

# Adventist World

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04/2024

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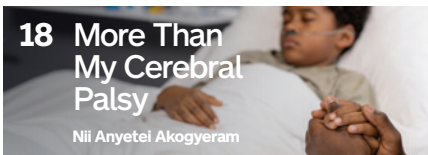
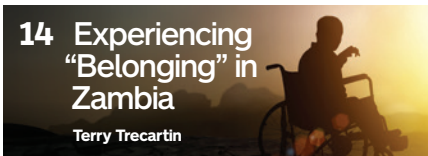
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## Seeing Possibilities





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Where Is Damien?

# The Blind Mind

By Justin Kim

Though the COVID pandemic introduced RNA vaccines to the world, the use of viruses and gene therapy has been around since the past century. Viral therapy is the virus’ own genetic material being replaced by new therapeutic genetic information. The harmless virus is then injected into the body, and healthy copies of DNA repair whatever conditions were caused by the original mutations.

One study involved gene therapy for a disease called Leber congenital amaurosis (LCA). LCA is one of the most common causes for inherited blindness at birth. There are dozens of types and different manifestations of LCA, but all affect vision.\*

As with many other vision therapies, the results were promising but inconclusive. The reason was that while the eye itself might have been healed, the brain was still unable to make sense of visual images. If blindness occurred later in life, the brain would know what to do with restored sight because the individual used to see. Those blind from birth would need, not just new eyes, but new neural pathways.

Imagine never having seen something before, no point of reference, no anything; and then you saw. How would you know what you saw? This reality makes the healing of the blind man of John 9 so remarkable. Jesus healed other blind individuals (Matt. 9:27-31; 20:29-34; Luke 18:35-43). Whether they were congenitally blind is not clear, but John 9:1 specifically describes “a man who was blind

from birth.” This description is different from the other blind-healing stories. Interestingly, Jesus utilized the common elements of dirt, saliva, and water. It was not the medium, but the Source of life, that caused the man to see.

In other words, Jesus healed more than just the eyes. Modern treatments like gene therapy may heal people physically. But what occurred at the Pool of Siloam points to an amazing transformation of the mind. Not only were the cells of the eyes cured and the nerves

established, but the brain was filled with the capacity, memory, reference, and capability to process the new flow of information.

While the disciples and Pharisees were fixated on the cause of blindness, Jesus used the scenario to teach its purpose: all need the larger and complete physical, mental, and spiritual transformation from above. Disability while acknowledging the need for Jesus is infinitely better than ability without Jesus. He says, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains” (John 9:41).

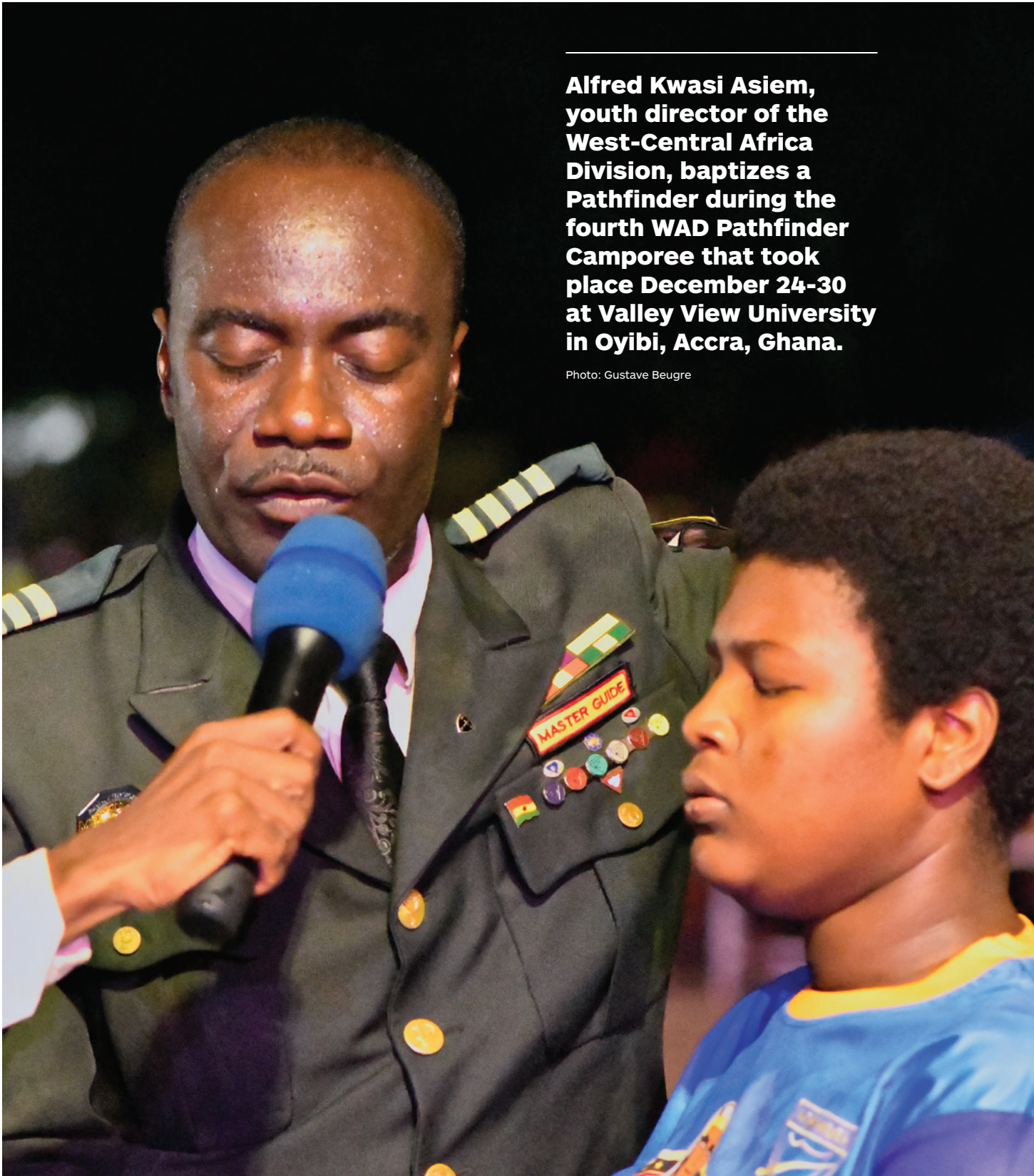
\*<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5360787/>



We believe in the power of prayer, and we welcome prayer requests that can be shared at our weekly staff worship every Wednesday morning. Send your requests to [prayer@adventistworld.org](mailto:prayer@adventistworld.org), and pray for us as we work together to advance God’s kingdom.

**Alfred Kwasi Asiem, youth director of the West-Central Africa Division, baptizes a Pathfinder during the fourth WAD Pathfinder Camporee that took place December 24-30 at Valley View University in Oyibi, Accra, Ghana.**

Photo: Gustave Beugre



“We are thrilled to embark on this new chapter in our broadcasting journey. Let us continue to pray and support Hope Channel Central Philippines as we dedicate ourselves to producing impactful programs through this digital platform.”

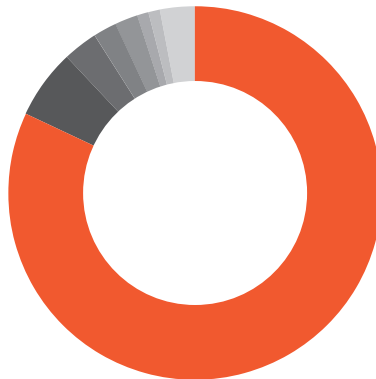
—Bernie C. Maniego, communication director of the Central Philippine Union Conference, about the switchover to digital transmission at the Hope Channel transmitter site in Babag 1, Cebu City, Philippines. Hope Channel stands out as one of the pioneering TV networks that transitioned to digital terrestrial television technology ahead of the Philippine government’s announcement of a full migration to digital broadcast.

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The number of participants that completed the inaugural Catalyst course in November 2023. Catalyst is an initiative of the South Pacific Division in partnership with Avondale University. The program is described as a discipleship adventure; the 12-week nonaccredited course is for those who have a desire to serve God and are interested in learning and acquiring knowledge and skills to become disciple-makers.

## Disability Within the Adventist Church

Church members were asked what type of disability, if any, they have.



- 82% No disability
- 6% Visual
- 3% Hearing
- 2% Mobility
- 2% Cognitive
- 1% Deaf
- 1% Speaking
- 3% Other disability

Scan the QR code to view the complete survey.



N=60,040

Source: 2017-2019 Global Church Member Survey

Data provided by the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research.

“As we reflect on 40 years of ADRA in Australia, we are grateful for every supporter, volunteer, employee, board member, and, of course, the Seventh-day Adventist Church. . . . We currently operate in 25 countries . . . , we are also stepping up our national program. There are currently more than 100 projects in Australia, and this is only possible thanks to our more than 2,000 volunteers, and partnerships with churches and ADRA op shops [thrift shops] across the country.”

—Denison Grellmann, CEO of Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Australia, about the work his team has been engaged in. Though ADRA Australia was established in 1984, the Adventist Church had already organized relief efforts since 1918, when it sent aid to regions devastated by World War I.

### Adventist Review Newsletter

Would you like to keep up with what’s happening in our church? Sign up today to receive our weekly newsletter that features news stories, inspirational stories, videos, and more.



[www.adventistreview.org/newsletter-signup](http://www.adventistreview.org/newsletter-signup)

# 30

The number of graduates that completed the first LeadLab program in the Southern Asia-Pacific Division. The church's Global Leadership Institute launched an extensive leadership and development program that brought together leaders from various fields of ministry within the Adventist organizations and institutions. LeadLab has become a cornerstone for equipping elders, strengthening their moral foundation, and reaffirming their purpose of service.

**“This partnership with AdventHealth is an answered prayer. We don't see them as just a partner but as part of our family.”**

—lexis Pérez Zúñiga, CEO of Hospital del Sureste, about a new partnership between the Mexico-based hospital and the U.S. health network. Hospital del Sureste is an Adventist health-care institution located in the city of Villahermosa, Tabasco, Mexico, and serves approximately 8,000 patients annually with a team of more than 200 employees.

# 10

The number of years that the Vivo church has been growing in Geneva, Switzerland. The church celebrated its tenth anniversary on Sabbath, January 13. The church was established as part of the Hope for the Big Cities initiative that was launched in 2005 at the fifty-eighth General Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri, United States. Eight years later, in 2013, Geneva members applied for funding. The project was approved, and on January 11, 2014, Vivo's first service was held.

**“Reaching secular and post-Christian people is one of the Adventist Church's biggest mission challenges. It is one of the three Mission Refocus windows we are concentrating on—along with the 10/40 window and the urban window. Brendan Pratt brings a rich experience ministering to these people in Australia and New Zealand, and I know he will bring a strong, practical vision to the Global Mission Center.”**

—Gary Krause, director of the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission, about Brendan Pratt, who is the new director of the Global Mission Center for Secular and Post-Christian Mission. Pratt is a pastor with a passion for sharing God with secular and post-Christian people. He will oversee the Adventist Church's growing efforts to reach the same demographic group worldwide. ➔



Photo: Adventist Mission

## Leaders Respond After One in Three Pastors Leaves Cuba Since 2021

Ireydis Pita and Libna Stevens, Inter-American Division

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cuba is doubling its efforts to equip young people in response to the emigration of a large number of pastors and local leaders in recent years. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the emigration of pastors and church leaders was a regular occurrence, but the number has grown to an unprecedented level since then, local church leaders said.

“Between 2021 and 2023 the multidimensional crisis on the island accelerated migration, something that has affected the Adventist Church here,” Aldo Pérez, Cuban Union Conference president, said. “We have lost valuable pastors and local leaders.” In 2023 alone, 29 pastoral families left the island. Since 2021, 44 pastoral families—one in three—have left their post.

### AN EMERGENCY TRAINING PROGRAM

The pressing situation forced leaders to implement what they call an emergency program to train

new leaders. “We have a young leadership in the church, and we must equip them well so that the church can move forward,” Pérez said.

To face the challenge of losing so many pastors and local leaders, administrators have strategized to train 7,000 youth, including 3,500 new Master Guides and 3,500 Adventist Youth (AY) leaders across the island.

“The goal is to accelerate the processes and produce trained and motivated leaders to serve at greater speed and quantity than the migration pulls,” Ray Frometa, Youth Ministries director of the Cuba Union, said.

During a recent training of more than 500 youth leaders and Public Campus Ministries (PCM) students and young professionals in January, Frometa encouraged them to strive to make a difference for the Lord and never think or say that the best of the leaders have left the country. “Those of us who are left are the ones whom God will use to finish the work,” he said. “This work is not about human talent, but about the will and purpose of God.”

Church speed up training so young people replace those who left.

### STRENGTHENING YOUTH LEADERS

As part of the strategy to restore leadership, a pastor has been assigned in each of the 20 AY federations throughout the country. Each of them can directly supervise and lead in the process of recruitment and training of the new AY leaders and Master Guides, Frometa said. “They will have the mission of emphasizing the organization of the clubs and youth leaders as well as the mentoring program that would end up integrating them in the local leadership of the church,” he explained. “Being part of a nationally coordinated leadership team, any one of them can continue working with the strategies set in place and be ready to face an eventual migratory vacancy in any of the conferences or missions in the country.”

### DEDICATED AND PASSIONATE LEADERS

Honing young people at different levels and ministries of the church remains a priority and part of the ongoing strategy, Pérez emphasized. On January 12 and 13, nearly 400 university students, young professionals, and high school students gathered in Las Tunas for a PCM event, where they were reminded to cling to God and minister to others even amid the challenges they face each day.

There is no shortage of miracles in Cuba, Pérez said. “God will continue to work more miracles here in Cuba, especially so that our trained youth leaders can continue to win other young people for the eternal kingdom.” ©



Ray Frometa, Youth Ministries department director of the Cuban Union Conference, leads a training seminar in Peñas Blancas in 2023.

Photo: Cuban Union Conference

## In England, Evangelism Expo Emphasizes a Renewed Mission

David Neal, Trans-European Division



The South England Conference held their annual Evangelism Expo at Newbold College in Bracknell, January 9.

Photo: SEC Media and David Neal

The new South England Conference (SEC) leadership hit the ground running on January 9 at their annual Evangelism Expo, held at Newbold College of Higher Education in Bracknell.

In just four months since taking office, the leaders, alongside department heads, have engaged in extensive deliberations, prayers, and consultations to chart the conference's new course. Their direction of travel could not be clearer. "Christ in our hearts. Christ in our homes. Christ in our churches. Christ on the streets."

Picture this—a bitterly cold Berkshire day on the first Sunday of January, with most members traveling from up to two to four hours across the territory to gather at the Newbold campus auditorium by 10:00 a.m. Approximately 1,000 local leaders, driven by their commitment to the mission, congregated to explore how to embody these values amid the rapidly changing world around them.

For leaders, the Evangelism Expo delved beyond the usual "how to" and novel ideas. It grappled with change and "paradigm shifts," addressing new cultural realities surrounding the church.

"It is critically important for us to be aware of this," said Roger Hernandez, ministerial and evangelism director for the Southern Union Conference, United States, and the first keynote speaker. Quoting Dan White, a church planter in the U.S., Hernandez emphasized the vital importance of understanding how Christian beliefs intersect with a culture repelled by "absolute truth," "combative dialogue," "demonization" of groups, "ideological border policing," and "shaming" to ostracize.

Hernandez's ministry partner and wife, Kathy, specializing in hospitality ministry, echoed their vision in a video shared during the presentation, highlighting the need to extend care beyond a simple greeting to guests.

Karen Glassford, digital evangelism manager for Communication and Media Ministries at the General Conference (GC), followed suit. She underscored the rapid growth of digital evangelism and initiated a collaborative project with SEC Communication and Media to pilot digital evangelism models with select churches. The potential impact of this project on connecting with

**Christ in our hearts, Christ in our homes, Christ in our churches, Christ on the streets.**

an increasingly online community drew praise from such attendees as Elizabeth Taslmacsi, a Brighton, Hove, and Worthing district member. "People who live in our large towns and cities are quite isolated. We do not know our neighbors; we are afraid to talk about our faith. . . . [This initiative] will create opportunities for greater involvement of members," she said.

The morning's final plenary session, led by SEC president Kirk Thomas, conveyed a clear message: "It's time to learn and move on from the past." He called for renewal, growth, and a willingness to embrace change. Thomas urged leaders to "Go" and be "Inspired for Mission," emphasizing Christ as the center of the SEC strategy.

As the day progressed, 23 workshops, primarily run by SEC administrators and department directors, provided local leaders with a chance to engage with the new leadership.

Commenting on an effective digital evangelism workshop, Bernie Holford, newly appointed as the pastor of the Hemel Hempstead church, said, "As an older person who hasn't engaged with Facebook very much, I've realized just how powerful the digital evangelism approach could be."

The day concluded with participants mingling and reconnecting outside workshops, visiting the Stanborough Press store, and exploring various ministry exhibits.

"The vision persists," church leaders said. "Christ in our hearts, our homes, our churches, and on the streets. It is a vision that begins with Christ in our hearts." ☺

## Center Is Leading Community to Wellness in Melbourne

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*

An outreach center in a leafy suburb of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, is reaching out to university students and neighbors and providing them with tools for better physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, and social health.

The weExplore Wellness Centre, a donor-based initiative of Gateway Adventist Centre, a nonprofit community center in Melbourne, has been helping hundreds of students attending nearby Monash University and others in the community to receive food assistance and enroll in free courses that cover topics from mental resilience and effective habits to diabetes prevention.

"[The] weExplore center works as a sowing program, creating awareness in the community because we want to reach out to the community," volunteer Gordon Chau explained on the sidelines of the 2024 Adventist Youth Conference (AYC) in Melbourne in January. "We want to support people, help them, and of course, ultimately, bring them to Christ."

The program, Chau says, goes from friendship to church services to Bible study to conversion to

nurturing. "Some of our volunteers once walked past our center and said, 'What is this?'" he shared. Chau told the story of Kavitha, a separated mother of twin boys who once stopped out of curiosity. Kavitha felt treated with kindness and eventually requested a Bible. Sometime later she enrolled in Bible studies, eventually got baptized, and is now volunteering to train others. "It's kind of a loop," Chau explained. "Those who were ministered to are now ministering to others."

### AN OUTREACH CENTER IN THE CITY

The idea for opening weExplore Wellness Centre was initiated in April 2018 as a result of a prayer and planning session of Gateway Adventist Centre. "Initially we had Global Mission funds, and they helped us to establish the center," Leanne Tilson, association vice president and program coordinator of the ministry, said. "We had been praying about it as a church, as we dreamed of establishing a center of influence within three years. But in less than six months the Lord pro-

**weExplore Wellness Centre is bringing people to better health and to Jesus.**

vided these funds. He opened the door for us, even when we were not prepared and were thinking more long-term," Tilson said.

According to the center's website, "since the establishment of weExplore, our calendar has been filled with exciting events as supported by grants and donations. Doctors and other health professionals volunteer their precious time. . . . We see many in our community as well as university students drop by the center and . . . express their needs for better wholistic health."

The site also explains that because of the impact of COVID-19, "mental health and emotional wellness are paramount subjects at this time." It adds, "We have been using the online platform to provide support and care for our community, along with the in-person services."

The center is strategically located within walking distance of Monash University, which has a student population of more than 85,000. Thanks to an agreement with the government of Victoria, the center is providing food bags to approximately 300 students per week. The center enlists about 75 volunteers from four Adventist congregations in Melbourne and the community. The programs on physical and mental health, including a weekly Pilates class, are highly popular.

And what about Kavitha, the woman who stopped by the center and eventually became an Adventist church member and center volunteer? "I wish I had listened earlier," Kavitha recently said. "Finding Jesus and giving my life to Him has made all the difference." ©



Photo: weExplore Wellness Centre





Photo: Southern Asia-Pacific Division News

## Puppetry Evangelist Brings Joy and Faith to People Across Borders

**How a retired Adventist teacher in Malaysia is using puppets for ministry.**

In the heart of Sarawak, Malaysia, the puppetry ministry of Chai Sew Moi has been subtly creating inspiration for people around her for many years. She has had a tremendous creative and spiritual effect on others since retiring in 2016 and has used her talents to share the faith of God with children in church and in local communities.

Moi's journey into puppetry started in a modest way. In 1993 she made the decision to try her hand at puppetry after watching the American program *Sesame Street* with her nieces in the 1970s and later with her own children. With no formal training, she created puppet characters for a Sabbath School program, aiming to promote church mission offerings. Her newfound ministry gained momentum as she engaged 9-year-old children as puppeteers and voice actors.

Since those early days the puppetry ministry at her church has

flourished. Children became active participants in song leading, church activities, and special programs, all featuring puppetry. One of Moi's notable puppet plays, "Hobart the Worm: We're Wonderfully Made," conveyed the message that everything created by God is significant. This production transcended borders, with performances reaching such countries as the Philippines, Indonesia, Myanmar, Korea, Taiwan, and Mongolia.

As a former schoolteacher, Moi extended her passion to her colleagues, teaching them how to use puppets as an effective teaching tool. In 1998 she received formal puppetry training at a Children's Ministries convention and later learned from professional puppeteers from the United States and Australia.

In 2021, amid the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Moi found a unique way to bring joy and hope. She embarked on a 100-day puppet singing marathon, sharing religious songs requested by friends and family. This initiative served as a beacon of hope during a challenging period.

Simultaneously Moi introduced a thematic puppet song video platform, including such categories as "Praise Garden," "Gospel Station," and "Christmas Bless," all aimed at spreading joy, hope, and love during the challenging times of 2021.

Moi's impact on children is immeasurable. "Children embrace

puppetry immediately, without reservation. Presenting a puppet show is a reliable way to catch the child's attention," she said. While some initially had reservations about puppetry, they soon realized its potential to convey biblical truths and moral lessons.

She pioneered puppetry in several Southeast Asian nations, thanks to her faith-based belief in God's mission. Moi introduced puppetry and puppet-making workshops during conventions and seminars to share this gift with others who wanted to reach out to children. Her dedication and efforts eventually resulted in the creation and distribution of 24 puppets across eight Southeast Asian Adventist organizations.

Using puppets in church, Moi believes, can help children and adults connect with their faith on a deeper level. Puppetry ministry is indeed a rapidly growing trend in the church, offering a modern form of entertainment while delivering valuable spiritual messages.

"Children are a gift of the Lord," Moi said, quoting veteran Christian educator David Faust. "Let's handle this gift with care. Let's care so much about children that we minister to their needs. Let's teach them biblical truths. Let's lead them to have good, wholesome fun. Let's use puppets and plays to bring out the childlike quality in all of us." ☺

# The Test

Learning to “stomp twice”

BY ERNESTO DOUGLAS VENN

In the summer of 1992 my wife was the director of the early childhood center at our Adventist school in Wenatchee, Washington. I had graduated from Walla Walla University with my degree in theology, and was invited to serve as a youth pastor for that summer at the Wenatchee Seventh-day Adventist Church. The invitation came with one condition—I had to learn to drive a school bus and pass both the written and driving tests to get my commercial driver’s license. I soon had a Jonah-like experience, being swallowed by a yellow “behemoth whale”—a school bus.

As I recall, this was a 1965 C-180 series school bus made by the Gillig Brothers and had a seating capacity of 52 passengers. It had air brakes and a Fuller RT610 10-speed manual transmission. And it had a double clutch. What is that? Well, when you drive a vehicle with a manual transmission, your left foot is used to push in the clutch to change gears. If the vehicle has a double clutch, you must press the clutch in twice to shift gears. Why twice? The first time to transition out of one gear, and then the second to engage the next gear. Learning to drive the bus around town and coming to stoplights was an aerobic exercise. It felt very unnatural for me, but over that summer I developed the stomp-twice reflex! And I passed my driving test!



## THE CALL TO CARE AND INVOLVE

Christ called His disciples to learn to “stomp twice” by seeing the possibilities of all people, including individuals with disabilities and the marginalized.

The disciples had preconceived expectations about what the ministry of Jesus should be. These expectations collided with Christ’s call to care for others and to involve them in God’s work. The disciples had to learn to “stomp twice” to develop their faith. The first stomp was to disengage their notions of what God’s kingdom consisted of and to understand the true priorities of the kingdom of God. This was not natural for Peter, James, or John. While Jesus was clear about His mission and how it involved individuals with possibilities, the disciples were confused, as seen in John 9:1-3:

“Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘Neither

Filipe Fortes





this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.’”

Jesus modeled, for His disciples, a different way of seeing people. Rather than focus on this man’s disability, Christ saw the potential of how this man could be a witness of God’s grace in action. Jesus confronted the disciples’ misguided theology concerning disabilities, and helped them to see the possibilities. He helped His disciples develop their faith reflexes and disengage from this stigma.

#### **A TEST OF CHARACTER**

In Matthew 25:31-46 we see the clarity of Christ’s call to minister to the “least of these.”

Ellen White further amplifies this test to care and involve when she writes:

“I saw that it is in the providence of God that widows and orphans, the blind, the deaf, the lame, and persons afflicted in a variety of ways, have been placed in close Christian relationship to His church; it is to prove His people and develop their true character. Angels

of God are watching to see how we treat these persons who need our sympathy, love, and disinterested benevolence. This is God’s test of our character. If we have the true religion of the Bible we shall feel that a debt of love, kindness, and interest is due to Christ in behalf of His brethren; and we can do no less than to show our gratitude for His immeasurable love to us while we were sinners unworthy of His grace, by having a deep interest and unselfish love for those who are our brethren and who are less fortunate than ourselves.”<sup>1</sup>

“God will hold the church at — responsible, as a body, for the wrong course of its members. If a selfish and unsympathizing spirit is allowed to exist in any of its members toward the unfortunate, the widow, the orphan, the blind, the lame, or those who are sick in body or mind, He will hide His face from His people until they do their duty and remove the wrong from among them. If any professing the name of Christ so far misrepresent their Saviour as to be unmindful of their duty to the afflicted, or if they in any

## **In your local church family of faith, how is your church meaningfully involving individuals with possibilities?**

way seek to advantage themselves to the injury of the unfortunate and thus rob them of means, the Lord holds the church accountable for the sin of its members until they have done all they can to remedy the existing evil. He will not hearken to the prayer of His people while the orphan, the fatherless, the lame, the blind, and the sick are neglected among them.”<sup>2</sup>

After disengaging the gear of fear and stigmatization, we must engage the gear of love and inclusion. As we recognize the possibilities to honor and glorify God that lies within those most often marginalized, we become like the God we claim to serve.

So Jesus calls us today to care for and involve all. The Adventist Possibility Ministries (APM) Initiative seeks to share the three angels' messages *to* and *with* seven people groups that include:

1. the deaf community and individuals who have experienced hearing loss.
2. individuals who are blind or have limited vision.
3. orphans and vulnerable children, which include street kids, foster kids, immigrant and refugee children, and children who have a parent in jail.
4. individuals with physical mobility health and wellness challenges.
5. individuals with mental health and wellness challenges. This includes both mental disorders and mental learning developmental challenges, such as autism and Down syndrome.
6. individuals who have experienced spousal loss (widows, widowers, and those who have experienced divorce, abandonment etc.).
7. caregivers of these groups.

Through APM, local churches can minister alongside seven distinct people groups for greater mission impact. Our motto is "All are gifted, needed, and treasured."

### SO WHAT? NOW WHAT?

A few reflection and application questions for your consideration. Around the world, governments and societies have ignored, marginalized, or stigmatized the deaf community, people with disabilities, and those who have suffered spousal loss. I believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a role to play here in the end-times by bringing *awareness, acceptance, and action*—the "Three A" strategy of Possibility Ministries.<sup>3</sup>

So how will we respond to the appeal of God's Spirit? Will we develop our faith reflexes to see possibilities where others see handicaps, disabilities, and limitations? Will we pass that "final exam" on judgment day? How will the three angels' messages propel us to care for others and work alongside them in practical ways?

In your local church family of faith, how is your church meaningfully involving individuals with possibilities? How has your local church been enriched by their creativity, faith sight and vitality, and God-given spiritual gifts?

How will you and I develop faith reflexes and learn to stomp twice? I want to do my part! How about you? Let us extend Christ's last-day call and include people with possibilities as we proclaim the everlasting gospel "to those who dwell on the earth—to every *nation*, tribe, tongue, and *people*" (Rev. 14:6). ©

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 3, p. 511.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 517, 518.

<sup>3</sup> Learn more about the "Three A" strategy at <https://www.possibilityministries.org/wp-content/uploads/3a-document.pdf>.

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**Ernesto Douglas Venn** serves as the assistant to the president for Adventist Possibility Ministries at the General Conference.

## Resources for Adventist Possibility Ministries

The Adventist Possibility Ministries YouTube channel provides video resources for

- the deaf and hard of hearing
- mental health wellness and addressing stigmas
- orphans, street children, refugee children, and other vulnerable children
- the blind and low vision
- caregivers
- spousal loss
- physical/mobility health and wellness



<https://www.youtube.com/adventistpossibilityministries>

Find devotional videos, a compilation of resources for the deaf and the hard of hearing at the Adventist Deaf Ministry International website.



<https://www.adventistdeaf.org/>

For access to Hope Channel video content with sign language or closed captioning, visit their website by scanning the code.



<https://hopechanneldeaf.org/>

To access training for Adventist Possibility Ministries, with specific action steps your organization can take to create a climate for "possibility thinking," visit the Adventist Learning Community.



<https://www.adventistlearningcommunity.com/courses/adventist-possibility-ministries>

Focus

# The Blind Singing Evangelist

A historical Adventist with possibilities who was chosen for mission

BY ERNESTO DOUGLAS VENN

**B**orn in Caroline, New York, United States, on October 11, 1871, DeGrove Turk married Grace A. Shear (born November 3, 1876) on December 28, 1903, in Binghamton, New York. They joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1907<sup>1</sup> and that same year reported their literature evangelism efforts.<sup>2</sup> By 1908 we find a record of the Turks joining in evangelistic efforts as musicians at a tent meeting in Oneida, New York.<sup>3</sup> The next year, 1909, Grace received her missionary license, and D. G. Turk was ordained to the gospel ministry.<sup>4</sup> They continued to travel together preaching and singing the Word throughout the state of New York.<sup>5</sup>

He died at age 79 on May 15, 1951, and his wife died 15 years later, at age 90, on November 16, 1966. His obituary reads, in part, "Though Elder Turk was blind before his marriage, he and his wife were very musical and spent their talents in the Lord's work. They helped in several tent and evangelistic efforts in which Brother Turk proved himself a convincing and powerful speaker.



His faithful companion served as eyes to him in his sermon preparation. . . . With the exception of taking time off for evangelistic efforts in a number of New York cities, he served as pastor of the church in Binghamton for 25 years."<sup>6</sup>

The ministry of the Turks is emblematic of how all are chosen for mission, and all are gifted, needed, and treasured. ©

<sup>1</sup> "Obituaries," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 28, 1951, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> D. G. Turk, "Binghamton," *New York Indicator*, Apr. 10, 1907, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. and Mrs. F. C. Webster and Mr. and Mrs. D. G. Turk, "Tent Meeting at Oneida," *New York Indicator*, June 10, 1908, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> F. N. Johnson, "The 1909 Conference," *New York Indicator*, Oct. 27, 1909, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> A meeting in Albany, New York: J. G. White, "General Meeting at Schenectady," *New York Indicator*, Apr. 14, 1909, p. 1; a meeting in Union, New York: "Notices and Appointments," *New York Indicator*, Apr. 5, 1910, p. 4; a meeting in Willet, New York: R. E. Bliss, "Willet," *Adantic Union Gleaner*, Sept. 30, 1914, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> "Obituaries," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 28, 1951, p. 22.

**Ernesto Douglas Venn** serves as the assistant to the president for Adventist Possibility Ministries at the General Conference.

Focus

# Experiencing “Belonging” in Zambia

Adventist Possibility  
Ministries in action

BY TERRY TRECARTIN



Just after graduation in 2005 my wife, a friend of ours, and I decided to attempt a cycling event that was being held right where we lived in Chattanooga, Tennessee, USA. It was called the “Three State Three Mountain Challenge” because one of the routes was a 100-mile ride from Tennessee down to Alabama, over to Georgia, back up to Tennessee, and over three mountains. As I came down off of one of those mountains, I was going around a corner and . . . blank. I was told I hit a car that was coming up the mountain. I do not remember this or anything else about the accident. The next three riders were all medical professionals, and they knew right away how to help keep me alive. As a result of the accident, however, I was paralyzed from the waist down, making me a paraplegic for the rest of my life. I have used a wheelchair ever since. Using a wheelchair to get around presents its challenges, but also its opportunities.

## POSSIBILITIES IN ZAMBIA

I have had the incredible privilege of being a member of the Adventist Possibility Ministries (APM) Physical/Mobility Health and Wellness Task Force. APM is an initiative of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to minister to groups of people who get left out at times. It has grown into a seven-part ministry that focuses on those who have experienced spousal loss, those who are blind or have low vision, caregivers, the deaf and hard of hearing, orphans and vulnerable children, those with physical/mobility health challenges, and those with mental health challenges. Despite our challenges, APM promotes *wholeness in our brokenness*.

When I was younger, I spent a few months in Africa, and for years I have tried to get back there to share this part of my childhood experience with my wife. You can imagine my excitement when she was offered the opportunity to attend a conference at the Adventist University of Africa in Kenya! Shortly after she received her invitation, we had the opportunity to connect with the General Conference APM director and become ambassadors for APM while on our trip. While I was busy making big plans to travel all over Africa and show my wife the places I had lived, God, in His infinite wisdom, redirected our trip and arranged for us to have more time in Zambia.

In Zambia our dear hosts Vera and Coster planned a courtesy visit to the Southern Zambia Union Conference office in Lusaka. At the union offices we randomly crossed paths with the union APM director before we were scheduled to begin our APM ambassador activities (though nothing

in God's plans is random). That same day, the APM director learned how I use my transfer board to get in and out of a car, and excitedly drove us to meet the director of a nongovernmental organization that advocates for the needs of people with disabilities for the entire country of Zambia. These two had been working together to better serve people with disabilities.

Given that the day's visit was supposed to be short, the union director requested that we avail ourselves to train the hundreds of APM leaders and members in the Southern Zambia Union before leaving the country. The exciting realization began growing on me that the Adventists in this union and in the country of Zambia had so many initiatives to help those in need!

When the day of the training came, we shared a presentation with practical resources based on what existed locally, and an introduction to APM resources online. I remember being impressed by how accessible the church was where we gathered. I noticed how the members and leaders were intentionally making adaptations that worked for me and other attendees with wheelchairs, those who were deaf or hard of hearing, and those who were blind. The diversity in that space was amazing! Everyone was eager to help, and although I could make it to most places pushing around on my own, they loved to help me with this, too.

One of the most memorable experiences that really touched my heart occurred when a choir of children, all dressed in uniforms with the APM and Adventist Deaf Ministries logo on their shirts and dresses, stood up to sing. As the music played, they began to sign the songs to us, with their choir director proudly leading them. It was clear that God's angels were right there with them, singing and signing along. Had you been there, I am sure you would have been

getting goosebumps, a lump in your throat, and tears in your eyes, just as we were.

### THE PARABLE OF TWO CHURCHES

Once upon a time there were two churches. Both congregations met and got to know a person who used a wheelchair. One church was very large and had a beautiful building, but it had an old unreliable elevator that was constantly breaking down. It also had wooden pews that did not allow for a wheelchair user to sit comfortably next to their family or friends. The other church was small and was renting a building for its worship services. Eventually the members of the small church purchased land and began constructing their own building.

When the members of the large church learned about the difficulties the elevator and the pews were causing the person in the wheelchair, they began renovations, without asking the wheelchair user what they needed. As part of their renovations, they eventually put in a new elevator and made cutouts in the pews with required locations for people who use wheelchairs to sit.

The small church consulted with the wheelchair user and built a one-level church that did not need an elevator. They chose comfortable and movable chairs rather than pews. In this way the person in the wheelchair could sit wherever they chose and with anyone in the church. The small church even put a ramp up to the podium to give wheelchair users and other people with mobility challenges access to the pulpit.

The lessons from this parable are many. Simply adding an elevator to a church building, for instance, does not assure accessibility or create belonging. APM extends beyond simple building renovations. It exists to create belonging by helping us all recognize that everyone is gifted, and

## It was clear that God's angels were right there with them, singing and signing along.

treasured—much like what I experienced in Zambia. If you want to know how you can create belonging in your church that extends beyond only design, the APM website has free accessibility questionnaires that members and church leaders can use if they choose to become more accessible.\*

We are all familiar with the Bible verse that says, "And then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14). But have you ever read that verse with Romans 10:14 and 15 in mind? Since Jesus comes back when the gospel goes to everyone in the world, there is still a world to be reached. Whom are we overlooking who needs to hear the gospel? We often think of those in remote jungle regions in unnamed countries. While this may be true, could we also be overlooking the person next door to us who is deaf, and also may be Adventist, but attends the local Sunday church because they have interpreters there? Or the believer who never comes to church because there are a lot of steps and they do not want to inconvenience anyone? "How can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him" in their own language of sign, or braille? ©

\* [www.possibilityministries.org](http://www.possibilityministries.org)

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Focus

# Mobility Challenge Accepted

## The rise and walk phenomenon

BY GEORGE UBA

Paralympics organized by Rise and Walk.

**G**od is unpredictable. Sometimes He takes an unfortunate incident from someone's life and uses it to bring happiness to many others.

Some years ago I served as treasurer of the conference in Bucharest, Romania. One day, when I arrived at the office, the heavy gate at the entrance came off its hinges and fell on me. When the shock of the blow eased, my mind began to race: what if I would have to live in a wheelchair for the rest of my life? Though I did not end up in a wheelchair, God had a different plan. Through that accident He was preparing me for a grand project that, like bread dough rising, was five years in the making.

After completing my term as director of Sabbath School and Personal Ministries at the Romanian Union, I served as pastor at the Grant church in Bucharest and awaited a vision for a mission with influence and high purpose. In prayer I recalled the gate of the conference. There began a missionary adventure that would surpass my grandest imagination.

### MORE WILL COME

Together, Aurel Burcea, a young man in a wheelchair who for many years had been coordinating a magazine for people with disabilities, and I set out to create a family for physically challenged individuals in Bucharest. We asked God to bring 25 people to start this project. Nine months later only 11 people with physical limitations had registered. Aurel insisted on starting the project. "But we don't have 25 people registered!" I countered.

"If we start, more will come along the way!" he replied confidently. Still haunted by not reaching the target of 25 people, I yielded, but continued to press God about

our goal. On the date of our first gathering, April 18, 2010, we entered the rented hall in Bucharest and counted the people with disabilities: there were 25 individuals, not including their support persons and volunteers. God had answered!

The atmosphere of the meetings was one of joy and great enthusiasm. Mario Brito, president of the Inter-European Division, visited us and encouraged us to expand. People with disabilities from large and small cities across Romania came to see what Rise and Walk, initially organized under ADRA Romania, was about. They asked us to establish branches in their cities. Today we have 32 branches throughout the country, totaling nearly 4,000 persons with physical difficulties. And we are still expanding. The number of volunteers, mostly from the Adventist Church, is more than 6,000. In 2024 we plan to establish 8 to 10 new branches.

In Romania we are registered as a service provider under the Ministry of Labor, but the church handles all the logistics. Each branch is led by a pastor and a lay church member, who form the nucleus of the branch. They are responsible for organizing the programs we have, with our patrons starting every branch meeting with spiritual messages based on Scripture. Three years after the formation of the Rise and Walk association, the congregation of people with disabilities was formed, which now has more than 50 spiritually enthusiastic souls, most of whom are not Seventh-day Adventist.

We have established the Free Mobility Center for people with disabilities, the first of its kind in Romania. Following the donation of adapted vehicles to transport them to destinations they couldn't reach with



nonadapted public transportation, we have transported thousands of people with physical problems. Many of our transportees have become members of Rise and Walk. We enjoy healthy relationships with the cities in the areas in which we have the “free taxi” service.

### PROGRAMMING FOR POWER

Every year we offer a seven-day oasis of joy, friendship, and knowledge in annual camps, where nearly 200 people from all over the country come for excursions, daily programs of song, poetry, life stories, various seminars, and sports activities. At the end of the camp, there is a magnificent program performed by people with disabilities for members from churches surrounding the camp area.

A villa, acquired with funds from the division, in the most visited mountain town, Sinaia, is the venue for mini camps, where we organize meetings of 20-25 people with disabilities from all regions of the country for three days during the summer. The memories from these powerful days are unforgettable.

In schools, under the program Different but Equal, people with disabilities present their disability experience to students. As they showcase their resilience in the struggle to overcome limitations, they inspire and motivate students to improve themselves and to correct their perceptions of people with physical challenges.

To address those lacking basic necessities, we started You Are Not Alone. It is a program that offers food, clothing, transportation for people with mobility problems, medicines, and other resources to meet their needs and loneliness.

There are people with disabilities who have not left their apartments for years. Our volunteers with big hearts and the joy of service have helped them to find a family of people facing the same challenges. We have taken them

out of their isolation to see the seaside, the mountains, foreign countries, and picturesque places in the country, often for the first time. We have organized festive meals at the weddings of those who have gotten married, and encouraged them in the development of their abilities. We have baptized those who wanted to be a part of the church. Above all, we have shown them the love of Christ through the warm and visible love of the volunteers.

Plans are under way for a Care and Recovery Center in Claudia, near Arad, which will be a refuge for those with disabilities who cannot care for themselves. The project is designed for both resident people with disabilities and also for temporary stay. Thermal pools, accessible greenhouses for organic farming, sports fields, a chapel for religious services, a meeting room for the Arad branch of Rise and Walk, which has more than 80 members, and a physiotherapy room will be available for people with disabilities in the country and beyond. At this facility we will conduct more camps for at least 150 people who will experience a healthful lifestyle and an elevating spiritual atmosphere. Just as the heavenly Architect worked on forming this Rise and Walk family, He will orchestrate the construction of this citadel of refuge to His glory and the joy of many souls burdened by physical challenges.

The Lord desires to honor the subjects of His love with a friendship banquet: “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind” (Luke 14:21). It is our privilege to extend the invitation of the Master to those yearning for that eternal friendship with God. ©

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**George Uba** is vice president of the Rise and Walk Association, and president of the Rise and Walk branch in **Arad, Romania**.





Focus

# More Than My Cerebral Palsy

My journey with a stigmatized condition

BY NII ANYETEI AKOGERAM

According to the Cerebral Palsy Alliance Research Foundation (CPARF), about 17 million people have some form of cerebral palsy globally.<sup>1</sup> In my native Ghana, in 2023, more than 22,000 children of the 34.1 million people (0.07 percent of the population) are estimated to be living with cerebral palsy.<sup>2</sup> The data says little or nothing about adults living with cerebral palsy, but I happen to be one of them. My name is Nii Anyetei Akogyeram, but I am popularly called Inocki Popo. My grandfather named me Enoch, but my older cousin changed it to Inocki and added the pet name Popo, resulting in my nickname: Inocki Popo.

I was born in Accra, Ghana, on March 8, 1990. During the first week after my birth, my parents noticed that my skin and the whites of my eyes were yellowish, and suspected that I had jaundice (a condition that occurs when there is excess bilirubin in a baby's blood). As a remedy, they placed me under the early-morning sun for a few days. The blue light spectrum found

in sunlight easily breaks down the excess bilirubin to enable the body to excrete it. When my condition did not improve, they rushed me to the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital, where doctors replaced the bad blood in my body with good blood through a transfusion. After that, they put me under ultraviolet rays.

Three to four months later my parents realized, to their chagrin, that my development was slower than normal. They took me back to the hospital, but the doctor who examined me assured them that there was no problem.

## DISCOVERING CEREBRAL PALSY

Despite noticing regular twitching and drooling, the doctors could not say what was wrong with me. The hospital, I learned, became my second home, because anytime I had a high temperature, they rushed me there. For a short period I had physiotherapy. Because of the drooling, my doctor prescribed a wristband, which I wore on my left hand and used to wipe off saliva

whenever it came. He prescribed a malaria drug called Camoquin that my family nicknamed *Sunday*, the day for treating high temperatures.

At the age of 24 I took it upon myself to find out what was wrong with me, and I spent hours online for information on my condition. At last I found that I was suffering from a disease called cerebral palsy (CP).

Cerebral palsy, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "is a group of disorders that affects a person's ability to move and maintain balance and posture." It is the most common physical disability in childhood. A CDC study indicates that there are one to four cases of CP for every 1,000 live births. In Ghana, however, cases of CP are particularly high, affecting one in every 300 live births.<sup>3</sup> What exacerbates the problem in the country is the limited opportunities for treatment and case management.

I had a difficult childhood as a result of my condition, becoming the object of ridicule and bullying. My classmates made fun of me and often called me *saliva boy*. They would not play with me, fearing that my condition was contagious.

To maintain my sanity and survive their bullying, I resolved to ignore them. At times, however, I could not stand their persistent bullying, and I



learned to fight back. Ultimately the attacks lessened, and I had time to concentrate on my studies.

#### **TACKLING CEREBRAL PALSY**

At church I developed good relationships in my Sabbath School classes. My father was the children's ministries coordinator and assistant superintendent in charge of children's Sabbath School. Most of the children were my friends, and the other teachers were actually my family members—aunts and uncles. I had the opportunity to participate in all the activities—singing and reciting the Bible texts during thirteenth Sabbath programs.

In the Pathfinder Club my father was the director and my mother an instructor, so they were sure to include me in all the programming. I went camping, kayaking, rappelling, and mountain climbing. Recently I went through the training and was invested as a Master Guide. I now teach a Pathfinder class in my local church.

It was the Master Guide Leadership Training that gave me the idea to start the Popo Cerebral Palsy Initiative.

Living with cerebral palsy and knowing how it impacts its victims and their parents, I made it my mission to bring CP awareness to the public, particularly to parents and caregivers who bear the brunt

of the condition. I also figured that if teachers and pupils understood the condition, they would be more considerate when dealing with people with CP.

In October 2017 I founded the Popo Cerebral Palsy Initiative, a nonprofit organization. My goals were to encourage parents (especially mothers with CP children); educate the public on the condition; and support families living with the condition. My vision is to create an all-inclusive society that accepts and respects the fundamental human rights of all persons, including people with CP, and offers equal opportunities to all people.

My family and a few friends helped me promote the initiative on social media and provided me with the much-needed startup funds to help me realize my dream. I have been fortunate to have individuals who share my vision.<sup>4</sup>

I see my nonprofit organization as participating the mission of the church. We too view disabilities and loss through the transforming lens of possibilities. We believe in what individuals can do and what they can become because of God's grace. Central to our work is advocating for the recognition of dignity and respect for every person so that their unrealized abilities can be channeled for the gospel. We work closely with our local conference to develop programs that address the conditions of people with cerebral palsy. ©

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.childbirthinjuries.com/cerebral-palsy/statistics/>, accessed Feb. 6, 2024.

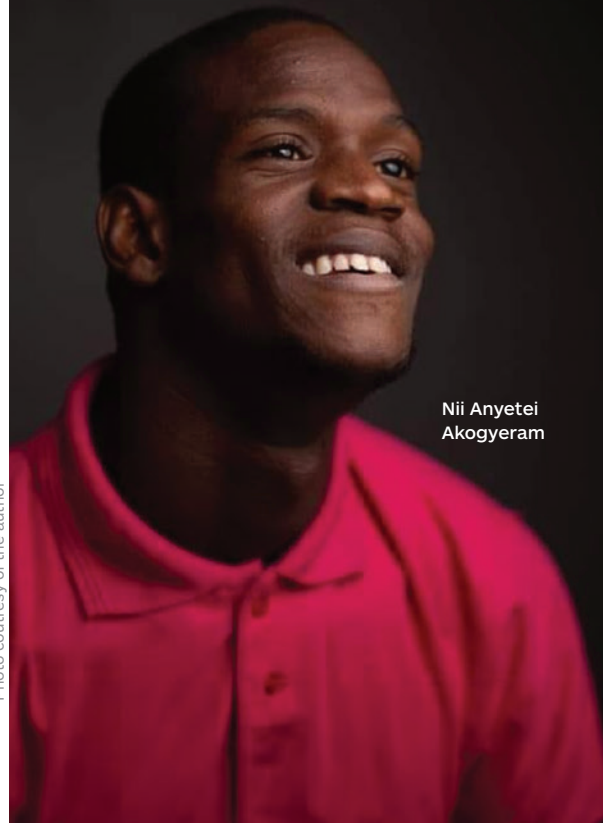
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6779979/>, accessed Feb. 6, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.childbirthinjuries.com/cerebral-palsy/statistics/>, accessed Feb. 6, 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Among those who offered to act as directors and secretary, respectively, to my organization were the late Elder Nana Kwaku Gyamfi, an alternative medicine practitioner; Mrs. Alberta Rockson, a physiotherapist; Mr. Benjamin Sackar, a lawyer; Ms. Jacqueline Asante-Mensah, a lawyer; and my sister, Angela Akogyeram. These graciously volunteered their time, money, and services to the foundation.

**Nii Anyetei Akogyeram** is founder of Popo Cerebral Palsy Initiative LBG, an educational nonprofit organization that seeks to reduce stigmatization of cerebral palsy.

**We believe  
in what  
individuals  
can do and  
what they  
can become  
because of  
God's grace.**



Nii Anyetei  
Akogyeram

# Ready or Not

Jesus is coming soon!

BY TED N. C. WILSON

One of our pivotal beliefs, as Seventh-day Adventists, is that of the second coming of Jesus Christ. It is, indeed, the hope “that burns within our hearts.” And we are not alone. The coming of Christ has been the culmination of hope for all believers down through the ages.

In describing that glorious event, the prophet Isaiah wrote, “And it will be said in that day: ‘Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation’” (Isa. 25:9). In Psalm 50:3 we read, “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous all around Him.”

While on earth, Jesus told His disciples, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2, 3). He repeats this promise with urgency in Revelation 22, saying in verse 7: “Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book”; in verse 12: “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work”; and in verse 20: “Surely I am coming quickly.”

## HOW QUICK IS “QUICK”?

And yet, how quick is “quick”? From our human point of view, especially in today’s technological world, anything less than instant is slow.

Adventists have been preaching the second coming of Christ for 180 years—which can seem like an eternity to some. Disheartened, some Adventists have lost their sense of urgency in the second coming of Christ, which should permeate every aspect of Seventh-day Adventist life.

This should not surprise us, however. We read in 2 Peter 3:3-7: “Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.’”

Peter points out that these scoffers “willingly forget” that God created the heavens and the earth, and that there was a worldwide flood. He then warns that one day all will be destroyed by fire.

The passage goes on, giving important instruction and encouragement to those who believe:

“Beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (verses 8, 9).

## “FOUND IN PEACE”

The passage urges us, since the earth and all things in it will be destroyed, to consider what kind of people we ought to be “in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God. . . . Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless” (verses 11-14).

What a calling we have, staying close to the Lord and allowing Him to guide us as we eagerly look forward to His coming.

The book of Hebrews encourages us: “Do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: ‘For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, my soul has



## None of us are promised tomorrow, or even the rest of today. We have only this moment.

no pleasure in him.' But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:35-39).

Friends, God's Word is speaking to us today. Do not let anyone take away your hope in the soon coming of Jesus Christ. He is coming soon!

### LITERAL, PERSONAL, VISIBLE

Our Seventh-day Adventist fundamental belief 25 states:

"The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. The Saviour's coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die. The almost complete fulfillment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ's coming is near. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all times."<sup>1</sup>

### NOT PROMISED TOMORROW

Within the past year we, here at the Seventh-day Adventist world headquarters in Silver Spring,

Maryland, have lost two senior leaders—Maurice Valentine, a General Conference vice president, and Heather-Dawn Small, director of Women's Ministries for the world church. Both deaths came very quickly; suddenly even.

Friends, time is short—none of us are promised tomorrow, or even the rest of today. We have only this moment, right now. Are you ready for Jesus to come? Whether we live or we rest in the grave, we will see Him soon.

The current deteriorating world conditions should awaken us to the urgent need to be ready and to proclaim the three angels' messages of Revelation 14 in anticipation of Christ's soon return.

### GOD IS COUNTING ON US

Inspiration tells us, "In these final hours of probation . . . , when the fate of every soul is so soon to be decided forever, the Lord of heaven and earth expects His church to arouse to action as never before. Those who have been made free in Christ through a knowledge of precious truth are regarded by the Lord Jesus as His chosen ones, favored above all other people on the face of the earth; and He is counting on them to show forth

the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into marvelous light. The blessings which are so liberally bestowed are to be communicated to others. The good news of salvation is to go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In the visions of the prophets of old the Lord of glory was represented as bestowing special light upon His church in the days of darkness and unbelief preceding His second coming. As the Sun of Righteousness, He was to arise upon His church, 'with healing in His wings.' . . . And from every true disciple was to be diffused an influence for life, courage, helpfulness, and true healing."<sup>2</sup>

My dear brothers and sisters, we are living at the end of time. Let's keep close to the Lord, allowing the Holy Spirit to fill our lives with hope and courage to share the message of Christ's soon return with the world! ☺

<sup>1</sup> "The Second Coming of Christ," Seventh-day Adventist fundamental belief 25, [adventist.org/second-coming](http://adventist.org/second-coming).

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1917), pp. 716, 717.

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Spirit of Prophecy

# Possible Ways to Minister

Paying special attention to the needs of the unfortunate among us

*In keeping with this month's theme, we share various statements from Ellen G. White. She promoted inclusionary methods for our worship family. Her words substantiate the need for this ministry within the church.*



“He will not hearken to the prayer of His people while the orphan, the fatherless, the lame, the blind, and the sick are neglected among them.”

—*Testimonies for the Church* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948], vol. 3, p. 518

“When you succor the poor, sympathize with the afflicted and oppressed, and befriend the orphan, you bring yourselves into a closer relationship to Jesus.”

—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 25

“Widows and invalids are in the church to prove a blessing to the church. They are a part of the means which God has chosen to develop the true character of Christ's professed followers and to call into exercise the precious traits of character manifested by our compassionate Redeemer.”

—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 273

“The more able should ever act a noble, generous part in their deal with their poorer brethren, and should also give them good advice, and then leave them to fight life's battles through. But I was shown that a most solemn duty rests upon the church to have an especial care for the destitute widows, orphans, and invalids.”

—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 274

“But there was a decided want of care for widows, orphans, and the feeble of the flock. Besides some interest for the cause in general, there was but little apparent interest for any only their own families. With so narrow a religion they were dying a spiritual death.”

—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 19

## RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

“**Fatherless and motherless children are thrown into the arms of the church**, and Christ says to His followers: Take these **destitute children**, bring them up for Me, and ye shall receive your wages. I have seen much selfishness exhibited in these things. Unless there is some special evidence that they *themselves* are to be benefited by **adopting into their family those who need homes**, some turn away and answer: No. They do not seem to know or care whether such are saved or lost. That, they think, is not their business. With Cain they say: ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ They are not willing to be put to inconvenience or to make any sacrifice for the **orphans**, and they indifferently thrust such ones into the arms of the world, who are sometimes more willing to receive them than are these professed Christians. In the day of God inquiry will be made for those whom Heaven gave them the opportunity of saving. But they wished to be excused, and would not engage in the good work unless they could make it a matter of profit to them. I have been shown that those who refuse these opportunities for doing good will hear from Jesus: ‘As ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.’ Please read Isaiah 58: [verses 5-11].”

—*The Adventist Home* [Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1952], pp. 167, 168 [boldface supplied]

“The work of saving the **homeless** and the **fatherless** is everyone’s business.”

—*The Adventist Home*, p. 169 [boldface supplied]

“All who profess to have a Father in heaven, who they hope will care for them and finally take them to the home He has prepared for them, ought to feel a solemn obligation resting upon

them **to be friends to the friendless** and **fathers to the orphans**, **to aid the widows**, and be of some practical use in this world by benefiting humanity.”

—*The Adventist Home*, p. 169 [boldface supplied]

## OPEN HOMES TO ORPHANS AND FRIENDLESS

“As far as lies in your power, make a home for the homeless. Let everyone stand ready to act a part in helping forward this work. The Lord said to Peter: ‘Feed my lambs.’ This command is to us, and by **opening our homes for the orphans** we aid in its fulfillment. Let not Jesus be disappointed in you.”

—*The Adventist Home*, p. 170 [boldface supplied]

“Those who have pity for the **unfortunate**, the **blind**, the **lame**, the **afflicted**, the **widows**, the **orphans**, and the **needy**, Christ represents as commandment keepers, who shall have eternal life. . . . Christ regards all acts of mercy, benevolence, and thoughtful consideration for the unfortunate, the **blind**, the **lame**, the **sick**, the **widow**, and the **orphan** as done to Himself; and these works are preserved in the heavenly records and will be rewarded. On the other hand, a record will be written in the book against those who manifest the indifference of the priest and the Levite to the unfortunate, and those who take any advantage of the misfortunes of others and increase their affliction in order to selfishly advantage themselves. God will surely repay every act of injustice and every manifestation of careless indifference to and neglect of the afflicted among us. Everyone will finally be rewarded as his works have been.”

—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 512, 513 [boldface supplied]

“There are orphans that can be cared for; but many will not venture to undertake such a work; for it involves more labor than they care to do, leaving them but little time to please themselves. But when the King shall make investigation, these do-nothing, illiberal, selfish souls will then learn that heaven is for those who have been workers, those who have denied themselves for Christ’s sake. No provisions have been made for those who have ever taken such special care in loving and looking out for themselves. The terrible punishment the King threatened those on His left hand, in this case, is not because of their great crimes. They are not condemned for the things which they did do, but for that which they did not do. They did not those things Heaven assigned them to do. They pleased themselves, and can take their portion with self-pleasers.”

—*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Aug. 16, 1881

“There are orphans whom Christ has bidden His followers receive as a trust from God. Too often these are passed by with neglect. They may be ragged, uncouth, and seemingly in every way unattractive; yet they are God’s property. They have been bought with a price, and they are as precious in His sight as we are. They are members of God’s great household, and Christians as His stewards are responsible for them. ‘Their souls,’ He says, ‘will I require at thine hand.’”

—*Christ’s Object Lessons* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900, 1941], pp. 386, 387

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Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. These selections were taken from a number of her writings.

Looking Back

# From Dyer to Devoted Servant

The story of an Adventist pioneer

BY SVEN JENSEN  
AND BIRTHE  
BAYER

**C**arl Christian Hansen, Sr., played an important part in the early years of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Denmark and gave of his time, effort, and means to support the cause he loved.\*

## EARLY LIFE

Carl was born on a small farm in Geraa, Denmark, on April 27, 1849. From age 7 to 14 he attended elementary school in the winter and in the spring and summer worked with his brother as a shepherd boy to help support their large family. When Carl was 14, his father arranged an apprenticeship for him with a dyer in the city of Aalborg, and later helped him establish his own dyeing business close to his childhood home.

Carl grew up in a predominately Lutheran society. Baptists and Methodists were considered dissenters. His mother and sister were Methodists, while his father seemed to be tolerant of all believers. Carl had no particular religious conviction. A turning point came in 1877 when a Baptist minister (who later became an Adventist) sold him a Bible. Carl decided to study it and see if he could find any connection between the different religious views in his area.

That summer his wife, Junia, became a Methodist. Shortly after her conversion, Carl found Job 28:28, "And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.'" This text made a deep impression on him, and from that moment, he experienced a radical spiritual change.

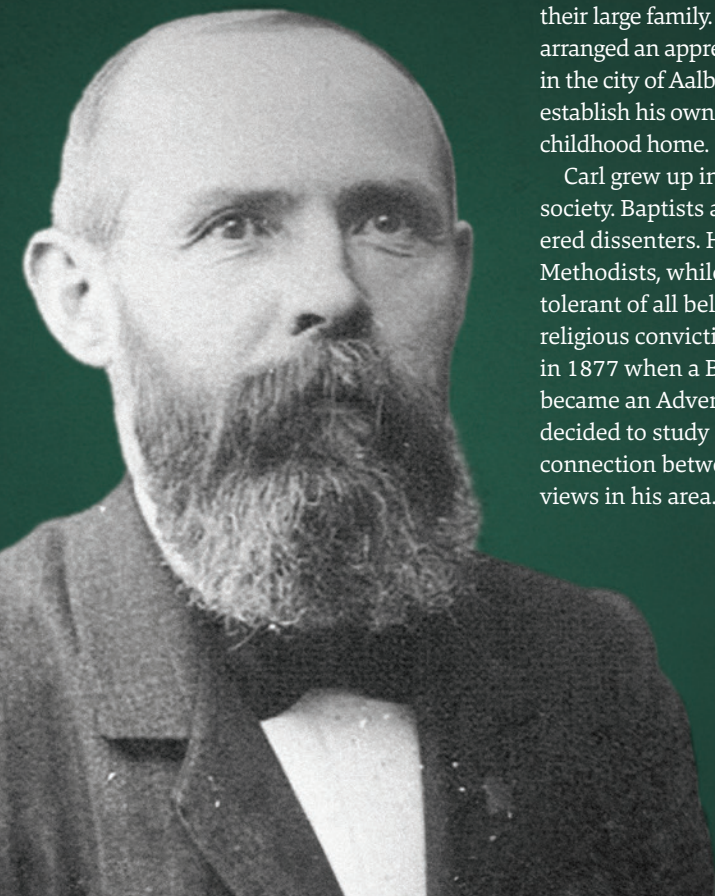
## MEETING THE ADVENTIST MESSAGE

Carl's first contact with the Advent message came when he visited a Baptist home. On the table he saw a magazine with an article about Daniel 10 that caught his attention. He asked the owner what kind of publication it was. The owner replied evasively: "I think it is from America, but it isn't worth anything." Then he took the magazine and put it away.

Carl remembered that the magazine, titled *Advent Tidende*, was published in May 1878 and edited by J. G. Matteson. He had already read in the newspapers that Adventist missionary J. G. Matteson had aroused a great deal of religious stir in Denmark and had started a temperance movement. Matteson was holding some meetings in Alstrup, about 50 kilometers (30 miles) away from where Carl lived, but he did not get the opportunity to attend.

In September 1878 one of Matteson's helpers, Knud Brorson, visited Carl's town. Brorson sought out the Methodist minister, but when he did not find him at home, he left a 64-page tract, *The New Testament Sabbath*, and went on his way. Soon after, Carl visited the Methodist minister to tell him that a Baptist minister had come to his home to convince him that people must be baptized by immersion to be saved.

"Well," the Methodist minister responded, "the Baptists should not refer so much to the Bible, because then they ought to follow it."





Carl asked, “Do they not follow the Bible?”

The Methodist minister responded, “If they want to follow the Bible, they need to keep Saturday holy.” Carl was shocked. He argued with the minister that the Bible said to keep Sunday. The minister replied, “It is not there. Here, you take a tract, read it, and you will find that it will give you something to think about.” The tract was *The New Testament Sabbath*, by J. G. Matteson.

For two weeks Carl and his wife were totally absorbed, studying the tract and comparing it with the Bible. When they had completed their research, they were convinced of the Sabbath truth, and the following Sabbath Carl closed his shop.

Trials began almost immediately. Friends, including the Methodist minister, mocked him and his wife and called them Jews. A few times his faith faltered, and he feared that he had made a grave mistake. Brorson came to his aid and assured him by pointing to Psalm 119:105: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” From that day on, Carl never doubted the truth.

On May 9, 1879, Carl and Junia were baptized. Three months later the Dronninglund church was organized with eight members. Kristen Kristensen (the former Baptist minister who sold Carl the Bible) was an elder, and Carl served as treasurer and secretary. In 1880 the Denmark Conference (the first Adventist conference outside North America) was organized with seven churches. J. G. Matteson was president, Carl was secretary, and J. P. Madsen was treasurer.

### WORKING FOR THE CHURCH

At the time there was no central place in Denmark where Adventist literature could be obtained. At the second conference meeting in Sep-

tember 1881, the first steps were taken to establish a publishing work. Church leaders placed Carl in charge of forming a local publishing house. He obtained a license for the business and was responsible for producing and distributing literature for four years.

In 1883 the Dronninglund church saw the need for Christian education for their children. Carl gathered 10 children and applied to the Ministry of Education for permission to open a school. Carl wrote in his autobiography: “The work succeeded to everyone’s satisfaction, and there was a very good and sympathetic relationship between me and the children. I had the great joy in the following years, that they walked in the way of the Lord and stand to this day as members of God’s church.” The school was the first Adventist school in Europe.

When Carl was 37, he was issued a ministerial license and worked in Østervraa for a year. At the close of his 16 Bible lectures, E. G. Olsen came and held another series of eight meetings in five days. Baptisms followed, and a new church was organized.

In 1888 Carl and his family moved to Odense, where he was asked to be publishing director. He oversaw four young workers who lived in his home. Three years later Carl was released from his role of managing the literary work and returned to Bible work and evangelism. At the annual Denmark Conference meeting in Copenhagen in 1894, Carl was ordained with two others. The ordination was conducted by conference president L. Johnson, and S. N. Haskell and Uriah Smith from the General Conference.

In 1897 inventory for a sanitarium was moved to the Frydenstrand school campus in Frederikshavn, and Frydenstrand Sanatorium opened as the first Adventist sanatorium

## Carl Christian Hansen, Sr., played an important part in the early years of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Denmark.

outside the United States. Carl served as business manager for both the school and the sanitarium until both were moved to Copenhagen.

### LATER YEARS AND LEGACY

When Carl stopped serving as business manager in March 1905, he bought a health store and opened “Sana,” where he invested all his energy into promoting a healthful lifestyle. In 1916 he handed ownership over to his daughter Kristine to “devote all my time undivided in the Lord’s service,” as he expressed it. He visited members regularly, held house meetings, enjoyed participating in Ingathering campaigns, preached, and functioned as elder in two small churches outside Copenhagen. Carl passed to his rest in 1932. ©

\*This story was originally published by the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* ([encyclopedia.adventist.org](http://encyclopedia.adventist.org)) and has been used with permission. It has been adapted for space.

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# Gospel and Life

Q

## Is the doctrine of the immortality of the soul compatible with the eternal gospel?

A

Adventists believe that the Bible does not teach the inherent immortality of the soul and affirm that humans are an indivisible unity of life in bodily form. Hence, immortality is a divine eschatological gift inseparable from the resurrection of the body (1 Cor. 15:50-55). Although at the beginning of the Christian era there were different interpretations of the human soul, the Christian church accepted the view that the soul is inherently immortal, dwelling in a material body from which it is liberated when the body dies.

### THE SOUL AND THE HUMAN CONDITION

The inherent immortality of the soul claims that the soul is indestructible and consequently there is not an external power, not even God's power, that can bring it to an end (at least, God seems to be unwilling to do so). The obvious conclusion is that sin has not threatened the existence of the soul. Something in us has escaped the deadly wound of sin. The Bible, however, teaches that sin has permanently damaged the totality of the person—the inner life as well as the spiritual, physical, and social life—leaving the whole person in need of salvation (Gen. 3:8-13; Rom. 8:6, 7; 6:23). Scripture teaches that the soul that sins will die (Eze. 18:4; cf. Rom. 1:32). The only option is to become a new creation through the saving sacrifice of Christ (John 3:7; 2 Cor. 5:17).

### THE SOUL AND SALVATION

The belief that human existence has never been at risk diminishes the depth of Christ's loving sacrifice. He did not give His life to save the soul, because the soul does not need to be saved—that is, to be granted eternal

life! Those who believe in the immortality of the soul would probably argue that it is the sphere within which the immortal soul will continue to exist that was at risk, but not the soul itself. The soul, they would argue, needs to go back to the sphere of God through Christ's work of reconciliation in order to escape the second hellish place of existence. They have redefined the damage that sin and rebellion caused to human nature, thus diminishing, at the same time, the magnitude of Christ's sacrifice—He died, not to give us life, but to make our inherent life enjoyable. The truth is that His sacrifice consisted in descending to the realm of death in order to give us back the eternal life we lost (Mark 10:45; John 3:16; 10:28; Rom. 6:23). We must affirm that nothing has escaped the deadly power of sin and that in order to redeem us an infinite sacrifice was needed (2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:7; Matt. 27:43). The idea of an immortal soul clouds the glory of God's sacrificial love.

### THE SOUL AND JUDGMENT

The teaching of the inherent immortality of the soul distorts God's loving character as revealed on the cross by redefining eternal death as the eternal burning of the soul of the wicked in hell. It is even painful to imagine that Christ would intentionally burn people *forever* as a penalty for living a *short* sinful life on this planet. This is one of the greatest doctrinal tragedies in the history of Christianity, and it is obviously the result of accepting the belief in the inherent immortality of the soul. God is not such a merciless Lord, for He is love (1 John 4:8; Rev. 21:3, 4). According to the Bible, the wicked will perish forever (cf. Mal. 4:1; Ps. 37:10; 145:20). ©

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# Cancer

## The sobering truth

*It seems that more people in our church are being diagnosed with cancer. What are the risk factors? Does following the Adventist health message make any difference?*

**G**lobally, cancer is a leading cause of death, second only to cardiovascular disease (heart attacks and strokes). In 2020 cancer was the cause of approximately 10 million deaths. Breast, lung, colon and rectum, and prostate cancers are the most common. Approximately 400,000 children develop cancer each year.

These are sobering facts and figures. Nevertheless, there is some good news. The various Adventist Health Studies have shown some advantage for vegetarians. Ovo-lacto vegetarians did better on bowel (colon and rectal) cancer than total vegetarians (vegans); this is possibly related to added calcium from the dairy products. Total vegetarians did better than other vegetarians regarding breast and prostate cancer, possibly related to the absence of milk. Overall, those following a vegetarian diet of some sort had better cancer outcomes and longevity.

Risk factors for cancer include:

- Tobacco use
- Obesity (high body mass index)
- Alcohol consumption
- Low fruit and vegetable consumption
- Lack of physical activity and exercise
- Air pollution
- Excessive sunlight exposure and tanning beds (skin cancers, including melanomas)
- Chronic infections such as cervical cancer from human papilloma virus (HPV), and liver cancer from hepatitis infections (these account for 30 percent of cancers in lower- to middle-income countries)
- Hereditary diseases such as Lynch syndrome, or hereditary colorectal cancer, also known as hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer syndrome

The overall cancer burden can be reduced 30 to 50 percent by intentionally avoiding the risk factors. Abstain from the use of tobacco and alcohol; there is no safe level of exposure to either of these carcinogens. Strive to maintain normal body weight. Eat healthfully, including five to seven portions of fruits and vegetables daily and a balanced vegetarian diet. Exercise regularly and enjoy physical activity every day. Avoid excess ultraviolet radiation from exposure to artificial tanning devices; use appropriate sunscreen precautions when in direct sunshine. Guided use of HPV and hepatitis vaccines aid prevention.

Additional reduction can be achieved by early diagnosis and appropriate treatment of cancer. When cancer is identified and diagnosed early, the

chances of successful treatment and survival are much improved. It is important to seek professional medical advice when one becomes aware of new symptoms such as lumps/bumps, blood in the stools or urine, or abnormal discharges/bleeding from the skin, breast, or urogenital system.

Helpful screening tests include:

- Papanicolaou (Pap) tests for cervical cancer
- Mammography for breast cancer
- Colonoscopy
- Digital rectal examination for men to detect prostate cancer and blood tests as advised.
- Regular oral/dental health checks

Most of the prevention listed in this brief article include the undergirding recommendations and practices of the Adventist health message. We live in a broken world, however. Until Jesus returns, we will face the inevitability of death, including possibly dying from cancer. Regardless, we will have had the privilege of better quality of life in general, maybe even longer life, with more years to serve the Lord and church we love. In short—it is worth following the Adventist health message. Maranatha! ©

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“May I Tell  
You a Story?”

BY DICK DUERKSEN

# “Go Home Now!”

Then the transmission made a few terrible screeching sounds, seized up, and quit.

## STUCK IN A SMALL TOWN

It took a while, but a tow truck finally towed the RV to the local transmission shop, where the mechanics quickly analyzed it and gave Jim the news.

“It can be repaired, but we close at noon today, so you won’t be able to get to it until sometime Monday. Until then, you can camp here in our parking lot.”

This was not the way he had planned to spend Sabbath.

That night a gang riot broke out in the parking lot, surrounding the RV with gunshots, shouting, squealing tires, and sirens. Fearful for his life, Jim spent most of the night lying flat on the floor of his tiny motor home, quietly crying out to God.

Sunday morning Pastor Jim woke up feeling that he needed to be in church—any church. He began walking, and just down the street he heard enthusiastic Christian music. The sign in front of the church said “Victory Outreach.” As he stepped into the small chapel, he quickly realized that these people were nothing like the people who attended his large church back home. Jeans and T-shirts, tattoos and piercings—this church seemed to be targeting addicts and street walkers. They were singing at the top of their voices, praising a loving, forgiving God.

As the music soaked into his soul, Jim began to weep uncontrollably. The members seemed to sing louder to cover the sound of his sobbing, and Jim knew God had led him right to where he needed to be.

When the service was over, he caught the attention of a woman in the pew ahead of him.

“I’m in trouble,” he said. “Is there someone I could talk to?”

“Just a moment,” she answered.

A few moments later a young deacon came and sat down beside him. As Jim sobbed out his story, the man listened deeply. When Jim paused, the deacon spoke directly to his heart. “There is

I don't think I should have just kicked me out of the house.  
Please pray for me  
Pastor Jim

**B**etty’s voice was clear and direct. “Jim, I can’t live with you anymore. You need to be out of the house before I get off work today.” It was Friday, and things had not been going well for Jim and Betty, a young Adventist pastoral couple. Betty was finished with their marriage, and Jim did not understand why.

“I thought we had a typical marriage, a good relationship,” he remembers. “But now the worst thing I could ever imagine was happening, and I didn’t even understand what I had done!”

Jim called the hospital chaplain and asked him to take care of the sermon he was to preach the next day; then he got into their old RV and headed south. Some hiking on the Pacific Crest Trail would help to clear his head, he hoped. He spent a fitful night parked near some railroad tracks. Sabbath morning took him farther south.

something I don't understand. How could a Christian pastor permit his marriage to get so bad that his wife would rather live without him?"

The question was shocking. "You don't understand. She is the one who kicked *me* out of the house. I didn't have a choice."

The deacon persisted. "You can't fix what you have broken from here. You have to go home."

"I can't."

"You must."

## UNITED PRAYERS

Outside, Jim began to wander around town. Walking, thinking, pondering what he had just heard and experienced, watering the path with his tears.

Later that morning Pastor Jim's walking took him to a local hospital. The air-conditioned lobby was comfortable. After perusing a few magazines, he found a small chapel just off the lobby. He slipped in, knelt beside one of the chairs, and prayed, seeking peace and understanding. After a time of quiet solitude, he rose. As he started to leave the chapel, he noticed a binder for prayer requests.

"I am a Christian pastor," Jim wrote on the open page. "My wife has just kicked me out of the house. Please pray for me." Then he signed his name.

Monday morning, mechanics pulled the old RV into the garage and began major surgery on the transmission.

Jim went walking.

And sobbing.

And thinking.

He found himself back at the hospital. There was no one in the chapel, but he could hear a chaplain talking on the phone in the adjoining office. When the man hung up, Pastor Jim knocked on the chaplain's door.

"Come in!" a kind voice invited.

"I walked in, sat down, and wiped my soggy eyes. When I looked up, I saw a kind-faced man reaching for a box of tissues," remembers Jim.

"How can I help you?"

"I'm Pastor Jim," he began.

"You're Pastor Jim?" the chaplain exclaimed.

"Well, yes, I am," Jim responded in bewilderment.

"Before you say a single word, Jim, I want you to know something. Every Christian pastor in this city is praying for you by name this morning. That message you wrote in the chapel prayer book yesterday, I shared it with all the pastors at our monthly prayer breakfast this morning! We all prayed for you then, and they are praying for you *now!*"

Jim could hardly believe what he was hearing. God had orchestrated an amazing gift for him.

"There, in an unfamiliar city, far from home, all the Christian pastors were calling out to God on my behalf. So unbelievable."

Jim and the chaplain prayed and talked together. Finally the chaplain put a hand on Pastor Jim's shoulder and said, "Jim, you need to go home. You can't fix what's broken in your marriage from here!" Jim recognized the counsel and knew what he needed to do. But he was terrified to follow through on the words. What if he called and Betty just hung up?

Back at the transmission repair shop, he sat in the small waiting room, his mind slowly replaying the words again and again. "You can't fix what is broken from here!" "Go home now!"

When the RV repair was finally finished, Jim placed a trembling phone call to his church. His wife, Betty, would be there with the kids for the weekly Pathfinder club meeting.

"May I speak to Betty, please?" His voice sounded as if he were in a magnitude 7 earthquake, his heart beating in fear-filled hope.

"Hello, this is Betty."

"Hello, this is Jim."

"Jim, you can come home. Just promise me we will both go for help. God wants us to fix this, together." ☺

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Seventh-day  
Adventist Church



# Where Is Damien?

**W**hat's wrong?" Laray asked her roommate, Keishla.

Keishla looked up from the cafeteria tray in front of her. Vegetable soup and Ms. Sonia's piping-hot rolls was usually her favorite meal! But the soup was getting cold as she stared at it.

"You have been quiet and unhappy all morning," Laray persisted. "What is bothering you?"

"I don't know where Damien is," Keishla mumbled.

Laray brought her spoon up to her mouth. "Isn't he your older brother?"

Keishla nodded. "My *favorite* brother." She pushed back her chair and slumped down. When the bell for classes rang, the girls stood up to take their trays to the kitchen.

As the other seventh graders bantered in the hallway going to their math class, Keishla ducked into Pastor Paul's office and sank into the chair beside his desk. Looking up, he saw her downcast eyes, and knew something was wrong.

"Have you had a rough week?"

Pastor Paul asked.

Keishla nodded.

"You want to tell me about it?" he gently urged.

Keishla's head hung low.

"I can't get Damien off my mind," she mumbled. Keishla and her younger sister went to school on the campus of Holbrook Indian School. All students from grades 1 to 12 stayed in dormitories at the school. While she was usually cheerful, loneliness for her brother had made life nearly unbearable for Keishla.

"Can't you call or email him?" Pastor Paul asked.

Keishla's head shook sadly back and forth. "We don't have an address or a phone number for him." She wiped her hands nervously on her jeans.

After exploring several ideas, Pastor Paul said, "Look, Keishla, Jesus knows exactly where Damien is, doesn't He?" Her sad eyes came up to meet his. Keishla had given her heart to Jesus and been the first in her Navajo family to be baptized months ago. Since that day she had not lost her glowing smile—until now.

"Why don't we just pray and ask Him to tell you what to do?" Pastor Paul asked. Keishla nodded and bowed her head.

"Dear God, Keishla is really missing her brother," Pastor Paul prayed. "You know where Damien is. Please help Keishla find him." Pastor Paul paused and looked up at Keishla. She looked at him, and he nodded encouragement.

Keishla closed her eyes again. "Dear Jesus, do You see Damien?" she prayed. "Can You please send him home?" Tears choked her voice. "I am worried about him. Is he OK? Help us to find him. Amen."

Pastor Paul stood up. "Come on," he said, motioning her to the door, "Let's go see Mrs. Brown."

As usual, Mrs. Brown's office was swirling with students. One needed medicine, another had a form to fill out, and a fourth grader had a question that only she could answer. As registrar, vice-principal, and counselor, Mrs. Brown was very busy.

When Pastor Paul explained Keishla's situation, Mrs. Brown



## Keishla hadn't seen her favorite brother in two years.

cleared her office and sat down with them.

With Pastor Paul's help, Keishla explained the problem that had her feeling so sad and anxious. Mrs. Brown listened quietly, then kindly asked some questions. Slowly Keishla's mood began to lift. Finally, they prayed together for a way to find Damien. There was a hint of hope on Keishla's face as she left for her next class.

Pastor Paul lingered in Mrs. Brown's office, discussing possible ways they could find Damien. Surely there was a way to get word to him that his sister was longing to talk with him. But no answer came to either of them.

That night during study hall in the dorm, Keishla was called down the hall to the dean's office.

"You have a phone call," the dean said, handing her the phone.

"Who is it?" Keishla asked.

"I don't know," she said.

Keishla shrugged and with a puzzled look on her face said, "Hello?"

"Keishla? This is Damien," the voice said.

Keishla held out the phone and looked at it with disbelief. "Who?" she questioned.

"This is Damien, your brother," the voice repeated. "I just talked to Mom, and she said that I should call you." He paused. "How are you doing?"

By now Keishla's heart was pounding with excitement. "Damien? Damien, my brother?" She spoke with wonder into the phone. "Where are you? How come you haven't called before now? I haven't seen you for two years!" Her words were tumbling over each other.

In the excitement the dean called her younger sister, Karina, to the office. Grinning, Keishla handed her the phone. Thinking it was her mother, Karina took the phone.

"Hello," Karina said.

"Hi there, Karina! This is Damien."

"Who?" Karina asked in surprise. She looked at Keishla, who was holding a hand over her mouth as she quieted her giggling. As she listened to her

brother's voice, Karina's eyes began to widen. Suddenly she let out a scream that echoed down the dorm hallway. Now Keishla was laughing and Karina was crying as she realized that this was truly her brother, Damien!

Even though Pastor Paul and Mrs. Brown had not been able to come up with a plan to find Damien, God had the plan in motion even while they were praying.

Just in time for Thanksgiving break, Damien invited his whole family down to where he was in Phoenix, Arizona. After two long years the family was all together! And you can be sure that the best part of that holiday for Keishla was *not* the good food. It was the awesome answer to her prayers for God to find Damien. Keishla knew just how David felt when he wrote, "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice" (Ps. 55:17, KJV). ©

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**Cathlynn Doré Law** is an author and retired teacher who loves adventuring outdoors with her family.



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