Fall 2016

Columns Fall 2016

Southern Adventist University

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Recommended Citation

Southern Adventist University, "Columns Fall 2016" (2016). Alumni Newsletter. 179.
https://knowledge.e.southern.edu/alumni_newsletter/179

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Centered on Christ
Southern welcomes David and Cherie Smith as the university’s first couple. Page 12
Accepting the Commission

As a child, David Smith dreamed of being a doctor, but God had other plans. After years as an English professor at Southern, Smith felt God’s call to Union College, and eventually back to Collegedale as a pastor. Then the invitation came to serve as Southern’s president. Smith said in his inaugural address: “Serving as president here was not on my bucket list, but God convinced me this was what He wanted me to do, and I have never won an argument with Him.” As Smith accepts his commission at Southern, he looks forward to seeing how God writes the next few chapters of the university’s history. “This school, no matter what it faces, will move into the future grounded on the certain promises of God and the faith and dedication of those who serve Him.”

Centered on Christ: David Smith, Southern’s 26th President

When David Smith took his seat in the corner office in Wright Hall on June 1, 2016, a new chapter began for Southern Adventist University.

Discovering the Past in Ruins

Biblical archaeology is a field in crisis due to the secularization of culture, but it has never been more important.

Called to Care

For Will Otis, ‘10, the plan was simple: go to college, go to dentistry school, then be a dentist like his father. However, as he entered his senior year at Southern, Otis began to feel that he was not on the right path.

Homecoming 2016

When alumni gather for Homecoming Weekend, they share the passion and purpose they developed as students.
After a long week, the promise of the Sabbath rest is a relief for many. Steven Luu, ’12, found a unique way to welcome in the Sabbath and share the experience with others. With a bachelor’s degree in computer science and a job as a software engineer at Microsoft, Luu created a simple website where visitors can enter their phone number and thereafter receive a text with a cheerful Bible verse to bring in the Sabbath. Recently “Sabbath Text” sent out its 15,000th message. Visit sabbathtext.com.

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New Sabbath Trail Open to Community and Students

Southern dedicated a new walking path called the “Sabbath Trail” on September 10, 2016. Students and community members alike can now enjoy the 1.5-mile path, which loops around campus’ Benton Forest on Bauxite Ridge, becoming part of the university’s larger network of approximately 37 miles of hiking and biking trails.

The dedication ceremony was held in a small clearing a quarter of a mile from where the trail begins. Community members, faculty and staff, former and current university presidents Gordon Bietz and David Smith, and the Landscape Services crew attended. Along the loop, the plaques and stones tell the history of the Sabbath, creating an environment in which God’s presence can be felt. The inspiration came from a similar Sabbath trail, located behind a pioneer church in Washington, New Hampshire. Mark Antone, director of Landscape Services, and his team designed the trail and incorporated their own touches.

“This is not just a regular hiking trail. This is an inspirational park,” Antone said. The plaques are strategically placed along the trail so that there is time to ponder the words before reaching the next one. This is a different approach from the trail in New Hampshire, where the plaques are grouped together and surrounded by seating.

An alumni family made the Sabbath Trail—a long with the rest of the trails on Bauxite Ridge—possible with the gift of 250 acres adjoining campus, opposite White Oak Mountain and its system of trails. Marty Hamilton, associate vice president of Financial Administration, worked with the donors and Antone to help develop the project. Hamilton explained that the purpose of the trails is to enhance outdoor activity for the students.

“We took a mountain that no one could use and built a space that community members and students are able to utilize,” Hamilton said. Hamilton also emphasized that the Sabbath Trail’s main purpose is to serve as a place to get away and ponder. The engaging and quiet atmosphere emphasizes not only environmental stewardship, but also the creation and biblical history of the Sabbath.

—Olivia Blesmore

Enactus Team Excels at National Level

Southern business students received national recognition this year for their participation in Enactus. The team won regionally. At the national level, they received third place in their league, a first for Southern.

Enactus is an international, nonprofit organization designed for students to improve the world through entrepreneurial actions. There are more than 17,000 student participants, representing 443 colleges and 36 countries.

“I have enjoyed being a part of Enactus because it has helped me grow as a leader,” said Latia Allan, senior marketing and management double major and president of Southern’s Enactus team.

Through Enactus, members participate in meaningful projects. This year Southern’s team assisted veterans to find jobs as civilians, helped entrepreneurs achieve their goals, and installed mosquito nets in Nigeria, where many suffer from malaria.

As Nathan Umali, junior financial management major, said, “It’s great that you can use what we learn in the classroom and apply it to a project to help better the community.”

—Michael Swindel

Southern to Host Electric Car Sharing Station

This summer, Southern partnered with regional transportation and power agencies to establish an electric car-sharing station on campus. Starting this fall, anyone will be able to rent an electric car from the facility, while those who own electric cars will be able to charge them there for free.

The new facility, built between Talge Hall and Mabel Wood Hall, has four charging stations, which anyone with an electric vehicle is welcome to use. Solar panels, mounted on the covered spaces, help offset the power used by the cars.

“атьe new facility, built between Talge Hall and Mabel Wood Hall, has four charging stations, which anyone with an electric vehicle is welcome to use. Solar panels, mounted on the covered spaces, help offset the power used by the cars. The only expense to Southern for this project was providing the concrete parking pad. Other partner companies built the shelter and provide the electricity, while the Green Commuter car-sharing company, which will maintain the rental program, contributed the charging points, solar panels, and the rental cars. Initially, two Nissan Leafs will be available at Southern.

“We've got a lot of people here on campus who have driver's licenses; they just don't have a car,” said Marty Hamilton, associate vice president of Financial Administration. "Historically, about 50 percent of students don't have cars."

Southern was approached to be a part of this project because of its location and the prospect of students renting cars. Apart from Southern, the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga is the only other local university participating.

Chattanooga will soon have approximately 20 charging and rental stations throughout the area, with each station containing two to six vehicles. Those wishing to rent a car must become members of Green Commuter’s car-sharing program, which includes insurance when ever using a vehicle. The mobile app-based system provides members with instant access to cars, and no car keys are involved. Rentals will be round-trip, with hourly and day rates available.

"I have been at Southern for almost three years now, and for that whole time I've been without a car," said Sierra Emble, junior English major. "Knowing that students will be able to rent cars puts me at ease, because now I won't have to shuffle through my contact list when I need to go somewhere. I can gain back some independence when it comes to transportation!"

This installment to Southern’s campus is part of the university’s goal to become more eco-friendly. Vision 20/20, Southern’s strategic planning process to implement 16 new initiatives on campus, emphasizes a sustainable physical environment. This includes campus-wide recycling, solar panels, protection of forests and trails, partnership with local organic farmers (including Thatcher Farm on campus), revitalizing campus gardens, and creating a pedestrian-only campus center. With the new charging stations, Southern encourages students to bring their electric vehicles or to take advantage of the rental cars.

Melanie Ramirez, sophomore biology major, likes what the charging station says about Southern: “Having an electric car station demonstrates how our university is involved with clean energy and environmental awareness.” —Eileen Rawill

6 a.m. The time that All-night Softball ended, having begun at 8:30 p.m. the previous evening, September 24.

100 Years since Southern moved from Graysville, Tennessee, to Thatcher Switch, now known as Collegedale.

26 Southern presidents have served the university since it was founded in 1892, including the latest, David Smith.

100+ People waiting in line at 12 p.m. for one of Southern’s iconic meals: pasta day in the Dining Hall.

#1 Southern’s top ranking by National Collegiate Fitness Index for overall campus physical activity and lifestyle among other private schools in the nation.

90 The number of years the Southern Accent has been providing news from a student viewpoint.
Degree Options Expand with Physical Therapist Assistant Program

Southern is expanding medical degree options by adding the Physical Therapist Assistant program. While this new degree is still in the development stage, it will offer a unique addition to Southern’s available majors.

In the last five years, physical therapist assistant careers have been among the top medical fields for growth, giving great potential for student success in this area. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, healthcare careers are among the top sectors in the U.S. Labor Market. The Bureau predicts that “Physical Therapist Assistant” will be within the top 10 healthcare careers in the next five to 10 years.

Southern has hired Christopher Stewert, DPT, as the director of the new program. Volker Henning, PhD, associate vice president for Academic Administration, is pleased with the choice, saying, “He is very well fit for the position.”

Although the Physical Therapist Assistant program will not be fully launched until 2016, Stewart is already laying the groundwork. New general education classes, required by the degree, will be offered next fall. After Southern receives approval from the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education, the new program will begin accepting students.

Gala Raises $350,000 for Student Scholarships

Southern’s October 12 Inauguration Gala for President David Smith, PhD, raised $360,000 for endowed student scholarships, Legislative leaders, area businesses, alumni, employees, and friends of the university were among the more than 225 guests whose ticket purchases, silent auction bids, and other significant contributions made the evening a success.

Fenton Forest Mural Brightens Pediatric Facility

The new pediatric simulation area now features a mural based on the popular Fenton Forest series by Gordon Bleiz, DMN, former Southern president. The artist, Rebecca Johnson, ’12, adjunct professor in the School of Visual Arts and Design, also illustrated the series. Barbara James, DSN, dean of the School of Nursing, believes the mural fits the location.

“Now our facility needed to be an attractive and comfortable place for kids,” James said. “The mural of Gruft the Bear tendly caring for a hurt rabbit was just the ticket.”

Employees Published

Norman Gulley, PhD, research professor in the School of Religion, completed the book Systematic Theology: The Church and the Last Things. This is the fourth and final volume in Gulley’s biblical research series, making it the largest theological work ever written by an Adventist author, according to Ronald Knott, director of Andrews University Press, which published the book.

Donald Keefe, MFA, assistant professor in the School of Visual Art and Design, presented his work in an art exhibition at the Castelk Art Society in Livingston Manor, New York, throughout August. He was also featured in the October 2016 issue of FreshPaintMagazine. Additionally, his artwork was featured in the juried book International Drawing Annual 10.

Van Loe, MA, assistant professor of biology and allied health, wrote a book about loss for young people. Called When Sparrows Fall, this is her second book, the first having followed her experience as a student missionary in Africa.

Ben McArthur, PhD, professor in the History and Political Studies Department, published a biography, A. G. Daniels: Shaper of America’s Century-Adventist. The book garnered high praise from Gilbert Valentine, PhD, Australian historian of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Tron Wilder, PhD, associate professor in the School of Education and Psychology, published an article in the April/May 2016 issue of the Journal of Adventist Education. It was titled “Addressing Behavioral Addictions in Adolescents: Creating a School-wide Culture of Prevention.”

Southern Ranks in Top Tier for 15th Consecutive Year

For the 15th year, Southern ranked in the Top Tier of U.S. News and World Report’s “Best Colleges” guide. The difference this year is that Southern’s ranking category has switched from college to university for the first time. The change is due to Southern’s growing graduate program, which includes numerous master’s degrees and one doctoral program.

Another study, SmartAsset’s “Best Value Colleges,” ranked Southern as one of the most economically valuable institutions in Tennessee. The average starting salary for Southern graduates is $45,000.

Lighting a Passion

At the age of 5, David George, MFA, ’95, associate professor of Visual Art and Design, began watching the opening sequences of Captain America: The First Avenger. As the cinematography in the film transported him to a new time and space, the groundwork for his future started to fall into place.

As he grew up, George frequently accompanied his father to his job at a local TV station, fueling his passion even further. George’s newfound access to equipment allowed him to expand his knowledge of film, and he even discovered himself as a broadcast journalist major at Southern Adventist University.

Teaching on the Fly

After graduating and working in the industry for a few years, George returned as a professor to Southern’s School of Visual Art and Design. He proved instrumental in the development of Southern’s film program in 2001, an experience he described as “like trying to fly an airplane that you were building.” Since then, the department has produced many projects and films, such as Secret of the Cane, and has contributed to ventures such as the 2015 movie Old Faithful. George believes the program has grown tremendously in the last 15 years.

“At the beginning, it was sort of like the frontier; we just found a way to make everything work,” George said. “As time passed, the quality of the classes and the kind of equipment students had access to began to improve. We saw the quality of students’ work getting a lot better, but the bar continues to rise.”

According to George, even though he has much to teach his students, he feels that to be an effective teacher he must first seek insight into a student’s needs. “I don’t want to prescriptively figure out how I can help them best get to where they’re trying to go. I want to figure out how I can help them best get to where they’re trying to go,” George said. “And as time passed, the instructor that he is today.”

It’s just been fun to watch from a front row seat as he gets better and works on ways to improve,” said Mark Comberiate, ’15, a production and facilities manager for the School of Visual Art and Design. “I’ve seen firsthand the effort behind the scenes in what he does for current students. He’s not satisfied to leave everything as it has been. We’re continually improving to find exactly what we need in the field of education to be as effective as possible.”

Striving for Success

For the past several years, many have noticed George’s effort to find ways of advancing the film program at Southern.

“I can definitely see that he is always looking for ways to improve, and that he is always striving for success,” said Mark Comberiate, ’15, a production and facilities manager for the School of Visual Art and Design. “I’ve seen firsthand the effort behind the scenes in what he does for current students. He’s not satisfied to leave everything as it has been. We’re continually improving to find exactly what we need in the field of education to be as effective as possible.”

“I’ve been impressed with his creativity and the way he motivates his students,” said Zach Gray, MFA, ’99, associate professor of Visual Art and Design. “He puts in extra effort to find ways of advancing the film program at Southern.”

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For many Southern students, a year serving as a student missionary is a normal part of the college experience. But for Jeremy Holt, a junior business administration major, his year in Peru wasn’t enough; his mission followed him home.

Holt spent the past year working at the AMOR Projects clinic in Pucallpa, Peru. He helped to run the business side of the mission and said that the experience brought him closer to God.

“I got to see God work all the time,” Holt said. “That is the most exciting part of working with missions. It amazes me every time to see how much God cares, that He would do so much just to help save one person.”

Do Something
Krista Bonney, a senior biology major, also spent the past year at AMOR projects. She gave Bible studies and helped in the medical clinic, a life-changing experience for her. Bonney recalls the story of two brothers, Carlos and Ubaldo.

After consistently attending the small Bible study for children that Bonney and her fellow Bible worker held, one day the boys did not show up. Their parents had changed their minds about letting them come.

Later on, Bonney found out that Carlos and Ubaldo’s mom was sick. Bonney visited their home and later returned with the mission’s nurse. Every day after her Bible studies, Bonney visited the family’s home, even after the mom got better.

Before long, the boys returned to the Bible studies, and their mother opened up her home to be used as a meeting place for a small neighborhood revival. Carlos and Ubaldo completed the Bible studies, and today they continue to study with a local Bible worker.

“I realize that I am so blessed and have so much to offer that it would be selfish of me not to do something,” Bonney said.

Bringing It Home
Since their return to Southern, Holt and Bonney have been working to raise awareness for the work in Peru, as well as talking with their fellow students on the importance of missions. Holt shares his mission experience through sermons, vespers, and prayer meetings.

“I am hoping that this will get people excited about missions and inspire them to get involved at home and around the globe,” Holt said.

He hopes that others understand that although going on a mission trip requires a lot, it yields a great reward.

“It can be tough at times, and it calls for sacrifice; however, it is totally worth it,” Holt said. “It is the biggest blessing to get to work for God and serve others. It is also a ‘job’ that has eternal value.”

Bonney has also preached sermons and helped run a mission booth at the Carolina Conference Camp Meeting. While she hopes people will be inspired to donate time or money, her biggest goal is to share Christ.

“I love going to new places and experiencing different cultures,” Bonney said. “But we each have a purpose wherever we are, and we can serve God through our interactions with others.”

More Than a Visit
“While I was in Peru, my eyes were again opened to a need that I have seen around the world,” Bonney said. “I realized that if I let God take control, He can use me in His work. My greatest desire is to share my faith with everyone whom God brings me in contact with for that purpose. That’s what He puts us here for.”

Along with sharing about their time in Peru, both Bonney and Holt are encouraging others to get involved. From going on trips to donating funds, and living every day as an example, they hope their testimonies will spark interest and start a mission movement.

“I hope that I can encourage others to live as missionaries and that I will lead by example,” Bonney said. “My mission will be uniquely mine, and I pray that God will be able to use me to reach those around me.”

Even though everyone may not feel compelled to do foreign mission work, Bonney believes that there is a job to be done everywhere.

“God has a purpose for each one of us,” Bonney said, “if we will just step out in faith and accept God’s plan for our lives.”

A Strong Future
Inaugurating a new president is a momentous occasion, and Southern marked the event with an entire week of special programs—a Wind Symphony concert, a special art exhibit by Brett Weaver, and an archaeology lecture, to name a few. The night before the inauguration, local officials, alumni, employees, and friends of the university gathered for the Inaugural Gala. As they arrived, they were greeted by the flying figures of the Gym-Masters Acrobatic Team. Here, Julian Armstrong, senior health science major, does a handstand nearly seven feet off the ground, while other team members did flips and sailed on aerial silks. The team embodies strength and enthusiasm, qualities that permeate Southern’s student body and ensure a bright future for the university!
When David Smith took his seat in the corner office in Wright Hall on June 1, 2016, a new chapter began for Southern Adventist University. Selected by Southern’s Board of Trustees by a unanimous vote, Smith accepted the position of president after much prayer and consideration. He began training with former President Gordon Bietz in April, and they worked together until June 1, when Bietz officially passed the torch of leadership, making Smith Southern’s 26th president.

“Ever since 1981 when Gordon and I first moved to Collegedale and met,” Smith said, “I’ve always been impressed with how God has blessed Southern through his leadership. Spending time with Gordon has inspired me to do all I can to give myself and my time to the campus as he has.”

During a meeting with all Southern employees, Smith set the tone of his presidency, emphasizing humility, service, trust, and transparency. He called for “all-in” participation in living out Southern’s mission to provide a Christ-centered, student-focused, and excellence-driven campus.

As Smith said during his inauguration on October 13: “God is the author of Southern’s story. And I believe that the best part of Southern’s story is yet to be written. I am excited to be part of that story.”
enrollment, make Adventist education more affordable, and reduce student debt. He hopes to nurture a campus built on trust, teamwork, open communication, and inclusive decision-making. Smith believes that the way God has led him, and the career path that brought him here, has given him the faith and abilities that he needs to successfully guide Southern into the future.

With a bachelor’s degree in history and a master’s degree in English from Andrews University and a PhD in English from the University of Tennessee, Smith is well-versed in higher education. He has gained extensive experience leading Adventist institutions, including 13 years as the president of Union College (1996-2011) and five years as the senior pastor of the Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists (2011-2016). He has gained extensive experience speaking publicly around the world and collaborating with community, state, and civic officials. Beyond credentials, however, Smith believes that acknowledging the One who started it all is the only true path to success.

“The first thing we have to do is humble ourselves before God and give Him full credit for what He has done for Southern,” Smith said. “We also need to align our mission and campus experience so that the life we live out on our campus reflects our intentions. This involves being authentic in every aspect of our life and work, while serving our students, parents, visitors and guests, constituents, and each other with the respect, priority, and empathy that marked Jesus’ ministry to others.”

Getting Personal

Smith feels immeasurably blessed to have his wife of 45 years, Cherie, by his side as he begins this new adventure. Cherie is the associate pastor for visitation and prayer at the Collegedale Church.

“In college, we kept standing in registration lines together, so I naturally thought of Cherie when I was deciding whom to ask for a date,” Smith shared. “I’m a real believer in the value of registration lines!”

Cherie considers their many years of teamwork to be one of God’s richest gifts for her life.

“Dave’s wisdom comforts me, and his kind heart offers safety and peace,” Cherie said. “I treasure the practical ways Dave shows love, such as cleaning the house, taking care of my car, meeting me for a Walmart run, or planting a butterfly garden because he knows I love butterflies. But it’s been daily prayer together that keeps us moving in the same direction.”

The couple has two children, Jacie and Kim. Their oldest, Jacie Smith, ’94, is a stay-at-home mom who lives in Israel with her three children and her husband, John, an engineer for Boeing Corporation. Their youngest, Kim Hutchinson, ’98, is a teacher and vice principal of Keene Adventist Elementary School. She lives in Cleburne, Texas, with her three children and her husband, Chad, ’98 and 04, who teaches at Southwestern Adventist University.

Smith has enjoyed extensive travel, visiting his oldest daughter as she has lived in various places around the world, including Singapore, where he was impressed by the beauty of its gardens and the sense of safety in the city. In his free time, Smith relishes almost anything that takes him outdoors, like bird-watching, wildlife photography, and team sports. He also reads extensively and enjoys public speaking. And in all that he does, God is front and center.

“My most important goal is to always do what God asks me to do and to live my life within the boundary of His will,” Smith said. “I love to partner with God to see what He will do and then give Him glory for what He does.”

Student-Focused

Of all the experiences Smith has had over the years, he especially values opportunities to influence students, both as a professor and an administrator. He looks forward to working side-by-side with them to create a more meaningful Southern reality for everyone. Smith believes that through God’s blessing and the dedication of Southern’s employees, the university has huge potential to shape the lives of young adults.

Although Smith knows that committees and paperwork will demand their fair share of his time at Southern, students will always be his top priority. He loves to interact with them through informal visits. One-on-one or in large groups, he enjoys getting to know them and hearing about their lives.

“Every student has a story,” Smith said. “Whether they know it or not, God is the author of that story, at least as far as they have left Him be. I get excited when I see how God works in students’ lives. I love Southern’s rich heritage as a place where Seventh-day Adventist Christian higher education has the opportunity to transform young people and further the mission of the church. As Southern’s new president, I look forward to continuing that tradition.”

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Dave the Pastor
by Jack Blanco, PhD, Former School of Religion Dean

As a church family, we praised the Lord for calling David Smith back to our community as senior pastor at Collegedale Church, and we are grateful for his years of service. Dave’s love for Jesus Christ and us as members will never be forgotten, and his authentic, Spirit-filled sermons are a lasting legacy. He was in high demand as a speaker and occasionally preached elsewhere, but on those Sabbaths, we missed hearing his voice ringing from the pulpit here at home.

He and I met together weekly to pray for his ministry and the needs of the church and local schools. We prayed for people in need, the pastoral team and church officers, staff, church volunteers, teachers, and students. Without a doubt, Dave’s pastoral heart was invested in us, and every action he took demonstrated his concern and care. His family was always uppermost in his mind, and his affection for his wife, Cherie, and their children and grandchildren was evident during the times we petitioned the Lord together on their behalf.

Dave will be greatly missed as our minister. We send our love to his family as he helps us with spiritual matters or prayer needs of the church and local schools. We prayed for people in need, the pastoral team and church officers, staff, church volunteers, teachers, and students. Without a doubt, Dave’s pastoral heart was invested in us, and every action he took demonstrated his concern and care. His family was always uppermost in his mind, and his affection for his wife, Cherie, and their children and grandchildren was evident during the times we petitioned the Lord together on their behalf.

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My dad exemplifies God’s love for humanity by parenting with consistency, authenticity, and generous sacrifice. I will never forget his selfless love during a family canoeing trip. The rapid water surprised all of us, capsizing the canoe. Both of my parents secured branches in the rushing river, but I was trapped underneath the overturned canoe. Without a thought for his own safety, my father, who doesn’t swim, dove under the water to rescue me. This is just one example of his innate desire to parent like Jesus, who willingly paid the highest personal price to show God’s love to the world. — Jacie Buxton

I am blessed with a dad who has been there for me at every stage of life. From surprising me with my first puppy to coaching my softball games and teaching me to drive, my dad has always demonstrated a blend of patience and encouragement. He is the guiding light of our family as he helps us with spiritual matters or supports us in our decisions. His patient guidance, strength, and love over the years have helped me to become the wife, mother, and teacher I am today. No matter what I am going through, I can always count on him to be in my corner. — Kim Hutchinson

First Ministry, Now First Lady
by Eloise Ravell, ’16

Cherie Smith, ’91, is no stranger to Southern. Originally a student and an employee, then a pastor at the campus church, Cherie now steps into a new role at the university: first lady. She sees this as a good fit with her ministerial position.

“Dave and I have worked as a team throughout our whole married life, no matter what positions we were in or the tasks at hand,” Cherie said. “The plan is for me to continue in my role as full-time pastor at the Collegedale Church of Seventh-day Adventists while supporting my husband in any way that I can in his new commission at the university.”

When the Smiths first moved to Collegedale in 1981, Cherie began working on campus and got first-hand experience in a variety of departments through the years. She worked in Student Finance, Alumni Relations, Public Relations, and finally for the vice president of Academic Administration. In 1996, Cherie began her ministry at the church, serving for two years before Dave accepted the position of president at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska.

“At the time, it appeared that God was closing the ministry door for me because there were no pastoral positions available in Lincoln,” Cherie said.

But God had other plans. A few months later, Cherie was invited to serve as part-time pastor at a local church, which soon grew into a full-time position. Most of Cherie’s ministry revolved around visiting the sick, shut-in, and grieving. She was able to shine a light in the darkness for those suffering, believing the Holy Spirit works through those who help others in difficult circumstances. Besides her commitment to visitation, Cherie demonstrated a passion for women’s ministries, working with deaconesses, and seeking ways to welcome, include, and nurture new members.

The couple returned to Collegedale in 2011, where Cherie now serves as the associate pastor for visitation and prayer at the campus church. As her husband steps into the presidential role at Southern, Cherie hopes to partner with him to further God’s work and to encourage students during their college careers.

“For 37 years, my husband and I have worked in college settings,” Cherie said. “It has been fun to support students at this pivotal time when they are making big decisions that will impact the rest of their lives.”

Cherie hopes to connect with students by affirming their life paths, listening to their stories, being a mentor, and even baking treats for them. She has faith that together, she and Dave can accomplish God’s will by trusting Him to move mountains, open doors, and give them the spiritual gifts they need.

“As we follow God through this new part of our journey,” Cherie said, “we do so with one goal: to make an eternal difference for His Kingdom.”

Turn to page 31 for Cherie’s philosophy of living in gladness.

Dave and Cherie love to interact with students and always take time for them when asked. BOTTOM RIGHT: The Smith family together in 1988. Jacie is in the back, and Kim is in the front.

LEFT: Dave worked at Southern for 15 years before beginning her pastoral ministry. RIGHT: Dave and Cherie shortly after his inauguration as president of Southern Adventist University.

Turn to page 31 for Cherie’s philosophy of living in gladness.
biblical archaeology is a field in crisis due to the secularization of culture, but it has never been more important. In the 1940s and 1950s, there were an abundance of biblical archaeological programs at Ivy League universities, according to School of Religion Professor Michael Hasel, PhD, director of the Institute of Archaeology and curator of the Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum. However, by the 1980s and 1990s, many of those programs were closed. From 1950-1970, 45 excavations in Israel were sponsored by American institutions, whereas in the last 20 years there have been only four or five major projects. “It is imperative that those of us in this discipline who are still interested in the Bible retain a voice in the discussion” Hasel said.

The Institute of Archaeology at Southern, under the auspices of the School of Religion, took root following a 1999 visit from respected professor and archaeologist William Dever of the University of Arizona. Subsequently, Southern established a Bachelor of Arts in Archaeology with two concentrations: Near Eastern Studies, which focuses on Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and Mesopotamia during the Old Testament period; and Classical Studies, which looks at the Greco-Roman world.

Now the Institute of Archaeology also includes the Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum, opened in 2004, and the William G. Dever Research Library, housing more than 3,500 volumes. Students utilize the extensive archaeological resources on campus, but the knowledge they gain in classes becomes most meaningful when they go on the Middle East Study Tour and participate in hands-on archaeological excavation projects.

Uncovering Rare Artifacts

The Institute of Archaeology first conducted an archaeological excavation in Idalion, Cyprus, in 2003. Since then, hundreds of participants have had the life-changing experience of excavating in the ancient Israelite cities of Hazor, Khirbet Qeiyafa, and, most recently, Lachish. Southern is partnering with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for this excavation, which is currently the largest archaeological dig in the Middle East.

“The biblical city of Lachish is mentioned 22 times in the Old Testament,” Hasel said. “Some of the most notable references include the Israelite conquest of Lachish, the Assyrian siege and destruction of the city by the Assyrian king Sennacherib in 701 B.C., and the destruction of both Lachish and Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon, in 586 B.C.” Lachish, during the Iron Age, stood as the most important city in Judah after Jerusalem.

The process of excavation is time-consuming and, as observed by Martin Klingbeil, D. Litt., associate director of the Institute of Archaeology and professor in the School of Religion, sometimes it is not what a participant expects at first.

“The first couple of days everyone is working to remove the topsoil, digging out roots and larger rocks,” Klingbeil University of Arizona. Subsequently, Southern established a Bachelor of Arts in Archaeology with two concentrations: Near Eastern Studies, which focuses on Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and Mesopotamia during the Old Testament period; and Classical Studies, which looks at the Greco-Roman world.

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Bringing the Past to Life

The experience students have in the field deeply impact not only their professional and personal lives, but also their spiritual lives. After her time at the dig, Judit Manchay, ’16, came away with a new perspective.

“Time and space divide us from the events and people of the Bible,” Manchay said. “In a sense, biblical archaeology gives us the opportunity to come face-to-face with the historical context of the Bible.”

The biblical stories become tangible and real as we take a boat ride across the Sea of Galilee, visit the sites in Jerusalem, in which we have been married, and then sail to the Sea of Galilee, visit the sites in Jerusalem, and even fewer, if any, mention the names of the Bible. The Bible of the Bible.

Excavating Lachish helped me understand what real archaeology involves,” said Juan Mora, junior theology and archaeology double major. “It is important to maintain the size and shape of each square as we dig two meters down. Finally work begins on nearby layers, where siting and careful digging begins to uncover floors of buildings where artifacts are preserved. Everything found within each square is recorded in great detail using tablets with a specialized database, drones, GPS and survey equipment, and other state-of-the-art technology.”

Participants, such as Guilherme de Souza, ’16, especially relish finding something important that has been hidden out of sight for thousands of years.

“Past summer, I uncovered a very tiny inscribed stone weight,” Bras de Souza said. “There are less than 200 of these that have ever been uncovered in all of Israel. It dates back to the time of King Hezekiah.”

Catalina Hannah, junior business administration and international studies double major, also made a discovery while excavating a beautifully preserved stone floor dating to the time of Senenruthen’s destruction, 689 B.C.

“A small oval object caught my eye,” Hannah said. “I picked up the little artifact, took it in a deep breath, and I don’t think I let it out for a whole two minutes as I studied the object. One side looked like the backside of a beetle. Rewinding 10 months back to my time in my archaeology class, I remembered learning about how Egyptians made their seals with a special backplate that replicated the dung beetle. So there I was, trying to contain my excitement while holding what I thought was a real-life scarab.”

The artifacts excavated by Southern in partnership with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, are making a very real impact in the realm of scholarship and in pop culture. Documentary films on items excavated in all of Israel. It dates back to the time of these that have ever been uncovered.

The exhibit titled “A World in Miniature: Creating Images of the Past through Biblical Times” recently opened in the Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum at Southern. The Institute of Archaeology at Southern will be back at Lachish, Israel, in the summer of 2017. After that, the project continues to spend the next 10 years concentrating on publishing data from the excavations.

“The millions of bits of data from the past two projects now need to be processed, analyzed, and published,” Michael Hael said. “That is the work ahead of us, involving both students and an international team of experts.”

Students in Southern’s archaeology program have witnessed opportunities to look forward to life-changing opportunities to be trained in the fascinating field of biblical archaeology.

Daniel Perez, staff member at the excavation projects at Lachish and Khrbet Qeiyafa, emphasizes the importance of archaeology.

“When involved with the field of archaeology means to be a steward of great cultural heritage,” Perez said, “and to transmit that sense of responsibility to succeeding generations.”

For more information, stop by the Lynn H. Wood Archaeological Museum on campus or visit southern.edu/archaeology.
For Will Otis, MBA, ‘10 and ’15, the plan was simple: go to college, go to dentistry school, then be a dentist like his father. However, as he entered his senior year at Southern, he began to feel that he was not on the right path. “I really felt like dentistry was not where God was calling me to go,” Otis said. “I took a semester off, and when I returned, I decided to start looking at the School of Business.”

The next semester, Otis took general business classes, and he talked to his business law professor about which career path to take. “I went by his office and shared with him how I had no clue where I was going. Then he asked me if I had ever thought about long term care,” Otis recalled. “Absolutely not! I had volunteered in nursing homes before, and I knew that it was not a passion of mine.”

After further encouragement and time in prayer, Otis decided to give the long term care industry a shot. “I got a job as a resident assistant at Morning Pointe Assisted Living in November 2011. I started working from the bottom up and absolutely fell in love with the industry.”

Otis then enrolled in the Long Term Care Administration program offered through Southern’s School of Business. After he graduated, he furthered his career with Morning Pointe and now works for Morning Pointe at Greenbriar Cove near the university’s campus.

As senior executive director, Otis is involved in all areas at Morning Pointe: finance, budgeting, customer service, employee management, and public relations. However, what makes Otis’ career choice worth it is the positive impact he is able to have on the senior residents and their families. “One of the biggest reasons I went into senior care was because I wanted to serve people. That is why I thought about dentistry at first; I wanted a profession where I could help other people,” Otis said. “What I have learned in hindsight, even though I was reluctant at first, is that it is incredible to work with seniors.”

Whether it is assisting residents with the decision process of care services; building a relationship with them; providing them a warm, caring, and loving environment; or simply making them smile, Otis believes the long term care industry is an incredible opportunity to show Christian care. “Even though I am a director, I still get to know each resident personally,” Otis said. “I get as much from them as they get from me. Just to make an impression on seniors’ lives makes it worth it, makes it easier to get up in the morning and come into work.”

An Unknown Mission Field

When someone visits a medical facility, they often see the doctors, nurses, and support staff. They do not always think of the employees who are in the office helping all of the people and departments work together, according to Scott Edens, ’91, adjunct professor of long term care. Edens went through the program himself and has served on the long term care advisory board for almost 10 years. Currently he is the regional vice president of Ethica Health and Retirement Communities.

“We often think of nursing as a service career, but long term care administration is as well,” Edens said. “It is not only a career where you serve seniors, but it is also leadership of peers. We need mission-minded, Christian young people coming into long term care to serve these people in need.”

Long term care facilities are focused on providing ongoing medical and personal care for patients who are unable to live independently. Long term care facility managers are highly trained leaders who oversee the daily operations of nursing homes, assisted living facilities, rehabilitation centers, and home health services. They wear many hats in handling the staffing, budgeting, marketing, billing, legal, and other aspects of their center.

Duties of a long term care facility manager often go beyond operations. Administrators help educate patients on their path to recovery, while also assisting their loved ones as they navigate the complicated healthcare system. The long term care managers are helping seniors, widows, and the poor who may not have the assets to get the care and services they need, and these professionals point people to the right resources.

“Long term care administration is directly aligned with the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is a mission field and a service opportunity,” Edens affirmed. “To serve...
A Shift in Focus

The Long Term Care Administration program at Southern originated in 1978. Since its inception, the program has focused on the management of skilled nursing facilities, such as nursing homes. However, changes in the long term care industry are causing a major shift in Southern's program, as well as national education for long term care administration.

Southern’s bachelor’s degree in long term care administration is accredited by the National Association of Long Term Care Administrator (NAB). The NAB governs the long term care licensure in all 50 states and creates the exam that students need to pass to earn national accreditation. Southern’s program was the first in the country to meet the NAB’s criteria for top quality education and training of long term care administrators.

Lisha Kuhlman, ‘10, assistant professor in the School of Business, became the director of the program in June 2016. She explained that the NAB is developing a new exam. “It will license people across a continuum of care,” Kuhlman said. “Because of this change, the NAB has recommended that we alter our program, so we are now in the process of rebranding the degree.”

The revised program will still include skilled nursing but will add classes and internship hours for assisted living and home health, and will shift the focus towards these areas, which are the two sections being added to the NAB exam.

“Most people immediately associate long term care and skilled nursing with nursing homes,” Kuhlman said. “In reality, skilled nursing has morphed into more of an extension of the hospital. Hospitals are no longer keeping patients for long periods after surgery, so skilled nursing has become essentially a place where patients go when they need an extra week with more care before they go home.”

“By contrast, assisted living communities, such as those at Greenbriar Cove, provide additional resources, while large windows offer inspiring views of the campus below.”

A Heart of Service

With all that the long term care program has to offer prospective students, at its heart is Christian service. Otis and many others in the field agree that the most rewarding part is what they are able to give to their residents.

“I had a daughter of a resident come to my office one day. She was looking for a placement for her father,” Otis said. “Her dad did not have recent memory and couldn’t continue living in his own home. She was completely beside herself, just sitting there crying. She felt so much guilt for having to place her father in an assisted living setting.”

It was very difficult for her to make that decision, but the daughter knew that she needed to make a change for her father. Her dad was relacionat, too, at first. “After about a month in our community, the dad started getting involved in activities and began getting to know the other residents,” Otis said. “Soon his entire demeanor changed, and he became the Morning Pointe greeter. He would sit up at the front and welcome people and then tell them how much he loved living there.”

The man lived at Morning Pointe for several years, and when he passed away he was buried wearing his Morning Pointe greeter name badge.

“Being able to provide that care for him and his daughter when they were so reluctant was so satisfying. To this day, the family still advocates for our community,” Otis said. “It isn’t always easy for people, and being able to walk through that process and calm their fears and care for their needs makes all the difference.”

Otis said that many of the students who have gone through Southern’s long term care program, has found the satisfaction that comes from following in Jesus’s footsteps, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve” (Mark 10:45).

Improvements With a Higher Purpose

The School of Education and Psychology recently underwent significant changes. Degrees were updated, programs received accreditation, and the school returned to a renovated Summerour Hall.

Curriculum Enrichment

The Teacher Education program has added two Response to Intervention classes to teach elementary education majors how to better assist children struggling with math and reading. “Not many teacher education programs provide intervention training unless they are special education,” said Kristal Bishop, EdD, ‘73, director of the Teacher Education program.

Psychology broadened its bachelor’s degree offerings by adding a concentration for students wishing to focus on marriages and families as a vital foundation for later careers in clinical psychology, counseling, and marriage and family therapy.

The undergraduate level, outdoor education students earning their Master of Science in Education participated this summer in the Dinosaur Project, led by Arthur Chadwick, PhD, of Southwestern Adventist University. They joined others from across North America for dinosaur excavation field experience in the Lance Formation of eastern Wyoming. This is part of a renewed effort to encourage deeper thought about issues of origins and biblical creation.

The master’s degree in instructional leadership, which puts students on track to be principals or school administrators, is now fully online, offering new opportunities to accommodate working students.

Program Recognition

In 2015, the School Counseling program achieved accreditation through the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). This recognition is an indication of program quality and enhances employment opportunities for graduates. “We’re thrilled that our graduates have this recognition of their counselor education program,” said Reanna Freeman, Ph.D, director of graduate programs in counseling.

The undergraduate teacher education program is preparing for reaccreditation through the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) in 2017.

“Data should demonstrate that our students have the skills and knowledge to be effective teachers who positively impact student learning,” Bishop said. She expects the process to go well. The previous program review cited no areas for improvement, a status achieved by only 2 to 3 percent of programs being reviewed at the time.

The quality of some research conducted by Southern’s psychology majors was recognized by the Southwestern Psychological Association (SEPA). Fernando Barrientos, ‘15, and Seth Daly-Stennis, ‘15, were awarded for best undergraduate research study in 2015 and 2016.

Home Again

The complete renovation of Summerour Hall, which was completed in May 2014, kept the name of the building, but left most of the updates catered to the needs of students and faculty. I wanted instructors to walk into a classroom, plug in their computers, and have everything take care of itself,” said John McCoy, EdD, dean of the School of Education and Psychology. “But ultimately, it’s really about making things easier for our students.”

New podiums feature automated screens, compatibility with a variety of computers, plus internet, DVD, and Blu-Ray capabilities. “The building has a new chapter,” Bishop said. “We have everything we need right at our fingertips. All of the technology is very usable.

Student work areas and the Teaching Materials Center provide additional resources, while large windows offer inspiring views of the campus below.

The Focus of It All

While the inside of Summerour Hall caters to learning, a visual representation of the school’s mission greets the entrance. A bronze statue depicts a student on a bench, pointing to an open Bible as Jesus kneels beside her. The words “I Am the Way” are inscribed on the bench. “I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life,” the statue in front of Summerour Hall reflects the centrality of Christ to the activities within the school.

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Alumni Passion, God’s Purpose

When alumni gather for Homecoming Weekend, they visit together and share their life stories. As they do, one thing quickly becomes clear—through the years, Southern has consistently been a place where students could bring—or discover—their passion, then learn to shape it into a life of purpose, driven by the will of God. No matter their career paths, Southern’s graduates spread out and change the world. Following are a few examples.

Passion for Music

Robert (Robby) Ranev, ’16, graduated with a degree in music education and a double minor in history and religion. God immediately put Ranev’s gifts to work as a grade school teacher at Shelton Valley Christian School in Shelton, Washington. As a freshman, he received a scholarship from the School of Music, chose music as his major, and never looked back.

During Ranev’s time at Southern, he took every opportunity to enrich his scholastic experience through national and international choir tours, a European history tour: an evangelistic trip to Madagascar, and in-depth involvement at church, while also working at Southern’s classical radio station, WSMC. Ranev’s current teaching job has challenged him in every way he had imagined and in many ways he hadn’t. Yet his time at Southern taught him how to share Jesus in a way that he relates to personally.

“I am not an evangelist,” Ranev says, “but the language God has given me for sharing the gospel is music. Through Southern, I’ve gotten to do that in more ways than I can even count.”

Passion for Sharks

Jennie Dee Janssen, ’99, graduated with a bachelor’s degree in biology from Southern. She’s passionate about living things and “singspirations” on the front steps of Lynn Wood Hall, he grew spiritually and found direction in life. After graduating from Southern, Wood served as a boys’ dean, teacher, principal, and youth leader at the local, conference, and union levels. The greatest challenge Wood faced in his career was balancing family and ministry. However, witnessing young people he had worked with giving their hearts to Jesus and becoming active, contributing members of the church made the challenges worthwhile for Wood.

“Ellen White tells us that God leads us in a way that we would choose ourselves if we knew the end from the beginning, as He does,” Wood said. “Even though life has not been perfect, my family and I are very grateful for how God has led us and absolutely have no regrets. It has been an amazing journey.”

Passion for Young People

William (Bill) Wood, ’66, graduated with a degree in history and a minor in religion. He’s currently using his passion for youth ministries as coordinator of North American Division Camp Ministries.

Before starting his academic career at what was then Southern Missionary College, Wood knew that he wanted to work for the church. His time at Southern solidified those goals. As dean, teacher, principal, and youth leader at the local, conference, and union levels. The greatest challenge Wood faced in his career was balancing family and ministry. However, witnessing young people he had worked with giving their hearts to Jesus and becoming active, contributing members of the church made the challenges worthwhile for Wood.

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Jennie Dee Janssen, ’99, works with staff at the Georgia Aquarium to draw blood from a real shark during a health exam.

Marie Masunda, senior, allied health and biology double major, connects with professor and alumni Rick Nankove, ’71, during the Beyond the Columns Supper. She has directed that energy into managing the changing lab skills.

Jennie Dee Janssen, ’99, reconnects with fellow alumni before classes. 2. Collegiate Speaker, Brown-Adkins invites the congregation to join Southern’s musical groups during the divine service. 3. Alumni like Teacher Pam Smith, Southern’s educational garden. 4. The 50-year class reunion gave alumni such as Elizabeth Ann Holmes Steele, ’66, a chance to catch up with lifelong classmates.

George McBride, attended, presents a certificate in appreciation of his surgical unit in appreciation of his surgical unit in appreciation of his surgical unit in appreciation of his surgical unit in appreciation of his surgical unit in appreciation of his surgical unit in appreciation of his surgical unit in appreciation of his surgical unit in appreciation of his surgical unit in appreciation of his surgical unit in appreciation of his surgical unit in appreciation of his surgical unit.

The Wedgwood Trio (Bob Summerour, ’67, Don Vollmer, ’67, Jerry Hoyle, ’66) were joined by long-time donors. 1. Alumni like Teacher Pam Smith, Southern’s educational garden. 2. The 50-year reunion gave alumni such as Elizabeth Ann Holmes Steele, ’66, a chance to catch up with lifelong classmates.

The Lord has totally blessed me. He led me to all of this.”

Janssen interned at the aquarium, growing her research, analytic, and lab skills.

While considering a biology career, Janssen was concerned that keeping Sabbath would be an issue. During a 14-day shark tagging expedition, she was surprised how accommodating her fellow biologists were to her religious beliefs. Since then, God has placed understanding people in her path every step of the way. Janssen is certain that God instilled her fascination for sharks, brought her to Southern, and orchestrated the pivotal discussion with her biology professor that started her journey.

“I had the passion, but it took someone at Southern showing me that my passion could be funneled into reality,” Janssen said. “The Lord has totally blessed me. He led me to all of this.”

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“Ellen White tells us that God leads us in a way that we would choose ourselves if we knew the end from the beginning, as He does,” Wood said. “Even though life has not been perfect, my family and I are very grateful for how God has led us and absolutely have no regrets. It has been an amazing journey.”

Jennie Dee Janssen, ’99, works with staff at the Georgia Aquarium to draw blood from a real shark during a health exam.

Marie Masunda, senior, allied health and biology double major, connects with professor and alumni Rick Nankove, ’71, during the Beyond the Columns Supper. She has directed that energy into managing the changing lab skills.

Jennie Dee Janssen, ’99, works with staff at the Georgia Aquarium to draw blood from a real shark during a health exam.

Marie Masunda, senior, allied health and biology double major, connects with professor and alumni Rick Nankove, ’71, during the Beyond the Columns Supper.
We’d love to hear from you, and so would your classmates! Send updates about additions to your family, educational accomplishments, marriage, professional recognitions, or other news you’d like to share to classmates@alumni.southern.edu.

In the previous issue of COLUMNS, I talked about building bridges for students and alumni through the Leadership Education through Alumni Partnerships (LEAP) mentorship program. We have heard from many of you about your desire to be a part of this program, and I look forward to seeing many more bridges built through these relationships.

Gary Councel, ’67 and ’69, has spent his interim pastor of 11 churches in southeastern Pennsylvania, Gulf States, and the Mississippi territory on the base. While overseas, he has encouraged prospective students to visit and attend Southern! I want to hear how that worked. Did you connect with a Southern graduate? Tell me the story. Is there a current student at Southern who will count you as an integral part of his or her academic journey? Share with me the techniques you utilized. Many are realizing that they have not always been doing so successfully; the easier it will become for all of us to participate.

Our Alumni Association would love to provide the tools for supporting your bridge-building activities. Visit southern.edu/alumni, email alumni@southern.edu, or call Alumni Relations at 423.236.3200 to learn how you can be involved.

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Kelly Rose (Bishop) Bolton, ’92 and ’98, has become the seniors recipient of The Vogel Award for experiencing all 102 townships in the Adirondack Park. She began her journey in June 2015 with her grandmother Lillian Rose (Dogie) Bolton, ’92, who passed away before completing all of the townships. Kelly completed the journey with friends and family.

Brett Paspandis, ’04, and his wife, LaRae (Coleman), ’04, are moving to Tennessee with their two children to help support a self-sustaining project in that West African nation. They will do medical clinics in addition to planting two churches—on lookout mountain.

Joshua George, ’99, married Ellen Luchak, ’00, and they reside in Hope Valley, California, where they live and work. They just returned from a trip to New York City to sing with Faith for Today. While they were in New York, Joshua attended the 2016 Baha’i World Convention and was an Advisor to the Board of Directors.

Devin Chen, ’96 and ’97, recently received the Stokely-Loewen Law Firm in Orlando, Florida, and is practicing in guardianship and estate planning. He graduated from the University of Florida College of Law after earning both his bachelor’s degree in psychology and master’s in marriage and family counseling.

Erick Penn, ’10, and his wife, Hectarmac (Cruz), ’11, are living in New York. Upon obtaining her bachelor’s degree, Hectarmac took graduate classes from Southern while completing her work in New York. While she was a student, she was a manuscript editor of the Tennessee Law Review, a member of the moot court board, and recipient of two outstanding scholar awards. Erick has just completed a degree in microbiology.

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Glad
by Cherie Smith, ’91

In the movie Pollyanna, a 12-year-old girl’s missionary parents die, and she moves in with her rich Aunt Polly. Despite her loss and transition, Pollyanna is cheerful, optimistic, and, no matter what the situation, always focuses on finding something to be glad about. The “Glad Game,” she explains, was created by her father one Christmas when a gift barrel arrived with crutches instead of a doll, which devastated her. Her dad was glad that Pollyanna didn’t need the crutches!

Later, Pollyanna falls off of a roof, leaving her legs paralyzed and challenging her ability to play the Glad Game. Temporarily she declares the Glad Game to be stupid. She isn’t going to play it anymore. However, in time she learns to be glad again, even when life is hard. That is God’s desire for us. I’ve often longed for a faith that helps me play God’s version of the Glad Game. I want to “always [give] thanks to God the Father for everything” (Ephesians 5:20), no matter what tragic loss, big transition, or confusing life circumstance occurs. I want to authentically give thanks to Him in the midst of difficulty.

Although I’m still learning, God has taught me some ways to work toward being glad in the midst of painful experiences:

Choose to run TO God, not FROM Him
Adam and Eve hid from God (Genesis 3:8), and when we are hurt and confused, our initial reaction may be to turn away from Him, too. Figuring out how to be glad about a difficult life experience requires God’s Spirit. The good news is that even if we don’t want to run to God, we can ask Him to give us a heart to do so. Ezekiel 36:26 reminds us that it is God’s job to give us a new heart and a new spirit. If we have the courage to go TO God and dialogue with Him, He can give us the gifts we need to be glad when life is hard.

Stand on God’s Promises
One of the greatest interferences to our gladness in the midst of difficult experiences is that we believe the lies of Satan and doubt God’s love for us. To combat the lies, we must use the sword of the Spirit, “which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17).

God reinforced this lesson for me one horrific morning when I felt totally abandoned. My sadness culminated with a near accident on ice as I drove to work. Pulling into a parking spot outside the church, I cried out to God, “Do you really love me?” Immediately, these words went through my mind: “I love you with an everlasting love.” God’s response to my hurt with His words, found in Jeremiah 31:3, shocked me, and my list of things to be glad about immediately grew!

Practice Praising God
Learning to “always [give] thanks to God the Father for everything” is a big step in surviving life’s traumas. Remembering how God has revealed His love and care in the past, we face the future with the assurance that He is with and for us. One way to remember is to write down when we’ve seen God work in our lives and to thank Him.

Recently I penned through my prayer journal and was reminded of a day God saved the lives of two of my grandsons. Our then 10-month-old grandson was eating breakfast and choked. As his Mom worked to dislodge the food from his throat, I prayed. When the baby could breathe again, we thanked God for His gift. Hours later we received a call that our 2-year-old grandson had been separated from his parents in an airport. Security joined them in looking, while we joined them in prayer. A few moments later, he was found.

For days after these two experiences, I thanked God for His intervention. However, over time I totally forgot about that day until I reread the accounts. The written record reminded me of God’s personal intervention and great love. It gave me opportunity to praise God again for His care.

God longs for us to be able to be glad in good and bad times. During difficult experiences, we can choose to run to God, stand on His promises, and daily find things to praise Him for. Then, like Pollyanna, we will find gladness and healing and give hope to others.

Face Full of Life
While traveling with 17 students and three faculty members in Bali this summer with the Tropical Biology class, Southern Marketing and University Relations employee Ryan Pierce, captured this image of a vendor in a local marketplace. The class trip is a unique academic and cultural opportunity, which takes students to Indonesia for a three-week intensive field course.
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