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A Seat at the Table

Lawrence Robinson
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THE LAKE UNION HERALD STAFF

P.O. Box 287, Berrien Springs, MI 49103-0287 | (269) 473-8242
 Publisher Maurice Valentine, president@lakeunion.org
 Editor Gary Burns, editor@lakeunion.org
 Managing Editor Debbie Michel, herald@lakeunion.org
 Circulation/Back Pages Editor circulation@lakeunion.org
 Media Specialist Felicia Tonga, felicia.tonga@lakeunion.org
 Art Direction/Design Robert Mason, masondesign@me.com
 Design Articulate@Andrews, articulate@andrews.edu
 Proofreader Susan K. Slikkers

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Adventist Health System Anthony Vera Cruz, Anthony.VeraCruz@ahss.org
 Andrews University Rebecca May, RMay@andrews.edu
 Illinois Shona Cross, scross@ilcsda.org
 Indiana
 Lake Region Paul Young, paul@ilcsda.com
 Michigan Andy Im, aim@misda.org
 Wisconsin Juanita Edge, jedge@wi.adventist.org

CORRESPONDENTS

Adventist Health System Anthony Vera Cruz, Anthony.VeraCruz@ahss.org
 Andrews University Gillian Sanner, sanner@andrews.edu
 Illinois Shona Cross, scross@ilcsda.org
 Indiana Colleen Kelly, colleenkelly1244@gmail.com
 Lake Region Paul Young, paul@ilcsda.com
 Michigan Julie Clark, jclark@misda.org
 Wisconsin Deidre Roat, droat@wi.adventist.org

LAKE UNION CONFERENCE DEPARTMENTS

P.O. Box 287, Berrien Springs, MI 49103-0287 | (269) 473-8200
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LOCAL CONFERENCES AND INSTITUTIONS

Adventist Health System: Terry Shaw, president/CEO, 900 Hope Way, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714; 407-357-1000.
Andrews University: Andrea Luxton, president, Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0670; 269-471-7771.
Illinois: Ron Aguilera, president; John Grys, secretary; Michael Daum, treasurer; 619 Plainfield Rd., Willowbrook, IL 60527-8438; 630-856-2850.
Indiana: Vic Van Schaik, president; Mark Eaton, secretary/treasurer; street address: 15205 Westfield Blvd., Carmel, IN 46032; mailing address: P.O. Box 5000, Westfield, IN 46074; 317-844-6201.
Lake Region: R. Clifford Jones, president; Garth Gabriel, secretary; Yvonne Collins, treasurer; 19860 South LaGrange Rd., Mokena, IL 60448; 773-846-2661.
Michigan: James Micheff, Jr., president; Justin Ringstaff, secretary; Leroy Bruch, treasurer; street address: 5801 W. Michigan Ave., Lansing, MI 48917; mailing address: P.O. Box 24187, Lansing, MI 48909; 517-316-1500.
Wisconsin: Michael G. Edge, president; Brian Stephan, secretary/treasurer; street address: N2561 Old Highway 16, Fall River, WI 53932; mailing address: P.O. Box 100, Fall River, WI 53932; 920-484-6555.

Contributors: Writer guidelines are available online at <http://herald.lakeunion.org>.

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A Seat at the Table

Lawrence Robinson



Provided by Lawrence Robinson

▲ Lawrence Robinson

IN THE DAYS LEADING UP TO the North American Division (NAD) Year-end Meetings, I took some time, every so often, to think about the importance of what I was going to do while serving as an NAD executive committee member. As a college student, I knew it was a privilege to attend the meetings as a voting member when others, more qualified than I, did not have that opportunity. In spite of my insecurities, I knew God would give me guidance and wisdom to represent Andrews well.

During the meetings, I listened to reports from different departments, talked with leaders from across the region, and voted on some policy changes. This was all an exciting and new experience for me, but the tension was evident, even from the first day of the meetings.

The elephant in the room during the entire session was the General Conference (GC) Annual Council and the document* that was passed at Battle Creek in early October. I knew this topic was something my generation was struggling to understand. I was aware of the confusion and questions the document had caused among my demographic, as I heard undergraduate and graduate students, my classmates and teachers, and even my close friends speak from their hearts about how they felt about it.

The Sunday session of the meetings was specifically set aside for delegates to discuss how their constituents felt about the document, as well as voice their personal concerns or speak in favor of it. It was during this time that my fellow student delegates and I felt that we had to say something. Many of us had classmates at our universities, friends in our home churches, and family members that were discouraged by this document. We knew that we'd be failing them by not speaking up. We

were convicted to draft an open letter to our church leaders to make them aware of how our generation felt about what occurred at the Annual Council and what we wanted to see happen in the future.

This was not just any impulsive letter that we wrote. We had met in the lobby of our hotel for a few hours to choose what we wanted to say and determine what the tone of our letter should be. I can say that, in all of my academic career, I have never participated in such a collaborative and intentional group writing session. We deliberated throughout the night and prayed intermittently until we felt comfortable with what we had written.

Although we initially addressed our letter to church leaders, our statement shifted more into being a message of encouragement and action directed to young people like us. This moment in our church's history calls for the youth of all ages — middle schoolers, teens, college students and recent graduates — to get involved in our church. We cannot keep our heads down and not say or do anything. Our letter notes that young people need to talk to church leaders on all levels, from the local church to the GC, to find ways to be actively involved, collaborate with other members, and be mentored.

Readers, I encourage you to read the document for yourselves. If you are young like me, I hope that these words encourage you to be involved. If you are a bit older and wiser than I am, please reach out to my generation. Provide us with opportunities to serve where we are interested. Allow us to work alongside you to further the mission of the church. If we work together, not only will our church flourish, but we can reach out to others and be more like Jesus. ■

*Document available at lakeunionherald.org under NEWS, or <https://bit.ly/2DRQyKL>

Lawrence Robinson, also known as "L.J." by his peers, is an Elementary Education major and currently serving as the Andrews University Student Association president.

Giving Back

By Konner Dent



KhaiKhai Cui

▲ Sangneung Sang

SOME PEOPLE MINISTER FOR TRADITION'S SAKE, while others do it out of obligation or to quell religious guilt. Sangneung Sang is not one of those people. Since leaving Myanmar and coming to the U.S., via India, the 23-year-old has immersed himself in the Battle Creek Tabernacle Church where he's heavily involved in ministering to refugee children.

"Our main goal is to teach kids, at a young age, to believe in Jesus and make our community stronger, so they can be good kids to their families and [dedicate] their knowledge towards God," said Sang.

It was 2006 when Sang arrived in India; four years later he arrived on U.S. soil with his parents and two siblings. "It was a better place, for both education and better living experience," he said, recalling

his 8,000-mile journey to Kansas City, Missouri. He and his family then moved to Battle Creek, Michigan, where he completed high school and an associate degree from Kellogg Community College.

In September 2018, he finished a series of bi-weekly youth retreats. While working with the refugee children ranging in age from 8–16, Sang confessed that it tested his ability for communication and ministry at times. "Something I'd like to work on is having more leadership skills. Things sometimes didn't turn out the way we wanted, and we had to talk to our students and get them to understand."

However, reflecting on the end of every week, Sang happily admitted that his students were able to take away what was most important. "Friday nights we had special music, and when these kids would be talking about what they learned and how they used what we taught them, it put a smile on everyone's face."

Sang says in the near future he hopes to attend Grand Valley University to pursue a science-related degree, such as nursing but, in the meantime, he's faithfully applying his life's philosophy of accessing heavenly power for help while here on earth. "I know that each day, our Savior, Jesus, is always with us. If we are having difficulty, such as family or friends who give us a challenging time, we know that with God everything is possible. In terms of our faith, it gives us strength for our daily lives." ■

Konner Dent is a freelance writer.

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