

# American Union Newsletter

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, REFORM MOVEMENT  
International Missionary Society

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## Local Church News

*Elder Joel Barnedo, Bronx, New York*

**A** young man visited our church service on a Sabbath in Bronx, New York. Later that evening, he noticed that his wallet was missing; he had lost it somewhere and could not recall where he might have left it. That night at around midnight the young man came to the church and knocked on the door, seeking for some guidance in regard to his wallet.

I suggested to him that we pray together and ask God to restore the lost wallet to him, its rightful owner. The young man told me that he had looked everywhere

and even went to different places to look for his wallet. After we prayed that God would restore his wallet, the young man went back home.

Later I found out from the young man that he had found his wallet in his laundry basket. However, he said that he had not even gone near the laundry basket that day. He believes that God granted him a miracle and brought his wallet back to him. He came back to church to pray and thank God. I am happy that this young man is interested in studying the Bible with us and joining the church in Bronx.



# God's Signet Ring

*By Manuela Di Franca*

In 1941, a North Carolina native, David C. Cox, left college and joined the U.S. Army Air Corps. Before his departure, his parents gave him a gold signet ring that featured a propeller and wings with an inscription on the inside reading, "Mother and Father to David C. Cox, Greensboro."

In July 1943, Cox's plane was shot down over Kassel, Germany. He parachuted to the ground and was taken prisoner by German forces that shipped him to a Nazi prison camp near Munich. Rations provided by the Red Cross dwindled down to nothing, so Cox and the other prisoners were forced to survive on meager portions of soup and bread. When an Italian prisoner managed to get his hands on two chocolate bars, the starving Cox traded his precious ring for the sweet treat.

A few months later, he was liberated and made his way back home to North Carolina. Cox had a replica of the lost ring made soon after his return. When he died in 1994, he passed the ring to his son, David Cox, Jr. Meanwhile, the original ring had made its way into the hands of Martin Kiss, a member of a Hungarian family from the northern part of present-day Serbia that had lived in Germany since 1971. With the help of an American couple, Kiss was able to locate its owner. David Cox, Jr., confirmed that the ring in Kiss's possession was his father's, and so the long-lost ring made its way back in a package to the U.S.A.

The Bible mentions signet rings in a different context. In the book of Daniel, we read that the king used his signet ring to seal the mouth of the lion's den so that Daniel's situation might not be changed. Daniel 6:16-18.

In the book of Esther, the king gave his signet ring to Esther so she

could sign the decree that was written in his name in favor of the Jews. Esther 8:8.

In ancient times, a signet ring was worn on the owner's right hand or suspended on a cord around his neck. Whenever it was worn on one's hand, it was always in visible and treasured by the wearer.

Think of yourself as God's signet ring. You are like an object that constantly holds His attention; you are always before His eyes. "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy." Psalm 33:18.

The signet ring was sometimes carried on a string around the owner's neck, and thus it would be near to his heart. Continuing the analogy, God holds us close to His heart so He can constantly comfort and encourage us, restore our hope, and build us up.

As Solomon expressed it so beautifully, let us pray with all our hearts to Him to "Set me as a seal upon Thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm...." Song of Solomon 8:6.

Furthermore, the signet ring was something precious and unique in being made of gold, silver, or iron. It was guarded carefully so it would not be stolen or copied. In the same way, we all are precious and very dear to God. When a person is tempted to



express doubt about his or her value to another human being or even to himself, he should remember that the Creator of the universe wears him as His signet ring. “Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee....” Isaiah 43:4.

Every signet ring was designed to identify the specific person or the family of the one wearing it. Sometimes it contained a family crest or coat of arms; but at other times it had a monogram, a simple symbol, or a distinct pattern. The ring was made in a mirror image to ensure that the mark or impression came out properly. When it was pressed

onto hot wax or soft clay, the ring left a distinct seal that was considered to be more official than a signature.

We have our own unique stamp that reveals how we were created in God’s image and expresses our particular mix of gifts and talents. We are chosen for a noble purpose: God wants us to represent Him in this world and to impress His glory on the hearts of our neighbors. As God’s signet ring, we can make a mark on the people around us by spreading the good news of His love. God is granting us all a great privilege: “... And will make thee as a signet; for I have chosen thee....” Haggai 2:23.

## American Union Free Pamphlets Project Completed

In March 2012, the American Union began a project to spread the three angels’ messages through the printing and distribution of the pamphlet “100 Facts on the Sabbath Question.” The American Union paid for the printing and transport to the publishing house in Denver of 100,000 the pamphlets in English and 100,000 in Spanish. The pamphlets were provided to the churches, groups, and individuals in the American Union for free except for the cost of shipping from the publishing house to the receiver.

The last of these free pamphlets were sent out in February 2018. May God bless everyone who participated in this project. The pamphlets were shipped to the following states: California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, New Mexico, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Texas. Eternity will reveal how far the pamphlets were scattered and how many hearts were reached by the clear, important truths about God’s holy day.

Religious Liberty Publishing Association still has “100 Facts on the Sabbath Question” available for purchase in four languages—English, Spanish, French, and Russian. The price each is \$.13. However, if you go to [www.sda1888.org](http://www.sda1888.org) and click on “Store,” you will find quantity discounts for the English and Spanish versions. To order in French or Russian, send an email to [info@sda1888.org](mailto:info@sda1888.org), or call 916-765-3389. The same discounts are available in these languages as well.



# Come Away for a While

*Sandra Nelson, Western Field Family Department Leader, Sacramento, California*

- What?** Christian Adventure, Fellowship, and Rest
- Where?** Asperkaha Park (near Ashland, Oregon)
- When?** June 27-30 and July 1, 2018 (Wednesday through Sunday)
- Cost?** \$100 per adult for lodging and meals  
(Children 4-12: \$75; children 3 years old and under are free)

**Details:** We will be visiting Crater Lake (the deepest lake in the United States), sharing the gospel with those in nearby Ashland, Oregon, and encouraging each other in the Lord. There will be singing, Bible memorization, hiking, campfires, eating, and resting.

*Please reserve your spot by June 15, 2018!  
(A \$20 late fee applies for late reservations.)*

Don't have time? You will never HAVE time.  
You will need to choose to MAKE time! See you there!

*See Reservations Form on next page*



## RESERVATIONS FORM

# Western Field Family Department, Missionary Department, and Youth Department Retreat

**Asperkaha Park, near Ashland, Oregon  
June 27-30 and July 1, 2018**

Deadline for Registration and Payments: Friday, June 15, 2018

A \$20 LATE FEE WILL BE CHARGED FOR ALL REGISTRATIONS RECEIVED AFTER THE ABOVE DATE

Please mail this form with payment to: Sandy Nelson, 12434 Pear Lane, Wilton, CA 95693  
Make checks payable to: IMS SDA Church, Reform Movement.

Questions? Call Sandy Nelson at (916) 539-6777 or email Sandra.Nelson@Juno.com.

*Please note any special needs on the bottom of this sheet; we will do our best to accommodate your needs.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip Code

List below the names and information for yourself and anyone else in your group.

*NOTE: Each cabin sleeps 10 people (maximum) in bunk beds.*

NAME	Male/Female	Age	Cost for lodging and meals (\$100 per adult; \$75 per child aged 4-12; free per child aged 3 and under)
_____	_____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	_____	\$ _____
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_____	_____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	_____	\$ _____
_____	_____	_____	\$ _____
TOTAL COST (ENCLOSED)			\$ _____

NOTE SPECIAL NEEDS HERE:



## Current Events

*Elder Henry Dering, Sacramento, California*

### **Christian, Jewish, and Muslim leaders in Vienna Affirm Social Cohesion and Peaceful Coexistence**

01 March 2018

**U**nity among religious leaders is growing, and it is a powerful message of hope in the Arab region, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim leaders have heard at a Vienna conference on peaceful coexistence and diversity, whilst advocating the necessity of even more dialogue.

The 26-27 February conference was organized by the Vienna-based International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID). It was held at a time when people seeking to sow discord put religious differences as the cause of societal problems while faith leaders are working harder than ever for unity. "The unity of purpose between Christians and Muslims on vital issues, such as common citizenship cannot be ignored. Unity among religious leaders is the strongest message of hope the region has seen in many years," said KAICIID secretary general Faisal Bin Muaammar, opening the conference. At the end of the conference hundreds of religious leaders jointly affirmed values of social cohesion and peaceful coexistence. The Vienna-based centre works with representatives of five major world religions, and has implemented programmes in Nigeria, the Central African Republic, the Arab region, Myanmar, and Europe.

#### **International partners**

It works with a wide range of international partners which include religious institutions, intergovernmental organizations such as the European Commission, United Nations, and civil society. More than

200 religious leaders, policymakers, academics, and representatives of international and civil society organizations attended the conference. They included leaders from the Orthodox community, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Muslim World League, Jewish leaders and the Evangelical Church of Egypt. Titled "Interreligious Dialogue for Peace: Promoting Peaceful Coexistence and Common Citizenship," the conference coincided with the centre's fifth year in operation. "Promoting tolerance, deepening the shared values will keep our religions away from exclusive claims and fundamentalist tendencies," said Aram I. Keshishian, Catholicos of Cilicia.

#### **'Spirit of tolerance'**

He said, "Only by giving articulation to the spirit of tolerance can we overcome fear and distrust and build a harmonious existence." Metropolitan Emmanuel, Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, repeated the words Patriarch Bartholomew had mentioned in his address. "We must have love, not only to our friends but also to our enemies, which is more difficult. And this is the basis of dialogue that is sincere and continuous. And this is what KAICIID has been doing." Rabbi David Rosen, international director of Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee, noted, "Prejudice and bigotry are nurtured by ignorance and alienation. That is why this gathering is so important. That is why sincere interreligious dialogue does promote peace." Rev. Mark Poulson, secretary for Inter Religious Affairs to the Archbishop of Canterbury said platforms need to be authentic. "Platforms and the building of them involve preparation and care, and they are only effective if they are locally relevant," he said.

This was echoed by Dr. Kezevino Aram, director of Shanti Ashram, who said: “Those of us who are gathered here are convinced that dialogue must continue, but we must still convince our brothers and sisters of the actual impact of this dialogue. Conflicts have increased, but the desire and the hunger for peace is also expanding.” Bishop Miguel Ayuso, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, alluded to the hope such meetings can provide. “The immense movements of refugees and migrants fleeing the horror of war shall find us united in compassion and aware of the urgency to address the present challenges,” said the Roman Catholic bishop. “How necessary peace and reconciliation are in our days and in our world, so in need of promoting a ‘culture of dialogue,’ a ‘culture of inclusivism’ respectful of every human person, so as together to promote a solidarity directed towards the common good.” KAICIID said that leading representatives of Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and other religious communities worldwide “spoke up in one voice for social cohesion, peaceful coexistence, and respect for religious diversity.”

### *Common citizenship*

Participants conferred on topics such as the role of religious leaders and policymakers in promoting social cohesion and common citizenship, something that is strong on the agenda of religious leaders in

the Middle East. They also discussed global partnerships for dialogue and promoting social cohesion, interreligious education and common citizenship values, and examined social media as a space for dialogue. The participants included leading figures in interreligious dialogue, experts, and policymakers. Those attending the conference included: Patriarch Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople; Dr. Mohammad bin Abdul Karim Alissa, secretary general, Muslim World League; Dr. Abbas Shuman, deputy of Al-Azhar; Theodoros II of Alexandria, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa; Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, chief rabbi of Moscow, Russia, and president of the Conference of European Rabbis; Adama Dieng, the UN secretary-general’s special adviser for the Prevention of Genocide; and Ahmad Alhendawi, secretary general of the World Organization of the Scout Movement. Among others giving support to the mission to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue were: Dr. Michael Linhart, Austria’s secretary-general for Foreign Affairs; Dr. Nizar Madani, Saudi Arabia’s state minister for foreign affairs; Belén Alfaro, Spain’s Alliance of Civilization and the Interreligious Dialogue ambassador. –<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/christian-jewish-and-muslim-leaders-in-vienna-affirm-social-cohesion-and-peaceful-coexistence>.



Photo: Daniel Shaked/KAICIID

## Happy Birthday!

*Athai Finch, American Union Newsletter Editor, Valencia, California*

“**F**or by Me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased.” Proverbs 9:11. We want to take a moment to wish a very special young lady a Happy Birthday!

Aracely Elias turned 19 years old on April 7. As one of the newest and youngest members of our local church in Huntington Park, California, Aracely has accepted the responsibility of children’s teacher on Sabbath mornings. Aracely was raised in the faith. Her fervent love for Jesus has increased more and more over the last year. She enjoys participating in door-to-door missionary work every Sunday along with other members. So young and so full of the love of Jesus, Aracely has been a wonderful example to the other young people and the children.

May God bless her richly! May He also give her many more years of life and work through her heart to be a blessing to others as she continues to grow spiritually. We love you very much, Aracely!



## 2018 Calendar

- May 25-28: Youth Retreat, Smokey Mountains, Tennessee
- June 27-July 1, 2018: Western Field Family Department, Missionary Department, and Youth Department Retreat, Apserkaha Park, Oregon
- July 26: Southeast Field Delegates’ meetings, Cedartown, Georgia
- July 27-29: Southeast Field Conference, Cedartown, Georgia
- August 15: Western Field Delegates’ Meetings, Camp Kuratli, Portland, Oregon
- August 16-19: Western Field Conference, Camp Kuratli, Portland, Oregon

The *American Union Newsletter* is the official organ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Reform Movement, American Union. It is published monthly, is complimentary for members and friends, and carries items of interest submitted by believers. We reserve the right to make changes as necessary and to refuse to print certain items.

To submit news, send your item in an email to [atramirez829@gmail.com](mailto:atramirez829@gmail.com).