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My Journey

Moving to Thunder Bay felt like an Abraham experience of leaving everything behind and stepping out in faith. Our church are these incredible people we call family. I serve on a few different ministries, including with the First Nations for prayer, family life. It has its demands, but there's a sense of reward working for the Lord.

Visit nadadventist.org/ajrichardgreen for more of Green's story.

RICHARD GREEN,
*business owner, church elder,
Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada*



Cover photo by Ffaihana Rakotoarison

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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A “New” President and a Formula for Change

Part two of a two-part series
sharing the life and legacy of
one of the Adventist Church’s
most significant leaders.

All images provided through the
Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists

for the division. It authorized the North American members of the GC nominating committee, rather than the committee as a whole, to nominate a slate of officers and departmental directors for assignment to the NAD. Going forward, this change meant that Bradford would be authorized to convene meetings with NAD personnel to develop plans and exercise leadership for the church in North America.

God's Formula for Change

Bradford's sermon on the first Sabbath (April 19) of the 10-day session, "Formula for Change," drew on the biblical prophets in setting the tone and direction for his administration. "God's formula for change," Bradford declared, "is to break up the dull, tame monotony of our religious labor and to take on a deep, earnest, sanctified zeal." He broadened the typical understanding of Adventist mission by invoking the prophetic mandates of justice and compassion: "The principles of justice and neighbor love must be worked out in the laboratory of human experience, in the here and now. And we are the ones to demonstrate these grand principles." This would be a recurring theme in his sermons and articles.

↓ Charles Bradford preaches when elected in 1985 as North American Division president.



Did you know that the North American Division was founded in 1913? For most of the twentieth century the work in North America was led by one of the vice presidents of the General Conference. Then in 1985, with growing missional needs, the North American Division was reformulated once again as one of the 13 divisions of the world church. Charles Edward Bradford (1925-2021) would serve as the first president of this newly reformulated North American Division beginning in 1985. This is our story in a biography gleaned and condensed from an biographical article written by Douglas Morgan in the Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists about Bradford's life and contributions. This is part 2 of 2, and the conclusion of Bradford's story.—Editors.

Charles E. Bradford's election as an associate secretary of the General Conference in 1970 suggests that the predominantly White denominational leadership sensed the genuineness of his loyalty, and, more important, something of the value of his gifts for leadership.

Additionally, his skill and effectiveness as a preacher was incomparable. A folksy yet highly intellectual oratorical style became Bradford's trademark. His speaking combined prophetic power with pastoral warmth, and he endeared himself to listeners by illustrating his points with a seemingly exhaustless supply of telling and often humorous anecdotes. His voracious reading and lively awareness of current issues and societal trends enabled him to speak with credibility and relevance to a wide range of audiences. In sum, Bradford, by the 1960s, had "established his reputation as one of the premier pulpiteers of the church."

On January 11, 1979, Bradford was elected General Conference (GC) vice president for the North American Division (NAD), based on the recommendation of a nominating committee comprised of his leadership peers in the division. Bradford's election in 1979 to the top leadership in the NAD, less than 15 years after the denomination decisively renounced segregation, was widely hailed as a milestone in denominational race relations not only within the church but also in the public media, including the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. A feature article in *Ebony* magazine reported that Bradford had been elected "president of all Adventists in North America, becoming the first Black to attain that position."

Though frequently referred to as "president," Bradford was in fact elected to the position of GC vice president for the NAD. The distinction is important because it was indicative of a long-standing "special relationship" that enmeshed the NAD with the GC in the denomination's governance structure. It was a relationship that was causing considerable discontent in North America by the 1970s, and one of the top priorities of Bradford's administration was to move the NAD toward becoming a full-fledged division comparable to the other divisions of the General Conference.

At its April 1980 meeting in Dallas, Texas, the General Conference elected Bradford to continue as vice president for the NAD. Though his title was unchanged, leaving the NAD without a president, the session voted a seemingly minor change in policy that in fact represented a significant step forward

To chart a path forward for mission in the NAD, Bradford embraced an endeavor, stemming from an evangelism summit held at Glacier View Ranch in Colorado in April 1979, to formulate biblical leadership principles informed by up-to-date research on church growth and effective management models, and by listening to the perspectives of those on the ground in diverse ministry settings. The rubric adopted through this process, Faith Action Advance, called for empowering, and holding accountable, every unit of church organization for implementing plans best suited to reach their target populations. In all of this, attention was to be focused on the local church as the primary and most important unit of church organization. With the Caring Church model, voted in 1983, the NAD provided resources for renewal of dynamic local congregations in accordance with New Testament principles.

While the degree of receptivity varied from place to place, Faith Action Advance and the Caring Church helped give the NAD a distinct identity separate from the GC. Innovations introduced by the Bradford team to implement these formulas at the division level made a tangible impact on church life. The NAD affiliated with several “resource centers,” such as the NAD Evangelism Institute, the HART Research Center, and the Center for Creative Ministry, to make training and resources directly available to local ministries. Among the most enduring of these centers is AdventSource—a major publisher and distributor of local church leadership materials. The NAD also fostered development of a new Sabbath School resource, the *Collegiate Quarterly*, and organized an unprecedented division-wide Pathfinder camporee at Camp Hale, Colorado, in 1985. That event inaugurated the era of large-scale camporees every five years (international since 1994) that have become a prominent and highly valued feature of Adventist life.

The 1985 session voted that the head officer of the NAD be designated with the same title as those of all the other world divisions. Accordingly, on July 5, 1985, Charles E. Bradford was finally and officially elected the first president of the newly reconstituted North American Division.

Advancing the church’s mission in North America, was, of course, the overriding purpose driving the protracted struggle over bureaucratic details. While Bradford was an astute admin-

“God’s formula for change is to break up the dull, tame monotony of our religious labor and to take on a deep, earnest, sanctified zeal.”

istrator, organizational management was not his primary concern. He regarded the doctrinal and organizational structure of the church—the anatomy of the church body, as he often put it—as basically strong and well established. His real passion was for the vitality of its “physiology”—its dynamics as a thriving, growing community of faith. The preaching and writing that he directed toward that end during his years at the helm of the NAD made an impact beyond the strengthening of the division structure.

Wit and Wisdom

Bradford retired from full-time denominational employment at the time of the 1990 GC Session, having completed 44 years of service, 11 as leader of the North American Division. Publication of *The Wit and Wisdom of Charles E. Bradford* (Review and Herald, 1990), a 136-page volume compiled by colleagues William G. Johnsson, then editor of the *Adventist Review*, and Noelene Johnsson, an associate director of the NAD Church Ministries Department, reflects the esteem and affection held for him at the time of his retirement. He and Ethel moved to Spring Hill, Florida, and lived there until 2008, when they moved to Madison, Alabama. In his retirement Bradford devoted himself to study and writing, producing a number of books.

Charles E. Bradford passed away on September 9, 2021, in Huntsville, Alabama, at age 96, survived by his wife, Ethel, their three children, three grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. He was laid to rest in the Oakwood Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Huntsville.

You can read more about Adventist history in the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* at <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org>.

↓ Left: Bradford participates in the 1963 groundbreaking for Meier Hall at Andrews University. (Right) Charles and Ethel Bradford at a church event



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BREATH OF LIFE MINISTRIES CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF MEDIA, MUSIC, AND EVANGELISM

BY CHRISTELLE AGBOKA

In the mid-1960s the U.S. faced social and racial unrest, including rioting and violence, protesting the inequitable treatment of African Americans by the police. Amid the chaos, Walter Arties, a gifted musician and Seventh-day Adventist pastor, began to dream of creating uplifting Christian programming for the Black community.

Arties championed his vision until Breath of Life Ministries finally launched in 1974. Dynamic preacher C. D. Brooks served as its first speaker/director and Arties as program producer, singer, and founder of the Breath of Life Quartet.

On December 6, 2024, Breath of Life Ministries celebrated 50 years with its Legacy Night, held at Oakwood University church (OUC) in Huntsville, Alabama—its home since 2012. The evening reflected on the ministry's evolution and honored key contributors. It also featured performances by 10-time Grammy winners Take 6 and the current Breath of Life Quartet, as well as a message by former speaker/director Carlton P. Byrd, now president of the Southwest Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Legacy Night was the culmination of a year of celebration, including a Giving Tuesday Praise-a-Thon and a Mediterranean tour tracing the evangelical path of the apostle Paul.



NAD president G. Alexander Bryant affirms Breath of Life Ministries as a blessing to the entire Seventh-day Adventist Church and announces that the division will donate funds to assist the ministry's work of transforming lives.
All photos by Ronald Pollard

One Man Plants, Another Man Waters

In his welcome, Debleaire Snell, current speaker/director, acknowledged the legacy of those who came before him—founder Arties and his predecessors Brooks (1974-1997), Walter Pearson (1998-2010), and Byrd (2010-2021). “One man plants, another man waters, but God gives the increase,” he said, referencing 1 Corinthians 3:6-9.

Snell later commented, “Each speaker brought their passion, temperament, and perspective. And I think God customized the gifts to meet the needs in the body of Christ and the larger culture . . . in each era of Breath of Life.”

Today the ministry continues to thrive, sharing the gospel through TV and online media programs, books and other resources, public evangelism, and community outreach. Since 1974, the ministry of Breath of Life leaders has resulted in tens of thousands of baptisms and the planting of more than 17 churches globally. “Breath of Life, at its core, is evangelism,” said Byrd.

Showcasing What Makes Breath of Life Special

Byrd noted that from its inception Breath of Life was unique among media ministries for its emphasis on music and preaching, “encompassing the whole worship experience.” Accordingly, Legacy Night showcased both aspects.

Byrd preached a message of thanksgiving based on Psalm 100. He highlighted promises people take for granted—our creation by a loving God and the promise of salvation inherent in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He called for the audience to “make a joyful noise unto the Lord” (verse 1, KJV) regardless of circumstances. “Your situation does not eclipse the goodness of God.”



↑ Former Breath of Life speaker/director Carlton Byrd (left) receives a legacy award from Gianna and Debleaire Snell, current communication director and speaker/director, at the Legacy Night celebrating the ministry's fiftieth anniversary, held Friday, December 6, 2024, at Oakwood University church.

He highlighted the night's theme: “We praise God for the Breath of Life ministry. Souls have been won through this ministry. Burdens have been lifted through this ministry. Somebody found Jesus through this ministry.” He added, “Breath of Life has been around for 50 years, and guess what? We're not going anywhere. This is God's ministry.” He concluded, to an enthusiastic response, “Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord, and praise God for Breath of Life!”

Program music began with a reunited Breath of Life Quartet. They opened with an orchestral arrangement of “For the Beauty of the Earth,” by former member Adrian Westney, then sang several crowd-pleasing standards such as “Nobody's Fault But Mine.”

Take 6 took the stage later, beginning with their spirited rendition of “If We Ever Needed the Lord Before,” a Breath of Life Quartet song they popularized. Founder Claude McKnight shared that while students at Oakwood College (now University), four original members were singing this song in the men's dorm bathroom when Mark Kibble, who would become their primary arranger and help them expand to six members, first heard them.

“It's really special for us to be part of [Legacy Night] because we started off singing Breath of Life music,” said Kibble in a pre-event interview. Take 6 honored their musical roots by performing two sets of songs by the group who, per bass Alvin Chea, “gave us a sound . . . and an identity.”

Ministry Builders Recognized at Breath of Life Legacy Night

On Legacy Night several honorees received inscribed plaques for their contributions, including:

- All three former speaker/directors and two associate speaker/directors;

- Former and current Breath of Life quartet members (12 total);

- Former quartet arranger/accompanist;

- On-air personalities, including a cohost and a former announcer; and
- A dedicated local fundraiser.

Accepting in person were former speaker/director Byrd; former associate speaker/director Malcolm J. Taylor, who ministered alongside Walter Pearson; and the current Breath of Life quartet. Other awards were mailed to recipients who could not join, and family members of honorees who had passed away received awards on their behalf. Among those, Walter Arties' wife, Beverly, received his award in March, and Deidre Brooks Tramel accepted an award for her father, C. D. Brooks, during the ministry's legacy cruise.

↓ Patricia Pearson, widow of Walter Pearson, Breath of Life Ministries' second speaker/director, accepts a legacy award in his honor from current speaker/director Debleaire Snell at the ministry's fiftieth anniversary celebration.



↑ Take 6 performs uplifting gospel standards at Breath of Life Ministries' Legacy Night, celebrating its fiftieth anniversary.

In a video interview with Snell, Tramel noted that even in his final days Brooks knelt by his bed and prayed in a weak voice, "If there's a way that I can touch just one more soul, give me that chance."

On December 6 Patricia Pearson accepted an award for her husband, Walter, sharing that watching Snell's sermons gave them strength before his passing. Snell, in turn, lauded Walter as one of his ministry heroes as a young convert. Later, reflecting on the evening, Pearson said, "I thought it was such a beautiful snapshot of the 50 years of ministry, not just to our community but globally." She also spoke about the ministry's enduring impact: "It was the same message but different delivery. Times have changed, but the principles and mission did not change."

Exciting Plans for the Future of Breath of Life Ministries

G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president and chair of the Adventist Media Ministries board, affirmed Breath of Life, stating, "It's not only been a blessing to the African American community, but it's also been a blessing to the entire church." Bryant shared that the division would donate \$50,000—\$1,000 for each year of Breath of Life, "for God to continue to work miracles" through them.

Snell thanked Bryant for the NAD's generosity and mentioned that they had raised more than \$48,000 during the Praise-a-Thon, which would expand their digital footprint and add the television broadcast to more cities.

Viewers then learned more about Breath of Life's recent activities, including young adult rallies, media and leadership training, diversified online programs on real-life issues, the updated "Breathe" podcast.

After the event Snell shared that in 2025 and beyond, Breath of Life will continue pursuing bold, "unrealistic," God-inspired goals. These include participating in the Pentecost 2025 initiative, training ministry leaders, and conducting evangelistic series across diverse communities. They are also launching their first animated show, *Evie's Treehouse*, based on their audio devotional for children. Each episode will include a downloadable Bible study.

He concluded, "We want to see Breath of Life become the nexus of spiritual life for the African American. [When] they're looking for things for health, work, their spiritual life, [their relationships], we want them to be able to come to our website, our YouTube page, our podcast, and find something that speaks to them."



AdventHealth Announces Retirement of Its President/CEO

AdventHealth announced on December 13, 2024, that its president/chief executive officer, Terry Shaw, will retire in July 2025, marking the conclusion of his 40-year tenure of leadership. Shaw's decision, which was shared with AdventHealth team members in a video message, is driven by his desire to create the opportunity for the next generation of leaders to guide the company.

Under Shaw's stewardship AdventHealth has achieved a number of key accomplishments during his

tenure, some of which include:

Uniting the organization under one cohesive brand, strengthening its identity and purpose.

Creating a 10-year strategic road map called Vision 2030, a strategic framework that lays the foundation for long-term growth, financial strength, clinical excellence, value-based care, and long-term sustainability of its mission.

Establishing a cutting-edge technology ecosystem within the company to meet the evolving needs of patients and communities.

Prioritizing the consumer experience—putting those we serve at the center—as a critical component to the organization's success, creating the opportunity to serve 9 million patients annually.

Reaffirming a commitment and comprehensive strategy to care for the team, fostering a learning culture, collaboration, and wholeness, which grew the organization to 100,000 team members.

Shaw's internal message included this personal sentiment: "When I joined AdventHealth more than 40 years ago, I never imagined the profound joy, challenges, and sense of purpose this career would bring. Leading this incredible organization has been the honor of my lifetime."

AdventHealth's board of directors has a long-term succession plan in place, with a thorough process to select an internal successor in April 2025. Shaw will continue to play an active role on the AdventHealth board.

—AdventHealth Newsroom

Church in Canada Announces New Contract With Christian Record Services

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada (SDACC) is pleased to announce a new three-year contract with Christian Record Services (CRS) to provide services to members who are blind and visually impaired. This partnership, effective from 2025 to 2027, will enhance the quality of life for many individuals across Canada.

Under this agreement SDACC funding ensures members from all conferences within their territory continue to receive essential resources without added costs to the conferences or SDACC during the contract period.

The services provided by CRS include access to an online library and app, various formats of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, and subscriptions to CRS magazines in multiple accessible formats. This initiative also allows for the addition of new members from churches and communities throughout Canada during the contracted period, expanding the reach and impact of CRS and the goals of SDACC to provide services and

support throughout its territory to people who are blind and visually impaired.

According to the 2023 Report Card on Vision Health in Canada by Fighting Blindness Canada, more than 1.2 million Canadians live with vision loss, which has profound health, financial, and social impacts. This partnership between CRS and SDACC is a significant step toward addressing these challenges and supporting the blind community in Canada.

"This partnership reflects our commitment to improve the lives of people who are blind and visually impaired by providing valuable resources and support," said Diane Thurber, CRS president.

"This is a giant step forward to provide services to the blind in Canada, and it is a great resource for churches to share with those with visual challenges in their communities," said Paul Llewellyn, SDACC president.

—Brian Carlson, Christian Record Services communication director



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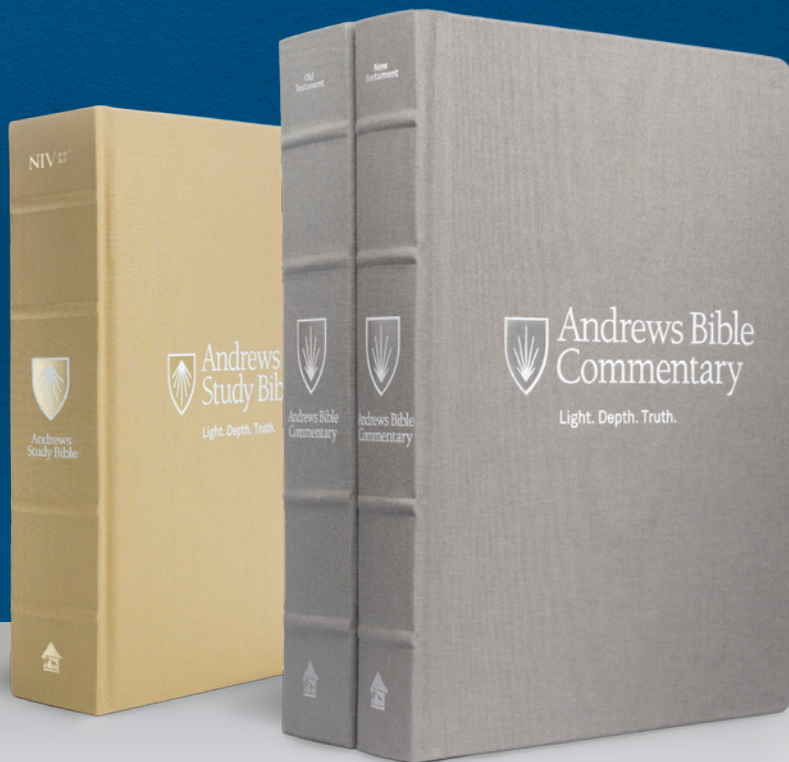
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BY CALVIN WATKINS, SR.

Lessons for the Living

I have a confession to make. I have a habit, some might call it a morbid one, but wherever I go, whatever city I'm visiting, I will find myself in the oldest cemetery in town, walking among the dead.

The most interesting cemeteries I've ever been to are the ones found in Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia. I can go to a cemetery, and stay for two hours, three hours, and I walk up and down reading the tombstones. I like to ponder: *Who was this person? What was their life?*

The most interesting tombstones I have found were the ones dated in 1891. Several tombstones together—a family plot. There were two large tombstones, and then there were three small, childlike tombstones. I got down on my knees, and I started to read those epithets. I discovered the year that the people on the two large tombstones were born. They were both husband and wife, and those three tombstones, I saw their birthdays and realized they were newly born. The first one was born on May 30, 1891, and died June 1. The second tombstone had the same birth and a June 2 death. The third tombstone listed the same year, with death on June 3. June 3! Three girls, and they died a day apart. On closer examination of that family plot, I saw that the father and the mother died on the fourth day.

Searching the words on each tombstone, I formed the picture. The mother and father could not take the death of their three children. Triplets born and then triplets dying each a day apart. To lose three children within three days, I'm sure their hearts were broken. I'm sure there was a sad funeral that the parents never had a chance to attend because they died themselves. I believe that they carried a burden too heavy for them. The pressure was too much.

We all carry life's drama. Whether we have lost someone is not the issue. Whatever the situation, the difficulty, the issue is: have we learned how to take what we carry and cast it at the feet of Jesus?

In 1978 I was running a big evangelistic campaign in a little town in Georgia. I was studying my message, about to go to the tent to preach that night on death, and I walked the conference president to tell me that my mother had just passed. Here I am, doing what God has called me to do, and this news comes. I almost lost it. But I was reading my Bible when the news came, and that text was "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (Rev. 14:13). I gave it to God. I carried it that night, but I gave it to God.

Life is hard. We've all had our moments of despair. We've all carried heavy loads that we felt as though we just couldn't take anymore. Whatever we face in life, it's a lot easier when we don't try to carry it ourselves. Cast your cares on Him (see 1 Peter 5:7).

The Bible says, "I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?" (Jer. 32:27).

Whatever you've got, no matter how big or small it is, put it on God. Put it on His plate, because He can handle it.

I learned a valuable lesson that day walking among the dead. And yes, there are lessons to be learned among the dead, but there are even greater lessons to be learned among the living. Those who have been through something and have survived did so only because of God's grace and strength. These are the lessons meant for the living.

Calvin Watkins, Sr., is vice president, regional liaison/evangelist, for the North American Division.

Whatever you've got, no matter how big or small it is, put it on God.

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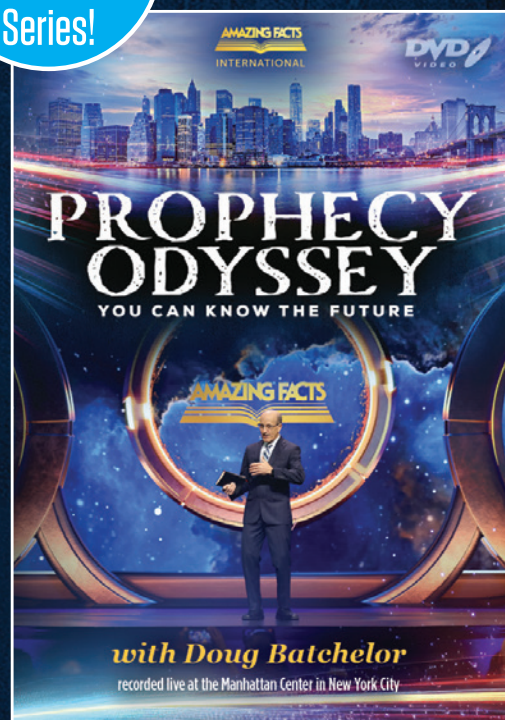
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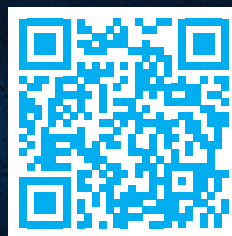
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