively used Weimar's Newstart program in one phase or another for 10 years. He also hosts a Weimar TV program called NEWSTART NOW, viewed on 3ABN and other networks.

**I** was born in San Francisco, California. I became very streetwise and was deeply involved with drugs. For most of my life, I thought nothing of drinking a bottle or two of wine with dinner.

At age 62, I was diagnosed with a serious heart condition. The doctors wanted to do a 5-way bypass. I resisted to the end. I looked for an alternative and found a place called Weimar Institute that could reverse my condition. I called Weimar and was advised to get there right away and go through their program. When I told my wife and family, they thought I had flipped out. After visiting UC Davis Medical Center and talking with five cardiologists, they advised me to proceed with the surgery. I underwent a 5-way bypass. After the bypass, I began the long road back to being able to walk and take care of myself.

One day, I realized I couldn't go on living like this. I had diabetes, high blood pressure, and I was obese. I couldn't sleep, I was angry most of the time, and to be honest, I was a drunk. One day, my wife asked me, "What about that place you told me about, Weimar?"

I signed up for the 18-day NEWSTART Lifestyle Program. After three days on the program, I quit taking my diabetes medication, and three days after that, I stopped taking two high blood pressure medications. The excess weight began to melt away and by

the end of the 18 days, I had lost 20 pounds. To date, I have lost a total of 95 pounds, have more energy than when I was a young man, look better than ever, and can actually walk several miles a day without panting.

I am truly blessed and owe a great deal to Weimar, the NEWSTART program, and the staff that made my stay an experience of a lifetime. Wellness is a matter of choice. By following the NEWSTART Lifestyle Program, I have regained not only my health, but I now have hope for a long and happy life.

Three months after completing the NEWSTART program, I was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, where I am currently an elder. I now work full time at Weimar Center, where I have the opportunity to help others get a new start.



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# WITNESSING ON THE RUN

by Tangila Jefferson



**Tangila Jefferson**

Tangila Jefferson is the personal ministries leader at the New Albany Seventh-day Adventist Church in New Albany, Indiana.

Born in Benton Harbor, Michigan, she came into the church through an evangelistic meeting in 1994. She has worked professionally as an administrative assistant for more than 20 years and uses her experience to serve the Lord by planning church projects and administrative functions while utilizing computer technology.

Going through my junk mail, I came across a letter from the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) asking me to join their organization, even offering me a free tote bag. “They must’ve made a mistake,” I thought to myself. “I’m not old enough to receive AARP.” I discovered that a person qualifies for AARP at age 50, and my fiftieth birthday was in two months.

I have always been young at heart, and turning 50 was depressing to me. “My life is over,” I thought. “All of the fun years have passed, so now I’m just a dead man walking.” After a few days of thinking this way, I changed my attitude and asked myself, “What is something that I have always wanted to do before I die?” My response was, “See every state.” But I also wanted to do something that would bring glory to God.

I came up with the idea of running a 5k race in every state, collecting a medal from each completed race as a souvenir. Turning 50 and seeing all 50 states! The races would have to be non-Sabbath races and in each state I would meet a new friend and give them one of our spiritual books. I would also say a prayer over each state, asking the Lord to save all those who are His and for them to “come out of her my people” (Revelation 18:4). I would pray the affirmation found in *Steps to Christ* page 70: “Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service.”

As my journey began, I asked the Lord to guide me to the person who most needed a book. As I prayed this prayer daily, my life became an adventure I will never forget.

To date, I have completed 16 races and have passed out over 50 books.

My first race was in Chicago, Illinois, on April 15, 2018. I had a fever that morning (I was later diagnosed with the flu) and was tempted to skip the race, but it was my first one and there weren’t any refunds. Maybe it was a test to see if I would truly follow through. I ignored my physical condition and decided to attempt the race.

Completing the race would be the easy part, but being an introvert made it difficult for me to approach strangers. Before the race, I sat in my car and prayed, “Lord, I can’t do this. No one is going to want this book (*The Great Controversy*). I’m scared, Father. Please help me to know who should receive it.”

I stepped out of my car and before I could even close the door, a lady named Gina called out to me. “Hey there! I have two of those at home!” She said, pointing at my Mini Cooper.

I engaged her in a conversation and told her that this was the very first race of my new-found journey. She happily agreed to take my book and be my friend from Illinois!

In North Dakota, I approached a woman named Donna, who appeared to be rather sad.

She opened up and shared with me a problem in her life. I told her I would pray for her, and then I offered her one of my books. She chose *The Incredible Power of Prayer* by Roger Morneau. After I explained to her how the author was delivered from going to “the other side,” Donna was very happy with her choice. “My son could really use this to wake him up from thinking he can play around with that stuff!” she remarked.

While in Seattle, Washington, I had my first impression from the Lord. I was having trouble finding the waiting area at the local city bus transit station, so I decided to ask one of the security guards for directions. Due to a calf injury that I had sustained during one of my previous races, I walked with a noticeable limp. The guard noticed my injury, kindly gave me the necessary directions, and proceeded to escort me to the location. The guard, a young man who appeared to be in his mid-thirties, was named Justin. I decided not to witness to him since I preferred to witness to women only.

We eventually reached the waiting area, and rather than leaving, Justin continued to share with me certain things that were happening in his life. He shared how he was retired from the army and was raising a family. He was brought up a Mormon and had left the church, recalling that “it just wasn’t right.” He kept talking to me as I waited for the bus, explaining how something was missing from his life. I then heard a still small voice say, “Give him the book.” I brushed it off because he was a young man and I don’t witness to men. I had already given away my book for this city, anyway. I thought to myself, “No Lord, send a man to him instead.”

The bus was running late, and everyone at the stop was growing slightly agitated from the

delay, including Justin. “This bus is never late! In all my years of working here, this bus has never been this late,” he stated out loud. As the people around me started to complain about the tardiness of the bus, I felt another impression: “The bus will not come until you give him the book.” Searching through my belongings to see if I even had a book to give, I came across a copy of *Steps to Jesus*.

“Justin, you’ve been telling me your life story, your hardships, and how you know that something is missing in your life. It’s the Lord,” I said. “Give Him a try.” With that, I handed him the book. Pondering my words, he took the book as tears began to form in his eyes.

“Yes ma’am,” he replied thankfully. “I’m going to read it.” Within one minute of me offering Justin the book, our bus pulled up to the stop.

I’ve made over 40 new friends so far on my journey, some of them now following me on Facebook to chart my progress from state to state. Throughout this adventure, I have received a tremendous blessing from the Lord with a newfound boldness to be able to approach total strangers. To date, every stranger I have approached has agreed to be my friend and has accepted a book.

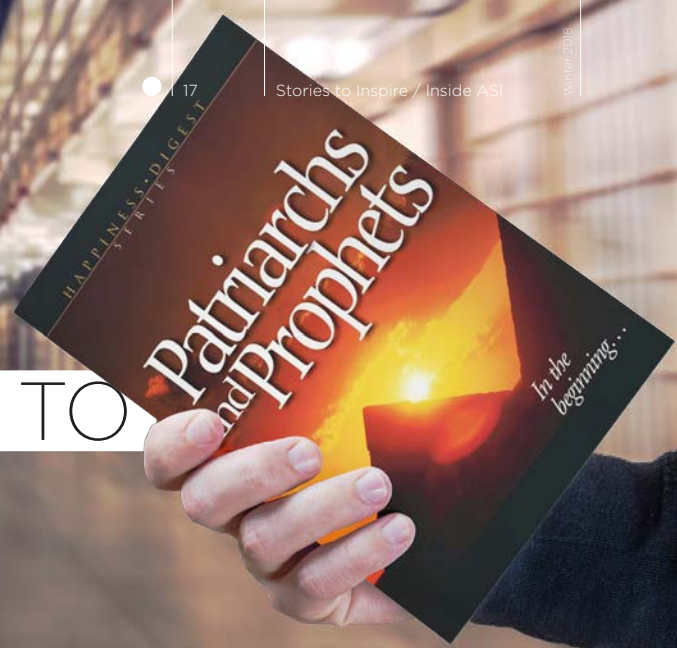
I’ve planned my last race to be in Maryland in 2020, and I will finish with a tour of our General Conference office.

I give all honor and glory to God for His leading in this adventure. It will be my greatest joy to meet one of these precious souls in the kingdom!



# FROM CONVICT TO COLPORTEUR

by Brenda Nieves



**Brenda Nieves**

Brenda Nieves teaches English at Ouachita Hills College and is married to Erik, a robotics engineer. They have a son attending Andrews University and a daughter at Ouachita Hills Academy.

“I believe this book saved my life,” says Joshua Holly enthusiastically, holding up an ASI edition of *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Holly first found the book propping up a TV in his prison cell. “My cellmate handed it to me and said, ‘I think you’ll like this.’”

Holly had been raised in a home that was considered “Christian,” but where drug use was a family affair, much like playing games or watching TV might be for another family. At age 17, he was sentenced to the Oklahoma State Penitentiary. In prison, Holly was introduced to gang life and became more deeply involved in drug use. After seven years, “I’d earned myself a spot in maximum security,” he says wryly. It was there that God spoke to him.

“My best friend had committed suicide about a year before, and now I had hit such a low point that the thought of death was starting to appeal to me as well. I remember leaning against the door of my cell, completely and utterly depressed. God had to wait until I was that low before I was ready to listen. Suddenly, all the hair on my arms and on the back of my neck stood up. I could feel the Holy Spirit in the room. God clearly told me, ‘I am real and the Bible is true.’”

Up until that point, Holly says, the only use he’d had for a Bible was tearing out its pages to roll cigarettes. But now he picked up the Bible and started to read Romans. For the first time, he learned of hope for a changed life. The encouragement came to “keep reading.” He began a

period of intense Bible study, reading 12 hours a day, seven days a week. Holly estimates that over the next six months, he probably read the Bible 40 or 50 times.

Yet, despite his deep familiarity with the Word, he was confused. “Genesis was very confusing—I still believed in evolution, thinking that God had used it to create the world, and I couldn’t figure out who Lucifer was. God knew the burning desire of my heart to understand these things.” That’s when his cellmate, who had also become a Christian, pulled the book from the stack that was holding up the TV. As Holly read *Patriarchs and Prophets*, the Bible began to make sense. Holly’s questions about Lucifer were answered, and he realized that the Old Testament was not a collection of fairy tales, but rather true stories. He read the book through once, then again, with his Bible in hand.

God continued providentially providing for Holly’s spiritual growth. The same week that he found *Patriarchs and Prophets*, the prison TV system began showing sermons from Pastor Leo Schreven’s prophecy seminar. But Holly still had more questions and God had more answers.

Holly was moved to a new cell. Under his bunk, he found a stack of books taped together as a prop for doing push-ups. Holly broke open the stack and took out a new volume, *The Great Controversy*—another ASI edition. Turning to the chapter, “America in Prophecy,” he started reading, and for the first time, Revelation 13 began to make sense. He read the entire book. After eight

years and three months of incarceration, Holly was released. His first Sabbath of freedom, he found Adventist Fellowship, a church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, that Pastor Schreven had invited him to through the Prophecy Seminars shown on the prison TV. Holly was baptized. "The thing is," says Holly, "I didn't understand the idea of being 'dead to self.' I thought that it was up to me to live up to the rules—but I really didn't understand why I needed to keep those rules."

With his immature faith and a family atmosphere actively working against his new Christian values, Holly easily slid back into his former lifestyle. "Sometimes I would try to recommit my life to God, but in the back of my mind, I was always holding something back." It wasn't until he found himself running from a gun pointed at his head that Holly was ready to completely surrender.

Just at that time, a judge gave his mother, who was also struggling with a drug addiction, an ultimatum: rehab or prison. It was time to act. With his desire for a new life and his reluctant mother in tow, Holly drove to City of Hope, a family-run Seventh-day Adventist rehabilitation center in Oklahoma City, where they both entered the rehab program. There, they discovered the heart of the gospel: a new life in Jesus. His mother was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist church for the first time, and Holly was re-baptized—this time dying to self and being raised to a life powered by Jesus Christ.

As part of the six-month program, participants were required to attend the Oklahoma Conference camp meeting, where Holly shared his testimony with anyone who would listen. Hearing about his experience with Ellen White's books, "Someone told me about colporting. Right then, I sensed God speaking to my heart again saying, 'You can make a living doing that.'" Holly was excited. He'd never had trouble finding work, but he frequently ran into problems because he always kept the Sabbath, even after returning to his old life after his first baptism. "Over those seven years, I'd lost three or four jobs because I wouldn't work on Sabbath." The other problem was that his coworkers continually introduced the very temptations he needed to avoid. Selling books sounded ideal.

God provided the books and the means, and Holly started knocking on doors. "The first time money [for a book] hit my hand, I thought, 'I just got paid to share my testimony!'" He was elated, but he found the work exhausting. "I could only do it for two or three hours at a time. I was pouring out my story at each door." Holly began searching for colporteur training and a team to work with.

In January 2018, Holly was accepted as a theology student at Ouachita Hills College (OHC), an ASI member institution, where tuition costs are kept low through the income generated by student canvassing. With the training he's received at OHC, Holly says that he's now easily able to canvass eight hours a day.

Working with a team of OHC students, Holly has sold various books, but the ASI editions of the *Conflict of the Ages* series remain his favorites. "I want to have a trunk full of these books [to sell] for the rest of my life. They are so beautiful—the cover art, the way they're laid out. The paper isn't dreary; it's a nice white. And they have the most beautiful illustrations. When I'm showing these at the door, if I can just get people to listen long enough for me to open the book, 99 percent of the time they buy it."

"Josh's testimony shows the value of the work that ASI has done by investing in these books," says Magda Rodriguez, president of OHC. "In *Testimonies*, vol. 2, page 246, we're told that 'one soul saved, to live throughout the ages of eternity, to praise God and the Lamb, is of more value than millions in money.' Josh's testimony and his enthusiasm are already having an impact here on the OHC campus, and wherever he tells his story. But it is only in eternity, when we are around the throne of Jesus, that we will see the true worth of our investments here on earth."

## Welcome to the Family - New Members

### Organizational For-Profit

British Columbia Helicopter, Ltd.,  
Mischa Gelb, Abbotsford, BC  
DosSantos Enterprise, LLC,  
Jose DosSantos, Ooltewah, TN  
Integrity Mobile Home Sales,  
Lance Maasdorp, Ellenton, FL  
Pulse Café,  
Keith Rehbein, Windsor, MA  
Spyder Controls Corp.,  
Curtis Letniak, Lacombe, AB  
Sterling Construction Contractors, LLC,  
Ron Oxentenko, Dayton, TN

### Organizational Non-Profit

End Times Like These Ministries,  
Michael Johnson, Simi Valley, CA  
SALT Outreach, Inc.,  
Eric Camarillo, Altamonte Springs, FL

### Young Professionals

Theodore Flo, University Park, MD  
Treson Francis, Sebring, FL  
Edna Gouveia, Metairie, LA  
Olivia Hale, Collegedale, TN  
Lisamarie Heldzinger, McDonald, TN  
Ranela Kaligithi, Laurel, MD  
Hannah Kennedy, Charleston, SC  
Hudson Kennedy, Caroga Lake, NY  
Claudia Moncada, Visalia, CA  
Christian Paul, Zellwood, FL  
Cesar Vasquez Flores, Houston, TX

### Associate

Naren James, Stanford, KY

### Sole Proprietor

The Laundry,  
Allan Feldman, Morgantown, WV  
Vearus, LLC,  
Michael Weaver, New Palestine, IN

### Retired Business or Professional

Myrna Castillo, Keene, TX  
Byron West, San Bernardino, CA

# SHARING ELLEN WHITE IN THE MARKETPLACE

by Mark Cook



**Mark Cook**

With a BFA from Andrews University and an MFA from the University of Notre Dame, Mark Cook has spent over 20 years designing for brands like Whirlpool, Herman Miller, and Johnson & Johnson. He spent eight of those years running Thesis, an award-winning design studio in southwest Michigan, before founding Types & Symbols with Ivan Ruiz-Knott in 2015. His time is now split between designing client solutions and creating studio-initiated projects like *The Conflict Beautiful*—all with the goal of making remarkable Adventist experiences.

I grew up as a pastor's kid in the 80s and 90s surrounded by a family that loved Ellen White and did their best to help me appreciate my Adventist heritage. However, there were many people along the way who chose to use her writings as a vehicle for correction rather than as a resource to encourage and uplift. Unfortunately, those interactions were frequent enough to cast a negative light on her work, and as a result I viewed Ellen White as a negative person and her books as another set of rules to be followed. It wasn't until many years later, with enough time and distance, that I was able to give her writings another chance and read them for myself. In doing so, I recognized how profoundly I had misunderstood her.

As I started reading through her books, I quickly discovered that she speaks so beautifully of Jesus and His love. I recognized that knowing what Jesus is like is so much more powerful than knowing what I shouldn't be like. I realized that, by not reading her for myself, I had missed out on something moving and compelling. It was then that I understood why so many Adventists treasure her writings and encourage others to read them.

As a graphic designer, this understanding sparked an interest in exploring how I might also help share her writings with others. A few years ago, I founded Types & Symbols with the goal of creating beautiful Adventist experiences. My business partner, Ivan, and I knew from the very beginning that alongside client work we wanted to develop our own projects, one of which would

be a redesigned *Conflict of the Ages* series. We have been blessed to grow over the past few years, and with more clients and more employees, we've also had more time to finally pursue this vision.

We had the privilege of launching this project, which we are calling *The Conflict Beautiful*, at the 2018 ASI International Convention, and the response was encouraging. We had many people tell us that this is the edition of the *Conflict of the Ages* series they've always wanted. We were overwhelmed with how positive the feedback was, especially from young people who said they were excited to finally have a set of these books that they could proudly display in their home or give as a gift.

This will not only be a set of beautiful books—we want this edition to provide the best reading experience anyone will have with Ellen White's work. We are laboring over the details of font choice, font size, margins, line length, line height, binding, paper, and cover materials to create books that are a joy to read and reflect the beauty of the message inside.

We hope through this new, premium quality design, people will understand what a treasure these writings are. We pray that as individuals read these books, they will ultimately acquire a greater understanding of the story of the Bible and God's character of love.

If you're interested in learning more about the project, we invite you to visit our website at [theconflictbeautiful.com](http://theconflictbeautiful.com).

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# VIDEO MISSION

by Scott Mayer



Scotty Mayer

Scotty Mayer has worked in media for more than 20 years; working 10 years in television production and 10 years in media ministry. He has a passion for creativity and design and strives to challenge his team to explore new ways to win souls to Christ using media. Scotty has traveled internationally, speaking on many topics relevant to Christian youth.

In the late 1990s, I took a film studies program and immediately became passionate about media. I moved to Hollywood and worked in television for almost a decade until I was called to work in video ministry. Around this time, I had the chance to work on a documentary and quickly fell in love with the genre. The thing I like most about documentary work is being able to produce a feature length project on a minimal budget. Because the world responds very well to visual mediums, we can use media to illustrate concepts of faith in attractive ways.

Funding has always been a major factor in Christian productions and we've had to be quite creative when illustrating certain topics. The Bible has an inexhaustible amount of subjects to tackle, but it's always challenging when creating a video that illustrates concepts such as the Second Coming, Jesus being crucified, the Sanctuary, or heaven. We need quality animations and cinematic footage, but those are expensive. Here's our solution: VideoMission.com.

VideoMission is an Adventist-owned Christian stock media platform that offers high quality video footage while keeping prices affordable. How do we do this? We work with media content creators from all over the world who contribute re-enactments and raw footage. We connect these content-creators with people who need visual aids for preaching or teaching. As the con-

tent is sold multiple times to different churches and ministries, the creator has the opportunity to recoup the costs of production.

We all have been given the great commission to spread the gospel far and wide. Today, thanks to media, our world is connected like never before. With the current generation's obsession with media, the need for uplifting, Christian video content is ever growing.

These are exciting times to be involved in media ministry. You can create a project in the United States, upload it to your favorite platform and instantaneously share it with a worldwide audience. It's not only large organizations with huge broadcast budgets that can have a big influence, but smaller digital media teams as well. The playing field has been leveled. As more and more people jump on the bandwagon of personalized technologies, we have access to them via YouTube, Facebook, and a whole host of related outlets.

Churches, evangelists, filmmakers, and broadcast media groups all have the same need: high quality media to illustrate the gospel. It has been said that "to get the job done, you need the right tools." If your mission is to create video, photographs, or animations, join us in becoming a contributor! If your mission is preaching or teaching, all your high-quality resource materials are available at [www.VideoMission.com](http://www.VideoMission.com).

# ASI CHAPTER SPRING CONFERENCE INFORMATION

# 2019



# A MINISTRY FOR ALL MINISTRIES

by Felecia Datus



**Felecia Datus**

Felecia Datus is the special projects manager at the Center for Online Evangelism.

She studied at Northern Caribbean University in Jamaica and at Andrews University. She's a blogger, speaker, television and radio host, and helps operate a mission school and feeding program in Haiti.

**B**eth and Robert\* walked into a nearby Seventh-day Adventist church one Saturday morning, eager to worship on the Sabbath. After studying the Bible, they realized the seventh-day Sabbath was still relevant. For a full year, they worshipped and spent much time with their new Adventist friends.

Then one day, Robert went online to find out more about Seventh-day Adventists and their beliefs. Immediately, the Google search results showed dozens of websites and videos denouncing Adventism as a cult. Some websites claimed members followed a false prophet and the doctrines of the church were unbiblical.

By the time members noticed that Beth and Robert had stopped attending service and Bible study, the damage was done. The couple wanted nothing more to do with the Adventist Church. They believed church members held back information from them. The negative content online had a stronger impression than a full year of studying and interacting with Adventists.

This is only one of the countless stories with similar outcomes. In this digital age, people naturally turn to Google for reviews about a business, product, service, or church. So when a canvasser shows up at a door with *The Great Controversy* or when an Adventist ministry's local mission work is featured in the newspaper, what will follow is

a quick online search about Adventists or Ellen White. Unfortunately, negative, inaccurate content is currently outranking the truth.

Additionally, people are googling questions related to faith, the Bible, and Jesus Christ. Many others who face hopeless circumstances go online to find answers or comfort. This presents an opportune moment to share how the gospel changes lives. But a thriving Adventist presence is lacking online, as far as Google's search results are concerned.

Because of this, the Center for Online Evangelism is dedicated to supporting and bolstering the work in the digital mission field. We launched Project Caleb, a special initiative designed to help counter the misleading content online and help stop the bleed of prospective members. A major step forward for Project Caleb was signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the White Estate during ASI's 2018 convention. This collaboration will aid in moving our work along.

Every Adventist ministry runs the risk of being wrongly labeled due to online content that is defaming in nature. Whether a ministry is focused on health, sharing literature, education, empowering inmates, or feeding the homeless, they are affected by what people read about Adventists online. To ignore the problem is to ignore the thousands of souls who could know the truth about Jesus Christ.

Project Caleb teaches ministries how to improve their online presence while reaching more people for Christ. It also gives hope to church members who have witnessed the results of inaccurate online information.

At this year's convention, we listened to scores of heartbreaking accounts of attendees who saw friends or family members reject sound doctrine after going online to research Adventists. One ASI attendee sadly told of how a young woman named Sharon\* was convicted about truth but stopped attending church after reading defaming information about Ellen White. When a member followed up with her, Sharon responded, "I will never join that church." Her husband added, "They're a cult." The attendee was convinced the couple would have been faithful members had they encountered accurate information about our church beliefs instead of fallacious content. "If she hadn't read that, she would be in church."

However, after attending ASI, this attendee, along with other church members and leaders, was given hope that God is working through online evangelism. Many were inspired with creative ideas to help promote the gospel online.

Because the Center for Online Evangelism is the only ministry specifically focused on strengthening the Adventist presence in the digital space through online reputation management, digital marketing, and professional training, our work impacts every single Adventist church and ministry. We want to see all of our denomination's evangelistic and service efforts succeed!

Managing the online reputation of the Adventist Church is a challenge. When it seems like an impossible undertaking, we will remember those we met at our booth during ASI: digital missionaries like Michael Farris and Tim Perenick who are dedicated to sharing the truth online, and church members like Juan, who perseveres in his faith despite his family's objection after reading online that the Adventist Church is a cult. We are also encouraged to continue this work

for church members like Denise and Catherine\* who lost friends and fellow members because of false information online.

There are millions online who want to know about forgiveness, hope, and how to gain victory over sin. We as a church have these answers and we know how to direct these seekers to the Bible and to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. It's our mission at the Center for Online Evangelism, alongside the Ellen G. White Estate and other ministries and organizations, to empower each of our members with the guidance, content, and training to reach the online mission field with this life-changing message.

*\*Names have been changed to protect identity*

**Myanmar Frontier Missions**

MFM is a nonprofit religious organization established in 1997 by Myanmar Seventh-day Adventist laymen working in cooperation with Seventh-day Adventist Church to plant the church among unreached people groups in Myanmar. As an affiliated organization, we are dependent upon God to move people to support this work. As a supporting ministry we are working together with Myanmar Union Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We serve to fulfill the Great Commission under the title of our commitment "Community Service and House Church Approach as a Basic Method of Church Growth in Myanmar". We urgently need your support. The MFM will fulfill its mission only through the earnest prayers and continuous financial support of the worldwide church. Thanks for your generous support and commitment to see the gospel reach the unreached people groups in our country.

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Mandalay Division



# GOD WORKS

by Kristi Jensen



**Kristi Jensen**

Kristi Jensen is a student at Southern Adventist University, where she is studying Business Administration and Political Science, with pre-law. She has taught English overseas, worked as a senior editor in high school, and has her own blog. She interned at a marketing firm in Tampa, Florida, and launched a community marketing business in Collegedale, Tennessee.

Kristi is the VP of Membership at a local Toastmasters club and is also a member of SAU's Communications Club. Kristi enjoys writing, rock climbing, running, scuba diving, and traveling.

**D**ianne Fillman was born into an Adventist family and raised in the church. However, life circumstances and childhood abuse caused her to become bitter towards Adventism. At 18 years old, Dianne felt failed—failed by her parents, failed by her faith and failed by her church. After graduating from high school, she enrolled at Southern Adventist University and quickly fell into a crowd of like-minded students—students who attended an Adventist university for the education, not the spiritual environment. For the next 18 years, Dianne recalls, she was directionless. She married a young man she met in college, but after 13 years of marriage, she became depressed and suicidal.

"I just decided it wasn't worth [living] anymore. I knew what I was doing was wrong; I knew that I wasn't following God's plan for my life...I couldn't even pray anymore. How do you pray when you know what you're doing is wrong?"

After one night of heavy drinking, Dianne's life changed forever. She drove home drunk. "I was seeing double," she says. "I could've had my life taken right then and I would've been lost."

Soon after the incident, Dianne began seeing a Baptist pastor for counseling. The pastor didn't try to convert her to a religion, but rather encouraged her to focus on her spirituality. "Before you can really heal, you need to decide where God fits into your life," he explained.

Around the same time, a few of Dianne's friends

were beginning an Adventist church plant nearby and encouraged her to join. As she became involved in the church, her life began to change. Dianne found a new love for God, a restored relationship with Him, and a renewed passion for the Christian life. Sadly, her husband was not supportive of Dianne's recommitment to the Lord and after 13 years of marriage, the couple divorced.

With her revitalized faith, Dianne recalled a childhood passion: mission service. "When I was a little kid, my parents used to read mission stories for worship and I would cry," she says. Dianne was drawn to make a difference in the lives of others. Yet, for a long time, Dianne left her childhood passion on the back burner. Due to her former abuse, she spent much of her life overcome with the need to succeed and "be the best at everything." She focused on her studies, career, and dental practice. Her life had become so busy, she had little time for anything else. Satan was using her work to distract her from God's purpose.

In 1997, Dianne began developing a tremor. Initially, the tremor was not severe enough to affect her work. However, ten years later, her condition had worsened to the point that patients were beginning to notice. In 2007, Dianne realized she needed to quit her job to avoid a possible lawsuit.

"It was devastating," says Dianne. "I was really at the pinnacle of my career at that point." But God had a plan.

Five months after retiring, Dianne heard a speaker share her testimony of mission service in Peru. As she listened, Dianne was again impressed to pursue mission work. Shortly afterward, she got in touch with Jenny, the coordinator of an upcoming mission trip to Peru. Dianne quickly signed up for the trip, only to learn she would be training two US students who would be doing dental work in Peru for a year. Initially, Dianne resisted. She was going to Peru to “do something,” for the locals, not to train students. But as she thought and prayed about the opportunity, she agreed to the proposal.

This was her first time traveling out of the country, and setbacks ensued. She lost her luggage, which included all her dental equipment. Turns out, “I didn’t even need it!” she says. God used this to force Dianne to rely on Him to provide, and He did.

Following her first mission experience, Dianne was “fired up.” Every time she was offered an opportunity for mission service, she accepted. God didn’t let Dianne get too comfortable, though. He challenged her, not only by having her become

the leader of a mission trip, but by having her preach an evangelistic campaign abroad.

As Dianne told me story after story, I could sense the excitement rising in her voice. With each narrative, she included some form of the disclaimer, “I can’t tell it all, but there was just miracle after miracle” or “I just don’t have time to tell you how God worked it out perfectly again and again.” Since 2007, Dianne has traveled to 13 countries, and many of those more than once. “Every single mission trip, there has been some miracle directly from God.”

The common theme in Dianne’s story is clear: God works. Again and again, He is faithful. Not only to bring the lost out of darkness and into the light, but to give them purpose and fulfillment beyond what they could ever imagine. Dianne Fillman is living proof of God’s relentless involvement in our lives, and her story is not unique. God gently guides each of His children to a life of purpose and peace. In a thousand ways of which we know nothing, God is leading, providing, and loving—since the beginning of time until forever.

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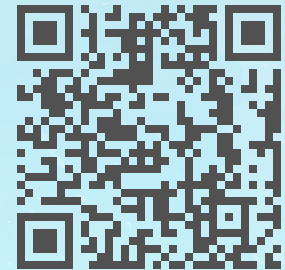
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