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SOCIAL MEDIA FRIEND OR FOE

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In today's world and as we continue to move into the future, social media platforms take a more prominent role in information distribution. They control how we communicate with each other, the delivery of education and news, productivity improvement, health information, and more. There is also an abundance of information or fake news, crime dissemination to include harassment, bullying, and decreased productivity. The reality is that the print media—news and books—as well as radio and television are increasingly moving into the electronic and online methodology.

As with anything in life, there are two sides to the coin—the good and the bad. Social media can build up your reputation or destroy it. It can be a

helpful tool to get a job or lose one. It helps you get a college acceptance letter or get rejected. The problem is not social media, it is how it is used. Social media can help you be in the know, or the lack of it can isolate you and keep you in the dark.

THE FACTS

Around seven out of ten Americans (70 percent) use social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Pinterest. On social media sites, users may develop biographical profiles, communicate with friends and strangers, do research, and share thoughts, photos, music, links, and more.¹

Opponents of social networking say that the sites prevent face-to-face communication; waste time on

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frivolous activity; alter children's brains and behavior making them more prone to ADHD; expose users to predators like pedophiles and burglars; and spread false and potentially dangerous information. A study published in the journal *Science* found that lies spread six times faster than the truth on Twitter, and "fake news" is retweeted more often than true news.²

Let's look at the pros and cons of social media.

Law enforcement uses social media to catch and prosecute criminals. Seventy-three percent of federal, state, and local law enforcement professionals surveyed believe "social media helps solve crimes more quickly."³

Social media sites help students do better at school.

Social media sites help employers find employees and job-seekers find work. Ninety-six percent of recruiters use social media in the recruiting process. Eighty-seven percent use LinkedIn, fifty-five percent use Facebook, and forty-seven percent use Twitter.⁴

Social media can be your best friend or your worst enemy. It has been said that the best friend of the divorce lawyers is "Facebook." Social

media is also known to be responsible for jobs lost.

It is up to you. You need to use caution not only in what you post in social media, but also who you befriend in social media. Here are a couple of rules to follow.

1 Everything you write on a computer, whether it is an email or a post in social media, have the potential of going "viral" for the world to see. It can never truly be deleted. Cyber-forensic experts can find it, even if you press the delete key

2 Everything you do, do for the Glory of God. "Let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."⁵

This issue of *For God and Country* is dedicated to social media. We desire that you will learn from it and apply it to your life.

¹ socialnetworking.procon.org

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Matthew 5:16, KJV

HOW'S YOUR SOCIAL LIFE?

By Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries Staff

If you're engaged with social media, you've probably done it at one time or another. As you sat down at your computer or picked up your cell phone, you've thought, *I'll just do a quick check of my Facebook page.* Suddenly, you realize that quick check became a two-hour deep dive into the lives and opinions of others.

According to *We Are Social*, more than 4 billion people worldwide are using the Internet. "Nearly a quarter of a billion new users came online for the first time in 2017. Africa has seen the fastest growth rates, with the number of Internet users across the continent increasing by more than 20 percent year-on-year."¹

In the United States during the 10-year period from 2008 to 2018, personal social media profiles grew from 10 percent of the population to 77 percent using a profile.² "The number of worldwide social media users is expected to grow to some 2.95 billion by 2020."³

What do these impressive numbers have to do with your social media use? Did you know that the Bible speaks about using social media? It doesn't mention Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or any other platform specifically by name. However, the principles of using these types of communication methods are found throughout Scripture.

As Christians, we want to reflect the character of God and show His love to others. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.”²

It doesn’t take scrolling through much of social media to see this principle is long forgotten by many users. Social media can be used for good in spite of the many negative influences it can produce for others to see. As you engage in posting and reading any social media content, consider these guidelines.

IS IT REAL OR IS IT FAKE?

Today’s news cycle is 24/7 and, often, news no longer is news. You can’t go through a day without hearing that some news item or story is fake. False information can be blended with a small amount of truth, and it gushes forth as though it’s spewed out from a firehose. A constant exposure of truth mixed with error lowers the ability of discernment. If you are fooled by daily news, how will you be affected when you need to tell the difference in spiritual matters? Could you be deceived when you need to be watching Bible prophecies being fulfilled?

Fake news isn’t the only thing that can become less than the real deal through social media. For some individuals, their participation drives them to develop a pseudo-identity. When you interact through technology, it’s more difficult to read body language. Texts and posts can’t always express emotions, feelings, and

thoughts in ways the sender might intend for them to be received. Ask yourself if you want others to know you only as the person who can be revealed in a Facebook post or a 140-word tweet.

DO YOU WANT TO TALK?

It happens. A group of people comfortably seated together, mobile devices or laptops in hand. Not a word is being spoken, but conversations are taking place. Texting, Facebook, Snapchat, and other apps are where the messages are being exchanged.

Although social media seems to be so open and accessible, it can create virtual walls that affect human interactions. These walls can make individuals feel lonely and isolated, even when they are with other people.

If you are always up-to-date in the lives of your extended family and friends, you might find that when you are together, you have nothing to say. The stories have been compressed into text messages and posts. It’s easy to fall into the trap of allowing the silence to descend and everyone resort to pulling out their phone and burying themselves once more in electronic media land.

WHAT’S A USER TO DO?

Do we have to abandon online interactions altogether? As with most things in life, social media itself is neither good or evil. In your daily life, it’s how you manage the use and the content you post.

Periodic self-checks are an excellent method to ensure that you are staying within appropriate self-imposed boundaries. They are also effective ways to participate in online communities.

Create your personalized checklist by considering several categories that can be affected by your social media

usage. What questions do you need to honestly ask yourself as you conduct your self-assessment?

YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Does your use of social media bring you closer to God? Are you spending more time chatting and posting than you are praying and being engaged in Bible study? Do you find methods to share your faith online with others? Are you afraid of having silence in your life, a time when you can listen for the still, small voice calling to you?

RELATIONSHIPS

Do you choose online engagement over talking directly with family and friends? Do you stalk the pages and profiles of people that you don't even know? Are you choosing to wallow in envy over the picture-perfect lives of others? Are you getting caught up in the drama of other people's lives? When you have a disagreement with an online friend, do you work things out or do you take the easy way out and with a click of a delete button that person is no longer in your life? Real friendships take an effort to maintain. It's through the give and take that we grow in relationships.

MENTAL HEALTH

Do you struggle with feelings of isolation or depression because of your online activity? Do you feel like you can never measure up and this influences your work, your home and personal life, your church life? Do you focus on a particular topic that opens you up to depression? Is your sleep affected because of the amount of time you spend online?

USE OF TIME

Throughout the day, do you

constantly check in to make sure you're not missing out on the latest update? Is your profile the first thing you check before you do anything else in the morning and the last task you complete before you slide into sleep at night. This could indicate that you have an addiction and need to address it now.

Are you drawn into discussions that evolve into arguments that you can't resolve in a post or two? There's nothing wrong with caring about issues, but don't allow yourself to spend time in unresolvable arguments. The Apostle Paul gave guidance in this when he wrote, "Again I say, don't get involved in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights."⁴

ACCOUNTABILITY

Have you established some type of accountability with another person for your posts, status, comments? This can be a spouse, a family member, or a close friend. The more transparent you are in your online activity, the more honest you will be with yourself and with others. Do you periodically take a social media fast, allowing yourself time away from the continual information cycle?

IT'S OUR CHOICE

As in all things, God gives us free will in how we choose to use our time, build our friendships and relationships, and whether we will reflect His character or our sinful nature. Our social media engagement is no different.

¹ <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018>

² <https://www.statista.com/statistics/273476/percentage-of-us-population-with-a-social-network-profile/>

³ Colossians 3:16,17, NLT

⁴ 2 Timothy 2:23, NLT

BIBLE PRINCIPLES

YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Romans 12:2, NLT

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31, NLT

So if your eye—even your good eye causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Matthew 5:29, NLT

And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.

Deuteronomy 6:5, NLT

All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything.

1 Corinthians 6:12, NLT

USE OF TIME

A lazy person is as bad as someone who destroys things.

Proverbs 18:9, NLT

Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days.

Ephesians 5:16

ACCOUNTABILITY

And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth.

Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right!

James 3:10, NLT

In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

Matthew 5:16, NLT

Fools have no interest in understanding; they only want to air their own opinions.

Proverbs 18:2, NLT

A truly wise person uses few words; a person with understanding is even-tempered. Even fools are thought wise when they keep silent; with their mouths shut, they seem intelligent.

Proverbs 17:27-28, NLT

RELATIONSHIPS

Spouting off before listening to the facts is both shameful and foolish.

Proverbs 18:13, NLT

Unfriendly people care only about themselves; they lash out at common sense.

Proverbs 18:1, NLT

Love your neighbor as yourself.

Matthew 22:39, NLT

Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for "bad company corrupts good character."

1 Corinthians 15:33, NLT



I WIN, YOU LEAVE?

By Jamie Domm, Digital Strategist, North American Division

He who is careless and heedless in uttering words or in writing words for publication to be sent broadcast into the world, sending forth expressions that can never be taken back, is disqualifying himself to be entrusted with the sacred work that devolves upon Christ's followers at this time."¹

Social media has eased entry into the world of telling stories, sharing ideas, and expressing thoughts to a wide audience. We are all writers and publishers now. But with this ability comes responsibility.

You can have hundreds, thousands, even millions of people viewing your messages. But, as so often is the case, the person we need to set boundaries with is ourselves.

Social media, at its very essence, is people connecting with people to create a collective human story. Your personal social media can serve as a powerful witnessing tool, revealing what God is accomplishing through you and your work. But...

IS THERE ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO CONDUCT?

Would someone know you are a Christian based on your social media? Would your audience like Christians based on your behavior online?

I once listened to a powerful sermon in which the speaker asked, "If you were pulled into court today, is there enough evidence in your life to convict you of being a Christian?" Well, what evidence does your social media provide? Is your use of social media driving people away from the church or toward Christ? Think about it.

Social media is public by nature and has blurred the lines between your work for the church and your personal life. This can be a

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good thing. Follow principles of responsible use and be a living testimony to others. Be a light among the quagmire of negativity online.

"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."²

We were all taught in primary school to T.H.I.N.K. before we speak. It is not enough for something to be True; it must also be Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary, and Kind. Every opportunity to share is an opportunity to either advance or hinder the kingdom of God. As disciples, that means connecting with each other and God as well as sharing the gospel.

It is likely that you have friends or followers on social media who are not Christians, or are questioning and struggling with their faith. As

a member of the church, you are always representing the church. This is especially true for pastors and others in leaderships roles. It is of vital importance that we maintain a high standard of ethics, striving to always be honest, professional, and kind. This means always verifying questionable content with credible sources before sharing, honoring the privacy of others, respecting intellectual property rights, and never releasing confidential information.

Your posts can have a much greater impact and reach than you imagine. We recognize and value diversity of opinion within our community, but as an employee or member, your followers may confuse your opinion with the official position of the church. While this is most likely not your intention, be mindful to:

- prevent confusion by avoiding posts that conflict with your ministry's official positions on matters
- observe principles of impartiality
- avoid topics like politics where emotions can run high and can result in inflammatory or inappropriate language.³

Many discussions are significantly more productive in person. Online communication strips away the context of tone and intention. Many comments online are misunderstood without this context and provoke controversy and conflict instead of positive discourse. When asked why they left the church, a sizable portion of former members cite something that was said to them or how they were treated by other members. My

question to you is this:

How many people are you willing to drive out of the church to make a point or to “win” your argument?

Public figures have the potential to magnify division and take thousands out of the church. For those of us on an individual level, we may discourage someone from ever considering Christianity. We talk about a life lived as a reflection of Christ but turn into devils on social media. People say things on social media that they would never dare to say in person.

We absolutely respect and value different perspectives among our members and leadership. But as representatives of the church, we must not use our public speaking platforms as a sounding board for the problems we see in the church, in leadership, and our country. As leaders, we represent a diversity of people with a diversity of ideas, perceptions, and experiences. We can't serve them while simultaneously showing a strong negativity bias toward certain groups of people and ideas online. We are a family; let's resolve our internal issues privately. It would be considered obscene to go knocking on doors and to begin your evangelistic effort by lambasting the very church you are asking people to join. So why do it online? We must protect our church family and frame all of our digital communications with the salvation of others in mind. Social media is a powerful tool for sharing the gospel; let's use it wisely and err on the side of caution.

“The power and efficiency of our work depend largely on the character of the literature [message] that comes from our presses [social media

profiles]. Therefore, great care should be exercised in the choice and preparation of the matter that is to go to the world. The greatest caution and discrimination are needed. Our energies should be devoted to the publication of literature [posts] of the purest quality and the most elevating character. Our periodicals [tweets and updates] must go forth laden with truth that has a vital, spiritual interest for the people.”⁴

Freedom of speech does not mean freedom from consequences. Carelessness in speech can and will inhibit our ability to accomplish our mission. When we turn people away from the church, we are not only working against ourselves, we are working against God. You can also get your ministry or self in legal trouble. In many cases, you may endanger your job and reputation, even years later as content remains searchable online. This can all be avoided by simply using discretion and focusing on the positive. Let’s not fall into the trap of using the negative and sensational to get attention online when God calls us to focus on what is good and holy.

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”⁵

I hope that this post changes how you view social media. Let’s work together to get the job done and go home.

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”⁶

More resources on social media etiquette and a downloadable presentation are available at: www.sdadata.org/social-media-guidelines.

Online communication strips away the context of tone and intention. Many comments online are misunderstood without this context and provoke controversy and conflict instead of positive discourse.

¹ White, Ellen G., *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, pg. 61.

² Matthew 5:16

³ Romans 12:9-21

⁴ White, Ellen G., *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, pg. 11.

⁵ Philippians 4:8, NIV

⁶ Matthew 24:14

JUST A SIMPLE CLICK

By LTC (CH) Dan Bray, U. S. Army, Retired, MS, MDiv.
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The mere mention of social media can often place people into two very different and opposing camps. One group may claim the thought that “using social media is a vast consumption of time for selfish reasons.” The second unit of thought portrays the conviction that “we are just using the technology available to us to get communication out.”

So, what kind of response should we have as Christians to social media? What does Scripture say about the use of social media? Can using social media harm one’s career advancement?

It has been suggested that social media is no longer a passing fad. It is here to stay. This is much like the thinking from some years

The Bible does ask us to consider what activities occupy our time and strength.

ago when new inventions such as the calculator, personal computers, or wireless Internet came onto the scene.

Like anything else in our lives, a careful moderate use of social media could be beneficial. Plus, there are multiple studies that have been conducted that clearly indicate that the majority of people who are online use social media. But just because “everybody is doing it” does not necessarily mean that a Christian should follow suit.

Many of us could likely cite examples of people who are so absorbed into their online use of Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter that they are utterly oblivious to their surroundings or even being sensitive to the needs of others. I’ve seen a number of married couples in my office for counseling and often the complaint is that one of them spends far too much time away from the spouse on social media. And, the disheartening take-away from this is that many of them do not believe they are doing anything wrong. “After all,” they argue, “I am just having fun looking to see what is going on in the lives of others, and I deserve that.”

Scripture does not use the term “social media.” However, the Bible does ask us to consider what activities

occupy our time and strength. Of course, there is the danger that one could become so involved in using social media that it takes the place of our rightful time in our first priority in life—having a meaningful relationship with God. And unfortunately, at times, some people become so preoccupied with the latest on Facebook/Instagram that they are unable to carry on a meaningful conversation with a “live” person standing right in front of them.

We risk not being understood correctly while being online. Often the tone in our words is not interpreted correctly. Or, the message we intended for one party inadvertently goes to someone else much to our loss.

One of the great positives in the use of social media is the potential of reaching a large number of people in a relatively short period of time. With just a simple “click” a message can literally go around the world in an instant. Many churches and faith groups alike use social media in the furtherance of expanding the Gospel message.

The use of social media is not an issue of good versus evil. Rather, it is how we choose to use this technology and for the appropriate reason and motive.

A FULL CIRCLE FAITH JOURNEY

By Captain Glenn Olarte, U. S. Navy, Retired with Deena Bartel-Wagner

“I thought I’d enlist in the Navy and serve for four years and move on,” says Glenn Olarte. It seems God had a different idea.

At his birth at Tripler Army Medical Center in Hawaii, Glenn became part of the third generation of his family members who called themselves Seventh-day Adventists. “My maternal grandfather was a minister, a pioneer of the Adventist church in the Philippines in the early 1900s,” says Glenn. “Many others from my family have shared their gifts with the church as administrators, teachers, and missionaries.”

HONOR AND DUTY

Serving country as well as serving their God is also a thread that runs through Glenn’s background. “My dad was in the Army when I was born. Several of my uncles were guerrilla fighters in the Philippines during World War II, including my Uncle Romeo Castro,” says Glenn. “He was training to be a pilot with the United

States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) when the Japanese invaded the Philippines. The war derailed his plans to be a military pilot. Later he and my aunt Belle became teachers at Philippine Union College. Romeo was later ordained as a pastor.”

After the 1972 declaration of martial law in the Philippines, young people were required to undergo 12-18 months of military training, with the possibility of conscription. Because of his military experience, Castro saw the value of training college students in the methods taught through the Medical Cadet Corps which helped Adventist college students fulfill the training requirement. “He became the leader of the Medical Cadet Corps at the college,” says Glenn. “I’d ride with him on the back of his motorcycle to the meetings. Then, I’d watch the drills and marching.”

Glenn’s family viewed military service as an honorable action. “My father immigrated to the United States in the early 1950s, and was

drafted during the Korean War. He eventually retired from the U.S. Army as a Command Sergeant Major. He wanted me to follow in his footsteps and serve the country in gratitude for the opportunities life in the United States allowed him,” says Glenn. “I grew up on Army posts and attended church with numerous Adventist military members and their families, including former ACM Director Chaplain (COL) Stenbakken. I wasn’t sure about the military, but I was offered several military college scholarships my senior year in high school. With my dad’s encouragement, I accepted a Navy ROTC scholarship to the University of Washington, in Seattle close to home. As a condition of my NROTC scholarship, I was obligated to join the Navy. I had it all planned out. I thought I’d join the Navy, serve for four years (the term of his obligation) and get out.”

FINDING FAITH AGAIN

When he first enlisted, Glenn found it difficult to practice his Sabbath-keeping faith. “During my first eight years at sea, I learned that everyone had to stand watch. This included being assigned to duty on Sabbath,” says Glenn. “I eventually wandered away from the beliefs I held and really was living a life in the world.”

Even after he married Martha, Glenn didn’t feel compelled to return to his spiritual roots until he became a father. “I realized that I wasn’t willing to raise my children in any other faith than the Seventh-day Adventist faith of my youth and most of my family,” says Glenn.

The couple began attending Sabbath services, even though Martha was from a Baptist



During a 28-year Navy Career, Glenn Olarte experienced many different opportunities.



In 2009, Capt. Glenn Olarte, right, briefed Panama’s Foreign Affairs Minister Juan Carlos Varela.

background.. After 15 years of marriage, Martha eventually was baptized as a Seventh-day Adventist in the Escalon Seventh-day Adventist Church in El Salvador.

“You find your faith when you come back to it,” says Glenn. “Now that I wanted to have Sabbaths for worship, I needed to explain my actions to my friends, peers, and colleagues who hadn’t known me as a Seventh-day Adventist.”

Glenn found encouragement in the story of Cornelius in Acts 10. Cornelius, a centurion, and his family are described as devout and God fearing, and also refers to another soldier, Cornelius’ subordinate as a devout soldier. “The Biblical record is clear that military service is not inconsistent with being devout or God-fearing,” says Glenn.

As an officer and Glenn believes it

was easier to explain to his beliefs and receive the accommodations of his requests to his superiors. Additionally, he had transferred from shipboard duty as a Surface Warfare Officer after being accepted into a newly created career path as a Navy Foreign Area Officer. Instead of serving at sea, Glenn was posted to overseas assignments in Embassies and military staffs that generally allowed for Sabbaths off. "God blessed me and my family with leaders who respected me professionally and were willing to understand my commitment to faith. Being perceived as a team player, carrying your load and bit more earns the respect of others and goes a long way when you have an unusual request, such as Sabbaths off."

The ministry of the National Service Organization played an important role in Glenn's spiritual walk. "From my first days in the Navy, I sought out and appreciated the spiritual materials, including devotionals and church magazines that were provided to me. These items added to my Bible study and the sense of being connected to my church," says Glenn. "I have fond memories of spending Sabbaths at SDA Serviceman's centers in Germany while I was a kid, and readily made use of the SDA Servicemen's Center operated in Korea during my career."

GOD, DO YOU WANT ME HERE?

Knowing what God wanted for him was also important to Glenn. After recommitting his life, he began to pray for guidance in his military career. "As each promotion came, I asked God to direct me," says Glenn. "I'd pray 'Lord, if you don't want me here, don't let me be promoted or

selected.'" With each promotion and successful career milestone, Glenn knew that he'd put it entirely into God's hands.

God's leading saw Glenn serve aboard frigates, minesweepers, and mine hunters, afloat and shore staffs. He served as a Flag Aide to a Rear Admiral; Commanding Officer of the U.S. Military Sealift Command Office in Busan, South Korea; Embassy assignments as the Naval Attaché at the U.S. Defense Attaché Office in Santiago Chile; the Executive Officer for the U. S. Military Group in San Salvador, El Salvador; the Chief of the U.S. Office of Defense Cooperation in Panama City, Panama; and retired from the Navy as the Inspector General for the U. S. Southern Command based in Miami, Florida.

Today Glenn works for the Department of State as a Program Manager for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Panama.

Recalling his 28 years of naval service, Glenn says, "As a naval officer, you know that the decisions you make will affect lives of those you lead and their families. Even during the years I was not practicing my faith, I would often pray before making decisions as well as pray for decisions impacting me. I was also comforted knowing others, especially my mother, were praying for me."

COMMUNITY IN SHARING THE BURDEN

Upon his return to being a practicing Adventist, Glenn wanted to help other sailors who faced difficulty with religious accommodations. "Surprisingly I met many Adventists and former Adventists while openly

exercising my faith,” says Glenn. “Often it was when reminding others I would be absent for a Sabbath event or when someone noticed I did not drink coffee, a rarity for a sailor at sea. I had opportunities to counsel sailors who were struggling with leaders unwilling to authorize Sabbath accommodation, something that the U.S. military allows for, but does not guarantee.” Glenn always respected the chain of command, and encouraged involvement of the chaplain, but when possible, he lent his voice help to clarify and validate the basis of the request and biblical basis of Adventist belief.

“It’s essential to be clear and articulate in requesting Sabbath accommodation with the chain-of-command, but also be consistent in the exercise of faith in routine situations,” says Glenn. “State your request and explain why this is important to you.” I would tell my superiors, “This is who I am, what, and why I believe. I’ve had people ask me why I keep the Sabbath, and have been able to share my faith journey with them and surprisingly have had some accept an invitation to church.”

Another aspect that Glenn believes is important is owning your decision. “It’s not easy and will never be easy to practice your faith. Ever changing conditions and complex situations in the military will try your faith, and will people will even try to break your faith practice for various reasons,” says Glenn. “It’s incumbent on us to submit the issue to the Lord in fasting and prayer, while remaining a positive and exemplary service member. Excel as much as you can in all assigned duties and if you find that circumstances don’t allow you to remain faithful, perhaps it’s better for you to leave the military.”



Glenn Olarte relied on God’s leading during his career, even when he’d wandered from his faith.



The Glenn Olarte family.

Today, Glenn and his wife, Martha, and youngest son Christian Felipe worship at a Balboa SDA church, a bilingual English-Spanish church in Panama City, Panama. Their eldest son, Juan Alejandro, is a baptized Seventh-day Adventists and attends the Ephesus SDA Church in New Orleans, Louisiana where he is a student at Tulane University.

THE MOST MEANINGFUL SERVICE

An initial commitment of four years in the Navy grew into a 28-year career journey for Glenn Olarte. Although he wandered for a time, God continued to impress upon Glenn’s life the need of Him. A return to faithfully serving God, while serving his country is his most meaningful personal act.

By Kenneth Harding,
Captain, U.S. Army, Retired
with Deena Bartel-Wagner

THE SOLDIER WHO TRIED TO HIDE



The saying, “You can run, but you can’t hide,” proved true in the life of Kenneth Harding. As a U.S. Army soldier, he believed he could travel to the ends of the earth and run away from the church and God. Instead, God pursued Kenneth relentlessly to form a friendship that continues today.

“I grew up in an Adventist pastor’s home learning songs and memory verses in Sabbath School, attending church, and eventually becoming a student at Mt. Pisgah Academy in North Carolina,” says Kenneth. “During my academy years, I

participated in the Medical Cadet Corps and eventually attained the rank of 1st Sergeant.”

Life for the Harding family changed drastically when Kenneth’s father received an appointment to serve as the president of the Iran Mission. “Our family moved to Tehran and when it was time for college I enrolled as a student at Middle East College in Beirut, Lebanon,” says Kenneth.

Although he wasn’t living in the United States, when Kenneth turned 18 years old, United States law required that he register for the



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draft. “My father took me to the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and I filled out the required paperwork,” says Kenneth. “When it came time to check the box detailing my status, I chose, under my father’s expectation and influence, to register as a conscientious objector. It’s what I’d been taught growing up and I followed along.”

But rules and regulations at school began to chafe Kenneth. “I became involved in activities that eventually led to me being sent back to my parents in Tehran,” says Kenneth. “It was decided that I should attend Southern Missionary College.” This proved to be a stop gap measure. Still unsettled, Kenneth eventually dropped out of college and joined the Army.

“My cousins’ husbands served in the Army, so that may have influenced my choice” says Kenneth. “I went to Fort Jackson for basic training and to Fort Gordon for my AIT training in Heavy Weapons Infantry.”

Soon Kenneth found himself on secret assignment in the Blue Lancer Valley in South Korea. “Our small yield tactical nuclear weapons unit, called a Davy Crockett unit, was assigned to a location just north of the Han River, just below the DMZ. We were responsible to fire the weapons within 30 minutes if



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1. Harding as OCS senior.
2. The Harding family in 1962, Kenneth (far left), brothers Brian and John, and parents Eva and Kenneth.
3. Harding and fellow soldier in South Korea.
4. Harding at the DMZ.
5. Courting Jane LeBaron, 1966.



6. Harding (left) out on patrol in Vietnam, 1969.
7. Harding looking into a punji pit.



South Korea came under attack.”

Fortunately, the unit never fired the nuclear weapons and Kenneth completed his tour in Korea. He returned to the States and stopped by Southern to retrieve personal items he’d left there when he joined the Army. “During that visit, I met Jane LeBaron and we began dating,” says Kenneth. “That was in spite of the fact that a male friend told her she could do much better than me.” Kenneth and Jane married on Thanksgiving Day in 1966.

Following a stint as a Drill Instructor at Fort Benning and a promotion to Staff Sergeant, Kenneth decided to apply for Officer Candidate School. “When I’d registered for the draft at the Tehran embassy, I had listed my status as conscientious objector,” says Kenneth. “When I applied for OCS, I signed a document renouncing that status.”

VIETNAM BOUND

Life moved quickly for Kenneth with six months attending OCS, followed by Ranger School, a promotion to 2nd Lieutenant, and then orders for Vietnam where he would serve as an Infantry platoon leader with the 2/39th Infantry in the Mekong Delta. Just before deploying, Kenneth was assigned to be the officer in charge for a military funeral. “As I observed the proceedings, I reflected on the fact that my wife could soon be experiencing the same things very soon,” says Kenneth.

“As a platoon leader, I took our platoon out on ambush patrols. Every day we got up and went out looking for a fight.”

One night, while out on a mission, Kenneth felt his mortality. “We were camped in a rice paddy and the following morning I had settled down

to read a newspaper,” says Kenneth. “Suddenly, I heard the zing of a bullet by my ear. Then a second one whizzed by. I shouted that someone was shooting at us and soon we were engaged in a fight. I didn’t have time to think until later how close I’d come to death in that moment.”

YOU CAN RUN, BUT YOU CAN’T HIDE

War, death, and his own mortality didn’t impact Kenneth in a way that made him reconsider his running from a relationship with Jesus. “I convinced myself that God would forget about me,” says Kenneth. Instead He continued to pursue Kenneth relentlessly with reminders that He will go to the ends of the earth to seek His children out.

God’s first reminder came in the Blue Lancer Valley. “A buddy and I were in the day room during some time off,” Kenneth recalls. “There was a knock and the door, and somebody yelled out my name. Then I heard that a soldier was looking for me.”

A Seventh-day Adventist medic had taken a leave of absence to travel around South Korea to contact all Adventist service members. “I couldn’t believe it,” says Kenneth. “This private spent his own money and took leave time to look for me. I wasn’t at all receptive. I told him, ‘I’m sorry buddy, but you’ve wasted your time.’ Then I shut the door in his face.” Kenneth thought he’d run away from God and the church, but he realized he hadn’t been forgotten by either God or the church.

Following Vietnam, Kenneth moved on to a duty assignment at Schofield Barracks in Honolulu, Hawaii. While stationed at Schofield Barracks, he was assigned to the 25th Infantry Division. “We were the

ready reaction force for the Pacific,” says Kenneth. “We trained hard and constantly needed to be prepared.”

“Throughout our marriage, Jane faithfully attended church each Sabbath,” says Kenneth. “I never opposed this, but I didn’t go with her. In the Army, on Saturday’s we typically stood for inspection and I used this as my excuse. That was until the Army instituted the Modern Army!”

The orders came down that a five-day work week would become the new standard. Suddenly, Sabbath mornings were free, and Kenneth no longer had an excuse to avoid going to church. “I started attending the Wahiawa church with Jane,” says Kenneth. “At first I didn’t kneel for prayer or sing the hymns with the congregation. But I sat there Sabbath after Sabbath and the Holy Spirit began to soften my heart. Eventually I recommitted my life to Christ and was re-baptized.”

From Hawaii, the Harding family moved to Ft. Benning and then to Fort

8. With daughter Beth while stationed in Hawaii, 1971.



Campbell, Kentucky. “At Fort Campbell, I was assigned to the 101st Airborne as the Deputy G5,” says Kenneth. “It was here that I began to consider a career change. God continued to pursue me with the idea that I should enter the pastoral ministry.”

HAIL AND FAREWELL

In September 1974, eleven years after enlisting in the Army, having attained the rank of captain, and been awarded the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, and the Silver Star, along with the Combat Infantry Badge, Kenneth left the Army and returned to the classroom. He completed his undergraduate degree at Andrews University in Michigan, majoring in Business Administration with minors in Religion and History and then attended the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.

“We found a house in Berrien Springs, Michigan to rent for \$200 per month,” says Kenneth. “God providentially provided a sponsorship for me through the Illinois Conference. I graduated from the Seminary with a M. Div. degree owing no student debt. In spite of my rebellion God has blessed me more than I ever deserved.”

Pastoral ministry took Kenneth and Jane and their three children, Beth, Emily, and Gregory to Illinois, Alabama, and North Carolina. In 2008, Kenneth retired from the ministry. In 2016 he received the North American Division Ministerial Association Pastoral Lifetime Achievement for 30 years of service as a pastor. This year, Kenneth and Jane celebrate 52 years of marriage.

“I’m proud of my military service,” says Kenneth. “I’m not always proud of my behavior during that period of

my life. I’d like to find the soldier who came to me in Korea and thank him. Although I reacted badly to his visit, it helped me know my church and God hadn’t forgotten me. Jane’s faithfulness and influence brought me back to church and a relationship with God.”

9. Graduating from Andrews University in 1978.

10. Pastor of the Sharon Amity church in Charlotte, NC.

11. The Harding family L to R: Emily, Ken and Beth Jeffers and their children, Gregory, Jane, and Kenneth.



The **Seventh-day Adventist Church** and **Military-Related Service** CONFERENCE

APRIL 10-11, 2019

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Headquarters
Silver Spring, Maryland

The 2019 worldwide conference is designed to create awareness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church official position on military-related service.

THE CONFERENCE WILL:

- Explore and discuss viable options on how to support the individual member and the way they follow their conscience. Regardless of the individual's choice, it is imperative that no one be made to feel denigrated because of their decision to serve. Respect for the conscientious decision of the individual church member is crucial.
- Discuss Sabbath-keeping challenges and ways for Adventists who serve in uniform, e.g. military, police, fire, emergency services personnel, park rangers, game wardens, security guards etc. to follow their conscience and church guidance without fearing reprisals from their fellow church members and or church discipline.
- Recognize the service of Adventist serving as non-combatants, such as but not limited to the "Whitecoats."



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT

[WorldServiceOrganization.org/2019WSOConference.](http://WorldServiceOrganization.org/2019WSOConference)

BEANSTALKS AND BLESSINGS



Recently, I had the occasion to read to my grandchildren. They requested Jack and the Beanstalk. You may remember that the son inappropriately spent his mother's money with a peddler for special seeds. The peddler promised the seeds would grow nearly as high as the sun.

The story says that Jack's mother scolded him harshly when he came home with nothing but seeds. Discomfited, Jack went out and planted the seeds in the yard hoping to be vindicated in the morning. Sure enough, in the morning, a seed had grown. Jack climbed to the top of the stalk and walked into a new and alternate reality. While there he faced a giant who threatened him. In the midst of this danger, Jack saw and seized opportunities for great wealth. When the vine fell, they lived happily ever after. They lived on the bounty from the storehouse at the top of the tree.

I thought, as I read to the children, if the peddler knew that the seed would grow so fast and verdantly, why had he not planted them and reaped the harvest himself. Then I thought about how often we miss the fortunes of providence because we fail to plant and fertilize the dream seeds that God plants within our minds and psyches.

I thought that as Christians, we are the purveyors of the grace, hope, and unlimited possibilities of God and His plan for ourselves and others. Is Jeremiah 29:11 really meaningful? John 4:37 says one man plants, and another harvests. Are we to expect to reap a harvest? Galatians 6:9 shares the promise that we shall reap in due season, if we don't get tired and stop working. Are we too busy peddling platitudes and prophetic prose to plant the products that we preach? Have we lost touch with our faith so that we merely parrot what we have heard from others without trusting in the transformative nature of the words we share?

With God nothing is impossible. With God, dreams are providential proddings. Joseph's dreams were fulfilled. Daniel interpreted dreams that

came to fruition. His own dreams were visions of God's panoply of history. Paul's rooftop vision became the catalyst of evangelistic fervor that changed the world. John the Revelator dreamed with eschatological futurism details of which are still unfolding.

As we move through our Christian life, planting seeds of grace and hope, take the time to plant those seeds in your own faith experience. Since we are like trees planted by rivers of water, let's climb to the top and see what new vistas will challenge us. Let us see what spiritual abundance we can seize as our dream seeds grow. How?

A few years ago, U. S. Army General Stanley McChrystal gave me a book titled *The Dream Seed*. In it, the author, Joey O, shared five success habits that make dreams come true. They are:

Think abundantly.

Speak with knowingness.

Believe in the unbelievable.

Live with purpose.

Smile and work to make others smile.

Simplistic? Yes! Effective? Yes! Time tested? Yes.

Jesus came so that we might have abundant lives. That is the antithesis of insufficiency. The world was created by the power of words. The Incarnation that insured our salvation was something that had never been done before. But Mary believed in the unbelievable. So did Abraham and Noah. Jonah fought the power of purpose, until he relented. Nineveh was not destroyed, because Jonah finally pursued his purpose. In Philippians 4:4 is encouragement to rejoice in the Lord always. You can't rejoice with a scowl on your face. Smile and brighten the world around you.

When dream seeds are planted, fertilized, and grow, the fruit of the spirit, mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23, becomes evident. Don't just peddle seeds. Plant them. Prepare to reap your harvest.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Paul L. Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping loop at the end of the last name.

A Life of FAITHFUL SERVICE



World War II veteran and Civil Air Patrol Chaplain (Lt. Colonel) Ivan Peacock fell asleep in Jesus on June 5, 2018. He was 101.

Peacock served in the U.S. Army as a medic during World War II. During his college years, he enrolled in the Medical Cadet Corps program and received training that prepared him to be an aid man on the battlefield.

Originally, Peacock's unit was scheduled to go to North Africa, but were instead reassigned to Australia. Peacock worked in the dispensary and eventually were moved to Oro Bay in New Guinea.

In 1944, Peacock's unit moved to the Philippines, and the unit was part of the amphibious invasion of Leyte. Twice during the unit's landing Peacock was nearly killed by bombs being dropped on the troops by kamikaze pilots.

Following the war, Peacock continued his life of service. He served as a missionary in Iran, Honduras, Thailand, and Canada. He and his family eventually settled in Tennessee, where they raised their family, helped raise up a local Adventist congregation, and Peacock's desire to serve others continued throughout his life.

At the age of 79, he joined the Civil Air Patrol and was the chaplain for the Sumner County Cadet Squadron in Gallatin, Tennessee. He held this position for 20 years until his retirement at the age of 100 in 2017.

Lt. Col. Peacock's life was one of faithful service for God and Country.



Chaplain Peacock with Civil Air Patrol Chaplain, Lt. Colonel Sergio Freeman.

PACIFIC RIM FRONTLINE REPORT

By Dr. Paul Anderson, Director, ACM-NAD

Dr. Jacinth Theodore, a Marriage and Family Therapist, and I embarked upon a journey to Okinawa, Japan earlier this year. Our trip's purpose was to attend the 2nd Annual Service member and Family retreat for the Pacific Theater. The retreat convened on Friday evening at the YYY retreat center near Okinawa.

One hundred eight people attended from military installations on mainland Japan and throughout Okinawa. We occupied the entire resort and a nearby bed and breakfast. The accommodations were comfortable and the food was delicious and plentiful.

The theme of the retreat was "Faith and Resiliency on Life's Battlefields." Chaplain Daniel Lubega was the first speaker on Friday night. His sermon was titled "Stop Blaming God." He drew great devotional points from the story of Ruth.

Sabbath morning began with an early morning prayer meeting on the beach, led by Chaplain Raynard Allen. Almost half of our attendees turned out for that moving beachfront



A Sabbath afternoon baptism in the South China Sea.

devotional about the ACTS of prayer. ACTS is a formulaic acrostic for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication.

Dr. Theodore was the primary presenter from 9:00 to 11:00. A few technical glitches prompted us to pause and pray for a miraculous outpouring of the presence of God. We were not disappointed. Following her first presentation, four people chose to be baptized. Chaplain Lubega, Chaplain Allen, Pastor Komedja, and I facilitated their baptism in the East China Sea.

After lunch and a few hours of free time, we gathered in several breakout groups. Dr. Theodore shone again.



L to R Chaplain Raynard Allen, Dawn Adams, Chaplain Evan Adams, Dr. Paul Anderson, and Chaplain Daniel Lubega

There were some transformational moments and relational epiphanies in each breakout group. When we reconvened in plenary session we were regaled with humorous recaps from each group.

The day progressed with a presentation on the missionary experiences of Nick and Grace who are Health and Wellness Evangelists in Northern Japan. As the sun began to set, I was asked to give the end of Sabbath devotional. I chose Psalm 19:14 as my text. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." The message was well received.

After we closed the Sabbath, an impromptu prayer vigil occurred. Then there were games, private counseling, and fellowshiping late into the night. It seemed that a good time was had by all. At 10:00 pm. we boarded the ferry back to Okinawa. On the pier, the hugs, networking, and planning for next year was evidence of the bonding experience that had occurred. The mission was accomplished successfully.

Sunday evening, Dr. Theodore, Chaplains Allen, Lubega, and I met up

with the third SDA Chaplain on the Island. Chaplain Evan Adams and his wife arrived on Okinawa Friday night. Chaplain Adams will be the Director of the Navy's CREDO operation for the next three years. We shared a dessert together before jet lag forced us to part for the evening.

On Monday, I visited Chaplain Allen's boss, the Commanding Officer of the 4th Marine Regiment. He has deep roots in the Seventh-day Adventist church and is a graduate of Blue Mountain Academy and Union College. He said that his years as a Pathfinder prepared him well for his career in the U. S. Marine Corps.

Later in the day, I visited with Chaplain Lubega's boss, Chaplain Johnson. He is the Chaplain for 3rd Marine Division. He was promoted to the rank of Captain along with Chaplain Mike Hakanson in Chaplain Barry Black's office, last year.

Monday evening Chaplains Allen, Lubega, and I were hosted at a dinner party with Chaplain Jim Edwards and his wife Wendy. Chaplain Edwards and I served together on Okinawa, when we were both Lieutenants, 20+ years ago. Tuesday morning Dr. Theodore departed on her journey home. I recovered, shared a sunset dinner with Marco and Diane Jackson who coordinated this wonderful event, then prepared for the next leg of the journey—South Korea.

Wednesday, I was met at the airport in South Korea by Chaplain Merchan and Pastor Zonke. They had graciously made the trek, in heavy traffic, from Camp Humphreys to meet me. We went to Camp Humphreys where we dined with a few

Adventist soldiers at a South African-themed restaurant near the base.

Thursday was a full day of touring. I saw the base, local environs, the space where the local congregation currently meets and some possible sites, one of which the congregation is praying to miraculously acquire. Thursday evening Pastor Zonke and I met with a cadre of DOD civilian members at Camp Casey in Seoul. We had dinner at the Dragon Hill hotel restaurant.

On Friday, Pastor Zonke took me to meet with the President of the Northern Asia Pacific Division, Elder Lee. He was very personable and engaging. He insisted that we accompany him and his executive team to lunch. The cuisine was tasty and spicy. After lunch, Pastor Zonke drove across town for a meeting with the President of the Korea Union Conference, Elder Hwang and his staff.

We then drove all the way back up to Camp Humphreys and arrived just in time for a Friday evening vesper service with some of the military families there. There was food, fellowship, and Bible study. Jet lag hit me hard and I was asleep in the car before we left the parking lot.

Sabbath morning was a bright, sunny day. When we arrived at the church, the congregation was buzzing with the different Sabbath school classes operating simultaneously in a small space. I could hear that the lesson was being studied in English, Korean, and Spanish. The children were rehearsing songs for 13th Sabbath.

This church had once been a Korean congregation. Two ladies, the matriarchs of the church, had an evangelistic vision to reach out to the



Chaplain Allen and Dr. Paul Anderson visited with the 4th Marine Regiment Commanding Officer.

American service members who lived nearby. They persuaded the church to change to an English-speaking service with radio devices for simultaneous translation to Korean.

The investment strategy worked, and the congregation has grown significantly. Yet, there is a need for more space. They need a new location. Their hope is that a partnership with NAD ACM, the Union conference, and the Northern Asia –Pacific Division will net them a new evangelistic center for the community including and surrounding Camp Humphreys.

The saints who are serving in the military and their family members covet your prayers for a new worship site and for their safety as they stand at the tip of the spear in support and defense of the freedoms that we so thoroughly enjoy at home.



Too much talk leads
to sin. Be sensible and
keep your mouth shut.

Proverbs 10:19, New Living Translation

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The extent of a Christian's usefulness is measured
by his power to communicate that which he has
received, and which has become experience to him.

– Ellen G. White



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