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God Prevails | Editorial

By Jessica Gamez

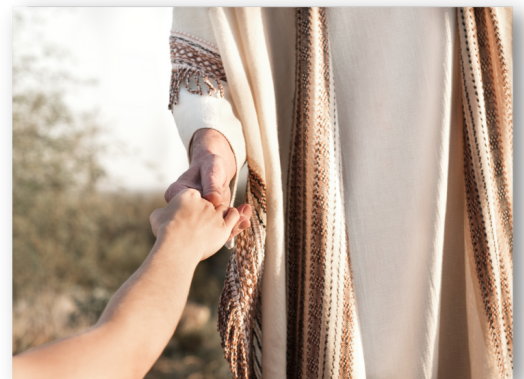
These last two years have been nothing short of arduous given the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic issued a call to action to the church—rethink, reconfigure and adapt. As we continue adjusting to daily life in the "new normal," it seems as if every time we reorient, additional challenges pop up. However, it is reassuring to know that despite the trials we have faced and still currently face, God prevails.

As you read through this issue, you will find examples of how God has blessed and multiplied our church community with flourishing ministries and leaders during the height of isolation—a feat seemingly impossible. Transitioning from in-person to online to hybrid

Sabbath services with a new F Team, using Christian internet memes to further a digital ministry, cultivating genuine care through small groups, relearning how to lead church programming for our children, youth and young adults and relaunching Beacon Light, would not be possible if not with God.

We invite you to reflect on God's Hand over your life. Know that even in the presence of this global pandemic, God has not and will never leave us.

Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.
-Proverbs 19:21 (NIV)



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Want to submit an article for our next issue? Email us at beaconlight@mtzion.ca!

PASTOR'S CORNER

Connecting Like Jesus

By Pastor Sereivudh Ly

What is happening in 2022? Is Jesus coming soon? We have been suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic for the last two years and it has started a war about the freedom of choice. Is God trying to wake up His children from a spiritual slumber? How are you doing spiritually? What is your **next step** in your spiritual journey? What do you aim to achieve in 2022?

The Ontario Conference has designated 2022 as "The Year of Multiplication". The ministry direction of 2021-2022 is **Connecting Like Jesus** in ministry and mission through discipleship. All churches are encouraged to create their own ministry strategy (values, vision and action plans) to align with this. We made our church ministry strategy at the end of 2021 and are ready to move with a full-fledged push. Our vision is to become a church of loving and forgiving ambassadors of God. We hope to inspire at least 30% of our members to become ambassadors by the end of 2022. God has given each of His children "the ministry of reconciliation" and assigned them to be "ambassadors" for Him before He returns (2Cor. 5:18-20).

Why do we need to become ambassadors for Christ? It is God's commission for all of us. In the process of becoming ambassadors, we, as a church, strive to reach people in the Greater Toronto Area and around the world with the distinctive, Christ-centered Adventist message of hope and wholeness. We are citizens of God's kingdom. Every citizen must seek first the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33), speak on behalf of the kingdom (Eph. 4:12), train others (Eph. 4:13), lead and share what is good from the kingdom (Acts 1:8) and continue to encourage others in love and forgiveness (1Thess. 5:11; Heb. 3:13, 10:24-25).

How are we going to achieve this vision? First, after the 25th church anniversary, we adopted the values of the NAD REACH initiative: **Revival & transformation** (Connecting with God through public and personal worship); **Education for discipleship** (Every youth and adult learning, growing and becoming more like Christ); **Alignment within the church** (Connecting effectively within our diverse church family); **Community outreach & evangelism** (Connecting with our communities—sharing hope and wholeness); **Healthy leadership & management** (God's stewards insisting on personal and church-wide excellence).

Second, early this year, the church aligned all ministry departments into seven "F Team" ministries based on REACH values and Jesus' prayers in John 17. Jesus' ministry modeled 7 purposes (John 17:1-26 NIV):

1. **Faith:** Spiritual Development (Values, Purpose, Intuition, Vitality) (v.4)
2. **Frontier:** Occupational Development (Employment, Volunteering) (v.6)
3. **Fortifier:** Intellectual Development (Mind) (v.8)
4. **Fellowship:** Psychological and Emotional Development (Feelings) (v.12)
5. **Friendship:** Social and Relational Development (Family, Friends, Relationships) (v.18)
6. **Forwarder:** Financial Development (Communication & Resources) (v.18)
7. **Frontliner:** Physical Development (Body) (v.18)

Currently, we continue to use the NAD MdX method to reach our three current church goals: Connect, Grow & Multiply via two types of responsibilities: church and individual members.

CONNECT (RELATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP ENVIRONMENT):

Actively involve all church members. In the first phase, at least 100 members (8 groups, young and old) of our church family will be part of CARE Groups and the EMM Network (Every member = Encourager, Mentee, Mentor) to deepen the church family relationship. EMM Network is a mentorship program based on Jesus and the three disciples Peter, John and James (Luke 9:28-30). Each church member has three functions: Encourager, Mentor and Mentee and would have three people involved in his or her spiritual life. In turn, 30 committed members will grow to become mature disciple-makers by December 25, 2022.

GROW (INTENTIONAL LEADERSHIP): Vigorously equip at least 40 active members through leadership development processes with Abundant Life Growth Track courses to become mature disciples of Christ through CARE Group ministries by December 25, 2022.

MULTIPLY (DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS): Reach the Toronto community, especially newcomers, with God's love and lead at least 20 people to become baptized Adventists by December 25, 2022.

The church's responsibility is to provide several worship services every week, such as Children's Ministry (Adventurers, children's choir, children's sabbath school classes), Youth Ministry (Pathfinders) and Young Adult Ministry (Master Guide). The church will host four CRDP events, five Growth Track courses, three Bridge events, three Marriage Bootcamp days, a Couples Retreat, etc. The members' responsibility is to attend events and courses to gain new skills and experiences to teach others. Every member is encouraged to join a CARE Group and EMM Network.

Let's continue to trust and be united in serving the Lord. Let's join and serve in God's purpose of 2022. I am looking forward to the great things God has prepared for us this year. May God bless you all!



F Team Feature



Forwarder Team

By Brian Co

The Forwarder Team is a new F Team within the structure of MZFC. It is made up of the following teams: Communications, Livestream, Audio Visual, ProPresenter, Media, Website, Social Media, Beacon Light, Bulletin, Treasurers and Clerks.

2022 has been busy and exciting for our team thus far. We have a handful of new teams and first-time officers. There has been a lot of learning and knowledge sharing amongst our team over the past few months which has led to a greater sense of camaraderie and teamwork.

The year just started and goals have just been set, but by the power of God, there are already some highlights worth mentioning!

The Communications team, led by Jerson Aure and Samuel Ly, actively maintain our Facebook pages and keep our members up to date on news and events. They also help host our weekly Adult Sabbath School, Midweek Prayer and Vesper Zoom sessions.

The Livestream and ProPresenter teams, led by Mac Gheorghita and Dianne Magsipoc respectively, continue to enhance the Livestream experience by incorporating live social media comments, dynamic camera angles and creative uses of PowerPoint slides.

The Audio Visual team, led by Joan Dee Grijaldo, has installed a new audio mixer which will improve the quality of our audio during our worship services.

The newly formed Media team, led by Glenn Mariano, continues to produce inspiring music videos with artists, young and experienced, from our very own church. These videos have truly touched the hearts of our online viewers.

And of course, last but not least, the relaunch of our official publication "Beacon Light", led by Jessica Gamez and her team.

We pray that there will be many more highlights for this year as we continue to work collaboratively with all the other F Teams to do God's work.

Ministry Through Memes

By Jedd Fritz Frias

The old adage tells us: "A picture is worth a thousand words". In my opinion, in this fast-paced and increasingly-shorter-attention-span-with-each-new-generation society we live in, this proverb rings true more than ever.

I have a ministry called "Sevy Sitdown" which is a podcast where I share *hopefully* in-depth conversations with other Christians about their ministries and beliefs. You can find these on social media platforms, such as Youtube and Spotify (shameless plug). These conversations range from 45 minutes to well over an hour.

When the pandemic hit, I, like the rest of the world, had to make a shift. I could no longer meet in-person to record audio with a guest. Society's atmosphere was filled with worry as we were all entering unknown territory. So during this beginning stage of the "new normal", instead of interviews, I began to shift focus onto Instagram instead.

On Sevy Sitdown's Instagram page I post memes of Christian content. (A meme is essentially a funny picture with an underlying meaning that most people on the internet understand). I would post these memes to portray a biblical message or to playfully poke fun at Christian/Adventist tendencies. I believe what can make memes so popular is the fact that they can potentially tell a whole story through the comedic medium of simply a seemingly unrelated picture and a few words.

After shifting my focus to memes, my views, likes, and shares increased dramatically. Sevy Sitdown was not created for the numbers, but it was an interesting observation. I was also getting more views from outside North America.

I believe during this time of an increased sense of hopelessness, people were finding comfort in things that made them smile. That's why it's important to do what we can do to be ambassadors for God 24/7. We never fully know how we can affect other people with just our words, behaviour, and actions. Even if that action is doing something as seemingly insignificant as posting a Christian meme!



Creating A Caring Church

By Susan Stepien

It has been a year since my son and I got baptized—May 22, 2021 to be exact. It continues to be an enriching, inspiring, enlightening and fulfilling experience for both of us. As members of the "New Disciples for Christ" CARE Group, I am most grateful that our group is very accepting and supportive of my son. When your group accepts and supports you and is non-judgmental, you feel like you can open your heart to them and belong to a God-focused family. This deepens your understanding of how God is present in your life no matter what you're going through. It also helps that while we go through our theology classes, we also have fun together. Our CARE Group is led by Elder Andrew Runge-Skytte who is thorough in his teaching and will not leave a Bible verse or particular topic until it is fully understood by everyone.

CARE Groups model cell groups and meet a few times a week. They constitute the backbone of ministry and outreach in the local church. They are a primary expression of the church's vision to grow genuine loving relationships with each other based on God's word, and create intentional opportunities to live Jesus' call to love one another as He loves us. To fully follow this call, we must immerse ourselves in each other's lives and learn to love in genuine, practical ways that come in response to knowing others and allowing others to know us. To create a church community that really cares for one another, the best way to do it is through small groups. When small groups become the vehicle for caregiving, the whole church gets involved in sharing one another's burdens naturally - hospital visits, childcare or providing meals when someone is in crisis. This is another example of how small groups become extended family. If we live far away from our relatives, we really need that kind of connection with people.

BENEFITS OF BEING IN A CARE GROUP:

1) YOU WILL BEGIN TO FEEL LIKE A PART OF GOD'S FAMILY

Most people in a CARE group say the greatest benefit is developing close relationships. It helps knowing that others face the same difficulties, have lived through them and have learned spiritual principles in the process. In the New Testament, the phrase "one another" is used over 50 times to describe our relationship to other believers. We are instructed to love one another, bear one another's burdens and build up one another. To obey these commands is to be in "community" with one another. God never meant for you to do the Christian life alone. If you're lonely and feel disconnected or uncared for, part of the answer is to join a CARE group.

2) PRAYER WILL BECOME MORE MEANINGFUL TO YOU

Many people are hesitant to pray in front of others, especially in a large church. In a CARE group, you learn to participate in prayer by having a conversation together with God. No one is pressured to pray, but as you become comfortable, you'll be able to pray sentence

prayers. There are many promises in the Bible related to group prayer. In praying with others, we are drawn together and find answers to the needs in our lives.

3) YOU WILL BE ABLE TO HANDLE STRESS AND PRESSURE BETTER

CARE groups provide primary support in times of crisis, change and stress. You will have a sense of stability knowing there are people who care and are committed to standing with you. When someone loses a job, a family member has an illness or a mother needs a babysitter, CARE groups naturally take care of you. Many throughout the world could testify they would not have made it through difficult times if not for their support group.

4) YOU WILL HAVE A NATURAL WAY TO SHARE CHRIST WITH FRIENDS, RELATIVES AND WORK ASSOCIATES

Most of us have friends who have not crossed the line of faith with Christ or who wouldn't be caught dead in a church. Some have preconceived notions about church and Christians that just the thought makes them defensive. However, they may be open to a casual gathering and discussion in a home. In a CARE group, your unbelieving friend can ask questions and express honest doubts without feeling put on the spot. When your friend sees the love, warmth and honesty of your group, it will make them more receptive to the Good News.

5) YOU WILL USE YOUR GIFTS AND DEVELOP LEADERSHIP SKILLS YOU NEVER KNEW YOU HAD

The Bible teaches that every believer is given certain talents or gifts to help others in God's family. Unfortunately, most Christians remain as Saturday morning spectators all their lives because large group meetings are primarily sit-and-listen situations. As you share and participate in a relaxed CARE group setting, your confidence and self-esteem rises and when ready, you will be willing to step out when opportunity arises. Developing leadership skills will help you at work, church and in relationships.

6) YOU WILL DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF WORSHIP

Many believers mistakenly feel that worship can only happen on Saturday morning in a large group with a sermon, worship team and offering plate. Worship happens anytime we focus on God. Sometimes that happens best in smaller groups that pray and sing, serve someone in need or have a fun time together.

7) YOU WILL BE A NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIAN


The Book of Acts is clear about how God intends His people to grow and have their needs met in church. We will never be able to have enough professional pastors to meet all the individual needs in our family. God never intended for it to be that way. Consider these verses:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... All the believers were together and had everything in common... Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

-Acts 2:42, 44, 46-47 (NIV)

Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

-Acts 5:42 (NIV)



God's Guidance Through Pathfinders

By Rulgims Solijon

Throughout the pandemic, I faced many challenges trying to serve in the Pathfinder Ministry due the constant need to adapt.

Starting off, it was quite difficult to transition so suddenly as everything was different compared to meeting in person. Some struggles included: figuring out what online platform worked best, figuring out how the Pathfinders would submit their work and how to adapt the teaching styles for online classes.

Each struggle had its own learning curve. Some were simple to solve while others took many attempts. Regardless of its difficulty, the challenges had slowly chipped away at the endurance of everyone in the class. This had resulted in a build up of burnout for my first

online class, leaving me to question my worth in the ministry.

The pandemic made my lack of reliance on God's strength apparent and also gave me time to reflect on myself and my areas of weakness. The challenges, the isolation and the frustrations had defeated me, but in my defeat, it also led me to draw closer to God. There, I was able to find peace knowing that it's okay to have made mistakes and not have it all figured out, and keeping in mind that I just need to make sure to give my best for Him and His work.

With a renewed spirit and mindset, I began to question the things that didn't work in the first year and what I would be able to improve. I began asking questions

like, "How can I get better engagement?", "How can I keep everyone from burning out?", "How can I give the best experience?" and, most importantly, "How can I help these kids grow closer to God?". The answers I found became the foundations for me to build my adaptations and find out how I could best serve in the Pathfinder Ministry.

I pray that despite all the pain and challenges that the pandemic has caused, that it may also be viewed as a tool from God—one that may serve as a stepping stone for growth, a moment of time to reflect and learn from our past or even a driving force to develop our relationship with God.

Adventurers For Jesus

By Cyhrel Joy & Joshua Dave Bryan de Luna

It's a great privilege to be the new Directors of the Light Bearers Adventurer Club. It's really a big challenge for us as we are new to this ministry, but we believe that with God's leading, guidance and help, we can mold our children to be in the heavenly kingdom. The Adventurer Ministry belongs to the Fortifier Team.

The Light Bearers Adventurer Club currently has 24 registered club members and we meet on the 2nd and 4th Sabbath of the month at 3:00 pm.

On February 26, 2022, we held our 29th Induction Ceremony via Zoom. It was a big success with the presence of God in our midst during the program. Marcia Forde (Area Coordinator of Metro North District), Jerson Aure (Area Coordinator), Alona Alba (Master Guide Director), Oliver Rey (Fortifier Team Lead) and other Adventurer staff were also in attendance.

Our upcoming activities are the Camporee July 27-31, 2022 with the theme "I AM Camporee" via Zoom,



Left to Right: Alona Alba, Cyhrel de Luna, Joshua de Luna
Bottom: Bryle de Luna

Adventurer Family Fair on October 30, 2022, Adventurer Bible Experience on November 12, 2022 and Investiture on December 10, 2022.

Let us continue to pray and support our kids as we shape them to do God's work and that they may have a sense of mission at their young age. God bless!

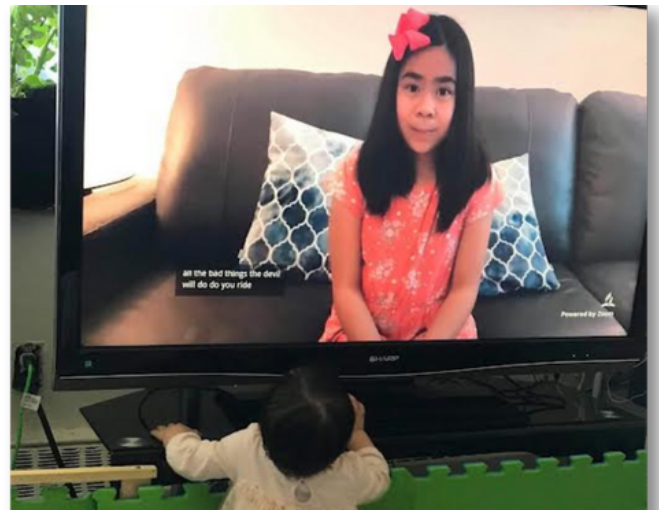
Children's Ministry

By Glenda Grijaldo

Being in this ministry teaches me a lot—mainly that moulding our kids' young minds and hearts is integral to all aspects of humankind. Our goal is for them to possess a Christ-like character that will prepare them for whatever tests in life they may encounter.

The Children's Ministry Department has come a long way, especially in this pandemic, through the never-ending dedication and support of parents and loving members of the church. We have seen a lot of children come out of their shell to give their talents in service of the Lord. These kids keep growing in God's guidance.

Singing songs, learning Bible verses and stories, prayers and counting blessings are some of the activities our children have been involved in. Weekly Sabbath School classes have been their training ground in spite of the challenges of online meetings. The Divine Service Children's Story has opened opportunities for children who are good at storytelling and making videos to share their wisdom through online media.



Seminars and training workshops for teachers and leaders were conducted to equip them to be channels of information for others. On January 30, 2022, we held a session called "Why Care About SELF CARE?" and on February 27, 2022 we held one on "Why Care About CHILDREN'S SELF ESTEEM?". Moral lessons and God's messages through Bible were emphasized and highlighted throughout.

Let us continue to pray for the new generations as we guide them to be the future leaders of our church and a light to others one day—hand in hand together through God's love..

Ongoing Initiatives & Upcoming Events

EMM Network ►

The EMM Network is a tool we can use to become stronger disciples of Christ. It reinforces the ongoing discipleship process of building relationships, allowing the Holy Spirit to transform our character and inspire others to do the same.

Each letter in the EMM Network has a meaning; Encourager, Mentee and Mentor. These are all roles you will take on within your own personal EMM Network.

Is there someone who you can encourage, learn from or help guide spiritually? By prayerfully selecting individuals to be a part of your EMM Network, you form a covenant and join together on a spiritual journey of maturing in Christ as well as learning to disciple others. We encourage you to please take time to pray for God's guidance on who to select for your EMM Network. Once God has revealed these names to you, please scan the QR code to the right to fill out the form.



◀ Prayer For Friends

Prayer For Friends is a church initiative where we encourage members to reach out to friends outside of our church and offer to pray for them.

Prayer is powerful, especially if we pray for others. These prayers will draw us closer in our relationships with our loved ones. Praying for these individuals will help them see how much you love them and where this love ultimately comes from; a loving relationship with God.


Offering to pray for someone is a free and powerful gift you can give to anyone you meet. Please reach out to friends outside of our church, offering to pray for them. Scan the QR code to the left to submit their names using the form and our church will pray for these individuals with you.

Looking Ahead

June 25-27	Crawford Adventist Academy & Kingsway College Graduation Weekend
July 1	Pathfinder Hiking Trip
July 2-9	Vacation Bible School
July 3 & 17	Food Bank
July 17 & 31	JAZ Festival
July 23	Graduation Celebration
July 28-31	Ontario Conference Adventurer Camporee
Aug 5-6	Ontario Conference Camp Meeting
Aug 7 & 22	Food Bank
Aug 9-14	Ontario Conference Pathfinder Camporee

Reach Out!

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