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# Adventist Journey

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## My Journey

"I grew up in an Adventist home. My mom used to read bedtime stories to me that made a great impact on my life. Sometimes those stories would play back in my mind, and I would end up realizing that I needed to make a decision to avoid what happened in the stories. As I grew up, I begin to notice and understand how God was moving in my life."

Visit [nadadventist.org/ajcharleshodge](https://nadadventist.org/ajcharleshodge) for more of Hodge's story.

**CHARLES KAREL HODGE,**  
*architect, living in Ocala, Florida*

Charles Karel Hodge



Cover photo by Art Brondo

**Dear Reader:** The publication in your hands represents the collaborative efforts of the North American Division and *Adventist World* magazine (Justin Kim, editor), which follows *Adventist Journey* (after page 16). Please enjoy both magazines!

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### ADVENTIST JOURNEY

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# PASSIONATE LEADERS WANTED

**Women's Ministries Leaders Gain  
the Keys to Ministry Success at the  
Inaugural Passionate Leader Summit**

**BY CHRISTELLE AGBOKA**

*Photography by Pieter Damsteegt*

**W**hat is a passionate leader? The North American Division's (NAD) inaugural Passionate Leader Summit for Women's Ministries leaders, held at the NAD headquarters in Columbia, Maryland, February 1-4, 2024, tackled this query through inspiring messages, worships, interactive workshops, and moving testimonials. NAD Women's Ministries leader DeeAnn Bragaw and her team drew inspiration from Psalm 37:5: "Let the Lord lead you and trust him to help" (CEV).<sup>1</sup>

"The Holy Spirit is inviting you to do what Jesus did—surrender," Bragaw said near the beginning of the event. She continued, "This reality is the key to being a passionate, Christlike, effective leader." She added that while the words "lead" and "surrender" seem opposed, "the most effective godly leadership happens as a result of complete surrender."



Attendees of the North American Division Passionate Leader Summit gather for a group photo.

Anastacia Ferguson-Bansie, associate pastor of Atholton Seventh-day Adventist Church (Maryland) and Chesapeake Conference Women's Ministries field director, continued the theme of surrender in the opening keynote, titled "Chains." Her message centered on the Israelites' pleas to return to Egypt in Exodus 14 when Pharaoh's army approached them at the Red Sea. She paralleled their slave mentality with our bondage to sin, guilt, shame, and self-doubt.

Ferguson-Bansie weaved personal anecdotes into her message, illustrating God's ability to help us reach greater heights in life or ministry during challenging times. One such moment was her mother's miraculous healing from a near-death experience; another was her journey from the bottom of her class to the top seven years after her neighbor taught her to read. She stressed that only the mental chains of the ene-

"I have seen the Holy Spirit working, encouraging, touching, convicting, prompting, inspiring, and equipping."

my—not the naysayers, low budget, or lack of volunteers—can weaken our reach.

Before offering a prayer of consecration, Ferguson-Bansie urged the women to cast the plastic chains set on each table at the foot of a cross at the front of the room. "Are you facing a roadblock in your ministry? Are you facing challenges and hardships that are too much for you to bear? Are you facing the issues of life? Take off those chains!" She underscored Moses' response to the doubting Israelites at the Red Sea—"Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. Look to Jesus."

As the praise team sang, "I hear the chains falling," and plastic chains dropped, an almost tangible sense of liberation filled the air.

### Empowerment, Equipping, and Fellowship

For many, the opportunity to expand their ministry tool kit and resources was a highlight of this summit. "What I enjoyed most [were] the trainings and the networking. I gained a wealth of information about how to be an effective leader [and met] so many people who can come and help [me] and [my] ministry," said Gertrude Okyere, a youth leader from the New Jersey Conference, who is considering transitioning into Women's Ministries.

For Okyere and other leaders, the summit offered a plethora of practical topics, including fostering God-confidence, emotional intelligence, overcoming negative self-talk, conflict management and effective communication, trans-

formational leadership, building successful teams, and even an interactive workshop on how to share your story and prepare an impactful sermon. All sessions incorporated hands-on activities and discussions among women at their tables. Notably, participants were seated within their unions all weekend, culminating in a discussion on February 4 on how to integrate what they had learned in their territory. The final session, by design, touched on mentorship as discipleship, i.e., becoming leaders who will then make more leaders.

Marthe Hall, a pastor's wife and Women's Ministries team member from the Maritime Conference, was particularly encouraged by one of several sessions on developing a stronger sense of worth as a daughter of God. She described a presentation with a slide listing a person's inadequacies and doubts on one side, with Jesus' response on the other side. For instance, she explained, "You say, 'I am not enough,' and Jesus says, 'I am.'"







The praise team leads attendees in song at the North American Division (NAD) Passionate Leader Summit for Women's Ministries leaders, held from February 1-4, 2024, at the NAD headquarters in Columbia, Maryland.

She stated, "If you collaborate with Him, it's bound to be OK. It might not be perfect. But knowing that I'm working with the Perfect One, . . . that's extremely encouraging and takes a lot of pressure off."

### Addressing Needs

When Bragaw joined the division in 2021, the Women's Ministries Department did a comprehensive survey of NAD directors' needs. A standout response was an updated, video-based leadership training building on and contextualizing the existing General Conference leadership training for North America. Notably, this summit served as an introduction to the North American Division Women's Ministries passionate leader training, which will be available on the Adventist Learning Community website in the coming months.

As Bragaw consulted with her advisory comprised of union Women's Ministries directors division-wide presummit, a union director shared the name "passionate leader," which she had used for a training years prior. Said Bragaw, "We all got so excited about that because we felt like the term embodies who our Women's Ministries directors are. They are passionate about serving women, loving women, and drawing women to Jesus." She added, "A passionate leader is not only willing to grow in her leadership; she also nurtures and opens the door for other leaders."

Complementing the mentorship focus was the camaraderie that developed naturally among the women. Vickie Danley, Women's Ministries



Attendees of the division's inaugural passionate leaders' summit cast the plastic chains set on each table at the foot of a cross at the front of the room as a symbol of liberation from sin and shame.

cochair at her church within the Iowa-Missouri Conference, shared, "Knowing that other women have the same ups and downs, the same problems, it's been a joy to know I'm not by myself."

Chomburi Kim, the event's makeup artist, echoed Danley's sentiments. Kim, who was not a churchgoer, had been introduced to Adventism a few years ago through a contract doing makeup for Hope Channel. She gave a testimony near the end of the summit that watching the slides and being around women leaders had dramatically changed her life. After the weekend she felt she was not alone in her healing journey and was looking forward to reading the Bible gifted to her by Bragaw and Erica Jones Smith, NAD Women's Ministries assistant director. "Now I know my worth. I know I can help somebody. I really do feel like the Holy Spirit and God put me here," she stated, smiling.

Bragaw concluded, "I am incredibly grateful to Jesus because I have seen the Holy Spirit working, encouraging, touching, convicting, prompting, inspiring, and equipping," she said, adding that she and Smith had been moved by women coming up to them all weekend, saying, "I so needed this. I'm going back better equipped. Knowing that they said, this is our need, and we have met that need, I am so happy."

### Moving Forward With a Surrendered Heart

On Sabbath of the summit, Ann Roda, vice president of mission integration and spiritual care for Adventist Health-Care, recounted the familiar story of Hannah in 1 Samuel.

Hannah traveled annually to Shiloh with her husband, Elkanah, and his other wife, Peninnah, to worship and sacrifice to the Lord. Despite her tearful prayers, Hannah remained barren. Worse, she had no safe space, as Peninnah was verbally abusive and Elkanah caring but clueless. But one year later her prayer changed, as did God's answer.

Roda explained that *palal*, the Hebrew word for prayer, signifies both supplication (or asking for something) and being willing to be judged. "Hannah, in her anguish . . . got to the point [where] she said, 'OK, God, I'm throwing it all down. Judge me. What is it? What is stopping this prayer from being answered?'" Hannah got naked before God and experienced true conversion. Fully surrendered, she bore a son the following year. "When we challenge God in that way, He'll respond," said Roda.

Roda urged the Women's Ministries leaders to follow Hannah's example by asking God, "Point out anything in me that offends you" (Ps. 139:24, NLT).<sup>2</sup>

"In conversations I've had with all of you, you've got some big visions. And you're going to do it . . . because you're called to be leaders," she said, then cautioned that ministry requires sacrifice. "Let go of the vision, the plans, the to-do lists, the 150 women we want to attend our events. Let go and let God, then sit back and see what God's going to do. When He becomes our greatest need, everything else falls into place."

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*Christelle Agboka is news writer/news producer for the North American Division.*

## Resources

**"Speak, Lord" Women's Bible studies:** For more information, contact [wmprojects@nadadventist.org](mailto:wmprojects@nadadventist.org); or visit [nadwm.org/bible-studies](https://nadwm.org/bible-studies).

**Coming soon:** passionate leader training modules will be available on the Adventist Learning Community at [adventistlearningcommunity.com](https://adventistlearningcommunity.com). For info on these and other Women's Ministries offerings, visit [nadwm.org](https://nadwm.org).



The NAD Passionate Leader Summit fosters a natural sense of camaraderie among the Women's Ministries leaders present.

# enditnow Safe- guarding Peace Summit

enditnow® North America is hosting a free training on September 11-13 at the Sheraton New Orleans (Louisiana). This free in-person training will provide ministry leaders, volunteers, and safety officers with pertinent information on abuse prevention and response. Following this training, attendees will be able to define relational abuse and identify its key elements, identify the prevalence of abuse in the church, recognize the signs and dynamics of an abusive relationship, explain the barriers that prevent victim/survivors from moving toward safety, give examples of preventative strategies for adults and children, and respond appropriately to abuse disclosure. To register, please visit [enditnownorthamerica.org](https://enditnownorthamerica.org). Space is limited. Find more information on the upcoming "Safeguarding Peace" enditnow Summit Against Abuse here: [enditnownorthamerica.org/](https://enditnownorthamerica.org/).

Read about the 2023 enditnow summit here: [nadadventist.org/news/enditnow-summit-2023-tackling-abuse-one-advocate-time](https://nadadventist.org/news/enditnow-summit-2023-tackling-abuse-one-advocate-time).

# NAD NEWS BRIEFS



← Yami Bazan has been named the next president for Union College, starting in the summer of 2024. *Photo provided by Union College*

## Yamileth “Yami” Bazan Named Next Union College President

**T**he Union College (Union Adventist University) board of trustees has invited Yamileth Bazan to take the reins as Union’s thirtieth president. Her term will begin on July 1, 2024, soon after the official transition to the new name of Union Adventist University. “Yami,” as she prefers to be called, brings with her a passion for education and ministry combined with a long legacy of supporting and mentoring students, university leaders, and local church constituents.

“I am confident God led in the search process,” said Gary Thurber, chair of Union’s board of trustees and president of the Mid-America Union Conference. “The experience she brings in serving young people, mentoring them spiritually, and building leaders is a perfect fit for Union. She lives and breathes the mission and values of the Adventist church and this university.”

Union’s students first met Bazan

in November before she interviewed for the presidential role. The week she was scheduled to speak for worship services turned out to be a very difficult one; a student had just died in a tragic accident. “Dr. Bazan has already supported us through a hard time, and we know we can trust her to lead with compassion, empathy and love,” said Annelise Jacobs, Student Association president. “She will be a great president because she is both a strategic thinker and a great listener who cares deeply about the students and employees.”

Bazan has served in Adventist higher education for more than 17 years. As associate dean for Student Affairs at Loma Linda University School of Medicine, she oversees all student services and support offices, including student clubs and events, the Records Office, tutoring and other academic support, and health and wellness

services. As vice president of Student Life at La Sierra University from 2007 to 2021, she led 10 departments ranging from athletics and counseling to campus security and spiritual life. Before entering higher education, Bazan served in youth ministry for the South-eastern California Conference and began her career teaching in Adventist elementary schools.

“During my visits to the campus this year, I was blessed to experience the caring learning community that makes Union special,” said Bazan. “The values and mission are lived beautifully by the faculty, students, staff, and administration. It has been a sweet surprise to see God connect our paths. I am honored to be part of the next exciting chapter for this campus family.”

“Yami is an answer to so many prayers!” said Vinita Sauder, Union’s current president. “I can retire happily knowing that I am leaving Union in the hands of someone so caring and competent. I know God has called her to Union for a purpose.”

Bazan holds a Ph.D. in leadership from Andrews University, a master’s in administration and leadership, a bachelor’s from La Sierra University, and an associate degree from Loma Linda University. She has also taught graduate-level courses in educational leadership at La Sierra and led a seminar class on college success for first-year students for many years.

—*Union College Communications*



## It Is Written Conducts Alaska Evangelism and Mission Trip

This spring It Is Written will conduct a mission trip and evangelistic campaign in Alaska, culminating in the Revelation Today: Hope for Humanity series. At the end of March, a mission team of 70 volunteers are serving in Anchorage, the largest city in Alaska, and Bethel, the largest rural community. The evangelistic series begins April 5. The events are held in partnership with the Adventist Medical Evangelism Network (AMEN) and the Alaska Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

John Bradshaw, It Is Written speaker/director, shared his excitement for the campaign, stating, "It Is Written exists for the purpose of sharing the gospel. We're thrilled to be collaborating with the churches in Alaska. We have met many pastors and church members who are enthusiastic about what is taking place. The two mission teams are going to do a great work for God, and we are trusting that the evangelistic meetings will reach many souls with the message for this time."

The Revelation Today: Hope for Humanity series, to be held from April 5 to May 4, will be a Christ-centered Bible prophecy series led by John Bradshaw and Wes Peppers, It Is Written evangelism director. Eight churches in Anchorage are working together to host the series, with a livestream being offered to more churches across the state.

In preparation for the series, It Is Written has held training events for local churches, teaching pastors and members how to effectively reach their community. "We've been helping to shape the culture there for mission and evangelism for more than a year," said Peppers. "The evangelistic meetings are the culmination of that. As a result of our long-term training, the churches will be better equipped to continue the work that's been started."

The Revelation Today campaign will follow a large-scale mission effort in Anchorage and Bethel to offer free medical, vision, and dental care to the community. "AMEN has a well-established clinical process but wanted to scale up its evangelistic efforts. We've been wanting to increase our medical footprint, so this was a natural partnership," said Peppers.

The Anchorage clinic will offer medical, vision, and dental care. The Bethel clinic will also offer medical care, but will primarily focus on mental health, including consultations, depression and anxiety education, and professional counseling. Each clinic visitor will be invited to attend the series and receive Bible studies.

Next year It Is Written will conduct evangelism in the Columbia Union.

—Christine Magnuson and Cassie Matchim Hernandez,  
*It Is Written*

↓ In Anchorage, Alaska, the It Is Written team partners with the Adventist Medical Evangelism Network and the Alaska Conference for a mission trip providing health care and an evangelistic series that will begin April 5. *Photo provided by It Is Written.*





Photo courtesy of  
SFFC Foundation

## Southern Adventist University Launches Aspiring Teachers Clubs at Adventist Academies

To inspire the next generation of Seventh-day Adventist teachers, Southern Adventist University piloted the nation's first Aspiring Teachers Clubs (ATC) for students at Georgia-Cumberland Academy and Collegedale Academy in 2022. Since then it has continued to grow into a valuable resource for high school students throughout the Southern Union who are interested in pursuing a career in education.

Melanie DiBiase, Ed.D., associate professor of education at Southern, describes the purpose of the unionwide Aspiring Teachers Clubs program as “pulling back the curtain on teaching,” empowering high school students to jumpstart their journeys as educators and learn about this career.

As members of an Aspiring Teachers Club, academy students have opportunities to shadow and assist professional teachers, engage in preprofessional development club meetings, lead out in school worship and mini-lessons, assist in coaching sports teams, and attend university education department events. They also tutor younger students at nearby Adventist elementary schools, meet with sponsors to discuss tenets of effective instruction, such as social-emotional learning and growth mindset, and interact with denominational conference leaders to learn about careers within the Adventist school system.

Piloting the Aspiring Teachers Clubs was a team effort between the Southern Adventist University School of Education and Psychology, the university's administration, and the Southern Union Conference. DiBiase shared, “The Southern Union Conference assisted the two initial clubs financially and through the expertise of Keith Hallum and Carla Thrower in the union's Education Department last year.

This year Murray Cooper, who replaced Hallum as the director for education, found additional funding for each of the eight clubs in the Southern Union. In addition, Jason Merryman, Southern Adventist University's vice president for enrollment management, was instrumental in getting the clubs started in 2022, both financially and through his expertise, and he continues to find scholarship funding and support for local clubs this year.

In the spring of 2023 the SFFC Foundation approached Tammy Overstreet, who is Southern's dean for the School of Education, Psychology, and Counseling, along with Leisa Standish, director for Elementary Education at the North American Division, about adding a scholarship component to the clubs. During the 2023-2024 school

year, the SFFC Foundation offered to fund up to eight tutoring scholarships to every academy in the North American Division. Southern also introduced a scholarship worth \$7,000 over four years to award to one high school senior from each club it supports.

These scholarship opportunities helped the Aspiring Teachers Clubs continue to grow, and Southern Adventist University, in conjunction with the Southern Union Conference, currently supports clubs at six academies, including Atlanta Adventist Academy, Bass Memorial Academy, Collegedale Academy, Georgia-Cumberland Academy, Highland Academy, and Madison Academy. Oakwood University also supports an Aspiring Teachers Club at its local academy.

As the scholarships presented new opportunities to expand the program, the North American Division began working with Southern and Oakwood to help develop a club model and resources for other clubs sponsored by other Adventist universities across the United States and Canada.

“One of our church's greatest ministries is our school system, and for children in our schools, one of the most important people in their lives is their teacher,” DiBiase said. “We need to help young people build tools that transform them into teacher-disciples for Christ.”

—Amanda Blake, senior journalism major, Southern Adventist University



BY GABRIELA PHILLIPS

# The Messiah of Honor: Seeing Jesus Through Muslim Eyes

**M**ohammad was a bit unconventional. Many Muslims speak of *Isa al Masih* (Jesus the Messiah) with much respect, adding conversationally, “May Peace Be Upon Him.” But Mohammad launched without filters.

“Sorry, sister, but this Jesus you follow was sort of a useless prophet,” he said. “Why did God send Him? Whenever He went, He left people confused. Some were so confused that they called Him a God; and worse, He left his mission incomplete, and God had to save Him from the cross.”\*

Where should I start?

By using building blocks already present in Mohammad’s scripture so that I could then point him to the biblical Jesus, following Paul’s approach (see Acts 17).

“Brother, shall we go over the story according to the Quran first? Perhaps we can establish who Jesus was and what was His mission,” I replied, as I started with Mary.

“Then came the time when the angels said: ‘O Mary! Behold, Allah has chosen you, and made you pure, and exalted you above all the women in the world’” (Al Imran 3:42)—the only woman identified by name in the Quran. I continued: “She was chosen twice, one time chosen for God’s own sake, and the second time, chosen above all the women of the world. Blessed among all the women. Why?”

Now it was time to see Jesus being sinless from birth. Gabriel said, “I am only a messenger from your Lord, sent to bless you with a pure son” (Maryam 19:19). I also quoted: “We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear [signs] and supported him with the holy spirit” (Baqarah 2:87).

Mary was purified, and became the vessel to receive a pure son, sinless from birth. Next I shared on Jesus’ preexistence: “And when the angels said: ‘O Mary! Allah gives you the glad tidings of a command from Him: his name shall be Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary. He shall be highly honoured in this world and in the Next, and shall be one of those near stationed to [God]’” (Al Imran 3:45).

I asked, “Do you know what ‘Messiah’ means?”

Mohammad didn’t, because although “Messiah” is used 11 times in the Quran, it is explained only in the Bible.

Follow the sequence of the verses with (1) the angel Gabriel declaring the good news, i.e., “the Word from Him” (God); then, (2) this “Word from God” taking the human name of Jesus *and* the title of Messiah; and finally (3) Jesus’ status in the sight of God, which is distinguished in this world and in the world to come.

“Can this be said of just a prophet?” I asked, then read John 1:1-14.

The next step was talking about the Quran’s description of Jesus: “And peace is on me the day I was born and the day I will die and the day I am raised alive” (Maryam 19:33). Whenever Jesus is peace, there is peace, this is why we can pray, “May His peace be upon us.”

I also shared that Jesus’ message was given to Him by God (Maida 5:46), with no angel coming to Him; and, finally: ‘O Jesus! I will take you and raise you up to Myself. I will deliver you from those who disbelieve, and elevate your followers above the disbelievers until the Day of Judgment’” (Al Irman 3:55).

“Mohammad, what do you think of Jesus now? Is He a failed prophet? What about His followers? Until when did God establish them?”

I prayed then that God would do His part in bringing conviction to seek the real Jesus in the Gospels.

And He did.

\* This is a reference to the Islamic idea that Jesus was rescued last-minute when God replaced Jesus by Judas so that justice would be served; and that Jesus will return to finish His teachings and call all Christians to become Muslims.

Jesus' message was given to Him by God.

Gabriela Phillips is North American Division coordinator of Adventist Muslim Relations.



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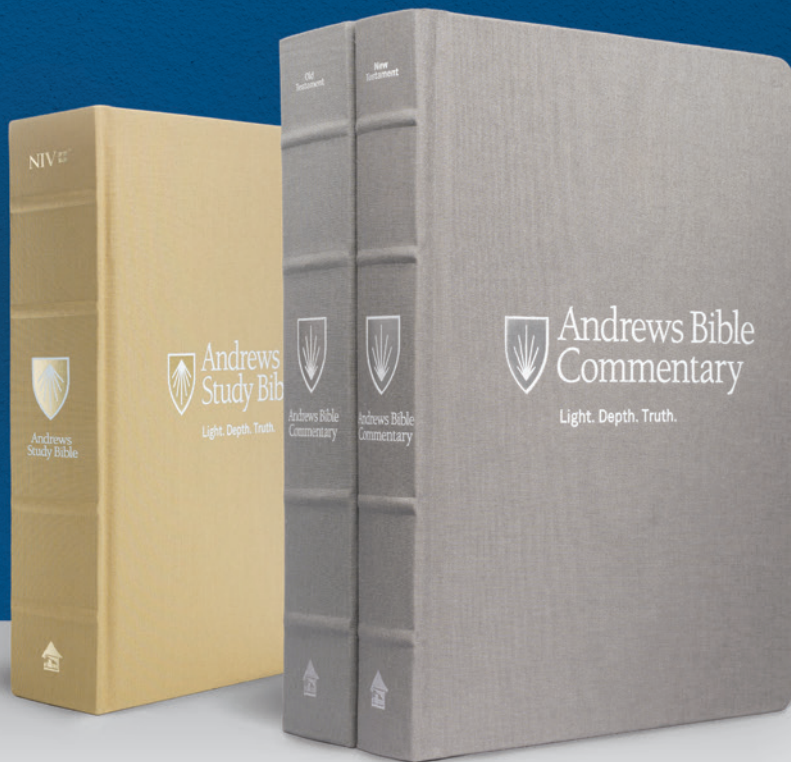
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