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I WILL
GO

EDITORIAL

JANUARY – MARCH 2021

I'm sure I speak for all of you reading this when I say how stressful and heartbreaking the year 2020 truly felt. Feels like just yesterday that we were all so excited for a year of focusing on God and fulfilling the mission as a church moving forward. But the year hit us with many surprises that none of us could have ever expected. We can all be grateful to God that we have made it this far, thanks to His love and kindness.

As you all know by now, our new theme and mission objective for the World Church these next 5 years is 'I Will Go,' and what a statement that is. If there was ever a theme and mission objective that confounded us all, I'm sure it's this one. I still remember how excited we were here at the Youth Ministries department when we first heard of this new

plan for the church. We were all so excited about all the ways we could minister to young and old under this powerful charge! There were so many ideas and plans and projects but everything changed once this terrible pandemic hit.

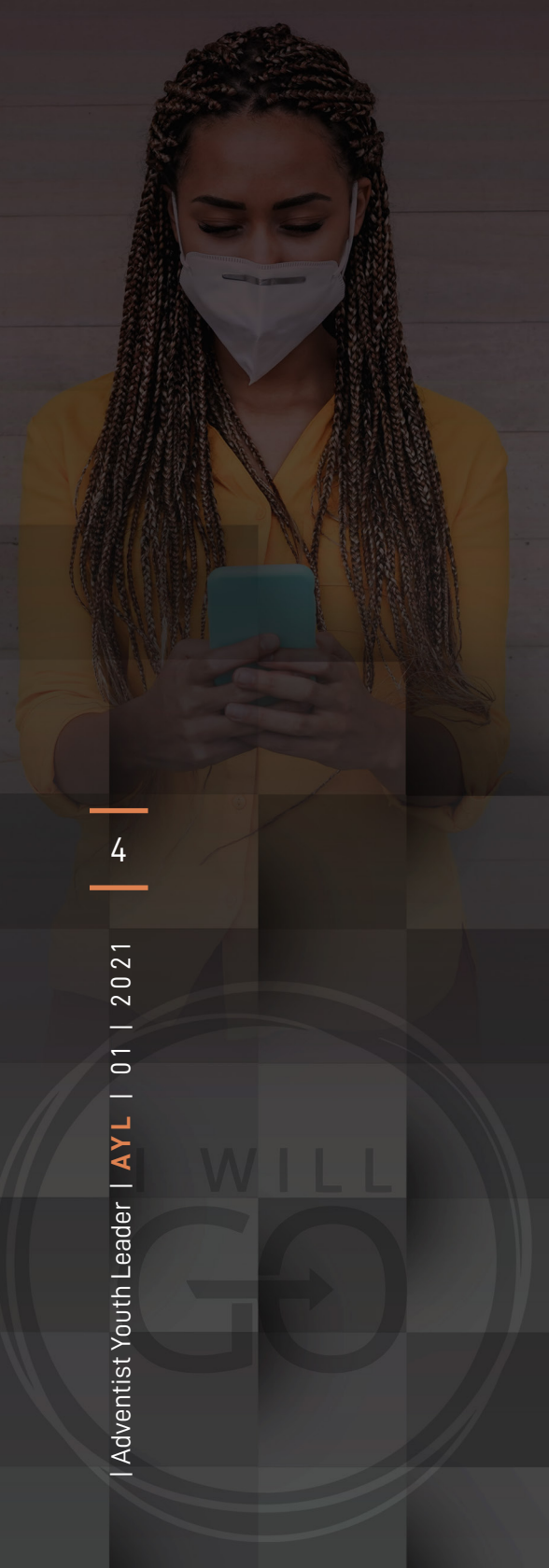
Many of us might be feeling a bit disillusioned and frustrated with how much this current situation seems to interrupt our plans. I know we sure have felt those waves of emotions but we are encouraged by Psalms 121: *"I lift up my eyes to the hills-- where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth."* Dear reader, dear young person and youth leader, we know that the task ahead of us is great and unprecedented, but this is the moment where we put our eyes on Jesus and realize that although "going" for God might look

different than we expected, for some, it is merely an opportunity to expand our creativity and let God take the lead! In this issue of the AYL Magazine, you find even more information and resources to further assist you as you plan for the year ahead, as well as creative ways to continue ministering to your young people and pertinent information from our World Church.

So even if you are a little afraid and just a bit unsure, loudly proclaim "I Will Go!" and be sure that He will take you exactly where you have to go, however, and whenever that may be.



Kenia Reyes
Senior Editorial Assistant



I WILL GO!

GLOBAL YOUTH STRATEGY 2020-2025

Like Joshua, God is calling parents and youth leaders around the world, to lead the younger generation. It is estimated that 51% of the world's population is 25 and under. Right at this moment, we stand on the very edge of the Jordan.

Before us lie “giant” challenges and opportunities! We face pandemics, disease, social unrest, militant atheism, anti-Christian media, spiritual apathy, and swaths of people who have never heard the gospel of Jesus or experienced the converting power of His Spirit.

But God has called us to lead His young armies forward and to conquer the land by proclaiming the Three Angels Message “to every nation, kindred, tongue and people.” In fact, our Adventist Youth Ministry Aim reads “*The Advent message to all the world in my generation*” and our Adventist Youth Ministry pledge reads “*Loving the Lord Jesus, I promise to take an active part in the work of Adventist Youth Ministries, doing what I can to help others and to finish the work of the gospel in all the world.*” So, built into the very fabric of Adventist youth ministry is a clarion call to strategize, mobilize and evangelize the whole world.

Dear youth leaders and advocates, if Joshua could conquer a hostile land in just 7 years what might God do through us in the next five? What you have here is a simple vision and strategy which we believe God has given us to accomplish the unique work we've been given as ADVENTIST youth Leaders. The General Conference Youth Department in collaboration with the 13 Division Youth Departments around the world, humbly submit it to you as our basic global plan for youth ministry for the next five years. We welcome you to modify it as the Spirit directs to best reach your cultural context.

PSALMS 127:4

The following strategy is taken precisely from **Psalms 127:4** which reads **“Like Arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one’s youth.”** It has five components that when unpacked reveal a simple but profound youth ministry strategy for taking “the everlasting gospel” to every corner of the world. *For the last five years, we have used a relay race analogy now we propose an archery one!*

So, let’s dig in and unpack it!

1) ARROWS

The Bible compares young people to “arrows in the hands of warriors” (Psalms 127:4). In other words, our young people were designed to live dangerously for the Lord. Jesus himself said to the young people who followed him *“I send you like sheep among wolves, be wise as serpents and gentle as doves” (Matthew 10:16).*

his means the church must not see young people as merely collectable items or trophies to collect dust in our church pews. Instead, we must see them as arrows designed to be sent across enemy lines. **Every Adventist young person, therefore, is a missionary either across the sea or across the street for Jesus.** *It’s probably no coincidence then that our “I Will Go” youth logo has an actual arrow inserted in it!*

CLARIFICATION

At this point let’s be clear, we are speaking here in spiritual terms! We are in no way promoting physical violence or weapons of warfare. Like the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6, we are using military terminology in Psalms 127:4 to reveal our SPIRITUAL responsibility as youth and youth leaders. While we are most certainly engaged

in a real war against Satan for the salvation of souls and while our youth are most certainly God’s “arrows” to be sent by “warriors” into the most dangerous places of the earth, we are speaking about engaging in a spiritual “great controversy” not a bloody clash of swords and violence. *To assure this right understanding we are using the sport of archery not warfare as our global analogy.*

THREE FEATHERS

Interestingly, every arrow has three feathers/*fins* embedded into it. These feathers help guide the arrow towards its target and keep it from falling short. There are also at least three reasons WHY Adventist young people will live dangerously for the Lord and serve Him faithfully for the rest of their lives.

Adventurers, Pathfinders, Ambassadors, AY, and Public Campus Ministry students will fly “straight and true” for the cause of Jesus if they have first been *Redeemed by His Blood, Revived by His Spirit, and Rightly trained by His leaders.*

-Redeemed by His blood-1 Peter 1:18-20

This happens when young people continuously hear about the grace of the Lord Jesus and how He provided forgiveness, peace, victory, salvation, and a brand-new royal identity at the cross! Interestingly, all of our AYM logos highlight either the blood of Jesus or the centrality of the cross! Our AYM mission statement reads *“To lead young people in a saving relationship with Jesus and help them embrace his call to discipleship.”* Why is this important? Our AYM motto spells it out clearly *“The love of Christ compels me.”* This famous quotation from Ellen White explains why this first feather is so crucial for our young arrows to experience.

“So those who are the partakers of the grace of Christ will be ready to make any sacrifice, that others for whom He died may share the heavenly gift. They will do all they can to make the world better for their stay in it... *No sooner does one come to Christ than there is born in His heart a desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus; the saving and sanctifying truth cannot be shut up in his heart.*” *Steps to Christ* p. 78

-Revived by His Spirit (Act 1:8)

This happens when young people saturate themselves daily in prayer and the study of scripture as they did in Acts 1-2. Ezekiel 37 also reminds us that when the Spirit is poured out on God’s army of youth, they rise up to become an “exceedingly great army” (10). *When filled with the Holy Spirit our young people become more than just arrows, they become firebrands!* In Hebrews 1:7 the bible promises to make “...His ministers flames of fire.”

Small group prayer initiatives like *Give Him 20* which are built around the amazing promise of Acts 1:8 can really help facilitate youth revival around the world. To learn what prayer and bible study initiatives are available in your Conference or Union be sure to contact your local Youth Department. Another great resource for gathering youth and young adults into small groups for prayer, study, and outreach is *Dennis Smith’s book “Ten Days.”* You can download a free digital copy at youth.adventist.org.

-Rightly trained by His Leaders (Ephesians 4:11-12)

This happens at congresses, camporees, etc. when young people are trained by youth leaders who themselves are living out the great commission. Effective training should also be combined with enlisting young people in global and local mission initiatives. In perhaps her most famous quote regarding youth ministry, Ellen White writes “With such an army of workers as our youth RIGHTLY TRAINED, might furnish, who soon the



message of a crucified and risen and soon-coming Savior might be carried to the whole world.”

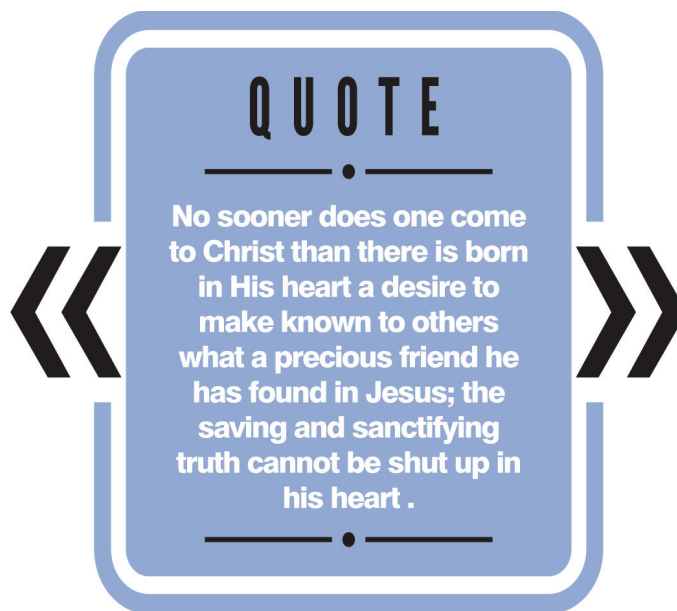
Right training involves more than teaching young people to be effectively soul winners, it is also about equipping them to grow spiritually and to defend their faith against opposing worldviews (See 1 Peter 3:15). It is estimated now that “80% of young people walk away from their faith during their college years” (*Dan Story, Defending your faith* p. 24). The author goes on to say, “Youth leaders must embark on a course of study that trains teenagers in the kinds of anti-Christian philosophies and worldviews they will encounter in secular universities and colleges—and how to refute them apologetically.”

2) ARCHERS (“WARRIORS”)

The Bible compares biological and spiritual parents to “warriors” tasked with the responsibility of leading and sending young people (“arrows”) into the harvest field. Psalms 127:4 says “Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one’s youth.” Nothing even comes close to the influence parents have on their biological children! Research has shown repeatedly that the most influential person in a young person’s life is mom and dad. It is from these two “warriors” that young people are most successfully sent into the world for the cause of Christ! Youth ministry must acknowledge this reality and plan accordingly.

But in his great wisdom, God has also provided spiritual parents for the younger generation! Interestingly, the Apostle Paul saw himself in this light. Not only did he call young Timothy “a true son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2) but he *counseled, challenged, and encouraged* the young man as a caring biological father would.

In 1 Corinthians 4:15, the Apostle Paul tells us exactly *when* we become spiritual parents commissioned



with sending the younger generation. He writes “*Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.*” This means when you lead a young person to Jesus, you become their spiritual parent and the “warrior” the bible is referencing in Psalms 127:4.

This means your success as a youth leader is not only in having your quiver full of arrows but in your ability to send these arrows redeemed, revived, and rightly trained into the churches, campuses, cities, and unreached places of the earth with the Three Angel’s Message. In other words, *it’s not just your seating capacity at programs, events, classes, and services that matter but also your sending capacity!*

■ Measuring Success

In youth ministry today we need an additional metric for measuring success. As mentioned above,

rather than gaging success in youth ministry by our seating capacity alone we should also measure it by our sending capacity. For example, how many young people are we seating at our events, AND how many of these young people who've attended our congresses, campuses, and worship services, are now actively involved in mission? When Jesus returns may he find our quiver and the harvest filled with them!

■ Reaching and Retaining

Many are rightfully concerned that we are losing so many young people in our church today and are wondering how we can reach and retain them. Although there may be several answers to this question one solution is revealed in 1 Samuel 14.

The philistines were surrounding the Israelites and would soon wipe them off the face of the earth. Instead of giving courageous leadership, King Saul cowardly hid under a pomegranate tree. As a result, he watched his young army defect and desert. The Bible says his numbers dwindled from 3000 to just 600.

Fortunately, his son Jonathan was a courageous leader and although he had only one "Pathfinder" in his club, he declared "I will go!" and led courageously behind enemy lines. His courageous leadership inspired the youth who had defected or deserted King Saul. They joined Jonathan and a supernatural and victorious youth movement took place!

Our young people are most certainly wired to live dangerously which is why leading them in courageous mission service is one powerful way to reach and retain them! Someone once said, "A boss says go, but a leader says let's go!"

3) BOW

For our archers to be effective in leading and sending our young people, they must be equipped and resourced with the highest quality "bow" or sending catalyst. We believe the following three components assembled and implemented in the next five years by the General Conference Youth Department in collaboration with the 13 Divisions around the world, will help put this bow in our warrior's hands.

Keep in mind that each Division may have its own unique initiatives/catalysts for sending youth but here are three we want to provide from GCYD to supplement not substitute unique local Division initiatives!

Component 1– First, we would like to collaborate with the Divisions to establish regular Online **Mission Leadership Cohorts**. This way our youth directors/ leaders at every level of the Adventist Church can get *thorough* training in Adventist youth global mission initiatives. For example, Intergenerational Churches of Refuge, One Year in Mission, Public Campus Ministries, Senior Youth Leadership, etc. *This online training catalyst would not be a substitute for local Division training but a supplement to it.* In other words, the leaders who attend these cohorts will be even better equipped and resourced to train others within their Divisions. *Furthermore, all who attend these cohorts will be encouraged to contextualize and use the resources they receive to complement their Division's unique perspective.*

Component 2–Second, we would like to see our **Adventist Youth Leaders Magazine** (AYLM) in the digital hands of every youth leader from the local church to the Divisions. In other words, we would like to see this quarterly magazine translated and digitally distributed by our Division Youth Departments to every youth leader

Save the Date

MARCH 20

2021



#GYD21

around the world. For the next five years, this magazine will focus on the “I WILL GO” motto and feature writers from every Division who can speak theologically, practically, and experientially into the issues facing our Adventist Youth Leaders in the field. Eventually, the best articles from our AYLM will be compiled to create digital books and other resources. All books, magazines, and resources will be available at youth.adventist.org.

It is also our prayer that we will be able to make this magazine and other youth ministry tools available on a **GCYM app** by the end of the quinquennium.

Component 3—Finally, we envision our **Global Youth Leadership Congress**, currently scheduled for September 5-10, 2023, to be a significant part of our “bow” or catalyst for inspiring, equipping, and resourcing our youth leaders (archers) in the field. We are inviting every Division to send its youth leaders from the local Churches, Conferences, and Unions to this epic experience. *We are also asking each local conference to sponsor and send a minimum of two lay-youth leaders to the congress.* This global congress will provide workshops, plenaries, booths, coaching, and digital resources designed to equip our youth leaders to effectively lead the next generation into churches, campuses, cities, and unreached countries of the world (10/40 Window) with the Three Angel’s Message of Jesus!

(This event is tentative due to our current Coronavirus pandemic and its negative impact on health and finances.)

4) TARGET

Since young people are “arrows” and our youth leaders are the archers then it is logical to conclude that they both need a target. We recommend one target with four rings. Interestingly when Jesus spoke of global

evangelism, He also recommended four target areas (Acts 1:8). We also recommend some specific global initiatives that are uniquely designed for each area of the target. *Division equivalents are of course equally significant and valued!*

■ Churches

The first and most outer ring is our local churches—Interestingly both Jesus and Paul did not abandon the local churches but instead made them their first gospel recipients. Some of our most effective initiatives for this target area are **Intergenerational Churches of Refuge (iCOR), Club Ministry, Ambassadors, AY, and Sabbath School**. We need to see these ministries as redemptive agencies designed to reach our local churches and communities. Of course, Sabbath school is a collaborative effort with the Sabbath School Department, but it is a vital ministry, and we should work side by side with them to assure its success!

■ Campuses

The 2nd ring is our public campuses. This ring has so much potential since many of our future world leaders

QUOTE

Our young people are most certainly wired to live dangerously which is why leading them in courageous mission service is one powerful way to reach and retain them!

will spring from these institutions. Like Nebuchadnezzar in the University of Babylon, many of these future leaders have open hearts to God and desperately need Public “ambassadors” like Daniel and His three friends to stand out and speak up for the cause of Christ! Many of the young people on public campuses come from places where the three angel’s message and the “everlasting gospel” has never been heard. They will then be able to return to their people with the wonderful news of Jesus and His church. **Public Campus Ministries** is a global mission initiative designed to effectively reach this field of labor. It should be the vision of every Division to start a PCM chapter in every University where two or more willing Adventist students can be found. Since we want every Adventist church near a secular campus to reach out to our Adventist and future Adventist students, we made campuses the second ring in our target.

■ Cities

The third ring is our local cities and communities— Over and Over again we have been told through scripture and Spirit of Prophecy to work smarter by reaching the cities of the world where over 50% of the world’s population live clustered together. When Jesus declared the “harvest is ripe,” he was specifically referencing a city when he said this (Matthew 9:35-37). We have three global initiatives that if used strategically to reach the cities, could make huge advancements for God’s kingdom. They are **Global Youth Day, Mission Caleb, and One Year in Mission**. If implemented in that order every young person regardless of commitment level could play a big part in reaching the cities. **We challenge every Division to launch an OYiM in every city with more than 1 Million residents or at least an OYiM in every Union around the world.*

We also recognize **Pathfinders** as one of our greatest outreach initiatives to the cities! Perhaps one of the most exciting developments in club ministry is the Community Pathfinder Clubs (CPC). This is when a local Pathfinder club decides to plant another Pathfinder club in the city and use it as an outreach to children who don’t yet know Jesus, His Word, or His church. This is just one example of how influential Pathfinders can be in their local cities, for Jesus!

■ Countries

The final ring which some call the “bullseye” is most central to the target and represents the unreached countries of the world. Sadly, in this area between North Africa and Asia, the 10/40 Window, 90% of the population have never heard the good news of Jesus. As a result, many will perish “without God and without hope in this world” (Ephesians 2:12). Therefore, to send our young people into the first three rings is to successfully hit the target but to send our young “arrows” into the 10/40 window is a bullseye!

To be very clear, Jesus commanded his disciple to go strategically not stupidly into the dangerous places of the world. After telling them he was sending them “like sheep among wolves,” Jesus balanced His words with “be wise as serpents and gentle as doves” (Mark 10:16). We challenge every Division Youth Department to work closely with their sister Divisions especially those overseeing large swaths of the 10/40 Window to find out how best to send our young missionaries into their fields.

Imagine the impact to the world church, if every year they received reports and testimonies of churches planted, evangelistic meetings held, centers of influence started, ministries born and souls won to Jesus in the 10/40

window by our redeemed, revived and rightly trained young “arrows.”

■ Boomerang Effect

Of course, there will always be folks to discourage the focus on reaching foreign fields. They will claim there is enough work to do locally and sending young people into the 10/40 Window is neglectful of the local harvest. But notice how Ellen White describes a *boomerang effect* of blessing that is poured out on the local fields when we do not neglect the foreign ones. *“The home missionary work will be farther advanced in every way when a more liberal, self-denying, self-sacrificing spirit is manifested for the prosperity of foreign missions; for the prosperity of the home work depends largely, under God, upon the reflection influence of the evangelical work done in the countries afar off”* (*Testimonies for the Church* p. 627).

■ Conditional Coming

Many believe the reason Jesus has not returned is because the church has neglected the 10/40 window. Jesus himself promised *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in ALL the world as a witness to ALL nations, and THEN the end will come”* (Matthew 24:14). The Three Angels Message itself may be a reminder of this fact. Only after the Three Angel’s Message goes to “EVERY nation, kindred, tongue and people” does the Second Coming of Jesus happen (Revelation 14:14). Ellen White herself has this to say *“By giving the gospel to the world it is in our power to hasten our Lord’s return...Had the church of God done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the WHOLE world would before this have been warned and the Lord Jesus would have come to our earth in power and great glory”* (*Desire of Ages* p. 633).

■ Jesus Opens Windows

In the next five years, we hope to partner especially with our Division Youth Departments that oversee large portions of the 10/40 window and launch a digital “Jesus Opens Windows” Congress. This global initiative would be designed to help our youth and young adults become aware of and enlist in missions within the 10/40 window. Of course, this would be a collaborative effort on the part of all our Division Youth Departments who would invite their interested youth and young adults to participate.

5) ARROWHEAD

Seventh-day Adventists are not better than other Christians, but we have been given a greater responsibility. God has given our church and our youth, His very last message of warning and mercy to the world.

The Three Angels message which highlights among other things the “righteousness of Christ made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God” contains God’s famous last words before He returns (*Testimonies to Ministers* p. 90-92). These words contained in Revelation 14:6-12 which have been given to our church are *“the most solemn words ever given to mortals”* (*Evangelism* 476). This means they are more solemn than those given to John the Baptist, Jonah, or even Noah! *The Three Angels Message then on the lips of a young person baptized with the Holy Spirit is our arrowhead!*

We have two new initiatives we invite every division to absorb into its programs and/or events to help sharpen their arrowheads. These initiatives do not need to be stand-alone programs (though they can be) but can easily be integrated into almost any already established program/event.

100K Project—This initiative not only challenges young people around the world to publicly share the three angels’ message but provides the resources they need to do it. It is called the 100K Project because in the next five years we want to be able to report 100,000 evangelistic meetings held by Adventist youth around the world. Not long ago, we watched as 400 souls were baptized in one conference as a result of this initiative. Imagine if club ministries took this project on as well!

Give Him 20—The only thing that scares Satan more than young arrows redeemed and rightly trained to invade his territory, is when these young arrows are also set on fire (revived) by the Holy Spirit! Give Him 20 encourages young people to gather together with their friends weekly or monthly for twenty minutes either in person or on social media and claim the promise of Acts 1:8 in prayer. *“And you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the Ends of the earth.”* Our young people are then encouraged to record these prayer seasons and share them on their social media platforms. They can also share them on our GH20 group page @gcyouthministries. It is our prayer that GH20 goes viral and our youth are directed and empowered to go supernaturally by the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

“I will go” is more than just a logo for Adventist youth ministry, it’s our response to the Great Commission of our Great God who is “...not willing that any perish but that all might come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

“I will go” then is our commitment as a Joshua Generation of leaders, to send our youth into the enemy’s frontlines. *What you have just read by way of this plan, is*

a simple, comprehensive, visual, and practical strategy for making that happen regardless of your context.

On behalf of the General Conference Youth Department, we charge you to send our youth ages 4-30, redeemed, revived, and rightly trained into the churches, cities, campuses, and unreached countries of the world with the Three Angels Message.

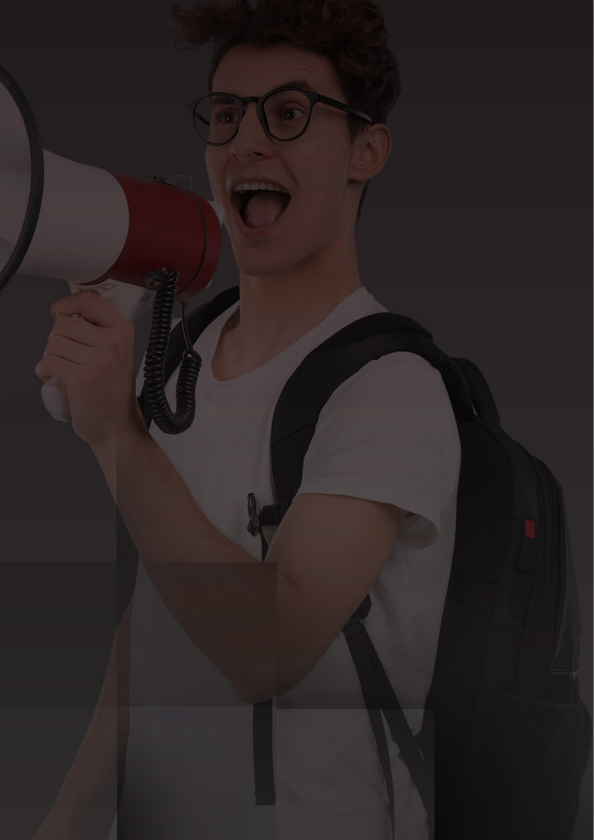
In her most famous and powerful quote regarding youth ministry, Ellen White answers several natural questions around our “I Will Go” logo. For example, who will go? how will they go? where will they go? and what they will go with? But the question I find most beautifully answered is the vital question “why should they go?”

“With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world! How soon might the end come, the end of suffering and sorrow and sin! **How soon, in place of a possession here, with its blight of sin and pain, our children might receive their inheritance where “the righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever”; where “the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick,” and “the voice of weeping shall be no more heard.”** —*Counsels to Teachers, Parents, and Students*, p. 555.

Even so, come Lord Jesus!



Gary Blanchard
GC Youth Director



I WILL GO!

GENERAL CONFERENCE INITIATIVE

STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES

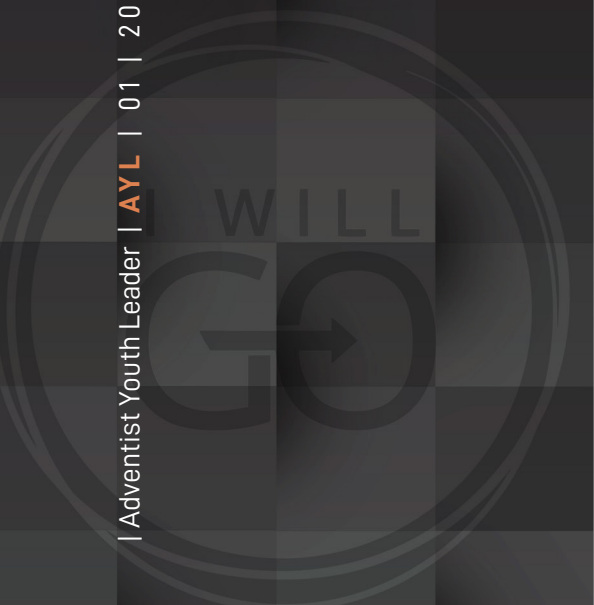
The *I Will Go* strategic plan outlines 10 objectives, divided into the categories of Mission, Spiritual Growth, and Leadership. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church will work together to fulfill these objectives. As you read them, prayerfully consider your role in helping the Church grow and fulfill its mission to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth.

MISSION OBJECTIVES

1. To revive the concept of worldwide mission and sacrifice for mission as a way of life involving not only pastors but every church member, young and old, in the joy of witnessing for Christ and making disciples
2. To strengthen and diversify Adventist outreach in large cities, across the 10/40 Window, among unreached and under-reached people groups, and to non-Christian religions
3. To make developing resources for mission to non-Christian religions and belief systems a high priority
4. To strengthen Seventh-day Adventist institutions in upholding freedom, wholistic health, and hope through Jesus, and restoring in people the image of God

SPIRITUAL GROWTH OBJECTIVES

5. To disciple individuals and families into spirit-filled lives



6. To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults
7. To help youth and young adults place God first and exemplify a biblical worldview

LEADERSHIP OBJECTIVES

8. To strengthen the discipleship role of pastors, teachers, and other frontline workers and provide them with regular growth opportunities
9. To align world church resources with strategic objectives
10. To enhance the transparency, accountability, and credibility of the denominational organization, operations, and mission initiatives

HOLY SPIRIT OBJECTIVES

To be defined as the Holy Spirit leads.

This article was originally published on the 'I will go' website: <https://iwillgo2020.org/the-objectives/>

For more info go to: <https://iwillgo2020.org/>

QUOTE

Prayerfully consider
your role in helping the
Church grow and fulfill
its mission to proclaim
the gospel to the ends of
the earth.





BE AN EAGLE

Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary. —Isaiah 40:31, NASB

The imagery of the eagle is one of my favorite Bible illustrations because of the characteristics they portray such as a graceful soar, strength, keen eyesight, and the ability to empower its offspring with great care in the art of flying. In Exodus 19:4 and Deuteronomy 32:11 the eagle is used figuratively to depict God's protection and care. In these passages, God is pictured as a loving parent who redeems and protects His people, even as the parent eagle cares for its young. God also empowers the persecuted church with "eagle's wings" to protect it from the serpent and from adverse circumstances and difficulties.

DARE TO SOAR LIKE THE EAGLE

The eagle, the epitome of swiftness, is often known to fly at a rate of 40 to 50 miles per hour. It can fly three to four miles in 10 minutes and sometimes flies to heights of more than 10,000 feet.

The eagle needs to work hard to take off. If it is on a rock, it takes small leaps to the air, opens its wings, and begins to fly. If it is on land, it jumps, beats its wings, and rises. Eagles can soar day after day by riding on the thermal air currents, stopping only to rest at night.

God has also given us the ability to soar. The key to overcoming spiritual weariness is to extend our arms and allow our life to be lifted high above the burdens of this world, by the sweet breeze of the Holy Spirit; lifting us above the stress, the past, criticism, and daily difficulties.

When all other birds try to flee from the storm and hide from the fierceness of it, eagles fly into it and use the wind of the storm to rise higher. It uses the pressure of the storm to glide higher without using its own energy. It is able to do this because God has created it with the unique ability to lock its



wings in a fixed position in the midst of the fierce winds. We all face storms, but do not be afraid. Simply allow God to lift you above the storms.

DARE TO HAVE THE STRENGTH OF AN EAGLE

The strength and youthful vigor of the eagle is proverbial. Some eagles can carry geese, lambs, or other animals between 80-90 pounds. The power of an eagle's grip comes from its leg muscles, tendons, and bones. Its wings are also very strong; one of the largest wing-spans on record is that of an eagle with a wing span of 7.9 feet.

Our strength comes from God. The Bible suggests that we pray continually. Ellen White said, "In order that we may be kept by the power of God through faith, the desires of the mind should be continually ascending in silent prayer" (*Prayer*, p. 83). If we want to have the strength of a spiritual eagle, we need to constantly be in prayer mode!

DARE TO SEE LIKE THE EAGLE

From a great distance away, the eagle uses its sharp vision to spot its prey. Rebecca L. Grambo, award-winning author of more than 20 nature books, suggests that the eagle's vision is among the strongest in the animal kingdom, with an eye-sight estimated at four to eight times stronger than that of the average human (*Eagles*, p. 11). The eagle has telescopic vision and can see a rabbit from two miles away.

As leaders, we need to be visionary. Visionaries do not look at problems, they see the solutions, and they see opportunity. Most visionaries fail many times because of opposition and a lot of resistance. Visionaries are sometimes misunderstood and criticized.

Your vision needs to be greater than your obstacles. The eagle-believers are like Joshua and Caleb, who see beyond present circumstances and are willing to conquer.

DARE TO EMPOWER LIKE THE EAGLE

In teaching its young to fly, the eagle is said to push them out of the nest high in the rocks, and then hover under them to catch them with its wings as they fall through the air. They empower them to fly and teach them how to survive. Our leadership is growing older and we need to empower our children, youth, and young adults for service. We need to give them the tools to live a life of service with a consecrated mind.

DARE TO BE LIKE JESUS

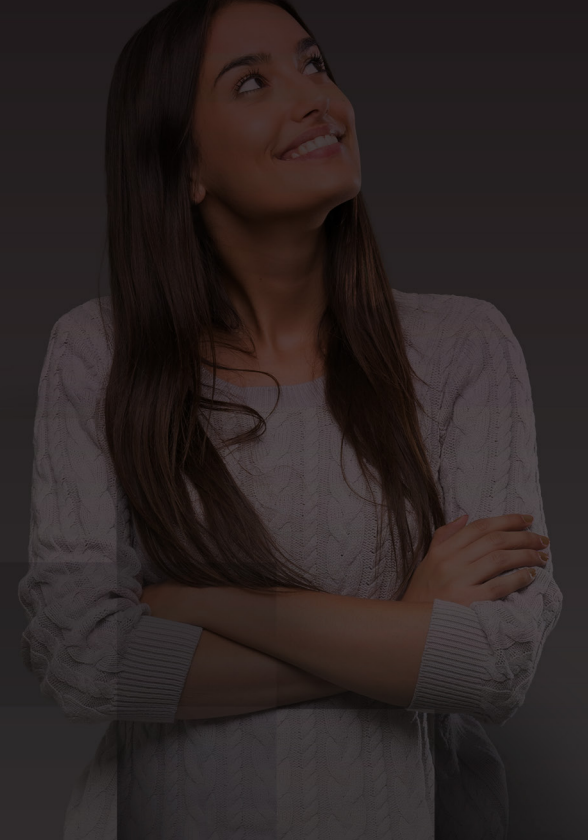
Jesus is like an eagle. He came to this earth and He dared to fly. He dared to keep His eyes focused on God. His relationship was with His Father on high. He received His strength through constant prayer. He saw what no one else saw. He saw beyond and envisioned His purpose of helping the needy and the sinner. He empowered His disciples to reach the world. Last, but not least, like an eagle, He died with open arms on the cross to save us and protect us. Dare to be like the eagle!



Andrés J. Peralta
Associate Youth Director
General Conference

QUOTE

In order that we may be kept by the power of God through faith, the desires of the mind should be continually ascending in silent prayer.



A BOY NAMED FORTUNATE!

Years ago, the following advertisement was discovered in a local newspaper in the missing pet section. “*Lost dog—brown fur, s, blind in one eye, deaf, lame leg due to a recent traffic accident, slightly arthritic. Goes by the name of ‘Lucky.’*” Of course, nothing about this advertisement would be funny if it weren’t for the dog’s name. The dog was ironically living a very unlucky life.

In Acts 20 we find a similar irony. A young man, whose name literally means “fortunate” or “Lucky”, was sitting in a window three stories above the ground and desperately trying to stay awake as the Apostle Paul was preaching. Apparently, the apostle Paul had missed the section in his seminary homiletics class on the importance of keeping one’s messages to 3 pithy points in 30 minutes. The bible says he preached until midnight and then again from midnight to sunrise (verses 7, 11). I guess if you are the greatest apostle who ever lived homiletic rules don’t apply.

It was probably almost bedtime when the sermon began, so we must cut the boy Eutyclus some slack for having trouble staying awake. But tragically the young man whose name means “fortunate” or “lucky” lost the battle with tiredness, fell asleep, then tragically fell three stories to his death! We know this because Dr. Luke says so in verse 9. “And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutyclus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up *dead*.”

It’s hard to imagine anything more tragic happening during a church service and it’s also hard to imagine anything more tragic happening to a young person. *But I would suggest this story is eerily repeating itself every Sabbath around the world and contains an extremely relevant message for parents, church leaders, youth advocates, and the younger generation!*



But first, let's look at why this young man was quite lucky. Yes, you read that right! The boy who fell two stories to his death was extremely fortunate for at least three reasons (see I paid attention at seminary).

1) He was able to hear the gospel before he died (7)

When you consider that millions will die this year having never heard the gospel, Eutychus was very fortunate! They say, within the 10/40 Window, the area between North Africa and Asia, 90% of the inhabitants will die “without God and without hope in this world” (Ephesians 2:12).

These dear souls are completely uninformed about what Jesus did for them on Calvary. They don't know about his blood-bought forgiveness for sins and the corresponding freedom from guilt and regret he provided. They don't know that justice will be served and evil eradicated forever at His return. They don't know about His coming kingdom or about life eternal in a world made new without poverty, pain, and conflict.

Yes, Eutychus was very lucky to have heard the gospel before passing away. Because Paul realized this was his last sermon before leaving the area, he undoubtedly passionately preached “the word of his grace” (20:31).

Paul understood what every pastor and teacher knows or should know, and that is that there are two groups of people listening to you each Sabbath: those who are hearing the gospel for the first time and those who are hearing it for the last time!

I will never forget an experience I had during my first year as a youth pastor. I was teaching Youth Sabbath School class and the topic was “Can we know we are

saved?” and the key bible promise which answered in the affirmative was 1 John 5:13. Little did I know this would be the last time I would speak with one of them. There was a terrible car accident that night and the life of a young man was tragically ended. I can only hope he heard, received, and put his confidence in Jesus before his life tragically ended. Eutychus was indeed “lucky” and “fortunate” to have heard the gospel before He died.

2) He experienced the resurrection power of Christ (10)

This was extremely fortunate! Not many people have been lucky enough to be raised from the dead and have a second chance at life? In my almost twenty-five years of youth ministry, I have only seen this happen once. I was preaching one Sabbath when my sermon was interrupted by someone shouting, “She's dead!” An elderly woman had slumped over in her chair and passed away. To say this was traumatic for the church was an understatement. To say this was a real blow to my confidence as a speaker, another understatement! But God was with us that day, and while we prayed, He breathed life back into her as He did in Acts 20, and like Eutychus, this woman came back to life and lived for many more years!

Let me also make a spiritual comparison. Many have heard the gospel of Jesus but have never experienced the resurrecting power of the indwelling Christ! The gospel is just theory to them and not a life-changing experience. As a result, they are powerless over their fallen nature and unable to witness for Christ with any real impact (See Galatians 5:16 and Acts 1:8). But those who humbly come to Christ, confess their need, and ask for spiritual resurrection will receive it (Luke 11:13, Romans 8:11). Again, the boy named fortunate was very lucky to experience the resurrection power of The Lord!

3) He was deeply loved and pursued by His Church Family (12)

They say many young people who graduate from High School also graduate from God. Few are fortunate enough to have a church that leaves the 99 and goes searching for the one lost sheep (Matthew 18:12) or in this case one fallen boy. Eutychus was very fortunate to have a church like this! A Church that cared so much about him that bringing him back into the family was more important than even continuing the worship service. The bible says “And *they brought* the young man in alive, and they were *not a little comforted*” (12).

QUOTE

Why does it take a young person leaving the church or going through some tragedy for the church to notice?

Notice it wasn't a one-man show! In other words, it wasn't just the pastor or leader going after the boy, the entire church worked together, and “They brought the young man in alive...” It bears mention though that the preacher led the way. Notice that Paul stopped his preaching and raced downstairs to the young man. “Paul went down, threw himself on the young man, and put his arms around him. “Don't be alarmed,” he said. “He's alive!” (vs 10).

If there is one thing, I have learned in youth ministry through the years, it is that proximity is the

key to reaching the younger generation. In other words, you must get up close and personal. Youth ministry is a contact sport. As one youth leader put it years ago, “you can impress kids from a distance, but you can only impact them up-close.” Apparently, Paul understood this and Eutychus was fortunate to have Paul as his preacher that night.

Interestingly, the prophet Elijah understood this as well and when the widow's son died in 1 Kings 17, he stretched himself out over the boy three times and prayed that his life would re-enter him (verse 21-22). Are you looking for a formula for successful youth ministry? Now you have one! Prayer + Proximity = Youth revival.

THE BILLION DOLLAR QUESTION

But here is the billion-dollar question! *Why did the young man have to fall out of the window in the first place? Why does it take a young person leaving the church or going through some tragedy for the church to notice?* What can we learn from this story that will help every congregation keep their little lambs before they leave the “ninety-nine?”

Talk Less

The first thing we need to do is talk less and start watching and listening more. The bible says that Paul “...*kept on talking until midnight* (7). Young people like Eutychus are giving us major signs of their spiritual condition. Notice, not a single person including Paul or the boy's parents realized he was sitting in a very dangerous location and was starting to fall asleep. You might want to read that again!

Can I keep it real? Are you noticing the youth in your church sitting in the balcony or dozing in the mother's room? What about those who are getting involved in risky behaviors outside of church or are



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showing signs of spiritual apathy? Are they engaging more with the sabbath school lesson or with their cell phone? One pastor friend of mine shared a pic with me of his church from the balcony while a guest preacher was speaking. The place was lit up with members (young and old) surfing the web during the sermon.

Don't misunderstand me! I am not talking about being judgmental but about being observant like a shepherd watching over his sheep. If we would talk less in order to observe more, we would have a better idea of where our youth are positioned spiritually and what needs to be done to keep them from falling asleep and falling away.

Perhaps you've noticed that in many Sabbath School classes the teacher takes on the role of a lecturer. In other words, he or she does most of the talking and though they will at times answer questions, they often seem annoyed at being interrupted. This is unfortunate since the young people have already been lectured to at school and really need an opportunity to share and discuss. In fact, this lecture style of teaching Sabbath School may be one major reason for its decline in some churches around the world. By the way, it is my humble opinion that this is a major problem in adult Sabbath School classes as well, though not as detrimental since most adults are not sitting in classroom lectures all week at school.

When it comes to youth ministry, we must never forget the following—if you are speaking, you are learning, if they are speaking, they are learning! In other words, Sabbath School should be a time for youth leaders to hear the hearts of their youth as they facilitate the lesson. This of course does not mean there is no place for sermons or lectures but that this mode of communication happens at 11 am in most churches. What I am saying is that Sabbath School can provide an excellent opportunity for us to talk less and listen more.

Love More

What Eutyclus desperately needed that night, was someone in the congregation to take an interest in him. Someone willing to sit beside him on that windowsill and keep him from falling.

I have never heard of a Seventh-day Adventist Church that did not love young people. In fact, when it comes to youth ministry, Adventists are the most self-sacrificing people on the planet. Many of our churches have had to go without badly needed renovations, technology, and financial resources in order to invest in Adventist Education or to support their local church's Adventurer or Pathfinder ministry. And guess what? Most do it without complaining!

But there is another way to express love for the younger generation that will also help keep them from falling out of the church. Ellen White hones in on it when she writes *“The Youth are objects of Satan’s special attacks, but KINDNESS, COURTESY, and the SYMPATHY which flows from a heart filled with love to Jesus, will gain their confidence, and save many of them from the snare of the enemy... WE SHOULD SEEK TO ENTER INTO THE FEELINGS OF THE YOUTH, SYMPATHIZING WITH THEM IN THEIR JOYS AND SORROWS, THEIR CONFLICTS AND VICTORIES... We must meet them where they are if we would KEEP THEM...”* (Gospel Workers p. 207-212).

As a child growing up, I was always taught to respect adults and treat them with utmost courtesy but notice according to Ellen White this should work both ways. The older generation, moved by their love for Jesus, is also to treat the younger generation as valued members of the body of Christ. Beyond our financial support, young people need our “kindness, courtesy and sympathy.” They need us to be engaged in their lives. They need us to “meet them where they are...” To listen more and talk

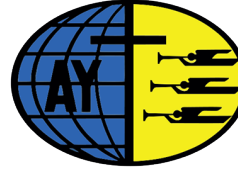
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less! If we do this, according to the Spirit of Prophecy, we will “keep them” from falling out of the church.

Research in the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been done on this! One of the top factors in youth retention is their relationship with the older generation in their local church. By the way, every young person has a relationship perceived or otherwise with the older generation. The question is whether this relationship is positive or not. When young people felt they were loved and valued unconditionally in the church by the older generation, they were most likely to remain in church years later. Do you love the youth in your church? If so, then now more than ever, God is calling you to love them even more!

Help Seat

The third thing we must do to keep our youth is help them find a seat. Apparently, not a single person offered Eutychus a seat that tragic night. This is another major factor in youth retention. Young people need opportunities to serve and make a significant contribution in their local church and community. They need a “seat at the table.” They need the older generation to help them find a seat, a warm place among the body of Christ, where they can use their gifts and talents for the Lord. This will require intentionality and hard work on behalf of the entire congregation, but it is well worth it!

Young people can do great things for the Lord! The Bible is filled with their exploits! The Apostle Paul

understood this and empowered young men like Timothy and Titus to give strong leadership to the churches (1 Timothy 1:3, Titus 1:5). Some of the greatest counsel to young people in all of scripture is found in Paul's charge to Timothy, *"Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity."*¹³ *Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching."*¹⁴ *Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you"* (1 Timothy 4:12-14).

Two things become very clear from these verses. First, unlike modern youth ministry, Paul refuses to lower the bar of expectation for young people. He calls them to a higher level, to be examples to the older generation in at least five ways (speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity). Second, Paul implies that youth involvement in ministry (including public ministry) is more than a good idea, it's a divine calling and responsibility! In fact, Paul warns Timothy that if he does not use his spiritual gifts to benefit the church, he is being neglectful. This means that it is the sacred responsibility of the local church to help the younger generation be obedient to the call of God. Like priest Eli, we must help the young Samuels among us to hear God's unique calling on their lives and be faithful (1 Samuel 3).

Of course, this does not mean that every young person has the same gifts as Timothy, Titus, or Samuel and should be thrown into leadership or public ministry positions right away. In fact, in many cases, it is best to start them out with smaller responsibilities. The bible says that Elisha who became one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament began his ministry by simply washing Elijah's hands! (2 Kings 3:11). While I don't recommend any pastor require this of their youth, it is good and even wise to involve local youth with smaller responsibilities first.

There are three reasons for this. First, it doesn't overwhelm the young person. Our goal is to pass on ministry to the younger generation not dump it on them. Second, it gives a real insight into the young person's heart. Are they humble? Are they Teachable? Interestingly, The Apostle Paul looked for two basic qualities in a church leader---competency and character (1 Timothy 3, 5, Titus 1). As much as we love our young people, being young doesn't necessarily qualify them for heavy leadership responsibilities---at least at first. Finally, starting young people out with smaller responsibilities at first gives a young person the opportunity to try different things in order to discover their ministry calling. We can learn much from stores like Costco that brilliantly provide food tasting booths. When you go to one of their booths, they never give you an entire meal but offer you a small sample of the meal instead. Once you have tasted the food and like it, you are much more likely to purchase it. Brilliant! *"And let him who has ears..."*

There are no insignificant details in the bible. God is telling us something clearly in this story. *Young people were not designed to sit up, pay up and shut up! They were not designed to only attend and listen to us speak at churches, camporees, and congresses as important as they are. They were designed to play an active part in God's work. They deserve a "seat at the table" and we must help seat them.* By the way, church leaders, if you are doing all the talking and all the ministry, then you are doing all the learning and all the growing. Why not share this with the younger generation before they fall asleep and fall away.

TEAM INTENTIONAL

Every church should have a team of individuals whose responsibility it is to help young people get placed in ministries that fit them. Moreover, this team needs

to make sure that every ministry leader is educated on how to effectively mentor a young person to serve as their associate. In other words, how to share, enrich and expand their ministry in doing so. Young people grow best when they are patiently and repeatedly taken through a process of observation (watch me do it), participation (do it with me), and activation (you do it and mentor someone else). The gospels tell us that for three years Jesus mentored His twelve young adults this way.

What did Jesus, Moses, Elijah, Barnabas, and Paul have in common? They gave a seat to the younger generation. No, I don't mean they gave up their ministries to the younger generation then walked away. I mean, they mentored young people some time for many years helping them grow in character and competency until God made it clear that it was time for the next generation to lead without them (See Joshua 1:2, 2 Kings 2:11). Who are you mentoring? As one leadership expert correctly warns us "there is no success without a successor."

By the way, what did King Saul not have in common with Jesus, Moses, Elijah, Barnabas, and Paul? He was jealous of the young man God had given him to mentor and even worked to sabotage David's success. Before you condemn King Saul, let me say this, King Saul's are among us today. There are indeed church and ministry leaders who are intimidated by young people. They fear their energy, talent, and charisma will soon trump their own, so they work subtly and even blatantly to keep them from opportunities to shine. But never forget this! Some believe Elisha became a greater prophet than Elijah (did more miracles) because he learned from his mentor's strengths and weaknesses. When the young person you are mentoring becomes greater than you, this means you were successful! So be proud of them and remember their ministry success is your success as well. Continue to use

your influence to help them grow and become all God has anointed them to be. Resist the evil spirit of Saul!

By the way, you don't need to wait until a committee is formed to help youth find a seat! You can help them personally find a seat now in ministry. Find out what they are interested in and what they enjoy doing. Then introduce them to the right people who can help them make it happen. Stay with them through the process to see if it's the right fit and be ready to help them find another ministry if it is not. Also, be open to helping the younger generation create new and innovative ministries that may not yet exist in your local church or community. Be patient and flexible---two core values of successful youth advocates!

Adventist Youth Resources

Perhaps you're wondering if there are Adventist youth resources that can help your church grow younger by reaching and retaining the next generation. There most certainly are! If you go to youth.adventist.org you will discover at least five helpful resources.

First, there is an excellent *Spiritual Gifts* test that young people can take to discover where God may be pointing them in ministry. Second, we have a *mentoring resource*—which will train your church on how to effectively mentor young people. Third, our *Senior Youth Leadership* (SYL) training curriculum will help you and your members become even more effective Adventist youth leaders. Fourth, you will want to check out *the Intergenerational Churches of Refuge* resource. If it's studied and incorporated into the culture of your Church, iCOR will make it a place that attracts young people and helps keep the ones you have from falling away. We highly recommend that every church pastors, elders, and deacons study all three resources carefully together. You

can also download our quarterly *Adventist Youth Leaders Magazine* which is available on our website as well.

Let me conclude by saying that in every congregation there are Eutychus's. Young people who are living on the very edge of eternity. This should concern us all and motivate us to urgent and intentional action! Our great God put this story in the bible so that you, your local church, Conference, Union, and Division could be proactive. Although it is ultimately the decision of every young person whether to stay or leave the body of Christ,

we can make it easier or harder for the enemy to push them over the edge! It is our earnest prayer at the General Conference Youth Department that the youth under your influence will be truly fortunate!



Gary Blanchard
GC Youth Director



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CAST YOUR CARE!

The Devil has a plan for your life. Yes, you read that right. In John 10:10 the Bible outlines his nefarious plan. “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy...” One of the ways our archenemy does this is through anxiety, stress, and worry. In fact, medical doctors call stress the “silent killer” because of its devastating impact on one’s holistic health and our often unwillingness to take it seriously!

According to Mayo Clinic, chronic stress increases the risk of anxiety disorders, depression, digestive problems, headaches, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, insomnia, heart disease, weight gain, cancer, and shortened longevity (www.mayoclinic.org). All of these symptoms steal, kill and destroy us!

This Coronavirus pandemic has no doubt been a real tool of the enemy. Many are afflicted with anxiety regarding their health, finances, and family. According to the Center for Disease Control, the younger generation (ages 18-24) has been dangerously impacted. Three out of four are now claiming to be experiencing one or more mental health conditions and, brace yourself, one out of every four now claim to have seriously contemplated ending their lives in the last 30 days (Youthaliveportal.org).

Yes, the Devil has a plan for your life and works through current events to afflict you with worry, stress and anxiety. From destructive storms and fires, to social and political unrest. Yes, 2020 has been Satan’s year to steal, kill and destroy.

SATAN + 2020

The dating site match.com ingeniously did a commercial recently showing Satan and a woman named “2020” starting a

dating relationship. The two-minute video shows the two enjoying the end of the world together. But what the somewhat humorous video fails to communicate is the fact that Satan himself is behind the stressful events in our world today. He is the one with the dastardly plan to steal, kill and destroy the spiritual, physical and mental health of humanity. Not surprisingly, in the commercial Satan refuses to enter a church with his new love interest “2020.” No doubt because he knows his plan for our lives is in complete contrast to that of God’s!

GOD’S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

In John 10:10 we also discover God’s plan for our lives! “The thief comes to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” Notice the contrast! Satan steals our life through stress, worry, and anxiety but Jesus gives us life “abundantly.”

How do we access this abundant life?

1) First, we must stop just praying that God will take our worries, anxieties, and stresses! We must start casting them upon Him instead!

In 1 Peter 5:7 the bible tells us to “cast all your anxiety upon Him because he cares for us.” Notice we are not to passively give our anxieties to Jesus but “cast” them upon Him! The word casting means “to throw upon.”

Why do we need to cast our cares upon Him? For three simple reasons. First because “he cares for us,” Second because He can handle it, and thirdly because holding on to stress hurts us.

HOT POTATOES

Recently, I tried to illustrate this third point using hot potatoes. My wife baked them super-hot then during

my sermon on this particular passage, I threw the potatoes out into the audience. Not my smartest moment! If you work for Adventist Risk Management, please try to forget this. As soon as the people caught the potatoes they quickly and wisely dropped them to the ground before their hands got burned. As inadvisable as this sermon illustration was, it did make an important point. Holding on to anxiety and stress and not quickly “casting” it in prayer upon Jesus will harm our holistic health leading to all kinds of symptoms.

In Philippians 4:6-7 God’s Word warns us that the hot potatoes of anxiety, stress, and worry do indeed endanger our “hearts and minds.” The verse says, “Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Notice that prayer is not just a good idea, it is vital to our health, especially in these crazy times.

SUPERNATURAL PEACE

God makes a wonderful promise in this passage to those who stop allowing Satan to steal, kill and destroy them! God offers “supernatural peace” to those who cast their care upon Him in prayer. The bible calls it “...the peace of God that surpasses all understanding...” In other words, this incredible peace confounds human logic. In this world, people are at peace only when things are going their way (money in the bank, good health, car runs, monthly mortgage is paid, Wi-Fi works, etc.). However, as soon as things are not going well or tragedy strikes, their ceramic peace shatters. But God’s peace is not dependent on outward circumstances. It’s present when the waters are calm or when they are raging!

When Jesus and his disciples were caught in a storm the contrast between them was stark.

The disciples were terrified and even wondered if God still cared about them. “Lord don’t you care?” they screamed above the stressful storm. But Jesus had a supernatural peace that kept Him oddly calm in the midst of a life-threatening situation. In fact, the disciples actually found him sleeping in the boat, His head resting calmly on a pillow (Mark 4:38-39).

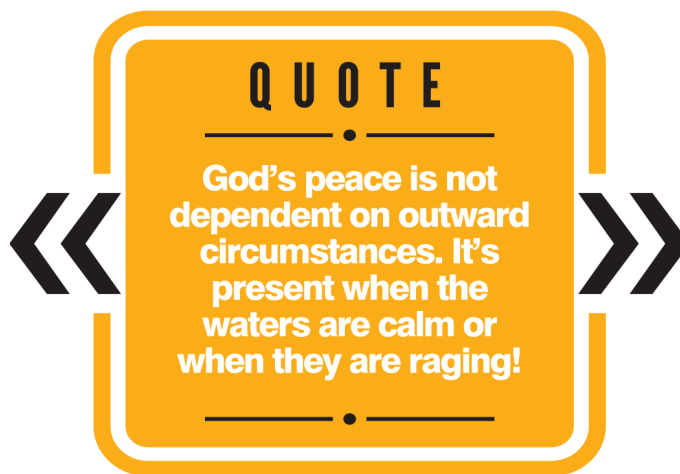
This my friend is the promised “...peace of God that surpasses all understanding...”

We too can experience it regardless of the satanic tumult around us. Interestingly, Ellen White tells us that Satan was behind the storm that night that caused a cascade of anxiety for the disciples (go figure!). His plan is always to steal, kill and destroy but it was God that calmed his child and calmed the storm!

Several years ago, Scott Krippayne performed a song titled “Sometimes He Calms the Storm” that sums up this wonderful peace from God:

“Sometimes He calms the storm
with a whisper “peace, be still
He can settle any sea
But it doesn’t mean He will
Sometimes he holds us close
And lets the wind and waves go wild
Sometimes He calms the storm
And other times He calms His Child.”

When we cast our cares upon The One who cares for us, we can expect at least two things. Either God will supernaturally calm our situation, or He



will supernaturally calm us! Either way our health is protected, and we live a more “abundant” life.

I am a huge fan of the artist Dawson and his painting titled “Peace in the Midst of the Storm.” If you have a chance to check it out online, you will be greatly blessed. It’s a picture of a raging storm---lightning is flashing, a deluge of rain is falling, flood waters are rising and yet at the center of the picture resting peacefully in the rock is a little bird. Like no other, this picture shows the mind bending and profound impact of God’s supernatural peace given to all who cast their care upon Him who is our Rock!

Now we move into the second and last thing we must do to access God’s plan to give us an abundant life:

2) We must go through any doors of escape He provides!

SUPERNATURAL ESCAPE

As if supernatural peace were not enough, God also promises supernatural escape. That’s right! Let this amazing promise in Isaiah 43:15-16 sink in.

“I am the LORD, your Holy One, The Creator of Israel, your king. Thus, says that LORD, who makes a way through the sea and path through the mighty waters.”

In the *Great Controversy* page 525, Ellen White confirms this promise beautifully. She writes “...whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your Spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be open for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. The heavier your burdens, the more blessed the rest in casting them upon the Burden Bearer.”

You might feel that your situation is beyond help but this is not the case! It’s never the case! We are told to lay out “whatever” issues we have to the Lord our “burden bearer” and He will help us “disentangle.” What a precious promise!

Now notice we have a responsibility here. We are to first “spread our case before the Lord.” This means to be completely transparent with him regarding our situation. It’s also about being painfully honest and specific regarding our needs. Then, we are to take whatever doors of opportunities He opens for us. This may take time and patience, but it is a promise so expect it!

Perhaps you’ve heard the story of the man who was caught in a flood. He asked God to save him from the deadly situation he was in. In no time a boat appeared, and the captain invited the man inside, but the man said, “no thank you I am waiting on the Lord to rescue me.” A little later a helicopter appeared, and the pilot threw him a rope ladder. Again, the man said, “no thank you, God

...whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your Spirit will be braced for endurance.

will deliver me.” Sadly, the man drowned in the flood. When he got to heaven, He asked God why he did not deliver him. God replied “I tried! I sent you a boat and a helicopter.” The problem is never that God abandons his people in times of trial and difficulty, it’s that often they do not avail themselves of the help he sends them!

My dear friend, If God could defeat death at the resurrection of Jesus and if he could mastermind a plan to save the human race through the blood of Christ, then you do not have a problem too big for Him to guide you through! Please take whatever help he sends your way and consider it supernatural because it is.

In his beautiful song, Don Moen put it best “God will make a way where there seems to be no way, he works in ways we cannot see, He will make a way for me, He will guide, Hold me closely to His side, With love and strength for each new day, he will make a way, He will make a way.”

My dear friend, now is the perfect time to cast your cares upon “the burden bearer,” trusting him to give you supernatural peace and supernatural escape.



Gary Blanchard
GC Youth Director



COVID-19 VACCINES: ADDRESSING CONCERNS, OFFERING COUNSEL

The following article was originally published on the Adventist News website: [COVID-19 Vaccines: Addressing Concerns, Offering Counsel](#)

Seventh-day Adventists look to the coming of Christ as the great culmination of history and an end of all disease, suffering, and death. At the same time, we have been entrusted with the Adventist health message embodied in and expanded upon by the writings of Ellen White, summarizing healthful living through practical and holistic healthy lifestyle behaviors.

We advocate all of these practices to maintain a healthy immune system, and in the pandemic, even more is needed. Ellen White was not only an inspired conduit of health information much ahead of her time, but she modeled practical prevention in the face of the lethal disease in her era, smallpox, and took the immunization herself, as did those close to her.¹ Today, smallpox has been globally eradicated.

We hope that this article will answer questions, allay fears, and resolve some of the prevalent myths and rumors, thereby bringing peace to the hearts of our members as they make health decisions guided by their health-care providers.

There are rumors and conspiracy theories that use the COVID-19 vaccine as an interpretation and/or fulfillment of prophecy. We asked the General Conference Biblical Research Institute for comments in this regard, and the response is as follows:

“The global upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has generated considerable speculations related to end-time events and misinterpretations of the Bible. One recent view, propagated through social media and some internet websites, has put forward the theory that the upcoming vaccines produced to combat COVID-19 belong to a process of control that will lead to the application of the mark of the beast.

It should be noted, however, that Adventists hold to the conviction that the end-time controversy will center on the law of God, and particularly on the fourth commandment (Rev 14:12). Moreover, the third angel’s message will warn against the reception of the mark (Rev 14:9–11) and will enlighten humankind as to the issues involved.

For this reason, it should be made clear that Seventh-day Adventists understand the “mark of the beast” to be not a literal mark but a sign of allegiance that identifies the bearer as loyal to the power represented by the beast.

From a distinct perspective, another speculative view argues that vaccines make those who take them unclean because, supposedly, unclean substances are used to produce them. In this regard, it should be clarified that the abiding biblical instructions forbidding the consumption of unclean food and blood (Lev 11:1–20; 17:11–12; Acts 15:20) do not apply to vaccines for the obvious reason that vaccines are produced as medication to save lives, not to serve as food.

Speculations such as these bring the Word of God into disrepute and cause confusion among sincere but less-informed believers. Using the introduction of a vaccine to stir up an eschatological scenario of spiritual and cosmic proportions, or to oppose it on the basis of a faulty interpretation of Scripture, only distracts sincere

believers from the real prophetic issues and the Adventist Church’s commitment to proclaim the gospel.

Hopefully an effective vaccine will help to bring the current pandemic to a halt. This will protect the lives of those who still need to know about the gospel, as well as those who have already accepted the gospel and are thus charged with the proclamation of God’s infinite love to a suffering world (John 3:16).”²

Adventist Health Ministries is firmly based on the Bible, the instruction of the Spirit of Prophecy through Ellen White, and is consonant with peer-reviewed, evidence-based health science. We rely on these foundations in formulating health approaches and advice. With millions infected, and many dead, and global infections on the increase, a number of vaccines have been developed in record time. There are numerous questions people are asking regarding the COVID-19 vaccine.

As a church, while we support evidence-based public health recommendations, we are also careful not to make pronouncements that may be construed as replacing national and international public health guidelines. For this reason, it is important for our comments to be understood within the framework of our [official church position on immunization](#):

“The Seventh-day Adventist Church places strong emphasis on health and well-being. The Adventist health emphasis is based on biblical revelation, the inspired writing of E. G. White (co-founder of the Church), and on peer-reviewed scientific literature. As such, we encourage responsible immunization/vaccination, and have no religious or faith-based reason not to encourage our adherents to responsibly participate in protective and preventive immunization programs. We value the

health and safety of the population, which includes the maintenance of ‘herd immunity.’

“We are not the conscience of the individual church member and recognize individual choices. These are exercised by the individual. The choice not to be immunized is not and should not be seen as the dogma nor the doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”

There have been efforts to establish a reliable evidence-based approach to treatment of COVID-19. Additionally, and within record time, vaccines have been produced which are now being used to help bring the pandemic under control. However, people do have concerns and questions regarding COVID-19 vaccines.

Emergency use authorization (EUA) for the Pfizer/BioNtech vaccine was granted on December 2, 2020, in the United Kingdom, and on December 9 in Canada. In the U.S., the Pfizer vaccine was reviewed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and provisionally authorized on December 11. The Moderna vaccine will follow.

In conversation with the Loma Linda University School of Public Health (LLUSPH), Michael Hogue, dean of the Loma Linda School of Pharmacy, who serves on the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Advisory

Committee on Immunization Practices Workgroup on COVID-19 Vaccines and on the San Bernardino County COVID-19 Vaccine Taskforce in California, shared the following insights regarding frequently asked questions on the Pfizer/BioNtech and Moderna vaccines. His insights and explanations of common questions appear below.

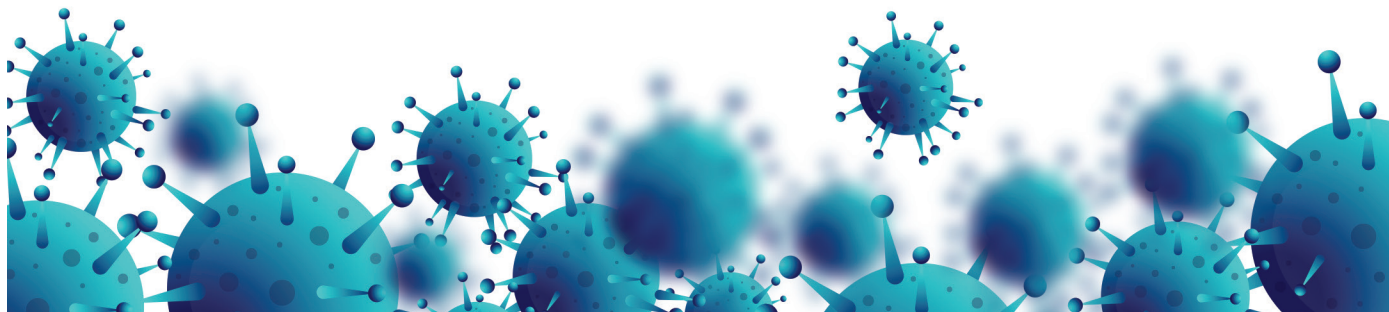
QUESTIONS AND FACTS ABOUT THE VACCINE

Question: *Does the mRNA (messenger Ribonucleic Acid) vaccine change your DNA?*

FACT: Both referenced vaccines are based on mRNA, which is a first for vaccines, but the technology has been used in medical treatments for the past 15 years. The vaccine enters into a cell’s cytoplasm (the fluid within the cell), where it stimulates the production of antibodies to fight the SARS-CoV-2’s spike protein. Since it does not enter the nucleus of the host cell, it does not change the DNA or genetic structure/function.

Question: Can it be safe and effective, as it was developed so quickly?

FACT: Due to current technology, the SARS-CoV-2 virus was sequenced within days of its being identified, and work on a vaccine was started right away. The sample size for the large study is 40,000 people (the average FDA



vaccine study sample size is usually only 27,000). We are two months into a two-year study. Data is being carefully monitored.

The first dose showed a 50-percent immune response protection. The second dose reached 95 percent protection! (Only Hepatitis A vaccine is higher, at just about 100 percent protection.) The study was well designed and represented U.S. demographics very closely, with the exception of Native Americans (and the ongoing study is working to rectify that). Efficacy and side effects were similar in all ethnic groups.

Question: Are the ingredients and preservatives in the vaccine dangerous?

FACT: There are no preservatives in these two COVID-19 vaccines, which is why they require deep freeze/freezer facilities for storage and transport. The vaccine is carefully purified.

Question: What are the side effects?

FACT: So far, 10 percent of subjects have reported fever by the second day, and in 24 hours, 50-60 percent reported feeling “achy.” There have so far been very few serious side effects with the Pfizer/BioNtech vaccine, including three cases of significant allergic reactions (unusually low; probably due to the non-use of preservatives).

Dr. Hogue further commented that if a person has already tested COVID-19 positive in the past, that person can still get the vaccine; it will simply increase the person’s antibody levels. He also pointed out that taking the vaccine in the USA is voluntary, not mandatory.

The efficacy of the Pfizer/BioNtech and Moderna vaccines is similar, but they are not interchangeable (if a person starts with one, the second dose has to be from

the same brand). For the Pfizer vaccine, there is a 21-day interval between the two doses; it is reported that for the Moderna vaccine, the interval will be 28 days between doses. The vaccine is not authorized for use during pregnancy or in those under 16 years of age.

CONCLUSION

Immunization, along with sanitation and clean water, has been foundational to the improved longevity seen around the world where these interventions have been applied. Vaccines have long been used by Adventist church members throughout the world. Along with good health practices, they have provided protection against many infections and prevented illness and death.

As we witness the global magnitude of the pandemic, the deaths, disability, and long-term COVID-19 effects that are emerging in all age groups, we are encouraging our members to consider responsible immunization and the promotion and facilitation of the development of what is commonly termed *herd immunity* (pre-existing community immunity of approximately 80 percent of individuals as a result of previous infection and/or vaccination).

We reiterate: ***THE DECISION TO BE IMMUNIZED OR NOT IS THE CHOICE OF EACH INDIVIDUAL AND SHOULD BE TAKEN IN CONSULTATION WITH ONE’S HEALTH-CARE PROVIDER. PERSONAL RESEARCH ON THE SUBJECT IS IMPORTANT. WE ULTIMATELY RELY ON FOLLOWING BIBLICAL HEALTH PRACTICES AND THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, AND FOLLOWING GOD’S LEADING IN OUR LIVES, WHICH WILL BRING US PEACE AND ASSURANCE IN OUR DECISION-MAKING.***

1. Concerning vaccination against smallpox, D. E. Robinson, one of Ellen White's secretaries, under the date of June 12, 1931, wrote as follows concerning Mrs. White's attitude toward vaccination:

"You ask for definite and concise information regarding what Sister White wrote about vaccination and serum.

"This question can be answered very briefly because so far as we have any record, she did not refer to them in any of her writings.


"You will be interested to know, however, that at a time when there was an epidemic of smallpox in the vicinity, she herself was vaccinated and urged her helpers, those connected with her, to be vaccinated. In taking this step, Sister White recognized the fact that it has been proven that vaccination either renders one immune from smallpox or greatly lightens its effects if one does come down with it. She also recognized the danger of their exposing others if they failed to take this precaution. [Signed] D. E. Robinson" (*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 303).

2. Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, December 2020.

QUOTE

We are not the conscience of the individual church member and recognize individual choices. These are exercised by the individual. The choice not to be immunized is not and should not be seen as the dogma nor the doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.





GENERAL CONFERENCE LEADERS VOTE TO POSTPONE GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION 2020 FOR A SECOND TIME

This article was originally published on the Adventist news website: [Leaders Vote to Postpone General Conference Session 2020 for a Second Time](#)

For the second time in 10 months, members of the Executive Committee of the global Seventh-day Adventist Church have voted to postpone the quinquennial session of the denomination, originally scheduled for late June of 2020, due to challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members of the Executive Committee (EXCOM) from around the world attended the January 12, 2021 virtual Zoom session, where they listened to reports from the world church administration, health officers of the church, logistics coordinators, and legal counsel. Leaders discussed the feasibility of adhering to the planned business session dates of May 20-25, 2021 in Indianapolis, Indiana, United States, that had been previously approved by the same body.

The persistence of the deadly global COVID-19 pandemic and its enduring impacts on public health, travel, and the availability of international visas persuaded the international body to postpone the session until June 6-11, 2022, also in Indianapolis. The new plan voted by church leaders and laypersons now postpones the date for the denomination's quinquennial business session for nearly two years from its originally scheduled dates, as allowed by the Adventist Church's constitution.

General Conference (GC) President Ted N. C. Wilson, who chaired the EXCOM committee, began the two-hour meeting by outlining the process

of data collection and discussion that brought the recommendations to the governing body of the church. “A team of workers has been working diligently,” Wilson said. “We have been carefully reviewing things, especially with those in session management and planning.”

Wilson added that recommendations are coming from a consensus approach from various groups, including world division officers, health professionals, Adventist Risk Management, the Office of General Counsel, and other Adventist Church leaders. “This is not a recommendation directly coming from the three senior officers of the GC,” he said. “This is something that has come from a plethora of information and counselors.”

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Wilson introduced those who would provide background and context to the current and projected challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic.

Peter Landless, director of Health Ministries for the global Adventist Church, shared current COVID-19 statistics and concerns of moving forward with such a large gathering. Given the rising infection numbers, along with a new, more infectious, and aggressive strain, Landless said the Health Ministries department had to recommend delaying the GC Session.

“We’ve been consulting with international experts and taking into account the needs and concerns. The GC Health Ministries department believes it is prudent and practical stewardship to postpone the GC Session to 2022, given this difficult time,” Landless said. “And it is with a heavy heart one makes this recommendation. However, it is a recommendation that comes because it appears there is no alternative.”

GC meeting planner Sheri Clemmer outlined some of the current challenges to a large meeting of delegates from around the world. She mentioned visitor visa

difficulties and quarantine requirements, especially for those who use public transportation and transportation hubs. She also explained standard COVID protocols surrounding mass gatherings in Indianapolis.

G. T. Ng, executive secretary of the global Adventist Church, reported data collected from the division leadership about the likelihood of delegates being able to attend the May 2021 GC Session. Major challenges to achieving a large portion of delegates that were expressed by division leadership included travel bans, quarantine restrictions, and problems obtaining visas to the United States. The General Conference constitution does not currently allow for electronic participation at a General Conference Session.

Tim Northrop, president of Adventist Risk Management, outlined various liability risks that could follow if EXCOM voted to not delay the 2021 Session.

“We have an important meeting for our church. What we have heard is that there are potential exposures and potential risks,” Northrop said. “We have also heard our constitution allows us to weigh those risks and to consider moving the meeting to a later date. This business continuity plan we have as leaders is important. It allows us to be more nimble and allows us to continue the ministry of our church.”

Following the presentations and discussion, the recommendation to move the dates of the General Conference to June 2022 was put to a vote by electronic polling. The motion passed with a vote of 185 to 9.

Following the vote, Landless concluded the discussion with a serious observation: “We have been brought to this point, not because it is something we would like to do, but something we have to do.”



ADVENTIST YOUTH PRAYER NETWORK HOLDS ITS FIRST CONVENTION

“I Will Pray” event galvanizes young members across the Southern Asia-Pacific region.

Young Adventists across the Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD) gathered on Zoom and on Facebook Live to hold the first Prayer Network Convention during a week in December 2020.

More than 1,083 young people registered for the “I Will Pray” event, more than 350 connected to the Zoom link each night, and the seven-day prayer initiative recorded 24,000 views online.

According to organizers, Adventist young adults feasted on the Word of God and the inspired words of Adventist Church co-founder Ellen White through several guest speakers. General Conference prayer coordinator Melody Mason opened the session with a message on intercessory prayer. Mason emphasized that young people need to be willing to be inconvenienced to pray for others, put away sin, and obey God. She suggested they should all stay humble and hold on, and not let go.

On the following nights, other leaders addressed the virtual crowd, including General Conference (GC) Sabbath School curriculum manager Nina Atcheson, Adventist Church youth director Gary Blanchard, and GC ministerial secretary Jerry Page.

During vespers, SSD family ministries director Orathai Chureson focused her talk on “Prayer in the Home Circle: Reflecting on God’s Faithfulness.” Chureson invited everyone to “lead all members of our family to recognize



God's faithfulness" and to render their prayers "with a full sense of respect, reverence, praise, adoration, and gratitude."

SSD president Saw Samuel encouraged young people to pray with passion, persistence, and thankfulness. He reminded his audience that "I Will Pray" is not an event but a process. "It is not information but a transformation. It is not a subject but a commitment, a determination, a decision. It is a lifestyle, a prayer-driven life," he said.

Feedback from the event was overwhelmingly positive.

"The Lord has been so gracious since the time He called me to be part of the SSD Prayer Network as coordinator," event coordinator Gen Camato said. "The Prayer Convention taught me to be more dependent on our heavenly Father."

Yan Michael Sitanggang, from Indonesia, said that through the prayer convention, he was blessed and also reminded that prayer is the number-one thing that he shouldn't forget. "The theme is so wonderful and relatable with my life today, and I believe that it helps to reaffirm

and strengthen my connection with Him," Sitanggang said. "This changed my understanding of prayer and helped me depend and focus on God more than on myself. It has been a blessing for the attendees."

Ellen Supit, Prayer Network coordinator in the West Indonesia Union Mission, said that by attending the event, she learned that prayer is a two-way communication system, and it is the key to knowing God's heart. "[We must] not only lift our petitions but also be still and hear His answer.... We are to seek His heart before we seek His blessings," she said.

Saw Htee Khy Wah, Prayer Network coordinator from Myanmar, concurred. "Praying to God is more than speaking with Him; it's having a relationship with Him," Wah said.

Source:

<https://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story15904-adventist-youth-prayer-network-holds-its-first-convention>



**Petronio
Genebago**

Southern Asia-Pacific
Division, and *Adventist
Review*





ADVENTURER MINISTRY UPDATES

ADVENTURER DAY

Calling all Adventurers! We are so excited to announce the First-Ever Official World Adventurer Day on May 15, 2021. It will be a day full of smiles, singing, prayer, and of course, Adventurers!

We cannot wait to see all of our 1.5 million adventurers across all the 40,000 clubs that will join us in celebrating this wonderful day that we know will be a blessing to all. Resources will be made available soon on our website: youth.adventist.org

Adventurers remember to bring your best and be all Jesus wants you to be! See you All on May 15, 2021!

ADVENTURER CURRICULUM

The Adventurer club is a wonderful ministry that for decades has served the youngest members of our church. We have seen how our children learn to love Jesus and develop in so many other ways thanks to the work done by our Adventurer leaders.

We know that the world changes every day and we have been working diligently to create resources to support those very leaders in their work with our Adventurers. Now, we are pleased to announce the all-new Adventurer Curriculum Bundle. This new curriculum introduces 2 new classes, Little Lamb and Early Bird, to our world field. You will also find manuals, an updated Award Book, as well as media resources.

All materials have been given to your Division leaders and they will be making the necessary adaptations and translations in the upcoming weeks. We will only have general guidelines on our website, <http://youth.adventist.org>, related to the Adventurer Curriculum. Please make sure to stay updated with your local division and unions for more information on these resources.

We are excited to see how you use this all-new bundle and the difference it will make in the lives of our Adventurers worldwide!



WORLD ADVENTURER DAY

May 15, 2021



ADVENTIST YOUTH MINISTRIES
GENERAL CONFERENCE

YOUTH.ADVENTIST.ORG 

PATHFINDER BIBLE EXPERIENCE

The Pathfinder Bible Experience is the Official North American Division Pathfinder Bible study program. Some affectionately call the program Bible Bowl. Each year, teams of six club members study a book of the Bible (alternating Old Testament and New Testament), memorizing large portions of God's word.

There are four levels of competition - Area, Conference, Union, and Division. The Pathfinders are tested over the assigned study books as well as the SDA Bible Commentary Introduction to each study book.

At each level, the teams scoring 90% or higher of the highest score at their testing site make 1st place and are invited to go on to the next level. The winning teams are extreme students of the Bible and in most cases memorize chapters and, in some cases, the entire book(s). Winning teams incorporate the Total Church Involvement approach. This means they have study coaches but also involve the church elders and other members of the local church to assist in making up sample tests, friendly competition against the elders to see who is the better student of the Bible, become involved in worships made up of talks from subject matter from the assigned study book(s). The students may also perform dramas depicting some of the Biblical stories from their assigned study book.

The Pathfinder Bible Experience How-to Guide will assist you in organizing your local Pathfinder PBE Team.

<https://www.clubministries.org/wp-content/uploads/HowtoBibleExperience.pdf>

2021 PBE RESOURCES

The Pathfinder Bible Experience is still on!!!

The Youth and Young Adult department of the North American Division, in conjunction with the Youth directors of the Unions have agreed to continue planning for a full PBE season starting next February. A different set of rules and setups have been planned for teams and conference leaders as they prepare to have the testing in the midst of COVID-19. The rules and procedures have been sent to the Conference leaders for them to prepare and be ready. More information as to how this will happen will be coming soon by your conference leaders.

Union and Division level will be held online (more information on that soon).

Teams and leaders are encouraged to continue studying and preparing their chapters. In the midst of this pandemic, our purpose is still to learn the word of God and at the same time, be safe while we engage and participate with others. We pray that this PBE Covid Edition season is a blessed one.

FOR MORE INFO: <https://www.clubministries.org/pathfinders/pathfinder-bible-experience/>



THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

“THE BRANCH OF SALVATION”

INTRODUCTION

This paper will examine the messianic passage in Zechariah 6:9-15, Zechariah's second oracle where he makes reference to the Branch. It has been debated over the years by many scholars who have disagreed on the messianic nature of the passage.

MAIN BODY

Personal Fresh English Translation

9. *And the word of the Lord came to me saying*
10. *Take from the exiles, from Heldai and from Tobiah and from Jedaiah and you come this day come to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah which came from Babylon*
11. *And take silver and gold and make crowns and put it on the head of Josiah son of Jehozadak the high priest*
12. *And speak to him saying thus says the Lord of host saying behold the man Branch is his name and from under him he will spring up and build the temple of the Lord*
13. *And he shall build the temple of the Lord and his glory will be lifted up and he shall sit and he shall rule over his throne and he will be priest over his throne and the counsel of peace shall be between the two of them*
14. *And the crowns shall be a memorial to Helem and to Tobiah and to Jedaiah and to Hen, the son of Zephaniah in the temple of the Lord*
15. *And those far away shall come and shall build the temple of the Lord and you shall know that the Lord of host has sent me to you, and it will come to pass if you surely obey the voice of the Lord your God*

There are several keywords in this passage that have caused much debate among scholars. Among them is *Semah* the word translated Branch which the majority of scholars seem to translate as either Branch, Shoot, or Dawn. I went with the Hebrew Strong's Dictionary definition of Branch. The word *atarot* which appears in verse 11 & 14 is another word which is debated by scholars, in this case, I went with the translation of crowns because it was plural. Hen in verse 14 could be translated alternately as grace or favor. I opted to use the word as a proper name because Hen is referenced as the son of Zephaniah.

INNER-BIBLICAL ANALYSIS

The use of the word Branch, and reference to him as a person, is the main key to the messianic nature of the passage. However, a combination of actions and words used in the passage supports the suspicion that this passage references more than just the immediate time period. In this passage, crowns are made and placed on the head of Joshua and set as a memorial. Joshua is not of the Davidic line and it was not customary for priests to be crowned. The character Branch is identified as one who will build the temple will be glorified and sit and rule over the throne as well as be the priest.

At this particular time in Israel's history, they are in the process of rebuilding the temple. They are post-exile and the temple was being rebuilt under the leadership of Zerubbabel. It is declared in Zechariah chapter 4 that Zerubbabel has laid the stone for the temple and he shall also complete the temple during vision 4. In chapter 6:15 Zechariah references those who shall come from far away to build the temple. In this time period, exiles were coming back with treasures including gold and silver

to aid in the building of the temple. Later during Ezra's return, he would commission the priest to bring the treasures into the temple.

Branch is also referenced Zechariah 3:8 as the servant of God. Here it's argued that the person referenced is most likely a future figure of the Davidic line because of the use of the term servant. Additionally, the use of priestly language as the stones referenced could be part of the high priest garment.[12] In the reference in this chapter, Branch does not seem to readily identify any earthly figure in the vision at the time. So, one can conclude that in both references of the term Branch in Zechariah there is a messianic connection.

INTERTEXTUAL BIBLICAL ANALYSIS

While the use of the word *Semah* is used with some ambiguity, in Zechariah there are several other references in the Hebrew Bible which provide clarity on the identity of the mysterious Branch person in Zechariah. While there are twelve references where the root *semah* is used in the Hebrew Bible Biblia Hebraica as a common, singular, and masculine noun there are two references in the book of Jeremiah where it is used as a person. The reference in Zechariah can be associated with these instances.

Jeremiah was pre-exile so the information in Zechariah would be a reference back to something that would have been known at the time. In the first reference, Jeremiah 23:1-8 the Lord promises to rise up to David a Branch of righteousness. Based on the text it's clear that this Branch of righteousness is a person. In fact, the person is further identified as "The Lord Our Righteousness," which one can understand is a person of divine origin. In the context of this passage, Jeremiah

QUOTE

God is orchestrating the events of history and His remnant people.

seems to be describing a time post-exile when God gathers His people from where He has driven them. The connection to the Branch Zechariah's second oracle can be seen as connected and even referring back to this earlier reference.

While prophesying from prison, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah a second time mirroring the message in Jeremiah 23. In Jeremiah 33, the Branch is again referenced. Similar to the reference in chapter 23, God promises to raise up a Branch of righteousness to David. This Branch is described as a person. He is also specifically identified as “The Lord Our Righteousness,” as He was in Jeremiah 23. The context of this passage is also similar to the previous in that it speaks also of God gathering His remnant who were scattered to once again praise Him in the Land.

In Jeremiah 33:17-18, both the throne of David and the priestly line of the Levites are mentioned. This is a parallel to Zechariah 6:13, where there is a reference to the man Branch ruling over His throne and also serving as a priest over His throne. These two roles throughout Israel's history have been separate and distinct. Zechariah mention here provides strong evidence these passages are connected. In both cases, however, the prophets are speaking or acting under the influence and guidance

of the Lord. If one believes God is orchestrating the events of history and His remnant people, one can easily understand these intertextual references to the Branch are connected.

While the root word *semah* is used multiple times throughout the Hebrew Bible, the references in Jeremiah correlate directly to the references in Zechariah. These give the clearest evidence to the reference of the Branch and his divine identity and function. There are references in Isaiah to a branch as well which are not as closely connected. Isaiah 11:1-2 also speaks of a branch but uses a different root word *choter* as the term for branch. In this reference, the branch is also a person who comes from the offspring of Jesse, which could also point to the Davidic line.

A connection regarding the presence of the priesthood and kingship can also be connected to other biblical texts.[13] Rydelnik suggests, and I agree, that the passage here can be associated with the reference in Psalm 110:4 indicating that the *Semah* will come to build the true temple of God which will unite the priestly and kingly roles. This reference connects back to Melchizedek who makes his first appearance in Genesis 14 and is the only other person to be identified as having the dual role of both king and priest.

LARGER THEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE

The larger theological landscape in which this passage occurs is in the post-exilic time frame. Based on the information in Zechariah 1:1, his prophecies began shortly after the prophet Haggai. The time period for events in Zechariah 1-8 is (520-518 B.C).[14] The first of the three returns had already taken place where Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest who were the leaders at the time. As previously prophesied by

Jeremiah at the appointed time the command was given to go and rebuild the temple.

Exiles had already returned to rebuild the temple. Their mission was not without challenges. They had set up the altar and laid the foundation but the people who were in the land antagonized them. They hired counselors to frustrate the work and discourage them. Eventually, they were successful at getting an order to cease building from King Artaxerxes.

Haggai brings the message that the Lord's house is to be built and Zechariah reinforces the message. Zerubbabel and Joshua were stirred up by the Spirit of the Lord to continue the building process. In their view, the people could be expecting that the messiah would come as they are returning to the land. Their return signals a renewal of the covenant as the covenant land is now once again in view. The prophecies of Jeremiah are being fulfilled. God had promised that He had a plan for His people and that He would gather them from where they were scattered because of their covenantal unfaithfulness and bring them back to the land. There was a promise that He would once again be with them and be worshipped.

Zerubbabel the governor was of the Davidic line and would have been expected to be the one who would have taken rule at this time. Though the prophecies in Jeremiah predicted that a remnant would come back it also spoke of the man Branch. It is possible that they could possibly have expected that the man Branch would come at this time. Joshua was serving as priest and there were enough people that returned to take care of the people in the Levitical line to take care of the temple needs. Zerubbabel would finish the temple as promised. The signs that Zechariah mentioned to affirm he was the Lord's prophet would be fulfilled.

QUOTE

God had promised that He had a plan for His people and that He would gather them from where they were scattered because of their covenantal unfaithfulness and bring them back to the land.

At this point, the frame of reference for the people of Israel was changing. They had once identified strongly with the exodus and the mighty way that God had worked. Now in addition to the exodus, they had the experience of being in exile. God had delivered the punishment He promised because of their disobedience. True to His word He was now restoring them because He had triumphed once again in another rescue operation. Throughout the history of His people, He had been faithful to the original covenant that He made with Abraham.

MESSIANIC PROPHECY TYPE ASSESSMENT

The messianic prophecy type in this passage is possibly a mix between typical fulfillment and applicational fulfillment. With regards to the man Branch who can be identified as “The Lord Our Righteousness” or the Messiah, it was predicted that He would build the temple of the Lord. Jesus predicted that if they tear down this temple in three days, He would restore it. It's logical that people could have in mind the physical temple however, it was a type of temple that Jesus would restore, His body. Additionally, there was already a temple in heaven of which the earthly temple was modeled. Jesus whom one can consider as the only person that could fill the role of the man Branch did not finish any buildings



on earth. He restored Himself through His resurrection which was the temple He meant when He said destroy this temple.

The man Branch is also expected to be glorified and sit and rule over the throne and also be priest over the throne. This is both a typical and applicational fulfillment. Typical fulfillment in the sense that the throne is not the earthly Davidic throne that one may have considered referenced here. Indeed, it is the heavenly throne on which Christ now rules. As an applicational fulfillment, Christ was considered the King of the Jews by some while on earth. Although He did not rule over any earthly kingdom. The New Testament writers record that Christ is now seated on the right hand of God where He is King of this world. Additionally, He holds the title of our high priest and will be our judge. Essentially, though He is not or has not served on this earth as king and priest He serves now as priest and king.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Christ fulfills the role identified as the Branch in Zechariah 6:9-15. When compared with other references within the book as well as throughout the Bible substantial evidence exists to identify Christ hence the reference is messianic in nature. The prophecy has been/ is being fulfilled now as Christ continues to serve as our king and high priest.

QUOTE

This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.

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