



I'm leaping and singing in the circle of your love;
you saw my pain, you disarmed my tormentors,
You didn't leave me in their clutches, but gave
me room to

breathe.

MSB Psalm 31:6-8

**2021
OFFERTORY
READINGS**

Our mission is “to reach the North American Division and the world with the distinctive, Christ-centered Seventh-day Adventist message of hope and wholeness.” Stewardship Ministries is dedicated to helping members catch this vision.

Systematic giving is part of being a faithful steward. When we return tithe, we are recognizing that God owns everything. Giving offerings expresses our gratitude for what God has done for us. God loves a cheerful giver, and He has chosen this method to support those who preach the gospel as they reach the world with His message.

You will find an extensive selection of videos emphasizing various offerings by visiting our website at www.nadstewardship.org/videos. You can use them in conjunction with the offering appeals or in place of them. They average between a-minute-and-a-half and two minutes in length.

Faithful stewardship is a matter of the heart. We don't give to receive love and blessings from God. We give because we have already received God's love and blessings. We give because our hearts and lives are full of the joy of the Lord. We give because we want to live out God's character of abundant generosity—especially as exhibited through the giving of the ultimate gift: the life of His Son. Giving is a natural response for recipients of God's goodness.

God's blessings to you as you help others experience the joy of faithful stewardship.

Michael Anthony Harpe

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Harpe', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Director

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About the Author



Angel J. Rodriguez is a Seventh-day Adventist minister. He began his ministry in the Greater New York Conference in 1985. He has since served in the New York and Texas Conferences and now in the Upper Colombia Conference. He has also served as an administrator and department worker for various conferences. He and his wife, Valerie, have four boys and one princess.

His parents were from Puerto Rico. While his mother was pregnant with Angel and his twin brother, the couple migrated to New York City, where she later worked for the Board of Education. His father worked as an engineer for various hospital systems.

He is an avid sportsman who loves fly-fishing, canoeing, kayaking, hiking, cycling, and horseback riding. He earned his doctorate in Church Growth and Evangelism from Andrews University in 2003. He now pastors the Sandpoint, Idaho, Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Upper Colombia Conference.

Angel has been involved with many church-planting projects, church revitalizations, prison ministries, club ministries, and overseas evangelistic efforts. His passion is soul winning. He loves watching the transformational power of Jesus Christ in the lives of precious souls as they open their hearts and commit their lives to Jesus.

About the Readings

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Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version.

About the Personal Giving Plan

The North American Division encourages the use of the “My Personal Giving Plan.” This plan was developed as a guideline to assist members in systematic giving. The plan suggests that, in addition to returning 10 percent of a member’s personal income as tithe, certain percentages may be dedicated as offerings to three main categories:

- Local Church Budget: 3–5 percent
- Conference Advance: 1–2 percent

(education, evangelism, VBS, summer camps, and union magazines)

- World Budget: 1–3 percent

Visit <https://www.personalgivingplan.com> to see a more extensive breakdown for each category.

The My Personal Giving Plan encourages each of us to renew our commitment to the principles of Christian stewardship. While it blesses the church as a whole, its real impact is on us as individuals in our faith-based covenant with God.

Everything in God’s creation is orderly and purposeful. The same can be said of My Personal Giving Plan. Like all plans, it requires thought and consideration. No great work can be built upon emotional or sporadic giving.

Calendar of Offerings - NAD 2021

Special Offerings

January 23	Religious Liberty
February 13	Adventist Television Ministries Evangelism
March 13	Adventist World Radio
April 10	Hope Channel International, Inc.
May 8	Disaster and Famine Relief
June 12	Women's Ministries
August 14	Christian Record Services
November 13	World Budget (Emphasis: Radio Ministries)
December 11	Adventist Community Services

Thirteenth-Sabbath Offerings for 2021

First Quarter:	Euro-Asia Division (ESD)
Second Quarter:	Inter-American Division (IAD)
Third Quarter:	North American Division (NAD)
Fourth Quarter:	Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD)

Summary of Offerings

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Where Do My Offerings Go?

13th Sabbath Offering

You've heard how everyone in an Amish community comes together for a barn raising. Well, Seventh-day Adventists also have projects where we all pitch in to accomplish a goal. That is the purpose of the 13th-Sabbath offering. Every 13th Sabbath, the church focuses on one of its world divisions to accomplish a mission goal. Often, the offering goes toward constructing a building that will be used for education, evangelism, or media outreach. The 13th--Sabbath offerings have been used to establish schools such as Central Philippine Adventist College. A recent offering made a youth camp possible in Belize. All the church members around the world join hands on these projects through sacrificial giving. In 1913, the 13th-Sabbath overflow amounted to 474 dollars. Now, it exceeds a quarter-million dollars. We call it an overflow offering because it encourages extra giving beyond the usual mission offering. In practice, 25 percent of the 13th-Sabbath offering is considered overflow. The rest is more broadly distributed to continue mission work around the globe. Also, you can give a 13th-Sabbath offering anytime by marking it on your tithe envelope. Do you want to be part of something big? You'll be part of a worldwide community expanding Adventist mission work when you give to the 13th-Sabbath offering. Remember: Our giving funds the mission to finish the work.

Birthday Thank Offering

Usually on your birthday, you get a present. But in church many people give a gift on their special day. It is called a Birthday Thank Offering. Have you ever given someone a thank-you gift? Maybe they watched your cat for a weekend or sang a song at your wedding, and you just wanted to show how grateful you felt. Well, church members sometimes offer a gift of pure gratitude to God. It might be on the occasion of a birthday, thanking God for the blessings of the past year. Or maybe thanking Him for one blessing in particular, such as

a promotion at work. Or a new grandbaby. They mark it on their tithe envelope as a Birthday Thank Offering.

So, what happens to the Birthday Thank Offering? This gift is directed to church divisions outside North America to do mission work. Much of it is used in evangelistic activities. But some also goes to clinics, hospitals, and educational institutions. A portion of your gift goes to administer the General Conference mission program, helping to move missionaries into new fields and advance the Adventist message. So, your gift of gratitude goes to missionaries and church institutions around the world who in turn will accept it with gratitude. It shows that being thankful can be contagious, doesn't it?

Conference Advance

Your local conference is a sisterhood of local churches that helps each congregation within its boundaries to accomplish important objectives that are beyond the reach of any one church alone. A Conference Advance offering addresses these specific needs as well as a variety of special projects. One of the largest portions goes to fund Christian education. Another substantial part of the Conference Advance offering is set aside for evangelism in the local community. It is also used to finance programs and advertising that most local churches cannot shoulder alone. Child evangelism, inner-city evangelism, Vacation Bible School, summer camps, and youth evangelism are also areas supported by the Conference Advance offering. Another benefit of the Conference Advance offering is the popular union papers and magazines that are shipped free of charge to church members. These informative publications help to unite believers over a large area and create a sense of community. All of these educational and life-changing programs are possible because individual members choose to contribute a suggested amount of 1–2 percent of their income to the Conference Advance.

Local Church Budget

Perhaps the most obvious need addressed in My Personal Giving Plan is the local church. Like every family, the local

church family has financial obligations to meet. Some are easy to see like power and heat, but many are not so obvious: children's magazines, Sabbath School Bible study guides, teaching supplies, staff salaries, cleaning services, church school operating expenses, property insurance, worthy student fund, and community outreach. These are but a few of the costs that must be met month after month as the local church seeks to be a light in the community. Because these expenses are constant, My Personal Giving Plan recommends that 3–5 percent of one's income be set aside for the local church budget. This systematic giving ensures that all share both in the blessings and the responsibilities of the local congregation.

Mission Investment Offering

The Mission Investment Offering is a partnership between you and God. You pick a project and dedicate the income to the Mission Investment Offering.

Here's an example involving chickens! When Kelly Rose Bishop was a teenager, she decided to commit 10 percent of her egg business to investment. She sold eggs to regular customers and to people who just stopped by her house. After two months she noticed that her sales had gone up by 50 percent. That's how the partnership worked. She promised to give 10 percent of her income—that was her part—but she believes that God blessed her little business because the 10 percent grew due to a new larger income—that was God's part.

There are all kinds of ways to enter into partnership with God. For example, you might dedicate the money you save using coupons at the grocery store, or you can dedicate the money you save by skipping dessert when eating out. One person picked up aluminum cans that she found on her morning run and gave the proceeds to investment. Every dollar you raise goes to advance Adventist missions overseas. Come up with your own mission investment idea today.

Sabbath School Mission Offering

When the Sabbath School Mission Offering envelope comes around, it is easy to slip in a dollar or two. But when you find out where it goes, you might want to give more!

The mission offering travels to church divisions outside North America where the needs are great. Much of it is used in evangelistic activities, but some also goes to aid clinics, hospitals, and educational institutions. Adventist World Radio gets help from this offering. And a portion of your gift goes to administer the General Conference's mission program, which helps to train and move missionaries into new fields to advance the Adventist message. The offering that you give in your Sabbath School room literally goes a long way as it aids mission work around the globe.

World Budget Offering

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a worldwide church. And the world budget is our contribution to this global mission.

From the earliest days of the Adventist Church, men and women have responded to Christ's Great Commission by looking beyond their own shores. Today, Seventh-day Adventists make up one of the fastest growing Christian churches in the world—with more than 3,000 people being baptized every day! In more than 200 countries and in more than 600 languages, the message of Jesus's soon return can be heard.

Historically, it has been the privilege and duty of the materially blessed members in developed nations to plant seeds of growth in poorer regions of the world. New evangelistic strategies that address ever-changing global realities are constantly being developed, and our offerings give life to these new programs.

My Personal Giving Plan recommends that 1 to 3 percent of our income be set aside for this global outreach. Working together, we can make sure the Adventist message continues to grow worldwide.

Special Projects Offerings

These offerings include ministries such as Women's Ministries and Christian Record Services. My Personal Giving Plan doesn't recommend a specific percentage for these since the need and scope will vary from project to project. For example, these offerings support undertaking local church building initiatives or a mission trip. The special projects also include requests for help from denominational entities such as ADRA and Adventist World Radio, as well as other Adventist supporting ministries that you may wish to assist.

2021 North American Division Sabbath School Mission Investment Projects

ATLANTIC UNION

The Good Shepherd House, located in the Greater New York Conference, hopes to contribute to the fight of health equity among the surrounding communities in the county of Brooklyn. Having a Seventh-day Adventist-run free Medical and Dental Clinic would help bridge the gap in access to healthcare quality. Along with a food pantry program, a thrift store, and social services that we plan to implement, it will enable us to address some of the social determinants of health.

The Southern New England Conference is focusing the mission investment funds on aspects of community services involving collection, distribution and training. Currently, there is a need for space for the temporary storage of equipment needed to meet emergency needs. There is very little space for deployment mobilization of service assets (workers and equipment) to provide needed services during times of extremity.

PACIFIC UNION

The Nevada-Utah Conference is focusing on the Church building on the Kayenta Navajo Mission site in the Nevada-Utah Conference.

The Arizona Conference plans free clinics and multisite

evangelism under the name: Diné Impact '22. The majority of the land area, population and Adventist membership of the Navajo Nation is within the territory of the Arizona Conference. Therefore, the Arizona Conference accepts the challenge of taking the lead in a united evangelistic thrust to reach the entire Navajo Nation. The purpose of this specific project is to reap a substantial harvest of souls in the late summer of 2022, by capitalizing on interest generated through radio and internet outreach to the entire Navajo Nation (across State and Conference lines) in partnership with Adventist World Radio and others, beginning in August 2020. A weekly Navajo-focused, locally produced radio broadcast will air across the Navajo territory on KTNN-AM, the 50,000-watt "voice of the Navajo Nation." A website, currently under construction, will complement the weekly broadcast, and a Bible school will be established to follow up on interest generated.

Dear Presenter,

Thank you for your willingness to share the offering appeals with your local congregation. It is a wonderful and gratifying responsibility. How you present these readings will determine how effective they are. Here are some suggestions to consider before you share:

Pray: Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit. Pray that God will use your words to speak to the hearts in the congregation.

Practice: Read over the appeal at least three times to familiarize yourself with it. Read slowly and clearly. Underline or highlight key words to be emphasized during the reading. Strive to share these readings with excellence.

Prepare: Sometimes materials for special days are sent to your local church to distribute or present along with the appeal. Determine how they can be used most effectively.

Personalize: If you have a personal experience that you think will add strength to the appeal, please share it. People connect with others through stories.

Present With Passion: A presentation can have all the above elements, but without passion it may not stir the hearts of the hearers. Ask God to fill your heart with His Spirit so that you can present the appeal with spirit and truth.

May God richly bless you and speak through you as we take this journey together in 2021.

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January 2, 2021

Local Church Budget

A visitor arrived at a church in the middle of winter. He noticed it was cold inside the sanctuary, and everyone wore winter coats and scarves. The visitor found the head elder and asked, "Is your furnace broken?"

"No, the furnace is fine. We just don't have enough money to pay the heating bill."

Startled, the visitor asked, "Doesn't the local church budget handle these issues?"

The elder shook his head.

The visitor requested permission to address the church. He asked the members, "How many of you had heat in your homes today?" Everyone raised their hands.

He continued by saying, "Today, we are in God's church. I believe that God deserves better than what we enjoy in our homes. I will visit again next Sabbath and will donate to the local church budget. How many will join me?"

Most of the congregation raised their hands. He read this passage: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7

The following Sabbath, the visitor returned and led the members in giving to the local budget. The congregation continued to pay for heat throughout the entire winter as they brought their offerings for the church expenses. When we compare the costs in our own home to the needs of the church, we can see the importance of supporting the local budget.

January 9, 2021

Local Conference Advance

Every year in Alaska, a team of dogs and men take a challenge called the Iditarod. During their 1,000-mile trek, the team works together to achieve the common goal of finishing the race in the town of Nome.

In 1925, the town of Nome had an outbreak of diphtheria. The quickest way to send the antitoxin was by sled dog. Twenty mushers volunteered with over 100 dogs to pull their sleds. They created a relay known at the Great Race of Mercy, which began on January 27.

If the medicine didn't arrive quickly to the town of Nome, many people would perish. So the mushers pooled their resources and created a relay. Each group of dogs and mushers would pass the cylinder, which contained the anti-toxins, to the next team of dogs.

On February 2, at 5:30 a.m., the final leg of the relay arrived in Nome with the dog Balto leading the sled. Today, a statue of Balto is in Central Park, New York City.

There is a toxin of sin that causes all of humankind to perish. We have the anti-toxin, but we who have already been saved need to pass this remedy of Jesus our Savior to others. Through Him, healing may be found.

Our Conference Advance offering goes to help those still dying for want of this cure. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4

January 16, 2021

Local Church Budget

A church member lost his job when his company downsized. He knew that for weeks he would be without food and without the ability to pay his bills. He told the pastor about his situation.

The pastor said, “You are not alone. About a third of our congregation’s members have gone through tough times. Our church can assist you for a month or two to give you time to get back on your feet.

The church board requested his rent and utility bills. It shocked this man that the church would give, not loan, the money to help pay the bills.

The pastor shared this text. “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Matthew 25:40

Weeks later, the man found another job. He wanted to repay what the church had done for him.

The pastor pointed out a line item in the church budget called Emergency Fund. This explained how the church had assisted him and his family.

When you give to the church budget, a part of the offering goes to help church members in time of need. By contributing to the church budget, you are helping to provide resources to those in crisis—one day this may even be you! Today, when we give to the local church budget, we are supporting all the ministries of the church.

January 23, 2021

Religious Liberty

A pastor stood on a ledge with a long drop before him. This group of Houston pastors had gone on a team-building exercise as part of a faith-building experience.

They helped each other through obstacle courses and challenges to accomplish tasks they could not have done alone. They called the final challenge “the step of faith.” The pastor was hooked to a harness. Then he would step forward and drop 50 feet to the ground.

The coach reminded him, “We are here for you. We’ve got you. Just believe and take the step of faith.”

After a moment of silent prayer, the pastor stepped forward. The seconds felt like an eternity as he dropped into what seemed an endless descent. Then the tension on the line increased, and at last his descent decreased in speed. When he landed, the pastor dropped to his knees and thanked the Lord.

All the pastors learned how teamwork could bring a group together to achieve a common goal. Each individual, when they gave their best, enhanced the entire team’s abilities to complete their mission. The exercise reminded them how faith in God helped the team triumph in what seemed impossible.

When talking to the disciples, Christ gave them a message. “And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.” Mark 11:22

Today, let us give God our best in our offerings so that together we can achieve the common goal to expand the indispensable work in defending religious liberty across the North American Division.

January 30, 2021

Local Church Budget

Have you ever attended church in a house? There are many home churches across America. But home churches are easy to outgrow!

One of these house churches in Vermont, the Brattleboro church, stepped forward by faith in outreach to their community. As the congregation grew, it became obvious they needed a new location to become even more effective for the Lord. The house itself could no longer handle the various ministries and the growth of the congregation.

They brought the matter before the Lord. Land opened in the adjacent town of Vernon, and the members raised funds to move to the new location. Week by week, the members gave according to their abilities. The church project went forward, and construction began on the new building.

The new structure started as only a dream in the hearts of the members. Now faithful members worship in their beautiful building today.

Members are able to have a wider impact in the community. The community is grateful for their presence. When God's people come together for the Lord and follow the dream that the Lord placed in their hearts, great things will happen.

Today, as you give to the local church budget, ask God to place in your heart a vision for your church. Catch the inspiration of how your congregation can bless your community. Look for the greater mission to souls who will come and praise our wonderful Savior. "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Proverbs 29:18

February 6, 2021

Local Church Budget

The new pastor arrived early in the week for a tour of the church and school. When the deacon showed the new pastor the sanctuary, he gasped.

“What happened here?” he asked. There were large streaks of watermarks running down the walls on two sides of the sanctuary.

“Long story short, it’s a budget issue,” the deacon replied.

After the tour, the pastor thanked the deacon and went home. As he prayed about the situation, the Lord pressed his heart that he must find some way to restore God’s house of worship. A couple of verses came to mind. “Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes.... Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there.” Deuteronomy 12:8, 11

His first Sabbath, after the conference president introduced him, the pastor stood still and looked at the walls of the church. The eyes of the members followed the eyes of the pastor as he scanned the walls. “Beginning next week, we shall work together as a church. We shall restore God’s Holy Temple,” he said to the congregation. The church erupted with praise!

The next Sabbath, the pastor placed an offering in the plate. He asked the congregation to join him and give to the church budget. Six weeks later, they completed the repairs. The church renewed God’s house of worship.

February 13, 2021

Adventist Television Ministries Evangelism

Media consumption is at an all-time high. People watch television on big screens in their living room, on computers in their office, and on laptops, tablets, and smart phones in their hands.

Americans spend a staggering amount of time watching TV programs. We even have a new word for it called “binge watching.” People get most of their information from looking at a screen. Thus it’s a great way to reach them with the Adventist message.

During World War II, television was a pretty new invention. By 1950 only about five million TV sets existed. Adventists thought it might be a good idea to use this new medium. So, a program called Faith for Today was launched. It has the distinction of being the first nationally broadcast religious program on TV.

Soon other Adventist television programs followed. It Is Written in 1956, Breath of Life in 1974, and, more recently, the Jesus 101 Biblical Institute. Today these continue to be the four television ministries owned and operated by our North American Division. They provide a primary evangelistic thrust.

Adventist television has been transforming lives for 70 years and is still going strong. Every year, thousands continue to discover a Christ-centered message of hope through the creative productions of Faith for Today, Breath of Life, It is Written, and Jesus 101.

More people are reached through TV programming than any other way. You can help Adventist Television Ministries touch hearts and change lives. Please give liberally today.

—Fred Knopper is Marketing Director at the Adventist Media Ministries Support Services.

February 20, 2021

Local Church Budget

One of our churches in New York City was looking for an innovative way to help pay off their mortgage. The monthly payments were close to 60% of the local church budget.

“Does anyone have an idea for ways to raise extra money?” the pastor asked. They knew at their current rate of giving, it would be decades before the building could be free of debt.

One member came up with a novel idea. Besides his normal offering, he volunteered every week to donate the money that it would cost him to have one meal at his workplace. The cost was between five to six dollars per meal. He invited others to join him in this pledge.

Around 300 members dedicated the cost of one meal per week for the local church budget. As a result, \$1,500.00 extra funds came into the treasury per week. That meant donations of \$6,000 per month, close to \$78,000 per year, besides the regular offerings.

As the church grew, the giving amounts also grew. Within ten years, this church burned their mortgage and dedicated the church debt-free.

When a church works together and supports the local church budget, wonderful things happen in the name of the Lord.

The Bible is clear. “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7

February 27, 2021

Local Conference Advance

One Sabbath afternoon, a Texas pastor walked down a trail and discovered a large anthill. He knew the area often flooded, so he figured that these ants had built their home above the floodplain. His curiosity got the best of him, so he grabbed a stick and poked a small hole.

Part of the top area of the colony collapsed, and the ants rushed out in an offensive formation. First came the warriors to protect the perimeter. Following the warriors came the workers. The worker ants scouted the breach. Then they began touching antennas and went to work to close the breach.

The colony worked in unison. Each ant had his or her unique and specific task. It was an emergency, and all placed their backs into it, making sure they restored the nest.

We can learn a lot about how ants work as a team. They work as one body.

We are told in the Bible that we are the body of Christ “that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” 1 Corinthians 12:25-27

As a church, when we work together, we can move mountains for His glory. Let us work together today as we give toward our Conference Advance.

March 6, 2021

Local Church Budget

One Sabbath morning, the deacon-in-charge arrived at church only to discover standing water in the church basement.

He began making phone calls. “There are several inches of water in the basement! Can you come to help clean up the mess?”

Most of the deacons changed from their Sabbath clothes to flannel shirts and jeans and hurried to the church. They gathered sump pumps, hoses, extension cords, and began to drain the water. They closed all the waterlines to make sure it wasn’t a frozen line that ruptured.

When they first heard the news, some members worried about the coming repair bills. “How will we be able to pay for this?” they asked one another.

However, the head deacon smiled and reassured them, “Our church emergency repair fund will take care of the expense. We have money set aside for unexpected events like this.”

The members were thankful that through their faithful giving to the church budget in the past, there did not need to be any delay in getting repairs. The head deacon made a call to the local construction firm that Monday. Within two weeks, the workers had repaired the damage.

The congregation could once again meet in their fellowship hall and Sabbath School classrooms.

The Bible says, “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”
2 Corinthians 9:8

March 13, 2021

Adventist World Radio

The field trip had ended. At the bus stop, many parents were already waiting to pick up their children. Others arrived a few seconds later. One by one, the parents hugged their children and left.

However, one child still waited for his parents. The bus driver sat next to the boy on a bench and waited with him. Tears were rolling down the boy's face as he looked up at the driver. He needed no words to explain. He felt abandoned.

Then he heard the voice of his auntie. He ran to her and grabbed her by her legs. His tears turned to joy. The pain of abandonment changed to celebration.

We as Christians may sometimes feel alone and abandoned by God. But this is never the case. The Bible reminds us: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." Psalms 23:4

Imagine if we as Christians can feel alone and abandoned at times, how must others feel who don't know Christ?

The offering that we give today brings joy and hope to those who feel lost and abandoned. They are like that young boy. The message of hope is like the aunt, ready to bring peace and hope to those who have believed they were all alone.

Today, let us bring a message of joy to others by opening our hearts and giving to advance the spread of the Gospel.

March 20, 2021

Local Church Budget

Jesus saw the widow bring her offering to the temple. She gave two of the smallest coins in the temple monetary system. She waited until she thought no one was watching, for her gift was so small. Yet, Jesus commended her. "Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all." Luke 21:3 How can that be?

The rich gave large coins. But the widow gave her heart as part of her offering.

A Christian writer commented on this passage. "A heart of love and genuine faith in a worthy object is more acceptable to God than the most costly gift. The poor widow gave her living to do the little that she did.... It was this unselfish spirit and unwavering faith that won the commendation of Jesus." {3SP p. 72}

We may think the size of our offering makes it valuable to God. But no, the size of the heart gives value to the gift. God will take the offering we give with our hearts and magnify our offering into something special for His service.

Does this mean we should not sacrifice as we give? Here are the words of Jesus. "For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had." Luke 21:4 The widow sacrificed with her heart. As a result, God blessed her gift.

March 27, 2021

Local Conference Advance

A group of Pathfinders took part in the annual Pine Car Derby event at their Family Life Center. When the pastor built his pine car, he used the wrong glue. He arrived at the event with a non-functioning car.

The “Pit Crew,” as he called them, came to his rescue.

They removed the wheels, used the proper glue, and put graphite on the wheels. But the car did not have any weights. No problem. Four quarters, two dimes, two nickels, six pennies later and the car met the five-ounce regulation. The pastor named the car “Money Changer.”

One last problem: the pastor was running out of super-glue. The final coins only received a little dab of glue. He slapped the number 36 on one coin, and the race began.

To his surprise, he came in first place for the first two rounds. Then something happened. Two of the coins flew off the car. The third round he came in second. Another coin came off. He slid to third place on the final round. The little coins made a big difference.

The Pit Crew glued the coins back on for the Pastoral Challenge. The coins made the Money Changer come in first for all the remaining rounds.

When we give to Conference Advance, remember even coins can make a difference. “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?” Luke 14:28

April 3, 2021

Local Church Budget

The greatest gift a person ever receives is the gift of life. Each child differs from every other child.

When the time came for one father's only daughter to be born, there were complications. She had the umbilical cord tied around her neck three times. The doctor had to push her back to untie the cord.

When the doctor delivered her, she looked different. She was purple. The nurses grabbed her and supplied oxygen to her lungs. She seemed lifeless. Then she twitched, and then she cried. Tears ran down the father's face as he saw her turn from purple, to soft red, and to a healthy peach in color. He thanked the Lord for bringing life into his princess.

Just then he saw a glimpse of the cross. He felt a little of how our Father must have felt seeing His Son on the cross.

God's heart must have broken while watching His Son go through so much pain and agony to save us. The greatest gift our Heavenly Father gave us was His son. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Today, as we give to local budget, let us remember why we give. Because of your personal giving, these funds are used to share the good news of the Cross with others. We bring a message of hope to a world in need of a Savior.

April 10, 2021

Hope Channel International, Inc.

Sarah loved Jesus from a young age, and always believed in Him. Yet, she felt she was never good enough for Him and didn't see how she would be able to do all of the right things in order to be saved. Sarah found herself engaging in unhealthy habits, searching for worth in relationships and substances.

Sarah knew this was not the right path, and she shared her feelings with a friend. Her friend suggested she download some resources on her phone that would allow her to lift up her thoughts and feel that God was close to her. That's when Sarah found Hope Channel—right in the app store on her phone.

“I liked the name,” Sarah said. “I thought okay, Hope Channel’ – I am really looking for hope right now!” She immediately began to watch the program Table Talk. Through this program, Sarah was able to see and understand God's grace. Her life began to transform.

This led to finding Let's Pray LIVE. “They say ‘the place where you don't have to pray alone,’” said Sarah. “My husband is not a believer so a lot of times I do pray alone, and since I found them, I'm not!”

Sarah says, “I'm just so grateful that I found [Hope Channel] and since I found it, I have never once thought about throwing away this precious life that I've been given. I am joyful.”

Thousands across North America and around the world like Sarah are searching for hope. Today, your offering will further the ministry of Hope Channel. Let us join together to share hope around the world!

—Elizabeth Camps is Director of Marketing for Hope Channel International, Inc.

April 17, 2021

Local Church Budget

“How can you maintain a church school? Your congregation is so small!” This question came from parents whose membership was at a nearby church that had no school of its own. “We are so thankful to send our children here. But we don’t see how you manage. Our church can’t afford a church school!”

The church school often struggled with finances. But by the end of each fiscal year, it had stayed within budget. The pastor and church determined that educating the youth of the church was the top church priority. “It’s our investment in the church’s future,” the pastor explained.

The children from their church school would grow to be the church of the future. Not only that, but there would be eternal, heavenly rewards for this church who had invested in the Christian education of their young people.

So, despite the challenges, this church channeled 66 percent of their church budget to keep the church school in the black. They rejoiced to continue to sacrifice to keep their school. Their church school still operates today.

The results are clear. Many of the youth from the school are still active members of the worldwide church. These youth give thanks for the spiritual care that teachers and faculty provided and to those members who contributed to the church budget year after year.

The Bible is clear. “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6

April 24, 2021

Local Conference Advance

Houston, like most large cities today, has large numbers of homeless people. Some have urged laws to prohibit their citizens from helping the homeless.

The Houston church took a different position. They said, “These people are the children of God.”

The church formed a small group. Twice a month on a Sabbath afternoon, they met together. They prepared hot food and then placed the food in small containers to give out downtown.

The city had set up restrictions. However, they did not forbid the distribution of food already contained and sealed. So the church was within the city ordinances.

Some asked, “Why is the congregation undertaking such an endeavor when the location is nowhere near the church?”

The pastor replied, “The church is to impact all parts of the world for His glory.”

Jesus declared, “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink:.. And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Matthew 25:34, 35, 40

Today, as you give to Conference Advance, remember that we are impacting parts of God’s vineyard where we live. Lives are being touched for the Master.

May 1, 2021

Local Church Budget

A new church plant, with only 25–30 attending each Sabbath, wanted to invite a speaker for an evangelism effort.

“How much will it cost?” they asked. When the pastor told them the amount, they knew they could not afford the price. How could they raise that much money?

The church met for a business meeting to discuss the idea. The pastor listed the costs of the meetings: air-fare, car rental, motel, meals, and so on.

One family said, “We don’t have any extra money, but we do have a nice guest room. We can invite the evangelist to our home. That will save the cost of a motel. He can also eat breakfast with us each day.”

Another family said, “We can provide evening meals.”

A third family offered, “He can use our pickup.”

In the back of the room, three families whispered among themselves. “We can pay for the airline ticket,” they announced.

Within a short time, plans were complete. The evangelist came, and the church plant rejoiced to see the fruits of their giving.

When a church comes together, what seems impossible can become possible. Each family gave what they had. As a result, the Lord’s work went forward. “Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee.” Deuteronomy 16:17 Today, let us come together and give as our wonderful God has blessed us.

May 8, 2021

Disaster and Famine Relief

“Fatal,” “Devastating,” “Horrendous,” “Unforgettable,” “Death toll rises!” Just some of the words to describe news reports on natural disasters and traumatic events.

Your gift to the Disaster and Famine Relief offering allowed Adventists to give a sense of HOPE to thousands from the Camp Fire tragedy. Hundreds of kitchen kits were provided to use in their travel trailer and hundreds of sheds to secure any belongings they were able to grab. Instant pots, along with cooking classes on how to use them, were given to bring some normalcy.

One resident shared, “I’m so excited to receive this kitchen kit that I’m going back right now to make brownies.” She made a plate of them and shared them with the clean-up crew.

Cleaning buckets were distributed in North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida during storms over the last two years and families were able to remain under their roof without fear of mold infecting their household.

Our friends on the Island of Saipan were able to return to their homes after ACS DR team members traveled the long hours to rebuild homes that had been uninhabitable after Typhoon Yutu devastated the Island.

Adventist Community Services Disaster Response works all over the North American Division serving communities in times of crisis. Today, your generosity may be used by God to meet the needs and bring relief and comfort to those who have lost everything.

—Wynelle Steven is the Assistant Director at Adventist Community Services.

May 15, 2021

Local Church Budget

“The Church is on fire!”

We can talk about being “on fire” as a good thing. But when flames and fire trucks appear, a church on fire is never good news!

Once the fire was out and the immediate crisis over, the church members met to make plans for how to meet the emergency. They gave offering appeals for repairs. The work of restoration began at once.

But there was another special need. The Pathfinder club, with about 50 children, wanted to attend the Camporee that year. At first, they asked for permission to raise funds from resources outside the church. The board granted permission. The young people began asking for donations from family and friends. They wrote letters to aunts, uncles, cousins, and neighbors. Little by little, the Pathfinder funds arrived.

The last Sabbath before the deadline for the Camporee, the Pathfinder club still fell somewhat short of their goal. In spite of the focus on the fire restoration, the pastor gave a special appeal for the Pathfinder club. The congregation responded, and the Pathfinders had the funds needed for the Camporee.

The Pathfinders didn’t know that it was impossible for them to raise the funds within months. They had faith God would bless. Their motto was Matthew 19:26. “But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.” Today, let us remember that what seems impossible becomes possible when a church works together to support the local church budget.

May 22, 2021

Local Conference Advance

During the early days of the Seventh-day Adventist movement, church buildings were few. In Battle Creek, Michigan, they needed to build a larger church to house the rapid growth. Battle Creek had become the center for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They needed a place large enough to hold their camp meetings and General Conference sessions.

Elder James White, one of the founders of the church, thought of a plan. He suggested, "If each month, each member would donate one dime, within one year we could raise enough money to build a new church structure." At that time, the average price of a home was around \$2,000.

The members adopted the project. On April 20, 1879, they dedicated the new church, debt-free. The "Dime Tabernacle" became the fourth church structure of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. This building could seat 4,000 people.

Fund raising was simple. Give a dime per month. A dime then would be equivalent to \$2.25 US, or \$2.00 Euro today. Even at today's rate of exchange, that's not very much money!

Widespread participation brought success. When the members took this as their Conference Advance project, the Lord blessed. What Conference Advance project needs your support today?

When God's people come together, like they did with the Dime Tabernacle, God will move hearts to accomplish His will through His children. "And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Luke 18:27

May 29, 2021

Union Designated

In the Bible, the King of Syria besieged the capital of Samaria. As a result, a great famine ensued. The famine was so severe that a donkey's head sold for 80 pieces of silver. The prophet Elisha went to the king and made a strange proclamation.

“To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.” 2 Kings 7:1

The king did not believe him. How could this be? He had not learned never to limit what God can do for His people.

That night the Lord caused the Syrians to hear chariots, cavalry, and a marching army. In fear and confusion, the Syrians forsook their belongings and ran for their lives.

The next morning, some lepers decided to surrender to the Syrian army. It surprised them to discover that the large army had gone, their tents were empty, and they had left all their belongings behind. The lepers sent word to the king of Samaria. In one day, the city went from famine to abundance, just as Elisha had predicted.

This story reminds us that God holds our future in His hands. When a crisis comes in God's work, He provides ways for us to overcome. As we give to our local field today, remember that we worship a God of miracles. He will take what we give and increase it to touch lives in supernatural ways.

June 5, 2021

Local Church Budget

A New York church school fell behind on their payments to the conference. The conference had to set a deadline. "We can only give you three more months. If you are not current by March first, we cannot reopen the school in September."

The church and school board had an emergency meeting. "What can we do?" they asked each other. "We owe \$20,000. It's almost the first of December."

"We could have a bake sale."

"We could have a garage sale."

"Maybe the students could sell Christmas candles." But none of these ideas, nor even all these ideas together, would raise enough.

Finally, one member suggested, "What if we agree to pledge all unexpected money for the next three months? Perhaps God will send the money."

Every Sabbath, the head elder took a couple of minutes to ask, "Has anyone gotten any unexpected money to donate to the church school debt?" The funds and ideas began to build. Unexpected Christmas gift? \$250. Year-end bonus larger than usual? \$100. A forgotten refund? \$14.50. A tax rebate? \$1,200. Large and small, the gifts continued.

The treasurer kept careful records but did not announce the exact amount until March first. The total of the unexpected money donated to the school debt equaled \$20,000!

Today, as we give to the church budget, let us remember how God blesses those who will trust God in their giving. "We walk by faith, not by sight." 2 Corinthians 5:7

June 12, 2021

Women's Ministries

The woman had lost her husband. Creditors were coming to collect. She had no money to pay them. What was she going to do?

She went to the prophet Elisha and told him her trouble. "They will take my two sons as slaves," she cried.

The prophet asked one question. "What do you have in your house?"

"I have only one small pot of olive oil," she replied.

He instructed her to borrow as many empty vessels as she could from all her friends and neighbors. Then, in private, she should pour that same oil into the borrowed containers.

Her sons brought vessel after vessel until there were no more available. She began pouring oil from her little pot. When she filled the last jar, the oil stopped flowing.

The next day she told Elisha what God had done. He told her, "Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest." 2 Kings 4:7

When this widow came to the Lord, our Father heard her prayer and intervened.

Today, we have many members who are in debt, and as a result it becomes difficult to contribute tithes and offerings. I want to introduce you to a God who hears the cries of mothers and fathers who are in need. God opens the windows of heaven in our behalf. When you receive His blessings, remember to thank the same God by giving offerings so that others can also receive a blessing.

June 19, 2021

Local Church Budget

The General of the Army of Syria was a leper. During one of the conquests against Samaria, the general captured a young girl and gave her to his wife as a maid. The Bible never gives the name of this precious child, but her influence would be great. She spoke of the God of Israel who could heal the husband of her mistress.

The wife told her husband of the hope of a cure. Naaman asked the king of Syria to write a letter to the king of Samaria requesting healing.

After several delays, Naaman arrived at the home of the prophet Elisha. He found a humble home. To make matters worse, Elisha didn't even come out in person to meet the general. He sent his servant out to deliver the simple message. "Go and wash in Jordan seven times." 2 Kings 5:10

Angry, Naaman headed home. But his servants urged him to follow the command of the prophet. When he did, God healed him of the leprosy.

A little girl shared with her mistress. The woman shared with her husband. The general shared with the king of Syria. Naaman came before the prophet of God, and God changed him. Today, we can do the same. When we give to the local budget, the funds are used to help share the gospel with others. Your name may never be known, but by sharing—like the little maid—lives will change as did that of Naaman the General.

June 26, 2021

Local Conference Advance

It started as a normal day, August 5, 2010. Miners went to work in the caverns of northern Chile.

A little later, the cries of alarm sounded. The mine-shaft had collapsed. All 33 miners, half a mile down, had no way to escape. A check of the underground emergency shelter revealed only a few days' worth of food rations.

When their plight became known, officials brought a Pennsylvania drilling company. They bored a small shaft to reach the miners. It took 17 days for a new drill to bore a small hole to reach the men.

During the wait, some men considered suicide an option. But their leader urged that it was better to work and stay busy than to give up in despair.

On August 22, a small shaft reached the men. They sent food, water, and medicine. The rescue crew communicated with the miners, who regained hope.

On October 12, a one-man capsule went down, and the first man returned to the surface. It took 69 days after the collapse tragedy to rescue all 33 miners.

Today our Conference Advance has a rescue plan. The plan is to rescue souls buried not only in sin, but also in the circumstances of life. As we give to Conference Advance, we are taking part in the rescue of precious souls for Christ. "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." John 12:46

July 3, 2021

Local Church Budget

Oshkosh is the largest Pathfinder event in the North American Division. It meets once every five years. But a church in Texas had a problem. They had elected a new director and staff for their Pathfinder club just nine months before Oshkosh.

The new leader said, “We have little money in our Pathfinder fund in the church budget. Oshkosh is expensive. How can we raise enough money to attend?”

They consulted with the former Pathfinder director to get ideas. How could their small group find money to pay for transportation, food, the entrance fee, and all the incidentals that are part of Oshkosh?

The church board gave permission for placards, donation boxes, and other promotions. They had some response, but the club was always short of their goals each month.

On Pathfinder Day, they made a special appeal. “We have done all we know to do, but we’re running out of time. Can you please help us?”

People made more donations than usual. Everyone kept praying. The children watched the goals. Parents wondered if they could somehow give a little more. Church members found extra funds to help meet the deadline.

When the time came, the Pathfinders went to Oshkosh. The entire church received a blessing!

How did it happen? Leadership counseled together. The church worked together. When there were no funds for ministry, they brought the matter before the Lord. “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.” Proverbs 11:14

July 10, 2021

World Budget

Every year, several pastors come together to go salmon fishing. One pastor didn't bring his polarized glasses. He noticed that his buddies could see the fish in the river and cast their fly presentations before them. While they caught one fish after another he caught nothing.

Then his friend realized what was happening. He said, "Come over here next to me."

His friend passed an extra pair of glasses to him and pointed to the river. "Can you see now?"

The pastor replied, "Now I can see! There are salmon everywhere!"

One moment, the pastor could not see the fish. However, as soon as he put on the right glasses, his worldview changed.

In the time of Israel, Moses sent spies to go into the Promised Land to see the potential. Ten spies saw the obstacles that faced them. "We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land." Numbers 13:27, 28

Ten men saw danger and defeat. However, two of the spies could see the promise.

"And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it." Numbers 13:30
When we see the promise of the second coming of Christ, we can understand why giving is important. We will see how God can use our gifts to help others see the promise before them.

July 17, 2021

Local Church Budget

A church member enjoyed fishing from a bridge in a park. One day, he felt a tap on his boot. He ignored it at first, but then he felt many small taps. He looked down and saw a squirrel. The small animal looked up with longing eyes.

He realized he was eating from a small bag of mixed nuts he had in his pocket. Well, he pulled out some nuts and handed them to the squirrel.

The man named the squirrel Tapper. Each time the man would go to the bridge, Tapper would race down the tree and tap the man's feet. Each time, Tapper would get a feast of nuts and dried fruits. People who chanced to walk by smiled in surprise to see the relationship between the two.

Have you ever gotten a tap in church? Have you had a tap on your heart to respond to an offering appeal? Is God tapping on your heart right now to support the church budget ministries that touch the lives of the people in your community? If you feel that tap, take out your mix of bills and coins and hand them over with joy, because you are touching the lives of others.

This morning, listen to the taps of the Holy Spirit. "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Isaiah 30:21

July 24, 2021

Local Conference Advance

On April 14, 1912, the Titanic scraped an iceberg on the starboard side, cutting into the ship.

That night, Pastor John Harper grabbed his six-year-old daughter Nana and placed her into a lifeboat. He looked her in the eyes and said, "One day we will see each other again."

As the boat sank, Pastor John swam to various people to ask, "Are you saved?"

One young man replied, "No, I am not."

Pastor John took off his life jacket, threw it to the man, and said, "You need this more than I do."

Pastor John continued to swim and lead people to Jesus until he sank into the frigid waters.

Four years later in a church meeting in Hamilton, Canada, a young man by the name of Aquilla Webb told the story. He said, "I am here tonight because of Pastor John's sacrifice."

Today, we can also help others who are sinking in life's cold, dark waters. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Romans 12:1

God may never ask us to give up our lives. But we all have an opportunity to sacrifice as we share in God's work. When we give to Conference Advance, we are throwing life jackets to others by giving them the opportunity to accept Jesus into their lives. Give today that others may be saved.

July 31, 2021

Local Church Budget

During the retreat by Japan from the Philippines during World War II, one Japanese soldier named Hiroo Onoda received an assignment. He was to stay behind at his post until his commanding officer, Major Yoshimi Taniguchi, relieved him of his duties.

On the day of the Major's departure, he made a promise. "Stay here until I come back to relieve you of your duties. Whatever happens, we will come back for you."

As an intelligence officer, Onoda had learned the art of blending into his environment and sustaining himself off the land. The war ended in 1945, but for 29 years, he stood by his post.

At last, the emperor learned that the lieutenant was still on the island. He sent Onoda's former commanding officer with a letter from the emperor telling him he was free to go. On March 9, 1974, the Major arrived and at last Onoda could leave for home.

To all Christians, our commanding officer Jesus gave orders before He left. He said, "But that which ye have already hold fast till I come." Revelation 2:25

Are you holding and maintaining your post until He comes? As Christians, we are to work for the Lord and help support Christ's ministry through our tithes and offering. We are to do all we can for our Master till He comes again and relieves us of our earthly post. As we give to the local budget, let us hold fast till He comes.

August 7, 2021

Local Church Budget

After the fall of Israel because of their apostasy, God gave the nation time to consider what they had done. Seventy years later, when their probation ended, the time arrived for Israel to return to rebuild the walls and the temple at Jerusalem.

However, they didn't have the resources to go back and rebuild.

Yet God had ways of opening the treasures of heaven to bless His church. Never underestimate our God!

The Bible says, "In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid." Ezra 6:3

God touched the heart of the pagan king to allow Israel to return to Jerusalem. Not only that, but the king offered to finance the entire project for the restoring of the temple.

Years later, God touched the heart of Darius, the king who followed Cyrus. He provided the lambs, bullocks, and rams needed for the sacrifices. He also provided wheat, salt, wine, and oil for the ceremonies connected to the worship services.

Some might argue, how could the nation of Israel accept such a gift from a pagan king? Let us remember it was God Himself who touched the heart of the king to support the cause of spreading the Gospel. Today, may our hearts also be open to support the gospel ministry that each church has for its community.

August 14, 2021

Christian Record Offering

The number of people with visual impairment or blindness is expected to double by 2050. This could include you or someone you love or someone in your community. Who cares?

Since 1899, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has cared for people who are blind. With support from members like you, you show you care by providing funds for Bibles, camps for the blind, college scholarships, accessible reading resources, and a Bible school with Braille and large-print lessons through Christian Record Services for the Blind. Christian Record Services empowers people who are blind to engage their communities and embrace the Blessed Hope.

There is more we could do. If every church member gave generously and faithfully to support ministry for people who are blind, together we could also decrease loneliness and despair in the blind community and reduce the accompanying health-related complications such as a weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, and cognitive decline.

Revelation 1:7 offers a future with eyesight for people who are blind: “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him.” Until that wonderful day, your gift will provide hope and love and help nurture someone’s spiritual journey with Jesus.

Consider how much you value your eyesight and prayerfully donate today for someone who cannot see, so they can receive the caring love of Jesus through Christian Record Services. Give liberally so people who are blind can understand how much you care.

August 21, 2021

Local Church Budget

The church roof had a problem. It leaked! One time, the pastor counted six buckets in place to catch the drips. Raindrops fell on the rugs or pews or tile floors. It seemed like they discovered a new leak every time it rained.

The church board discussed the problem. “We don’t have enough money,” they agreed. “But let’s at least get a few estimates so we know how much we will need.”

After getting several estimates to repair the roof, the board saw that the church didn’t have enough resources to cover the entire expense. They had to make a choice.

“Could we cover the roof with a tarp while we wait for funds?” they wondered. “Or should we take out a loan?”

The pastor suggested a third option. “Let’s take this matter to the congregation. Perhaps, when they understand the need, they will give extra offerings to the church budget to repair the roof.”

Within weeks, the church had raised over 90 percent of the funds. The pastor and head elder agreed to move by faith and scheduled the repairs. As the work went forward, the extra funds kept coming into the local church budget.

The construction work progressed. Upon completion, the church had enough funds to pay the final installment of the bill. Where the body of Christ works together in unison, great things can happen. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” Psalm 133:1

August 28, 2021

Local Conference Advance

A member moved into his new home. The house had wall-to-wall carpet. He never thought of what might be underneath the carpet.

Then one day, as he looked into one of his children's rooms, he noticed a partial lift in the carpet. He looked closer and found rich oak wood flooring underneath. He could not believe his eyes.

When he removed the rug from that room, he discovered that all the wood floor needed was a little sanding and a fresh coat of Poly. The ordinary room was transformed into a majestic room. Room by room, he removed the rugs to reveal the hidden beauty. Within weeks, the entire home changed into a mansion.

Today, you and I are born in sin. The world tries to cover us in an attempt to make us feel beautiful while ignoring the fact that underneath is God's creation.

Our Lord sees us as His workmanship. His goal is to restore us to our original luster. He wants us to become elegant, rich in tone, and unique in design. When we place our lives into His hands, He removes the layers of sin and pain and recreates us into His image.

The Bible says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10

By your gift today, the gospel message can open new doors to let hope and transformation touch the lives of others.

September 4, 2021

Local Church Budget

Jesus told two of His disciples to go to the village next door. He said, “Ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them.” Matthew 21:2, 3

This is one of the perplexing stories in the Bible. A modern equivalent might be if you were told to find two limousines with the keys left in them. You find them. As you start the engine, there is a knock at the window. The owner asks, “What are you doing?”

You reply, “The Lord has need of these.”

The disciples followed the instructions of Jesus. The owner of the two animals accepted their answer. They brought the animals to their Master.

God had already touched the heart of the owner. The Bible never explains how this happened, but the owner had everything ready for Jesus.

There come times in our lives when God sends a messenger to let us know that God needs us for some special purpose. We don't always understand, but we can know the Lord is calling.

What do you do? Do you listen to the voice of God and walk into the unknown? Or do you ignore His voice? God wants to use you to meet the needs of the various ministries of His church. You will often hear the voice of God and sense the Lord speaking to you to bring your gifts to Him.

September 11, 2021

World Budget

Everyone old enough to have experienced September 11, 2001, will remember that day. One of the most tragic events in the history of the United States happened when two planes flew into the Twin Towers in New York City. Our world has not been the same since.

As the news spread, the Greater New York Conference and the North Eastern Conference joined forces to provide immediate help.

A Manhattan church opened its doors for the Fire and Police Departments. Rapid response task force meetings met in the church's boardroom.

Various Sabbath School classrooms gave police officers and fire department personnel a safe place to sleep between shifts.

The church location provided quick access to ground zero. Church cooks worked in the fellowship hall to prepare food for the emergency workers. On the Hudson River Park Pier, Community Services departments worked to help unload essential supplies needed at the site of the tragedy.

To this day, those efforts have impacted the reputation of our church in a positive way.

In our uncertain world, we never know when our gifts to World Budget, along with gifts of time and effort, will be needed. God can accomplish great things for His glory when His people commit their lives and resources to Him.

The Bible says, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matthew 18:20 Let us work together to impact the world for Christ.

September 18, 2021

Local Church Budget

One day a fisherman was fishing on the edge of a lake when a grey herring landed next to him. The bird looked into his bucket and saw a feast. When the bird tried to take the fish from the bucket, the fisherman tapped him with the end of his rod and made a deal with him.

“Every other fish I will give to you on the condition that you don’t steal.” The fisherman named the bird Henry.

So the fisherman caught a fish and tossed it to Henry. The next catch went into the bucket. Henry waited for his turn. In an hour, he must have eaten at least 10 to 12 fish. Then he flew away. Each time the fisherman returned to that lake, Henry would fly and land next to him.

The fisherman didn’t have financial resources to give to the local church budget. But he wanted to contribute to the ministries of the church. He donated the fish in the bucket to the new immigrant people who were attending his church. The fisherman questioned if this ministry was a way of working for God since he had limited resources. Henry was God’s answer to him.

In the Bible, God uses animals to touch our lives. “And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.” 1 Kings 17:4 Giving can also come in many forms: time, talent, or tender.

September 25, 2021

Local Conference Advance

In August 2017, Hurricane Harvey left thousands of people homeless. Many were without food. Others could not return to their homes because of mold and mildew.

Across the United States, something special happened. Many of our colleges and high school academies organized mission trips for volunteers to go to Houston and help with the reconstruction phase.

The Houston area churches collected addresses from their local communities of those who needed help. They assigned the volunteers to work in teams.

One entire school of volunteers took responsibility for a single home. They removed all the sheetrock, rugs, and other items saturated with moisture. In a single day, they gutted the entire home. They placed all damaged items curbside for FEMA to collect. The house was ready for the contractors to come in and restore the home.

They sent other crews to homes that needed yard cleaning, painting, and other cosmetic repairs. Still other teams visited homes with food baskets to give to those who needed food.

Most of those who received help were not part of the church. But they were part of the community where the churches ministered. Through the help of the volunteers, Houston churches met the needs of their neighbors.

Let us not forget our youth and the impact they can make when guided in the right way. “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” 1 Timothy 4:12

October 2, 2021

Local Church Budget

The family was car-pooling on their way to their son's graduation in Tennessee when someone asked, "What is ministry?"

Someone else asked, "What ministry is most impactful to the community?"

The lively discussion paused when the GPS directed them off the highway for no apparent reason. At the stoplight was a man who had a sign asking for food. The temperature that day was close to 100-degrees Fahrenheit. The man was turning red and was covered with sweat. He looked as if he were moments from fainting.

The driver pulled a sandwich, a dessert cup, and a bottle of water from the cooler. The man shouted that this was an answer to prayer. He had prayed that the Lord would send food and water so he could survive in the intense heat.

That's when the GPS redirected to the exit.

As the family resumed their trip, the driver joined the discussion and stated, "This is ministry. When you touch the lives of the people, not only to convert them, but to minister to their needs, that is ministry."

Each church understands the needs of their community. When you give to the local budget, you are being part of the ministry of the church to reach the community for Christ. What is ministry? Here are the words from Jesus. "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." Matthew 25:45 .

October 9, 2021

Union Designated

The young lad told his mother the news. Jesus, the Miracle Worker, would preach by the Sea of Galilee that day. He wanted to see Jesus. His mother packed him a lunch. The boy didn't realize that what he had in his hand would touch the lives of thousands that day and for centuries to come.

He arrived early and found a front-row seat. He never remembered his lunch until near evening. Then he heard the Master speaking to the disciples about a need for food. He offered Jesus all the food he had.

Jesus thanked him and asked the multitude to sit down. He "took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude." Matthew 14:19

That day, 5,000 men, plus women and children, ate their fill of warm bread and salted fish. Jesus told them to gather up the leftovers. Can't you see the boy filling his bag with the miracle food and rushing home to share with his mother?

Not one of the four gospel writers tells us his name. But his actions are recorded for all eternity.

As we give to our local field I want to ask you, what do you have in your hand? God can take the offering you have in your hand and by His touch multiply your offering to bless the lives of thousands.

October 16, 2021

Local Church Budget

Jesus was en route to Jerusalem when He heard ten lepers shouting “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”
Luke 17:13

Christ acknowledged their request and told them to show themselves to the priest. As they were walking away, they noticed Jesus had already healed their leprosy. Their skin was soft and silky. No trace of disease remained.

One of the former lepers turned around and returned to honor Jesus for the miracle. Only one. Often, we are the recipients of God’s grace. We pray, we plead; we come before the Lord with our petitions. When God grants us His grace, there are many who forget to thank the Lord for His mercies.

There are many ways of thanking the Lord. One way is by offering Him a thank offering. When a child is born in good health, some give a thank offering to express gratitude to the Lord. A successful surgery can be an opportunity to give a thank offering to Jesus, the Great Physician. When a child returns home after having wandered away, we rejoice. In the story of the prodigal son, the father held a feast thanking the Lord for the return of his son. Today, we can honor our Lord for His many gifts.

We can thank Him for His grace, for His protection, and for His love toward us. “And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the LORD, offer it at your own will.” Leviticus 22:29

October 23, 2021

Local Conference Advance

The New York Conference has a church school near the office location. A conference officer who visited saw that many students were wearing only one glove.

“Why are so many of you wearing only one glove?” he inquired.

“We share our gloves with the immigrant students. They don’t have gloves of their own. When we share, we can all go outside to play in the snow!” Each student had one hand in a pocket and one hand in a glove.

The conference leader could scarcely believe the unselfish actions of the students. He investigated further and found that some students had no socks or proper shoes for the winter.

He hurried to send this information about the immigrant students and their needs throughout the conference. Donations rolled in for socks, shoes, gloves, coats, and sweaters. By the end of the week, these precious children of God received the warm clothing that they needed.

Christ is clear. “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Matthew 25:40

When we as a conference come together for the Lord, great things will happen. Many needs are too great for one person to meet. But working as a team, we accomplish great things. Today, as we give to the Conference Advance, let us remember how we can touch the lives of others for Christ.

October 30, 2021

Local Church Budget

John and Nellie had lost their jobs because of downsizing. They were living on unemployment. However, as they were applying for new jobs, they had an idea.

“Let’s volunteer for the church community service program,” John suggested.

Nellie agreed. “We can use this gift of spare time while we’re job hunting to serve others.”

Their own difficulties seemed few when they opened their eyes to the needs of the community. They saw parents struggling to feed their children, to pay for their rent, and to get proper clothing for their kids. They understood, because they too were in a similar situation. They learned compassion.

As the days turned into weeks, their hearts changed. When the Lord opened doors of opportunities and both went back to work, they saw with different eyes. When the time came for offerings, they gave to their community service program. Not only that, but when there were holidays, rather than taking all the time off for themselves, they continued to volunteer to serve others.

We might not always have monetary resources to give to a ministry, but we can give our time, hands, and feet. We can touch the lives of others for God’s glory. This places these scripture verses in a new light. “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Matthew 6:20, 21

November 6, 2021

Local Church Budget

A church told their pastor they wanted a direct mission project, from one church to another. As they tried to decide what mission project to sponsor, the board prayed together.

An elder grabbed the globe in the office and took it for a spin. He asked another member to place a finger on the globe. It landed near Lake Victoria in the nation of Kenya.

They investigated and discovered there was a church in that place that met under the trees because it had no church structure. After working out the logistics between the two conferences, the church raised funds for the project. Within six months, the church had raised enough to build a church for this sister congregation. Representatives from the church visited Africa when the church there was completed to be part of the dedication service.

At the dedication service, the conference officer asked the pastor, “Why did the church in America choose this church?”

The pastor replied, “We prayed, we asked for direction, and God pointed the way.”

“Did you know this church prayed that God would send a miracle?”

“No, but God knew!” the pastor said.

Let us remember that the church belongs to God. When we give to the local budget, we can watch for God to open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing. “Prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing.” Malachi 3:10

November 13, 2021

World Budget (Emphasis: Radio Ministries)

Over ninety years ago, an Adventist preacher started a radio ministry called The Voice of Prophecy. The year was 1929. His name was H. M. S. Richards. Back then radio was “live” rather than recorded. This meant Pastor Richards would sit in front of a microphone at a designated broadcast time each week.

During World War II, the Voice of Prophecy became the first religious coast-to-coast broadcast across North America on the Mutual Broadcasting Network. That same year, 1942, it launched the first Adventist Bible correspondence school. Also that year, a Spanish-language version branched off called La Voz de la Esperanza.

Both of these Adventist radio ministries continue broadcasting around the world. They form part of the Adventist Media Ministries owned and operated by our North American Division. Today the Voice of Prophecy can be heard in nearly three dozen languages. This media ministry operates the Discover Bible School with Bible lessons available in more than 70 languages. It also operates Bibleinfo.com, a Bible question-and-answer website that receives more than 1.2 million visitors monthly. That’s nearly 15 million contacts every year!

Ninety-three percent of Americans listen to radio every week while 88% watch television. This makes radio the leading media, even more than television. The Voice of Prophecy and La Voz de la Esperanza use radio to proclaim the everlasting gospel of Christ. They are leading people to accept Jesus as their personal Savior. Please give liberally to reach people through radio.

—Fred Knopper is Marketing Director at the Adventist Media Ministries Support Services.

November 20, 2021

Local Church Budget

The pastor received a phone call. “Is your church looking for a Christmas project?”

“What do you have in mind?” he asked.

“Many children in our community will not receive any Christmas gifts this year. Their families are struggling. Can the church do anything to help?”

The pastor and his team brought this need before the Lord. God led them to begin a ministry called “The Christmas Project.”

They asked the church members, “Can you bring a list of names of anyone from our community who might appreciate a Christmas gift?” The deacons passed out forms with blank spaces to list the age of the child and gift suggestions.

For four weeks, the members brought gifts to the church. A corner of the platform filled with wrapped presents in bright colors. Each gift had an address attached to it.

After the last service before Christmas, members took various gifts and gave them to the parents. All they said was this: “We are your friends from the Adventist church around the block. We want to let you know we are here for you. God’s blessings on you and your family.” Because of this outreach, many parents and children attended the church.

Give to your church local budget today and support the ministries that bless your community. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” James 1:17

November 27, 2021

Local Conference Advance

“Pastor,” a young man said, “I feel God is calling me to enter the ministry. What should I do?”

The pastor replied, “You need to go to college.”

The young man drove to the college with only enough funds to make the trip to the school.

Upon arrival, he went to the admissions office and asked to enroll. The clerk at the window gave him a slip to take to the financial office to gain admission.

The financial officer asked him, “How much money do you have for your tuition?”

He emptied his pockets of the few coins he had left.

“Why are you here?”

He replied, “I believe God is calling me to become a pastor.”

The financial officer asked the young man to wait. She excused herself and made a few phone calls. Then she returned to explain. “Just a few days ago, a donor came to the school and handed me a card. He said, ‘If a student arrives at the school with no money, but has a call from the Lord, contact me.’”

The young man entered college in 1982 and became a minister of the gospel.

God takes care of His people. “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”
Jeremiah 29:11

Today, we can be like that private donor. We can give and help others to become what God wants them to be.

December 4, 2021

Local Church Budget

The Lord asked Noah to build an ark. Not by the riverfront, not by the ocean side, but on dry land. Each plank, each nail, and each cut was a testimony that he trusted in God. The finances for such an undertaking were enormous, but the command of God was clear. "Make thee an ark of gopher wood." Genesis 6:14

If God asks you and me to do something, it's because He has already provided a way for it to be accomplished. God provided the wood, the manpower, and the finances to accomplish Noah's great task. He provided some in advance and others as they walked by faith.

Today, God may ask us to take a leap of faith. To start a new ministry that will impact the community. To start a new Pathfinder club or Vacation Bible School for the children of the church. Often you may sense God calling you to step forward. I want you to understand that in every venture in the Bible, God provided the resources as His people moved forward by faith. Remember Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Esther, Deborah, and Daniel, to name a few.

The church budget includes many ministries that will enhance the lives of the church and the local community. Today as you give, you can become an Esther, a Daniel, or a Joseph for the Lord. When God touches your heart, give so you and others can take that step of faith and fulfill His will through your life.

December 11, 2021

Adventist Community Services

If your church disappeared today, would anyone other than the members even notice?

“Our neighbors are not merely our associates and special friends; they are not simply those who belong to our church, or who think as we do. Our neighbors are the whole human family”

(Ellen G. White, “The Role of the Church in the Community,” Ellen White Notes, 3Q 2016).

Community Services is God’s invitation to do amazing things with Him. Hard times come in all shapes, sizes, and colors, and Adventist Community Services is responding to individual needs, developing relationships, and committing to make a difference in people’s lives.

ACS supports community outreach programs by funding development projects that make a major impact in your communities. A washer/dryer serves thousands of homeless to bring dignity and value to their lives. A shelter provides protection and offers hope. A portable shower trailer prepares someone for a job interview. And so much more.

“I had just lost my son Christopher to cancer.... The church couldn’t bring back my son to me, but what they did was they brought my life back to me.”

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45

By supporting ACS, you can make a lasting impact and know that your dollars are going to something that is making a difference in a life.

—Wynelle Stevens is Assistant Director at Adventist Community Services.

December 18, 2021

Local Church Budget

The Lord called Joseph and Mary to the responsibility of raising the Messiah who would take away the sins of the world. They were poor. They had no resources. They didn't know where their next journey would take them. But they trusted God. They knew God was guiding their lives one step at a time. God has a way of touching the hearts of people from all walks of life.

Soon after the birth of Christ, the magi arrived to worship Jesus. "They saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh." Matthew 2:11

These gifts were unexpected. The magi traveled far from foreign lands to bring their gifts and worship. Through these gifts, God provided the income Joseph and Mary needed to take care of the Child Jesus.

When we step forward in faith to fulfill the ministry to which God has called us, He opens the way before us.

Today, you can be that person who God touches to help others. You can help a child go to school. You can join with your brothers and sisters in the church to provide funds to reach your community. You can win souls for Christ.

When the church calls for support, you can hear God speaking to you. Open your heart and watch how our Lord uses you to touch lives for the growth of His kingdom.

December 25, 2021

Local Conference Advance

It had been a hard year for the family. Expenses had been high, income ran low. They had to go to the food bank to receive powdered milk, blocks of cheese, and whatever other staples were available. They had few special treats.

By the middle of December, the children began asking questions.

“Will we have a Christmas tree?” “Will we get any Christmas gifts this year?” “What about Christmas dinner?”

Mom told the children to keep praying. “The Lord will provide,” she said. “You never know how God will bless us.”

A few days before Christmas, their uncle came to visit. He was the head elder of a church in the Bronx. He came to see how things were with the family. Tears welled up in his eyes as he hugged them goodbye. He hadn’t realized how bad it had been for them.

Two days later, someone delivered a Christmas tree. By the end of the week, presents appeared under the branches. A gift box came that contained a nativity scene.

We worship a wonderful God who promises to provide for our needs. God inspired their uncle to look after the family that year for Christmas. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning.” James 1:17 Remember during this season, as we give for Conference Advance, that God wants to use our hands to give to others in their times of need.



STEWARDSHIP

Seventh-day Adventist Church
NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION