



General Conference Executive Committee Newsletter

An informative publication for members of the General Conference Executive Committee as a service through the office of the Chair

JANUARY-MARCH 2022

Our hope is not based on probabilities, it is based on the certainty that God is real, and His Word endures forever. The outline Jesus gave in Matthew 24 of the characteristics of the times prior to His coming helps us understand that “the days in which we live are solemn and important” (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 9, p. 11).

Jesus said there would be false Christs and false prophets, calamities, wars and rumors of wars, plagues, famines, natural disasters, persecution, betrayal, and moral decline. We are now witnessing a horrible conflict that has generated more than one million refugees in a few weeks. But before Christ comes, the everlasting gospel and three angels’ messages of Revelation 14 must be proclaimed throughout the world (Matt. 24:14). The global fulfillment of this prediction is yet to be realized, but what Jesus promised *will* come to pass; nothing can prevent it. “Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones” (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 9, p. 11).

Jesus is coming soon! Everyone must know. We must all proclaim the gospel. Will you go? I will go!

ABNER DE LOS SANTOS
GC VICE PRESIDENT

EDITORIAL



CHRIST’S CHANGING POWER NEEDED IN TIMES OF CONFLICT

BY GARY BLANCHARD, M.DIV., YOUTH MINISTRIES DIRECTOR

The terrible conflict raging in Ukraine is the topic of heated political debate around the world. The global community realizes there is much at stake and many grave dangers for Humanity.

Albert Einstein once said, “I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.”¹ H.G. Wells expressing an even more pessimistic view of war, said “If we don’t end war, war will end us.”²

In the United States, people are divided regarding whether

the solution is diplomatic or military, but everyone seems united in wanting to avert a World War III scenario! But politics aside, there are important spiritual lessons we can learn from the current conflict. Some may argue this article is “too soon,” but with the clear and present danger we are now facing as a global community, learning must commence, and it must commence quickly! “...for now is our salvation closer than when we first believed” (Rom. 13:11).

Turn the page for six spiritual lessons we must learn quickly.

1. PEOPLE ARE EVIL.

Whoever said “absolute power, corrupts absolutely” didn’t understand human nature. It’s not power that corrupts the heart of man, it’s the heart of man that corrupts power!

Case in point: as long as Adam and Eve had sinless natures, they were safe having absolute power on earth (Gen. 1:26). However, after our first parents fell in the garden, things changed dramatically. We now have evil residing at the very core of our beings (Rom. 7:21).

Ellen White put it like this, “It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are *evil*, and we cannot change them.”²³

So, when given the opportunity, we will wield power for our own selfish ends with little consideration for the devastation and death we might cause. All of us have the capacity for great evil— just give us great armies or even small opportunities with little accountability and watch what we will do to those who stand in our way.

Thankfully, Ellen White finished her quote above on an encouraging note, “There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ.”²⁴

My friends, Jesus never stopped being a carpenter! Only now He works at remodeling the human heart. “We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works. . . that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Through faith in the new covenant promise, Jesus supernaturally writes his law of love upon our hearts and puts hatred or “enmity” in us toward evil thoughts and deeds (Heb. 10:16; Genesis 3:15).

In other words, Jesus can reset



DEPOSIT PHOTOS / FOTORESERG

us to factory settings! This takes time but if we cooperate it is assured (Phil. 1:6). The time has come for Christians to push back against their evil natures and let the beauty of Christ shine through.

2. PEACE IS FRAGILE.

Global peace has always been fragile, but it will be increasingly so in the last days. We have known this since God gave King Nebuchadnezzar that prophetic dream in Daniel 2.

We are living in the days where peace treaties and promises are as dependable as the adhesive power of clay and iron (Daniel 2:42-43). It is a frightening fact that our global community today is just one misstep from nuclear war! We are just one bad decision away from annihilation!

Thankfully, students of Bible prophecy know this is not how it ends for humanity. Despite the fragile and ever-growing division in our world today, we know from Daniel 2 that Jesus will return just in time to deliver His people. He will then set up a rock-solid Kingdom that will never end (Dan. 2:44, Rom. 5:6).

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We are living in days where peace treaties and promises are as dependable as the adhesive power of clay and iron.

Seventh-day Adventists who “have this hope” must stand up and preach it on every possible platform! We are so proud of our Adventist youth, especially at this critical time as they serve as the hands and feet of Jesus, partnering with ADRA and local Seventh-day Adventist churches in helping meet the incredible needs of the current humanitarian crisis. Doors are opening for them to minister

is not given, people are lulled to sleep by smooth messages and taken unprepared (see *The Great Controversy*, p. 243).

Forces are right now being mobilizing to destroy the church! We can hear and see them taking aim at free speech and attempting to demolish traditional Christian values. Our enemies know that division is key to victory, so they work tirelessly to divide Christians

comes in the last days and people are unable to “escape” (1 Thess. 5:3). Every aspect of the Three Angels’ Messages needs to be proclaimed now! It is these messages that prepare the world for the return of Christ (Rev. 14:14).

Yes, they will call you a “troubler of Israel.” Yes, they will call you a “conspiracy theorist” or “alarmist.” Yes, they will call you “hurtful” or a dealer in “misinformation,” but in the end God and those you warn will call you blessed!

4. COURAGE IS INSPIRING.

Leaders with courage are receiving accolades all over social media today! People of all ages are so inspired by them that they are willing to lay down their lives for a cause.

The Bible teaches that the younger generation was designed to live dangerously, and they will follow leaders who resonate with this God-given virtue—“Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one’s youth (Ps. 127:4).

Maya Angelou once said, “Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can’t practice any other virtue consistently.”⁷

Courageous leadership, especially when it is combined with character, is almost irresistible to all and youth are no exception!

When Prince Jonathan, the son of King Saul, went to war against the Philistines, he had only one young soldier by his side—his faithful armor bearer. However, his faith and courage were so inspiring that not only did God give Him supernatural help, but all the Israelite youth



not only to physical needs, but spiritually as well—offering the hope that only Jesus can provide. They are responding with one voice, saying clearly, “I Will Go!”

3. TRUTH TELLERS ARE RARE.

God never allows His people to be ambushed. He always tells them what He is going to do before He does it (Amos 3:7). The problem is when those who are supposed to tell the truth preach “peace and safety” instead (1 Thess. 5:3). In other words, when the warning

into hostile warring tribes.

Peace and safety preaching needs to stop! Ellen White wrote, “The smooth sermons so often preached make no lasting impression: the trumpet does not give a certain sound. Men are not cut to the heart by the plain sharp truths of God’s word.”⁵

Pastor Charles Spurgeon warned that “A time would come when instead of shepherds feeding the sheep the church will have clowns entertaining the goats.”⁶

It’s because of a shortage of truth tellers that “sudden destruction”



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Ageism has no place in any movement, secular or spiritual, that wants to succeed in mission. Whether you are 8 or 80, God has a work for you to do within the church!

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who had deserted Saul’s army joined Jonathan in the cause. As a result, a great victory was won, and this courageous leader became legendary (see 1 Samuel 14)!

People often ask, “Why are we losing so many youth in the church today?” The answer is simple—We have too many “Sauls,” not enough “Jonathans” leading mission!

Young people have always been and always will be attracted to leaders who lead courageously from the front—backseat leaders only inspire apathy and eventually defection in the younger generation!

Someone once said, “A boss says, ‘Go!’ A leader says, ‘Let’s go!’” If courageous leadership is inspirational in the secular world, how much more inspiring is it in the spiritual realm of the Great Commission?

5. INTERGENERATIONAL SYNERGY IS VITAL.

It’s hard to ignore the importance of intergeneration synergy when one sees 18-year-olds and 60-year-olds standing side by side for their cause.

What a reminder of the importance

of intergenerational ministry! In fact, the Adventist church was conceived when young and old alike joined together to proclaim the Three Angels’ Messages around the world.

Ageism has no place in any movement, secular or spiritual, that wants to succeed in mission. Whether you are 8 or 80, God has a work for you to do within the church!

Old folks are not the church! Young folks are not the church! It’s only when young and old work together that the church is complete. Interestingly the Attic Greek word for “synergy” means “working together.” This kind of intergenerational synergy is God’s command for the church in the last days (see Malachi 4:6).

Adventists should never forget the following quotation from the book *Lessons from Battle Creek* by Alberto R. Trim and James R. Nix:

“Age diversity was a historic phenomenon that gave the Adventist movement a strong start. If replicated, the authentic combination of older and younger members working together will once again be a catalyst as we near the end of time.”⁸

6. UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITIES

All around the world, Adventist youth are praying and working to relieve suffering in Jesus’ name. These two essential components are key to seeing supernatural results for God’s kingdom (see Acts 3:6-8, 2SM 370). With one hand we are to assist those in need (work) and with the other we are to reach out to God for wisdom and strength (prayer).

We are so proud of our youth who are taking advantage of these unprecedented opportunities to minister to the basic needs of millions of refugees not only in Ukraine and Russia but around the world. We are hearing reports of food distributed, housing provided, and gospel tracts shared.

On Global Youth Day (always the third Sabbath in March) Adventist young people go into their communities and show the world that love is a verb! In other words, they demonstrate that love is a lifestyle (see 1 John 3:18). In this special sense, our youth are being called to be Adventist activists!

Ellen White understood how important it is for the Church to keep their eyes and ears open to divine opportunities to minister to others in Jesus' name! She wrote, "We are not keeping pace with the opening providence of God. Jesus and angels are at work. This cause is onward, while we are standing still and being left in the rear. If we would follow the opening providence of God, we should be quick to discern every opening, and make the most of every advantage within our reach. To let the light, extend and spread to other nations."⁹

CONCLUSION

In Matthew 24:12-13, Jesus warned that just before He returns, the world will experience global freezing. In other words, compassion and love will be hard to find. In fact, He warns that this lack of love will lead to unprecedented "lawlessness."

Then Jesus speaks directly to His Church and says, "But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (vs. 13). In other words, those who don't lose their Christian love for God and each other will be saved.

But how can we get warmer, not colder, in these frigid times? How can we "endure" in love? Notice Jesus answers this question by focusing His people on gospel mission. "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as witness to all nations, and then the end with come" (vs. 14).

According to Jesus, it's by staying focused on gospel mission that we are able to overcome the cold and bring others into the warm-hearted embrace of God.

Ellen White put it like this: "The giving of the gospel to the world is the work that God has committed to those who bear His name. For earth's sin and

misery the gospel is the only antidote. To make known to all mankind the message of the grace of God is the first work of those who know its healing power."¹⁰

No doubt there are many more lessons we can learn from these current events, the important thing is that we take to heart and act swiftly on what we are learning, and say, "Yes, Lord, I Will Go!"

¹Albert Einstein, "Brainy Quote," www.brainyquote.com/quotes/albert_einstein_122873.

²H.G. Wells, "Brainy Quote," www.brainyquote.com/quotes/h_g_wells_161934

³Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 17.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2002), p. 140.

⁶Charles Spurgeon, in "Grace Gems," www.gracegems.org/2016/05/clowns.html.

⁷Maya Angelou, "Brainy Quote," www.brainyquote.com/quotes/maya_angelou_120859.

⁸Alberto R. Trim and James R Nix, *Lessons from Battle Creek*, (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2018), p. 82.

⁹White, "The True Missionary," January 1, 1874, par. 10.

¹⁰White, *The Ministry of Healing*, (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2003), p. 142.



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Volunteers distribute hot meals to refugees at a refugee center in Lviv, March 9, 2022.

A CALL TO PRAYER

From the Administration of the Euro-Asia Division

Pray one for another . . . The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16, KJV).

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, In this troubled time, when sorrow and pain burst into our lives in the territory of the Euro-Asia Division—when our perception of reality was divided into “before and after”—we keep our hope in the Lord, who gives us assurance of His love and supports and keeps us.

We are sincerely grateful to all of you, dear brothers and sisters, for your prayers, faithfulness to God, and dedicated service in works of mercy; for your open hearts in helping and supporting refugees and migrants; for your readiness to share shelter and bread with those in need.

Throughout the week, the church was in prayer and fasting, asking for God’s protection and mercy for all those in need. God showed His mercy and care, but there are still a lot of challenges. These are hardships in connection with forced displacement, grief from losses and suffering, the pain of breaking relationships with loved ones, and many other experiences. Therefore, we need to keep crying out to the Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters, do not let up in prayer. Expand your prayer work—create prayer chains, organize prayer groups, hold prayer meetings—because our help is only in the Lord!

We invite you to continue our prayerful standing before the Lord, not abandoning works of mercy, giving people all kinds of support, sharing bread, providing shelter to those in need, and with humility, crying out to God in prayer every evening at 19:00.

Additionally, on the Sabbaths of March 5 and 12, 2022, unite in fasting and prayer for God’s intervention, protection, and guidance; for the comfort of those who have lost their loved ones; for wisdom for all on whom the recovery from these difficulties depends; and for the extension of the time of grace to serve in the territory of the Euro-Asia Division.

Let this become the time of closeness to our God, rethinking of our life values, disposition of our hearts to serve, and confidence in the imminent

coming of our Lord.

“[The Lord] asks us to come close to His side. Whatever difficulties we labor under, which weigh down soul and body, He waits to make us free” (Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 249).

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).

This article was originally published on the Euro-Asia Division’s news site. English translation published by Adventist News Network.



Refugees on the street in Lviv, March 9, 2022

By Andrew McChesney

Adventist Leaders Preview Leadership Program

World Church Leadership Council focuses on “Growing Leaders for Mission.”



In the United States, a newly elected president has nearly three months to prepare to take office after election day.

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a newly elected president takes office immediately.

For Artur A. Stele, the swiftness of his assumption to the office of president of the Euro-Asia Division left him shocked in 2000. Stele had leadership experience as a pastor, academic dean, and president at Zaoksky Adventist University in Russia, but he had never led an entity such as the Euro-Asia Division, which oversees the Adventist Church’s work over 11 time zones in Russia and other former Soviet republics.

“I was shocked,” Stele said. “I was young and inexperienced.”

But he received a lifeline shortly after his election at General Conference Session in Toronto, Canada. Former General Conference president Neal C. Wilson spoke to him in an informal mentoring session that helped Stele to hit the ground running.

“He spent maybe 15 minutes, but I remember it up until now,” said Stele, now a general vice president of the General Conference.

Recognizing the importance of mentorship in leadership, Adventist leaders have made it a pillar in a proposed General Conference leadership development program that they enthusiastically affirmed during the second annual World Church Leadership Council, titled,

“Growing Leaders for Mission,” on February 9-10, 2022. The initiative, when officially approved and voted, would be funded by the General Conference and implemented with the assistance of Andrews University’s Global Leadership Institute. The innovative program would seek to provide church leaders with three tracks for learning:

■ **LeadLAB** a series of short-term, focused leadership development seminars and workshops offered to divisions that wish to participate.

■ **LeadCONFERENCE** an annual leadership development conference that coincides with Annual Council.

■ **LeadMENTORS**, an individualized, customized mentorship program provided to emerging leaders.

TRAINING LEADERS FOR MISSION

General Conference president Ted N.C. Wilson emphasized that the purpose of the leadership development program was to advance the church’s mission of preparing people for Jesus’ return.

“The theme for the leadership development framework is growing leaders for mission,” he told the World Church Leadership Council, a Zoom gathering of about 80 leaders from the

General Conference, the Church’s 13 world divisions, its three attached fields, ADRA, several universities, and other entities.

The mission focus was reiterated by General Conference treasurer and chief financial officer Paul Douglas, who together with General Conference secretary, Erton Köhler, is working closely with Wilson on the General Conference leadership development program.

“The ultimate objective is growing leaders for mission who will display the character of Christ,” Douglas said at the Zoom conference.

The LeadLAB component of the still-developing program was piloted in 2021 in the South Pacific Division and the Inter-European Division. LeadLAB has its roots in a proposal that was featured two years ago at a leadership conference in Cape Town, South Africa. Church leaders agreed at the 2019 Global Leadership Summit to establish a leadership institute based at the General Conference’s headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, disrupted those plans and led facilitators to opt for a largely online program.

Wilson, emphasizing that the program remains a work in progress, said it was optional, not mandatory, and was meant to augment, not

replace, existing leadership programs that divisions might have in place. The divisions can help to form the program as it develops, and their involvement in shaping it will be valued, he said.

“This is a collaborative work since all will be involved in helping create something which will provide for ‘Growing Leaders for Mission,’” Wilson said later by e-mail.

It also is envisioned that other General Conference educational institutions such as the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS), Adventist University of Africa (AUA), and Loma Linda University Health (LLUH), as well as others, can be involved in the program.

In the Zoom meeting, Wilson presented a proposal in which the General Conference would provide “substantial funding” for the program through 2025, after which a decision would have to be made on how to proceed beyond that time period. He expressed hope that all 13 church divisions, as well as the attached Middle East and North Africa Union and the Chinese Union Mission, and the Israel Field, would be able to participate from the near future through 2025.

PILOT PROGRAM CALLED SUCCESS

Leaders of the South Pacific Division and the Inter-European Division voiced strong support for the leadership development program. Several hundred church leaders in the two divisions have participated in a pilot project of LeadLAB seminars over the past year.

“The South Pacific Division is very happy to be a trial, I guess a guinea pig,” said Glenn Townend, president of the South Pacific Division. “The material that we have received so far has been absolutely excellent.”

He praised the LeadLAB program as

“really spiritual, biblical, and practical,” adding, “We really like the direction that the General Conference is going, and it is great to be part of this.”

Mario Brito, president of the Inter-European Division, said he had prayed for years to find good leaders and he was in “seventh heaven” with the program.

“We are delighted,” he said. “I thank the Lord because you are really interested in understanding our needs and helping us fulfill them. . . . This is an opportunity to grow in the image of Jesus Christ. . . . I thank the General Conference and Andrews.”

Erich Baumgartner, founding director of Andrews University’s Global Leadership Institute, said he was cheered by the pilot projects with the first two divisions and looked forward to expansion.

Many other division leaders offered wholehearted support for the program at the Zoom conference. G. Alexander Byant, president of the North American Division, and Si Young Kim, president of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division, called it a welcome enhancement to leadership programs already in place on their territories. Zoom participants also underscored the importance of leadership training in fulfilling the church’s mission.

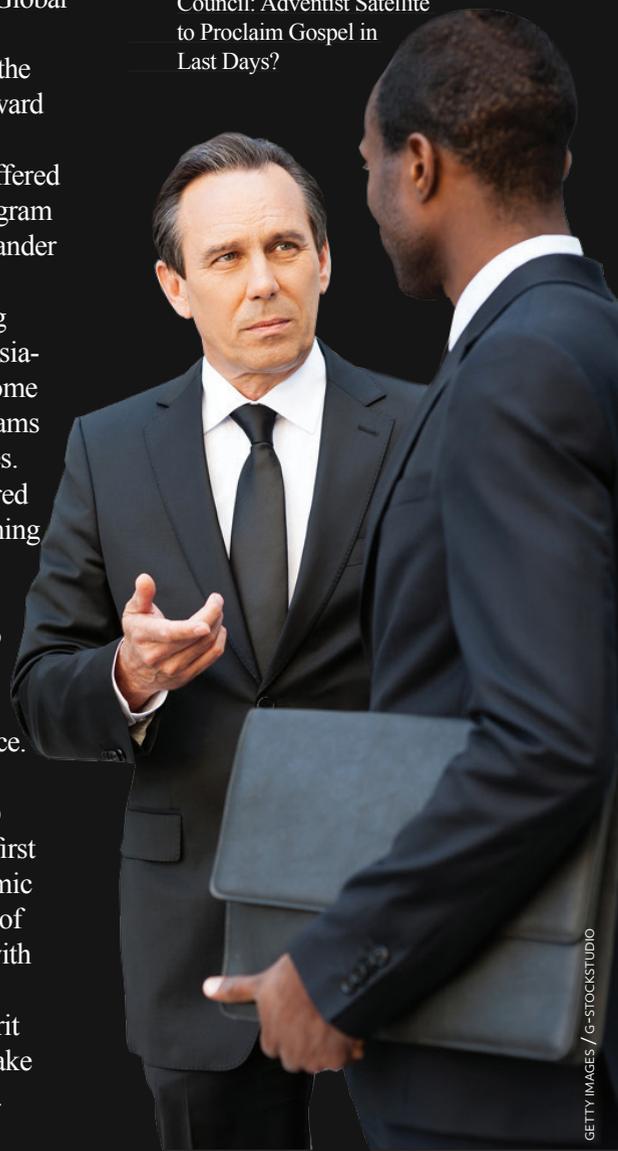
“Leaders need to be trained to focus on mission,” said Guillermo E. Biaggi, the conference organizer and a general vice president at the General Conference. “Mission is so important to us.”

The World Church Leadership Council, which was held for the first time amid the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, covered various aspects of strategic thinking and planning with the aim of proclaiming the Three Angels’ Messages with Holy Spirit power and seeing the latter rain take the gospel work to its conclusion.

Speakers’ presentations took a closer look at mission-driven activity within Adventist Church organizations, self-evaluation and assessment techniques, future leadership development, the benefits of leadership training after elections, the beauty of mentoring younger leaders, the need to think strategically to achieve goals set out in the world church’s “I Will Go” plan, and encouragement in the Bible and Ellen White’s writings to unitedly complete the church’s mission.

RELATED STORIES

- World Church leaders back creation of leadership institute
- Report from first World Church Leadership Council: Adventist Satellite to Proclaim Gospel in Last Days?



“HOLDING UP BRAVELY”

By Ellen G. White



We are not, as a people, sufficiently aroused to the short time in which we have to work, and we do not understand the magnitude of the work for the time. The night soon cometh, in which no man can work. Satan is earnest, zealous, and persevering in his work. If he fails to accomplish his purpose the first time, he tries again. He will try other plans, and work with great perseverance to bring in various temptations to ensnare souls. He never becomes so discouraged as to let souls entirely alone. If the zeal and perseverance of Christ's followers in their efforts to save souls were equal to Satan's efforts to deceive them to their eternal loss, we should see hundreds embracing the truth where we now see one.

“God calls for men and women to qualify themselves,

by consecration to his will and earnest study of the Scriptures, to do his special work for these last days. He calls for men now who can work. As they engage in the work in sincerity and humility to do all they can, they will be obtaining a more thorough experience. They will have a better knowledge of the truth and better know how to reach souls and help them just where they need to be helped. Workmen are needed now, just now, to labor for God. The fields are already white for the harvest, and yet laborers are few. There are those among us who could work if they were awake to the wants of the cause, and were willing to bear burdens. God calls for men and women, who are followers of Christ, to volunteer to work under his dictation to rescue souls from

ruin. All who engage in the work of presenting the truth to others must have true courtesy, and Christian politeness, and sincere love for souls, so as to make, not general efforts merely, but personal efforts. . . .

“God will have men who will venture anything and everything to save souls. Those who will not move until they can see every step of the way clearly before them will not be of advantage at this time to forward the truth of God. There must be workers now who will push ahead in the dark as well as in the light, and who will hold up bravely under discouragements and disappointed hopes, and yet work on with faith, with tears and patient hope, sowing beside all waters, trusting the Lord to bring the increase. God calls for men of nerve, of hope, faith, and endurance, to work to the point.”

—“The True Missionary,” January 1, 1874, par. 7, 8, 12.

CHECKUP



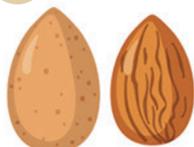
1 SPINACH



2 BLUEBERRY



3 CHIA



4 ALMOND



5 TOMATO

People around the world have experienced extraordinary stress first with the pandemic, and more recently with the conflict in Ukraine and its global ramifications. What we eat can have a significant impact on our minds and bodies. *Vibrant Life*, the official Seventh-day Adventist magazine focused on health, offers this advice in their article, “The Mind Menu: Food That Is Good for Your Brain,” listing 10 foods that boost brain function.*

Dark Leafy Greens

Low levels of folic acid have been shown to be associated with depression, insomnia, and dementia. Dark leafy greens (spinach, chard, kale, collard, turnip, and beet) have high levels of folate, as well as iron, calcium, magnesium, potassium, folate, and omega-3s.

Berries

In addition to being an immune-boosting food, berries, such as blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, and blackberries, are full of potent antioxidants.

Chia Seeds

Omega-3 fatty acids play a role in the function of serotonin and dopamine, which are important for mental health. One tablespoon of chia seeds contains 1,769 mg of omega-3s. They are also a good source of magnesium, sometimes called the “stress antidote.”

Nuts

Another rich plant-based source of omega-3s are nuts, especially walnuts, cashews, and almonds.

Tomatoes

Tomatoes contain folic acid and lycopene, which helps to fight brain disease and delay the onset and progression of Alzheimer’s disease.

Whole Grains

Complex carbohydrates, such as those found in whole-grain flour, soy, oats, and brown and wild rice, provide an even, consistent energy source. They also assist tryptophan absorption, which can help reduce depression and anxiety.

Mushrooms

Mushrooms help balance blood sugar levels and contribute to a positive mood. They also promote a healthy gut biome. As 95 percent of serotonin is produced in the gut, a healthy gut promotes mental health.

Avocados

Avocados provide health fats that contribute to brain function. They also contain vitamins K & B6, folate, lutein, and tryptophan, an amino acid that promotes mental health.

Citrus

Citrus fruits contain a phytonutrient called hesperidin that helps increase blood flow, which can help reduce the risk of stroke.

Beans, Lentils, and Peas

Thanks to their high fiber and tryptophan levels, beans help stabilize blood sugar levels, which aids in mood stability.

*Adapted from “The Mind Menu: Food That Is Good for Your Brain,” by Vicki Redden, in “Vibrant Life” Mental Health Special Issue, pp. 40, 41. Used with permission.



6 SOY



7 MUSHROOM



8 AVOCADO



9 ORANGE



10 GREEN LENTILS

“We Know the End of the Story”

Personal Ministry Reaches Hearts

By Maria Shajiei

How much longer will this go on? Pastor, can't you tell God we've suffered enough and that He can return now?"

The woman's mask hid her facial expressions but not the pain in her voice as she implored the two visiting pastors and my husband, a pastor in training, to give her some insight into the economic and political crisis in her country. Like many Lebanese, she had family members who had fled the country years earlier for a better life. Yet, she had chosen to remain in her beloved homeland.

She was a teacher by trade, although recently, she had cut back to two months a year of substitute teaching because that's all she could manage with the economic crisis. "It would cost me one million Lebanese pounds a month for gas to commute if I was teaching regularly," she told us. One million pounds represents anywhere from a third to two-thirds of a salary in the current economy.

The woman's home was filled with lovely art décor. Glass hutches held years of memories and mementos, including a photo she lovingly pointed out of her father, who had passed away a few years earlier.

"I'm lonely," she shared. "I believe that God is the One who controls our lives and we don't choose many things. Otherwise, why am I living by myself?" Then, looking directly at me, she added, "You know what it's like. We women need companionship."

She was right. Perhaps that's why she had invited me to come along on the visit that evening. She instinctively knew that there would be a connection between us.



We shared a delicious feast around her dining room table as we laughed together, inquired about her tasty homemade olives, ate bowls of pumpkin soup, and dessert.

After reading a few verses from Matthew 24 that refer to the signs of Jesus' second coming, the pastors prayed, and it was time for us to head home. We invited her to visit us in return and left with bags full of greenery from her garden. As we drove away, she stood in the dimly lit driveway and waved. The city lights flickered off, and then a generator took over.

We waved one last time and then drove off into the darkness, leaving her standing in the driveway, silent and alone. When we reached home, I told my husband I wanted to visit her again.

I came to Lebanon in 2016 excited to embark on my own missionary adventure with Adventist Volunteer Service. One year turned into two, and soon I had passed my five-year mark. However, the adventure had shifted drastically, and my life was now severely restricted by the pandemic and the country's economic crises. I had lost my passion for mission service. The tedious difficulty of life had worn me down.

Then I met this dear woman. During our short visit, I was reminded yet again that I have a purpose in life—to love and care for others in any way I can. We are to encourage each other with hope because, as my husband so aptly puts it, "We know the end of the story."

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I had lost my passion for mission service. The tedious difficulty of life had worn me down.

*This story is abridged from the original. First published in *Mission 360*, vol. 9, no. 4. <https://issuu.com/advmission/docs/mission360-v9n4/s/14136609>. Used with permission.

THE BACK PAGE

More than 1 million people have been displaced because of the humanitarian crisis in **Ukraine**. Seventh-day Adventists in western Ukraine, Poland, Romania, and other bordering nations, along with ADRA and Hope Channel, and other Adventist entities are providing not only humanitarian relief but spiritual support to the many refugees. [Watch a report from the Adventist News Network here.](#)

A **Maksym Krupskyi, Hope Media Center Ukraine Director**, gave a [heartfelt video report](#) shortly after hostilities began. In his message, Krupskyi described what it is like when “rumors of wars” are no longer rumors, expressing hope in Jesus. “Stand with us in prayers for peace in Ukraine,” he says.

B **Ukrainian churches have been inundated with people** after armed conflict erupted February 24, with 50-100 people arriving at individual churches each night. Church members are handing out food, providing shelter, and giving people rides from hot spots to safe places or the border. All Ukrainian Seventh-day Adventist pastors have remained. Church and personal savings have almost been depleted in Ukraine. The Office of Adventist Mission has turned to the Hope in Crisis initiative as the Adventist Church and members in Ukraine run low on funds. U.S. tax-deductible donations to help the people of Ukraine can be made on Adventist Mission’s website, adventistmission.org/donate. Select “Hope in Crisis (Ukraine)” as the desired project.

C **Seventh-day Adventist schools in Ukraine are doubling** as places of refuge for many fleeing their homes. Displaced families sheltering at Adventist schools across Ukraine are provided hot meals, a place to sleep, and other basic items as they wait for the invasion to end.

D **Seventh-day Adventist churches in Poland are becoming shelters** for Ukrainian refugees. The Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA) in Poland is working in cooperation with the Polish Union, local churches, and volunteers to show solidarity with the refugees. Adventists in Poland are also opening their homes to the Ukrainian refugees.

E **A team from ADRA Romania managed to deliver vans with much-needed items**, included mattresses, across the border into western Ukraine. After traveling for 29 hours, the volunteers arrived in Ukraine with thousands of donated items — mattresses, blankets, pillows, linen, hygiene products, medicines, and food supplements. Some items were distributed in Chernivtsi, while a significant portion were transferred to other vans and transported to Kyiv and other areas of the country.

F **ADRA Hungary and local Adventist churches** are ready to receive refugees. An Adventist Bible Camp, with heating, a kitchen, and bathrooms, located 80 kilometers [50 miles] from the Ukrainian border is ready to receive refugees as well. The capacity is for at least 50 people. The Hungarian Union Conference office will also be opened to receive refugees.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is praising God after the official YouTube Channel of the denomination was restored. The channel had been offline since YouTube removed it for violating community guidelines. The communication department of the Adventist World Church in **Silver Spring, Maryland, USA**, in consultation with the Office of General Council, appealed the decision twice, first on Monday, February 28, and then again on March 3. On March 4, the Adventist Church asked church members on Twitter to pray for the channel to be restored and to repost tagging YouTube asking for the appeal to be heard. [On Sabbath, March 5, the channel was restored.](#) Communication director of the Seventh-day Adventist World Church, Williams Costa, Jr. says, “The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s YouTube channel is vital in sharing Jesus and His love with others. We were devastated to see it taken down, but God has shown us He is always working. We have been amazed and inspired by the prayers and support of our Church members. God answered their prayers and we are incredibly grateful.”