A Day in the Life of a Single Dad

Love Lessons at Grasshopper Junction

Robert Folkenberg: Your Tithe Dollar

eXcite98: Redefining a Generation
On the Home Front
Of all the new writing talent showing up in the Review, I most enjoy Leslie Kay’s On the Home Front articles. Her writing is so down-to-earth, yet expressed in such clear, humorous terms. Moms and housewives relate to her experiences very well, I expect. But the best part is when she switches to a spiritual parallel so smoothly that it catches me by surprise. Keep up the good work!
—Helen Self
Morganton, North Carolina

Tobacco Tax Initiatives
Regarding Wendi Shull’s “Seventh-day Adventists Support Tobacco Tax Initiatives” (Apr. NAD Edition). It seems to me that the Adventist Church should have no part in any effort, no matter how good or noble it might be or seem, to legislate “an urgent moral imperative.” The church’s policy on tobacco has long been known. What happens when the other 21 churches decide Sunday worship is the next “urgent moral imperative”?
—Joel Orcutt
Oklahoma

The Local Church (cont.)
The local church has had serious problems for a few years, and I am grateful to Alex Bryan (“The Local Church Is the Church,” Mar. 19 Cutting Edge Edition) for his honest exposition from the “pulpit side.” I would like to enhance his contribution by sharing some perspectives from the “pew side.”

1. It seems odd that we have found it easier to make new members than to keep the old ones. We are very willing to spend money in evangelism, but not willing to spend time and money addressing the needs of those already in.
2. In some of the smaller congregations pastors feel pressured to preach exclusively from Daniel and Revelation. A pastor told me that he could not afford to rock the boat, so he chose to preach “nonapplicable theology.”
3. When our children return from academies and colleges, we want them to forget everything they learned that does not agree with our outdated traditions. We make them very uncomfortable to the point of leaving the church, and then we blame our institutions for not teaching them right. Many people in the “pew side” are concerned, but feel powerless to help. Our system of government does not allow a member or two to express their concerns without being branded “troublemakers.” The administrators need to visit the local congregations and invite the members to dialogue.

—Dan Lopez
Moses Lake, Washington

In This Month’s Cutting Edge Edition . . .
In “Always . . . and Forever,” former pop superstars David and Marian Lewis tell why they left lucrative careers with Atlantic Starr and Oil of Olay, respectively, and rejoined the church of their youth.
In “Standing Firm,” collegian Andra Armstrong tells how young Adventists cope when their parents leave the church.
In “On the Level,” Ohio inventor Steve Divnick compares our witnessing methods to multilevel marketing.

Plus columnists Chris Blake (Leaving the Comfort Zone) and Allan and Deirdre Martin (The X-Change).

If you don’t receive the weekly Adventist Review, you don’t receive the Cutting Edge Edition. To subscribe, call 1-800-456-3991.
Division has developed a new delivery system for resources for the local church. The Church Resources Consortium brings together the departments and an array of new technology to supply information, materials, training, and consultant services directly to local pastors and lay leaders. This includes:

1. An 800 number you can call to help find just the right resources among the thousands available. It is called Plus Line, and it is available at 1-800-SDA-PLUS.

2. An automated fax-back system with fact sheets on nearly 100 topics that local churches without computers can tap into 24 hours a day. It is called Fax Plus, and it is available at 1-800-474-4732.

3. A direct-access order desk where any local leader can get what they need among all of the supplies and materials available without traveling to a store or worrying about what is in stock. It is called AdventSource, and you can dial 1-800-328-0525 and ask for a catalog.

4. Direct access to live training events via satellite and teleconferencing. ACN provides two or more “cross training” events each month and includes all departments and ministry areas. To get a schedule, dial 1-800-ACN-1119. For those without a satellite dish, videocassettes are available.

5. Direct access to the most experienced specialists at more than 20 specialized resource centers, each of which provides an 800 number “help desk” and a full range of information and cutting-edge research on what works and what doesn’t in areas such as youth ministry, reclaiming former members, small groups, evangelism, and personal outreach. Each has its own 800 number—too many to list here.

6. An online computer form and websites where the same information and services can be accessed by those who have computers.

7. More and more resource materials with high levels of personalization and local adaptability—things such as job descriptions on floppy disk and clip art on CD-ROM that can be modified to each church’s context and needs.

This new resource system is serving thousands of local church leaders each week. It is the church’s primary strategy to address the needs raised in Bryan’s excellent article.

—Monte Sahlin
Assistant to the President
North American Division

A Second Opinion
Dr. Roderick Yip’s letter “Diagnosis Needed” (Mar. 1998 NAD Edition) got me thinking:

We’ve diagnosed the problem so long that the patient was dead on arrival. I’m sorry, but reading Testimonies for the Church and the Conflict of the Ages series is not going to help one soul find heaven unless the words of God’s messenger are put into practice. Look around. We speak with the words of angels, but our youth are dropping away like flies. Our youth are crying to be understood, and the best we can do is tell them, “We’ll pray for you.”

We don’t need more surveys; we don’t need more reading; we don’t need more instruction in how to do it just right. We need people willing to let the Holy Spirit act through them. We need people who are understanding and caring, and who show it by their actions. We need people who are not afraid to stand up and be counted, and are willing to take the flak that inevitably will darken their skies.

Do you see great things happening in North America? The answer is an unqualified no. Why? Because people are talking the same talk now that my grandparents did 50 years ago. They’re still reading how to do it in manuals and praying for power to open the way. What they don’t see is that the way is there—all they have to do is step out in faith and do it.

—Robert Oster
Nine Mile Falls, Washington
The Noise We Make

Every day I receive information in my mailbox or hear reports on radio or television about ordinary people involved in one cause or another—whether it be the environment, gun control, hunger and poverty, cancer, AIDS, women’s rights, whatever. I don’t belong to any.

Nor have I ever participated in a street demonstration for any cause. When hundreds, including the state governor, turned up recently in the Maryland capital of Annapolis in counterprotest to a march by the Ku Klux Klan, I was not there. When thousands joined Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) in parades and marches across the U.S., I was not there. And when tens of thousands in towns and cities in the U.S. and Canada took to the streets in favor of or against abortion, I stayed home.

Nor was I there as students protested in the sixties against the war in Vietnam; or as Martin Luther King, Jr., led his Poor People’s March on Washington in 1968; or as Louis Farrakhan gathered his troops on the Washington Mall for the Million Man March two years ago. And when the Promise Keepers came to town one Sabbath last October, I went to church.

I don’t know about you, but I think about that. And I wonder what it means.

People get “beat up” at demonstrations sometimes; they can come away with blood on the face; can even be thrown into jail. Am I a coward? Am I afraid to take risks for a good cause? Demonstrators are passionate people. Do I feel strong enough on anything to stand up and be counted?

In my own defense, I might note that in many cases there have been good reasons for my absence. Sometimes it was just plain inconvenient—I had classes, I had to work, I was out of town. In others I became aware of the event only after the fact. In still others, Sabbath was involved.

But all that said, I sometimes have the feeling of shirking responsibility, of sitting back and letting others take the heat. And frankly, I have felt a little guilty for it.

Only a little, however—because I think (and that’s my point) that there are other ways to make a contribution, other ways to influence the status quo. And one of them has to do with the “noise” we make.

Every one of us makes a certain kind of noise. The things we fuss about around the dinner table—whether at home or dining out with friends. The things we beef about—whether in the realm of politics, religion, or the social issues of the day. The jokes we make and the persons or things that form the butt of them. All these, and much more, are noises that help to shape the atmosphere around us, that define our position on the issues.

When we learn that a plane was blown up over Lockerbie, for example, what do we talk about the following day around the table? If our conversation ignores the tragedy and focuses instead on who won the ball game the night before, then the noise we’re making is shallow, trite, unbecoming. If a government has just mowed down citizens in the public square, people ought to hear a certain kind of noise around us—a noise of outrage. When we learn about some of the garbage found on the Internet today, do we, somehow, signal our support for finding ways to silence the hatemongers among us and eliminate, if possible, the human predators in our midst that prey on innocent children?

It seems to me that even more than through demonstrations, this is how public opinion forms. It’s like an invisible force spreading imperceptibly through our own circle, our own community, and far beyond. It’s as though millions of us are dropping pebbles in the pond, setting up circles that collide and intersect into a pattern of infinite complexity, but that somehow settle down in the end into a shape for which no single one of us can take the credit.

That shape, however, would not be the same if any of us failed to throw in our pebble—whether big or small.

The waves on a thousand shores break peacefully, giving enjoyment to both adults and little children playing paddles in the sand. But every so often, pushed by a million little wind gusts, as I imagine it, they pound the coastline, and reshape it. That’s what happens too when millions of us make the same kind of noise, when we throw our little pebbles in the pond of life.
A Lonely Birthday
This Year

Anybody else out there got a birthday June 24? I do.

When I was a kid I thought it was the perfect time for a birthday: six months from Christmas Eve either way you counted it. It was a perfect time for presents. Even when one year it was a nonallergenic, polyester-fiber-filled pillow, it still broke the long drought between Christmases.

This year my birthday's going to be a little lonely. For the first time in my life, I'll be celebrating my birthday without my special birthday aunt. Hazel and I had the same birthday—except that she was 40 years older. She died this past September. She was 92.

June 24 was always a special day together. A birthday cake. A present—or, better yet, a card with money in it. One year it was a book called Greatest Religious Stories. I read the stories so many times I had them all memorized.

We had a lot in common, despite our age difference. She liked to garden, and I liked to eat. She liked to bake pies, and I thought God created blueberries for her pies.

When I was 8—and she was 48—we played games together at my birthday party. When I was 14—and she was 54 with arthritic knees—she watched the pickup baseball game at our party. When I was 19, she watched me water-ski as she rode in the boat. When I was 33, she read my children a story, and I enjoyed hearing it.

Every June 24 I woke up knowing that someone else was thinking of me. Hazel knew it was my birthday—but except that she was 40 years older. She died this past September. She was 92.

June 24 was always a special day together. A birthday cake. A present—or, better yet, a card with money in it. One year it was a book called Greatest Religious Stories. I read the stories so many times I had them all memorized.

We had a lot in common, despite our age difference. She liked to garden, and I liked to eat. She liked to bake pies, and I thought God created blueberries for her pies.

When I was 8—and she was 48—we played games together at my birthday party. When I was 14—and she was 54 with arthritic knees—she watched the pickup baseball game at our party. When I was 19, she watched me water-ski as she rode in the boat. When I was 33, she read my children a story, and I enjoyed hearing it.

Every June 24 I woke up knowing that someone else was thinking of me. Hazel knew it was my birthday, and she was wondering what fun I would have. As I grew older, our shared birthday parties became fewer, but our shared thoughts remained. We shared cards and phone calls instead of cake and the annual picture taking.

This June 24 I'll wake up and remember that this year she's not thinking of me. It will be a little lonely.

I've learned something in the years since I was 8, though. I've learned that I can wake up every morning and know that Someone is thinking of me. Not just on my birthday, but every day—all day and all night. I know that Jesus is paying attention to what's happening in my life.

"He will not fail you or forsake you," Moses told Joshua (Deut. 31:8, RSV). It was a ringing declaration of confidence after Moses had spent 40 years leading a cantankerous people around a hot and barren desert. Now, ready to lay down his life before he reached the Promised Land, he shared, in his last message to Joshua, the most important things Joshua needed to know.

- "He will not fail you." Joshua needed one thing above all others: a trust in God's plans above any human devising. A firmness never to waver from following the commands of God. God would be faithful in everything Joshua needed.

- "He will not forsake you." Joshua also needed a sense of the presence and goodness of God. Joshua needed to wake up each morning knowing that God cared about what was happening to him and to Israel.

There's another facet to the story of my birthday aunt. One year I forgot Hazel's birthday. I was grown. I lived in another town. I had my own family, a busy job. I forgot.

I didn't remember our birthday until a week or so later. I was embarrassed. I bought one of those funny, belated birthday cards, signed it, and sent it to her. No gift. No picture. I didn't even have the nerve to call.

A month or so later, while on vacation, we stopped at Hazel's place. There was my belated birthday card sitting on the mantel over the fireplace in the living room. She picked it off the mantel and said she thought it was the funniest card she had received that year.

No condemnation for forgetting our birthday. No wondering if a picture had gotten lost. No questions about what had happened. Only love.

I learned about Jesus that day. There are mornings I forget about Him too. Send Him a quick, belated prayer at lunch. There are days, even weeks, when I seem to live my life, not our life together. But there's never any condemnation. Just love.

Kermit Netteburg is assistant to the president for communication in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.
GIVE & TAKE

ADVENTIST QUOTES

"The only ability God cannot give us is availability."
—Dale Thomas, head deacon, in a Sabbath school discussion on spiritual gifts, Lady Lake, Florida

“Half of what you eat keeps you alive, and the other half keeps us doctors alive.”
—the late Clarence E. Nelson, M.D., when giving temperance talks in churches

“All these blueprints, specifications, and plans are—without faith and the power of the Holy Spirit—as useless as a carton of contents labeled ‘Batteries needed but not included.’”
—Karl H. Bahr, church building chair, Middletown Valley church, Middletown, Maryland

WE NEED YOU

Send Give & Take submissions to . . .
Give & Take, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904;
Fax: 301-680-6638; E-mail: 7432.2564@CompuServe.com. Please include phone number. Submissions will not be returned.

ADVENTIST LIFE

Working as an R.N. at Florida Hospital, I sometimes forget that patients come with questions and misconceptions about the church organization affiliated with the hospital. This was brought to mind as I was assisting a cardiologist with a cardioversion. The patient’s heart had developed an irregular rhythm, so we administered IV sedation, then delivered a mild electrical shock.

“He’s converted!” the doctor exclaimed, as the heart went back to its normal rhythm.

The man opened his eyes, lifted his head off the pillow, and said, “Does that mean I’m a Seventh-day Adventist now?”

Talk about a conversion with a jolt!
—Susan Danforth Jones, Deltona, Florida

Intrigued with the creativity of our meatless meals, our 10-year-old grandson intently watched us prepare taco filling in the electric fryer using canned vegetarian chili (a shortcut to burger and beans). Benny silently observed the process of mashing the beans to texture them as “refried” and sprinkling on the taco seasoning.

Little had we realized the impression of our reincarnating abilities. A few weeks later we served for dessert our latest frozen fascination: chocolate tacos. Benny eyed me cautiously as he found the courage to ask, “Are these vegetarian?”
—Roger C. Lankheet, Fennville, Michigan

Before I tuck my sons into bed for the night, we always have a Bible story and prayer time together. One night I decided to tell the story about Noah’s ark. We got to the part about the animals entering the ark when I asked my son Jeremy, “What animals got on the ark?”

“Camels, horses, and cows,” he replied.

Then I asked, “And what else did Noah take with him on the ark?”

After thinking about it for a while, Jeremy replied, “A fishing pole!”
—Lynn Golden, North Platte, Nebraska

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE: In the April NAD Edition we challenged Adventists who don’t subscribe to the weekly Review to put us to the test by subscribing to and then reading the magazine for 15 minutes every Friday night for several months. That same week we received this photo from the Cooper family in Redlands, California. Pictured left to right are Ross (with dog Perky), Todd, and Tabitha. “The Adventist Review is well read in our home,” writes Tabitha. “This was not posed—it just happened.” To subscribe to the weekly Review, call 1-800-456-3991. Ask for the editors’ discount and the free book. You’ll have to get your own sofa. Photo by Richard Cooper.
A Day in the Life of a Single
Twenty-four hours a day he’s doing a job ideally shared by two.

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY SHERRIE PLATT

INE MONTHS AFTER Mitchell was born, Jim Harris’s wife, Sharon, died of ovarian cancer. Jim was left to raise his son and 2-year-old daughter, Noël, alone.

Mitchell has now celebrated his first birthday and Noël her third. Jim is a computer consultant who works at their home in Collierville, Tennessee. Following are some vignettes of their life together, offered here to illustrate some of the challenges encountered by a single parent, as well as to dispel some of the stereotypes about what it means to live in a single-parent family.

UP AND AT ’EM: “The kids usually get up around 7:30 in the morning,” says Jim. “Mitchell wakes up in a good mood most of the time. I can hear him making noises in his bedroom. He then begins hitting the side of his crib. When he starts running his fingernails down the wall, I know that it’s time to get him up.”

QUALITY TIME: While waiting for Noël to wake up, father and son play with a toy that makes animal sounds. “Mitchell will sometimes moo like the cow,” says Jim proudly.
KITCHEN DUTY: Noël helps her dad mix the pancake batter while Mitchell munches on some Cheerios and banana slices in his high chair nearby.

ONE FOR ME, ONE FOR YOU: In between bites of breakfast for Mitchell, Dad gets to eat his breakfast.

ALL ABOARD: After they clean up the kitchen, it's time for a quick stroll around the neighborhood. “I’m the choo-choo and you’re the caboose,” announces Noël. After several minutes of running ahead of the stroller making choo-choo noises, she decides she wants to be the caboose. Later she becomes the choo-choo again. “She’s going to be ready for a nap,” Jim observes.

OFF TO THE OFFICE: After breakfast Jim and Mitchell make a quick trip to check e-mail in Dad’s upstairs office.

KIDS FIRST: Noël and Mitchell enjoy their lunch before Dad even gets a taste of his. Sleep begins to overtake Mitchell as he takes the last few bites.
DADDY’S LITTLE HELPER: Noël stomps raked leaves into the trash container (with a little help from Dad). “We spend most of our days playing, sleeping, and eating,” says Jim. Sometimes they “work.”

QUALITY TIME TOO: Around 8:00 in the evening Jim gets Noël and Mitchell ready for bed. They look at pictures before Mitchell is tucked into bed.

EVENING DRESS: Now it’s Noël’s turn to put on her pajamas. She and Dad have their own storytime as Jim reads from The Children’s Bible. Tonight Noël chooses the stories “The Children,” “The Coin,” and “Walking on Water.”

BACK TO THE OFFICE: “I can begin working after I put the kids down for a nap,” says Jim. “I have about two hours to make phone calls and get some computer work done. It also gives me time to read the paper and straighten up the house.”
Ministering to Today’s Families

Back in the 1800s Auguste Comte, the “father” of sociology, expressed concern that the social disorganization caused by the French Revolution would destroy the family as a social institution.

In the early twentieth century, social scientists were even more fatalistic than Comte. John Watson, a behavioral psychologist, predicted, in his work Psychological Care of Infant and Child, in 1928 that marriage would no longer exist by 1977. It was Watson’s belief that the automobile would cause the destruction of the family. Mobile and capricious young people with money to spend, in his opinion, take the family to its demise.

A year later, in 1929, while the Great Depression was expanding, the President’s Research Committee on Social Trends reported to President Herbert Hoover on the state of the American society, pointing to the rising divorce rate as a sign of strain in the family.

Although all of these predictions have not come true in the technical sense, families have endured remarkable change over the centuries, and particularly in the past two decades. Most troubling is the fact that many of these changes have pushed this sacred institution farther away from God’s ideal. What used to be called deviant is now simply described as variant.

As a church we must either meet the family’s new and complex needs or risk becoming irrelevant. We must begin where we are with what we have. But we must never surrender the ideal: what our families can become through the power of God. The fact that brokenness exists within our families means that Jesus is needed as much today as back in New Testament Capernaum of Galilee. And like then, Jesus is still available today.

“Our work for Christ is to begin with the family, in the home,” wrote Ellen White. “There is no missionary field more important than this” (The Adventist Home, p. 35).

There is no doubt that stronger and emotionally healthier families is what we should be about. Whether they are traditional or one of the many contemporary configurations of today’s family, our commitment must be to minister with love and compassion.

After all, God’s grace is limitless, and available to all who want to live for Him.

By Willie Oliver, director of family ministries for the North American Division.

I WANNA DRINK: Noël gets one more drink before Dad tucks her into bed for the night. “Now is when my day begins,” admits Jim. “Noël is good about giving me instructions. She’ll tell me to go to my office, turn on the light, and work. But she wants me to leave the door open so she can see the light.”

Sherrie Platt is communication director of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Collegedale, Tennessee.
Surrounded? Thank God!
The Urban Paradox

BY BRUCE CAMPBELL MOYER

FEW ASPECTS OF MODERN CULTURE HAVE proved more perplexing to conservative Christians, including Seventh-day Adventists, than the rapid urbanization of North America. Many Christians find cities distasteful and simply ignore them. Some view cities as hotbeds of unspeakable crimes and poverty, places to be avoided by “proper” people. Still others devoutly believe that true Christian spirituality is extremely difficult, if not impossible, in the concrete jungles.

Only a minority seem to understand the challenge and the opportunity that cities pose for winning the world to Christ. Even the briefest survey of the Bible, however, reveals numerous instances of God’s deep concern for urban areas. Cities are a central concern of the Bible: at least 119 cities are mentioned in its pages.

In the story of Sodom (Gen.18, 19; Eze. 16:48-58) God notices the behavior of cities, and Abraham’s prayer is given as a godly model for urban concern. The relationship between the presence of the godly and preservation of the city is clearly established: 10 righteous people would have saved Sodom from destruction. We also note that escape theology is insufficient for those who would flee the city. The primary evil is not environmental, but personal. While fleeing the city does feature as part of the story of Sodom, it is clearly the perversity of the inhabitants rather than the city itself that invites God’s wrath.

In the account of Jonah’s evangelistic mission to Nineveh we read of God’s struggle to plant a message and messenger in this city: again we observe God’s concern for the city as a place of vital human activity. Given Nineveh’s record of conquest and destruction, Jonah is a missionary story that teaches grace for the chief of sinful urban systems. God accepted the repentance of Nineveh even when the prophet acting in His name could not.

In the book of Daniel the city of Babylon is the chief counterpoint of Jerusalem. Its soldiers cut off the Temple, destroy the city of David, end the monarchy, and nearly obliterate the messianic people. Yet a creative God sends good Jewish boys into the intellectual and political center of that city to function within its structures (if not its lifestyle), mastering the urban pagan culture while still maintaining their own faith.

In Babylon, Daniel received visions of angelic influence on government officials. As part of God’s designed chastisement of His rebellious people, Babylon—the destroying city—actually served as a place of nurture and spiritual renewal. And it was to His people in Babylon that God sent word: “Seek the welfare of the city . . . and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jer. 29:7, RSV).

Is God truly serious when He asks “Should not I pity . . . that great city?” (Jonah 4:11, RSV)? What might God’s searching question mean for North American Seventh-day Adventists as we enter the twenty-first century?

The Growth of the Cities

Even for those of us who live in or near cities, the growth statistics are nearly overwhelming: Shanghai—15 million people; São Paulo—17 million; Delhi—10 million; Cairo—10 million; Tokyo-Yokohama—27 million people. The growth of cities is a twentieth-century phenomenon.

Researchers report that there are 2,500 metropolises in the world. There are hundreds of world-class cities with populations of 1-4 million; more than 40 “supercities” of 4-10 million each; and 24 “supergiants” of more than 10 million. Estimates for the year 2050 predict the number of “supergiants” will rise to as many as 80.

A century ago, all of the world’s five largest cities were strongholds of Christian life, discipleship, and urban
evangelism: London, New York, Paris, Berlin, and Chicago. This represented a major change from 200 years earlier, when the five largest cities in the world were non-Christian and even anti-Christian.

In this century, however, the number of non-Christian megacities has mushroomed from five in the year 1900 to 125 today. Non-Christian and anti-Christian “supercities” have exploded from zero in 1900 to 20 today, and will reach 180 by 2050, according to researchers.

Serious Christians must also be alarmed by the steep decline of Christian populations in these cities. In 1800, 31 percent of all urban dwellers worldwide were Christians. By 1900, that percentage had risen to 69. Ninety-eight years later, however, the proportion of Christians has dropped to 45 percent, and in 50 years the rate will be little better than that of 1800.

Adventist presence in the world’s largest cities is painfully small. Currently in the cities of Bombay (15 million) and New Delhi (10 million) there is one Seventh-day Adventist church each. In Cairo (10 million) there are two small and struggling Adventist churches. In North America there are numerous megacities with far too few Adventist congregations to achieve even minimally effective evangelization.

What have been the causes of the flight of Christians to suburbia and beyond? Many economically advantaged people choose to leave cities for reasons of safety and comfort. In suburbia they believe they will be insulated from the perceived high urban crime rates. Many are clearly more comfortable living in culturally homogeneous neighborhoods. Their desire for peace and quiet for themselves may seem laudable, but the
absence of their stabilizing influence in urban areas is painfully apparent.

Many North American cities have become “throwaway” neighborhoods, societies lacking positive role models, unsafe, unclean, and unloving—and all that caused, at least in part, by the studied neglect of those who are free to choose which environment they will live in.

Committed Christians will want to address some timely questions about urban realities as we enter the twenty-first century:

1. Where will the majority of people be found?
2. How might this majority of people best be addressed?
3. What sort of church is best able to adequately communicate the gospel to these people?
4. How can we best make faith possible for these people?

Finding answers to these questions will require serious, mission-minded Christians to alter their mission strategy from a rural-only priority to one that includes a clear focus on urban need. Work in the towns and villages must continue, but our mission strategy must accompany the thousands who are migrating to the cities and are becoming lost in the materialistic and secular complexity of urbanism.

This suggests that Adventists must stop reading their Bibles through “rural-only” lenses. While drawing on the themes of rural and agricultural life, the Bible is a very urban book, written by urban people: prophets, priests, politicians, military leaders, bureaucrats, and businessmen. Most of the authors represented in the Bible were city dwellers. Their writings deal with cities in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Assyria, Samaria, Judea, and the Roman Empire.

The Bible tells us that Jesus traveled from city to city, and that the apostle Paul centered his work in the cities of the Mediterranean basin. The book of Revelation, in which Seventh-day Adventists find their identity as a remnant people, was written to seven urban churches and describes the culmination of the plan of redemption in the city of New Jerusalem. As several writers have noted, the Bible may begin in a garden, but it ends in a city.

---

Ready to Plant a Church?

By Russell Burrill

Has your congregation ever considered planting a church?

Planting a new church can be an exciting and rewarding venture for your congregation. New churches are simply more effective in reaching lost people than older established churches.

If any of these conditions exist in your congregation, you may want to begin praying and planning with others about planting a new church in your region:

- The church is at 80 percent of capacity most Sabbaths.
- The parking lot is 80 percent full.
- The Sabbath school facilities are 80 percent utilized.

Studies have consistently shown that churches stop growing when they reach 80 percent in any of these areas. If your church is at the 80 percent factor and is harvest-centered, it has three choices: build a bigger church, add an additional worship service, or better yet, plant a new church.

- There are significant people groups in your area not currently being reached by existing Adventist churches. These could be ethnic or racial groups, persons living in a geographical area, or a subgroup that the present church isn’t reaching.
- Your church hasn’t grown in attendance during the past five years. Starting a new congregation may well cause the “mother” church to begin growing again.
- God has placed a burden on you or someone in your congregation to plant a new church. Fan the flame that the Holy Spirit has lit. Pray with your leader group, attend training events, and step out with the faith God has given you.

Russell Burrill is director of the North American Division Institute of Evangelism.
The Nehemiah Principle

A successful Adventist urban strategy might follow a plan first articulated in the book of Nehemiah: “The leaders settled in Jerusalem, and the rest of the people drew lots to choose one family out of every ten to go and live in the... city of Jerusalem, while the rest were to live in the other cities and towns” (Neh. 11:1, TEV). Think of what might be accomplished if 10 percent of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America were to move to New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Toronto, not simply as casual urban dwellers, but as deliberate, intentional Christians committed to these cities and their welfare and committed to making friends and networking for Jesus through their homes, schools, offices, clubs, and businesses.

Ellen White first called for this intentional working of major urban areas more than a century ago, but sadly, few have heeded her counsel.

Let me suggest a few likely indicators of successful urban Adventist congregations. In addition to an intentional focus on their city environments and populations, they will:

■ Understand, accept, and have compassion for lost, unchurched people.

■ Obey the Great Commission to preach, make disciples, and baptize. These activities will be the unifying center of their church program. The main business of each congregation will be to make faith possible for unreached people. They will understand that evangelization is not merely one ministry among many in the church, but the overarching purpose for which the church was called into existence;

■ Adapt to the language, music, and style of the urban culture. They will not import and superimpose a rural style of worship and outreach, but will go out of their way to be understood easily and to make faith possible for as many people as possible (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

The Pauline Principle

For more than a decade the Seventh-day Adventist Church has operated a program of “tentmaking” missions, seeking to place committed church members in countries and cities that are closed to conventional missionaries. These are professionals and entrepreneurs who use their professions, vocations, or businesses as platforms for mission, living as deliberate, intentional Christians in non-Christian environments for the purpose of discipling new Christians and planting new churches. They are called “tentmakers” after the apostle Paul, who supported his mission program by making tents.

The process is really quite simple. Tentmakers move into an area and make friends—genuine friends—enjoying the time spent together, moving deeper and deeper into the lives of those they meet. In the process, they share what Jesus has done for them. Tentmakers don’t theologize: they simply witness and then, as appropriate, invite others to consider seriously how commitment to Jesus might improve the quality of their lives. Urban tentmaker missionaries are generally surrounded, but never alone and never overwhelmed.

This same strategy could be specifically and deliberately adapted in the cities of North America and Europe, empowering all of God’s people to be loving and lovable witnesses, transforming the marketplace and the urban systems with the presence of Jesus.

The Chosin Principle

During the Korean War, Gen. “Chesty” Puller, of the United States Marine Corps, had moved his troops, the 1st Marine Division, to the frozen Chosin Reservoir on the border of China. While waiting for orders to continue, he and his troops were surrounded and outnumbered in a quick night-time maneuver by the army of the People’s Republic of China.

Gen. Puller’s message to Gen. Douglas MacArthur was clear and decisive. “We are surrounded! The enemy is in front of us, behind us, and on all sides! We have them where we want them. They can’t get away from us this time.”

As his troops were moving out, General Puller was asked if he was retreating. “[Expletive deleted] no!” Puller replied. “We’re merely advancing in the opposite direction.”

The Seventh-day Adventist Church today finds itself in a similar situation. While we weren’t watching, the cities of the world exploded in size and now comprise 50 percent of the global population. We are surrounded! The cities are in front of us, behind us, and on all sides! We have them where we want them. They can’t get away from us this time.

We have only to move in the name and strength of Jesus.

Bruce Campbell Moyer is director of the Center for Global Urban-Secular Mission at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.
BY ROBERT S. FOLKENBERG

FROM ITS EARLIEST DAYS THE ADVENTIST Church has believed in tithing, or what we have called “systematic benevolence.” Besides being the major source of income, tithing is an act of worship, an outward, visible manifestation of one’s faith. To take a sizable portion of your income and donate it freely (as opposed to being forced to do so by law, as with taxes) requires commitment, and each act of returning tithe can only strengthen that commitment. Make no mistake: those who benefit the most from tithing are those who do it.

Of course, administrators have a sacred responsibility to administer that tithe according to policies approved by the church after a careful study of God’s Word and the counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy. “The church is very careful,” says a recent report by the North American Division, “to account separately for its tithe income and the use of tithe at every level of the church operation.”

Nevertheless, questions frequently arise over the use of tithe money. A few congregations, in fact, have broken away from the denomination because they’ve wanted to retain the tithe for use within their local church. Some members assert that tithe money isn’t being used wisely, that it feeds a top-heavy wasteful bureaucracy at the expense of the local church.

How much of the tithe actually goes into administration? The answer will probably surprise you.

I want to share with you the facts as to what happens to every tithe dollar you place in the collection plate. The numbers that follow are actual and are based on the North American Division. Even though Ellen White makes clear that we each are responsible to return a faithful tithe and not be anxious as to the use made of it, I want you to be informed and to have confidence in the leadership of our church.

The quick breakdown of your tithe dollar is as follows:
- 11.35 cents—forwarded to the General Conference
- 10.40 cents—forwarded to the North American Division
- 10.00 cents—forwarded to the unions in North America
- 68.25 cents—forwarded to the local conference
- 100.00 cents total

Does this mean that one third or more of the tithe goes into the bureaucracy? Not at all. Each of the entities above puts most of the funds it receives into specific ministries or sends them back to the local conferences, retaining only a small percentage for their own use.

Let’s take a closer look at what happens at each level:

**General Conference (11.35 Cents)**
- 3.03 cents pay for services offered to the world church from the General Conference complex itself—hardly a lion’s share, considering that the General Conference office serves a 10-million-member constituency in more than 200 countries—with 100 fewer employees than a few years ago. This pays everything from the electric bill to editing the Adventist Review, accrediting primary and secondary schools and colleges, and a myriad of other services often taken for granted.
- 2.62 cents go to help operate General Conference institutions, such as Andrews University, Loma Linda University, Oakwood College, the Ellen White Estate, the auditing service, and various publishing programs around the world.
- 3.64 cents help mission activities in the world divisions (primarily four of them). Though all

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administration</strong></td>
<td>7.67 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Services and Subsidies</strong></td>
<td>8.82 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, missions, publications, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Ministries</strong></td>
<td>83.51 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church/Conference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
divisions are increasingly self-supporting, some countries' economies are at a poverty level. These funds are vital to sustain basic operations.

- 2.06 cents, added to Sabbath school mission offerings, pay the expenses of more than 600 Adventist missionaries working in dozens of countries all over the world.

**North American Division (10.40 Cents)**
- 1.14 cents go to operate the North American Division—its office and administrative costs.
- 9.26 cents go back to the conferences in North America, in proportion to their tithe, to help with education (2.35 cents), evangelism (1.50 cents), regional conferences (1.15 cents), special assistance funds (0.75 cents), financially weak conferences (0.57 cents), tuition for seminary students (0.47 cents), and other miscellaneous items.

**Unions in the North American Division (10.00 Cents)**

What follows is an average—actual use varies from union to union.

- 3.50 cents are retained by the average union for administration.
- 0.50 cents covers the cost of the union paper.
- 6.00 cents go back to local conferences, the union college(s), and in some instances, data management services provided for conferences and some congregations.

**The Local Conference (68.25 Cents)**
The use of these funds varies widely, but essentially it covers pastoral employment expenses, appropriations for primary and secondary schools in the conference, retirement benefit expenses (10.25 cents), conference office operations, and youth camp subsidies. Most conferences spend little on administration.

So how much of the tithe actually is spent directly by the conference or indirectly through the various ministries of the church in nurturing the spiritual needs of the member? To the 68.25 cents add the 9.26 cents returned by the division and the 6.00 cents (average) from the union, and the total is 83.51 cents out of every dollar. North American members also benefit in the remaining 16.49 cents. How? Through reduced educational costs (2.39 cents) and through our world mission program (2.06 cents), demonstrating we’re committed to the global task our Lord entrusted to His followers.

Now just how much of the tithe goes into running our church organization becomes apparent. Beyond the local conference level only 7.67 cents goes into administration (union 3.50 cents, division 1.14 cents, and General Conference 3.03 cents). Nothing like the bloated bureaucracy some imagine, and a small price to pay for the unifying effort and worldwide scope of our end-time movement.

I thank the Lord our members are committed enough to this church to spend 7.67 cents to underwrite the cost of all levels of our constituent-based church organizations. And remember, this 7.67 cents isn’t funding bureaucrats sitting behind desks all day, but people who are developing Sabbath school lessons and materials for the church, defending Adventists who face employment problems over the Sabbath, giving direction to our youth and Pathfinder programs, and so on.

The facts are: (1) the vast majority of every tithe dollar remains in the local conference to fulfill the spiritual mission of the church; and (2) the majority of the funds received by the General Conference, the division, and the unions are also spent for programs that directly benefit members.

Neither the Bible nor Ellen White’s counsels tell us how to determine the percentages for use of the tithe. Thus I’m not asserting that these percentages are sacrosanct. They have, in fact, been adjusted periodically. We need to note, however, that each time they have been adjusted, the world mission program has suffered. You can see from the numbers above that there is very little left to be reduced if we are to maintain a world mission program and a united global church. In fact, a careful analysis of challenging financial trends inevitably leads us to confront spiritual and not management issues.

I can understand how some may misconstrue what happens to tithe. The flow of church finances is somewhat complicated, including, as it does, considerable percentages being returned by both the division and the unions to nurture and grow the local church.

In order to provide more information on church finance to the world membership, the General Conference is working to place a graphic global analysis of tithe and its use on the Internet (followed thereafter by an analysis of non-tithe funds). We will inform church members as soon as this information is available.

Regardless of how much we understand or fail to understand about church finances, our faithful stewardship must rest on acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus, a conviction of the prophetic role of this end-time movement, and prudent personal financial management. I don’t suggest that every cent has always been used wisely, or that mistakes haven’t been made. Only the Lord is infallible.

But one thing is sure: church administrators and treasurers are committed to being the best stewards possible of the Lord’s resources. Your tithe dollar is handled carefully and responsibly, with very little going into administration.

---

Robert S. Folkemberg is president of the General Conference.
First Master Guide Convention Meets in Los Angeles

BY TIM LALE, GUIDE EDITOR

The first-ever North American Division (NAD) convention for Master Guides was recently held at the Biltmore hotel in Los Angeles. The delegates came from 38 U.S. states, four Canadian provinces, Bermuda, and 27 other countries. The convention provided training Pathfinder leaders for current and future Master Guides and also served as a celebration of 70 years of the Master Guide program.

The attendees chose from 24 workshops in six tracks (including one Spanish track) on topics ranging from Master Guide requirements and outdoor skills to church heritage and youth evangelism. Each workshop filled a certification requirement. “I got a lot out of the service training here,” said Ricardo Baratta, who coordinates 16 Pathfinder Clubs in New Mexico. “There are so many things I can pass along to church directors.”

At the Friday evening Investiture ceremony, Terry Dodge, Michigan Conference Pathfinder director, invested 22 attendees who completed Master Guide requirements.

Besides training, the Master Guides enjoyed fellowship and gained inspiration. Selene Stewart, a leader of the 117-member Brooklyn Faith Knights Pathfinder Club in New York City, said, “I like learning about leadership, learning how to motivate the kids. It’s fun to be with all these other Master Guides and share ideas.” Bob Wong, Southern California Conference Pathfinder director, called it “recharging the batteries.”

At the awards banquet Willie Oliver, North American Division Pathfinder director and coordinator of the convention, took the Master Guides back to their historical roots through appearances by L. A. Skinner, the first world Pathfinder director; Henry Bergh, a retired Central California Conference youth director who wrote the Pathfinder song in 1949; and John Hancock, a retired world Pathfinder and youth director who formed the first club named Pathfinders in 1946 and designed the distinctive Pathfinder emblem.

Oliver also paid tribute to Norm Middag, former NAD Pathfinder director, whose vision for Master Guide training led him to begin organizing the convention before his retirement. “I wanted a convention for three reasons,” Middag said. “One, because we’ve never had one; two, to raise the visibility of the importance of Master Guides; and three, to bring up the visibility of the Pathfinder Leadership Award and the Pathfinder Instructors’ Award.” The awards are the two levels of training above Master Guide certification.

Oliver presented a Distinguished Service Award to Arnold and Dixie Plata for their work on a Pathfinder museum and for many years of service to Pathfinder Clubs. He also conferred Outstanding Service Awards on several conference coordinators and club directors.

“This was a service-oriented convention,” said Baraka Muganda, General Conference youth director. “I saw a whole atmosphere of being service-driven. This is very important to youth ministry.

“In my sermon [on Sabbath morning] I gave the plea that we must be like Moses, ready to challenge the pharaohs of today and say, ‘We will go with our children.’ The young people need to see us loving them, sacrificing for them. We must move beyond the obvious—the programs, the insignias. We must see salvation working in young people. Salvation and service must be the bottom line of every program we do.”

The Master Guide program represents the highest level of youth training in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It prepares individuals for leadership in Adventurer and Pathfinder Clubs as well as in senior youth ministry and other church offices. Notes convention director Oliver, “People who enjoy working with young people are drawn to this program because it provides them with leadership tools and training. Since churches across the division are always in need of trained ministry leaders, Master Guides are ready to fill important roles.”
Church Confronts Violent Threats in Macedonia

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Macedonia continues to face threats of violence from a congregation that separated from the main church body.

The breakaway group has occupied the main Adventist church in the capital city of Skopje since 1992, reports George Trajkovski, Macedonian Mission president.

“After a long court process, the Macedonian court reached a verdict in favor of the official Adventist Church as proper owner of the church building,” says Trajkovski.

However, the separated group has resorted to threats of violence and, in some cases, murder to Adventist Church pastors and members if they enter the church property. The date set for an amicable handover of the keys for the church and mission headquarters has now passed, and the court will now have to determine when and how the unlawful occupancy of the property will be ended.

The church will be requesting full protection and the opportunity to worship safely, without fear of harassment or worse, according to a statement from Reinder Bruinsma, secretary for the Adventist Church’s Trans-European Division, whose territory includes Macedonia.

“Church administrators at the local and union levels and the Trans-European Division have been reluctant to publicize this issue too much,” says Bruinsma. “Efforts have been ongoing to reach a reconciliation with the small breakaway group. These efforts have been totally unsuccessful.

“Though regretting such a move, the Adventist Church does not deny the ex-members the right to form their own religious community; but after bending over backwards to heal the rift, we had to take legal action.

“We could not sit still, since they had hijacked not only the name of the church, its administrative office, and the main church building in Macedonia. The verdict reached by the appellate court is a step in the right direction,” Bruinsma says. “We hope the Macedonian authorities will show that their country is one of law and order and will provide adequate protection to our members.”

The Adventist Church began operating in Macedonia in 1880.—Adventist News Network.

ACS Receives Grant for National Tutoring Program

The Corporation for National Community Service recently awarded Adventist Community Services (ACS) a $255,000 AmeriCorps grant to initiate 100 community-based volunteer tutoring projects for underprivileged children.
The Cloud of Unknowing

BY BILL KNOTT, AN ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE ADVENTIST REVIEW.

The announcement by India’s new Hindu nationalist government that it conducted five nuclear tests in two days has rattled more than a stretch of desert near the Pakistani border.

World leaders were quick to denounce India’s swaggering entrance into the nuclear club, fearing that archrival Pakistan will quickly feel the need to demonstrate its own nuclear capability. Many governments recalled ambassadors for consultation and registered formal protests. Others, like the United States, also promised painful economic sanctions to penalize India’s assertiveness.

But beyond the rhetoric and the threats, India’s belligerent blasts have brought the world’s “nuclear spring” to a hasty end. Following the historic superpower agreements of the late 1980s that limited or eliminated classes of nuclear weapons, and the subsequent demise of the Soviet Union, many North Americans concluded that there was little left to fear from the once-dreaded mushroom cloud. For nearly a decade the news has been almost continuously positive: warheads have been retargeted; missiles have been destroyed; smiles are all around. Some have even dared to prophesy an age in which potential combatants merely threaten each other’s economies, or at most, destroy the means of production. Bloodless war has been a myth we found attractive.

Now all such optimistic scenarios must be set aside. Believers everywhere will be praying that the potent mix of religion, nationalism, and nuclear capacity now seen in several South Asian countries can be neutralized. But Christians also understand that the fundamental forces driving people groups and entire nations to dominate or destroy others will not ultimately yield to either threats or diplomacy.

Peacemaking, to be effective, must include more than governments and nations. Only as individuals and groups make peace with the Prince of Peace can we have a reasonable expectation that the world will actually become a less threatening place.

The grant funds 17 organizers for one year who meet with program coordinators, ACS center directors, and youth leaders, to help them start local tutoring sites. The organizers will provide training for volunteer tutors and coaching for local volunteer leaders, and develop collaborative relationships with public schools and community agencies, says Beth Schaefer, ACS public information officer.

The grant is renewable for an additional two years and could total as much as $765,000. The church’s tutoring initiative is being sponsored by ACS and the Youth Service Network. One hundred candidates have already expressed interest in the program.

Broadcaster James Dobson Visits General Conference

James Dobson, host of the Focus on the Family, visited the General Conference with his wife, Shirley, for an early breakfast with GC president Robert S. Folkenberg and other church leaders on May 8. Dobson also spoke briefly with GC employees at the morning worship service.

Dobson, who has recently been in the media spotlight, spoke of his deep respect and admiration for the Adventist Church. “You are doing a wonderful work around the world,” Dobson told his audience. “Many Adventist guests have appeared on Focus on the Family throughout the years, and I have many friends within the Adventist Church.”

The worship service also featured the music of Christian Edition, directed by Calvin Knipschild. Based in Glendale, California, the 25-voice Adventist men’s choir was the featured artist for the National Day of Prayer ceremonies at the United States Capitol on May 7, a program coordinated by Shirley Dobson.
A Statement of Conviction: Why Tobacco Control Legislation Deserves Your Support

From the Editor and the Associate Editors

Only rarely do the editors of the Adventist Review encourage readers to respond to legislative initiatives. We are convinced, however, that the moral significance of the tobacco control legislation now moving through the United States Congress deserves action.

Seventh-day Adventists have a long and consistent history of highlighting the biblical message about the relationship of physical health and spiritual well-being. For more than 130 years, church members have pledged to abstain from the use of tobacco, alcohol, and nonmedical drugs, as well as to make positive lifestyle choices in diet and exercise that illustrate the belief that our bodies are the temples of God (1 Cor. 3:16, 17).

Adventists also fund and operate both smoking-cessation and antismoking health initiatives: millions around the world have quit smoking through the church’s Five-Day Plan and Breathe Free programs, and hundreds of thousands of children and young adults have been influenced by the church’s active health promotion effort to never take up the injurious habit.

According to government research, virtually all new users of tobacco products are under the minimum age to purchase such products, making the tobacco industry’s documented efforts to lure children and teens to smoke especially nefarious. Illegal underage smoking, supported by multibillion-dollar advertising campaigns, traps tens of thousands of American youth every year in a desperate habit that will send many to an early grave. Teen smoking is now at a nine-year high: one third of American teens now smoke. Four hundred thirty-four thousand people die each year from tobacco-related illness only if those companies waive certain constitutional free-speech (advertising) rights.

Several public health advocacy groups and some legislators have criticized the bill for not being tough enough on the tobacco companies and for not committing the government to a truly anti-tobacco stance. Unless otherwise amended, the bill does not restrict or eliminate most federal price support programs for tobacco farmers, thereby continuing government support for an industry that is clearly acting against the public health interest.

Even with these inadequacies, and the possibility that further amendments may alter some aspects of the bill, the “National Tobacco Policy and Youth Smoking Reduction Act” deserves the support of Seventh-day Adventists for its groundbreaking efforts to combat underage smoking.

“I’m asking Adventists to act to help save the lives of hundreds of thousands of their fellow Americans,” says General Conference president Robert S. Folkenberg. “This legislation represents our best opportunity to protect American youth from the life-destroying tobacco habit.”

Brief, clear messages of support for the “National Tobacco Policy and Youth Smoking Reduction Act” can be phoned, faxed, or e-mailed to your U.S. representative and senators. (Information is usually available in the government listings [blue pages] of your phone book.) You may even wish to encourage your representatives to introduce or support amendments that further commit the U.S. government to an anti-tobacco position.

Key congressional leaders may also be contacted at the following addresses: Senator John McCain, primary sponsor (fax 202-224-2862 or e-mail senatormccain@mccain.senate.gov); Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (fax 202-224-2262 or e-mail senatorlott@lott.senate.gov); and Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (fax 202-225-4656 or e-mail georgia6@hr.house.gov).
eXcite98: Redefining a Generation

A lack of time and money has Adventist young adults dreaming even bigger about their August conference—and leaning even harder on their Lord.

BY ANGELA ROSICH

FEW MONTHS AGO SHASTA EMERY, 21, and Jennifer Tyner, 28, sat talking about what the upcoming summer had in store. The conversation soon turned from wedding plans and NET '98 to the needs of their generation.

It was all the soil the seed needed.

During the weekend of August 6-9, 1998, Emery, Tyner, and whoever else shows will gather in Riverside, California, to redefine their personal relationships with God and commit their generation to God's service.

The weekend will be packed with workshops, Bible study, prayer groups, music, and mission and service opportunities. “We want this to be our generation doing something for ourselves, for God, and for our church,” says Emery, who is inviting keynote speakers, worship leaders, and discussion facilitators age 35 and under. Emery says Xers will challenge themselves to be authentic and committed, to let down their guards, to cast off all pretenses, and to really come to know God.

“This conference will be about our generation making Adventism our religion, not just our parents’ religion or the religion we’ve been taught in school,” says Emery. “We will focus on personal relationships with Jesus. We want to boost the pride and excitement in our church and its mission.” All Xers are invited, including those who have left the church either physically or mentally.

eXcite98 isn’t just about Generation X, but about building the church and uniting its many generations. Organizers invite every church across the nation not only to send someone to the conference, but to ask someone under the age of 35 to preach from their pulpit on August 8. Gen Xers want to participate actively in the church and feel that they are needed, say organizers. They want the church to realize their passion, their sincerity, and most important, the spiritual gifts God has given them.

“eXcite98 may have a catchy title,” says Tyner, “but we promise that it isn’t another revival prompting only an emotional high. eXcite98 is about our generation reinterpreting the meaning of the scarlet letter attached to our birth dates.

**WHO:** All young adults from 20 to 35 years old who have been, are, or want to be affiliated with the Adventist Church.

**WHAT:** A conference of learning through powerful messages and workshops by our generation’s keynote speakers, sharing in small break-out groups, enjoying Adventist music and entertainment, meeting other Adventists across the country, contributing to mission opportunities, and best of all, focusing on the face of Christ through awesome worships.

**WHEN:** August 6-9, 1998. Registration all day Thursday, August 6; program begins at 6:00 p.m.

**WHERE:** Riverside, California. La Sierra University has offered its facilities and campus for this event.

**WHY:** To redefine Gen X by making Christ the focus of our lives.

**HOW TO REGISTER:** Go to http:www.excite98.net or call Shasta Emery at (909) 785-2344.
We don’t want to be known as slackers; we want to be known as the generation for Christ.”

The conference has also found support outside of Generation X. “I’m honored and delighted to add a personal and pastoral word of affirmation regarding the vision the leaders of eXcite98 are sharing with the nation and, by extension, the world,” says Andrews University pastor and NET ’98 speaker Dwight K. Nelson. “I really do believe that it is a Spirit-ignited vision—a vision with the high calling of Jesus to radical discipleship in this urgent hour of human history. I am deeply convicted that here at last is a generation perfectly positioned by God for the repeat of Pentecost. Gen Xers are the most economically disenfranchised generation in our history. Moreover, socially and professionally they are the most transient. In other words, they are a generation with the potential for instant mobilization—which is precisely the description of the followers of Jesus in Acts 1 and 2.”

It is this “instant mobilization,” says Emery, that has kept the conference from being bogged down by committees, written reports, budget analysis, or agenda-driven meetings. “We’ve relied on volunteers and their God-given spiritual gifts,” says Emery. “If we can’t afford four-color brochures, fine. We are committed to doing our best, and God is blessing the efforts of all the volunteers. I guess you might call us grass-roots, but with the tremendous power of God, those roots are healthy!”

“We’ve let the church know we are alive and kicking,” says Tyner. “We recognize a need, and we will not rest until we have fulfilled it.”

Angela Rosich writes from Riverside, California.

TEAM BUILDING: Jennifer Tyner and Shasta Emery invite the Adventist Church to help bring their peers (20 to 35) together in commitment to Christ at eXcite98.

HUDDLE: Prayer has become the focus of every volunteer. “We have seen God work in the lives of so many who are already involved,” says Emery. “We need the church’s prayer and support.”

BIG PLANS: Manassah Nwaige (left) is involved in developing mission and service opportunities for the eXcite98 conference, while Craig Chaya is one of many volunteers coordinating plans for the August 8 Sabbath, which calls for someone age 35 or under preaching from every Adventist pulpit. Australia has already come on board, says Emery.
Accept No Substitutes

BY KAREN LINDENSMITH

CUBIC ZIRCONIUM. THEY SAY it looks like the real thing. A young man working in a jewelry store apparently believed it. When people took their jewelry to the store to be repaired, he replaced all the diamonds with cubic zirconium. He then sold the diamonds for cash and accumulated quite a sum of money until the inevitable happened.

He was caught.

Can you imagine how the owners of those diamonds felt? Something just wasn’t the same about their jewels. They had them examined—cubic zirconium. They had been robbed. It was not hard to guess who the culprit was, and now he would be punished.

Satan is in the business of replacing the diamond of God’s gift of Himself with the cubic zirconium of this world. Power. Pleasure. Possessions. Cubic zirconium.

Jesus Christ—and all that He represents—is the true diamond. “The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls,” Jesus said. “When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it” (Matt. 13:45, 46)."

When my husband and I lived in Japan, we visited Pearl Island. It was here that Mikimoto irked his first oyster by inserting a grain of sand under its shell to produce the world’s first cultured pearl. After years of research he perfected the method of producing pearls by inserting a small mother-of-pearl bead. This made a pearl created entirely of the oyster’s secretions, called nacre. Cultured pearls closely approximate natural pearls except that they deteriorate more readily. If the covering of nacre is too thin, they will reveal their mother-of-pearl core after prolonged contact with the human body.

We found it interesting to go through the pearl museum and see how the pearls were made. We also saw pearls of all colors and sizes—white, black, blue, gray, cream, lavender, rose, and mauve. Rose was the most valued color.

Before Mikimoto developed the first cultured pearl, the French invented the first imitation pearl. Back in the seventeenth century they found that by dipping an alabaster bead in a pearl solution of fish scale essence and lacquer they could produce something that looked like a pearl.

But before the cultured pearl and before the imitation pearl was the natural pearl—the pearl of which Jesus spoke. Locating a natural pearl is no easy task. Of these pearls, only a few will be round and have the luster of true value. And of these, only a very few will be large enough to command a great price.

When the merchant found the priceless jewel, what did he do? He sold everything he had to get it. Now if that had been a cultured pearl or, worse yet, an imitation pearl
or—perish the thought—a plastic bead, the man would have been a fool. But he knew what he was doing. He was a pearl expert. He knew value when he saw it, so he sold everything he had to get it.

Not so the rich young ruler. The Bible tells us “he went away sad, because he had great wealth” (Mark 10:22).

Great wealth! If he had recognized value when he saw it, he would have thrown away all the cheap imitations to get the one Pearl of infinite value.

When he saw Jesus blessing the children, he knew there was something special about Him. Perhaps Jesus could bless him, too. He felt somewhat defective. Perhaps Jesus could make up for what he lacked. He sincerely believed that he kept all of God’s commandments, but something was missing.

Jesus loved him. He valued him. He wanted more than anything to share the priceless gift with him. He would reveal the man’s weakness. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (verse 21).

Doing the Unthinkable

It was too much. His wealth. His position in the Sanhedrin. Give it up? Live a life of uncertainty—poor, powerless, despised as Christ’s follower? It was too much. He went away sad. He was the wise fool.

In contrast to the wise fool is the foolish wise. Imagine a party. All the town leaders sit huddled around the table in muted conversation. Here comes Mary, uninvited, hunched over, not daring to look at the dignitaries. She weeps at Jesus’ feet. She slides a milky white vase of pure nard from under her robe. Then the unthinkable—she breaks it. The fragrance fills the room and with a wisp of the wind is gone forever. Or is it?

Mary, unlike the rich young ruler, had no great wealth. But in Christ she saw the eternal riches. She had received from Him love and forgiveness, and her gift was nothing in comparison. She held nothing back. She gave all. She risked all. In the presence of critical Pharisees she broke her vase and let its fragrance fill the air. She wept unabashedly, kissing Christ’s feet and wiping them with her hair.

Imagine it. A murmur goes around the room. Why this waste? Why this waste, indeed!

Jesus could not believe His ears. The men to whom He had devoted His entire ministry did not understand. After three and a half years under His constant tutelage—why this waste? His heart must have broken.

Mary felt the sting of embarrassment and looked hopefully into Jesus’ eyes for some sign that He understood—that He accepted her gift, not only of the nard but of her heart. The words of Jesus thrilled her soul: “She has done a beautiful thing to me. . . . I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached . . . what she has done will also be told, in memory of her” (Matt. 26:10-12). And so it is—in all four Gospels.

Paul said, “We are fools for Christ” (1 Cor. 4:10). Paul recognized value when he saw it. He threw away all the imitation pearls of the past, yes, even the cultured pearls. Everything he had valued he gave to Christ. “I consider everything a loss,” he says, “compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ” (Phil. 3:7, 8).

Paul was no fool. And despite appearances, neither are we when we give up all the cubic zirconium and plastic pearls that a materialistic culture throws at us to gain Jesus Christ—the eternal riches, the genuine article.

Karen Lindensmith writes from McClusky, North Dakota.
A young pastor preparing for ordination had to pass through a qualifying procedure in which his ordained colleagues grilled him with questions. Some of the questions were about pastoral situations. Others were meant to test his biblical knowledge. All went well until one minister asked him to explain the reference to God in Psalm 139:8: “If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.”

The ordination candidate was deeply troubled. How can God be in hell?

A look at the marginal reading would have been helpful. The Hebrew word translated “hell” is sheol, which the New International Version translates as “the depths.” David is not here consigning God to the eternal flames; he is expressing the divine attribute the theologians call “immensity.” God is not limited to spatial categories; rather He fills every part of creation with the fullness of His being.

David rejoiced in this knowledge: “You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me... Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?” (verses 5-7, NIV).

But where was this Bible teaching when I was a child? Grown-ups taught us that God could not be with us in certain places, that if we ventured onto forbidden ground, we would be exposed and unprotected. Some went so far as to say that if perchance we were to die while in some worldly establishment, we would be lost. The intent was to shield us from the dangers of the world, but the effect was to create a picture of a limited God, someone less than all-powerful.

Nothing could be further from the biblical picture. Jeremiah asked, “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord” (Jer. 23:24).

Imminence is described as an aspect of divine infinity. Infinity is the perfection by which God is free from all limitation, transcending both space and time (or space-time). Divine infinity expressed in relation to time is called eternity. Eternity is not endless time, but the absence of time. God is elevated above all temporal limits, and He possesses the whole of His existence in one indivisible present. The psalmist writes, “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Ps. 90:2).

Divine infinity expressed in relation to space is called immensity. God is not to be thought of as dispersed throughout creation, spread out everywhere. Rather the idea is that spatial laws do not apply to Him. When this truth is expressed in the positive, we say God is omnipresent; He is everywhere. As one writer puts it, “He inhabits all of reality, not just part of it... He is no more available in one place than in another.”

What a glorious truth! No wonder David rejoiced. Our God can reach us no matter where we go or who we are. We can call on Him and He will answer, even when we have turned away from Him and find ourselves in a “far country.” God will go anywhere to reach us, no matter where Satan has led us astray.

And God is no more accessible to the educated and highly placed than He is to the unlearned and lowly. “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, ... to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa. 57:15).

After a frustrating day in court representing youthful offenders, a non-Christian attorney was heard to say, “If these young people had what the young people in your church have, they would not be in trouble with the law.” Then he added, “Why do you Adventists sit up there on that hill isolated and to yourselves?”

It matters not in what city this incident occurred or to which specific church the attorney made reference. The question is for us all: if we really believe that God is available to all people and present everywhere, should not we also be available to all people and present everywhere to do His bidding?


John Nixon is senior pastor of the Oakwood College Seventh-day Adventist Church in Huntsville, Alabama.
WHAT IF . . .?

The first Adventists landed in the “unentered area” of Australia in 1885. Almost before they found their land legs they were organizing preaching events, evangelistic campaigns, visitation programs, and literature-distribution efforts. And they worked on print evangelism with the Signs of the Times.

Various media for evangelism have always fascinated Adventists, and back then the print medium was at the communication industry’s cutting edge. Some 11 years after the missionaries’ landing, the church had grown enough to seriously consider keeping in touch with believers scattered through most Australian states and New Zealand. Enter the Record. This year the Record (the South Pacific Division’s weekly church magazine) turned 100.

In looking at those early Records there’s no mistaking that the church was on the move. There’s no mistaking the growth on all fronts. There’s no mistaking that the mission of the church was to the fore.

I read a note in the second issue of the Record (Mar. 1898): “Brethren Woods and Ballingall are at present conducting a series of tent meetings at Kadina, South Australia.” Kadina? An insignificant country town of about 4,000 people. Insignificant? That’s where my home church is.

And I think, What if . . .
What if Adventists hadn’t thought globally back then?
Then again, what if Adventists don’t think globally now?
—Bruce Manners, editor, South Pacific Record and Signs of the Times

HAUNTED HOUSE BECOMES CHURCH

When Adventists in Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast, decided to conduct a series of meetings, the landlords of the community repeatedly refused to rent for that purpose. As a final insult, the Adventists were offered a “haunted” house, where they could conduct their meetings rent-free. After three mysterious deaths had occurred in the house, no one had ventured onto the property and the house had sat vacant for 27 years.

With Global Mission funds earmarked for hall rental the Adventists renovated the house and removed the overgrowth, including a tree that had grown up through the ceiling. The house was transformed into a beautiful house of God.

After the meetings 16 people were baptized. The new congregation has about 45 people worshiping with them on Sabbaths.

ONCE UNENTERED . . .

Country Seventh-day Adventist work began

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>1892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>1898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>1902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>1903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>1906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>1906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>1911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>1952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grasshopper Junction is not what it used to be—which may be just as well, since Grasshopper Junction used to be a boot-scootin’ rip-roaring bar. But every time we pass the old deserted place on our way into town, I remember. In spite of its checkered past, I remember the summers I treasured there with my father, its handsome, energetic proprietor.

A daddy’s girl from birth, I was convinced my father could do anything—shoot a pesky rattlesnake, take a splinter out of my finger before I knew it, tell the funniest stories I’d ever heard—and most of all, he was kind. I wanted to be just like him.

I thought I had my chance to do just that during my fourteenth summer, the summer of the “Tote-goat.” To my adventure-charged adolescent mind the Tote-goat was a powerful black stallion, and the porch behind the bar the last frontier to be conquered. No matter that my sleek black “horse” was a lumbering yellow motorbike—and the steep hill to the porch expressly off-limits. If Dad parked the bike at the top of the hill, I secretly wanted to do it too. I wanted him to be proud of me.

So one blistering August day, after a few thunderous laps behind the bar, I pulled into my designated parking area only to “hear” the porch thrusting out its usual brazen challenge, “Bet you can’t conquer me!” This time I made the mistake of listening.

Resolutely facing my challenger, I twisted the throttle and screamed up the steep slope. But I panicked. Unable to wrench my frozen hand from the throttle, I watched in horror as the front tire lurched onto the cement pad, rammed into the back wall of the bar, and attempted to climb to the roof, until gravity stepped in, and the bike slammed onto its side, severing a fat electrical cord and smashing a half-dozen five-gallon water bottles into splinters.

Grasshopper Junction hadn’t seen so much action all summer. With a thump the back door burst open, and out streamed the day’s catch of locals and tourists, turning my private humiliation into a painfully public one.

My father rushed to my side and turned off the engine. “Honey,” he asked anxiously, “are you all right?”

“I . . . I’m OK,” I managed to squeak. Speechless and pale, I disentangled myself from the wreckage and stood with downcast eyes, wishing death would come quickly and mercifully. Sensing my embarrassment, Dad put his arm around me and gently led me to the house, away from the terrible eyes. Once inside, he sat me down and calmly reprimanded, “Honey, what you did was wrong. I told you not to bring the bike up the hill. It’s too dangerous for you. Obviously, you realize that now.”

Miserably I whispered, “I just wanted to do what you do. I wanted you to be proud of me.”

Startled, Dad sat back and looked at the floor, straining to comprehend the convoluted workings of the adolescent mind. Then he said deliberately, “Leslie, you don’t have to do what I do to make me proud of you. I’m proud of you just as you are. And no matter what happens—no matter what you do—you’ll always be my girl, and I’ll always love you.”

That summer I didn’t intend to take (and fail) a “crash course” in motorcycle stunt riding. I also didn’t plan to take a crash course in unconditional love from a man who was not a Christian, but who had intuitively received from God a large-hearted love for his erring daughter.

Now I want to give something back to my father in appreciation for this great love he’s given me. So I pray that this man who has worked so hard to earn everything he’s ever owned will come to understand that there’s one thing he can never earn—the freely given unconditional love of his heavenly Father. I pray that he’ll hear his Father’s voice reassuring him, “My son, no matter what happens—no matter what you do—you’ll always be My child, and I’ll always love you.”

I pray that my father will accept this divine love in all its fullness and allow it to transform him from a beloved but estranged son into a believing, eternal son of the living God.

Leslie Kay writes from a mining claim in Chloride, Arizona.
Not long ago I took a crash course in Christianity. Bogie, my perpetually puppylike Dalmatian, and I completed an eight-week class in beginning dog training. And as I attempted to teach him basic good manners, I learned much more about brass-tacks faith.

Let the master lead the way.
An obedience dog’s primary position is at its master’s side. It must be ready to follow wherever its handler goes. Bogie had to learn to follow my lead, for if he didn’t stay by my side, there was a very real danger that he would interfere with another’s progress.

Sometimes obeying means staying in one place.
Learning to walk wherever I led presented my pup with few problems compared to learning to stay where he was told. At first the dogs weren’t given the opportunity to grow restless. But as their understanding of what was expected of them grew, they learned that they couldn’t constantly be on the go. They also learned that though we might leave them “on their own” for a short time, they were still expected to obey and were never out of sight.

Enthusiasm counts.
Again and again our instructor reminded us to praise our dogs and to make the work fun for them. A perfect performance that exhibits no real joy does little to promote the sport. A well-trained obedience dog reveling in its work inspires beginners like me to set our standards high.

It doesn’t matter what your parents have accomplished.
Some breeds have been bred for generations with obedience in mind (Dalmatians, I hasten to assure you, are not one of these breeds.) But even if a puppy boasts obedience trial champions on all branches of its family tree, without trust in its handler and daily practice it will never live up to its potential.

The more willing you are, the more the master can teach you.
From “Canine Good Citizen” through the varying degrees of companion and utility dogs, one constant remains: obedience work is a team effort. The more advanced the training, the more difficult the tasks.

The more noise you make, the harder it is to hear the master.
The first few nights of class were cacophonous. Some dogs bristled; some grumbled: one in particular yapped at everything in sight. Before long, however, the only noises heard were the voices of our instructor and each handler’s quiet patter of praise and reprimands.

And most important, keep your eyes on the master.
My puppy learned to focus on my face, to listen only to my commands, and to block out the conflicting commands of others.

Inspired both by the visible changes in my dog’s behavior and by what I felt were the Christian parallels, I found biblical support for my analogy. In nearly every instance that I found dogs mentioned, the beasts in question had no master, and thus no manners.

Matthew 15 is slightly different in tone, however. When testing the Canaanite woman, Jesus tells her that dogs shouldn’t eat at the children’s expense (verse 26). The woman’s answer, though (verse 27), strikes a chord with dog lovers everywhere. The attitude makes all the difference, you see. While snuffling under the table for the crumbs children always drop, the dogs aren’t thinking, Oh, brother. All we get is leftovers. No. If the dogs in the illustration are anything like mine, all they care about is All right! We get to eat with the master!

So is Bogie now an example of canine perfection? Hardly. But he is more attentive, more disciplined, and much more enjoyable to have around. I can’t claim to be anywhere near Christian perfection either. But I figure that, like my puppy, I can’t go wrong if I keep listening to my Master.

A. L. Hendrickson is a freelance writer living in Coloma, Michigan.
Fat Cats

ROSY TETZ

What’s one word you think of when you hear “North Pole”? (“Santa Claus” doesn’t count—that’s two words.) Lots of people think “cold” because it’s so very cold at the North Pole. It’s so cold up in the Arctic that even though there is no land—it’s just an ocean—polar bears can live there. Do you know how? The ocean is always frozen. The polar bears live on a giant iceberg.

They can bear the cold because they have thick fur and because they are big. Big bodies keep warm more easily than small bodies.

Seals also live in the Arctic. They have blubber to keep them warm. Under their skin is a thick layer of fat. They are so fat, they are almost round. If you are going to live in the Arctic, the best shape to have is a ball shape. That helps you keep warm.

In the Bible sometimes the word “fat” means rich or powerful or strong. That’s why you might find a promise like this: “The Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones” (Isaiah 58:11). We still have this idea today. Sometimes we call someone who is rich or powerful a “fat cat.”

Is it good to be a fat cat? It depends. If you walk with God, riches and power can do a lot of good. But if you walk with God, you can do amazing things even if you are poor and weak. The important thing to remember is that He is strong. Even if you don’t have blubber, God can keep you warm and help you share warmth with others. God can make fat thy bones.