

CONNECTION

A person is shown in silhouette, kneeling on the grassy bank of a lake. Their hands are clasped together in a prayerful gesture, held up towards the sky. The background is a soft, hazy landscape with a bright sun low on the horizon, creating a misty atmosphere over the water. Tall pine trees are visible in the distance against the bright sky.

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NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE

PRAYER IN THESE LAST DAYS

Message From The President

By Ted Huskins



THE HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER

Last words are significant! On May 9, 1864 at Spotsylvania Virginia, Union Army General John Sedgewick stood amidst the canons of the Union artillery directing their activities and placement. About 1000 yards away Confederate sharp shooters were sending a barrage of bullets whistling towards the Union line. Sedgewick's men ducked and flinched as the bullets whizzed by. Sedgewick looked at his soldiers with contempt and derision and said, "They couldn't hit an elephant at this distance." A moment later a musket ball struck him beneath the left eye and he dropped dead.

If last words are important, then last prayers are doubly so. Let's look at Jesus' last prayer.

In the 17th chapter of his gospel, John records the longest prayer of Jesus in the Bible. It is the prayer that Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane before he was arrested. Some people call it the High Priestly prayer of Jesus. Others call it the

true Lord's prayer. By any other name it is clearly an intercessory prayer, and in this prayer Jesus had three very specific requests.

First, He prays for himself. He knows the hour of his greatest trial has arrived. This is the hour his entire life has been pointing toward, and in particular the last three years have been a journey to Jerusalem and his appointment on Golgotha. Knowing what is immediately ahead, Jesus prays that God will glorify Him, so that through Him the Father may be glorified. What exactly is glorification? The word glorify literally means to make manifest hidden values or hidden riches. John begins his gospel by writing in Chapter 1, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory." Here in chapter 17 Jesus prays that by means of the cross something else which is hidden will be made manifest. Jesus then tells us what that is, that God will give him "power over all flesh". These are words that describe sovereignty, and the right to rule over all of the nations of the earth. Was this specific prayer of glorification answered? In Philippians Paul writes that Jesus became obedient unto death and that God the Father "highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9-11) In Matthew 28:18 Jesus stands in resurrection glory beside the Sea of Galilee and says to his disciples, "All power in heaven and on earth is given unto me."

In the cross of Christ, His prayer of glorification was answered. He was made King and Lord over all. In Colossians the Apostle Paul says that Jesus "disarmed the principalities and powers and triumphed over them in the cross." So this portion of the prayer has been fully answered.

In the cross Jesus was glorified and his Lordship was revealed.

In His second request, Jesus prays for His eleven remaining apostles. He knows that the test they are about to endure will challenge them to the core. Jesus intercedes, asking that God will "keep them in thy name." The name stands for all of God's resources, power, protection and ability. And notice what Jesus prays, "Keep them that they be one even as we are one." He prays that they will experience the same unity that is experienced by the Trinity. He then asks that they will be kept in truth and that through the revelation of truth that Jesus has spoken they will believe and be led into all joy. Jesus understood that these eleven men would face temptation and the full brunt of the enemy's attack. Those attacks come because the evil one hates the truth as it is in Jesus. His sole goal is to attack the character of God and the truth that we have in scripture. So in His prayer Jesus emphasizes the importance of unity in dispelling and diluting that attack. And we are susceptible to attack because we live in a sinful world. We cannot isolate ourselves. We are sent to the world...Jesus prays, "As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." God doesn't call us to live in our own little communities. No, He sends us into the world to minister, to be salt and light just as He was sent into the world to bring hope and healing.

Finally, Jesus prays for you and me. Notice verse 20, "I do not pray for these only but for all of those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

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A BIG VISION FOR OUR YOUTH: AN INTERVIEW WITH TREVOR SCHLISNER

By Scott Christiansen

When Trevor Schlisner accepted the call to become NNEC's new Youth Ministries leader, he threw himself into planning an aggressive year filled with revitalizing and extending the youth ministries program. But no sooner had he launched his plans than COVID completely upended them. As it became clearer and clearer that there would be no campers at Camp Lawroweld, nor would there be any camp meeting, he scrambled to reassemble his big vision and salvage something good from 2020. Trevor recently sat down with the CoNNEction to talk about what happened and what he sees for the future.

CoNNEction: So 2020 pretty much came crashing down around you-

Trevor: Yes. I think it did for all us.

CoNNEction: But you managed to find some good in it. Tell us about that.

Trevor: It was the Lord who worked things out. When it became evident that we wouldn't be having any camp this year, I was crushed. The campers and camp staff get a huge spiritual blessing from camp, but that is only half the story, because the camp staff also rely on it to help with their college tuition so I wanted to bring them in to camp even if we didn't have campers. The quarantine rules at the time made it possible to bring on a staff of under 50, so my focus quickly shifted to young adult ministry – camp staff ministry if you will – combined with an all-out effort to revitalize the camp we all love, Camp Lawroweld.

CoNNEction: So 2020 became the year of progress and rebuilding at Camp Lawroweld?

Trevor: Yes, with the camp staff there was a rebuilding of camp infrastructure and also a



The new multi-user bathrooms in the lodge are nearing completion



The camp store looks entirely different and now sports a juice and fruit bar!

rebuilding of our faith in God. We kept the theme for the summer, which was "Walk by Faith". There were dozens and dozens of small projects that for years really needed attention at the camp, but the reality is that there was never a time when the weather, manpower and camp availability all lined up. Getting all the counselors to camp during COVID was a difficult process, and we basically had to set up a "bubble" and all quarantine together. But we did that and set right to work with painting projects, clean-out projects, and reconstruction projects – we had a huge list of projects and we filled every available day working on them. As a result there are big changes in boy's staff house, camp store, craft house, and lodge. There are also new beds in all of

the cabins. No more sleeping in a taco! The Lord gave us the time and space to accomplish a great deal at Lawroweld and get it ready for 2021, and He did it while also delivering a powerful spiritual blessing to the staff that worked together, played together and worshipped together all summer long. I'm really proud of the work they accomplished.

CoNNEction: So your camp staff crew cleared out a backlog of numerous small projects, but you didn't stop there.

Trevor: We sure didn't. We were blessed to host Maranatha Volunteers International in the late fall to do some heavy lifting. The projects we had them tackle were especially for the purpose of providing an environment that would be a blessing for all of our ministry weekends – Men's Ministry and Women's Ministry and Prayer Ministry, etcetera. What that means in practical terms is a complete rebuilding of the guest rooms in the lodge, as well as a complete

rebuilding of the bathrooms there. No more drywall, no more carpet, and the bathrooms can now be used by more one than person at a time. Almost every torn screen was replaced on campus and there is new wiring, lighting, and plumbing in the lodge. The girl's bathhouse complete remodel was started. Those are all big, time-and-skill-intensive jobs that we just don't have the capacity to undertake. A lot of credit needs to go to our former president, Bob Cundiff, who laid the groundwork for having Maranatha come in the fall. I just needed to follow through. David Woods, the Director of Maranatha North America, agreed to be the project manager and really did an incredible job managing the volunteers along with his wife, Susan. I know they had a great experience at Lawroweld because we've already agreed on a date for them to return this spring before camp starts and again in the late fall. That's right, they are coming twice in 2021! They will be finishing up what they started and will start a few more exciting projects.

CoNNEction: So God moved to get a great deal of work done at Lawroweld! Praise God! But I know your vision is still bigger. Tell us what you have in mind for youth ministries going forward.

Trevor: I have a passion for our youth and for bringing them to Christ. I want them to fall in love with God's word and be surrounded by opportunities



The new guest rooms in the lodge are a real upgrade!

to grow closer to Christ and to put their faith into action. So, within the context of all that, I want to see more individuals that work well with youth offer Bible study. I am studying with eight youth and young adults that want to know God better. All I did was ask if they were interested. I want to also see a renewed emphasis on youth-oriented local mission opportunities. I want to build a stronger Adventist youth community here in Northern New England, one that engages both with church family and with our communities. That means there is a lot of building yet to do, speaking metaphorically. But the literal building that got done at Lawroweld was a good start on my broader plan to continue upgrading our camp while building a mission-minded youth community. My constant prayer is that our youth grow in faith and use their gifts to serve God and their community.



The boy's staff house was essentially rebuilt, including new piers in the foundation.

TIME TO PREPARE

By Jennifer Hernandez

One of the most interesting aspects of this time of trauma and disruption in the world is this: we get used to it. Take a moment and consider the world that we are living in: We are in the midst of the greatest global pandemic in the last hundred years and here in the United States whether and how to address the challenge of protecting our society from this pestilence has become a political football. Our nation is bitterly divided on many critical issues and the media is filled with violent protests; it seems as if hatred is running strong in the world and love has grown cold. And surprisingly, we're getting used to it.

On the global stage, the president of China has told his army to prepare for war and around the world small armed conflicts are proliferating. Global crises are not limited to politics but are seen in the lack world food supplies and ever-more unstable weather patterns (including rainfall patterns) are no longer reliable, which threatens harvests and makes the potential for famine a real concern. The world is in turmoil and we're getting used to it.

The world is moving into conformity with the conditions Christ said would be evident in the last days. In Matthew 24 (and Luke 21 and Mark 13) is Christ's description of the conditions that will prevail along with the call to watch and be ready (Matthew 24:42-44 & Mark 13:35-36). Jesus warned us what was coming and what to watch for so that we might be able to do the most important kind of

preparation – spiritual preparation. He knew there was a lot to do in terms of preparing, and He knew it would be difficult to be mindful and make intentional and appropriate preparations in the middle of a crisis; preparation is most effectively done before the crisis, not in the middle of it.

Let's consider this: When you know a hurricane is coming, you put plywood over your windows, and you do a thorough job of securing your resources. You prepare ahead of time because you know it is not physically possible to be nailing plywood over windows during a hurricane. Actually, attempting to do so will only increase the potential risk and damage.

Adventists have preached for generations that the last days are coming. For decades we have seen the storm clouds building on the horizon. Now, the storm clouds are creeping over us and this is exactly the time to not get used to it; our preparation on all fronts is needed. We need to go deeper into God's Word and commit His promises to heart. We need to grow our relationship with Christ and reach out to impact the world with the message of the gospel. We are obligated by our commitment to this gospel to watch over and care for the vulnerable populations in our communities. And we must boldly cling to Christ and ask Him to mold us into His likeness.

Jesus called for us to watch and prepare with care and mindfulness. The Planned Giving & Trust Services Department is run with the same emphasis. Planning is what

we do and as we progress through these last days of history the planning ministry of this department grows more important, not less important. All of us who have been called to watch and prepare should make sure that our personal affairs – our end-of-life planning (wills, trusts, medical directives, provisions for guardians for children and such) have all been the subject of intentional and prayerful decision-making and are in place well ahead of any crisis.

We invite you as friends and family in Christ Jesus to not get used to this world, but to use it to spur you on to watch, pray, prepare, and grow in your relationship with Christ through His Word. Live out the Gospel through your words and actions in your church and community. And as a small part of that overall effort, assess your situation and decide if your estate planning needs creating or updating. Our unfortunate reality is that sometimes our last days come earlier than we expect, and they often come as a storm. It is no less difficult to carefully and mindfully do your estate planning during one of life's "storms" than it is to try to cover your windows with plywood during a hurricane.

Time is short, so call me and let's talk about what God can do through Planned Giving and Trust Services to assist in bringing you peace of mind through the knowledge that one more important point of preparation has been completed.

Evangelism: Too Important To Fail

By Ted Huskins

Growing up my dad loved antique automobiles, and our favorite past times were going to car shows and junk yards or trying to spot vintage cars on the road. To this day, I can still identify most cars manufactured from 1930 to 1980 by maker and within a few years of production. It's one of those skills that has very little value other than to sometimes amaze my wife, though I confess she's probably just humoring me and isn't as impressed as I might hope.

Every boy of my generation loves vintage Corvettes, Mustangs and Camaro's...the muscle cars of the 50's to the early 70's. But I also had an interest in car companies that went out of business; Packard, Hudson, Crosley, Nash. I guess we could throw the Ford Edsel in that group, even though it was the model that failed and not the company.

As I got older I developed interests in business and strategy and I wondered, "why did these companies go out of business? Why don't we have Studebakers anymore?" The reasons behind the failure of each of these unique car brands is fascinating. What is even more fascinating is that for the most part they failed for a variety of very similar reasons.

#1- They failed to invest in research and development.

#2- They failed to innovate.

#3- They focused on current customers and failed to listen to the needs and preferences of the next generation.

#4- They were more interested in making money than making a good car, or they were more interested in making the perfect car instead of being practical about maintaining a profit margin.

In Northern New England we are in the business of sharing the Gospel. If we fail, it isn't just a financial loss. Nor is it a case of one less car company; failure means there will be fewer people in heaven. It means that our neighbors, our children or our grandchildren may miss out on salvation. We simply can not afford to fail!

Our first core value as a sisterhood of churches is: "Courage to take risks in Advancing the kingdom of Christ. This courage comes from trusting His promise to be with us as we follow His word."

We have taken that core value seriously over the last six years. We've tried a number of different things, some tried and true and some experimental, all with the desire to grow God's kingdom. We've been very pragmatic; if the ideas worked we kept doing it, but if they failed we scrapped it and moved on to the next idea. This methodology and tenacity is starting to pay dividends. For the last year we've seen real growth in members month after month and quarter after quarter. That growth is a welcome change after years and years of declining membership and baptisms! We have also invested heavily in church planting, Bible workers, pastor training and evangelistic efforts. God is blessing! Souls are being won! Men and women and children are being disciplined! We gave us momentum.

But then, Covid hit. After being knocked back on our heels, we decided we couldn't allow this unforeseen obstacle to get in the way of what God is doing. So we invested more in evangelism, and in the midst of Covid, we've seen God open hearts and open eyes to the Gospel. With God's blessings, we grew throughout 2020. The cost of that growth, however, was quite real and we're ending 2020 with

our evangelism funds at a seven-year low.

A big part of the problem is that we typically get our largest contributions to evangelism at camp meeting and this year we couldn't have a live camp meeting. At our current rate of expenditure and inflow we'll have no evangelism funds at all in three years. If we were Nash or Studebaker, we'd lay off (or at least quit hiring) Bible workers. We'd stop doing evangelism, we'd circle the wagons and hunker down. But we're not a car company – we're God's end-time movement with a precious message to give the world.

And so we continue moving forward at full speed to proclaim the gospel. But if we are going to keep going and reach our friends throughout the region with the everlasting Gospel, we need your help. We need the faithful and dedicated to continue to reach out to friends and neighbors and share their faith. We also need the faithful to make sacrificial financial commitments to our evangelism fund. Cindy and I have prayed about it and we're going to make a sacrificial commitment to Conference Evangelism beyond what we've done the last few years. Won't you please join us and pray about what God wants to do through you? No investment is too small and no investment is too large. We need \$10 donations and we need \$10,000 donations. If we will all systematically give something every month through 2021 God will bless and when Jesus comes there will be more of His and Our friends in heaven as a result. Maybe your son or daughter, grandson or granddaughter will be in heaven because of what we do today. Again, we can't afford to fail! Let's be innovative, let's take risks and let's be faithful!

Elder Brad Cauley Accepts Call to Become New NNEC Executive Secretary

By Scott Christiansen



Brad and Nellie Cauley, along with their teenagers Alexandra and Bradford, are on their way to NNEC!

The executive secretary position in NNEC is a big job and it requires a person with many talents to fill it. The job of the executive secretary is to quietly keep all the plates spinning – to make sure everything functions as it should. But the executive secretary must also be able to look down the road and anticipate problems – legal problems, policy problems, resource problems, etc. The executive secretary must then fill in these potholes, so to speak, so the conference does not experience any jolts or bumpy rides. Because it is such a demanding job, it is difficult to fill this particular role at the conference.

But the Lord is bigger than any difficulty His work encounters, and He has brought to NNEC Elder Brad Cauley to fill the role of executive secretary. Brad is an enthusiastic man with a multitude of needed talents whom the Lord has guided step by step throughout his career, now bringing him to NNEC.

Born and raised in South Carolina, Elder Cauley felt strongly called to ministry coming out of high school. Raised in an Adventist home, he had attended public schools his whole life, so when he set foot on the campus of Southern Adventist University, attending an Adventist school was a new experience for him. He graduated from Southern in 2001 with a degree in theology, then

moved on to Andrews University to work on his Masters of Divinity. While at Andrews, Brad met his wife, Nellie, at an off-campus Bible study. Nellie was also a student at Andrews, pursuing her Masters in nursing.

After he graduated in 2004, Brad and Nellie accepted a call to the Texas conference as the first pastor of a newly planted church. The position suited Brad perfectly, as he had felt called to plant churches since he was a teenager. Soon after, Brad added to his church plant duties an associate pastorship for the district. The Lord used him to make churches grow, and he was instrumental in leading the plant of a Spanish-speaking church. Through all of his experiences, Brad took an analytical approach, constantly learning and refining his approach. His conference then moved him to East Texas, where the Lord worked through him to buoy up churches and to lead the planting of a school. In NNEC, Brad will be very involved with our ongoing church planting initiative.

In 2012, Brad and Nellie received a call from the Carolina Conference, Brad would be close to family. But it was the portfolio that the conference offered that excited him most: he would take on the duties of church planting director, church revitalization director, volunteer lay pastor program director, and would also get to be involved with health ministries. After a season of prayer he and Nellie accepted the call and Brad built his skills while the Lord used him to build strong programs.

In his years in the Carolina Conference, Brad became a resource to the whole Adventist movement through his book *Steps To A Vibrant Church* (2015, Advent Source) and he was recruited to sit on the North American Division's Church Planting Committee. He also started the annual Regenerate! Conference focusing on church revitalization.

The Lord guided Brad to Northern New England and gave him skills that are a perfect match for the needs of

NNEC's work. Still, even though he felt drawn to come here, deciding to make the move was a very difficult process. Brad and Nellie took into account the desires of their teenagers Alexandra and Bradford, and they also took into account their own desire to have their kids attending academy close to home. But there were other challenges - there was the issue of Nellie finding a job in her specialized area of nephrology (diseases of the kidney) nurse practitioner – the opportunities were limited compared to her home area. As NNEC's recruitment and reference-checking process went forward, Brad prayed for God to remove his name if the call was not His will. The process went forward and the conference made an official call for Brad to come to Northern New England. To Brad's surprise, as he and Nellie were thinking about it, he had a number of people come up to him, unbidden, and tell him they thought he should accept the call.

Brad and Nellie set yesterday, November 3 as their decision day, making big decisions in their life as the nation also made big decisions about its leadership. And the way the Lord worked it out, it was on November 2 that Nellie got a recruiting call from a clinic in Maine. God was removing the last of the barriers and yesterday afternoon, Brad called NNEC president Ted Huskins and accepted the position.

Brad and his family have a big change in climate ahead – their entire careers have been in Texas and North Carolina, and snow has heretofore been a fleeting rarity. But Brad underlines that they are not coming here for the climate, but for the mission. And, if there is any doubt about their commitment to that mission, they're coming in the winter!

Praise God for the skills Brad brings to NNEC. The conference, currently running with just two officers carrying the entire load, has great need of a skilled administrator in the Executive Secretary position. Praise God for His faithfulness!

Prayer in These Last Days

By Scott Christiansen



We are told in scripture that the last days will be many things – anxious, troubled, and filled with conflicts, disease, hunger, and both spiritual and physical threats. Matthew 24 provides a pretty good overview of some of these challenges. In Luke 21:25 we are also told that the last days will be perplexing and that great signs will be seen in the heavens. Taken altogether, we are told it will be an unparalleled time which will be incredibly challenging to navigate. In other words, during the last days we need to be constantly in prayer.

If conflict, disease and hunger combined with anxious and perplexing times as well as

spiritual and physical threats are chief among the signs of the last days, then just a casual look around us will confirm that we are well into the end times: Conflict abounds. Deception abounds. Anger abounds. And if we say that to be perplexed is to have one or more complicated problems with no clear solution, then we can fairly say that we live in a time of perplexity. All of the signs of the times that Christ provided us in Matthew 24 (especially verses 6-8) are only increasing. What we've not yet seen are the stunning signs in the heavens, but those come only toward the end of the last days.

So here we are, in the end times and every day more in need of prayer not just as a form of support, but as the primary mainstay in our lives. To put it a bit more graphically, if our lives were a circus tent (and many will find the metaphor fitting) then prayer needs to stop being a board supporting the sidewall and start being the main pole that supports the whole tent. Given our daily increasing need of prayer, let's take a look at some passages from the Bible and from the Spirit of Prophecy about prayer – passages that we can take to heart and use right now.

Let's start with a rock-solid promise from Matthew 22:21 *"And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."* That is a truly massive promise for these end times – that whatever we ask in prayer we will receive. There is only one qualifier – that we must believe. So does that mean we must believe that God will be faithful in giving us what we ask for? Or does it mean we must believe that Christ is our savior who died to remove our sins? Or does it mean believing that Christ is our savior and that we, His followers, must live out our lives as His representatives here on earth, always striving to show His character in our every action?

I would argue that *"believing"* means all of the above. Otherwise, anyone who believed that God would do what He said He would do could ask anything of God, even if what was asked was selfish. That is a problem when even Satan believes that God will do what He says He will do. And this interpretation of the verse is buttressed by reading the verse immediately before it, which says, *But Jesus answered and said unto them, "Assuredly I say unto you, if you have faith and*

do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and cast into the sea,' it will be done." So between these two verses we start with a promise that those who follow Christ and attempt to live out their lives in faith and accordance with his character will be given extraordinary blessings through prayer.

Let's take our lessons from Matthew 22:21 and set them alongside another promise from Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." From this we know that the challenges of the last days – the days we are in now – will ultimately be a benefit to us and it is likely we will receive this benefit by having any remaining scales fall from our eyes as we see the character of Satan more and more fully reflected in the world, thus driving us to seek with more and more determination to have the character of Christ reflected fully in us.

So here is what we've got so far: If we are a true follower of Christ, we can ask for much, and if and as we experience trials, these too God will use to our benefit and for His purposes.

Let's look at another related promise, this time in John 14:13-14. Here Christ is speaking directly to His disciples, and therefore directly to us: "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the

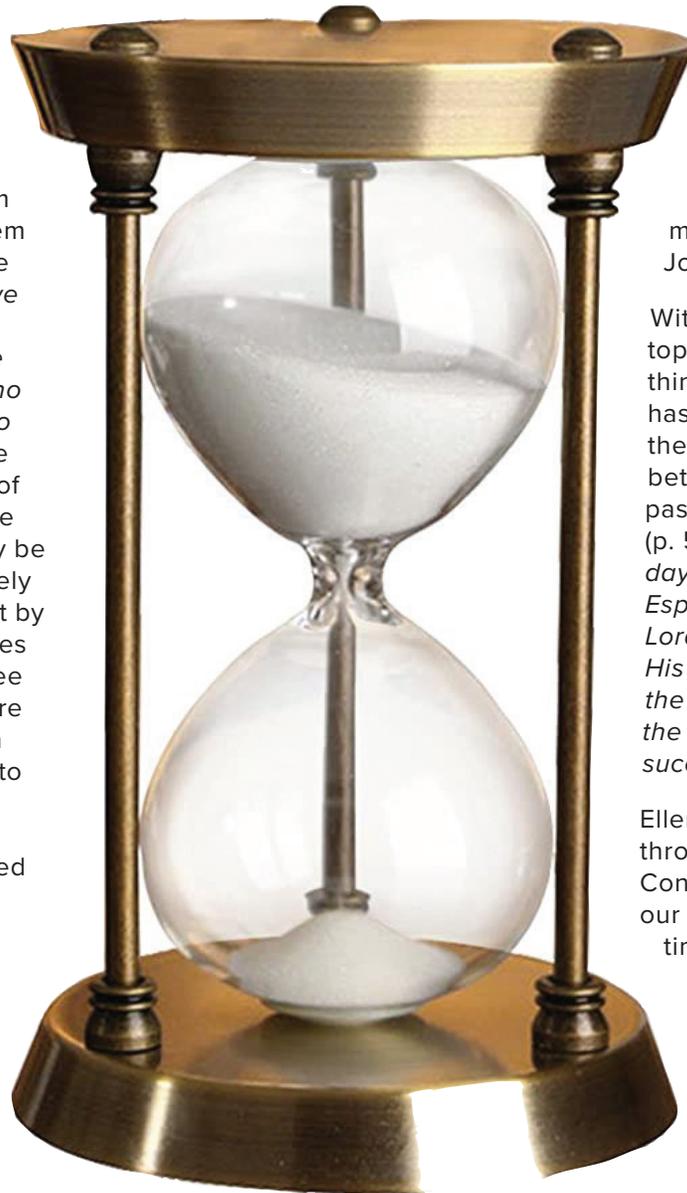
Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it." Over and over in prayer promises in the Bible we are encouraged to approach the throne boldly and to speak right up, asking for what we need. These promises are particularly

and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened."

Taken altogether, what we see is Christ repeatedly instructing His disciples (and therefore us) to boldly ask God for what they need, with the promise that they (we) will receive it. There are more promises along these lines. Take a moment to look up John 15:7, John 15:16, and John 16:23&24.

With God's firm prayer promises top of mind, let's look at some things the Spirit of Prophecy has to say about prayer in these last days, and there is no better place to start than in this passage from Great Controversy (p. 530): "No man is safe for a day or an hour without prayer. Especially should we entreat the Lord for wisdom to understand His word. Here are revealed the wiles of the tempter and the means by which he may be successfully resisted."

Ellen White makes it clear throughout chapter 37 of Great Controversy that scripture is our only safeguard in these times. In fact, that is the name of the chapter – Our Only Safeguard. Further, she underscores that we should pray for guidance and for a clear understanding of God's word. On page 599, she says, "The Bible should never be studied without prayer" (and references Psalm 119:18 in this regard). To add grave context, she goes on to say, on page 601, "We are living in the most solemn period of this world's history. The destiny of earth's teeming multitudes is about to be decided. Our own future



important in these last days, when, anxious and perplexed, we seek God's wisdom, blessings, and power. To this verse we can add Luke 11:9&10: "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek,

well-being, and also the salvation of other souls, depend upon the course which we now pursue. We need to be guided by the Spirit of truth. Every follower of Christ should earnestly inquire, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" We need to humble ourselves before the Lord, with fasting and prayer, and to meditate much upon His Word, especially upon the scenes of the judgment. We should now seek a deep and living experience in the things of God. We have not a moment to lose. Events of vital importance are taking place around us; we are on Satan's enchanted ground."

In her book *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, on pages 52 & 53, Ellen White says this: "If the Savior of men, with His divine strength, felt

the need of prayer, how much more should feeble, sinful mortals feel the necessity of prayer— fervent, constant prayer! When Christ was the most fiercely beset by temptation, He ate nothing. He committed Himself to God, and through earnest prayer, and perfect submission to the will of His Father, came off conqueror. Those who profess the truth for these last days, above every other class of professed Christians, should imitate the great Exemplar in prayer."

What is emerging is a perception of prayer as being critical in preparation for the study of scripture, as a necessary part of knowing God's will and submitting to it, and for generally understanding God's word and

His will for us. These, combined with fortitude and a determination to do God's will, are critically important for these times in which we live. To these we can add the need to safeguard through prayer against the plans and temptations of Satan and the distress that he is bringing upon nations. Here is a passage from *Great Controversy*, page 601, followed by a passage from page 621.

"The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, and hunger—a faith that will not faint though severely tried. The period of probation is granted to all to prepare for that time. Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. His victory is an evidence of the



power of importunate prayer. All who will lay hold of God's promises, as he did, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he succeeded. Those who are unwilling to deny self, to agonize before God, to pray long and earnestly for His blessing, will not obtain it. Wrestling with God—how few know what it is! How few have ever had their souls drawn out after God with intensity of desire until every power is on the stretch. When waves of despair which no language can express sweep over the suppliant, how few cling with unyielding faith to the promises of God.”

“Till the conflict is ended, there will be those who will depart from God. Satan will so shape circumstances that unless we are kept by divine power, they will

almost imperceptibly weaken the fortifications of the soul. We need to inquire at every step, “Is this the way of the Lord?” So long as life shall last, there will be need of guarding the affections and the passions with a firm purpose. Not one moment can we be secure except as we rely upon God, the life hidden with Christ. Watchfulness and prayer are the safeguards of purity.”

We are just scratching the surface with this short study, yet what gems have been uncovered! We know from God’s repeated promises in scripture that He has fitted us with the tools we need for the time we are in – His Word and the Spirit – and that we should avail ourselves of these tools as well as ask boldly for whatever else we need to do His will.

Over and over we are counseled in God’s Word to approach the throne through prayer. If you have not developed the daily habit of setting aside some time each day for dedicated prayer, now is the time and the moment in history to do so.

If you would like to learn more about the practice and power of prayer, consider joining in with NNEC’s Prayer Ministries Retreat. For a full schedule and descriptions of all retreats in 2021, see the upcoming Spring Edition of the CoNNEction!

Cover Photo by Aaron Burden

The High Priestly Prayer article continued from pg. 2

This prayer extends beyond that moment into the centuries and millenia that would follow. Jesus is actually praying for you! He is praying for your pastor and your local church! Isn’t that amazing? Jesus is praying for us and His prayer is that we would be unified, that we would be ONE! Everything hinges on the actualization of this prayer. We can not finish the work He has given us if we allow ourselves to drift off base and forget the importance of unity.

Today we live in a world that is more polarized than it has been in many years. We are polarized politically, generationally and ideologically. We live in challenging times and those challenges are not stopping outside the walls of the church. My fear is that many of us are allowing the

polarization of the times to polarize us as Christ followers. We simply cannot afford for that to happen. The mission of the church, which embodies Jesus’ mission for this world, is dependent upon our unity. If we don’t love each other and support each other and pull together despite the things that would divide us we can not offer a life changing and compelling vision to our communities. We will be no better than them.

In the book Evangelism page 102 we read, “The Lord is displeased with the want for harmony that has existed among his workers. He cannot impart His Holy Spirit for they are bent on having their own way. Great discouragement will come in from Satan but it is an offense to

God when you allow your individual, unsanctified traits of character to be active agents to discourage one another. **PRESS TOGETHER, PRESS TOGETHER** be of one mind. Christ is the leader and you are the brethren. Follow Him!”

We must now more than ever embrace the elements that we mutually hold dear. We must focus on what unites us, not on the things which divide us. We are Seventh-day Adventist Christians! We have a mission and a message for a world in chaos. We know that Jesus’ Coming is near. We must focus on the Gospel and the unique messages of Revelation 14. Let us all commit today to dedicate our heart, life and soul to God’s purpose for us. That is my desire and I hope it is yours as well.

LIZ GAGNON'S JOURNEY: FROM PK TO HEROIN USER TO STARTING A CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S SOBER HOME IN MAINE

By Scott Christiansen

It is said that preacher's kids – PK's for short – have the odds against them. They grow up perceiving intense social pressure because they are the “pastor's kids” and that seems to imply different standards apply to them which in turn can create a barrier to gaining a blessing from church. Truth is, most PK's either affirm their parents and embrace God's message, or rapidly flee from the church. Liz Gagnon has done both.

When she was just six years old Liz's father, Pastor Mark Gagnon and his wife, Pam, began serving in the Northern New England Conference, first pastoring in Vermont, then later moving to the Norridgewock, Maine district. Pastor Gagnon serving there from 1993 to 1998 before moving to Southern New England Conference. All through her school years, Liz was a PK who was raised in a spiritual and nurturing home and for a while, she seemed to be one of the PK's who would turn out okay – she was class chaplain while attending Greater Boston Academy, and she was truly happiest when engaging in some form of missions.

But when Liz left home to attend Kettering, she entered into a romantic relationship that turned toxic. Liz ended the relationship, but it left a deep mark on her, essentially shattering her world and causing her to question everything in her life. Little by little, step by step, her path turned away from the beliefs and values she was raised with and toward the world. She engaged more and more in the kind of rebellious behavior that PK's are sometimes famous for. She began using drugs and alcohol and engaging in other destructive



behavior. She relocated to Florida where she got a very well-paying job, but money only fanned the flames of addiction in her and her path traced a tragic arc. At the end she was injecting heroin in an attempt to fill the void in her soul.

Liz had hit bottom, and she did two things; first, she surrendered and entered into a rehab program in Utah. Then, she engaged in some very deep soul-searching and realized it was her own choices, rooted in pride and self-justification that had led to her destruction. She believed Satan's biggest lie that she would somehow be happier not following Jesus so she turned her back on Him. But, Jesus had not turned His back on her and even at her heroin-craving lows, the Holy Spirit brought to Liz's mind Bible stories from her childhood that she could identify with; stories of sinners recognizing their great need of a Savior and a Savior in search of sinners. Finally, she humbly concluded that Jesus was her only hope at redemption.

As it happened, her father, Pastor Mark Gagnon, had written a Bible study called “HiStory” that traced the story of Christ's love from Genesis to Revelation. Liz, now living in a women's sober house in Maine, vowed to undertake her father's Bible study with complete honesty about herself and her sins since she had come to understand

that honesty is the birthplace of redemption. In that study, she saw God's love story as well as the full scope of dysfunctional human history. In that study, she saw her own history.

And so it was that the little girl who once memorized Bible stories, who as a teen was Class Chaplain, and who as an adult lost her faith and her way, found Jesus again through the Bible study her father had written. Relying on Christ, Liz began the very difficult process of recovery and the reestablishment of her religion and Christian life. But keeping this message of hope wasn't enough for Liz – she wanted to again joyfully engage in ministry and she wanted to help the many women who were still in the situation she had left.

Liz has realized her ministry ambitions and is now on the verge of opening a Christian women's sober house in South Portland, Maine. Liz points out that there are many sober houses for men, fewer sober houses for women, and no Christian sober houses for women in Northern New England that she is aware of.

Praise God for the staying power of the Bible stories we teach our youth, and praise God for the transformational power of Christ's character! If you know a woman who is in need of a Christian sober living facility, here is Liz' number: 385-447-9888. And if you would like to hear Liz' story in her own words, NNEC's Pastor Shawn Brace recently interviewed Liz for his “Mission Lab” podcast. You can find it by going to www.missionlab.podbean.com and playing episode 90.

GIVING AND RECEIVING IN OXFORD, MAINE

By Scott Christiansen

The congregation in the Adventist church in Oxford, Maine, is not a large one. On a good Sabbath as many as 30 people might be in attendance, though usually the number is closer to 20. The congregation also skews toward the grey side – most members are retirees living on a fixed income. But what this small and resource-limited congregation has managed to accomplish in the local and global mission field has been truly inspiring.

The church operates a food bank for the community, and while the ministry has been an important service for many years, it has been a critical resource during the COVID-19 era. Food bank ministry leaders saw many new faces and much longer lines as unemployment and hunger became a much larger phenomenon in the community, but the church soldiered on, dedicated more resources to the ministry so that more food could be purchased and, with a little help from the Northern New England Conference, kept serving all who came. It took faith to keep on serving while their balance kept dropping, but serve they did.

But just serving the local community wasn't enough. Early in the year the church was challenged by their pastor at the time, Leon Twitchell, to take up a project that would help truly vulnerable people. The church members thumbed through the annual ADRA gift catalog and decided they would fund part of the cost of a new well for a village in Africa. Their hearts were touched at the thought of the women and children who had to walk one or more miles each way

to fill up water pails, and so church members started finding ways to set money aside.

Pastor Twitchell, however, set an even higher goal: he challenged the church to raise \$10,000 during the year – enough to complete one well for a village! Church members responded by steadily donating money. A table was set up in the sanctuary, and each time the fund grew bricks were placed on it in a circle, eventually forming a very convincing facsimile of a well. Some members gathered returnable bottles and cans while others cut down on purchases or ate cheaper food. Everyone found a different way of sacrificing to meet the goal. Even after Pastor Twitchell transitioned to focusing on digital evangelism and church planting in Western Maine, church members stayed with the project and by November the church had raised the whole \$10,000 to send to ADRA.

But even as the church was celebrating what they had been able to give, they got some joyful news – a check had come in the mail! The check, for \$315.00, had come from the Grace Lutheran Church in the nearby city of Auburn. Because of Covid restrictions, Grace Lutheran had not been able to hold their annual Thanksgiving meal-packing event, and had instead raised money to donate to food banks in the region, including the Oxford food bank. Even while the church members were focused on completing fund-raising for the well, the Lord was arranging a blessing for their food bank.

For many, 2020 was been a miserable year they can hardly wait to forget. And while the members of the little Oxford Church also struggled, they will remember 2020 in part as the year they both gave and received in support of Christ's ministry of helping the vulnerable.



Oxford Church's food bank has served hundreds during the COVID pandemic.



Pine Tree Academy Teacher Receives National Award

By Judy Sabnani

James Reid has been teaching Bible, health and public speaking and also acting as chaplain at Pine Tree Academy for five years. His excellent curriculum and strong positive connection with his students, the local church, and community prompted his nomination for October's award offered by Hi 5 4 Teachers. James says, "I chose to be a teacher because as a Youth Pastor at a large church, I was never able to be in the children's lives as much as I felt was needed to help make a difference. A few hours on Sabbath and Sunday wasn't cutting it. When

I received the call to teach, I felt inspired by God to take the risk. The education ministry is a 180 day plus evangelistic campaign. And boy is it a tough one! But every time a child says yes to God, it's worth it! I love it!"

A relatively new ministry, Hi 5 4 Teachers aims to encourage and support educators for their dedication and hard work on behalf of our children. The \$500 award is to be used by the teacher—half for personal use, and half to benefit the classroom and students in

some way. True to his generous character, James immediately used part of his gift to help a needy student with tuition!

If you would like to be a part of the Hi 5 4 Teachers ministry (which has strong Adventist roots!) or nominate a teacher for the award, see the web site —www.hi54teachers.com. For only \$5 a month, you can help to bring an unexpected surprise to a deserving teacher.

The Penultimate Page

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other hand, is a very big problem, as massive amounts of methane come boiling out of the ocean and mix into the atmosphere, where it traps far more heat than carbon dioxide, causing all manner of problems. And of course, methane is a flammable gas so it is possible for it to be ignited by lightning as it boils out of the ocean.

Right now, ocean-floor scientists are very alarmed by the decay and increasingly rapid conversion of methane clathrates to gas, with what seems to be an increasing amount of gas making it to the surface. The

chain reaction has apparently been set off by increasing warmth in the water column.

Do we know for sure that methane clathrates are what the Bible is talking about in Luke 21:25? No. Do we know for sure that we'll see massively destabilized methane clathrates in the near future? No. Do we know for sure that we are headed for roaring oceans and strange, surging tides in the days ahead, with the nations in distress and perplexed? Yes, we do know that for sure because Christ Himself told us it would happen.

Do not be surprised when we see a roaring, boiling ocean in the near future. Do not be surprised if the cause is methane clathrates. And do not be surprised when global shipping trade is drastically reduced and increased hunger and economic devastation result. We know from prophecy that such things are coming. So what do we do? We go about our Father's business by proclaiming Christ and living our lives as citizens of His kingdom of love, helping the vulnerable, healing the sick, and pointing to Christ as the solution to sin.

The Penultimate Page

The penultimate page is the one right before the last one. But here it means something extra, as we live in the penultimate age – the one right before the end. This page will feature articles talking about our time.



THE ROARING OF THE SEA

By Scott Christiansen

We live in a time when we are seeing prophecy fulfilled before our eyes. Our world daily grows more and more wicked, more and more out of harmony with the character of Christ, and we can in real time observe the love for our fellow man growing cold (Matthew 24:12). All around us we witness steady increases in cruelty, conflict, hunger, and disease (Matthew 24:8). But the problem with the fulfillment of prophecy, even when it is before our eyes, is that we can grow accustomed to it and it can lose its power to move us (hey, the Israelites grew accustomed to – and even disdainful of – the daily miracle of manna!).

So, with this in mind, let's look at one of the events that can serve to strongly point that there is very, very little time left. Let's look at Luke 21:25,

26 “And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” The context for this passage is that Jesus is telling His disciples about things that will happen that herald His immediate return. Note the first part of the passage, where nations are distressed and perplexed. In other words, they face a huge problem (or problems) and don't know what to do. And the source of their distress and perplexity? The ocean is roaring – boiling if you will – and the waves and tides are surging and acting strangely (see the New Living Translation and the Berean Study Bible versions of the same verses).

You get the impression that Luke is struggling for words here. He could have easily said “storm” if that was what he meant, but instead he conveys the impression of an ocean in tempest and turmoil and generally acting very strangely. Such an ocean would probably be impossible to use for shipping, which would mean a dramatic slowing –

almost a cessation – of meaningful global trade. That would explain the perplexity of nations, since pretty much the entire world depends on trade.

But what could cause an ocean to boil and surge? And, if a cause can be identified, is there any evidence that it can happen at this point in history? Well, let's turn to a whole series of news reports recently (and, if you want, you can go further back and look at my comments on this in my 2012 book, *Planet In Distress*) on the subject of methane clathrates. Basically, methane clathrates are a mixture of frozen methane and ice that combine into an unstable slush at the right temperature and pressure. There are truly vast deposits of this slush on some areas of ocean floors around the world, and these deposits can be triggered into either slow or rapid conversion to gas by either increases in temperature or decreases in pressure. A very slow conversion to gas is the better option, as bacteria in the water column eat much of the methane in the water column if it comes as tiny, occasional bubbles. A rapid conversion, on the

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A very small methane clathrate deposit is seen under a carbonate rock encrusted with chemosynthetic mussels at a depth of about 3170 feet in the Gulf of Mexico. Photo credit: US Geological Survey

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Crumbs

by Bruce W. Wilkinson

Lord give me a crumb, the smallest piece, of the Bibles living bread,
the loaf of which Christ spoke of, the one of which he said,

that if you eat you will not want, your hunger will subside,
the one that if you ask for, you will never be denied.

You spoke about this bread, from which the crumbs fell from the table,
to a desperate woman needing Him, because she was unable.

Also about that Lazarus, the beggar upon the floor,
eating crumbs the rich man threw him, because he was so poor.

I know about the Showbread, which stayed always in the temple,
it had a special meaning for us, a beautiful example.

Symbolizing the broken body, of Jesus Christ our Lord,
and how He ever feeds us, and His blood was one day poured,

for those who will acknowledge, and need always to be fed,
with the Showbread from Your temple, Your bodies Living Bread.

Please feed my soul, that longs to be, nourished by your grace,
strengthened to do ministry, and fit for you to place.

Use me Lord, to feed for you, the wealthy or the bum,
from the living bread that satisfies, please make of me a crumb.

