**Members:** With more than 1.1 million U.S. members and 21 million members worldwide, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of the fastest-growing faiths in the world. Initially emerging in 19th century New England as a small Christian Protestant denomination the Adventist faith has grown to include more than 85,000 churches.

**History:** While the faith was not officially founded until 1863, Adventists trace their roots to the Second Great Awakening. Over the ensuing decades, the church expanded from its original base in New England into an international organization with a presence in more than 2010 countries; established a worldwide network of publishing companies; organized more than 8,000 schools with 2 million students; and established 138 hospitals and 500 health clinics worldwide. By the 20th century, the faith became officially recognized as an official Christian denomination.

**Beliefs and Practices:**

*Sabbath:* Every week from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown, Adventists dedicated their Sabbath time to deepen their relationship with God. For most practitioners, this means a committed effort to abstain from all work and sports activities, and instead, engage in contemplative prayer and humanitarian service.

*Heavenly Sanctuary:* Comparable to Old Testament depictions, Adventists believe in a heavenly sanctuary created by God and ministered by Christ. In his role as High Priest, Christ cleanses the realm in preparation for the Second Coming.

*Afterlife:* Unlike other Christian denominations, the Adventist afterlife model excludes heaven and hell. Instead, the righteous remain unconscious after death and are resurrected after the Second Coming.

*Religious Liberty:* Adventists deeply respect the religious freedom of all people, regardless of religious affiliation. The church’s own experience with religious persecution directly informs their advocacy programs for religious liberty around the world.
**General Conference:** With more than 85,000 churches, Seventh-day Adventists follow a hierarchical network. The democratically-elected General Conference oversees the global ministry of the church and spiritual development of the church.

**Noteworthy Adventists:** Adventists have made contributions to nearly every professional field, from sports and medicine to the military. Notable Adventists include Magic Johnson, Dr. Ben Carson, Sojourner Truth, and Desmond Doss—the first conscientious objector to be awarded the Medal of Honor.

**Commitment to service:** Since the establishment of its humanitarian work in 1956, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) reaches into more than 130 countries and serves tens of millions of people every year.