

WINTER/SPRING 2024

# INSIDE *ASI*

The Official Publication of Adventist-laymen's Services & Industries

Blazing  
New Trails  
TOUCHING HEARTS  
*Hearts for Mission International*





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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Reader,

I am excited to introduce you to this issue's theme: Trailblazers. It's a heartfelt compilation of stories and articles highlighting some of the incredible people and ministries blazing new trails to witness. From next door neighbors in the United States, to congressmen in Costa Rica, to a mother in Malawi, the goal of this magazine is to inspire you with the trails blazed both around the world and at home and rouse within you a desire to be a witness to those in your sphere of influence.

God has planted you in your work, neighborhood, church, and community for a reason. He has surrounded you with the people that need your influence, support, and friendship. Are you blazing trails to reach out?

"You are My witnesses," says the Lord, "And my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He." (Isaiah 43:10, NKJV).

As you immerse yourself in these pages, may you be encouraged and inspired by the trailblazers who exemplify the love of Christ through their actions. I pray their stories kindle a fire within our hearts, igniting a passion for mission work that knows no bounds.

Let's blaze new trails together.

With love,  
Kristi Jensen  
*ASI Editor*



**Kristi Jensen** lives in Nashville, Tennessee, where she runs a communications business.

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# The Joy of Seeing God at Work

BY CURTIS LETNIAK

**T**hroughout the book of Acts, it is so encouraging to see the joy that the early church experienced seeing God at work, even in very difficult times. One might ask, “Does God still work in our world today like He did back in the days of the early Christian church?” If one tried to answer this question while reading the news feeds recently, it might be difficult to see this taking place.

Before I left home to attend Adventist boarding academy, a close family member gave me some advice that still has a great

impact in my life today. “Wherever you go,” they said, “you will find what you are looking for. If you want to find good, you will find it. If you want to focus on the bad, you will find that too.” The great controversy taking place in every life, every family, every church and community, and every country on earth, might make one feel that the enemy of souls is winning the battle. But if we take a moment to look for where God is at work, I would like to submit that He is working in a way and on a scale that we have never seen before in modern history.

Recently we had our second annual ASI Canada rally in British Columbia. As

many lay-people and ministries shared testimonies and recent experiences, it was such a joy to see and hear about how God is working. We heard from a construction contractor who shared how the Holy Spirit led him to so many people seeking for truth, that he is now spending nearly half his time giving Bible studies. God opened the way for a retired brick mason who is giving Bible studies to a group of multi-denominational pastors and elders who are sincerely seeking the truth. One ministry shared how they have seen more individuals and families respond to the call to mission service abroad than ever before.



Elsewhere, in a small church in a rural community where it seemed that evangelism would never work, several hundred people turned up each night to learn Bible truth with around 50 people committing their lives to Christ in baptism. In my local church, where several people were facing challenges in nearly every facet of life, we began praying corporately each evening and have had the joy of seeing God working in amazing ways. This month, I have been involved in planning a short-term overseas mission trip opportunity and we have more people responding than we can

handle. Friends, God is truly at work!

I am ashamed to say that too often I have allowed myself to dwell on the seeming advances of evil and began to doubt if God would work like He did in the stories of Acts. Perhaps I am not alone. Along with me do you long to see God at work in your workplace or business, in your community or broader sphere of influence like He did in the early church?

In John 16:24, Jesus said, “Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.” It is our prayer within the ASI

family that we would each experience the joy of seeing God at work asking, “Lord, please make me part of Your work today.”



**Curtis Letniak**, ASI VP for Membership, along with his wife, Julie, and their two children, live near Ponoka, Alberta, where they are actively involved in ministry at home and abroad in countries throughout Southeast Asia. Curtis is owner of Spyder Controls Corp, a Canadian electronics design and manufacturing firm that serves a variety of marine, vehicle, and equipment manufacturers. He is passionate about developing creativity and innovation in ministry to hasten Christ's soon return.

## PEANUT SOUP

- Preparation time: 15 minutes
  - Cooking time: 25 minutes
  - Number of servings: 10
1. Blend the peanuts with 1/2 cup of water. Pour into a pot and add the rest of the water. Add a sprig of celery and salt.
  2. Let it cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
  3. Sauté the garlic in a pan with a bit of oil or water, add the onion and sauté until transparent.
  4. Add the carrot and paprika and season with turmeric and salt.
  5. In another pan, lightly toast the noodles with a splash of oil. You can also bake until lightly golden.
  6. Add the stir-fried vegetables, potatoes, peas, broad beans, and noodles.
  7. Let cook for 10 more minutes or until the potatoes are cooked.
  8. Before turning off the heat, add half of the chopped parsley and mix it together.
  9. Serve and decorate with roasted potatoes and parsley and peanuts.



**Dr. Dosung Kim**, a graduate of Loma Linda University School of Dentistry, heeded a divine calling to lead missionary efforts in Bolivia with his family. He currently serves as OCI Field President for South America.







# Harvest Time

## GOD'S WORD IN HIGH PLACES

BY KEITH LAROY

**W**e stood inside a 40-foot shipping container, which felt more like a sauna due to the scorching tropical sun outside. Pastor Ricardo Marin, president of the South Central American Union, and I were busy organizing boxes of Bibles and other items within the container, preparing to distribute them to areas in need. Suddenly, he casually shared something that caught me by surprise.

"Did you know that Costa Rica celebrates the Day of the Bible in September?" he asked me.

"No, I had no idea," I replied, intrigued by this special day.

It was indeed September, and the container had recently arrived in the country, thanks to the generosity of our ministry supporters.

He continued, "There's a special program planned for this upcoming

Friday at the Legislative Assembly to emphasize the role and significance of the Bible."

My mind started racing with possibilities.

"Imagine if we could gift each congressman a Bible," I suggested.

"I believe we can make that happen," Pastor Marin replied. We eagerly began planning as he informed me that there were exactly fifty-seven congressmen (referred to as 'diputados' in Spanish) in Costa Rica. Not only did we have around 7,000 Bibles in the container, but we also possessed hundreds of beautiful four-volume commentary sets.

Each set, individually packaged, included *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *The Desire of Ages*, *The Great Controversy*, and a small health book. I proposed combining one commentary set with a Bible as a gift for each of the fifty-seven congressmen. Pastor Marin assured me

he would arrange for a local pastor to present them at the event on Friday.

I promptly collected the fifty-seven Bibles and commentary sets and drove two hours to deliver them to the church office, where the local pastor would pick them up. Then it was a matter of waiting and praying until Friday.

But what led to this moment? It's a story of Providence.

With the conviction that we were in a season of harvest, my family answered the call to leave our Canadian home and engage in full-time cross-cultural mission work in 2020. We embarked on a fundraising and preaching tour, and one of the first churches I spoke at was over Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The following Monday, a church member I had never met called me and expressed his inspiration upon hearing about our mission in Central America. He



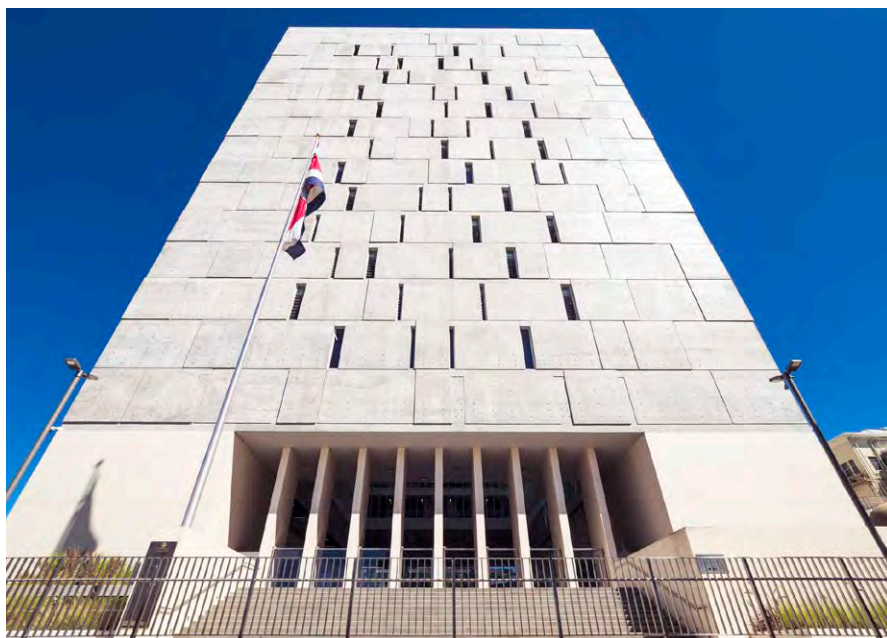
informed me about a small charity his family had operated for years, sending shipping containers worldwide filled with items for areas in need. He offered to send us a container at no cost once we arrived in our country of service. He also shared a remarkable story.

Just a few months before my sermon at his church, he had received thousands of Spanish Bibles in his warehouse. Unsure where to send them, he decided to store them. He wondered why God had sent him all these Spanish Bibles and literature, as it was not a language he typically dealt with. Then, on the Sabbath when I shared my mission, it suddenly clicked for him. He realized that God had sent him these Bibles to be sent to Central America.

Fast forward a little over a year from that conversation, and our family was now living and serving in Costa Rica. We had witnessed the need for Bibles firsthand, and we began praying and planning. Was it the right time to bring all that literature from Canada? Challenges loomed. Shortly after arriving in the mission field, our relationship with the original sending agency had disintegrated, forcing us to reset our finances. Although the container was being shipped to us for free, we had to cover the taxes, import, and transportation costs on our end. Our original mission funding was no longer accessible. It seemed like a grim situation. Moreover, global shipping was plagued by delays and complications. Yet we believed that where there appeared to be no way, God could make a way.

And indeed, God began working.

Around this time, a friend offered to cover the costs of importing the container. We proceeded with the shipment, trusting that God would



**Delivering the Word:** The entrance of the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica where Bibles and wisdom found their way into the hands of Costa Rica's legislative leaders.

open the necessary doors. The container left Canada and headed south, accompanied by much prayer. It faced delays in several ports along the way, taking several months longer than expected, but it finally arrived just in time for the Day of the Bible.

On Friday, the appointed pastor and a few assistants delivered the fifty-seven Bibles and commentary sets to the Costa Rican Legislature. While I couldn't be there in person for the ceremony, the pictures I saw conveyed a wonderful event. The Bibles and commentary sets were gifted to all the legislators, each accompanied by a small note.

After the ceremony, a journalist from the official television channel for the Legislature interviewed the pastor who brought the books. He highlighted the value and importance of these books and shared a few words on behalf of the Adventist Church. Later, we received several messages of appreciation from the legislators.

The impact of these books and when they will be read remains uncertain. However, one thing is clear: God is at work, gathering a harvest. As He says, "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

Two years earlier, I could never have imagined that Bibles and commentary sets stored in a Canadian warehouse would end up in the hands of Costa Rican lawmakers. God's incredible work knows no bounds. When we step out in faith to follow Him, we witness remarkable things firsthand. Why not recommit yourself to embark on a faith journey with Jesus? There's no better time than the present.



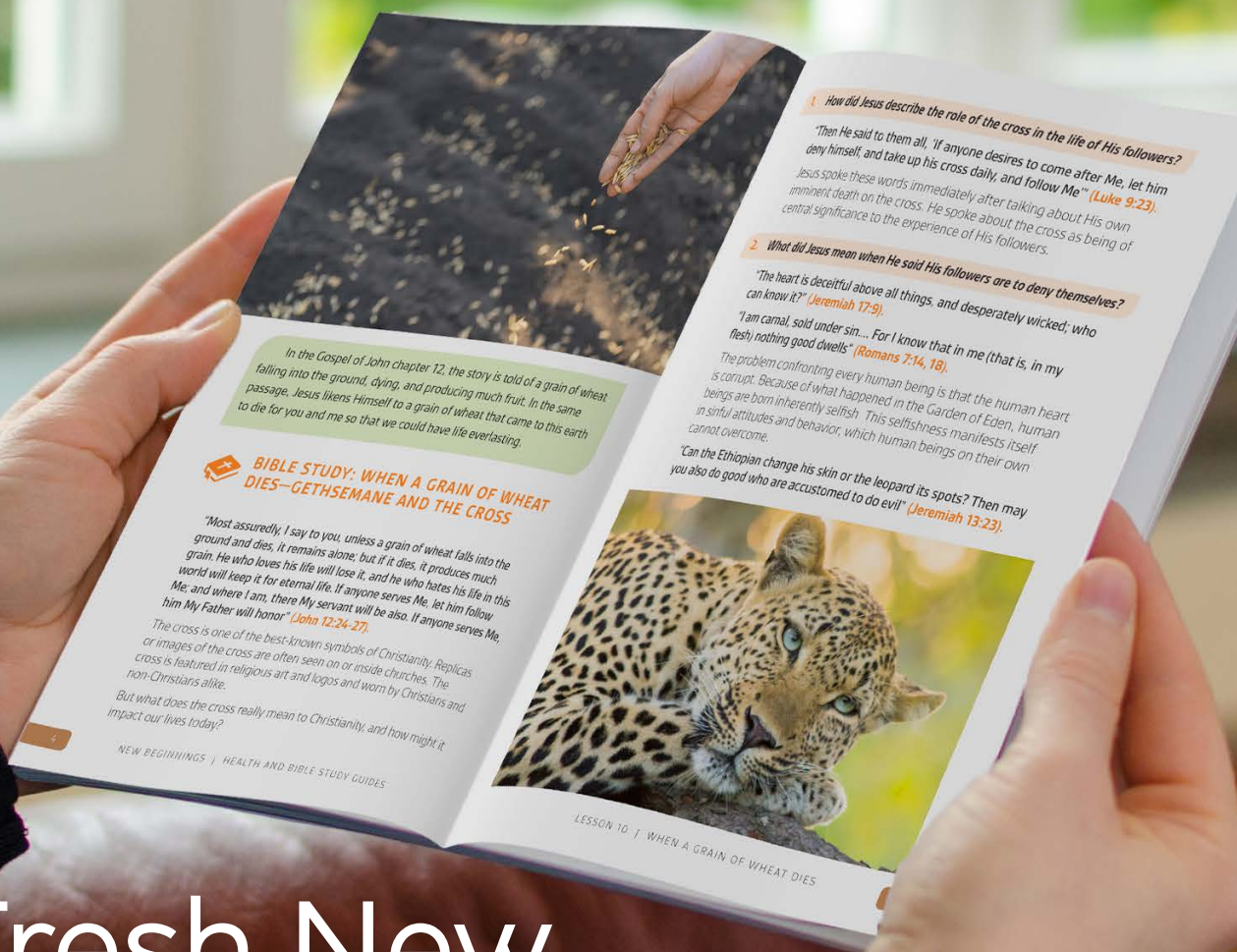
**Keith LaRoy** is the Executive Director of Alas de Vida | Wings of Life ministry, an OCI member ministry based in Costa Rica and serving throughout Central America.



# A Fresh New Way to Share

THE NEW BEGINNINGS HEALTH & BIBLE STUDY GUIDES

by Andi Hunsaker, ASI President







What do you get when you combine the latest wisdom in wellness with timeless biblical truths? We are so excited to introduce a new and innovative 20-lesson health and Bible study ministry tool: the *New Beginnings Health and Bible Study Guides*.

This groundbreaking set of lessons—a collaboration between ASI and *It Is Written*—effectively joins the “right arm” of our church with comprehensive Bible studies covering our unique Adventist perspectives.

Ellen White has much to say about the necessity of linking the health message with the teaching of the Word of God. Here are some examples of her statements. “The Lord is calling for a revival of the principles of health reform. Seventh-day Adventists have a special work to do as messengers to labor for the souls and bodies of men” (*Councils on Diet and Foods* p. 76).

“Health reform is to stand out more prominently in the proclamation of the third angel’s message. The principles of health reform are found in the word of God. The gospel of health is to be firmly linked with the ministry of the word. It is the Lord’s design that the restoring influence of health reform shall be a part of the last great effort to proclaim the gospel message...In perfect and complete unity with the gospel ministry, the work of health reform will reveal its God-given power. Under the influence of the gospel, great reforms will be made by medical missionary work. But separate medical missionary work from the gospel, and the work will be crippled” (*Testimony Studies on Diet and Foods*, p. 88).

Thoughts like these impacted the leadership of ASI, inspiring them to produce a set of Bible studies that would be true to God and to His messenger, Ellen White.

After much prayer, the decision was made to move forward in producing

a resource that would be available for all. Each of the twenty lessons begins with a vital health topic that is intricately connected to a gospel truth. Throughout the series, health and gospel topics are presented in a holistic manner, designed to mirror the way Jesus taught. The guides cover the eight fundamental laws of health, including the importance of good nutrition, sunlight, clean air, and so much more. These studies cover fundamental Seventh-day Adventist beliefs, founded in Scripture.

Each lesson includes a QR code which links students directly to a two-minute video that introduces the health topic along with the gospel study that will be covered in the lesson.

The team of contributors includes Pastor John Bradshaw, who wrote the Bible study sections, and Rise Rafferty and Lyndi Schwartz, who contributed to the health portions of the studies.

Of course, the studies contain beautiful truths and are also beautiful





to look at, thanks to the great talent of our graphic designer, Mark Bond.

For those who might worry about having enough background knowledge to share these studies—*have courage!* All you'll need to know is written out for you. All you need is to be a willing servant with a heart to share the joy we have in Jesus.

Here is a short example of how we connect a health principle with a biblical concept. The lesson about the Great Controversy covers the origin of sin and suffering and why sin was permitted. One would wonder what health topic could illustrate this. Well, the team came up with *seeds*. *Yes!* Seeds of rebellion were sewn in Heaven. This is one of the lessons on one of the elements of a plant-based diet: *seeds and nuts*.

We know that there are good seeds and bad seeds. Jesus Himself taught this in Matthew 13:24-28: "Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man

who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?" He said to them, "An enemy has done this.""

From this example, it's evident that the team took great care to integrate fascinating health principles as a way to start the conversation for each study and to convey a God who cares for us not only spiritually but physically.

Each study thoughtfully weaves in the laws of health. Thirteen focus on nutrition and the other seven center on the health principles of rest, exercise, sunlight, fresh air, etc.

Our prayer is that as we share these study guides with our various contacts that God will do a work in our own hearts as well as the hearts of the students. The aim is for us to

befriend our Bible study contacts who are our neighbors, co-workers, family, and friends, and that we will all soon stand together on the Sea of Glass in Heaven!

These guides are available now at the special price of \$10.99 (normally \$12.99).

Order yours today at **itiswritten.shop**.



**Andi Hunsaker** and her husband, Bob, are both physicians and graduates of Loma Linda University School of Medicine. Their home is in Sudbury, Massachusetts. Andi practices medicine full-time at a major teaching hospital in Boston, Massachusetts. She is a regular Sabbath School teacher at her home church in Stoneham, Massachusetts, and has a passion for the Word of God.



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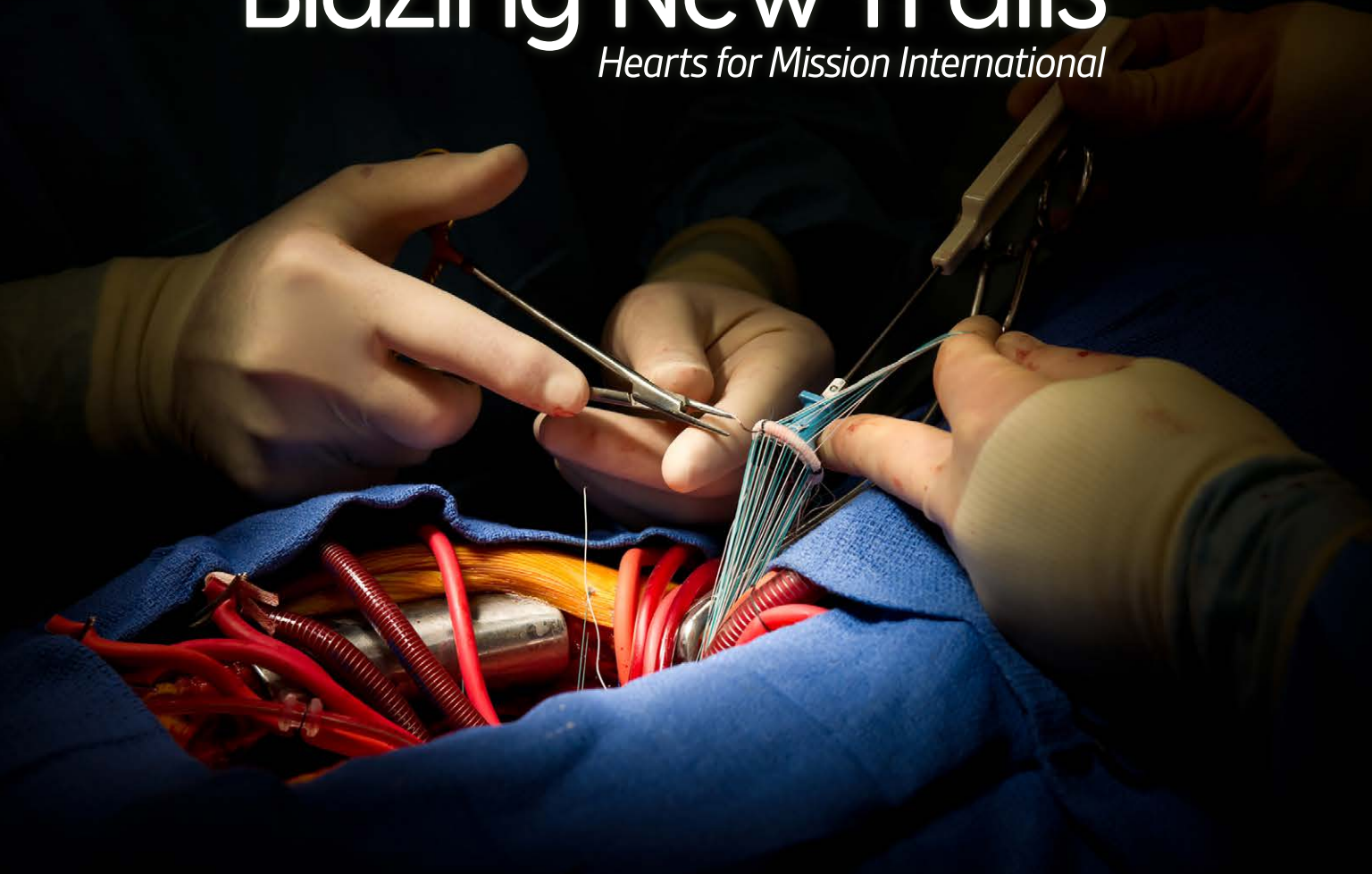
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# TOUCHING HEARTS

## Blazing New Trails

*Hearts for Mission International*



by Kristi Jensen

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**H**earts for Mission International (H4MI), an ASI Missions, Inc. organization, successfully performed the first ever open-heart surgery in Malawi at the Blantyre Adventist Hospital in November of 2023. The moment was a monumental milestone and a beacon of hope for the millions of people in Sub-Saharan Africa that suffer from heart disease with no access to medical care.

However, Hearts for Mission International's story begins long before the monumental surgery in Malawi.

Hearts for Mission International was conceived when cardiologist Dr. Nan Wang and his wife, Sandy, along with a few former members of the Loma Linda Heart Team and their colleagues, desired to continue the work of performing open-heart surgery in Africa.

In 2021, Dr. Wang and Sandy visited South Africa and were deeply impressed by the people of the region. During their visit, Dr. Wang inquired into the accessibility of cardiological care in Sub-Saharan Africa. He quickly learned that outside of South Africa, very few heart surgeries were being performed in the region.

Unfortunately, the lack of heart surgeries is not due to a lack of need. According to the World Health Organization, cardiovascular disease is responsible for an estimated 1.3 million deaths annually in Sub-Saharan Africa, and that number is only expected to grow. Cardiovascular care in the region poses a multitude of challenges, including a shortage of trained healthcare professionals, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to

diagnostic and therapeutic interventions.

Upon returning to the United States, the Wangs discussed the dire need for cardiac care in Sub-Saharan Africa with their friends, Pam and Dale Timothy and Patti Catelano. Dr. Wang recognized the need for a local heart surgeon to spearhead the endeavors in Africa. Pam and Dale introduced Dr. Wang to Dr. Arega Fekadu Leta, a Loma Linda trained cardiothoracic surgeon working at a Christian hospital in Kenya. Dr. Leta had a heart for medical mission work and desired to partner with an Adventist hospital in the region to advance access to cardiology care.

In March of 2022, the Wangs began preparing for a trip back to Africa to meet Dr. Leta in person and to visit the Blantyre Adventist Hospital in Malawi. Dr. Wang and Dr. Leta hoped to partner with the Blantyre hospital and local officials to organize a team of medical heart specialists to perform surgeries there. As they were in the midst of planning, Dr. Wang received a serendipitous text message from his niece, Charlene Wang, a medical student at Loma Linda University who was doing medical mission work at the sister institution Malamulo Adventist Hospital in Malawi.

During one of her rotations, Charlene met Young Banda, a 15-year-old living in a mud brick home in the rural hills of southern Malawi. Young Banda was ill. He was always tired,



**Paving the way:** Young Banda, a 15-year-old Malawian boy with rheumatic heart disease received life-saving surgery in Kenya, further validating the urgent need for cardiac procedures in Malawi.

had joint pain, and often shook with Rheumatic fever. Upon being admitted to the Malamulo Adventist Hospital, Banda was diagnosed with Rheumatic Heart Disease, a painfully common and hopeless disease for so many in the country and region. Banda would need open-heart surgery to relieve the blockage in his heart as well as a double heart valve replacement—neither of which had ever been done in Malawi before. Sub-Saharan Africa has 14.3 million people for every one cardiothoracic surgeon—and none of these surgeons were in Malawi. Those with resources suffering from heart conditions were forced to travel to South Africa or India to receive life-changing surgery.





Dr. Leta (left) with Dr. Wang after the first surgery.



The Hearts for Missions International team gathers for a group photo.

Young Banda's situation was close to hopeless. With no surgeon in Malawi to help and no resources to travel abroad, he had no pathway to recovery. After Charlene told Dr. Wang about Young Banda, he connected his niece with Dr. Leta in Kenya. After evaluating Banda's condition and conducting further tests, Dr. Leta agreed to take the case.

Charlene quickly began raising funds. In only a few short months, Young Banda traveled to Kenya and, on July 4, received his life-changing surgery.

Young Banda's story added fuel to the fire of the small team that desired to increase access to heart care in Sub-Saharan Africa. Dr. Wang, along with his friend Dr. Nathaniel Liu, a retired dentist from Fallbrook, California, and the small team that had formed began work to establish H4MI as an official nonprofit organization. Hearts for Mission International, in partnership with ASI Missions, Inc., obtained its nonprofit status in December of 2022.

A few short months later, several H4MI team members returned to Malawi to meet with hospital leadership and government officials to plan for the first official heart surgery team visit. Malawi's Deputy Minister of Health, Halima Daud, was thrilled,



**Historic First:** The Hearts for Mission International surgical team performs the first of two open-heart procedures in Malawi at Blantyre Adventist Hospital.

asking if the first heart surgeries could be performed in six months time.

Hearts for Mission International and its small team had originally planned on a one-year timeline, but placed the work in God's hands and agreed to expedite their goal. In November of 2023 during a 10-day cardiac camp, H4MI performed the first-ever open-heart surgery in Malawi at the Blantyre Adventist Hospital.

The patient was Eliza Frank, a 33-year-old mother of four who used to be a subsistence farmer before

contracting Rheumatic Heart Disease. Her symptoms—shortness of breath and heart palpitations upon any exertion—forced Eliza to stop farming and rely on her mother and sister for support. With limited access to medical interventions, Eliza's situation, much like Young Banda's, was all but hopeless.

However, Eliza was one of two patients in Malawi selected to undergo the life-changing procedure and was the first one to receive open-heart surgery. The surgery was a resounding





The ground-breaking procedure made front page news on Malawi's news stands.



Smiles and thankful hearts for successful procedures.



Eliza Frank, with her surgeon, Dr. Nan Wang following the first open-heart surgery ever performed in Malawi.

success and Eliza recovered successfully at the Blantyre Adventist Hospital. Eliza's surgery was a major milestone for Malawi and an extraordinary step toward long-lasting cardiovascular solutions for Sub-Saharan Africa.

There is still so much work to be done. Millions of others in Eliza's

region are suffering from cardiovascular conditions with little hope of recovery. Surgical procedures that could dramatically improve the lives of millions are simply unattainable under the current conditions. By collaborating with government officials and healthcare professionals both locally and abroad, H4MI is fervently working to be an integral part of the solution.

H4MI includes a team of dedicated doctors and supportive staff, including cardiothoracic surgeons Dr. Nan Wang and Dr. Arega Fekuda Leta, cardiologists, including Dr. Tiffany Priester, and Malawian general physician Dr. Blessings Mkundiza, together with anesthesiologists, perfusion specialists, general surgeons, and a dedicated team of support staff including Dr. Randy Bivens, board chair, and Jason Blanchard, CEO, and other board members.

H4MI is committed to continuing the work of providing life-changing care and plans on traveling to Malawi twice each year to perform life-saving surgeries. Their next trip is planned

for April of 2024 when 12 patients are already scheduled to receive heart surgery.

But the story does not stop there. Hearts for Missions International has goals above and beyond two trips to Malawi each year. Their long-term goal and mission is to build a cardiac surgery hospital with an interventional cardiology department. Their goal is to include housing for staff members and to train a team of African cardiac surgeons to run the department. While this goal is ambitious and five to seven years out, it is a crucial element of H4MI's plan to create a permanent presence in Malawi.

While their long-term goal is slowly materializing with the assistance of an incredible team, donor support, and prayer, H4MI will continue to provide critical solutions to crucial needs in Sub-Saharan Africa.

H4MI is truly giving the gift of life.



**Kristi Jensen** lives in Nashville, Tennessee, where she runs a communications business.

Scan to watch a short video about this amazing story!





# The Three Redeemed

by Karen Phillips

I didn't realize she lived in our neighborhood even though I walked by her house every day.

I became acquainted with Donna only when my son, Robert, came home one night and said that a neighbor had asked us to visit and sing with her. I learned that he had done some tree service for our neighbors, Donna and her husband, Dan. When the work was finished, Dan and Robert got to talking. Dan mentioned that his wife loved to play the piano. As Donna joined in the conversation, she agreed but told Robert that she only played sacred hymns. At the age of 13 she had told the Lord that if He would allow her to learn piano she would only play

songs that glorified Him. Robert said, "That's great because that is all I play on my guitar also."

A friendship was born as my son and I went over to Donna and Dan's house later that evening. Donna played the piano, Robert played guitar, and we all sang along with her husband, Dan. It was a wonderful evening and everyone was blessed.

Only one week later, Dan ended up going to the emergency room. After slurring his words and experiencing falls, the doctors ordered a variety of tests and scans. The results were not good. He had fourth-stage brain cancer. He spent five weeks in the hospital and brain surgery was done to

help identify the type of cancer. After surgery, he was transferred to a hospice center for veterans.

We were able to visit Dan and sing again with him and Donna. Dan knew his life was ending but felt at peace as we talked, sang, and prayed together. Just six short weeks after his diagnosis, Dan passed away. Donna asked Robert and me to sing at the funeral. It was an honor to do so.

Donna was impressed with our love and concern for her husband, even though we had just met them a couple of months earlier. Since she attended a Sunday church, the seventh-day Sabbath was a new concept for her. I gave her a copy of *The Great Controversy*



and *The Desire of Ages* and Robert invited her to our Stanton SDA Church plant. She read the books and began attending our church as well as our Thursday-night Bible study. The truths of the Word were being opened to her.

Why am I writing this? Because no matter where we are or where we live, there is a soul to win for Jesus. This is Christ's method alone. Donna's soul was touched by the Holy Spirit and the outpouring of our compassion and love during a very difficult time in her life.

"Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.' Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit," (*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 143, 144).

As we view the life of Jesus Christ on this earth, we see that He demonstrated this method. He healed the sick, made the lame to walk and the blind to see, brought the dead back to life, and performed many other miracles. We read through the gospels of his selfless life as He spent three and a half years doing His Father's will so that the hearts of men might receive His life-giving transformation. His compassion and love were felt by everyone He met.

Even on His way to the cross, Christ was still soul-winning. As the crowd was shouting, "Crucify Him, Crucify Him," He was reaching out to save them. His body was bloodied from the severe beatings, weakened by the cruel treatment, and depleted by His lack of sleep and nourishment. Yet, He, even in this condition, wanted to reach out to that one last, lost soul.

One of these redeemed was Simon, a Cyrenian. Simon had been in the crowd that day and was thrust upon by the

Roman guards to bear the cross for Jesus. Ellen White writes in the *Desire of Ages*:

"Simon had heard of Jesus. His sons were believers in the Savior, but he himself was not a disciple. The bearing of the cross to Calvary was a blessing to Simon, and he was ever after grateful for this providence," (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 742).

The second redeemed was the penitent thief on the cross.

"To Jesus in His agony on the cross there came one gleam of comfort. It was the prayer of the penitent thief... The Holy Spirit illuminates [the thief's] mind, and little by little the chain of evidence is joined together. In Jesus, bruised, mocked, and hanging upon the cross, he sees the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," (*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 749, 750).

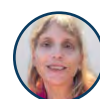
Lastly, there was the Roman Centurion. He watched as the guards under his command nailed the hands and feet of Jesus to the cross. He heard the seven times that Jesus spoke while dying and witnessed the darkness all around them.

"In the closing events of the crucifixion day, fresh evidence was given of the fulfillment of prophecy, and new witness borne to Christ's divinity. When the darkness had lifted from the cross, and the Savior's dying cry had been uttered, immediately another voice was heard, saying, 'Truly, this was the Son of God.' Matthew 27:54. These words were said in no whispered tones. All eyes were turned to see whence they came...It was the centurion, the Roman soldier...the centurion recognized the form of the Son of God. He could not refrain from confessing his faith," (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 770).

Three men from three different backgrounds all responded to the Savior's witness in those last few hours of His life here on earth. And

because of their response, we will see them in the heavenly kingdom when Jesus comes again to take His people home. Every soul won puts a smile on Jesus' face!

Just as our Lord Jesus was soul-winning to the very end, we should be doing the same. Let's look around us at every opportunity to see the perishing ones that need this life-saving message. May the Lord grant us the single-mindedness of the mission to save that one last lost soul with the compassion and love of Christ.



**Karen M. Phillips**, a past ASI Officer for the Mid-America Union, is now residing in a small town in rural Kentucky. She keeps busy as a staff member for their ministry, HeReturns, and doing volunteer human resources work for various other ministries. A wife, mother, and grandmother, her greatest desire is to spread the three angels' messages to all she meets.



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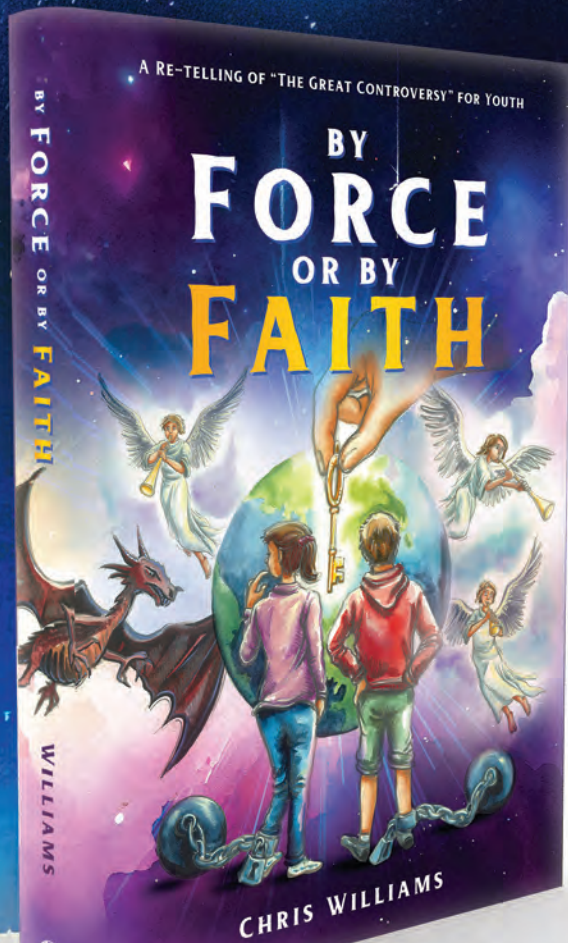
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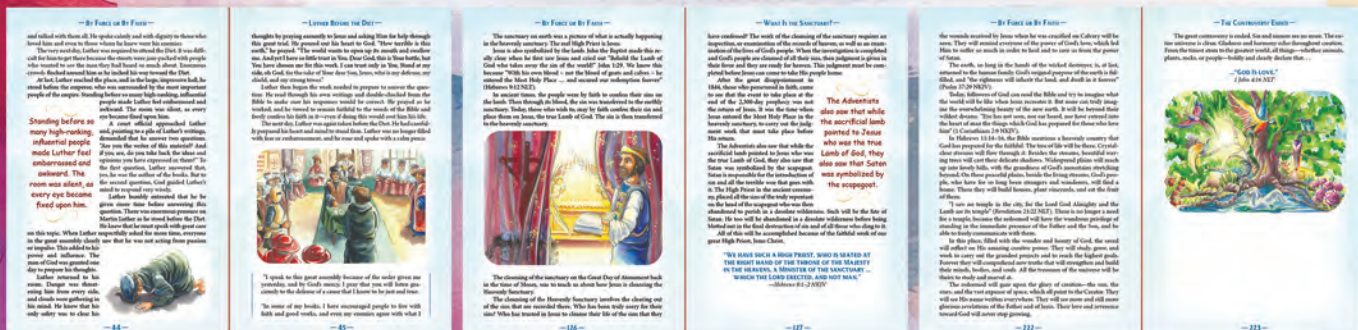
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# FROM STRUGGLES TO STARS: A Journey of Faith in Massage Therapy

BY GUY SIVERSON

In November 2018, my wife and I graduated from massage therapy school and received advice against immediately launching our own business, especially in Rapid City, South Dakota, where we planned to reside. Why? The market is highly competitive. Others tried and failed. Did we want to join that list?

Despite careful consideration of the advice, we decided to launch Graceful Touch LLC the same month we graduated. It wasn't an easy decision, especially when we discovered that the promised \$5,000 bank loan would not be coming through. We temporarily maxed out our credit cards purchasing tables, sheets, oil, and business cards while waiting for the funds, which, as it turned out, would never arrive. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

In 2015, our previous business failed. Due to the stress, I had a seriously high blood pressure reading of 245/125. Something had to change. In the hope of a fresh start, my wife and I joined a ministry where things became even worse.

In May 2018, we found ourselves facing a mandatory move from the ministry's campus. We were now deep in debt and had no source of income. It

was time to pray.

My wife had always been encouraged to pursue a career in massage therapy, but her dyslexia had been a barrier. In 2018, with few alternatives, we began exploring possibilities of her becoming a massage therapist.

We found our preferred school but canceled her admission due to lacking funds. We were encouraged to pray. And we did.

A timely invitation from friends for dinner came just when we needed it. They had witnessed our struggles and wanted to help by paying for Irene's schooling. In overwhelming gratitude we accepted their offer and contacted her chosen massage school.

The school was pleased but suggested a new idea: both my wife and I should enroll in their program.

I chuckled at the thought. I was more inclined towards soft sciences like Psychology and Communication, not hard sciences like Anatomy, Physiology, Pathology, and Kinesiology. But the offer was generous, and our sponsors agreed. Both my wife and I would be going to massage school.

Once we arrived on campus, the science teacher expressed concerns about my wife's ability to pass his

tests and complete the class due to her dyslexia. I assured him it wouldn't be an issue. Irene had the three P's of power: Purpose, Passion, and Pursuit.

This assurance satisfied him, until I pointed out that he would have trouble with me because I didn't come equipped with those three P's of power. However, as school began, my disinterest in hard sciences transformed into amazement at the incredible abilities that were crafted into the human body. Turns out that my only regret was not embarking on this path at 19, rather than 50+.

Halfway through our training, God prompted me to seek employment. I hesitated, thinking that no one would hire a halfway graduated massage therapist, not to mention two. However, the prompting grew stronger, and I found myself on an online job board.

The first job listing was from a company that matches clients with therapists. I called them, and we had a great conversation until they asked for my office location. Office? I didn't have an office let alone finances required to pay for one.

"In two weeks, we will have an office," I heard myself say as Irene stared at me in disbelief. I didn't know



how, especially since securing an office for free would be quite a challenge.

So, we prayed.

"You've brought us this far, Lord. We need an office. Please help. Amen."

Not long after, our class visited the nearby city of Chadron, Nebraska for a chair massage event. A woman approached me, eager to discuss water, while I was focused on massage. I eventually asked for her business card hoping to stop the conversation. It worked. However, as I sifted through some paperwork at home, her business card resurfaced. God prompted me to call her, even though I'm from a mountainous area and Chadron, Nebraska is flat. Again, the promptings grew stronger. I called.

She was instantly enthusiastic about water, igniting my frustration once again. I needed to study Anatomy, not water. But she caught my attention when she mentioned friends in Rapid City, South Dakota, who owned a water store. The potential connection between hydrotherapy and massage piqued my interest. We agreed to collaborate, and they offered us free office space for the first six months. Graceful Touch was officially open for business. Due to God's blessings we started paying rent in less than three months.

Remember the business cards? Irene took them to local chiropractors and physical therapists to secure clients, but got no response. God had other plans.

Despite the initial setbacks, we moved forward, and both of us took the National MBLEx exam, a requirement for massage therapists. Failing would have left us with no income. Irene started her test first, and as I began mine, the questions seemed like Greek to me.

Two hours later, I knew I had failed.

However, when I saw the results, the word I found was not "Fail" but "Pass."

I yelped. Everyone clapped. Then, I gulped.

Given the MBLEx nightmare I had gone through, my thoughts turned to Irene, who I found downstairs, crying. She never cries; I'm the one that cries. Were these tears of joy or sorrow? Turns out they were tears of joy. She too had passed.

Not long after returning to our office, we were offered the opportunity to take over the water store, but we didn't feel called to do that. Instead, we asked for 30 days to pray.

The very next week, a chiropractor who had received one of Irene's business cards eight months earlier called. They were in need of massage therapists. We met and they asked us to email a list of our move-in requirements. We did. The response back? "No."

We wouldn't be joining their team. Instead, we decided to open the Graceful Touch clinic. We found the perfect place, but that path also became a dead end.

So, we prayed.

"Lord, we are massage therapists because of You. The water store is closing, the chiropractor didn't work out, and we won't be starting the clinic. We need a place to practice. Please fix this. Amen."

God prompted us to send the same email that had been declined a week earlier to the same chiropractor. It seemed like a waste of time, but we did it anyway. To our surprise, everything they had previously rejected one week earlier was now accepted.

Over the past five years, God has blessed us beyond what we could have imagined. This story is just a small part of our journey. Today, Graceful Touch Products, a division of Graceful

Touch, offers over 50 alternative health solutions and we have become massage stars in the eyes of Google with 450+ five-star reviews.

We continue to be guided by God's blessings as we follow His lead.



**Guy and Irene Siverson** are the owners of Graceful Touch LLC, a multifaceted company with two main branches and another one growing. For those in the area of Rapid City, South Dakota, we offer massage. Our associated essential oil Graceful Touch Product line extends our reach nationally and internationally as we aim to provide alternative answers to wellness concerns that people experience. Guy also enjoys sharing our story of struggles to stars via podcasts and in-person speaking events.

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# Breaking the Chains of Fear

by **Tandi Perkins**

**D**oes the conflict between Russia and Ukraine scare you? Maybe just a little? Let me tell you about young Sam and how fear gripped his Native community of Gambell, on St. Lawrence Island only 35 miles east of Russia.

Sam woke to the sound of forced whispers in the house. “They are asking us to carry guns and guard our shores!” He peaked around the corner and saw a small group of men talking to his father. “I don’t understand why they are here. We are not part of the Russia-Ukraine problem!”

The speaker’s voice faded as Sam rushed out of the door and headed to school. In class, everyone was talking about the arrival of the military and how they had come to set up observation points on the beach to guard against a Russian invasion.

Sam slid into his seat next to his best friend, Brian, who whispered, “Have you heard what is happening?”

Sam nodded, “My mom says this is just like it was during the Cold War; they were always on alert for spies looming around our island. Blackouts were common and they couldn’t make any noise. She told me that one time during a blackout, she saw a spy peering through their window! My family is really afraid that we will be at risk again this time.”

As Sam made his way home from school, he passed small groups of people. Some were crying, some were talking angrily, and some were praying. It was clear that everyone was afraid of what the future held for this peaceful village with no military or weapons except what it used to hunt with.

Petu Koonooka, Elder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in

Gambell, knew his community needed support through their fear. He collaborated with Pastor Ryan Rogers from the Palmer (Alaska) Seventh-day Adventist Church to lead a three-day workshop on fear. For the first time, Native leaders, behavioral health professionals, and pastors of two Christian denominations joined forces to provide hope at a time filled with fear.

The workshop started at the Presbyterian Church with a reflection on the Biblical story of Job to guide the discussion of the fear of loss. Pastor Ryan asked the group, “What have you lost?” and “What are you afraid of losing?”

With no hesitation, a young woman named Carla shared that she lost her mom and had since become an alcoholic. One night in May of 2021, Carla drank especially heavily and crashed her four-wheeler, breaking several bones in her face, ankle, and



hip. She was left with scars and a desire to remain sober.

Cassie, a mom with two daughters, talked about her seven-year-old son Qaqu. He has a cancerous brain tumor that has limited his use of the left side of his body. God has used this horrible sickness to call their hearts back to Him. Cassie is inspired by her son's faith, cheerfulness, and outgoing personality. Reflecting on this, she says, "I want to feel like when I was a kid and my heart would be so happy, learning about Jesus and about His love and that He's always there."

A determination was very clear in these two women to hold onto Jesus. Cassie and Carla shared that they want "to start going back to church every Saturday morning." Cassie wants to teach her son more about the God he is putting his faith in. She wants to "lean on the Word when times get tough."



Carla added, with an enthusiastic smile, "I want to start Bible studies again."

We all have brokenness. This family's pain has come in a larger measure than many of us have felt. But their response is the same response we need. Don't let your pain keep you from Jesus for one more moment. Bring your fear and brokenness to Him.

Visit [www.arcticmissionadventure.org](http://www.arcticmissionadventure.org) to learn more.



**Tandi Perkins** is the director of development for Arctic Mission Adventure, Alaska Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. After her fifteen-year career as a wildlife research biologist, Tandi answered God's call to change careers to philanthropy. Before serving in Alaska, Tandi worked with Philanthropic Services for Institutes, the NAD's internal fundraising consulting department.



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# Stepping Out

by Anthony Castelbuono

Six years ago, the Lord quietly spoke to me about how I could really know Him. I was excited and said, “I’ve tried before Lord and I’ve failed but I would like to spend more time with you. What should I do?” The Lord asked me to start knowing Him by utilizing the same relationship-building blocks that had led Michelle, my wife, and I on a journey from friendship, to dating, to engagement, and on to marriage. I started following the same relationship-building blocks in my walk with Jesus and He completely transformed my life. I went from a Laodicean Seventh-day Adventist to one who is on fire for the Lord.

Two years after this transformation in my life, I pleaded with the Lord to let

me do something for Him. “You have done so much for me, what can I do for you?” I asked God. After a few weeks of praying, the Lord asked me to start a magazine to help others get ready for the Second Coming of Jesus. I wrestled with this for a few weeks but finally followed God’s calling and created Time to Get Ready Ministries.

God has blessed so much through this ministry. This summer alone, Time to Get Ready Ministries has shared our story and handed out encouraging and enlightening articles on small sharable 4 x 6 inch cards at three camp meetings across the country. One person at the camp meeting in Wisconsin was impressed to take 100 cards and pass them out in his community! Praise God! Then later this summer, Time to Get Ready

Ministries attended ASI and shared with many other people in Kansas City, Missouri.

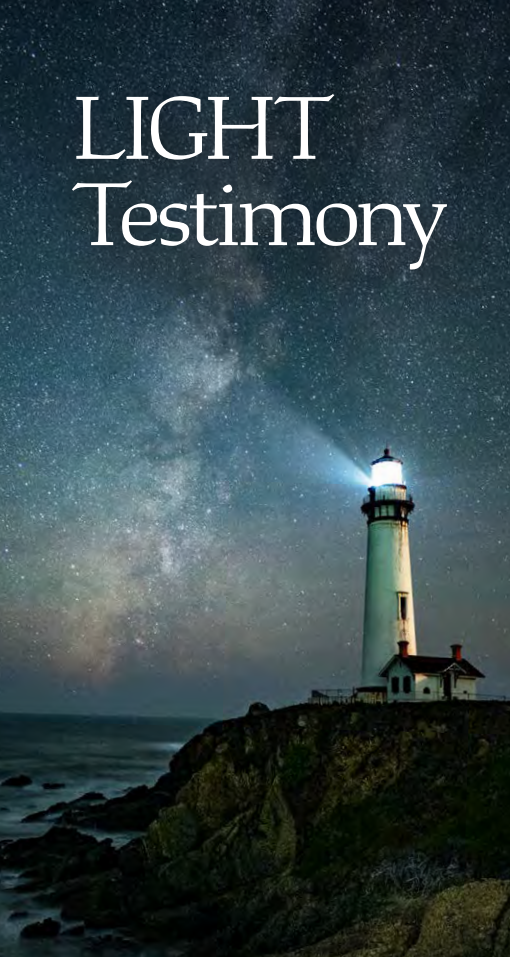
I long for Jesus to come. I believe God is working amongst His people, to prepare us to be ready and give the loud cry so Jesus can come. My family and I are all-in for Him and we are excited to be partnering with over 25 Time to Get Ready Ministry volunteers and other ministries in our current work. We appreciate your prayers over this ministry and work.



**Anthony Castelbuono** is an HR professional and a Bible study leader in his local church in Tennessee. In 2017, he became convicted to start spending 60 minutes daily with Jesus following seven key relationship principles.



# LIGHT Testimony



**K**nowing *about* something is one thing, but *practicing* it is another. This is what Mystina Zummach found out after taking an online course from Lay Institute for Global Health Training (LIGHT).

As a Seventh-Day Adventist, she knew about the health message, but did not eat a very healthy diet. She was a vegetarian but still found herself overweight and out of shape.

The LIGHT course, “Essentials of Health Evangelism,” helped her make changes in her health, and she was excited about sharing this with others.

The well-rounded approach that includes both physical *and* spiritual health appealed to her as they are both vital components. The course helped broaden her knowledge, and gave her the confidence to help others to make changes in their lives.

As a health and temperance coordinator in her church, she used the tools she acquired during her LIGHT training to impact others.

She applied her newfound passion by organizing a health expo for her North Carolina church. It was a great success. Participants were inspired by the health principles that were presented.

LIGHT encourages follow-up programs. This inspired Mystina to plan future events like “Dinner with the Doctor,” cooking classes, and a diabetes seminar. The health expo participants were excited to learn about these upcoming events.

Mystina shared, “As Adventists, we know that the health message is the ‘entering wedge,’ or the ‘right arm of the gospel.’ If you want to strengthen those arm muscles in your ministry, I highly recommend taking a course from LIGHT!”

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Anthony, Inmate at a Correctional Facility in Indiana

A just want to thank you, and show you love, respect, and gratitude for your work and hearts.

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A may not personally know ya'll, however I love and respect your morality and devotion to Christ.

Thanks for everyone...may the father permeate your hearts, minds, bodies and souls!

"A am in prison, ye came unto me."

Andrew, Inmate at a Correctional Facility in Indiana

## Other Inmate Comments

» "Keep up the good work, it is working! We are opening our hearts to Jesus."

» "This token of love shown to each of us from this great ministry has lifted me up and confirmed to me that the Lord has not left us nor forgotten us in these troublesome times."



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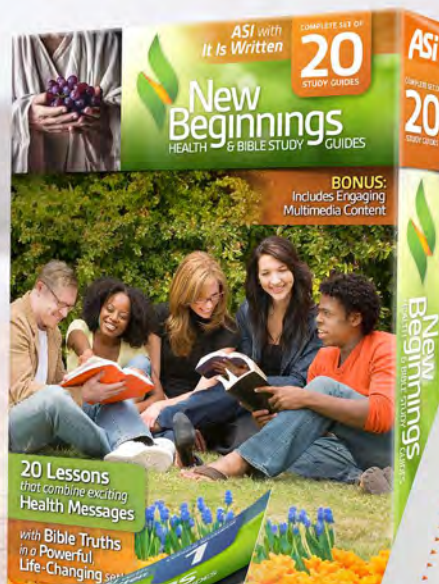
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