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Adventist Journey

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My Journey

I was not prepared for how much I was going to love these students. I wasn't prepared for just loving every moment of being with them in the classroom, having the opportunity to talk about God for six hours a day with the students. It's ended up being one of the most fulfilling experiences of my life. Visit vimeo.com/nadadventist/ajalexchang for more of Chang's story.

ALEXANDER CHANG,
senior biochemistry/premedicine major, Pacific Union College,
student missionary, Pohngpei




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 follows *Adventist Journey* (after page 16). Please enjoy both magazines!

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ADVENTIST JOURNEY

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Certain Trumpets

IT'S A WARM MAY SUNDAY EVENING, fragrant with the first apple blossoms on the overgrown trees below the farmhouse. The nesting robins have finished their chorus for the day; even the ovenbirds in the deep woods have ended their celebration of twilight.

A kerosene lamp warms to life in the window of the south parlor. Floorboards creak as family members make their way to accustomed places on the hand-me-down sofas and ancient chairs.

The vacuum tubes in the secondhand radio begin to glow, and soon the competing voices of crossing radio signals demand to be tuned. A slight turn of the knob, and then a settling into the chairs, into the near darkness, into a family tradition.

A fanfare of trumpets emerging from the radio still makes the youngest daughter flinch—before she smiles. “Lift up the trumpet, and loud let it ring . . .” Lips around the shadowed room form the familiar words of the hymn. “Jesus is coming—again!” they sing.

“It’s your song, Daddy,” the little girl says to the man who sits beside the radio.

The nearest neighbor is a half mile up the hill. Beyond that lie the newly plowed fields and dark spruce forests of this small patch of

BY BILL KNOTT,
with key reporting
by Sandra Blackmer

the Berkshires. Somehow, in a place far distant from Berlin and Moscow and London and Washington, D.C., it matters—greatly—to know that though “nations are angry” and “men run to and fro,”—“Jesus is coming again!”

MY FAMILY’S SPIRITUAL STORY, like that of thousands of other Adventist families, begins with a ministry still known as the Voice of Prophecy (VOP), and with the people who launched it 90 years ago. Like so many others, it’s rich with nostalgia-laden memories of a simpler, less-complicated time when a general faith in Scripture was the heritage of almost everyone in town. It was an age when a thoughtful, pastoral voice in a weekly radio broadcast could be more important to a family than all the rantings and pronouncements of dictators and presidents.



Jean and Shawn Boonstra produce a segment of *Disclosure* in their headquarters studio.

THE WORLD HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY in 90 years, however. Not only is everyone from that farmhouse family now gone, but so is the media environment that once allowed for weekly gatherings beside a glowing radio. A world undreamed of when H.M.S. Richards launched his radio broadcast in a converted chicken coop in 1929 now pulses with hundreds of thousands of choices on radio, television, satellite, the Internet, and social media. And only a small sliver of these myriad options aims to lift up hearts to faith or goodness or trust in God. How can a ministry launched 90 years ago reimagine itself in a media world where virtually all the norms—of truth, of family, of morality, of politics—are vanishing like snowbanks on a hot May afternoon?

“WHEN WE TOOK OVER VOP, it was \$2 million in the red, with little prospect of changing that,” says Voice of Prophecy speaker/director Shawn Boonstra, a 27-year veteran of public evangelism across North America. Raised in British Columbia and baptized an Adventist while in college, Boonstra pastored multiple congregations in his home province before becoming speaker/director of It Is Written Canada in 2001. When evangelist Mark Finley moved from his leadership role at the international It Is Written broadcast to serve at the church’s world headquarters, Boonstra spent seven years as speaker/director of the denomination’s oldest television ministry. He later served a two-and-a-half-year stint as an associate

director of the North American Division’s Ministerial Association, focused on promoting evangelism.

He freely admits that he didn’t know how depleted the Voice of Prophecy was when he was invited to head it up.

“From its heyday at 70-plus staff, the Voice of Prophecy in 2013 was down to 13—mostly in the Bible school, because it was the only thing still going well. During the wind-down of the media center in Simi Valley, California, many of the assets of the VOP had disappeared. Not a lick of equipment was around; not even one microphone was left.”

“[North American Division president] Dan Jackson asked me one day ‘Would you be interested in leading VOP?’ It didn’t look promising. But after sleeping on it, I thought, *How could I look H.M.S. Richards in the eye one day? I think God could fix this.*

IT’S A SIGNATURE STORY Shawn Boonstra tells—one that challenges assumptions, questions the received wisdom, looks at other alternatives. Walk through the Loveland, Colorado, headquarters with Boonstra and his wife, Jean, associate director of VOP and creator of the popular *Discovery Mountain* children’s broadcast, and you hear a kindly “push-back” to the premise that public evangelism is dead or dying in the cities of Europe and the Americas.

“That’s a photo of an altar call—in downtown Rome,” he says, a trademark grin creasing his still-boyish face as he points to a photo on the wall of his ministry headquarters. “You know, the Western world says it can’t be done. Too postmodern, too secular. But God didn’t make a mistake with the message He gave this church. He didn’t fail to see the postmodern generation coming. He knew it when He assigned us this message.”

“Where are you going to go that would be tougher than any other

town? That would be Rome. So we held a campaign. I asked God for 10 or 15 decisions, because that would be a miracle in the heart of Rome.”

His words come more slowly as he remembers the obstacles.

“Everything that could go wrong in that meeting went wrong. We lost our auditorium three days before opening night because the Vatican pressured those who had rented us the hall. We had tires slashed on our vehicles. But at month’s end it was standing room only—people still standing at the back of the auditorium.”

He points to the mass of people in the photo who have crowded to the front of the hall, and grins again. “At this point I think we had about 140 decisions already in that meeting.”

The photos on the wall—and the stories—continue.

“This one is another altar call—in Portland, Oregon. Another difficult city. Another postmodern environment. The percentage of churchgoing people in the Pacific Northwest is lower than almost anywhere in North America.”

“In Portland the first night we had heavy rain,” Jean remembers with a grimace. “A bus hit a train. Everything that could go wrong did go wrong. . . . There was a basketball game in the arena next door, so the parking was gone. But people literally walked a mile in the rain to get to this meeting—in a place where the experts said you couldn’t draw a crowd.”

Shawn’s eyes narrow with a friendly intensity: “There were 2,200 people there on opening night without public transit, and in pouring rain.”

The stories and the photos lead to a conclusion that’s at the heart of the evangelistic ministry the couple has helped to rebirth. Shawn delivers the line with a mix of wistfulness and correction.

“We’re out to show the saints that all they’re missing in their outreach in their community is their courage. We’ve got the right message for this hour; we’ve got the right methods; we’ve been counseled correctly by Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy. We’re just lacking courage. And if you exercise courage, things like this happen.”

“God didn’t get it wrong when He told His people how to win the world. He wants this to work. So how can you go wrong if God wants it to work?”

AS THE SEVERAL MINISTRIES THAT HAD SHARED the Adventist Media Center in Simi Valley for more than 20 years moved out of southern California to new locations across North America, and the center went up for sale, Boonstra and his small team were faced with an important choice about where to locate the ministry they hoped to revive.

They ultimately selected Loveland, Colorado, a growing small city of 75,000 just an hour north of Denver and its major international airport. The new location had historic ties to the ministry’s founder, H.M.S. Richards, Sr., who had grown up there a century ago and attended nearby Champion Academy. The relatively lower cost of living in Loveland, and the availability



Shawn Boonstra has served as speaker/director and his wife, Jean, as associate speaker of Voice of Prophecy since 2013.

of a student population to help staff the ministry’s still-robust Bible school, helped the VOP team make the decision.

The small team identified an empty bank building in downtown Loveland that could serve as the new headquarters, and in April 2015 set about slowly rehabbing it. A small closet was where Boonstra recorded the first 60 radio broadcasts, before the team assembled a humble studio.

Working out of a former bank building didn’t do anything for the ministry’s financial equation, however. There was no money left behind in the vaults when Chase Bank vacated the facility.

“We still have a nail-biter every month, because we’re self-funded. We have to raise it every month. Is it going to come in? We live from miracle to miracle around here. Some months we wonder, *Are we going to survive?* Then the next month there’s a miracle.”

REBUILDING A MINISTRY AS VENERABLE as the Voice of Prophecy has required a mix of diplomacy and negotiating skill from Shawn and Jean, both of whom were political science students in college. After agreeing to lead the financially troubled ministry in 2013, they began reaching out to longtime VOP supporters who had grown anxious about the future of the ministry and were beginning to consider investing in other causes.

Funding began to slowly return to the oldest of the church’s broadcast ministries. Sponsorship Weekends—three-day gatherings of those who have donated at least \$1,800 in the previous year to the ministry—appeared in strategic locations around North America, including just outside of Portland, Oregon, one near Atlanta, and one in Palm Springs, California. The high-quality mix of

passionate preaching, great musical talent, and learning about the ministry’s plans brought people back to hear what a reborn Voice of Prophecy might include.

It wasn’t only the traditional program of a strong preaching ministry operating three or four major evangelistic campaigns a year, however. The Boonstras cast a vision to supporters of an entirely different model for building an evangelistic culture in Adventist congregations across North America.

“Supporting the local church is really the key focus of what we do as a ministry now,” Shawn says.

“We’ve shifted everything. There’s been this unspoken assumption over the last several decades that evangelistic ministries expect church members to support what they do, and that’s what happens. But we’ve gone back to the roots of this ministry—back to the principles on which H.M.S. Richards founded it 90 years ago. The Voice of Prophecy exists to support your church, not the other way around.”

“I told the Lord about eight years ago that I was going to ‘give the store away’—share all the methods and materials He had blessed us to develop with any congregation or group of committed people who had the courage to try them. Yes, those methods have worked for me as an evangelist: more than 80,000 people have been baptized through those approaches. But it’s at the level of the congregation that the work of sharing the gospel is either going to succeed or fail.”

His eyebrows furrow as he looks out the bank window at the Loveland community.

“Our churches, so many of them, feel that they’re languishing. We can help turn that around. With a vision of using local gifts and talents and field-tested methods and materials, you can turn that around in any church. I know it, because I’ve seen it work

over and over. For a handful of evangelists to try to move around the continent and get the work done—well, it simply can’t work that way for long.”

NEVER ONE TO AVOID the arresting metaphor, Boonstra laughs as he draws on the American fast-food industry to illustrate a new model for creating a culture of evangelism in Adventist churches.

“After 27 years of public campaigns in places large and small, we’ve got almost every imaginable resource that covers the entire evangelistic cycle, from how you meet people in the community to how they become disciplined in the church. And we have an incredible team here that is developing a whole new suite of evangelistic tools as well. But now we’re going to franchise it, brand it, make it a national brand and send the people through the doors of your church, and they’ll know what to do when they show up.”

The grin gets wider as he builds out the franchise metaphor.

“It’s like opening a Wendy’s,” he says, clearly enjoying the surprise the line creates. “Here’s your burger.

Here’s your menu. I’ll be [Wendy’s founder] Dave Thomas and we’ll do national economies of scale on marketing and awareness to make sure that the experience you provide in your local congregation is consistent with the quality of experience we’ve been offering for a quarter-century.”

The Boonstras have been presenting the vision of a “franchised” Voice of Prophecy at pastor’s meetings and administrative councils for the past two years, and they’ve seen a resurgence in the confidence of pastors and congregations that they can do the work of evangelism.

“So far, the excitement level is high,” Shawn says. “Churches are saying, ‘You mean I don’t have to invent the wheel; this is plug and play?’ Everything that we’ve floated so far, we’ve piloted in 700-800 churches at a time. The buy-in has been huge each time.”

THE RESOURCES BOONSTRA and his creative team have been producing are more than lecture notes about what works and what doesn’t; it’s an entire suite of ready-to-use tools that cover the full cycle of evangelism. Included is the minis-

Voice of Prophecy officially opened the doors of its new headquarters in downtown Loveland, Colorado, in April 2015, following 86 years in California.



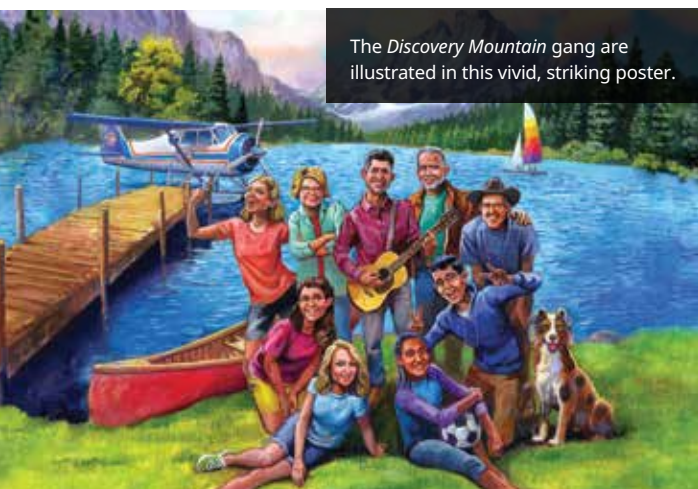
try's innovative high-quality, multipart Discover seminars—which have already brought tens of thousands of visitors to Adventist churches for 30-minute, historically accurate films produced by the ministry.

Shadow Empire chronicled the departure of the Christian church from apostolic faith in the era of Roman emperor Constantine. *A Pale Horse Rides* focused on the small, beleaguered groups of Christians trying to practice biblical faith in the Dark Ages. *The Appearing*, which premiered in the autumn of 2018, focused on the “signs of the times,” events depicted in Bible prophecy before the second coming of Christ. Each series, ranging from three to five segments, is designed as an arresting lead-in to presentations made by the local pastor in a rented hall or church sanctuary—connecting visitors to members and pastors rather than to a far-distant evangelistic ministry.

THE MONTHS AHEAD WILL TEST THE VISION

the Boonstras have cast for the future of the renovated Voice of Prophecy. With a goal of opening 1,000 evangelistic “franchises” in local churches, the VOP team is working hard to produce a broad array of resources that can be used by hundreds of pastors.

Boonstra has pioneered a radio talk show “just for men” (Shawn calls it *The Bullpen*), as well as *Disclosure*, a one-hour weekend talk radio format with in-studio guests on current—and even controversial—topics and issues listeners are concerned about. Still to come is *Believers*, a 15-minute weekly show hosted by Jean that will offer inspirational biographies of famous Christians through the ages. Add to



The *Discovery Mountain* gang are illustrated in this vivid, striking poster.

“We’re supposed to be headed for the biggest moment in the history of the world, and it is entirely possible for your church to be a part of that.”

that the acclaimed *Discovery Mountain* podcast for children, now in its sixth season, and the depth chart of resources from the new VOP offers pastors and lay leaders a remarkable ability to tailor content to the specific needs of their communities.

Long known for its world-circling Discover Bible schools, the ministry has now revised the Discover Bible course to bring it into the twenty-first century. It coordinates the Bible lesson program for more than 2,000 congregations already, as well as operating Bibleinfo.com, the online Bible-study site attracting more than 1 million unique visitors each month.

After a multiday “Revelation Speaks Peace” campaign at the North Carolina Fairgrounds in Raleigh, North Carolina, in mid-March, Boonstra will turn his attention to a large-scale training event May 5-8 for hundreds of pastors scheduled at the North American Division headquarters in Columbia, Maryland. (See more details at discoverycenters.com.) This rollout of the “franchise” concept will give pastors across the continent access to the entire resource collection of the Voice of Prophecy’s evangelistic tools, all for a fraction of what even a local congregation would normally invest as its share in engaging in public outreach. Across the NAD pastors and congregations will begin preparing for a simultaneous launch of “Discovering Revelation,” a multipart full-message series slated for March 2020 that utilizes the marketing “lift” and brand awareness being generated by the Voice of Prophecy.

LIKE ANY SEASONED EVANGELIST, Boonstra knows his audience well—in this case many dispirited Adventist congregations ready to give up on outreach in their communities.

“Your church can grow,” he says slowly, emphasizing each word. “I’ve watched this work in every imaginable context, in the hardest communities on the planet. And if it works for a guy like me who’s terrified of public speaking, who doesn’t like the spotlight—if I can do this, if this team can do this, there’s no reason this can’t happen in your church. And to make it as easy as possible, we’ll do all the heavy lifting. We’ll create all the tools. We’ll brand it nationwide. We’ll show you where to find the people to bring to your church. We’ll show you why they’re interested. We’ll show you how to get them to the point of decision—and watch them become a part of your church.”

“We’ll show you that it works: your church doesn’t need to die. It is not over. Our message isn’t over. Its best days are ahead. We’re supposed to be headed for the biggest moment in the history of the world, and it is entirely possible for your church to be a part of that.”

Bill Knott is editor and publisher of Adventist World magazine; Sandra Blackmer is an assistant editor of Adventist World.



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◀ Ivan Williams (left, foreground), NAD Ministerial Association director, leads a panel discussion as Dan Serns, evangelism coordinator for the Texas Conference, and Donnete Blake, pastor of the New Dimension Seventh-day Adventist Church in New York, answer a question. Photo by Enno Müller

EHUDDLER REINVIGORATES PASSION FOR EVANGELISM

Pastors and church leaders meet in San Diego for learning, discussion

For two and a half days, on February 18-20, 2019, evangelism directors of conferences and union conferences, church administrators, pastors, innovators, and other leaders gathered at eHuddle in San Diego to share, learn, and dialogue about how the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America can more effectively reach people in an increasingly secular culture.

More than 200 people attended the eHuddle event, sponsored by the North American Division (NAD)

Ministerial Association, though more were able to benefit from the presentations given during the first two days via video livestream on Facebook. During the meeting more than 30 presenters shared tried and tested ways—often referred to as traditional soul-winning methods—to reach out to their communities, while others shared innovative, creative, and new approaches for how they engage their local communities and churches. eHuddle also featured round-table discussions after presentations.

“For this year’s meeting we wanted to address two needs that we see in our churches: First, we focused on how churches can grow young and ensure retention of young people. Presentations were shared about how to disciple children and to help them make serious decisions for Jesus,” said Jose Cortes, Jr., event organizer and associate director of the NAD Ministerial Association. “Second, we engaged with the epidemic of dying and plateauing churches in our division. We are concerned about the health of our churches, and therefore wanted to address these issues.”

In the Local Context

Various presenters spoke on these two themes, sharing practical solutions and ideas on how

they were addressing them in their local context. In one presentation Tim Gillespie, lead pastor of the Crosswalk Seventh-day Adventist Church in Redlands, California, spoke about how his church helps remote churches connect to Crosswalk. The satellite congregations reap the benefits from the programming at the main church.

During his presentation Gillespie challenged the audience: “We live in a time in which Uber is the largest taxi company in the world, yet it doesn’t own a car. Airbnb is the largest hotel chain, but it doesn’t own a room. Perhaps we need to rethink the model of church in our current time.”

The presentations and ideas shared at eHuddle were “incredibly helpful and informative,” according to David Dennis, president of Southern New England Conference. “This event can be best described as a café of ideas,” Dennis said. “I see what ideas are being tried and it inspires me with new ideas and helps my team to reflect on our own evangelistic efforts. What I learn here influences the training of our pastors and churches.”

Like Dennis, Tom Evans, president of North New South Wales Conference in Australia, sees value in this event. “Bringing my team to eHuddle gives them exposure to the world’s best practices. Each of them comes from a different context, so each of them is blessed, moved, and motivated in their own way by listening to various presentations,” said Evans. “We need to consistently search for new and relevant avenues and methods in ministry. I like how eHuddle creates space where projects can be refined and developed.”

The meeting encouraged attendees to try new things and also served as a reminder that evangelism is not the same in every community.



↑ Participants at the February 2019 eHuddle gather for a photo outside their San Diego, California, meeting place. Photo by Enno Müller

Inspired and Invigorated

Many attendees of this year’s event left invigorated by the ideas that presenters shared. First time attendee Vanston Archbold, Jr., general field secretary for the Southwest Region Conference, said, “I am inspired what others are doing. I have the same amount of resources and this encourages me to figure out what I can do in my field. Others are doing it, and that gives me the courage that I can do creative ministry as well.”

The meeting this year encouraged attendees throughout the NAD to try new things and, at the same time, also served as a reminder that evangelism is not the same in every community.

“It is important to find a way to create relationships and connect with people in the community. This requires an understanding of what their needs are,” said Ivan Williams, director of NAD Ministerial Association.

Enno Müller is communication director of the Southeastern California Conference.

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The school, Kellogg Mookerjee Memorial Seminary, has over 450 students including many sponsored by Child Impact. This school is a key missionary outreach and serves a very poor community, however the building is long past its time to be replaced.

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The total cost including the fit-out of the school, library, science lab and English training school is US\$520,000. To date Child Impact has raised \$250,000.

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“ This is a special school that serves a poor community including over 50 orphans. The need for the classrooms, library and science lab is critical to children graduating. The English training school will provide critical revenue for the school.”
Child Impact CEO Jim Rennie



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BY G. ALEXANDER BRYANT

One Body, Many Members

In John 17:20, 21 we find Jesus in a certain mode and mindset: “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.”

Paul, trying to explain and describe the unity that Jesus is talking about, gives us a great analogy in 1 Corinthians 12. Paul writes, “For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Cor. 12:13). God has made many members in the body of Christ. And in those members, He said there is diversity.

You could be a Jew, a Gentile, bond, or free, but God has made the body of Christ one through the Spirit of God. God has made one body with many members—and He knew exactly what He was doing before He did it.

One body, many members. What makes us one is not our ideology, but the fact that we drank of the same Spirit. And what the Spirit brings when we drink is the mind of Jesus Christ.

Different Parts

God has put conservatives in the church. God has put liberals in the church. God has put people in the middle in the church. God has set the members of the body as it has pleased Him. Because God knows: the body cannot be the body without the distinct and separate functions of the members.

That's what Paul is saying. *What if everything was an eye? What if everything was an ear?* We need the diversity in the church to carry on and fulfill the mission of the church, the will of God.

God has set the members of the body. And for the body to be the body, it needs all the different parts. The hands can never do the work of the feet. We might like hands. They may look better than feet. We even take care of hands better than we take care of feet. But God said each member of the body has a unique and a specific role; and the body cannot be the body without each specific member.

God has given each member a unique function in the body of Christ. He said we are stronger united. But more than that, we are not the body of Christ without our differences, our diversity, and the uniqueness that God has set in the body.

Gain Everything

When we stand up for Jesus Christ, when we give in for Jesus Christ, when we give in for the body, we don't lose anything. We gain. And we reflect Jesus more in what we give up than what we hold onto.

Jesus gave up everything. He said, *I have total equality with my Father, but I'm going to give it up. I'm going to take it off so that I can be one with humankind* (see Phil. 2:7,8).

When Jesus decided to give it up, Paul writes: “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (verses 9-11).

We don't lose anything when we give it up for Jesus Christ. We gain everything. The body that Jesus gave His life for, the body that He died for, and hung on the cross for—He's entrusted that body to you and to me. Let's handle the body of Christ as carefully as He did.

**Bible texts in this article are from the New International Version.*

G. Alexander Bryant is executive secretary for the North American Division.

When we stand up for Jesus Christ, when we give in for Jesus Christ, we don't lose anything.



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