



Andrew Mutero

## House of God and Gate of Heaven

One of our major strengths as Adventists is a unique philosophy of education that seeks to develop the whole person physically, mentally, and socially in a world where education has a strong bias for only mental development. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been called at such a time as this not only to *preach* the third angel's message but also to *teach* the message.<sup>1</sup>

We are reminded of Jacob, who was faced with fear and an uncertain future. Genesis 28:11 says that Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. He was running away from his brother Esau, whom he had betrayed and who was seeking revenge, and Jacob was afraid for the future. In this time of uncertainty, he “stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep” (Genesis 28:11, NIV).<sup>2</sup>

But in a moment of despair, sometimes a dream comes! Jacob “had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it” (Genesis 28:12). Majestic ambassadors of God were conducting business between heaven and earth. Most encouraging to Jacob, “there above it stood the Lord” (Genesis 28:13). At the top of every stairway in life stands the Lord. We can trust Him with our future.

This dream was all grace. Jacob was not seeking God—he was fleeing the consequences of his decep-

tion. He was not expecting grace, yet the vision and the voice of God bore only assurances. Jacob could never go beyond God's keeping. Grace had brought Jacob safe thus far, and grace would lead him home.<sup>3</sup>

What can we learn from the experience of Jacob? At today's crossroads, we must:

- **Have a dream for our Adventist schools.** The Lord is sitting on His throne, watching over us, and the angels are there to minister to us and connect us to the throne of God (Genesis 28:12).

- **Wake from our sleep and think,** paying close attention to our schools and our dreams for them: “When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, ‘surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it’” (Genesis 28:16).

- **Recognize and admit** that “surely the Lord is in this place,” and sometimes we may not be aware of it.

- **Declare in reverence,** “How awesome is this place!” Could our schools become the house of God and the gate of heaven in our communities?

Just like Jacob, we are apprehensive and concerned about the future. What is the future of Adventist education? What will happen to our schools? Where do we get the much-needed resources? The Lord is assuring us today: “I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you” (Genesis 28:15).

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The articles in this issue are a collection of reflections on topics that speak to wholistic education: the mental, physical, social, and spiritual. The rise of generative Artificial Intelligence has impacted education globally. It has forced educators to think about how best to navigate this technological advancement's moral, ethical, and practical use. JAE will be publishing throughout the year several articles on the topic (see "Generative AI in Adventist Education" by David P. Harris and Fred Armstrong in the previous issue [<https://www.journalofadventisteducation.org/2023.8.5.2.2>]). In this current issue, Lorin Koch addresses "ChatGPT in the Classroom: Recommendations for Use, Limitations, and Student and Teacher Experiences" and provides helpful recommendations for practical use by educators as they shape the learning environment for all learners. Shondell DeVelde takes an evidence-based approach to teaching students about healthful food choices in "Promoting Plant-based Diets in Seventh-day Adventist Schools." We are excited to share a reprint of an article by Wilf Rieger, first published in *TEACH Journal of Christian Education*, on character development as a hallmark of Christian education titled "Rick Warren and Ellen G. White on Christian Character Development: An Unexpected Meeting of the Minds?" Our Perspectives section shares an adapted transcript of a presentation by Siroj Sorajjakool to the Seventh International Scholars Conference in Bandung, Indonesia (October 19, 2019) titled "Academia, the Sabbath, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution" in which he reflects on the challenges of navigating technological change within the context of Adventist education.

The remaining articles address resources for improving instruction: "The Geoscience Research Institute: A Resource for Teaching a Biblical Understanding of Earth History" by Emeraude Victorin Tobias; "Best Practice Approaches for Multigrade Education" by Andrea Gray; and Bianca Loss' review of Ophelia Barizo's book, *Seeing GOD Through STEM*.

We hope these articles stimulate your thoughts as

you make curriculum decisions, plan instruction, and seek ways to cultivate a learning environment that leads and nurtures learners as they develop a vibrant, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The Lord is in our Adventist schools, and we are sometimes unaware of it. Every Adventist school ought to be a "house of God . . . the gate of heaven,"<sup>4</sup> where every child, man, and woman, can come face to face with God through the Ladder who has been sent down from heaven, Jesus Christ Himself.

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**Andrew Mutero, PhD**, is the Education Director for the East-Central Africa Division, headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya. This division includes the countries of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, and Tanzania. He also serves as a consultant on THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION® Advisory Board.

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#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Mission Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (October 13, 2014): <https://www.adventist.org/official-statements/mission-statement-of-the-seventh-day-adventist-church/>.
2. Scripture references in this editorial are quoted from the *New International Version of the Bible*. Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.
3. Allusions to verse 4 of "Amazing Grace" a hymn credited to hymnwriter John Newton. See Hymnary.org: <https://hymnary.org/hymn/LUYH2013/691>.
4. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1949), 5:491.



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