Young Widowhood
When your dreams collapse

For All Who Feel Average

Thirty Terms Every New Adventist Should Know.

February 18, 1999

Cutting Edge

SPECIAL REPORT: Adventist World President Resigns
Ten days after top church officers voted to call a special meeting of the church's highest deliberative body to consider allegations against him, General Conference president Robert S. Folkenberg announced his resignation, effective immediately.

Folkenberg’s decision averts a potential conflict between himself and the General Conference Executive Committee scheduled to meet at the church’s world headquarters on March 1.

By provisions of the church’s working policy, General Conference secretary G. Ralph Thompson became acting president. He will serve in that position until the 268-member committee elects a new president. (See “What Happens Next?” p. 3.)

In an emotional statement to more than 600 employees at the denomination’s world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, on Monday, February 8, Folkenberg cited the distractions created by a lawsuit against him and the need for church unity as reasons for his decision.

Folkenberg, 58, was elected president of the 10-million-member denomination in June 1990 at the church’s international constituency meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, and reelected at the 1995 General Conference session in Utrecht, Holland.

In late December 1998 allegations of financial and ethical improprieties by Folkenberg surfaced in connection with a civil lawsuit filed by James Moore, a Sacramento, California, entrepreneur against Folkenberg, attorney Walter Carson, and accountant Ben Kochenower, who had all at one time served on the board of two independent charitable organizations.

The General Conference Corporation and the church’s Inter-American Division were also named in the suit, but are not expected to figure prominently in the litigation. No church entity had any funds invested with Moore, nor were any church funds at risk. The General Conference Corporation never had any dealings with him, and the Inter-American Division had cut off all contact with him 10 years ago.

“This is a day I never dreamed would come,” Folkenberg told the headquarters employees as he explained his decision to resign. “There are things that are far more important than Robert Folkenberg and the position of president of the General Conference, and that is this movement that the Lord has raised up and the task that He has given us to do. And that transcends all personalities. It is bigger than any mistakes, and Lord knows, I’ve made my share of them. And I have confessed them, apologized, and wept and prayed about them. But above and beyond all of those is this end-time movement with a last-day message the Lord has given us.”

Folkenberg also read aloud the resignation letter that he sent to Thompson on Sunday, February 7, in which he acknowledged mistakes in his dealings with Moore but “rejoiced that the integrity of my motives has not been called into question.”

A Special Ad Hoc Group appointed by the General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM) met on January 25, 26 to hear presentations by Phil Hiroshima, a General Conference-retained attorney, and Folkenberg and his attorneys. Hiroshima had discovered evidence of possible ethical irregularities as he prepared to defend the General Conference Corporation and the...
theft in 1987. The president's failure to share information with the leadership circle about the lawsuit when it was still only being threatened seriously damaged his credibility.

There was also evidence that the office of the president had been misused, according to those at the meeting. Several financial schemes were attempted, invoking the influence and even the letterhead of the General Conference to introduce Moore to leaders of foreign countries as a way to raise money and pay off what Moore claimed Folkenberg owed him. ADCOM members deemed that behavior unacceptable.

Church leaders reached for comment expressed their belief that Folkenberg had made the right decision even as they underscored their personal pain about the events of the last three weeks.

“All of us are saddened by this sudden rush of events that has necessitated Elder Folkenberg's resignation,” said Thompson in a phone interview from Loma Linda, California. “A series of events has swamped and engulfed him, and for the good of the church and his family it is important to let a time of healing begin. We admire him for his decision and look forward to his continued contributions to the church he so much loves.”

“Elder Folkenberg reminded us when he was first elected nearly nine years ago that the real president of the

What Happens Next?

**BY BILL KNOTT, ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE ADVENTIST REVIEW**

The decision by General Conference president Robert Folkenberg to resign his office has set in motion a never-before-used policy for replacing the highest officer of the 10-million member denomination.

G. Ralph Thompson, secretary of the General Conference and the second-ranking officer, became acting president upon Folkenberg's resignation, and will serve until a new president is elected and assumes the responsibilities of the office.

Thompson, 69, has served 18 years as General Conference secretary, and was first elected at the church's international session in Dallas, Texas, in April 1980. He was subsequently reelected in 1985 and 1990, and most recently at the July 1995 General Conference session in Utrecht, Holland. Originally from Barbados, West Indies, Thompson is the first non-North American to serve as the church's second-ranking officer and becomes the first person in its 135-year history to function as an acting president. He has served as a pastor, evangelist, theology teacher, union president, and general vice president of the General Conference during 48 years of denominational service.

The General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM) has scheduled a special meeting of the full Executive Committee for March 1-7 at the world church headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, to elect a new president.

The Executive Committee is composed of nearly 270 laypersons, pastors, and church administrators from around the world, and is charged with giving leadership to the worldwide church between the five-year international sessions.

At the March meeting, a nominating committee will be selected with representatives from each of the world church's 12 divisions and will meet to bring a recommendation to the Executive Committee. The person elected as president will serve until the next General Conference session in June 2000 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Only rarely has the church had to act to fill a midterm vacancy in its highest post. In October 1978 President Robert H. Pierson surprised the Annual Council gathering in Takoma Park, Maryland, with an announcement that he was resigning his post and retiring from denominational service on the advice of his physicians. Members of the General Conference Executive Committee at that meeting subsequently elected Neal C. Wilson, then vice president for North America, as the new president.

Fifteen persons have served as General Conference president since the church was organized in May 1863 in Battle Creek, Michigan.

Terms of service were only two years during the first decade of the church, but gradually increased to four and then five years as the denomination lengthened the span between its international sessions.
General Conference is the Lord Jesus Christ,” Thompson continued. “The church moves forward, and, as I always like to say, the future is as bright as the promises of God.”

Others echoed Thompson’s sentiments about the denomination’s need for stability.

“The history of recent events cannot be undone,” said Jan Paulsen, General Conference general vice president. “But we owe it to God and the church to look for ways of healing and a sense of a strong, deliberate march forward.”

“I’m sorry Elder Folkenberg made mistakes,” says Kelly Butler, 22, a production artist in Laurel, Maryland. “Now, however, our church should move on with new leadership to share the gospel. I’m sad when people approach me and say, ‘Have you seen the gospel. I’m sad when people move on with new leadership to share the church.’”

“The anguish of this situation is palpable. But I’m glad that the church has dealt with this openly and without being judgmental.”

Thompson added, “The resignation of a GC president under these circumstances is an unprecedented event,” says Reinder Bruinsma, secretary of the Trans-European Division, headquartered in St. Albans, England. “More information must be provided to the church at large. Only openness can ensure continued trust in the church’s leadership.”

Still others looked for lessons in the three-week drama.

“Situations like this should be viewed as a warning for the church, particularly church leaders,” says Gregory A. Ille, chair of the Theology Department at Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama. “In a crisis, we must evaluate and ask the critical question ‘What is God saying to the church through this situation?’ For the people of God, the answer is always that God is calling us back to a relationship with Him. He’s calling us back to His mission, operating on His agenda, using His strategies.”

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Lawrence Geraty, president of La Sierra University in Riverside, California, notes both strengths and weaknesses in Folkenberg’s presidency. “I have appreciated so many things about his leadership: his strong commitment to the message of righteousness by faith; his ability to think ‘out of the box’ when it comes to the use of technology; his tireless commitment to holding a worldwide church together, with all its diversity; his calls to evaluation and accountability in the light of mission, eschewing ‘business as usual.’ He never asked anyone to do what he himself was not willing to do.”

“It is no secret, however, that his methods often clashed with the church’s leadership in higher education,” Geraty adds. “I personally felt his leadership style of ‘management by destabilization,’ while perhaps useful in other settings, was not appropriate for the church where ‘doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God’ is what we expect of our leaders.”

“Folkenberg’s resignation will give the church a chance to heal and move on, and I hope the same for him.”

Some observers expressed satisfaction with the speed and candor with which church leaders have dealt with the crisis.

“I’m deeply grateful that the church has dealt with this openly and quickly,” says Richard Stenbakken, director of chaplaincy ministries for the church. “The anguish of this situation is palpable. But I’m glad that the church has exercised judgment without being judgmental.”

“Our church gathered for prayer and debriefing when we first heard about these matters two weeks ago,” reports Ron Schutzen, pastor of the Lewiston, Idaho, Adventist Church, who read the February 11 Adventist Review special report to his congregation. “We appreciated that the matter was handled forthrightly and with dispatch. But we concluded that these events won’t sidetrack us from the mission of our local church. While one person has apparently stumbled, the rest of the church’s processes have succeeded.”

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“Folkenberg was the youngest General Conference president in nearly 90 years and the church’s highest elected office.”


dated major ini-
initiatives during his first five-year term to reduce both personnel and budgets at the church’s world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, and to cap operating expenses for the denomination. With the enthusiastic support of Adventist laypersons in business and industry, he promoted the use of satellite and Internet communication to further evangelization. Three international satellite evangelistic efforts—commonly known as NET evangelism in 1995, 1996 and 1998—resulted in tens of thousands of baptisms and positioned the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a global leader in church-based satellite communication through AGCN, the Adventist Global Communication Network.

For the first time in its history, the Seventh-day Adventist Church approved an official logo for the denomination, even as it contested trademark infringement with entities that inappropriately used the church’s name.

World membership of the church increased by nearly 68 percent during Folkenberg’s term, from approximately 6.3 million in 1990 to more than 10.3 million in early 1999. Contributions to the church increased by more than 57 percent, from a 1989 total of $953,134,989 to $1,500,521,546 in 1997, the last year for which a complete report is available. The church’s Global Mission initiative planted nearly 12,000 new Adventist congregations in previously unentered territories during Folkenberg’s term.

Rapid growth for the church in the formerly Communist countries of Eastern Europe, in Africa, and in the South Pacific resulted in the creation of a new world division of the church since 1990, the Euro-Africa, and the splitting of the Asia-Pacific region into the Northern Asia-Pacific and the Southern Asia-Pacific divisions. "On the road" an average of nearly 200 days each year, Folkenberg showed no hesitation in visiting politically sensitive and even dangerous regions, including Iraq, Iran, China, Cuba, and, most recently, war-ravaged Angola. In 1994 Folkenberg baptized the first convert in Mongolia. A dventists around the world could follow the peripatetic president on his many travels via his personal website, complete with day-by-day diaries and photographs. A weekly “From the G C President” fax newsletter kept hundreds of Adventist leaders and institutions updated on the president’s travels and opinions.

Folkenberg also championed several initiatives that called for greater church scrutiny of Adventist institutions and more accountability to constituents. His “Total Commitment to God” initiative, voted by the church’s 1996 Annual Council in Costa Rica, called for each Adventist pastor, congregation, school, health facility, communication enterprise, and administrative office to adopt mission statements, prepare specific and measurable objectives, and annually assess outcomes. A 1998 world church action to establish a Board of Missions and Theological Education in each division to give oversight to church-operated seminaries and theology departments has evoked significant criticism in some areas, including North America, and awaits implementation.

Twice during Folkenberg’s tenure (at Indianapolis in 1990 and Utrecht, Holland, in 1995) delegates to General Conference sessions declined to approve the ordination of women to gospel ministry or to allow world divisions to pursue independent policies to do so. An Office of Women’s Ministries was organized in 1990 and gained full departmental status in 1995, highlighting the increasingly public involvement of women around the world in the church’s evangelism and nurture efforts.
As I reflect on life in these wonderful but terrifying times, more and more one word comes to my mind—intensity.

Everything seems to be speeding up, to be off balance, to be out of whack. Communication, travel, work—the pace quickens, and the demand is only for more and faster. So people make big bucks but burn out and marriages fly apart. And we Christians aren’t immune from the pressures and hazards of these times.

I don’t know how close we are to Jesus’ return, but we may be much nearer than many Adventists believe. It’s as though the world is rushing on to a divine appointment. I don’t put any stock in the year A.D. 2000: Jesus was born about 4 B.C., so more than 2,000 years have already passed. But all around I sense the sort of gathering intensity that Jesus gave as the sign that His coming was imminent.

“It will seem like all hell has broken loose—sun, moon, stars, earth, sea, in an uproar and everyone all over the world in a panic, the wind knocked out of them by the threat of doom, the powers-that-be quaking.

“And then—then!—they’ll see the Son of Man welcomed in grand style—a glorious welcome! When all this starts to happen, up on your feet. Stand tall with your heads high. Help is on the way!” (Luke 21:25-28, Message).

Even nature is off course. Last year brought the biggest spate of natural disasters in human history. The planet reeled under the impact of droughts, floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes, as scores of thousands of people perished and damage ran into hundreds of billions of dollars. Areas such as Honduras have been so devastated that it will take decades to restore them.

But someone will say, “The world has always had its problems—crime, famine, earthquakes, and other natural calamities. What we see happening is only more of the same.”

Perhaps, but I wonder. I wonder if the very intensity that characterizes these times isn’t the key, that in fact we are in the midst of the birth pangs that accompany the time of the Messiah’s coming (see Matt. 24:8).

And some things are different. Our century—this century about to close—has witnessed the waging of war and death on a scale unique in human history. It was to have been “the Christian century,” but it became the era of Hitler and Auschwitz and Idi Amin and Rwanda.

Evil is gathering in intensity—this seems undeniable. Seemingly, nothing has become too vile for humans to commit, nothing too degraded to be viewed or read. Once little children and the aged and nuns were shielded from personal attack, but no more. Once people indulged in filth secretly; today they flaunt obscenities and trash on T-shirts and bumper stickers. The Christian church has existed nearly 2,000 years. Only in our generation has it seen pastors who openly espouse homosexuality, and congregations of members with similar practices.

It’s not true that what we are seeing is just more of the same, that all things continue as they have from the beginning.

Ellen White noted: “A n intensity such as never before was seen is taking possession of the world. In amusement, in money-making, in the contest for power, in the very struggle for existence, there is a terrible force that engrosses body and mind and soul” (Education, p. 260). She wrote these words almost 100 years ago; I cannot find a better expression of life today.

But at such a time—at this time—God’s work is going forward as never before. The gospel is speeding to every creature under heaven by satellite, by the printed word, by radio, by one-on-one sharing.

For God is drawing together a people around the globe who love and obey Him. The lines between those who follow Christ and those who do not are being drawn ever more sharply. The pressure of the times is such that mere profession doesn’t work anymore.

John saw them, a people redeemed from the earth when Jesus returned (Rev. 7:9-17; 14:1-5). They love Jesus and are loyal to Him whatever the cost. They speak truth; they are pure. Through His blood they are without blame. And they follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

Here is intensity—the intensity of grace.

A Gathering Intensity

WILLIAM G. JOHNSSON
DREAM CENTER

In this feature Adventists share their dreams for this church. We welcome your brief submissions.

TV COMMERCIALS: The Mormons have run some very nice television ads. I think we should produce ads that promote an image of a church that loves the Bible. I suggest a takeoff on successful existing commercials—like the Sprint ads that contrast garbled versus clear messages. Have someone read a particularly obscure passage from the King James Version, then hand them a contemporary version and say, “Here, try this.” End the ad with an offer to send a free copy of that translation. My nomination would be the New Century Version from Word Publishing. Others—such as the Good News Bible, or the Contemporary English Version from the American Bible Society, or the New Living Translation from Tyndale—are also excellent.

—Bob Dahl, Plymouth, Minnesota

ADVENTIST LIFE

Years ago my father was teaching a Sabbath school class in his home church in Kearney, Nebraska. During the discussion he reached into his back pocket for the handkerchief he always kept there.

Wondering why the class members were smiling, he looked down at his “handkerchief.” Imagine his chagrin when he saw that he was holding the cloth he had used to polish his shoes.

—Ruth Rankin, Lincoln, Nebraska

During our Sabbath worship services I always give our congregation an opportunity to voice their praises and prayer requests. One Sabbath one of our dear senior citizens praised the Lord for the successful cataract surgery she had endured on her eye. She then requested prayer for the upcoming surgery on her other eye, adding, “And I’d like to praise the Lord that He gave me only two eyes!”

—Gary Moyer, pastor, Summerville, South Carolina

JUST HANGING OUT

CALLING ALL UNUSUAL PETS

Do you own—or know an Adventist who owns—an interesting pet? We’d like to feature them on this page. Send (1) a photo of the owner and pet and (2) a short descriptive paragraph to Pet Show at the Give & Take address below. Deadline: April 1. That’s a good boy.

“Come on, boy!”

“Stay!”

“Here, boy!”

“Come here, girl!”

TAKING IT EASY: Sixth-generation Adventists Cherise and Mindy Hill—and their donkey, Jenny Lee—live on the campus of Daystar Academy, an Adventist high school in Castle Valley, Utah.

ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS

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.
Young Widowhood
Not everyone’s Valentine’s Day is happy.

BY RUTH-ANN J. MOSBY

WE WERE RUNNING A little behind schedule. It was already 1:30, and we should have been at our friends’ home by 12:00 noon. But Tim had to finish a two-year project (18 months ahead of schedule), call his sister, and, on the way to our friends’ home, stop by the Army/Navy surplus store. They would be his final acts.

An immediate outpouring of love and support came from all over the country. In the days before the funeral I was surrounded by family and friends, neighbors and coworkers, and bombarded with phone calls, food, and cards. But as soon as the funeral was over, the calls and the visiting decreased drastically.

My physicians advised me to abort the baby. I had a tear in my womb, they said, that could result in spontaneous abortion. My broken ribs would not be able to heal properly while I was carrying a baby. My rib cage would expand to accommodate the baby, causing me excruciating pain. The baby would likely be born with some type of disability, perhaps even blindness and/or deafness. My decision was firm and final. No abortion.

Lonely
I soon realized that the best of life and the worst of life is that life goes on. My friends had to return to their new husbands; people had to return to work. Jai had to return to his special preschool program designed for the specific needs of autistic children. And I had to return to... what?

Still injured from the accident, I was unable to work. I sat at home day after lonely day. Mostly I cried. It felt as if I could physically reach out and touch the loneliness. Daily around 4:30 p.m. I would imagine families reuniting all over the world, and I would sink even lower into depression. My heart ached worse than the morning sickness and broken ribs.

I confided in a friend who had also been widowed at a young age. She gave me a key to her home and told me, “Sometimes you just don’t want to be at home.” On some days just looking at the key helped me to feel better. I also frequently phoned some distant friends who never seemed to tire of listening to me. A large phone bill was a small price to pay to hear another human voice.

On Sabbaths I would go to church and put on my most sincere smile. Usually that day was filled with potluck dinners,
Out of Place

I began to realize that perhaps I needed help that my family and friends were unable to give. My physician suggested that I attend a support group and made all of the necessary arrangements. I was excited at the thought of meeting others who truly understood. I was in for a rude awakening.

The group was designed for widows and widowers, and that’s the only thing we had in common. Tim died just short of his thirty-fourth birthday; the group was filled with people whose spouses had died just short of their fiftieth anniversaries. While these senior citizens were bemoaning that their spouses would never share their retirement years or see another grandchild graduate from high school, I sat watching my belly swell with our second child that Tim would never see. I listened as long as I possibly could, but finally stormed out of the meeting, my eyes burning with tears of anguish.

I went home and cried that entire afternoon. I formed a double-exposed picture of Tim and me. Every book I found on it assumed that the spouse had died in the “golden years.” There was scarcely any help available for me. I needed some practical information about coping with young widowhood. I was overwhelmed with the responsibilities of running a home, cutting the grass, rearranging the furniture, handling the finances, maintaining the car.

Next I attended a few single-parenting groups. I certainly didn’t fit the pattern of a single parent. I found that the issues of child rearing were similar, but I hadn’t experienced a divorce. I soon began to feel out of place.

Writing in my journal became a solace. It was the one way that I could express my true feelings as I shuffled through the stages of grief—shock, anger, guilt, bargaining, acceptance. On April 11, 1985, despondent and feeling as if I just could not live another day, I wrote:

“The fact is that I’m still very much in love with Tim. But I must remember that my husband is dead. Dead. Dead. Death. Dying. I have to keep saying it cuz it’s still difficult to believe. I don’t expect I’ll ever ‘get over’ him, but I wonder if I’ll ever be able to stop hurting, to fill the void. Tim was so much a part of me. A part that is now dead. I can’t stop feeling guilty. We were both in the car and both in the front seat. So how did Tim die and I live? Perhaps I shouldn’t have lived.

“I keep seeing couples . . . twos are everywhere. Two squirrels, two sparrows, two shopping carts touching in the middle of the parking lot. Everywhere there are couples. Even Brother and Sister J are sitting together in church. We’ve lived in Columbus for almost four years and I’ve never seen them together.

“A nd I keep seeing fathers with their sons. I’m trying to be brave, but this is simply awful.”

About two months later I became a mother for the second time. I had special birth announcements made with a double-exposed picture of Tim and me on the front. The inscription read: “Tim’s last and most precious gift of love to Jai and me was our son.”

Weighing in at seven pounds, the handsome bundle of joy was born on Father’s Day, June 16, 1985. When Brandon was just 5 weeks old, my father died of colon cancer.

Questioning God

After a while I began to question God and tell Him that I didn’t like His plan for my life. Then I prayed for a sign to show me that He had not abandoned me. Weeks passed, but nothing. So I stopped praying. What good was that doing anyway?

Then one morning I descended the steps to the basement to do yet another pile of unending laundry. I heard water swirling around, and as my foot touched the basement floor I found myself ankle-deep in water. My entire basement was flooded. The recent storm had caused the pump to back up. A real mess. For me this was the last straw. I raced upstairs to my bedroom and dropped to my knees and prayed, “God, You said that You would be a husband to the widows, and guess what? I’m a widow, and a young one at that. I don’t care what You have to do, but You mop my basement.”

I gathered the boys and left the house. I was gone all day. When we returned home that evening, I put the boys to bed and then went to bed myself. The next morning I awoke and went downstairs, fully intending to clean up a messy basement. But there was no sign of water anywhere. Even more, there was no sign of water damage anywhere. I ran my hands under the couch in the family room. Dry. I went to the piano. Dry and undamaged. No damage to the washer and dryer, the desk, the bedroom furniture, the stored boxes . . . everything was bone-dry. I ran through the entire basement screaming like a lunatic. I knew that there was no human explanation for what had happened.

Healing

That was a turning point in my life. My true hope was in God. I knew that with God in my life, I was no longer alone. In a real and tangible way He had shown me that He loved
me just because. I then began to study His Word. Oh, I had read the Bible before, but now I put the words in my heart. And I searched for stories in the Bible that touched me personally. The story of Ruth became especially dear to me. (Ironically, my mother-in-law’s name was Naomi.) I found a God who comforted others whose lives had hit bottom. Talk about a support group! I clung to God’s Word, trusting in His promises—and my broken heart began to heal.

I still saw couples, fathers with sons, and happy families, but I no longer resented what I saw. While before I had tried to put up a good front, now I could feel genuine happiness for other people. I settled in my mind that life is full of change and that what we have today can easily be gone tomorrow. I learned that time and people are precious and that we must learn to appreciate both.

Once God began to heal my heart, He impressed me that it was time to heal my emotions. I sought professional counseling. The ability to speak openly about my grief, my life, and my needs was another necessary step in the healing process. When after two years my counselor suggested that I didn’t need her anymore, I felt another loss. But this time I had the strength and the courage to face life on my own. I even returned my friend’s house key.

I was invited to a baby blessing in Pittsburgh, and that’s where I met Alvin. He had an understanding heart and a listening ear. Five and a half years after struggling with widowhood, I remarried.

“Mourn With Those Who Mourn”

When someone is grieving, we often don’t know what to do. We are stunned, shocked, immobilized. Yet we are called by God to “mourn with those who mourn.” How do we do that? Here are some suggestions:

- Pray earnestly for them—and for yourself. Pray for wisdom and a caring heart. Only God knows exactly what grieving people need and when they need it.
- Find practical and specific ways to help. Shine shoes for the funeral, pick up prescriptions, or supply the house with toiletries, paper goods, staples, and practical items. Offer to pick up people from the airport or house out-of-town guests. Respond to the concerns God places on your heart.
- Offer simple condolences. A brief, sincere “I’m sorry for your loss” is much more tasteful than a long dissertation. Also, avoid the story of Job. How about a hug instead?
- Understand that, whether sudden or expected, death is a painful process. And remember that grief has no time limit. Allow one year or more for a person to adjust to the loss of a loved one. Let the bereaved talk freely—without fear of criticism.
- Help out financially if you can. Some banks will freeze accounts when they discover that someone has died, even if it’s a joint account. Those accounts can be frozen for as long as seven days. Even if the deceased had insurance, these claims may not be settled for three to six months or longer. Often up-front expenses need to be handled immediately, which can deplete the family’s income.
- Relate an amusing or touching anecdote about the deceased. It’s always comforting to know that the loved one was special to others as well. A funny story or anecdote can be endearing during a time of a loss.
- Remember the “anniversary” date of the death. Make a mental note—if not of the day, then of the season. A round that time send flowers or a card or make a special telephone call just to say you are thinking about the bereaved and/or the deceased. Remember holidays that may trigger especially lonely times, especially the “firsts.” That first Christmas, Mother’s/Father’s Day, even birthdays, can be surprisingly traumatic.
- Don’t try to be the “perfect” support—simply do what you can do. At times like these words often fail, and no one has the ability to be a complete support system.
- Don’t presume to know exactly how a person feels, even if you’ve also experienced the death of a spouse or loved one. No one knows the heart but God.

Ruth-Ann J. Mosby lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with her husband, three sons, and a daughter.
For All Who Feel Average
Lessons from my personal journey

BY STEPHANIE GULKE

I AM AVERAGE.
Not brilliantly average or even pathetically average. Just plain old average average. I do a lot of different things very so-so. I play a little piano, a little tambourine. I can sing a song, but it definitely won’t bring tears to your eyes or goose bumps to your arms—and usually it’s along with the radio.

I ski and swim, horseback-ride, and land a mean roundoff, but the only awards on my mantel are the “Grammy” I won in college at a Valentine’s banquet and a blue ribbon from the 4-H fair when I was 9—for my Rice Krispies Treats. And I think that was a fluke. How can one plate of Rice Krispies Treats really be that much better than the next?

Yep. Mediocre. That’s me.
And the problem is, I’m not quite sure how I ended up this way.
I always had high dreams. I always imagined grand accomplishments and medals, honors, and speaking engagements. I always thought I would be fabulous and deserving of praise, but I’m beginning to realize that that’s just not going to happen.

I don’t have “it.” I don’t have the ambition or umph. I don’t have the talent.

Reality Setting In
There was a time when I thought that maybe writing was “my thing.” That this was my spiritual gift with which I could touch lives and make a difference. I used to lie in bed and think about what I could write a book on . . . you know, so I could live off the royalties and wouldn’t have to get a “real job.” But then someone stole my idea, so I was left with nothing.
I used to be proud, and I really hate to admit this, but maybe even a little cocky about my writing.
I thought, yeah, sure, I could be syndicated. Why not? But that was before I took an upper-division writing class and realized that I am a nothing. That my short sentences and made-up words are ridiculous and I need to get some serious, probing topics to write on.

That was before I realized how many people there are who were born to write. And I’m not talking about silly ding-dong essays, either. There are immensely creative souls who breathe poetry and prose. People who crank out two books a month. Artists who have been writing since they were 4. There are students and coworkers whom we pass in the hall, people whom we chat with every day, who write eloquent lines and encourage intense thought.

And then I felt embarrassed. Embarrassed that I’d ever read my opinion aloud, printed a column in my school paper, or sent an article to a publisher.
I felt embarrassed for ever thinking that I was funny or clever, that I had a moving point or swayed opinions. I felt embarrassed because I was but a measly wild clover in the prairie of life.

Wondering and Wishing
So here I sit at average, wondering where all of my childhood dreams went. Wondering what I do that makes me special or changes the world. Wondering whatever happened to my book deal, my ice-skating career, my Meals-on-Wheels mission project that would change dinner hour
for seniors across America.

Here I sit wishing I had taken that leap of adventure and just tried. Wishing I had the guts to step out and say Here I am, ready to shout greatness. Wishing I wasn't just average.

I wonder how these people who are president of this and editing that, these people who intern and produce, publish and compose, draw and get the top scores every time, do it? I wonder if they ever see themselves as average or if they know they are far ahead of those of us who just go along digging life?

But most of all, I wonder if they always knew they were going to be brilliant? Did they always know what they were going to make of their lives? Is it all just a part of the fateful plan that always works out for some and never for others? Or is it this immense talent that encompasses their lives? Talent that cannot be denied?

I think for some it's a given. They will be great. They will win awards and hang their art in galleries. They will land record deals and start Fortune 500 businesses. They will come back to reunions, and everyone will say, "Yeah, so. No shock there. We knew it all along."

But there are others. There are those who set their minds and refuse to take no for an answer. Those who don't exude brilliance, but who accomplish because they say they will. They are tenacious and spirited and won't give up. They'll make fools of themselves and ask questions and do anything to get what they want. And they will. Because they've worked hard for it. Because that's their dream. Because they deserve it.

On a Different Level

And then there are the seemingly average.

Those who don't make millions of dollars. Those who will never be on the news or in the papers. They will never have accomplished titles or prizes behind their names. They will work normal jobs and have children and make dinner and go to the Wisconsin Dells once a year for a family outing.

There will be people who to the outsider are not much to speak of, but in truth are the most accomplished of all because they have touched people's hearts. Because they have shown Jesus in their daily lives. Because they have been kind to their annoying neighbors and smiled in the checkout line.

There will be teachers who encourage excellence in their students and mold bratty children into gracious, responsible adults, and men who turn hearts to Christ through their gentleness and accepting ways at the restaurant every morning.

There will be couples and families, grandparents and single mothers, who will do so much for not an ounce of recognition. No one will ever know. They will never be thanked or put on a plaque or applauded for. Yet they are miles from mediocrity.

They are the souls who inspire us to be more. Who enrich our lives and nourish our spirits. They are the souls who encourage us to love ourselves. To show tenderness. To open our hearts.

And there's nothing average about that.

Stephanie Gulke is a graduate student at Loma Linda University.
Andy Nash interviews Ed Reid

An ordained minister and licensed attorney, G. Edward Reid serves as the stewardship director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. Over the past few years, though, Reid has been best known for his books on end-time events. Even at the Door (1994), Sunday’s Coming! (1996), and Ready or Not? (1997)—all published independently but distributed by the Review and Herald Publishing Association—have each been top sellers among Adventists.

NASH: In 1993 you published a best-selling book—It’s Your Money, Isn’t It?—on money management. When and why did you decide to write books about the end-time?

REID: Interestingly, I never have thought of myself as a writer, and I never had any illusions of writing a best-seller or anything like that. In fact, the Review and Herald came and asked me to write the book on money management. But when it sold well, I had the confidence to think, Well, maybe I could write the material I’ve been researching on prophecy.

A re you surprised that your end-time books have sold so well?

Not really, because I think that there has been a vacuum in this area. A s the Bible predicted in Matthew 25:5, while the bridegroom seemed to delay, people slumbered and slept. So you had sleeping people, even sleeping pastors. I mean, I was one myself.

People don’t read my books because of my writing ability. They read them because of the content and because everything is well documented.

Some people say end-time authors today are just looking to make an opportunistic buck.

You don’t write books for the Adventist Church to make money.

Certainly one of the most intriguing—and controversial—aspects of your books is what some call “the 6,000-year theory,” or “the great week of time.” In Even at the Door, page 152, you write: “... God will use His cycle of seven, in this case 7,000 years, to complete the cycle of the great controversy—6,000 years for the great controversy struggle with evil followed by the sabbath rest of 1,000 years for the earth.” How convinced are you that this will actually happen?

I believe that it’s a biblical concept. By the way, I didn’t always. When I first heard about this I thought it was probably coincidental, and I didn’t think it could be supported in the Bible and in the Spirit of Prophecy. But the more I found, the more convinced I became. Just a couple examples:

There are two places in the Bible—Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8—where “with the Lord a day is like a thousand years.” (By the way, Ellen White and J. N. Andrews comment that 2 Peter 3:8 talks exclusively about the Second Coming and its imminence.) The early Christian church fathers pointed out that God told Adam, “In the day that you eat of this fruit, you will die.” Remember that with God a day is a thousand years, and Adam died at 930 years. God didn’t let him pass a thousand years. This is fascinating.

Then you have the sabbatical year—the Babylonian captivity, the 70-year exile. The Bible says that the Israelites went into captivity because they hadn’t honored the sabbatical year. During that time the land was keeping its Sabbaths, according to 2 Chronicles 36:21. It was desolate, and the cities were broken down and so on. This same language is used to describe the millennium in Jeremiah 4:23-27.

Why do you think the 1,000-year period even exists? Does the judgment really take a thousand years? The reason is that the earth is lying desolate, keeping its Sabbath. Our pioneers called it the great Sabbath—or the seventh millennium.
Would you say that the texts you cite in your books provide exegetical support for the “great week of time” theory?

From a legal perspective, I would say that instead of a smoking gun, we have a preponderance of the evidence—although I believe significant exegetical support can be found.

You mentioned J. N. Andrews. He actually thought that the 6,000 years would end in the late nineteenth century.

Anybody can do a chronology, but my chronology or yours is immaterial to the principle.

Now, you don’t believe that Jesus will necessarily return right at 6,000 years.

That’s actually true. The other time prophecies were fulfilled right on time so that we could have confidence in them. But Matthew 24:22 says that for the elect’s sake, time will be cut short, and Romans 9:28 says that the Lord Himself will finish the work.

So you believe that Jesus will come at or before 6,000 years.

My personal judgment is He could come early, but He will not come late—not beyond 6,000 years.

On pages 157 to 159 of Even at the Door, in which you discuss Bible chronology, you note that Ellen White believed that exactly 4,000 years passed between Creation and the birth of Jesus Christ. Asuming that Jesus was born in 3 or 4 B.C.—as most scholars believe—at least 2,002 years would have passed since then, meaning that we’re already past 6,000 years. Correct?

Ellen White was using Ussher’s chronology, which was the best available to her at that time. Essentially, we have approximately 4,000 years to the time of Christ and approximately 2,000 years to our day.

When you wrote Even at the Door in 1994, did you in your heart expect that we would reach 1999?

I actually did. I personally thought, based on 2 Peter 3, that though Jesus is eager to return, He is so loving that He wants more people saved. And the church right now is making greater efforts than it ever has to fulfill Matthew 24:14.

What about the Islamic community?

That’s a very good question, but remember, just a few years ago we were asking questions about China and the Berlin Wall. The Lord is working, and He is going to finish the work.

Can you understand how some people would call your books “soft date setting” and say that the only thing stopping Ed Reid from setting a specific deadline for the Second Coming is the fact that he doesn’t know when the 6,000 years are over?

I can understand that question, but I think I have already answered it in one way when I say that I don’t think we’re going all the way to 6,000. I think God is going to come short of that, but that’s His judgment. The fact is, if we believe the end is near, then we have a duty to tell other people, because if you believe you are leaving here soon, you would be changing some of your plans. For example, the goal of Christians would be to go to heaven penniless—you know, zero down their accounts. From a stewardship perspective, we want to be transferring funds over there, so I personally think that as The Great Controversy says on pages 370 and 371, we are instructed and required to know when it is near so that we can make adequate preparation.

So that’s your purpose in preaching these things—that it should change the way we live?

Oh, yes, indeed. Whenever you make an appointment—such as an airline appointment or whatever—there are certain preparations that you have to make. It’s not a legalistic thing to be ready.

But shouldn’t we be doing these things anyway—being good stewards, witnessing to people, praying more? Should it matter where we are on the time line?

No, it shouldn’t matter—but here’s the bottom line. Matthew 25:5 says that while the bridegroom was delayed they all slumbered and slept. Somebody once talked about my being an alarmist, and I said, “Well, an alarm clock only wakes up sleeping people.” What I am wanting to do is say: “Hey, these are my friends—and Jesus is almost here.”

Returning to the “great week of time”: Would there come some point, say, A.D. 2020, when you would revisit your belief in this theory and say, “I apparently misunderstood these prophecies”?

I would say that, yes. I want to be honest with people and with myself. But at the same time you are asking me a hypothetical question at this point in time. What if somebody came to Noah at the end of the 119th year and asked, “What if it doesn’t rain next week?”

Do you think Y2K could play a part in all this?

I think Y2K could cause instability in a society that has been so stable for so many years. If things are falling apart, people could actually say that we need to get back to God. A1 I mentioned in Sunday’s Coming! the reason that people call for Sunday laws is not to make it difficult for Sabbathkeepers, but to try to save the United States.

When you read Adventist publications today, you don’t find even a fraction of the end-time articles that you found a century ago. Does this disappoint you?

It really does, because Jesus Himself wanted everybody to think that He would come in their day. The blessed hope in Titus is that we are all looking forward to the Coming. Paul thought that Jesus would come in his day. He said that when the dead in Christ rise, we who are alive and remain will rise.

The third angel’s message is the final message to earth. It’s repeated in Revelation 18 when God’s Holy Spirit comes in greater power. I think that just as John the Baptist prepared the way for that First Coming, the Adventist Church has been called to prepare the way for the Second Coming.

Andy Nash is an Adventist Review assistant editor.
Every year Seventh-day Adventists all over the world come together for spiritual renewal at a time determined by their local conferences. Traditionally we call these camp meetings, and they are usually held in the summer. Of course, we lack the space to list all of the worldwide camp meetings, but we have received the dates of those for the North American Division. Plan now to attend your local camp meeting. A few of these dates may change, so check with your pastor as the time gets closer. An updated list will be published later.

Atlantic Union Conference
Bermuda June 18-June 26
Greater New York
English June 30-July 4
Hispanic July 16-24
Portuguese May 28-31
United September 4
New York June 25-July 3
Northeastern June 25-July 3
Hispanic To Be Announced
Northern New England June 25-July 3
Southern New England June 18-26
Union: Franco-Haitian To Be Announced

Canadian Union Conference
Alberta July 2-10
British Columbia July 23-31
Manitoba-Saskatchewan July 2-10
Maritime July 23-August 1
Native A merican
Alberta (Bowden) June 3-8
British Columbia (Lytton) July 17-19
British Columbia (Port Hardy) May 21, 22
British Columbia (Kamloops) May 21-24
Newfoundland July 19-24
Ontario July 8-11
Quebec July 13-17

Columbia Union Conference
Allegheny East June 24-July 4
Allegheny West June 23-27
Chesapeak June 15-19
Mountain View June 18-26
New Jersey English June 18-26

Lake Union Conference
Illinois
Central September 10, 11
Hispanic September 8-5
Northern (Broadview A cademy) June 11, 12
Southern September 17, 18
Indiana (Indiana A cademy) June 6-12
Hispanic September 3-6
Lake Region (Camp Wagner) June 18-26
Hispanic A ugust 6-14
Michigan
Hispanic (Camp Au Sable, Grayling) May 21-24
Lower (Cedar Lake) June 16-25
Upper (Camp Sagola) July 30-August 1
Wisconsin (Camp G o Seek) June 18-27
Hispanic A ugust 19-22

Mid-A merica U nion Conference
Central States June 11-19
Dakota June 11-19
Iowa-M issouri June 1-5
Kansas-N ebraska May 28-June 5
Minnesota June 11-19
Native A merican
South Dakota (Pine Ridge) To Be Announced
Rocky M ountain
E astern Slope July 9, 10
Western Slope June 1-5
W yoming July 13-17

North Pacific U nion Conference
A laska (Interior) To Be Announced
A laska (Palmer) A ugust 10-14
A laska (Prince of Wales) To Be Announced
A laska (V anch Island) To Be Announced
Idaho June 15-19
Hispanic To Be Announced
Montana (Mount Ellis A cademy) June 23-26
Native A merican
A laska (Dillingham) Past (January 21-23)
A laska (Nome) Past (January 28-30)
Oregon
Gladesville Campground To Be Announced
Hispanic Camp Meeting To Be Announced
Portland July 13-17

Pacific U nion Conference
A rizona (Prescott) June 11-19
Spanish June 21-26
Central California (Soquel) July 8-17
Nevada-Utah (South Lake Tahoe) August 9-14
Nevada-Utah (Springville) June 21-26
Portuguese August 20-22
Nevada-Utah Convocation (Las Vegas) March 19, 20
Northern California July 22-31
Southeastern California July 31-August 7
Southern California (Cedar Falls Conference Center) To Be Announced

Southern U nion Conference
Carolina May 30-June 5
Florida May 28-June 5
Georgia-Cumberland May 26-29
Gulf States May 24-29
Kentucky-Tennessee May 28-June 5
South A nticlantic June 13-19
South Central June 6-12
Southeastern June 10-19

Southwestern U nion Conference
A rkansas-Louisiana (Baton Rouge) March 25-27
A rkansas-Louisiana (Gentry) June 1-5
North A merica Cowboy (Springtown, A rkansas) July 7-10
Oklahoma (W e woka) July 16-24
Southwest Region (Lone Star Camp, A thens, Texas) June 12-19
Texas (Fort Worth) April 24
Texas (Pasadena) A pril 24
Texas (Longview) May 15
Texas (K eene) M ay 28, 29
Texas (San A ntonio) February 27
Texas (Valley/South Padre Island) A pril 9, 10
Texas Korean Convocation To Be Announced
Texas Spanish June 2-5
Texico (A lbuquerque) June 8-12
Texico Northern (Lake H opewell) July 16, 17
Texico El Paso Convocation (Nameless Valley Ranch) August 21, 22
Recently I visited a church in which a variety of music was featured. The first number was performed by a duo who pantomimed the song “His Eye Is on the Sparrow.” The church seemed moved by the fanciful notions of movement.

The song just prior to the sermon had me squirming in my seat. It was rendered by a group of young people dressed in black with white gloves. The song was one I had heard before—“I Believe I Can Fly,” from Michael Jordan’s movie Space Jam. Interestingly, a large number in the congregation joined in on the chorus. As the song ended, a visiting literature evangelist (a student) moved to the microphone. He said he thought we should all get on our knees and ask for forgiveness. He continued by sharing his thoughts on how we had blasphemed God’s house by using a secular song for worship.

Two questions: What do you think of using songs like this for worship? And what do you think of the literature evangelist’s response?

Allan’s reply to the first question: We often respond quickly to a “hot potato,” in this case song selection, rather than dealing with the entire meal. But since you asked, let me start with some questions of my own:

1. Did the overall program inspire and point the congregation to God?
2. What was the intention of the various elements of the worship? Did they accomplish their intention?
3. Did the elements facilitate or subtract from worship?

From what little you shared, I’m impressed by the church’s desire to incorporate creative and diverse ways to express the gospel. A nd I’m delighted to hear of young people so prominently involved in the worship experience. This is positive.

I empathize with your difficulty in keeping your mind focused on worship. Given my passion for basketball, I too may have become distracted. But overall there seems to have been considerable merit to the worship experience.

1. They spoke in a divergent cultural language to convey the gospel. “His Eye Is on the Sparrow” spoke to some in the congregation, much in the same way that “I Believe I Can Fly” spoke to others. I admire a worship service that tries to reach a cross-generational congregation.
2. They involved young, creative individuals. I can live with some squirming if it means young people are participating and expressing worship. You have to give the congregation credit for using the young talents.
3. The worship served as a catalyst for congregational involvement. I’m intrigued with the action verbs you use in your account: “moved,” “squirming,” “joined in.” Some churches could use only the verbs “sit” and “snore.”

I get the feeling that the sermon topic might have been something about God’s care for us, and the encouragement for believers to take wing. That’s good stuff, a worship meal that inspires me to soar just imagining it (see Isa. 40:31).

I agree with the student’s concern. Popular secular songs are very difficult to use in worship services.

Deirdre’s reply to the second question: I agree with the student’s concern. Popular secular songs are very difficult to use in worship services.

But I’m angered at the judgmental attitude displayed. More young people are pushed away from the church by displays of “righteous indignation” than anything else. Too often we don’t carefully consider the impact of our words and actions.

It would’ve been best if the student had taken the performers aside after the program and tried to understand what they were trying to do. If he still had concerns, he could share them in a private, individual setting.

Besides, those who are “visiting” need to be aware that they may not have all the information or the relationship with the group. It would be wise to be conservative with our conclusions without context and liberal in giving others the benefit of the doubt.

If someone is offended by what is going on, pray hard. Then quietly leave. If you don’t have the heart to share your concerns gently and gracefully, then simply pray for wisdom—both for them and for yourself.

A. Allan and Deirdre Martin are cofounders of dre•a•m VISION ministries, dedicated to empowering young people in Christian lifestyle and leadership.
Snakes Alive in Maluku: Divine providence saves ADRA project.

BY JACK MAHON, A RETIRED WRITER AND EDITOR LIVING IN ENGLAND

In eastern Uganda the Adventist Development and Relief Agency is transforming the shantytown of Maluku into a garden suburb. One part of the program—the deep latrine—ADRA uses as a frontline against disease. Each of the trim new dwellings in Maluku is built from the soil excavated from the deep shaft of the new toilet on each building plot.

With cement, 4,000 profiled blocks, cunningly contrived to interlock without mortar-bonding, form a solid weatherproof, verminproof building in a predetermined sanitary environment. Doris Jorgensen, ADRA's country director for Uganda, who took on the challenging task of the Maluku "makeover," told me the story of the sinking of one such latrine shaft.

To construct a deep latrine, a two-person team is required. Taking turns, the two men excavate the soil layer by layer. As the hole gets deeper, it is no longer possible for the digger to throw the soil up on to the surface, so he fills the basket and then shouts to his companion to haul it up, using the windlass.

As the shaft gets deeper, the light fades and the digger needs a candle to see where to dig and fill the basket in the close confines of the shaft, which is not much wider than his body.

On one occasion the digger on one team reached about 10 meters deep when a sudden life-threatening crisis occurred. His first warning was a sudden flurry of soil falling on his head and a hairy body plummeting down and extinguishing the candle in its fall. He quickly became aware that he was not alone in the excavation as some frantic beast panted and pulsed around his feet. He became instantly aware of what was happening as a second body hurtled down the shaft.

The latest arrival was long, moist, and scaly, causing cold sweat to break from the digger's face. He didn't need the faint light filtering from above to realize the identity of his second unwelcomed guest. A bove the thunder-beat of his own heart's pounding came the hiss of a king cobra.

It was a simple scenario. The snake was hungry, and here was a big rat. The battle began—a swift strike, a near miss, and rapid pursuit. The three creatures recognized that only one would emerge alive. The rat had sharp teeth; paralysis and quick death were in the serpent's fangs; but the man scarcely moved to protect himself.

With an instinctive reflex action the man in the hole managed to grab the cobra below its venomous jaws. All he could do with the strength of desperation was to hold on to the writhing, spitting serpent. Gasping through gritted teeth, the digger continued his death grip and wrestled the snake up against jagged rocks for what seemed like hours.

Shouting to his companion to haul him up, he burst into nervous laughter. Not until more than an hour had passed could he give a coherent account of his subterranean struggle.

This story is an authentic account of a duel in the dark, which almost claimed the life of a man. In a way, it is a kind of parable in the African idiom of what has been happening aboveground in eastern Uganda.

In turning the shantytown of Maluku into a garden suburb, there was an unfortunate reaction by some local criminals. Sheltered in dismal dwellings, surrounded by the poor and unfortunate, were some small-time crooks. Although these individuals appeared to favor the transformation of their town, they were secretly opposed to any change that would take away the livelihood they made from their neighbors.

In other words, the beautiful garden of the transformed Maluku already had its resident "serpent." And as the evil reptile raised its ugly and malevolent head, murder would halt the program of change at Maluku.

"The answer is simple," said the big man with the puckered scar on his forehead. "A ll we have to do is take Moses Okello out. We'll get people from outside to do the job so that we keep in the clear. I know just the bunch of lads who will do the job for us at a reason-
Adventists Take School Battle to European Court of Human Rights

Two Seventh-day Adventist families began proceedings at the European Court of Human Rights following the refusal of the Luxembourg school system to allow their children to observe the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday).

Until the 1990s Adventists had arranged permission for their children to be absent from school on Saturdays, reports Jacques Trujillo, religious liberty director for the Adventist Church in the region.

"However, since 1993 the Luxembourg authorities consider that any such exceptions to school requirements cause interruptions to the running of the school system," says Trujillo.

If the case was pursued through tribunals in Luxembourg, it was brought before the European Court last December. While accepting the need for regulations governing school attendance, the families appeal to their religious convictions and the internationally recognized human right to observe the day of worship of their choice. The case highlights a discriminatory situation against a religious minority that needs to be resolved, as is the case in most parts of the world, reports Trujillo.

"Adventists are not seeking to upset the school routine or increase administrative costs," says Trujillo. "They are asking for the same right given to majority religions of recognizing their choice of the day of worship. It is unacceptable to think that religious liberty is a question of numbers of members or that respect for difference operates only when there are no differences." — Adventist News Network.

ADRA Compound Reported Burned and Looted in South Sudan

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) compound in Chukudum, south Sudan, was reportedly burned and looted in mid-January while two local military factions spent three days fighting nearby.

The United Nations helped evacuate 14 expatriate ADRA staff to Lokichokio, Kenya, the United Nations/Operation Lifeline Sudan (UN/OLS) headquarters in northern Kenya, after the staff spent three days hiding. ADRA is a member of the UN/OLS consortium of 40 nongovernmental organizations.

"While bullets from the warring factions flew through Chukudum and the surrounding hills, ADRA staff hid in a roofed bomb shelter. Bullets continued to whiz over their heads," reports Robin Willison, acting country director for ADRA/South Sudan. "There was no food or water except when someone was brave enough to venture
Get Connected

BY STEPHEN CHAVEZ, ASSISTANT EDITOR, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Microsoft’s latest ad campaign ends with the words “Where do you want to go today?” Those words always follow action images of people biking, dancing, painting, cooking, kayaking, playing musical instruments, writing the great American novel, etc.

But who’s going to do anything if they are, in fact, planteed in front of a computer monitor?

While Internet designers and computer makers give the impression that surfing the Web has substantially altered the way we live our lives (and in some ways it has), it’s still a person-to-person world. And even though the Internet provides access to thousands of sites all over the world, visiting a website is no substitute for being there in person.

The computer is a terrific tool, but unless you have a very long cord (or a powerful battery), you still have to go out (sometimes) and get involved in real life—where people are having conversations, cooperating on projects, solving problems, planning for the future.

Making a difference requires personal contact. It’s not as comfortable as sitting alone in a room with your hand on a mouse, but in the long run it’s surely more effective. Getting involved with others is risky; it’s time-consuming; it calls for commitment. It’s a life of activity and sometimes frustration, emotional highs and lows, and—ultimately—great rewards.

When Jesus calls us to fish for followers, I don’t think He means for us to do it from the shore (or from somebody’s website). He means for us to get in the boat; to feel the sea breezes, to taste the salt on our lips, to hear the sound of the waves splashing against the bow, and, most important, to listen to the Captain’s voice.

Microsoft won’t take you there.

Y2K Bug Goes to Church

Many Adventist churches in North America confronted the Y2K problem one year early. The problem, which surfaced in early January 1999, affects about 2,000 congregations using Church Accountant software developed by the Lake Union Conference.

The problem arises in the contribution entry program that checks the date to make sure it is not more than one year in the future or one year in the past, says Harvey Kilsby, the software developer who wrote the program.

The software fix was released last year, but only half of the local conferences using the program ordered the update. Many of the entities that received the update didn’t install it until the problem arose. Kilsby contacted conferences, explained the problem, and sent out an additional 900 updates. Nearly 1,000 software updates had been shipped in 1998.
Religion in the News

Mormon Missionaries: No More E-mail Home

The Mormon Church has told its young missionaries around the world they may not use e-mail and faxes as ways of communicating with families and friends back home.

Don LeFevre, a spokesperson for the church, said there will be exceptions to the new policy for missionaries living in areas where postal service is poor. The church has always tightly controlled communication between missionaries—typically young men in their early 20s—and their families as a means of keeping the missionaries focused on their work. Missionaries are allowed to phone home only twice a year—on Christmas and Mother’s Day—and are not supposed to write more than once a week.

But LeFavre said that given the convenience of e-mail, “some missionaries may be communicating more than once a week, and that would detract from missionary work.” However, Bonnie Carter, of Orem, Utah, called the policy change “a cruel move” at a time when several missionaries have been injured or killed in foreign countries, the Associated Press reports.—Religion News Service.

For Your Good Health

Sticks and Stones . . . and Words Can Hurt

Hostility and higher levels of cholesterol have previously been associated. But a new Duke University study shows it’s people who express their hostility in an antagonistic way—in either a verbal or physical manner—that are most at risk for elevated cholesterol levels. People who feel angry but seldom take it out on others have a lower risk.—Annals of Behavioral Medicine.

Grape Juice: It Does a Heart Good

Purple grape juice seems to have the same effect as red wine in reducing the risk of heart disease. While researchers call the process extremely complex, purple grape juice appears to increase the bloodstream’s levels of nitric oxide. This chemical reduces the amount of blood platelet clumping in arteries, and helps dilate (or widen) blood vessels. Both of these effects reduce the likelihood that blood clots will block arteries and cause a heart attack.—American Heart Association.

—compiled by Larry Becker, editor of Vibrant Life, the church’s health outreach journal. To subscribe, call 1-800-765-6955.
I T W A S A L O V E S T O R Y, A V A L E N T I N E’S D a y story from the very beginning. It had all the elements—romance, passion, love at first sight, tragedy near the end. It would have read like the script of some second-rate soap opera with some dashing TV doctor in a gleaming white coat smiling his Colgate smile . . . that is, if it had been made up, instead of real.

Maybe it was Valentine’s Day, that chill February morning when Joshua zipped up his windbreaker over a thick wool sweater and went out to the east field to think about the year’s crop. He didn’t have love on his mind—no, nor Valentine’s Day, either. What the young farmer was thinking about was fertilizer, high-yield seed, and combines. Babies were the furthest thing from his thoughts. So it was with a great deal of surprise that he stumbled over one.

Joshua had just pulled his battered old blue pickup over to the side of the bumpy dirt road and swung out of the cab, leaving his keys dangling in the ignition as he always did. He half jumped over the ditch, where—the morning still cold—water congealed at the end of a concrete culvert in what would, he hoped, be the last ice of the season. Joshua was just thinking that, given an hour or two, the sun would melt it away and by midafternoon he might just leave his windbreaker in the pickup when he heard something.

The sound reminded him a little of the pathetic squall a tiny goat makes just before the kid sucks its mother’s milk for the first time or of a cat that knows it’s being bundled up for the vet’s, but too sick to make much fuss. But it wasn’t a goat kid or a kitten.

“It’s a baby.”

“It’s a baby,” Joshua said again, testing the words against the slate-colored sky.

Suddenly he was glad he’d left the keys in the ignition. Back in the pickup, Joshua cradled the baby against his chest with one hand—never mind the blood on his windbreaker—and tried to steer around the potholes with the other. Afer one particularly violent jounce, he glanced down at the baby without taking his foot off the accelerator, and was glad to see that some of the horrible purple-blue color was fading to a bit less grotesque purple-red in the warmth of the cab.

Tucking a dangling string of blood that he thought must be an umbilical cord between his fingers, Joshua finally slammed through the kitchen door. The baby hadn’t made another sound since that first tiny squall, so Joshua was glad to hear the 911 dispatcher say in a clipped but kindly voice that an ambulance was on its way right now, even as they spoke.

Only a couple years before, Joshua had been a teenage lifeguard at the local pool in the nearest town 15 miles away. He didn’t remember much of the CPR course he’d had to take, but he knew he had to try. Whether it was the CPR or not he never knew, but at last the baby squalled again—a thin, tiny sound—and for the first time Joshua had some hope that she might live until the ambulance got there.

Joshua grabbed a new package of three sponges from underneath the sink, ripped it open, and pulled out the pink one.

“For a little girl,” he said.

It was while he was wiping the blood slicked around the baby’s nostrils and eyes that Joshua finally found time to wonder why this baby—obviously just born, perhaps in the back seat of somebody’s dingy old car that early Valentine’s Day morning—should be in his field.

He’d seen trash bags filled with rotten watermelon rinds and beer cans dumped along the rural roads, and even a litter of kittens or a mangy dog left alongside the dirt lanes—but never a baby!

In the city, the radio said, women sometimes left their children in trash cans or dumpsters, but never here in the country! Not a baby! He couldn’t think of anyone he had ever met who would do such a thing.

“They didn’t want you.”

“They didn’t want you.” Joshua repeated. “I can’t believe no one cared.”

“But I care. And I want you. You can live with me.”
All the elements are here—romance, passion, love at first sight.
Joshua expanded the family farm, made successful deals, bought the combine he had been dreaming about and the young woman’s shoulders.

“Bet I know why you’re here,” he said. Later, slipping hot chocolate from steaming mugs in the old farmhouse kitchen, she told him the whole story. It revolved around foster parents and agencies, and a deep feeling of insecurity, never knowing where she came from or whether she was ever wanted, anywhere she went.

“I wanted you,” said Joshua. “I always cared. It’s why I knew you’d be back, and why I kept looking for you.”

He cared for her as he always said he would.

He half jumped the ditch and, before she could say anything, swung his windbreaker around the young woman’s shoulders.

“T hey all look alike in there, don’t they?”

“No,” said Joshua coldly. “Sorry. That your baby?”

“A nother man slapped him on the back. What he called “the baby ward.”

A sergeant down at the police station had told him that the parents could not be found. Joshua walked out of the station and out of the hospital and went back to his farm. That year he let the east field lie fallow.

But sometimes, when he was driving by, Joshua stopped the old blue pickup, left his keys dangling, and trudged over to the spot where he’d found the baby. He’d stand there for long moments, a young man alone with his dreams. He’d stare hard at the ground, then up into the sky, out across the field, and finally, far down the dusty dirt road.

“She’ll be back. Someday.”

And every Valentine’s Day Joshua would drive out past the east field, softly humming “Happy Birthday,” because he knew he was the only one who cared.

Twenty years passed this way. Joshua expanded the family farm, made successful deals, bought the combine he had been dreaming about and a great many other things. But for all his success and his acres and acres of “amber waves of grain,” Joshua never once felt like her father. He was smitten. It was love at second sight.

They were married a year later—on Valentine’s Day. Joshua doted on his wife, and lived every minute for her. He gave her everything her heart could desire and cared for her as he’d always said he would. They had two sons and two daughters. The farm seemed like paradise. And Valentine’s was always their special day.

But paradise wasn’t good enough, and Valentine’s lasted only one day a year.

The note Joshua found in the empty house said she felt stifled, smothered, as though she and the children needed to make it on their own for a while, and she appreciated the Visa card.

Joshua followed her to the city, but then didn’t know how to go about finding her.

“Doesn’t matter,” an acquaintance in the State Department of Agriculture told him. “Everyone knows her. Most beautiful woman in the city. Didn’t know she was your wife. The unattached society men would do just about anything to be seen escorting her, and a number of them have.”

As it turned out, unattached men weren’t the only ones seen on her arm—or entering her apartment.

Joshua went home, unable to locate his children, and was once again stymied by the courts. He raged at her during the night and cried during the day.

Before long, it was Valentine’s. By now, Joshua had no tears left to cry, just an ache that pounded at his brain every day. He got in the pickup and drove out to the east field.

A figure was standing there. She looked defiant. Joshua swung out of the cab and slammed the door.

“How could you? You were my wife. I wanted you! I cared for you! Why didn’t you want me? Now you’re nothing but a sick prostitute. No, you’re worse! They charge for their services, but you entice men to you and promise them gifts!”

Joshua reached out and, thinking of his children, bunched the top of her dress in his fists. She raged at him and heard a ripping sound as the garment came apart in his hands.

“Look!” he called out to the world. “See what my wife’s become!”

Suddenly, all of Joshua’s fury was spent. He leaned against her, noiseless, racking sobs shaking him for a long time.

“I forgive you.”

“I forgive you,” Joshua said. “I remember what I promised—to have and to hold—to love and to honor in sickness and in health—in good times and bad—till death do us part. I forgive you. Let’s go home.”

* Of course it’s a true story! You can read the original in Ezekiel 16.

Christopher Small is a pastor living in South Haven, Michigan.
Dear Something Else,

How does a person even begin to thank you for what you have done for me? I can think of no reason my misfortune would matter to anybody. Especially something as "minor" as vandalism—it wasn't life-threatening or anything "important." To think anyone would care about what was so unbelievable.

Dear friends,

Thank you for coming to the rescue of this school in Pakistan. What joy you've brought to the school personnel.

Something Else, that's what you guys really are. The prayers, food, visits, the long card, and phone calls kept us both going—knowing that you were behind us in spirit and in love. Don't know what we would do without our Sabbath school class. You're such an important part of our lives.

Four years ago a Sabbath school was born. It was conceived under the best family planning conditions, and held two mission statements for life: "The kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power" (1 Cor. 4:20, RSV) and "Christianity is always intensely practical" (Messages to Young People, p. 200).1

The church bulletin depicts the one-hour class as “pointing toward Christ, and propelled by five ministries. Prayer. Time. Money. Study. Social." In the beginning about 20 people showed up—now 50 or more attend. Each class is divided into three 20-minute sections, with the first designated for prayer, where a roller coaster of laughter and grieving rolls along.

Time, social, and money ministries take up the next 20 minutes. A ongoing time ministry is the monthly operation—buying food, cooking, serving, cleaning up—of a soup kitchen downtown. Other time ministries are helping people move, cleaning out a burned house, or setting up a free lemonade stand on a hiker/biker trail. Social ministries may be a Friday night campfire, picnic potluck, or game night.

The final 20-minute section is an interactive Bible study.

Money ministries is perhaps the most cutting-edge ministry. While also supporting local Sabbath school expense, it operates under five premises2 with 65 projects completed, totaling nearly $20,000 (see a sampling in the center box). "I give more in Sabbath school than I ever have before," says one member, "because I know it's going to something worthwhile."

When a single mother didn’t show for class one Sabbath, during prayer time it was announced that her car had “died” on Thursday, and she was in danger of losing her child-care business as a result. The class took up an instant offering and made pledges, the total reaching $875. The next day a car was bought. On Monday it was licensed. On Tuesday she had her business back.

This information is mentioned here as a spark of courage and hope for those readers who are like-minded, who desire their Christianity "intensely practical."3 A dapt the ideas yourself. Anyway, I understand that this approach has made Sabbath school inspiring and "unmissable" for many members. I know it has for me.

1 Too often, the members thought, Sabbath school is more talk than power, and intensely impractical.
2 "1. Money ministry is a participatory process— it’s the members’ money, not the leaders’. 2. Acts 2—we give first priority to the needs presented by our class members. 3. Projects from outside the class need to have a class sponsor to be seriously considered. 4. Limited, short-term financial help is what we offer to anyone in need. 5. Prayer for God’s leading is what we prefer to do before giving."
3 One member has developed a class website with more information: http://welcome.to/somethingelse.

Chris Blake is a member of the College View Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lincoln, Nebraska.
The Edifice Complex

Once they got started, they didn’t know how to tell, or even what they were trying to accomplish.
LOS INSECTOS IS A CITY LIKE MANY ANOTHER. IT HAS ITS MUSEUMS AND SHOPPING MALLS, ITS SCHOOLS AND SPORTS STADIUMS. YOU MAY NOTICE THAT CHURCHES ARE NOT MENTIONED IN THIS LIST. THERE IS A PERFECTLY GOOD REASON: WITH REGARD TO CHURCHES, LOS INSECTOS IS NOT A CITY LIKE MANY ANOTHER.

Many explanations have been offered for this state of affairs, but as accurately as anyone can remember, it all came about like this:

One congregation—the Lepidopterists over on Dreamland Drive—decided one day to make just a few needful improvements in its place of worship, which had been built some 54 years before. At the time it seemed a sensible and inspired thing to do. They consulted a highly respected architect and called in a dependable contractor, who helped them find a creative way to move a wall or two and expand the entrance to the building to include three huge wooden doors, doors that had been hand-carved in Europe.

A few days after the completion of the remodeling project at the Lepidopterist church, the choir director of the Coleopteran congregation in the suburb of Hundley Woods happened to drive by and just couldn’t help noticing the improvements to the place. She was impressed. So at the beginning of the Coleopteran board meeting that very evening, she commented in an offhand way on how much the Lepidopterists’ new look had improved their church.

“You know,” one board member said, “it’s just a coincidence, of course, but I’ve been thinking that we really need to make a few changes around here as well.” The agenda went right out the window, and before the evening was over, the Coleopterans had embarked on an exciting remodeling plan that included a new wing for administration and an impressive stone facing across the entire front of the building.

Shortly after construction on the Coleopterans’ administration wing had begun, the pastor of the Church of Hymenoptera, out on Highway 215, introduced to his congregation the idea of refurbishing the front of their church with white marble pillars and expansive, concrete steps that rivaled those of the state capitol. From all his previous 14 years as pastor of that church, the pastor could not recall a time one of his ideas had inspired such enthusiasm from his church members. It gave him a thrill to see how they took hold of his suggestion with such fervor. This was something no one had mentioned back in seminary.

By now the whole city of Los Insectos was buzzing. The Tattler and Times, Los Insectos’ daily newspaper, ran a full-length feature story with large photographs in four colors on the aesthetic improvements that the churches of the city were making. Reports were broadcast on the 6:00 news, in which architects and pastors were quoted and counterquoted in stirring sound bites. “With regard to churches,” intoned a TV reporter for channel 4, “Los Insectos is not a city like many another . . .” Now things really began to become interesting.

Until this time, the Orthopterens on Riverside Boulevard, being a comparatively conservative lot and one of the very oldest congregations in the city, had chosen to remain aloof from the mounting competition. But with all the growing media attention that the other churches were now receiving, the Orthopterens simply could not resist any longer. They removed the simple, steeply sloping shingled roof on their church and replaced it with a breathtaking system of arches that fairly commanded one to turn eyes heavenward. They even added a buttress or two, though the architect confided in a weaker moment that the structure didn’t really need them at all.

Whereupon the Lepidopterists, who, you will remember, unwittingly began the whole building furor, put in some gardens with ponds and streams and constructed a massive visitor center, where guests could attend multimedia programs and buy books and souvenirs.

Thus, in an amazingly short time, the good citizens of Los Insectos completely lost the vision of what a church is supposed to be. If you asked any of them to define the word “church,” they would invariably begin describing a building, with all its architectural possibilities, and they could do this with unusual sophistication. They knew what a nave was, and a clerestory, and a tympanum, and a purlieu.

But in the process, they forgot that a church is made up first of members—not of mere wood and steel and glass and concrete. With regard to churches, Los Insectos is certainly not a city like many another.

Gary B. Swanson is the editor of the Collegiate Quarterly and Cornerstone Connections. He lives and works in Silver Spring, Maryland.
Learning the Language
Thirty Terms That Baffle New Adventists

BY THE EDITORS

You may be one of more than 15,000 new Seventh-day Adventists picking up this journal for the first time in February as you begin receiving a one-year free subscription funded by members and conferences throughout North America. To help orient you to the sometimes baffling terminology that Adventists use, we offer the first installment of an occasional dictionary of key Adventist terms. The list is by no means exhaustive, and the definitions are only our own. E-mail us at reviwmag@adventist.org with your suggestions of other terms that need some explanation!

**ABC (Adventist Book Center, Book and Bible House)** — a Christian bookstore retailing Adventist and general Christian books, magazines, Bibles, devotional materials, educational resources, and vegetarian food products. Usually located at or near the conference office, the ABC may also operate a mobile van that brings products to local churches on a specified schedule.

**Academy** — any one of 108 secondary schools operated by the denomination in North America. Academies usually offer an accredited high school level and college preparatory program in either boarding (residential) or day (school hours only) settings. They are staffed by Adventist faculty and administrators and funded by denominational subsidies and parent-paid tuition.

**ADRA** — the Adventist Development and Relief Agency. This humanitarian/disaster relief program operates in more than 140 countries around the world, coordinating both donated money and government grants to manage hunger-relief programs, promote economic development, provide medical care, and distribute clothing.

**Adventist Review (the Review, the Review and Herald)** — the weekly general church paper of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (you are reading it now!), published since 1849, and offering news and inspiring articles about Bible study, Christian experience, healthy lifestyle, Adventist heritage, and education.

**Camp Meeting** — an annual multiday gathering of Seventh-day Adventists in a given conference, often including on-site housing in cabins, tents, recreational vehicles, and trailers. Camp meetings offer inspirational preaching, music, seminars, and fellowship to attendees, and may vary in length from a single weekend to 10 days. Camp meetings began in the early nineteenth century and have been a standard feature of North American Adventism since the 1840s.

**Celebration Church** — a usually unflattering reference to a Seventh-day Adventist church that offers more contemporary worship and music styles.

**Church School** — an elementary-level private Christian school, sometimes including kindergarten and usually extending through grade 8, operated by one or more Adventist congregations in an area. Church school teachers and administrators are Seventh-day Adventists, as are most students who attend. The school is usually funded by a combination of congregational subsidies and parent-paid tuition.

**Communion (Lord’s Supper)** — a celebration of the meal Jesus inaugurated with His disciples on the evening before His arrest and crucifixion (see Luke 22:14-20), often preceded by a service of foot washing (see below). Seventh-day Adventists use unfermented grape juice and small
pieces of bread to symbolize the blood and body of the Lord. Most Adventist churches celebrate Communion at Sabbath worship services at least once a quarter, often on the last (thirteenth) Sabbath of the quarter.

Community Services (Dorcas Society)—the local humanitarian outreach of one or more Adventist congregations in a community, often providing free or reduced-price food, clothing, and assistance to needy persons or those displaced in natural or man-made disasters.

conference (conference office)—the administrative and resource center that coordinates the efforts of local congregations in a given region (e.g., Southern New England, Ohio, Rocky Mountain, etc.). There are 52 conferences in North America. In its earliest conception, the conference was a gathering of representatives from each Seventh-day Adventist church who met annually to coordinate evangelism, cooperate financially, and share resources. Conference officers and departmental directors are now elected at triennial, quadrennial, or even quinquennial sessions. A few decades of functioning primarily as administrative units for pastoral assignment, financial administration, and local policy development, many conferences are recasting themselves as resource centers to serve the mission of local congregations.

deacon, deaconess—literally, "servant" of the local church, often responsible for helping to meet the physical needs of members and of maintaining the church building and grounds. A deacon/deaconess may assist with offering collection, ushering, coordinating church work bees, and assisting needy members.

division—the largest administrative subsection of the denomination, often encompassing a continental land mass (South America, North America, etc.), a transnational region grouped by common language (Africa-Indian Ocean) or history (South Pacific, Euro-Asia). There are 12 divisions in the world fellowship of Seventh-day Adventists.

elder—the local leader of a congregation, responsible for helping to coordinate its life and mission in the community. There may be multiple elders in a congregation, depending on its size. An elder frequently helps to plan worship services in conjunction with the pastor, may serve on or chair the church board, and may be responsible for overseeing a given segment of the church's ministry (youth ministry, Sabbath school, etc.).

foot washing (ordinance of humility, service of preparation)—a pre-Communion fellowship experi-
Pathfinders— a youth ministry of the church for children and youth aged 9-16, focusing on spiritual growth, citizenship, outdoor activities, recreation, skill-building, and crafts. Many local congregations sponsor a Pathfinder Club.

potluck (fellowship dinner, fellowship meal, etc.)— a “bring your own dish” style meal, usually following a worship service, to which church members bring a wide and wonderful variety of casseroles, salads, vegetable dishes, and desserts. A great place to sample local, and usually vegetarian, cuisine.

the health message— a generic term referring to Seventh-day Adventism’s long tradition of espousing healthful living, including dietary reform, lifestyle improvement, and natural remedies. Often associated with the teachings of Ellen G. White, Adventism’s health message is increasingly appreciated by secular persons looking to make healthy lifestyle changes.

the quarterly— the Sabbath school lesson guide provided at the beginning of each quarter to each attending individual or family for use in studying the Sabbath school lesson each week. A quarterly is available for each age division of the Sabbath school, and adult quarterlies can be obtained in large-print or Easy English editions (in the North American Division).

the seminary— usually a reference to the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Graduate-level pastoral education in North America is offered at this site, usually enrolling 400 or more students.

tithe and offerings— a dual term referring to two distinct aspects of financially supporting the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Tithe is a biblical concept (see Malachi 3:10 and Numbers 18:20, 21) referring to 10 percent of income, and all members are encouraged to return tithe to God through His church to support the ministry of preaching, teaching, and evangelizing. Offerings are additional funds donated by members to support the needs of the local congregation or specified ministries not usually supported by tithe. Both are collected each week during the worship service, and are differentiated by the designations members supply on the tithe and offering envelope, usually in the pew rack.

Uncle Arthur— a familiar reference to Arthur S. Maxwell (1896-1970), whose 10 volumes of The Bible Story and many volumes of Bedtime Stories provided decades of Adventist children (and adults) with easy-to-grasp Bible knowledge and moral lessons.

union— not a reference to a labor union, but to a midlevel administrative unit of the denomination, usually coordinating the work of four or more conferences in a region. There are nine unions in the North American Division of the church, for instance. Unions assist with financial administration, offer resource development, and help to provide educational resources on a scale unavailable to most conferences. Each union operates at least one accredited four-year college in its territory that serves the Seventh-day Adventist constituency of the union.

vegemeat— a generic term referring to any or all of more than 100 meat-substitute products made by a variety of health food companies, including Worthington Foods, Morningstar Farms, and Loma Linda Foods, among others. Vegemeat may refer to soy-based, wheat-based, or peanut-based foods that health-minded church members employ to reduce or eliminate the use of flesh foods in their diets.

vespers (vesper services, sundown worship)— worship experiences on either Friday or Sabbath evening, designed to assist members in welcoming the Sabbath or reflecting on its meaning. Often coordinated at or near sundown times, these are frequently smaller and less formal gatherings of members in either homes or church buildings where testimony, Bible study, and music are enjoyed.

White, Ellen G. (Ellen White, Sister White, the servant of the Lord, the pen of inspiration, etc.)— (1827-1915) prominent leader of the early Seventh-day Adventist Church who Seventh-day Adventists believe exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during her more than 70 years of public ministry. Her numerous books and articles continue to powerfully shape the church she helped to found and are considered by most Adventists to represent divinely inspired counsel for God’s last-day people on many matters of Bible teaching, Christian lifestyle, and health. Author of such Christian classics as The Desire of Ages, Steps to Christ, and The Great Controversy, her works have been translated into dozens of languages and distributed in millions of copies worldwide.
Are You New?

BY ALETHA RODERICK

I love children. They are so open and honest. It seems like just yesterday that we were at our daughter’s home celebrating our youngest grandson’s birthday. Everyone was asking Jeffrey how old he was, and he happily answered, “free,” as he proudly held up three fingers for all to see.

As we sat around the table laughing and talking, Jeffrey looked across at me and sweetly said (in a voice that everyone could hear), “You’re old, aren’t you, Grandma?”

“Yes, I’m old, Jeffrey,” I humored him.

“How old are you, Grandma?”

“Oh, I’m very old!” I replied, evading the question.

“How did you get so old, Grandma?” he persisted.

“By having so many birthdays,” I teased. “And from eating so much cake and ice cream.”

His eyes grew big as everyone laughed, and we all assured him that the cake wouldn’t make him old like Grandma.

Soon father and son disappeared for a few moments. When they returned, Jeffrey ran to my chair and looked up into my eyes, a sweet smile upon his face. Cocking his head, he paused, and then: “Grandma, are we new?”

I really liked the idea of being new. “Yes, I’m new,” I answered. And with a hug he was off to play.

Later we learned that during their short leave of absence his father instructed him that he mustn’t tell people they are old, especially women, because this makes them feel sad.

Jeffrey thought for a moment and then questioned, “What are we, Daddy? Are we new?”

The more I thought about it, the more I wanted to be new. New eyes that don’t need glasses, a new face without wrinkles, new vocal cords that will sing like Amy Grant. And, yes, I know that someday Jesus will make all things new (Revelation 21). But I would like to be new right now; no waiting around until heaven comes. Until graves are opened. Until trumpets sound. Wouldn’t you love to be new right now? You don’t have to be old to want to be new.

It had never hit me just that way before, so I went to my Bible and looked up the word “new.” I was amazed to find 147 texts that speak about something being new, but four of them spoke especially to me:

**Second Corinthians 5:17, 18:** “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ.”

When very young, I gave my heart to the Lord. He made me new when He came into my life. Yet somehow, in my human way of thinking, it has been so long that surely by now I must be old, like clothes that wear out, you know. And so the search continued.

In Ezekiel 36:26 God gave a promise of renewal to the Israelites because He wanted to show Himself holy to the surrounding nations through them. “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”

God holds out the same promise to us today. How many times God has taken my stony, unforgiving heart and made it new. He keeps giving me a new heart even though I keep putting things in there that dirty it—har den it—and have to ask again for another one. If I had all my old stony hearts stacked in our backyard, the pile would be large enough to erect an altar to the Lord. Does God run out of new hearts? What are our chances of always having a new heart?

**Lamentations 3:22, 23** tells me “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

Thanks, Jeffrey, for giving me new insights.

Yes, you and I can always be new because of Jesus’ love for us—no matter how old we grow to be. “He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God” (Psalm 40:3).

*A Bible texts are from the New International Version.

Aletha Roderick is a freelance writer living in Martinez, California.