



## ACF and Stone Soup

I hope you like a good story, because this one is a great one. It's a story not fully written. It's your story, my story and the story of so many others who most of you have never heard of. It's the story of ACF and Stone Soup. Never heard of Stone Soup? Well, here goes.

Once upon a time – all good stories begin this way. Once upon a time in a very poor village long, long ago and far, far away a traveler happened into the village on his way to who knows where and was very, very hungry. He hadn't eaten for days and was hoping to find a bite of food in this generous village. When he arrived, he began knocking on doors and asking if the people inside could spare a piece of bread or even a potato. Unfortunately, everyone was destitute and had nothing they could share. After being turned down by several homes, he got an idea. He went back to the first house, and all the others, until he had knocked on every door in the village. But this time he invited the entire village to join him in a huge pot of stone soup. Stone soup – the villagers had never heard of such a recipe, but they were curious. The traveler's pitch was simple. He was brewing a pot of stone soup and all he needed was a few extra vegetables to add to the recipe. If each one could spare a carrot, potato, an onion, etc., it would add so much to the pot. All were invited to join him in the fully cooked stew. Of course, each one put in what they could adding to the stone in the pot. When it was finished the whole village ate and there was even soup left over for another day.

This story reminds me of Adventist Christian Fellowship. It began with very little – little funding, little direction, little resources – but a lot of passion and personal endeavors. It is also the story of many, many people adding to the pot and the good news is that the pot is still brewing today, with each of us adding to the ACF recipe. But I'm getting way ahead of myself.

Adventist ministry on non-Adventist college and university campuses has a long if somewhat sketchy history in the North American Division. The first ones adding to the pot actually go way back to the early history of our church. It all begins with some inspiring words from church founder Ellen G. White in which she encouraged students attending the University of Michigan campus back in 1893 to be careful of the worldly influence of the university, while reaching out and sharing their faith on campus. She writes that sharing the Adventist message with students on secular campus is "a work that must be done." (3 SM, p.153).

However, the pendulum of campus ministry swung more toward preparing students for health, education and gospel ministry in the development of Adventist church run colleges and did not begin to swing back to ministry on secular campuses until the 1970's. Dr. Lynn Savedra of Berkeley, California writes of hanging out with a group of graduate students at the Adventist church in Berkeley while she was earning her Ph D in Nursing at UCSF. Lynn remained in the area after graduation continuing on as a member of the Berkeley SDA church and later served as the faculty advisor for the Berkeley ACF group until just a few years ago.

Some of the earliest to follow the unique calling of campus ministry were Paul Jensen and Joe



Jerus, from Southern California. Both were trained as Campus Crusade for Christ staff - now (CRU). Paul and Joe worked with CRU for about five years until transitioning to Adventist campus ministry, first through the Voice of Prophecy and then through the Southern California Conference.

Paul and Joe, along with a couple of other staff, carried on significant campus ministry efforts at Cal State Irvine and Cal State Fullerton campuses for a number of years. About the same time, Michael Brownfield, at the Greenlake Seventh-day Adventist church, Washington Conference was helping sponsor a ministry at the University of Washington Campus that lasted a few years. Another interesting story during this same time period is of a rather quiet, reserved graduate student attending the University of Florida by the name of Bernie Molnar. Bernie was quite shy and now days would probably be considered a typical nerd, but Bernie felt a calling to share his faith on campus. He and a few other students hosted a prophecy lecture series on campus. I really am not sure what all came from their efforts, but one significant contact they made during their series was a very secular Jewish student by the name of Clifford Goldstein. Clifford studied or rather argued the biblical teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist church with Bernie, was eventually convinced of the Bible's inspiration by the plain teachings of biblical prophecy and doctrines like the Sabbath. He joined the Seventh-day Adventist church through baptism in 1980. Of course, today, we know him as the former editor of popular Adventist publications like Liberty magazine and the Adventist Sabbath School lesson.

In the late 70's, Adventist public campus ministry received a huge boost of support under North American Division Youth Director, Les Pitton. The NAD encouraged campus ministry efforts by sponsoring a six-year campus ministry initiative that subsidized Adventist chaplains on non-Adventist campuses in a three-way split between the NAD, participating unions and conferences. Unfortunately, not many appointments were filled. The only one I am aware of was pastor and chaplain John Cress who served for about five years at Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff. During this time the Florida Conference was also experimenting with campus ministries at the conference youth department level. Florida Conference youth directors Bill Crofton and Sergio Torres were helping support ministry efforts at both ends of the state. UC Berkeley also had students who attended the Berkeley SDA church on a regular basis with strong student involvement. Chico SDA church in Northern California also operated a student center with full time staff - SEDAVA House at Chico State, Chico CA. Other early campus ministry programs were getting way on Oregon State University, Corvallis, University of Idaho, Moscow and University of Colorado, Boulder.

It was also in the late 1970's that ministry efforts got started at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville campus. Members of the Knoxville Seventh-day Adventist Church - Harold and Beverly Duckett with a few others began opening their architecture office to students on Friday nights for food, fellowship and bible study discussions. A house was purchased as an on-campus student center in 1980 and today is referred to as Advent House, becoming the first Adventist student center owned and operated by the Seventh-day Adventist church on a non-Adventist campus in the North American Division. My wife, Carolyn and I came to Advent House



in 1985 to help develop the ministry. We had received a summer of practical on campus training from Paul Jensen and Joe Jerus in the summer of 1983. Campus ministry in the Georgia Cumberland Conference expanded to include ministries at Valdosta State University, the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia Southern University, Savannah, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, TN., University of Tennessee, Chattanooga.

I recently learned that this was also the time that Michigan campus ministries was just getting restarted under the leadership of Pastor Jerry Connell. During his years as a seminary at Andrews University, Jerry helped launch an Adventist campus ministry group first at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo 1983 – 1985. He later planted other ministries at Michigan State University, Lansing and Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant. Jerry's work in Michigan was just previous to what is now CAMPUS – a conference-wide ministry effort established by Dr. Samuel Pippin now being directed by Pastor Israel Ramos, Michigan Conference Public Campus Ministry Director. CAMPUS was the inspiration for S.T.R.I.D.E. in the Boston area planting Adventist ministries at MIT and Harvard. Students who attended campus ministry training through CAMPUS also helped launch a Mid-Atlantic ministry on dozens of campuses called ANEW. Canada was also beginning to establish ministries at York University during this same time period.

AMiCUS (Adventist Ministry in College and University Settings), was established in 1989 and launched through the education Department of the General Conference under the leadership of Dr. Humberto Rasi, supporting ministry to Adventist students on non-Adventist college and university campuses around the world. Dialogue Magazine, a quarterly resource in support of university students was also created and launched as an on-going resource for university students. Another great boost in 2014 to worldwide public campus ministry was the appointment of Dr. Jiwan Moon as Director of PCM for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Today, GC PCM has been transitioned to the GC Youth Department and being directed by Pastor Gary Blanchard and associate Youth Director Pako Mokgwane.

Campus ministry leaders and chaplains across the NAD finally met together in 1990 to form a grassroots organization called Campus Advent that would later become Adventist Christian Fellowship (ACF) as a way to support Adventist ministry efforts on college and university campuses in the NAD.

An even stronger grassroots student effort resulted in a world campus ministry conference at UC Berkeley, CA–Berkeley 2000. In this historic conference, students and conference participants signed the Berkeley Resolution requesting official representation for Adventist ministry and students on non-Adventist college and university campuses. They also requested to be assigned specific representation under a designated church department. It was voted to ask church leadership to designate Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries (ACM) as the representing department for Adventist public campus ministries. NAD administration approved the request at NAD Year-End meetings that year. It wasn't until five years later in 2005, that ACF would become the official Adventist ministry to students on non-Adventist college and university



campuses in the NAD and shifted from ACM to the NAD Youth Department. I was named the first ACF Volunteer Coordinator and continue to serve within the NAD Youth/Young Adult Department in an advisory role. In 2015, NAD leadership created a new Public Campus Ministry (PCM) Director position with Dr. Tracy Wood selected as the first PCM director serving in the dual NAD Young Adult/PCM Director role.

Other significant contributions to the ACF Soup was the team effort of pastor Kirk King and I in writing some of the campus ministry resources we are still using today. Resources like “The Word on Campus: A Guide to Public College Ministry” and companion “The Quick Step Guide for Launching Campus Ministry for the church”, and student leader’s workbook “Adventist Christian Fellowship”. Later, I began writing bible study guides for on campus small group bible studies called the Journey Series. All these resources can be purchased through AdventSource. In fact, many of them can be downloaded for free from the ACFLINK website.

Another important resource available to conferences and individual students to help fund and support campus ministry efforts was launched by those we lovingly refer to as ACF Advocates – individual church members who give generously and lovingly to college students and campus ministry. Leigh and Colleen Johnson along with several others founded ARC – Advancing Resources for Public Campus Ministry – [www.bethearc.org](http://www.bethearc.org). ARC has funded many projects year after year since 2011. ARC continues to raise funds in support of students and Adventist Public campus ministry.

My own journey as a campus chaplain began early when I attended a youth congress in Greensboro, NC. Student leaders from across North America and the world church gathered to learn and be inspired about missions. One of the afternoon community outreach opportunities included campus outreach at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. Some friends of mine and I took our guitars and spent the afternoon on campus playing songs, talking with students and getting a feel for public campus life. Up to this point, my only experience in non-Adventist education had been in elementary, middle school and my senior high night school graduation.

For college I attended Southern Adventist University. During my senior year I was chosen as the assistant chaplain and student campus ministry leader. I had already seen how important our college years are for a student’s faith development. I was a brand-new Christian when I came to Southern and it was there that I learned to develop my daily devotional habits, grew in my faith and made Christian friends that I still love and am connected with today. But, sitting in the middle of UNCG campus was not the same. Living my faith on an Adventist campus was so different. To begin with the student population was much smaller compared to all the students on most public-school campuses. How would the message of Jesus and the unique Adventist message fare on a public college campus? It was a question that continued to interest me from those first couple of days of our outreach at UNCG. Still, I could not see how God would lead my wife Carolyn and I to spend our years of ministry on college and university campuses.



Seminary provided our first opportunity. By the time we came to our last quarter of my MDiv degree, I had accumulated twelve elective credits. I went to the youth ministry advisor, Des Cummings Jr., and asked if he could help me arrange a semester away in a public campus ministry program. After doing some searching, we learned of Paul and Joe's program in Southern California – College and Career Fellowship. It all worked out and Carolyn and I spent the most amazing summer under their leadership. We attended classes and bible study in the morning and went out on campus and on southern California beaches in the afternoon's - talking with students and young people that would listen about Jesus and their questions about the Christian faith.

It was a life changing experience for me. At the end of the summer, we invited people that we had shared the Gospel with to a fun evening of square dancing and ice cream sundaes. Paul got up at the end of the evening and gave a gospel presentation and tears came to my eyes as a couple of the students I had first engaged in conversation with during the summer came forward to receive Christ. After this I was hooked. Carolyn and I even considered not returning to the Carolina Conference. We wanted to join Paul and Joe in College and Career Fellowship. But God had other plans. We spent two years pastoring a small church district in the Carolina Conference, was ordained and then received the call to go to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville to become the new chaplain and director of Advent House.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of leading many, many students to Christ and some have joined the Adventist Church. The college campus is a tremendous mission field. Students are usually willing to talk about spiritual things. Friendship is the best way to influence someone about our faith. Spiritual things are better seen than heard. It has been said that most people don't care how much we know until they know how much we care. How can God use us to be an influence on campus is the easiest thing in the world. Be real, care about people and be willing to listen. It is as simple as Jesus taught us in His conversation with the Samaritan woman. He began with asking her for a favor. That doesn't seem too hard. From there all we have to do is make friends. Questions will surface and we can be the gentle guide sharing with people what and why we believe – how the gospel makes sense to us. The Holy Spirit will do the rest.

Someone asked me recently what to do if there is no ACF group on campus or even a nearby Adventist church? Do we have to start an ACF Chapter to begin being used by God? Certainly not! Jesus said that we are to make disciples and we don't need a church to do that. We don't even need an ACF Group. We begin by listening to the Holy Spirit's promptings. By praying to be a blessing to someone and asking God to lead us. If we begin this way, soon we will have enough friends seeking God together that we can form an ACF Chapter and we can plan other activities together and invite more people to join in. God will expand our influence and others will be led into the fellowship.

ACF is just this – a network of students just like you - preparing for a career and learning to be used by God during that preparation. It is an ACF Stone Soup, where God begins with us and



each one adds their spiritual nutrient into the fellowship and oilla – we have a tasty meal of salvation for all. You don't have to have all the answers. God will help you with the questions your friends are asking. You can also reach out to your local church and pastor for prayer and even financial support. In many conferences, the youth director would be happy to help support your efforts. You might also look for someone in your church – a church member or a retired faculty member who will be your best advocate. Your church wants you to thrive in your faith on campus and we are all here cheering you on. Just remember – ACF is a ministry of, by and for students. It's not your pastor's ministry. It's not your churches ministry. It's your ministry. God has placed you on that campus to lift Him up and to be a witness of how good He is. You're the only one who can tell your story of how great it is to live in Christ and to believe in the Good News of Jesus.

Adventist Public Campus Ministry had an auspicious beginning and has come far with a stone soup of volunteer support. With some 200 ACF chapters on campuses across North America, look what God has accomplished! As Jesus once commented on the important missionary work ahead of the disciples among the Samaritans, "Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest." John 4:35. With our Adventist whole life approach to Christian ministry, our worldwide presence, and students ready to share their story of God and His goodness with others - public campus ministry is a rich mission field for the Seventh-day Adventist church and one that we hope, pray and expect will broaden the mission of the church and help prepare thousands of students for Christ's kingdom.

To learn more about ACF go to [www.acflink.org](http://www.acflink.org) where you can find many other ACF chapters, register your own chapter and become an official member of ACF/NAD. And please remember – the ACF Soup is still brewing and desperately needs whatever talents, resources and individual contribution you can add to the flavor. Students are still learning about God on campus. You are God's feet, hands, eyes and heart on campus. Jesus is God's message on campus, but we are His messengers. Together, we provide a way for others to taste and see that God is good!

All, for Christ and campus!"

Ron Pickell