

ATLANTIC UNION

# GLEANER

JUNE 2023

## Creating a Chain of **EVANGELISM**

ALL IN

ADVENTIST COMMUNITY  
SERVICES CONVENTION  
EMPOWERS, INSPIRES LEADERS

NEW YORK CONFERENCE  
LEADERSHIP TEAM ELECTED

# Inside **JUNE 2023**



- 3** Oh, to Be a Modern-Day Nehemiah!
- 4** Creating a Chain of Evangelism
- 7** All In
- 8** Adventist Community Services Convention Empowers, Inspires Leaders
- 10** New York Conference
- 10** New York Conference Leadership Team Elected
- 12** Atlantic Union Conference
- 13** Greater New York Conference
- 14** Northeastern Conference
- 16** Northern New England Conference
- 18** Southern New England Conference
- 22** Advertisements/Announcements
- 22** Sunset Calendar



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# Oh, to Be a Modern-Day Nehemiah!

*So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?"—Neh. 6:3 (NKJV).*

**G**od sometimes calls on us to accomplish extraordinary duties and tasks that require unusual determination and detailed strategic planning, which can only succeed with the power of the Holy Spirit. Nehemiah was given such a task when God called him to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. He was deeply distressed when he received a report about Jerusalem that "the survivors who are left from the captivity in the province *are* there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire"—Neh. 1:3 (NKJV).

After the report, Nehemiah acknowledged that "So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven"—Neh. 1:4 (NKJV). His season of prayer and fasting led to his commission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. This assignment forever changed his life. The book of Nehemiah contains a narrative of how he accomplished the task and object lessons for all of us. Following are some of the many insights discerned from Nehemiah.

1. He cared for God's work and loved God's people (Neh. 1:3, 4).
2. He understood God's purpose and mission for his life.
3. He was prayerful. We see him often in prayer (Neh. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, etc.).
  - He acknowledged the greatness and character of God (Neh. 1:5).
  - He confessed his sins and the sins of the people (Neh. 1:6, 7).
4. He claimed God's promises (Neh. 1:8-10).
5. He made his requests known to God (Neh. 1:11; 2:4).
4. He was strategic and organized (Neh. 2:7-10).
  - He asked for the king's authorization to go on the mission (Neh. 2:5, 6).
  - He anticipated opposition and potential obstacles, both natural and man-made and he planned how to overcome them (letters, materials, timbers, and soldiers).
5. He was diligent and watchful. The walls were reconstructed section by section by builders girded with a sword (Neh. 3, 4).
6. He bravely challenged entrenched powers and fought against injustices in society. He was not afraid to make tough decisions for the good of the oppressed people (Neh. 5).
7. He knew who his true friends and his enemies were (Neh. 6).
  - The enemies first tried to discourage him.
  - Second, they ridiculed him and minimized his work.
  - Third, they accused him of being in rebellion against the king. They said, We have proof showing you're plotting to establish yourself as king (Neh. 6:5, 6).
  - Then, they deceitfully pretended to be his friends (Neh. 6:7).



8. He always relied on God. Every time he was confronted with a problem, we see him going to the Lord in prayer. (Neh. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, etc.)

God is calling on us to be modern-day Nehemiahs to do great things for Him in the Atlantic Union Conference. He has entrusted us with the responsibility and privilege to be servant leaders and to work for His people. Today, it's not about Nehemiah, Jeremiah, Moses, Esther, Paul, Peter, and other members of the "great cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1). Today, it is up to you and me.

As we fulfill God's purposes for our lives, we will face obstacles, oppositions, and difficulties. Let's be strategic and wholly rely on Christ, the solid Rock. Let's stay focused on the great work that God has for us to do. We cannot come down and cause the work to cease. May God help us to stay on mission and not be distracted by the plots of the enemy. ①

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*Pierre E. Omeler is the president of the Atlantic Union Conference and chairman of the Atlantic Union College Corporation.*

# Creating a Chain of EVANGELISM

In a visionary move, Hispanic representatives at the Atlantic Union Conference 26<sup>th</sup> Constituency Session, held November 17-18, 1996, presented a proposal to elect a vice president at the union level to coordinate Hispanic ministries. Delegates supported the proposal

“Beginning in 2024, the Atlantic Union will target two conferences each year to work together and share pastoral resources to support each other’s evangelism initiatives.”

by voting on a recommendation to present to the nominating committee to fill the position. More than 26 years later, the Atlantic Union Conference Hispanic and Portuguese ministries continues its mission to coordinate and support the “ministry efforts of Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking people in the Atlantic Union territory.” Four vice presidents have served

during this time: Francisco Ramos (1996-2000), Roberto Reyna (2000-2006), Dionisio Olivo (2006-2022), and Henry Beras (2022-present).

All Atlantic Union Conference departments and ministries, working under the leadership of the administrators, are coordinating their efforts to emphasize making mission and evangelism a priority in this territory under the theme “United We Go.” The work of the Atlantic Union Conference departments is to support the six conferences in the territory: Bermuda, Greater New York, New York, Northeastern, Northern New England, and Southern New England.

The U.S. Census Bureau cites Spanish as the “most common non-English language spoken in U.S. homes (62 percent) in 2019—12 times greater than the next four most common languages” of Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Arabic. Some of the plans for Hispanic and Portuguese ministries include working to provide training, serving as speakers, and joining financial forces with the conferences in propelling mission and evangelism to reach this growing demographic. Henry Beras, who currently serves as Hispanic and Portuguese ministries vice president, explained that beginning in 2024, the Atlantic Union will target two conferences each year to work together

and share pastoral resources to support each other's evangelism initiatives. "This will create unity and push forward the idea of moving unitedly as we support each other in spreading the gospel and strengthening the Atlantic Union," Beras said. He added that this would not only benefit Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking churches. "We will involve all the churches, since United We Go."

Sometimes, mission and evangelism occur outside the Atlantic Union territory—especially in countries and territories connected to members whose primary language is Spanish or Portuguese. Many members now living in this territory hail from Brazil, Cape Verde, Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Puerto Rico, to name a few, and may still have relatives and loved ones in these countries whom they want to reach for Jesus Christ. Over the years, the Atlantic Union Conference and Hispanic and Portuguese ministries have actively participated in ongoing evangelism and outreach efforts in some of these places and continue to work with union and conference leaders in the Inter-American Division to help build or restore churches, schools, and other ministry-focused institutions.

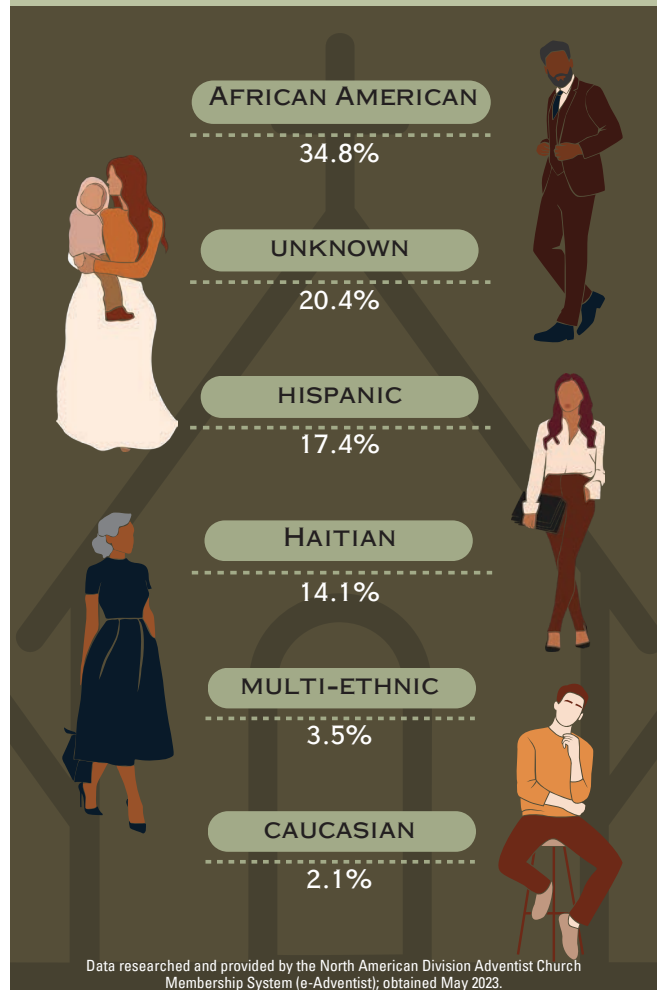
"While we sometimes support evangelism programs in different countries, our primary responsibility is here within our union territory," said Beras. For that reason, he is working with conference-level Hispanic and Portuguese ministries coordinators to create a "chain of evangelism" here at home between the conferences by helping to coordinate opportunities for pastors in the Atlantic Union territory to work together, network, share ministry ideas, and build rapport with pastors from other conferences and other countries ministering to people in these same language groups.

Hispanic and Portuguese ministries also sees the importance of ongoing evangelism training for lay church members. The department is already planning a union-wide Hispanic and Portuguese leadership convention to take place April 19-21, 2024, in Stamford, Connecticut, for Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking church laity and leaders serving at all levels.

Since beginning his term, Beras has conducted several evangelistic series and training seminars for churches around the territory. "Doing training is part of my responsibilities, and it is a resource provided by this office," emphasized Beras. He welcomes the opportunity to serve in this capacity by conducting seminars and assisting conference coordinators in bringing experienced pastors and individuals to their churches with the necessary expertise to help their members grow and develop spiritually.

## Atlantic Union Conference Members by Church Ethnicity

The Atlantic Union Conference is blessed with diverse people, groups, and cultures. This infographic highlights the top six ethnicities of church membership in our territory.



### Ethnicities represented within the Atlantic Union Conference church membership:

African	Hungarian	Native American
African American	Hispanic	Nigerian
Asian American	Indian	Other
Cape Verdean	Indonesian	Portuguese
Caucasian	Jamaican	Romanian
Filipino	Karen	Ukrainian
French	Korean	Unknown
Ghanaian	Luso-Brazilian	West Indian
Haitian	Multi-ethnic	

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Hispanic and Portuguese ministries also works with conferences to create lay training schools and support endeavors already in place. Sponsoring one-day evangelism rallies at a central location with members from local Spanish or Portuguese churches coming together for an encouraging message, inspirational music, and more is another endeavor the department is developing with conference Hispanic and Portuguese coordinators to begin in 2024.

Additional future projects for the department include collaborating with local conference Hispanic Ministries coordinators to create a resource guide in Spanish and Portuguese for church members to provide relatives and neighbors who have recently entered the United States. The guide will include a directory of churches with services in those languages, a list of Adventist-operated food banks and clothing ministries, churches that provide English classes, and more. "So many people are suffering from various situations. The Hispanic and Portuguese ministries work is important to let them know that we are here to serve, support, and encourage them. They have a department specifically to work on their behalf," said Beras.

Serving this demographic of our churches and communities requires the help of all language groups. Several churches around the Atlantic Union have opened their doors to small Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking groups to give them a space to hold Bible studies and worship services. Many Hispanic and Portuguese churches were formed as they quickly outgrew their donated space and obtained their own building, thus spreading God's message to other neighborhoods. Some churches offer English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, host seminars featuring local community agencies offering free financial or legal assistance to immigrants, started diaper ministries, and more to minister to those who may be new to this country. "English-speaking churches have greatly benefited Hispanic and Portuguese ministries," Beras said. "I encourage more churches to look around their community and see if there are people there who speak Spanish or Portuguese. Get to know them, find out their needs, and think of ways their congregation can be of service, and ultimately, be part of a step in leading someone to Jesus Christ." 0

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*Debra Banks Cuadro is the Atlantic Union Conference assistant communication director.*

By Sonia Edwards

## All In

Every few years, the North American Division (NAD) comes up with a theme for Christian education. One focus was that we were all on a “Journey to Excellence.” Then came the theme, “Something Better,” based on EDUCATION, p. 296, where it states: “Something better is the watchword of education.”

These are wonderful words to help us remember why we are here as Adventist educators. But recently, I was at the Atlantic Union Conference office for meetings, and our education director shared a theme that was used for Academy Connect, as well as for the union meetings, that resonated

As I ponder the meaning of *all in*, I need to ask myself if I am *all in* as an education superintendent. Am I as committed to our schools, teachers, and students as I was to my children’s education many years ago? When I accepted this position, did I acknowledge that this was a calling from God, and was I truly *all in*?

As I think about our teachers, who are struggling to meet the demands of educating for eternity when so many children are behind academically or suffering with post-pandemic emotional issues, or just struggling from trying to survive in this challenging world, I wonder, are we *all*

conferences while operating a school? Are other churches willing to assist them? Are church members willing to donate their time and talents to our schools? Are pastors willing to spend time with our kids? Are we *all in*?

What about the conferences, unions, or the NAD? Are they willing to do whatever it takes to retain and support our teachers and keep our schools open? Are we *all in*?

I think that all of us can admit that at one time or another, we have not been *all in* for Adventist education, and this very thought frightens me as a Christian, because we are on the edge of eternity. I wonder how many of our children could be potentially lost because we were not *all in* for Adventist education.

As we contemplate the God-given task of educating our children for eternity, at times, it can be most overwhelming. Yet it is during these moments that we are reminded that we are not alone. We can be assured that God will give us the grace to accomplish the work if each of us is willing to be *all in* for Christian education. ☺

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### “I wonder how many of our children could be potentially lost because we were not *all in* for Adventist education.”

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with me like no other theme: “All In.” As those words were shared, bits and pieces of memories began floating in my mind of the times in my life when I was *all in* for Adventist education.

I remember when I was determined to provide a Christian education for my three children. It started with homeschooling and then led to boarding academy. Homeschooling was not popular at the time, and boarding academy was beyond our reach financially. But I did both because Christ had called me, and I was willing to face any consequences because I was *all in*.

*in* to offer encouragement and support to them?

Then there are our parents, who are grappling with how to navigate as Adventists in this complex world, trying to pay rising rent or mortgages, buying food and other necessities with growing inflation, and trying to find the financial resources to send their kids to our schools. Again, I must ask, are we *all in* to support them?

What about our churches, who scramble to find ways to pay the teacher salaries, wondering how they will meet their local church budgets and not get into debt to their local



Sonia Edwards is the Northern New England Conference superintendent of schools.

# Adventist Community Services Convention Empowers, Inspires Leaders



Mario Augustave, Northeastern Conference ACS director, right, stands with Earnest Flowers who received a Community Services citation from New York State Senator Leroy Comrie's office in Queens, New York, and a citation from U.S. House of Representatives Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries.

The Atlantic Union Conference Adventist Community Services Inter-conference Convention was held April 13-16 in Trumbull, Connecticut. The organizing committee chose "Empowered" as the theme for the convention that included seminars, panels, worship sessions, and an award ceremony. Its purpose was to train, empower, and inspire Adventist Community Services (ACS) leaders throughout the Atlantic Union territory.

Organizers felt the convention was necessary after the isolation and stress from serving during three years of the COVID-19 pandemic. "ACS has fundamentally changed since COVID-19," said Mario Augustave, Northeastern Conference ACS director. "It woke us up to the necessity to work together and also to access outside resources." Augustave wanted the convention to allow leaders an opportunity to share what they've learned and experienced.

The convention was the vision of Mario Augustave, Northeastern Conference ACS director, and it

was supported by Atlantic Union Conference administrators Pierre E. Omeler, president; Ted A. Huskins, executive secretary; and Elias F. Zabala, Sr., treasurer. The organizing committee included Dora Baker, Bermuda Conference ACS director; Everett Samuel, Greater New York Conference ACS director; Judi Eells, New York Conference ACS director; Keisha Gosling Vilafina, Northeastern ACS associate director; and Frankie Vasquez, Southern New England Conference ACS director, along with ACS volunteers and lay leaders from throughout the conferences.

"The goal for the convention was manifold," said Samuel. "We wanted to empower and train [ACS] leaders," she said, in addition to bringing people together to network. "It's in our name, 'community,' it calls for togetherness. You can't build community in a silo . . . and you can't make change unless you work together."

Attendees from the Bermuda, Greater New York, New York, Northeastern, Southern New England, and Texas conferences chose from a range of training options, including disaster preparedness, grant writing, emotional and spiritual support, older members' ministry, risk management, how to balance compassion and fairness, and warehouse management.

Presenters included W. Derrick Lea, North American Division Adventist Community Services director; Wynelle Stevens, NAD ACS assistant director; Colette Newer, NAD ACS associate director; Derek Lane, Washington Conference Outreach Ministries director; Bianca Madanat, Adventist Risk Management, Inc., customer care representative; Lloyd Scharffenberg, Greater New York Conference Corporation secretary; Walter Harris, founder of "Power in a Shower;" Judi Eells, New York Conference ACS director; Earnest Flowers, EF3



Adventist Community Services Inter-conference Convention attendees pose for a group photo.



Consulting, LLC director; and Barbara Hall, Northeastern Conference Risk Management director.

Newer said, “When churches shut down [during the pandemic], ACS did not.” With needs skyrocketing while other services shut down, “It’s been stressful,” she added. “These teams have been working so hard and faithfully.” She hoped the convention provided a time for volunteers “to step back . . . and make sure they are whole and healing. I hope they are encouraged in what they do.”

Multiple people were recognized for their commitment to service. During the Sabbath morning worship, Pierre E. Omeler, Atlantic Union Conference president, received a proclamation from the City of Bridgeport Mayor Joe Ganim. Organizers also recognized Carolyn Nah, former president of the Greater Bridgeport NAACP. During an evening ceremony, lifetime achievement awards were given to those with 10 years or more of service with ACS in local churches. Several attendees also received service citations from their respective conferences and elected officials.

Feedback from the conference has been overwhelmingly positive. “Overall, everyone felt the training was superb. They all gained something,” Augustave said. There were many takeaways for attendees.

Nordia Hoff, ACS leader at the Friendship church in Elmira, New York, appreciated the chance to meet other leaders and administrators face to face. “As leaders, sometimes you think you’re the only one with a problem,” she said. “When you come together, you realize you’re not alone. With teamwork, you can come up with a solution.”

The convention was “an eye-opener” for Keisha Marshall, ACS team member at the Shalom church in the Bronx. She said the seminars helped her learn about the various branches of ACS and the importance of building relationships with donors. “You can’t do it alone; you need additional resources.”

Marie Henry, ACS assistant leader at the Maranatha church in Brooklyn,

looked forward to taking what she learned back to her church and community to empower them, particularly in the area of disaster preparedness.

“We needed this” was a recurring refrain during the weekend, Samuel said. “People are hungry for tools to do ministry better and differently.”

—Kaara Baptiste writes for the Greater New York Conference, with contributions from Mario Augustave, Northeastern Conference Adventist Community Services director.



Attendees participate in a general session during the Atlantic Union Conference Adventist Community Services Inter-conference Convention.



Standing from left are: Dora Baker, Bermuda Conference ACS director; Judi Eells, New York Conference ACS director; Everette B. Samuel, Greater New York Conference ACS director; Pierre E. Omeler, Atlantic Union Conference president, holding the proclamation presented by the City of Bridgeport Mayor Joe Ganim; Mario Augustave, Northeastern Conference ACS director; Jose Joseph, Atlantic Union Conference vice president for Haitian and African ministries; and Elias F. Zabala, Sr., Atlantic Union Conference treasurer.



Three lifetime honorees and 18 other individuals who received citations for their service to Adventist Community Services are joined by Mario Augustave, Northeastern Conference ACS director, seated center front, and other ACS representatives.

# NEW YORK CONFERENCE Leadership Team Elected

The New York Conference held its first quinquennial Constituency Session on Sunday, April 30, at Union Springs Academy in Union Springs, New York.

The delegates voted to elect Miguel Crespo, president; Claudio Gomez, executive secretary; Priscilla English, treasurer; Dan Whitlow, Youth Ministries Camp, Pathfinder, and Adventurer director; Reynolds Rodriguez, Youth Ministries Youth and Young Adult director and Pathfinder and Adventurer associate director; and Jeremy Garlock as superintendent of schools. All other ministries were referred to the newly-elected executive committee.

Delegates voted to add two new churches and one company: Buffalo Westside church, East Palmyra Bilingual church, and the Rochester Karen company. The East Palmyra Bilingual church emerged due to the merging of two churches: East Palmyra and Seneca Lake. The delegates also voted to close the Massena company.

Representatives from the Atlantic Union Conference who were present and participated in various aspects of the meeting include Pierre E. Omeler, president; Ted A. Huskins, executive secretary; Elias F. Zabala, Sr., treasurer; Jose Joseph, Haitian and African ministries vice president; Henry Beras, Hispanic and Portuguese ministries vice president; Marlene Alvarez, education director; Cynthia Huskins, Stewardship Ministries and Planned Giving and Trust Services director; and Debra Banks Cuadro, assistant communication director. In addition, Todd McFarland, deputy general counsel for the General Conference Office of General Counsel, served as the parliamentarian for the session. Gary



The Atlantic Union Conference executive officers stand in support of the newly-elected New York Conference administrators. From the Atlantic Union are: Elias F. Zabala, Sr., treasurer, left; Pierre E. Omeler, president, third from left; and Ted A. Huskins, executive secretary, right. From the New York Conference are Priscilla English, treasurer, second from left; Miguel Crespo, president, third from right; and Claudio Gomez, second from right.

Blanchard, Northern New England Conference president, presented the devotional. Representatives from the Greater New York Conference included Alonzo Smith, president, and Ariel Manzueta, executive secretary.

In his written report to the delegates, Crespo said, “There are times in our individual and collective experience when we are eagerly looking forward to [moving] on from the past and [stepping] boldly into the future. Considering what we have recently experienced as a nation, conference, and church family, I am eager to put the past behind and look ahead to 2023 and beyond. But it is not just to ‘put the past behind,’ it is to ‘look forward to the future,’ to what appears as the imminent, triumphant, and personal return of our precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

During the 2018-2022 quinquennial term, the conference presided over the construction of the Conrad Skantz Pavilion, a permanent structure built to replace the camp meeting tent used

for more than 70 years. The pavilion allows the conference to have a facility that can be used for three of the four seasons of the year.

To maximize the benefit of property owned by the conference, they partnered with a green energy company to lease a 50-acre section of the property for solar power generation. The lease offers the opportunity to bring in more revenue for the mission of God’s church. “Today, we still have a portion of our property leased to a local farm (200 acres) but also a small portion (50 acres) leased for the production of solar power,” says Crespo.

In 2021, the then-conference executive committee voted to focus on three strategic initiatives, Mission, Mentorship, and Media. As the New York Conference focuses on the work that needs to be done in anticipation of the return of Jesus Christ, the president’s report indicated that they would like to expand the plan voted in 2021 into the new quinquennial term. The mission is to get every

member involved in the work of evangelism (according to their individual calling) by providing theme-based training and promoting the work of evangelism throughout the NYC territory. The conference intends to have a more robust lay pastor training program. The recently launched Christian Leadership Academy gives lay members and pastors unique access to training and education to prepare them to be better leaders in their churches. The conference is also hoping to train 200 “digital missionaries” who will create digital media content to share the message of the gospel in the digital space and provide content for use by churches for outreach to their communities, including, but not limited to, digital evangelistic meetings, Bible studies, podcasts, and devotionals.

All of the items on the agenda were completed at the constituency session, including electing an executive committee, a constitution and bylaws committee, and a board of education, as well as receiving reports and voting changes to the conference’s constitution and bylaws.

The officers and directors elected to serve the New York Conference for the next five years will provide leadership

to about 6,084 members, along with 65 churches and three companies, five elementary schools, one academy, one summer camp, and many community services centers. ①

*Ednor A.P. Davison is the Atlantic Union Conference communication director and GLEANER editor.*



Gary Blanchard, Northern New England Conference president, presents the devotional message at the New York Conference Constituency Session.



Debra Barks Cuadro

Jeremy Garlock, Union Springs Academy principal, presents the students to the delegates at the April 30 constituency session.



Photos: Jochy Jamel

The Union Springs Academy Choir sings during the devotional segment of the New York Conference Constituency Session.



Atlantic Union Conference administrators stand with newly-elected officers and departmental directors following the New York Conference Constituency Session. Representatives from the Atlantic Union are Henry Beras, Hispanic and Portuguese ministries vice president, left; Elias F. Zabala, Sr., treasurer, second from left; Pierre E. Omeler, president, fourth from right; Ted A. Huskins, executive secretary, third from right; and Jose Joseph, Haitian and African ministries vice president, right. Representatives from the New York Conference are Reynolds Rodriguez, Youth Ministries Youth and Young Adult director, third from left; Dan Whitlow, Youth Ministries Camp, Pathfinder, and Adventurer director, fourth from left; Priscilla English, treasurer, fifth from left; Miguel Crespo, president, center; Claudio Gomez, executive secretary, fifth from right; and Jeremy Garlock, superintendent of schools, second from right.

## PUSH Youth Ministries Prayer Line Celebrates Third Anniversary

On March 22, 2020, Atlantic Union Adventist Youth Ministries (AYM) began “Operation PUSH” (Pray Until Something Happens) to pray for those affected by COVID-19 and for issues faced by youth ministries leaders as they sought to minister during the pandemic. Some 200 people—representing the Atlantic Union territory, various U.S. states, and other countries—participated in the prayer video conference when it first began. Three years later, this vital ministry continues to thrive and flourish. Youth, young adults, church leaders, and the “young at heart” continue to join in the early-morning prayer sessions seven days a week, with more than 600 devices linking together each day at 6:30 a.m. to begin their morning in united prayer.

To celebrate the third anniversary, David McKenzie,

AYM director, welcomed Mark Finley, evangelist, author, and assistant to the General Conference for evangelism, who presented a special devotional message on March 22, 2023. More than 940 participants watched on the Zoom platform as Finley reminded them about the power of intercessory prayer.

“Intercessory prayer is part of God’s plan to move the forces of heaven into a position where they can beat back the forces of hell,” said Finley. “There is no question in my own mind that a prayer line like this is making a dramatic difference throughout the Atlantic Union.” Other participants closing out the week included Armando Miranda, Jr., North American Division Youth Ministries associate director, and Ted A. Huskins, Atlantic Union Conference executive secretary.

On the following Sabbath, McKenzie welcomed more than 740 viewers to a special anointing service to culminate the anniversary celebration. “God has been good to us! We have never missed a single morning during these three years,” exclaimed McKenzie.

Pierre E. Omeler, Atlantic Union Conference president, was the guest speaker for the morning and expressed appreciation to the AYM prayer team for their dedication and commitment to this ministry. “Indeed, we can say that God is a specialist in making the best out of the worst situation possible,” said Omeler. He presented a powerful message of hope and encouragement based on Romans 12:1 and reminded viewers to be willing, living sacrifices for the honor and glory of Jesus each day. He emphasized being “dedicated and devoted to the purpose

of service for which God has called us” and serving God “with integrity and loyalty because He is renewing His goodness to us.”

After the message, McKenzie invited those who were sick among hundreds of Zoom participants to dip their fingers in oil and touch their foreheads as Omeler prayed for God’s healing. It was a fitting end to a week of praise and celebration. As McKenzie reflects on their three-year journey, he says, “[AYM] sees the need to continue to enrich the daily spiritual journey of our youth, young adults, and young-at-heart. By God’s grace, we will continue doing this impactful ministry to support and sustain them as they sojourn through this life.”

—Debra Banks Cuadro, assistant communication director, Atlantic Union Conference

## Five Atlantic Union PBE Teams Place First at NAD Finals

Five teams representing the Atlantic Union participated and prevailed at the 2023 North American Division Pathfinder Bible Experience (PBE) Finals in Tampa, Florida, April 21-22, at the Florida State Fairgrounds. All five teams—representing the Greater New York and Southern New England conferences—took first place, earning 90 percent correct of the top-scoring team’s score. The teams and their churches are Morning Star and Day Dawn, representing the First Ghana church, and God’s Army, representing

Old Westbury church, both in the Greater New York Conference (see photos on page 13); the CT Cougars, representing the Connecticut Valley church, and the Meridan Missionaries, representing the Meridan church, both in the Southern New England Conference.

Pathfinders fielded questions based on the biblical book of John and information from the “Introduction to the Gospel of John” found in the ANDREWS BIBLE COMMENTARY. Congratulations to the Pathfinders, their club directors, staff, and volunteers for

their exemplary work preparing for this event.

—Debra Banks Cuadro, assistant communication director, Atlantic Union Conference

► The CT Cougars represent the Connecticut Valley church at the North American Division Pathfinder Bible Experience Finals.

▼ The Meridan Missionaries represent the Meridan church at the North American Division Pathfinder Bible Experience Finals.



Photos: Art Biondo/NAD

## GNYC Pathfinders Place First at North American Division Pathfinder Bible Experience

“Today’s world portrays different challenges for those who have decided to follow Jesus, especially our youth and young adults,” says Enmanuel Contreras, Greater New York Conference (GNYC) Youth and Young Adult Ministries director. “Those challenges have caused some to promote the idea that our youth and young adults are no longer interested in reading the Bible and learning its teachings. However, we have discovered that our youth and young adults love the Lord and, with like passion, love the teachings of His Word.” It is for this reason that the Greater New York Conference Youth Ministries Department supports the Pathfinder Bible Experience (PBE), not as a competition among Pathfinders but as a powerful way to grow in their faith through the memorization of Scripture passages and also, to share Jesus with those who have not yet surrendered to Him.

At PBE, Pathfinders are tested on specific subjects of the Bible, Bible characters, crucial moments in the life of Jesus, and others from which they obtain applications for daily life. The



Art:Bronido/NAD

Morning Star and Day Dawn Pathfinder clubs represent the First Ghana church at the North American Division Pathfinder Bible Experience.

PBE dares the Pathfinders to work together and deepens their understanding of teamwork. It prepares the Pathfinder to become a spiritual young adult and helps the Pathfinder to understand and use Scriptures to teach practical lessons to others. It is an experience that requires dedication, sacrifice, and much prayer.

The first stop in the Pathfinder Bible Experience 2023 journey began on January 14, with a PBE mock test at the local church that provides an overview of the PBE journey and expectations. The second stop was on February 4 at the PBE area testing. For the entire month, the teams who

advance to represent their churches and areas continue their preparation to be tested at the local conference level, which took place on March 4 at the Victory church in Bronx, New York.

Next, the teams that scored first- and second-place moved to the Atlantic Union Conference PBE on March 25 at South Lancaster Academy in Lancaster, Massachusetts. Finally, the teams that scored in first place moved to the North American Division PBE on April 21-22 in Tampa, Florida. The book chosen for PBE in 2023 was the Gospel of John.

Three teams from two churches represented

the Greater New York Conference. God’s Army represented Old Westbury church and two teams, Morning Star and Day Dawn represented First Ghana church. “We are excited to report that, with great diligence and by the grace of God, the three teams representing the Greater New York Conference were among those who won first place at the North American Division PBE,” said Contreras.

“We thank the Lord for His blessings for this great testimony. We are also grateful for the support teams and staff; Sherma Baptiste, lead coordinator for PBE ministry at Greater New York Conference, who attended the event in Tampa, Florida; Andrew Gordon, GNYC Club Ministries assistant; the local church leadership, pastors, elders, parents, chaperones, coaches, and area coordinators; the Greater New York Conference administrators and Youth Ministries directors; and the Atlantic Union Conference Youth Ministries Department, who supported the teams at all levels.”

—Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Greater New York Conference



God’s Army represents the Old Westbury church at the North American Division Pathfinder Bible Experience.



Pathfinder clubs walk across the stage to receive their certificates.

## Female Pastors Featured During Day of Prayer and Fasting

The Northeastern Conference held its first Day of Prayer and Fasting for 2023 on March 29. This day was notable, not only because it was the first day of prayer and fasting for the year, but it was also during Women’s History Month. In honor of the month, the day featured several dynamic female pastors of the conference: Donnett Blake, Amanda Hawley, Patricia Langley, Michelle Mota, and Petrice Wideman.

Each of the pastors preached sermons that inspired, encouraged, and motivated. Hawley shared a compelling message inspiring participants to

“wait for what the Lord has to say to [His people],” as Jehoshaphat and the children of Israel did in the Old Testament. Langley shared the importance of having faith when praying. Wideman delivered a message of comfort, ensuring viewers that God is “still in the business of healing” and that He seeks to heal their physical bodies, spirits, and communities—a holistic healing based on the story of the paralytic man. Mota challenged participants to bear good fruit to go along with their “outward appearance” or their leaves. Finally, Blake reminded the viewers to be fervent and

persistent and to never give up when they pray.

The day was a blessing of praise and worship, special music, powerful words, and prayer. Members were able to submit prayer requests on Facebook, YouTube, and in person, and conference officers prayed for the various areas of the conference and their leaders.

Hugh Wesley Carrington Northeastern Conference Prayer Ministries director, and Michelle Mota, Northeastern Conference assistant ministerial director and Brownsville church pastor, continue to encourage members and nonmembers of the conference to partici-

pate in this quarterly day of prayer and fasting, either in person or through the live stream on Facebook and Youtube, and look forward to the blessings that people will experience as a result of their participation.

—Judith Silfrene, member, Horeb church



Donnett Blake



Amanda Hawley



Patricia Langley



Michelle Mota



Petrice Wideman

## Women Gather for Spiritually-Enriching Weekend

The Northeastern Conference Portuguese Ministries held its first women’s retreat March 3-5, at the Southbridge Hotel and Conference Center. About 220 women gathered for a spiritually-enriching weekend.

Dilene Ebinger, couple and family therapist, was the main speaker. She guided the women on a journey into their past and into their hearts. The group broke through emotional barriers and overcame obstacles, finding



Participants at the first Northeastern Conference Portuguese Ministries Women’s Retreat gather for a group photo.

freedom in Jesus’ loving and forgiving arms. They left the retreat feeling empowered to continue the race of life alongside Jesus.

A special thank-you to Leilane Seifert, Gilda Souza, Gisele Silva, Audilia Dias, and her team for the months of hard work putting this

event together which has richly blessed the lives of so many women.

—Marlane Heiser, communication, Brockton Portuguese church

## New Superintendent of Schools Elected

On Tuesday, March 28, 2023, the Northeastern Conference Executive Committee unanimously elected Venetta Jarvis to serve as the Northeastern Conference (NEC) superintendent of schools. Prior to her election, Jarvis served as principal of the Northeastern Adventist Academy Boston Campus. She brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the NEC school system.

The new superintendent has extensive background in education and has worked in various capacities, from classroom teaching, to supervising, to administration. She comes with a

proven track record of implementing innovative programs and strategies to improve student achievement, enhance the professional development of teachers, and foster positive relationships between schools and the community. “With Mrs. Jarvis’ leadership, we are committed to continuing to provide the highest quality education to our students and ensuring that every child receives the support they need to succeed,” said the Northeastern Conference administrators.

—Administration, Northeastern Conference



Venetta Jarvis is the newly-elected Northeastern Conference superintendent of schools.

## Mount Carmel Church Launches Brunch N Bible Study

In October 2022, Aaron Chancy, Mount Carmel church pastor, contacted Kayla Skipper, one of the young people who recently returned to the church, to see if she would be interested in starting a women’s Bible study group. After Chancy mentioned the idea for the Bible study, Skipper revealed that she had an idea for a women’s Bible study several years ago but never acted on it. During the conversation, Chancy and Skipper confirmed how the Holy Spirit had been working over the years to ask Skipper about the Bible study, which reignited her interest and passion for a women’s Bible study.

Brunch N Bible Study is for women aged 21-40 in the Syracuse, New York, area, with a mix of practicing Adventists, former Adventists, and



Mount Carmel church Brunch N Bible Study participants pose for a group photo.

non-Adventists (anyone can attend). With brunch as the backdrop, participants meet once a month to journey through the Bible through discussion and activities and to draw the parallels between the stories and themes and their life experiences as women.

While this focuses on Bible study, Brunch N Bible Study is also a safe space for women to commune, share their struggles, be

vulnerable, and build a trusted sisterhood community. In March 2023, the first Brunch N Bible study kicked off. The first meeting was successful, with 15-20 women attending. After brunch, the participants engaged in icebreaker activities and shared heart-to-heart conversations. After the first meeting in March, most women were eager to know when the next one would

be and how they could get involved.

By the second meeting in April, women were volunteering their time, wanting to contribute food for brunch and play a more significant role in the topics discussed. Most importantly, they expressed the need for Brunch N Bible Study to continue and saw the value in the fellowship and community it fosters.

Sometimes God plants seeds, and we don’t know when we’ll see the harvest, but His plan is always fulfilled at the right time. Kayla Skipper had no idea that a Bible study she previously thought of would come full circle many years later in this way. With people like Pastor Chancy helping to cultivate those seeds, Brunch N Bible Study has come to fruition and is a blessing to the women involved.

—Communication staff, Mount Carmel church

## Music Clinic 2023 Draws a Large Crowd

This year, March 30-April 1, at Pine Tree Academy in Freeport, Maine, over 230 students participated in a combination of band, youth choir, larger choir, strings, and piano as they graced the halls for Northern New England Conference's 2023 Music Clinic. The theme of "Forever His" from John 10:27, 28 permeated the worship talks and the spirit of kindness and cooperation as everyone pitched in to make this event run smoothly.

On Thursday and Friday, each musical section came together to create music as a whole group after practicing the pieces they had received in the mail. On Saturday night, the final concert, conducted by Brendan Krueger, included the "grand finale" with all the musicians participating. Sonia Edwards, NNEC superintendent of schools, and all of her predecessors, envisioned the "grand finale" as a chance to give students the opportunity to participate with many musicians. The result was a wonderful "surround sound" experience.

The group of professional-quality clinicians included Jenelle Westerbeck Anderson, Large Choir; J. Bruce Ashton, Piano;

Brendan Krueger, Band; Laurie Redmer Cadwallader, Strings; and Doris Krueger, Youth Choir.

Each day, many of the students and adult volunteers made new friends and rekindled old relationships. Since the COVID-break, each year

brings more attendees, and this year there were over 550 people. This is an annual event, so be on the lookout for the next Music Clinic scheduled for the end of March 2024.

—Linda Dayen, story editor, Northern New England Conference



Jenelle Westerbeck Anderson, from Pine Tree Academy, leads the large choir.



Photos: Ed Rumlais



## Farmingdale Church Hosts First Health & Wellness Expo

On Sunday, March 19, the Farmingdale church hosted its first annual Health & Wellness Expo at the Senator Inn in Augusta, Maine. While the effort was coordinated and primarily staffed through the total member involvement of the Farmingdale church, there were additional volunteers from area churches, including Topsham, Brunswick, Auburn, and Turner.

Expo visitors learned about the Eight Laws of Health: Sunshine, Temperance, Air, Rest, Trust, Nutrition, Exercise, and Water. They also received blood pressure checks, BMI/weight/height measurements, and a computer-generated health age. Each participant met with a health counselor to review assessment results and get tips on the next steps. Volunteers provided a hydrotherapy demonstration, chair massages, and prayed with visitors. The final item received was a thank-

you card with a QR code for the church's health evangelism website: [www.health4centralmaine.com](http://www.health4centralmaine.com).

Directly across the hall from the main event was the Kid's Expo, where young visitors moved through stations based on the Eight Laws of Health and learned valuable tips on how to care for their bodies. While overseen by three adults, the volunteers at the Kid's Expo stations ranged in age from 7-18.

A gentleman from the community shared, "This has been great! Everyone has been smiling and so happy to share information. This was excellent!"

Participants completed a questionnaire about additional topics of interest and provided their contact information. Farmingdale's outreach team will use this data for personal follow-up and to plan additional outreach activities about once a month.

—Kimberly Brown, Health Ministries coordinator, Farmingdale church



The Health & Wellness Expo is busy with volunteers and guests.



Heather, Barbara, Martha, and Pauline are ready to welcome guests with a smile.



The younger volunteers prepare to serve at the Kid's Expo.

### LEGAL NOTICE

Northern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Inc.

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that the first quinquennial session of the Northern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Inc., will be held at Pine Tree Academy, Freeport, Maine, on Sunday, October 22, 2023. The first meeting of the session is called for 9:00 a.m. The purposes of this meeting are to elect officers, an executive committee, and the departmental/service directors for the ensuing quinquennial term; to consider proposed amendments to the Articles and Bylaws; and to receive reports. Each church is entitled to one delegate for the organization and one additional delegate for each twenty (20) members (Article V, Section 1a) to represent them at the session. The Organizing Committee shall meet on Sunday, June 25, 2023, at 11:00 a.m., at the Freeport church, 63 Pownal Rd., Freeport, Maine. The purpose of this meeting is to elect the nominating committee to serve the constituency, to nominate an Articles and Bylaws Committee, and any other committees as may be necessary (Article VI, Section 1c). The Nominating Committee shall meet on Sunday, August 13, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. at the Pine Tree Academy Chapel, 67 Pownal Rd, Freeport, Maine (Article VI, Section 2a).

Gary Blanchard, President  
Brad Cauley, Secretary

## God's Blessings and Total Member Involvement at Middletown-Portland Church Food Pantry

Every Wednesday at 10:30 a.m., every member of the Middletown-Portland church in Connecticut distributes food to 50 to 100 families at their Heaven's Storehouse food pantry. Some members and volunteers come earlier to pick up food donations from local grocery stores and to organize, and some members can only come as their work schedule permits. Phil Byron, the food pantry director, closes his lawn care business on Wednesdays to accommodate this ministry.

Even with this level of member involvement, Byron maintains that "God keeps this food pantry running." When the Middletown-Portland church decided to open a food pantry in the empty school building behind the church, there were only 15 members in their congregation, and both the church and school buildings needed repairs. But God has provided for every one of their needs.

They cleaned, painted, and filled out applications with the town. Every application required a fee. When the health department required them to install a food service kitchen, Byron dropped to his knees and prayed, "God,



Some Middletown-Portland church volunteers, with food pantry director Phil Byron, third from left, and Frankie Vasquez, Southern New England Conference Adventist Community Services director, right.

we didn't come all this way to have the doors shut."

The health department called back. "I've got some good news for you. I've been ordered not to have anything to do with food pantries. You're all set."

Next, the church's furnace and heating system

needed replacing, costing over \$10,000. The members met every night for a week to pray for God's guidance. Perhaps this was the time to shut down the church or move to a new location. Then a pastor called to ask if his congregation could rent the church for their Sunday ser-

vices. They didn't mind that the church was undergoing repair and offered to pay \$3,000 monthly. With this income, the Middletown-Portland church borrowed money to cover the cost of all the repairs and paid back the loan in record time.

In 2019, the food bank that supplies most of the food Heaven's Storehouse distributes increased its annual membership fee to \$1,000. "We don't have that kind of money," Byron responded, "but God will provide. We'll get it to you." The food bank soon called back to say that they had just received a \$1,000 donation in their name. Many other miracles and donations continue to keep Heaven's Storehouse functioning.

Volunteers from the community and other Adventist churches, several home-schooled young people, and high school students who need community service hours come to help. With God's providence and total member involvement, Heaven's Storehouse has served the community continuously since 2017, even during COVID.

—Sandra Dombrowski, communication specialist, Southern New England Conference

## Boston Korean Church Raises Funds to Help Earthquake Victims in Turkey

The Boston Korean church accepted the call of the Southern New England Conference (SNEC) to help the victims and families of the earthquake in Turkey.

Accepting Jesus' mission to help others, Mintae Kim, the church's pastor, and his church members organized a Korean food festival in the parking lot of the church

on April 2, 2023, to raise money for earthquake victims.

Church members volunteered their time and talents to work together to

make the event successful. From buying and preparing ingredients, promoting the event in their community, schools, churches, and the Southern New England



Crowds enjoy a variety of Korean foods.

Conference, to preparing all the food and setting up the tables, everyone played a part in this event.

Volunteers shared food samples that motivated people to buy food to eat on site or take home. Church members raised \$7,100 to send to ADRA to help the families in Turkey. The church is grateful for the community's support and the support

of SNEC representatives Frankie Vazquez, Adventist Community Services director, and Shawn Santana, communication director.

The Boston Korean church, as the hands and feet of Jesus, accepts the call to help others in their neighborhoods and also in other countries.

—Evelyn Santana, member, Redemption Community church



Boston Korean church members sell their native cuisine with a smile.



## FEATURE

### Food Pantries in Southern New England Conference

The Southern New England Conference Adventist Community Services (SNEC ACS) exists to empower churches within the conference as they connect with and meet the needs of their various communities by facilitating opportunities for ministry, training, direction, workforce, resources, and more. ACS encourages collaboration between community and local churches across the tri-state area of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island.

One of the growing community service ministries in SNEC is food pantries. “The first official ACS food pantries in the Southern New England Conference were in Amesbury and South Lancaster, Massachusetts, and are still active today,” says Frankie Vazquez, SNEC ACS director. The food pantry at the Plainville church in Connecticut was organized about 20 years ago and is still going strong. Now food pantries are popping up all over the conference, despite the demanding nature of this ministry.

Food pantries were one ministry that grew exponentially and became more visible, not less, during the pandemic. Heaven’s Storehouse, at the Middletown-Portland church, was feeding about 50 families per week before the pandemic. During the pandemic, they brought boxes of food outside and loaded them into people’s cars as they parked by the curb. Probably because of the increased need and the high visibility in the neighborhood, they fed about 100 families per week.

Vazquez reports that the food pantry at the Boston Temple church went from distributing food to 35 to 40 families once a week to serving 125 or more families twice a week during the pandemic. Similar reports came from other food pantries.

Vazquez says, “Churches can do more than provide food and clothing.” Some SNEC churches are planning mental health and addiction recovery support groups for the community, realizing that their church can become a center of influence in a variety of ways.

“My goal is to hear people from the community say, ‘I am happy that people from that church helped me,’” says Vazquez.

For a list of active SNEC food pantries, visit [www.sneconline.org/foodpantry-accenters](http://www.sneconline.org/foodpantry-accenters). If you’re interested in volunteering or starting a food pantry or center of influence at your church, contact Frankie Vazquez at [Fvazquez@sneconline.org](mailto:Fvazquez@sneconline.org).

—Adventist Community Services, Southern New England Conference



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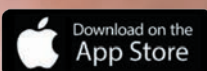


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Daylight Saving Time

	July 7	July 14	July 21	July 28
Bangor, ME	8:22	8:18	8:12	8:05
Portland, ME	8:24	8:20	8:14	8:07
Boston, MA	8:23	8:19	8:14	8:07
South Lancaster, MA	8:25	8:22	8:16	8:09
Pittsfield, MA	8:32	8:28	8:23	8:16
Hartford, CT	8:27	8:24	8:18	8:12
Providence, RI	8:22	8:19	8:13	8:07
New York, NY	8:29	8:26	8:21	8:14
Albany, NY	8:34	8:31	8:25	8:18
Utica, NY	8:42	8:38	8:32	8:25
Syracuse, NY	8:45	8:41	8:36	8:29
Rochester, NY	8:51	8:48	8:42	8:35
Buffalo, NY	8:55	8:51	8:46	8:39
Keene, NH	8:29	8:26	8:20	8:13
Manchester, NH	8:26	8:23	8:17	8:10
Portsmouth, NH	8:24	8:20	8:15	8:08
Brattleboro, VT	8:30	8:26	8:21	8:14
Burlington, VT	8:39	8:35	8:29	8:21
Rutland, VT	8:34	8:31	8:25	8:18
Hamilton, Bda	8:29	8:27	8:23	8:19

# ATLANTIC UNION GLEANER

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**NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND:** Gary Blanchard, President; Brad Cauley, Secretary; Daniel Battin, Treasurer. Office Address: 479 Main St., Westbrook, ME 04092. (207) 797-3760. Website: www.nnecc.org  
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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### NORTHEASTERN

The Northeastern Conference Global Prayer Hotline is open 24 hours a day for prayer and study. The phone number for the prayer line is (605) 313-5169, access code: 888974#. For more information, visit the website at [northeastern.org/prayer-ministries](http://northeastern.org/prayer-ministries).

### NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND

Join the Northern New England Conference Prayer Ministries for Morning Prayer on the phone line at (609) 663-0983: 5:00-6:00 a.m. study time; 6:00-8:00 a.m. prayer time. For more information, visit the website at [nnecc.org/prayer-ministries](http://nnecc.org/prayer-ministries).

## ADDRESS CHANGE

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Contact information for conferences is in the shaded box on the bottom right of page 23.

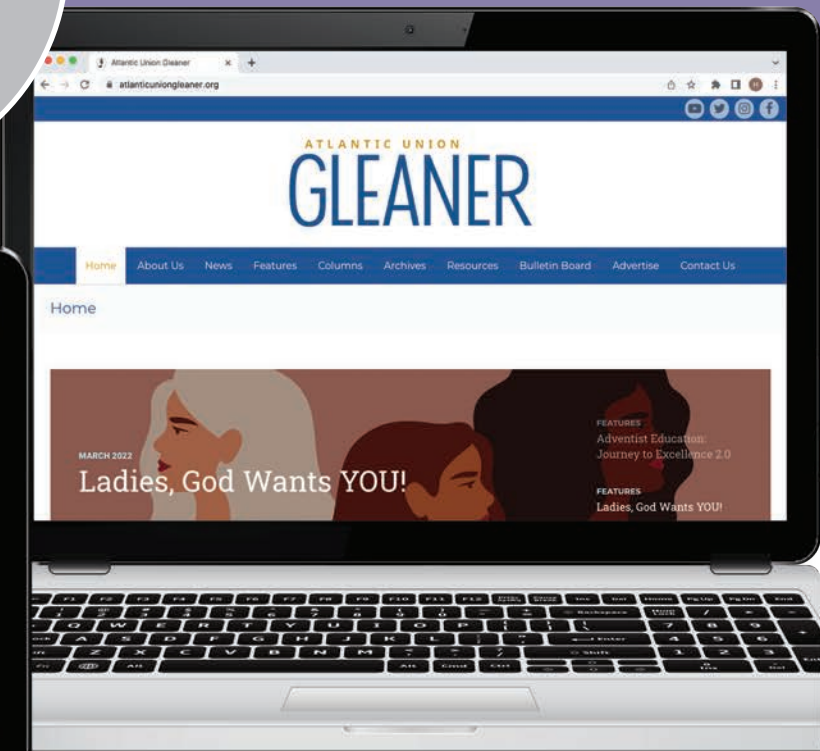
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