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—MALALA YOUSAFZAI



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Adventist Journey

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My Journey

Doing the special needs Christmas program, that's one of the things where God's direction was so clear. Even though I am imperfect and I [wondered] if I was capable, God put this task on my life, and it was a reaffirmation that God needs me, loves me, and wants me to be part of this life of reaching out to others.

Visit nadadventist.org/ajnitzasalazar for more of Salazar's story.

NITZA SALAZAR,
Idaho Conference Children's Ministries coordinator

Nitza Salazar



Cover photo by Art Brondo; Salazar is pictured with her daughter, who helps Salazar in her ministry of serving children

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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Visit us online!

Correction: In the May 2025 magazine the name of our cover feature person should have been Natasha Richards, not Richardson. We regret the error.

Bridging Faith, Tough Topics, and the Power of Film at Sonscreen Film Festival

BY CHRISTELLE AGBOKA

A cluttered, garbage-strewn room. A broken man battling drugs and alcohol, haunted by his father's death by suicide. Church as a site of both hurt and healing.

These are a few provocative scenes from "Refuse," the first film shown at Sonscreen, the North American Division's (NAD) twenty-second annual film festival for young Christian filmmakers. Embedded within the hard-hitting, faith-based horror film was the message that love can cast our demons. "Refuse" was one of seven professional films, which included an Academy Award-winning movie, screened alongside 40 student films, at the Loma Linda University church in California from April 4 to 6, 2024.

Sonscreen leaders set the tone from day one. "Sonscreen is a safe space where you can share your creative voice and talk about challenging issues," said Julio C. Muñoz, Sonscreen executive director and NAD associate communication director. He added that regardless of background, "You are welcome here. You belong here."

In his session, "Refuse" actor, writer, and director Kenneth Chang stressed, "If there's one place you can be totally fearless, it's in storytelling." After the screening and Q&A, Chang, a pastor educated at Fuller Seminary, spent time talking with student filmmakers. This was a trend each professional filmmaker followed at this year's event—in addition to scheduled times for engagement.

Sonscreen provided several networking and professional development opportunities, including career talks from seasoned filmmakers and a new "luncheon with a professional." The third annual pitch competition offered emerging filmmakers funding for projects.



**Sonscreen
Film Festival**

Julio C. Muñoz, Sonscreen Film Festival executive director and associate director, NAD communication, addresses the crowd at the 2024 festival, held from April 4 to 6 in Loma Linda, California. *Pieter Damsteeg*

The festival concluded with a highly anticipated reception and awards ceremony, where 13 students awards were distributed as attendees cheered on their peers. Student films were recognized across six categories—dramatic short, documentary short, comedy short, art/experimental, animated short, high school short, and an audience choice award.

Additional awards included the brand-new Emerging Voice Award and the Sonscreen Vision Award, presented for the first time since 2019. And while the jury has, in past years, honored a film with a special award, this year's festival presented four separate special jury awards for achievement in archival research, creative storytelling, visual style, and writing. Juror and screenwriter Ryan Dixon announced the special jury awards during the ceremony and explained that the jury members felt compelled to present the additional awards because of the high quality of student work.

The night's final prize, the Sonscreen Vision Award, was given to Rajeev Sigamoney, Pacific Union College's (PUC) visual arts department chair, for his support of Sonscreen from its inception. A tearful Sigamoney praised Sonscreen for supporting such projects as "The Record Keeper" and providing him and other artists of faith a sense of community. He also thanked the current organizers, including Muñoz, festival associate director Rachel Scribner, festival producer Tanya Musgrave, and NAD communication director Kimberly Luste Maran.

"We love you, Rajeev!" a PUC student shouted, Sigamoney's students swarming him as he ended his short acceptance speech.

Schools represented in person included Andrews University, Hinsdale Academy, La Sierra University,

Oakwood University, Pacific Union College, Southern Adventist University, Walla Walla University, and Richmond Academy. Point Loma Nazarene University, a Christian liberal arts college in San Diego, California, also had an official entry.

Jacob Capiña, the Emerging Voice Award winner, was an outlier, as his academy, Hinsdale, does not have a film program. He especially appreciated being able to share thoughts and ideas with filmmaking peers. "This networking opportunity for people like us in the Adventist world has been impactful for me," he stated.

Films Cover the Gamut of Human Experience

Sonscreen films made attendees laugh, cry, gasp, and think, tackling such topics as racism, civil rights and other unsung heroes, mental health challenges, war, and family relationships. Several covered discovering one's calling, including "Sara Hunter, Birth Photographer," by Nicole Edisa Djirah Sabot, which won best documentary short and best in festival for its skillful entry into the little-known work of documenting the birthing process.

Another recurring theme was being authentic, as in "Pics," which draws from Oakwood University student Hannah Browning's experience publicly revealing her alopecia. After "Pics" won best dramatic short, Browning said, "It's not all about the awards. What moved me most was how 'Pics' touched people. I see the award as a tangible reminder of that."

Sonscreen participants also used film as an avenue to explore their faith. For instance, "Pics" prominently featured a poster emblazoned with "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). Winning high school film "His Blessing," from Richmond Acad-



The Sonscreen Vision Award went to Rajeev Sigamoney, Pacific Union College's (PUC) visual arts department chair, for his contributions to Sonscreen over the past 22-plus years. *Art Brondo*

emy's film class, effectively used a split screen to contrast life with and without the Sabbath. It was inspired by director Nicole Da Luz's experience losing, then regaining, the gift of the Sabbath because of a temporary lapse in church attendance after her family moved to the U.S. from Brazil.

Chase Smith, a Walla Walla University student, shared that producing "Miracles," about overcoming leukemia as a toddler, helped him reflect on his faith. "I have to keep reminding myself I'm lucky to be here. And I have a purpose, making these films," Smith said. He hopes to share messages "that can help people" throughout his career.

Professional Films Offer Aspirational Aspect

Sonscreen incorporated professional films throughout, which organizers intended to be aspirational. Several came from Adventist entities, such as "Life on the Line: Finding Hope in Ukraine," a Loma Linda University Advancement Films production highlighting the work of Adventist clinic Angelia Hospital in war-torn Ukraine; notably, this film helped raise \$4 million for a children's hospital.

"The Color of Threads," about five women weavers trying to escape their pasts, directed by Richard Ram-

sey and cocreated, produced, and written by Walla Walla University graduate Josie Henderson, premiered at this year's festival. It is one of the ongoing collaborative projects between Sonscreen Films and Adventist universities.

For a fourth year Sonscreen featured professional films in partnership with the Windrider Institute, a community of filmmakers from different faiths who meet at the Sundance Film Festival to watch movies and discuss the intersection between film and faith. Most of these filmmakers were present at Sonscreen, including Mikaela Bruce ("Not Afraid," on murdered and missing Indigenous women) and Chang ("Refuse").

Sonscreen's collaboration with Windrider also enabled attendees to enjoy the Academy Award-winning documentary short "The Last Repair Shop," which tells the stories of technicians helping the Los Angeles Unified School District continue to provide free instruments in good working order to K-12 public school students. In a prerecorded interview with Walla Walla University professor Jerry Hartman, filmmaker Ben Proudfoot shared these gems: (1) reframe rejection; (2) have a long-term career plan; and (3) surround yourself with people who believe in you.

Expanded Learning and Networking Opportunities

The 2024 festival expanded its career-building tools. The "LA Luncheon With a Professional" was a popular new feature allowing attendees to sit at a table with professionals in all aspects of filmmaking, whether cinematography, directing, documentary filmmaking, entertainment law, producing, or screenwriting, in small groups.

The pitch competition gave students the experience of sharing their vision with a live audience and jury. Cash prizes included first place (\$3,500), second place (\$1,500), third place (\$750), and an audience choice award (\$250), based on pitches including budget, audience, marketing, and distribution. Films on gentrification and commercial-driven displacement took the top awards.

Javad Karimabadi, who won the audience choice award for a film on repairing an estranged father-son relationship, said, "[Sonscreen] has [helped me see] what I'm capable



of, especially in terms of creative development and things I've worked on through the pitch."

One was "A Networking Story," by Simon Knobloch, a producer, director, and teacher at the SAE Institute in Germany. He shared that the German word for relationship is *beziehung*, and a common saying is that somebody used vitamin B—B for *beziehung*—i.e., achieved something by capitalizing on relationships.

Knobloch shared networking success stories. For instance, as the creative producer for Hope Media Europe's *Daniel* TV series, he found the entire crew through school, volunteer, or work connections. "Don't ever underestimate any person you meet," he said. He also spoke of accessing elusive materials for an episode on the Qumran (Dead Sea) scrolls after praying and cold contacting a German Bible researcher. With emotion he made another point—"You should never underestimate the connection you have to heaven."

Other educational presentations included Richard L. Ramsey speaking about his upcoming film "Unsung Hero," on the musical ascent of For King and Country (Joel and Luke Smallbone) and Rebecca St. James; and Julian Curi, who gave an honest account of the ups and downs of DIY filmmaking after his film, "Gruff," a paper-cut animated short about learning to accept love in different forms, was screened.

Finally, while speaking on his journey securing a distribution deal for his film "All the Wrong Ingredients," after a year of attending festivals, Southern Adventist University professor Nicholas Livanos praised Sonscreen for being exceptional in terms of organization and technical aspects. But most impressive, he said, is the community it fosters.

Livanos concluded, "I've seen us cheer on high school *Star Wars* fan films. I've seen students win awards with humility and grace, which I can only aspire to. And I've seen the competition for those awards take a back seat to the fellowship of new friends and old. I have been shaken by the love that pours out of people here. Thank you for your films. Thank you for your hard work. Thank you for being exactly you while selflessly serving a purpose greater than you."

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

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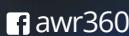


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During the May 29, 2024, North American Division Executive Committee, NAD president G. Alexander Bryant reminds those in attendance about the July 1 registration opening for Pentecost 2025, the new initiative voted by the committee. *Kimberly Luste Maran*

PENTECOST 2025 INITIATIVE VOTED BY THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

During a special session of the NAD Executive Committee, a new initiative that includes funding assistance for local church proclamation initiatives is approved.

Pentecost dramatically impacted the early church. In fact, many Christians regard Pentecost as the birthdate of the Christian church (see Acts 2). On that day the church multiplied in number from 120 to 3,000 believers. Pentecost marks the fulfillment of Jesus Christ's promise to send the Holy Spirit to empower and guide His disciples.

And now, on May 29, 2024, the North American Division Executive Committee has voted to approve Pentecost 2025, an initiative to be launched for church leaders and members alike to seek the Holy Spirit's power and mobilize for evangelism with the goal of holding at least 3,000 proclamation initiatives division wide in 2025. Starting in July, Adventists with

approval from their church board can sign up to be part of Pentecost 2025, with the option to apply for start-up funds.

"All of us can play a pivotal role in sharing the love of Jesus and the distinctive truths entrusted to us," said G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president. "Moving forward with Pentecost 2025 helps us all embrace the mission and proclaim the

Article continued on page 10

“This is not merely a historical event but a clarion call for us, as Seventh-day Adventists, to carry the everlasting gospel to every corner of the earth, starting here in North America.”

Answers to the Most Asked Pentecost 2025 Questions

The NAD opened registration in July 2024 on the Pentecost 2025 webpage. In addition to the Pentecost 2025 application, there is a comprehensive list of resources, a short video introducing the initiative, and a detailed FAQs section. Below is a small selection highlighting the answers to the most asked questions the division has already received.

Who Can Participate?

Join the NAD's list to receive valuable tips and tools for evangelism in your own context. Whether you are a church holding a traditional event, a family conducting a meeting with friends, a school leader inviting the community to an event, or an social media content provider hosting a Bible study, we want to hear from you and provide assistance you may need. Each event needs to be connected to a local Adventist church and/or school and receive church or school board approval, but can be led by church workers or lay leaders.

What Is Required to Participate?

Pentecost 2025 is meant to encourage proclamation events that teach the Christ-centered, biblical teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Appeals to accept Jesus as Savior and to join the Adventist Church through baptism or profession of faith need to be included. There should be at least 15 sessions (the first 10 could be done in a small group Bible study format) with five public preaching proclamations and appeals taking place.

What Is a Proclamation Event?

Proclamation events are strategically designed activities focused on communicating the message of the Christian gospel and the distinctive beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist faith to diverse audiences. These events adapt various engaging formats for maximum impact:

Evangelistic Series: Public events that vividly present the gospel and Adventist doctrines, creating a welcoming environment for community exploration and connection with our faith.

Bible Study Groups: Sessions held in-person or online, providing a communal setting for participants to delve into biblical teachings, fostering an environment of learning and spiritual enrichment.

Health and Bible Study Proclaim Events: Emphasizing the wholistic approach to evangelism, your church could, for example, utilize the latest resource from ASI and It Is Written with Pastor John Bradshaw, the “New Beginnings Health Bible Study Guide Set” available at It Is Written Shop. These guides combine physical well-being with spiritual growth, offering a comprehensive study experience that addresses the needs of the whole person.

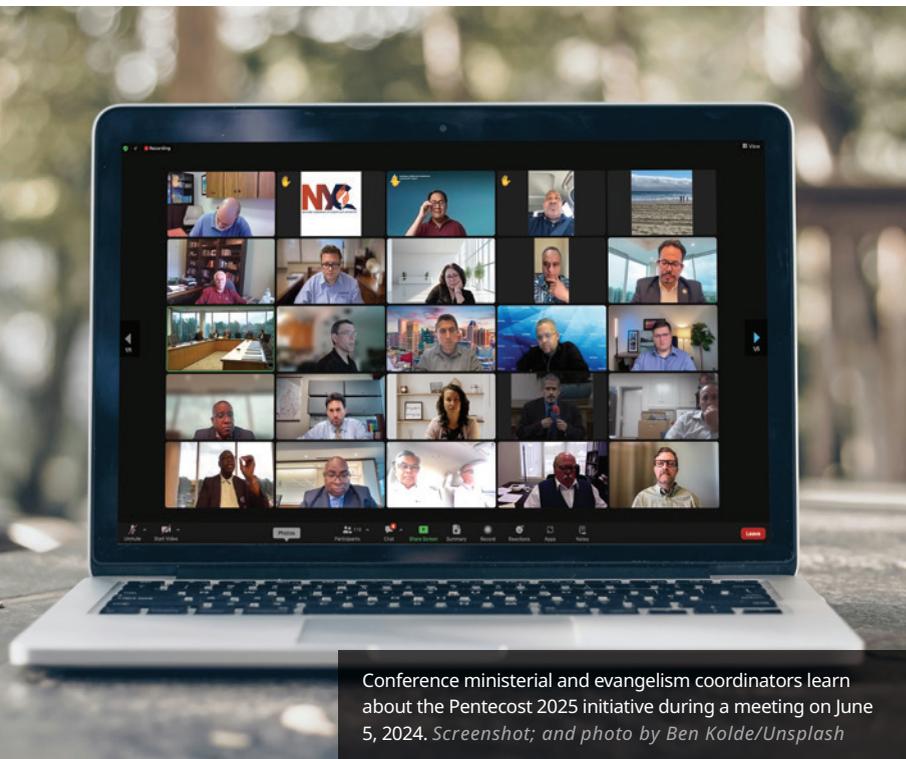
The purpose of these events is to manifest and share the hope and love found in Jesus Christ, encouraging people to embrace the faith. By engaging in these proclamation events, we follow the biblical example set forth at Pentecost, empowering individuals to discover and grow in their spiritual journey under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

How Can I Engage my Community in Preparation for Pentecost 2025?

Ministering to the needs of people and developing relationships is critical if we are going to follow Jesus' model for soul-winning. On an individual level we can do this by sincerely reaching out to neighbors, coworkers, and others with friendship, encouragement, and acts of compassion. A church group might also use felt needs seminars, food pantries, literature distribution, Bible studies, etc. Check out the webpage section on preparing for Pentecost for resources and ideas for connecting with people in your community.

Where Do I Start?

Embarking on the path of Pentecost 2025, you're invited to deepen your engagement with evangelism through accessible, enriching resources and training opportunities. In addition to using available resources, and utilizing the training offered by the NAD (webinars and regional training), those coordinating the proclamation events should engage with their community, followed by a focus on Bible study and evangelism, and, above all, pray! Prayer must be the starting place for any event/series. Prayer must continue to be a hallmark of every Pentecost 2025 activity. There will be success only where the Holy Spirit is present and working in the lives of all involved.



↓ The Pentecost 2025 resource welcome kit will be sent to churches that sign up and are approved for their initiative. The kit includes sermons for different age groups, training materials, a video message player, presentation remote, Pentecost 2025 T-shirt, and more.



gospel. This is an opportunity for each member to take the words of Matthew 24:14 to heart.”

The plan is straightforward. Using the rest of 2024 as planning and preparation time, a pastor or layperson is encouraged to take their proposal for a proclamation initiative (i.e., evangelistic meetings) to their local church board for an action of support. Upon voted church board approval, the person registers for Pentecost 2025 by filling out the NAD form at <https://www.nadadventist.org/pentecost2025>. There is an option to request, one time, up to \$3,000 in financial assistance for their local event. Once the local conference designee provides approval, the application goes to the union and then the NAD; and a resource welcome kit is sent to the church. Upon completion of the event, a report will be submitted to the division.

“Pentecost 2025 is for all Seventh-day Adventist churches across the North American Division. Every member, pastor, teacher, young adult, student, and child is encouraged to participate. We are urging total member involvement,” said Calvin Watkins, NAD vice president overseeing evangelism. “And we recognize that the majority of our churches are small and may need ‘seed money’ and resources that can help them chart the way forward. We hope to provide both to as many as possible. We are together in mission!”

To facilitate Pentecost 2025, the NAD leadership will lead by example through proclamation events and dedicated prayer time, and resources and training will be made available through the North American Division website. “We are committed to equipping our members with the tools and knowledge necessary for effective evangelism. Whether it’s through innovative outreach strategies, digital platforms, or traditional methods, we must find ways to reach hearts longing for the hope and wholeness found in Jesus,” said Jose Cortes, Jr., NAD Ministerial Association associate director for evangelism.

Plugging into Pentecost by joining the NAD’s list of proclamation initiatives means getting access to valuable tips and tools for evangelism—including regional training events and webinars—in a variety of contexts.

“Whether you are a church holding a traditional event, a family conducting a meeting with friends, a school leader inviting the community to an event, or a social media content provider hosting a Bible study, there will be resources and training to help you along the way,” said Kent Sharpe, NAD project director of Antioch initiatives.

“We want the Holy Spirit to descend on us as never before,” Bryant said. “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 carry the everlasting gospel to every corner of the earth, starting here in North America.”

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

NAD NEWS BRIEFS

Adventist HealthCare CEO Terry Forde to Depart to Lead Health First in Florida

Terry Forde, president and chief executive officer of Adventist HealthCare, headquartered in Maryland, will step down from his role on August 2, 2024, to become president and CEO of Health First, headquartered in Florida.

Founded in 1907, Adventist HealthCare is a faith-based, not-for-profit comprehensive health-care system consisting of six owned and managed hospitals and more than 50 facilities offering a full continuum of care across the Greater Washington, D.C., region. Under Terry's leadership during the past 13 years, Adventist HealthCare has earned national recognition for its leadership practices, been awarded numerous quality and safety distinctions, been honored as a trustworthy organization, and been recognized repeatedly for being a top workplace.

Emmanuel Asiedu, chair of the Adventist HealthCare board of directors, said, "Terry has been a tireless advocate for championing our mission, driving improvement, and expanding our services in order to provide physical, mental,

and spiritual healing to every person every time. We are grateful for his many achievements and for the leadership system he established that will continue to guide our delivery of high-quality, compassionate care to our community. We wish Terry and Health First the very best."

"It has been an honor to work with the dedicated leaders and team members of Adventist HealthCare, especially during the midst of a pandemic and significant change in the health industry," said Forde. "I am so glad to have been part of an organization dedicated to being the best choice for both patients and team members and look forward to joining Health First to promote vibrant well-being in Florida."

—Adventist HealthCare News



↑ Terry Forde, president and CEO of Adventist HealthCare, is stepping down on August 2, 2024. Photo provided by Adventist HealthCare

Walla Walla University Names Alex Bryan as New President

On Monday, May 6, 2024, the Walla Walla University board of trustees unanimously elected Alex Bryan to become Walla Walla University's twenty-fourth president.

"We are excited that Dr. Bryan accepted our invitation to serve as Walla Walla University president," says John Freedman, chair of the board of trustees and president of the North Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. "He has a deep love for and walk with God and His Son, Jesus Christ, which will bless our university students, faculty, and staff."

For 13 years Bryan served as a pastor in Georgia and Tennessee before joining Walla Walla University church (College Place, Washington) as senior pastor in 2009. In 2013 he became president of Kettering College (Dayton, Ohio) for one year, and then returned to Walla Walla

University church to serve as senior pastor another four years.

In 2018 Bryan joined Adventist Health (Roseville, California), where he most recently served as senior vice president and chief mission officer, leading strategy and discourse about ethics, alignment to mission, spiritual care, relationship to faith communities, global mission, theological foundations of health care, and also overseeing philanthropy and grants initiatives.

During the past 16 years Bryan has served as adjunct professor teaching theology, business, communication, and honors studies at numerous Seventh-day Adventist universities. He has served on several committees and boards, including the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, the Upper Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, and the



↑ Alex Bryan, Walla Walla University's twenty-fourth president Photo provided by Walla Walla University

Adventist Bioethics Consortium.

"I am honored to be called to serve such a special place, one that is dedicated to God and to His glory and to His purposes in the world," Bryan says. "Our family has called College Place home for 15 years, and we've been deeply blessed by the peerless mission of Walla Walla University and its people."

Bryan will replace John McVay, who is retiring after serving as university president for 18 years.

—Walla Walla University Relations

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BY DIANE THURBER

Made in His Image

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26, KJV).¹

Many are familiar with this verse from Creation week, but Scripture also speak of God’s continued involvement in the creation of humanity. King David wrote, “For you formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed” (Ps. 139:13-16, NKJV).²

When our first child was developing in utero, our obstetrician asked if we would like an ultrasound image. We declined. We wanted to be surprised at the delivery. And then came the news that our child likely had spina bifida (a neural tube defect that causes mild to severe disabilities), and he suggested that then would be the best time to abort this child if we were concerned.

We were devastated! As many parents do, we prayed for healthy development and delivery. Aborting our growing baby was nothing we ever considered. He encouraged us to think about the news and let him know our decision. We both felt strongly this was a prayed-for baby, and if the child were born with different abilities, we trusted that God would help us. We believed we would not love the child any less. We told the doctor we would carry the child to term. “Are you sure you don’t want an ultrasound?” he asked again. We declined.

When our son was born, he was perfect, from our perspective. We questioned the doctor. “No, he doesn’t have spina bifida.” Our joyful hearts praised God. But not every parent has this experience.

Working at Christian Record Services for the Blind, I meet the most wonderful children and adults. I meet some parents, too. There is not a one-size-fits-all answer to their questions: “Why me?” or “Why did this happen to my child?” Blindness is a spectrum, and it does not always occur at birth.

The only comfort I have to offer comes from the Word of God. In the New Testament, Jesus often paused to interact with people who were blind. He demonstrated His profound love for each of His children and, in doing so, often illustrated He came to heal blindness—both of the eyes and of the heart.

Jesus taught that people who are blind are not a mistake. They are His children, and He has a purpose for their lives, just as he has for mine (see Jer. 29:11).

God also promises His presence to my friends who may find that life offers a more difficult journey: “I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them” (Isa. 42:16).

I long for Jesus to return and give sight to those who have heard His voice and sensed His presence. Revelation 1:7 promises, “Behold, he is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him” (NKJV). Imagine the joy

in Jesus’ heart as His faithful followers who are blind see His face and, at that moment, truly understand they were made in His image.

God invites us to lead not only people who are sighted to Him but also those who are blind or otherwise abled differently. Will you answer His invitation?

The only comfort I have to offer comes from the Word of God. . . . Jesus taught that people who are blind are not a mistake.

¹ From the King James Version of the Bible.

² Scripture taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Diane Thurber is president of Christian Record Services, Inc., a ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. For information, visit ChristianRecord.org, or follow on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram @CRSBfriends.

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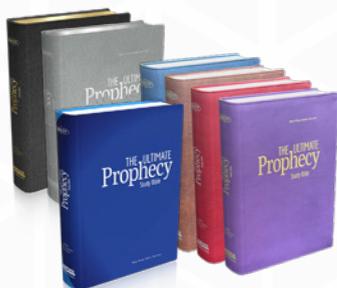
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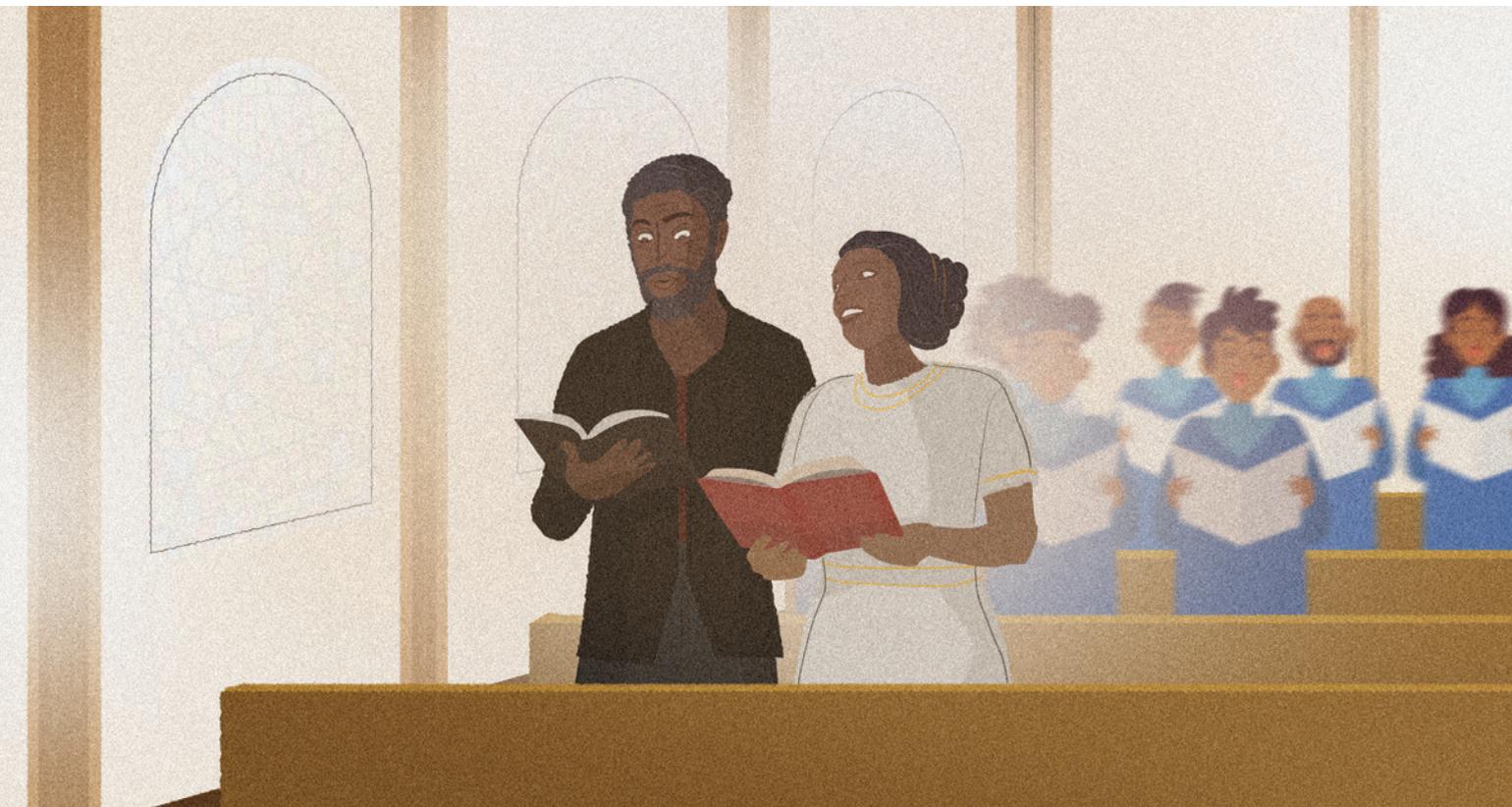
Sherry and Gary

are ready to retire next year.

They need some advice on tax implications and ways to navigate this next stage in life. They are prepared to get more involved at church but want to ensure their bills are taken care of before they retire and give a significant donation to the children's programs.



To learn more about Sherry and Gary's next steps—scan the QR code or visit willplan.org/SherryandGary



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AMAZING FACTS IS GOING TO NEW YORK CITY!

I'm inviting you to partner with me, Amazing Facts, and the worldwide church in winning souls this coming fall by hosting *Prophecy Odyssey* in your church or home! This exciting evangelistic series will be broadcast **live from the Manhattan Center in New York beginning September 20.**

Here are just a few ways you can host *Prophecy Odyssey*:

- Advertise the series in your community and show it in your church sanctuary.
- Invite your friends and neighbors to enjoy the series in your home.
- Watch a rebroadcast of the series with co-workers during a lunch break.
- Host the meetings for church youth in a member's home.
- View the series with a remote group on Zoom and discuss what you learned.

