

ONTARIO CONFERENCE

HIGHLIGHTS



Winter 2021



What's Next?

Ministry Post COVID-19

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It's now been over a year and a half since COVID-19 turned the world upside down. Speaking with a pastor recently, we both admitted to believing life would be back to normal in a few months. However, the continued impact of the virus in 2021 was beyond our imaginations.

On the other hand, the pandemic has brought unexpected blessings, including finding creative ways to connect with others. For example, I'm grateful for the online small groups and interactive worship services that sustained me in the early days of the pandemic. There, I could receive spiritual food, share my burdens and draw strength from others' testimonies.

During one of the Conference's daily Zoom worship services last spring, for example, I was greatly encouraged by a testimony from Pastor Allan Chichester (director, Children's Ministries and Sabbath School). He shared a nerve-racking experience from his days of training to become a military pilot before accepting the call to pastoral ministry.

One day, while in flight, the clouds were so thick that he and his commander didn't know if they were heading east or west. Worse, the instruments they would typically use to guide them were not effective in this situation. As a result, they were in danger of heading into the mountains or entering the flight territory of another country with which they still have territorial disputes.

His commander, a man of great experience, usually unruffled, admitted to Chichester, "I don't know what to do," and told him he had to navigate this leg of the flight.

He had no choice but to pray for God's guidance. No sooner had he prayed than he heard a small voice saying, "Stay the course." He decided to listen to that voice, and as they flew, he saw a clearing to

the left, the Atlantic Ocean beside them. Now they knew where they were heading, and he could safely steer the plane to their destination. God came through in a miraculous way!

At present, many of us are still struggling to navigate cloudy skies in our personal and professional lives; or even, as my colleague Kevin Benta (Property Management director) often says, "building an airplane while in flight." Our lives have been interrupted in extraordinary ways, and as we battle against a dangerous new variant, we don't know what's next.

But in all this uncertainty, we can be assured of a few things. One is that God requires us to be intentional in pursuing our highest calling, making disciples as per our theme—"Connecting Like Jesus." Accordingly, in this edition of Ontario Highlights, we focus on crafting a vision and mission for ministry and the need for disciple-making evangelism (pp. 6-10). We also share examples of such intentionality at the conference and local church levels. Such examples include the long-awaited purchase and dedication of our own campground (pp. 12-15), our Connecting Like Jesus camp meeting (pp. 16-19), Really Living Centre, Ontario Conference's first centre of influence (pp. 24-25) and successful evangelistic or community service efforts across Ontario.

Our other assurance is that, as in Pastor Chichester's story, God is our ultimate GPS. So as we join our efforts with God's, we can trust that even when we don't know which way to go or what to do, God will prepare the way and clear a path for us.



Christelle Agboka
Communications director



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Experience the Power

It is not easy receiving sombre news, especially in the middle of a pandemic, but that is exactly what the Ontario Conference leadership received in late summer 2020 from the results of a 2018–2019 study of every church and company.

Using information provided by churches and companies, conference leadership followed criteria established by the North American Division to identify each congregation's growth and categorize them accordingly. We discovered that in pre-pandemic 2019, only 34% of churches were growing. The remaining 66 percent were either plateauing (47%) or declining (19%)—None were multiplying. Sombre news, indeed.

There are two plausible responses to such news. The first is to acknowledge it but carry on doing the same things that have led us here. The second is to identify and correct the causative factors; this is what we are attempting to do and encouraging every congregation to do.

When considering causes, it is easy to cast blame on external conditions: "People are secular and disinterested in religion," or "Our church is in a Catholic community!" Alternately, we look at our failings: "We're not preaching enough about prophecy," or "We're not praying enough."

Approaching this challenge honestly, we recognize that we are experiencing

what Timothy prophesied in 2 Timothy 3:5 regarding the last days, of "having a form of godliness but denying its power." Outwardly, we may be engaged sincerely in our religion, believe fully in the church's teachings, plan outreach and evangelistic meetings and seek to live holy lives, but we can still exemplify "having a form of godliness but denying its power."

The power associated with godliness is the Holy Spirit! After His resurrection, Jesus promised His disciples that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit was given to them (Acts 1:8). The reality of the resurrection and the power of the Holy Spirit were the church's driving forces as believers preached about the risen Christ. After Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on believers, the Spirit immediately led 3,000 to repentance and conversion in one day.

The Holy Spirit led the early church in evangelism and care for the needy: "With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them" (Acts 4:33).

Ellen White recognized that all our churches are prone to decline and even die when we do not allow the Holy Spirit to lead. She said, "Wherever the need of the Holy Spirit is a matter

little thought of, there is seen spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension and death. Whenever minor matters occupy the attention, the divine power which is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, and which would bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking, though offered in infinite plenitude" (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 50).

The Lord's servant clearly saw in the Book of Acts that growth and multiplication were not dependent on the number of sermons preached, prayer meetings held, missionary journeys made or evangelistic meetings conducted. Rather, the success of God's kingdom was dependent on the Holy Spirit. As White considered the state of her church in 1911, she wrote:

"Since this is the means by which we are to receive power, why do we not hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit? Why do we not talk of it, pray for it, and preach concerning it? The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who serve Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children" (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 50).

This statement is as applicable today as it was then. While we may look to our churches to receive the power of the Holy Spirit, we must remember that the church is a collection of believers—you and me. We cannot expect the

pastor or church board to bring about a change of state for our churches. The change must begin with me, with you and with every believer. We must hunger and thirst for the Holy Spirit in our life and church. If we do not hunger and thirst for the Spirit, then we must pray that God brings us to that point.

We presently have churches in three of the four categories, but I know all our churches can become multiplying ones—just as it was when the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost. As we preach more about the Spirit, as we pray for Him to reveal Himself in the life of our church and allow Him to take His rightful place, we will begin to see congregations reflecting His leadership. Then, we can expect many thousands to be converted. As we prepare for a year of multiplication in 2022, the same Holy Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost has the power to do wondrous things right here in Ontario.

Mansfield Edwards,
Ontario Conference President



CONNECTING LIKE JESUS

ONTARIO CONFERENCE 2021

Connecting Like Jesus in Ministry and Mission Through Discipleship

The most common question I've been asked in the last year and a half is: "How are we doing? Is our conference growing?"

There's been concern that the circumstances we're in would affect our growth. After all, most of our churches have been meeting only virtually, and the COVID-19 restrictions affected community outreach and evangelism activities.

However, according to a 2021 statistical analysis, our churches reported 488 additions through baptism and 109 through the profession of faith. Thus, our total increase of 597 is the highest in the last four years. Furthermore, the Conference's net growth of 0.92% is in the range of pre-COVID-19 growth.

We praise the Lord for our members' and pastors' commitment to the Great Commission. Despite our circumstances, churches adjusted their methods. Regions collaborated virtually for evangelistic series. Several churches followed the It Is Written International ACTS 2021 Evangelistic Online Journey. Some churches also hosted online international evangelistic initiatives or provided hybrid (online and in-person) evangelistic opportunities.

As I studied the growth data of our churches, I discovered that one mid-sized church in the Metro East region celebrated the most baptisms this year. The church has only been meeting virtually since the COVID-19 pandemic. Many congregations struggled, especially with baptisms, except for this church. I noticed that the church didn't engage in any evangelistic series or have a Bible instructor. So, I wondered, what is their secret? I decided to call the pastor for some answers.*

In my introduction, I told the pastor that his church had recorded the highest baptisms this year and asked, "What is your secret? What strategy contributed to such fruitful results?"

The first secret I discovered was his humility. The pastor gave glory to the Lord and expressed appreciation to his church leadership team, members and especially the elder.

He said, "I am blessed to have an elder with a missional heart, and we partner together in keeping our interest list active and updated. I visit my members, call them, and with the elder, follow up on those who sign up online to receive a visit or Bible study."

*Many congregations
struggled, especially
with baptisms,
except for this
church.*

I then wanted to know, "How do people sign up? Is it because the church is hosting or featuring special events online?"

The pastor responded: "No, pastor. Our online contacts come from Sabbath morning preaching appeals. Every time I preach, I make an appeal and invite people to sign up for a Bible study. We follow up on every name that signs up. We immediately contact them and begin a Bible study, largely done online or by

phone. Most of the Bible studies are led by the elder and myself."

Second, the pastor shared that church members are encouraged to provide the contacts of people interested in Bible studies. However, the majority of contacts added to the interest list are provided by the newly baptized members.

The pastor continued: "Our Bible study is more than just sharing knowledge; we disciple them. We intentionally walk a journey with them and help them become disciples. Then, after they are baptized, we continue nurturing them through further studies and prepare them to make more disciples. As a result, they are the most active members we have."

We agreed that what is happening in his church is disciple-making evangelism. That is, everything they do is focused on evangelism through discipleship.

The preaching aims to allow the Holy Spirit to move listeners to connect with and commit to Jesus. People are disciplined to baptism and, after baptism, disciplined to connect with their friends and make more disciples.

According to the pastor, they aren't doing anything new. Rather, they didn't allow circumstances to slow them down or prevent their disciple-making evangelism.

"There is nothing that can hold us off from being intentional in reaching out to those on our interest list," the pastor concluded.

After I prayed with the pastor, a verse came to mind:

"I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming

when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (John 9:4-5).

This was the same passion and determination Jesus had in fulfilling His ministry and mission. Jesus showed us the ultimate example of how to engage in ministry and mission that is not affected by our circumstances: a dedication and

determination focused on ministry and the mission of making disciples.

As we consider plans for the next evangelistic cycle and the year of multiplication in 2022, I pray that we accept the challenge to adopt a lifestyle that includes a pointed determination toward connecting like Jesus in ministry and mission through discipleship.

Jakov (“Yakov”) Bibulović,
Evangelism and Church Growth director



**If you wish to contact the pastor and learn more from his ministry experience, please feel free to contact me at jbibulovic@adventistontario.org*



It Won't Happen Without a Vision

We all have one.

A few minutes listening to an Adventist talking about his or her church quickly confirms this.

Among the many comments I have heard are, "I wish I could find a church where people weren't so judgmental" and "I wish my church were more loving." The word loving may be replaced by caring, accepting, evangelistic, involved in the community and countless others.

We all have a picture of our ideal church family. When we express it, others agree — even at church boards and in business meetings. For example, no one ever disagrees with wanting their church to be more loving. Sadly, it remains as talk and nothing changes, leaving us disappointed and frustrated. Yet, we continue hoping for real purpose and direction, even as most of our churches in Ontario are either plateauing or declining.

Individually, we all dream of what our church can be, but this rarely translates into the local church having a clear vision of what it could become. Without a sense of identity, purpose, or direction, nothing happens; the church simply exists, leading to plateauing, standing still, and eventually, death. "Where there is no vision," says Proverbs 29:18, "the people perish" (KJV). Thus, if your church is to transform from declining or plateauing into a healthy, growing congregation, it needs a clear vision.

What Is a Vision?

So, what is a vision? In Revelation 21:2, John says, "I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven

from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." (NIV)

John was able to look into the future and see where God was leading His church. He could describe the city's dimensions, its twelve gates, the street of gold and the tree of life. Undoubtedly, this vision of the glorious start of a new age sharpened the focus of his mission, helped him remain faithful, and stayed with him even to martyrdom.

Someone once defined a vision as "Seeing by faith the desired future God is leading you toward." This statement is equally applicable to your life as to your church. In your church, this means having a consistent picture of what you want it to become. That is, the statement describes what your church will become as it works to make it so.

Depending on your church, the picture (vision) may be "a community of disciples of Jesus where people can experience unconditional acceptance, love [and] fellowship, become connected to Jesus and learn to be disciple-makers."

Another church may envision its purpose to be "see[ing] people saved, healed, set free, disciplined, equipped, empowered and serving" (Gateway Church, Southlake, TX).

Here is another: "To welcome the community with open arms. To train an army of people who are passionate about living out God's purpose for their lives. To then give that army an outlet for sharing the love of Christ through outreach and missions" (Saddleback, Lake Forest, CA).

All these examples are called vision statements — a vision as a written statement. However, they are not simply slogans or a set of nice-sounding words, and they are not simply crafted by a gifted wordsmith. A church's vision is born out of what it values and the needs of the community.

Values

When members mention wanting a church where they feel loved, it is usually because they do not feel loved where they are. When what we value is missing, its absence may create a sense of discontent or complacency. Conversely, a person may not have felt loved in a previous congregation but now feels so loved that he or she wants others to experience the same. Either way, love is valued.

Other values frequently heard are acceptance, Spirit-led, Gospel-oriented, disciple-making, growth, hope, healing, community-focussed, inspirational worship and church planting. A church's key values are often reflected in the written vision statement. Look at the first example of vision statements above, where the values of unconditional acceptance, love, fellowship, connected to Jesus and disciple-making are included. These values describe what the church intends to become. They are values simply written in the form of a statement that describes what the church intends to become for the community's benefit.

Values also help determine how members are expected to behave. For instance, if love is valued, it must be practiced.

A church wanting love to be part of its DNA will intentionally work toward growing into a loving community where everyone may experience the love of God among His people. The same may be said of all its values, reflected in its vision statement.

The Purpose of a Vision

A vision is a target for the church to reach, which is long term and serves as a beacon of light in the darkness, guiding the church toward its destination. When a church has a clear vision, its members know what they are trying to become in and for the community. The vision provides them with a specific destination and an impetus for getting there.

If a church is to move from declining or plateauing into a healthy, growing, Spirit-led congregation, it must begin with a vision. Likewise, a growing church seeking to become a multiplying one should definitely start with a vision.

How Does a Church Cast Its Vision?

Although your church can cast its vision through numerous avenues, it should begin with seeking the Holy Spirit, asking Him to open the eyes of your church to the needs of the community

surrounding the church. Your vision must be directly related to the community. If your church wants to “see by faith the desired future God is leading you toward,” it must spend time in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal God’s will. Prayer is a role for the entire congregation, not just the board or a select group of people.

After spending time seeking the Holy Spirit, the process may take different forms. Some churches may choose to divide the congregation into groups, each identifying five to seven values. The values that occur most frequently will then be shared with the church as core values. A skilled group of people will then incorporate the words into a statement. This statement may undergo several revisions as it is shared with the board before being presented to the church for agreement. Your church may take a different approach. The outcome is most important — having a vision that is clear to everyone.

Once a church has a clearly stated vision, it must be referenced frequently. Alongside the mission to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19), everything the church does must be directed by its vision. As the church

sees by faith the desired future God is leading it toward, its ministries will align and work toward realizing the vision. Members and visitors alike will have a clear sense of where the church is going and be inspired to become part of it.

If your church intends to grow or multiply, it must have a clear vision.

Does your church have a vision?

Halsey Peat,
Assistant to the president



MISSION-DRIVEN: NAD's Revolution in "Church"



Have you ever boarded the wrong plane? It once happened to me as I was rushing to board a plane from Alabama to Chicago. I selected a comfortable seat and had an entire row to myself. The weather was perfect, the flight attendants stellar. I settled in, prepared to enjoy American Airlines at its best.

Then my nightmare began. Shortly after takeoff, the pilot announced, "Ladies and gentlemen, your expected arrival time in Dallas, Texas, is 11:47 a.m." "What? Dallas? That's in the opposite direction!" I thought. I desperately buzzed the flight attendant. As she examined my ticket, the truth sunk in—I WAS ON THE WRONG PLANE! My trip was ruined.

How many men, women, and children sitting in congregations today aren't sure where they're going? It's comfortable in those seats; there's plenty of activities, events and fellowship. But is the church's destination (mission) clear? Does everyone know it? And are they working together to accomplish it?



A. Mission-Drift



B. Mission-Driven

These two illustrations represent two different churches. Both boast diverse cultures and personalities, but there's a difference.

In Church B, individuals and departments work jointly toward a laser-sharp mission. Every person and department is on board.

Church A hosts several activities and events, but there's no overall strategy uniting their efforts. Departments work independently, and 20% of the members do 80% of the work.

Most church members agree, "We want to be mission-driven (Church B)." However, when asked, "Which church does YOUR church most resemble?" most admit to "Church A"—not hot or cold, but lukewarm (Revelation 3:16).

But here's the good news:

1. Mission-Driven BASICS.

To help congregations wanting to become Church B, the North American Division (NAD) has devised a simple, flexible process entitled Mission-Driven BASICS. BASICS is NOT a program. Rather, it instructs churches on five habits applicable to any program your church chooses in pursuing its mission. It builds on similar, already introduced approaches (e.g., "REACH," "Becoming a Mission-Driven Church," "Mission-Driven Excellence").



2. Mission-Driven Quick-Start.

The new online monograph Mission-Driven Quick-Start gives step-by-step instructions for launching and

establishing strategic thinking in your church. It only requires churches to take a five-minute inventory quarterly to measure their progress in transitioning from Church A to Church B. A special online program prepares a dashboard so that your congregation can trace its quarterly progress.

3. Mission-Driven for the Conference Office. The same principles that apply to the church apply to the conference office, helping the office serve the hundreds of congregations within Ontario. Ontario Conference intends to lead by example.

TESTIMONIALS BY CHURCH LEADERS

"Mission-driven churches have certain habits in common. These habits reflect the character of Christ."

G. Alexander Bryant

"Mission-driven BASICS is a practical, user-friendly guide for churches of all sizes." **Mark Finley**

"Mission-driven BASICS gives pastors what they've lacked most—a concise, user-friendly approach to strategic planning." **Ivan Williams**

TESTIMONIALS BY CHURCH PASTORS

- "If I had this earlier, life would have been a lot easier for me. Mission-driven brings the leaders, the church, along the whole process so that everyone buys into it."
- "Mission-driven gives you a toolkit for ministry, similar to a doctor's bag, to help you be happy and successful in ministry."
- "If you've tried everything else, try this. Simplify your life. Mission-driven will give you clarity and direction."
- "Mission-driven is a way to get the church excited about the impact it can have in the community."

To get started, order BASICS or the Quick Start Guide from AdventSource
Adventsource.com
(800) 732-7587

OR contact the Ontario Conference office for additional information and support.

Paul Brantley, PhD
**Recently retired vice-president,
North American Division
of Seventh-day Adventists**

Going Phygital

This pandemic has wreaked havoc in all areas, including church life—forcing a hard reset. As we anticipate its end, the question is, where do we go from here? The church is not returning to default settings, and although it may not be easy, the transition will be worth it. We're likely facing a hybrid of the old—the physical church service—and the new—a digital presence. In other words, we will have to go *phygital* to fulfill the needs of the people we serve. This calls for a much broader conversation, but in this space, I will highlight the three Rs we can adopt in going phygital. To enter the new era, we'll need to **recalibrate**, **reinvigorate** and **reinvent** our programs and plans.

The initial R stands for **recalibration** as we crawl out of our present crisis with a renewed commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This unpleasant season has brought clarity and a reset perspective on our calling as disciples. The pandemic should help us return to our foundational call to share the good news with a world searching for hope and peace.

Also, note the commandment instructing us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Who is our neighbour? Anyone in need within our sphere of influence. We must apply Jesus's method as mentioned in *Ministry of Healing*: "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour 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'" (p. 143). Therefore, I propose that we focus on Christ's fundamental commands: "love God, love others, and make disciples."

The second R stands for **reinvigorating** our worship services. People have more options, so our worship services need to be restructured for enhanced praise, more powerful prayer sessions and relevant preaching. We must go phygital and configure our services in ways that serve

WE MUST GO PHYGITAL AND CONFIGURE OUR SERVICES IN WAYS THAT SERVE THE BODY OF CHRIST AND SEEKERS ALIKE.

the body of Christ and seekers alike. We also need to revive our efforts to connect through small group models, re-establishing a support network that actively demonstrates that we care.

The final R stands for **reinventing** our approach.

Truthfully, some of our services are not ready to be live-streamed. We must be mindful of the content and quality of our online services. Not all of us need to broadcast to Facebook or YouTube; a private Zoom service is a better option for some. Before going live, churches should be prepared to engage in a labour-intensive

production—this includes dedicating time and resources toward achieving professional results. Consider, how do we perform evangelism? Do we need digital evangelism? Can we deploy our youth? Can we engage and empower them to reimagine the church and help fulfill this vision for God's glory? This shift calls for major stakeholder engagement at each level; it takes more than leadership alone.

Going phygital means the successful combination of physical and digital presence in the church space. It calls for all our churches to recalibrate, reinvigorate and reinvent to thrive in a post-pandemic world. We can approach this new norm and reset the recent past only through collaborative effort and dedication, as guided by the Holy Spirit.



Damson Oppong,
Ministerial Secretary





An aerial photograph of a campsite nestled in a lush green forest. A winding dirt path leads through a grassy clearing where several small, rustic buildings are situated. A river flows along the bottom right edge of the frame. The surrounding area is densely wooded with various types of trees.

Ontario Conference Dedicates Camp Meeting Site to God

On Tuesday, September 28, 2021, nearly 30 Ontario Conference office workers gathered for a dedication ceremony at our new campground, the beautiful 56.2-acre Rolling Hills, outside of Barrie. They were joined by a virtual audience (1,632 to date) via [youtube.com/Adventistontario](https://www.youtube.com/Adventistontario). The day had a joyous, relaxed tone, and after years of prayer and searching, the Conference's vision of acquiring an outdoor site for camp meetings and other events was realized.

The theme of the day was God's providence. Treasurer Virene Meikle shared this incredible story: "Twenty-five years ago, I visited this campsite. My daughter was a Girl Guide, and her club was having a weekend retreat. I admired the property, not knowing that 25 years later, it would be owned by the Ontario Conference. God works in mysterious ways."





Some Conference directors



Pastor Rooney and Edwards



Main lodge

Kevin Benta, Property Management director, then shared how the Conference came to own Rolling Hills. In October 2019, while visiting another property with the administration, Benta mentioned that the Girl Guides were liquidating their properties. He subsequently contacted the Girl Guides president, and several miracles ensued:

1. Their president was moved by the Conference's vision for the property and instructed the camp director and realtor to "take care of him," smoothing Benta's path.
2. Benta and administration looked at the property listings separately and independently chose Rolling Hills. The acreage and existing infrastructure were impressive. It included seven pavilions; a comfort station with washrooms and showers; a main house/lodge with a kitchen, laundry room and four accommodation rooms; utility corridors; and a play structure.
3. An existing, conditional deal on Rolling Hills — conditions set to expire on October 23— was no obstacle for God. As Benta told Rob, the realtor, "Myself and our administrators [have]

been praying about this. We believe God is leading. So when it falls through on the 23rd, please call me." The afternoon of the 23rd, he received this message. "Kevin, I don't know how or why, but the deal has fallen through!"

4. Rob was similarly shocked when Benta's conservative offer — much less than the deal that had folded — was accepted with only a few thousand more requested.

Benta concluded, "To God be the glory that we are here today!" Later, Mansfield Edwards, Ontario Conference president, reflected, "Today, I am joyfully relieved. We ran into several obstacles, but the Lord was building our patience and trust in Him, and He led us through."

Other speakers that day were Camp Frenda Director James Rooney, who took on Rolling Hills as part of his portfolio, and Health and Prayer Ministry director Maria McClean, who asked the Lord to bless the ceremony. Rooney expressed his gratitude for being entrusted with this responsibility, admitting, "I was excited and almost vibrating in my truck the first time I drove around this site with my family on the way back from Frenda a couple of years ago."





One of six pavilions



Comfort station with washrooms and kitchen



Playground

Leading the service's thanksgiving portion, Edwards stated, "Today, we concur with James 1:17 — every good and perfect gift is from above." Next, he read the lyrics of Hymn 376, "All Things Are Thine." Finally, he led workers in a litany praising God for the property and dedicating it to God's work.

Finally, Executive Secretary Jakov Bibulovic offered a prayer of dedication: "May all who come here learn more about You. May they commit their lives to Jesus Christ. May this property be a beacon in this community. May Your Spirit sanctify it. And may everything we do here bring glory to Your name."

A Ministry Playground

Later, as they toured the site in small groups, Conference leaders dreamt of departmental retreats, workshops, seminars, camporees and more.

Chatting with his fellow director, Edwin Martin (Adventurers, Master Guides and Pathfinders), Allan Chichester (Children's Ministries and Sabbath

School), said, "Maybe we can have a children's fun day out here." "Why not? There are so many things we can do!" Martin replied gleefully.

Throughout the service, the livestream chat was active with appreciative comments, like:

"Wow! This is breathtaking! Absolutely beautiful and tranquil." Rosanna Bullock

"Praise God for His providence in guiding our Conference leaders to purchase this gorgeous property. We look forward to our next camp meeting on this new campground!" pjessmaj315

"May we live to have great memories here!"
Ronald Francis

Christelle Agboka,
Communications director



Ontario Conference office staff read the litany

102,000+ Learn to Connect Like Jesus

Ontario Conference's First-Ever Virtual Camp Meeting

For most Adventists, camp meeting is as much of a staple as haystacks, so much so that in 2019, over 7,700 Ontario church members gathered at Mississauga's International Centre for a full day of camp meeting services. Unfortunately, COVID restrictions shut down our 2020 Camp Meeting. But this year, President Mansfield Edwards and other conference leaders were determined to continue our annual day of spiritual uplift despite COVID. Therefore, from Tuesday, June 29, to Sabbath, July 3, camp meeting took on a new life, with over 102,000 global visitors on YouTube streams for adults, children, youth and young adults. Themed "Connecting Like Jesus," it was our first digital multiday camp meeting, incorporating ministries convention training for leaders and members.

Connectedness and Creativity in COVID-Era Worship

This camp meeting looked quite different from what we would have imagined pre-COVID. Instead of meeting in person, we met on the YouTube chat, which was overflowing with greetings, insights, prayer requests, encouragement and even a request for baptism. Digital exhibit rooms and afterglows were spaces for informal fellowship. Instead of the Parade of Nations, we viewed parade footage and members praying in different languages. Live music was replaced by a whopping 50 videos of talented

musicians recorded at the conference, in homes and sprawling backyards. And instead of a few sessions per ministry, we had over 55 sessions with speakers from North America, the United Kingdom, Asia and Australia. French, Spanish and ASL interpretation were also available for adult plenaries via Zoom.

Speaking to connectedness in this era, Sis Sam Smith stated, "It's such a pleasure when all of God's people can tune in from all over the world! Hallelujah!" And Pastor Peter Caran (Peterborough Church) noted, "It is wonderful to celebrate multiculturalism in our church family." This celebration included a Canada Day presentation by our administrators that paid homage to Canada while acknowledging our responsibility to seek justice for oppressed groups like our Indigenous brothers and sisters.

It was an ambitious program, taking our production team (Fifaliana Rakotoarison, media manager; Ashton Blake, web developer; Edwin Martin, Adventurer, Master Guide and Pathfinder director; and others) a month and a half and several sleepless nights to execute. And it wasn't without technical challenges. But God helped us avoid disaster, including power outages in Durham that didn't reach the office. By His grace, many would concur with Cheryl Bailey, "Wow! This is the best camp meeting and ministries convention I have ever



attended," or Samanta Browne, "I am so grateful for these messages and all the fantastic training sessions."

Lessons on Connecting with and Like Jesus

In Tuesday's opening ceremony, North American Division (NAD) President G. Alexander Bryant stated, "Jesus [longs] to connect with us because when He connects with us, He transforms us. People look at us and see something different when He comes into our lives."

All week, presenters like Desiree Bryant, Tony Anobile and Jose Cortes (NAD), It is Written President John Bradshaw, Vanessa and Jamil Hairston (pastors, Miami Temple Church), Hope Malabrigo (student chaplain, Andrews University), Joseph Kidder (professor, Andrews University Seminary) and Peter Roennfeldt (church planter and author) added the following:

1. **Minimize distractions to hear God's voice and experience His love;**
2. **In a collapsing world, discipleship must be our highest priority;**
3. **The key to discipleship is meeting others' felt needs;**
4. **Church should be an ark of safety where everyone feels loved; and**
5. **Every member is called to contribute to God's kingdom.**





Reaching Alphas and Gen Zers

Younger generations were not left out. There were daily segments for children in the adult evening worships, including puppet shows and biblical re-enactments. Afternoons included “Connect to Christ,” a children’s show by Shawn Ellis (pastor, Apple Creek) and his wife, Lian. Finally, children’s church and Sabbath School programs featured local children’s ministries and Rich Aguilera, “Mud Guy” (guide). “My children are enthralled!” said Kristen Bailey during a puppet show by Grace Ayoo (Ottawa Church).

John Scott, youth and young adult director, took on the challenge of recreating the camp meeting experience and energy virtually for teens and young adults. Highlights included:

- shorter training components, with more time for leaders to connect in their regions;
- rich conversations on music, social justice, campus ministry and Adventist education;
- an engaging musical variety show hosted by Acoustic Energy TV on Friday evening; and
- age-appropriate Bible studies—Bible Discovery for teens with Daniel Innocent (pastor, Ottawa Church) and Deep Dive for young adults with Andre Anderson (pastor, Shiloh Church).

Only ministry-minded young people with relevant experiences were invited to speak, including Sabbath keynote speakers George Tuyu (youth pastor, ReLove Church, California) and Jordane Smith (associate pastor, College Heights Church, Alberta). “All our speakers were timely, creative and practical, and they allowed God to use them powerfully,” said Scott. Indeed they did, offering gems such as, “God sees every part of us and still loves us. Because we have received this grace, we are called to be ministers in the church and the world” (Emily Kuchurivski, McMaster University student and Adventist Christian Fellowship leader).

Here Am I, Send Me

On Sabbath, following a rousing charge for workers by NAD chaplain James Black, Ivan L. Williams (director, NAD Ministerial Association) challenged us: “Commit to connecting with people like Jesus did. Desire their good, show them sympathy, help them when they’re down and out, then encourage them to follow you as you follow Christ.”

The week of inspiring messages and trainings was a strong call to action. David Ross reflected, “The entire camp meeting experience motivated me to follow Jesus in reaching out to others and in showing, better than I have, the kindness, understanding and empathy He offered to so many.”

“Each of us needs to know the voice of God and to respond by saying

‘I will serve,’” concluded Errol Lawrence (pastor, Toronto East).

What’s Next?

In Sabbath’s president’s message, Edwards mentioned the conference’s purchase of a campsite near Barrie, ON (see pp. 12-15). Its primary use will be for future camp meetings, perhaps as early as 2022. However, as Rakotoarison later shared, “We need to continue reaching people virtually even when we’re able to have an in-person camp meeting again. People are getting used to receiving high-quality content online, so if we don’t try to achieve that, we’ll fall behind.” While the future of large, in-person gatherings is still murky, one thing is certain—connecting with and like Jesus is here to stay.

Christelle Agboka,
Communications director

Where to Watch 2021 Connecting Like Jesus Camp Meetings

Adults and children:
youtube.com/adventistontario

Youth and young adults:
youtube.com/adventistyouthontario

Ministries Convention training:
connectinglikejesus.org



Youth and Children an Integral Part of CM2021

This 2021 camp meeting was all about “Connecting like Jesus.” I was able to attend two of the Teen Ministries sessions, including the Monday Bible Discovery Session by Pastor Daniel Innocent and the Tuesday Ministries Leadership by Pastor Matthew Piersanti, which focused on ways teens can discover their love for God and expand it further.

The first session I attended was the Monday Morning Bible Discovery session by Daniel Innocent. The main focus was on John 13:31-38, which was where Jesus predicted Peter’s denial. Pastor Innocent really emphasized that “the disciples were only known because they followed Jesus...following Jesus became their identity.” He also mentioned his own opinion, which multiple attendees shared their views on. He thinks Peter said, “Lord, why can I not follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake” because he understood that Jesus didn’t want him and the rest of the disciples to put themselves in danger..

“Jesus, if you’re worried about our safety, don’t be! I will lay down my life for you!” He might have said.

Peter was willing to fight and die for Jesus, thinking it had something to do with physical weapons. But he wasn’t prepared for the emotional and spiritual battle that Jesus meant. Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled” because He knew His disciples were anxious as to why he was leaving... and

that they couldn’t follow him. As the session continued, we discussed the importance of living a Christian life, not just bearing the title “Christian.”

One point Pastor Innocent made really stood out to me:

“The point of being a Christian is not to know all the Bible verses in Sabbath School or to have the best attendance rate in church. No! The point of being a Christian is to want to live for Christ, therefore wanting to glorify Him.”

The second session I attended was a Ministries Leadership session about helping teens discover their love for God by Pastor Matthew Piersanti. We discussed the five love languages and why all of them are important, even though we each may have different ways of expressing affection. Pastor Piersanti showed the attendees five videos, each on the love languages: physical touch, quality time, words of affirmation, acts of service and receiving/ giving gifts.

He emphasized that God loves and appreciates all love languages and that healthy relationships involve all five. One point Pastor Piersanti made that stood out to me was that the wise men gave Jesus gifts. That was their way of expressing their love, gratitude and appreciation to Jesus—the newborn King. At the end of the session, Pastor Piersanti gave us all a challenge. With our love language in mind (mine is quality time), we had to think of one way we would attempt to connect with God.

Since camp meeting, I have really tried to have my morning and evening devotions every day and spend more time with God. I can already see the benefits! I now look forward to completing my Sabbath School lesson and want to spend longer times in prayer. This 2021 camp meeting has definitely helped me connect with God!

*Addison Kielbasiewicz (age 14),
Bowmanville Church*



Puppets, Songs and Scripture!

The programs put on for the youth were done by Teen and Children's ministries. Pastor Sean and Auntie Lian were the two hosts of the Children's sessions for this camp meeting. The attendees could either join a Zoom meeting or watch the session on how to "Connect like Jesus" on Youtube. There were fun games and activities the children could enjoy and play live during the session too.

Puppets were included during the week to help teach the children life lessons about how you don't need to be "cool" in order to go to church or make friends. No! You need to have Jesus in your heart and "connect" with others as He would. Songs and scripture readings were emphasized multiple times during the sessions, giving the children the opportunity to memorize a Bible verse or learn a new song.

The session on Sabbath was especially interesting. Rich Aguilera, also known as "The Mud Guy," was featured. He showed the children different artifacts he'd collected over the years and told them multiple stories about his travels. One story included one way God intervened so that Aguilera and his team were able to "connect"—witness—to one man and gain a benefit from him at the same time. His two puppet friends, Dusty and Feather, joined him later on in the session, gave a special shoutout to the Ontarians watching and then talked about how Canadian geese connect with each other to stay in their 'V formation' while flying.



After that, there was a mini-game show where Aguilera wrapped up the last children's camp meeting session by asking five questions regarding the live stream. The session ended with a praise song and a short story by Jonathan Zita, the executive director of GLOW Canada. I'm sure God worked on the hearts of those watching so they will want to be able to connect like Jesus and someday be reunited with Him in heaven!

Jackelyn Kielbasiewicz,
Bowmanville Church

TECHNIQUES IN



SERVING YOUR NEIGHBOUR

Derived from the book, *The Art of Neighbouring*, by Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon, here is some inspiration for you and your children in serving your neighbour. Check out other useful resources below.

"I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth." - 1 Timothy 2:1, 3&4 NLT

START WITH PRAYER

Choose and pray over eight neighbours. Ask God for specific ways you can reach each individual person. Listen to his voice for direction.



GIVE AS A FRIEND

Gift a handful of seasonal flowers, an inexpensive treat or a magazine of interest. Show you're continually invested in the relationship.



ACT OUT KINDNESS

Offer to share in the yardwork or child care, to pick up groceries or some cold medicine. Carpool or give a ride, share your backyard or team up out on the field. There's no limit to kindness and its benefits.



NOTE YOUR TRUTH

Express your love and care for your neighbours in fun little notes, through holiday cards and notes of concern when a loved one is ill.



ACCEPT AN INVITATION

After all your efforts, make sure to accept when your neighbours invite you over! Enjoy your new friendship and pray for this budding relationship.



Some Additional Resources: *Sharing Your Faith: A Mini-Handbook for Prayerful, Bible-Based Witnessing* (book), Finding Joy 4 Eternity website, www.findingjoy4eternity.com, Witnessing.lnnd (ministerialassociation.org)

Conference Workers on the Move

As the year winds down, we must give thanks for our dedicated pastors and their supportive spouses. Our ministers are the frontline workers who have helped members navigate the storm of the past few years. In this section, we thank retirees, welcome new hires and share other 2021 'comings and goings' and achievements.

Ordination 2021

We're happy to announce four members of the pastoral team were ordained on December 11, 2021. **Pastors RJ Becbec, Kirk Dunchie, Andrew Thomas and Rui Oliveira** were ordained while standing with their fellow colleagues and spouses during the recent Worship That Connects Summit. Visit [youtube.com/Adventistontario](https://www.youtube.com/Adventistontario) for the full weekend's videos.

New Hires



Daniel Kurek, who has been temporarily assigned as an assistant pastor at Willowdale Church, was installed on Sabbath, October 2, 2021. A graduate of Andrews University,

Kurek brings wide-ranging experience teaching Bible and English, working with crisis care and mental health clients, and providing for his local church as an elder.



Lombardo Salas Silva was installed as the pastor of Leamington Spanish Group and Windsor Spanish Company on October 16, 2021. His experience includes carrying out

evangelistic campaigns in Mexico over the last 10 years, serving as a colporteur in Sonora, Mexico, and initiating a Spanish group in Leamington, Ontario. Leobardo also holds a Bachelor's in Religion and Master's in Family Relations from Montemorelos University.

Preston Patterson was installed as the pastor of Living Faith Company and Leamington and Chatham Churches



in November of 2021. Preston served as president of the Ministerial Association of the Guyana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He currently manages

a YouTube channel called "Final Millennium Ministries" and hosts "The Power of the WORD" daily devotional thought on YouTube.



Nazir Masih is the new pastor of the Brampton Asian Church and Urdu Group. Nazir has a Doctor of Ministry from the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIS)

in the Philippines. He speaks fluent Urdu, Punjabi and Hindi. Amid his vast ministry experience, Nazir has spoken around the world, been involved in church planting and was once a high school teacher.



Hopeton Blake was hired to be a Bible instructor for the Metro South Central Region in October of 2021. Hopeton previously served as the branch manager of the Adventist

Book Centre, evangelist / Bible instructor for the West Jamaica Conference, as a colporteur and missionary for the West Indies Union in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Hopeton has served in Ontario for more than a decade with distinction. He has a passion for souls.

Marcio Gerley Sousa was hired to pastor Monte Carmelo Company and the Brazilian/Portuguese group in Southern Ontario and start a Hispanic Church plant in Southern Ontario.



Paul Jang was hired to pastor the Toronto Chinese Church. Paul brings vast knowledge in natural health, business and theology. Some of Paul's achievements include

advising the Toronto Raptors medical team, founding the Canadian Chinese Multi-Business Association and earning her majesty Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Transfers

Frank Dell'Erba was transferred from pastoring New Life Church to pastoring Kanisa Adventist Fellowship.

Mathew Feeley was transferred from pastoring at Ottawa East Church and Kanata Company to pastoring New Life Church.

Jephthah Ndlovu was transferred out from serving as assistant pastor at Living Faith Company in November.

Dario Ferreira was transferred out from pastoring the Cambridge Luso-Brazilian Group. His last day of service was Sabbath, October 16, 2021.

Honourable Mention

On behalf of the Ministerial Association in Ontario, we want to congratulate Pastor Daniel Cucuteanu, who successfully defended his doctoral thesis on July 14, 2021. He completed a Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology from California Southern University. His topic was "Beliefs toward Mental Illness and Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Help among Canadian Adventist Pastors."

We would also like to congratulate Pastor Ida Smith on completing her doctoral program in Counselling and Psychotherapy. May God bless you in your endeavours.

Retirement



Paul Casey recently retired from pastoring the Waterloo Seventh-day Adventist Church. Among his most cherished memories there were watching the youth win Bible Bowl awards,

seeing several youth and adults get baptized, engaging in outreach and being

immersed in different cultures during the church's annual international days.



Rosa Lopes served Ontario for many years in the Portuguese community. She has faithfully served the community with excellence for almost two decades.



Roy West took leave from retirement to serve in the Chatham and Leamington district.

The pandemic extended what was supposed to be a year assignment. He served the district well, and we are grateful for his service.

Farewell

Philip Lee accepted a call to Michigan Conference to be closer to his parents. He will be pastoring in Battle Creek, Michigan. Phillip will be missed, but we wish him well.

Patrick Jacques also successfully defended his doctoral thesis: "Resilience, Stress, Spiritual Well-being, and

Depressions in a Bahamian-Caribbean Support group." Congratulations, Patrick! We wish him all the best as he finishes his program with his internship at the University of Western Ontario, London.

Pastor Daniel Sanchez has accepted a call to the Montana Conference. We are grateful for his service in Ontario and wish him well in this new assignment.

*Damson Oppong and
Kristen Whyte-Bailey,*
Ministerial department

Sweet Memories with Rose Dunn-Kalynko

For Rose, who grew up in Oshawa, the Ontario Conference is home. She began her denominational work at the ABC and Pacific Press in the US after completing a Bachelor of Business Administration. When her father passed away, she returned to Oshawa to be with her mom and started working for the Conference in 2000.

Rose served as a support staff for several departments but discovered her passion for Personal Ministries while working under Pastor Eustace Williams (then-director, Personal, Prayer and Prison Ministries). Among her achievements, she was blessed to work with a dynamic team in starting the Ontario Conference School of Evangelism and Discipleship (OCSED) and Ontario Conference Lay Evangelists Association (OCLEA) in 2014. She also helped plan Maranatha, which grew into the bi-annual Ontario Conference Ministries Convention, training over 1,000 members.

In 2017, she was transferred back to Personal Ministries, OCSED, OCLEA and Prison Ministries with Reynold Hazelwood and Stewardship with Gerry Pasikatan. There she remained until an accident and emergency surgery left her confined to a wheelchair in 2021.

Despite these challenging circumstances, Rose was the grateful beneficiary of an exceptional virtual sendoff on November 3, 2021. The thoughtful program included a joint devotional



by her directors, Hazelwood and Pasikatan, musical numbers, a "Sweet Memories" video, a trivia game about all things Rose and tributes from individuals representing different aspects of Rose's life.

Well-wishers included office friends Carl Hewitt and Kristen Whyte-Bailey, a "friend from the cradle," Carol Scott," her sons Chadwick and Aaron and former directors Eustace Williams and Jakov Bibulovic. Bibulovic said, "Thank you for going the extra mile for the Lord, for the conference, for your directors every day."

Other special guests included Alfred Johnson, previous director of Personal Ministries/Sabbath School, North American Division; Dan Linrud, former Ontario Conference executive secretary, present Oregon Conference

president; and Peggy Caesar, ADRA Canada communications specialist.

In a serendipitous moment, Rose's former boss, Pastor Dave Schwinghammer, (executive secretary, Oregon Conference) was visiting the president's office as his name came up an example for the trivia game. Guests were tickled to see him again. "I wish you and Bill all the very best ... and what a privilege to be here to see you all. God bless you," he said.

"I'm blown away," Rose said at the end, crying. "So much precious time went into this going-away." She expressed regret that, because of her health challenges, she'd left without saying goodbye in person. But she thanked everyone for their support and promised they would see each other again.

Future Plans

During the pandemic, Rose and her husband, Bill, bought a house in Okotoks, AB, to be close to their oldest son, Chadwick, his wife, Berta, and their grandchildren, Lucas (12) and Kailee (6). Rose also looks forward to spending more time with her son, Aaron, his wife, Bridget, and their grandson, Hagen (15), who live in San Antonio, where Aaron works in the US airforce.

Despite her disability, Rose says, "I am highly blessed. I'm looking for ways to carry forth my complete joy, personal ministries. I am positive God has something planned for me."

Christelle Agboka,
Communications director

Strategies for Moving Ontario Conference Toward Years of Multiplication

Since fall of 2020, Ontario Conference leaders have been evaluating our churches in alignment with the North American Division (NAD) office's vision to define the reality of our province alongside fellow conferences and unions. A new NAD initiative has measurements that assess congregations and classify churches in one of four categories: multiplying, growing, plateauing or declining. We discovered most of our churches (66%) are plateauing (47%) or declining (19%); the remaining 34% are growing. These figures are comparable to those of the NAD, with 58% of churches declining and 63% declining in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada.

We were determined to discuss these findings both at the office and with local church leaders. In preparation for these meetings, we engaged Dr. Fred Russell, one of the best professional Adventist leadership coaches in North America. He provided two days of coaching clinics to equip administrators and directors to offer our pastors professional support.

Meetings with regional leaders and pastors incorporated breakout

discussions to consider causative factors and possible solutions to shift churches away from plateauing and declining and toward growth — or better yet, multiplication.

Regional meetings began on February 21, 2021, and were rich with contributions from leaders and pastors. For the last two meetings, we brought together our French churches in April and our Hispanic churches in June.

Growth Strategy Meetings

We have engaged in services to assist us in scaling and scheduling workers' meetings, three for pastors and one for everyone, to be held in September 2021. On March 10, 2021, the pastors of all declining congregations met, followed by pastors of growing congregations on March 23 and of declining congregations on May 17. At all three meetings, pastors discussed ideas and strategies for church growth in cooperation with the NAD's vision of multiplication across our churches.

New Mission-Driven Resource

After years of providing counsel, the NAD has put together a document called "The Mission-Driven Quick-Start Guide for Local Church Leaders 1.0." We have secured a copy for each pastor to use with local leaders to ensure church board meetings, business meetings and worship services are mission-driven so churches can be kept moving in a clear direction (see p. 10 for more).

COVID-19 has challenged us to develop new perspectives. The pandemic stopped everyone in our tracks and forced us to pause and reflect on the vulnerability of our world. Amid this crisis, each of us has been given the opportunity to climb our own sycamore tree, from which we can view fresh perspectives and see Jesus more clearly.

Mansfield Edwards,
President



OCLEA Evangelistic Series Viewed Globally

What an incredible blessing the OCLEA's Evangelistic Series was to all involved! OCLEA's capable leadership—President Julia Clarke, Ontario Conference Personal Ministries Director Reynold Hazelwood, and our dedicated volunteer team—expertly planned and executed the series, *Signs of the Times Revealed: Declaring Truth, Delivering Hope*, from July 17 to 31. Throughout the series, Pastor Fitzroy Maitland kindly offered the lay preachers spiritual guidance.

In June, OCLEA members engaged in 40 days of prayer, culminating in a special prayer service the evening before the opening. OCLEA also hosted an exhibit booth during the Ontario Conference Virtual Camp Meeting (June 29–July 3), which provided the series greater exposure.

Six anointed and ethnically diverse lay evangelists (Julia Clarke, Leonardo

Barboza, Sammy Adriatico, Kathleen Garcia, Garner Liverpool, and Volence Drummond) marked the series with power-packed preaching.

They faithfully presented engaging topics: "The Cause and the Cure for Suffering," "Signs of His Coming," "Born to Live Forever," "Why So Many Churches?" and "Mark of the Beast." The final message—"The Best Is Yet to Come!"—promised a joyful end despite present challenges.

Nightly, soul-stirring melodies arose from our singing evangelists Bovrell G. Simpson and Pretha Radlein alongside praise and worship teams from across Greater Toronto. The series streamed live via YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and

The graphic features a purple and gold color scheme. At the top, it says 'OCLEA LAY EVANGELISTIC SERIES'. The main title is 'Signs of THE TIMES REVEALED' in a stylized font, with the subtitle 'DECLARING TRUTH, DELIVERING HOPE'. Below the title are icons for Facebook Live, YouTube, and Zoom. The event is scheduled for 'JULY 17-31 2021' and 'JOIN US 7:00PM'. It lists the days: 'TUESDAYS, WEDNESDAYS, FRIDAYS, SATURDAYS & SUNDAYS'. On the right side, there are portraits of the evangelists: Julia Clarke (Opening Night Preacher), Kathleen Garcia, Sammy Adriatico, Leonardo Barboza, Volence Drummond, and Garner Liverpool. At the bottom, it says 'SPONSORED BY THE PERSONAL MINISTRIES DEPARTMENT OF THE ONTARIO CONFERENCE'.

Zoom; more than 1,000 global viewers tuned in to hear these timely messages.

The series concluded with an in-person service (also broadcast live) at Toronto Central Church. The crowning act was the baptism of nine people who decided to give their lives to Jesus. We give heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped make the series a success. To God be the glory; great things He has done!

Rainford Cornish,
Public Relations, OCLEA

Southern Ontario Virtual Camp Meeting Broadens Its Reach in 2021

By God’s grace, the audience for the second virtual camp meeting of the Southern Ontario district (June 4–6) was almost 40% larger than in 2020. Thousands of viewers accessed YouTube and Facebook for up to 17 hours of adult, children’s and youth programming.

To reach a global audience, the committee engaged speakers from South Africa, the U.S. and Canada and featured international musicians. This tactic attracted viewers from over a dozen countries worldwide, including Brazil, Guyana, India and South Africa.

Our live camp meeting had an audience of 1,200 to 1,500, and we reached more than 12,300 people online, compared to approximately 7,900 online in 2020. Viewers heard relevant, powerful messages from international speakers, including Ontario Conference President Pastor Mansfield Edwards; Pastor Mazibuko of South Africa; Pastor Shawn Boonstra; Pastor Debleaire Snell of Alabama; and Pastor Elizabeth Pule, Family Life director.

The youth heard from Pastors Garth Dottin, Anthony Kern and Philip Lee. Pastor Allan Chichester, Children’s Ministry director, provided spiritual food for the children.

We thank God for the opportunity to labour for Him and the blessings granted to many.

Here are a few quotes from attendees:

“This past camp meeting was truly inspiring and spiritual. The weekend has left an indelible impression on my heart and mind.”

- Sheryl from Kitchener

“The messages received from the Southern Ontario Youth Camp Meeting were very relevant and encouraging. I felt challenged to ‘stand up’ and represent God wherever He calls me to serve.”

- Ashley from Oshawa

“The entire program was a blessing. I enjoyed the Bible stories, experiments, music and verses. I loved the variety and extensive involvement of children throughout. It was very well done.”

- Anonymous (Children’s program)

Russell Preddie,
Chair, Southern Ontario Adventist Regional Camp Meeting Committee

SOUTHERN ONTARIO ADVENTIST REGIONAL CAMP MEETING 2021
"Understanding Times"

Join us for our
Children's Program

Friday, June 4th @ 7:30 pm EST | 11:30 pm GMT
featuring Adventurers Ontario

Saturday, June 5th @ 9:30 am EST | 1:30 pm GMT
Saturday, June 5th @ 4:00 pm EST | 8:00 pm GMT
featuring Pastor Allan Chichester

Sunday, June 6th @ 10:30 am EST | 2:30 pm GMT

Meet our speaker for the divine hour
Grace Ayoo
and her friends
Oliver and Theo
(Ramona will be there too)

List of supplies available @
www.adventistcampmeeting.org

Live at @adventistontario

Southern Ontario Regional Adventist Camp Meeting
"Understand the Time"
June 4 – 6, 2021

FRIDAY EVENING SERVICE: Friday @ 7:00 pm EDT
SABBATH SCHOOL: Saturday @ 9:00 am EDT
DIVINE SERVICE: Saturday @ 11:00 am EDT
AFTERNOON SERVICE: Saturday @ 2:00 pm EDT
EVENING SERVICE: Saturday @ 6:00 pm EDT
SUNDAY MORNING: Sunday @ 10:00 am EDT

LIVE via

@AdventistOntario
adventistcampmeeting.org

** Health Presentations by Dr. Neil Nedley, Social Psychologist at the Weimar Institute.

SPEAKERS

Pr. Mansfield Edwards
 Pr. Khethelo Mazibuko
 Pr. Shawn Boonstra
 Pr. Debleaire Snell
 Pr. Elizabeth Pule

All That WE ARE
A VIRTUAL CAMP MEETING
June 4-5, 2021

FRIDAY NIGHT VESPERS: FRIDAY AT 7:30 PM
SABBATH SCHOOL: SATURDAY AT 9:30 AM
DIVINE SERVICE: SATURDAY AT 11:15 AM
SATURDAY VESPERS: SATURDAY AT 6:00 PM

PASTOR GARTH DOTTIN
 PASTOR ANTHONY KERN
 PASTOR PHILIP LEE

LIVE Via
@ADVENTISTYOUTHONTARIO

PRESENTED BY



The Really Living Centre: A First of Its Kind

“When you come here, you can be yourself,” says Hannah Navarro, Really Living Centre member and media volunteer. “You’re accepted, you’re loved, you’re cared for. Everybody becomes your friend. They become your family.”

Twenty years ago, during a meeting at Tim Hortons with his head elder, then-senior Pastor of Hamilton Mountain Adventist Church, Dan Linrud, sketched out a rough conceptual blueprint on a napkin. His vision was to create a centre of influence; he aimed to establish a hub with holistic ministry at its core that would serve the Hamilton area and beyond. He also envisioned an innovative means of connecting the church to the community, shifting the focus from practicing traditional outreach styles to building genuine relationships through acts of service and kindness.

In January 2001, elders and members commissioned Linrud and a dozen families from Hamilton Mountain Church to form a new congregation called the Living Word Christian Fellowship. It was then that Linrud’s vision — small groups spread across the city that fostered community and grew together spiritually — took root and began to germinate.

He hoped that one day, Living Word Christian Fellowship would embody this dream by becoming an established community centre for Sabbath worship and a safe haven available to community members seven days a week.

On September 7, 2019, nearly 19 years after he helped plant the seed, Linrud’s vision blossomed into something tangible, something concrete. The Really Living Centre and the Really Living Adventist Church became Ontario Conference’s first centre of influence. Linrud, now president of the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, returned to join in the celebration and watch as the idea that began as scribbles on the back of a napkin became much more than he ever envisioned. As the divine hour speaker, Linrud thanked Pastor Francis and Tina Douville for their exceptional leadership and tireless efforts in bringing the Really Living Centre to life. This day served as a reminder to all in attendance that God’s plans often exceed every expectation we could set for ourselves.

The 25,000-square-foot facility, designed to be open every day of the week, was created to address the reality that

conventional evangelism methods often cannot create lasting change. The Really Living Centre operates under the belief that Christ’s method of ministering to people’s needs first, then sharing the gospel, tends to create the biggest impact — especially in urban centres. Forming connections with community members by providing them with various services and activities will, in the end, draw them to Christ.

Since its grand opening, inquiries regarding the Centre’s roster of activities have been continuous, thanks in part to the 130-square foot digital billboard positioned alongside the active roadway out front, advertising upcoming community events and programs. Before the pandemic, the centre boasted multiple, diverse activities. From summer camps for kids to drop-in basketball and indoor rock climbing, to cooking classes in their commercial-grade kitchen, to a seniors’ walking club, there was something for everyone, no matter their walk of life. Throughout the pandemic, Really Living Centre continued with online worship services and low-contact community services, including community gift hampers at Christmas, “Bags of Hope,” which delivered free groceries to struggling families, and the centre’s ongoing free oil changes for single parents.

Centres of influence like Really Living have only recently begun to take off worldwide, but the concept is not new. In the 19th century, Ellen White



dreamed of “establish[ing] in all our cities small plants which shall be centres of influence” (7T, 115). She noted that “it is through the social relations that Christianity comes in contact with the world” (4T, 555). Today, with over half the world’s population residing in urban areas, White’s vision has become even more practical.

It takes time and multiple points of contact to foster and grow these kinds of social relationships. Offering practical community programs where members and visitors interact and build friendships can lead to an enriching experience for both church and community. For instance, Sashani Brown-Gowdie was impressed with the children’s programming upon visiting Really Living at a friend’s recommendation. She soon joined the community boot camp, and throughout the eight-week program, developed friendships within the church. This touchpoint ultimately led her and her family to take Bible studies and become members. The Gowdie family has since become invaluable to the life and ministry of the church. Their involvement and leadership in countless areas bless many within and beyond the Centre’s walls.

Only by God’s grace can Really Living Centre share stories of mutual enrichment like that of the Gowdie family. However, it has been a long journey to reach this point. Initially, the church plant was a difficult transition for the mother church. Land acquisition and

development proved challenging. Even more arduous was the task of creating a broader purpose for Adventism, one expanding beyond theology and ideology. Prayer quickly became a priority for Really Living leaders and members as they lifted up their need for visionaries who believed in the centre’s mission and vision. Over the past five years, they have seen God consistently fulfill this request.

Based on the principles of the Mission-Driven Church (see p. 10), Really Living is now working toward greater alignment in mission. In November 2020, Pastor Douville felt God guiding him to rethink their vision and set strategic goals. He then carefully selected a 10-person committee comprised of founding members, newly baptized members, leaders, non-leaders, visionaries, men and women, all ages from 21 to 75 and different ethnicities, for this task. Together, they set a new vision for the church: a five-year mission to take Really Living from a church of prayer and turn its members into people of prayer. Their vision includes

- making prayer integral at all levels of church operations,
- implementing improved forms of digital evangelism,
- establishing an innovative children and youth ministry, and

- encouraging healthy lifestyles and mobilizing members of every age to serve.

By taking these steps, Douville hopes there will be an overflow of disciples ready to bring the gospel to every corner of the earth, beginning in Ontario.

“At the end of the day, the sermon is such a small part of why we exist. When our church accepted to become a centre of influence, every aspect of ministry, from the building structure to how we ‘do church’ had to be analyzed from the perspective of those we are trying to reach. As transformation is replacing tradition, we are prayerfully putting God before all our endeavours. As a result, we are seeing new people come to Christ every year, and that makes it all worth it to us,” said Pastor Douville.

At the heart of Really Living’s ministry is a solid community of believers who strengthen their walk with God through small groups, church services and personal devotions to pour their cups into filling those of others. For people like Sashani Brown-Gowdie and Hannah Navarro, it is a place of acceptance, friendship and family. Over time, Really Living is becoming all that Pastor Linrud envisioned 20 years ago and more — a way to connect to others so they can connect to Christ.

Christelle Agboka, with contributions from Tina and Francis Douville, Shantal Small

Ephesus Church, Expanding God's Work in Scarborough

On April 17, 2021, Ontario Conference leaders officiated the merger of two established Scarborough-area congregations. President Mansfield Edwards, Treasurer Virene Meikle, Ministerial Director Damson Oppong and Chief Auditor Egberth Jeffers joined Pastor Leonard Northe and members as Toronto North Church and Salem Company became Ephesus.

The day's theme was "To God Be the Glory," as 40 in-person and 80 online attendees celebrated how God has led the two churches over the years and the greater work He will do through Ephesus. Each church brings unique strengths. For instance, Toronto North offers financial stability as an older congregation, whereas Salem offers a workforce, youth and vitality. Furthermore, they chose the name Ephesus to signify a fresh start — a return to their first love.

This day has been a long time coming. Over the past few years, Salem and Toronto North members had grown closer as they held joint communion services and evangelistic programs. Eventually, Toronto North's building was sold, and the two congregations began worshipping together in November 2019.

The April 17 program made the fusion official, with founding members of both churches giving a brief history of the two congregations and emphasizing that they started as branch Sabbath Schools in the early 2000s in response to community

needs. These histories recognized pioneers like Sylvia Mead-Alexander and Arnold Dawkins (deceased), founders of Salem Company, whose work in the Eastern region will continue with Ephesus.

In his first message as the shepherd of Ephesus Church, Pastor Northe stated, "All of us have seen two rivers flowing smoothly and quietly along until they meet. Then, they clash and hurl at one another. However, as they flow downstream, they gradually quiet down, flow smoothly again and join to form one new river — broader, more majestic and more powerful. So it is in forming a new union. At first, this venture is turbulent and stormy, with unsettled issues. Sometimes selfishness and control are prevalent. But when oneness is achieved, the result is far greater than either alone."

Christelle Agboka,
Communications director



Toronto Perth Celebrates 50th Anniversary

It is a Jubilee year for Toronto Perth Seventh-day Adventist Church. Fifty years of worship and service began when Pastor Earl Parchment inspired a small group of visionaries from Toronto West Seventh-day Adventist Church to establish a new congregation. That group purchased a building at 243 Perth Avenue; though it required extensive renovations, the Perth Avenue Seventh-day Adventist Church officially opened on January 2, 1971.

Membership multiplied, surpassing 500 by the end of the first decade. Pastors Rick Bacchus and Shirley Green shepherded this booming congregation through the 1970s, followed by Pastors Orville Parchment, Ted McLeary and Steve Cassimy in the 1980s. In 1990, Pastor Cassimy led the church to plant two congregations: Mt. Olive and Hope Seventh-day Adventist Churches. Pastor Ray Llewellyn took the church through the remainder of the 1990s and into the 2000s, followed by Pastors Joel Nembhard and Theodore Sargeant.

Noting that church attendance had exceeded seating capacity, Pastor Sargeant started speaking of relocation. In 2010, he passed this baton to Pastor Nerval Myrie, who orchestrated

the sale of the previous location and the purchase of a car dealership building at 220 Bethridge Road (Etobicoke). The congregation held their final service at Perth Avenue on June 26, 2011, after 40 years there. In faith, they entered their new home on July 2, 2011. After renovations, Toronto Perth Seventh-day Adventist Church was born on July 6, 2013.

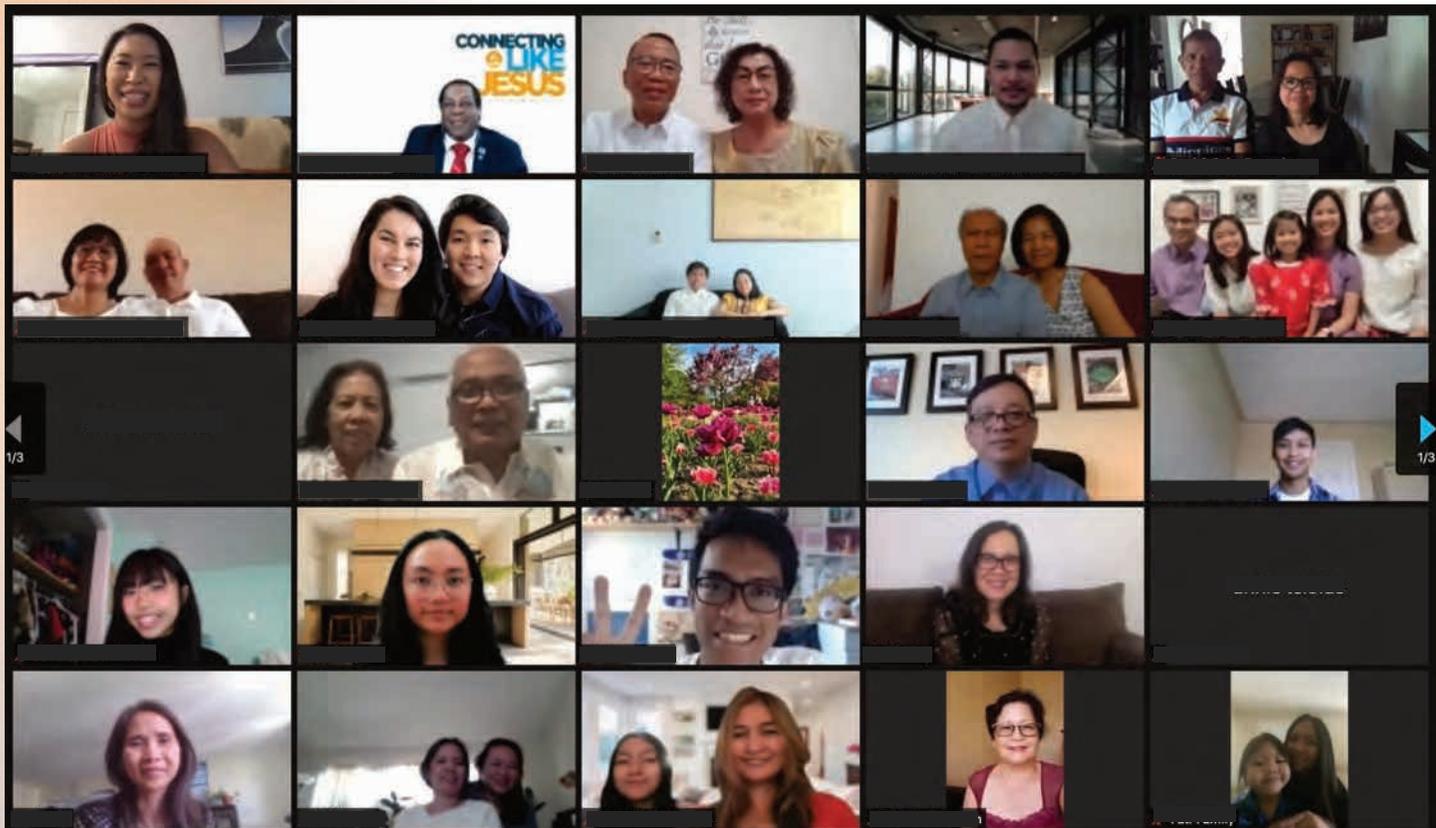


Under the leadership of Pastor Eustace Williams, the 50th-anniversary celebration is a testimony to this congregation's fortitude. Pastors Ken Campbell, Stanley McFarlane, Frankie Lazarus, Joseph Bulgin, Orville Brown, Vincent Lue, Donville Cooper, Audley Allen, Frederick Nichols, Garth Dottin, Dewaine Frazer, Fitzroy Radlein, Windel Montaque, Kelvin Kublall and Nicholas Patrick have also shaped the church.

Today, we reflect on 50 years of service, worship, caring and growth. We thank the members who forged the path leading to this moment and the pastors guiding them. We will be forever grateful for those who started this journey, and we are confident we can continue this legacy so that 50 years from now, our descendants will say, "We, too, have come this far by faith." It is truly a Year of Jubilee. May God grant us 50 years more.

Dorian Facey, Toronto Perth clerk

Durham Filipino-Canadian Church Organized on Philippines Independence Day



On June 12, 2021, Philippines Independence Day, the Durham Filipino-Canadian Seventh-day Adventist congregation was conferred church status by the Ontario Conference administrators. Focusing on the theme “Growth and Service in Christ,” the Sabbath began with a warm welcome from Judith Guarin, Sabbath School superintendent, followed by an inspiring Sabbath School lesson review led by Pastor Allan Chichester (director, Sabbath School, Children’s Ministry).

Conference leaders devoted the worship service to the church organization, with Pastor Jakov Bibulovic (executive secretary) leading the review and affirmation of Adventist beliefs, Pastor Mansfield Edwards (president) giving the charge, Virene Meikle (treasurer) leading the litany of consecration and Pastor Damson Oppong (Ministerial secretary) offering the prayer of dedication.

Pastor Edwards reminded the congregation what it means to be the bride of Christ: “Christ deserves a beautiful bride, a bride who grows to appreciate and value Him, values her walk with Him and appreciates His grace and acceptance of her; a bride who assumes the responsibility to represent Him wherever she goes.” Edwards concluded by challenging the congregation to truly represent Christ and establish a strong influence in the Durham region.

The afternoon was a mix of greetings from pastors, musical renditions from various Ontario Filipino churches and testimonies from members. The afternoon’s highlight was a message from Pastor Mark Johnson about freedom from sin and separation as a gift from Christ.

Pastor Leo Launio concluded with a prayer of thanksgiving for God’s

marvellous leadership during the several years of working toward church status. Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NKJV) eloquently sums up the experience that culminated in this historic event—“He has made everything beautiful in its time.”

With 88 charter members, empowered by the Holy Spirit, the new church is committed “to shar[ing] the good news of salvation [with] everyone, nurturing families and friends to live Christ-centered lives, and equipping them to serve and prepare people for Christ’s soon return.”[i]

Pastor Leo Launio

[i] <https://durhamfilcan.org/services/mission/>

Ottawa Church Partners with Big Give Ottawa to Serve Needy Communities Across the Capital

Since April 2021, the Community Services Assistance Programme (CSAP) of the Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church (OSDA) has maintained a food pantry to assist community and church members in need. This initiative has been a crucial response to recent challenges.

On Sunday, June 5, 2021, OSDA partnered once again with the annual Big Give Ottawa while adapting to COVID-19 restrictions. The Big Give is a day on which community churches come together to give generously to as many communities as possible across Ottawa.

In a normal year, our church members would directly engage the communities by providing household goods and services during an event held in a public space. However, this year, we delivered 22 grocery boxes to the homes of single mothers in need in several communities. We envision that the wider Ottawa area will soon have access to our food pantry and its provisions.

Wanito Bernadin, head elder and deputy Community Services leader, Ottawa Seventh-day Adventist Church

Photos (L-R, T-B): Years past Big Give Volunteers: Backpack distribution - Kathleen Johnson, department leader, works in conjunction with Wanito; Gail and James (husband and wife) serving outdoors in their bubble; Haircut from past Big Give event; Ronnie sporting T-shirt messaging





London South Helps Alleviate Pain During Pandemic

For seven years, the London South Church community service program has partnered with Ark Aid Street Mission to help the homeless by providing a hot meal monthly and supplying clothing, blankets and toiletries. Last March, we modified our program by offering a bagged lunch with a boxed hot meal.

During the pandemic, we saw an increased need resulting from restrictions and facility closures for the homeless. We provided meals, clothing and blankets to people on the street to help alleviate pain. We also met them in tent cities, parking lot groups and riverbanks. Some community members inquired about our program and assisted by donating food, water, backpacks, blankets, winter clothing, toiletries and medicinal creams.

Furthermore, we provided the homeless with information on assistance programs. For instance, we persuaded those living

in tents to apply for housing accommodations via a city-run program that provides housing in refurbished construction trailers.

Every Sunday, we supplied 130 bagged lunches comprising sandwiches, fruit, drink and dessert and 60 hot meals; we provided 200 hot meals every fourth week. The homeless also accepted religious books and tracts and were thankful for the assistance.

An older gentleman in dire need took our advice; he is now being housed through the WISH program and hopes to obtain an apartment. Another incident involved a young lady who set up a tent on the riverbank and was so proud of her accommodations that she insisted we visit her "home." She later recognized one of our volunteers on the street and noted she would not be here without our assistance.

By God's grace, we have fulfilled our mission of helping alleviate hunger and ease the pain of the homeless in London. We have all been blessed.

Teresa Ferreira, London South Community Services



Ruth Community Services: Serving Faithfully in the Pandemic

“Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile.” – Albert Einstein

These profound words from Albert Einstein almost sound like a biblical excerpt, such as Proverbs 19:17: “Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward them for what they have done.” Following Christ means accepting a call to service. Thus, I view community services as one of the pillars of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

I have been privileged to serve in Ruth Church’s Community Services department for over seven years under the devoted, dynamic duo Dawn and Anthony Pegasus. I have repeatedly witnessed that it is more blessed to give than to receive. On days I was not feeling my best, coming out on a Sunday to pack and deliver grocery boxes and pray for our community friends always brought my soul joy.

Our food pantry, established in 2012, regularly serves 80 families from diverse backgrounds on the last Sunday of each

month (11 a.m. to 1 p.m., 10755 Torbram Road). Another successful community service endeavour is our free tax clinic, which began in 2018 under Brother Robert Hoilett, Arlene Johnson and Michelle Coleman. The clinic serves numerous clients during the tax season, including youth, college/university students, seniors and single mothers.

The year 2020 was life-changing and disruptive for many. As a result, more families needed our services than ever before. But by God’s grace, we faced the challenges of the pandemic, adjusted according to provincial health guidelines, and kept working and serving our community. Though the pandemic persists, we continue to serve.

We thank everyone who has helped us continue to be the Jesus our community friends see—Dawn and Anthony; our volunteers; those who have donated food, computers and printers; and others.

Proverbs 29:18 states, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” We thank God that there is a vision for the advancement of the Ruth Community Services department. Let us remember that service is essential for spiritual growth and achieving God’s purpose for our lives. May we take our place alongside Christ, the finest servant of all.

MG Rosanna Bullock, Ruth Community Services



Sister Ruby Smith Successfully Spearheads COVID-19 Soup Kitchen

Sister Ruby Smith, our dedicated Community Services leader, is always thinking of ways to help our community. When the pandemic began, our community service team began making food baskets, handing out food vouchers and shopping for individuals in need. Throughout the lockdown, Sister Ruby and her team continued to find ways to meet individual and family needs; one of them was preparing hot meals and delivering them to the elderly and shut-ins in our community.

This initiative involved shopping during the week, organizing a team to prepare the meals on Sundays and coordinating drivers to deliver these meals. Thankfully, when Sister Ruby put out the call, several church members willingly came out to help prepare culinary delights. They kept the menu simple—hot soup and sandwiches. Volunteer drivers also lined up to deliver meals with a warm smile and friendly attitude.

This program is going swimmingly. The recipients of this ministry are grateful for the meals served and the love demonstrated. Thanks to Sister Ruby and her team, the COVID-19 lockdown has provided us with another great opportunity to minister to our community.

Downsview Church, Community Services department

Heritage Ghanaian Church Shines during COVID-19

The devastating effects of COVID-19 have initiated a wake-up call against apostasy in Heritage Ghanaian Church. As a result, we have made changes in five specific areas.

Online Services

The inability to gather for in-person worship has prompted the need to meet online. The church has thus made substantial efforts to facilitate the spiritual growth of both the congregation and the community virtually.

Beyond Sabbath services, the church has been holding midweek prayer sessions and Friday evening Bible studies as they were held pre-pandemic. Small groups are gathering, and the pastoral team is relentless in their prayer sessions with each family. In addition, the women's ministry hosts sessions each Sunday to pray and learn how to best support their families in these unprecedented times. "Each One Brings One" is the slogan of our personal ministries for gaining converts through these programs.

Welfare Ministry

Knowing the critical role of charity in evangelism, the welfare ministry has organized drive-through distribution of essential food items to our community. Members have also been asked to inform the pastor of those needing assistance — including fellow members — so no one is left behind. Special assistance has been provided to newcomers to Canada, and funds have been earmarked to distribute spiritual pamphlets and booklets.

Children and Youth

The church cherishes the spiritual growth of children and youth, and leaders doggedly involve children and youth in worship gatherings to foster that growth. A portion of our Zoom gatherings has been allocated for children and youth, and we sometimes incorporate a youth service where they minister to us.

Stewardship

Some Sabbath afternoon studies have been intermingled with evangelistic events; the most prominent of these by the pastoral team were "Proper Spiritual Engagement" and "Practically Encountering God Through Divine Reading." Furthermore, we are holding seminars to promote faithfulness to God with our scanty treasures.

Health

Finally, we acknowledge that COVID-19 has been disastrous in terms of fatalities. We frequently organize health seminars, and we praise God that no one from the church has yet fallen ill. MARANATHA! The Lord certainly has blessed Toronto Ghanaian Church.

Francis Adu-Donkor, Communications leader, Heritage Ghanaian Church



Spreading the Word to the Ottawa Valley

Earlier this year, pastors everywhere grappled with the question of how we can spread the Word when COVID-19 has imposed gathering restrictions.

In Ottawa, Pastor Bob Winsor of Nepean Church and Pastor Robert Greaves of Ottawa Church decided, "If the people cannot come to us, we will go to them." Reaching out to Pastor Bill Santos of Lessons for Living Television, they saw a way of combining the clear Word of God with an invitation for viewers to connect with Nepean and Ottawa Churches.

Pastor Santos would bring the message, and Pastors Winsor and Greaves would share a unique aspect of their churches' ministries in each episode, inviting viewers to reach out to them. The program would air on Sunday mornings on CTV 2 Ottawa, and members from each church would respond to callers'

inquiries. These pastors acted on faith and trusted God's guidance. They ran the programs from spring through the end of summer.

Viewer statistics indicated that between 3,000 and 4,500 viewers tuned in each Sunday from across Ottawa, Arnprior and the surrounding areas. Requests for literature and prayer over the months on air totalled near 30. Interest came in from as far away as Arnprior and various regions of Gatineau. One precious soul was baptized, and one nearby family is now regularly attending Ottawa Church.

When heads, hearts and minds unite, there is no limit to what God can do. He worked wonders through the thoughtful partnership of the Nepean Church and Ottawa Church members and the



creativity of Pastor Santos and producer Doug Bruce. It was a blessing to be on air each Sunday and bring hope and encouragement during the pandemic.

Pastor Robert Greaves,
Ottawa Adventist Church

Downsview's Undefeated Youth Evangelistic Series a Blessing in Pandemic

On October 2, 2021, Downsview Seventh-day Adventist Church started its fall evangelistic campaign. This year's fall series was entirely youth-focused and youth-driven, which was, to my knowledge, a first in the church's history. What started as an idea in 2020 quickly took shape as the church's youth seized the opportunity to minister to their church family and peers. A planning committee was organized, with the desired outcome to see peers who used to attend services return to their church home. The series' theme was UNDEFEATED, and our keynote speaker was Michelle Clarke, assistant pastor at Toronto West Seventh-day Adventist Church. God used her to bless us nightly, and for that, we give Him thanks.

As their pastor, what inspired me the most was that these dedicated young people were willing to serve and minister despite the pandemic. There was uncertainty regarding how

the series would take shape and whether the lockdowns would persist. However, this didn't deter our youth. Why? Because the goal remained the same: lead people home and lead others to Christ. Thus, the team, led by Shaina Lue, Sabrina Lue and Andrene "Dora" Burrell, devised several plans and backup plans to ensure the series would continue regardless of restrictions.

On October 16, 2021, we concluded our series with a celebration and a baptism. Five precious souls were added to the kingdom. God is doing an amazing thing at Downsview, and I look forward to seeing what He does next!

Pastor Sean Folkes



Spreading the Three Angels' Message Online

The Great Commission of Matthew 28 has come to life at Brantford Seventh-day Adventist Church over the past two years! March 2020 brought worldwide lockdowns, including restrictions on personal and corporate assemblies. However, even with only 10 people able to meet in person, Brantford Church presented three evangelistic series to our church community and to online viewers worldwide.

Initially, our church lacked the audiovisual equipment, lighting and platform required to present to an online community. Nevertheless, Brantford Church members had a strong vision of spreading the Three Angels' Messages and decided to press forward with faith that they could meet ministry needs.

One after the other, answers to prayer materialized. Our prayer team did not stop until the equipment, lighting, stage,

volunteers and finances for the first evangelistic meeting were all gathered — just in time — and everything was ready.

We knew God's hand was on our dream of presenting these last-day messages to Brantford Church members and online viewers. Not working under the familiar circumstances of our previous outreach programs could have been discouraging, but the evidence of God working throughout the process revitalized our members' faith. Five baptisms were a cause of great rejoicing as we witnessed the fruits of our labour with Christ.

Seeing new members take an active part in these ventures was also a blessing, from the audiovisual team, greeters, cleaners and prayer partners to the musicians, presenters and people designing and distributing pamphlets. By being a blessing to others who received this message, the members themselves were



blessed. Additionally, two Revelation seminars and one health-message seminar served as powerful reminders of the Adventist Church's beautiful messages of life and truth. We look forward to the next outreach in the spring of 2022.

Alexander Gietsel,
Pastor, Brantford and Paris Seventh-day Adventist Churches



Immanuel United Prayer Ministry Changes Lives During COVID

Sandra McKenzie, Immanuel Church's Prayer Ministry director, experienced a spiritual revival after participating in the 24/7 Global United Prayer Ministry teleconference in the fall of 2020. This ministry is a group prayer line first envisioned in 2014 as a network of earnest believers stationed worldwide. The ministry officially launched in the summer of 2020, beginning with several daily prayer calls and growing to 18 prayer lines. These lines span six continents and are available 24/7 via Zoom.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Sandra invited the leaders of the global ministry and those of its North American counterpart to introduce united prayer to Immanuel Church during its December 2020 Week of Prayer. Thus, in January of 2021, Immanuel launched the Immanuel United Prayer ministry, which occurs daily at 7 p.m. with 10-15 participants during the week and 30-35 on weekends.

During United Prayer, the facilitator leads participants through the following sequence: praise, confession, supplication and thanksgiving. Supplication includes praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, intercession for the lost (especially loved ones) and consideration of God's vision for Immanuel and other requests. Participants take turns praying in short sentences, united like the disciples in the Upper Room.

Guided by God, North America and Global United Prayer leaders and Immanuel member Melissa Miranda encouraged the ministry to expand its territory. These efforts resulted in the launch of 24/7 United Prayer Canada on March 5, 2021, with five team members. The team has since grown to 15 members. At 8 p.m. nightly, 15-25 people call in from across Canada, the United States,

Barbados, Jamaica, Australia, India and other Asian countries to pray.

The Holy Spirit is working mightily, changing lives and answering prayers. Ella Miranda shared answered prayers about healing, restoration of relationships and guidance. Debra Sims testified about her spiritual growth and coming to walk more closely with God. Ernest Rampersad affirmed that the united prayer gave him spiritual strength and revival. One married couple renewed their walk with the Lord via a profession of faith. One non-Adventist, after learning to fast, pray and tithe, even decided to be baptized. To God be the glory!

We invite you to visit 247unitedprayer.org for a list of global United Prayer lines, including 24/7 United Prayer Canada.

Aurora Wilson, Communications director, Immanuel Church

Church Member Gives Away More Than 2,000 GLOW Tracts

In April 2020, Eman B'Dacy, an Immanuel Church member, decided to place a table stocked with Bibles, E. G. White books and GLOW tracts with inserts providing information from 3ABN and Amazing Facts at the end of his driveway. Passersby were curious, but not many took any materials.

In May, Eman started placing his table on a walking path close to his house on weekends. He added a "FREE Books" sign with the same reading materials now in clear plastic containers. From a distance, Eman noticed that people now stopped, browsed and took the literature that interested them. He left for the morning, came back at midday to replenish the materials and returned at the end of the day to collect everything for the night. He then moved his table to an even busier walking and cycling trail along the Humber River Path and faithfully continued this ministry on

weekends throughout the summer and fall.

In 2020, Eman gave away more than 300 books and more than 2,000 GLOW tracts!

At first, Eman was concerned about vandalism or questions from local authorities, but surprisingly, no such incidents occurred. In fact, many people complimented Eman's efforts, thanked him and asked questions — some even offered to give donations!

Encouraged by Eman's success, Immanuel Church decided to replicate his innovative ministry. The Personal Ministries department has grouped members based on their area of residence. Each group is responsible for placing a table full of materials at a



trail within their assigned geographical area. Each material is stamped with the church address and information and a link to the Voice of Prophecy website.

Eman's table ministry is still going strong. For instance, on Sabbath, May 15, 2021, he placed his table at St. James Garden, and people picked up 73 books and 483 tracts. Moreover, two individuals approached him while he was setting up and told him they took items from the table in 2020 and were returning for more. Praise God for such a simple yet effective literature ministry!

Aurora Wilson, Communications director, Immanuel Church

2021 Departmental Ministry Report

As we close another year, we recognize God's hand in growing Prison Ministry, Personal Ministry and the School of Evangelism and Discipleship. He allowed His mission to continue in a pandemic.

For instance, many Prison Ministry volunteers continued to serve faithfully. By God's grace, we helped at least two individuals released from the system to obtain a comfortable residence and aftercare support.

Prison Ministry has also expanded beyond the Greater Toronto Area to Northern Ontario, Western Ontario and parts of Eastern Ontario. The Ontario Prison Ministry Association of Seventh-day Adventists (OPMASDA) is pursuing all avenues to make Matthew 25: 35-36 come alive for the incarcerated. During the annual Prison

Ministry convocation on Sabbath, November 27, Pastor Charles Skeete (North London Church) challenged us to be faithful to God's mission by offering hope and wholeness to our society's most vulnerable individuals.

Then, our Personal Ministries department has been diligently providing leaders resources for sharing the gospel online. While we often cannot conduct in-person Bible studies or small groups, we may engage our family, friends and others via various digital platforms.

Next, throughout 2021, we trained and equipped lay ministers through the School of Evangelism and Discipleship. We held trainings on conducting Bible studies, preaching evangelistic sermons, planning evangelistic series and gaining decisions for Jesus, among other things. We also prepared

children and teens to become digital disciples through the Walking and Working with Jesus initiative.

Finally, in preparation for 2022, "the year of Multiplication," the Ontario Conference Lay Evangelism Association hosted a virtual evangelistic series. Graduates of the School of Evangelism and Discipleship carried out all planning and execution, Bible work and preaching. By the series' end, the Lord added 28 precious souls to His kingdom. All glory be to God, and many thanks to every volunteer, graduate, student, disciple and member of the body of Christ.

Reynold Hazelwood, Personal Ministries, Prison Ministry and School of Evangelism and Discipleship director, Ontario Conference



Ottawa Adventist School Celebrates Six Baptisms During Pandemic

COVID-19 could not stop God's plan to amplify the good news of salvation. During the most challenging school year I have experienced, the Holy Spirit placed on my heart the need to give students the opportunity to accept Jesus as their Saviour. I discussed this with Pastor Francois, who was helping teach Bible in the classroom. Pastor Francois was committed to assisting with this critical mission.

We sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit because we realized that ultimately, we were conduits of the message of salvation. The Spirit convicts people of sin and changes their lives. Pastor Francois made an appeal after a Bible lesson, and six students joined a baptismal class.

I called the parents to discuss their children's decision and discovered each child had already spoken to their parent. The parents were delighted that their children were ready to declare their commitment to Jesus.

We set up a Google Meet link for baptismal classes on Sundays (7-8 p.m.) and invited the parents. Pastor Francois and I presented the weekly lesson plan in advance, and the parents supported it fully.

Midway through the baptismal lessons, our school received a chaplain, Pastor Jim. He had assisted us in the Week of Prayer and Bible class the previous school year, so I was happy to see him return. I viewed the assignment of a chaplain to Ottawa Adventist School as an answer to my prayers.

Baptismal classes continued weekly. We conducted the Week of Prayer from March 8 to 12, during which four of the baptismal students delivered personal sermons.

On Sabbath, March 27, at Ottawa West Church, Calah, Adam and Zoe publicly declared that Jesus is the Lord of their lives and were baptized, followed by Lily, Allana and Prudence on April 3.

The students' baptism was an amazing celebration of the Holy Spirit leading young people to stand for Jesus in challenging times. To God be the glory!

Paulet Terrelonge, Teacher, Ottawa Adventist School

Hamilton East Church Adds Eight Members During Lockdown

A lockdown will not stop God's work. At Hamilton East, we praise God that eight individuals have given their lives to Jesus since January.

The first baptism this year was on January 2, 2021. The candidate's wife and daughter were already members, and he often visited the church but was not ready for Bible studies. The family was facing an unusual situation and sought Pastor Donaldson's assistance. After the family met with Pastor Donaldson, he decided to follow Jesus and requested baptism.

Then, on March 20, 2021, five people were baptized. Their testimonies are as follows.

One of our elders had studied with a lady over 20 years ago. In late 2020, the elder met this lady at the mall. They spoke about the church, and she said she had visited other Adventist churches in

the area but wanted to be baptized at Hamilton East. She stated that if not for the pandemic, she would have already been baptized.

A young child whose parents and eldest brother were baptized members told his parents he was ready for baptism. When Pastor Donaldson discussed with him why he chose to be baptized, another of his older brothers, sitting in on the discussion, also decided to be baptized.

A lady came to our church in December 2018, who had received support from the church's Community Services department. When she heard of the baptism, she asked to be baptized despite not having done much formal Bible study.

On the morning of the baptism, everyone thought there were four baptismal candidates. All were surprised and thankful to discover that the other brother in the young boy's family was

also getting baptized. He stated that he did not want to be left out and gave his heart to Jesus.

Finally, we held a baptism on April 24, 2021. One of the baptismal candidates was a member's spouse. He often attended church services, and his spouse overheard him telling someone that had it not been for COVID-19, he would have already requested baptism. Shortly after this conversation, he had a medical incident, accepted Bible studies and gave his heart to Christ.

The other person baptized that day had walked six kilometres to the church as a seeker of truth. Before completing his studies, he decided to follow Christ all the way.

Praise God for His work in these unprecedented times!

Janice Rose, Hamilton East Church



Toronto Central Partners with West Jamaica Conference for Footprints of Hope Series

In the midst of a prevailing pandemic and such uncertainty in our world, we are thankful for the technology that allows us to connect and worship while sharing God's messages of hope.

Our church was fortunate to partner with the West Jamaica Conference in their "Footprints of Hope: Walking with Jesus" digital evangelism series; it was live-streamed on platforms of the West Jamaica Conference, Toronto Central and partnering churches in North America and Jamaica. What began as a three-week campaign turned into five weeks due to viewer demand.

Pastor Glen O. Samuels, West Jamaica Conference president, delivered over 35 Bible-based sermons. He also continued teaching sessions on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Other features included free marriage and family counselling sessions, inspirational gospel music, medical lectures, mentorship, skills training, prayer sessions, youth sessions and answers to Bible questions.

The impact of the online series was far-reaching, as viewers from every continent requested Bible study and baptisms nightly. The working of the Holy Spirit was evident from comments in the chat rooms. One of our newly baptized members, Shernett, shared that she received the link from her mother, who lives in the U.S. and is not a Seventh-day Adventist but learned of the series through friends.

One digital disciple who monitored the chat stated, "I was moved to tears reading comments as viewers were earnestly pleading for their loved ones to be prayed for or to start their walk with Jesus. This caused me to reflect and ensure my walk and personal connection

with God was intact, through prayer."

We were blessed to baptize 21 people. And we received baptism requests from the Caribbean, U.S. and other Canadian provinces that we passed on to pastors in those locations. The West Jamaica Conference baptized 862 individuals from the series. To God be the glory, great things He has done.

Finally, caring for those who were baptized during the series is the key to retaining them.

Therefore, the pastoral and personal ministry team has met with them weekly to affirm their newfound faith in Christ. They greatly appreciate this effort, as reflected in their participation in these meetings.

Maureen Davis-Smith,
Toronto Central Communications

Toronto Central Meets Community Need; Sustains Impact

When you think of missions, what comes to mind? Do you think of the faraway needs of faraway peoples in faraway lands? Do you picture missionaries getting on planes and travelling halfway across the globe to provide food, water, housing and even medical care to people in undeveloped or underdeveloped regions? Most, if not all of us, probably think of missions in this stereotypical way.

But did you know there are many mission projects where you live? The impact of the pandemic has been far-reaching. Several communities have been struggling to survive the economic impact of the pandemic since 2020. People have lost their jobs, homes and even loved ones. COVID-19 has also strained communities, and churches have had to find new ways to reach the people they serve. The Toronto Central Seventh-day Adventist Church has been dedicated to serving its local communities during the pandemic. By meeting the needs of its communities and collaborating with leaders and businesses, it has made a sustaining impact on its local area. Toronto Central has been the hands and feet of Jesus. It has used Christ's method of meeting people based on their needs and has connected with its neighbours.

Since 2018, Toronto Central has been busy serving the Roselawn Community. It has developed several ministry programs, such as a homeless outreach program, youth ministry program, senior ministry program and health ministry program. Every year for the past five years, Toronto Central has served more than 200 members of the local communities. All its programs have been successful, but one ministry, in particular, has been making strides.

Toronto Central's Community Services team, led by Judith Brown, has been working hard to stay active during these difficult times. The team's fundamental belief is based on the need to connect with people at the grassroots level. For instance, when a community member



died, the team reached out to that person's family and neighbours, offering condolences as well as words of hope. While most things were shut down, they let people know that Toronto Central was there for them. This was not just a cliché: Toronto Central Community Services not only said they would take care of their community but also did it. After a three-month pause, they resumed their partnerships with a bakery and Toronto Community Housing to distribute bread and pastries in July. They also collected

and distributed groceries, toiletries, furniture and many other items.

Much of the work done by Toronto Central could not have happened without partnering with local businesses and community residents. In 2020, the church's total in-kind donations (for food, clothing, furniture and other items) were valued at \$42,496.52. Donors included Tim Hortons, Cobs Bread, Sanmar Canada and several other businesses. Community Services team

members engaged business partners/ sponsors with a simple message: "We're part of the same community; let's work together to make some lives better." Through hard work and dedication in reaching out to community sponsors and going door-to-door to connect with local businesses, they went from five sponsors to 19 in one year!

Toronto Central Community Services has become well known in its local communities. With the support of other church ministries and direct business sponsorships, the team has helped people from many different walks of life. They have served and continue to serve low-income families; seniors; immigrants; many homeless people; the abused; and people dealing with food, income and housing insecurities.

You may assume that Toronto Central's Community Services team comprises a large team of volunteers. However, according to Judith, the core team, including herself, comprises only eight. This small team has worked countless hours and sacrificed personal time and means to serve their community. Their valiant effort and cooperation prove that teamwork does make the dream work. They have also enlisted the help of other volunteers to ensure successful outcomes when hosting community outreach events.

The Toronto Central team has done some remarkable things throughout this pandemic season while realizing its dream of serving the community. It sought out the most vulnerable community members and didn't wait



for them to arrive at the doorstep of its church. With the support of the Prayer Ministry team and many others who share a passion for community service, team members prayed constantly, and with God's help, they acted on those prayers. The team members didn't wait for opportunities to come to them; instead, they went out and seized them.

Judith Brown reminds us that "the sky is the limit. There is nothing that we cannot do if we commit our plans to the Lord, allow Him to lead and set our minds to it. But we cannot do it out of thin air. We need support. Most of all, serving the community requires financial support. I have learned these past three years that God truly opens

"Much of the work done by Toronto Central could not have happened without partnering with local businesses and community residents."

windows and doors. He touches the hearts of people that you would never think of or imagine. So don't be afraid to ask. Ask Him to show you who to ask, who to approach. Ask for what you need, and He will bring it to pass."

Judith also shared her experiences of serving the community. One Saturday evening more than two years ago, Judith and a teammate were out delivering bread. After knocking on a door, it opened, and they stood face-to-face with someone wearing pyjamas, who had the curtains fully drawn and who looked sad and depressed. The Holy Spirit conveyed to their minds the seriousness of the situation, and they



offered to pray in the doorway. Judith believes God led them to that door in time to block a potential suicide and offer hope and encouragement to someone who may have thought life was meaningless moments earlier.

Judith also recalled several occasions delivering bread when she and her team came into contact with people who were either drunk or high on drugs. Sometimes they were caught in an exchange of cursing and had to silently pray for God's divine protection. They have experienced firsthand many desperate cries for help in their local communities and become acquainted with people longing for a different, better or normal life who were unable to attain these lives alone.

Judith and her team have heard stories about brain seizures, physical abuse, drug overdoses and near heart failures while mixing and mingling with people. However, they recognize that community services provide a unique opportunity to lead people to Christ, so they pray, hope and trust that lives will be saved for eternity because of their work.

God is waiting for you to make a memorable impact on your community, and there is no reason for you not to serve your neighbour. Even if you do not have the money, manpower and community service experience, God can make anything possible. He's just waiting for you to be willing.

Elijah Ramjattan, with contributions from Judith Brown

Ontario's Pre-Juniors Won National Bible Bowl Championship 2021

Congratulations to the Ontario Pre-Junior team on their impressive victory in the 2021 National Bible Bowl competition hosted by the Black Adventist Youth Directors Association. The team created history on October 22nd by participating in the first-ever virtual Bible bowl games and winning the championship against the Northeastern Conference (United States) with a score of 125-80.

The team includes Ethan Williams, Dontae McDonald and Immanuel Blake. All are members of the Scarborough Seventh-day Adventist Church and were ably coached by Mrs. Michelle Nanton. Their unwavering commitment, exemplary teamwork and stellar performance enabled them to achieve success in the face of stiff competition



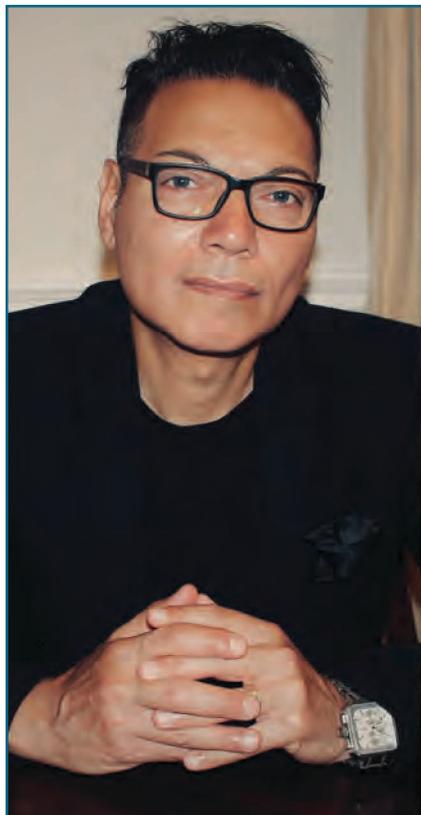
from several other outstanding teams.

Throughout the year, teams from various churches throughout Canada and the United States study the designated Bible books for the season and meet to compete locally, conference-wide and then nationally. This year, the Bible books focused on were Exodus and John.

Families and friends are encouraged to participate in Bible Bowl, a ministry to acquaint people of all ages with

the word of God in a fun, interactive and in-depth way. It's a game of quick recall and a way to praise the Lord with one's knowledge of the Word. It's a sustaining and retaining ministry to bring participants closer to God. Everyone is encouraged to "study to shew thyself approved unto God" (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV). For more information about Bible Bowl, visit www.biblebownationals.com.

Keisha Francis, Scarborough Church



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