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*A Journal for Seventh-day  
Adventists in Military and  
Public Service*

# For God & Country





# FLEETING FREEDOMS

By Mario E. Ceballos, D.Min, BCC

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The theme for this issue of *For God and Country* is Religious Liberty. I encourage you to closely examine the main articles, reading them carefully and prayerfully.

As we move closer and closer to the end of time, we see signs of “the end of the world.”<sup>1</sup> We know that we will lose our freedom to worship God. We don’t exactly know how this will happen, but it will happen. Today, many of our churches are either closed or meeting under strict regulations set by local and state governments. We have lost some of our liberty to worship as a congregation. That is due to not only government mandates but mainly due to the pandemic known as COVID-19. In some churches

these events inspired members to be more united in prayers via electronic means but have severely limited in-person interaction.

The United States of America, a country colonized in part by people looking for a place to exercise their religion, had a rocky beginning. French Protestants known as the “Huguenots” who settled close to Jacksonville, Florida, were massacred. The Spanish commander said of them in a report to the King of Spain that he “had hanged the settlers for ‘scattering the odious Lutheran doctrine in these Provinces.’”<sup>2</sup>

Throughout history, many of the major atrocities, massacres, and wars have been in the name of religion. They have been a violation

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## THROUGHOUT HISTORY, MANY OF THE MAJOR ATROCITIES, MASSACRES, AND WARS HAVE BEEN IN THE NAME OF RELIGION.

of people's religious liberty. In ancient times, Christians were fed to the beasts to be killed and eaten in the Roman Coliseum. A modern case in point is the holocaust in Germany.<sup>3</sup> Today, minority religious communities are under attack, some most recently in Iraq.<sup>4</sup>

Many believe that what we are seeing in the world today is unprecedented in our lifetime. Even though similar to in times past, these events are just the beginning. They are affecting our freedom to worship and practice our beliefs as a community.

Think about it! When was the last time you had communion? In my local church, we have not been able to partake for over a year. The same has happened to many other religious practices that have been impacted by the condition of the world today.

The position of our church on religious freedom is:

*“As loyal citizens, Adventists believe they have the right to freedom of religion, subject to the equal rights of others. This implies the freedom to meet for instruction and worship, to worship on the seventh day of the week (Saturday), and to disseminate religious views by public preaching, or through the media.*

*This freedom further includes the right to change one's religion, as well as to respectfully invite others to do so.”<sup>5</sup>*

We can see that many of our beliefs are impacted. Often we are asked not to share our beliefs in different settings. That goes against our position that says, *“and to disseminate religious views by public preaching, or through the media.”<sup>6</sup>*

I pray that the articles in this magazine will help you prepare for the times in which we live. Soon and very soon, we will see our Lord descending from the clouds of Heaven. I want to be there, and it is my desire that you also will be there. Until then.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 24:3 (KJV)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.history.com/topics/united-states-constitution/freedom-of-religion>

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Holocaust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holocaust)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-48333923>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.adventist.org/articles/religious-freedom-1/#:~:text=Religious%20Freedom%20For%20more%20than%20a%20century%20Seventh-day,Adventist%20Church%20has%20a%20presence%20in%20209%20countries.>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

# AN UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH ABOUT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

**By Bettina Krause, Associate Director,**  
Public Affairs and Religious Liberty, General Conference



**I**t was at a meeting in Washington, D.C. last year that I began to question my understanding of religious freedom.

My years in law school in Australia had taught me to look at religious freedom through the lens of legal theory—as a fundamental human right, shaped by international and constitutional law. My years as an Adventist Church member meant I also saw religious liberty in terms of biblical prophecy and traditional Adventist ideas about the separation of church and state.

Later, when I began work in the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty department at the world church headquarters in Maryland, I began to write articles about religious freedom as an individual right—a right we assert to protect our ability to keep the Sabbath, to be free of religiously motivated discrimination, to gather for worship, and to share our faith freely with others.

But at a gathering of human rights advocates in Washington last year, I began to suspect there was more to religious freedom than I had previously thought.

## THE PERSECUTION PARADOX

My work in Washington for the Adventist Church means I regularly meet with advocates from

many different faith traditions and nationalities. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians from other denominations. We exchange reports on challenges facing our own communities in various parts of the world and often work together on shared advocacy efforts.

On the day in question, as we met via Zoom, a representative from a Hindu advocacy organization gave a report on the tremendous discrimination faced by Hindus in parts of Muslim-majority Pakistan. He spoke of the hardship they faced—the ostracism from their communities, the economic hardship, their status as second-class citizens.

Ironically, the very next person to give a report was someone who spoke eloquently about the plight of Muslims within parts of Hindu-majority India! He reported that some Muslims were being scapegoated for COVID-19—blamed for its spread and denied access to medical care.

And this is a pattern that's repeated the world over. A persecuted group in one context is the persecutor in another. In fact, when we look around the world, we see there are no faith or ethnic groups that have a monopoly on religiously motivated persecution. Many Muslim-majority countries, such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, are rightly accused of repressing religious minorities. And yet, on the other

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hand, in places such as China and Myanmar, it is Muslim minorities who suffer intense persecution.

Similarly, Christians in many countries experience terrible persecution and are often the target of brutal attacks. I think of the Coptic Christians in Egypt whose places of worship have been bombed and who struggle under discriminatory laws. And yet, some Coptic leaders have, in turn, been behind efforts to marginalize other religious minorities in Egypt.

What's happening here? This human impulse toward intolerance and persecution is clearly driven by something far deeper than simply whether someone belongs to a particular religion or culture.

As I sat in the meeting and considered this paradox, I was struck by another disturbing question. If intolerance crosses all boundaries of religion and nationality, were there circumstances where I, too, could be tempted to deprive others of their rights and freedoms? Where I could become the oppressor?

Being an Adventist Church member doesn't automatically exempt me from distorted thinking about other groups in society. Consider the fact that following the 1994 Rwandan

genocide, where many thousands of Tutsis and Hutus were brutally murdered, it was an Adventist Church leader who was the very first clergyman to be convicted of genocide in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. The tribunal found that he personally drove armed Hutu attackers to various places where Tutsis had taken refuge—including an Adventist church where he was pastor. He ordered the removal of its roof so that Tutsis could no longer use it as a shelter. They were all then slain in cold blood. And this Adventist pastor was not alone. Members of other faith traditions were also convicted of similar crimes.

What could drive such intense hatred that overrides even one's deeply held religious convictions?

History, psychology, and social science teach us there is one common denominator that links every mass atrocity or large-scale persecution, regardless of where it takes place in the world or the immediate circumstances that drive it. And that common denominator is dehumanization.

Intolerance and oppression can only take



place when we dehumanize others in our minds. If we suspend empathy. If we stop thinking of certain people, or “categories” of people, as living, breathing, feeling human beings. If we close our minds to feelings of shared humanity. If we refuse to allow ourselves to acknowledge our common identity as children of God, dearly loved by Him.

Genocide may be an extreme example of the power of dehumanization, but I believe forces fueling dehumanization are present and active everywhere—in our communities, our churches, on our cable network news, and in our social media feeds.

## RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AS AN ANTIDOTE

I’ve come to appreciate that our church’s understanding of religious freedom is grounded on far more than just a notion of legal rights—about

laws, constitutions, and litigation. It’s about much more than our biblical understanding of end time events or our unique perspective on church-state relations. These are all important facets of religious freedom, but they are not its beating heart. They don’t explain why we, as a church, passionately defend the right of others to believe very differently to ourselves.

One of my favorite passages in the Psalms is Psalm 139. Here the Psalmist paints a vivid picture of God’s connection with His created beings. We see in the first few verses of the chapter a description of the intimate and unshakeable connection between God and the writer. He says: “You know when I sit down and when I rise up” and “you discern my thoughts from far away.” Then, starting in



verse 13 we gain an insight into why this connection exists. “For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

As Adventists, who hold to a belief in the literal Creator God, we know these beautiful words are much more than mere poetic license. This is a description of human origins that undergirds a reality about who we really are. There’s something profound in the fact that the God of the Universe said at the beginning of earth’s history, “Let us make man in our image.” It points to the stamp of the divine in every person, no matter how smudged or damaged by sin that stamp becomes.

And this is the lens through which Scripture calls us to see others: to acknowledge the essence of humanity in every person, as someone endowed by their Creator with both freedom and infinite worth.

This is the truth, also, that lies at the center of our Adventist conception of religious liberty.

Religious freedom, at its heart, is a very simple concept indeed. It is simply the recognition of someone else’s humanity.

## MORE THAN A RIGHT

While the core principle at the heart of religious freedom is simple, its implications for us as Christ’s followers are massive. Religious freedom becomes transformed from a “right” to a “responsibility.” And that responsibility starts with guarding our minds against forces that distort our thinking and stunt our empathy for others.

What are some of these forces?

## 1. Labeling

On a recent episode of *Global Affairs Today*, a television program our department produces on Hope Channel ([hopetv.org](http://hopetv.org)), we interviewed two experts in the sociology and law of hate crimes, and their message was clear: an essential ingredient of every crime that targets a member of a minority group is “labeling.”

Why? Because labeling people and groups allows us to simplify the way we represent them in our minds. In one sense labels are useful and often benign. They’re a shorthand form of categorization that helps us convey information efficiently. But labeling can also be very dangerous. In using labels for people, we unconsciously ascribe to them a monolithic identity. We begin to think about them in one-dimensional terms. We create caricatures and stereotypes.

It’s a useful exercise to think about the labels we often use in the way we think or talk about others. “Liberal,” “conservative,” “progressive,” “traditional,” “Black,” “White,” “Hispanic,” or any other ethnic, racial, or social group or subgroup. Other broad social labels are “homeless,” “drug addict,” “working class,” “unemployed,” and the list goes on and on.

Labels are convenient but they’re never neutral and so must be used with care. They carry baggage. They suggest that if a person belongs to one of these groups, they have certain essential, immutable characteristics or tendencies. Labels obscure a person’s individuality and their own unique personal story. Labels are, in a word, dehumanizing.





# RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, AT ITS HEART, IS A VERY SIMPLE CONCEPT INDEED. IT IS SIMPLY THE RECOGNITION OF SOMEONE ELSE'S HUMANITY.

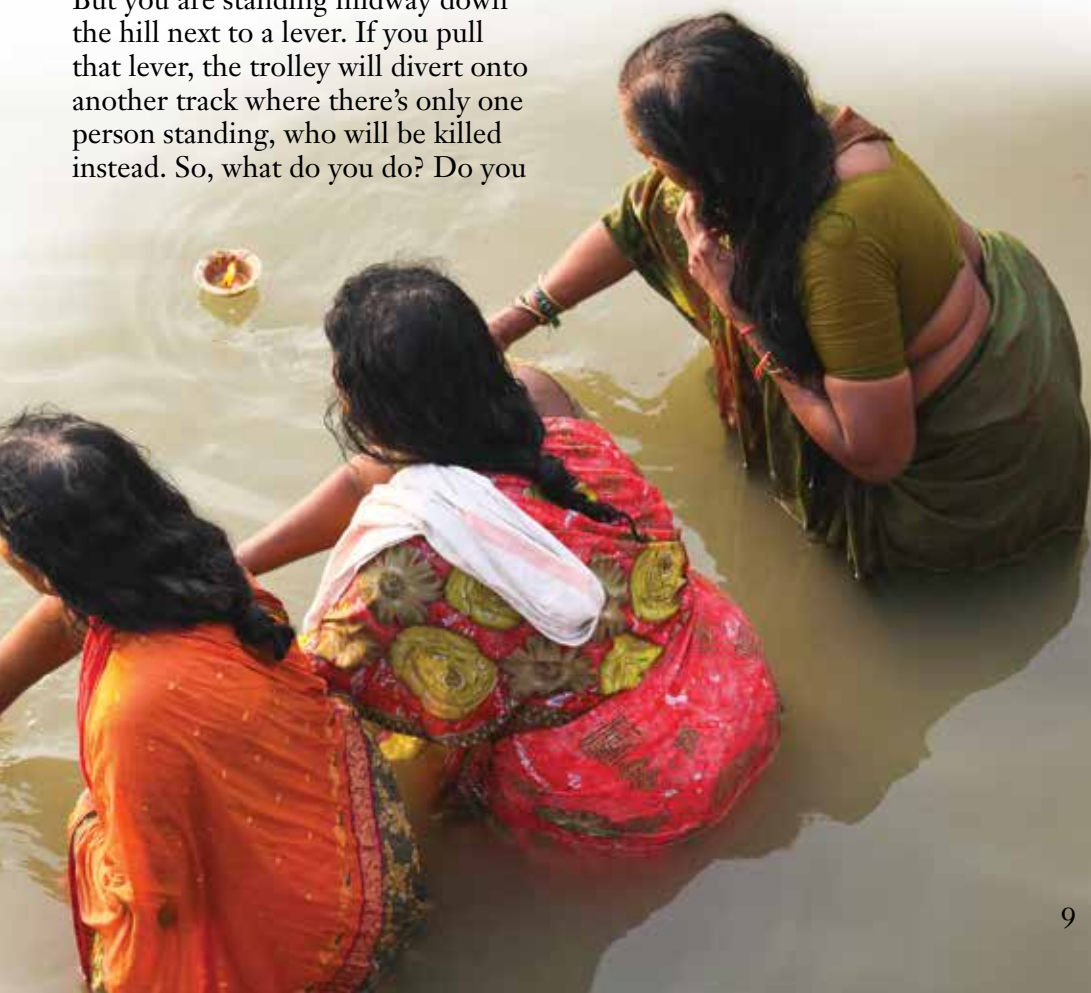
## 2. **Unthinking allegiance to our own group**

There's a classic thought experiment in psychology called the trolley conundrum. It goes like this: There is a trolley, or railcar, at the top of a steep hill. Its braking system has failed, and it's rolling out of control down a steep hill heading for five people who are standing on the track. But you are standing midway down the hill next to a lever. If you pull that lever, the trolley will divert onto another track where there's only one person standing, who will be killed instead. So, what do you do? Do you

let the trolley run its course or do you act and save five people, but doom the person on the other track?

It's not a simple case of arithmetic—saving five people at the expense of one. According to scientists, there are a myriad of factors that play into how we make that decision.

For instance, if the lone person standing at the end of the second track is a family member it's highly unlikely



# RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, AS OUR CHURCH UNDERSTANDS IT AND DEFENDS IT, HAS UNCOMFORTABLE IMPLICATIONS FOR EACH ONE OF US.

that we'll divert the runaway trolley. Likewise, we'll value friends above strangers. We'll place a higher value on members of our own subgroup, or tribe, or religion, or community, and the list of variables goes on.

The power of the trolley experiment is to show us the uncomfortable reality that we do not value all human life equally.

Psychologist Henri Tajfel was the originator of so-called social identity theory, which suggests that each of us gains a tremendous sense of who we are based on our group membership. With that sense of belonging comes a natural tendency to exaggerate our differences with those outside our group. This results in an "in-group" (us) and "out-groups" (them). In its extreme form, in-group bias and allegiance can fuel dangerous social forces that result, ultimately, in violence such as occurred in Germany with the Jews, in Rwanda between the Hutus and Tutsis and, in the former Yugoslavia between the Bosnians and Serbs.

It's good to regularly check-in with ourselves and consider our own personal in-group biases, whether flowing from our social class, ethnicity or nationality, educational background, or any other social loyalty. Could our allegiances be distorting our thinking and preventing us from seeing some people through the eyes of Jesus?

## 3. Fear or threat

Finally, the factor that so often lights the fuse of violence between groups in society is a sense of imminent threat. We don't need to look far for an example of this. My office in Washington D.C. is directly across the road from the U.S. Capitol building. I wasn't there on January 6 when rioters stormed the building, but I watched events unfold online. What made these images even more distressing to me was the pervasive presence of Christian emblems and signs. Christian nationalism within some parts of American public life is alive and well. This is the idea that to be a true patriot—to be a true American—one must also be a Christian. Further, Christian nationalism fears that its influence in America's public square is being diluted by rising pluralism and secularism. But just replace the word "Christian" in that scenario with



the name of any majority religion—Hindu, Muslim, or another other faith tradition that has historically dominated public life in their nation—and the same dynamic exists.

What is true at the political level often holds true within the social fabric of our communities and relationships. Fear of “categories” of people—seeing them as a cultural or economic threat to our own “in-group”—distorts our thinking and prevents us from seeing others as fellow children of God.

## THE UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH

Religious freedom, as our church understands it and defends it, has uncomfortable implications for each one of us.

The uncomfortable truth about religious freedom is that it’s not primarily a set of ideas; it’s actually

a life commitment. It’s a spiritual discipline, a mandate to view every single person we meet and interact with through a lens that is simply not natural for us. It’s a way of thinking that goes against our selfish grain. It requires us to look inside ourselves and unearth some potentially disturbing biases and prejudices. It requires us to take a few moments in other people’s shoes—especially if they’re the shoes of a person with whom we have deep disagreements or who is outside our cultural or religious in-group. It requires us to acknowledge the humanity of every person, someone worthy of dignity, respect, and freedom. This is not easy.

I pray we as a church and as individual members will continue to do all we can to bear witness to the Creator God, the One who formed every man, woman and child in His own image, and whose love for them has no limits.



# EXTENDING RELIGIOUS LIBERTY TO ALL

By CH (LTC) Dan Bray, U. S. Army, Retired, MS, MDiv.  
Counseling Psychologist  
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When I hear or see the words religious liberty, my mind immediately goes back many years to when I would listen to offering appeals at church to promote the church journal titled *Liberty*. I did not clearly grasp the concept of what it means to truly have freedom in the way I practice or do not practice a form of religion or spirituality. Now, I seem to take a different perspective toward the subject. This viewpoint impacts my personal life, my work interactions, and the way I view others who may believe differently than me.

First, as an individual, I am certainly aware of other people who do not believe the same way I do. In spite of those differences, though, religious liberty gives us both the right or authority to choose certain paths of behavior. One real temptation is to consider the behaviors of others as “being worthy” in my mind. If or when that happens, I may tend to treat and regard them with an inferior attitude than



God allowed Adam and Eve the opportunity to make choices. Of course, with every choice comes the consequences as well.

I should. And, I know I absolutely cannot do that if I really believe in religious freedom for all people.

This idea of religious liberty, I believe, goes back to the Garden of Eden. God allowed Adam and Eve the opportunity to make choices. Of course, with every choice comes the consequences as well.

Secondly, the people with whom I interact on a daily basis deserve to experience religious liberty. Sometimes I encounter a counseling case in which the patients are living a lifestyle that is contrary to mine. A colleague once gave me some sound advice on how to work with other people. She said, "Just continue the therapy process no matter how differently you may feel from the patient." One of the therapy goals I aim to achieve with each patient is to somehow demonstrate a Christ-like approach to them. It could be something as simple as word choice or voice volume. Clinic associates have commented to me that no matter the situation in working with difficult

people, "you just seem to be as calm as possible." But, little do people realize that like the duck on the water, my "legs are quickly churning underneath the surface" just to remain afloat.

Thirdly, the way I view others has proven to be a key component for me over the years. Inwardly while I still may take exception to the choices that others make, those choices do not cause them as an individual to be less worthy in the sight of God. And if God views others that way, then I, too, ought to have the same genuine compassion and empathy.

It is not my mission to cause others to like me. But I can affirm choices that others may make even when those choices do not make any sense to me. That, I believe, is one of the major objectives of religious liberty. We ought to reflect our own God-inspired journey to others and at the same time freely allow others to express their opinions as well. This will work when both sides truly practice this self-awareness without compromising either ourselves or others.





# IT'S ALL IN THE

**By LT Jason Dedeker, U.S. Navy,**

3rd Marine Logistics Group, 3rd Medical Battalion with Deena Bartel-Wagner,  
Editor, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries

**T**ennessee is a long way from Okinawa, Japan. Although flight paths between the two locations are well-established, Lieutenant Jason Dedeker's passage between the two was anything but direct.

"I was born and raised in southeast Tennessee," says Jason. "Surrounded by parents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, my family was like a village who joined together to raise me. Our family enjoyed spending time together camping, playing softball, and other outdoor activities."

Jason's other pursuits included playing the cello, being a choir member, and participating in musical theater. "When I began my university studies, I chose to attend Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee, which just happened to be near my home," says Jason. "I had thought about

medicine, but registered for classes with the intent of earning a history degree and one day going into teaching or law."

The tug towards medicine grew stronger though. "My application to medical school wasn't coming from a typical pre-med student," says Jason. I had taken pre-med courses, but it was God's direction in making the final choice for that field."

With medical school comes high tuition. "I began to look at options to cover my costs because I'd rather owe time. There were several possibilities, and when I learned about the opportunity of military service, I wasn't sure if I wanted to go that route," says Jason. "However, my grandfather served in Vietnam, a friend served as a nurse in Desert Storm, and a cousin was serving as a Marine. They gave me good input



U.S. Navy Lieutenant Jason Dedeker, a psychiatrist with 3rd Medical Battalion (Med. Bn.), 3rd Marine Logistics Group (MLG), and native of Chattanooga, Tennessee, removes a simulated casualty's uniform to render medical treatment at the Medical Skills Training Center, Camp Foster, Okinawa, Japan, October 29, 2020. Sailors with 3rd Med. Bn. participated in an Alert Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force training evolution to practice their combat lifesaving skills in an expeditionary environment. 3rd MLG, based out of Okinawa, Japan, is a forward deployed combat unit that serves as III Marine Expeditionary Force's comprehensive logistics and combat service support backbone for operations throughout the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility.

(U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Ryan Harvey)

about the pros and cons and that helped me make my decision. The Navy was the first service branch I came across and it seemed to be the best fit from what I knew at the time.”

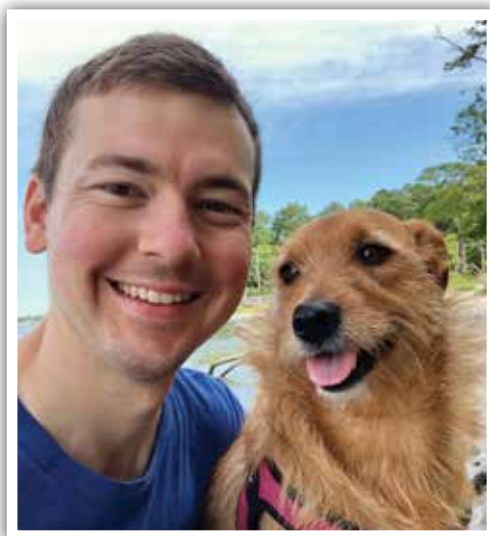
During medical school, students are introduced to all areas so they can eventually choose a specialty. “When I started med school at Loma Linda, I thought I wanted to go into pediatrics,” says Jason. “During my different rotations, though, I found myself staying behind and asking the patients about their life stories. History is really just the story of people, and the stories of the patients fascinated me.” A professor’s teaching piqued Jason’s interest in psychiatry and encouraged him to think about choosing it as his specialty.

After graduation, Jason moved across the country from California to Portsmouth, Virginia, for residency,

but first attended the five-week Officer Development School (ODS) in Rhode Island. There he’d learn about the Navy’s history, traditions, and customs, leadership development, and military etiquette. He’d also learn about God’s opening doors that seemed closed.

“At ODS, typically you aren’t allowed off base during most of the five weeks of training. My faith is important to me and so I requested permission to attend church,” says Jason. “Wherever you are, God has resources to help and I was the only person allowed off base in those five weeks.”

Spending most of his life surrounded by Adventist communities, he’d had great experiences with church. “I went to the same church for the first 22 years of my life,” says Jason. “I worked in children’s ministry and became a member of the church



Jason with his dog Sandie (short for Sandra Day O'Connor).

board when I was 19. In both Rhode Island and Virginia, I found church families who welcomed me in and made me feel at home. Finding that instant community in a brand new place made me more aware of how global our denomination truly is.”

## TRAINING AND GROWTH

Following ODS, Jason began his advanced medical training at the Naval Medical Center in Portsmouth, Virginia. The following years stretched Jason and exposed him to different experiences, lifestyles, and people. “The Navy has provided me with opportunities to meet new people and to engage in conversations I might never have had,” says Jason. “Many of my close military friends are not Christians, but I’ve learned numerous spiritual lessons, such as humility and gratitude, from them.”

Residency tests both physical and mental strength with long hours and little sleep. “Time off is rare and it’s easy to fall into complaining,”

says Jason. “One of my friends who is a Buddhist said to me during a particularly difficult day, ‘Peace. Be Still. There are good things about today.’ That took me back for a moment and I said to myself, ‘Wait. I’m supposed to be the one who is at peace.’ His words helped me stop and re-examine my reactions to what was happening in me and around me.”

## EXPERIENCE OKINAWA

Hard work and long hours paid off. Jason completed his time in Portsmouth and it was time to move on. “When I learned I had orders to Okinawa, I did have questions,” admits Jason. “I wanted to stay in the Southeast, and there was the uncertainty of being outside of the United States long-term. And then COVID became an issue. Upon my arrival on Okinawa, I was quarantined in my apartment for two weeks. Fortunately, my military sponsor family was very supportive during that time and helped ease the transition.”

Again, church family became important. “My dad made contact with a pastor here in Okinawa who connected with me, and I had friends in common with a few church members,” says Jason. “The separation from family and spending my first Christmas away from them makes me look forward to when we’ll be together for eternity. I’ve wondered if this is one of the lessons God is trying to instill in me.”

## CLINICS, CONSULTATIONS, AND STORIES

A routine in his job sets a rhythm for the week. There are daily clinics where patients are seen, medications are dispensed, and psychotherapy sessions are held. Meetings with commanding officers, and exercise and



Left: Jason stands near the Good Samaritan statue on the campus of Loma Linda University.



Right: Jason's commissioning service took place during the graduation weekend at Loma Linda University.

training routines add to the schedule.

"So much of psychiatry's history stems from the military and war," says Jason. "Although they aren't always perfect, we have good treatments for depression, anxiety, substance abuse, alcohol, and post-traumatic stress."

Meeting with his patients is a meaningful part of his daily routine. Listening to people's stories today is the same as what attracted Jason to psychiatry in medical school. He continues to listen, reflect, and learn the history of individuals. "People meet me for the first time and tell me deeply personal, traumatic, and hurtful things they've experienced. Often, they've never told anyone else," says Jason. "It's humbling to have people place so much trust in you. These stories can be difficult to listen to, but I rely on God and my training to guide me in my response and reaction."

Finding ways to share hope through the practicality of the health message is important to Jason. He's taken opportunities to share the importance of regular sleep and exercise, the dangers of alcohol and tobacco,

staying in touch with community, and more with his patients.

## I'LL FOLLOW HIS LEAD

"My professional life hasn't gone exactly to my plan," says Jason. "God said, 'Go to medical school.' Then He said, 'I need you in the Navy.' And then He led me to Okinawa. I know that by listening for God's direction, He'll point me in the way He wants me to go."

As he listened for God's leading, Jason depended on prayer and counsel from family and friends to confirm his convictions. "If you are considering the military or medicine, you need to know what you are getting into. You should also be clear on what you want to do with your life," says Jason. "Take counsel from people you trust. Most importantly you need to be open to God's leading and listen for His voice."

Listening to God's voice allows Jason to write his story. Along the way, he'll take time to hear the stories of others and share with them how they can find hope and healing in their lives.





Deployed with the Signal Corps to South Korea, Rick performed his daily duties in this radio van.

# WHEN TESTING Strengthens Convictions

**By Rick Esterline**, E-6, U.S. Army, Veteran, with Deena Bartel-Wagner,  
Editor, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries—General Conference

I grew up in a Christian home,” says Rick Esterline. “My father and grandfather were Nazarene pastors. Spiritual matters were individual choices and by the time I was 12 I decided to be baptized.”

During his childhood, Rick listened to the stories his father told of his World War II experiences. “He fought in the Battle of the Bulge and was taken prisoner by the Germans,” says Rick. “Later, Dad and a buddy



Rick believed the die was cast and Christianity would no longer have a hold on his life.

named Richard escaped captivity.” These stories made an impression on a young boy.

When Rick turned 18 years old, he sought adventure and a different life. “I decided to leave Christianity behind and do my own thing,” says Rick. “At five feet ten inches tall and weighing only 115 pounds, I had no leanings to be a warrior. The teachings of the Nazarene Church include the belief that we work for peace. Individuals are allowed to follow their conscience, even though the denomination promotes non-combatancy. In spite of these convictions, I decided to enlist.”

Rick believed the die was cast and Christianity would no longer have a hold on his life. “When Dad asked me why I wanted to join the military, I told him I wanted to grow up,” says Rick. “All my life I’d heard the church teachings on abstinence from drinking and smoking. That was something else I wanted to test. In the final days before I reported for duty, I bought a pack of cigarettes and smoked some. That didn’t turn out as I expected. Instead of enjoying the experience, I couldn’t understand why people chose to smoke.”

### **Boot Camp and The Signal Corps**

After completing boot camp at



When he turned 18, Rick enlisted in the United States Army and did his boot camp training in Fort Ord, California.

Fort Ord, California, Rick signed up for the Signal Corps. His reasoning hearkened back to his spiritual grounding. “I thought if I joined the Signal Corps I wouldn’t have to actively look a guy in the face kill him,” says Rick.

Being taught to obey at home, Rick did well in the Army. He received the honor of being chosen as Soldier of the Month for the 7th Infantry Division while deployed to South Korea with the Signal Corps. While basking in this accomplishment, an opportunity presented itself that Rick believed was too good to pass



Rick earned the honor of being chosen Soldier of the Month for the 7th Infantry Division.

up. “I learned I could volunteer for Officer Candidate School,” says Rick. “However, I didn’t study things out as completely as I should have.”

Assigned to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Rick learned unsettling news. “I’d been assigned to the artillery track and this bothered me deeply. I went to my superiors and said I wanted to return to the Signal Corps,” says Rick. “I was told that I couldn’t make the change and that I would become a field officer.” However, as Providence would have it, Rick’s request was honored within a couple of months and he volunteered for assignment to posts in Vietnam and Korea.

When he returned to the United

Those spiritual lessons learned during childhood lay dormant, but the Spirit continually worked in Rick’s life.

States, Rick decided to leave the military and return to civilian life. He found employment and began a new life in San Jose, California. Although he thought he was done with military service, within a year Rick felt a desire to return. Eventually, he re-enlisted and was sent to Fort Gordon, home of the Signal Corps. This decision led to events that Rick could never have predicted.

### **I’m Not Sure I’m Ready**

One evening while Rick was working, he turned the radio on and the only station he could tune in featured a speaker by the name of Herbert W. Armstrong. “He was talking about those who speak peace, but act out in violence,” says Rick. That message jumpstarted Rick’s thought processes.

A second event worked even more on his heart. Those spiritual lessons learned during childhood lay dormant, but the Spirit continually worked in Rick’s life.

“Opening my trunk after being rear-ended in a car accident, I noticed some of Mr. Armstrong’s unread

magazines in the trunk of my car,” says Rick. “The topic on the cover about the Sabbath piqued my interest and I felt the need to study about the history of the Sabbath. The overwhelming feeling that I wasn’t ready for Christ’s return weighed heavily on me.”

As he studied deeper, Rick decided he needed to find a Sabbath-keeping church. “I located the name of an Adventist church in the Yellow Pages and called them,” says Rick. “When someone answered the phone, I asked if I needed an initiation to attend Saturday services or if I could just come to the next service.”

That week Rick attended his first Sabbath service. “There was a baptism and as part of the service Bible studies were offered to anyone who was interested,” says Rick. “Dr. and Mrs. Rice provided me with a recorder, projector and filmstrip lessons, which led to me accepting the Adventist message.”

## The Testing Continues

Meanwhile, Rick faced pressure at work as an instructor in the Signal School. Adjustments were made to accommodate his Sabbath observance. However, his speaking with soldiers during the intermissions about biblical matters was not well received by everyone. His unwillingness to use foul language or tell shady stories drew special attention to his religious convictions. When questioned by his superiors he responded, “I wanted to take advantage of the free time I had between the classes I taught so I always carry my Bible into the classroom and read it during the breaks we have, but I

make sure I never speak about spiritual things during class.”

Eventually Rick’s convictions led to examinations by psychiatrists, appearing before panels of officers to answer hypothetical questions, and more. “Following an interview with the school commander, the decision was made to move me from the classroom into an office position away from the students,” says Rick. “Within a year I received an honorable discharge, transitioning into civilian life in 1973.”

## What’s the Next Plan?

Unsure of his next career path, Rick trained to be a tractor trailer operator and drove trucks for a year. “Then I worked as a manager of a health food store,” says Rick. “My Bible study continued and I felt that I was being called into pastoral ministry.”

During this time, Rick also met his future wife, Marsha. As they discussed plans for their life together, they made the decision that Rick would follow in the pastoral steps of his father and grandfather. The only difference was that Rick would be a Seventh-day Adventist pastor. Immediately following their wedding reception, the newlyweds headed to Southern Adventist University in Collegedale Tennessee, where Rick began his ministerial training. Through the ensuing years, Rick has served in a number of positions in ministry.

Although Rick believed he’d go his own way and leave Christianity behind, it turned out that God’s way proved more appealing, even in times of testing.

# CREATE YOUR PERSONAL PROFILE

in the World Service Organization Database



The World Service Organization (WSO) is part of the Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries Department. The WSO is the church entity that supports Adventists who serve their communities, militaries, and local, regional, and national governments.

In order to support you, we need to know who you are and what you do. We have created a system to collect this information and store it securely. Now, we need you to create your profile.

## WHO SHOULD CREATE A PROFILE

Any Adventist who serves in:

- ▶ a national military or defence force (This includes Active Duty, Reserves, and National Guard, and State Defense Forces.)
- ▶ law enforcement personnel (City, County, State/Provincial/Federal)
- ▶ firefighters (City, County, State/Provincial/Federal)
- ▶ Search and Rescue/EMTs/First Responders
- ▶ Corrections (State/Provincial or Federal)
- ▶ Government (City, County, State/Provincial, or Federal)
- ▶ Military veterans

## CREATE YOUR PERSONAL PROFILE AT PORTAL. WORLDSERVICEORGANIZATION.ORG.

Once you log in, choose the Adventist In Uniform/Government Registration platform.

You'll be asked to provide your name and contact information, government service information, and church relationship.

Be sure to complete the section on subscriptions to the *For God and Country* magazine, occasional email updates and texts from the World Service Organization.

Complete the information and click submit.





# TELL US YOUR STORY

In the days before digital photos, printed snapshots of people's stories were kept in photo albums. Those photos were the visual evidence of events, emotions, convictions, and legacies.

At the World Service Organization, we believe your story of service is important. We want to tell it in the pages of *For God and Country*.

We are seeking stories about Adventists serving in uniform. This includes all military—Active Duty, Guard or Reserve, and veterans, law enforcement, firefighters, EMTs, First Responders, Search and Rescue, and others who serve their community, state, province, or nation.

To share your story, contact the *For God and Country* editor at [ACMEditor@gc.adventist.org](mailto:ACMEditor@gc.adventist.org).

**YOUR LEGACY NEEDS TO BE SHARED WITH FAMILY,  
FRIENDS, AND THE CHURCH-AT-LARGE.**





## NAD Director's Thoughts WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET



I would have despaired had I not believed that  
I would see the goodness of the Lord In the  
land of the living. Wait for and confidently expect  
the Lord; Be strong and let your heart take courage;  
Yes, wait for and confidently expect the Lord.

Psalm 27:13 -14, Amplified Bible

In the early years of computer programming, the acronym WYSIWYG became popular. It stands for “What You See Is What You Get.”

Before my parents left after enrolling me at Pine Forge Academy, they dropped my bags at North Hall. My father, a man of few words, then said his departing words to me, “You will find whatever you are looking for. Look for the best choices and do the right thing every day. If you do not, you will come home to disgrace.”

Later in life, I stumbled upon quotes that echoed what my father had said. Kabir, a Hindu poet, wrote, “Lift the veil that obscures the heart, and there you will find what you are looking for.” Bryant McGill wrote, “You will find what you are looking for, so look for something beautiful.”

The Psalmist has a more profound suggestion for self-care and perspective management. He/she believed that his/her eyes would see the goodness of God in their lifetime. What protected him/her from despair was the belief that goodness was coming, if not already present. Great expectations yield a greater harvest than mediocrity can dream of.

Believe in good! Expect good. Wait with anticipation. Look with lenses tinted with optimism, and be prepared to embrace and project the realization of the goodness you seek.

The COVID-19 pandemic has enveloped us in a cloud of insecurity, isolation,

disruption, disease, and death. Could there be a silver lining to this dark cloud that has loomed over us for more than a year? Science has delivered several vaccines in record time. Technology has allowed students to continue learning. Most work is being done remotely. Commerce has moved to the digital space. Zoom and other virtual meeting platforms have facilitated corporate worship, fellowship, celebrations, and even dating. During a pandemic, we are not alone.

As you serve God and country, in whatever role you fill, ameliorate your inevitable moments of depletion and despair with the everlasting hope that something good is happening or will soon occur.

Another way to shift your focus from your trials to your triumphs is in the old hymn written by Johnson Oatman, Jr.

*"Are you ever burdened with a load of care?  
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?  
Count your many blessings; ev'ry doubt will fly,  
And you will be singing as the days go by.  
Count your blessings, name them one by one.  
Count your blessings see what God has done.  
Count your blessings. Name them one by one.  
Count your many blessings see what God has done."*

May your life and work be filled with the expectation that beauty and joy will become apparent in your experience because God is with you. And in the worst of cases, find comfort that He is coming again, maybe even while we are in the land of the living.

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

# FREEDOM IS NOT FREEDOM



**By Washington Johnson II,**  
Assistant Director, Adventist Chaplaincy  
Ministries, North American Division of Seventh-  
day Adventists, Captain (CHC) United States  
Navy Chaplain Corps

In a world growing more unpredictable and increasingly dangerous, the roles of the men and women serving in our armed forces are becoming more crucial to our national defense. Whether you are active duty, reserve, or guard member, your commitment, dedication, and devotion to duty have not gone unnoticed. Veterans and service members, you and your families, have contributed to the many freedoms that we all enjoy as a nation. But freedom is not free and has come with a cost that cannot always be measured. Service members who have experienced combat, physical and moral injury in places like Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan are predisposed to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Freedom comes with a cost.

According to the 2018 United

States Department of Veteran Affairs, 20 Veterans chose death by suicide daily, accounting for 13.5 percent of all suicides in the United States. Freedom comes with a cost. In April 2019, the U.S. had a homeless population of over 630,000, with 67,000 identified veterans. This represents 1 in 10 veterans making up America's homeless population. Freedom comes with a cost. Some service members have even made the ultimate sacrifice. Freedom comes with a cost, and we should honor all who served!

One of my assignments as a United States Navy chaplain was to provide burial and spiritual care for service members and their families at Arlington National Cemetery. Conducting more than 200 funerals, I learned that every deceased service member had a unique story. Whether they retired after 20 years, enlisted after high school, came from a metropolitan city, or a rural farm in the Midwest, they helped to make up an ever-expanding mosaic of service reaching back to the American Revolution and are worthy of the highest honor.

# But be assured today that victory will be won on the side of good.

As a nation that is 244 years old, we have experienced our share of wars resulting in deaths, casualties, and external displacement. According to history, President Woodrow Wilson, in his optimism, referred to World War I as the “War to end all Wars.” Unfortunately, that was not the case. World War II, a war in which my father served, followed 23 years later, and we have had many subsequent wars since that time.

Presently our troops are in Afghanistan as the result of the deliberate terrorist acts of 9/11 that claimed the lives of nearly 3,000 citizens and forever changed our world.

Because of these attacks, our country has become the global leader in defeating terrorism. In January 2013, I had the honor of being a part of this global mission to end terrorism with a year-long deployment to Djibouti, Africa, with the United States Navy. Djibouti is strategically located in the Horn of Africa. It is a key United States partner on national security, regional stability, and humanitarian aid in the region. In planning for my mobilization, I went through three weeks of extensive, rigorous expeditionary training along with other service members.

During the classroom and field training, our military instructors stressed the importance of being situationally aware of our surroundings. In warfare, the enemy is always ready to attack—without a moment’s notice.

During my expeditionary training, I also learned the importance of wearing protective gear in a war zone (a.k.a. Battle Rattle)—gas masks, boots, goggles, and a bullet-proof vest. There was not a day when the Battle Rattle was not required.

The Apostle Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6:11-12 how to engage in this world’s spiritual warfare. He tells us to “Put on the whole armor of God” because we are not dealing with an enemy here on earth that we can see or get our hands on. We are dealing with the darkness of spiritual beings who were once in heaven and are now using their authority and power in an attempt to rule this world. Everyone on earth is involved in this cosmic showdown, whether they are veterans or civilians. There is no escaping this war, and there are only two sides in the conflict, good and evil.

But be assured today that victory will be won on the side of good. The Word of God validates this fact in many scriptural passages. Isaiah 2:4 is one such place where the prophet paints the final scene of God’s conquest with a broad brush and a salient message that is most relevant today: “He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.”

I look forward to that glorious day!



# ONLINE GIVING

The World Service Organization provides Online Giving for the return of tithes, offerings, and charitable contributions. Giving tithe and offerings online is easy and secure.

## TO GIVE ONLINE

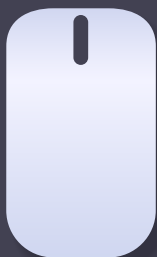
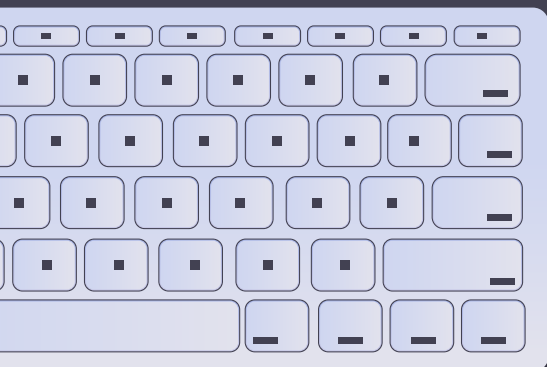
1. Go to [AdventistsInUniform.org](http://AdventistsInUniform.org).
2. Select the Online Giving link.
3. Create a new account or log in to your Adventist Giving account.
4. Enter the amounts you wish to contribute.
5. Provide your payment information.

A receipt for tax-exempt contributions will be issued.

For future offerings you can access the online giving in your Adventist Giving account.

## WHY GIVE?

Seventh-day Adventist military members and chaplains are encouraged to support World Service Organization and Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries as their “local conference.” These organizations provide pastoral care and religious materials for their spiritual well-being. Also support your base chapel program. Military members for countries outside the North American Division are encouraged to contact their conference/union/division ACM leadership for further guidance on how to return their tithes and offerings.



# NAD MILITARY CHURCH

## YOUR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Are you assigned overseas for six months or longer in some type of official government or military-related service for Canada or the United States (active duty in the armed forces, civilian employee, teacher, AAFES worker, contractor, or family member)? Then you are eligible to join the NAD Military Church.

To request a transfer of your membership, contact the World Service Organization at the Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries—North American Division Office.

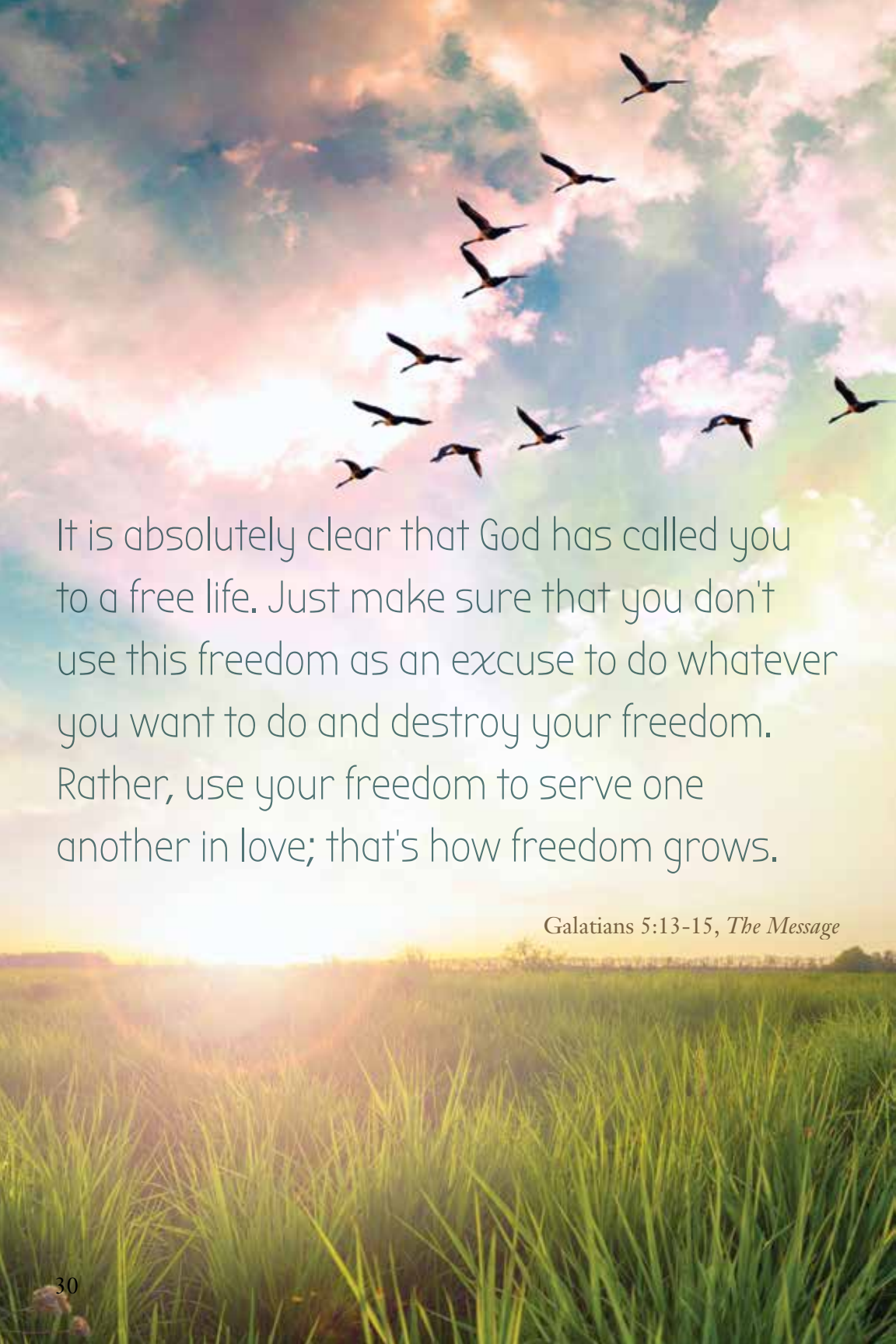
### MAIL IS RECEIVED AT:

Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries  
C/O North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists  
9705 Patuxent Woods Drive  
Columbia, MD 21046

### FOR MEMBERSHIP TRANSFERS, PLEASE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

- names of each family member who will be included in the transfer
- each person's date of birth
- the name and address of the church where your membership is currently held

**YOUR NAD MILITARY CHURCH STAFF AND BOARD LOOK FORWARD TO SERVING YOU!**



It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows.

Galatians 5:13-15, *The Message*

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The National Service Organization is the official military-relations office of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Its primary mission is to provide pastoral care and religious resources to support the spiritual well-being of Seventh-day Adventist military-related personnel.

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God does not control our minds without our  
consent; but every man is free to choose what  
power he will have to rule over him.

– Ministry of Healing, p. 93



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