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My Journey

Last year I had a stroke, and the Lord restored my walk and the symmetry of my smile. . . . I had another stroke, back in the hospital again, and I'm sitting here today saying that God restores. And not only does He restore, but He surrounds you with love and support here on this earth, in addition to the love and support that He gives you.

Visit nadadventist.org/ajmavismajor for more of Major's story.

MAVIS MAJOR,
licensed clinical therapist, living in Las Vegas, Nevada

Mavis Major



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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Correction: The February 2025 feature on Charles E. Bradford misidentified Bradford as serving as Southwest Region Mission president; the president was W. W. Fordham, who began serving in 1946.

Leading the NAD Through Significant Growth and Innovation

Alfred C. McClure's leadership was characterized by a fervent commitment to evangelism, innovative strategies, and a vision for a thriving church.

This article is adapted from a piece by Michael W. Campbell continuing a series celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the reinauguration of the North American Division in 1985 with its emphasis upon evangelism.—Editors.

Alfred Clinton McClure (1931-2006) left a significant mark on the Seventh-day Adventist Church as president of the North American Division (NAD) from 1990 to 2000. His leadership was characterized by a fervent commitment to evangelism, innovative strategies, and a vision for a thriving church. During his leadership tenure there were more than 250,000 baptisms, and he spearheaded initiatives that shaped the church's approach to outreach and growth. McClure saw the need for planting new churches and was a major proponent of the SEEDS church planting initiative. His lifelong passion was to build within the church a "culture of evangelism."

McClure's early life was rooted in a strong Adventist background, with his father serving as a pastor. His personal conversion, he noted, was a "growing awareness" of his need for a Savior, shaping his lifelong passion. He graduated from Southern Missionary College (now Southern Adventist University), where he met his wife, Mary Frances Taylor, and



Alfred McClure sits in the General Conference building atrium, circa 1990s. All photos courtesy of the McClure Family

embarked on a ministry that spanned multiple conferences and leadership roles. He served as a departmental director and conference president before being elected president of the Southern Union Conference in 1980.

His presidency of the NAD began in 1990 amid significant challenges, including rapid societal materialism and the need to adapt outreach efforts to the changing context of North America. McClure challenged the church to embrace a "ripening harvest" and overcome complacency. He emphasized the importance of evangelism, urging congregations to actively seek new ways to connect with people, particularly in large cities.

Some of the creative outreach efforts McClure helped facilitate started at the 1990 NAD Year-End Meeting, where he suggested the denomination develop an evangelistic task force with the desire "to bring about an explosion in church membership." He believed that every year every congregation "should conduct some form of evangelistic outreach." McClure was also instrumental in creating the NAD Women's Ministries Department. Another central theme of McClure's leadership was youth empowerment. He established the Youth Kitchen Cabinet to advise him on youth-related issues.

A notable initiative was the participation of NAD youth in the Pasadena Tournament of Roses. McClure believed that with this strong emphasis upon church growth the denomination in North America could reach an attendance of 1 million.



← Left: Alfred McClure receives an award from North American Division leaders as wife Mary Francis looks on during a farewell event at the 2000 General Conference session. Right: McClure speaks at an event in Canada.

Embracing Technology

A defining characteristic of McClure’s presidency was his embrace of technology, especially satellite evangelism, which became a cornerstone of the division’s outreach efforts. The Adventist Communication Network (ACN) allowed for broadcasts of evangelistic series, including one originating from Russia and featuring Mark Finley.

McClure advocated leveraging technologies such as CompuServe to disseminate information and expand the church’s reach. This appeared to be a promising area for ministry, and CompuServe was a place where the church created an Adventist online group with 18 “bulletin boards” to be used by anyone around the world who was online. CompuServe was accessed through local telephone numbers by 95 percent of the population in North America. His emphasis on technology and innovation transformed the NAD.

McClure moved forward on his strategic planning initiative that would boil down to three words: proclamation, nurture, and service. The NET ’95 evangelistic series exemplified McClure’s vision. The Amazing Discoveries Series (later dubbed “Discoveries in Prophecies”) evangelistic series would be available from February 17 through March 25, 1995, featuring Finley, with C. D. Brooks, answering questions. It was later reported that 5,000 baptisms resulted.

“High technology makes it possible to have more ‘high touch’ ministry,” wrote McClure. “With a satellite evangelist, thousands of pastors can focus on personal work with families and individuals.” This success paved the way for NET ’96, broadcast in multiple languages. In 1997 regional conferences sponsored the Ebony Evangelism initiative, resulting in 24 new churches and 300 new members; and a satellite evangelistic series, LA RED ’97, conducted by Alejandro Bullón, Southern American Division ministerial director, held for eight consecutive nights in Spanish (November 8-15, 1997) and then Portuguese (November 16-22), and included more than 400 Hispanic churches in North America. The meetings were organized by the NAD and transmitted by satellite to North, Inter, and South America from Brazil. An estimated 3,500 people joined the church as a result of these meetings. Then NET ’98, featuring Dwight K. Nelson, was broadcast globally and available in many more languages.

McClure expressed gratitude to the Lord for the various satellite evangelistic meetings, noting that such initiatives were rapidly multiplying around the world. “Satellite evangelism,” remarked McClure, “has become almost routine.” This sparked a “resurgence of interest in evangelism” that was not limited to public meetings. “Satellite series may have sparked it, but evangelism in all its forms shows up in every part of the division.”

Building Consensus

With so many new members, another major emphasis of McClure was how to make congregations more friendly and welcoming. McClure oversaw the development of new resources to assist churches for these new members. He also envisioned the need for planting new congregations across the NAD territory. The SEEDS church-planting initiative, launched in 1996, aimed to plant new churches, and resulted in more than 600 churches during his final

four years. McClure believed that for these initiatives to be successful, one must draw people to Christ first, nurturing new believers in Christ-likeness and deploying them in service. Unsurprisingly, he encouraged regular training updates via satellite, established resource materials, and partnered with various departments at all levels of the church to offer these training materials.

McClure’s leadership style was one of consensus building and persuasion, which was particularly evident in his work with committees and in the strategic planning process. His overall leadership centered on proclamation, nurture, and service. In the late 1990s McClure commissioned race relations summits and publicly apologized for the church’s treatment of minorities. In 2000 McClure retired, leaving a legacy of innovation and growth. He saw the NAD mature into its own division status. His presidency witnessed a significant increase in membership and a shift toward more independent operations.

Michael W. Campbell is director of NAD Archives, Statistics, and Research. For more Adventist historical information, visit encyclopedia.adventist.org.

↓ McClure celebrates his birthday with family, including his wife and two grandsons.





PENTECOST 2025

“Seeking God’s Spirit” Prayer Meeting Kick-starts 10 Days of Prayer, Reaches More Than 35.4K

Rick Remmers (NAD assistant to the president), Judy Glass (NAD treasurer/CFO), Kyoshin Ahn (NAD executive secretary), G. Alexander Bryant (NAD president), Ted N. C. Wilson (GC president), Kimberly Luste Maran (communication director), and Calvin Watkins, Sr. (NAD vice president, regional liaison/evangelism) hold different roles during the Pentecost 2025 prayer session.

On the evening of January 8, 2025, the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church hosted a special prayer meeting to launch the world church’s 10 Days of Prayer with emphasis on “Seeking God’s Spirit” for Pentecost 2025. Introduced last year, Pentecost 2025—the NAD’s invitation for church leaders and members to hold at least 3,000 proclamation initiatives—had already seen more than 5,200 church and school registrations by December 31, 2024.

“We’re delighted to have you here with us tonight. We’re excited about what God is going to do and about His promises, and tonight we’re going to claim those promises,” NAD president G. Alexander Bryant said in his greetings.

The hourlong program, live streamed from the NAD studio to YouTube, Facebook, and Zoom, featured prerecorded performances from Oakwood University’s Aeolians and prayers from leaders division-wide. Viewers participated via a digital prayer wall, which has received 326 prayers to date, and an afterglow led by Vandeon Griffin, NAD associate director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, and Calvin Watkins, Sr., NAD vice president, regional liaison/evangelism.

By January 13, 2025, the event had reached more than 29.7K global viewers on Facebook and 4.7K on YouTube. Same-day views on Zoom peaked at 1,000 (the meeting limit), with nearly 600 staying for the one-hour afterglow. Behind-the-scenes social media

“lives” reached an additional 19.4K viewers.

General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson joined a panel of NAD leaders, including Bryant, Rick Remmers (assistant to the president), Judy Glass (treasurer/CFO), Kyoshin Ahn (executive secretary), Kimberly Luste Maran (communication director), and Watkins. Each panelist contributed in unique ways—Wilson and Bryant through messages and prayers; Remmers, Ahn, and Glass through introductions; Maran by sharing resources; Watkins with the initial welcome; and Vandeon Griffin by hosting the prayer wall.

“There’s no place I’d rather be than here tonight. It’s so exciting,” said Wilson, affirming the NAD “on behalf of the 23 million brothers and sisters around the world.”

All photos by Pieter Damsteegt

Seeking God's Spirit

Themed "Seeking God's Spirit," the evening emphasized, per Bryant, that "Pentecost 2025 is not an event; it's a clarion call. It's an acknowledgment to God and ourselves that our resources are not good enough, our plans are not good enough. We need extra power from God to fulfill His mission."

Wilson underscored the necessity of Pentecost 2025. "Wherever my wife, Nancy, and I travel, we see signs [of Christ's imminent return]. Things are falling apart, disintegrating." He then prayed, "Lord, fill us with a sense of urgency as Pentecost 2025 begins in the North American Division. And as we join others around the world, may we see the fires burning brightly of Your power working in the lives of people so that soon we can see Jesus come."

United in Prayer Across the Division

The NAD was represented by leaders spanning the division. These included:

- Abraham Jules, Atlantic Union Conference president;
- Paul Llewellyn, Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada president;
- Marcellus Robinson, Columbia Union Conference president;
- Matthew Kirk, Guam-Micronesia Mission president;
- Ken Denslow, Lake Union Conference president;
- Craig Carr, Mid-America Union Conference ministerial director;
- John Freedman, North Pacific Union Conference president;
- Leon Brown, Pacific Union Conference executive vice president;
- Ron Smith, Southern Union Conference president; and
- Stephen Brooks, Southwestern Union Conference executive secretary.

Themed "Seeking God's Spirit," the evening emphasized that "Pentecost 2025 is not an event; it's a clarion call. . . . We need extra power from God to fulfill His mission."

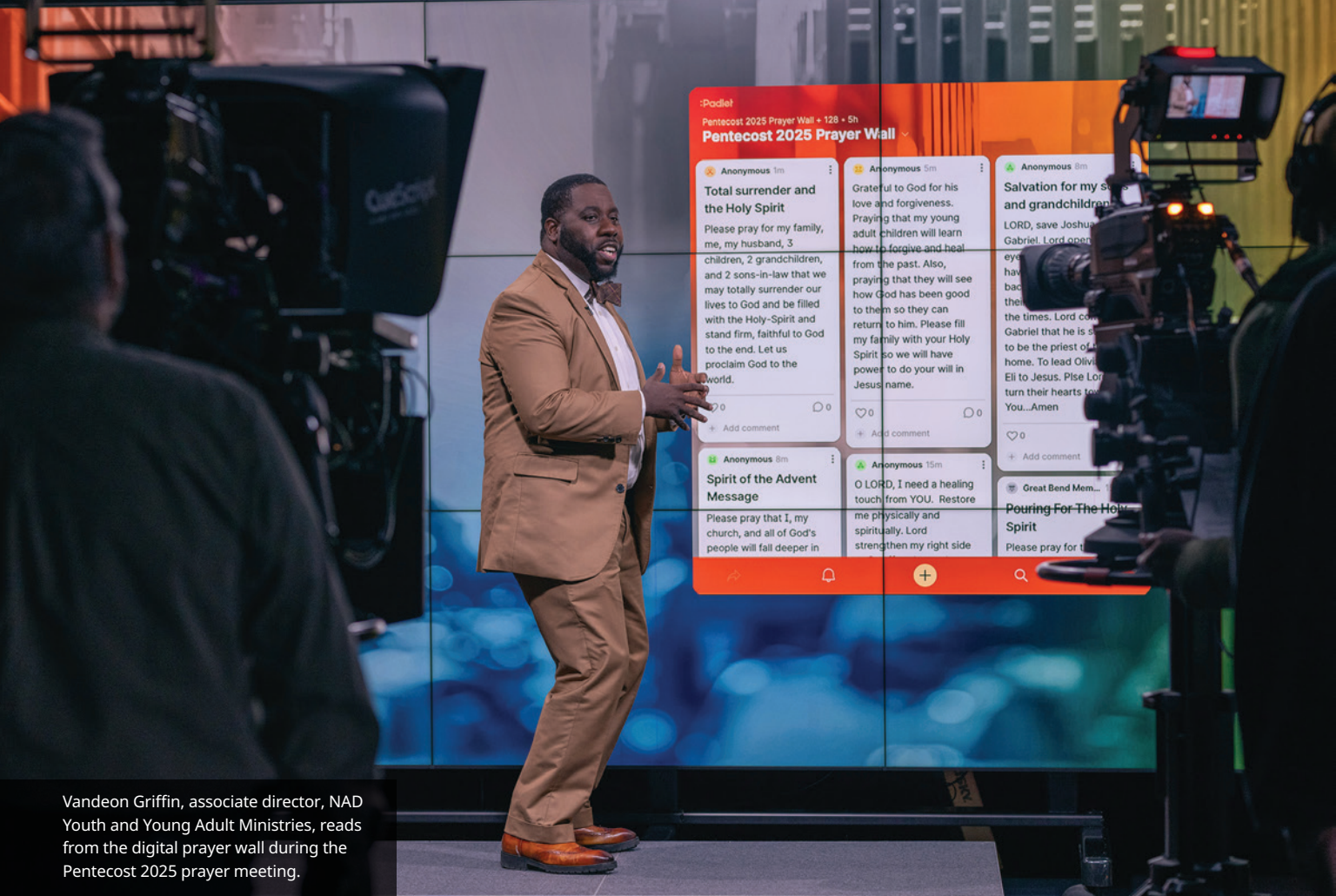
They offered prayers of thanksgiving, repentance, empowerment, unity in mission, a passion for the work, and the Holy Spirit's equipping to carry out God's mission through 2025 and beyond. Leaders such as Jules asked for the Holy Spirit's power to proclaim His Word and noted that to be filled with His Spirit, "we must first be emptied of self and sin."

Others, such as Llewellyn, drew attention to the post-Christian context that makes the North American field especially difficult; he asked for boldness and wisdom to reach the secular mind. Robinson prayed for unity in a divisive world. "If there's any trace of bias, prejudice, or supremacy reigning in our lives, we ask You to expose it to us and set us free. May we go forward in peace and love one for another; love that builds bridges to those in need of a Savior."

Kirk asked for the Spirit's aid to overcome challenges weakening our churches' impact in their communities. He noted that while we may be lacking resources or knowledge of how to serve our communities, we can take comfort in Romans 8:26, the promise that Your Spirit "helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray as we ought, but



G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president, prays during the division's prayer meeting launching both the world church's 10 Days of Prayer and the NAD's Pentecost 2025 initiative. NAD executive secretary Kyoshin Ahn is on his left and GC (world church) president Ted N. C. Wilson is on his right.



Vandeon Griffin, associate director, NAD Youth and Young Adult Ministries, reads from the digital prayer wall during the Pentecost 2025 prayer meeting.

the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

Brown drew attention to the wildfires ravaging the Greater Los Angeles area. “I want to pray for the millions who stand in the presence of the fires burning tonight. We pray that You will intercede on behalf of the Pacific Union.”

In between prayers, viewers were treated to a beautiful music of meditation, “Take It to the Lord in Prayer,” by the Aeolians, Oakwood University’s award-winning choir.

“Prayer still works,” Griffin said after the union prayers concluded. He then read a few requests on the prayer wall and offered a general petition for the Holy Spirit and each need represented.

Next, Maran noted, “Although we will leave here, we will not leave prayer behind.” She pointed the audience to Pentecost2025.com, where they could find evangelistic training and prayer resources, such as daily prayer readings, songs, scriptures, and testimonials.

Bryant closed the prayer meeting with encouragement, saying, “The time has come for us to put aside our differences and move forward united in mission and purpose in our church.” He reminded viewers of 2 Chronicles 7:14, adding, “We have been praying, and God’s promise is that if we pray, He will answer.”

Then, he prayed, “Lord, we pray, as You did for the imperfect disciples on the day of Pentecost, let the fire fall. Let it fall in New York. Let it fall in Toronto. Let it fall in Florida. Let it fall into Missouri and Texas and all over the land. Let us see people responding by the hundreds and thousands. And let us work unlike we’ve ever worked before.



Additional Information

Watch the replay of the Pentecost 2025 prayer meeting

by scanning the QR code or by visiting this link: www.youtube.com/live/6PanACzha7M?si=sS4374n6gQ-PHns36

Learn more about Pentecost 2025 at www.pentecost.com; and find out about the NAD monthly prayer focus at pentecost2025.com/prayer-focus/.

Thank You, Lord, for Your Holy Spirit. Thank You for what You are doing and what You will do. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

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

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NAD NEWS BRIEFS



← Photo of retired dean of Southern Adventist University's School of Religion and author Jack J. Blanco. Photo (from 2014) provided by Southern Adventist University

Jack Blanco, Author of *The Clear Word Bible Paraphrase*, Passes to His Rest

Jack J. Blanco, former dean of the Southern Adventist University School of Religion and professor emeritus, and author of *The Clear Word Bible* paraphrase, passed peacefully to his rest on Sabbath, January 11, 2025. He was 95.

After a fruitful career in pastoral ministry, mission service, teaching, academic administration, and editorial work at the Review and Herald Publishing Association, Blanco was called to Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee, in 1982. Having been part of the university family for 18 years, he retired in 2000 and continued teaching as an

adjunct professor until 2010, when caring for his wife, Marion, who passed away in 2012, indicated he relinquish teaching.

“Dr. Blanco was a deeply beloved professor who took a personal interest in his students,” said Michael Campbell, director of Archives, Statistics, and Research for the North American Division. “His classes were both interesting and engaging, but one would never forget his contagious smile and winsome way of encouraging others. His classes were a highlight of my college experience. He constantly challenged others to grow closer to Jesus.”

Blanco graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from Union College (now Union Adventist University) in Lincoln, Nebraska. He continued his studies, graduating with an M.A. and M.Div. from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan; an M.Th. from Princeton Theological Seminary; and a Th.D. from the University of South Africa.

During his career, before joining the faculty at Southern, Blanco served as pastoral assistant, pastor, and evangelistic coordinator, working in the Potomac, New Jersey, Georgia-Cumberland, and South-eastern California conferences. He also chaired the Theology Department at Solusi College (now Solusi University) in Zimbabwe and the graduate program at Philippine Union College (now Adventist Uni-

versity of the Philippines), and taught theology at Columbia Union College (now Washington Adventist University) in Takoma Park, Maryland, where he also served as academic dean.

In 1983 Blanco joined Southern as a professor and dean. In 1984 he began paraphrasing the New Testament during his devotions to deepen his connection with God. Starting with Mark, he worked prayerfully for three years, producing a paraphrase of all 27 books. Friends and family encouraged him to continue, and seven years later

he completed the Old Testament.

The result, *The Clear Word*, published in 1994, has touched countless lives. Reflecting on its impact, Blanco said, “When people thank me for what *The Clear Word* has done for them, I always tell them to give the glory to God. That is my goal in life.”

Blanco’s son, Steve Blanco Ross, a physician in Nashville, passed in 2009. (Steve is survived by his wife, Kelly Ross-Wilkenson, and his daughter, Chelsea Ross.) His wife, Marion, preceded him in death in

2012. Blanco is survived by daughter Cheri Blanco Jones and her husband, Geoff; grandson Derek Jones and his wife, Andrea, and three great-grandchildren: Connor, Emily, and Hailey.

A memorial service was scheduled at the Collegedale Seventh-day Adventist Church on March 30, followed by a military honor guard tribute at Veteran’s Memorial Park in Collegedale.

—NAD Office of Communication with Southern Adventist University Marketing and University Relations and Angela Baerg

Ken Norton Named Voice of Prophecy Bible School Director

Ken Norton, president of the Montana Conference, has accepted the Voice of Prophecy’s invitation to serve as the Discover Bible School director. He will begin his service at the ministry on March 2, 2025.

Norton will replace Bill Payne, who recently became the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries director at the North American Division.

“I get very excited when I see God lining things up for His work. It was obvious—almost immediately—that He was answering our prayers by sending Ken to us,” said Shawn Boonstra, Voice of Prophecy speaker/director. “Ken has a soul winner’s heart and deep experience using the Bible School to lead people to Christ.”

Before his time in Montana, Norton served as president of the Guam-Micronesia Mission (GMM) for five years. His professional background also includes pastoral ministry in the Florida Conference, Georgia-Cumberland Conference, and the GMM, as well as teaching and international missions. Throughout his career Norton has utilized the Bible School’s resources and aided its global growth.

The Voice of Prophecy’s Discover Bible School is one of the largest Bible lesson programs in the world, supporting more than 2,800 local branches across North America, with hundreds more around the world. It offers lessons in more than 100 languages — a feat made possible, in part, by Norton.

While serving as president of the GMM, Norton led efforts to translate the Bible School’s *Discover* guides into local island languages. He also developed a website enabling the local islanders to study the Bible School’s lessons online.

Norton looks forward to enriching the Bible School’s virtual outreach operations. In fact, Norton’s doctoral study focused on how video chat technology can help laypeople organize effective small-group Bible studies. His academic journey resulted in a Doctor in Ministry degree from Andrews University and yet another connection to the Voice of Prophecy: his primary adviser was Kurt Johnson, World Bible School director and associate director for the Discover Bible School.

“Ken’s passion for Bible study ministry, humility, and desire to live like Jesus are apparent,” said Johnson. “Both he and his wife, Julie, are devoted to missions—to walking in the footsteps of Jesus and doing everything in their power to help others make that same journey.”

—Amanda Blake, Voice of Prophecy



Ken Norton began serving as the new Discover Bible School director on March 2, 2025. Photo provided by the Voice of Prophecy

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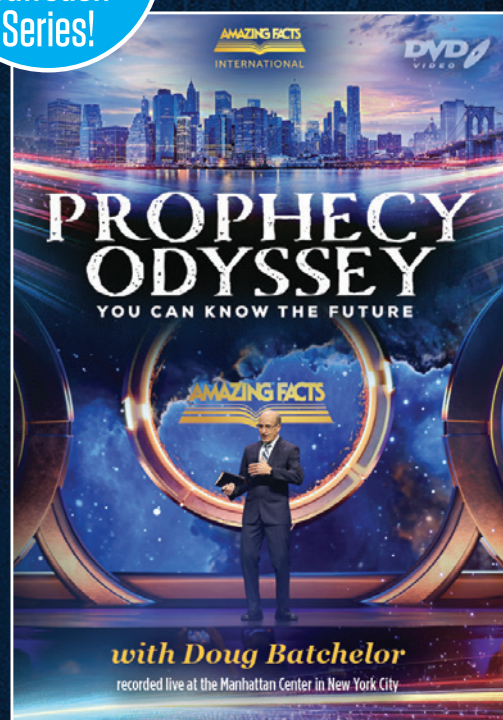
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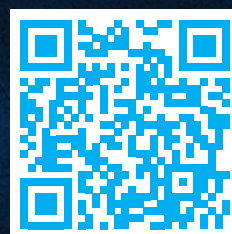
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BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

One Day Last Year

One day in February 2024 an unusual assortment of North American Division leaders walked into the president's office. Those represented included the Ministerial Association, vice presidents, the president's office, Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries (ASI), Professional Services, and communication. Most did not know what the meeting was about; with searching looks on their faces, they took their seats.

I was one of the "most." While all of us at some point or another have worked together, I could not recall a time this particular grouping had ever assembled. I sat in one of the chairs set in a circle and mentally went through a list of topics. *Camporee? Year-End Meeting? Leadership Council?* Each possibility didn't quite match the gathering; none of my musings matched the meeting topic. And although it was an inauspicious start, a tiny acorn sprouted into something big and exciting.

After prayer and an exchange of pleasantries, the leaders looked to president G. Alexander Bryant. "What do you all remember about Pentecost?" he asked. Typical answers surfaced referencing the Acts 2 account. "What if we were to do something like that at the NAD? What if we could get all our churches involved? What if we focused on prayer, outreach, and proclaiming the gospel message?"

Simple yet profound questions.

An outline was handed out. Emblazoned across page 1 was the number 3,000, referencing the early church that, during Pentecost, rapidly grew in one day from 120 to 3,000 believers.

The fire was lit. I scrawled notes. Thinking. Listening. Not accustomed to being in a room with so many impassioned pastors, I marveled at their ability not only to pontificate on the theme but to articulate the deep need in the world, in the church, in the members, in themselves. With energy I'm not accustomed to seeing, we prayed again. Then we started to lay out what Pentecost 2025 could look like in North America. How each member could be involved.

That day I assisted in planning the name, the landing page, the website, the messaging, the call to action. Together we helped shape the words explaining what the division hopes to accomplish through the power of the Holy Spirit.

It was a good start: "The Pentecost serves as a reminder of the call to engage in mission and evangelism. This is not merely a historical event but a clarion call for us, as Seventh-day Adventists, to prayerfully carry the everlasting gospel to every corner of the earth, starting here in North America. . . . Let us, with renewed zeal, embrace the mission, proclaim the distinctive truths entrusted to us, and embody the love of Christ in a world hungering for hope and wholeness."

As we marched through 2024, the plans and processes took firmer shape. Training events were added in and by unions, conferences, and churches. The division filmed webinars to encourage and prepare members with sessions on holding Bible studies and prayer meetings, conducting outreach events, preparing for a proclamative evangelistic series, and multiple sessions on prayer. The first-ever NAD livestream prayer meeting in January 2025 grew from the need to keep prayer the top priority and remind us all that Pentecost is not a "one and done" event.

Our group has continued to meet, to plan, to pray, to dream. Though all were (and are) inadequate alone, together with God and His Holy Spirit we recognize that we can change the world.

The "what if?" questions persist. What if we humbly and sincerely ask for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit's power? What if we continue to make it less about the numbers and more about the inviting, the following, the doing? What will happen if we allow the Lord's transformative grace and transformative power to work in us?

Kimberly Luste Maran is editor of Adventist Journey and communication director for the North American Division.

What if we ask for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit's power?

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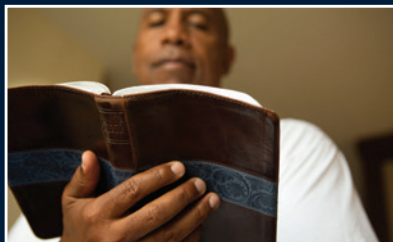
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