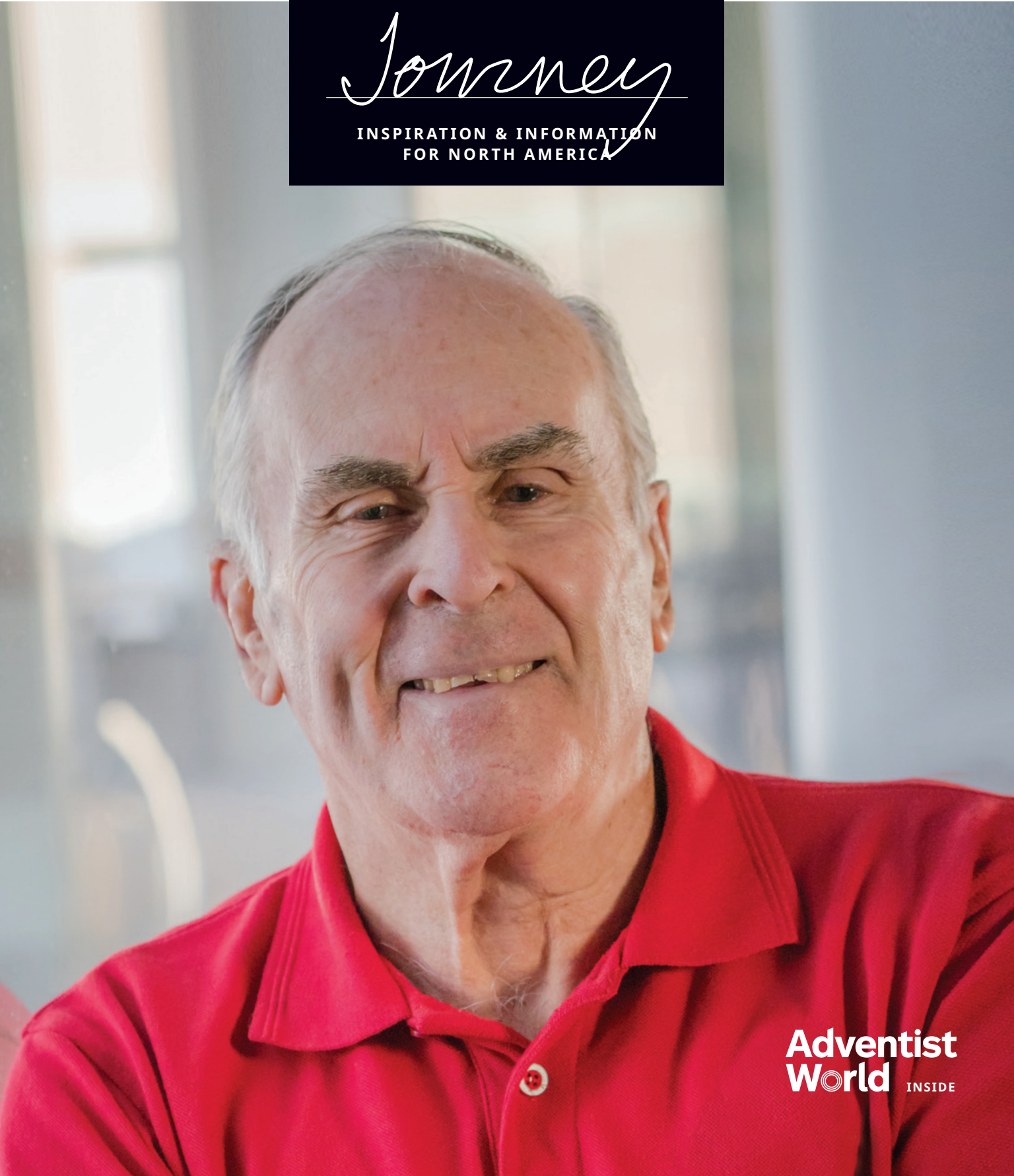


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# Adventist Journey

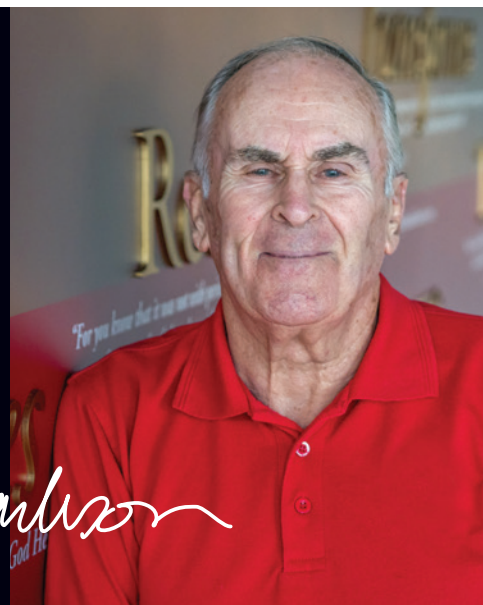
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## My Journey

As my Christian journey has gone on, and as my faith and commitment to the Lord has grown stronger, I look for God's leading more and more. It's a continual growth process. Writing to prisoners, sponsoring addicts in recovery, mission trips . . . I don't examine what I do or why I do it. That can lead to lack of humility. I'm not going to analyze it; I'm just going to do it. Visit <https://vimeo.com/249599551> for more of Ed's journey.

### EDWARD JACKSON

retired rail worker, U.S. Army contractor,  
and church member from Beltsville, Maryland



Cover Photo by Dan Weber

**Dear Reader:** The publication in your hands represents the collaborative efforts of the North American Division and *Adventist World* magazine, which is inserted halfway through *Adventist Journey* (after page 8). Please enjoy both magazines!

*Adventist Journey* (ISSN 1557-5519) is the journal of the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The Northern-Asia Pacific Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is the publisher. It is printed monthly by the Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Copyright © 2018. Send address changes to your local conference membership clerk. Contact information should be available through your local church.

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A. Vol. 1, No. 3. March 2018. **Adventist Journey Publication Board** Daniel R. Jackson (chair), G. Alexander Bryant (vice chair), Kimberly Luste Maran (secretary), G. Thomas Evans, Tony Anobile, Larry Blackmer, Paul Brantley, Debra Brill, Alvin M. Kibble, Gordon Pifer, Kenneth Denslow, Daniel Weber, Julio Muñoz, Karnik Doukmetzian, legal advisor **Scripture References** Unless otherwise noted, all Bible references are taken from the *The Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

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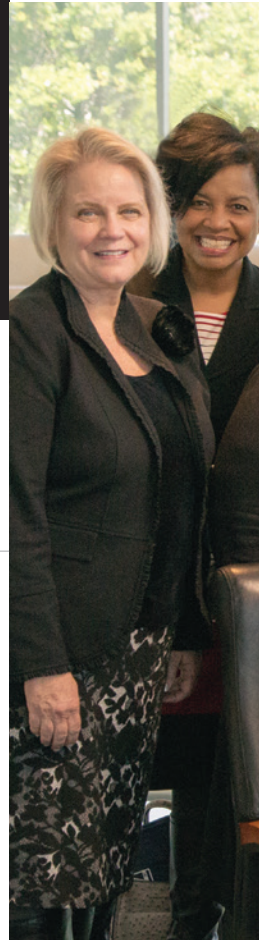
Executive Editor, *Adventist World* **Bill Knott**

# Connect, *Share,* Encourage

Adventist women  
in leadership meet  
to pray, reflect,  
and praise God.

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

Photos by Pieter  
Damsteegt, NAD Office  
of Communication



**L**ast fall, during the North American Division (NAD) 2017 year-end meeting, a group of history-making church leaders gathered in a conference room for a lunchtime meet and greet. A conference president, three college/university presidents, several ministry leaders, and a few church officers—all women—gathered to reflect, share, pray, and praise God. Of the 14 women assembled, all of whom have made significant contributions in each of their fields of service, nine are the first women to serve in their positions.

The inaugural meeting of Adventist Women in Leadership (AWL) featured a luncheon and agenda established by hosts Debra Brill, vice president for NAD ministries; Ann Roda, vice president, mission integration and spiritual care, Adventist Health-Care; and Celeste Ryan Blyden, Columbia Union Conference vice president for strategic communication and public relations.

As part of the program, Blyden asked each leader to share what they'd tell their younger selves. Poi-

gnant and practical advice followed. Below are a few snippets of the conversation the women started and hope to continue during the next few years through coordinated prayer sessions, seminars and networking events, mentoring opportunities, and a social media group to facilitate wider engagement with other women in church leadership roles.

We need to be soft-hearted and hard-headed. Grounded in our principle, but soft and loving as Jesus was.



Celeste Ryan Blyden, Columbia Union Conference vice president for strategic communication and public relations, introduces the agenda for the inaugural Adventist Women in Leadership meeting.



Women in leadership gather for lunch, prayer, and encouragement during the 2017 North American Division Year-End Meeting. Pictured left to right (back row): Sandra Roberts, Carmela Monk Crawford, Diane Thurber, Elaine Oliver, Twyla Wall, Celeste Ryan Blyden, Debra Brill, Vinita Sauder, Sabrina Cotton, and Avia Hendrickson; (front row) Andrea Luxton, Ann Roda, Teresa Ferreira, and Lara Melashenko.

### **Sandra Roberts, conference president, Southeastern California Conference**

My path to ministry was a zigzag. Administration was never one of those things I was going to do. In fact, I've often said that, as that quintessential young professional, I was never going to be one of those people who worked at the conference office and wore a suit every day.

God has times of convergence in our lives, when He brings together the experiences we've had. Whether we're men or women, God has heart-shaping work that He does for us throughout our lives. If I could go back, and could have trusted more fully that God knew

what He was doing with the path He was leading me on, I probably would have been a lot more at peace with the twists and turns.

Whether you're male or female, leadership is tough work. Sometimes I have a hard time separating what are simply difficult leadership challenges and what results because of gender. I deeply value conversations like the one today because I can get stuck in my own world trying to figure this out. Being able to talk, pray, and gain other perspectives through conversations on retreats together, or just in small groups, is really helpful. I long for us to do more connecting, more sharing, and more encouraging in

the midst of the demands leadership brings in our lives.

### **Elaine Oliver, associate director, Family Ministries, General Conference**

Everything is in God's hands, so I would say to my younger self to just trust God and understand that He has a plan for our lives. We never know on what journey He's going to take us.

We need to be still. One text that has become sort of my mantra in the past few years is Psalm 46:10: "Be still, and know that I am God." There are so many demands on us sometimes: marriage, children, work. But the most critical thing in

our lives is our relationship with God. If we don't take time to listen to Him, then we won't recognize His voice. We won't know where He's taking us. So breathe, smile, breathe some more; it's going to be OK. It's not as stressful as we think it is.

**Twyla Wall, director, Adventist Information Ministry**

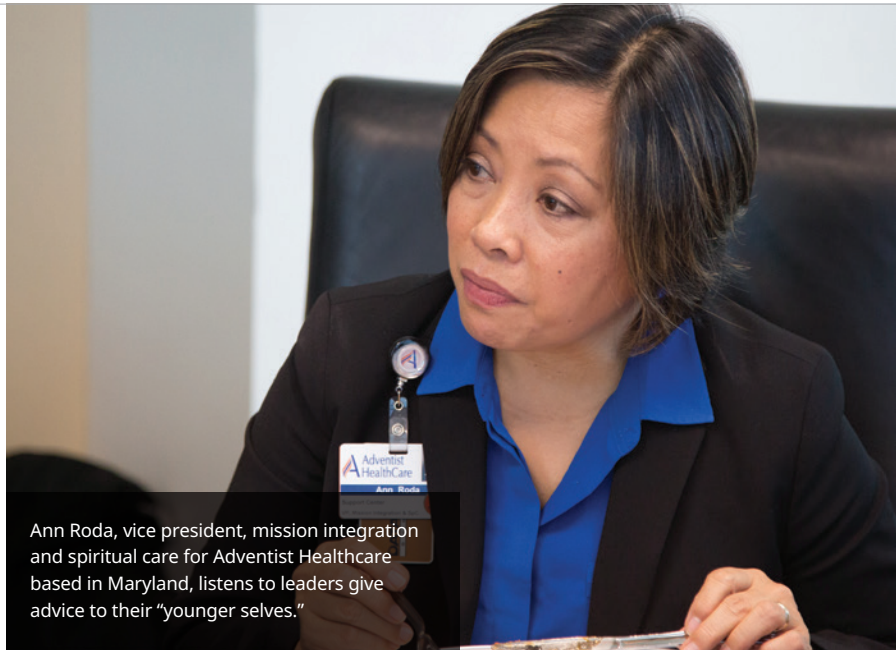
I would admonish myself to continually put before me the concept of salvation as a free gift. It comes to us by faith, not by works. We work hard. We work steadfastly and we sometimes get that backward. I tell myself: Always, always, always cling to that fundamental, foundational gift, that is free salvation, and wrap myself in God's robe [of righteousness] all the time.

**Diane Thurber, president, Christian Record Services, Inc.**

I always wanted to be a missionary. I'm not a missionary overseas, but I certainly am a missionary for those who are blind. God fulfilled that dream.

I would say to my younger self: Have those dreams and talk to God about them, because He will fulfill those dreams. My advice is to trust that God will give us the desires of our hearts. I would also say to filter some of those voices that wanted to keep you from trying new things, from doing things you thought you were capable of; those voices that wanted to put you in a box and limit what God wanted to do for you.

You can take that first step, and God takes you the rest of the way. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Prov. 3:5, 6).



Ann Roda, vice president, mission integration and spiritual care for Adventist Healthcare based in Maryland, listens to leaders give advice to their "younger selves."

**Andrea Luxton, president, Andrews University**

As a child, I never had a sense that there was something I couldn't do or that wasn't open to me. That's a great gift my parents gave me.

But a faculty member at Newbold once said to me, "You really like being able to box everything up and put a bow on top, don't you?"

I'd tell my younger self to understand that you don't have to control your own life by putting parameters on it, boxing it in. That willingness to be vulnerable to a possibility that God may have for you is really the only way to do it. That's something I've learned over my life. Maybe if I'd learned that as a kid, God would have found it easier to open doors for me.

**Sabrina Cotton, vice president for finance, Oakwood University**

I never understood this when I was younger, but once you travel the path, you understand, you reach your destination, you can look back and see the "why"—how

all of the twists and turns were to give you an expected end.

We should listen to both positive and negative voices, and use the negative voices to go forward. I remember once a vice president said, "I would promote you, but I don't want a woman as my assistant vice president"

But eventually, with God's help, I proved him wrong, and that same vice president promoted me to assistant vice president. So it's listening to those voices, and the ones that told me God knows the plan for my life. And having positive, God-fearing parents: I'd tell my younger self to listen to them more.

**Vinita Sauder, president, Union College**

I would tell my younger self that God is my partner in my work. He takes our small part, the little piece we can provide as human leaders, and He magnifies it. He magnifies our work every day. Partnership with God is what makes us able to lead.

I was recently reminded of this by my husband. . . . During a difficult



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“I know God loves me and I’m going to be all right.”

time when a student was seriously injured at Union, my husband gave me a card that read “Remember that God put you here.” I have that card in my desk to this day, right in the top drawer, so I can remind myself, when the going gets tough, that I don’t have to lift the weight all by myself; that this is God’s educational ministry; and that He walks beside me.

In another job, before I became Union’s president, I experienced a distinct turning point when I realized that I needed to depend on God for true wisdom and discernment. It was back before smartphones, when you had to look up a Bible verse in a physical Bible. One of our project teams needed to look up a verse to include in a publication, and for some reason we couldn’t find a Bible in any of the offices that reported to me. This lack surprised us and became a tipping point. I went and purchased Bibles for our offices and put one right in the middle of my desk as a permanent reminder that this was our leadership north. This same Bible sits on my desk at Union College 12 years later, a symbol of my commitment to Christian leadership through the grace and goodness of God.

**Teresa Ferreira, executive secretary, education superintendent, camp, and women’s ministries director, Maritime Conference**

I’d say three things to my younger self. First, God loves surprises. He is a God of surprises. He must look at driven women who have their lives mapped out, chuckle, and say, “I am God. I have a plan for you.”

Second, when my husband and I first found each other, we were in our mid-30s, OK with being single, and both of us had come to the point where we wanted to be in ministry for

**ADVENTIST WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP**

**D**uring the luncheon for Adventist women leaders attending the NAD year-end meeting, Celeste Ryan Blyden shared the AWL message: “Today we see you. We celebrate your accomplishments. We rejoice in what God is doing in you and through you. We are here for you, and we’re praying for you.”

The goals of AWL, as established by Blyden and planning partners Debra Brill and Ann Roda, are: (1) to connect and engage women in leadership positions in the Seventh-day Adventist Church; (2) to acknowledge and celebrate our God-given gifts, calling, and contributions to ministry; (3) to nurture, support, train, and prepare women for leadership; and (4) to mentor new leaders, younger women leaders, and student leaders.

Leadership categories include administrators (elected officer or vice president); departmental directors and associate directors; ministry or educational leaders (elected or appointed); and student leaders (elected Student Association presidents at Adventist academies, colleges, and universities). “We must encourage and mentor young women to become leaders. They can do it, and we are in positions to be advocates so their voices are heard,” said Brill.

God. Then we met, and within the first month he talked about marriage. We just knew. I remember the first time I was going to preach, he sent me this text message: “Go be great for God.” That would be the second message I would send to my younger self: “Go be great for God.”

The last message I would send to my younger self is built on Bible verses John 17:3 and Psalm 16:8. . . . We live in a world of compromise. I tell people at work that we are often perceived as being all hardhearted and softheaded. We need to be softheaded and hardhearted. Grounded in our principle, but soft and loving, as Jesus was.

**Lara Melashenko, principal, Chinook Winds Adventist Academy, Calgary**

I’d say two things to my younger self: Surrender, and trust in our Maker. I continually feel these questions in my heart: “What’s next? What do You want me to do? Why am I here?” That surrender piece has been the resounding theme in my life.

THIS MAGAZINE  
CONTINUED AFTER

**Adventist  
World**





Left to right: Debra Brill, NAD vice president for ministries; Avia Hendrickson, Atlantic Union College president; and Vinita Sauder, Union College president, enjoy lunch dialogue during the first Adventist Women in Leadership meeting.

God magnifies our work every day. Partnership with Him is what makes us able to lead.

### **Ann Roda, vice president, mission integration and spiritual care, Adventist Healthcare**

In the past 20 years I have never applied for a job, never. Everything came to me. So I would say a couple things to my younger self.

When Moses was getting ready to cross the Red Sea with all those people, God said, in effect, “Stand still, and watch Me do what I do best.” So that’s what I would say. It takes a lot of courage and boldness to stand still, because we women are doers, and, I’m sure you can relate to this; I do “doing” very well. Most women leaders are like that. Sometimes we just have to stand still, which one of the greatest skills and gifts of leadership.

### **Celeste Ryan Blyden, vice president, strategic communications and public relations, Columbia Union Conference**

I didn’t ask for this job; I’ve never asked for a job in this church. The only job I ever asked for was when I came out of college and asked, “Could I start a magazine for my generation, Generation X, young adults?” It was as a volunteer, and Ted Wick, then NAD youth director, gave me the opportunity. I started *Adventist View*, a magazine for young adults. Here I am, 25 years later, and God would have it that I’d be the first female vice president, an officer in my union.

I am thankful for the opportunity. My husband says something to me that my mother used to say in a different way. My mother used to say, “Baby, your turn will come.” My husband says, “All things in time, my dear. All things in time.”

That’s what I would say to my younger self: “Relax. God’s got you.”

*Compiled by Kimberly Luste Maran,  
NAD Office of Communication*

### **Carmela Monk Crawford, editor, Message magazine; attorney**

My current Bible passage, Psalm 94, tells me that everything I need, He will give me. Just wait for Him. That’s what I would tell my younger self: “Wait. Wait for it.” That’s been the theme of my life. Wait. Wait.

I’m one of those people who has long prayers. Praying and waiting. I got married at 33; had my last kid at 40. You hear what I’m saying? Praise God, He’s working on it. God answers prayer. God has a plan; just wait for it.

### **Avia Hendrickson, president, Atlantic Union College**

My Bible verse to my younger self would be Romans 8:23. I see how many of the life experiences I’ve had I use now. I grew up being “seen, not heard,” so I developed an ability to observe and learn.

I’ve also learned that B-I-B-L-E was an acronym for “basic instruction before leaving earth.” I use Scripture to help and guide me. God has prepared me, as He did Esther, for such a time as this.

People ask how I’m doing, and I say, “Well, I’m fine as long as I’m praying. I have to keep praying.”

I’ve learned to do that, trust in God, and use Scripture to center myself. Whatever happens, I know that God loves me and that I’m going to be all right.

### **Debra Brill, vice president, North American Division**

Rosa Banks and I were the only women in the NAD officer group for many years. Our voices were small.

But I recall a meeting during which we were talking about nominating committee. I went to the microphone and said something like “You know you have opportunity in your nominating committees. Who are the women you know who you can put forth as qualified people to serve? Will you please return to your territories and think of those women who you know are qualified to serve, and champion their names to the nominating committee?”

What I said was the right thing to say at the right place. It was not affirmed by anyone at the time, but it was the right thing to do. I would say to my younger self: be bolder. I encourage women to speak with boldness and confidence.

# NAD NEWS BRIEFS



← A patient engages with a volunteer at the lab station where blood tests are administered.

*Miguel Manzo*

## MILITARY CHAPLAINS HONORED AT MEMORIAL DEDICATION CEREMONY

**D**ick Stenbakken's 47-year-old dream of placing a memorial to honor chaplains from the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard, and Marines, past and present, at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, became a reality on December 13, 2017, in Honolulu, Hawaii.

On a sunny Hawaiian day, Chaplain (Colonel) Richard "Dick" Stenbakken, United States Army (retired), saw the conclusion of two years of phone calls and piles of paperwork, making this memorial a reality.

"Getting the stone through customs, through the California fires, to Hawaii, and having it done in time for the ceremony was nothing short of a series of miracles," says Stenbakken. "After nearly 100 phone calls, and tons of coordination—and by the grace of God and answered prayer—it happened."

—Rajmund Dabrowski, Rocky Mountain Conference. Visit [ow.ly/F1O930hACY2](http://ow.ly/F1O930hACY2) to read more.

## MORE THAN 6,700 PATIENTS RECEIVED FREE MEDICAL CARE

**A**t the Your Best Pathway to Health (YBPTH) event in Phoenix, Arizona, from December 25-27, 2017, more than 3,300 volunteers, including health professionals, spent their Christmas holiday serving 6,770 residents of the greater Phoenix area. Services included medical, dental, vision, physical therapy, lifestyle education, financial, legal, child care, haircuts, even surgical specialties. The total value of medical procedures performed and services offered was \$40,608,800.

Pathway to Health opened its doors at 7:00 Christmas morning. Dental and vision care represented the greatest need. The dental department was comprised of

250 dentists, hygienists, and their assistants at 168 stations. Services included extractions, root canals and fillings, treating abscesses, cleanings, and more. Vision had a team of five optometrists, one assistant, and three ophthalmologists. On Christmas day alone, the team saw 271 patients.

"We love the idea of demonstrating God's gift of life through Jesus Christ," said Lela Lewis, co-founder and CEO of YBPTH. "This is an awesome opportunity to provide physical, mental, and spiritual health. All volunteers play a role in sharing this love."

—Kristyn Dolinsky and Pathway to Health Communication; visit <http://ow.ly/WYAk30hG19l> to read more.

## APRIL'S SONSCREEN TO BE HELD AT NAD HEADQUARTERS

**S**onscreen 2018 will take place on April 5-7, 2018, at the new North American Division headquarters in Columbia, Maryland. In addition to film screenings throughout the festival, panel discussions/workshops and networking opportunities are also scheduled.

The Sonscreen Film Festival, which debuted in 2002, is an annual gathering for Christian young adults who have a passion for using film and video for the purpose of creating timely and

relevant productions for social awareness, outreach, and uplifting creative entertainment.

"Sonscreen alumni are welcome to attend as guests of the festival. This is meant to keep our community of filmmakers growing," said Julio C. Muñoz, Sonscreen director, "but increased student participation is our priority! We are looking forward to an inspiring time with all our visual storytellers."

—Visit [www.sonscreen.com](http://www.sonscreen.com) for more information.



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## NURSING PROFESSORS AMONG FIRST IN THE WORLD TO EARN CERTIFICATION IN LIFESTYLE MEDICINE

**T**wo Southern Adventist University (Collegedale, Tennessee) nursing professors were part of the first group of medical professionals in the world to earn board certification in the field of lifestyle medicine. The group includes 247 physicians and health clinicians who are now certified as "Diplomates of the American Board of Lifestyle Medicine (ABLM)/American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM) and the International Board of Lifestyle Medicine."

Lilly Tryon, D.N.P., and Cindy Rima, M.S.N., both associate professors of nursing at the university, sat for the exam on October 26, 2017, in Tucson, Arizona.

—Janell Hullquist, *Southern Adventist University*. Visit [ow.ly/RX-0330hAwEN](http://ow.ly/RX-0330hAwEN) to read more.



↑ Victoria Nichols (in red on right/back) celebrates Union's first place finish in the Rinse, Recycle, Repeat competition. Photo provided by Union College

## STUDENT WINS NATIONAL "RINSE, RECYCLE, REPEAT" RECYCLING CONTEST

**B**iology major Victoria Nichols led Union College (Lincoln, Nebraska) in a nationwide recycling competition sponsored by Garnier. She entered the contest and was chosen to involve her community and her school in the collection of empty personal care and beauty items.

"I wanted to encourage my classmates to reduce their footprint on the earth," she said.

Nichols worked to collect as many empty personal care and

beauty containers as she could during April 2017, the first month of the program. Nichols then had to break them down, box them up, and ship them to New Jersey.

"Tori was the winner by far, with more than 7,000 empties," said the representative from TerraCycle who spoke at a ceremony in November 2017, honoring Nichols and Union College for their achievement.

—Maren Miller, *Union College*. Visit [ow.ly/QyMM30hACLN](http://ow.ly/QyMM30hACLN) to read more.

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**COST:** \$79.00<sup>†</sup> | \$35 for students

### WHO SHOULD ATTEND:

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[www.urbanmissionandministry.org](http://www.urbanmissionandministry.org)



\*ONLINE PREREQUISITE REQUIRED | <sup>†</sup>EARLY BIRD RATE ENDS JUNE 28, 2018

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BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

# Fount of Every Blessing

**M**usic streamed from the hotel meeting room as instruments and voices fused the chords of an achingly beautiful and poignant message. Even before I gently pulled on the door handle, the melody and harmony flowed straight into me. I quickly found a place to stand with the gathered worshippers as they continued with the song's first verse: "Teach me ever to adore Thee, may I still Thy goodness prove, while the hope of endless glory fills my heart with joy and love."

Moisture found its way into my eyes as I glanced around the room at the pastors and chaplains gathered for the conference and retreat. I realized at that moment that the words of this hymn, "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," was salve for weary souls, and encouragement for hope-filled hearts. Raising my meager voice with the throng of women, I remembered another experience in which those around me drew comfort from this message.

The Los Angeles Convention Center became a home away from home for several days during the Your Best Pathway to Health mega clinic in April 2016. I was not one of the more than 4,000 volunteers assisting the 10,000 patients who received free medical and dental care at the three-day event. Part of the media crew, I gathered stories and helped conduct interviews for video and print use.

During the dizzyingly busy height of service in the dental treatment area, two of us were setting up a photo opportunity when almost a dozen Adventist teens and young adults sauntered in from the vision area. Conversations dropped off as the group neared. With an acoustic guitarist volunteer in tow, the band sang, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love," as both patients and medical volunteers paused and pondered for the few moments their proximity that allowed the musical message to be heard. Faces softened and flagging energy renewed.

The parable Jesus told about the lost sheep (Matt. 18:10-14) is apt: we are prone to wander, even though we know that the fountain of life is with Him; and in His light we are able to see (Ps. 36:9). Even though we may have accepted God's gift of salvation, even though we labor for Him, even as we share His Word and

We are nothing without God's grace. But in Him we may stand as strong as an Ebenezer stone.

care for His children, we are prone to lose sight of God. We can lose our joy and love. We can drift out of tune.

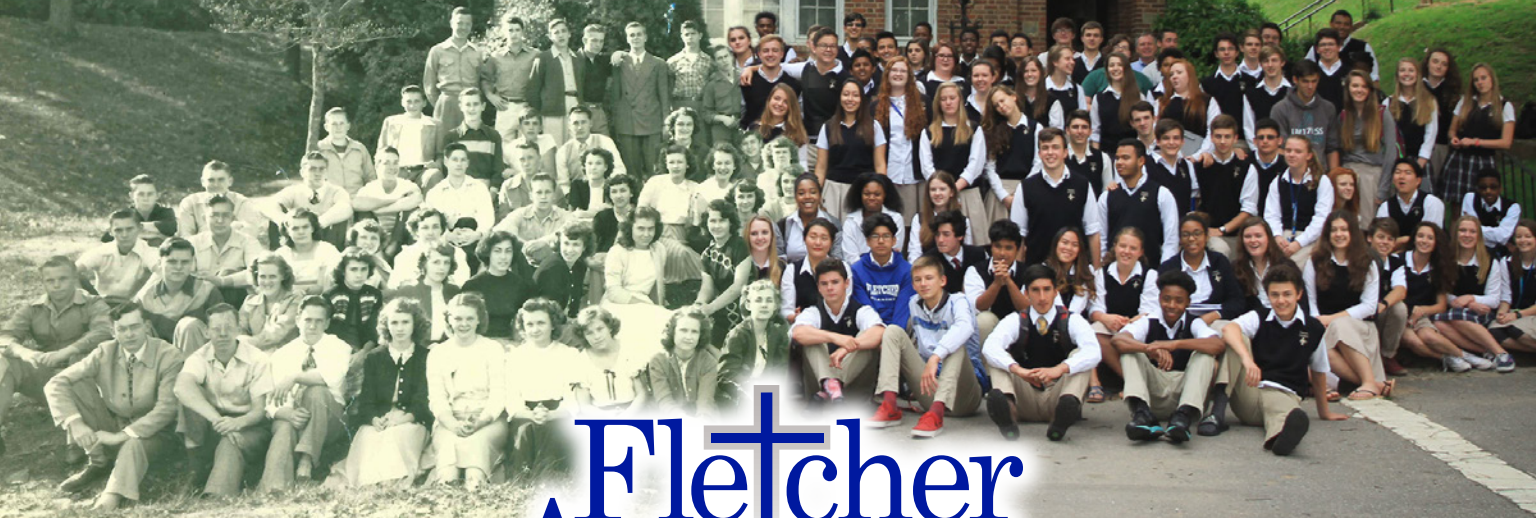
But God and His streams of mercy can renew us. He can—and He does—renew church leaders. He can—and He does—lighten the loads of those committed in service. He can—and He does—bestow His surpassing grace (2 Cor. 9:14) so freely on all of us. We are nothing without God's grace. But in Him we may stand as strong as an Ebenezer stone (1 Sam. 7:12).

Our heavenly Father has given us the Bible. He's given us nature. And He's also gifted us with music. I am grateful for these gifts—a way to grasp our souls, our minds, our hearts—to seal us for His heavenly courts.

Our responsibility? Ask, as the hymn goes: tune our hearts, bind us close, teach us. Say, "Here's my heart—O, take and seal it . . . for Thy courts above."

*Kimberly Luste Maran is editor of Adventist Journey.*

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