



ILLINOIS Focus

Editorial



JOHN GRYS,
PRESIDENT

For a host of reasons I cannot delve into here, Job is one of my favorites book of the Old Testament (along with Ecclesiastes—what does that say about me?). Of curiosity to me in light of the theme of education is the end of the book. While chapters 1 and 2 and 38-40 hold the slices on the Baguette de France vegesandwich, the real vegemeat comes in the intervening chapters. These are chapters significantly raw and largely unedited. They are as humans are—struggling with life and meaning. If we are honest. Life done in community cannot be anything other than that for this is the testimony of Scripture. Even the emerging church in Acts experiences people slayed dead (imagine that prayer meeting!). The topsy-turvy of loss and more loss and more loss challenged all known boxes with which to put the experience. Emotions poured forth. Desperation set in. This the heartbeat of the book. And then...

Ah, but perhaps, right here in the midst of the pool of tears and the heap of ashes, in this most sacred space, Job finds the fullness of his

spirit open to a whole new voice. And this voice belts singularly into his stirred soul in ways that were not immediately of comfort. And this voice “educates” Job about how his losses mount up against the fullness of space and time. This voice breaks into the ashes mingled with tears and opens the aperture of eternity in ways that bring Job from where he was to a place he never imagined. And it is in the midst of this voice that stillness enters his soul for perhaps the first time in recent memory.

been unseen. And in that revelation can be a golden opportunity for memorable learning.

And what was the content of those words? “Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?” (v. 2) Oh man, that had to sting. And yet, in those words stands an invitation...and a reminder: Words may not be knowledge! I will avoid the obvious connection between this and the amount of posting across social media platforms. Humanity can be

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Issue Focus

Education

And the first thing I notice is that YHWH speaks “out of the storm.” (38.1 NIV) Scripture continues to surprise me. God loves to use the unexpected as a means of drawing us closer to Him. Christmas has just passed and we love the whole imagery of “silent night.” Yet, storms seem to be a popular place for God’s most impactful teaching and human learning. If you are in a stormy place in life, lean into those storms because I gotta believe by the testimony of Scripture, God is speaking. I wish it were not so, but Job (and Elijah) would beg to differ. Storms have a way of revealing that which has

exposed to so many words daily and yet, never receive knowledge. Learning is not as much about words as it is knowledge. I can read “x” number of books and believe I now have knowledge. I fall into this trap so, so often. Chapters of words fill the pages between chapter 4 and 37 and yet, the possibility YHWH declares is that little knowledge existed.

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& more



Train up a child in the way he should go

The Illinois Conference Education department exists to help grow disciple making schools. As a disciple of Jesus, our schools focus not just on academic excellence; to help students live and be successful in this world, but on Jesus and heaven, our true home. Our teachers and faculty are genuinely dedicated to Jesus, doing their part to help fulfill the mission in Matthew 28. Our schools serve as one of our churches' most active evangelistic opportunities. Our churches that support schools are privileged to touch the lives of more than 450 families, 180 days a year, throughout Illinois. What an amazing opportunity is being handed to us to spread the love of Jesus across Illinois! As we continue to reach lives for Jesus, the Illinois Conference is excited to continue to bring new schools to Illinois. In fact, the process has started to bring a unique virtual school for families in areas that are too distant from a traditional brick-and-mortar school. This endeavor is truly unique as we are partnering with our neighbor conferences, Indiana, and Wisconsin in this adventure. I encourage families to prayerfully consider joining our Adventist education system. Let me share with you a few reasons why families choose Adventist Education:

1. **Values-Based Education:** Adventist schools are guided by Adventist principles and values. We aim to provide an environment where students can learn and grow spiritually, morally, and ethically.
2. **Biblical Integration:** Adventist education integrates biblical teachings into the curriculum.

Students are taught from an Adventist Christian perspective, fostering a deeper understanding of faith and morality.

3. **Character Development:** We emphasize the development of character traits such as kindness, compassion, integrity, and service. The goal is to help students become well-rounded individuals with a solid moral compass.
4. **Community and Fellowship:** Our schools foster a sense of community and fellowship. Students benefit from a supportive and nurturing environment where they can build positive relationships with teachers and peers.
5. **Holistic Education:** Our schools emphasize a holistic approach, addressing the intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual aspects of a child's development. This contributes to a well-rounded education that goes beyond academics.
6. **Emphasis on Health:** The Seventh-day Adventist Church significantly focuses on health and wellness. Our schools incorporate teachings on healthy living, promoting a balanced lifestyle that includes proper nutrition and physical activity.
7. **Focus on Service and Mission:** We encourage students to engage in community service and outreach activities. This focus on service and mission instills a sense of responsibility and commitment to positively impacting the world.

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KATRINA BAUN,
SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION



MEET the Education Department



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We wholeheartedly embrace the truth that, “The true aim of education is to bring man back into harmony with God,” (E. White, Counsel to Teachers). Thus, in our schools, we seek to awaken minds, equip students, and develop character.

To learn more about our schools, please visit www.ilcsda.org



PASTOR ALEXANDER RAMIREZ,
ROCKFORD SDA CHURCH

Living with Jesus is an experience that will compel us to change the status quo of ordinary life and to thrive for something more promising or unexpected. In the Bible, Jesus invites the believer to experience the fullness of living with purpose as we walk with Him. I like to give gifts and surprise my wife and kids with something that they are not expecting, and let me tell you, God wants to surprise His children with beautiful gifts as well. He has way more to offer than I could ever think to give to my family. He has a good surprise for each of us. It is hard to believe, especially in our busy and complex generation with downs and few parentheses of happiness. Still, we should learn to live expecting the unexpected because God can do the impossible. Jesus says, "If you have faith... you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it would move. Nothing would be impossible (Matthew 17:20). When I read my Bible, I see God's people living in a way that expects the unexpected because He could do the impossible for them. Fishers, lawyers, kings, prophets, lepers, locals or strangers; a whole town crossed the sea on foot without getting wet, lions with their mouths shut, and prophets fed by ravens; God is ABLE! He is more capable than Elon Musk! That's my God, and He still is today. My loving, amazing, powerful heavenly Father wants to surprise us with good things. He promised to "open

Educated by Jesus: Expect the Unexpected

the windows of heaven... [and] pour out blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in!" (Malachi 3:10).

Jesus is in the business of re-educating us to live expecting the unexpectedly full life: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10 NIV). Listen, God is not trying to rain on your parade! He wants you to have a full life! Our heavenly Father's definition of "full life" is better than anybody else's. Over and over, I see how God asks, "Do you want a full life?" He wants you to drink fully from the real living water. Jesus said to the woman at the well in Samaria, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:13-14). In John 5, Jesus is walking by a pool. The place was full of people who were sick, blind, lame, homeless, and

paralyzed; it was like the downtown of your city. Jesus sees a man lying beside the pool for 38 years, waiting for someone to help him to enter first into the pool at the right moment and get healed. Indeed, it is a pathetic scenario. Then, the most bizarre question is heard: "Do you want to get well?" (John 5:6). If I were there, I could listen to the people saying, "Daahh... of course!" "Don't you see him trying faithfully every day to be as close as possible to the pool?!" But the reality is that the best of this man for 38 years was not enough! This man was expecting to be there for another thirty-something years! And Jesus was there wishing to provide wellness and wholeness to this man, and He hopes to give the same to each of us. When the disabled man responds affirmatively to Jesus' question, he's met with a challenge from the Lord: "Get up, pick up your mat, and walk!" (John 5:8) In other words, "Do the impossible, expect the unexpected!"

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Adventist Education That Brings Us Together

Have you ever experienced a student grow to have a life-saving relationship with Jesus in our Adventist Schools? I have. It is an amazing experience. For those who have yet to experience this or have not experienced it in a while, I invite you to partner with me in supporting Adventist Education in the Illinois Conference.

I am convicted of Adventist Education's great importance in our time. Perhaps you sense this too. As we approach the Second Coming with increasing intensity, consider if this generation of young people will be the one to usher in the great event of Jesus' return. If it is not this generation, are they equipped to disciple the next generation?

I envision Jesus at the center of Adventist Education. This education is not just for our schools. Jesus centered Adventist Education should also be in our churches and our homes. Imagine the three working together!

For our Illinois Conference pastors, provide that Christ-like presence at our schools. Be there as an extension of Christ's Character for the students, parents, and

staff. For our educators, we know the incredible ministry you provide in the classroom. Invite and provide an opportunity for church members to support, volunteer and give to your school. For every member of Illinois Conference, make yourself available to pray daily for an Adventist school. Do not stop there. Pray for each school-age child in your church! Ask God for His leading for you to volunteer at the closest Adventist school.

Here are 9 ways Illinois Conference members could be involved in an Adventist School:

1. Provide prayer and spiritual support.
2. Help with Home and School, connect the bond between the home and school.
3. Help with community outreach and service projects through our schools.
4. Provide technology assistance.
5. Help with the library and classroom libraries.
6. Provide specialized workshops or seminars for the students.
7. Organize extracurricular activities.
8. Assist teachers during or outside school hours.
9. Help with tutoring and mentoring.



PASTOR IRA BARTOLOME,
DOWNERS GROVE SDA CHURCH

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WELCOME TO CAMP AKITA

WRITTEN BY ALPINE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL STUDENT, AURORE IGIHOZO

Camp Akita has been a great experience for me. I have stayed there for their summer camp for two summers. The first time I went to Camp Akita, I thought it was going to be a really strict Christian camp, but I was wrong. The weeks are filled with nothing but fun. Camp Akita has also helped me grow closer to God and socialize more with more people. I have made many memories that I have gotten to share with the new friends I made at camp.

My relationship with God was not strong before Camp Akita. That changed. I would wake up and read a verse from the Bible and write down what I learned. I also learned many new Christian songs, which I listen to every day. I have witnessed so many people get baptized and proclaiming Christ as their Savior and I wonder, "When am I getting baptized?"

One of my favorite parts of Camp Akita is waking up every morning and doing skits of daily verses. Our cabin used scenes from movies like Toy Story, Mean Girls, and Beauty and the Beast. Afternoon worship felt like I was stepping into a whole new world. I sang my heart out every day.

I did many cool and fun things -- zip-lining, rock climbing, and riding the big horses at Camp Akita. I was even scared to try most of the activities, but after giving it a chance, I got the hang of it. Zip-lining was one of my favorite activities because I wanted to get over my fear of heights. Additionally, I got "blobbed," which is when you sit at the very end of the big floaty, and one to three people can jump from an edge onto the blob, causing you to go high up in the air.

Camp Akita is not just a summer camp, to me. It is a special place - a place where I can be myself. Even though I have only been there for two years, I feel like I've gone there my whole life. Camp Akita has helped me grow as a person. It also helped me grow spiritually. I became more social and created many friendships and memories that I hope will last forever.



If you would like to learn more about our summer camp programs, visit www.campakita.com



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Whether education occurs in a classroom filled with seventh graders or a university room filled with theology students or a training event held by our conference, let us never fall into the trap that words are knowledge. YHWH is about to extend the learning environment into eternity and braces Job for what is coming...and it serves as an invitation to us, "Brace yourself. I will question you." And now, as eternity begins we've entered into an education for the ages. Stay tuned!

Continued from page 2 | Baun

8. Small Class Sizes: Our schools offer smaller classes, allowing for more personalized attention and individualized instruction. This benefits students who thrive in a more intimate learning environment.

Today's children face many struggles and temptations that differ greatly from our Adventist beliefs. Our schools' partner with parents to provide a safe place for students to grow and develop; to see God's plan for their lives. Proverbs 22:6 tells us, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This is God's promise to us; if we fulfill "our part" as parents, He is faithful and just to fulfill His part.

This world is not our home; as a parent, I want nothing more than to see my children in heaven with me someday. Don't you want to give your child every opportunity to see Jesus and have a relationship with Him?

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These are just a few ideas! Volunteer acts can add up to an amazing school year for a young person. It has much potential for a student to develop a vibrant relationship with Jesus. My School Board Chair reminds me often that our Adventist School is evangelism 10 months out of the year. What a privilege and opportunity God has given to us as we work together.

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When the man obeyed and made the effort, he was whole -physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. God is more generous, kind, and merciful than any good parent. He takes delight in surprising us when we expect the unexpected. Today, He is also inviting you to live, expecting the unexpected.

Pray with me, "Eternal God, thank you for the joy of your surprises. You do more for us than we can even ask or imagine. Lead us safely to the refuge of your choosing, for we know you desire to give us a full life. Give us wisdom to evaluate each action as we refuse to deviate from the path of integrity. Please help us to live according to your will, expecting the unexpected. In your mighty name. Amen."

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