Throughout history God has used migration in various ways to accomplish his purposes of love for humanity. This article will touch on some biblical examples of this phenomenon, will explore the migration of people groups in our day, and indicate possible opportunities this migration provides for Seventh-day Adventists intent on fulfilling the Great Commission to reach the world with the gospel “in this generation” (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Matt 24:14; White 1903:262).

“A life of monotony is not the most conducive to spiritual growth. Some can reach the highest standard of spirituality only through a change in the regular order of things. When in His providence God sees that changes are essential for the success of character-building, He disturbs the smooth current of the life” (White 1907:7). Perhaps this is why the travel and migration of individuals and people groups is such a central and recurring theme in the Bible.

Migration in Bible Times

God spent most of the Old Testament illustrating his love and care for a people group that began as migrants and refugees—the Israelites. Yet, he did not stop there. He went on to make sure that the presence of non-Jews in Israel, such as the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon and the visit of the Babylonian delegation to Hezekiah were also recorded “for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor 10:11). Each of these stories, as well as those not mentioned in this brief synopsis, provides important implications, warnings, and direction for missions now and, prayerfully studied, will save us from dangerous pitfalls and increase our efficiency and greatly expand the results of our efforts in missions.

Some of the most striking parallels and lessons for modern missions, however, are found in the New Testament. God timed the great outpour-
ing of the Spirit on the disciples at Pentecost to occur just in time to prepare them to reach out to Jews who had been scattered to almost every nation and spoke various languages. In fact, “when assembled, they were of every known tongue” (White 1969:266). Thus, by bestowing the gift of tongues on the disciples who had witnessed Jesus’ life and mission first-hand, the gospel could go through individuals already fluent in those languages, to every unreached language group of the day. Thus, “the Holy Spirit had done for them that which they could not have accomplished for themselves in a lifetime” (1969:267).

**Our Task**

The challenge of taking the Three Angels’ Messages to “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Rev 14:6) may seem daunting in light of the fact that, while we have entered all but twenty-four of the 228 nations and areas recognized by the United Nations (What Is Global Mission), many of these nations and areas or regions still have dozens of language groups that are still unreached by the Three Angels’ Messages, many also untouched by any Christian influence. The Joshua Project estimates that 2.72 billion individuals live in approximately 5,906 unreached people groups in the 10/40 Window alone, and these are unreached, not only by the Adventist message, but even by Christianity in general (What Is the 10/40 Window?)

**God’s Time Frame**

Yet, God commands us, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15) and he does not leave us with some vague temporal eternity in which to accomplish this task. His time frame is clear.

Success in any line demands a definite aim. He who would achieve true success in life must keep steadily in view the aim worthy of his endeavor. Such an aim is set before the youth of today. The heaven-appointed purpose of giving the gospel to the world in this generation is the noblest that can appeal to any human being. It opens a field of effort to everyone whose heart Christ has touched. (White 1903:262; emphasis mine)

These words that were first published on July 1, 1902 in a General Conference Bulletin, and were prepared for the book Education that was published in 1903, have clearly not yet reached their fulfillment, but not for any lack on God’s part. However, since that fact is water under the bridge, let us take it as though it was written to us today.
In program planning circles, a goal is not a goal without a time frame, identifiable objectives, and measurable outcomes. With the research available to us now as to specific unreached people groups, and the time frame identified by Ellen White, it is not a terribly difficult task to gain an overview of the size of the task and the rate at which Adventists need to move forward to accomplish it.

When asked as to the meaning of the term, “generation,” Ellen White responded in a letter through her son W. C. White by saying, “The word ‘generation’ is used with a somewhat variable meaning.” The letter went on to cite several biblical examples and closed with the admonition, “There is a great work for us to do in the world. Let us keep our minds fixed upon it, and leave to God those things which we cannot fully understand” (W. White 1911).

According to the General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics, “by the end of 2009 there was one Seventh-day Adventist for every 418 persons dwelling on our planet” (Haloviak 2010).

Obstacles

While this is a vast improvement over the 1962 ratio of 1:2,154 (Haloviak 2010) Adventists have much work ahead of them, especially in view of the fact that a vast number of people groups that still remain unreached speak languages for which the Seventh-day Adventist Church has few if any resources.

Another obstacle to reaching the unreached in this generation is the fact that many of these unreached people groups live in countries that are closed to missionaries and unfriendly to evangelism. For a good example of these countries see the Voice of the Martyrs map of restricted nations, many of which are within the 10/40 Window (Restricted Nations 2011).

God Still Has a Way

The task is monumental, yet “as the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings” (White 1900:333). Even now, as at Pentecost, God is working to bring unreached people groups within the reach of those who know him. He is again using migration to open doors for mission.

Refugees

According to the latest World Refugee Survey, there are 13,599,900 refugees and asylum seekers worldwide. These displaced people have fled from their homeland due to war or for fear of persecution, and are
among the most open to the everlasting gospel and the blessed hope that Adventists have to offer. Those who are in refugee camps can be reached through humanitarian organizations. Resettled refugees are often even more within the reach of Christian communities. Most refugees are eager to adapt and fit in to their new culture, and are very grateful for any help or friendship offered by vibrant Christians.

Detailed information about refugees, their source countries, host countries, and countries of resettlement, as well as a Refugee Report Card is available in the World Refugee Survey published annually by the United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. It is available in printed format, and much of the information is available online (World Refugee Survey 2009).

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is very active in refugee camps around the globe. The News and Views section of the UNHCR website is an excellent source for “The Human Story” of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) including photo and video galleries. Statistical information is also available. Another useful tool recently added is the Global Needs Assessment, also available on the UNHCR website.

The United Nations is also responsible for the establishment of a World Refugee Day on June 20 of each year to “honor the courage, strength and determination of women, men, and children who are forced to flee their homeland under threat of persecution, conflict, and violence” (World Refugee Day).

For information on how to introduce a local congregation to refugees, see Adventist Refugee and Immigrant Ministries: Welcoming God’s Guests. The website has program ideas for a Refugee Awareness Sabbath, a Bible study/sermon outline on Seven Principles on the Care and Nurture of Refugees (also note the article entitled “Reaching the World Rapidly” in this issue of the Journal of Adventist Mission Studies, pages 98-118).

Migrant Workers

“There are about 100 million migrant workers worldwide, most of whom crossed borders to escape poverty in their homelands . . . [and in order to] provide better lives for the families they left behind. . . . Yet, despite their huge contributions, migrant workers continue to suffer from various abuses—from unpaid salaries to sexual harassment.” In addition to these conditions, “the slowdown in the global economy has already compelled many companies to retrench workers and stop hiring. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) forecasts that the crisis will result in the loss of some 20 million jobs, with migrant workers among the most likely to be retrenched” (Sarmiento 2009).
Adventist leadership in Korea has seen this need and opened a “Home Away from Home for Migrant Workers.” This Seventh-day Adventist Migrants Mission Center was established by the West Central Korean Conference in the city of Ansan, which is home to an estimated 100,000 of the 1.3 million foreigners residing in Korea. The center is a three story building with exercise room, laundry room, baptismal font, dining room, offices, employee housing, and 15 dormitory rooms and guest rooms. . . . The center operates different church programs in English, Mongolian, Chinese, and Myanmarese. Currently around 40 Adventists from 13 countries gather every week. In addition, the center provides free dental care, medical checkups, and legal advice for migrant workers. (Home Away from Home for Migrant Workers 2009)

The North Asia-Pacific Division President, Dr. Jairyong Lee, encouraged center workers to make this center play an important role in the evangelism of migrants, “so they can go back to their country and preach the gospel there” (Home Away from Home 2009).

This first Migrant Mission Center has been such a success that Kwon Johng Haeng and the leadership of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division is planning to establish another center in Seoul.

A pastor in Singapore has also discovered migrant workers who are so enthusiastic about studying the Bible that they gather on the street corners at night and study their Bibles by the light of street lamps. They are already sharing their newfound faith with their families back home in India, Bangladesh, and Malaysia, and, as a result, these families are beginning to attend Adventist churches in their home countries. Look for the story by Daniel Weber on a Missions DVD or the Adventist Mission website early in 2012. Yet, the overwhelming majority of these 100 million migrant workers worldwide, who are extremely open to the gospel and hungry for the friendship and hope Adventists can give, remain unreached.

**Foreign Exchange Students**

Young people studying abroad are among the most open and impressionable, and potentially influential missionaries once they return home if they are reached during their stint as foreign exchange students. Yet, this is another almost completely untapped opportunity. In fact, statistics on the number of foreign exchange students worldwide are difficult to find. Most statistics on this topic are on the national level. Even the Wikipedia article on this topic contains the following disclaimer: “The examples and perspective in this article deal primarily with the United States and do not
represent a worldwide view of the subject” (Student Exchange Program). See “Reaching the World Rapidly” for more astounding statistics about this almost completely unreached group in North America.

**Diplomats and Prominent Foreign Business People**

Global statistics are scarce in the area of the number of diplomats and foreign business people living outside their countries of origin. However, no country is without these groups of people, and the stories of Cornelius and of Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch illustrate God’s intent for us to reach diplomats, heads of states, and prominent leaders of various nations. A wealth of very specific and practical counsel on this topic can be found in *Evangelism*, pages 552-561, by Ellen G. White in the chapter entitled “Working for Special Classes.”

**Witness to Leaders in Business and Government**

The call to be given “in the highways,” is to be proclaimed to all who have an active part in the world’s work, to the teachers and leaders of the people. Those who bear heavy responsibilities in public life, physicians and teachers, lawyers and judges, public officers and businessmen, should be given a clear, distinct message (White 1948:78).

**Witness to the Influential**

Those who belong to the higher ranks of society are to be sought out with tender affection and brotherly regard. Men in business life, in high positions of trust, men with large inventive faculties and scientific insight, men of genius, teachers of the gospel whose minds have not been called to the special truths for this time,—these should be the first to hear the call. (White 1946:555)

**Witness to the Upper Classes**

*Plans for the High Classes Will Reach All.* Bring your minds up to the greatness of the work. Your narrow plans, your limited ideas, are not to come into your methods of working. There must be reform on this point, and there will be more means brought in to enable the work to be brought up to the high and exalted position it should ever occupy. There will be men who have means who will discern something of the character of the work, although they have not the courage to lift the cross and to bear the reproach that attends unpopular truth. First reach the high classes if possible, but there should be no neglect of the lower classes.

But it has been the case that the plans and the efforts have been so shaped in many fields that the lower classes only are the ones...
who can be reached. But methods may be devised to reach the higher classes who need the light of truth as well as the lower classes. These see the truth, but they are, as it were, in the slavery of poverty, and see starvation before them should they accept the truth. Plan to reach the best classes, and you will not fail to reach the lower classes. (White 1946:553)

Men in high positions of trust in the world will be charmed by a plain, straightforward, Scriptural statement of truth. (White 1946:557)

Even the great men are more easily drawn by the simplicity of the gospel than by any effort made in human power. We need more of God and far less of self. God will work through the weakest human agent who is charged with His Spirit. (White 1946:557, 558)

Much more prayer, much more Christlikeness, much more conformity to God’s will, is to be brought into God’s work. Outward show, an extravagant outlay of means, will not accomplish the work to be done. Many are drawn by the simplicity of the Gospel gasping for a breath of life from heaven. They will recognize the Gospel when it is brought to them in the way that God designs it to be brought. (White 1946:559)

**Ethnic Ministers and Religious Leaders of Other Denominations and Religions**

There is a danger in assuming that ministers of other denominations are prejudiced against Bible truths. Many have never had a clear explanation of these truths from someone who cares deeply for their souls. This is especially true of religious leaders of other ethnic and language groups. Often non-Christian spiritual leaders are among the most eager seekers of truth. One Lao Buddhist monk who had studied to the highest level of Buddhism, which emphasizes the importance of “dhama” or “religious words or teachings” was convicted that Jesus is the promised Savior just by reading John chapter one where Jesus is described as the *Word*. He learned this as a refugee, and is now an active Adventist church planter in his country of resettlement, not only among his own language group, but also among refugee groups whose languages he does not even know.

**Tourists**

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines tourists as people who “travel to and stay in places outside their usual
environment for more than twenty-four (24) hours and not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited.” According to Wikipedia, “In 2008, there were over 922 million international tourist arrivals, with a growth of 1.9% as compared to 2007” (Tourism). The top five international destinations in 2010 were France (78.95 million arrivals), United States (60.88 million), China (55.98 million), Spain (53.00 million), and Italy (43.2 million) (World tourism Rankings 2011).

In 2003, Chad Wilkerson published an article entitled, “Travel and Tourism: An Overlooked Industry in the U.S. and Tenth District” (Wilkerson 2003). If tourism is overlooked as an industry, it has been much more overlooked as a mission opportunity, and yet tourists are among the most open to exploring new ideas and concepts and integrating them into their lifestyle. We often spend thousands to go on “short term mission trips” while we overlook the mission opportunities among tourists who have already spent their own money to come to us.

Tell-A-Tourist mission teams are just one example of how some Christians are reaching tourists in London. ‘‘We expect to speak to people from over 50-60 countries (72 is our record!) and tell them of the love, life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. Many of them tell us that they have never heard this message before,’ says Peter Kennelly, London Director of OAC (Open Air Campaigners)” (Evangelists Ready to Take Gospel to London Tourists 2009).

Illegal/Undocumented Immigrants

Statistics for illegal and undocumented immigrants group are naturally more difficult to verify. However, estimates are available for most countries and while this class usually carries with it some stigma, individuals in this category are just as much in need of the gospel as anyone else, and often, due to their precarious immigration status, feel their need more than others. Reaching this group is a bit more sensitive, and therefore the counsel to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves” is applicable here, but while Christians should obey the laws of the land in everything that does not conflict with God’s law, God’s witnesses should also remember that God blessed Rahab for assisting some undocumented entrants into her city. God’s people should have the courage to obey God rather than man in showing mercy to “the least of these.”

Concentrations of Migrants

Some of the largest concentrations of various language groups are in the world’s major cities: “In most cases, international migrants do not ran-
domly choose their country of destination. On the contrary, for a variety of economic, social, linguistic, and other reasons, they migrate to certain countries and, within these countries, to certain cities” (Global City Migration Map).

The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) has identified 150 metropolitan areas of one million or more people with at least 100,000 foreign-born residents in fifty countries (see Global City Migration Map). In fact, foreign-born residents number 500,000 or more in nineteen of these cities, and foreign-born residents account for 25 percent or more of the total population of twenty-four cities worldwide (Global City Migration Map).

According to the Joshua Project, “the 10/40 Window contains the overwhelming majority of the world’s least evangelized megacities—that is those with a population of more than one million. The top 50 least evangelized megacities are all in the 10/40 Window!” (What Is the 10/40 Window?) Again, notice what Ellen White says, “The gospel is to be proclaimed in our cities. Men of learning and influence are to hear the message. Not only white men but colored men of ability are to accept the faith. These are to work for their own people, and they are to be supported in doing the work the Lord desires to have done” (White 1946:559). Just two examples are listed to show the huge numbers of migrants.

**China**

There are some seventy million Chinese living outside mainland China that need to hear the gospel (Tsui 2009).

**Mongolia**

Missionaries to Mongolia have discovered that there are more Mongolians outside of Mongolia that there are inside the country. (See “Reaching the World Rapidly” for the story of a Mongolian woman working in the United States who led her family to the Adventist Church with just one phone call home.)

**Summary**

It is natural, even biblical, for us to share our faith first within the inner circle of our family, closest friends, and native culture. However, to stop there would rob us of necessary character building experiences and many rewarding opportunities to be workers together with God. Worse yet, refusing to leave our comfort zone and launch out into the untried waters of cross-cultural ministry, robs God of the glory he wants to reveal to the world through his church, and of the souls he paid such a high price to save.
Just as God uses migration to bring the unreached in touch with the gospel, he longs to use the experience of cross-cultural ministry to help us who know him to reach a higher “standard of spirituality through a change in the regular order of things . . . for the success of character building” (White 1915:269). May God use this essay to inspire each reader to venture into the miracle territory of cross-cultural ministry for the glory of God and the salvation of souls in his Kingdom is my earnest prayer.

Works Cited

Terri Saelee discovered the joy of ministering to refugees as a freshman at Union College. She went to Thailand as a shy student missionary and returned with an unquenchable passion to reach refugees here in America where she launched SEARCH (Southeast Asian Refugee Community Helps). Four refugee church plants later, Terri is now reaching out to the Hmong in Wisconsin with her husband, Ko Saelee, (Hmong Coordinator for the Wisconsin Conference) and three children. Terri coordinates Adventist Refugee and Immigrant Ministries (ARIM) for the North American Division.