

PROCLAIMING Jesus PASSIONATELY

LUKE 4:18



FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT RON AGUILERA

FYI (For Your Information...)

A weekly e-newsletter for employees and friends of the
Illinois Conference of Seventh-day Adventists



January 6, 2021



DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

“Do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

Happy New Year! Why am I happy? We are one year closer to being with Jesus in the place He has prepared for us.

As I begin to think and plan for 2021, I realize that on the first day of a new year, many of us wish each other a “Happy New Year!” But as we begin this new year, I think particularly after 2020 that we need more than a hopeful greeting from the people around us. In fact, I think we need to listen to what God told Joshua about 3,400 years ago. As Joshua was about to lead God’s people into the promised land, he had reason to be afraid. There was an enormous task ahead of him, and he was well aware of the dangers he and the people would soon be facing. He needed God’s encouragement.

A new year brings lots of questions: What will happen with COVID? Will our health hold? Will I be able to hang on to my job? Will our marriage last? Will I get into the right school? Will I live to see the end of this year? Will the economy improve? I want to remind us that the Creator of the universe comes to us and says, “Don’t be afraid; don’t be discouraged.” What happens in this coming year is not left to chance. God is in charge, and He promises to stay close: *“The LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”*

The Lord Jesus made the same promise to His followers many years later when He said, *“I am with you always”* (Matthew 28:20). That’s the reason we can wish each other a “Happy New Year!” This is my desire for each of you, for each of our members, our churches, and our schools.

As we begin this new year together, and as we focus on “Proclaiming Jesus Passionately,” may we remember that God is with us. He will not leave



Seventh-day
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*Making healthy
disciple-making
churches*

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January 6, 2021

us nor forsake us. He has promised He will return to take us to the place He has prepared for us. I am happily looking forward to that day. My prayer is that each of us will be ready!

I KNOW SOMETHING GOOD ABOUT...

... two of our Illinois Conference pastors, Gabriel Bardan and Josh Voigt. They have committed to helping us read through the Bible in 2021. You are invited to join them every Tuesday at 8 pm as they review each week's reading on [Youtube](#), [Facebook](#), and [Vimeo](#). For more information and to register, go to <https://biblereading.link>

COVID-19 UPDATE

COVID-19 continues to affect us as we enter 2021. Our hospitals continue to be at full capacity. Many of our members have been affected, including some of our pastors, teachers, and office staff (some who are seriously ill today). Also, some of our members have lost loved ones to COVID. I ask you to remember all those affected in prayer.

My prayer is that 2021 will bring healing and hope to those affected and beyond. We continue to encourage all of our members, churches, and schools to err on the side of caution. We are still recommending that our churches and schools strictly follow the protocols and guidelines set by the State. If you have any questions or are unsure about how to move forward, please contact our Executive Secretary, John Grys. We hope to release new recommendations later this month, after a potential holiday wave. Until then, may God keep each of you safe.

NEWS

- ☞ I want to invite you to join us online for our Conference Sabbath on January 16th. I will be sharing a sermon focusing on our theme for 2021, Proclaiming Jesus Passionately. The programming will be on our Facebook and YouTube pages. It will begin at 9:30 am and end at noon. Join us for this time of worship and visioning.
- ☞ This past Sabbath was Pastor Ralph Shelton's first Sabbath as the Burr Ridge and West Central District's full-time pastor. I pray God will multiply Elder Shelton's ministry and bless him and his family abundantly.

RESOURCES

- ☞ NEW! Seeking an Understanding by Seth Pierce. Tired of tone-deaf dialogues? Angry online exchanges? Misunderstandings? Seeking an Understanding makes communication research accessible for those who want to have better conversations. It combines interpersonal and intercultural communication principles with a practical pastoral approach. At the end of each chapter, you will find a few reflections and exercises that will challenge you to dig deeper into what you really understand and believe. This book is an ideal starting point for anyone feeling overwhelmed and confused by the communicative chaos of the world around them. Go to: <https://tinyurl.com/y288fhw6>
- ☞ Mission-Driven Church: Strategic Planning for Local Congregations by Paul Brantley. This church-tested resource will take your leadership team through an assessment and planning process that will help set the stage for change, build your ministry team, agree on a mission and strategy, implement that

January 6, 2021

strategy, and create an ongoing culture of missional excellence. The starter kit includes all the resources you need to launch a successful Mission-Driven Church process. It comes with a pastor's guide, presenter's manual, USB with multimedia resources, and one participant workbook. Also available in Spanish. For more: <https://tinyurl.com/y6x9fnrk>

DID YOU KNOW . . .

. . . as of July 1, 2019, there are (at least) 328,239,523 people living in the United States? That would be 328+ million, as compared to just over 1 million Seventh-day Adventists.

“Heaven is a good place. I long to be there and behold my lovely Jesus, who gave His life for me, and be changed into His glorious image. Oh, for language to express the glory of the bright world to come! I thirst for the living streams that make glad the city of our God.”

—Ellen White, *The Adventist Home* page 543.



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Illinois Conference of
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