



Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson

## EDUCATING FOR PROPHETIC SOCIAL ACTIVISM

In the fall of 2011, evangelical Christian pastors led by Jim Wallis of *Sojourners*<sup>1</sup> formed a coalition called The Circle of Protection to assist the working and non-working poor, the homeless, and the undocumented immigrant, who are affected by what the pastors regard as immoral laws that unfairly burden those who least can afford to carry the financial weight of the American economic crisis.

Throughout their 150-year history, Adventists, too, have felt a conviction to address social inequities, based on the biblical mandate expressed by their Master: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. . . . to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free” (Luke 4:18, 19, NRSV),<sup>2</sup> which echoes the challenge of Isaiah 58:6 and 7: “to loose the bonds of injustice, . . . to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke.”

Like other people of faith who grapple with the biblical implications of these words in a complex world, Adventist educators are called on to prayerfully consider their own personal “moral compass” as they decide how they and their students can productively engage in contemporary issues relating to social justice.

Through a variety of topics, this issue of the *JOURNAL* addresses the following questions: “How can social outreach help to broaden our understanding and implementation of evangelism?” and “What strategies will inspire students to engage in these activities both while they are in our classrooms and throughout their lives?”

Floyd Greenleaf’s reflection on Adventist involvement with pressing social issues provides documentation showing that Adventists have always engaged in social activism, beginning with Ellen White’s support of the anti-

alcohol movement on down to the EndItNow campaign, an initiative of the General Conference’s Women’s Ministries Department in partnership with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) to protect women and girls everywhere from violence.

By providing a framework for thinking about Adventism’s role in addressing social injustices, Zack Plantak challenges educators to find ways to connect the gospel, especially our unique emphasis on the Sabbath and the Second Coming, to a commitment to justice.

Adventists’ early prophetic/eschatological vision focused as much on living the gospel through deeds of compassion as on preaching doctrine. This understanding of the church’s mission is revealed through (1) the work and witness of Ellen White who, as Ginger Harwood’s article reveals, was a social activist, and later, (2) the sociopolitical work of such activists as Fernando and Ana Stahl who, as Charles Teel so compellingly describes, transformed the Peruvian sociopolitical structure that kept the indigenous populations on the margins of national life; and during World War II, (3) the heroic John Henry Weidner, who, Kurt Ganter shows, did not just deplore the injustice of the Nazi regime—he risked his life to do something about it. Sharing these and other stories of heroic action will go far in convincing the current and future generations of the relevance of their faith, and in inspiring them to make the world a better place.

Next, authors Hyman and Lampkin suggest possible models for Adventist social engagement by referencing the American civil rights movement and recent social involvement by Adventist universities. Their article is followed by an interview by Jeff Boyd with Karen Kotoske, founder of a worldwide humanitarian organization, who

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**ADVENTIST SOCIAL JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS**

**Amistad International**  
Karen Kotoske, Founder/Executive Director

P.O. Box 455  
Palo Alto, CA 94302  
(650) 328-1737  
<http://www.amistadinternational.org>  
e-mail: tomamistad@aol.com

**Adventist Disaster and Relief Association (ADRA)**  
<http://www.adra.org>

**Adventist Peace Fellowship**  
P.O. Box 2840  
Silver Spring, MD 20915  
(240) 515-1386  
<http://www.adventistpeace.org>

**General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists**  
Official Statements relating to social justice (abuse and family violence, birth control, child sexual abuse, drugs, environment, global poverty, homelessness and poverty, racism, literacy, tolerance)  
<http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/index.html>

**General Conference Women’s Ministries Department and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) *EndItNow Campaign*** (addressing violence toward women and girls worldwide)  
<http://www.enditnow.org>

**International Children’s Care Alcyon and Ken Fleck, Founders**  
2711 NE 134th Way  
Vancouver, WA 98686  
Or  
P.O. Box 820610  
Vancouver, WA 98682-0013  
(800) ICC-PRAY  
<http://www.forhiskids.org>  
e-mail: info@forhiskids.org

**REACH International**  
P.O. Box 32  
Berrien Springs, MI 49103  
(800) 869-1412  
<http://www.reach.org>  
e-mail: info@reach.org

**Restore a Child and Defend Orphans Movement**  
Norma Nashed, Founder  
<http://restoreachild.org>;  
[facebook.com/RestoreAChild](https://facebook.com/RestoreAChild)

**Saving Orphans through Healthcare and Outreach (SOHO)**  
Cynthia Prime, Founder/Director  
8240 Naab Road, Suite 160  
Indianapolis, IN 46260  
(317) 471-5954  
<http://www.savingorphans.com>  
e-mail: info@savingorphans.com

**OTHER CHRISTIAN SOCIAL JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS**

**Operation Inasmuch: A Compassion Revolution**  
A national nonprofit that employs proven models to motivate, train, and equip churches to inspire congregants to serve the neediest in their communities.  
<http://operationinasmuch.org>

**Sojourners and *Sojourners Magazine***  
Jim Wallis, President, CEO, and Editor  
Provides a wealth of resources to get students involved in currently pressing social issues.  
<http://www.sojo.net>

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models an in-the-trenches prophetic Advent faith.

And finally, a how-to guide for Adventist campuses. Peace Weeks have been organized at a number of Adventist universities and colleges, such as Walla Walla University and La Sierra University. At Union College, Chris Blake draws on his years of experience to present a model for a yearly Peace Week that showcases the works of justice and mercy carried out by students, faculty, and staff.

Engagement in social-justice activities, such as short-term mission trips at home and abroad, feeding and clothing the poor, and raising funds for disaster relief and constructing chapels and schools help cultivate in students a spirit of selfless service that bodes well for the future of Adventism as it “occupies” until the Lord comes.

One of the participants in the New York City “Occupy Wall Street” protesters gave this answer when asked why she was there: “We are here because we know something is wrong.”<sup>3</sup> If we as Adventist educators know “something is wrong,” we, too, must respond in ways that honor our own faith tradition while implementing eternal biblical mandates in a manner that is relevant to hurting people in the 21st century. If we do, our students will rise and bless us for teaching them how to live relevant and meaningful Christian lives.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See <http://www.sojo.net>.
2. All of the Bible texts in this editorial are quoted from the New Revised Standard Version. Bible texts credited to NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright ©1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.
3. Launched on September 17, 2011, the Occupy Wall Street movement sought to address issues relating to economic justice and corruption. The author accessed this statement on YouTube in October or November of that same year in video that is no longer available online.

*The Coordinator for this special issue, Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson, Ph.D., is Chair of the World Languages Department at La Sierra University in Riverside, California. She is also a member of Clergy and Laity for Economic Justice (Pueblo de Fe Unido) and has published articles dealing with Christianity and immigration reform. The editorial staff of the JOURNAL express heartfelt appreciation for her assistance throughout the planning and production of the issue. Dr. Morales-Gudmundsson devoted many hours to identifying authors and topics, critiquing articles, and obtaining peer reviewers, but perhaps her most important contribution was inspiration, as she consistently radiated passion and conviction about the topics addressed in the issue.*