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Adventist Journey

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My Journey

In my administrative role at the NAD, I still do evangelism. I do at least one [series] a year and I still love it. Sometimes, through all the different committees and policies and that part of church life, you have to work to keep connected to the front-line ministries—where people are being transformed by the power of the gospel. Visit vimeo.com/nadadventist/ajalexbyrant for more of Bryant's story.

G. ALEXANDER BRYANT,
new president of the North American Division



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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G. Alexander Bryant *Named*

North American Division President



G. Alexander Bryant becomes the fifth president of the North American Division. *Dan Weber*

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's General Conference Executive Committee met on July 9, 2020, to receive the name of G. Alexander Bryant, the recommendation for division president, from both the North American Division's nominating committee and executive committee. Bryant was confirmed in a vote of 153 to 5.

Ted N. C. Wilson, General Conference president and, as policy indicates for the vote of division president, chair of the NAD nominating and executive committees held on July 6 and July 7, said, "Elder Bryant is a mission-focused individual. He is someone who is a careful listener to people. He will take [these cares] to the Lord and ask for guidance. . . . I believe that God can use him in a very special way."

"I am first indebted to God for His call to ministry, and second, to those who have poured into my life over the years," said Bryant in response to the vote. "I am deeply humbled by the confidence Elder Wilson, our chair, and the NAD and GC executive committees have placed in me with this assignment. This task is too big for one individual or office. It is abundantly clear to me that it takes all of us working together to advance God's kingdom. I deeply covet your prayers."

He added, "Hopefully, by our efforts together, we can hasten the coming of the Lord through our mission work throughout our territory and beyond."

Policy and Process

All world division executive officers serve as elected officers of the

GC; their nomination and election by the region they represent must be approved by the General Conference Executive Committee. The division's nominating committee is termed a standing committee. It was appointed by the NAD executive committee in 2015. During the past five years the nominating committee has recommended the names of individuals to the executive committee for vote in order to fill division vacancies.

Following an outlined process disclosed this past spring, the division's nominating committee met on July 6 and selected the name of Bryant, which was presented and voted on by the NAD executive committee on July 7. Bryant's name was sent as a recommendation to the GC Executive Committee. All meetings were held virtually via Zoom with a previously used electronic voting process.

Bryant replaces Daniel R. Jackson, who served at the NAD helm since his election in June 2010 at the GC Session in Atlanta, Georgia, and reelection in 2015 in San Antonio, Texas, until his July 1 retirement. Bryant is the second African American elected to serve as NAD president. Charles E. Bradford, the division's first president, was also African American. Previous presidents include Alfred C. McClure, Don C. Schneider, and Jackson.

About the New President

Glenward Alexander ("Alex") Bryant most recently served as executive secretary of the NAD and associate secretary of the GC, positions he's held since October 2008, when elected at the GC Annual Council in Manila, Philippines. Bryant was reelected at the 2010 GC Session. While serving as the division's secretary, Bryant conducted leadership seminars, training and orientation of



Alex Bryant and wife, Desiree, on July 9, 2020, the day Bryant was named NAD president. *Dan Weber*

conference executive officers; organized a division-wide diversity summit; coordinated the digitalization of the NAD Secretariat; and conducted annual evangelistic series.

Before coming to the division, Bryant served as president of the Central States Conference in Kansas City, Kansas.

Bryant graduated with a double major in theology and business administration from Oakwood College (now Oakwood University) in 1982.

He began his ministry that same year in Springfield, Missouri, and Coffeyville and Independence, Kansas. In 1986 Bryant was ordained, and continued his education by earning a Master of Divinity from Andrews University in 1988. The Central States Conference voted Bryant to serve as youth/Pathfinders/National Service Organization director, temperance director, and superintendent of education in 1990. He became president in 1997.

In addition to pastoring several churches early in his career, Bryant also served as a student missionary to Japan for one year. During his college years, Bryant's administrative abilities helped him serve as the Adventist Youth director at Oakwood College and president of the Black Students Association of the Seminary (BSAS) at Andrews University.

Bryant is married to the former Desiree Wimbish, who served as an associate superintendent of education for the Potomac Conference, as superintendent of education for Central States Conference, as well as former principal of the V. Lindsay Seventh-day Adventist School in Kansas City. Desiree was assistant director and projects coordinator for Adventist education in the NAD before taking the role of an associate director and Ministerial Spouses coordinator. The Bryants have three adult sons and three grandchildren.

An Interview With the New NAD President

Dan Weber: Let's help our church members in North America get to know you. You became an Adventist as a teenager. What attracted you to the Adventist message?

Alex Bryant: To be honest, it was the people who attracted me.

If you've always been an Adventist, this message is just part of your bloodstream. You grew up with it. But if you had not been an Adventist and you hear the message of the Sabbath, the message of the state of the dead, the message that you don't go to heaven right away, and all that, it's quite shocking. To read it from Scripture and know that you've studied the Bible in your church but missed all those major points, is quite earth-shattering. In Scripture the truth of the Adventist message was undeniable. So that was easy.

The hard part was the culture change of moving from Sunday churchgoing, and giving up everything I did on Saturday. As a teenager, I found that that was quite a lot.

What did the trick for me was the people—the people who would come into our home on a weekly basis and give us Bible studies. I fell in love with the people and eventually accepted and followed the truth because of that relationship that was nurtured over time.

How long after you became an Adventist did you decide to go into pastoral ministry?

When I was a Baptist, I felt a call to ministry. But after looking at some of the role models I had, the urge just kind of left me. Maybe a year after I became an Adventist we had an evangelistic meeting and, after I saw and heard our pastor preaching with fire and preaching evangelistic sermons under the tent, the sense that this is what God wanted me to do returned.

Is evangelism your favorite part of ministry?

I love evangelism. I love teaching. I love seeing the light in people's eyes when they hear truth for the first time—especially when they grasp it and capture it.

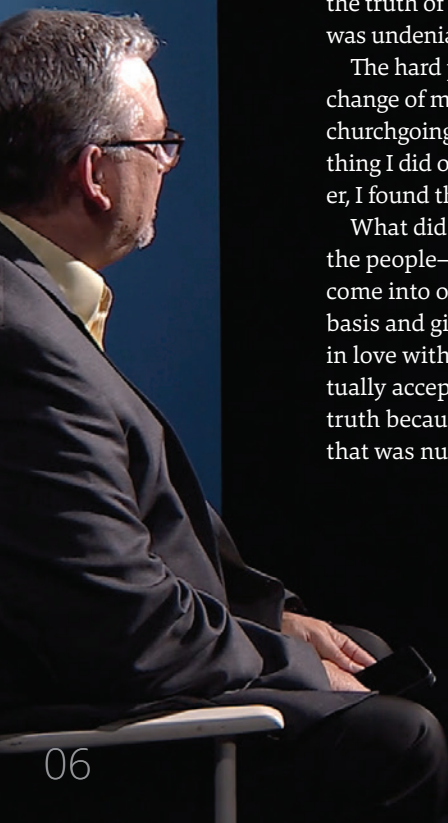
In my administrative role at the NAD, I still do evangelism. I do at least one [series] a year, and I still love it. Sometimes, through all the different committees and policies and that part of church life, you have to work to keep connected to the front-line ministries, where people are being transformed by the power of the gospel.

When you made the transition from pastoring to being an administrator, what were some of the challenges?

You are a little further removed from the people. With pastoring, all you do is interact with people: helping them to work through their challenges, and helping to nurture and grow and disciple people along the way. When you get in administration, you don't get those opportunities as frequently. I miss that.

One of the benefits of administration is that you get a more global view. As a pastor, your view is pretty singular to that local church, into what you're doing in that local community, and you don't always see the connection to the larger family, the larger call of the gospel, the larger mission of Matthew 28:19, 20. As an administrator, you're confronted with that on a regular basis.

I try to help pastors through the worker meetings [that the NAD conducts]. I try to help them get a view through my lens to broaden their vision so



they see that what they're doing in the local community and the local church literally makes an impact in the worldwide family.

Let's move to an area that I know you're very passionate about: young people in the church. When you were in college, you went as a student missionary to Japan for one year. Tell me about that experience.

It was a great experience, and I highly recommend it to any young person. It's life-changing, transformative. I went to Japan at 19 years old. I was teaching conversational English classes to vice presidents of Mitsubishi and Sony and some of these other mega companies. We would offer a free class for them to practice their English. It was a Bible class. I was in a different place, in a different country, in a different culture, and everything that I had said that I believed I had to put into practice, because these were vice presidents coming and asking me, this 19-year-old kid, some questions about the Bible.

Did that solidify your desire to go into ministry?

Yes. It gave me a sense of confidence in what God can do through me if I offer myself to Him. It solidified my life in so many different areas; professionally, yes, but also on a personal and spiritual level. When I returned to school at Oakwood [College], I didn't look at life the same.

What role then do you see young adults playing in the church?

There's an energy, an innocence, and a vitality that young people have that impacts other people in ways that the young people don't understand. Their witness, their enthusiasm for Christ, their commitment to God and to His church, impacts the lives of people in ways that they don't even see sometimes. They're committing themselves—

their talents, their gifts, their lives—to Christ, and for anyone, even people in their peer group, but especially for people outside of their peer group, it is impactful. For young people, it's transformative.

One subject that young people especially are passionate about now is the apparent racial inequality and injustice in the U.S. What role can the church play in terms of guidance?

The church has a vital role. I hear a lot of the different activists, and I think that they have a piece of it, but they don't have all of it. If the hearts of men and women aren't changed, it can go only so far. Changing laws, for example, is only a surface answer, because if you don't get to the heart, then those [inclined will] find a way around the laws.

What the church has to offer to this conversation and dilemma is this: the real answer for the unrest and inequality we face is found in Christ and transforming the hearts of people toward other people—this spiritual element that Christ Himself used when He went after racial inequality in His time. When He was trying to get the Jews to see the Samaritans as children of God, Jesus went after the heart. He did other things for certain, but He knew that real, lasting change comes only from the heart. It's not the only thing, but I think that's the major thing that the church can bring that we don't often hear from other circles.

Where do you see the NAD heading in the next five years?

A lot of what happens in the church is shaped by what happens outside the church. And given where we are now—this triple threat of an economic meltdown, social unrest, and COVID-19—the church in the North American Division is uniquely positioned to have a great impact. During times of uncertainty,

"I love evangelism. I love teaching. I love seeing the light in people's eyes when they hear truth for the first time—especially when they grasp it and capture it."

people look for places of certainty, and the hope and truth that we have is [built on] more than just what we've done in the past. We can take the truths we've embraced as a church and make them applicable to today's challenges in society.

How do we interweave the church's positions, our beliefs, our standards, and our doctrines with what is happening on the streets of America today? During the next five years the church will have a unique opportunity to step up, with members saying, "It's time to not have the gospel over here and the community over there. It's time to bring the gospel that we love, the gospel we believe in, the community that we're called to serve, and put them together because they belong together." If we can do that in a significant way, it will transform the communities that our churches are in—and transform our cities and our country.

We can be a voice that people go to in these uncertain times and [hear] the certainty that we know God is going to get us through. Justice is part of that, but hope is too. God's promises are a part of that. They're not disconnected. The church has an opportunity to pull all those together and see how they fit and how they can support, help, and build on each other as we go toward the future.

Kimberly Luste Maran is editor of Adventist Journey; Dan Weber is NAD Communication director.

NAD NEWS BRIEFS



← The AMFA Peace of Thread Chattanooga sewing class meets before the COVID-19 pandemic forced the group to stop meeting in person. *Pieter Damsteegt*

REFUGEE CHILDREN'S SUMMER CAMP LEADS TO COMMUNITY LEARNING

Adventist Muslim Friendship Association helps immigrant and refugee women learn new skills, earn income.

Every summer Adventist Muslim Friendship Association (AMFA), a North American Division-based initiative located near Chattanooga, Tennessee, provides a summer school for children of refugee families in the area. According to AMFA, the goal is to help integrate refugee children into the United States in a godly way.

In 2016, around the same time that AMFA's summer classes for children started, leaders in AMFA began to discuss activity options for the mothers that brought their children to summer programs. That first summer included English and geography classes, hiking, and some crocheting classes for mothers. The following summer, after observing another organization, Peace of Thread At-

lanta, which taught women to sew bags and purses, AMFA expanded the summer program to include sewing classes.

"When we sent out word, we expected maybe a half dozen women to come to the classes," said Nema Johnson, who helped spearhead the sewing program. "By the end of the first week of sewing, I had more women interested in learning how to sew than the number of borrowed sewing machines we had."

After those four weeks of summer classes attended by more than a dozen women, there was much interest in continuing the sewing classes. The group has met every other week since.

The full process from start to finish involves church members and students from the Chattanooga area cutting donated fabric, then, at the

actual biweekly sewing class, the women work with the precut cloth to craft beautiful purses and various bags. Purse parties are held on the weekends around the suburbs of Chattanooga. During the purse parties the refugee women can make money for their families by selling the purses they have crafted.

The sewing class, held every other week, typically starts with discussion and sharing, followed by an opening prayer. Then the women work to learn a new purse design. They either finish the project during that class or take it home to continue to work on their projects until the next meeting time.

"It takes a bit of a learning curve for the women to make high-quality purses. We're not just talking about putting material together and sewing to get money," said Darleen Handal, local area coordinator for AMFA. "We're doing a service. We're creating a piece of art."

COVID-19 Impact

When the COVID-19 pandemic caused businesses and churches to shut their doors across the state, the women adapted the way they work and socialize as a community. "Initially the whole thing got put on hold [while we were] trying to figure out what to do," said Johnson. "But then we started to meet every week [virtually]."

Shortly after the lockdown began in March, Johnson designed some masks that could be sewn by the women. The first goal of this next endeavor was to ensure that

An Interfaith, Multiconference “Virtual Freedom Ride” Champions Prayer and Activism

Faith leaders, government officials, and activists advocated for prayer, social justice, and community empowerment in response to the national outcry over the death of George Floyd by law enforcement through a “virtual freedom ride.” From June 14 to 21 Miles to Minneapolis took viewers on Facebook and YouTube on the virtual journey from the east coast to the midwest. The “stops” included Columbia, Maryland; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio; Detroit, Michigan; Chicago, Illinois; and Minneapolis, Minnesota. The ride ended where Floyd was killed.

Leaders from the Potomac Conference, Allegheny East Conference, Allegheny West Conference, Lake Region Conference, Central States Conference, Minnesota Conference, Mid-America and Lake union conferences, and the North American Division Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department collaborated to find speakers for the campaign. Every stop featured representatives of different faiths, including Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism. Ministers of various Protestant denominations also participated along with Adventist church leaders.

“Miles to Minneapolis is more than an event. It’s a movement to effect positive change in our communities,” said Debra Anderson, communication director for the Potomac Conference, who also served as the communication director for Miles to Minneapolis.



↑ Adventist pastors and other denominational church leaders address viewers at the first stop of the Miles to Minneapolis virtual freedom ride in Columbia, Maryland. Screenshot of the Miles to Minneapolis broadcast

While Miles to Minneapolis was centered on prayer and faith, another instrumental component was encouraging community engagement. This led to the creation of a pledge that leaders at every location were encouraged to share with their viewers. Participants pledged five actions: engage in public service; vote and get counted (through the U.S. Census 2020); become culturally informed; learn a new trade and/or support Black businesses; and take charge of one’s health.

Miles to Minneapolis began as a prompting of the Holy Spirit between three Adventist friends with a history of activism—Yolanda “Yoki” Banfield, Rockefeller “Rocky” Twyman, and Bill Ellis.

Banfield and Twyman looped into their discussions their longtime friend Ellis, who is also passionate about community activism. Ellis was already starting to brainstorm ways of assisting protesters within social distancing guidelines required because of the COVID-19 pandemic. When the three of them spoke, they knew whatever they did needed to center on prayer.

—Mylon Medley, NAD Office of Communication

the women had masks for their families. A disinfecting process was put in place. After they run the donated fabric and materials through a sterilization process, Johnson takes those fabric batches to the women’s homes and leaves them on the porch. The women then disinfect the containers and bags before using the cloth for sewing projects.

“Right now they’re selling the masks on their own, because we can’t have purse parties,” said Handal. “It’s a challenge because we

don’t have people cutting fabric right now.”

The group is still making specialty bags and purses, though the process has been slowed because of the additional steps and safety precautions put in place. “For the most part we are moving forward, so praise the Lord,” said Johnson. “All the women who were meeting before are still meeting [virtually], and we still have a waiting list of other refugee women wanting to join.”

While AMFA isn’t going to host a summer school for kids this year,

they will be trying something new. They will be bringing kits to the children’s families with activities based on Creation, learning about one day of Creation each week.

Peace of Thread Chattanooga, inspired by Peace of Thread Atlanta, hopes to be able to meet in person again. But in the meantime, both they and AMFA will continue to build community virtually by supporting families in Chattanooga in socially distanced ways.

—Pieter Damsteegt,
NAD Communication Production



← Daniel and Donna Jackson celebrate their retirement during a July 1, 2020, event held at the North American Division headquarters in Columbia, Maryland.

Pieter Damsteegt

time with coworkers, they grew the mission and ministry of the division. The program served as appreciation for the many contributions Jackson made during his 10 years of service at the division, including the building up of the NAD Ministerial Association, Multilingual Ministries, and Stewardship Ministries; the creation of a missional strategic plan; and the addition of several institutions that came under the purview of the NAD: the Guam-Micronesia Mission, Oakwood University, Pacific Press Publishing Association, AdventSource, and Christian Record Services for the Blind.

In addition to the division moving to its own headquarters in Columbia, Maryland, in 2017, record titles came in annually during Jackson's tenure; almost 1,000 churches were planted; more than 300,000 people were baptized; the legacy Adventist Media Ministries (Breath of Life, Faith For Today, It Is Written, and Escrito Está, Jesus 101, La Voz de la Esperanza, Lifetalk Radio, and Voice of Prophecy) found their own homes and identities; the number of women working as pastors and chaplains doubled; the Adventist Learning Community, a digital ministry resource, was created; both the Young Adult Life initiative and Big Data + Social Media Department came to fruition; and the division started the magazine *Adventist Journey* in partnership with *Adventist World*.

—*Kimberly Luste Maran, NAD Office of Communication*

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION BIDS FAREWELL TO DAN AND DONNA JACKSON

On July 1, 2020, under a big white tent on the grounds of the North American Division (NAD) headquarters, more than 200 in-person and online guests bid a fond farewell to Daniel R. and Donna Jackson during a two-hour celebration of their ministry and leadership. Each ministry, service, and entity of the division had the opportunity to share memories and messages for the Jacksons, who officially retired on July 1. Vice presidents of the division, union conference presidents, and special guests General Conference (GC) president Ted N. C. Wilson and his wife, Nancy, also spoke at the event, which concluded with final thoughts from the Jacksons and a closing prayer.

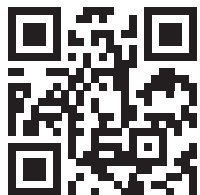
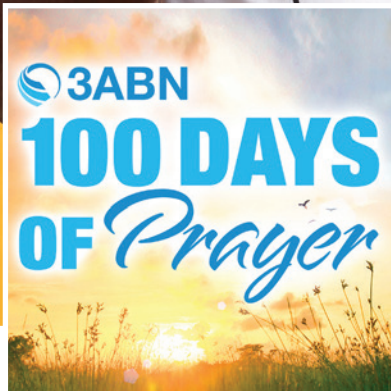
Humor, one hallmark of Jackson's presidential tenure, was on display as employees read clever poems and a modern-day parable. Others presented posters, personalized teddy bears that included COVID-19 face masks, an individualized working policy book, a special Canadian law book, and two bobble-head dolls of the Jacksons. Many shared funny stories; and several groups performed musical parodies to several of Jackson's favorite songs.

G. Alexander Bryant, new division president and formerly NAD executive secretary, opened the occasion by sharing the process that went into planning the retirement event. "When we were thinking about this celebration, we thought about Elder Jackson and Sister Jackson and their spirit, and the spirit that he has exemplified has always been accompanied with laughter," said Bryant, who then quoted Proverbs 17:22.

Not only did the Jacksons bring laughter, song, and encouraging smiles and support to employees personally as they made special effort to spend

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BY CARL MCROY

Until All Lives Matter . . .

We all know that all lives matter to God. This is reaffirmed by such scriptures as “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of *all*, abounding in riches for *all* who call on Him (Rom. 10:12, NASB).¹

While all lives matter to God, He knows all lives don’t matter to all people. We play favorites, and usually defer to the powerful. That’s why biblical prophets repeatedly called for special protections for the “quartet of the vulnerable”² listed in this passage: “This is what the Lord Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor’” (Zech. 7:9, 10, NIV).

Ellen White also emphasized ministering to and advocating for vulnerable people groups: “Every act of justice, mercy, and benevolence makes melody in heaven. . . . When you succor the poor, sympathize with the afflicted and oppressed, and befriend the orphan, you bring yourselves into a closer relationship to Jesus.”³

Early Adventists on All Lives Matter Hypocrisy

Many early Adventists were wide awake to the fact all lives don’t matter in the U.S.—it was part of their prophetic understanding of Revelation 13. The following excerpt is one small sample:

Uriah Smith wrote, “Says the Declaration of Independence, ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness;’ and yet the same government . . . will hold in abject servitude over 3,200,000 of human beings . . . and write out a base denial of all their fair professions in characters of blood. In the institution of slavery is more especially manifested . . . the dragon spirit that dwells in the heart of this hypocritical nation.”⁴

Many early Adventists critiqued our nation’s bloody record of systemic racism, just as Protestants have done regarding the Roman church and just as American history classes rehearse British tyranny. They proclaimed that it won’t be until the Lamb of Revelation 14 brings judgment upon the lamblike beast of Revelation 13 that there will truly be liberty and justice for all.

Say Their Names

What do we do until then? Take a page, the last page, out of the book of Job:

“The Lord blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the former part. . . . And he also had seven sons and three daughters. The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job’s daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers” (Job 42:12-15, NIV).

Job had seven sons, and none of their names were recorded, yet his three daughters’ names are still with us today. Didn’t his sons matter? Of course they did, and everyone in his community would have readily agreed, while being indifferent toward Job’s (or anyone else’s) daughters.

Job’s experience with God’s justice and compassion compelled him to resist societal norms and insist that everyone say his daughters’ names, thus recognizing their personhood. He pushed boundaries further by giving them “an inheritance along with their brothers.” In a society that valued male lives above female lives, Job leveraged his privilege to ensure his daughters autonomy. Never would they be economically entrapped by the whims of their brothers or future husbands. All would know that Jemimah’s, Keziah’s, and Karen-Happuch’s lives mattered.

Are you and I willing to leverage our privilege—any advantage based on our race, gender, profession, or socioeconomic success—to empower others? Until all lives matter, we must. That’s what Job did for his daughters. That’s what Jesus did for all of us. That’s what several early Adventists did in response to slavery. That’s what Black lives need right now.

Are you and I willing to leverage our privilege to empower others?

¹ New American Standard Bible® (NASB), Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

² Coined by Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*, p. 76.

³ Ellen G. White, *My Life Today* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1952), p. 242.

⁴ Uriah Smith, “The Two-Horned Beast—Rev. XIII,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Mar. 19, 1857.

Carl McRoy is Literature Ministries director for the North American Division.

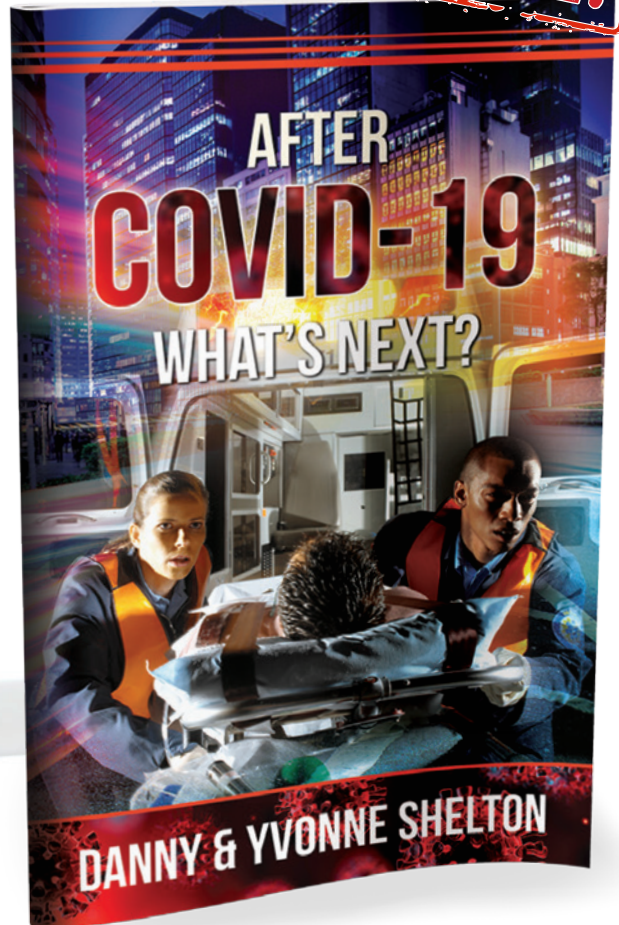
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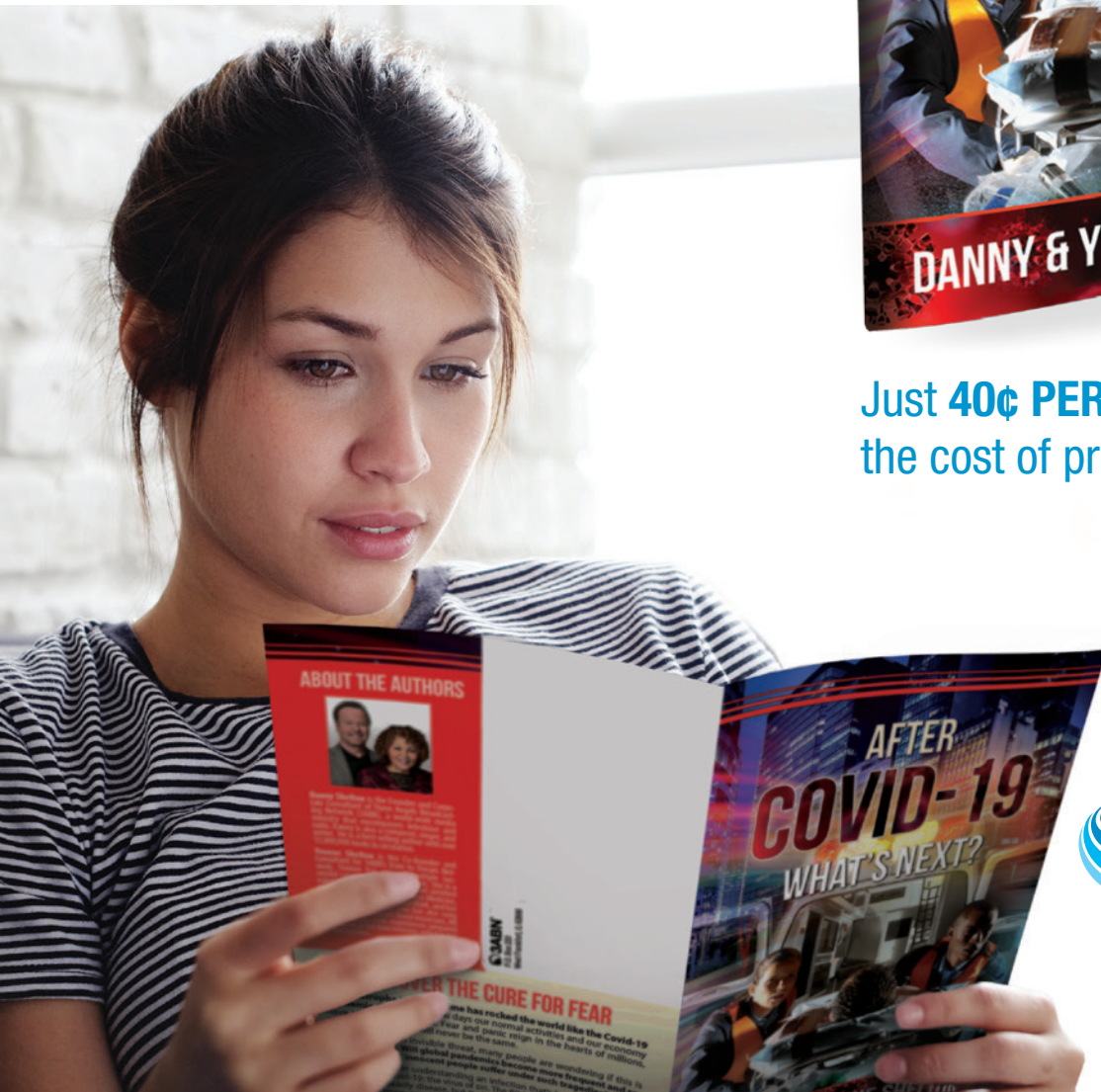
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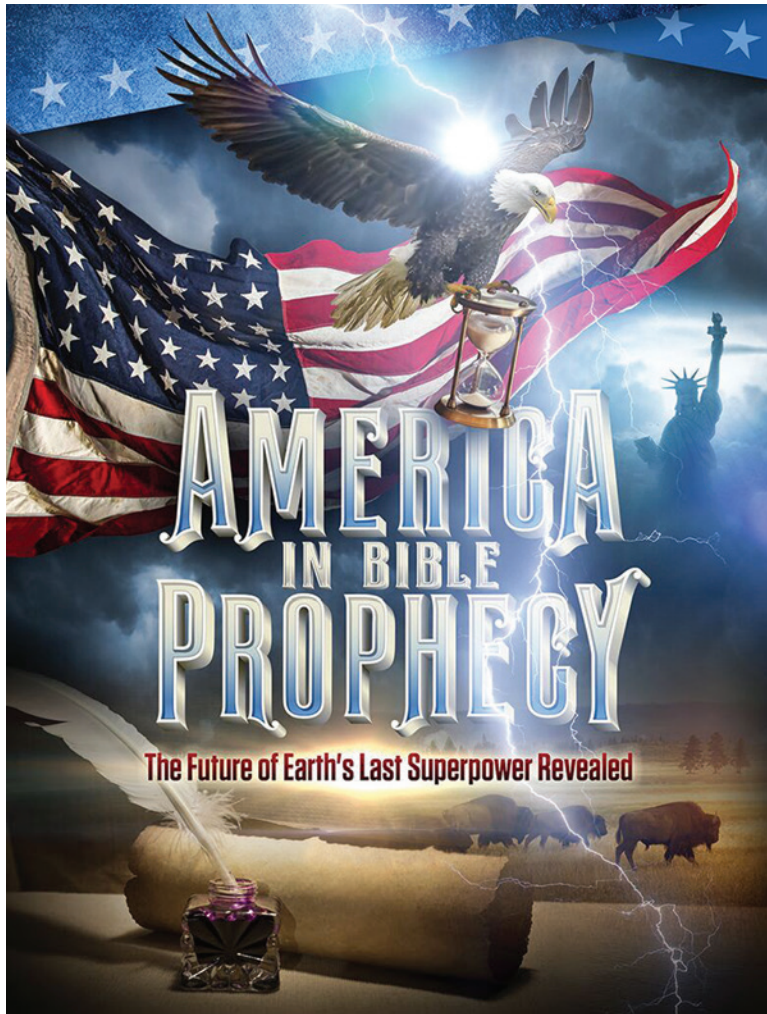
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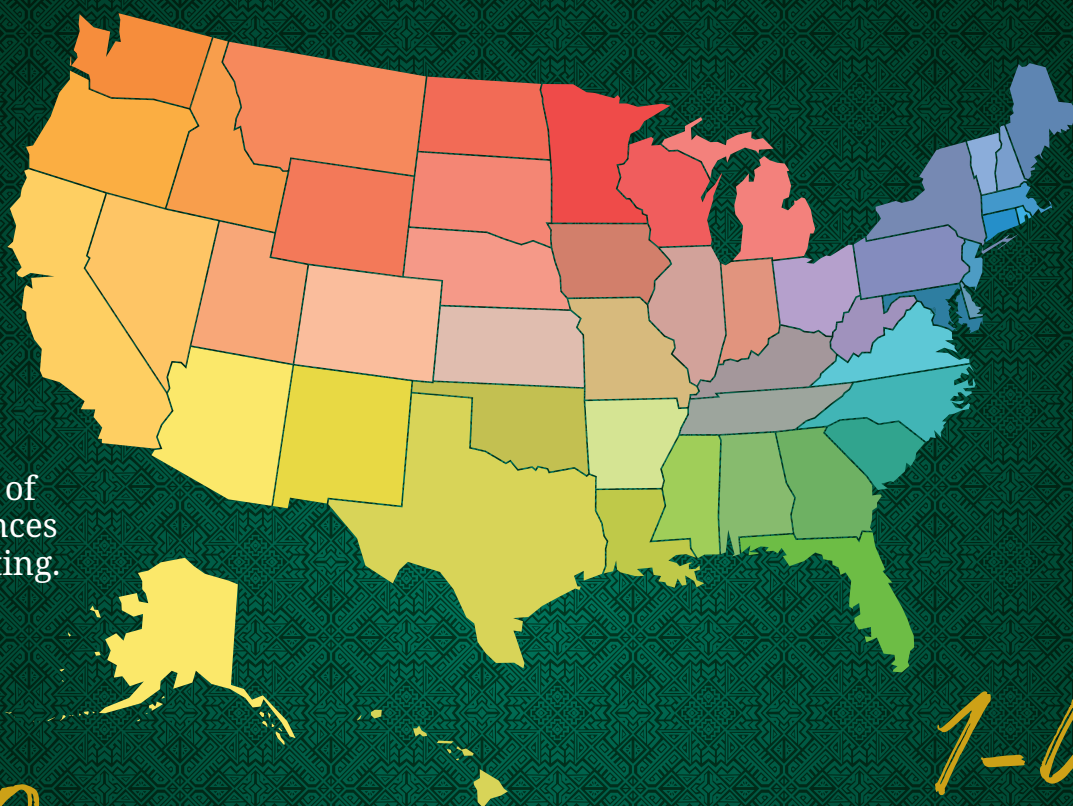
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