

FEBRUARY 2024



God's Plan for the Castaways

BY JOSH FEW

Have you ever watched or heard of the movie "Cast Away"? Do you ever feel like things don't always go the way you planned? Wondering how these things could be related? Well, do I have a tale for you!

It was the spring semester of my junior year at Union College in 2008. I was taking a fairly new major at the time called International Rescue & Relief. In fact, I was part of the first full group of students to take the program all the way through. A part of that curriculum was to

spend most of a semester in a mission setting. My group ended up going to Honduras. We spent time leading medical clinics, learning how to do medical procedures, and training the locals in rescue and recovery tactics. Part of our education for credit while we were there was survival training for specific situations. Little did we know we were going to have to put our training to use quicker than we had hoped!

We had just finished a few days of jungle survival and were preparing for our next adventure, which was to fit our entire class into an actual survival raft and float on the ocean for 24 hours. After spending a few days sleeping in the jungle in 90-degree weather with 90% humidity, we were looking forward to the ocean breezes! As one may surmise, doing these types of things takes a lot of

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Saturday Morning Services
Sabbath School: 9:45 am
Worship Service: 11:00 am

FEBRUARY SPEAKERS

February 3 - Pastor Brian
February 10 - Pastor Brian
February 17 - Pastor Brian
February 24 - Pastor Brian

planning and preparation. The original plan was for a boat and its operator to take us out to a secluded island cay off the main island of Roatan. From there we would attach the raft to the boat and we would all float along for 24 hours, living off of survival raft rations and water. At the end we would be towed back to the island. Unfortunately, things didn't go as planned from the start. Our original boat fell through, and we were able to procure a different one. They took us to the island, dropped us off, then turned around and left us there alone with our equipment. After sitting in the hot sun for a couple of hours and unsuccessfully trying to call someone to come back, we decided that we would at least start our 24 hours by anchoring ourselves to the reef just off the shore of this island.

We devised a plan, inflated the raft, and successfully anchored it to the reef with the raft anchor and a rope. All was going well, except for the fact that when one is anchored in a stationary position closer to shore, one feels each and every wave. All of us had never been so seasick in our lives. Needless to say, another boat never arrived to save us from this uncomfortable situation. About eight hours in, at about 11:00 p.m., much to the relief of our half-asleep bodies, the tossing of the waves stopped. A collective sigh went up until someone sat up with a start and asked if we were still anchored to the reef. Much to our dismay, we pulled the rope in and we were not! We watched the island cay drift away, as well as the rest of our leadership who were soundly sleeping in their tent, the crashing waves masking our yells for help. If you haven't guessed already, rope isn't very durable no matter its thickness when coral is involved. While we had positioned ourselves in a way originally where this wouldn't be a problem, we had drifted over the hours to where it

rubbed on the coral and cut loose. The anchor is still firmly planted where we put it to this day!

We faced other problems. Not only was everyone we contacted on our satellite phone asleep, but our air-filled rubber boat was also heading straight for another exposed reef before reaching more open ocean. We did not want to be stranded on it until someone woke up to rescue us. We all prayed that we would cross this reef unscathed—for at least if we were still floating, we would have a chance of surviving the night. Right as we approached the reef, a swell lifted us over the exposed coral, but not before puncturing a small hole in our floor. What was once firm with air turned into a water bed! Fortunately, the raft was divided into sections, so the raft walls and covering structures remained inflated. Our next problem was, according to our (pre-smartphone era) GPS, we were drifting at about 3mph between some islands and would eventually be well on our way to Cuba before anyone woke up.

Our options were limited. We could activate our emergency satellite beacon, which would in turn alert the Honduran Military, likely causing an international incident with a bunch of American college students deliberately putting themselves on a survival raft. We quickly dismissed that idea. The next option was to light our flares and hope that a passing boat or someone on land would notice us and mount a rescue. We considered that only as a last resort because we did not want to attract unwanted attention from drug boats or pirates. Our final choice was to either stay in the raft and drift out to the open ocean, or swim ourselves and the raft towards the last lights that we could see. These lights were also on the last island before the current swept us away. Our instructor also said that if we reached land, our survival raft experience would be complete. Having been in the raft for

“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ”

PHILIPPIANS 3:8

February Birthdays

10 - Napier, Janet
13 - Pinnt, Elaine
24 - Glover, Al
24 - Maxson, Bev
27 - Doll, Raymond
27 - Perrigo, Linda

“True worship is open to God, adoring God, waiting for God, trusting God even in the dark.”

-N. T. Wright

almost 12 hours, we opted for this option.

After praying for safety and a few angels to help, those of us who were strong swimmers got out of the raft and clung to the side, kicking with all our strength towards an unknown and dark shore. Some stayed in the raft to watch out for any reef and sharks. Two hours of swimming and kicking later, those of us in the water heard, "REEF!" and we all tried to get back into the raft. I got pulled in, gathered my bearings, and turned to help a friend in. Just then, we hit the reef and the coral tore into the rest of the raft, dragging my friend under. Those of us who made it back into the raft slid smoothly onto the beach, the raft hissing and deflating. Those who did not get some cuts and bruises on the reef, but we all made it to land. We did not know what island we were on, who lived there, or if they were friendly. We did not care much as we used our skills to patch each other up, lit a flare, and made a fire out of some old broken wood furniture we hoped no one cared about. We thanked God for bringing us safely to land and fell asleep around the fire on the sand.

We awoke to four-wheelers arriving and men with guns surrounding us. Only one girl in our group was completely fluent in Spanish and bravely tried to explain our situation. The apparent leader of their group explained, "I speak English; my employer is American and this is his private island. The guys told me this morning that a cruise ship sank and you are the only survivors!" We all looked at our disheveled raft sitting on the beach and of course had to explain who we were and what REALLY happened! Health message aside, we were cleaned up and served the best breakfast we had the entire trip! They helped us pack our things and brought us back to the main island on a small

yacht, much to the surprise of a few people who were relieved that we were still around.

After hearing of our ministry and what we were doing in Honduras, we were invited back to have a retreat and to also train the staff on the island in first aid and survival practices. We were also able to share the love of God with them. Needless to say, rafting was off the table! Sometimes it may feel like nothing is going to plan, or you are just floating along in the ocean of life, things getting deflated left and right. Always remember to keep your eyes on Jesus. Who knows, he might just deposit you on the very beach you need to be on.



Ordination Service

This past month, we held our ordination service for some of our new church elders, deacons, and deaconesses. We are so happy they have taken up the call to serve our local church!



Photos from January church services

The Pastor's Corner

BY PASTOR BRIAN MUNGANDI



Dear church member,

You have heard the saying, “confession is good for the soul,” right? Well, it’s pastor confession time. When I accepted the call to pastor Rapid City Seventh-day Adventist Church, I mentally said to myself “I don’t want to waste my time just maintaining a status quo congregation, a congregation that is self-focused, rigid, critical, and satisfied with a set culture!” After my interview, I felt that the Rapid church was poised for growth, I felt that many of the members who interviewed me generally speaking, were people who wanted to reach out to the lost for Christ.

I came in with an attitude, to make a change, but the reality was different! I immediately realized I was coming from a different culture. The cultural differences were huge, I experienced personality crushes, manifested in positional tiffs. I had a rude awakening when I realized that I was human and that change only happens by prayer and willing hearts. The truth is that change takes time, even when it is desired. So, I had to pause and recalculate my strategy. That is my confession.

I began to engage in prayer, I asked the Lord to show me where to start. I prayed that the Lord would give me the love, the courage, the patience to do the background work needed to be done. I asked God to send us people with fresh eyes, people that God wants to be here. People willing to participate in God’s mission. Then the Dakota Conference offered us the revitalization initiative, I am so thankful for the Natural Church Development (NCD) survey, because it

opened my eyes to the potential energy in this church. I will admit that even with the negatives as reviewed in the survey, I can report that in 2023 the Lord was good. We asked the church to pray for these goals:

a) We were praying for 5 persons to be baptized, we baptized 7 persons in 2023. Our church showed a growth of 4.33%

b) We prayed for an increase in our church attendance from average attendance of 96 to 110, our average attendance was 114 in 2023.

c) We prayed for tithe increase, our tithe increased from \$292,004.45 in 2022, to \$298,985.85 in 2023. An increase of \$6,981.40 which is 2.39%.

I am wondering, would you be willing to join me in praying for 10 people this year to join the church through baptism? If we work together, I am hoping that our worship service would be inspiring in bringing people close to Christ, so much so that we will be able to move our average attendance from 114 to 130 average attendance by end of the year. I am asking everyone young or old to “test the Lord” by bringing in your tithe and offering. Let's see if the Lord will not open the windows of heaven (Mal 3:8-10). I can assure you, if more people are faithful this year, we will increase our tithe from \$298,985 to \$300,000. I want to appeal to you all, be a contributor to our school, be a cheerful and generous tithe and offering giver for the cause of God’s church. I am also praying for the church membership to be filled with a

passion for reaching people for the Lord. Thus, I encourage you to invite your friends, relatives, coworkers, you can do this by text, email, Facebook, Twitter or word of mouth. Please be a prayer warrior for good. Try and be a sweet-spirited encourager to members and visitors alike.

Looking back from where we have come thus far I can honestly brag that there are individuals in this church on fire for the Lord. Therefore, this year we want to celebrate and showcase what the Lord is doing in our midst with our ministry testimony videos. Please, if you feel that the Lord is moving in a special way in your life, or if the Lord has laid on your heart a significant passion, and you have seen the Lord at work, give a testimony.

I ask each member to be the church’s public relations ambassador. I ask please, spend time before or after the service to greet someone, give a hug, speak a kind word to a stranger, pause for a prayer with someone you haven’t seen in a while, and say a word of encouragement to our young people! That is what doing ministry looks like right there. You see, what we are doing here at Rapid City Seventh-day Adventist Church is trying to be sensitive to the voice of God so we can ride the waves he is creating in our midst. Please become the mood setter for our congregation, your attitude and demeanor are the best witnessing tools we have. I will tell you, the people who come here will be attracted to a contagious attitude, especially if that attitude is the attitude of Christ.

Let's welcome newcomers with that Rapid city Seventh-Day Adventist Church smile I have come to know.



School Gala

Thank you for supporting the church school at this year's Gala! The fiesta was full of fellowship, food, and fun. We were treated to a delicious taco bar, Jarritos soda, and all the chips and salsa that your heart could desire. The auction successfully sold students' lovely art and delicious donated desserts. The evening ended with a piñata breaking open and spilling all sorts of goodies for the kids. Thank you to everyone who helped with set up, clean up, food prep, and dessert donations. Your generosity resulted in **\$4,838** being raised for the school. It was all hands on deck and the school greatly appreciates your support.

- Home and School Association



Get To Know Your Students

We are proud of our students and teachers. Throughout the year, we would like to introduce you to our church school kids to learn a bit more about them and to learn what keeps our kids, and our school, ticking!



Catyrina – Kindergarten

Birthday: October 12
Favorite Activities: Playing, Watching movies, Playing with make-up
Favorite Song: Barbie Girl
Favorite Snack: Ice Cream
Favorite Book: All books
Favorite Subject: Math
Favorite Summer Memory: Going on a big camping trip.



Nick – 4th Grade

Birthday: November 18
Favorite Activities: Video games, Playing, Sleeping
Favorite Song: Force Theme
Favorite Snack: Hershey Bars
Favorite Book: Diary of a Wimpy Kid
Favorite Subject: Science
Favorite Summer Memory: My favorite memory was playing games.



Parker – Kindergarten

Birthday: June 30
Favorite Activities: Playing with toys, Playing with my siblings, Playing with soap
Favorite Color: Green
Favorite Snack: Peanut butter & jelly
Favorite Subject: Math
Favorite Summer Memory: My favorite memory was swimming.

Kindergarten Open for 2024-25

We are excited to announce that **Rapid City Seventh-day Adventist Elementary School will be hiring a full-time kindergarten teacher starting next year!** As enrollment grows, it has been a true blessing to see as we expand the school to 3 full-time teachers in effort to minister to our young people. If you or someone you know has a child who will be starting kindergarten next year, we invite you to enroll them in a beautiful faith-based education here at Rapid City SDA Elementary!

For enrollment details, contact Ms. Jamie Howell at: msjamiehowell@gmail.com.

School Treasurer Needed

We are sad to report that Gabriel Alvarez and his family have relocated out of state to the sunny lands of Florida. As many of you know, Gabriel served in the school treasurer position at Rapid City SDA Elementary School. So we are looking for a new school treasurer to serve in our rapidly-growing church school! If you have interest in serving our young people in this capacity, or you know of someone who would be able to fill this role, please reach out to our schoolboard chairman, Richard Chancellor (rchancellorr@aol.com) or school principal Ms. Jamie Howell (msjamiehowell@gmail.com) for more information. Thank you!!



Church Game Night

ACS Report

BY ANN HANEL

History of Dorcas, Adventist Community Services (ACS), and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)

In 1874, ACS began as the “Dorcas and Benevolent Association” composed of women providing clothes, food, financial support, and services to needy families in churches and in their communities. This is why until the World War II era; the humanitarian work of local Seventh-day Adventist churches was known as the Dorcas Society. Dorcas was a disciple in the early Christian church in the city of Joppa who was well regarded as a person who was always doing good and helping those in need (Acts 9:36-43).

In 1879, the Dorcas Societies wanted to involve their husbands, so the Good Samaritan Society was organized. In 1953, the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church broadened the concept of service to urban ministry. This new organization was named Seventh-day Adventist Health and Welfare Services (SAWS). In 1972, the name was changed to Adventist Community Services (ACS). In 1983, the church organized the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) International to serve societies outside of North America more effectively. ADRA is a church owned non-governmental organization (NGO) that works at a global level sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church to provide international relief and development. In 2005, ACS expanded its ministry with ACS International under the General Conference Sabbath School and

Personal Ministry Department to focus on Adventists in community services and outreach ministries at the local church level.

Late in 2005, General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department (SSPM) Assistant Director, May-Ellen Colón, was appointed to lead the Adventist Community Services (ACS) part of SSPM. Since ACS at the General Conference level is an international administrative entity, it has been re-named Adventist Community Services International (ACS-International). At all other levels of church structure, ACS remains ACS.

Through the years, in some parts of the world, ACS has remained active at the division, union, conference, and church level. Its focus has been church-based social ministry for the church’s surrounding community. In addition, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) has carried forward the humanitarian work of the Adventist Church worldwide. The Seventh-day Adventist Church needs both ADRA and ACS.

Historically, at the General Conference level, Dorcas (later ACS) has been under the Home Missionary, Lay Activities, and Personal Ministries Departments. This ministry of unselfish service started in 1879.

ACS International

“Dorcas” is named after the Dorcas in Acts 9, “who was always doing good and helping the poor” (vs. 36). Traditionally, Dorcas societies have focused on providing food and clothes to needy people, and remain a part of Adventist Community Services, as does Disaster Response. ACS has expanded its sphere to include many other different types of

services and ministries, such as tutoring and mentoring, crisis care, community development/urban ministry/inner city ministries, job finding and training, community health, elder care, family life, counseling, AIDS programs, etc. In 1985 the Sabbath School and Lay Activities Departments of the General Conference became part of the Church Ministries Department. By 1995 the Sabbath School and Lay Activities departments were re-established and became one department with the name Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department (SSPM). ACS was included under SSPM.

Since 1990, ACS at the General Conference level had been inactive because of staff, time, and budgetary issues. The last official Adventist Community Services leader for the world church was Maurice Bascom, who served from 1985-1990. Now that ACS is again international, with world-wide leadership from the General Conference, ACS International Director, May-Ellen Colón, is responding to calls from all over the world. She and an international team of division, union, and conference-level ACS Directors are motivating and equipping Seventh-day Adventist Church members to unconditionally meet the expressed needs of people around them in Jesus’ name.

For more church info, recorded services, or to access prior newsletters and bulletins, visit www.rapidcitysd.adventistchurch.org

Got something newsworthy? Send an email to:
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