Balloons, confetti, streamers, banners, all heralding a party, a time to celebrate achievement and success! For the Children’s Ministries Department, it is more than academic achievement or success. We celebrate twenty-five years of ministry to children around the world church both within the church and in the community. We celebrate twenty-five years of nurturing, resourcing, advocating, building, and fortifying the spiritual growth of our children and teens.

A worldwide network of directors on all levels of the church from the divisions down to the local churches are working in synergy to care for our children and teens in their walk with Jesus. It has been an amazing adventure! Sharing of resources among the different divisions has been a double blessing. It saves time and it saves money for there is no need to reinvent the wheel. It was especially evident during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. With the lockdown in almost every country, children were at home with no school, no church, no Sabbath Schools, no activities, etc. GC Children’s Ministries together with division directors went to work immediately. Videos, coloring books, jigsaw puzzles, songs, online Sabbath Schools, and even a virtual Vacation Bible School were produced for children and teens in different languages.

Many leaders also involved their children in the 100 Days of Prayer initiative.

Helping children say YES to Jesus has been our mission and our goal. GC Children’s Ministries has produced close to forty resources for children and leaders these past sixteen years in print form, videos, animations, coloring books, jigsaw puzzles, etc. Children’s leaders in the unions, conferences, and missions organize activities and programs to foster greater faith...
growth in children and teens. Programs such as Kids in Discipleship, prayer conferences, Vacation Bible School, Bible camps, stewardship camps, TMI evangelistic meetings, community outreach and service are not only to nurture the faith of children and teens, but they are also effective tools for training them leadership skills.

Each year Children’s Ministries celebrate special emphasis days that involve children and teens throughout the world church. Children’s Sabbath, Global Children’s Day, World Day of Prayer for Children at Risk, Creation Sabbath, enditnow Emphasis Day bring together children and teens in prayer, community service, and outreach activities.

Children’s Ministries also serves as an advocate for children in areas of violence and abuse. Hence, we join hands with seven other GC departments to participate in the annual enditNow initiative. This is a global initiative, marked on our church calendar, to raise awareness and advocate for the end of violence against women and children around the world church.

Children’s leaders are trained regularly through the GC Leadership Certification program which is in its tenth year of implementation. When we have strong, spiritual, and passionate leaders, we have strong children and teens as true disciples of Jesus.

We praise the Lord for His blessings in leading this ministry for the past twenty-five years! While a lot more needs to be done, but today, we are happy that our children and teens are being cared for in their faith walk with Jesus. Praise be to God that many of these children and teens have chosen Jesus as their Forever Friend!

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14).

Linda Mei Lin Koh
GC Children’s Ministries Director
Remembering the Past

Work in the 1800’s.
While it is true that Children’s Ministries did not become a full-fledged department of the General Conference until 1995, the Seventh-day Adventist Church had long recognized the importance of ministering to children even back in the 1800’s. Work for children began in 1863 when Adelia Patten wrote a two-year series of lessons for children. From 1864 through 1888 children’s lessons were published in the Youth’s Instructor with biblical history and narrative Bible stories. In 1869 G. H. Bell wrote a series of lessons for children.

Work in the Early 1900’s
In 1890 Our Little Friend began carrying the Sabbath School lessons for primary and kindergarten children which lasted for sixty-seven years. In 1957, Our Little Friend began to have Sabbath School lessons for the Cradle Roll and kindergarten children. Sabbath School lessons for primary children appeared in a new publication, Primary Treasure in 1957. Sabbath School quarterlies for primary and junior ages started in Australia in 1911-1913, and soon more quarterlies were produced for children for the rest of the English-speaking world. From 1933 to 1936 a series of five volumes called Bible Stories for the Cradle Roll appeared. Other curriculum materials for children appeared periodically, both from the General Conference Sabbath School Department and from active and enthusiastic teachers and personnel in local Sabbath Schools around the world.

In the 1960’s several men took an active part in the children’s ministries department: Curtis Barger, Tom Ashlock, and Ben Leibelt. Tom Ashlock was responsible for developing a new Vacation Bible School program, with pencil activities being placed in the Our Little Friend and Primary Treasure.

At the same time, several women in North America who had a passion for children also developed materials for them. They were Maureen Luxton, Helen Craig, Louise Myers, and Alice Lowe. Louise Myers wrote a series of program books for the Cradle Roll and Kindergarten levels.
AND SAID, 'TRULY I SAY TO YOU, UNLESS YOU ARE CONVERTED AND BECOME LIKE CHILDREN, YOU WILL NOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.'
(MATTHEW 18:3 NASB)

CHILDREN'S WORK UNDER CHURCH MINISTRIES
Although there was no organized departmental work for children, but at the 1985 General Conference session in New Orleans, the Church Ministries Department was created, which was formed from a merger of four departments: Sabbath School/Lay Activities, Stewardship and Development, Youth, and Home and Family Service. This department includes services and support for children's ministries work, but it was not until the 1987 world advisory that children's ministries emerged as a new ministry within the Church Ministries Department.

This department, in cooperation with the Review and Herald and Pacific Press publishing associations produced Sabbath school quarterlies for children. These included the Kindergarten Sabbath School Lessons, Primary Sabbath School Lessons, Junior Sabbath School Lessons, Earliteen Sabbath School Lessons, and Mission (children's edition). The department also produced program helps for cradle roll, primary, and junior/earliteen Sabbath school leaders.

From 1985-1990, children's ministries received its impetus from the vision and prompting of Helen Craig, former Sabbath School associate director for children's Sabbath School, Vacation Bible School, and children evangelism. From 1990-1995, Dr. Virginia Smith led out in the work for children's ministries as one of the various support ministries of the Church Ministries Department.

EMERGENCE OF THE DEPARTMENT
The 1995 General Conference session at Utrecht marks a watershed for children's ministries. On July 4, 1995, A. H. Tolhurst proposed a motion from the floor that the Children's Ministries Department be established as a separate ministry, a separate department of the church. It was seconded and voted, and children's ministries became the newest department of the church, the only department in history to be suggested from the floor at a session.

In the year 2000 a new children's curriculum, Gracelink, was written for the world church that stresses four core aspects of the Christian faith: Grace, Worship, Community, Service. This new curriculum lasted twenty years and at the present moment another new children's curriculum, Alive in Jesus, is being developed for the new millennial generation.

Today, Children's Ministries has become a worldwide ministry with every division in the world field having a director to oversee the work of spiritual nurturing and training for children. Many unions and conferences have also elected Children's Ministries directors to minister to children and teens in their territories.
CHILDREN MINISTRIES IN ACTION

CHILDREN’S SABBATH
- Children leading out in worship
- Children participate in special afternoon programs
- Special celebration package every year

GLOBAL CHILDREN’S DAY
- Packing lunches for the elderly
- Picking up trash in the town
- Distributing food for the poor
- Sharing missionary book
- Getting involved in community service

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR CHILDREN AT RISK
- Prayer sessions for children at risk
- Children participate in prayer activities together with adults and leaders

CREATION SABBATH
- Special day to remember God the Creator
- Participating in fun nature activities

COVID-19 SPECIAL ACTIVITIES
- Videos and media
- Online Sabbath Schools
- Virtual Vacation Bible School (NAD)
- Infographics on the Corona Virus with tips to help parents how to talk to children
- Tips on dealing with anxiety, trauma, mental health, uncertainty, etc.
- Activities for kids like coloring book, jigsaw puzzles, etc.
As our colleague during the past ten years, Dr. Saustin Mfune, GC Associate CHM director, is retiring at the end of July. We are sorry to see him leave us. It has been an amazing ten years! A man with great musical talents, he has produced lots of music, dramas, songs, and many more. He not only composes music, he also plays the piano, and sings with a powerful voice. He has blessed the world field with his gifts and talents as well as his passion for children and their eternal salvation. Yes, “African Children” has become his signature song!

As Dr. Mfune moves on to another milestone in his life, we want to thank him on behalf of the world church for his dedication and contribution to nurturing children into a loving, serving relationship with Jesus. As he moves back home to Malawi, may God bless him richly as he continues his service for the Lord. But knowing his love for children, I am sure Dr. Mfune will never retire from Children’s Ministries.

Bon Voyage!

Linda Mei Lin Koh
Children’s Ministries Director
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

“Hi Saustin, It was nice working with you. Thank you for everything that you’ve accomplished in Children’s Ministries and good luck to everything you will accomplish in the future. God bless you!”

Tanya Muganda
Administrative Assistant
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
In Appreciation

Dear Saustin,

Thank you so much for all you have done. Your love of music really showed through. The kids loved the way you told stories and that really is a gift. I pray that God will richly bless you as you, no doubt, still work for His children wherever you will be.

Blessings,

Clair Sanches
CHM Director,
Trans-European Division

Dear Dr. Saustin,

Thank you for your dedication, commitment, and enthusiasm for children! Your love for Christ is contagious, and your ability to connect with, and reach, children is amazing. God gave you just the right mix of talents and gifts for what He made you to do!

Blessings as you a new page in life,

Lisa Clouset
CHM Director,
Northern Asia-Pacific Division

Dear Pastor Saustin,

Working with you in the Children's Ministries department is a blessing to me personally and collectively in West-Central Division. You are a mentor, friend and a pastor. We will always remember you for your sense of humor and your diligence with which you undertake all your assignments. As you go on tirement, we pray that you will continue to bear fruit in your old age and that the Lord will grant you the desires of your heart.

Thank you for your service in our division

Omobonike Sessou
CHM Director,
West-Central Africa Division

Dear Dr. Saustin,

We thank the Lord for His care and for using you in our ministries.

There is so much to thank you for the things you did in the East-Central Africa Division. There is so much to appreciate. This message holds more gratitude than words can convey.

May our Lord continue showering His blessings upon you and your family.

Debbie Maloba
CHM Director,
East-Central Africa Division
COME, YE CHILDREN, HEARKEN UNTO ME: I WILL TEACH YOU THE FEAR OF THE LORD.
(Psalm 34:11 KJV)

In Appreciation

Dr. Saustin, it is so nice to work with you and Dr. Linda. Your sense of humor and the energetic presentation I never forgot. As the followers of Christ, we always have the mission in our heart, our mind and our action, we never quit but carry on with Him! May God bless you as you enter into another stage of your life.

Joyce Ng  
CHM Director,  
Chinese Union Mission  
GC Attached Union

Dear Dr. Saustin! For our territory and for me personally, it was a great advantage to know you as a Pastor, Minister, Singer and Storyteller with a capital letter! Your experience and life have taught us a lot. May your life ship pass safely to the quiet harbor of Christ! Let your Captain Jesus run your ship of life. And the sails of hope, like the Holy garments of righteousness, may our Lord God give you!”
With the love of Jesus Christ,

Zhanna Kaminskaya  
CHM Director,  
Euro-Asia Division

Dear Dr. Mfune

On behalf of the South Pacific Division, I just wanted to write to you and say a huge thank you for the numerous times you came to our Division and served alongside our leaders. Dr Mfune, you worked closely with our leaders and I am sure that they would join me in thanking you for the joy and laughter you brought to your work. You love working with our people in the Pacific and visited many of the Pacific Islands within the SPD, thank you for always being willing to travel so far to encourage, inspire and bring joy to the various events you ministered in. God bless you in your retirement.
Blessings,

Litiana Turner  
CHM Director,  
South Pacific Division

Dear Saustin,

It’s your love for Jesus, determination, enthusiasm, commitment, humility to lower yourself to the level of children; your resourcefulness, innovation and energy that gave us leaders, teachers, parents and their children a reason to commit our elves to the nurture of the children in SID. We can never appreciate you enough. May the good Lord go before you as your retire. Congratulations on your retirement!

Caroline Chola  
CHM Director,  
Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division
In Appreciation

Dearest Pr. Mfune,

We, Youth and Teens from North Brazil Union run out of words to convey our gratitude and affection we all cherish for you, thus, we decided to encapsulate the magnificent beauty of our forests, the friendship of our people, and the love for Jesus you helped to build up yourself, right into the heart of our youth, therefore, we rise and say, at last: take unto you, in the shape of appreciation, love and special fondness, all the kindness you imparted to us all, at every and each project you were remarkably part of, here, among the people of the North of Brazil, South American Division.

Glaucia Clara Korkischko
CHM Director,
South American Division

To DR. SAUSTIN MFUNE

May our Saviour lead your way as you plan for the future.
Your Absence will be felt.
Keep on being Useful to the Master.
Remember that God is our great Sustainer.
Trust God in all your ways and lean not on your own understanding.
Invest in yourself. It is your time to breathe and take care of you with a fresh approach, leaving any insecurity, and negative memories behind.
Never forget that there are many people that love you. Don’t forget us! We will never forget what you have done for the children in Inter-America.

Dinorah Rivera
Children and Adolescents Ministries Director
Inter-American Division

Dear Dr. Saustin:

Best wishes for a very happy retirement from Southern Asia Division of Children’s Ministries Department. Thank you for everything you have done for us directly and indirectly; it’s much appreciated, and I shall miss working with you. May the next phase of your life bring you all that you seek and more. We’re really going to miss you! Hope you’ll enjoy every minute of your retirement. Best wishes!

God bless you and your ministry!

Mridula Lakra
CHM Director,
Southern Asia Division

Congratulations

Dr. Saustin! I hope and pray that all your future plans come true and your retirement is alive in Jesus, being filled with good health, joy, happiness and abundant blessings from the Lord. You deserve all of them! Happy retirement!

Orathai Chureson
CHM Director,
Southern Asia-Pacific Division
Dear Saustin,

It has been a pleasure to have the opportunity to meet and work with you all along these years. Thank you for your enthusiasm and joy in sharing Jesus’ love with children. Your upbeat passion for music is contagious and children are totally mesmerized by the songs you wrote and taught them. I think that “African Children” is the best song I learn that involves children singing along cheerfully and joyfully, with twinkling eyes and great sense of proudness for the important mission they have.

THANK YOU and may God continue to inspire you in new projects and challenges. Enjoy the new season of life!

Elsa Cozzi
CHM Director,
Inter-European Division

AND SAID, ‘TRULY I SAY TO YOU, UNLESS YOU ARE CONVERTED AND BECOME LIKE CHILDREN, YOU WILL NOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.’
(MATTHEW 18:3 NASB)
When you think of someone in his sixty,
You think of winding down, taking life easy, & be less picky.
You’d expect him to walk ever more slowly,
Or, carry a cane to assist him completely.

But Saustin’s energy is beyond that of a senior,
His dynamic preaching won many teens and juniors.
His story telling keeps kids & adults spellbound,
His singing touches your soul with beautiful sound.

Though he’s a man with a stature quite small;
But mind you, his heart for God’s work stands out tall.
His little head is ever full of musical notes,
Churning out lyrics and songs as he wrote.

“African Children, they are precious in God’s sight,”
His signature piece that kids sing with delight.
Saustin, we are sad that you are leaving us,
To say a big “Thank you” is not quite enough.

But keep preaching, teaching, singing, and making music,
For your songs for kids are simply so therapeutic.
May God bless you richly back in Malawi,
Continue your ministry to help children see,
That they can live with Jesus eternally.

Bon Voyage!

By Linda Mei Lin Koh
GC Children’s Ministries
Misapplication

Cain in the Bible was the first human being to kill someone (Genesis 4:8). Since no human being had died before Abel's death, have you ever asked yourself as to how Cain learned how to kill? It would seem to me that Cain learned how to kill from the sacrificial system God had mandated Adam and Eve to follow—that is killing a lamb which pointed to Jesus, the lamb of God who would one day die on the cross to save mankind from the curse of sin. It was from what which was intended for good that Cain misapplied, and resulted into Abel’s death.

In the Bible, we have a story of the city of Jericho and its bitter water. The leaders reported the matter to the prophet Elisha when he visited the city. Elisha resolved the problem by treating the source of the river (2 Kings 2:19-22). Most problems we have with our teenagers, start when they are babies. If we are going to resolve some of the problems our teenagers are encountering, we need to treat the source.

In my last article for this newsletter, I would like to deal with one source which we need to deal with as parents as we parent our children for heaven. I will focus on one good thing which if not treated, will continue to be a source of bitter water in parenting our children and climax into the spiritual death of Abel—our children.

Many things which are intended for good, through their misuse, they have resulted in the “death” of our children. If I had time and space, I could have discussed things like work, food, friends, rest, and voice, which are good but through their misapplication, have resulted in the “death” of little Abels in many homes. But for this article, I will dwell only on one good thing which is being misused. And that is social media. And even with social media, I could have discussed TV, computer games, etc. But I will zero-in on one aspect of social media and that is smartphones.

Smartphones have brought a term known as brexting. Brexting is a term used when a mother is texting while breastfeeding her baby. A mobile phone is a very useful gadget. But researchers are now informing us of the dangers of brexting, pointing to studies which have found that feeding time, whether bottle feeding or breastfeeding is critical to mother-child bonding.

When babies are born, they can see items that are about 25 cm (9.8 inches) away, which is from the breast as the child is breastfeeding to the mothers’ face. And God created a mother that when she is breast-feeding her baby, she looks into the face of her child. Researchers inform us that while breastfeeding, babies have instinctive activities they do to get the attention of the mother or caregiver. These activities include staring, cooing and other noises, movement of eyes and eyebrows and smiles, etc. These activities are intended to draw the attention of the mother or caregiver. If you don’t respond appropriately and keep looking away from your baby’s face because you’re texting...
or talking on the phone, the baby will learn over time that they can’t rely upon you to respond. And this leads babies to become anxiously attached or insecurely attached to you. And this being a critical period of development may lead to future behavior problems. You are developing a child at risk.

Recent research published in the Journal of Psychology reported that failure to resolve conflict with one’s romantic partner could be explained by a lack of attachment to a parent or caregiver as an infant. Christie Nicholson from Scientific American stated that research scientists from the University of Minnesota have been following a group of people since the mid-70s for this study.

They recently invited these people to come to the university’s lab with their romantic partners. There they were asked to discuss an issue they disagreed upon. A noticeable trend indicated that those who were able to resolve their conflicts were also those who were closely attached to their caregivers as infants. Although the researchers did not give reasons for why this was so, they were able to establish that attachment of an infant to a caregiver is important for resolving conflicts in the future.

What’s our take from this information?

- Your baby is more important than your friends. It should take your top priority. Therefore should your friends call, you can choose to ignore the phone or tell them you will call back later. Let them know that bonding with your baby comes first.
- When your baby is awake, put the phone away from you so that you are not tempted to keep looking at it or turn it off.
- Learn the sleeping patterns of your child so that you return your calls when your child is sleeping.
- Most mothers know the meaning of different sounds their babies make, learn to respond appropriately and promptly. But if your response will re-enforce negative behavior, then provide an appropriate response.
- Discipline yourself and learn to use your phone wisely.
- Know that second chances in bonding to your infancy are almost non-existent. Therefore make proper use of the first chance.
- Ask God to give you appropriate guidance. (Judges 13:8).

May God bless you all leaders as He helps you provide appropriate information to parents and teachers as to how they can use the good appropriately as they parent their children for heaven.

Saustin Sampson Mfune
Associate Director

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“SEE THAT YOU DO NOT DESPISE ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES. FOR I TELL YOU THAT IN HEAVEN THEIR ANGELS ALWAYS SEE THE FACE OF MY FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN. (MATTHEW 18:10 ESV)”

Look Out
FOR NEW RESOURCES COMING

1. BEWARE OF HIV/AIDS COMIC BOOK AND MUSIC CD BY DR. SAUSTIN MFUNE
   A fun way of teaching children about HIV/AIDS prevention, coupled with interesting songs.

2. HEATH FAIR FOR KIDS BY VALERIA SITTA
   A health EXPO for children to learn about the 12 principles of CELEBRATIONS health through fun activities and helpful information.

3. EXPLORING THE HEART WITH ACTIVITY BOOK BY DR. IEADA DOMICIANO
   A well-illustrated kid-friendly book to help children learn about their heart by going inside the heart itself. The fun activities will be loved by kids.

4. SUDDENLY A TUNNEL WITH ACTIVITY BOOK BY DR. IEADA DOMICIANO
   A second well-illustrated kid-friendly book to help children learn about their nose and the lungs. The fun activities will be loved by kids.