

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF ADVENTIST CHAPLAINCY MINISTRIES

THE

# ADVENTIST CHAPLAIN

ISSUE 4 2021





# A CHAPLAIN IN MOTION

## PERSPECTIVE

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For some odd reason, the most famous law of thermodynamics has been brewing in my mind during the last year. Perhaps it was because my busy life of travel came to a screeching halt. And, motion in my life, at least the way I was used to having it, has been forever changed. As I write these thoughts, I am preparing for my first airplane journey in a year and a half and only after complete vaccination and taking a slew of precautions. Still, this journey is one I must take. It is understood that, “A body in motion tends to stay in motion.” I have heard this applied not only to physics but also to exercise, and to life. So, then I thought, why not also apply this idea to chaplaincy and ministry in general?

One thing I find most frustrating in my travels and visits to chaplains

is when I encounter a pastor or a chaplain who refuses to grow and change. I guess they have grown accustomed to doing things one way and resist the signs of change surrounding them. I have learned in all these years that change is inevitable and those who oppose change or motion run the risk of losing relevance. And, the natural result of an irrelevant pastor or chaplain, well, let’s just leave that to your imagination.

I find this reluctance to grow somewhat puzzling because, as I see it, God built development and growth, into life from the very beginning. See, for example, the creation progression. Each day of creation developed into what was created as a base the day before. Even later, the days of creation developed what was created in previous days. For example, notice



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# I HAVE LEARNED IN ALL THESE YEARS THAT CHANGE IS INEVITABLE AND THOSE OPPOSE CHANGE OR MOTION RUN THE RISK OF LOSING RELEVANCE.

what God created on the third day. The plants, the trees, and the grass were further developed in the sixth day by adding animals and humans to creation to form the beautiful creative scene we have today with the variety of life that fills nature. See how God built development into creation?

Considering this, it behooves us chaplains and pastors of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to accept that developmental growth is an expectation, not a preference or a wishful desire. This may be a not-so-veiled invitation from me to develop your scriptural study tools. Let's examine how Jesus included a developmental description in the Beatitudes. Each of the Beatitudes builds upon the previous one in describing a spiritual development plan. Think about how

your spiritual life would be taken to a deeper level if you focused on developing your Christian walk after the descriptors of the Beatitudes.

Let us not forget that we have been called by a God who expects us to grow. Paul understood it when he declared that we are “being transformed, into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). So, I ask you, if God is actively transforming you through the Spirit (another way to name development), do you really want to stand in the way? I understand the spiritual implications of the second law of thermodynamics and dare to restate it with all due respect. “A chaplain/pastor who is in spiritual motion, tends to stay in spiritual motion!”

## WHAT'S

Please share what is happening with chaplaincy in your part of the world.



- Send it to [ACMEEditor@gc.adventist.org](mailto:ACMEEditor@gc.adventist.org)
- Copy your Union and Division ACM Directors.
- Include your email and phone number.

# FORGING YOUR PASTORAL AUTHORITY AND IDENTITY

**Deena Bartel-Wagner**, Editor, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries



In the world of the pastor and chaplain, professional growth occurs as the individual progresses through developmental stages. These stages include development in the chaplain's pastoral authority, pastoral identity, and pastoral tools. You may have heard Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries leaders say that all chaplains are pastors, but not all pastors are chaplains. A chaplain's role brings specialized ministry that accompanies the training and ministry developed in the pastoral season.

To illustrate this evolution in the life of a chaplain, let's examine the hypothetical chaplaincy journey of Hank.

### WHISPERS OF A CALLING

Hank sensed a calling to ministry throughout his life but wasn't clear on what that meant specifically for him. He liked giving of himself as a service to God and helping people. As people affirmed him through the activities and the preaching opportunities he accepted, Hank recognized that he was called to ministry. He enrolled in a theology degree at a Adventist college. As a student, Hank took advantage of and participated in the leadership and ministry opportunities in both the spiritual and other campus activities.

As graduation approached, ministerial secretaries interviewed and recognized the latent aptitude and call on Hank's life. After much prayer and discussion, he and his wife accepted an offer to intern in a three-church district under the senior pastor.

Although this was a new experience for Hank, his personal Bible study throughout college helped him recognize that the pastor's role is a biblical office used for building up the body,<sup>1</sup> shepherding the flock,<sup>2</sup> and following Christ's example as a servant leader.<sup>3</sup>

In those early years, Hank also knew that he had to be in submission to Christ,<sup>4</sup> be subject to the Word, be subject to the church in the way he lived and taught.<sup>5,6</sup>

When the local conference conferred a ministerial license and indicated he was on a path to ordination, Hank felt validated on another level of pastoral authority.

As the years passed, Hank developed personally and professionally through preaching, evangelism, leading committees, providing pastoral counseling, and active listening. Initially, none of these felt natural to Hank. Instead, they required conscious attention to individual elements he had learned. Then, however, his awareness of the spiritual gifts God built in him began to expand.

AS THE YEARS PASSED, HANK DEVELOPED PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY THROUGH PREACHING, EVANGELISM, LEADING COMMITTEES, PROVIDING PASTORAL COUNSELING, AND ACTIVE LISTENING.

Hank saw this effect as he continued engaging with his members and other individuals in his community.

Although Hank's ministerial experience was fulfilling, he began to recognize that the symbols of pastoral ministry, such as a license, the lead pastor assigning him additional responsibilities, and accolades from members, were external confirmation of his call to ministry. As a result, he felt a greater need for intrinsic pastoral authority.

This led to more self-reflection. Hank knew God had called him, the church had licensed him, and his growth as a pastor was positive. As Hank grew professionally, he recognized that he possessed general knowledge but needed additional specialized training. He began to anticipate the opportunity of attending the Adventist seminary.

## GROWING IN KNOWLEDGE

During seminary, Hank enjoyed the interactions of broader intellectual exchange, the enhanced application of biblical principles to life, and a growing recognition of areas of specialization in ministry. This more comprehensive array of ministries attracted Hank's attention. As a result, he began thinking about ministering to people using methods that addressed their specific needs rather than applying a blanket solution to all situations.

Hank began to hear colleagues discussing how they wanted to apply their ministerial skills. Some wanted to work with young adults. Others decided that they wanted to teach theology to undergraduate students. Still, others leaned towards biblical research.

One day Hank overheard a conversation about chaplaincy. He'd



met a chaplain at the local hospital during his ministerial internship but didn't initially think much about it. But now, his curiosity grew, and he wanted to learn more. Joining the conversation, Hank realized that chaplains work in various areas of ministry. So, he decided to enroll in a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and experience what it had to offer. Hank thought, "It can't hurt, and this will be one more tool I can use when I return to pastor a local church."

During his first CPE unit, Hank's active listening skills increased. He recognized that previous life events impacted how he reacted to people and situations. Working through those personal demons, he grew more empathetic.

Hank began to sense a deeper empathy welling in his own heart for the pain that people experience. His desire grew to reach into people's lives and heal their whole pain and not just the present manifestation they experienced. This led him to recognize that Jesus ministered in this manner. Then he read a quote in *the Ministry of Healing*. "*Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with people as one who desired their good. He showed sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He invited them, "Follow Me."*"<sup>7</sup>

Although Hank returned to a local church following his graduation, he knew that chaplaincy lay in his future.

His pastoral outreach changed as his theological identity grew. He now possessed a clearer sense of who he was as a Seventh-day Adventist and how the values and relationships from his past were a part of who he was.

He noticed that his pastoral ministry became increasingly directed to those who were hurting. These individuals seemed to have a keener desire for his help and be more receptive. He recognized that in the eyes of his members and even himself, the pastoral authority his ministry held was no longer tied as much to ecclesiastical leadership. Instead, it now was apparent because of the healing that came to members through his administration of the Spirit of Christ and His Word. The members seemed to be drawn to his empathy.

As Hank counseled others, he often asked them to let the Word of God speak to them for their needs in the here and now. His pastoral authority and identity continued to grow as he spent time with individuals, and they allowed Hank to be with them. Hank realized that they were giving to and affirming his pastoral authority in this way.

Although seminary classes were behind him, Hank desired to continue his clinical training and enrolled in additional CPE units. When a CPE supervisor talked about the need to make a connection between actions and the theory of those actions, Hank realized he'd gained another tool to use.

## HIS PASTORAL AUTHORITY AND IDENTITY CONTINUED TO GROW AS HE SPENT TIME WITH INDIVIDUALS, AND THEY ALLOWED HANK TO BE WITH THEM.

These interactions stretched him and caused him to further reflect on the direction of his ministry. Although Hank enjoyed preaching, the specialization of chaplaincy beckoned, and he spent time asking God if this desire was from Him.

He also began to think about what kind of chaplaincy would be most meaningful and decided to apply for chaplaincy endorsement from his home Division. The application process felt different from when he first began as a ministerial intern. He knew that he didn't depend on the endorsement to grant him pastoral authority, but rather it was a step needed to fulfill requirements. His pastoral authority had been internalized, and Hank's sense of God's leading was even more robust.

## A DEEPER LEVEL

Transitioning from pastoral ministry in a church to a chaplaincy position felt natural because of the foundation Hank laid throughout the years. He no longer needed external reminders of his pastoral authority. Instead, he understood better who he was as a pastor and how the role of an empath, active listener, counselor, shepherd, and even evangelist could change depending on the situation.

Although he completed four units of CPE during his years as a pastor, Hank felt the need to continue to build his clinical skills. So, he applied for a CPE residency and immersed himself fully in the experience. During the year, Hank felt challenged many times, but a statement by his CPE supervisor became his guiding principle.



The supervisor reminded the CPE trainees that they would need to find a balance between empathy and compassion. He explained that empathy is a feeling and that we as humans can become very good at parroting people's feelings.

Then he told the trainees that compassion is an action verb. He suggested that the trainees begin to think in terms of, "I feel with you, but let's see what we can do about this together."

Again, Hank possessed another tool to guide him as he ministered to others.

Ministering in a pluralistic setting drove Hank to further examine his theological identity and what made him stand out as a Seventh-day Adventist Chaplain. He contemplated the beliefs of the church and how faith and hope intertwined. His faith gives him confidence and trust in something, or someone not seen. His hope provided optimism for a better tomorrow.

As Hank continued thinking about this, he realized that his faith in the gift of salvation and his hope in the Second Coming provided something he could offer patients during his visits and interactions with them.

Hank's identity as a Seventh-day Adventist had become well-developed and identifiable. He didn't need to push it on people, but he also didn't need to cover it up. During his CPE residency, a church member

asked how he could minister to homosexuals. Hank considered the member's question and replied, "Although I believe marriage is between a man and a woman, I am not the judge of someone who practices homosexuality. I am not their advocate, neither am I their accuser. I am present to minister to them. I don't condone that lifestyle any more than I condone lying, thieving, or gossiping. But I am called to minister to them based on the grace God gives to every human being."

Hank decided to share this interaction in a verbatim to gain further insight from his supervisor and peers. The group agreed with Hank's response. The supervisor reminded them that if any of them was struggling with understanding their theological identity, they should get help to clarify their spiritual identity.

## **INTERNALIZING IDENTITY AND AUTHORITY**

During the transition from CPE trainee to a chaplain, Hank reflected again how different he felt in both his pastoral identity and authority from when he initially said yes to a local conference to become a pastoral intern. He fully identified that he was God-called, church credentialed, and chaplaincy endorsed.

HANK EXAMINED HIS THEOLOGICAL IDENTITY AND WHAT MADE HIM STAND OUT AS A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHAPLAIN. HE CONTEMPLATED THE BELIEFS OF THE CHURCH AND HOW FAITH AND HOPE INTERTWINED.

His denomination recognized his calling in both the ecclesiastical and professional realms. His former church members and now the patients he visited daily affirmed his calling by their willingness to share their stories and space with him.

Hank had the choice to settle into his role of chaplain and feel that he'd arrived. Instead, the desire for additional training remained. As a part of his endorsement, Hank was required to submit an annual report that shared the continuing education he received during the year.

Choosing seminars and training that stretched and challenged him became a partial answer to satisfy Hank's thirst for learning.

This seemed to be enough for a few years, but then Hank began considering Board Certification. He knew the process would take time and commitment. So, again, he turned to prayer, seeking God's leading in the matter. As he shared his thoughts with his wife, she asked him how this would help him professionally. Together, they mapped out a timeline that would allow him to complete the requirements and write his competency and reflection papers without taking a lot of time away from their family.

Eventually, the date for his

Board Certification interview came. Although Hank felt nervous, internally he knew this was what God called him to be and do. At the end of the meeting, Hank experienced the thrill of the confirmation of another affirmation to his ministry. He would soon be able to add the letters BCC after his name.

### CALLED TO MENTOR

As the months and years passed, Hank relished his interactions with the patients. He learned from their stories, shared from his heart, and often felt blessed to be with families in their time of crisis and deepest fear and agonizing sorrow.

When Hank realized he had become one of the senior chaplains, he noticed another progression. Now he was the person the younger chaplains came to when they had questions. They sought him out for encouragement, guidance, and sometimes even to vent their frustrations.

Hank sensed another evolution coming into his life. He realized that he enjoyed mentoring other chaplains and thought about his days of CPE training. Should he apply to become a CPE Supervisor? Again, Hank determined that he would not make this decision alone, and prayer and family discussions took place. He

WHEN HANK REALIZED HE HAD BECOME ONE OF THE SENIOR CHAPLAINS, HE NOTICED ANOTHER PROGRESSION. NOW HE WAS THE ONE THE YOUNGER CHAPLAINS CAME TO WHEN THEY HAD QUESTIONS.

explained to his family that this would not be a short-term process but rather that it could take as much as three to five years to complete. Hank applied and was accepted into the Supervisory Education track with their blessing.

He spent time participating in spiritual assessments, developing appropriate care plans, teasing out his own ideas of educational theory, and learning about and practicing implementation of behavioral science tools. He also began to create a CPE program tailored to his teaching style.

Additionally, Hank delved deeper into his personal reflective biography and theological reflection. He continued to be fascinated with the changes God worked in him through

the years and where being faithful to answer His call had led him.

As a CPE Supervisor, Hank knows that his learning continues each day as he interacts with his students and guides them through just a part of the process of their developmental stages of pastoral authority, pastoral identity, and the equipping of their pastoral tools in chaplaincy.

1 Ephesians 4:11-13.

2 1 Peter 5.

3 Matthew 20:27-28.

4 1 Peter 5:4.

5 1 Peter 5.

6 1 Timothy 3.

7 *Ministry of Healing*, page 73.



# THE HINGES SWUNG THE DOOR

By **Nicolás Luzardo**,

Chaplain and Clinical Pastoral Education Supervisor-in-Training, Sanatorio Adventista del Plata, Libertador San Martín, Argentina with Deena Bartel-Wagner, Editor, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries



Nicolás Luzardo serves as a chaplain and CPE Supervisor-in-Training at the Sanatorio Adventista del Plata, Argentina.



# A father's choice. A son's choice. Combined, they made the difference in the life of Nicolás Luzardo.

**A**t 13 years old, when his parents separated and divorced, Nicolás's life was turned upside-down. "My two brothers went to live with my mom, and I lived with my dad," says Nicolás. "This turbulent time was difficult for me."

As tensions grew between his parents, Nicolás felt caught in the middle. "The problems my parents experienced interfered with their ability to care for me," says Nicolás. "I decided to move out and began living in a car."

Nicolás' father worried that he didn't know how to best care for his son. Seeking help from a local priest, he learned about a boarding school, but it was for older teens. "The priest told my father about another boarding school operated by Seventh-day Adventists. He decided to enroll me and believed it would be a good place for me," says Nicolás.

The school program drew him in as the faculty and staff ministered to his emotional and spiritual needs. Then, during a camp meeting, Nicolás' life took another turn. "The pastor's words went deep into my heart and convicted me to follow Jesus," says Nicolás. "As I attended those meetings, I decided on baptism and to become a Seventh-day Adventist."

During the following year, Nicolás grew spiritually and continued to listen to God's still, small voice. "When I was sixteen, I felt a strong, clear call to study for the ministry," says Nicolás. "I completed my high school courses and then enrolled at Universidad Adventista del Plata (UAP) as a theology student."

Nicolás chose to be involved in

many of the spiritual activities of the university. "I worked as a chaplain at Sanatorio Adventista del Plata (SAP) for a year. My experiences there impressed me deeply," says Nicolás. "The moments I spent with terminally ill patients were especially sacred and special to me. I learned I was sensitive to people's pain. When someone loses a loved one, their grief is expressed in profound ways. I feel this is the most important place and time to be."

## PASTORING

Nicolás began his pastoral ministry in 2005 but still felt the draw of chaplaincy. "In 2012, I had the opportunity to take Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) for the first time," says Nicolás. "I received training at the Adventist Health System during an intensive summer unit. Then I did my one-year residency in Columbia, South Carolina, at the Baptist Hospital. After taking those 5 units, I returned to Argentina."

Upon his return to Argentina, Nicolás returned to SAP and began working as a chaplain. "When I returned from the United States, I was so excited to be a chaplain," says Nicolás. "I was in my own country, speaking in Spanish and working to help others whose culture I understood."

In just a few short months, his initial encounter with a family continues today. "One day as I during rounds, I met a very sad and stressed family waiting outside the ICU," says Nicolás. "During the following days, I began to know them better as they waited for their very ill mother to recover."

In Argentina, the role of chaplains



The Chaplaincy Team at Sanatorio Adventista del Plata. Front row from left to right: Soledad Araujo (staff chaplain), Carlos Hein (manager), Abigail Aranda (secretary); Back row from left to right: Nicolás Luzardo (staff chaplain and SIT), Daniel Córdoba (staff chaplain and SIT), Iván Elías (staff chaplain and SIT)

The Sanatorio Adventista del Plata was established in 1908.

isn't well known or understood, so Nicolás explained to the family that he was there to encourage and support them, and most importantly, pray with and for them.

"So day-by-day, they felt encouraged and supported, and the mother eventually recovered," says Nicolás. "That was six years ago, and since then, I have been in contact with the family in the following years. When one of the mother's daughters fell ill, I had the opportunity to help her and her husband during her time in the hospital. Recently, the family was at the hospital again. The 15-year-old grandson of the woman who'd originally been a patient needed treatment. The family eagerly waited for the chaplain's prayer before the procedure began."



The 15-year-old grandson told Nicolás that he, too, wants to become a chaplain because he is so impressed with how they help other people. Three generations have been touched and blessed by Nicolás' support. As the friendship has grown during the past six years, the family has asked many questions. Today the family has begun Bible studies to better know Jesus and His plan for their lives.

"So, the family has been in my life for more than six years, and they are starting to study the Bible now," says Nicolás. "It shocks and still surprises me how something as little as being next to someone in need can leave such a deep mark on the people we see every day."

## CHAPLAINCY IN ARGENTINA

Although chaplaincy in mainstream Argentina is in a fledgling state, it isn't unknown at SAP. "My hospital

was founded in 1908,” says Nicolás. “For the past 60 to 70 years, we’ve had chaplains. However, many people understood the chaplain’s role as someone who prayed and read the Bible to patients. Today we have six chaplains on staff at the hospital. When patients come to our 100-bed hospital, they expect a visit from the chaplain.”

Leaders and administrators outside the hospital began to see the specialized training as something that would enhance pastors’ ministry. As a result, interest is growing, and church pastors are receiving training.

The university is developing a master’s program in chaplaincy to provide training in this specialized ministry. “There are many educational institutions and numerous hospitals and clinics in the South American Division,” says Nicolás. “Here in Argentina, there is a second hospital in Buenos Aires. We have three in Peru, two in Paraguay, and one in Chile.”

In 2017, a CPE center opened at SAP to provide training, and in the first three years, CPE trainees completed their four units. “Currently, we have three groups operating,” says Nicolás. “One group meets in-person, and two groups meet online. We have 15 students from six hospitals, and two church pastors are also enrolled. We also have a group for two Supervisors-in-Training who have begun the process to become CPE supervisors. Our goal is to have three CPE supervisors here at UAP. We are grateful for the assistance that Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries and AdventHealth have provided.”

## MILESTONES AND REJOICING

Nicolás experienced another momentous event in 2018. After serving for 15 years as a pastor and

chaplain, he was ordained to the gospel ministry. “It’s not common in Argentina to ordain chaplains,” says Nicolás. “When you are a pastor in a church, you have many baptisms. Typically, baptisms aren’t as common for chaplains, so it takes a longer time for chaplains.”

A significant baptism for Nicolás took place five years ago. “My father met a woman who changed his life,” says Nicolás. “She was a Seventh-day Adventist, and he began to study the Bible, which eventually led him to be baptized.”

## TRAINING OTHERS TO REFLECT, THEN DO, AND REFLECT AGAIN

Today, Nicolás is a Supervisor-in-Training at SAP and plans to complete his training in early 2022. He’s also completing his master’s degree. As a CPE supervisor, he spends most of his time training students, reviewing verbatims, dealing with personnel, and teaching an adaptation of pastoral care to medical students and physicians at UAP. Unfortunately, the opportunity for interactions with patients is limited, and Nicolás misses that. He’s looking forward to when two more of his colleagues join him as CPE Supervisors. “If I want to be a good Supervisor, I have to be a good chaplain,” says Nicolás. “The patients teach me about myself, and that helps me grow as a chaplain.”

A father who didn’t know what to do with his teenage son made a choice and sent him to a boarding school. A 15-year-old boy made a choice to give his life to Jesus. Those two choices became the hinges that swung a door opened by the Master’s hand which called Nicolás Luzardo from a life in disarray and confusion to a life of serving his fellow humans.



# FROM ANCESTOR WORSHIP TO JESUS WORSHIP

By **Phong Nguyen**, Hospice Chaplain, Heart of Texas Hospice, Houston, Texas, with Deena Bartel-Wagner, Editor, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries

**A**s 17-year-old Phong Nguyen [fawng nwee-EN] said goodbye to his parents, he thought he was invincible and didn't realize the challenges ahead of him. Today he believes it was better that he didn't see into the future, or he would have been overwhelmed with what lay ahead.

"I grew up in a family of five children and have two older sisters and two younger brothers. My family was very close and loving," says Phong. "My father worked as a teacher, which is an honored career in Vietnam."

## A BOAT RIDE ON THE HIGH SEAS

By the time Phong was 17 years old, his father believed greater opportunities awaited his sons outside Vietnam. "My parents made the difficult decision for one of my brothers and me to leave Vietnam," says Phong. "The journey was not an easy one. I escaped from Vietnam on a boat with nine other people, but there wasn't enough gas on board to take us very far. On the second day of our trip, the engine died, and our boat floated aimlessly in the Gulf of Thailand. A couple of fishing boats with Thai fishermen tried to help, but they couldn't assist us. The engine wasn't made to power a boat, and they didn't have the parts to fix it."

As the boat continued to drift, danger lurked. Not all seafaring people were fishermen. Another day,

as a boat approached, Phong realized the crew was a group of pirates. This struck fear in everyone. "When they looked us over, they just shook their heads and said there was nothing they could rob from us because we were so poor and dirty," says Phong.

Another day a boat stopped and tried to help repair the engine and provide fuel. After the repairs were made, a catastrophic accident happened. When the engine was started, Phong's boat crashed into the other vessel and then splintered the front end into pieces. "The crew became too frightened to help us," says Phong. "In those days, the Thai government would arrest fishermen who picked up refugee people on the ocean. So, the fishermen left us there to die as the water began swamping the boat."

## THE TRIALS CONTINUE

Miraculously Phong and the group survived the night and witnessed the dawn of another day. But more trouble was on its way. "That afternoon, we saw all the Thai fishing boats racing past us, but we didn't understand why," says Phong. "As they sped by, it was obvious that they knew something we didn't know. Finally, the very last boat approached us and stopped. They picked us up, and as we sped towards our destination, we learned a powerful storm was blowing in."

When the group made landfall, the fishermen told Phong and his brother

When they looked us over, they just shook their heads and said there was nothing they could rob from us because we were so poor and dirty.

to disappear into the jungle where they would be safe. As night fell, Phong and his brother kept walking. “We could see a light in the distance, and we kept walking towards it,” says Phong. “There were times when we waded streams, and the water came up to our chests, but we had to keep going. In the morning, the police caught us and put us in a refugee camp in the mountains of Thailand.”

Life as a refugee in the camp was difficult. Water was rationed, food was scarce and unpalatable. Phong wondered if this was to be his fate. Eventually, he and his brother were transferred to another camp called Phanat Nikhom in Chonburi, Thailand. This move became a crossroads in Phong’s life.

## MEETING JESUS AS A REFUGEE

Phong knew that he needed to learn to speak English if he was going to be repatriated to another country. He heard that an organization called Adventist Relief and Development Agency (ADRA) offered English classes in the camp. As he attended the classes, he made friends, and some of them invited him to study the Bible with them. “I grew up as a Buddhist, and my family followed the tradition of ancestor worship,” says Phong. “I didn’t know anything about Christianity. My friends in the camp talked to me about stuff that I didn’t fully understand at first.

But their friendship and kindness began to win me over.”

Phong observed the Americans, Canadians, and Australians who taught the English classes. “They sacrificed their time and left their family to come and teach us English, the Bible, and to talk with us,” says Phong. “When they told me about the sacrifice that Jesus made for me so I could live forever, I realized that they were living out what they believed. They were willing to give of themselves to help someone like me. This was powerful to me and helped me make my decision to follow Jesus and be baptized.”

## THE PERFECT STORM

The months and years passed and finally, Phong and his brother received word that they would be moving to the United States. Getting an education was at the top of Phong’s list. “I decided to study to become an engineer,” says Phong. “I felt called by God to be a minister, but I used the excuse that I didn’t speak English well to convince myself to study something else.”

The Holy Spirit didn’t take no for an answer, and four years later, Phong enrolled at LaSierra University to study for his Bachelor of Theology degree. But this decision caused a rift between Phong and his family. “By this time, my family learned I’d become a Christian. They felt betrayed, and this created a huge

“When they told me about the sacrifice that Jesus made for me so I could live forever, I realized that they were living out what they believed.”

crisis in our family,” says Phong. “My relatives thought I was crazy, and my parents were embarrassed and wouldn’t talk with anyone. They wanted me to get an education and a job and earn enough to send money home. This became a perfect storm in my life. I struggled to keep up with my studies in English, deal with family and friends who criticized me, and worked to make a living.”

Despite all the obstacles, Phong completed his education. Following graduation, he volunteered to start a Vietnamese Adventist company in California. Then Phong moved to Texas and was hired by the conference to start a Vietnamese ministry.

## WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED CPE?

Learning new things and ideas always attracts Phong’s attention. So, when he learned about Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), he enrolled in his first unit. “I didn’t know anything about CPE, but I went in with a mindset that I wanted to learn something,” says Phong.

That unit led to five additional units and Phong’s transition into hospice chaplaincy. Today, Phong has found his niche in ministering to the dying.

## WALKING THE END-OF-LIFE JOURNEY WITH OTHERS

As he began working as a hospice chaplain, Phong believed his ministry would bless the people he met. “As I have sat by the bedside of many patients and listened to them, I’ve discovered they have blessed and ministered to me,” says Phong. When people talk to a chaplain, they often tell you exactly how you feel. They don’t play games with you,” says Phong.

“They’re sick, tired, and frustrated. When you’re lying on your bed, and you know you are dying, you are more honest and truthful with everyone.”

One of the skills that come naturally to Phong is listening and being comfortable in the silent times of a person’s grief. “I was working as a chaplain at MD Anderson Cancer Center. I received a call at 2:00 a.m. that a man had died from cancer and his wife needed to speak to a chaplain,” says Phong. “I introduced myself and then sat with her as she tried to comprehend her great loss, and now, she was a widow with two small children to raise. She told me later how she appreciated my presence in those moments.”

Today, Phong works for a hospice organization that contracts with doctors, and the patients come from many different hospitals and doctor referrals. “I typically have a list of about 40 patients each month who I visit regularly,” says Phong. “When a new patient is assigned to me, I review their profile and contact them to set a time for a visit. My visitation schedule is flexible, and I like that.”

Keeping his pastoral skills sharpened, Phong continues to minister to his congregation in the Houston Vietnamese Seventh-day Adventist Church he planted. He wants others to share in the hope he’s found in Jesus. “God’s mercy has taken me so far. I’ve been a pastor for 23 years,” says Phong. “Even today, I don’t understand everything about Him, but I’m still learning.”

Phong Nguyen’s journey to freedom in a country far from his homeland led him to freedom in Christ. His greatest desire is to help others find their freedom in Jesus and the hope He gives to the citizens of this war-torn planet.

# ADVENTIST CHAPLAINCY MINISTRIES WORLDWIDE

## INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION

### ADVENTIST CHAPLAINS MINISTER TO HAITIAN EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

By Libna Stevens, Inter-American Division News

A group of Adventist chaplains from the Inter-American Division's French territory were on a mission to minister to, as many as possible, victims of the recent earthquake that devastated the southern peninsula in Haiti. The chaplains were able to offer emotional and psycho-social support to more than 400 people from September 9–17, 2021.

Asnel Valcin, Psy.D., BCCC, director of Pastoral Care and Education at St. John's Episcopal Hospital in Far Rockaway, New York, United States, and instructor for Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries (ACM), invited a handful of Adventist chaplains from the French Antilles Guiana region and Haiti. The chaplains had been receiving training in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

since April, and it was fitting to be able to have an opportunity to provide much-needed assistance.

#### A CHALLENGING MISSION TRIP MADE POSSIBLE

"We prayed about this mission trip, and God opened the doors for us to fly to the commune of Les Cayes from Port-au-Prince, thanks to donations from friends and colleagues, members of the Adventist Church in Brooklyn, as well as the help of several local church and government leaders who believed in our mission to Haiti," says Valcin.

Eight chaplains from Guadeloupe, Martinique, and French Guiana flew to Haiti to pair up with eight chaplains from the Haitian Union.

What they experienced was more than they expected. "The first night, we met with local pastors and leaders in Les Cayes to explain the purpose of the visit. One local pastor had just returned from leading his eighth funeral and was anxious for his congregation, which had been experiencing so much physical



Left: Chaplain Atho Costumé of Haiti (center) speaks to persons in the community on their experience through the recent earthquake which hit the southern peninsula in Haiti on Aug. 14, 2021.

Right: Dr. Asnel Valcin (right), director of Pastoral Care and Education at Saint Johnson Episcopal Hospital in New York, United States, and organizer of the mission initiative and Chaplain André Honoré from Martinique, offer emotional support to a woman affected by the recent earthquake of Aug. 14, at a local hospital in Les Cayes, Haiti, Sep 9-17, 2021. [Photo: French Antilles Guiana Union]

and emotional devastation,” says Valcin. “The chaplains began talking to several members who approached them, and they were so grateful to share their stories of survival and know that someone cared for their emotional well-being.”

### SHARING THEIR STORIES

Their journey throughout the town found many people who were eager to share their stories. “People expressed feeling liberated after sharing their stories,” says Valcin.

For Pastor Esaïe Auguste, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries director in the French Antilles Guiana Union, the experience was like no other during his seven years in chaplain certifications.

“We felt overwhelmed by the scene of misery in which the people were living in [sic] and the hopelessness and resignation many of the people were facing,” says Auguste. He vividly remembered a young lady who had planned to go to university to pursue

medical studies. “She had lost her mom in the earthquake after the house buried her. Now she has to care for her three younger brothers and said her dreams had been shattered in less than a minute. She told us that for the first time since the August 14 earthquake, she felt heard and could express her emotions.”

Word of the chaplains’ mission spread to several Sunday congregations. A Catholic church, which was holding a funeral service for victims of the earthquake, invited the chaplains to speak to their members.

### TALKING ABOUT TRAUMA

“We saw so many who were willing to talk about trauma,” says Valcin. “People have had serious emotional challenges that have been repressed from many years ago, and when they saw this open door to share, they poured out their hearts to us.”

One pastor pleaded to get to his congregation. When the group of



Left: Chaplain Naomie Daube, chaplain and professor of biblical values at the school in Boissard in Guadeloupe, talks to an injured young man living in a tent in Les Cayes, South Haiti.

[Photo: Courtesy of French Antilles Guiana Union]

Right: Chaplain André Honoré (right) from Martinique speaks to a woman in her home during a ministering visit in the aftermath of the earthquake. Chaplain Richner Fleury (center) of the Haitian Union listens in. Each chaplain from the French Antilles Guiana Union teamed up with chaplain from the Haitian Union to minister to each person they were assigned in Les Cayes, Haiti. [Photo: French Antilles Guiana Union]

chaplains arrived, there were more than 250 people waiting the next morning. The team of chaplains saw an average of 41 people every day, and their main purpose was to listen deeper and help them tell their stories. “Conversations bring healing; persons experience relief in just having someone who cares enough to listen to them, and that begins the process of transformation,” says Valcin.

The chaplains also visited a local hospital, where they spoke to medical staff and health professionals. One particular nurse was fatigued from working so hard in caring for patients. “She was surprised at our visit and was so thankful to be heard,” says Valcin. “She soaked up every moment we were with her and was thankful for the time we took to listen to her and help her express her experience.”



Left: Chaplain Esaie Auguste (left), chaplaincy ministries director for the church in the French Antilles Guiana Union, listens to a woman who was affected by the earthquake of Aug. 14 while at home. [Photo: French Antilles Guiana Union]

Right: Chaplains Fleurimé Philippe (left) from Haiti and Chaplain Esaie Auguste (right) of the French Antilles Guiana Union headquartered in Martinique, listen in on a patient at the local hospital in Les Cayes, Haiti. [Photo: French Antilles Guiana Union]



Part of the group of chaplains from the French Antilles Guiana Union and the Haitian Union that ministered in Les Cayes, Haiti, Sep. 9-17, 2021.

[Photo: French Antilles Guiana Union]

## MINISTERING TO MEMBERS AND THE COMMUNITY

The team of chaplains took time to preach in several Adventist congregations on Sabbath, September 11. Members were given the opportunity to share their stories. “We were worshiping in the church building, which had been completely destroyed by the earthquake, and after preaching to a small group, I individually counseled most of the members there,” says Auguste. “They were able to recall their story and put into words their suppressed emotions.”

“One could only read the smiles on the faces of the people in the different communities that we visited,” says Pastor Richner A. Fleury, Director, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, Haiti. Fleury, along with seven other chaplains from Haiti, was blessed by the experience. “We heard so many words of satisfaction from the lips of those to whom we listened and supported. I know God will continue to help us care for the well-being of those affected.”

In addition to providing emotional support, Dr. Valcin and the local church leadership were able to

distribute 110 tents and 110 air mattresses to those still living out in the open air.

The intervention took a lot of coordination and funds but was a great opportunity to make an impact on hundreds of people in dire need of attention. It was an opportunity that could not be passed up.

## ANSWERING THE CALL TO MISSION

“When God calls you, God makes preparation for the mission,” says Valcin. “Regardless of where we are in the world, we have our humanity as the one thing in common.” There are many faces he cannot stop seeing and stories he cannot release from his mind. “This mission trip helped us understand how God truly used us in our humanity to connect with other people. I am humbled by this opportunity to serve.”

“The intervention in Les Cayes was only scratching the surface but one that will bring about more awareness of the needs of the people in the aftermath of any disaster,” says Pastor Pierre Caporal, president of the church in Haiti. “This intervention by Dr. Valcin and the group of chaplains from the French Antilles Guiana Union will for sure make an indelible impact, not only on our church members and persons in the community in Les Cayes who were helped, but also on our own chaplains who took part in this important ministry.”

*Editor's Note: Esaié Auguste and Richner A. Fleury contributed to this report.*

This article was originally published on the Inter-American Division's website. <https://www.interamerica.org/2021/10/adventist-chaplains-minister-to-400-persons-emotionally-affected-by-recent-earthquake-in-haiti/>

## SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION

# AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE APPOINTS ADVENTIST CHAPLAINS

By Lorraine Atchia, *Adventist Record*

*Editor's Note: The following report is a combination of reports from the Adventist Record.*

For the first time in its history, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has appointed Seventh-day Adventist pastors to serve as Chaplains in their ranks across the Navy, Army, and Air Force.

After an extensive recruitment process, which took over 12 months, Pastor Miljan Popovic was assigned as an Air Force chaplain and Pastor Gys Seegers as an Army Reserve chaplain earlier this year.

A Defence spokesperson stated that, on average, the ADF receives 70,000 applications each year for all available positions in the Navy, Army, and Air Force. In the current financial year, they are only looking to recruit 22 chaplains across the ADF, proving that becoming an ADF chaplain is not an easy feat. Applicants need to undergo the full ADF officer recruitment process, which includes several interviews, a medical, aptitude testing, psychological testing, and grueling physical training.

The first two years in a chaplaincy position are considered an induction period as there are academic requirements to learn about the ADF and chaplaincy. Both Pastor Popovic and Pastor Seegers are undertaking professional development where



Pastor Gys Seegers with his children.

they are enhancing their skills and knowledge of leadership, teamwork, ethics, psychology, counselling and other courses and training programs. All these skills will assist them in their new roles as they care for members of the ADF, and they will also be able to bring these skills to their local church ministry.

Pastor Popovic is currently posted at Amberley base in Ipswich, Queensland where he not only provides assistance through spiritual health and wellbeing, pastoral support, advocacy, and personal guidance to Air Force members and their families, but he also provides advice to commanders on pastoral, religious, ethical, and cultural issues of members.

When asked what it meant to be the first Seventh-day Adventist chaplain in the ADF, Pastor Popovic reflected on watching the ADF's response to the Queensland floods in 2011 and how they lifted the bar by providing help and support to those in need. This reignited his childhood desire to be part of the Defence Force culture, so when he was given an opportunity to apply to become an ADF chaplain he readily accepted. He sees this as such a "great privilege, honour, and responsibility". Pastor Popovic understands that "this is not a job. This is a call, and it is a passion. A passion to connect, support, and walk



Left: Pastor Moaga (left) and Pastor Koro (right) receiving their certificates of appointment from the ADF.

Right: Pastor Miljan Popovic



with people who serve our country and their families.”

Pastor Seegers is based at the Australian Army Cadet headquarters in Perth, West Australia where he provides chaplaincy support to full-time and reserve personnel, and he is also the coordinating chaplain for the chaplains who support 33 cadet units throughout Western Australia.

Originally from South Africa, Pastor Seegers said that he and his family have come to love the people of Australia, and that serving the men and women who serve our country is his small way of saying thank you. He also feels it is a blessing and privilege to enter into a new mission field on behalf of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Pastor Seegers explains, “I am humbled by this opportunity to help raise the banner for Christ’s kingdom within the ADF and the beautiful people who I’m getting to know—men and women of courage and respect who understand order and what it means to serve and sacrifice themselves for others.”

Pastor Michael Worker, general secretary of the Australian Union Conference and the Church’s representative on the Associated Protestant Churches Chaplaincy Board (APCCB), stated that, “It’s

important as the Seventh-day Adventist Church that we are involved in all facets of ministry. Being part of the Defence Force chaplaincy gives us a chance to interact with and provide a positive point of contact for many Australians who would never otherwise come into contact with Adventists. It gives our pastors opportunities to have spiritual conversations with our service personnel.”

Earlier this year Pastor Raymond Moaga became one of the youngest chaplains for the Army Reserves in South-East Queensland and Pastor Esava Koro became a chaplain for the Navy in Darwin, Northern Territory.

Pastor Moaga has wanted to be an ADF chaplain since he was a student at Avondale College in 2007.

“It has been a dream for 14 years,” explained Pastor Moaga, “God has been preparing me for this moment, I have been a church pastor, a youth director, a teacher and a sporting coach. All of my previous work has given me a wealth of experience and I have grown as a person, ready for this next chapter God has given me.”

Since the beginning of this year, Pastor Moaga has been working as a chaplain for a state high school where he has had to change how he ministers to the students as he cannot explicitly



Left: Pastor Moaga and his family.

Right: Esava Koro



personnel and those in the community.

“I really want to further my sphere of responsibility in ministry, especially in ministering cross denominationally. I love being a minister for the Church, but I want to go beyond that,” explained Pastor Koro.

“When I look at the ADF I see that they do a lot of varied work, they are not only protecting our nation, but they do a lot of humanitarian work where they meet the needs of real people and I want to be involved in that. To be able to reach the people where they are,” he added.

He has finished his first stage of training, which consisted of a physical assessment and leadership training, including intervention and crisis modules. With three more stages of training to go, he is looking forward to getting on a Navy ship and training at sea.

Pastor Koro currently looks after five churches across the top half of the Northern Territory, so adding this chaplaincy role to his current duties is no small feat but he is looking forward to working with Navy personnel and their families and sharing the support and comfort that can only come from God.

“We are proud to see our pastors branch out to minister to those who defend and look after our country,” stated Pastor Michael Worker, general secretary of the Australian Union Conference and the Church’s representative on the Associated Protestant Churches Chaplaincy Board.

“We will continue to encourage and support our pastors to look for different ways to show God’s love to those in the community.”

talk about the Bible or God.

“My experience being a chaplain at a state school will help me in my ministry as an ADF chaplain as they are all people from the community, without a Christian background and many have never heard about God,” Pastor Moaga stated.

Coming from a sports background, he was able to complete the physical assessment part of his training with flying colours, however, when asked what the hardest part of the process was, he admitted it was the waiting.

“God really tested my patience, but I am mindful that God is always preparing us for the next season, we don’t know when that season will come but as we wait, He is teaching us and helping us grow,” he explained.

Pastor Moaga will be looking after Army Reserve members and their families at five bases between Brisbane and Bundaberg while continuing to work as a chaplain at the state high school.

Pastor Koro has been working in ministry for over 15 years and with a daughter in the Australian Navy, has decided to become an ADF Navy chaplain as a way to reach out to Navy

## SOUTHERN ASIA DIVISION

# CAMPUS CELEBRATES CREATION SABBATH

By Chaplain Khirod Dalpati, Metas Adventist College, Surat, India

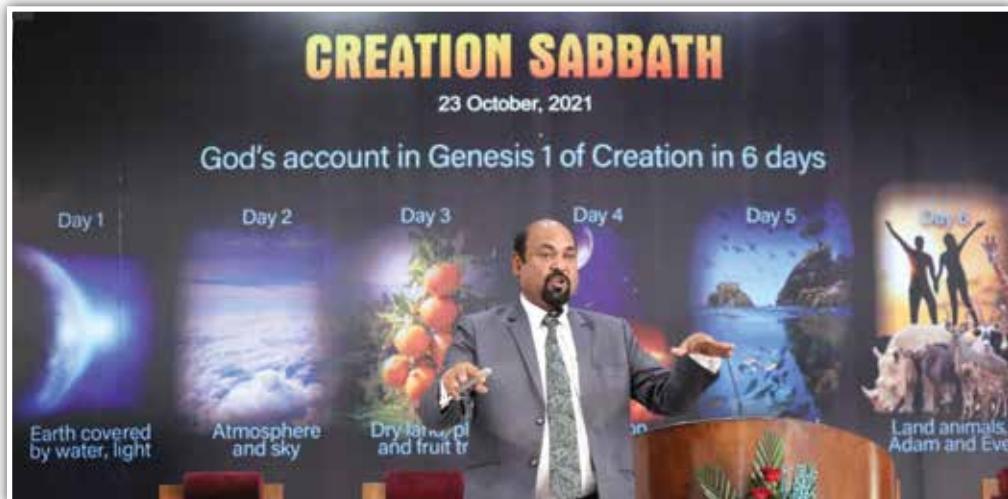
The students at Metas Adventist College and the campus church in Surat, India united with the world church to celebrate and emphasize Creation Sabbath on October 22 and 23, 2021 guided by Pastor Eliah Srikakolli, Metas church pastor. The celebration began on Friday evening and continued through Sabbath sundown. The research work and films of Dr. Timothy G. Standish and Dr. Leonard Brand from the GeoScience Research Institute (GRI) were shown, along with the work of other Seventh-day Adventist scientists.

During the Friday evening vespers Dr. Timothy Standish spoke about

a collection of scripture relating to creation. The criterion for selection was the belief that most reasonable people would agree that these texts constitute unambiguous references to the act of creation or the creation story. For example, when Paul refers to Adam and Eve, the first created humans, in 1 Timothy 2:13 it is included in the text even though the reference is to characters in the creation account, but not necessarily to the entire act of creation.

During the Sabbath morning Sabbath School Program, the church members viewed 'Creation Sabbath,' with Dr. Paul Nelson and Dr. Timothy Standish. This presentation depicted the perfect artistry and design of nature by God. The mountain peaks, waterfalls, the pounding waves, flocks of birds on wings lift our eyes beyond the natural world. The Apostle Paul recognized this universal truth in Romans. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that

Mr. Subhakar Prasad, the Senior Chaplain of Metas Group of Institutions, emphasized the research work done by Drs. Standish and Brand.





Dr. Leonard Brand discussed his study of fossils and how they were formed in sandstone.

are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”<sup>1</sup> As we journey through life, we travel through a gallery filled with masterpieces all bursting with purpose and design which are a revelation of the Creator’s existence, power, and love.

During the Sabbath divine service Mr. Subhakar Prasad, the Senior Chaplain of Metas Group of Institutions, spoke about the wonderful insights of the six days of earth’s and emphasized the research work done by Drs. Standish and Brand. A film for the children was also shown and explained during the sermon which enlightened the children about the Creation Sabbath.

During Sabbath vespers the students watched *Christians on Science* which portrayed a window in exploring our world. In the Christian worldview, God is not nature. Neither does he prompt nature. Rather He transcends nature. God created nature governed by natural laws. He created life and finally human beings capable of reasoning, eager to observe and to explore the universe. The question is not about science and tools, it’s about

assumptions. Scientific enquiry doesn’t have to be boxed down by naturalism. With good reasons to believe in God, we can expand the exploration to the transcendent and take discovery to new heights of the creation of God. The film ended with a beautiful phrase of a well-known scientist “The more I study Nature, the more I stand amazed at the work of the Creator.” – Louis Pasteur.

Ms. Shoba Rani Sangeethrao led the students in a recitation of God’s creative powers during the six days of the creation week from Genesis chapter 1. On the seventh day God rested, blessed, and hallowed the seventh day. Thus, in the creation week, the Sabbath Day of rest and remembrance was instituted. If we ignore the fact that fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom<sup>2</sup> we will lose touch with reality. The biblical examples of Job and Nebuchadnezzar provide powerful examples of how we can either keep our sanity or lose our minds to the delusions of our age.

<sup>1</sup> Romans 1:20 KJV

<sup>2</sup> Proverbs 9:10, KJV



# Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries

# WORLD DATABASE

**A**dventist Chaplaincy Ministries is the church entity that supports Adventists who serve as chaplains in both church-related, public, or private institutions.

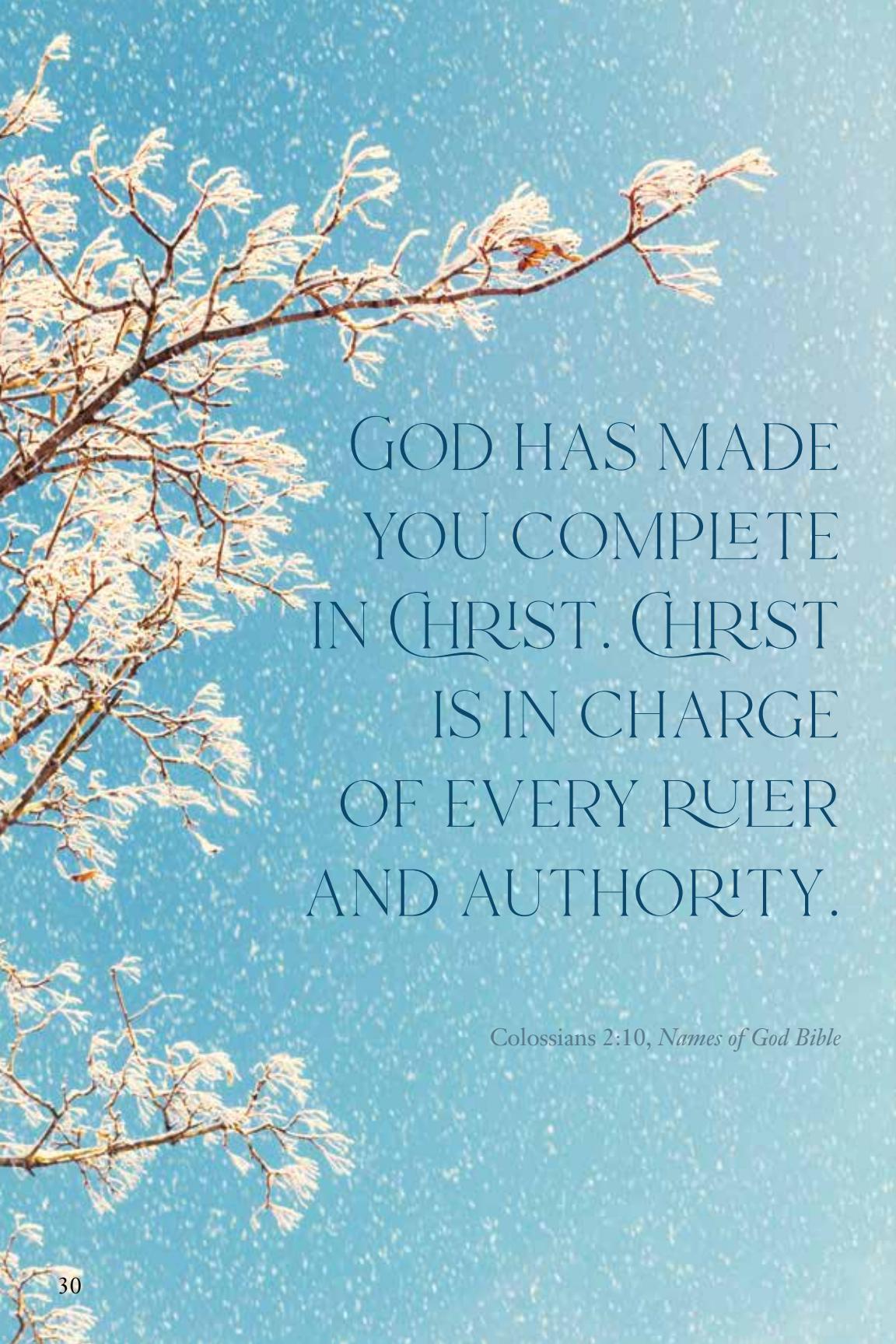
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AND AUTHORITY.

Colossians 2:10, *Names of God Bible*

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THE ADVENTIST CHAPLAIN is a quarterly publication of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries (ACM), the ecclesiastical endorsing agency of the Seventh-day Adventist® Church.

This journal is distributed worldwide to chaplains, church leaders, institutions, and others involved in chaplaincies. To be added to our mailing list, please visit our website at [AdventistChaplains.org](http://AdventistChaplains.org), or email [ACMEEditor@gc.adventist.org](mailto:ACMEEditor@gc.adventist.org).

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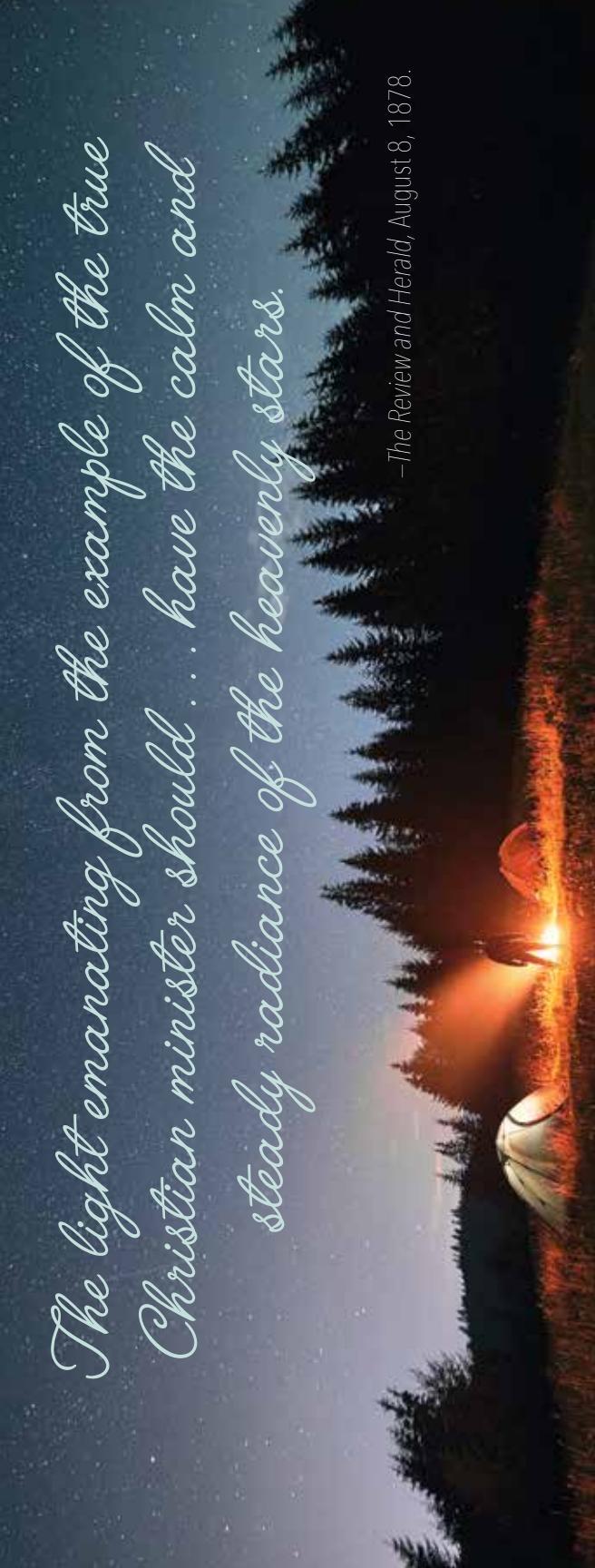
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*The light emanating from the example of the true  
Christian minister should . . . have the calm and  
steady radiance of the heavenly stars.*

*-The Review and Herald, August 8, 1878.*

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