A Woman Named Ruth

Do We Need the Church?

New Members From NET ’95 and NET ’96: Where are they now?
Serious Blooper

There is a serious mistake in Alfred McClure’s “Making Connections” (May NAD Edition). He states that his friend had correctly “made certain the white wires were attached to the positive poles and the black wires went to the negative.”

That is totally backwards. In electrical wiring, black is always positive (hot), while white is always negative (common, or ground). Were someone to hook a black wire to negative or white wire to the positive leg of a breaker panel, it would cause an immediate full short that could badly burn the person, cause an explosion in the electrical panel, or damage appliances connected to the “crossed wires.”

—Ken Wilbur
Via Fax

Taking Back the Cities

I commend you for your excellent cover story “Taking Back the Cities” (May NAD Edition).

However, there is one serious omission: the role of the LEARN (Latino Educational Advancement and Research Network) Resource Center and Foundation in training and initiating the three tutoring sites currently in operation in southern California. In fact, it was LEARN that videotaped the Flo McAfee presentation at La Sierra University, which you printed.

Since September 1997 LEARN has worked closely with Elder José Rojas following his visit and challenge to Latino Adventist youth at Camp Cedar Falls, and mobilized more than 200 Latino youth at the Spanish American Church and trained them to become tutors/mentors. Tutoring sites have been launched at the Spanish American church, Norwalk Spanish, and the Baldwin Park Bilingual church. LEARN will be reaching throughout the Pacific Union Conference to train Latino youth and professionals to “give something back to their communities.”

—Josué Rosado
Executive Secretary/Treasurer
LEARN Resource Center and Foundation

Why Obey?

In Robert S. Folkenberg’s “Why Obey? Reconciling the Commandments and the Cross” (May NAD Edition), 1 John 2:3 is used. He explained that this verse helped him put it all together. However, I am not sure that he understands what

Good News for Older Readers

“Just a note to ask you to please try to make the Review more readable for us older folks who can’t see to read as well as we used to. We still enjoy reading it, but at times it is almost impossible for us to do so,” wrote Myrtle Cossentine Aldrich, of Avon Park, Florida, in a recent letter.

Her request is typical of quite a few that come to my office every year. Some readers, now in their sunset years, have only the Review left in their life, and they plead with me to find a way to make it accessible to them.

I have wrestled with this problem for years, as did my predecessor, Kenneth H. Wood. Under his tenure the Review launched a large-print edition, but it was not financially viable and had to be discontinued.

At last—good news! The Review and Herald Publishing Association has obtained supplies of a clear magnifying sheet that you can lay over the page and that will enable you to read the print more easily.

This sheet has a $5 value, but we will send it to you free if you add a year to your current subscription or begin a subscription. To add a year or begin a subscription, call 1-800-456-3991.

And keep reading the Review!
William G. Johnsson, Editor
the verse is saying. It says: “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.”

Somehow I got the impression that Folkenberg is using this verse in reference to the Ten Commandments. It is important to realize what John explains these commands to be: “A nd this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. . . . A nd this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us” (1 John 3:23, 24, N IV).

Just because the Bible uses the word “command” or “commandment,” it is not necessarily a reference to the Ten Commandments. Many Adventists I meet seem genuinely to make this mistake. I hope they will consider the broader implications.

— Ron Corson
Boise, Idaho

Revising the Past

Refreshing indeed are the biblical clarity and moral courage of Bill Knott’s “Revising the Past” (May NAD Edition). He is right to decry any effort on humanity’s part to sanitize the Bible record and make it more palatable to modern tastes. In our time (and even in our church) many are trying to mute the Bible’s teaching on divine justice because they suppose that this subject conflicts with a “grace orientation.” True, God is gracious—infinitely so. But He does not offer grace as a cloak or license to sinners who barricade themselves against the life-transforming power of His goodness and law.

Meanwhile, the Lord is not asking us to be astute revisionists, but faithful witnesses of the truth as it is in Jesus. That truth comprises the “whole counsel of God,” not just the parts that readily appeal to us.

— Brian D. Jones, pastor
Charles Town, West Virginia

Thank you, Bill Knott, for helping to draw attention to our need to teach grace through Bible stories. Grace, the most beautiful and motivating of our beliefs, is not easy for us to define. Just when we think we have it firmly by the tail, we lose our grip on it. So I can sympathize with the other editor who revised the Bible story but failed to find grace in it. Unfortunately, Knott’s editorial raises a false dilemma that could further obscure grace.

A braham shows grace when he pleads for unknown righteous citizens of Sodom. God shows grace when He assures A braham that He will not destroy the city for 10 righteous people. The angels demonstrate grace when they go into the city and invite Lot and his family to save friends and family, and then practically carry out Lot’s at-home family. Lot does not deserve to be saved, but God saves him anyway.

Grace is not an excuse for sin; grace is not embarrassed by judgment or the final solution to sin and evil doers. Grace is God seeking to save us, even when we are not listening. When we focus our attention on grace, we can better understand the inevitability of sin’s consequences, as Bill Knott so eloquently pointed out.

— Noelene Johnsson, director
NAD Department of Children’s Ministries

Letters Policy

The Review welcomes your letters. Short, specific letters are the most effective and have the best chance at being published. Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: Reviewmag@Adventist.org CompuServe network: 74617,15.
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.
The Courage of the Remnant

Two months ago Bent Møller Nielsen, A DRA director for Burundi, was shot and killed by bandits. A longtime A DRA worker, Nielsen had chosen to stay on to help people in need, despite the dangers in that troubled country. His death reminds us of a quality in short supply today—courage.

“Courage,” said Winston Churchill, “is the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees all the others.” Indeed. Without courage we cannot take the risk that love involves, act faithfully in the face of abounding infidelity, or practice integrity when deception is easy.

The Bible tells us that God's last-day people will be men and women of courage. They stand for something: they know who they are and what they believe, and they aren’t about to let peer pressure or the power of the state sway them.

That great central prophecy of the Apocalypse, chapters 12-14, highlights these people. They are God's, bearing the name of the Lamb and the Father (Rev. 14:1); they are followers of the Lamb (verse 4). They are like the first Christians, who went to the stake or the wild beasts because they would not deny their Lord. “They overcame him [the dragon, that is, the devil] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death” (Rev. 12:11).

At the close of Revelation John describes the delights that await God's people (Rev. 21:1-7). Then he pauses to look back to those who do not make it: “the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars” (verse 8). But topping his list is “the cowardly.”

No place for the pussyfooters and the pusillanimous in the Holy City. No chicken-livered political creatures, no jellyfish here. The remnant know the sweat and toil of struggle, the discomfort of standing alone with every eye turned on you, the inner strength that comes from following convictions.

Courage comes in a variety of forms. Ellen White's well-known words address a situation similar to John's account: “The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall” (Education, p. 57).

But the mother who stays by her children through fevers, fights, and frustrations instead of walking away also displays courage. Caregivers who lovingly minister to the aged, the infirm, the twisted, and the crazy are people of courage. The courage of “little” people who do their job without acclaim or recognition keeps the wheels of the world turning.

And for those of us called to lead, whether in the church or in society, what better ideal than Teddy Roosevelt's ringing challenge? “It is not the critic who counts, nor the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of the deed could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who survives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows great enthusiasms, great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.”

If the Holy City opens only to heroes, how do you and I become profiles in courage?

The roll call of heaven's great in Hebrews 11 supplies the answer. There, among giants like Noah, Moses, and Abraham, we read about people “whose weakness was turned to strength” (verse 34). How? “Through faith” (verse 33).

A living faith transforms ordinary people into extraordinary witnesses for God. When we take hold of God, He takes hold of us and we find ourselves daring to say and to do what would have been impossible. “The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits” (Dan. 11:32, KJV).

Here is a formula for courage that no longer looks to the Pattons, MacArthurs, and Napoleons as its models. For us, the quintessential Man of courage is the gentle Jesus, who went to the death on the cross.

*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the New International Version.
The United States government launched the witness protection program in 1970 to give former outlaws the courage to testify against their organized crime bosses. It was created because potential witnesses feared that they and their families would be harmed if they testified openly.

And it's been successful. Nearly 10,000 persons have entered the program, and almost 90 percent of the trials have ended with convictions.

These witnesses know the details of criminal activities because they were on the inside. They are offered protection for life as prosecution witnesses against their former associates. They must close the door on their former lives. They and their families are given new names, new places to live, and they must never speak in public of their pasts. They are given new birth certificates, Social Security cards, passports, diplomas or degrees, driver's licenses, and professional or trade licenses.

This program's success is widely recognized as a valuable tool in the government's war against criminal conspiracies and organized crime; and not one person has been harmed who remained in the program and followed its rules.

The Justice Department maintains that this program is the first of its kind in the world. But I beg to differ. I am a part of the original witness protection program created by Jesus Christ for His witnesses.

At His departure from the earth, Jesus commissioned His disciples as witnesses for Him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and throughout the world (Acts 1:8). He had earlier informed them that they would be hated and delivered up to councils and other judicial and punitive bodies (Matt. 10:17). They did not fear, however, because He had a witness protection program.

He offered a new name. He blotted out their ugly past with His precious blood and gave them a glorious new destiny. In the Old Testament Moses and Aaron fearlessly rebuked Pharaoh in his palace because they were in God's witness protection program. Joshua slept well the night two of his servants were spying in Jericho because he trusted God's witness protection program. David, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will one day join hands with Esther, Mordecai, Elijah, and Joseph and share with us the blessings of God's witness protection program.

Peter was already knocking at the door while believers prayed for his release from prison. Paul and Silas were released from jail at midnight, part of the same witness protection program Christ has for us. Their lives proclaim, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us” (Dan. 3:17). And if He chooses to have us witness by giving up jobs or property or even our lives, His witness protection program has something that exceeds all our dreams and the imagination of our hearts.

After Ellen White's childhood injury and illness, a neighbor offered to purchase a burial robe for her (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 10). Those who didn't know of God's witness protection program thought that her death was imminent. Later, as a married adult, she became very ill. Two other women died within a few days of the same illness. She told her husband that she would soon be well and would resume her work for Christ (ibid., pp. 93, 94).

When I was a baby less than 1 year of age, the country doctor stated if I cried within the next two weeks, I would die. That was his way of announcing my imminent demise. A few years later he was dead and I was healthy.

I have seen miracle after miracle performed for me and for others in the areas of health, employment, travel, housing, finance—every aspect of life.

Thousands have placed their faith in the protective care of the U.S. Marshals Service as witnesses for the U.S. government. Today Christ wants two persons to place their trust in His protective care as witnesses for His government and against Satan. Those two are you and I. My response is yes!

Clarence E. Hodges is general vice president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.

The Witness Protection Program

Thousands have placed their faith in the care of U.S. Marshals.
ADVENTIST LIFE

My son, John, was helping a friend repair his boat when my 4-year-old grandson, David, came running down the dock and right into the lake. After his dad had fished him out and changed his clothes, David came walking gingerly out onto the dock and announced, “I’m not going to walk on water anymore!”
—Mary K. Rose, Dayton, Ohio

Our 5-year-old granddaughter, Amand, was holding the book What Jesus Said, by H.M.S. Richards, Sr. Since the book had a colorful picture of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, Amand asked me if it was the Bible. I replied that it wasn’t, but that it was a book about what Jesus said.

Just then Amand’s younger sister, Ashley, came into the room and responded, “Jesus said, ‘Don’t be afraid. I will come again, and you can sit on My lap.’”
—Emita Rich, Las Vegas, Nevada

A cradle roll finished at our small New Hampshire church, a mother of a 2-year-old was asked, “Do you have a Little Friend?”

“Oh,” she said matter-of-factly, “I have little friends, big friends, all kinds of friends!”
—Tim and Suzanne Cosgrove, West Lebanon, New Hampshire

Note to Adventist Life contributors: We enjoy anecdotes about kids and grandkids, but we have tons of them on file. Please send us some anecdotes from the world of adults.

READY AND WILLING

WHERE THE ACTION IS:
During the recent Los Angeles Marathon, Adventists at the Hollywood church, located between miles 19 and 20, supported the runners in a variety of ways. Volunteers (wearing shirts with the words “I can do all things through Christ . . .”) gave out water and oranges, praise bands sang, and a medical unit (see photo) stood by—just in case. Nearly 16,000 people ran, walked, and wheeled past the Hollywood church, pastored by Greg Hoenes.

WE NEED YOU
Send Give & Take submissions to . . . Give & Take, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904; Fax: 301-680-6638; E-mail: 74532.2564@CompuServe.com. Please include phone number. Submissions will not be returned.
When God has His way with ordinary people, extraordinary things inevitably happen.

BY DENISE DICK HERR

SOME PEOPLE THINK OF THE EVENTS AND characters in the book of Ruth as being mundane—no great military leaders, no miracles. Instead there are common, ordinary people encountering the events of life that most of us face—work, death, domestic upheaval, relocation, marriage, birth.

Indeed, the book gives us a glimpse of some rather ordinary people. Two of them are Orpah and the kinsman who had first responsibility for Ruth.

Orpah is not a bad person. After becoming a widow, she follows the advice of her mother-in-law, Naomi, and returns to her mother’s home to find another husband and a new life. She responds in a perfectly average way. Compared to Ruth, Orpah is ordinary and predictable.

The fact that the kinsman is not outstanding comes across strongly in the Hebrew, for he is called peloni almoni, which can be translated “Mr. So and So,” or perhaps “John Doe.” He is an ordinary man who wants to ensure that his children’s inheritance will not be threatened.

But in contrast to these ordinary people making predictable responses, in the story of Ruth there are others who go beyond what is expected, who respond extraordinarily to God’s love and reflect that love to others.

Captured by Love

Ruth’s story is one of the most dramatic stories in the Bible. After the deaths of her husband and brother-in-law left her, her sister-in-law, Orpah, and her mother-in-law destitute, Ruth boldly inserts herself into the story with her stirring declaration to Naomi: “Where you go I will go, . . . your people shall be my people, and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16).

We love these words, and we like to think of Ruth as a convert. However appealing this idea is, it would have been a simple thing for polytheists, such as the Moabites, to adopt another god. Ruth was leaving her people and the territory of Chemosh, her god; she was traveling to Naomi’s homeland, where her God, Yahweh, ruled. It would make sense for Ruth to worship that God in addition to her own.

However, what follows, even if she did not make an about-face conversion, shows that she was acquainted with the God of Israel, and Ruth’s response to Him makes her quite unordinary.

The use of the Hebrew word hesed, which appears several times in the book of Ruth, reveals how special Ruth is. This word can be translated “faithful magnanimity,” “loving-kindness,” “devotion,” or “benevolence”; it is very much like the Greek word agape. Scholars state: “It is more than ordinary human loyalty; it imitates the divine initiative which comes without being deserved.”

“IIt refers to acts of care and love that go beyond obligation and to a quality of generosity, of an abundance in giving. The Bible attributes this quality most particularly to God. When God reveals . . . [Himself] to Moses (Ex. 34:6, 7), God’s self-description reiterates only one word beside the name itself”—and that word is hesed.

Ruth embodies hesed. Somehow God’s loving-kindness struck a responsive chord in Ruth’s life, so that even her everyday duties were seasoned with it. When Naomi attempts to send Ruth and Orpah back to Moab, she states: “May the Lord deal kindly [hesed] with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me” (Ruth 1:8).

And Naomi is not the only person who notices Ruth’s exemplary life. Upon their return to Bethlehem, when Ruth first meets...
Boaz, she asks him why he is so kind to her. He replies: "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before" (Ruth 2:11).

Although he does not use the term, Boaz intimates that Ruth’s devotion exhibits the qualities of hesed. In fact, he draws parallels between this Moabite woman and Abraham, the founding father of Israel. His comment above sounds much like the call God made to Abraham: "Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great" (Gen. 12:1, 2).

In these texts the same ideas of land, birthplace, and heritage are emphasized. Ruth is portrayed as a founding mother, "in symmetrical correspondence to A braham the founding father of Israel. H i s comment above sounds much like the call God made to A braham: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation” (Gen. 12:1, 2).

In Deuteronomy 11:22 the Israelites are told that they should follow the Lord’s commandments, love the Lord, and cleave to Him. Joshua, as he bid farewell to Israel, admonished the people to remain true to God and to cleave to Him (Joshua 23:8). Ruth loves her mother-in-law and is committed to her, as Israel was to love God.

Phyllis Trible points out that Ruth has "disavowed the solidarity of family; she has abandoned national identity; and she has renounced religious affiliation. In the entire epic of Israel, only A braham matches this radicality, but then he had a call from God.” A nd he was a man who traveled with his household.

Trible adds, “Ruth stands alone; she possesses nothing. N o God has called her; no Deity has promised her blessing; no human being has come to her aid. She lives and chooses without a support group,” and her choice, she knows, may mean death. She steps out in faith; “consequently, not even A braham’s leap of faith surpasses this decision of Ruth’s.”

Nurtured by Loyalty
The relationship Ruth shares with her mother-in-law, Naomi, is indeed extraordinary. The Hebrew word used to speak about their friendship resonates with meaning. Ruth “cleaves” (davka) to Naomi. This is the same word used in Genesis 2 to describe the first bond between people—in that case, A dam and Eve—and it is also a term that indicates an ideal relationship to God.

In Deuteronomy 11:22 the Israelites are told that they should follow the Lord’s commandments, love the Lord, and cleave to Him. Joshua, as he bid farewell to Israel, admonished the people to remain true to God and to cleave to Him (Joshua 23:8). Ruth loves her mother-in-law and is committed to her, as Israel was to love God.

Ruth not only cleaves to Naomi and supplies food for her physical needs, but also provides emotional security for the aging widow. This is evident when Boaz notices Ruth gleaning in his fields. After she reveals that he is one of her next of kin, Boaz says to her, “Bring the mantle you are wearing and hold it out” (Ruth 3:15). He then fills her shawl with six measures of barley.

When Ruth meets Naomi, she recounts the event in these words: “These six measures of barley he gave me, for he said, ‘You must not go back empty-handed to your mother-in-law’” (verse 17).

It’s important to note what Ruth has added—a reference to Boaz’s care for Naomi. It appears that Ruth is trying to relieve Naomi’s anxiety about the future. Often in a marriage ceremony couples...
More Women Named Ruth

My parents named me Ruth after my mom’s sister, Ruthie. Having the name Ruth (Ruthie) doesn’t always have an everyday conscious impact on my life, but the subject comes up frequently—usually when I meet someone named Naomi.

When Ruth’s story comes to mind, I immediately think of the friendship between Ruth and Naomi. All I can do is aspire to be more like Ruth—a true friend, loyal and willing to give up everything for others. And with those thoughts in mind, my name is a great reminder of my goal.—By Ruthie Kerr, a college student who studied last year at Saleve Adventist University in France.

When I became a Seventh-day Adventist, I left my home and family to follow God’s plan for my life. Just as Ruth’s decision to follow Naomi changed her life, so did mine. God led me to a Christian education at Takoma Academy and Columbia Union College, and the family I lived with helped me settle into my Christian experience. And just as Ruth gleaned in the fields, I worked to pay my way through school.

Another similarity is my pledge to God that “thy people shall be my people.” Ruth’s loyalty to Naomi put her in contact with God and His extended family, which included Boaz, Obed, David, and ultimately, Jesus. My relationship with God has given me a wonderful family and, through my work here at the General Conference, many terrific friends.—By Ruth Dunbebin, donor response coordinator for Adventist World Radio.

promise to be faithful to each other “for better or for worse,” thinking that it is the “worse” that may have the potential to separate them. As Ruth and Naomi were leaving Moab, Ruth had promised to stay with Naomi; Ruth may now realize that Naomi could fear that “better” circumstances could also separate the two women. Ruth may be reiterating her pledge of loyalty to Naomi despite changing circumstances.

The village women note the special relationship that Ruth and Naomi share when they rejoice about the son who was eventually born to Ruth and Boaz—and Naomi. They say, “Your daughter-in-law who loves you” is “more to you than seven sons” (Ruth 4:15). Seven was considered in the ancient world as the ideal number of male heirs. It must have been a remarkable relationship for one daughter-in-law to be of more value than a natural child, to be worth more than a male child—and even of greater value than the ideal number of natural sons.

Graceful Living

In fact, these village women are remarkable themselves. They excitedly see Naomi returning to Bethlehem. But she greets their welcoming words with complaints and bitterness: “Do not call me Naomi ["Pleasant"], call me Mara ["Bitter"], for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me” (Ruth 1:20).

The women don’t reject Naomi, even though she has rejected their friendly advances. At the close of the book they rejoice with her at the birth of her grandchild. They bless the Lord, whom she earlier cursed. They listen to her in her adversity and call her to rejoice in her prosperity, praising Ruth and naming the child. They too have made an extraordinary response.

Their naming of the child would have alerted listeners that Obed is a special child: the act of naming by neighboring women symbolizes the legitimacy of royal power. This idea looks forward to Ruth’s descendant, King David; through him all Israel benefits from the extraordinary responses of these ordinary people, Ruth and Boaz.

Above the Law

Boaz is another person who goes beyond the ordinary, beyond that which would be generally expected or legally required.

The Levitical law regarding gleaning ends with the words “I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 23:22). This statement intimates that the Jews were to see gleaning as a way to connect with God—to reflect His compassion and share His gifts. A flowing gleaning was required of all landowners: this was duty—not hesed.

Yet Boaz goes beyond what is expected and tries to mitigate the risks that a single woman working alone in the fields might face. He encourages Ruth to drink the water that has been drawn for his own harvesters, and later he gives her food for lunch.

Ruth notices Boaz’s hesed and asks why he’s so kind to her, a foreigner. She uses a wordplay to emphasize the idea: she asks “Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, when I am a foreigner?” (Ruth 2:10). Both the word for “take notice” and the word for “foreigner” come from the same Hebrew root: nikr. This accentuates the surprisingly different, compassionate attitude of Boaz when he takes notice of a foreigner.

Reaching Out in Love

In the book of Ruth, God’s name is on everyone’s tongues, but He is seldom openly credited with what happens. However, hesed—the loving-kindness that characterizes God—abounds. A people pray and talk, they expect God to “work out his will for the people who are involved in this openly human story—and in each case it is the people, living as they are to live under God’s sovereignty, who proceed to work it out.”

As Edward Campbell points out, Boaz thinks God will protect Ruth—she should seek refuge under His wings. However, it is under Boaz’s wing where Ruth finds the solution to her problems (see Ruth 2:12 and 3:9, 10).

Bitterly Naomi complains that Yahweh has brought her back “empty,” implying that He needs to correct the situation. But after the night on the threshing floor, it is Ruth who makes sure that her mother-in-law is no longer empty (see Ruth 1:21 and 3:17).

Naomi prays that God will grant security to her daughters-in-law, but she herself initiates the plans that resolve their difficulties (see Ruth 1:9 and 3:1).

It is Yahweh who is expected to do hesed (Ruth 1:8 and 2:20), but it is the two young widows who carry out that hesed (see Ruth 1:8 and 3:10).
Campbell concludes that “God is present and active in the Ruth story,” but He is revealed chiefly “in the way in which people behave toward one another.”12 The story links “God’s will and human action so inextricably as to make each of the main protagonists the servant of God to the other.”13 In an everyday world, filled with a struggle for survival and contentment, “divine and human action go hand in hand.”14

But the story does not stop there: in Matthew 1, Ruth is named as a progenitor of Christ—the One who made the ultimate extraordinary response, the conclusive demonstration of hesed.

My life is not filled with miracles. If I see any burning bushes, they are likely the stunted lilac bushes that my husband has uprooted and is getting rid of. If, like Abraham, I hear voices telling me to go on a trip, it will be my mother asking me to fly across the country to help her pack for a move. Openly miraculous happenings are not a part of my daily life, just like they were not a part of Ruth’s.

But we don’t need the miraculous to see God. Reading the book of Ruth, we find that God’s loving-kindness, His hesed, is revealed in people’s hesed to each other. Although we may think that our hopes and actions are mundane and ordinary, although we may not see God’s hand openly and dramatically in our lives, we can experience His presence when we see and experience caring and sharing in each other. ■

1 Phyllis Trible suggests that his unwillingness to do his duty and redeem the name of Naomi’s family accounts for the fact that his name is not recorded in the Bible (“A Human Comedy: The Book of Ruth,” in Kenneth R. Louis, ed., Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narrative [Nashville: Abingdon, 1982], vol. 2, p. 184).
2 All scriptural quotations in this article are taken from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.
6 Ibid.
7 Trible, p. 168.
9 Kates, pp. 192, 193; deals with Boaz’s hesed.
11 Campbell, p. 29.
12 Ibid.
14 ———, The Anchor Bible: Ruth, p. 81.

Denise Dick Herr teaches at Canadian University College in College Heights, Alberta, Canada.
Present Hope

Mother’s example gave me a pattern for life—
with a capital L.

MY MOTHER DIED ALMOST two years ago. My friends
said, “Isn’t it good to know
that we have a hope that we can cling to?”

It seems strange to me that when people die, those who try to comfort often focus only on the future. Why not just remain in the moment and “be”? Mother taught me so much about hope in the present.

A Spiritually Healthy Worldview

A healthy imagination nurtured by Nordic lore and the books of the Old Testament combined to create Mother’s understanding of life. The Jesus of the New Testament was real to her. Thus the kingdom of heaven was “within” her in the present (Luke 17:21, NIV), informing her of hope for the future.

And what a present Mother was able to live, having these wonderful spiritual stories to guide her life. Viktor Frankl, a survivor of Nazi concentration camps, remarks with awe about the paradox of the seemingly weak who survived and the supposedly strong who lost hope. Frankl writes, “They [the weak] were able to retreat from their terrible surroundings to a life of inner riches and spiritual freedom. Only in this way can one explain the apparent paradox that some prisoners of a less hardy makeup often seemed to survive camp life better than did those of a robust nature.” A spiritually healthy view of life creates hope.

Goals Accomplished by Action

Mother was a woman of action. When a task—large or small—needed to be done, she literally attacked it. When the Sahara dust descended with a vengeance, she could set and complete the short-term goal of cleaning her home three times a week. In spite of her meager financial resources, she accomplished the long-term goal of creating her own physical therapy clinic.

She would simply lunge at formidable barriers until she found a way to solve them. Never did I hear her say that something had to remain the way it was because there were no solutions.

Her willpower and energy level were incredibly high. Years later many a student missionary would recount to me how she could outwalk them in speed and distance as they good-naturedly imitated “her walk.”

Compassion

Mother modeled compassion, a major ingredient in the psychology of hope. One day, while living in Africa, she and I had to “put down” our pet cat because it had lost a leg from being caught in a trap, and while in the trap had been blinded by a spitting cobra. It was a hard—yet compassionate—thing to do. Compassion for animals and humans alike had been
passed on to her from her mother, who sacrificed her meager food to the wanderers and animals who came through her manicured wood on their way to nowhere—God's creatures that society deemed less valuable.

Viktor Frankl recounts in his book Man's Search for Meaning about an opportunity he had to escape with his friend from the concentration camp. When the time came to escape from the demented, “dead” patients he was caring for, he simply couldn’t. Frankl started out with his friend, but turned back. A purely intuitive feeling came over him (which receded immediately when he returned to the death ward and continued his labors). But, he writes, “I gained an inner peace that I had never experienced before. I returned to the hut, sat down on the boards at my countryman’s feet and tried to comfort him; then I chatted with the others, trying to quiet them in their delirium.”

Compassion meant to stay in the moment with the pain, not run from it. Compassion nurtures hope.

Flexibility

Mother was flexible. While she had a definite value system, she was able to adapt to any situation. In 46 years of living away from her mother country (Denmark), Mother adapted to living in many places under various situations, some comfortable, others much less so.

As she encountered barriers to her goals, Mother had the uncanny ability to adjust by choosing alternative routes to those goals. This flexibility made it possible for her to succeed. The more she succeeded by finding alternative routes, the more she was able to reach her goals successfully.

She wanted a massage clinic where she could assist in the healing process of people with crippled bodies. After she tried and failed in soliciting funds to get the project off the ground, she decided that just starting with a room and makeshift bench was enough. Money for equipment and salary became secondary. Had she insisted on money first, the project would never have gotten off the ground.

She never did make any money on the project, but the meaning she derived from reaching her goal surpassed what money could have given her. Flexibility aids in reaching goals, thus motivates hope.

Relationships

Relationships were very important to Mother. She could be extremely honest and yet not create animosity or rancor. Her home was always filled with the laughter that accompanied good fellowship, games, and food. Mother created a home away from home for the young adults who had left their own countries and found themselves under her roof. Their recounted memories of being drawn close to Mother still warm me.

Viktor Frankl claims that his memory of his young wife kept him from choosing to die in the concentration camps. Whether the relationship is flesh and blood or a memory, humans can “will” to stay alive or choose to die. Frankl writes, “I understood how a man who has nothing left in this world may still know bliss, be it only for a brief moment, in the contemplation of his beloved.” The ability to develop and sustain healthy relationships is a hopeful activity.

Hope for Society and Church

The times in which we live are complex and often confusing. However, in young and old alike, I see hope in those who love God and life. Those who question and condemn the church and society, and who tremble about the future, lack the ingredients of hope: a spiritually healthy view of life, goals accomplished by action, compassion, flexibility, and relationships that produce deep, genuine feelings.

Shakespeare’s “to thine own self be true” is an ingredient in the psychology of hope that resists all false hopes. Those who put all their identity and loyalty into an institution such as church or corporation will lose all hope if it fails to “deliver the goods.” But when we are true to ourselves, we can allow something much higher to sustain us. Christ said that the kingdom of God is here now, within us (Luke 17:20, 21). If we truly believe this, nothing that happens to us can create hopelessness, because God is ultimately in control.

1 Viktor E. Frankl, Man’s Search for Meaning (Simon and Schuster, 1984), p. 47.
2 Ibid., p. 68.
3 Ibid., p. 49.
TELL ME STRAIGHT

What is Global Mission, and what does it do? The heart of Global Mission is reaching the unreached with hope. God’s love compels Global Mission’s wholistic, compassion-driven outreach to people who haven’t heard the gospel story. Thousands of Global Mission pioneers around the world care for the sick, teach people agricultural skills, run literacy programs, and share the good news about Jesus with those who have never heard. A special initiative started in 1990, Global Mission focuses specifically on establishing Adventist congregations in new areas. These can range from unentered suburbs in North American cities to entire countries in the Middle East. Although it’s vital to maintain and support existing missions and institutions, this isn’t Global Mission’s task. Global Mission supports local initiatives for cutting-edge ministry—reaching into unentered areas.

JOY RUNNING OVER

When Vinod and Ruhamah Gude were baptized in 1993, their hearts were “bubbling with joy,” Vinod says. Vinod left a high-paying government job, and the family began working as Global Mission pioneers. They are now in Haryana state, the heart of Hinduism in India. They have established new congregations in Raipur (23 baptisms) and Kharora (47 baptisms). Currently in Purena, they have prepared 12 people for baptism.

“In the past four years we’ve gone through many problems and attacks by Satan,” says Vinod. “At times our stipend hasn’t arrived on time, we’ve been evicted from our house four times, and sometimes we’ve been without food. But we pray sincerely to God, and He gives us patience to bear His cross. According to His promise, we’re under His care (Matt. 28:20). Praise the Lord for all He has done. Please pray for us that we will be used more by His Holy Spirit.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To receive Global Mission newsletters, support Global Mission pioneers, or join the Global Mission Prayer Ministry, simply call 1-800-648-5824.
Depression and I are old acquaintances. All my life, it seems, without my having willed it, without my comprehending why, depression has been irresistibly attracted to me. The attraction has not been mutual. Cultivating the intimate acquaintance of such unpleasant company is not my idea of a good time. But neither is it an easy matter to fend off the opportunistic overtures of this determined "friend."

It's not that I haven't tried. I've cleaned up my diet, I try to get adequate rest, and I regularly walk the soles off perfectly good Nikes. I've confronted my painful past, focused on the positive, and gotten my mind off myself and sought to bless others. But while all of these disciplines and activities have greatly improved my mental and physical health, they have not slain the dragon.

When I talk about depression, I'm not referring primarily to the "normal" down times of life in a sinful world. I'm not talking about concern generated by financial hardship, illness, or fatigue, or even heartrending grief at the loss of a loved one. Such sorrow and concern can be traced to their concrete causes and, when mixed with faith, soothed and tempered, and prevented from spiraling into despondency.

When I say depression, I'm talking about the shadowy, amorphous heart of the beast, the root of spiritual and social alienation that resides deep within every fallen human heart. I'm talking about the subconscious source of Nietzsche's maddening "melancholia," Solomon's "vanity of vanities" (Eccl. 1:2), A bram's "Foreboding, darkness, and horror" (Gen. 15:12, TLB). I'm talking about that universal latent suspicion—not generated by any specific life event, but easily confirmed by many—that there is no purpose, no point, no possibility of perfect love, to fill the aching void.

Skilled counseling, positive lifestyle choices, and human sympathy certainly have their place in assuaging this beast. But they can never eradicate despair, because its roots are bound up inextricably with a painful spiritual reality that dates to the fall of our race.

When Adam and Eve severed themselves from the Source of all hope and goodness, they severed their posterity as well. They transmitted to us the hereditary consequences of their sin—a fatal fundamental flaw in our genetic makeup, an essential alienation from God and from our fellow human beings. An alienation that is the essence of the "second" eternal death.

Had not Christ, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8), interposed as our second Adam, that death would instantly have asserted itself and crushed out our race. But because "Jesus tasted death for everyone in all the world," we live (Heb. 2:9, TLB). We live to embrace the reality and the implications of His victorious sacrifice, or we live to deny them.

Though I have chosen to embrace His sacrifice, I have been slow to understand and believe all that it comprehends. I have been slow to see that when He stormed the gates of hell and slew the dragon in its lair, He didn't do so in the abstract. He stormed the gates of my most private, incomprehensible hell; He slew the dragon of despair and alienation in my fallen humanity.

He died the equivalent of my second, eternal death, a "death in which the sufferer sees not a ray of hope because he feels utterly forsaken by God, the horror-filled sense of utter despair, the unspeakable pain of divine condemnation beyond which [he] can expect no vindication, no resurrection, no light beyond a never-ending tunnel."*

On an otherwise pleasant evening some months ago I received a visit from my old "friend" depression. I cringed at its familiar greeting:

You're all alone in a senseless world, unloved and unlovable. It's always been that way; it always will be.

For the first time, at my very core, I didn't believe it. For the first time I saw clearly that on His cross my Lord bore away my squalid birthright of alienation and depression. On His cross He earned the right to place these words in my mouth: "Once I was alienated from God, an enemy in my mind. But now I have been reconciled by Christ's death. Now I have peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (see Col. 1:21, 20, NIV).

Praise God, it's true. It's true for me. It's true for all.


Leslie Kay, wife and mother, writes from Chloride, Arizona.
Adventist World Radio (AWR) officers report that nearly 100,000 letters arrive yearly at Bible correspondence schools around the world as a result of AWR broadcasts. The following story, introducing readers to some of the people who write to AWR, is an introduction to a new feature you’ll be seeing in the Review from now on. Watch for it under the head AWR Letter Box.—Editors.

It works; AWR really works,” says AWR president Don Jacobsen.

“And how do we know it works? Because we hear the stories of lives being changed by the radio gospel. And how do we hear the stories? We read letters from listeners, tens of thousands of them every year.

“They come from people in all walks of life—students and sailors, doctors and farmers, housewives and teachers, men, women, young people, children.

“They speak in different languages; they have different ways of thinking; their cultures are different. Some are well educated; some must ask others to write a letter for them.

“Some live in extreme poverty; others in extreme wealth; some live in countries where they are restricted, harassed, or persecuted by society or religion. And all of them are searching for something better in their lives.

“Imagine how we feel when we get a letter like this,” Jacobsen says:

“I had lost hope and was thinking of ending my life. I had failed the university entrance exams and was sent to teach at a small village school, away from my family and friends. Then I heard your program on the radio, and it was like cool water to my dry heart. I kept on listening and found that hope returned. Thank you.”

This young woman in China wrote later to say that she had retaken the exam and was on her way to the university. Your program saved my life and gave me a new life to look forward to.

Stacks of letters from AWR listeners arrive every day at Bible correspondence schools around the world, letters telling of lives changed, joy discovered, hope encountered, salvation grasped.

“This is the reason AWR exists,” says Jacobsen. “Here’s another letter that made us realize the far-reaching impact of radio:

“I am one of 20 Sri Lankans now in prison in [a Middle Eastern country]. We got into a lot of trouble and were sentenced to 20 years in prison. We have served 10 of those years, all that time never hearing our own language except as we spoke to each other. But something wonderful happened! We have a shortwave radio. Imagine our excitement when we heard your program—in our own language. We have been listening and beg you to send Bible lessons. Please pray for us in our misery.”

Most people are not in jail, but many are in “prisons” of another kind. They too seek for freedom.

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Most people are not in jail, but many are in “prisons” of another kind. They too seek for freedom.

I have been a listener to your program for a long time, but waited until today to write because of the high cost of a postage stamp. I borrowed a radio from my uncle, and one day I found your program. The more I listen to it, the more my soul is attached to God. I told others
in my village about this program. Many of us gather round every day to listen. We know that for many people AWR broadcasts are the only way they will ever hear the gospel. Consider this letter from a listener in a certain country we cannot name:

I have felt my life was empty in spite of having a religion, and my parents are too busy earning money so they can send me to be trained as a leader in our religion. Then several months after listening to the Voice of Hope I have found peace, and I want to study about the Christian religion and to know who Jesus is. Will you guide me?

Again and again the Holy Spirit works on people’s hearts through the radiobroadcasts. Typically listeners become Christians and share their faith with their friends in an ever-growing circle. The following listener was a Christian and through the AWR broadcasts accepted the Sabbath. Here he tells of his activity to convince other believers:

The church board summoned me to accuse me of causing unrest. After several days of prayer, I went to the board meeting. The Lord moved me, and I defended my new belief for nearly two hours. It left them speechless; some apologized. Many members now worship on the Sabbath. I don’t know what will be the next miracles the Lord allows to happen. Our entire family has converted. Not only does persecution come from the local church but also from the local government. But our faith in God is unshaken.

At AWR we share the hope expressed by this listener:

We have been searching for the truth, and the Voice of Hope showed us the way. My wife and daughter and I have been baptized, but we still listen to the radio program regularly. My niece has now been baptized. We hope and pray that through AWR many more souls will be reached and saved for the kingdom.

**NEWSBREAK**

**Church Members, Workers Ambushed in Sudan**

From southern Sudan, torn by civil war, come reports of church members and denominational employees who have been ambushed, robbed, and killed in the violence.

Reports from the region on May 29 indicate that a group of young people and their pastors returning by truck from an evangelistic meeting in Malakal, in the upper Nile region of Sudan, were ambushed by rebel soldiers, says Roland Fidelia, communication director for the Middle East Union.

Pastor Joseph Malesh and an Ethiopian man were shot and killed as the rest of the group fled into the bush. John Pel, another pastor who was accompanying the youth, is still missing. The stranded group was evacuated from Sudan on June 4.

In a separate incident, eight Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) employees were stopped by armed robbers while traveling from northwest Kenya to Chukudum in southern Sudan. Awadia Ogillo, a health educator in southern Sudan, pleaded with the attackers not to take her possessions. The gunmen then demanded cash, taking 1,000 Kenyan shillings (US$16). “We are grateful to God for His deliverance,” said John Arthur, ADRA director for the Trans-European Division (TED), who was traveling with the ADRA group. “Things could easily have been much worse.”

ADRA is cooperating with 35 other humanitarian agencies to deliver thousands of tons of food and supplies to those displaced by the violence.

Commenting on the news, Miroslav Pujic, TED communication director, said that the tragedy “reminds one that working for the Lord in some parts of the world can be very dangerous. Prayers are requested for the safety of Pastor Pel and for the repatriation of the young people from the area of the crime to Khartoum.”

**Strong Winds Wreak Havoc on Wisconsin Academy**

When scores of families gathered at Wisconsin Academy for graduation weekend, May 29-31, they received a very brisk and windy reception. Tornado-like winds swirled throughout the campus, uprooting trees, overturning campers, and damaging the boys’ dorm and gymnasium (see photo), says academy spokesperson Sue Rappette.

Jaclyn Ondrejka, a graduating senior from Green Bay, was hospitalized with injuries suffered when an RV trailer fell on her. Jaclyn was flown to the University Hospital in Madison. At the graduation on Sunday, her sister Nicole marched in her place and received her diploma.
Submitting Graciously

BY MYRNA TETZ, MANAGING EDITOR, ADVENTIST REVIEW

A headline in the June 10 Washington Post read “Southern Baptists: Wife Must ‘Submit,’” with an article describing how the conservatives again dominated the Southern Baptist Convention in Salt Lake City on June 9 with the adoption of a statement on the family. Included was the declaration that “a wife is to submit graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ.”

There were unsuccessful calls at the convention to reword the proposal to say that “both husband and wife are to submit graciously to each other” and to make the definition of family apply also to single people, couples without children, widows or widowers.

The scriptural record of Creation makes clear that Eve was formed for inseparable unity (see Gen. 2:24). She was to stand by Adam’s side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him (see Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 46). It was a perfect union. No one above, no one below.

Sin changed all that, and the Lord pronounced some curses. But ever since, humans have determined to rid the earth of weeds, employed methods to avoid the sweating of the brow, and researched medicines to relieve the pains of childbearing. One would wonder why the “and he will rule over you” part of that list (Gen. 3:16, NIV) is now being so vigorously reaffirmed by the Southern Baptists.

The Southern Baptists might have done well to concentrate more on the Christian principles that would lead “a man and his wife into an experience of real partnership, where each is so devoted to the happiness and well-being of the other that it never occurs to either to attempt to ‘rule’ over the other” (The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 234, and Col. 3:18, 19). A committed Christian woman would have no problem with the submission issue if her husband had no problem submitting to Christ. It would be a perfect union.

Whitecoats Reunion to Convene in September

All former participants in the United States Army’s Whitecoats project are invited to the third Whitecoats reunion at the Frederick Seventh-day Adventist Church in Frederick, Maryland, September 25-27.

The reunion will offer spiritual reflection, fellowship, and a tour of Fort Detrick, where the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases conducted the project.

The reunion commemorates the twenty-fifth anniversary of the closing of the Whitecoats program, in which 2,300 Adventist service members volunteered for inoculations with experimental drugs. A new book will be available on the history of the 18-year program that ended in 1973.

Dr. Frank Damazo, who is organizing the reunion, says the event is an important one because the U.S. government is seeking the names and addresses of former participants for follow-up research.

For more information call Damazo at (301) 662-4502. To register for follow-up research send your name and address to Whitecoats Research, c/o Frank Damazo, Frederick Seventh-day Adventist Church, 6437 Jefferson Pike, Frederick, Maryland 21703.

Amazing Facts to Launch Church Growth Convention

If you are interested in seeing your church become a vibrant, growing ministry, you’ll want to attend the National Church Growth Convention in Sacramento, California, September 16-19.
For Your Good Health

Four Roads to Success

Four commercial weight-loss centers have received "Outstanding" ratings for their promotion of low-fat, cholesterol-free foods without artificial calorie limits. These four top programs—the McDougall Program (St. Helena Health Center, Deer Park, California), NEWSTART Lifestyle Program (Weimar Institute, Weimar, California), Wildwood Lifestyle Center (Wildwood, Georgia), and Preventive Medicine Research Institute (Sausalito, California)—all feature plant-based meals that are low in sugar and salt, and high in fiber and complex carbohydrates. These programs also offer courses in nutrition, cooking, exercise, and stress management.—Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine.

Sounding the Alarm

Medications usually relieve heartburn caused by stress and excess food. But if you regularly suffer that nagging feeling in your upper abdomen and lower chest, you may want to rule out something more serious: cancer. People who regularly take antacid medications may have up to a fortyfold increased risk of developing cancer at the junction of the stomach and esophagus. Your physician can perform a simple outpatient procedure that will reveal premalignant or early cancerous changes in the area, both of which respond well to treatment.—University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

Chew Something Else

Biting into pieces of ice can cause pressure and temperature changes on your tooth enamel, which can lead to small cracks on tooth surfaces. Plaque can collect there, leading to an increased risk of tooth decay, and stains can form along the cracks.—Consumer Reports on Health.

—For Your Good Health is compiled by Larry Becker, editor of Vibrant Life, the church’s health outreach journal. To subscribe, call 1-800-765-6955.
LASTING IMPACT

Where are all those converts from NET ’95 and NET ’96?

BY MONTE SAHLIN

What happened to all those people baptized during NET ’95 and NET ’96? How many of them are still going to church? If I had a $20 bill for every time I’ve been asked those questions, we wouldn’t have to take any offerings for NET ’98!

Over the past three years hundreds of thousands of people have participated in evangelistic events by way of a live satellite connection. At least 15,000 of these people made a commitment to Christ and joined a local Adventist church.

The stories about changed lives are compelling and heart-warming. The new life in hundreds of congregations is tangible. The North American Division has experienced a renewal of public evangelism.

How Many Are Still Attending?

Fourteen months after NET ’95 we found that nine out of 10 of the people who joined during that evangelism project were still active members of the church. Only 10 percent can be considered “dropouts.” (See Figure 1.) The results are the same for the 15 months following NET ’96.

Most of the congregations that participated in NET ’95 and NET ’96 have done much to integrate and involve their new members. A total of 41 percent of the adults who joined during NET ’95 have become involved in witnessing or volunteer responsibilities. Nearly half (47 percent) of the adults who joined during NET ’96 are involved in church ministries.

This percentage of individuals retained in active membership is consistent with past research on the dropout problem among Adventists. It is a myth that most of the results of public evangelism are lost right away.

Who Are the New Members?

To get a profile of the new Adventists who have joined the church through NET ’95 some 18 months after the public meetings, we conducted an additional survey. The anonymous answers provide an interesting picture of who is joining the Adventist Church in North America. (A study of new members joining during NET ’96 is currently underway.)

The gender of these new members is almost precisely the same as the general population in North America: 48 percent male and 52 percent female. This is a positive finding, because several studies over the years have shown that often public evangelism has attracted relatively few men.

The generations among these new members reveal an interesting mix. The majority are under 45 years of age. Compared to the various age segments within the general population, it

![Figure 1](image-url)
appears that middle-aged people were far more responsive to NET '95 than were younger individuals. (See Figure 2.)

Immigration has been a significant factor for Aventist Church growth in recent decades. Until NET '95 the majority of baptisms each year were among immigrants. Among the people joining through NET '95, only 14 percent were born outside North America.

Returning former members make up a third of these new members. A reclaiming ministry played an important role in the success of NET '95.

Churchgoers were significantly more likely to respond to NET '95 than the unchurched. Two thirds of these new Aventists were regularly going to church somewhere at the time they started attending the NET '95 meetings. Only 15 percent report that they grew up in a family that did not belong to any church.

The level of education among these new members is much lower than among the total membership of Seventh-day Adventists in North America. Only 19 percent have a college degree as compared to about 40 percent of the total membership.

The occupations of these new members reveal a cross section of North America, with an accent on the middle class. One in 10 work in professional or managerial positions. One in five are white-collar employees, and an equal number are blue-collar workers. A third fifth is retired, disabled, or unemployed. About 17 percent are full-time students, and 13 percent are full-time homemakers.

Satellite Evangelism Works

Satellite technology works for evangelism, but it takes more than broadcasting to win men and women to Christ. Relationships, group dynamics, pastoral ministry, and congregational life are also essential elements.

The importance of relationships is underlined in what these new members tell us about how they heard about NET '95. Nearly half say that a friend, relative, or acquaintance invited them to the meetings. About 14 percent were contacted by a pastor or a lay visitation team. Yet the vast majority of these new members say that they heard about the meetings through more than one avenue.

The largest number (45 percent) report that they received a brochure about the meetings through the mail, yet most of these say that something else helped them to attend: a newspaper ad, a poster, a radio or television spot, billboards. The mix of media had a great impact.

New members were asked what led them to attend the meetings. “A desire to study the Bible and know its truths” was the most important reason for 31 percent of the respondents and was selected as one of several items by 57 percent. A highest as many reported the motivation of “a deep interest in end-time events, prophecy, and the apocalypse.”

Two in five new members (40 percent) listed as their motivation “I needed some spiritual help because of the tensions and things that have happened in my life in the last couple of years.” Half of these (19 percent) report that this is the single most important reason they attended the meetings.

A third of the respondents say that they were “aware of the Adventist Church and wanted to know more about its doctrine and way of life.” A bout one in five (18 percent) indicate that they started going to the meetings because someone they know recommended them.

What Can We Learn?

God wants to bless His church with tens of thousands of new members, each a gift of the Holy Spirit to the fellowship of believers. What can we learn from the experiences of NET '95 and NET '96?

1. New members coming into the church represent great diversity. They come from different backgrounds, occupations, and levels of education. Some are quite conservative, while others have very contemporary tastes in Christian music and worship style.

In the Bag

In the Bronx, New York City, Paulette Newman had been praying for her husband, Kenneth, for years. Then on a November Sabbath in 1992 her pastor distributed baptismal bags to all with spouses or relatives who were not members of the church. He encouraged them to write the name of their loved ones on the bags and then pray for them every day. The bag contained items that would be useful at their baptism.

When plans for NET '95 got under way in her church, Paulette invited her husband to the meetings. Kenneth had not shown an interest in making a commitment to the Lord in their 23 years of marriage, but this time was different. He attended all of the meetings and was baptized at the close of the series, putting his baptismal bag to good use.

Kenneth says that the fact that Paulette is a dedicated member helped him in his church and spiritual life.

“I regularly invite friends to church,” says Kenneth. “And I encourage visitors whenever I see them at services. I’ll do the same for NET ’98.” Noting that a spiritual gift he and Paulette share is hospitality, he says, “We enjoy having people over for a meal as part of our witnessing.”

By Betty Cooney, associate coordinator and director of communications for NET '98.
Back Home Again

Ed and Dottie Hytinen’s story began a year before NET ’96. “We were living on the freeway of life, without bumps. Airplanes, boats, cars—we enjoyed the material pleasures of life,” said Ed.

He was raised an Adventist and attended Cedar Lake Academy for four years. Those were anchor years, he points out. Yet Ed had not made Christ a personal friend. Running a demanding business, Dottie and Ed lost interest in the church, and Ed spent Sabbaths with business friends on his $150,000 sport fishing boat.

Through a series of moves the Lord brought them to a church and a pastor who passionately presented Christ. The Holy Spirit began drawing Ed and Dottie home.

Although he owned many Bibles, most unopened and unread, Ed didn’t have a study Bible. As he left an Adventist Book Center, study Bible in hand, the clerk handed him a flyer on an upcoming Prayer Summit at La Sierra University. Ed forgot about the flyer until one evening when he opened the van’s door and it blew down on the floor at his feet.

Perhaps he should attend, he thought. That night Ed heard Holy Spirit just filled my life with the satisfaction I’d been seeking,” Ed said.

Ed and Dottie found NET ’96 to be the foundation they hadn’t had since academy days, but they also found much more—a passionate love for Jesus Christ. For the Hytinen’s that passion motivates them to nurture others who come “home” for a new look as well as those who come for a first-time look at the Saviour.

By Edna Maye Gallington, part of the communication team at the Southeastern California Conference in Riverside, California.

Heart-hugging Ideas

To keep members—new and old—involved in your congregation, try these practical suggestions:

■ Invite a new member, a widow/widower, a divorcé, or a single member to share dinner with you this Sabbath.

■ Next time your friends plan a social get-together, invite a new member to join the group.

■ If someone in your church is going through a crisis—divorce, loss of employment, unwed pregnancy, rebellious children—reach out and let them know you care.

■ Visit an elderly member and ask what you can do to help.

■ Call absent members and let them know you missed them.

■ If you have a critical, legalistic person in your church who drives members away, think of some creative ways to shower that person with deeds of kindness and love.

■ Let the children and youth in your church know you notice them and that they are important to your church family. Give them responsibilities.

■ Invite people to your home for potluck. Keep it simple. Remember, it’s the fellowship that counts.

■ Call, visit, take food to, and/or send a card to someone who is sick or whose loved one has died.

By Ann Fisher, editorial assistant at the Lake Union Herald.
And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

In these simple verses Jesus stresses a basic truth: salvation is not something granted by an organization, church, denomination, or movement. When we're saved at last, it's only by Jesus Christ, “by whom we have now received the atonement” (Rom. 5:11) and with whom we now enjoy a saving personal relationship.

Salvation is a one-on-one thing between an individual sinner and his or her Saviour, Jesus Christ, through whose blood He has now caused us to “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6).

If this is true—that we're saved by faith in Christ alone—then why do we need the church? If we're saved only through the blood of Christ, whose merits we can claim as our own through the vehicle of personal faith and commitment to Him, then what's the purpose of a church?

First, we don't join a church in order to get redemption; we join because we're already redeemed. The church isn't a means of salvation, merely an expression of it. The church doesn't dispense eternal life; the church is a vehicle by which those who have eternal life can—in a community of like-minded believers—grow in their relationship with Christ.

Second, we join a church because Christ has made it clear that He has a church. He told His disciples, “I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18) And the Bible is clear that He's the head of the body on earth known as the church. Paul affirms this fact with these words “Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23).

Third, the New Testament teaches that the church is Christ's body on earth. And as believers in Him we are all part of this body, with spiritual gifts we can use for building up His body and taking the gospel to the world. “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular,” Paul wrote under inspiration. “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:27, 28). Our relationship with the church also indicates whether or not we are willing to submit to Christ in all things. “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way” (Eph. 1:22, 23, NIV).

Fourth, the New Testament model knows absolutely nothing of individual believers in Christ striking out on their own. The biblical paradigm is never of individuals—not even a small group of individuals—doing their own thing apart from a corporate body. From beginning to end the New Testament model is that of a corporate group working together: “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Eph. 4:4).

Fifth, we join a church because the Bible is clear that God wants the church to represent His character: “His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known” (Eph. 3:10, NIV).

Finally, the church is God's tool in which things such as nurture, discipleship, discipline, witnessing, outreach, and numerous other ministries can be centered. There are things that only a church can do, that individuals—no matter how sincere—can never accomplish. The Lord knows that, which is why He has planted His church on earth.

Although Christ is the head of the church, you and I are sinners, and we make up the church. So it will sometimes be true that “the church” reveals our faults and shortcomings rather than God's perfect character. But whatever its weaknesses, the church was established by God with the distinct purpose of developing Christ's character in each of us and taking the gospel to the entire world.

That's why we need the church and the church needs us.

Robert S. Folkenberg is president of the General Conference.
Try this. You need two pieces of paper and a marker. Use the marker to make dots and spots all over both pieces of paper—not in nice neat rows, but every which way. The papers should look alike (more or less) when you are done. Then cut a little butterfly shape out of one of the papers.

Set the butterfly on top of the other paper and step back a bit. Don’t look too carefully—maybe squint a little. Does the butterfly blend in with the other paper? Is it hard to see it?

That’s camouflage. Some animals use camouflage to hide from enemies. Caterpillars can hide among the leaves; their colors and markings make them look like twigs. Some moths have patterns that match the bark of trees where they like to rest.

If a bug looks like the bark or leaf or flower on which it sits, chances are its enemies won’t see it, and it won’t get eaten.

However, camouflage works only if the bug stays still. Move your paper butterfly around on the background paper. It’s much easier to see, isn’t it? Even if the camouflage is perfect, an enemy will see a bug if it moves.

Satan says that we are sinners and we deserve to die. He’s right. But Jesus says, “I died for their sins. I paid their penalty.” And He’s righteous.

Jesus’ righteousness covers our sins. The Bible has a prayer that asks, “Hide me in the shadow of your wings” (Psalm 17:8, NIV). Jesus gives us “camouflage” that will protect us from our enemy—Satan.

We don’t have any righteousness of our own. Try to imagine yourself without Jesus’ camouflage. It would be as if you were standing in the middle of the white, white snow in bright-red long underwear.

“The Lord says, ‘Come, we will talk these things over. Your sins are red like deep red cloth. But they can be as white as snow’” (Isaiah 1:18, ICB).

The camouflage works only if you ask for it. When we ask Jesus to forgive our sins, we are also asking for His righteousness. Jesus’ righteousness can cover us. Try to imagine yourself in His camouflage. It would be as if you were a polar bear in the middle of the white, white snow. Jesus can make your sins as white as snow. Jesus can keep you safe.
The warm greeting at the door by Keith and Trudy Stokes was seconded by their tall teenager, Enoch, just beyond them in the foyer, all providing a stark contrast to the icy day outside. A gentleman standing by the inner door, noticing I had not picked up a bulletin in the foyer, welcomed me warmly and implored, “Here, take mine; I can get another one.”

After Nichol Robinson led us in a few hymns, Sabbath school began promptly, with Glen Wintermyer as superintendent for an uncomplicated but effective program. Director of personnel and field supervisor for Adventist Frontier Missions, Wintermyer welcomed everyone with a hearty smile and the enthusiastic announcement “Jesus saves and is coming again!”—a refreshing beginning.

Wintermyer had just returned from a visit to India on behalf of AFM. He shared his impressions of India’s great need for Jesus and reminded us that we too need Him. To conclude, he invited K. V. Ratnam to tell about his homeland and show a video of a previous missionary trip there. Ratnam and his wife, both nurses from India, worked at Scheer Memorial Hospital in Nepal immediately after their graduation, but now live in Michigan. Fellow missionaries in Nepal, Dr. and Mrs. Richard Clark, sat in the congregation, having become Eau Claire members in recent years as retirees. Ratnam recalled the days when the Clarks regularly held Sabbath services in their home when it was illegal to proselytize.

Twelve years ago Ratnam went with a group from the Pioneer Memorial church of Andrews University on Mission Madras, an evangelistic tour. He reminded us that only 4 percent of Indians today are Christians, while 80 percent are Hindus and 12 percent are Muslims.

The worship service followed a format familiar to most Adventist churches. Both organ and piano music were provided by able musicians. Warmth from the congregation could be felt. At prayer time members first listed special requests. Numerous personal ministries were mentioned, indicating an actively witnessing congregation. A nice added touch: the bulletin included an empty space labeled “Prayer Requests,” so people could jot them down to remember throughout the week.

A child spoke up too, and his request was accepted with concern and appreciation. This congregation deliberately, yet comfortably, integrates its many children into the worship experience. During the hymn singing the leader chose “This Little Light of Mine”—“for the children.” After well-known artist Nathan Greene called for the offering, a young girl quietly slipped to the piano and played an appropriate offertory, almost without notice.

Actually, this congregation comprises—and puts to use—a wide spectrum of ages, educational levels, and occupations. College student Kara Kerbs read the scripture articulately with expression. Vivian Oxley, a young mother and telecommunications worker, held the children’s attention with a story about procrastination. A member’s daughter, Sharon Aka, visiting from Toronto, sang a solo. Members include clerical workers, maintenance staff, and seminary professors from Andrews University, along with farmers, able musicians, and retired missionaries.

A visitor’s perspective might suggest a few minor improvements. I wished for some identification in the bulletin of the pastor and other leaders, perhaps with phone numbers for any visitor with questions. John Treat preached a brief traditional sermon on the three angels’ messages, but with no indication of who he is.

The second would be no problem to an assertive visitor. Announcements mentioned a potluck after the service, followed by an attractive 2:00 Home and School program, complete with child care. All were invited, but a visitor who had come without food might wonder whether it would be appropriate to stay.

All in all, though, this is a church where a visitor or new member could feel warmly accepted, needed, and at home.
As my old Buick nosed over the floating bridge, I pounded the steering wheel with my fist. "Where are You, God?" I shouted. Tears tumbled over each other and down my hot cheeks.

"I can't understand why You've forsaken us, Lord!" I continued. "I hate to leave Mother in the nursing home where help is scarce. Besides, I promised her I'd never place her in a care facility like this. She's been a good Christian all her life." I rambled on, "Now why is she having all of these small strokes—one after another? I feel so guilty driving the 350 miles back home and leaving her there, but my husband needs me at home."

As I cruised along, a heavy weight of guilt crushed my head and chest. Devastated and frustrated, I felt nothing had worked out for the plan to care for my aging mother. For various reasons keeping her at home for longer than 10 months did not materialize. Care for her in the private home of a friend didn't work out either. The nursing home proved our last resource for Mother's round-the-clock care.

Nevertheless, guilt crushed me. At the outskirts of the next little town towered a sign like a looming giant. Its black letters caught my attention. Never had I seen that sign beside the tan church during my many previous trips.

To this day I'm not sure of the name on that church—Immanuel something. I had never entered this church to worship and didn't know the pastor's name. But the sign's bold letters burned themselves indelibly into my psyche. They read, "God Forgives—Let Him!"

"All right, God, You win," I told Him. "Thank You for Your unmeasurable, unmovable love, and above all for Your promise to forgive! If only I can allow You to forgive all the blunders I've made in planning Mother's care. Somehow this guilt clings to me like a lead-laden backpack. Please help me let You forgive, Lord."

As my car sped along the winding highway, I contemplated the words on the sign. I thought about forgiveness and what it meant. The best living example I held in memory of forgiveness is how my mother always readily forgave me. One time I lost my cool and burning words escaped my lips toward Mother. Immediately I saw the deep hurt on her face. I apologized. She readily and lovingly forgave me.

My thoughts rambled on to the story of the prodigal son. His father rose each new day, went to his door, and strained his eyes peering down the road, awaiting the return of his wayward son. One day he couldn't believe his eyes. He saw a distant figure, with familiar gait, trudging toward his home. He raced to enfold his son with loving arms of forgiveness.

"Are You really like that, God?" I asked aloud as the hot July sun dipped low and slid behind the mountains. The load of crushing guilt slipped from my shoulders. God's miracle of forgiveness enveloped me.

Later at home I read in Steps to Christ: "It is peace that you need—Heaven's forgiveness and peace and love in the soul. Money cannot buy it, intellect cannot procure it, wisdom cannot attain to it; you can never hope, by your own efforts, to secure it. But God offers it to you as a gift, 'without money and without price' (Isa. 55:1). It is yours if you will but reach out your hand and grasp it" (p. 49). Further along I read, "If you believe the promise—believe that you are forgiven and cleansed—God supplies the fact; you are made whole" (p. 51).

During that trip I learned a valuable lesson from a church sign board. Many times I've thought I'd like to thank the pastor or whoever posted those words just for me as I wrestled with that heavy load of guilt. I've seen other words on that sign since that trip, but none jumped out to catch my attention like those.

It's been more than a decade since this experience, and I praise God for the words on that sign and for His love and precious promises—a balm to a weary, worn, guilt-laden traveler, "God Forgives—Let Him!"

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