Pastor Jan Paulsen
Elected World Church Leader
Adventists and Adoption

Regarding Pamela Maize Harris’s “Their Fight for Family” (Dec. 17 Cutting Edge Edition). As one who has experienced both infertility problems and adoptions (both as an adoptee and as an adoptive mother), I really appreciate the light shed on this situation—struggles with infertility, trials and challenges of adoption, and finally the joy that adoption can provide. The article showed that a family formed through adoption can be unique, special, and a rewarding solution for many.

I was adopted into an Adventist family as an infant in 1962. Now, 36 years later, I’ve been blessed with the opportunity to do what was done for me. My husband and I have been able to adopt a boy from a Romanian orphanage and a baby girl born to a teenager—giving a home of Christian love and acceptance to these two little ones in need.

Adoption is an option. My children and I are living proof. Thanks to Pamela Maize Harris for the uplifting, positive article.

—Dolly (Wetmore) Surak
Reading, Pennsylvania

We were delighted to find adoption featured in the Review, but were somewhat disappointed to see so little mention of international adoption. Just as adoption is not a second-class, last-resort way to form a family, neither is international adoption a last-ditch way to find a child. There are much better reasons for international adoption than the “decreased availability of White children” in America.

We can only imagine the emotional wringer that Geneth Wolfer was put through with the endless “But I’ve got another one for you” calls. Our experience adopting our wonderful daughter from China was utter simplicity by comparison.

We would encourage people interested in international adoption to extend their research beyond the two agencies mentioned. Hundreds of dedicated agencies facilitate international adoptions from around the world. A good place to start is the website: www.rainbowkids.com. A whole new world has literally opened to us with the adoption of our daughter, Thacia.

—Ralph and Franice Stirling
College Place, Washington
stirra2@wwc.edu

Note: The correct number for Adventist Adoption and Family Services is 503-232-1211, not the number given in Adventist Review, December 17, 1998, page 15.

Coming Out of the Dark

Bill Knott’s articles have always been an inspiration to me, but I feel compelled to speak out regarding his “Coming Out of the Dark” (Dec. 17). Since when are the pagan origins associated with Christmas an “inconsequential” matter? The Israelites made a “feast unto the Lord” and worshiped a golden calf, saying that it represented the God who brought them up out of Egypt. Was Jehovah pleased?

Saying that good news has not arrived at a house where there is not a Christmas tree or lights in the windows bears much resemblance to religious narrow-mindedness and ignorance. We do not need a pagan holiday once a year to remind us of our glorious hope.

—Tamie J. Faw
Billings, Montana

A most excellent article! Bill Knott put our bad happenings in the true light. This year my health became such that I can no longer work. The origin of the Christmas date may be pagan, but what we celebrate is love and life given to us eternally. Our Christmas tree is up all year long to remind us of the gift that God has given us. Thank you for such a hopeful article.

—Tonda E. McCullaugh
Apison, Tennessee

The Way We Treat Each Other

Gary Krause’s “The Way We Treat Each Other” (Dec. 17) was refreshing. I have suffered through the persecutions of well-meaning church members, just as he mentions in his article. Yes, I have been soundly counseled because I was serving as a deacon and forgot my suit coat. However, in many congregations I attend, the deacons are usually mixed dressed, from formal to casual. I have been told that jewelry is inappropriate, yet the persons telling me this were wearing a very expensive brooch, tie clasp, or watch.

Too many people don’t go to church because they feel that they are
under a microscope. I do not attend church to be a member of a social club—or so that I can dress like everyone else. I attend church because I love the Lord and want to serve Him. Isn’t that what it is all about?

—Andrew Eide
Redlands, California

I want to thank Gary Krause for having the courage to speak out in our church paper about the way we treat each other. This is long overdue. Our local church is full of people who have come from other Adventist churches where they have been treated as Krause describes. Some people are so wounded that they almost seem to invite emotional and spiritual abuse—because that is how they have always been treated. Our young people are the greatest recipients of this subtle and not-so-subtle condemnation.

Speak it loud and clear! I love the Cutting Edge Edition, and I am 66!

—Janis Walter
McDonald, Tennessee

There is a lot of painful truth in Gary Krause’s article on harsh judgmentalism in the Adventist Church. Ironically, in the process of making his point, Krause lets loose with some pretty harsh judgments of his own! Perhaps it is only natural. Do we not have the “judgment hour message”? I want to commend him, though, for deciding to wear a coat the next time he preaches in that church. In every culture, subculture, and locality, there is a tradition of what is appropriate for certain occasions. In some churches the minister wears a surplice; in others, a Geneva gown; in yet others, a morning coat with tails. In most of our churches a fairly dark suitcoat is expected. Conforming to the established sense of propriety is simply a matter of courtesy.

—Robert M. Johnston
Berrien Springs, Michigan

Ministering in the Last Days
Regarding Chris Blake’s “The Last Days: What Are You Getting Ready For?” (Dec. 17). I agree with his statement that “Christianity has never been about isolationism.” Nevertheless, I am concerned that the focus of the message completely ignores the biblical warning (Sodom and Gomorrah, with Lot’s family) that God’s people should not dwell in the larger cities and should hasten to move into less populated areas in order to avoid the serious problems connected with city living, especially in times of crisis.

Perhaps the argument to stay and minister is not valid if the days are coming in which a third to three fourths of those in the cities truly will die. What good shall we be when hordes of hungry, sick, drug-addicted, etc., people invade our homes in search of physical alleviation of their pain and suffering? Shall we perish with them since any food or help we have will not last more than a few days, if that long? Or shall we be in a position to visit the cities in chaos when the acute stage is over—to lead those willing to an outpost setting in which the quiet serenity allows God’s voice to penetrate the clouds of disbelief and doubt and give them the certainty of God’s salvation?

—Gordon A. Gilkes
Blythe, California

One Life at a Time
Heidi Gang is right when she says that the most effective way to reach the masses is “one life at a time” (“One Life at a Time,” Nov. 19). It is easy for us to be overwhelmed with the enormity of the gospel commission. Jesus could have been overwhelmed with the enormity of His task. But He focused primarily on “one life at a time.” We would do well to follow His example. Then by His grace and power the task He gave us will be accomplished.

—Vialo Weis
Yukon, Oklahoma
Our mission is to uplift Jesus Christ through stories of His matchless love, news of His present workings, help for knowing Him better, and hope in His soon return.
Catholic-bashing Adventists turn me off. And so do Adventists who exist in a perpetual crisis mode, painting dark scenarios every time the Roman pontiff sneezes. At the same time, however, given our knowledge of history and eschatology, we ought to remain intelligently alert to contemporary developments having potential implications for our mission.

One thing we need to watch, I think, is the Roman Catholic Church's relationship to the World Council of Churches (WCC). When the WCC formed in 1948, the Catholic Church was not part of it. In the succeeding years, however, more and more contacts developed, leading in 1965 to the formation of a Joint Working Group (JWG) between the two entities. In addition, Catholics now contribute half the membership of the WCC's Faith and Order Commission and are full members of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. In his report to the WCC Eighth Assembly last December in Harare, Zimbabwe, the moderator cited the papal encyclical Ut Unum Sint, in which the Roman pontiff expresses the Catholic Church's "irrevocable commitment" to Christian unity. This, the moderator said, "should be considered as a milestone in the recent history of the ecumenical movement."

But some assembly delegates still expressed frustration over what they saw as foot-dragging by the Catholic Church. "The relationship . . . , though cordial, is stagnant," one said. "There's been no ecumenical breakthrough. Divisions continue over the Eucharist, baptism, and ecclesiology."

Other Obstacles

As several Catholic representatives attending the council pointed out, the situation is an exceedingly tricky one for the Catholic Church. Under the present WCC constitution, churches are admitted as members essentially on a national or regional basis. But the Catholic Church is an international entity, with a tight, centralized bureaucracy. As a JWG report put it: "It is one church with a worldwide mission."

As well as a huge membership, we might add—1 billion faithful. The critical issue would be how to structure a Catholic delegation that would be acceptable to both the WCC and the Catholic Church.

And a high Catholic official at the council pointed out one other obstacle. Whereas the WCC takes stands on a variety of issues of public policy, "the Vatican, through its diplomatic corps, [has] a very different way of responding."

That simple observation gets to the heart of the issue, suggesting that the Catholic Church is really in a completely different league from the WCC. Here we have, after all, the extraordinary phenomenon of a religious entity with a regular international "diplomatic corps," its ambassadors recognized and credentialled in many capitals around the world and with the United Nations.

This translates into a gargantuan difference in clout between the WCC and the Vatican, a fact that became evident to me again when the WCC, on its first weekend in Harare, staged what it billed as a "Celebration With Zimbabwe Churches" in the city's Rufaro stadium. It was a beautiful afternoon under a pleasant cloud cover, no humidity, the temperature perfect in the low seventies.

What looked like the whole assembly showed up to watch colorful local choirs dance out their hallelujahs on the stadium's open green. A II told, however, not more than 9,000 took up places in the 60,000-seat sports arena.

Later Janice Love, of the United Methodist Church in the U.S., and a high-profile person in council circles, gave me her take on the event: "We gave a party and no one came. That should be a concern to us."

Indeed. For had it been announced that the pope would be at that meeting, hundreds of thousands—if not millions—would have been rushing the stadium gates to get in.

With centuries of experience in negotiation, diplomacy, and cunning, the Catholic Church is well aware of the huge imbalance that picture represents. I suspect that it knows exactly what it wants out of the WCC, and will have a pretty good idea when the time is ripe. Unity in some form will eventually emerge. And I leave unsaid what might happen after that.

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1 For my report on the meeting, see Adventist Review, Feb. 11, pp. 14-19.
2 WCC document PL3.1, p. 11.
When the Lights Go Out

“T hey that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee” (Ps. 9:10).

In January I had the opportunity of traveling to San Diego to attend the annual meeting of A dventist Editors International. The professional growth meeting offers attendees a rare opportunity to participate in skill-centered workshops and to dialogue with fellow editors about the general direction of A dventist publishing.

Located on the southern tip of California about 20 miles north of Mexico, San Diego offered a lovely setting for the midwinter meetings. I loved the warm January sun and gentle breezes off the Pacific. It was just the therapy I needed after leaving the subfreezing temperatures in W ashington, D.C.

Unfortunately, as I basked in the near tropical climate, unbeknown to me my family was suffering through a frigid ice storm. The storm closed area schools in Maryland, northern Virginia, and the District of Columbia, and knocked out elec-trical power in more than 200,000 homes—including my own.

My joy plunged into anxious despair as I learned of their plight. Just imagine living in a house with no lights, no heat, no refrigeration, and no stove or microwave—in sub-freezing temperatures.

During the first 24 hours, beginning Friday morning, January 15, my wife and two daughters opted to stay in the house. Many of our friends were facing the same plight. Just imagine living in a house with no lights, no heat, no refrigeration, and no stove or microwave—in sub-freezing temperatures.

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We were stripped of the comforts of home.

Make preparation. Experiencing such a crisis has shown us exactly what it takes to be prepared, and we were woefully unprepared to handle the ordeal. Some of my colleagues said that we had a dry run for the Y2K crisis. In any event, a few essentials like a kerosene heater, an electric generator, a portable gas stove, and a few heavy-duty flashlights would have made all the difference in the world.

Also in our spiritual life God has given us some essentials, such as Bible study and prayer to face our trials.

Under the plight of the disadvantaged. For the first time, my children got a small glimpse of what it’s like to be disadvantaged. For a few hours they were stripped of the comforts of home and lived (symbolically) as refugees, dependent on the hospitality of others.

From this experience has sprung a new appreciation for the words of Jesus, who said: “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (M att. 8:20, N IV).

Appreciate our precious church family. Christians often call themselves the family of God. However, it’s only in emergencies like these that we come to understand the enormous support network, the wonderful safety net, that God’s worldwide family really is.

Perhaps the most important lesson in this experience is that God really cares about His children, and if we put our trust totally in Him we will have the divine assurance that He’s there waiting to help—when the lights go out.
Hey, kids! Before we talk about Herald's hidden trumpet, we want to welcome all the new Adventist kids out there. Bright-eyed children are the absolute best part about the Adventist Church. We're so glad that you've decided to worship Jesus Christ with us.

If you're not familiar with this contest, here's how it works. Every five weeks Herald's trumpet is hidden somewhere in this magazine. We're not telling where, so please don't call us at midnight asking for clues, OK? If you can find the trumpet (your parents are allowed to help), send a postcard telling us where you found it. Then we'll randomly choose three winning postcards.

In our last contest (February 4) our three winners were: Laura Sunder-Rao, of Strasburg, Virginia; Diego Amorocho, of Washington, North Carolina; and Kessiah Grenz, of Garfield, Washington. Laura, Diego, and Kessiah received Great Stories for Kids 2, by Jerry D. Thomas.

Where was the trumpet? In the photo on page 19.

If you can find the trumpet this time, send your postcard to Herald's Trumpet at the Give & Take address on this page. The prize is Miracle Stories From the Bible, a Review and Herald book by Ruth Redding Brand and Charles Mills. Look for the three winners' names in the April 15 Cutting Edge Edition of the Review. Have fun searching!
Paulsen Chosen to Lead World Church

Executive Committee Chooses European as General Conference President

BY THE EDITORS

TUESDAY, MARCH 2

In a daylong session described by many as the most unusual they had ever seen, members of the Executive Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists on Monday elected Jan Paulsen to lead the 10-million-member denomination.

Paulsen, 64, has been a general vice president of the church since 1995, and previously served as president of the church’s Trans-European Division, a college president, a missionary to West Africa, and a ministerial director (see “An Open Person,” p. 10). Originally from Narvik, Norway, Paulsen is the first European and only the second non-North American to be elected to the church’s top leadership post in 136 years. He is also the first president to hold an earned doctoral degree.

Fluent in Norwegian, German, Danish, and English, Paulsen is also seen by many as a symbol of the increasingly non-American membership of the church. Ninety percent of the church’s membership is outside North America, with the most rapid growth occurring in the South Pacific, Africa, and South and Central America.

“How do you prepare for something like this?” Paulsen asked rhetorically as he and his wife were introduced to a Tuesday morning gathering of Executive Committee members and General Conference employees. To appreciative laughter he added, “Twenty-four hours ago I lived in a world of pure innocence.”

“Now you have many people—in the family and friends—who have assured me of their prayers, and I have the support of my good wife, Kari,” Paulsen continued. “That helps me—that helped us—as we talked about this to say, ‘Right. That’s what we will do.’ ”

Paulsen then recounted his personal practice through 40 years of ministry of accepting positions in which he has been asked to serve, even despite misgivings. “The Lord has led, and I have found it safe to let the committee decide,” he declared. “That’s the way we’ve done it, in the knowledge and with the assurance that the Holy Spirit is leading His church, that He is moving us all steadfastly forward, and that the Lord will achieve His objectives. Accepting this position, we will try to be servants of the Lord in achieving His mission and His objectives.”

In a statement specifically addressed to General Conference employees, Paulsen added: “We are a very, very diverse family in this house. Our talents differ; we think differently. We have different temperaments, and we don’t always agree. We don’t always see eye-to-eye. I want you to know I think that’s fine. That’s just fine. We don’t have to agree on everything.

“Any time you want to know, my colleagues, that you can talk to me and feel safe... It’s OK to disagree with me. We’re going to work our way around whatever differences that may be, because it’s important that at the end of the day we pull together and that what the Lord has in mind, what the Lord wants to accomplish, that we can set about doing it.”

Church leaders were quick to affirm the choice of Paulsen as the denomination’s new leader.

“I’ve been on a lot of nominating committees,” says Robert Kloosterhuis, who has served alongside Paulsen as one of six general vice presidents of the church, “and I think we did more praying this time. There was a unanimity of spirit, and a sense that we had all done the right thing.”

“In Portuguese, we have a word—‘polivalente’—that describes a multitalented and multifaceted person,” says Leo Ranzolin, general vice-president of the church and former world youth leader. “That’s the kind of leader Jan Paulsen will be for this church. I really believe he is the man for this hour.”

“I think he is an excellent choice,” adds Lowell Cooper,
who became a general vice president last October. “He also has
the grace to work with all kinds of people.”

Fellow Scandinavian Bertil Wiklander, who succeeded
Paulsen as president of the church’s Trans-European Division,
is equally optimistic about Paulsen’s new role. “He has a strong
capacity for work, and he certainly loves the church. He also
has great respect for the opinions of others. But no one can
lead this church alone. He’ll need God’s blessing and our sup-
port.”

“After the painful events of the last few weeks, our move-
ment needs a leader who can bring healing,” says Clifford
Goldstein, editor of the adult
Sabbath school Study Guides and
a well-known Adventist author.
“Elder Paulsen is the kind of per-
son who can do that important
work just now.

“His international perspective
is going to be a great asset to the
church,” Goldstein adds. “The
election of a European to lead
the world church illustrates a
ture maturation of this move-
ment and an affirmation that all
parts of the church need to be
included in the decision-making
process.”

Selma Chaij, a lay member of
the Executive Committee and a
professional counselor, also sees a
need for the new president to
bind up wounds just now. “My
prayer is that Elder Paulsen can
help bring healing to Elder
Folkenberg, his family, and all
other church families who feel
hurt and bewildered by these
events,” she says.

Matthew Bediako, originally
from Ghana and a vice president
since 1995, has known Paulsen for more than 30 years. “He
was my Bible teacher in high school and my theology teacher
in college,” Bediako says admiringly. “His missionary service
in his early years has enabled him to be sensitive to other cul-
tures.”

Paulsen’s election comes just three weeks after General
Conference president Robert Folkenberg resigned amid allega-
tions of inappropriate use of his office to forward the business
ventures of James Moore, a Sacramento, California, business-
man and onetime associate with Folkenberg in several business
endeavors. Moore had filed a civil lawsuit in August 1998
against Folkenberg, attorney Walter Carson, and accountant
Ben Kochenower, who had all served on the boards of two
independent charitable organizations.

The General Conference Corporation and the church’s Inter-
American Division were also named in the suit, but were not
expected to figure prominently in the litigation. The General
Conference Corporation had never had any dealings with
Moore, and the Inter-American Division ceased all contacts
with him in 1989 when he began serving a prison sentence for
an unrelated felony grand theft conviction.

In a surprise development on
Friday, February 26, Moore
announced that he was with-
drawing the lawsuit, and indi-
cated that he had reached a con-
fidential out-of-court settlement
with the individuals named in
the civil suit. Folkenberg con-
irmed settlement of the lawsuit
in a Monday morning statement
to Executive Committee mem-
ers (see “One Amazing
Morning,” p. 17).

“Church leaders have natu-
rally been concerned with these
events,” says Rick Remmers, pas-
tor of the Atholton, Maryland,
Seventh-day Adventist Church
and a member of the Executive
Committee. “But we’d do well to
remember that the mission of
the church is much larger than
the election of any individual as
its leader. For thousands of
Seventh-day Adventists around
the world, these matters will
only reach real significance if
they yield a church system that
more effectively empowers them
to do what the Holy Spirit is urging them to do.”

Paulsen’s term will run until the next scheduled quinquen-
nial meeting of the world church in Toronto, Ontario, Canada,
in June 2000. More than 2,000 delegates are expected at the
Toronto General Conference session, where they will elect offi-
cers, endorse new initiatives, and vote policy changes for the
denomination.
**“An Open Person”—Pastor Jan Paulsen**

William Johnsson interviews the new president of the world church

The following interview was conducted Tuesday morning, March 2, 12 hours after Pastor Paulsen was elected.

**Johnsson: What’s it like to wake up this morning and find yourself leading the world church?**

Paulsen: Stunned. It obviously is something that is totally unanticipated.

I’ve been away from this house—the General Conference—for the past two weeks, and knowing that there would be some sort of a change here, one ponders, one wonders, one prays, and one searches one’s soul. I prayed much, but I met no prophet on the way. There was no Samuel to say, “This is the way; this is it.” I suppose in that sense God didn’t help me too much, but then in another way I suppose God was saying, “I have a good system. I’m there with the Spirit. I’m there with the committee, and let that do its job and see how it goes.” And that’s what happened.

**Let’s talk about Jan Paulsen, if you don’t mind. How would you describe yourself?**

I am not a very complicated person. I think that I am quite an open person. It matters a lot to me that there is peace and an atmosphere of tolerance and kindness. I think that it is more important in given circumstances to have demonstrated kindness than to demonstrate that you’re right. These things have great value to me.

**Tell us about your upbringing.**

I grew up in an Adventist home. A wonderful, wonderful Adventist home. No, he was not. It was a very simple home that I grew up in. My father was a shoemaker, a cobbler. So I grew up, not in poverty exactly, but it was very simple.

**Was it in Norway?**

It was in Norway, north Norway. But my father and my mother were wonderful believers. When I told my mother early this morning what had happened, she wept, but she said, “The Lord will give you strength. The Lord will help you.” Which is of course my conviction also.

**Is your father living?**

He passed away 12 or 13 years ago.

**What about your family?**

My wife is a wonderful support to me. She has the ability to tell me the truth without inhibitions. We have three children. Our oldest is a daughter, who is married and lives in England. She teaches pediatric nursing in London at the university there. Then we have two sons. The older one lives and works in Oslo, and the younger one is in Haiti working for ADRA.

**Now, you are, I believe, the second non-North American to become president. The first was C. H. Watson, in the 1930s, who happened to be an Australian. You’re the first European.**

Yes.

**What is the significance of that?**

I don’t see any particular significance in that. Our church is a very international community, with more than 90 per-
dent of our membership outside North America. The fact that they should now choose a president who comes from a part of the world other than North America is, I see, a quite natural development.

You have served overseas, I believe. Tell us a little about that.

I began my ministry in Norway as a pastor. But as a young man of 27, I and my young family were called to Ghana. I taught Bible in our teacher training college in Bekwai. Then we were invited to go to our college in Nigeria, which was a senior college, the first one established for sub-Saharan Africans.

The six years in West Africa were truly wonderful years. My understanding of both the diverse cultures of the church and of how wonderfully God works in various circumstances came clear to me. My assignments there varied a bit—first teaching theology, and later serving as president of the college.

We are an unusual church, a remarkable church—worldwide and diverse. Yet it is also a great challenge to keep this church together. How do we maintain the world family of the Adventist Church?

For our large international family to hold together, I think it’s important that we have a sense of mutuality in that we share resources, we get together in counsel, and we agree on how we are going to formulate our statements. These are significant elements to keep us together as one family. At the same time, it is important that the creative elements that service the church be placed very close to where the church lives, where the church has its life. And thereby reflect obedience to God in that particular structure.

You’re talking about the local congregation, I take it.

Yes, I am. And about the national church, also.

Let me follow up on that. It seems to me that for many of our people the General Conference is seen as a large, remote, impersonal bureaucracy. Do you have any thoughts on how we might try to bridge the gulf?

I think you’ve made a valid point. It troubles me also that
and in the witness of the church. And I say this recognizing that this is not something that I intend to give to them. God has already given it to them. I merely recognize that the church is theirs. The church needs them, and the church is going to use them. We would be in a miserable state if we were not to find creative roles for both the youth and the women in our church.

**How would you describe your leadership style?**

Democracy is probably the best way we have to go forward. I feel very strongly that the people I work with should feel that they have a ready and open access to the ones who are elected to office. I have no intention of doing this job in isolation. There will be a fair bit of travel, but I do expect to spend a fair bit of time in this office. I function best when I can talk with people about the issues before us before we get locked into any fixed procedures.

*We are a church for whom mission is core—it’s part of our being.*

**What do you see as the opportunities for mission?**

What this church embarked on almost 10 years ago when we accepted the concept of Global Mission, of entering into unentered areas, is something that is really at the heart of Adventism. We will be committed to this and will continue this until the Lord returns—until the task is finished. I am wholeheartedly committed to the objectives of Global Mission.

I look forward to working closely with Global Mission here in this house, but it is not only done here. Yes, we have a modest-sized office here to serve Global Mission but it really is happening out there. There are thousands of volunteers who are working and who have been trained elsewhere. So I see Global Mission from this house as a resource center, as an opportunity to give some direction and counsel to various areas and various initiatives.

**Let’s talk about communications. On the one hand we have this vast increase in technology. On the other hand there is the simple way of one-on-one, the word of mouth spreading the gospel, which is at the heart of it. How do you see this coming together?**

Let me say first of all that technology—that’s where we are, this is the age. That’s where we have been taken also as a church, and Elder Folkenberg, my predecessor, has done an outstanding job in that respect. We shouldn’t even contemplate the idea of going back. We are simply using the resources of today and will continue to do so and develop that. What I would not want to see happen is that we end up defining evangelism, witness, outreach—whatever term we choose—as being essentially that which is delivered by satellite. The heart of the witness and growth of the church is at the local church. The pastor with the laypeople in the local church, they must own the initiative for the witness and for the growth of the church. So I see and would support strongly that the responsibility for the witness of the church is very much in the hands of the pastors and of the local churches. I see the other things that we can deliver by satellite as a blessed addition to the witnessing outreach of the local church.

You mentioned pastors. I think it’s true to say that some, maybe many, pastors today are feeling embattled, overworked, and so on. Do you have a word for the pastors who are the shepherds of our flocks around the world?

Well, I would say to them that it is a difficult assignment that they have, and yet it is a wonderfully blessed assignment. They are Christ’s ambassadors. They are working for Him and He is ever with them. It is not an easy task that they have been given, but they didn’t choose it as you would choose any other profession. They were called to it.

I was 15 years of age when I felt strongly that the Lord had called me to the pastorate, and I never looked back. That in a sense is also what drives me—a sense that this is what God wants me to do. I would be miserable if I didn’t do this. And I think most of our pastors feel the same way. They are doing it because God wants them to do it. And there simply isn’t another life for them that has that attrac-
tion. And I would say to these pastors without whom we could not carry on as a church, “Remain strong in the Lord. The Lord who has called you will be there with you and will give you strength from week to week.”

What do you see as the big issues facing the church today?

What I see as a big challenge for the church is in its internationality. It is very, very important that as the church continues to grow internationally—and it will grow rapidly internationally—the weight of the leadership and the creative forces that sustain the growing church are recognized as being widely distributed throughout the world field. That is not a diminishing of the importance of the General Conference. It is simply recognizing the reality that it is better for the church that the creative forces among our people in various cultures and nationalities, and of various talents around the world find expression there. I think it is important that we allow and support that particular kind of development.

The office that you have been called to is so demanding, the task so huge. What is your perspective as you embark on this adventure with the Lord? I don’t know any other way to describe it because without the Lord there will surely be no going forward.

The task, the assignment, the office, its largeness cannot be described. I find no words that can adequately capture how I see it. I see it as a huge assignment but also as a wonderful opportunity. I don’t want to sound overly brave, but in a sense I find joy in the fact that there is an opportunity to be part of leadership also in this particular sense. My dependence on the Lord is unqualified. Although I have been 40 years in this work, I still belong to fallen humanity, and I make my mistakes personally and in decisions and professionally. The mistakes are there, and yet with the Lord, I know that He sustains us in our frailty. He takes our willingness. I pray that He will take my willingness and use it creatively.

I will do my level best. I talk to the Lord regularly. I will want to listen to the brethren and the sisters and move together. If I saw this as some kind of secular presidency or if I saw this as some kind of royalty, it would scare the living daylights out of me, but we are together. It is the Lord who owns it. He calls us. I think, I believe, He was present in the process yesterday. So I take confidence and strength in that, and I will do my best with Him.

Do you have any particular passage of Scripture to which you turn most frequently?

Of course there are many. But whenever I reflect on what God expects of me, Micah 6:8 comes to mind: “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.”

How does Jan Paulsen recharge? Obviously, you go to the Lord, but there must be some other sources to recharge your batteries.

Yes, yes, there are. It’s not a very complicated thing. My wife is an enormous support and resource for me. I couldn’t do this without her support. And I have many friends. And my family, my larger family. When somebody comes up to me and says, “I want you to know that I am praying for you in this particular situation,” this means an enormous amount to me.

If you could meet one-on-one each of those individual Adventists around the world, most of whom will not meet you, what would you like to say to these people—the so-called little people, but they are not little?

No, they are not. They are the church. It’s very important what you are saying. Without them we have no place, we have no function. They are the church. But I would say to them, “I am going to meet you soon. We are all bound for the kingdom. The Lord is coming soon. Hang in there. Be strong. Do His bidding. That’s what I try to do, and we will meet.”

For related stories, see pages 17-20.
The Finger of God

BY GERALD A. KLINGBEIL

DURING MY PERSONAL DEVOTION ONE morning some years ago, I came across a curious statement. Jesus was the speaker. “But if I cast out demons with the finger of God,” He said, “surely the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Luke 11:20, NKJV).

The Setting

Jesus was having another row with His “eternal opposition.” The Bible mentions only the crowd (verse 14), but we can be sure that the Pharisees were part of the group that, immediately following one of Jesus’ miracles, began to cast doubts on the supernatural occurrence. “He casteth out devils through Beelzebub,” they said, their voices saturated with jealousy and incredulity.

“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation,” Jesus answered (verses 15-17). It was a focused response on Jesus’ part, showing the Pharisees’ charge to be totally illogical. “But if I drive out demons by the finger of God,” He said, “then the kingdom of God is very near.”

What caught my attention that morning in my study was the expression “finger of God.” What did it mean? Why did Jesus not just say “the power of God” or “the power of the Holy Spirit”?

When I started to study theology I began doing something that I still practice whenever I come across a question that I cannot answer: I put it into “storage”—I write it in a special book (or nowadays in a special file on my computer). So the “finger of God” ended up in cold storage—until last year, when I rediscovered the same expression in a place where I’d not been looking for it: in the Old Testament.

The phrase “finger of God” occurs three times in the Old Testament: Exodus 8:19; 31:18; and Deuteronomy 9:10. The last two occurrences describe the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, where God wrote the Ten Commandments into the tablets of stone “with His own finger.” Here the finger of God suggests the importance of the law of God. God actually took the trouble to write it down in His own “handwriting” for you and me.

I’d like to focus on the Exodus 8:19 occurrence a moment. It gives us, I believe, the backdrop to understanding Jesus’ use of that strange expression in Luke 11:20.

Dividing Line Between Human and Divine Power

It’s five minutes to midnight. And God’s people must be freed! His promise must be kept. So He sends Moses and Aaron out to face Pharaoh. The showdown that developed we know today as the 10 plagues. When we study this calamity in its totality, we soon realize that it is couched in creation language—a somewhat distorted creation, however.

When Aaron raises his staff in Exodus 8:16, 17, he strikes the “dust” of the “land.” The Hebrew terms for dust and land are well known in the Genesis account of Creation (Gen. 1:1, 11, 15, 17, etc.; 2:7). The object of Creation is the “land,” and the material of humankind’s creation is the dust.

However, while the story reminds us of the Creation account, the main focus is the struggle between Pharaoh and God.

From old Egyptian texts and images we know that the Egyptians regarded their Pharaoh as a demigod. He was supposed to maintain the peace of the land and to keep the country from slipping into chaos. But now as the plague crisis develops, Pharaoh begins to look more and more helpless. He calls in his specialists—the sorcerers, scientists, and magicians. By their tricks and fraud they manage to duplicate the first two plagues, and the heart of Pharaoh is “hardened.”

When we discuss the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart in our Sabbath school classes or discussion groups, we usually see it through Western eyes, putting the emphasis on who was responsible for the hardening and on whether it was really fair. However, reading both Hebrew Old Testament and Egyptian literature, one finds a totally different perspective on this age-old issue.

What the text in Exodus actually conveys is a religious polemic against the theology of the pharaohs. The heart was very important in Egyptian religious thought because it was “weighed” before the dead could enter the “other side” of the...
supposed netherworld. In this sense, God weighed Pharaoh's heart and found it lacking. After all, this was not a contest of equals (from the viewpoint of the biblical author), but one of a judge with the person to be judged. Pharaoh does not come out on top, but is instead indicted by this unknown God of the Hebrews. What an embarrassment!

Three Important Divisions

When one looks at the structure of the plague narrative one finds that the plagues can be divided into three units of three plagues each, culminating in the tenth plague, the death of the firstborn. The organizing factor seems to be the severity of the plagues. The first three plagues describe simply irritations. Blood, frogs, and gnats are not pleasant, but one can somehow manage. The second set of plagues describes destruction. And the third depicts death.5 Thus the third plague is at a crucial point in the story. Up to now the religious specialists were able to duplicate the "signs" that Moses and Aaron had produced, but this time "they could not" (Ex. 8:18). They were then obliged to report to Pharaoh that "this is the finger of God."

The proclamation came as a surprise. Pharaoh, the demigod sitting on the throne of Egypt, could not match the creative/destructive power of Israel's God. And it also constituted a recognition of the God of Aaron and Moses (although Pharaoh’s specialists do not mention Him by name).

Eureka!

I sit back from my computer... awed. Wow! Such a little phrase and so much to discover!

When Jesus referred to the finger of God, He clearly had in mind the experience of the Egyptian magicians and Pharaoh, who found themselves obliged, in spite of themselves, to proclaim the presence of God, His creative power, and His involvement in human affairs. Jesus is actually saying: "Listen up, folks, if this has been done by the finger of God—and I have proven that to you—then it means that God's kingdom has come close to you. He is the one who has the authority and the power, and He has entrusted it to me. Don't you see that I am the one you have been waiting for?"

How often do you and I just "hang around" God's Word without really investing anything of ourselves, our time, or our creative energy into it. We crave multimedia entertainment and soapy encounters, in which we don't have to get our hands dirty. What a challenge to each of us to get on our knees, get out those questions buried in "cold storage," and start looking for answers.  

3 Many more connections might be cited if space permitted.

Gerald A. Klingbeil is a professor at Peruvian Union University in Lima, Peru.
Why did the Lord ask Abraham to offer his son as a sacrifice? The text gives only one answer: the Lord was testing Abraham (Gen. 22:1). But why was the test necessary? The biblical context—in a sense, the full story of Abraham—is most important for a proper understanding of this story.

1. Immediate Context: Scholars have observed a relation between Genesis 22 and the sending away of Hagar and Ishmael in Genesis 21:1-20. Ishmael and Isaac are both removed from Abraham's family, there is a journey, both are about to die, both are rescued by God, etc. Notice also that the story of Hagar and Ishmael is placed in the middle of the story of Abimelech. This story was introduced in Genesis 20:1-18, interrupted by Genesis 21:1-20, and concluded in chapter 21:22-34. Genesis 20-22 forms one basic literary unit.

2. Significance of the Context: The stories of Abraham and Abimelech, Hagar and Ishmael, have one thing in common: they both reveal Abraham's lack of trust in the Lord and God's apparent indifference to it. Because of Abraham's lie, Abimelech questioned the Lord's justice and integrity (Gen. 20:4-6) and the righteousness of the patriarch (verse 9). Yet the Lord said to the king that Abraham was His prophet and that Abraham should pray for the king in order that the king might be forgiven.

The second story witnesses to the infidelity of Abraham's lie, A bimelech questioned the Lord's justice and integrity (Gen. 20:4-6) and the righteousness of the patriarch (verse 9). Yet the Lord said to the king that Abraham was His prophet and that Abraham should pray for the king in order that the king might be forgiven.

The second story witnesses to the infidelity of Hagar and Ishmael in Genesis 21:1-20. Ishmael and Isaac are both removed from Abraham's family, there is a journey, both are about to die, both are rescued by God, etc. Notice also that the story of Hagar and Ishmael is placed in the middle of the story of A bimelech. This story was introduced in Genesis 20:1-18, interrupted by Genesis 21:1-20, and concluded in chapter 21:22-34. Genesis 20-22 forms one basic literary unit.

3. The Purpose of the Test: The resolution of the problems described in the previous chapters is found in Genesis 22. The Lord decided to "test" Abraham. This verb is used to indicate something imperceptible that is going to be made known; the hidden will be revealed. The test will reveal the true self, the person as he or she really is with respect to God (e.g., Ex. 16:4; Deut. 8:2).

Indeed, at the end of the story the angel of the Lord said to Abraham, "Now I know..." Since the Lord knew from the beginning that Abraham was a faithful servant (Gen. 18:19), through this revelation God intended to share with others what He already knew. It served to vindicate Him and His servant.

4. The Nature of the Test: To understand God's request to Abraham we must remember that Isaac was a gift from God, the result of a miracle. The patriarch's future as the mediator of God's blessing to the nations was dependent on Isaac. By asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, God was telling the prophet that the covenant relationship had come to an end. He was requesting that the gift be given back to Him. Abraham, because of his sin, did not deserve it; the Lord was rejecting him.

But the test reveals the true depth of the patriarch's faith and commitment to the Lord. His confidence in the Lord was so firm that he was willing to relinquish the gift, to cast himself into the arms of a merciful God and trust in His forgiving grace: "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son," he said (Gen. 22:8, NIV). To the servants he asserted, "Stay here... We will worship and then we will come back to you" (verse 5, NIV). In the darkness of hopelessness and desperation his faith in the Lord held him. He seems to be saying, "Even if there's no future for me, I will still serve the Lord and wait on Him."

The Lord provided a substitute for Isaac, a future for Abraham. The blood of a sacrificial victim was poured out, Abraham was forgiven, and the covenant was renewed (verses 15-18). God revealed Himself as the one who does not condone sin and yet is merciful.

In the experience of Abraham we see God providing a substitute, His Son, for our sins. If we find ourselves on the road of hopelessness, the Lord has still provided for us a wonderful future.

Angel Manuel Rodríguez is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference.
One Amazing Morning
A Look Inside the March 1 Meeting

BY THE EDITORS

“It was one of the most difficult mornings I’ve ever been through,” says one member of the General Conference Executive Committee. “Each of us in the room brought our hopes, our concerns—our prayers—to the process, and of course, we saw it in different ways.”

The March 1 special session of the 268-member Executive Committee was called on January 27 to consider allegations of misuse of office by then-president Robert S. Folkenberg. Folkenberg’s February 7 resignation changed the direction of the March meeting from a judicial to an elective process, but committee members still had pointed questions to ask about his actions and the process by which he left office.

Executive Committee chair and acting president G. Ralph Thompson opened the meeting by briefly rehearsing the history of the process that required the special meeting.

According to Thompson, allegations about possible inappropriate business dealings by Folkenberg were first reviewed with himself and General Conference treasurer Robert Rawson in early January 1999. A meeting of the President’s Executive Advisory Committee (PREXAD), including four General Conference officers and the six general vice presidents, then studied the same information over the weekend of January 8-10. Later that week the vice presidents helped design an investigative process subsequently endorsed on January 13 by the 30-member General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM).

A special 19-member Ad Hoc Group composed of lay and employed Executive Committee members was authorized by ADCOM to fully investigate the matter and deliver its findings on January 27. As reported in previous Adventist Review news releases, the Ad Hoc Group spent nearly 25 hours listening to presentations by Phil Hiroshima, the church-retained attorney who had discovered the irregularities, and from Elder Folkenberg and his attorneys, as well as closed-door sessions in which they deliberated the significance of the charges.

The Ad Hoc Group’s January 27 report to an expanded ADCOM that included 10 of the 12 world division presidents of the church recommended that a special session of the General Conference Executive Committee be convened on March 1 to “express itself on a question of confidence concerning Elder Folkenberg’s continued leadership.”

ADCOM’s endorsement of the Ad Hoc Group’s recommendations set the stage for the March 1 meeting.

Following Thompson’s review of the process, church leaders graciously allowed Folkenberg—who as former president is automatically a life member of the Executive Committee—to make an extended statement to the committee. Speaking from notes, Folkenberg thanked committee members for the privilege of serving the church for the previous eight and a half years, and summarized key initiatives that had been launched during his term.

Noting his advocacy of the “Total Commitment to God” document, which called for greater accountability at each level of the church, Folkenberg added, “I also am subject to an accountability process, and that is, in part, why we are here.”

Folkenberg then briefly reviewed the sequence of events in his relationship with James Moore, a Sacramento, California, businessman who had made accusations against him and others in a civil suit filed in August 1998. Describing himself as “deeply repentant” that he didn’t disassociate himself from Moore much earlier,
Folkenberg nonetheless defended his motivations for the 20-year business dealings, noting that neither he nor the church had ended up profiting from the long-term relationship with Moore.

Folkenberg told the committee members that he had resigned “to avoid further conflict and pain to my family and the church I love.” He also acknowledged that a confidential out-of-court settlement had been reached in the lawsuit initiated against him and others by Moore, and indicated that it had included a financial component.

“These positions are not a mantle we own,” Folkenberg admonished. “We are loaned these responsibilities for as long as the church feels we can effectively carry them out. When the time comes to lay down that mantle, we should not be possessive of it but step aside for the good of the church.”

Folkenberg’s speech was followed by numerous statements from lay and employee members of the committee who insisted on further disclosures of information about the process by which he came to leave office. Several went so far as to recommend that committee members reject the motion on the floor to accept his resignation.

Thompson informed members that more and detailed information about the allegations against Elder Folkenberg was available for distribution, but expressed the hope that releasing it would not be necessary.

Harold Baptiste, secretary of the North American Division, then reminded committee members that a rejection of the motion to accept Folkenberg’s resignation would not automatically allow him to continue as General Conference president. If the resignation were not accepted, the committee would then be required to turn to considering the full information about the allegations, as called for in the ADCOM vote that convened the meeting. Other committee members quickly affirmed Baptiste’s comments, and urged members to accept the Folkenberg resignation.

Returning to the microphone, Folkenberg declared that it was not in his interest or that of the church to continue a lengthy discussion of the matter. Even if offered the presidency again, he insisted, he would respectfully decline the opportunity.

Committee members then moved quickly to a vote on the motion to accept Folkenberg’s resignation. The motion passed with near unanimity, and the committee then began selecting persons to lead out in the process for nominating a new president.

Forward to the Promised Land

One could feel the tension as members of the General Conference (GC) Committee and GC office staff assembled for the opening worship of a specially called GC committee, March 1. Chosen to speak was former Inter-American Division president Elder George W. Brown. We include here a few excerpts from his encouraging message.—Editors.

“Today’s message is a good news message! It is a vivid reminder that our God is able and available to transform our crises into triumph, and our bad news into the good news of ultimate deliverance through our triumphant Lord.”

“Like the people of the Exodus movement, the people of the Advent movement will face their Red Sea crises: But the good news is that in each crisis, however grim and perplexing, we have the unfailing assurance that our Supreme Leader will lead His pilgrim people all the way to the Promised Land. ‘The Lord went before [His people]... by day... and by night.’ (Ex. 13:22). Likewise, the God of the Advent movement is on duty leading His people 24 hours a day in all kinds of weather—through adversity and prosperity, through turbulence and calm, through Red Seas and Jordans.”

“It is not by administrative skills and human power, not by academic accomplishments and professional know-how, not by well-crafted policies and impressive programs, not by state-of-the-art technology, not by surplus liquidity and operating capital—‘but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts’ (Zech. 4:6). It should be God’s agenda, not ours.”

“‘Speak unto the children of Israel, . . . go forward’ (Ex. 14:15). Here God calls for action born of divine unction. I am fascinated by the New International Version’s rendering of this imperative: ‘Tell the Israelites to move on.’ This gets right to the point: Don’t remain trapped, terrified, paralyzed, and confused by crisis. Move on; go forward!”

“And so it must be for the Advent movement as we face the new millennium with its problems, possibilities, crises, and challenges. For us there shall be no retreat, no looking back, no detours, no hesitation, no marking time—only forward in faith!”
World Voices

Sibrina Kalliokoski, pastor, Finland
“Elder Paulsen was my teacher at Newbold College. I’m very happy and pleased. He is a good theologian. He has natural authority. He has strength and kindness combined. He’s experienced in many areas—evangelism, mission, administration, education. He values the work of women in ministry, and is very supportive.”

Harald Wollan, president of Bangladesh Union, Bangladesh
“Everyone came with a prayerful attitude. I’m pleased that we came to the decision after a time of prayer. I’m glad that God will continue to lead His people, because this is the time that we should not worry with the politics of the church but be concerned with the mission of the church.”

Pat Gustin, member at large, director of the Institute of World Mission at Andrews University, Michigan, United States
“I know, respect, and trust Elder Paulsen. I’m proud of the church for electing someone who is not from North America. This decision reflected the world nature of the church. Elder Paulsen’s work with Global Mission and his own mission experience made him attractive to me. He has a heart for mission.”

Alvin Ringer, lay member, Alabama, United States
“I feel confident that Elder Paulsen will bring terrific leadership. He’s personable. He’s a spiritual man and will work well with committees.”

Makvala Shavlikadze, lay member, Republic of Georgia
“When I heard information about all this [the Folkenberg resignation] on the Internet in my country, I was very sad. Then I began to pray about choosing a new president, and I hoped things would go well here. . . . I know we elected him [Paulsen] by God’s will. The Holy Spirit was the leader of our thoughts yesterday.”

Delbert Baker, Oakwood College president, Alabama, United States
“Elder Paulsen has an excellent opportunity to position the church to respond to the needs of the global community. It’s time to come together in unity to do the work of the Lord as we move toward the twenty-first century.”

Aliça E. DeSistiva, lay member, Colombia
“The Lord is coming very soon, so Elder Paulsen may be our last president. We need to support him. . . . We don’t have time for politics. We need to cross the Jordan. It’s not the time to be divided. It’s time to be close to Jesus Christ and support our leaders.”

Jere Patzer, president of the North Pacific Union, Oregon, United States
“It’s obvious that the prayers of millions of Adventists were answered, including my own. In what has been, and had the potential to continue to be, a very divisive issue, God brought unity and focus. There was a corporate sense that God had definitely led.”

Marion Fields, lay member, Australia
“It didn’t come all together [for me] until Jan Paulsen stood up this morning. The things that he said this morning really touched me—‘You can come and talk to me,’ and ‘You’ll be safe,’ and ‘You can disagree with me, and that’s fine.’”
Orville Parchment, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada

“It was the fairest route to have the entire Executive Committee to serve as the Nominating Committee. Everyone had an opportunity to participate in the process. Everyone had an opportunity to speak.”

Olga Pernavchuk, lay member, Ukraine

“We would like him [Paulsen] to visit our country often. To know how we live. To stand on the top of the mountain and to understand our life, even our economic conditions in which we live. This is very important to us.”

Brad Thorp, assistant to the president of the General Conference with Adventist Global Communications Network

“I’m very happy that the church addressed the issue and the problem encountered as quickly and rapidly as they have. I think this shows real maturity and openness—that we are not trying to sweep things under the carpet or create a spin story giving different interpretations to the reality of the situation.”

ADRA Assists Colombia Earthquake Victims

Following the earthquake that flattened 20 towns and villages in five provinces in western Colombia in January, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is collecting and delivering relief materials in-country and assisting in damage assessments.

The day after the earthquake ADRA/Colombia staff and volunteers delivered more than 100 baskets of food to families in Calarca, reports Ivonne Urea, national relief coordinator for ADRA/Colombia. Each basket contained enough food to feed a six-member family for one week.

ADRA International has made an initial commitment of US$10,000 and ADRA/Canada of US$5,000 for additional relief efforts. Carlos Pinto, youth leader and the person in charge of ADRA rescue teams, says of the damage, “No one can imagine the sadness we are seeing here. Radio and TV stations cannot depict the reality of the devastation.” The earthquake, measuring 6.0 on the Richter scale, is reportedly the worst natural disaster to hit Colombia since 1985, when an avalanche and mudslide buried about 25,000 people.

ADRA and GARSA, a Seventh-day Adventist relief group, worked with the Red Cross in assessing damage in the areas most affected by the earthquake. “A DRA/Colombia decided to provide assistance where most organizations are not able to reach, avoiding an overlap of relief efforts,” explains Pinto. “So many roads are buried or have disappeared. The only way to reach some of the affected areas is by motorcycle or plane.”

Jaime Pita, A DRA director for the Pacific region, helped with the damage assessment and worked with Quindio governor Henry Gomez Tabares to find a location between Bogotá, the capital, and Calarca for warehousing A DRA’s relief materials.

This temporary location will hold items such as food, water, warm clothes, blankets, and kitchen items, as well as provisional items such as plastic sheeting, tents, and mattresses that A DRA is collecting from its regional office warehouses throughout the country.

A DRA/Colombia is running continuous micro-enterprise programs throughout the country. Some of its beneficiaries are reportedly in the disaster area.

A DRA/Colombia also operates a program to help displaced victims of violence, funded by A DRA/Spain.

News Notes

**Correction:** In our February 18 Special Report article “What Happens Next?” two errors appeared. The first acting president of the General Conference was W. C. White (1888-1889); terms of service for General Conference presidents when the denomination first organized were one year, not two years.
I have dear friends who for some time have been stockpiling for the time of trouble. They’ve purchased property in a remote mountain area and are placing various essentials, i.e., foodstuffs, electric generators, etc., so that they can be somewhat comfortable when we are made to flee for our lives. Now, after the recent papal pronouncement regarding the Sabbath, they have intensified their preparations. Is this the kind of thing we’re supposed to do?

Perhaps there are some hideouts so remote and so secure that they will provide safety for those who plan ahead. However, it is difficult to imagine success in structuring for comfort under the circumstances that will then exist. My sense is that the efforts of those now devising to escape discovery by an enemy equipped with highly sophisticated detection equipment and rapid vehicular mobility are well-meaning but futile.

In describing the situation of the end-times Ellen White stated: “The people of God will flee from the cities and villages and associate together in companies, dwelling in the most desolate and solitary places. Many will find refuge in the strongholds of the mountains. . . . But many of all nations and of all classes, high and low, rich and poor, black and white, will be cast into the most unjust and cruel bondage. The beloved of God pass weary days bound in chains, shut in by prison bars, sentenced to be slain, some apparently left to die of starvation in dark and loathsome dungeons” (Last Day Events, pp. 259, 260).

I would suggest that the most feasible preparation for such trying times as these is not “stocking up” in mountain caves, but “storing up” in our hearts the lofty promises of God while daily reaffirming our faith in HIs providence.

Seeing how God treated Adam and Eve, how can we regard Him as a “loving Father.” Do you?

The truth is just the opposite from your conclusion. Consider: Adam and Eve were created in absolute perfection, placed in beautiful Eden, promised immortality, and blessed with communion with God—all clearly acts of love.

And since God did not desire that they serve Him from fear but from willing obedience, He gave them the power of choice—that too an act of love. He accompanied the capacity of choice with warnings regarding Lucifer’s fall and the likelihood of his stealthy but ruinous approach (see The Story of Redemption, pp. 29-31). This also reflects God’s love.

Even their sentence of death was a manifestation of love. Had they, with the physical and moral consequences of their self-willed transgression, been permitted endless life, the universe would have been victimized by the anomaly of everlasting evil. Thus even Adam and Eve’s demise reflected God’s love.

And it was love that gave them hardships to occupy their minds, to develop their characters, and to direct their allegiances to God. It was love, incomprehensible love, that forged the Father’s agreement with the Son and brought Him to earth as our substitute and sacrifice.

Recently, while witnessing the birth of our fifth grandchild, a beautiful baby girl, I watched in wonder and tears as our eldest daughter painfully brought life into the world. I was particularly moved when during her last, most powerful contractions she turned to me with fearful eyes and anxiously pleaded, “Daddy, the pain—the pain!” In that tense moment I think I experienced, if but faintly, the Father’s great love in allowing His Son to suffer the horrors of Calvary. His toleration of the travail that satisfied the terms of our salvation is the highest evidence of His loving heart.

What more can a loving God do?

Calvin B. Rock is a general vice president of the General Conference. He holds doctoral degrees in ministry and Christian ethics.
Christ’s Counterculture

What’s your level of commitment?

BY DAVID N. MARSHALL

Hat are the things most important in your life?

- Your position or status? Your monthly salary and perks?
- A flashy house and another upstate?
- Popularity with your peers?
- The size, make, type, and year of your car?
- The awards on your walls that prove you are an achiever?
- A wardrobe full of the latest gear—Gucci, Armani, Ralph Lauren, Dior, Dolce and Gabbana, Nike, Calvin Klein, Versace, Jean-Paul Gaultier, Hugo Boss, Yves Saint Laurent?
- The feeling of accomplishment?

If your answer is yes to any or most of those questions, you may have cause for concern, Jesus-wise. It is possible that you are in the economic and pop culture fast lane—that you’re like so many others. The trouble is, Christ doesn’t want you to be like so many others. His teaching launched a radical counterculture that now, as at the time of the launch, is the route to satisfaction at the personal level and to the spiritual high ground.

On a mountain in Palestine Jesus caught hold of worldly values—aims, fads, fashions, ambitions, and standards. He throttled some and turned the rest on their heads. He said that the kingdom and His righteousness were first, and that we can rely on Him for the basics of life. Not a glamorous spouse, house, and lifestyle first, and give the kingdom a passing thought on a Saturday morning if for a split second some shoutin’ an stompin’ preacher captures your imagination. (“Brilliant sermon! First-class entertainment! Better than the TV, and funnier!”)

The Audi A8, Gucci, Dolce, Versace, high-achiever culture is the one in which:
- fewer than half of marriages take place in church in most Western countries
- membership of many denominations in Europe and North America is barely growing or (more likely) in steep decline
- children are having children
- the divorce rate has passed 50 percent in most states
- 76 percent of kids experiment with drugs while they are still at school, and enough carry on with drugs afterward to fuel a drug-driven crime wave of mugging, stealing, assault, and murder that won’t quit.

Paul, on a top-o’-the-range horse en route to Damascus, aimed to capture the practitioners of Christ’s counterculture. He was a driven high achiever. He had an impeccable pedigree, and was proud of it—a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He had the Oscars, he had the Pulitzer prizes, and as is the way with achievers in the material sphere, he had transferred his mentality into the spiritual sphere: he had the Nobel Prize for do-it-yourself righteousness.

Then he met Jesus, who had been pestering Paul for some time with the claims and values of His counterculture. “Paul, it’s getting harder for you to kick against it!” A nd Jesus is the only achiever with a capital A, and the only truly perfect achiever at that.

Paul stopped kicking.

He dissolved under the heat of the Sun of Righteousness. A nd when he was reassembled in accordance with the values of Christ’s counterculture, what he had thought was important—the Gucci, Armani, Versace, Audi A8 culture and the Nobel Prize for do-it-yourself righteousness—was totally unimportant. No, worse; it was rubbish.

Listen to him, will you? “Whatsoever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish”—rubbish, mark you—“that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”

The world of the first century was, in some respects, similar to the radical materialism we have seen in the West in the eighties and nineties. The value of people was calculated in terms of money, possessions, privileges, ambitions, attitudes,
friends, and pedigree. The opener to Jesus’ sermon on the mount was a series of body blows to the prevailing culture of His day—and now, to ours.

Those who acknowledge their poverty of spirit (who rely wholly on God for their salvation) regard themselves as superior to the apostle Paul, who said, “I know I am rotten through and through. . . . Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin?”

Now notice Paul’s answer to his own question, and take heart.

“Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. . . . So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.”

But “those who belong to Christ Jesus” are called to discipleship. And “discipleship” involves embracing every aspect of Christ’s counterculture.

We began with the test of your materialism. Let’s finish with a test of your discipleship:

1. Am I willing to serve? Jesus repeatedly taught this lesson to His status-seeking disciples, especially when He so dramatically humbled them by washing their feet.

2. Am I willing to listen? On the Mount of Transfiguration Peter, full of bright ideas, was told by God to “listen” to His Son.4 When Martha busied herself about in the kitchen while Jesus was talking, she received a gentle rebuke for not being like Mary, who sat quietly—and listened.7

3. Am I willing to be corrected? How well do I receive honest criticism when others speak the truth in love?9

4. How well do I submit to those who are over me? A m I willing to involve myself in an evangelistic program that, though arranged by my elected representatives, holds no kudos for me? A m I willing to follow even when I do not fully understand the reasons why, or even when I do not naturally enjoy what I am being asked to do?

5. Can I share my life with others in open and honest fellowship?10

6. Am I learning humility? Can I rejoice with those who rejoice and be genuinely glad when others are blessed in some way or other?11

We began with a quiz. We ended with a quiz.

In which did you score higher? ■

* Unless otherwise specified, quotations are from the New International Version.

2 See Phil. 3:4-6.
3 Phil. 3:7-9, NIV.
4 Rom. 7:18-8:1, NLT.
7 Matt. 18:15.
8 1 Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:17.
9 Phil. 2:3.
10 Phil. 2:3.
11 Phil. 2:3.

NEARLY MISSED IT. WITH A COUPLE colleagues I recently went to China to see what effect broadcasts by Adventist World Radio (AWR) were having there. But I nearly missed a most important insight.

Adventist World Radio broadcasts 123 hours per week into China from our flagship station on the island of Guam in the western Pacific. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) did a survey in 1997 that told us that AWR has 1.13 million listeners in mainland China.

Programs are produced every day in our studio in Asia and broadcast from Guam, and all over this most populous nation on earth people are listening to the story of Jesus proclaimed in the setting of the messages of the three angels of Revelation 14.

We met with about a hundred of our listeners in a half dozen cities. Here's what they told us:

Hearing and Sharing

“Mrs. Chen,” a gracious, gray-haired woman, is the leader of one of the house churches we visited. She is retired from a large Chinese university, where she taught English. This radiant Christian told us her story: “One day I tuned in to AWR by accident, and there I learned about Jesus. Pastor Wong’s voice [one of the regular speakers in Mandarin] became so precious to me that I sometimes still hold my radio to my chest like I would hug an angel. It has become my constant companion. I feel that I have had a seminary course in the Bible by listening to AWR.”

“A few days later,” she told me, “I went out into the countryside to visit some friends and tell them about my newfound joy in Jesus. They asked me to preach in their Sunday church. I was very frightened, but I gave my testimony. Then I preached to them about the Sabbath, as I had learned it on AWR. About 40 members of that church accepted the Sabbath that day and have been keeping it ever since.”

Underlying the dramatic stories we heard was a simple yet startling fact.
the other end of the car could hear better. Even though I can’t read, I just remember the programs I hear on AWR, and sometimes I preach for two hours. The people seem to like it because they stay and listen.

“Once I was arrested for preaching on the street. A police car was sent to get me, and on the way to the police station I began witnessing to the officer who was driving the car. After a while I said, ‘Do you know why I have been arrested?’ He asked why, I replied, ‘God arranged it so I could tell you about Jesus.’”

About her husband from whom she is still estranged, she says, “God has taken away all of my hatred. Now I pray only for his conversion.”

In an area in south central China, we met with a group of believers who told us another delightful story. Many of them came to church by “trishaw,” a small three-wheeled motorized vehicle that holds three or four people. Some of the members have been witnessing to one of the trishaw drivers in particular. They told us, “He isn’t a believer yet, but now he will carry only Adventists on the Sabbath.”

While in China we learned that religious freedom has improved somewhat and that the economy is growing fast in this beautiful country.

A Common Bond

But here’s what I almost missed: in China there are almost none of those elements that we normally count on to hold the church together. There are no Adventist schools, no hospitals, no conferences or unions, no camp meetings, no Adventist Review. Only unconnected groups of believers scattered across that huge land. But the one influence that helps hold them together is AWR. They told us that from one end of the country to the other.

One house church elder told us he became a Christian by listening to the broadcasts, then looked for a year trying to find a Voice of Hope church to join (Voice of Hope is what we call our programs). He was finally led to one of our house churches and is now a baptized member and an elder in that house church. He said, “I looked for a year to find a Sabbathkeeping church, but AWR held me till I found it.”

AWR’s broadcasts serve as the glue that gives cohesion and consistency to our people’s understanding of Scripture. Day after day they all hear the same biblical teaching. In meeting with our division leaders in Seoul, South Korea, later, some of them told us that the broadcasts of AWR “serve more than any other single factor to tie our members into the world church family.”

We came away from our China visit with renewed gratitude to God for providing His end-time church with the marvelous tool of radio, by which the gospel story can be told. We also gained a profound appreciation for the imperative of AWR’s ministry in this great nation. We developed a deep respect for members and leaders there, many of whom put their faith on the line every day.

At a worship service on our last Sabbath in China we stood with the congregation as they sang (in Chinese, of course), “Take my life and let it be, consecrated, Lord, to Thee.” You’ll remember some of the words: “Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of Thy love” and “Take my love; my Lord, I pour at Thy feet its treasure store.” Many wept as they sang, and so did we, as we realized how real was the implication of their song. These are our brothers and sisters, and many of them know firsthand what it means to make a commitment to Christ that could cost them everything.

“Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country” (Prov. 25:25, RSV).

Donald Jacobsen is president of Adventist World Radio.
God had a defender when His holy day was threatened.

BY SVETOZAR VITOROVICH as told to ANN VITOROVICH

One Friday afternoon in early April 1946 my twin brother, Voya, and I emerged from the barn where we had strewn fresh straw after feeding and watering the sheep and cows. Outside, a brisk breeze embraced us, cooling and refreshing our sweating faces. Together we walked toward the house while the sun sent shadows sprawling across the meadow and under the trees in the orchard.
through the open gate, which separated the orchard from the backyard, we spied Father and his eldest brother, Deka, talking across the wooden fence that divided our two properties. With the enthusiasm of 13-year-olds who had completed their last chore before a carefree weekend, we raced toward them.

“We’re all done!” Our words spoken simultaneously flew ahead of us, colliding with a wall of gloom and falling limply at our feet. The men stood silent and unresponsive, their brows furrowed, their eyes looking sad and lusterless, as though their whole world had gone dark.

Voya and I exchanged glances.

Curtain Call

After four years of Nazi occupation, World War II had ended just the year before. The Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia replaced the kingdom of Yugoslavia. The victorious Communist-based Partisans won the internal struggle for control and began establishing a new order. Our “liberators” were liberating landowners of their property, dividing and distributing it among others, and nationalizing private businesses for the state.

They confiscated 60 hectares (150 acres) of our 100-hectare (250-acre) family estate in Glusci, Serbia, leaving only 10 hectares (25 acres) for each of the families of my father and his three brothers. They appropriated our grain mill and brick factory, putting young patriots in charge—strangers who were unappreciative of the foresight, sweat, and sacrifice invested by the former owners, who now worked as hired hands.

Suddenly, like the thunder of an approaching storm, a distant rumbling shattered the silence, invading our consciousness and rattling the wall of gloom that surrounded us. Our attention was jerked down the road, where four huge Russian-built farm tractors, each pulling a four-bladed plow, were rolling in our direction. As the tractors drew slowly closer, the rumbling and clacking crescendoed and the ground began to shake under our feet. To our amazement, when the lead tractor reached our house, it turned through the open gate that bordered the road and drove to the back of our house. One by one the other tractors followed and parked side by side under the large greening apple trees behind our house. A startled mother hen, pecking and scratching the ground beneath the trees, scattered with her brood in a flurry of clucking and peeping.

I frowned toward Voya, who frowned back. Father and Deka threw “What now?” glances at each other and shifted their stances, but did not move from their places at the fence. The four of us looked on like observers in a theater—aaloof, detached.

The back door of the house creaked as Mother opened it and peered out. Her blue eyes widened as she moved out to the top of the four concrete steps, wiping her hands on her embroidered linen apron, she surveyed the scene and cast a questioning glance at Father. He returned it with raised eyebrows and a silent shrug.

Confrontation

Just then a dark-green car whirred through the front gateway, horn honking, diesel engine clacking. It drove past us, made a U-turn, and stopped abruptly near the four tractors. Cars were not a common sight, and this one, a Mercedes, was even less common.

A slim, tall man in his 30s stepped out; he was buttoned into a dark-brown jacket and ribbed trousers and was wearing an officer’s military cap. It was Drago. He tossed a relaxed salute to the four young drivers, each now standing beside his tractor.

“Good day, Aunt Mara,” Drago called out to Mother when he saw her descending the stairs and walking toward him. He used the term to show respect and affection, since his family and ours were good friends.

Mother stood before him, her kerchief-framed round face turned upward, her blue eyes full of questions. “Drago, my son, why are these tractors here?”

The directness of this simple peasant woman seemed to take Drago by surprise. He was a war hero, a decorated Partisan, who for four years had fought the Nazis, slept under haystacks, and hid in barns. Now he was president of our village collective farm and not accustomed to being questioned. An idealist, he was committed to the Communist idea of equality in spite of his wealthy roots.

“Well, Aunt Mara,” he replied, clearing his throat, “we plan to plow the land in front of your house tomorrow morning, and we want to leave the tractors here overnight.”

Mother’s bushy eyebrows lowered like storm clouds over a clear blue sky. By nature Mother was not one to invite confrontation, but recent years had developed in her the courage to stand up for her convictions. She spoke sweetly, choosing her words with care. “Drago, our family has lived on this land for three generations. We didn’t sell it, so in the eyes of God it still belongs to our family.”

Drago shifted to one foot, looking uncomfortable.

Mother continued, “Tomorrow is the seventh day, Drago, God’s holy day, a day of rest. God forbids us to work on that day. Don’t plow this land
on the Sabbath. If you must plow it, wait until Monday.”

Drago tilted his cap up to scratch his dark-haired head. “Aunt Mara,” he finally said with a grin, “God and religion—that’s an old idea.” He gestured widely. “The new idea is that there is no God.” His hands fell to his sides.

“No, my son. Just the opposite. To seek after God is the new idea,” Mother replied quickly. “As long as 3,000 years ago there were some who believed your idea, and the Bible gave them a certain name.”

Drago raised an eyebrow and cast a glimpse over his shoulder at the young drivers. He turned to Mother with a puzzled look. “The Bible has a name for us?”

“Yes, Drago. You can read it yourself.”

“Well, I . . .” he began, but before he could finish, Mother was climbing the steps to the house. She returned with a worn-looking old black book. Slips of paper peeked out from between its dog-eared pages.

“There are two verses here written by the same man, a king.” She continued as if there had been no interruption, leafing through the well-marked pages to Psalm 14:1, 2. Drago immediately removed his cap and put it under his arm, betraying the reverence of the old ways he had not yet forgotten. His companions did the same.

“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God,’” Mother read (NIV). Having finished, she offered the open Bible to Drago. His face turned crimson.

“I, I’ve never held a Bible before.” He stared uncertainly at Mother and then at the book. Finally he took it carefully in his hands and read the verse where Mother’s finger pointed: “The fool says . . .” His voice faded, but his lips continued to move. He returned the book to Mother. Then he laughed a staccato, uncertain laugh. He threw a glance toward his men and shouted, “Say, fellows, this book calls us fools.” They laughed too.

Contagious Convictions

When he turned back to Mother his face appeared serious. “That’s fine, Aunt Mara, that you honor God and your Sabbath. My father is also a religious man. In the Serbian Eastern Orthodox Church the priest gives him exemption to gather hay and harvest crops on Sunday if bad weather threatens. Now, you’re not telling me the Bible specifically forbids plowing on your holy day, are you?” He cocked his head to the side with an air of confidence.

“Drago, let me read what God says about the Sabbath.” She flipped the pages to Exodus 20:8-11: “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy’” (NIV).

Drago frowned. “So where am I in that picture?”

“You are the alien within my gates,” Mother replied. “Men established Sunday, but God blessed the seventh day and made it sacred, and He forbids plowing on that day.” She turned to Exodus 34:21 and read aloud: “Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during the plowing season and harvest you must rest’” (NIV).

Drago looked incredulous. He shook his head. This undefeated warrior had been defeated by a gentle little woman and a worn old book. “Let me see that.” He bent toward Mother and squinted at the book. When he had read the words himself, his voice sounded earnest as he asked, “Tell me, Aunt Mara, what would happen if I disregarded everything you read to me?” He stroked his chin thoughtfully.

“I don’t know, Drago. That’s God’s business. But I can read you what He says.” Flipping through the pages to
Ezekiel 3:19, she read: “But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself” (NIV). She let him see the words again, then closed the book.

Drago drew back and glared at the book in Mother’s hands. He spoke softly, as if to himself: “First this book calls us fools; then it threatens us with death.” For a long minute he remained silent. Then with a sudden smile and a quick nod, he placed his cap back on his head, spun around, and strode briskly toward his car, shouting to his men as he walked. “Drive those tractors to my yard. Tomorrow we’ll plow another field.”

Quickly the four men jumped onto their tractors and revved the engines. When Drago reached his car, he turned back for one last look at Mother. She was still standing where he had left her, still clasping her Bible in her hands. There was a bewildered expression on his face as he climbed into his car and started up the noisy motor. It was still there when he drove past us, nodded a greeting, and sped through the gate and down the road.

One by one the four tractors followed, clacking and rumbling slowly off our property, each driver acknowledging us with a nod of the head or a wave as he drove past.

Through the hazy cloud of dust that swirled upward in their wake, enveloping us like an unlikely blessing, we watched until the last tractor disappeared. As the cloud dispersed, we looked at each other. Father and Deka had come alive. Light sparkled in their eyes, happy smiles gladdened all our faces, and praises rang out from Mother’s lips: “Thank You, Jesus!”

Confident in Him

Though Father and Deka did not subscribe to Mother’s Sabbathkeeping faith, they were inspired by her courage. In a time when the struggle was no longer to survive the war but to endure the peace, here was a small victory. Deka turned toward his house. Father put his arm around Mother’s shoulder, and they walked home. Voya and I followed close behind.

The wind stiffened and rustled the tops of the leafing trees. In the west the sinking sun, having tinted and gilded the evening sky with a final burst of ruby rays, ushered in the Sabbath.

On Monday Drago and the tractors returned to plow our land, but never in all the years our family lived there did anyone come to work “our” land on my mother’s Sabbath.
Regular Missionary Service

The following persons have left their homes to work in other countries or to return to missionary service. Please remember them in your prayers.

Charles Donald Arnett, returning to serve as director of the dental clinic at Community Hospital of SDA, Trinidad, West Indies, and Janet Edna Arnett left New York September 3, 1998.

Ronald Dean Bissell, returning to serve as theology professor, A dventist International Institute of A dvanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines, and A nna A lethia Bissell left Seattle A ugust 10, 1998.


Perry Dean Burtch, returning to serve as dentist, Yaounde Dental Clinic, Yaounde, Cameroon, and M onita Jean Burtch left Los A ngeles May 8, 1998.

Richard Eugene Clark, returning to serve as associate professor, A dventist U niversity of the Philippines, M anila, Philippines, Janice Lee Clark, and three children left M inneapolis May 27, 1998.

Mario A lfredo Collins, returning to serve as editor in chief, Inter-A merican Division Publishing M industry, M ontomorlos, M exico, and L uisa D omato Collins left M CA llen, Texas, September 21, 1998.

William Quinton Dickerson, returning to serve as principal, Bangkok Overseas C hurch School, Bangkok, Thailand, and E lizabeth G race Dickerson left Seattle July 29, 1998.


Stephen R oscoe G uppitt, returning to serve as education director, Southern A sia-Pacific Division, Silang, Cavite, Philippines, and M argaret D avis G uppitt left Los Angeles July 12, 1998.

J ohan R . Haakmat, returning to serve as assistant professor of religion, W est Indies College, Jamaica, W est Indies, and O lga Veronica H aakmat left Y ami M aiyug 9, 1998.

M yron A llen Iseminger, returning to serve as treasurer, Egypt Field, H eliopolis, Egypt, C andace Iseminger, and one child left Portland, Oregon, A ugust 12, 1998.


K wangrae A ndrew K im, to serve as dentist, Guam S DA Clinic, Tamuning, Guam, Sunhee C onnie K im, and one child, of Colton, California, left Los Angeles June 20, 1998.

R ichard William Ludders, returning to serve as director of Saipan A dventist Clinic, Saipan, H eidi Ludders, and two children left D etroit July 1, 1998.

R . M artin M oores, returning to serve as treasurer, N orthern A sia-Pacific Division, K oyang C ity, Korea, left H alifax, N nova Scotia, A ugust 22, 1998.

Arne N ielsen, returning to serve as principal, M axwell A dventist A cademy, Nairobi, Kenya, East A frica, C olleen N ielsen, and three children left A llanta A ugust 9, 1998.


Paul Pichot, returning to serve as vice rector, A dventist U niversity, Zurcher C ampus, A ntananarivo, M adagascar, Rupel in Pichot, and three children left Washington, D.C., August 18, 1998.

Byron Lewis Reynolds, returning to serve as physical therapist, M ission H ealth Promotion C enter, S araburi, Tha iland, C arol Reynolds, and three sons left San Francisco June 14, 1998.


G erald Eugene Rogers, returning to serve as construction supervisor, Cambodia A ttached District, P hnom Penh, Cambodia, and Sharon Kay Rogers left San Francisco June 28, 1998.

Du ane C lifton R ollins, returning to serve as treasurer, Guam-M icronesia M ission, A gana Heights, Guam, and M arylin Lavo nne R ollins left Houston A ugust 3, 1998.

Kenneth D ale Rose, returning to serve as physician, P enang A dventist H ospital, P alau P inang, M alaysia, L ana D ee R ose, and three children left Los Angeles October 6, 1998.

Donald Dean Sandquist, returning to serve as dentist, St. Kitts Dental Clinic, B assetterre, St. Kitts, W est Indies, and Esther J ane Sandquist left Seattle September 8, 1998.

Robert Lynn Stacey, returning to serve as dentist, Palau S DA Clinic, Tamuning, Guam, and D erik M ichael S tacey left Los Angeles J uly 29, 1998.


Marilyn L avonne R ogers, returning to serve as associate professor of religion, W est Indies College, J amaica, W est Indies, and Anne Alethea Bissell, returning to serve as assistant principal, A dventist International Institute of A dvanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines, and L eanne Bissell left Silang, Cavite, Philippines, and A nthony Markus Stahl, returning to serve as finance director, A DRA/ M anigua, M anagua, and K arina V irgith Stahl left Houston June 14, 1998.
It was class night at my daughter’s high school graduation. When Laura’s turn came to talk about her goals she announced to the world (and to the humiliation of the family) that her ambition was to live in a trailer on the beach and spend her days surfing.

Then in the middle of her freshman year at college (and perhaps to make it more palatable to the family) she decided to do this as a student missionary (SM) in the middle of the Pacific Ocean on the island of Majuro. Quite frankly, we hoped she knew what she was doing.

After quizzing the students we knew who had served as missionaries in this part of the world we learned that each student missionary’s experience is quite different. This means that the list of essentials differs as well. Because Laura was working at summer camp, it fell my lot to buy these things. One of the must-have items was shampoo to prevent skin rot and lice. This was embarrassing, as the salespeople naturally concluded that I must have the problems the shampoo was to correct.

One former student missionary suggested that a breadmaker was a perfect thing to take.

“What?” I said. “That’s ridiculous. Even I don’t own a breadmaker.”

But others agreed. We debated and we prayed. God provided a lightweight used breadmaker that Laura used almost every day. I learned that God cares about even small things that affect our comfort when He has a job for us to do.

Four young men told us that dehydrated fruit sent by one mother was a lifesaver. Without a large variety of fruit available other than bananas and coconuts, the two buckets of dried apricots she sent lasted only two weeks. Would she please send more? She was sorry to inform him that they had eaten the entire crop from eight trees.

With this forewarning we began to dehydrate every type of fruit that was available. We dried strawberries, cantaloupe, kiwis, peaches, pears, apricots, blueberries, cranberries, tomatoes, and yes, you can dehydrate watermelon.

We talked to Laura a few days after she arrived in Majuro. The roommate situation was good. It was fun having an apartment. The other SMs were great. Things were going well. Could we send materials to help individualized learning and to brighten up the classroom, and small toys to pass out at branch Sabbath school? We used every inch of space in the boxes we sent.

Thanksgiving approached. The messages were beginning to sound desperate. Teaching was hard; discipline was hard. The SMs we talked to assured us this was pretty normal for this time of year, that the Christmas trip to Guam would help.

We prayed that all of them would make it until Christmas. We learned that we may not be able to be there when our young people need us, but God can always be there.

We had been encouraged by the parents of former SMs to visit if at all possible. Our family agonized over the money for a trip and eventually decided that I should go alone. I learned that these SMs are the finest young people you can imagine. I was able to observe Laura in the classroom, and I was very proud. She was doing a good job despite all the misgivings she had about her teaching.

What else did I learn from my daughter’s time as an SM? I learned once again that God cares more about my daughter than I do. I learned that He will keep His promise to be with her even if she herself may not realize that He is there. I learned that He is already making something beautiful of the life that He has given this child of mine. I learned that I can let my daughter go out for a year to surf on the South Pacific or anywhere else God wants her to go and He will be there. She may come back with teeth that really need cleaning, a messed-up complexion, four-inch surf scars, and a protein deficiency, but nonetheless she will be stronger and better than she was before He gave her that task.

Kathleen Taylor is a mother who writes from Angwin, California.