

CAROLINA ACTION



ISSUE 1, 2021



Your Church Leadership:

A candid conversation about the pandemic and beyond. Page 5-6



From Pandemic Pain to Bright Blessings

After all we've been through in 2020, Carole and I pray that each of you will experience a very hope-filled, happy and healthy New Year in 2021 with the blessing of James 5:1, "Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers." With each passing year, we are one step closer to the day when we will see Jesus face to face, and reign with Him through the eternal ages.

Consider for a moment the story in the Old Testament about Elijah; how God spoke to him and told him to go to a specific place by the Brook Cherith not too far from the Jordan River. There, the ravens brought



him bread and meat to eat, and the Lord provided him with the cool, refreshing waters of that brook during a time when

there was a devastating drought in the land. You can read the full story as it's recorded for us in I Kings 17.

Then sometime later, the brook dried up and the ravens vanished into thin air! God could have kept the brook flowing; he could have continued to command the ravens to continue their flights of mercy. But He



didn't. Why? Simply because God had to make Elijah uncomfortable to get his attention.

Perhaps this is the greatest lesson that we can learn from the plague of this global pandemic. This is how God sometimes has to work in our lives. When we get to a point of comfort, we stay put. We don't feel a need to change. We get lazy and complacent, or like Jonah, just refuse to go where God wants us to go. It happens in our churches, our homes and in our personal lives.

As strange as it may sound, sometimes God allows pain and discomfort to get our attention! Just think about it for a moment. If you didn't experience pain when you cut yourself, you could bleed to death. Or what if you didn't feel anything when you touched a hot surface. You could experience some very serious burns.

When God uses pain and discomfort to get our attention, we have a choice. We can get angry

and bitter and rigid and blame God for our troubles, or we can choose to be authentic and honest about the hurts in our lives. And from those hurts, He helps us learn some valuable lessons, and gain opportunities to help others who are struggling with the same pain we've experienced. God the Father graciously and lovingly let Jesus leave the comfort of Heaven to come to this earth. He came to suffer, to experience the pain and hurt so that we ultimately can have an eternal life with Him.

As we have stepped into this New Year, I challenge you to give your pain and discomfort to Christ, and let Him use it to be a blessing to every life you touch.

Your servant leader,



Leslie Louis
Carolina Conference President



FROM THE
PRESIDENT'S PEN

The Organization of Fort Mill Church

Even with the Coronavirus looming overhead, the Fort Mill Company was not going to let that stop them from celebrating their organization into a church on November 14, 2020.

Thanks to the technology of Zoom, this group of church members were able to come together even when distance had to be kept.

Pastor Richard McNeil from the Georgia-Cumberland Conference was the guest adult Sabbath School leader. McNeil facilitated a very interactive discussion of “Worship in Education.”

Even while meeting via Zoom each week, the Fort Mill Adventist Church has continued to maintain every element of the normal church service, including the sometimes-overlooked children’s story, special music, and worship through “online” giving. This week they presented a compelling appeal for Global Missions.

Elder Gary Moyer, vice president for administration for the Carolina Conference, led the congregation through an explanation of why we exist as a Seventh-day Adventist denomination. This message led into a responsive reading and

a covenant made between the Fort Mill membership and God. Due to the lag time on Zoom, Elder Moyer and Church Plant Leader Mike Ray read the responsive reading, and where the congregation would normally respond verbally, they raised their hands in agreement with the congregational part of the reading.

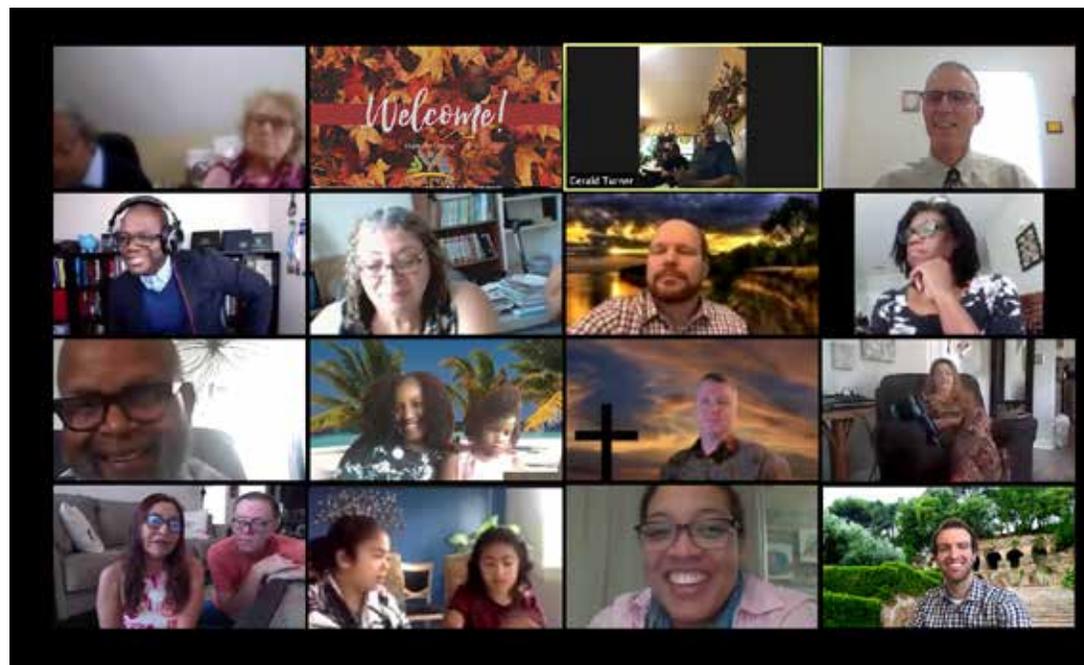
“The return of Jesus is the answer to all our problems, not the controversy that is going on around us,” Moyer shared. “Because we have a distinct body of truths, we need to remember

to ‘share with care.’”

Elder Moyer, encouraged the members to remember their mission when discussions that could divide the church come up. Dissent is the goal of the one person (the Devil), who is not happy that the Fort Mill Company is celebrating their formation into a church.

May we all remember that our mission is to embrace God’s people with the compassionate call of Christ.

—by Courtney Herod. Photo by Courtney Herod.



Members of the Fort Mill church joined Gary Moyer, VP for Administration for the Carolina Conference, on Zoom for their unique church organization celebration.

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GOD'S CONTINUED BLESSINGS through the pandemic and beyond

We sat down with Carolina Conference officers President Leslie Louis, Vice President for Administration Gary Moyer, Vice President for Finance Rick Russell, and Undertreasurer Chad Grundy to have a candid discussion on how the pandemic has affected the Carolina Conference and the challenges and blessings that have come from it, especially as it relates to the generosity of our members.

Interviewer: What were your feelings when this pandemic started, and how have you seen it affect us as a Conference?



Louis: I think it is only natural for us to have human feelings of being anxious, concerned. I am reminded of King Jehoshaphat. When he was facing a massive coalition that was coming together...that was his COVID-19 crisis. He didn't know what to do. And when we looked at the possibility of all of our churches shutting down and how that would affect involvement and engagement with the mission at the local church and the local church community, there was concern about how all of this would play out. Yes, there are areas of concern, but there are also things that we can just look at and thank God for. All of the projections we were told to expect with this crisis, none of them have come true. With cutting expenditures on events and travel, and a reduction in our workforce due to retirement and transition, we have been able to adjust our budget to meet the drop in tithe. Are we where we want to be? No. But are we better off than what we expected? Absolutely. And I thank God for our faithful members who have said, you know, God has blessed me and blessed my life with a job—with a means to support my family—I am going to be

faithful to the Lord.

Louis (cont.): We have not once had to dip into our (financial) reserves. In fact, we have come up in our reserves, which is mind-boggling. Just as Jesus said the harvest is plentiful out there but the laborers are few. I think the more that we can get engaged in the workforce—and I am so thankful for our volunteer lay leaders and lay pastors that are doing an amazing job in many of our smaller, rural communities where we have groups and companies present—everyone will pull together through this. God is carrying us through. It would be good for more laborers to be in the field (pastors), but we wait on the provision of the Lord for that. Until then we will endeavor to manage the resources He's given us to the very best of our ability, and in the most responsible manner; above all else, giving care and thought to all of those who have dedicated their lives to serving Him.



Russell: It is tempting from my perspective as the treasurer to quantify this crisis in terms of dollars and cents, and then just look at it from that angle. But this is much more than a financial crisis. This is a health crisis; it strikes to the core of how we do ministry. Although the money part of it seemed primary in my mind as we've gone through it, I see how God has walked us through all of the elements of this crisis in such a marvelous way. I've seen members—even though none of us like to wear masks—I've seen them generously putting them on because they respect other people's concern. They have been generous in that respect. They've been generous in innovating and finding new ways to do ministry, using technology, visitation, other creative ways to get through this crisis. All I can say is praise God for the generosity of His people.

Russell (cont.): As for the money, yeah, that was a devastating announcement when we heard from our parent organizations that we ought to be putting plans in place to absorb a 15% drop in income, mainly the tithe. That was...well, how do you do that? That's measured in millions of dollars. We began to look for ways to make reductions without stopping ministry in its tracks. And now, 10 months into the pandemic, we've seen that tithe has only gone down 2-3 percent. There are many who have suffered the economic impact of this crisis or lost their jobs or who have had their work cut back with reduction of hours. But there are others who have not, and, recognizing that this is one of the signs, perhaps, of the culmination of our time here on this planet, they want to be even more faithful than they have been. They are stepping up to the plate to take the place of those who have lost their income. I've just been so gratified to see and hear the testimonies of those individuals and see the results of their giving, that have gotten us through this in such a marvelous way.

Interviewer: Being the chair of the Emergency Response Team for the Conference, and dealing with the churches and pastors who are struggling with decisions about reopening, how do you see the blessings God has given us through dealing with the details of the shutdown of the pandemic?



Moyer: I am really thankful for the Emergency Response Team. Because this—as we have all been saying—no one has dealt with before. The team has been very cohesive in working through everything, being able to discuss, have differences of opinion, looking at the data, and coming to a

consensus. And then our churches overall have been very cooperative in working with us and understanding. They have told us, “We pray for you guys. We know this is like...how do you deal with something like this?” So that’s been very encouraging, to see that support.

Moyer (cont.): I’m also pleased to see our churches finding ways to continue to connect with one another. We have our pastors and our leaders coming up with creative ways to actually over-connect with people to compensate for the fact that they are hurting that they can’t meet in person. They are doing drive by visits, Facetime and extra phone calls...that’s real generosity. It is very encouraging to see the churches working together during this difficult time. They love God—they love His movement, His mission—and they just do what needs to be done until this thing is over. We are blessed to have that type of people in this Conference.



Louis: There are not too many things that inspire me on the news, but once in a while there are certain things that

do. I see people that are scared of going hungry, and hundreds—literally hundreds—of volunteers giving their time to prepare boxes of food. It touched my heart the other day when I heard of a nurse who was in tears because, she said, every day when she comes to work, she has to say goodbye to somebody. She said, ‘I am just pleading with people about wearing a mask. I would rather you wear a mask and go through the inconvenience of wearing a mask than my having to put a tube down your throat.’ There were just tears streaming down her face as she was saying this. These are people who are putting their lives on the line to carry us through this.

Interviewer: Can you speak a little bit about how you have seen the pandemic affect the ministries from the conference and how the office personnel and directors have dealt with the pandemic?



Grundy: It has been interesting seeing first-hand how different changes that we have made over the last couple of

years have gotten us ready as a conference to meet the challenges required by the pandemic. For example, our Conference Clerk membership software has been moved online, so it could be done remotely—similar to our accounting software—so we don’t have to be inside our Conference office every day to be able to continue the work. Many of our forms and documents have been digitized through Laserfiche; we’re implementing new software for our youth department that makes Club Ministries a paperless process; we have transitioned from desktops to laptops for our office personnel. God has truly blessed. These things were not prepared with such a disaster in mind, but we were ready. As we are getting closer to the last day events, I believe the Lord is looking over His church and saying this is God’s church and I am going to take care of my church.

Interviewer: There are probably a lot of our members wondering what the future holds. What do we see as the future of the conference?



Louis: You know, as we live with an open, generous heart, we’re not going to need to fear what the future holds and running

out of what we need. None of us can say, ‘Well, God has just never blessed

my life.’ That would be a very difficult thing to say. Just seeing how all of heaven has bankrupted itself for us is an inspiration to recognize that we do not need to fear the future, because God will provide for us. He always has and He always will. The Bible tells us that in our compassionate generosity we are taking hold of the true life. Godly, genuine living means loosening our hold of the things that we tend to hold on to by giving freely to others.



Moyer: I truly believe that the future of the Carolina Conference is very bright, because of the things we’ve learned

through this. I really think we’re going to be more effective in the long run in reaching people. This pandemic is helping us to focus on personally reaching people, because we’ve seen what it’s like when we can’t. It’s helping us see the value of a personal touch in ministry.



Russell: The watchword for the future is going to be “change.” There are some people who are saying now, ‘I can’t

wait to get back to normal’. The second group says, ‘Well forget that, there will be a new normal’. But the most visionary people are saying, ‘We are never going to be normal again. We will be always changing and adapting.’ That change is going to demand a new kind of generosity. Generosity of heart and spirit, not just of law keeping. This kind of generosity will result in great blessing for the church and for the givers, in the way God promised.

—Photos by Courtney Herod.

Brevard Church Chosen For Blue Zones Community Project

As soon as the news was announced that Brevard, NC was chosen to be the next community Blue Zone project, Pastor Ralph and Joni Henderson and Kathy Brannan met with the project leaders to let them know that the local Seventh-day Adventist Church would love to become involved as the representatives for the Seventh-day Adventists in Loma Linda, California, one of the original, and only North American Blue Zone. We shared the Creation Health seminar materials and showed them how closely those eight lifestyle principles paralleled the Blue Zone Power 9 principles. We were asked to run the Loma Linda booth for the kickoff event in August. This event was held outdoors due to Covid, but the weather was beautiful, and we had a very successful booth lined with Creation Health banners. We gave away samples of a beautiful salad in individual recyclable containers and drinks of watermelon infused water, along with a packet of materials which included the Creation Health self-assessment, Amazing Facts Health magazine, “Your Friends, the Adventists,” and information regarding the Creation Health seminar we offered to present at any location (churches, work places) free of charge. When the Blue Zones staff offered cooking demonstrations done by the owner of a local bakery via Zoom, we knew we could be a help in that area as well. We were finally taken up on our offer, and were asked to do one cooking class via Zoom per month from December until June, 2021. We are absolutely thrilled beyond words with this opportunity to witness to healthy eating as well as bring a positive impression of our church to this community! The first cooking class was held in our fellowship kitchen, using our recently purchased overhead demo mirror, on Thursday evening, December 10. We were not



expecting the wonderful introduction the hostess from Blue Zones gave to the Zoom participants before we began. She read from Dan Buettner’s Blue Zones book why Seventh-day Adventists in Loma Linda live from 6-10 years longer than the average American. With special Christmas meals in mind, Brevard church cooks demonstrated a Christmas kale salad, vegetarian and vegan options of meatballs and loaf, and apple pie made with no added sugar. The presentation seemed to be very well received by the Blue Zone staff. After it was over and their staff were gone, we commented on how exciting it is to see so many becoming convinced of the benefits of a vegetarian/vegan diet, information our church has had the privilege of knowing for so many years. We are thanking God for this



opening wedge to our county where we have only about eight Seventh-day Adventists who actually live in the county.

—by Kathy Brannan. Photos by Tammy Hopkins and Kathy Brannan.



Virtual Camp Meeting 2021

May 30 - June 5, 2021 · www.carolinasda.org



Children's Programs
airing at 10am
Monday-Sabbath

All programs will air
'live' on the website and
remain archived there,
and on our YouTube
and Roku channels.

Main Speakers:

11 am Monday-Friday — Mark Witas
7pm Monday-Wednesday — Pavel Goia
7pm Thursday-Sabbath — Mark Finley

Young Adults/Youth:

7pm Sunday-Wednesday — Nathan Polk
7pm Thursday-Sabbath — Jaime Pombo

As a member of the Student Association (SA) at Mount Pisgah Academy, I get to set up and help with many of the events hosted on campus. SA's most recent event was the Thanksgiving dinner, held in the cafeteria on November 15th. Staff members dined with their families, while students reserved seats with their friends, as they ate a home cooked meal prepared by the kitchen staff and

the decorations were simple, but nice. They definitely added a cozy feeling to the environment when everyone came in and sat down.

The food was also a huge part of the event. It definitely took the most amount of preparation, and we had to serve it too. We prepared dinner roast with a jelly topping, mashed potatoes, gravy, green bean casserole, stuffing, macaroni and cheese, sweet potato casserole, and rolls for around

part of getting ready for this meal was planning everything with social distancing in mind. Usually, this event is held entirely in the cafeteria, with 20-30 tables packed with 8 people at each, which makes for a pretty crowded setting. In the past there would also be a basket of rolls on each table, a buffet where students could serve themselves, and SA members passing out pie and refreshments to each table.

However, MPA did not want to cancel the event because of the virus, but rather accommodate for it. This meant masks were worn while not eating, setting up more

MPA Thanksgiving Dinner: The Yearly Tradition Continues

the SA team. In order to put on such a large event, a lot of planning and preparation has to occur. Decorations and food preparation had to be taken into consideration when planning the fun gathering. Additionally, SA had to plan for social distancing this year so that everyone could enjoy each other's company, while also staying safe.

My favorite part of preparing for the dinner was decorating. Our SA sponsors bought us fall decor, so that we could decorate each table. We covered each one with tablecloths in browns, golds, yellows, and oranges, and we put real fall leaves on them as a centerpiece. We put thanksgiving themed paper cups, plates, and napkins on the tables, so that not only would they be cleanup friendly, but covid friendly. Overall I would say

100 people. We also had to cut slices of apple, pumpkin, and strawberry rhubarb pie, which we topped with ice cream and whipped cream. When



I served the food, I enjoyed it a lot. When we served the pie, I would serve the whipped cream for those who wanted it. I really enjoyed creating swirly dollops of cream on top of the pie slices. I think the most fun I had that night was while serving the food while my fellow SA members.

The toughest

tables in other nearby locations, so that people would be spread out to 4 at a table instead of 8, no rolls on the table, and all food and dessert served by SA members. I was hoping the event would still have a cozy and heartwarming environment, where students could enjoy their food, and get to know each other better. I think we achieved that. I know that the staff definitely enjoyed the meals. As I was serving food to many of the faculty members, they smiled at me, and told me how amazing the food looked. It made me feel really happy, that even though covid made things more complicated, we could still spend this time together.

A good portion of the students and staff members at Mount Pisgah Academy look forward to the SA Thanksgiving dinner each year, for the food and festivities it brings. I know I definitely love it. I feel like, here on campus, the thanksgiving dinner is sort of an official opening to the holiday spirit. It helps us remember what God has given us, even if we do not acknowledge it enough. Just being able to eat, hang out with friends, and celebrate what we do have, is enough for me to call this one of my favorite events of the year.

—By Emma Boughman. Photos by Bob Vaughan.

Please Note: Photos shown are from last year's Thanksgiving Dinner.



Thanksgiving Teamwork at Raleigh Adventist Church

This past Thanksgiving, Adventist Christian Academy Raleigh (ACA Raleigh) and the Raleigh Seventh-day Adventist Church decided to team up to serve their community in making Thanksgiving meal boxes from donations made by both the school and church.

The generous donations easily filled over 20 boxes to the brim with shelf-stable goods such as stuffing, mashed potatoes, canned vegetables, soups, cake mixes, and many other side dishes.

A small group of members and school volunteers came together on November 15 to assemble the boxes and sort the food, then each box was hand-delivered to a member of the community at their



home.

The outcome was a success, and God's hand was felt by both

the givers and the receivers. This ministry team was so well supported by the church and school that there are already plans to do more food box projects in 2021!

—by Jessica Pieretti

90-Step Faith Goal Reached!

For the last two quinquenniums, the Carolina Conference leadership has set faith goals for church planting in order to measure congregational growth. Every time a new church plant is voted as an official Mission Group, it means one step has been taken. More steps are counted every time a Mission Group becomes a Company, or a Company reaches Church status.

Initiated in 2011, the faith goal of 50 steps was exceeded in December 2015 with a total of 51 total steps. This included 30 brand-new church plants.

A new faith goal was set for 2016-2020, this time for 90 steps! After setting this goal, the church planting department decided to

include every time a mother church births a new church plant. Although God replenishes mother churches, this was deemed valuable due to the missional sacrifice mother churches make. This is most keenly felt in the loss of ministry leaders, finances, and friends.

With the Holy Spirit's working through fantastic lay leaders, pastors, and conference leaders, on December 14, 2020, this goal was also surpassed. A total of 93 total steps were made by the Carolina Conference congregational family! Represented in this total are 31 total new plants (Mission Groups), 20 congregations who reached Company status, and 11 who reached Church status. Even though 31 mother church steps were taken, even when those

aren't included in the number, there were still 11 more steps (62 total) in 2016-2020. This shows that God is growing his family of believers in the Carolinas, and using your ministry as His method. Please keep these new congregations in your prayers, and continue to seek ways to grow your own ministry for Christ.

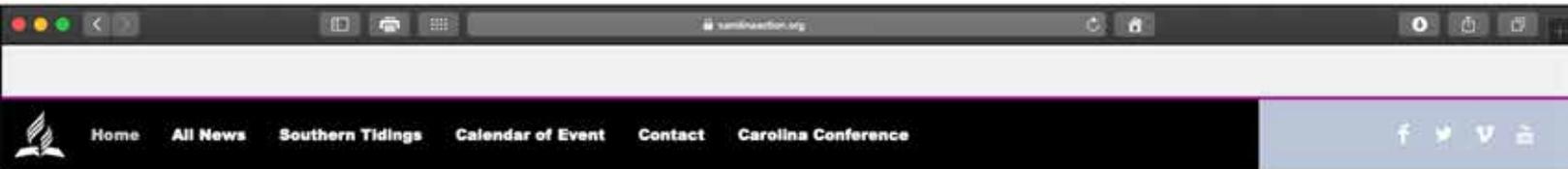
~by Brad Cauley

Editor's Note: Our Carolina Conference Church Ministries Director, Brad Cauley, has recently accepted a position as Executive Secretary for the Northern New England Conference. His energy and leadership will be greatly missed in the Carolinas, but we wish him well as he continues his ministry in a new direction.

NEW Carolina Action News Blog

Aiming for **MORE** Timely News

and to make it easier to share with family and friends

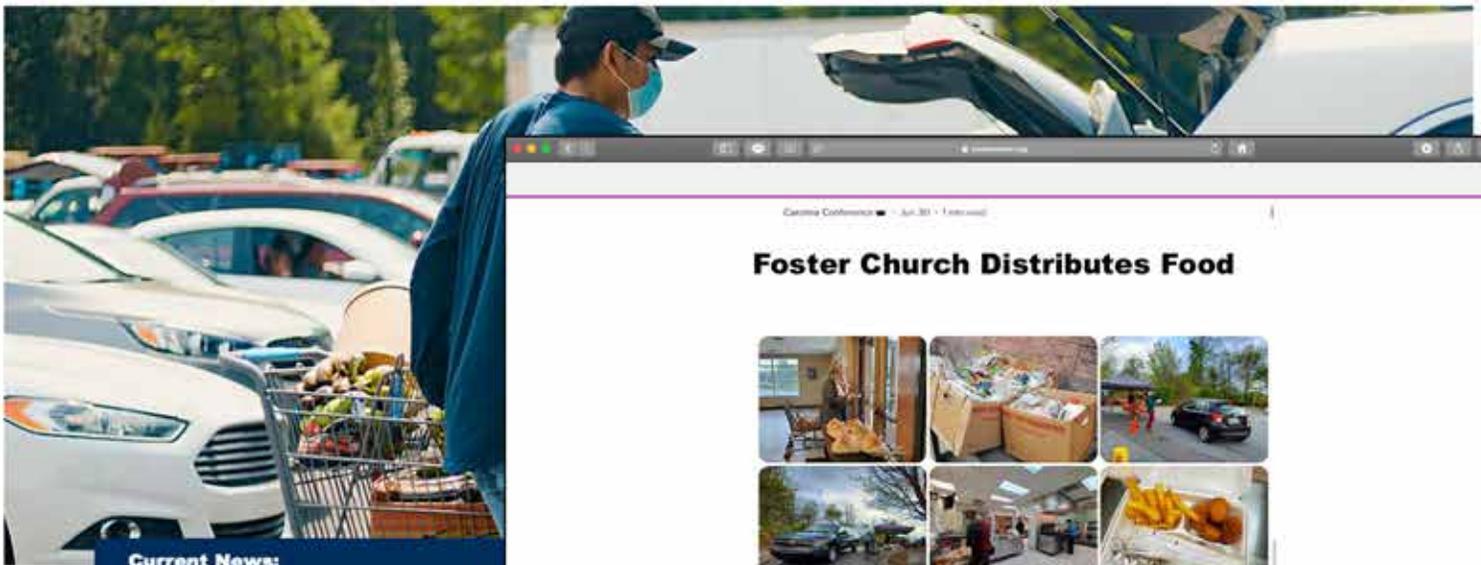


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CAROLINA



Embracing the Carolinas with the Compassionate call of Christ.



Current News:

News



Check it out at:
carolinaaction.org

Carolina Obituaries

AYERS, BEN LEE, 90, born January 27, 1930 to the late Bascombe and Maggie Ayers in Price's Creek, Yancy County, NC, died September 29, 2020, at NC State Veterans Home, Black Mountain, NC. He was member of the Fletcher Church in Hendersonville, NC. Ben is survived by his wife of 58 years, Carmen (Dietzie) Delores Ayers; two children, Marla Johnson (Tom), Marcella Sampayan (Edwin); five siblings, Bobby Joe Ayers (Susie) of Weaverville, Royce Ayers (Kathy) of Micaville, Ernest Ayers (Jackie) of Burnsville, Jimmy Ayers (Nancy) of Burnsville, Paul Woody (Nancy) of Burnsville; four grandchildren, Anna, Emily, Andrew, and Kayla; one great-granddaughter, Jane; and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins. He was preceded in death by brothers Charles Ayers and Edward Ayers; sisters Joyce Ayers Watts and Wilma Ayers Woody; and a great-grandson, Oliver.

GIBBONS JONES, JO ANN, 87, born April 25, 1933, to the late Jacob Eugene Gibbons and Elsie Davis Gibbons, in Louisville, Kentucky, died November 20,

2020, in Hendersonville, NC. She was a member of the Fletcher Church in Hendersonville, NC. She attended Pine Forest Academy in Chunky, MS, and then continued her education at Madison College in Madison, TN, where she achieved her bachelor's degree in Nursing in 1957. Nursing was her passion. Her giving spirit along with her remarkable dedication propelled her to become an assistant director, director of nursing, and a licensed nursing home administrator, as well as a state surveyor for long-term care facilities and hospitals. On June 30, 1958, she married Haskell Jones and they had one daughter, Karla Marie. The family made their home in Memphis, TN. In 1972, Jo Ann and Haskell accepted the call to serve as missionaries to Jamaica where Jo Ann was a nursing instructor at the University of the West Indies. Upon returning to the US, Jo Ann and Haskell settled in Hendersonville, NC, and Jo Ann accepted the position of assistant director of nursing/ Inservice director at Fletcher Hospital (AdventHealth). Over the course of the next several years she worked

as director of nursing at St. Luke's Hospital in Tryon, NC; Carolina Village in Hendersonville, NC; administrator of Brentwood Hills in Asheville, NC; and North Carolina state surveyor. Jo Ann truly followed her giving heart throughout her career in Healthcare. She also gave much of her time and energy to financially help worthy students attend Fletcher Academy. She was an active member of the Fletcher Seventh-day Adventist Church. Jo Ann is loved beyond measure and will be missed by so very many whose lives were touched just by knowing her. JoAnn was preceded in death by her parents, Jacob Eugene Gibbons and Elsie Davis Gibbons; infant brother Charles Gibbons; a sister, Louise Christian; a brother, Lieutenant Colonel Jack Gibbons; and a son-in-law, George Zaborowski. Survivors include her daughter, Karla Zaborowski; two granddaughters, Emma Zaborowski and Kimberly Thompson Bucy (Matt); two great-grandsons, Julian and Oliver Bucy; and a sister, Elsie Worthen, all of Hendersonville, NC. She is also survived by a sister-in-law, Nancy Gibbons of Keene, Texas; and several nieces and nephews.

Winston Salem Spanish Hosts Socially Distanced Evangelism

"My dear friends, I want you to know that what has happened to me has helped to spread the good news," Philippians 1:12. I feel this passage is speaking to us as a church.

Doing evangelism under current circumstances has been challenging, but our God is always faithful.

During the week of December 5-12, the Winston Salem Spanish church realized an evangelistic event in our congregation. Pastor Rubi Pimentel was the guest speaker.

The church planned this event for months to offer a safe event under the current conditions.

Through God's grace, the result was the baptism

of six new believers. We pray for God's guidance, and encouragement for every member to engage in the preaching of the gospel. We know that God will help us through.

Be safe and courageous.

—Pastor Ben Rueda



Carolina Conference Calendar

Subject to cancellations. See website for COVID-19 calendar updates.

JANUARY

Virtual Evangelism IMPACT—26-27.

See our website for more information.

FEBRUARY

Health Ministries Virtual Event

- **Vaccines: Facts and Myths—6.**

Zoom seminar. More information at www.carolinasda.org.

MARCH

Virtual Communication Seminar—7.

See our website for more information.

Virtual Women's Event—13. See our www.carolinada.org for information.

**Please visit our website for updates on whether COVID-19 will negatively affect these events.*
www.carolinasda.org.

The Carolina Action

Carolina Conference of
Seventh-day Adventists

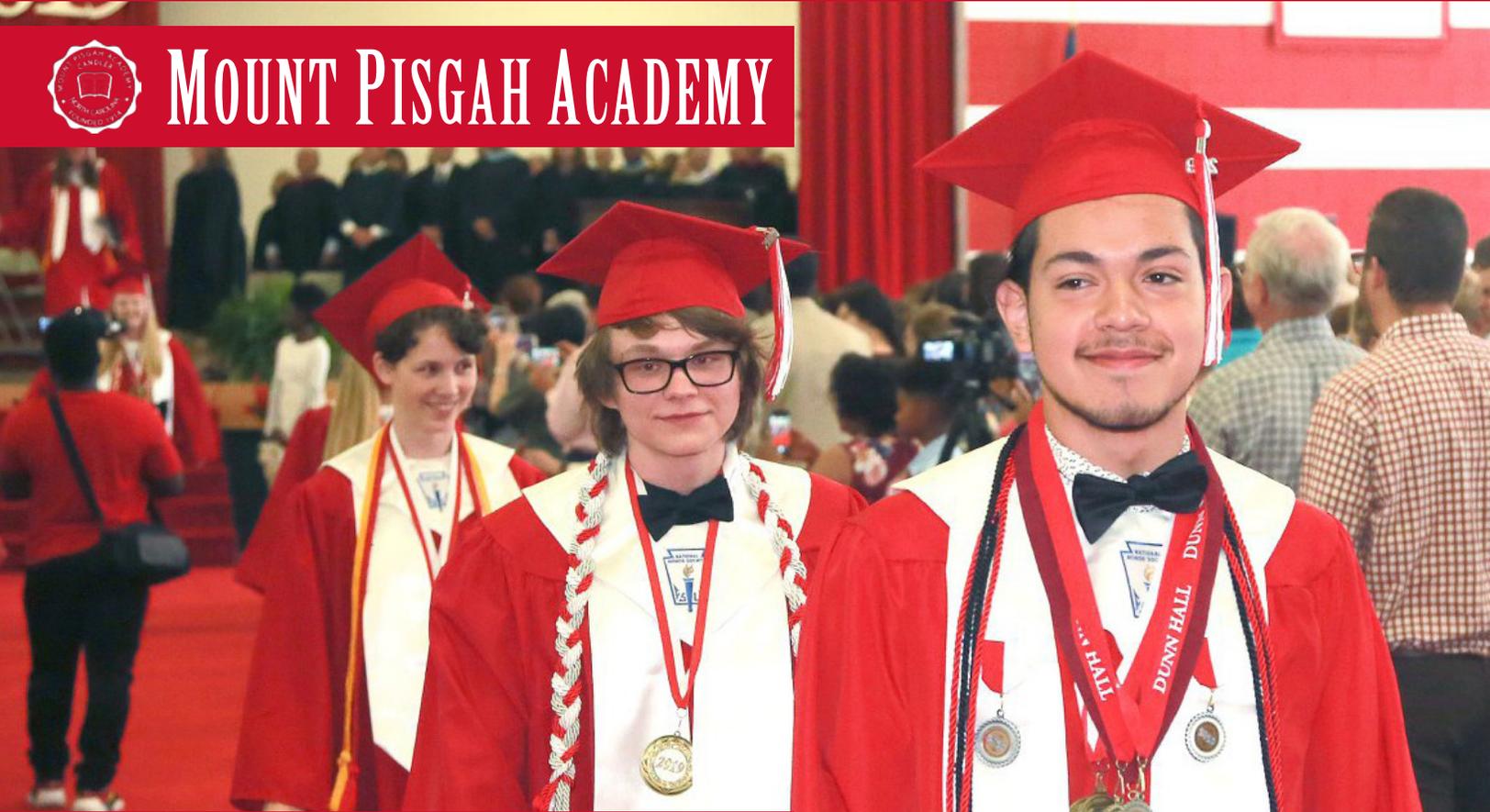
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Mount Pisgah Academy's mission is to love, educate, and disciple students for God's service. One of the ways we prepare students academically is by offering multiple college credits both online and in-person at a fraction of the cost of taking them on a college campus. Dual credit courses offered on-campus at MPA include Adventist Heritage & Mission, Anatomy & Physiology, College American History I & II, College Composition 101 & 102, Developmental Psychology, and Jesus & The Gospels. Each course is worth three credit hours and can be easily transferred to most colleges and universities. Students who take advantage of these dual credit classes have entered college as sophomores and have graduated up to a year early from their university. To request more information or schedule a tour of our campus, please use one of our contact methods listed below. We cannot wait to hear from you!

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