

Feature

Three Angels Unleashed

Laypeople and leaders team up in an unprecedented project to educate Adventists about the three angels' messages.



BY ANDREW MCCHESENEY

During weekend hikes Rusty McKee, a vice president at McKee Food Corporation, often strikes up conversations with young people who look like they might study at Seventh-day Adventist schools.

"Hey, are you Seventh-day Adventist?" he asks on the wooded trails around his hometown of Collegedale, Tennessee.

When he hears an affirmative, he poses another question.

"Do Seventh-day Adventists consider themselves Protestant?"

Usually the young person nods.

"What are you protesting?"

McKee asks.

Silence.

"Do you believe 1 John 4:8, which says, 'God is love'?" McKee persists.

The young person always gives a

resounding "Yes."

"Adventists have the three angels' messages," McKee says. "What are they, and how do they reveal God's love even more?"

Silence.

McKee began taking the informal survey after learning on a 2015 backpacking trip that a young relative and his friends—even with more than eight years of Adventist education and a lifetime of church attendance—could not explain the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12, the core of the Adventist Church's mission. The results were no better on the hiking trails around Collegedale. Puzzled, he spoke with friends, then phoned another friend, Dan Houghton, president of Hart Research Center, a supporting Adventist ministry in California that

develops evangelistic resources.

The 2018 phone call resulted in an unprecedented project to educate Adventists of all ages about the three angels' messages, a love letter from Jesus that identifies the characteristics of the last-day remnant church and declares His imminent return. The initiative aims to strengthen relationships with Christ, deepen understanding of the Adventist Church's purpose in the last days of earth's history, and encourage greater passion for mission.

The multipronged project, which has won support from the General Conference world church headquarters and the North American Division, includes:

- a two-week curriculum for K-12 students.

Ted Wilson: "This Is the Core of Who We Are"

The General Conference president reflects on the three angels' messages.

A brief interview with General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson about the three angels' messages project.

What do you hope that this project will accomplish?

The goal for the project is to get the three angels' messages out to our church members and the public in the most powerful way possible. This is the core of who Seventh-day Adventists are, and the real core of the three angels' messages is the righteousness of Christ, His justifying and sanctifying righteousness.

What is the significance of the three angels' messages to the Adventist Church and to individual church members?

Church members are to be thoroughly acquainted with the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12

and the fourth angel of Revelation 18:1-4, calling people out of Babylon and confusion into the marvelous light of God's full truth. We are told that the books of Daniel and Revelation, which are so intricately linked in prophetic understanding, are to be well understood by Seventh-day Adventists. They can then share these precious messages in Total Member Involvement with Christian love and hope, bringing people to the foot of the cross, where they can understand from the sanctuary message that Christ's intermediary work continues for them in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. All of this is closely tied into the three angels' messages, helping people know that God is the Creator, that we need to turn away from false religious practices that constitute Babylon in mixing error with truth, and that we are to avoid the mark of the beast—false worship on a day other than the seventh-day Sabbath—and align ourselves with our Redeemer and His seal, observing and worshipping on the biblical seventh-day Sabbath, the sign of God's creative power.

What a privilege to be part of God's last-day Advent movement with its full understanding of prophetic truth and our role in helping share the three angels' messages with Holy Spirit power. The 2021 General Conference Session's theme is "Jesus Is Coming! Get Involved!" Get involved by sharing the three angels' messages under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. ©

- a 13-part video series by Mark Finley.

- written sermon scripts with 1,200 new graphics that preachers can use for evangelistic meetings.

- a book, a GLOW tract, and other printed materials.

Catching the enthusiasm of the lay-led initiative, the General Conference has commissioned the first-ever *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* dedicated to the three angels' messages; embraced a three angels honor for Pathfinders; and formed a committee to enhance understanding of the three angels' messages through apps, digital media, and a variety of other methods.

NO OTHER WORK SO IMPORTANT

"I hope to see every Seventh-day Adventist around the globe involved in sharing these precious

three angels' messages about Christ and His righteousness and pointing people back to the true worship of God the Creator, Redeemer, High Priest, and coming King," said Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the General Conference.

In an e-mail interview, Wilson emphasized that the three angels' messages are at the core of the identity of Seventh-day Adventists and that "the real core of the three angels' messages is the righteousness of Christ, His justifying and sanctifying righteousness."

He noted that church cofounder Ellen White taught that Adventists' greatest responsibility was to proclaim the three angels' messages. Citing her words, he said, "In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last

warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention."¹

McKee said that he and other laypeople were motivated to act when they discovered the same Ellen White quotation and realized that the three angels' messages were the main reason for the church's existence.

"When we discovered the primary purpose our church exists, this set our hearts and minds on an action to educate church students, faculty, pastors, and leaders on this purpose and to provide tools to help them take action the way our Seventh-day

Sandra Doran: God Led Every Step of Curriculum Development

Veteran educator wondered how to share three angels' messages with kindergarteners.

Sandra Doran, a veteran Seventh-day Adventist educator, was intrigued when she was asked to develop a curriculum to teach the three angels' messages to children from kindergarten through high school.

But she wondered whether it was possible. After all, how could she break down the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12 for a 5-year-old child?

Doran considered declining the project. With a doctorate

in special education from Boston University, she had just invested her energies for 17 years as associate superintendent of education for the Florida Conference and founding head of North Tampa Christian Academy, an innovative Seventh-day Adventist school start-up in Wesley Chapel, Florida.

That night, after praying, she slid into bed and fell asleep.

In the morning she woke up with a poem ringing in her head. The words flowed as she wrote.

"Three angels in the sky. Oh my! OH MY! OH MY!" she wrote. "Ready? Let's begin the story. First angel: Give God the glory. He's always fair and good and true. He'll do what's right for me and you."

The poem became the text for *Three Angels in the Sky*, the first book in a curriculum being made available to K-12 church schools and homeschools at no cost in the 2020-2021 academic year. The curriculum is a key part of a larger three angels project financed by Seventh-day Adventist laypeople and supported by the Adventist world church to educate and inspire church members of all ages to share Jesus' love letter of Revelation 14:6-12 that He is coming soon.

Doran didn't know what to write after the initial poem, but she felt God was saying, "I'm going to help you along

Adventist movement did in the 1800s," McKee said by e-mail.

Early Adventists shared a joyful expectation in Jesus' soon return, and that passion needs to be rekindled, project leaders said.

"The three angels' messages lift us from being simply another denomination to a prophetic movement of destiny, to a movement raised up by God to prepare the world for His soon return," evangelist Mark Finley said by telephone. "Each passing generation faces the challenge of a loss of that cutting-edge passion to see Jesus come, a loss of a general understanding of who we are as a people. The three angels help us understand who we are in light of eternity."

Finley's contributions to the project encompass 13 video presentations called *Three Cosmic Messages: Earth's Final*



Conflict, which are available with downloadable study guides via Hope Channel, 3ABN television, and the websites HopeLives365.com and ThreeCosmicMessages.com. In addition, he authored the 212-page companion book, *Three Cosmic Messages: Earth's Final Conflict*, with 13 chapters focusing on

various aspects of the uniqueness of the three angels' messages with application to people's lives today.

The book is published jointly by Hart Books and the General Conference-owned Review and Herald Publishing Association. Finley also wrote the specially themed *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*,

the way." She agreed to develop the curriculum.

"God made it very, very clear to me that I could do it," Doran said. "But He never gave me everything at once. He only gave me one chunk at a time."

One chunk fell into place as Doran wrestled over content for a book for third- and fourth-grade students. She wanted the book's main character, a girl, to find her father facing a Sabbath conflict so students could understand the religious liberty issues that some people experience in keeping the fourth commandment. That night in bed Doran remembered that her husband, a pastor, had assisted a police officer in his church with a Sabbath problem three decades earlier.

You should use this case, she thought.

The next morning she asked her husband, Eric, "Do you remember 30 years ago when you had this police officer with a Sabbath problem in your congregation?"

Eric's jaw dropped in shock.

"I haven't accessed those files in 30 years," he said. "But yesterday I was going through my files and found it. I can give you everything right now."

He went into his home office and returned moments later with a fat file containing newspaper clippings and other documents. Doran had the information that she needed for the book, *Beth and the Trio of Angels*.

A similar incident happened while preparing materials for the fifth and sixth grades. As she grappled to write 10 essays for the children, she remembered a trip to Russia to speak at a women's retreat in 1996. While in Moscow, she had interviewed a woman named Natasha in hope of writing a book about her life. The book never materialized, but Doran recalled one of the stories that she had heard. Looking through her files, she found her handwritten notes from 1996 and wrote an essay titled, "A Dark Night in Russia." God had given her the perfect story for the essay 24 years before she needed it.

Doran describes the unexpected surprises as miracles and confirmation that she made the right decision in accepting the position of curriculum and creative director at Three Angels for Kids, a unit of Adventist supporting ministry Hart Research Center that developed the school curriculum.

"Why did I take on this curriculum?" she asks. "Because God gave the assurance every step along the way that this is what He wanted me to do. Whenever I doubted myself or needed reassurance or felt that I didn't know which direction to take, God would put it very clearly in my mind. . . . I am humbled. I feel that God has led through all of this." ©

scheduled for release in second quarter 2023. In addition, sermon scripts and accompanying graphics from Finley's presentations have been prepared for pastors and lay members to use to present the messages themselves. Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries (ASI) is also preparing a special version of *Three Cosmic Messages: Earth's Final Conflict* for sharing.

Dan Houghton, whose Hart Research Center is coordinating the project, voiced enthusiasm about the momentum that has grown as lay members have teamed up with General Conference leaders and supporting ministries, notably 3ABN, which provided use of its production facilities to create the Finley series. Such close cooperation is needed to finish the church's mission of

proclaiming the three angels' messages, he said, pointing to another statement by Ellen White in the same volume: "The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers."²

Houghton is praying for big results for the lay-funded project.

Claiming the Adventist DNA

Jewish children have the Shema; Adventists have the three angels' messages.

A rabbi approached the Roman Catholic priest overseeing an orphanage shortly after World War II. "Do you have any Jewish children in your orphanage?" the rabbi asked.

The priest shook his head. "We have no Jewish children here," he said.

"Are you sure?" the rabbi asked. "What about their names?"

"They have Polish names," the priest said. "We cannot tell the difference. There are no Jewish children here."

The rabbi left the orphanage, but he had no intention of giving up. He was traveling across Europe in search of Jewish children, a number of whom had been sent to orphanages by desperate parents for shelter from Nazi forces.

As evangelist Mark Finley tells the story, the rabbi returned to the orphanage that night and received permission from the priest to walk through the quiet rooms. As he walked, he began to sing the Shema, a Jewish prayer from Deuteronomy 6:4. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one," he sang in Hebrew.

As the sweet words pierced the still night, a 5-year-old child began to cry. "*Mameh, Mameh,*" she sobbed. "Mama, Mama."

A 9-year-old stirred in another bed. "*Tatte, Tatte,*" he wept. "Daddy, Daddy."

Every Jewish child knows the Shema, Finley said. They are taught it from their earliest ages as part of family morning and evening worship. It's part of their DNA.

As the children awoke and cried for their parents, the rabbi turned to the priest. "That's one of mine," he said. "That's one of mine. That's one of mine."

In telling the story, Finley asks: What is the Seventh-day Adventist DNA? What is it that makes Adventists unique? The answer, he says, is simple: It's the three angels' messages given in Revelation 14:6-12.

"One of the great challenges we face in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the loss of our identity," Finley said in an interview. "Adventists were raised in the 1840s as people who anticipated the coming of Christ. We were a movement of destiny, a movement of prophetic certainty, that was raised up by God to prepare the world for His return."

The three angels' messages are at the core of the Adventist identity, the Adventist DNA, he said. The messages identify the last-day remnant church as people who keep all of God's commandments, including the fourth (to observe the seventh-day Sabbath), and have the testimony of Jesus, also known as the Spirit of Prophecy. The three angels' messages are a love letter from Jesus containing an urgent appeal for the world to be prepared for His imminent return, because He doesn't want anyone to be lost.

A desire for young Adventists to claim their DNA and share this love letter with the world is the reason Finley and others support a groundbreaking three angels project, which includes a K-12 curriculum, a 13-part evangelistic series, a new book and magazines, an *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, a Pathfinder honor, and more.

"Imagine every Seventh-day Adventist young person graduating from an Adventist school—eighth grade, academy, and college—and coming out with a passion for mission, a passion to share the three angels' messages," Finley said in announcing the beginnings of the project at an ASI convention in 2018. "That's what this project is about." ©

"It's the three angels' messages as they haven't been preached in several generations," he said.

THREE ANGELS IN SCHOOLS

A crown jewel of the project is the K-12 curriculum developed by veteran Adventist educator Sandra Doran and endorsed by the North American Division's Department of Education.

The curriculum, available online at no cost, is designed to be easily incorporated into church schools and homeschools and to progress in a developmentally appropriate manner, Doran said. Kindergarteners will learn the broad concept that God is always right, fair, and true. High school students will dive deeply into specific issues such as fairness, Sabbath

observance, religious liberty, and the importance of making good spiritual decisions. The common theme running throughout the curriculum is: God is love.

"The entire curriculum is saturated with the love of God in sending a three-point alert to people living just before He comes so they understand that He is coming, share what they know with others,



Three Angels Resources

A quick guide to three angels' messages resources and ways to access them

All resources—including *Three Cosmic Messages: Earth's Final Conflict*, a 13-part video series by Mark Finley with study guides, and Mark Finley's *Three Cosmic Messages: Earth's Final Conflict* written scripts for a 13-part evangelistic series with more than 1,200 new graphics—can be downloaded at:

threecosmicmessages.com

Three Angels for Kids curriculum for K-8 homeschool teachers:

threeangelsforkids.com

Three Angels for Today curriculum for homeschool teachers of grades 9 through 12:

threeangelsfortoday.com

K-12 curriculum for church school teachers:

adventisteducation.org

Mark Finley's 212-page book *Three Cosmic Messages: Earth's Final Conflict*, with 13 chapters that focus on various aspects of the uniqueness of the three angels' messages with application to people's lives today. Download the ebook on Amazon or buy the book online or at Adventist Book Center. ©



draw closer to Jesus, and put their faith and trust in Him," said Doran, who holds a doctorate in special education from Boston University, served for 15 years as associate education superintendent for the Florida Conference, and most recently worked as founding head of school of North Tampa Christian Academy, an innovative school start-up in Wesley Chapel, Florida.

Doran emphasized that the two-week curriculum can be integrated effortlessly into a class, and not necessarily Bible class. The materials for kindergarten and the first and second grades, for example, include two storybooks and a watercolor book that can be used for art class.

"They make their own watercolor book," Doran said. "We teach them how to be artists and be proud that they can paint."

Third and fourth graders read *Beth and the Trio of Angels*, a book about the adventures of a little girl that Doran wrote at three different reading levels. All three versions are available so that teachers can use

them in a multigrade classroom if needed. In addition to Bible class, the book could be used in reading class.

"The book teaches children how to read," Doran said.

Three reading levels are also available for the 10 essays that Doran prepared for fifth and sixth graders. The essays aim to teach children how to write. In one assignment, students read an essay about a horse-judging contest and the reality that a horse can be rejected for a single mistake. Then students read an essay from Ellen White's book *The Acts of the Apostles* about how God's sacrifice for humanity, not human perfection, is the deciding factor on judgment day. Students are then asked to write about how God's judgment differs from the judging that takes place on earth.

"With that assignment, the teacher has taught the first angel's message about the judgment hour," said Doran, curriculum and creative director at Three Angels for Kids, a unit of Hart Research Center that developed the school curriculum.

An interactive notebook/journal

teaches the three angels' messages to seventh- and eighth-grade students, while five micro units are available for high school students, including an honors Bible course in which they preach evangelistic meetings based on Finley's *Three Cosmic Messages* series.

North American Division president G. Alexander Bryant has thrown his support behind the K-12 curriculum, which is available on the division's website. "I am amazed with these wonderful tools God has created to reach millions of people in this unique period of time in which we live. God will use this curriculum in our schools to give our youth a great understanding of Jesus as found in the messages of the three angels in Revelation 14 that will inspire them to be wonderful ambassadors for His cause."

Arne Nielsen, vice president for education at the North American Division, described the K-12 curriculum as "an invaluable resource for both students and teachers."

He also praised the curriculum's



NAD's Take on the Three Angels' Messages in Schools

Two education leaders weigh in on the new curriculum.

A short conversation about the three angels curriculum with Lisa Standish, North American Division's director of elementary education and curriculum development, and Stephen Bralley, North American Division's director of secondary education and accreditation.

What advice would you give North American Division teachers and homeschool teachers about this curriculum?

LS: The three angels curriculum has been adopted by the North American Division's Curriculum Committee as a distinctly Adventist resource that is easy to use, promotes rigorous learning, and dovetails with our Encounter Bible curriculum. Teachers or homeschool parents could use the three angels' lessons for their Fun Fridays, as a unit before Christmas or spring break, or as part of their language arts program. It's easy to use and comes with all the resources necessary to teach the unit.

SB: The North American Division's education department is always adding resources and additional support for the core curriculum it offers. This is a wonderful addition to Encounter. It aligns and affirms the growth of understanding in the nature and purpose of God for His followers. The curriculum was designed to be flexible and to provide teachers with plenty of options for using the material. It can be used in direct conjunction with Encounter lessons, as stand-alone pre- or post-lessons, or as bridge units before moving into the next lesson.

Why have you embraced and endorsed this curriculum?

LS: The North American Division is committed to provide distinctly Adventist resources that promote our mission and vision for Adventist schools. We want our young people to have an ongoing and authentic relationship with Jesus. This curriculum engages students in the biblical message and promotes faith and learning in a creative and student-centered unit.

SB: For all the reasons listed in the first answer. It offers additional resources for teachers; it affirms our beliefs and reinforces their importance; and it provides intentional flexibility of the material for the teacher.

What is your goal for this program?

SB: Teachers are always looking for resources when they create and adapt their daily lessons. Our intent is to provide high value material for teachers to use.

Anything you would like to add?

LS: The elementary and middle school units are specifically designed to complement the language arts. Students are engaged in an integrated unit based on the three angels' messages. Students will be engaged in art, history, reading, writing, and math. Each level is developmentally appropriate and highly engaging. ©

crossover value, noting that it could be used to support subjects such as history, English, and science, and said it respects Ellen White's counsel: "It is the work of true education . . . to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought."³

"This curriculum provides our students the opportunity for reflection, critical thinking, and opportunity to share with others as they become disciple makers," he said.

With the three angels project, the day may come that McKee no longer hears silence when he asks young hikers to define the three angels' messages and explain how they reveal God's love. "Every Seventh-day Adventist should be asking themselves and their Adventist friends these same questions," he said. ©

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 9, p. 19.

² *Ibid.*, p. 117.

³ Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903, 1952), p. 17.

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