

# Adventist

# Journey

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# Adventist Journey

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## My Journey

When I see the “aha” moments in my children’s eyes—that’s my greatest joy. That’s why I homeschooled them. When I saw those moments when they connected with God and He was real to them, it filled me with unspeakable joy. I pray that my children will hold on to God’s unchanging hand and that they will be able to convey that to their children.

Visit [nadadventist.org/ajnescolettsome](http://nadadventist.org/ajnescolettsome) for more of Lettsome’s story.

**NESCO LETTSOME, JR.,**  
husband, father, respiratory-care therapist,  
engineering consultant, and community services volunteer



Cover photo by Pieter Damsteeg

**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!

*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 © 2020. 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. 5, No. 3. March 2022. **Adventist Journey Publication Board** G. Alexander Bryant (chair), Kimberly Luste Maran (secretary), Kyoshin Ahn, Curtis Randolph Robinson, Wendy Eberhardt, Minner Labrador, Arne Nielsen, Maurice Valentine, Calvin Watkins Sr., Rick Remmers, 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.

Email: [AdventistJourney@nadadventist.org](mailto:AdventistJourney@nadadventist.org) | Web site: [nadadventist.org](http://nadadventist.org)

## ADVENTIST JOURNEY

Editor **Kimberly Luste Maran**

Senior Editorial Assistant

Art Direction & Design **Ellen Musselman / Types & Symbols**

Consultants **G. Earl Knight, Mark Johnson, Dave Weigley, Kenneth Denslow, Gary Thurber, John Freedman, Bradford C. Newton, Ron C. Smith, Carlos Craig**

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





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# Calling All Church Members

**TO EVANGELISM AND MISSION**



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**Ways to connect the local church to the community for effective ministry**

**BY JEROME M. HURST**



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these pastors and their congregations favorable impressions of the truth.”<sup>3</sup>

“Light has been given to me that there are those with most precious talents and capabilities in the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.). Much time and money have been absorbed among us in ways that bring no returns. Instead of this, some of our best talent should be set at work for the W.C.T.U., *not as evangelists*, but as those who fully appreciate the good that has been done by this body. We should seek to gain the confidence of the workers in the W.C.T.U. by harmonizing with them as far as possible.”<sup>4</sup>

### Love the Community, Know the Community

I believe that the main reasons we have experienced this gap between stated values and actual practice is that many Christian leaders simply do not have the hands-on skills to collaborate. Here are some tools/techniques that I have used from my personal experience.

Before meeting with those outside our organization there must be an understanding of self by the leader and the church. Each leader must confirm God’s calling upon their life and the ministry of the church. In order to reach our community, we, as leaders and church members, must love the community. We can never reach a community that we do not love. We will never reach people whom we are unwilling to love. We must see those in the community as people that God loves, and Jesus died for—and not just as potential members of our church.

After looking at the leader and church, consider the needs of your city and community. Some needs in your city might be obvious, like a newspaper headline that shouts, “Local stabbing connected to city’s gang growth.” Some needs in your community may only be a whisper, such as the staggering number of infant mortality or children suffering from lead paint poisoning. In order to connect with the community, it’s imperative that the church know the community you want to help and the people you need to serve.

Collaboration is not only a buzzword these days, but it is also a necessity to a successful ministry in today’s world. We live in a world with many challenges, where everyone is looking to see how the church will respond. The truth is that community problems and issues are far too complex for any church, agency, or organization to tackle alone. It is imperative that the church work in partnership with others in bringing solutions to the issues the communities we serve are facing. Collaboration is the key that reduces the duplication of our efforts, maximizes the impact of our ministries, and strengthens the credibility of our witness for Christ.

The real challenge, of course, is not that people are opposed to partnership in principle. Few people would say that Christians should *not* work together. And the message of the Scriptures in support of practical collaboration is abundantly clear. Below are just a couple.

It says in 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13: “For example, the body is one unit and yet has many parts. As all the parts form one body, so it is with Christ. By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Whether we are Jewish or Greek, slave or free, God gave all of us one Spirit to drink” (NKJV).

Another supportive text is found in Hebrews 10:24, 25: “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Unfortunately, there is a gap between the stated values and the actual practice of Christian organizations. Some believe that interaction betrays their own biblical distinctiveness.

Invariably some quote Ellen White in holding ourselves aloof from fellowship with the larger Christian community. While she emphatically urged that we maintain our unique identity and mission she also encouraged interaction with the wider Christian community.

For example, in the 1880s White joined forces with the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, a group of Protestant prohibitionists. She spoke at their rallies and even recommended that some of our best Adventist talent should work for that organization. She gave additional counsel: “The Lord has His representatives in all the churches,”<sup>1</sup> and “We should unite with other people just as far as we can and not sacrifice principle.”<sup>2</sup>

“It should ever be manifest that we are reformers, but not bigots. When our laborers enter a new field, they should seek to become acquainted with the pastors of the several churches in the place. Much has been lost by neglecting to do this. If our ministers show themselves friendly and sociable, it will have an excellent effect, and may give

You can find information about your community by reviewing the data available at [www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov). This official U.S. Census web site is filled with various levels of reports. In addition to population data, there is information about social, economic, and housing characteristics. You can also discover data about how many people are out of work because of disability, how many are divorced, or how many people live below poverty level, and much more.

Beyond the statistical data I recommend you talk to individuals who live in the community. Be intentional about taking the time to get to know and understand the community and the people whom you are called to reach. Here are some simple ways to do this:

**Porch talks:** Go house to house in the community and talk with the residents. You can use a survey to direct the conversation.

**Block associations/street clubs:** Some communities have groups of people that meet regularly to discuss issues and solutions that pertain specifically to their locale. A representative from the church should hold membership and attend those meetings, and the church could host meetings.

**Community hot spots:** Get to know people by going to the places where the community hangs out, such as barber and beauty shops, coffee shops, parks, fast food restaurants, etc.

### Valuable Community Partners

As we continue to gather information about the community, we can also begin to build relationships that could lead to partnerships. There are three types of organizations we should build relationships with that I've found to be valuable community partners.

**Community-based:** Look to organizations working alongside you on the front lines of your community. Local

nonprofits may find that your values fit well with theirs, even if you are offering different types of services. These could include hospitals and healthcare professionals.

**Government-based:** Local governmental institutions may also be excellent partner organizations to explore. Schools and educational institutions may be excellent partners and they can provide access to the population your church serves. Cultivating relationships with police and fire departments can also be important. And state-wide partnerships are important because of their data repositories.

**Faith-based:** If their mission aligns with yours, partner with local religious institutions. Places of worship are often regarded as important resources for a community and have diverse congregations with various skills.

There are people in each of these organizations who know more about the community than you. As church leaders, we can learn about our community from other local organizations that care for them. Pick up the phone. Call the organizations and agencies in your area and learn about their mission.

Some questions that can guide the discussion with the community leaders are: *What are the three best kept secrets about this community? Who are the three people who love this community and who understand the people who live here? What changes do you see on the horizon for this community? What are some of the most significant events that have taken place in this community's history? What is the difficult part of your job? How may we pray for you? What can the churches of \_\_\_\_\_ do to make this community better?*

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Oct. 21, 1884, Art. B.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, June 13, 1912.

<sup>4</sup>Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, June 18, 1908.

## Purpose and Passion Through Multiply

Even though soul-winning and discipleship are increasing in the North American Division, albeit slowly, future growth is vitally dependent upon the urgent need for greater community connectedness, proclamation, compassion, revitalization, and church planting. The essence of the gospel is go “multiply” (see Matt. 28:19). Jesus modeled this with His life and ministry. He sent out follow-

ers two by two and taught them how to love, teach, be present, care, meet needs, and live, which is the essence of discipleship.

Christ's instructions included sharing with the entire world—every race, language, tongue, and people. The everlasting gospel of a crucified, risen, soon-coming Lord announced by the three angels (see Rev. 14:6-12) is our only hope for this dying world. With

this purpose and passion, the guidebook *Multiply* expresses six action steps (love, serve, baptize, equip, plant, and revitalize) to reach, reclaim and retain the people of North America with Jesus' mission and message of compassion, hope, and wholeness. Visit <https://adventistbookcenter.com/multiply.html> to learn more.

—Ivan Williams, NAD Ministerial Association director

## CASE STUDY

# Safe Streets/ Safe Schools

An example of one of the many collaborations I am a part of is a partnership between churches, schools, community, and government through a program known as Safe Streets/Safe Schools. The principal partners included ConnectClev, City of Cleveland, Cleveland Public Schools, AmeriCorps, and local churches and community members.

Safe Streets/Safe Schools is a collaborative project developed by five clergy members (which has developed into a collaboration called ConnectClev) in response to the January 2017 abduction and murder of Alliana Defreeze, a student at E Prep Elementary School.

Safe Streets/Safe Schools was designed to create safe and healthy communities to support students traveling to Cleveland schools in the early hours of the day. As a first step, the participating pastors responded with immediate grief counseling at the school, and high visibility foot patrols before school, offering support and comfort to students.

Alongside, they carried out a strategic planning project and engaged in research to develop a sustainable model. The final initial model included (1) Identifying adult monitors who patrolled around the school; (2) Encouraging students to walk or travel to and from school in groups; (3) Distributing information and tool kits on school and community safety and school-based bullying; and (4) Working with parents and residents engaging in advocacy to address blight, abandoned buildings, and infrastructure issues such as weak and crumbling sidewalks.

In August 2018, the ConnectClev, received continuation funding from the City of Cleveland to implement an expanded framework of Safe Streets/Safe Schools. Based on feedback from parents and residents, the expanded model incorporated employment and financial literacy-based programming into the overall framework. Safe Streets/Safe Schools theory of change states that “children are

inherently safer when they come from families and communities that are financially stable.” Safe Street/Safe Schools continues to serve four out of the five original schools/communities and environs becoming a city-wide initiative.

While our program is school based, we have attempted to follow the students and parents into the community. Our plan for the “opportunity centers” is designed to connect with parents and students during after-school hours and to reach parents who may work during the day. Our overall engagement strategy is referral-based to city recreation centers. We have identified several key partners and utilize them for the core services.

Through collaborative efforts with the City of Cleveland recreation centers, Safe Street/Safe Schools circles will serve as a catalyst to engage individuals and families in geographically defined areas to achieve personal goals and objectives. Safe Streets/Safe Schools strives to develop healthy and resilient communities and families through our relationship with each school.

## Light the Fire

It takes work to build the necessary relationships to have an effective collaboration. Those who will put in the time and the effort will truly impact their community.

My prayer is that what has been outlined in this article will light a fire within you to gather more information and begin doing something *now*.

*Jerome M. Hurst is the senior pastor of the Ethnan Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church in Wilkesburg, Pennsylvania, and the Community Service and Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director for the Allegheny West Conference. This article is adapted from Chapter 5 of the North American Division Ministerial Association's new book Multiply, “a collective vision of pastors, members, and administrators to multiply the kingdom of God in North America through baptizing, equipping, and planting.”*







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# BEING RESTORED

NAD Health Ministries to hold mental health and wellness summit, provide resources

BY ANGELINE D. BRAUER



**T**emple Grandin is quite an extraordinary individual. At 4 years of age she was diagnosed with “brain damage” (later identified as autism), and her mother was told that she would never learn to speak.

At the time autism was poorly understood, and treatments were nonexistent. Despite tremendous barriers, with continued caring support of her family—and finding the right schools and teachers who believed in her abilities—Grandin flourished. She learned to talk, and she went on to complete college and gain advanced degrees, bringing incredible innovation to her field of work. She is now a renowned expert lecturer on autism spectrum disorders, which she credits much to the supportive community that did not give up on her.

I first heard about Grandin while working in autism research in the early 2000s, when there was heightened interest in the area and a strong push for more research and treatment methods. Much is still unknown about autism and other developmental disabilities, but it is very encouraging to see that many autistic individuals have fulfilling lives and relationships.

Today we are facing seemingly insurmountable issues with other conditions that involve brain function. The human brain is the most complex organ of our bodies, and some say the most complex structure in the known universe. It can likewise be incredibly devastating when it doesn’t work as expected—and when there are few answers as to why.

Ellen White penned these words in the book *Counsels on Health*: “Sickness of the mind prevails everywhere. Nine tenths of the diseases from which men suffer have their foundation here.”\*

While we can take this quote at face value, we also should dig deeper into her meaning. How did she

define “sickness of the mind,” and what more can we learn about the “foundation”? What leads to the sickness? Can we prevent it? Is there hope for the sufferer?

For these reasons and more, North American Division Health Ministries is turning a laser focus on the topic of mental health and wellness. To launch this, we are hosting a virtual, online mental health summit on March 31 to April 3, 2022. We will hear from experts in the field about anxiety, depression, Alzheimer’s disease, and other mental illnesses. We will consider how trauma and addictions impact lives and what is involved on the road to recovery; about population-level factors that can impact mental well-being; wholistic approaches to healing, including the role of healthy spirituality; and much more. Continuing education credits will be available for health-care practitioners, while practical trainings and certifications will equip church members to recognize mental health needs and to support the healing journey.

Yet that is only the beginning.

Through our mental health initiative, Adventist HealthyYOU: Restored, we are embracing the processes that God uses for the renewing of our minds. In the Creation story we can find evidence of the amazing mental capacities that God created in us. This gives us a biblical imperative to better understand the mind, how it functions, how to keep it healthy, how to improve its abilities, and how to be restored. Visit [www.NADhealth.org/restored](http://www.NADhealth.org/restored) to learn more about the mental health summit and more resources to come.

\* Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1923), p. 324.

Angeline D. Brauer, Dr.PH, MHS, RDN, is director of North American Division Health Ministries.

# NAD NEWS BRIEFS



← Charles Dickerson, JD, instructor for this fall's new Intro to Black Studies class, displays a pair of slave shackles during a recent class as an illustration for his lesson on slavery. *La Sierra University*

## NEW BLACK STUDIES CURRICULUM AT LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY AIMS FOR IMPACT AND UNDERSTANDING

**W**hat Charles Dickerson saw in a shop in South Los Angeles, California, more than 20 years ago immediately grabbed his attention—rough iron shackles with square openings hung on a wall for display, darkened with age and forged generations earlier for enslaving human beings most likely from Senegal, West Africa.

Dickerson purchased the historic objects and took them home so that visitors could see them, his children could touch them, and he could have a visceral, daily reminder of the circumstances from which his life and his ancestors emerged.

On a Thursday afternoon this fall quarter, students in Dickerson's Introduction to Black Studies class, a new offering at La Sierra University, got an up-close look at the shackles carefully displayed in a shadow box frame. For some it was an emotionally powerful moment.

"It's incredible, and infuriating, to know that people were subject to these not that long ago," said third-year biomedical sciences major Julio Rubio. He lingered after the class to take a closer look at the riveting objects in the box frame, "to observe and absorb what was really shown," he said. "It's crazy, the idea of shackling people for the profit of oneself."

The afternoon discussion surrounding the shackles exhibit and a film on Reconstruction and the peonage system were part of a comprehensive journey this fall

in the Introduction to Black Studies class that explores Black history from ancient Sub-Saharan Africa forward into the transatlantic slave trade, the Black American and wider African diaspora's fight against colonialism, persistent anti-Black racism and its roots, economic exploitation, political violence, and gender oppression. Led by Dickerson, a noted composer and conductor with former careers in government, law, and politics, the class launches the university's new Black studies curriculum in the Department of History, Politics, and Sociology.

In total, six new and revised classes cover a wide range of issues in various contexts, including African American history; Black cinema; socio-economic struggles and inequalities resulting from legal frameworks; and race, class, and gender in American history. In addition to Dickerson, instructors from the legal field and from regional University of California and California State University campuses will lead classes.

The new curriculum is the latest step in a process that began about 10 years ago as the History, Politics, and Sociology Department expanded courses specializing in the African American experience to cover such topics as the



Harlem Renaissance and the civil rights movement.

“In addition to these specialized courses, all our American history courses take an honest view of racial and gender inequality, and recenter the stories of Asian, Latinx, and Black struggles,” said Ken Crane, associate sociology and anthropology professor and chair of History, Politics, and Sociology. “It was the pandemic and the tragic deaths of African Americans at the hands of police in 2020 that refocused the lens on the persistent and gaping

inequalities in our society, and called for the university to do more. A series of factors coalesced to renew our efforts to grow the African American studies curriculum,” he said, including the university’s attention to student voices, the encouragement of university administration, as well as a commitment of funds for adjunct faculty.

The course lineup continues with Intro to African American History offered in January for winter quarter by Cecelia Smith, a current researcher in African American historical

topics and graduate student at Cal State San Bernardino. The class Law and Society will also be rolled out in winter quarter and taught by attorney and La Sierra University alumna Monique Gramling. Additional future classes will cover Social and Critical Movements in Film, taught by UCLA doctoral ethnic studies candidate Brian Stephens; and Race/Class/Gender in American History, taught by Cal State San Bernardino history graduate student Jacquelyn Anton.

—*Darla Martin Tucker,*  
*La Sierra University*

## Recognition Event Honors the Life and Legacy of Lucy Byard

**D**ecember 10, 2021, was a momentous day for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Adventist HealthCare (AHC) and distinguished Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), as the life and legacy of Lucille “Lucy” Byard was both recognized and honored. Lucy Byard was a Black Seventh-day Adventist member who was turned away by the Washington Sanitarium in 1943 because of the color of her skin.

Adventist HealthCare leaders unveiled a commissioned portrait of Byard, as well as a series of significant scholarships in her name that will benefit nursing students at each of the three universities.

The event brought together various church, health-care, and community leaders and representatives to acknowledge the decades-old indignity and to move toward healing and reconciliation by owning the wrong and taking committed action to ensure it never happens again. “I’m really proud today to be a part of the Columbia Union, and part of a health-care system that recognizes it’s time to set the record right,” said Dave Weigley, Columbia Union Conference president, and chair of the Adventist HealthCare board.



Artist Simmie Knox, and Lisa Sweeney-Walker, great-great-grandniece of Lucy Byard, unveil the portrait during the December 10, 2021, event.  
*Adventist HealthCare*

G. Alexander Bryant, North American Division president, echoed those thoughts via a special video message. “To come together in recognition of Lucy Byard, who symbolizes the experience of so many African Americans, to commend her life and legacy is extraordinary,” commented Bryant, “especially in a day and age of so much divisiveness and so much racial insensitivity and so much inequality. I appreciate the significant efforts to acknowledge the past and to bring forth in constructive and tangible ways activities and programs to help validate the worth of all people.”

“The recognition of Lucy Byard,” added Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “is an important step in helping people understand that Seventh-day Adventists, not just the institution, but all of us, must truly follow in the steps of Christ and understand what it means to offer respect and dignity to all.”

—*Corinne Kuypers-Denlinger, Adventist HealthCare*



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BY DEEANN BRAGAW

# No Accidental Guests

**W**e scanned the room, looking for a place to sit. The weekend schedule provided some free time, so we spent the afternoon exploring outside and slipped in near the end of the evening buffet meal. Most of the group had finished eating and were laughing, and chatting at their tables. Because I was new to my job, there were many people I didn't yet know, and I felt slightly awkward, looking for a place at a table.

Across the room we spotted a young couple who were still eating. "May we join you?" I asked.

"Sure, please do!" invited the man, gesturing at the open seats. We had just exchanged names when the man's phone buzzed. "Excuse me; I'll be right back," he said. While we ate, we visited with the woman, Sharice.

"I'm sorry," she sighed "Nathan has a couple things he needs to do. Being the mayor is a job never done!"

"Oh," my husband, Paul, responded. "We're just visiting the area. Is he the local mayor?"

"No, actually we drove about an hour and a half to get here," she answered. We were learning about her work as a personal trainer when Nathan returned to his meal. Since it didn't appear either one of them worked at my office, I asked who had invited them. I naively assumed they had some part in the weekend programming.

"We're really here just to catch our breath," they told us, and the longer we chatted I wondered, *Did they accidentally wander into our gathering?* I had seen a sign in front of this conference room earlier in the day, indicating a gathering for mayors of the region, and I began to sense they thought *this* evening meal was part of *that* gathering.

Quickly shifting my thinking, I asked, "Nathan, what do you like most about being the mayor?" His eyes lit up as he began to talk about how much he loved to serve, and shared stories of how he was making a difference in his community.

"What's one of your greatest challenges as a leader?" my husband questioned.

"When people think I should be able to make the changes *they* want and make them quickly because I'm the mayor." Laughing, and shaking our heads with understanding, we enjoyed our continued conversation about the adventures of leadership, finding a lot of common ground with our new friends.

"Well, I think we'll head out. Let me give you my card," Nathan said, "It's been a pleasure having dinner with you!"

"Nathan, before you go, would it be OK if we prayed for you?" I asked.

"I would love that!" he replied. Paul prayed a simple prayer of blessing over Nathan and Sharice, asking God to give them wisdom and courage in both their professional and personal lives. They profusely thanked us and slipped out the door.

"What just happened?" we asked each other. We laughed, humbled with the irony that this couple, who clearly were "accidental" guests, were in a room full of people who had been talking earlier about how to reach our neighbors for Jesus. These two *neighbors*, eating a meal in the same room, came very close to having no interaction with us at all.

How many times am I so caught up in my own agenda that I miss the opportunities God gives me to speak His courage and hope into the life of a neighbor He puts in my path? We don't live anywhere near Nathan and Sharice, so it's likely our meal that evening was the only one we'll have the opportunity to share. I'm grateful for the brief interaction God gave us, reminding me there are no accidental guests.

And thanks, Mayor, for sharing a place at your table. May I always do the same.

*DeeAnn Bragaw is director of the North American Division Women's Ministries.*

The room full of people had been talking earlier about how to reach our neighbors for Jesus.

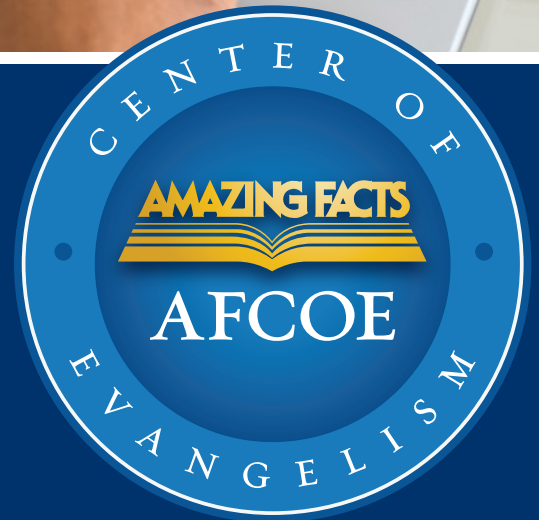
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