Tithe and the Local Church

It disturbs me to read of pastors and laypeople questioning the historic use of the tithe (see Carlos Medley’s “NAD Committee Members Question Tithe System,” Dec. NAD Edition). As I understand it, the local church does get “our little piece of the pie.” We get a pastor who is paid from the tithe money. If the local church cannot find the money they need to operate evangelism and other church functions, the problem is in the spiritual condition of the local church members, not in the way the tithe money is distributed.

—Philip A. Lewis
Seaman, Ohio

I was shocked to read that the North American Division—with its multicar, multi-TV, multi-Bible, multieveverything households and its padded pews, cathedral ceilings, and multipastored churches—was complaining about not having enough money. Most of our brothers have next to nothing, and half the world still has never even heard the precious name of Jesus. How can anyone filled with God’s Spirit ask to keep more money when we hear stories about starving children, bamboo churches, and one pastor for 20 churches? It is not more expensive programs that we need to fill our churches; it’s unselfish Godlike love.

—Jeff Zaremsky
New Port Richey, Florida

My righteous indignation was aroused by this article. If our God-given system is not broken, why fix it? When less than half of the membership of many churches return a tithe and a smaller percentage support the

What’s Your Story?

We still meet a lot of Review readers who ask, “Why don’t you do an article on — — —?” To which we reply, “Why don’t you write one?”

The Adventist Review is open to all Adventist writers—young and old. And though we can accept only 10 percent of the 60 to 80 unsolicited manuscripts we receive each month, we’re always looking for fresh, clear, real voices.


Length: 800 to 2,400 words (725-750 for Reflections).

Payment: $40 to $200.

Unsolicited manuscripts are evaluated the first week of each month. Attach a brief cover letter to a typed, double-spaced manuscript and mail to: Manuscripts, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. No e-mail submissions, please.

My wife and I are of limited funds—our combined income is approximately $20,000 annually—yet we give 10 percent in tithe and 10 percent in offering (50 percent to the local church budget; 20 percent to conference fund; and 30 percent to another need, local or otherwise). On top of this, we have promised the Lord that we would put the “largest” bill in my wallet each Sabbath morning into the offering plate. Many times it isn’t much (or nothing at all), but occasionally it has been a $20 bill or even one time a $100 bill!

Despite our low income, the Lord has blessed us greatly so that we have no lack at all—and indeed, we are able to do things that many other families are not able to do with much larger incomes. If every Adventist did this, the church would be able to do incredible things.

—Name Withheld

The Sins of the Church

Regarding Robert Folkenberg’s “The Sins of the Church” (Dec. NAD Edition). God’s revelation to us is one of total openness. The Bible is filled with potentially embarrassing stories in which God’s children don’t do what’s right but don’t represent Him well. But there is no attempt on God’s part to cover it up. Instead, the record is complete for all to read, ask questions,
and make up their own minds.

We as a church should be this open. If the church tries to hide parts of itself, it becomes dishonest and makes itself less and less relevant to society. Why would people turn to a church for answers when it can't take the questions? Our church does have the answers that this world is looking for. It can give a good accounting of itself, even in the face of tough questions. Let the church continue to be honest, open, and relevant.

—Mark Reeves
New York, New York

Elder Folkenberg’s message is powerful and on track. We have seen and heard far too much hatemongering from those trying to “perfect the church.” Folkenberg’s message is written in the same loving, entreating spirit that he is encouraging us to exhibit toward the organization.

—Judith Bee Kreischer
Berwick, Pennsylvania

When making admissions, being general can be far too easy and self-serving. It avoids admitting responsibility or naming safeguards against repeating the same mistakes in the future. General admissions are then misquoted to deflect further criticism by saying “We’ve already admitted our mistakes...” when in fact we’ve only admitted that some mistakes have been made. Those who risk trying to effect changes are even accused of being negative and destructive. Eventually they become quiet. That can’t be a good thing.

—Steve Divnick
Kettering, Ohio

Separate Conferences
There is no room for bigotry in our church. I couldn’t agree more with John S. Nixon’s “Time for a Miracle” (Dec. NAD Edition). Having been a member of the Adventist Church for more than 10 years now, I have never understood why we have White and Black conferences. It was always explained away as “They don’t want to be part of the White conferences.” My husband and I posed this explanation to some Black friends we met while attending a Black church in Atlanta, and they don’t understand it either.

Times have changed, and we will have to answer to God in the very near future as to why we continue a practice in direct opposition to His instructions. It is indeed time for a miracle.

—Suzanne French
Palmetto, Florida

Abortion
Thank you for having the courage to print Gary Krause’s news commentary “Criminal Timing” (Nov. 26 Anchor-Points Edition), regarding the high school student who discarded her newborn baby at a high school prom.

I have been disappointed at the reluctance of so many in the Adventist Church to meet the abortion issue head-on. No one, upon reading this piece, can miss the obvious point—that there is no substantial difference between killing a baby before birth or after birth. It’s still a baby, no matter what semantic gymnastics are used.

—Walter Sumner
Canaan, Maine

Letters Policy
The Review welcomes your letters. Short, specific letters are the most effective and have the best chance at being published. Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: Reviewmag@Adventist.org CompuServe network: 74617,15.
After more than 40 years of Sabbath school I figured nothing could surprise me. I've seen mission stories illustrated with live snakes; played Bible baseball with Gideon's team (wer en't they the ones who hit the pitchers?); earned my sticky stars for Bible verses memorized; led a hundred dry discussions. Like thousands of my "born and bred" peers, I've attended Sabbath school every seventh day since before I knew to walk. A lso, like thousands of them, I've sometimes wondered why.

Not that it isn't a pleasant way to spend an hour on a Sabbath morning. The upsurge of good feeling and conviviality provided by the Sabbath school has carried members through many a dismal worship service, saving something of the day. Earnest leaders and frequent skits have given early-morning Adventism a human face when stern formalities might otherwise hold sway.

But it cannot be that this is why we hold a Sabbath school—to exchange pleasantries, to teach our children Sabbath games, to get a good discussion going. I'm fully fond of fellowship, but I'll guess I'm not the only one who's asked, "Now, what's the purpose here?"

Two months ago and three thousand miles from home I sat in a crowded classroom, listening to a careful college senior explore the weekly lesson. The insights were genuine if unremarkable. The conversation sometimes lagged in painful gaps between question and answer. I bit my lip and kept an unaccustomed silence, even when the teacher nodded in my direction. Let others have their turn, I thought, congratulating myself for generosity. This is their time: I preach in half an hour.

I smiled at the quiet waterfall of turning pages that followed every question. Even when they chose not to speak, class members were attentively finding texts, heads bent over their well-worn versions, eyes tracing the columned print. More from whim than by design, I began counting open Bibles around the room: 25, 26, 27... 28. I shivered with astonishment as I realized that every person in the room had Scripture open.

Brief, poignant testimonies were shared, each anchored by a favorite verse. No controversies rocked the room; no daring provocations rent the sky. The agreed-upon authority in this class was Holy W rit, not unholy wrangling. It would have been unthinkable to begin an answer with "It seems to me...".

When I stood to preach, I fumbled for words to express my admiration—my surprise. They smiled in modest embarrassment, probably assuming I was saying something nice only to break the pulpit ice, unaware of just how rare their story truly is.

That the Sabbath school could be—should be—chiefly about a humble covenant to study Scripture with our peers now comes as a surprise, perhaps even an unwelcome surprise to some. After decades of wandering in the wilderness of gaseous opinion and speculative theology, a class where Scripture is simply shared now seems like water from the rock, a fountain in an arid land.

We have become accustomed to a false egalitarianism that foolishly assumes that each person is equally acquainted with the Word and equally adept at handling it. Deceived by otherwise useful notions of democracy, we place the same value on the unbiblical, uninformed opinion of the brother who never cracks the Word as on the sensitive, righteous insights of the sister who revels in it. This is a world turned upside down, in which the Book we say we value most is only supplemental reading to spark a hot discussion.

My wife each week attends an interfaith study group in which participants covenant not to speak unless they have completed the three-hour printed Bible lesson. Only then, with minds well washed by Scripture, may members share their viewpoints and opinions. This seems like strong medicine: how many Sabbath school classes across the land would fall silent if Adventists followed such a practice? But it is just this kind of medicine that may be needed if the body is again to become healthy.

Until we again place a premium on knowing the Word in our Sabbath schools, we will probably deserve all the wandering we get.
Giving in the Spirit

Juan Prestol is treasurer of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

Stories of wealth, youth, and power attract us all. The idea of wealth allows us to entertain thoughts of satisfying all our needs, wants, expectations, and desires. One of the most compelling stories about the dynamics of wealth, youth, and power comes to us from three of the four Gospel writers.


You remember the story: a young man, rich and powerful, comes eagerly to ask Jesus what he must do to have eternal life. The young man has all he could want on earth and wants to be sure that heaven is his as well.

But Jesus tells the young man to sell everything, give all that he has to the poor, and follow Him, as there will be treasure for him in heaven. This is too much for the young man, and he sadly walks away.

“Sell what you have, give it to the poor, and follow Me.” Jesus’ statement points to the central issue in the young man’s life. His problem was not what he had, but who he was. He was a selfish lawkeeper.

Someone has observed that the Ten Commandments can be summarized into one: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3, NIV). The other nine commandments define what it means to have other gods before Him. God, as the Creator of the universe, is worthy of our worship through everything we have—body, mind, soul, and yes, possessions. Riches and prosperity are part of God’s plan for His children. But the young man had missed the focus of God’s challenge, a challenge based on the fundamental spiritual principle that giving reflects our priorities.

Giving is one of the things God asks us to do on a regular basis as a demonstration of our commitment and faithfulness to Him. We do this by returning our tithes and offerings. Tithing represents our commitment and faithfulness to God. Offerings reflect our love and commitment, and the depth of our belief in Him.

Tithes and offerings are meant to bless the recipients, but the act of giving also blesses the giver. The Lord tells us: “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it” (Mal. 3:10, NIV).

When we surrender our possessions to the Lord, He multiplies them spiritually and materially. Christians seeking spiritual prosperity would do well to remember Ellen White’s maxim: “Spiritual prosperity is closely bound up with Christian liberality” (Counsels on Stewardship, p. 49).

Yet for many there is no difference between giving to God’s church and giving to any other charitable organization. Tithing is an act of worship and should not be confused with any other act of benevolence. The value that society places on tithing is often that of a simple tax deduction. But the reason that tithing and giving offerings are central to our spiritual growth and prosperity is that we need to balance our natural covetousness and selfishness with Christian liberality.

Tithing is not an insurance premium to prevent catastrophic losses, but an act of surrender to the will and power of God. King David acknowledged as much when he prayed with thanksgiving: “Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hand are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand” (1 Chron. 29:12-14, NIV).

This is something the rich young ruler couldn’t bring himself to do—recognize that all he had, all he was, was the result of the love, mercy, and grace of God. And it cost him eternal life.

The North American Division places a high value on the support of its members through tithes and offerings because we regard the gifts of God’s people as acts of worship motivated by the spirit of Christian liberality.

Juan Prestol is treasurer of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.
AN UNOFFICIAL GLOSSARY OF ADVENT-ISMS
How many of these terms apply to you?
A dventist: Believer in A dventism; the doctrine of
the nearness of the Second A dvent and
the end of the world/age
Badventist: A dventist exhibiting a poor example
Cadventist: A dventist with ungentlemanly instincts
Cladventist: A dventist clothed with a full suit of
gospel armor and covered with Christ’s
righteousness
Dadventist: Fatherly A dventist
Fadventist: A dventist drawn to every latest craze
Gadventist: A dventist on the go, but with little purpose
Gladventist: Happy, grateful, pleased, willing A dventist
Gradventist: A dventist holding an academic degree or diploma
Ladventist: Male youth A dventist
Madventist: Angry A dventist
NA Dventist: A dventist working for the North
American Division
Padventist: A dventist disinclined to leave personal
living quarters
Radventist: Wonderful, marvelous A dventist
Sadventist: Unhappy, downcast A dventist
Tadventist: Boy A dventist
Wadventist: (pronunciation irregular) A dventist in
possession of a considerable amount of money

— Jerry Stevens, Ferndale, Michigan

PASTOR JULIE

BREAKING THE STEREOTYPE: At age
21 Julie Hill (right) just might be the
youngest full-time female pastor in
the North American Division. Julie is
the chaplain of Auburn Adventist
Academy, a 300-student boarding
school near Seattle, Washington,
and the associate pastor of the
academy church. Julie’s appointment
followed an extensive search for the
right person to head campus min-
istries. “We interviewed many per-
sons before our committee r ealized
that all the qualifications we were
looking for could be found in our
young task force chaplain, Julie
Hill,” says Dave Weigley, Washington
Conference president. “Like Samuel, we passed over many of ‘Jesse’s sons’ before God
made His choice evident. Pastor Julie is doing an outstanding work in the community and
at the academy.” Julie’s experience includes five summers with the evangelistic team
Northwest Youth Challenge—50 students involved in eight annual weeks of Revelation
seminars, Bible studies, and door-to-door distribution of magabooks. Story by Cindy Tutsch.

WE NEED YOU
Send Give & Take submissions to . . . Give & Take, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904; Fax: 301-680-6638; E-mail: 74532.2564@CompuServe.com. Please include phone number. Submissions will not be returned.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TERRY CREWS
A Life in the Spotlight

With a career spanning more than five decades, E. E. Cleveland has been one of this century’s most influential Adventists.

BY STEPHEN CHAVEZ

He is arguably one of the most effective evangelists to serve the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For more than 55 years, on six continents (all except Antarctica), Edward Earl Cleveland has tirelessly presented the everlasting gospel and trained gospel preachers in 67 countries of the world.

“The other day some of my students asked me what I consider my greatest contribution,” said Pastor Cleveland recently from his home in Huntsville, Alabama. “I said, ‘Letting Adventism produce a satisfied old man.’ The gospel has given me a sense of appreciation for what God has done in my marriage, my career—every day of my life.”

And by all accounts, the Lord has crammed a lot into the more than threescore and ten years that Cleveland has been standing in front of congregations large and small (he will celebrate his seventy-ninth birthday next month).

In the Beginning

“I’ve known since I was on earth what I was born to do,” says Cleveland, the middle son of Bill and Eunice Cleveland. Earl’s two brothers, William and Harold, also served the church as administrators (as presidents of the Southwest Region and Allegheny West conferences, respectively), but Earl whistled a different tune. “I had a one-track mind from childhood to evangelize. My pop used to take me to tent meetings, and I couldn’t wait to get out and do the thing I always wanted to do,” he says.

By the age of 6 Cleveland would accompany his father to churches in the area of Chattanooga, Tennessee, where the family lived at the time. Cleveland preached sermons that his father, a lay member, had written. “The preachers seemed to be happy with them,” he recalls.

Cleveland and his brothers all attended Oakwood College, and Earl graduated in 1941. The nation had yet to recover...
completely from the Great Depression, and upon finishing college with a degree in theology, there was no "Colored money" for newly graduated pastors.

Cleveland worked for a few months with a church in Toledo, Ohio, until he received a telegram from his father. "Carolina Conference offers internship," it said. "Will you accept?" Cleveland recalls, "I fired off a one-word reply—'Accepted!'"

His first assignment was to pastor a district of seven small congregations. "I spent most of my time evangelizing, filling up those little churches."

While Cleveland’s love of evangelism quickly became obvious, he had no attraction to administration. "Board meetings, business meetings, and all those things bored me. I was born to do the thing on the corner," he says. Cleveland’s first evangelistic campaign netted 84 new members; the next one, 113. This at a time "when men were baptizing 30 or 40 and being crowned lord of all."

Evangelistic crusades of that era typically ran six nights a week for 12 to 20 weeks (three to five months). During the fifth week evangelists presented the Sabbath and began having services on Sabbath mornings in addition to their Saturday night meetings. "We’d go on and on as long as a soul moved in our direction."

In Greensboro, North Carolina, Cleveland held a campaign that brought 142 members into the church of 35. "I told the conference that if they’d send me across town, there was another 100 people," he relates. "They sent me, and we baptized 113 more. So they decided to put me into evangelism [full-time], and I’ve lived happily ever after."

Hitting His Stride

Over the years Cleveland hit upon several “innovations” that he used with great success in every city in which he held evangelistic meetings. The first was radio.

In 1943 Cleveland started in radio without any training and without any money. He walked into a radio station, told the manager he wanted to start a radio program, and signed a contract. "I didn’t have money for bread in my pocket," he recalls. When the manager asked, "Would you like to pay now or when you broadcast?" Cleveland replied, "I’ll pay when I broadcast, and that’s how I got started."

Another way Cleveland raised community awareness and support was to sponsor a “radio chorus.” His wife, the former Celia Marie Abney, would assemble a group of young members from the local Adventist church and augment it with young people from the community—Methodists, Baptists, Roman Catholics, etc. The radio chorus would sing for Cleveland’s meetings and provide musical selections for his 15-minute Sunday radio program. Most of
the young people ended up being baptized after sitting through all those weeks of meetings.

At one of the two campaigns Cleveland held in Greensboro, a young man, the son of an Adventist mother and a non-Adventist father, attended the meetings. The young man was planning a career in dentistry. One evening he sat in one of the folding chairs long after everyone else had left, just before all the lights in the tent were turned off. Cleveland saw the young man and went to sit with him.

"As I sat here this evening listening to you," began the young man, "the Holy Spirit convinced me to do what you're doing—preach the gospel." That young man, Charles Decatur Brooks, went on to Oakwood College and then to serve the church as a powerful preacher and evangelist. But he began his career in soul winning as part of Cleveland's radio chorus.

**The Preacher-Teacher**

After his second series of evangelistic meetings, the local conference president began sending young pastoral prospects to work with Cleveland and help in his campaigns. And beginning in 1950, at the president's invitation, Cleveland presented one-week evangelistic training seminars at Oakwood College. He observes that during those years "nearly every Black pastor who came to the pulpit had a little bit of my treatment."

A few years later Cleveland began an association with the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University as one of the evangelists with whom seminary students would participate in summer evangelistic field schools.

At the General Conference session of 1954, held in San Francisco, Cleveland was elected an associate director of the General Conference Ministerial Association. Cleveland still remembers the conversation he had with R. A. Anderson, the secretary of the M inisterial A ssociation. "He took me out under the bleachers of the Cow Palace, and he said, 'Earl, we welcome you to the association. Now, you won't be running any more tent meetings and public evangelistic meetings. Your business will now be to teach other men how to do it, and you'll do it on a world scale.'"

"I told him, 'I'm afraid you have the wrong man. Perhaps you need another horse'—that was the word I used—'because when I leave here, I'll go to Montgomery, Alabama, where a tent is already waiting on me. And I'll be there for 12 to 20 weeks.'"

Cleveland remembers Anderson's amazed expression at being told by his assistant what he intended to do. But Anderson replied, "All right, Earl, go on down to Montgomery, and I'll be down to see what you're doing."

According to Cleveland, the meetings were packed from start to finish, from the end of summer until December. When the meetings ended, 480 people had been baptized, and there was a new Adventist congregation worshiping in Montgomery. When Anderson came to observe Cleveland's methods, Cleveland said to him, "The best way to teach evangelism is to do it."

And that's been Cleveland's method of operation ever since. Over the years he's trained more than 1,100 pastors and ministerial students who have been involved in his more than 60 full-scale evangelistic meetings, in addition to countless smaller revivals and reaping meetings. Many of North America's largest cities (New York, Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, Washington, D.C.), as well as cities in Europe, Asia, South America, Africa, and Australia, have hosted Cleveland and his evangelistic team.

Cleveland cites as his biggest evangelistic thrill the campaign he held in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. He recalls that up to 1966 no single Adventist evangelistic campaign had yielded 1,000 baptisms. Cleveland went to Trinidad with a team of 47 pastors from 13 countries. A reviving during the rainy season, Cleveland and his team asked the Lord to stop the rain from 5:00

TEACHING EVANGELISM: Just after being elected as an associate in the General Conference Ministerial Association, Cleveland held meetings in Montgomery, Alabama. A caravan of eight chartered buses provided transportation for baptismal candidates and their families to the swimming pool where the baptism was held. A police escort was required to guide the procession of cars and buses over the 16-mile route through the city.
Cleveland—On the Record

On old-style, months-long evangelistic series:
People got taught the message three or four times before they ever hit the water.

On satellite evangelism:
I think it’s great. But the Air Force never won a war. We have to get the ground troops moving.

On race relations in the church:
This church has done all that it can in terms of legislation. You’d be surprised at the extent to which there’s been a flowing together without a whole lot of engineering.

On facing contemporary challenges:
Our greatest challenge is maintaining the 27 fundamental beliefs. If we can stay around the pillars, we’re safe.

On Adventist preaching:
We’ve got to bring more dynamics to the gospel’s theories and postulates, a little more meat on the bones.

Cleveland tells of approaching General Conference president Robert H. Pierson and describing the situation.

“What can I do?” was Pierson’s response.

“You could put about $15,000 into the enterprise,” suggested Cleveland.

“And you’re going to go down there and work with them?” asked Pierson.

“I’ll be there,” he assured Pierson.

“OK, consider it done.”

The General Conference was joined by the Columbia Union and the South Central Conference in providing food, shelter, and medical care to the people who were involved in the Poor People’s March, just one of many efforts to mend relationships that had been strained by racial division.

His Continuing Influence

Even though Cleveland’s schedule isn’t nearly as demanding as it once was, he still traveled more than 35,000 miles last year to speak at camp meetings, college campuses, and leadership meetings.

And when he’s not traveling, he teaches two classes each semester at Oakwood College: Evangelism and Religious Broadcasting, and Dynamics of the Christian Faith. “My supreme passion has been to develop my own spirituality,” he says. He compares growing in Christ to traveling an unlimited horizon that will culminate in Christ’s return. Beyond that, evangelism, or “populating the kingdom,” is how Cleveland would like to be remembered.

Stephen Chavez is an assistant editor of the Adventist Review.
My wife and I enjoyed a perfectly happy marriage until she decided to go to a counselor. Now she argues my every point and refuses to cooperate on anything. As Adventists, don’t we have all the advice we need in the Bible? Why should we seek the advice of worldly counselors?

The “unsettling process” that often follows counseling sometimes makes the parties involved wonder why they decided to seek help in the first place. In your case, the issue is compounded by the fact that you did not initiate the process; your wife did. From the sounds of your letter, you are content with the way things have gone for the past 20 years and will be perfectly happy if nothing changes in the next 20.

The fact that your wife has gone to an outside source for help, however, tells me that the other party in this relationship is not content with the status quo. While you judge the first 20 years of your marriage to be “happy, peaceful, and free from stress,” your wife’s reality appears to be different from your own. Just because you did not see your wife directly expressing frustration does not mean that she did not experience stress. It’s very possible that she spent the first two decades of the marriage avoiding problems at the expense of her own needs and desires.

Researchers have noted that people respond to stress in one of three ways.* In some cases people confront their stress directly, attempting to change the things that cause tension. Methods include speaking up, taking action, facing problems, going at an issue until it is resolved. At other times and under other circumstances people accommodate to stress, seeking to adapt to strain by changing their own response to it. At such times individuals keep their mouths closed, swallow their words, tolerate irritations, and work around problems. Last, people often attempt to “cognitively neutralize” stress, mentally reframing a stressful situation to make it more bearable. Individuals release stress in this way by focusing on the positives of their own situation, reasoning, “My life is difficult now, but there are others who have it much worse.” By reframing a negative situation, these individuals seek to regain a sense of internal control over their lives.

W hy and when do people decide to directly confront, silently accommodate, or cognitively neutralize stress? The answer is often connected to the measure of hope one feels for effecting change. In some instances people decide, either consciously or unconsciously, that the battle is not worth it. Nothing will ever change. The stress must somehow be endured. Perhaps your wife made small attempts early in your relationship to express her own needs, only to be met by resistance. Perhaps it seemed easier to avoid direct confrontation; the silent frustration of accommodating was easier to bear than the counterproductive cycle of confrontation, anger, and exhausting and frustrating bouts that led nowhere.

Unfortunately, those who accommodate at the expense of their own emotional well-being eventually pay a price. Energies spent submerging personal needs and desires consume one’s life force. Accommodation and cognitive neutralization give way to despair.

You might view the added stress in your home as a sign that your wife has the courage and energy to reach out for help before being totally submerged in another 20 years of silent frustration. Will things get worse before they get better? Most definitely. Is counseling antibiblical, anti-Christian, and outside of the parameters of the good Adventist home? Most definitely not. The God who blessed His creatures with the gift of emotions and the power of words with which to express them does not expect us to remain silent when we hurt.

It appears to me that you have two choices: join your wife in her quest for change or continue in your path of resistance. While both routes will consume enormous amounts of physical and emotional resources, the first promises to lead to a better place.


Catalyst for Awakening
A Adventist-Laymen’s Services and Industries leads by example.

BY WILLIAM G. JOHNSSON

Adventist-Laymen’s Services and Industries (ASI), now celebrating 51 years of active service and ministry, is a fast-growing lay organization that projects enormous energy and enthusiasm. ADVENTIST REVIEW editor William Johnsson recently caught up with ASI president Dan Houghton.

Johnsson: My first contact with ASI came in 1983, when I attended the annual convention. As I recall, the group was fairly small.
Houghton: Yes, approximately 300 people were there. Today we have more than 1,000 members.

Was there any particular takeoff point for ASI’s growth?

There’s been steady growth from the beginning. However, there has been a significant acceleration in membership in the past six or seven years.

Historically, ASI was rooted in self-supporting ministry. In 1947 a small group met in Ohio and put the ASI organization together. It began as an association of health-care and educational institutions that were part of the self-supporting work. During the sixties they began to accept businesspeople into the organization.

So what began as something without A adventist businesspeople today is basically businesspeople?

A large component of our constituency are businesspeople, but we still have a strong contingent of supporting ministries—about 70 percent business and 30 percent ministries.

What sort of businesses are represented?

We have members in professions and trades from A to Z—literally. Agriculture, accounting, baking, banking, construction, computers, education, engineering, a full range of health-care services, insurance, law, manufacturing, marketing, printing, publishing, photography, just to name a few.

And all of these members are A adventist?

ASI members must be practicing Seventh-day Adventists. None of the supporting ministries in our organization accept tithe.

What is the aim of ASI?

The primary focus of ASI is to share Christ in the marketplace, wherever we find ourselves. We place a strong emphasis on workplace witnessing, and the testimonies of our members who are doing it are a great inspiration. This theme has been highly visible for more than 10 years.

That hasn’t always been there?

It’s been there, but it hasn’t always been in the spotlight as it is now. Initially ASI was a way to keep our self-supporting ministries in communication with the church.
Because there have sometimes been tensions?
Yes, there have been those moments.

So this was a way to bring both sides together?
That’s right. People wanted to have ownership in the church’s ministries. A SI members want ownership, but they want to direct that ownership into mission and sharing Jesus Christ as a part of the church.

How do you read the relationship between A SI and the church today?
Very good. A s in any family there may be some differences of opinion, but I would say that the relationship between A SI and the church is excellent. At our convention this past year we had church leadership from all levels supporting us with their attendance.

I’ve noticed that each time I go to a convention, it’s the sort of meeting that leaders don’t miss anymore.
Some people say that the leaders want to be near the source of income, but my perception is that leaders recognize that something is happening.

There’s tremendous energy at an A SI convention.
We don’t consider this only a lay organization. Yes, the membership is laypeople, but we’re partnering with other people. That’s something I want to stress. A SI is all about partnering together with the corporate church.

A SI is much more than a convention. God has a special destiny for A SI. He has been cultivating us for a special purpose. That destiny, I hope, is that A SI members can be a catalyst of an awakening of the lay movement in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the world before Jesus returns.

You’re interested in growth, aren’t you?
We’d like to at least double our membership in the next 12 to 18 months—or earlier, if we can. That’s a big goal, but we believe that it’s doable. We don’t want to grow just for growth’s sake. I see our group as a catalyst that calls and leads by example the rest of our church membership in rediscovering the power of lay ministry.

I challenge people to become involved in their church, and I don’t mean simply becoming a member of a committee or a board. The passion of A SI is leading people into an experience of sharing their faith in Jesus Christ with someone who is not a Christian, is not saved, or is in need of drawing closer to Christ. Become involved in ministry.

At the conventions you give a lot of time to people sharing their experiences.
Yes, we do. It’s very intentional.

In fact, witnessing experiences dominate rather than preaching.
Far and away, when asked what was the most inspirational part of the convention, people say that the testimonies and witnesses of other people motivate them the most.

This is grace in action.
And it’s leading by example. There may be many people out there who do not qualify to be members of A SI, but perhaps we can encourage them. Because people say, “H ere’s a group of people who are willing to put their money where their mouths are. They’re willing to put their time where their mouths are.” And they’re willing to say, “We’re going to be involved in God’s work.”

You raised $3.85 million in one offering on Sabbath morning at your

“Create a Moment”

Excerpts from Dan Houghton’s presidential address to the ASI annual convention, held in Palm Springs, California, August 5-8, 1998.

We’ve been given a clarion message to give called the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14. . . . The main element of those messages . . . is to call the world back to the worship of the Creator-God. I look at [current events] and say, “That is good news!” We don’t have to be looking for our “time of trouble places.” We need to be thinking about the fact that God needs our hands, our lips, our feet, our actions, to call the world to a knowledge of the Creator-God, who wants us to worship Him on His Sabbath. We have the privilege of joining together with our Seventh-day Adventist family for that unique role and responsibility in Christianity and our world.

ASI members are people of action. . . . This is one of the most exciting groups of people that you’ll ever find. One of the most dedicated, committed groups of people—individually and collectively—that this church has anywhere. One of our objectives is to grow this organization to a new level of involvement and membership.

This organization has a destiny to fulfill that is special and specific. . . . We can take [this] passion for sharing Christ in the marketplace . . . and be the catalyst that shows the rest of the people what it means to come alive and truly become a . . . lay movement as we prepare to come before the Lord.

I’m convinced of this one thing: we should not try to do the work of the Holy Spirit. But we have the great privilege and honor to be a conduit of that Holy Spirit to reach the world around us. And our responsibility . . . is simply this: to create a moment in the world when the Holy Spirit has maximum opportunity to impact someone. It may simply be a smile. It may be a little more. You may need to meet some kind of a physical or a spiritual need that a person has. It may be an opportunity to lead them to Christ. Whatever it is, if you decide you’re going to create an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work, it can happen.
How to Join

Membership in ASI is open to any Seventh-day Adventist member in good standing who operates a business, provides a professional service, has a product to sell, or operates a supporting ministry.

There are three categories of membership:

Organizational Membership is available to any organization with at least two full-time employees that is owned and controlled by an Adventist layperson. This is the standard ASI membership.

Associate: Professional or Management Membership is available to any person in an executive or managerial level of responsibility, other than a denominational employee, who does not qualify for organizational membership.

Associate: International Membership is available to any organization that is operating outside North America and has direct ties to a parent organization holding ASI membership, or that is located in an area in which there is no ASI organization.

Annual membership dues begin at only US$85 for associate membership. Organizational membership dues start at US$120 and are based on the number of employees of the organization.

For membership information and application forms contact: the ASI National Office, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. Phone: 301-680-6450. Fax: 301-622-5017. Website: www.tagnet.org/asi. E-mail: tatuli@nad.adventist.org.

Daniel last August. How many people were in attendance?

About 2,600 or 2,700.

Were they all ASI members?

No. We welcome people joining us for our convention. We want the service-oriented, grace-filled, action-oriented spirit of ASI to be infectious.

You also have branch organizations in each union conference, I understand.

They’re called chapters. Each union has a union chapter and some conferences have a subchapter. We also have regional chapters in certain areas.

Dan, what about lay businesspeople and supporting organizations or ministries overseas? Do you see ASI as the organization to embrace all these others?

No, not at all. ASI is a North American Division entity. We have fostered development of those same types of entities in other divisions.

So you see yourself as sort of a facilitator of other organizations?

That’s right. We had two other divisions in attendance at this year’s convention. We’re trying to help spread the spirit, but we want to avoid trying to build a central structure. We believe that structure needs to be released and empowered and carried by vision to see what the Holy Spirit will do in these places.

Do you get any reimbursement for your work with ASI?

The ASI presidency is a labor of love. Certain expenses are paid, but all of our officers work without pay. We have more than 75 individuals involved in various levels of activity within our organization, including committees for evangelism, outreach, publication, and communication. Some 100 people are involved in making leadership things happen. We want to expand that and lead by example.

I’ve noticed that some church administrators get a little nervous or suspicious when laypeople get too active. Is that still with us?

Unfortunately it is. Laity have been too content for too long to pay the professionals and expect them to do the job. Some of our leaders and pastors do not know what to do with an empowered member. But this is changing, and it must change.

William G. Johnson is the editor of the Adventist Review. Sarah E. Coleman, an editorial intern last summer at the Adventist Review, assisted in preparing this article.
PIONEERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Four young Global Mission pioneers make up the traveling ministry team of YouthNet eXtreme. The ministry focuses on reaching Generation X with the love of Jesus Christ. The team made their debut in June at a camp meeting held in Huttonsville, West Virginia. Eleven young people were baptized and 20 more expressed a desire to be baptized in the near future.

The team is made up of Brian Yeager, Laura Whidden, Cory Wetterlin, and Bernita Smith. “We’re not perfect people you can’t relate to, but we’re all sold out for God,” says Yeager. The team continues to travel to academies, colleges, and rallies spreading the love of Jesus.

GO TO THE FRONT LINE

See and hear Global Mission stories from around the world on Global Mission Frontline, on Three Angels Broadcasting Network (SpaceNet 3, channel 21). You can see the programs: Tuesdays at 8:30 p.m., Central time/6:30 p.m., Pacific time; Thursdays at 1:30 p.m., Central time/11:30 a.m., Pacific time; and Sabbaths at 12:30 p.m., Central time/10:30 a.m., Pacific time.
Haiti, said to be the second-poorest country in the world. A land where the temperature can reach 100 degrees each day, where malaria-infected mosquitoes and flies are just everywhere, where electricity, plumbing, and refrigeration are scarce.

This is no vacationer's paradise, yet what would attract even missionaries to what some call a “godforsaken land”? Forsaken, you say? Never! Not by God and unequivocally not by the National Association for the Prevention of Starvation (NAPS). It is the committed spirit of youth with compassion for others that is the driving force of this relief ministry. It is the small faces of the hundreds of suffering children that wrench their hearts.

16-Year Ministry

NAPS's founder and director is Anthony Paul, chair of the Biology Department at Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama. The group began its ministry in 1983, when students began ministering to homeless people living under bridges near the school. NAPS volunteers have now made two trips to Haiti. Most recently they constructed a school building for the children of LaChapelle. The only school in this district is a makeshift canopy of weatherworn bamboo branches beneath several palm trees.

The children of LaChapelle are mostly undernourished. Signs of starvation are evident in their bloated stomachs, and their red hair reveals protein deficiency. Because of the unsanitary conditions and the high incidence of bacteria in the water, supplied only by a shallow river, severe illness and death are common, especially among the elderly and children.

In a remote makeshift compound this team of 39 Oakwood College students ministered to the people of Haiti and the children of LaChapelle.

New Friends

Rosemond and Marie-Joe are two girls who were befriended by the kind members of the NAPS organization. Every day they looked forward with more than 175 other children to the daily noon meal prepared by this relief organization. Rosemond, 12, and Marie-Joe, 13, were innocent teens whose joy was their daily encounter with two NAPS missionaries—Cynthia Gordon, a pre-med student, and Jean-Baptiste, a native of Haiti.

The girls hurriedly skipped down the road as they saw the missionaries approaching; they were always happy to greet them and begin their personal Bible studies. These girls had never heard of Jesus, and did not know that there is a God in heaven who watches over them. Yet convicted of this newfound truth, the girls expressed their desire to accept Jesus as their Saviour and be baptized.

This seemed virtually impossible to the villagers, however. They told the Bible workers that the parents of these girls were Satan worshipers. In fact, their father, a satanic priest, wanted no dealings with the Christian church.

One day the interpreter sat between the missionaries and the girls and translated as Rosemond spoke: "We have worshiped Satan for 11 years, but..."
Angola Fighting Produces More Refugees

New conflicts between the ruling Angola Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the opposition party National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) produced a new flow of refugees in this southwestern African country. Four years after the cease-fire, violent fighting erupted again. These attacks have produced an increase in the number of refugees. According to unconfirmed reports, from 6,000 to 8,000 new refugees have reached the city of Luena, in the interior of the country, since the beginning of December.

Since the 1994 peace agreements, the cease-fire has been fragile and often broken. The civil war in this gem-and oil-rich country started in the 1970s. Because of the loss of two United Nations planes, the UN has discontinued its humanitarian flights. Its aid program had concentrated its humanitarian flights on Huambo, where there are presently about 100,000 refugees, according to the report of the UN coordination office of humanitarian help.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) has temporarily evacuated its personnel to Luanda. According to ADRA officials, the situation in the capital, Luanda, is quiet.

Because of the food shortage in Huambo, the 35 school-children and students of the Bongo Seventh-day Adventist Seminary, in Huambo, have received food help from ADRA. About 90 percent of the 12 million Angolans are Christians. Despite war and persecution, churches have continued to grow. A bout 70 percent of Christians are members of the Roman Catholic Church. The most numerous Protestant churches in Angola are: the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with 176,000 members; the United Methodist Church, with 100,000 members; the Evangelical Congregational Church in Angola, with 140,000 members; and the Church of the Brethren, with 125,000 members.—Adventist News Network.

Remember Adventist TV Ministries Offering

A dv entist Television Ministries is setting records, reaching goals, and changing lives. Faith for Today's Christian Lifestyle magazine was again rated the seventh-most watched program at any time on any day on Trinity Broadcasting Network, a Christian cable station.

It Is Written set a goal five years ago to reach the 12 major languages of the world by the year 2000. To date it is broadcast in eight of the 12. Starting this year IIW
A Complex Market

BY MYRNA TETZ, MANAGING EDITOR, ADVENTIST REVIEW

They are called the millennials, and there’s 70 million of them—born since 1979, and most are still under the age of 18, reports Elizabeth Large in “The Next Generation.” “This makes market analysts, advertisers, trend forecasters and politicians extremely interested in them.”

“They’re intuitive techies and . . . a powerful group the rest of us can’t ignore.” The hot toys on the shelves this past holiday season demonstrate the comfort level with new electronics of even the youngest. “If it didn’t have a computer chip, as the Furby did, Santa could just leave it in his workshop.” “They are the most analyzed, dissected, categorized and agonized-over generation ever.”

Large suggests that information is absorbed by this generation unfiltered, and if you want to communicate, make it fast. “The zap and surf generation is used to processing fragmented images and having lots of quick hits. Catch their attention quickly or they won’t wait around to see what you have to say.”

Susan Mitchell, author of American Generations, says that the millennials have a sense of themselves as global. “They are multicultural, even where there is de facto segregation,” Large adds.

Statistics also say that the over-50 population will balloon by 41 percent in the next 10 years. Kurt Medina, in “Looking Back From Tomorrow,” says, “ALL marketing will have to take the needs of the mature into consideration.”

It’s a complex market. Logically, Seventh-day Adventist Church members ought to consider very creative measures to reach this unprecedented age span with such varying degrees of electronic savvy—if they expect to carry the gospel to the entire world. Utilizing the talents of the millennials might be a good way to start.

1 Unless otherwise noted, quotations in this article are taken from Elizabeth Large, “The Next Generation,” Baltimore Sun, Jan. 10, 1999.

2 Direct, December 1998, p. 54.

NEWS BREAK

emarks on an evangelistic effort called ACTS (Adventist Commission Through Satellite) 2000, which targets major cities throughout the world.

Breath of Life initiated a new format last year, financed on faith, which has received enthusiastic response. Having spawned 14 new churches in nearly 25 years, the ministry also plans to continue its public evangelism. An offering will be collected throughout North America on February 13 to keep these valuable ministries in the public eye.

CUC Studies Consolidation and Relocation

The Canadian University College board of trustees recently initiated a feasibility study that could have a major impact on the future of the Seventh-day Adventist school.

The study probes the feasibility of rebuilding the campus at its current location in College Heights, Alberta, or relocating the campus near Calgary. Rebuilding the campus at the current location would allow for a reduction in the number of buildings. Relocation could offer students greater cooperative work opportunities.

“These are exciting options to consider,” says Randal Wisbey, CUC president. “However, it is essential to carefully study both of these options to consider which one offers CUC the best opportunity for success—success for

our students, our institution, and for the communities we serve, both in Alberta and across Canada.”

NAD Official Appointed Pensions President

Donald R. Pierson, North American Division associate treasurer, was recently elected president of the Church Pensions Conference. The conference includes personnel from more than 50 denominations representing pension plan assets of more than $46 billion.

The conference meets annually to discuss issues of mutual concern, and how best to meet these challenges. Pierson is the first Adventist to be elected CPC president.

News Notes

Michigan Fire. The Orion-Oxford Adventist Church in Michigan incurred major damage on January 2, reports Bruce Babienco, Michigan Conference communication director.

The blaze totally destroyed the main sanctuary, and the piano and organ fell through the floor. Other churches in the community have offered the use of their buildings during reconstruction.
Unreached African-American Populations in North American Cities

New York 2,200,000
Chicago 1,535,000
Washington, D.C. 1,000,000
Los Angeles 975,000
Detroit 935,000

Note: These figures were arrived at by subtracting the estimated Black Seventh-day Adventist membership from the total Black population in each of these metropolitan areas. Source: NAD Office of Information and Research, with the assistance of the Adventist Center for Global Urban Mission.

Dear friends at AWR: "I began listening to your Bible stories. After a while there crept into my empty heart a peace that I had never felt before! I could hardly believe it, but suddenly there it was—like a warm and friendly hand holding mine. I knew indeed that this was just the thing that I had been yearning for."—Lee, China.

"I was once an alcoholic, so caught up in my bad habit that I reached the extreme of selling my clothes and other possessions to satisfy my desires. But now I thank God and AWR-Pan America because since I met Him and you, I don't drink anymore. Your broadcasts have helped my sinful soul to grow spiritually, and I have been richly blessed. I will be forever grateful to you."—Luis, Cuba.

For more information about Adventist World Radio, write to: 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904-6600; or call toll-free: 1-800-337-4297; e-mail: awrinfo@awr.org; website: www.awr.org.

AWR Letter Box

C Clifford Goldstein, Liberty editor since 1993 and a columnist for the Adventist Review, was recently appointed editor of the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide.

Goldstein, an ordained minister, has authored 13 books and written numerous articles. He replaces Philip Samaan, who joined the religion faculty of Southern Adventist University in August 1998.

Correction. Lessons 5-8 in the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide for first quarter 1999 do not coincide with the corresponding chapters in the companion book Show and Tell.

Lesson 6 matches chapter 7. Lesson 7 matches chapter 8, and lesson 8 matches chapter 5. The General Conference Sabbath School/Personal Ministries Department and Pacific Press Publishing Association regret any confusion this may cause.

ACN Broadcasts

The programs below are planned by the Adventist Communication Network for March 1999. Call 1-800-ACN-1119 for complete program listings, time, and channel information. All times shown are Eastern time.

Mar. 3 First Wednesday, 7:30-8:30 p.m., Telstar 5, channel 17
Mar. 6 Adventist Worship Hour church service, each Sabbath, 11:00 a.m.-12:00 noon, Telstar 5, channel 24
Mar. 13 Cross Training, Teaching Children to Love, 4:00-6:00 p.m., Telstar 5, channel 24
Mar. 13 Heart 99 health seminar, 6:00-8:00 p.m., Telstar 5, channel 24
Mar. 27 Once Upon a Time, Adventist Review special feature, 4:30-6:00 p.m., Telstar 5, channel 24

What’s Upcoming

Feb. 1 Monthly Focus—Family Life
Feb. 6-13 Black History Week
Feb. 13 Adventist Television Ministries Offering
Feb. 13-20 Christian Home and Marriage Week
Feb. 20 Health Ministries Sabbath
Mar. 6 Women’s Day of Prayer
Mar. 13 Adventist World Radio Offering
WE LIVE IN A DESPERATE WORLD.

Everywhere we see humanity in varying degrees of desperation. Organizations of all types and missions, secular and spiritual alike, operate in a context of desperate circumstances. They swim against a tide of turbulence in American and global markets and cultures.

As God’s people, we are often irritated by desperation. To avoid it we budget, plan, and pray, and strive for order and prudence. Nothing wrong with that. From our earliest Uncle Arthur story moments we were programmed to think ahead and think smart.

But there’s a risky side to this. We avoid and stigmatize desperation; we insulate ourselves from it, sometimes playing it too safe—like the steward with one talent. Often we anesthetize ourselves from the desperation that lies so closely at hand. And it gets worse when we sense its hot breath on our necks or on the necks of those we love.

We want to avoid being touched or tainted by desperation. So we march forward with concocted bravery and with focused, intentional determination. We are too busy doing God’s work to bother with desperation. Desperation is for the faithless, the slacker, and the one who didn’t fill the silo with seed corn. Desperation is for the foolish virgins, the builder on sand, and the procrastinating sap banging on the outside of the ark as raindrops begin to fall.

Some of us even have jobs that require us to avoid desperation, or at least to manage and resolve it. In health care we minister to suffering patients and their loved ones, and we work to soothe and conquer the malady every day. We invest lots of money and effort to inoculate ourselves from it, believing it unseemly to be caught in circumstances we can’t control or for which we didn’t plan or budget. We raise our eyebrows and sigh with remorse when someone we know, or one of our organizations, appears desperate. We cringe at Adam’s lie to God after sinning in the garden. We’re shocked by the
scene of a rabble of slaves leaving Egypt and suddenly being surrounded by mountains, the sea, and Pharaoh’s army. And we marvel at Christ’s night of desperation in Gethsemane.

Sometimes the Bible presents twin story lines to contrast alternative approaches and resolutions in cases of desperation. For instance, consider the biblical record of Peter and Judas. Both were traitors—worthy of death and expulsion from God’s people. Both had been loved and taught by Jesus—and desperate in that awful epiphany of shock once they locked into the enormity of their crimes. One resolved his desperation by suicide and a long last step into Satan’s eternal darkness, while the other found in his desperation a doorway to inspiration. Peter experienced transformation—a motivation to lift the human spirit, to impel a mere man to action rising high above himself, to reach for divine standards of a radical, selfless life of service, sacrifice, and self-denial.

Many years ago Hezekiah found his kingdom surrounded and cut off from hope by Sennacherib’s army. The Syrian delegation had come to the walls of the city and shouted waves of intimidation. They brought overwhelming force. Hezekiah tried resisting; he tried paying them off—even emptying the treasuries of both state and temple (2 Kings 18:14-17). But it was all to no avail. At last Sennacherib delivered his ultimate terrible ultimatum:

“Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, “Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.” Look! You have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by utterly destroying them; and shall you be delivered?... And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and... went up to the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord” (2 Kings 19:10-14, NKJV).

And the Lord worked a mighty miracle in delivering His people, with one angel destroying 185,000 troops (verse 35). Ah, the inspiration of desperation!

Paul occasionally found himself in desperate circumstances. One Bible paraphrase interprets his report this way: “We’ve had to face such hardships that our strength gave way and we wondered whether we’d make it through alive. We were so far gone that we felt sure we would die, but this only made us lean more on God who can raise the dead if He decides to” (2 Cor. 1:8, 9, Clear Word).

What is it that inspires you? What do you feel inside when you sense the breath of desperation drawing near? Are you so well bunkered in that you won’t ever have to deal with it? Hezekiah, Paul, Peter, and Jesus didn’t relish desperation. They didn’t go out of their way to invite it. But they recognized that it is the way of the world, Satan’s way to foster chaos and evil. They recognized that desperation is as much an element of Planet Earth as is oxygen. And in those moments of desperation they came to a place where they became inspired and motivated to move forward.

As Paul put it so boldly: even if we die and it is God’s will that we should serve Him, even so, He is able to raise the dead! You can’t get much more comfortable with desperation than that.

You who carry leadership burdens for the church are no strangers to desperation. You are well acquainted with strait places and foes on every side. Despite prayer, hard work, and preparation, those desperate moments have

Desperation around us seems hopeless.
As we move forward to earth’s closing scenes, we will confront predicaments that will make those challenges seem like the good old days. And it is in these rich moments, where answers seem absent and where all our training and intelligence seem only to help us define the gravity and depth of the danger, that God will offer us new opportunities for inspiration. There He will be, drawing us close, ever closer, to Him.

Not that we will ever learn to enjoy desperation; not that we will ever sense that we have “mastered the art” of what some like to call “crisis management.” God save us from such arrogance! No, it is in those times, rather, that we will become ever more accustomed to taking desperate issues and laying them before the Lord, as did Hezekiah. And we will see again God’s mastery of the universe. He can raise the dead, if that’s what it takes to get the job done.

What is it that inspires you? What motivates you to action and service beyond your mere human inclinations? Admittedly, desperation ranks way behind my personal favorites in the inspiration department. Way behind a sunrise, great music, the loving touch of my wife and children. All these rank way ahead of desperation on my list of inspiration favorites.

But it is in watching God act—and in some small measure helping Him—that there awakens in us the awesome wonder that He chose to involve us in His plan. It is in serving with Him as He works the impossible that we see His face and find ourselves more closely drawn to Him who alone is able to present us faultless before the throne. And in these encounters with difficulty, with desperation, we find ourselves ever more transformed into His children, and empowered anew to serve and feed His sheep.

Ted L. Ramirez is an attorney in Columbus, Ohio.
It's a great time to be in Toronto, especially if you enjoy reading newspapers. The media capital of Canada is in the throes of a great newspaper war. In addition to scores of ethnic daily, biweekly, and weekly journals, four daily newspapers now battle for 4.3 million potential readers in the Greater Toronto area.

News that would be buried or ignored in a one-newspaper town gets headline treatment here. And the papers are constantly seeking ways to expand their market reach. That might explain why this gem of a photo appeared in the Toronto Star last November.

A dog named Bob is pictured, standing on a farm near Bangkok, Thailand, with a stressed but doing-my-duty look on her furrowed face. A litter of eight piglets, not puppies, suckle away in noisy contentment. The 2-month-old piglets' own mother apparently became ill and was unable to feed them. So Bob stepped in as the surrogate.

The caption below the photo reads: "Milk of canine kindness." It sums up what we can all strive to be in a world whose inhabitants are hungry for love.

This engaging Reuters wire service photo of Bob and the piglets has many lessons for the Christian.

First, children are not as discriminating as adults; they accept kindness and love wherever they can get it. This can be good and bad. As a positive trait, it reminds us that Christ wants us to have this kind of childlike faith and trust—an attitude that makes it easier for others to help us. As a negative, it points to our children's vulnerability.

Those who live in urban settings know only too well that the influence of drugs and gangs is pervasive and unrelenting. Our children face the challenge and battles daily, literally just outside their door. Who will be the one to provide the "milk of human kindness" to the suckling children desperately in need of the physical and spiritual nourishment their biological parents don't provide?

The same "trust" that makes children adorable makes them susceptible to pedophiles and human predators who would recruit them for nefarious and dastardly deeds. The children will seek out "milk" one way or another. They will find it where they can. Either we provide it immediately and consistently, or the children will crave it elsewhere. In other words, if we don't fill their cups with lasting and genuine love, gang members will—with temporary "love" that leaves a bitter aftertaste.

Second, we can't always choose the object of our affections. No doubt Bob would rather be tending to her own puppies. But her help was needed, and she answered the call. Christians need to be like that. No sinner, no child, no person dirtied with sin like a pig covered in muck, should escape the comforting embrace of a child of God.

Third, Bob is an example of the perfect love of God. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus asks: "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? . . . And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? . . . Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:46-48, NIV).

Each one of us has the opportunity to let the "perfect" milk of human kindness flow this year. Just look around the "farm" you call home.

Maybe the pigeons at the town square need feeding. There's a beggar, a homeless man, at the intersection. A student at college is struggling to meet tuition payments, and you can fill the void left by an absent father. Then there is the mother with a brood of little ones, some of whom have just about worn out the sleeves of the hand-me-down winter coat. An unpopular teenager wants to be noticed and be invited home for Sabbath lunch.

There's no need to be frightened of the commission to be "perfect." What God requires of us is simply to have an attitude, a mind-set, an all-pervasive aroma of self-disinterested love and kindness for others. And when we do it, we'll be obeying the Saviour's greatest command: to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbors as ourselves.

It's not an unattainable and unrealistic ideal. Even a dog can do it. Just ask Bob.

Royson James is a columnist for the Toronto Star.
Living Despite the Odds

Reducing the risks of illness means living sensibly.

BY ZENO CHARLES-MARCEL

“If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee” (Ex. 15:26).

N HIS NATIONAL RADIO ADDRESS on February 21, 1998, President Bill Clinton challenged the nation to an ambitious goal: to eliminate the disparities in health status experienced by racial and ethnic minority populations by the year 2010. In his address the president put his finger on a problem that health-care professionals have known for decades: some ethnic minorities in North America—particularly African-Americans and Native Americans—suffer chronic diseases at significantly higher rates than do their fellow citizens.

According to a 1995 article in the Detroit News, “medical empowerment” is as important to Black communities as economic, educational, and professional self-help. In that same article a Harvard researcher explained: “Health promotion and disease prevention can be powerful tools in dealing with health deficits among African-Americans.”

A sober look at the situation will do us all
The Miracle Workers*

“They’re miracle workers,” says 30-year-old James Shaw, of Philadelphia. “What we learned here is priceless.”

“Here” is a conditioning camp program called Fitness for Life, nestled in the rolling mountains of Pine Forge, Pennsylvania, on the campus of the Allegheny East Conference (AEC) headquarters and Pine Forge Academy. The miracle workers are Gwendolyn Foster, M.P.H., AEC health ministries director; Geneva Jackson-McCleary, D.P.H., a health professional in Maryland’s Eastern Shore; Zeno Charles-Marcel, M.D., medical director of the Oklahoma-based Lifestyle Center of America; James Winston, M.D., a Philadelphia physician; and several pastoral advisers, dietitians, nurses, cooks, and a host of lifestyle counselors. For two weeks every summer Foster and her team work to change lives.

Foster started the Fitness for Life camp 20 years ago, just after she finished her master’s degree in public health from Loma Linda University. The idea for the camp came to her after she interviewed her adjunct professor, Nathan Pritikin, whose lifestyle centers helped the rich and famous in southern California wage war against coronary diseases. “They’d come for two weeks and leave miraculously cured,” Foster recalls.

From that moment, Foster knew she would also start a center, not for the affluent, but for anyone who would listen and benefit—especially for African-Americans, who are plagued with hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and arthritis at alarming rates.

“I’m 46, obese, and insulin-dependent; I have high blood pressure, I’ve had a hip replacement, and I need both knees replaced,” admitted camper Raynette Adams. “This camp has given me the rest of my life. After just two weeks I cut the insulin [dosage] in half, my sugar levels are lower than ever before, I lost eight pounds, and my pressure went from 142/88 to 126/58. I can now do 25 full-body push-ups, and I’ve gained four and a half inches in my flexibility reach. But I have gained more than that; I’ve also gotten a list of churches so I can get my spiritual life in order, all thanks to Fitness for Life.”

* Excerpted from the Columbia Union Visitor and used with permission.

TEAM BUILDERS: Gwen Foster (left), Fitness for Life executive director, and a staffer join a client in a group activity. Designed to build relationships between staff and clients, the activities add a social dimension to the practical instruction.

MAKING A POINT: Presentations by medical professionals add credibility to the lectures. Here Dr. Zeno Charles-Marcel makes his point.

FOOD FOR LIFE: Debra Carby (front) describes the food pyramid to Fitness for Life participants.

ALL SMILES: Nice people, good food, and fun activities bring a smile to participant Howard Jones’s face.

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to this country. In other words, if the mainstream is affected by a cluster of specific significant health problems, everyone who buys into the mainstream will suffer the same fate.

The Race Factor

That being said, genetics do play a part in overall health. For some as yet unexplainable reason, Black Americans are at higher-than-normal risk for several important health-sapping conditions. Notable among these are diabetes, high blood pressure, kidney failure, glaucoma, breast and prostate cancers, stroke, sickle-cell anemia, and HIV/AIDS.

Before 1950 smoking was less common among Americans of African descent than among those descended from Europeans. But now more than 7 million Blacks smoke, and the negative effects of tobacco hit people of color particularly hard.

Prostate cancer rates are 40 percent higher in Black men than in White men, and it develops at an earlier age. Twice as many women of color who have breast cancer die from it as those in the general population, although fewer Black women get the disease.

Type 2 diabetes is a serious health challenge in the ethnic communities, as in the population at large. But African-American men are 1.7 times more likely to have the disease as the general public. A new study found 2.3 million Black people, or almost 11 percent of the Black population in the United States, have this disease, which is largely preventable.

Cardiovascular disease, the major cause of heart attacks, strokes, and kidney problems, is linked to obesity, lack of exercise, and a diet high in fat and cholesterol, all of which are rampant in the Black community. Black females are 69 percent more likely and Black males about 150 percent more likely to die from cardiovascular disease than their White counterparts.

The situation is compounded by the fact that there is often less emphasis on healthy lifestyles among the undereducated, lower economic levels of African Americans than among those of all races who are more affluent and better educated. We are thus dealing with defined risk factors that may be hereditary but not genetic. By hereditary I mean passed on from one generation to the next in the form of traditional lifestyles. Genetics deals only with the biochemical transfer, but families pass along more than that.

While we may be powerless to change our economic level, we can and should, accept the responsibility of making the lifestyle changes necessary to improving the quality of our health.

Most of these lifestyle-related conditions are, to a great extent, preventable, even reversible, using principles given to Seventh-day Adventists more than 100 years ago.

God’s Blueprint for Health

Some question the relevance of the church’s health message today. They question whether such counsels are applicable in this technologically advanced age. Yet many, mostly non-Adventists, have embraced the principles we’re so familiar with because of their emphatic affirmation through science.

A corollary to some health experts, being an ethnic minority is in itself a risk factor for poor health. And while there are social, demographic, economic, and societal reasons for such statements, there are important and fundamental issues to consider in the “Black health” equation.

A major study of church attendance and mortality presented at the joint meeting of the Religious Research Association and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion showed that persons who attend church regularly live an average of seven years longer than those who don’t, the same as the life expectancy gap between women and men and between Whites and Blacks.

This is good news for African-Americans, for whose culture religion has traditionally played a significantly more important role than in society in general. Imagine the impact that God-fearing, wholesome, committed lives can have on the health of Blacks who also make wise lifestyle decisions.

As Christians in general, we have to believe that God’s way is the best way—in health, in lifestyle, and in every other area of our lives. The health message is a message of total health. It involves “wellness” in every aspect of our lives. The totality of Christ’s ministry in caring for the spiritual, physical, mental, social, and emotional dimensions of living is what we should be involved in; first for ourselves, but also for those who live in our neighborhoods and communities. In this grand scheme there is ample room for ethnic and cultural diversity. But its intent is to transform us radically so that we are first and foremost in line with God’s divine will and purpose, regardless of genetics or ethnic backgrounds.

The president’s challenge to reduce the health differential between different ethnic groups in America is individual and personal, as well as national. As Christians, we cannot offer God any less.

Zeno C. Charles-Marcel, M.D., is medical director of the Lifestyle Center of America in Sulphur, Oklahoma.
A few years ago, while standing in line at our world headquarters cafeteria, I talked with an Executive Committee member who expressed concern over the church’s past “sins” and errors. He acknowledged that these incidents—from mismanagement of funds to theological problems—had greatly shaken his confidence in the church.

I agreed that some of his concerns were valid, and that the church had indeed made some serious mistakes. But I also spent a few minutes talking with him about what the church had done—and will continue to do—to ensure that these mistakes won’t happen again. Then I asked him what it would take for him to be an evangelist of confidence in the church. After a lengthy pause he replied, “I’ve never thought of myself in those terms.” Needless to say, he walked away with a whole different attitude than when the conversation began.

I tell this story to make a simple point. We live in an age when conventional wisdom urges us to distrust, to point out all that’s wrong. The church is not faultless. On the contrary, considering that we claim to be a people chosen of God to bring the last message of salvation and hope to a dying world, we should be much less flawed than we are. Fundamental logic teaches that the whole is not bigger or better than its parts. That applies to the church as well. No matter how lofty and ideal and true our message is, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is no better, no holier, no more perfect, than its members. The three angels’ messages may be perfect, but the three angels’ messengers aren’t.

The church in many ways is an easy target. It’s big and diverse enough that almost anyone can find some moral or theological fault in it. Yes, we’re reminded that there will be a purifying and shaking of the church that will separate the chaff from the wheat in the end-time. But until that time, we have to live and work together with a common goal of preaching present truth to the world.

The question I ask is What role are we as individuals taking? The easy road, the one that’s broad and wide, that points out the sins and failure of “the church”? Or the more narrow road, the one that attempts to build confidence and hope in our God-given identity and mission?

There’s a lot wrong within the church. But there’s a lot right, too. And while I can say without any hesitation that I want the church as a body and all its related institutions to do everything possible in the power of God to solve the problems, I appeal to our members: be evangelists of confidence in each other. Build hope; instill trust; create bridges between others and the church.

Modern men and women hunger for a cause that they can trust, that will inspire them and give them guidance in a sea of information. As a church leader, I have my part to play. Along with every administrator, teacher, and pastor, I must commit myself to building trust. I know my pledge is shared by thousands of other leaders who love God and the church. With our flawed, sinful hearts we are nonetheless eager to finish the task that the Lord has given us.

But you have your role as well. Speak hope; speak faith; speak trust. Our ultimate trust must, of course, be in God alone. But Jesus has founded the church on Himself and given it the gift of His authoritative Word. He has called this people into being to do what no other group in the world is doing: preach the three angels’ messages. I know He’s still leading us, even with our faults.

There’s too much work to be done and too many souls dying for want of what we have to spend all our energies whining and pining. The problems are real, and leaders on every level are doing their best to solve them.

Pray for your church, its members and mission. Support it with your time, your energy, your love, and your resources. Covenant to find a ministry through which you can build up the church. Speak positively. Focus on the good. Help create trust.

In doing these things, you can never go wrong.

Robert S. Folkenberg is president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
Last summer my husband and I were wanting to purchase a new water lily to place in our pond (our greatest gardening joy). After careful study of the catalogs we decided to try a night-blooming tropical lily named Emily Grant Hutchings. Because of the position of a neighbor’s tree, our pond has a bit more shade than we would like. However, the catalog indicated it could tolerate partial sun and was a “super bloomer, often producing flowers in cluster.” Sounded just perfect, especially since the blooms were shown to be pink.

We placed Emily Grant Hutchings in our pond and waited. She produced the most beautiful, most healthy-looking lily pads for which we could have wished— but not one bloom all summer. We were so disappointed. When fall came and it was time to put our pond to bed for the winter, Emily was still producing beautiful pads.

At our latitude tropical lilies will not survive the winter. We knew the hardy variety would endure if they were placed at the bottom of our 27-inch-deep pond. What should we do? We couldn’t bear to just desert such a healthy-looking plant, but there was still no evidence of any blooms whatever.

We decided that since the plant would die anyway, we might just as well try to save it through the winter. We put water in a large tub with Emily inside and placed the whole thing just inside our patio doors, where even in winter there is considerable sunshine. We continued to feed the plant until the end of January, when we made our usual snowbird exodus.

When we arrived home in April, there was not too much left of Emily that looked encouraging. When the weather warmed and we cleaned our pond for the summer, Emily looked dead for sure. Should we just assume “Oh well, you win some; you lose some,” or should we continue to try? We almost decided to give up, but there was a tiny little something that looked not quite dead. We decided to place Emily on the shelf of our pond, where the water would not be very deep, there would be plenty of sun, and we would feed her well.

To our surprise, those beautiful pads eventually began to appear again. But still no blooms. We asked the advice of the experts, but everything they suggested we were already doing.

In our home there is ongoing earnest prayer for all our children. One has remained faithful to the God and the church we love. This spring we had the wonderful privilege of watching the oldest return. But there are three more. We kept telling God that two are not enough; we want them all.

He tells us to ask for more and still more of His blessings. We keep claiming His promises for these loved ones and looking for new promises to claim.

In my reading a couple weeks ago I came upon this promise: “We entreat the heralds of the gospel of Christ never to become discouraged in the work, never to consider the most hardened sinner beyond the reach of the grace of God. . . . He who turns hearts of men as the rivers of water are turned can bring the most selfish, sin-hardened soul to surrender to Christ” (Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 537).

And this one: “I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak” (Eze. 34:16, NIV).

A few weeks ago, while pruning and feeding the water lilies on our pond, I discovered a bud on the Emily Grant Hutchings. Was it really going to bloom at last? A few more weeks went by, and then—just in time for Sabbath—there was the most opulent, the most beautiful water lily bloom we have ever had in our pond. During that week we had at least seven more (the promised cluster).

Then early one morning I discovered this promise: “I will heal their waywardness and love them freely. . . . He will blossom like a lily” (Hosea 14:4, 5, NIV).

Oh, Father, thank You for Emily Grant Hutchings—my forever object lesson that tells me that You will, indeed, contend with him who contends with me and save my children (Isa. 49:24).

Betti Knickerbocker is a wife, mother, and grandmother living in Laurel, Maryland, who enjoys gardening and sometimes writes.