

MISSION UPDATE

AUGUST 2018

3,500 LIGHT YEARS AWAY

JEFFREY ROSARIO

ON JUNE 15 OF this year, Cambridge University scientist Stephen Hawking (1942-2018) was buried between Isaac Newton and Charles Darwin. A physicist and cosmologist of the highest rank, Hawking is believed to be the greatest scientist of his generation.

As his ashes were lowered into the ground, a recording of his voice was beamed 3,500 light years away toward the nearest black hole in the universe. It symbolically commemorated Hawking's life-long desire to reach outer space and penetrate the unknown.

In some sense we all long to be heard.

Hawking was heard all over the world, yet he needed the universe to know his voice. Though an atheist, he wanted to reach beyond the stars, whether or not something—or Someone—was listening.

Yet there *is* Someone listening. Maybe we can't beam our voices into a black hole, yet the lowliest among us has the privilege of knowing our faintest whisper can reach beyond the known universe and into the very presence of God. It's a baffling reality.


The Star Breather isn't too busy for us.

"Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice" (*Steps to Christ*, pg. 100).

The God who is responsible for monitoring the orbits of planets looks forward to hearing the seemingly insignificant concerns of our hearts. "Bow down your ear to me," pled the psalmist, "hear me, for I am poor and needy" (Psalm 86:1, NKJV).

As Ellen White wrote: "Through sincere prayer we are brought into connection with the mind of the Infinite. We may have no remarkable evidence at the time that the face of our Redeemer is bending over us in compassion and love, but this is even so. We may not feel His visible touch, but His hand is upon us in love and pitying tenderness" (*Steps to Christ*, pg. 96).

In thousands of years, Hawking's voice will reach that black hole. Yet before the words roll off our tongues, our prayers have registered at God's throne.

"Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16, NIV). 



EVERY PIECE A BULLET

MEIRING PRETORIUS

RWANDA IS STILL BUSY healing from its deep and sensitive scar. The horror of the satanic killings that began on the morning of April 7, 1994 is still fresh in the minds of the survivors. More than one million victims, the survivors' family and friends, lost their lives in the most inhumane and brutal genocide.

A program called Gacaca was started to establish reconciliation. As I was reading some of the stories of forgiveness in the Genocide Memorial Museum, I realized that only God's grace can bring true healing and reconciliation. It is times like these which create fertile soil for God's forgiveness, acceptance, and grace.

I believe that the containers of Bible lessons have come at the right time. Rwanda is open for the everlasting gospel. The evidence was seen during Ted Wilson's evangelistic campaigns of 2016, where 105,000 people responded to the gospel and were baptized. This mass baptism shook Rwanda. Everyone was astonished at the results.

However, even though there was success during the evangelistic campaigns, people still needed to be grounded in their relationship with their Saviour. Unfortunately, many converts fell away and their faith grew cold. A change in strategy was needed. Soon, in 2017, when the first container of Bible lessons from Light Bearers arrived, the Rwanda Union Mission put another strategy in place.

The Rwanda Union Mission has embraced the TMI (Total Member Involvement) initiative from the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and uses the Bible lessons as the basis for accomplishing this goal. The Bible lessons are now used as the primary evangelistic tool. The

union decided that every member should reach one soul by using the lessons. This has proven to be highly effective. The Rwanda Union Adventist membership stands at 860,000. The goal is to increase the membership to one million by September 2019. A jubilee-style event is planned by faith for next year to celebrate, along with the church's 100-year anniversary.

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The Rwanda Union Mission sees the lasting effect and success of these lessons and uses them now in all public evangelism programs. Using them helps to establish new members in their faith and a relationship with God. The union plans to use the Bible lessons in accordance with Christ's method of winning souls.

"Every piece of literature is like a bullet in the gun of a good soldier. He cannot lose bullets and they must hit the hearts of souls," says the evangelism director as he trains the lay members in using the Bible lessons effectively. "Mingle with

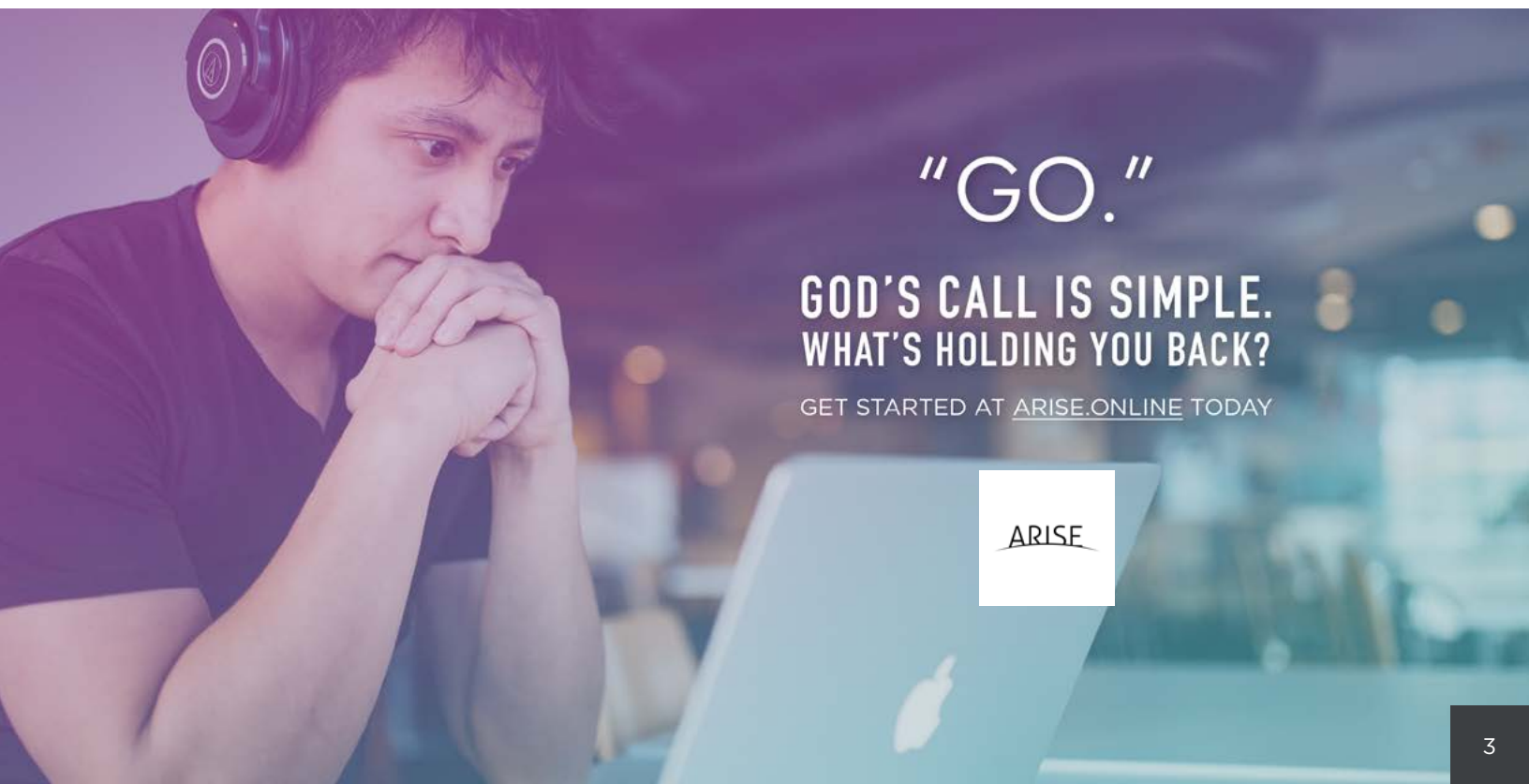
people. Create friendships. Supply their needs. Win their confidence," he believes is God's mandate to every member. Only the method of Jesus will bring true success in reaching souls. As the members follow this method and win the confidence of their friends, they introduce to them the Bible lessons. The success can be clearly seen in the number of baptisms from 2017 up to March 2018: 61,381 souls have embraced the truth as it is in Jesus.

Sabbath morning, while visiting in Rwanda, the evangelism director took me to one of the baptisms in the North Rwanda Conference. It was a high and joyful Sabbath where we witnessed 632 souls going into the watery grave, all the result of the Bible lessons. The conference wants to continue using the Light Bearers material as the foundation for all soul winning efforts. Not only are the lessons touching hearts for eternity, but they also provide healing for many broken and bruised hearts who have survived the genocide. Spiritual bullets are penetrating hearts for Christ in Rwanda. 🕯



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youth.adventist.org/GYLC

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