Lapping Up
Laodicea

Getting Older—
No Big Deal
Double Impact
The July 9 World Edition had double impact for me. Not only did I happily celebrate my sixty-fifth birthday as an ADRA volunteer in the steamy “bush” villages of southern Malawi (see Molly K. Rankin’s “Life Begins at 60”), but my husband, Ken, and I were close friends of Verena and Peter Jaggi, M.D. This precious couple cared for both of us in their own home while we were very sick with malaria.

We know Verena as “Vrenni,” and her tribute to Peter in “The Man in White” brings tears to my eyes. At any age, the life of service in Christ’s name brings immeasurable joy—even when one is too tired to celebrate the joy!

—Bee Biggs-Jarrell
Boise, Idaho

Wrestling Till Dawn
As my husband read aloud Jerry Moon’s “Wrestling Till Dawn” (July 9), I realized anew how blessed we are as Seventh-day Adventists. Our pioneers endured a severe heartfelt struggle of prayer and Bible study to ascertain the precious truths of God’s Word and their impact on His last-day church. Picturing James and Ellen White, Joseph Bates, Hiram Edson, David A mold, Stockbridge Howland, Otis Nichols, and others intensely studying the Word of God, sometimes all night, with prayer and fasting, made me realize how much I have inherited and my responsibility to share these truths with others.

When I saw the picture illustrating the article, I was totally appalled! It appears as cheap clip art that has no relation to this article in the least degree. There is not one alert person at the huge table (which I doubt our pioneers had), and certainly no serious study could have taken place in the stupefied, littered condition pictured.

—Alice R. Voorheis, President
Adventist Heritage Ministry

Depression—And Deliverance
While Leslie Kay’s self-portrait of depression (see “Delivered From Depression,” July NAD Edition) was a beautifully expressed image of how she was “delivered” from this devastating illness, I fear it may mislead people into thinking depression is the result of spiritual failure.

As a clinical counselor, I have seen how this myth often compounds the pain of those who suffer from depression—and keeps them from seeking treatment. Depression is an illness like arthritis or cancer. It is often genetically predisposed, can be brought upon by life events, and usually involves malfunctioning brain chemistry. Fortunately, with treatment, this illness has an extremely high cure rate.

As a Christian, I too believe alienation from God is at the root of all suffering, whether that suffering be spiritual, mental, or physical. This does not mean, however, that I view depression, a form of mental illness, as a spiritual disease any more than I would consider diabetes a spiritual disease.

—Stephanie Hittle, M.S., P.C.C.
Centerville, Ohio

Adventist/Lutheran Dialogue
As a former Lutheran, I was very pleased to see the report (“Adventists and Lutherans in Conversation,” June 25 insert) on the recent conversations between the Adventists and Lutherans. It was good for the Adventists to gain an appreciation for the history of Lutheran doctrines and to recognize that Lutherans are also great biblical scholars. And I’m sure that many of the Lutherans present—and those who have read this report in their papers—were exposed to some of our doctrines for the first time.

However, the greatest advantage of publishing this article is that our people will now know what happens during such “conversations.” Until this time, if there had been conversations between the Lutherans (or any other denomination) and the Catholics, we would have heard of “signs of the end” and “fulfillment of prophecy.” At this stage, however, the Lutherans have no more intention of joining with the Catholics on their terms than we do of joining with the Lutherans on their terms. They are still trying to get the Catholics to join them in the Reformation, just as we are trying to get the Lutherans to see that the Reformation did not go far enough.

—Glen C. Sauer
Marshall, Michigan

Life Begins at 60
Molly K. Rankin’s “Life Begins at 60” (July 9) brought back pleasant memories to Mrs. Lawrence and me.

Twenty years ago, when I was 60, a
call came for me to go to Zambia to teach at the Rusangu Secondary School. We will never forget the reaction of those whom we were going to serve. Knowing my advanced age, they were expecting a pair of old codgers, perhaps on canes or in wheelchairs. Instead they received a teacher who in a few weeks would be playing basketball with them.

Right on! He who ignores the rocking chair in favor of a life of healthy activity will enjoy the sunset years. We rust out faster than we wear out.

—J. Parker Lawrence
Mountain Home, Arkansas

Too Americanized
I am very glad the Adventist Review has changed so much. It’s good to have four different editions. But I hope the World Edition will become even more a World Edition. To me, the American influence is still too much. Even when there is news from, say, an African country, the news so often comes from an American visitor. Why not have the people themselves write about their area? Misunderstandings such as the one about Sudan (see Letters, June 11) will be avoided.

—Angelique Hornis
Emmen, The Netherlands

Why Obey? (cont.)
Elder Robert Folkenberg’s “Why Obey?” (May NAD Edition) arrived just as I was preparing for a study on the plan of redemption in one of my English Bible classes, and not only I but my Buddhist, atheist, and Christian students as well found the concepts opening our “spiritual eyes” as never before!

Then recently I had the opportunity to share his key points in a sermon at a Japanese Seventh-day Adventist church, after which a number of members asked to see the whole article—for they too wanted to share their deepened understanding of this vital truth with others.

—Peter Luchak
Gunma, Japan

Get Your Act Together!
I am glad that the editors had the belly to publish Steve Divnick’s “On the Level” (June 18 Cutting Edge Edition). The church grows when it follows the apostles’ system of ministry as outlined in The Acts of the Apostles. The system of having one pastor for each congregation simply does not work; plus, you have fewer resources available for the mission of the church.

Coming from the Inter-American Division, I know firsthand what the church can do when responsibility rests with the members. Recently I visited a Mexican church with 457 members present. A local elder did the baby dedication, another preached the sermon, and church was over by 12:00 noon. The pastor has nine churches—they see him only for baptisms and marriages.

We need to reassess the structure of the church here—let the laity feel and be part of the church—and I guarantee that there will be a harvest such as never was.

It’s a shame to know that the roots of the Adventist message began in North America, yet we are only 875,000. With this division’s resources, we should not be at the back of the line and be telling the other divisions what to do. Get your act together!

—Alberto Hernandez
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

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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 Adventist Review (ISSN 0161-1119), published since 1849, is the general paper of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is published by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and is printed 40 times a year each Thursday except the first Thursday of each month by the Review and Herald® Publishing Association. Periodicals postage paid at Hagerstown, MD 21740. Copyright © 1998, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

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To Writers: We welcome unsolicited manuscripts. (Please query before submitting long articles.) Include address, telephone number, and Social Security number, where available. A address all editorial correspondence to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600. Editorial office fax number: (301) 680-6638.

E-mail: Internet: reviewmag@adventist.org
CompuServe network: 74617,15

Subscriptions: US $38.97 for 40 issues, US $50.97 for 52 issues. A dd $10.20 postage for addresses outside North America. To order, send your name, address, and payment to your local Adventist Book Center or Adventist Review Subscription Desk, Box 1119, Hagerstown, MD 21741. Single copy, US $2.50. Prices subject to change without notice. Subscription queries and changes of address: Call 1-800-456-3991, 301-393-3257, or e-mail shanson@rhpa.org.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Adventist Review, 55 West Oak Ridge Drive, Hagerstown, MD 21740.


PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.
Vol. 175, No. 37
“Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons” (Mark 3:13-15, NIV).

In our day of MBAs and flowcharts, cell phones and satellites, the methods of Jesus demand our study. He was phenomenally successful in His mission; and His mission is our mission.

Jesus chose 12 to change the world. He chose them, not a committee. Committees are important and I believe in them, but sometimes they get in the way.

Fact is, a committee would never have approved Jesus’ list. It had two sets of brothers—Peter and Andrew, James and John—and that set up the group for conflict of interest. Besides, you could easily see that the list was a recipe for disaster: Simon the Zealot was bitterly opposed to the Roman overlords, while Matthew the tax collector was a collaborator.

The group as a whole seemed poor material on which to build a world-class movement. Most lacked education and refinement; they were rough and coarse. Only one showed leadership potential—Judas Iscariot. He had the brains and ability to go far, but not the others.

Jesus chose them—twelve to change the world (actually, Judas “chose” himself, thrusting himself forward; see The Desire of Ages, p. 293). To several He gave nicknames: Simon he designated “Peter,” a rock; James and John, the hot-tempered brothers, He called—maybe with a twinkle in His eye—“Boanerges,” sons of thunder. Jesus wasn’t naive: He knew what He was getting, for better and for worse. But He wanted these twelve, called them to Him, and designated them apostles.

In appointing the twelve, Jesus had two purposes in view: that “they might be with Him” and that He might train them for the world-changing mission.

Before the twelve could begin changing the world, they themselves had to be changed. They needed to spend much time with the Master, see Him, hear Him, walk with Him, laugh with Him, weep with Him, suffer with Him. Day by day—hour by hour, moment by moment—the sweet influence of the Lord would touch them and make them over into His likeness. They would be learning how to do mission; but first they would be learning Him.

And the twelve were learners. With one exception—the gifted one—they opened their hearts to Jesus. Slowly, imperceptibly, they grew like the Master. Their speech, once crude and profane, became straightforward and pure. John the son of thunder became John the Beloved; Peter the rolling stone became Peter the strong. The work wasn’t done in a day, nor was it complete by the time of Jesus’ death, but the disciples had changed course, were new people headed on the upward way.

Jesus still calls, changes, and empowers men and women. In His gracious regard for us He sees beyond our coarseness and roughness, sees past our gross failings and deficiencies. Perhaps He even has a playful nickname for us. He sees a high and noble purpose for us: that by being with Him we may become like Him and share in His mission.

In the huge task with which we Seventh-day Adventists have been commissioned—to take the everlasting gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people (Rev. 14:6, 7)—let us ever remember that our greatest asset is people. We can and should employ every aid, every resource, that modern technology has opened up, but above all else God wants people. Let’s give people priority; let’s affirm people.

And let us not become so enamored of degrees and training that we forget that the prime requisite for service in God’s kingdom is a heart emptied of self and open to God. When the heart is right, God can and does do great things through the humblest instrument of service.

Two questions rise up to challenge each of us: Have I been with Jesus today, to observe Him, to love Him more, to become like Him? And have I learned from Him how to do the work He has placed in my hands?

It’s still true: twelve who have been with Jesus can change the world.
The State of the Church

You know all those things the church’s critics have been saying over the years? They’re true. There is hypocrisy in the church. There has been a lowering of the standards. The spiritual climate in the church is decidedly lukewarm. And there’s a desperate need for spiritual revival.*

Some propose drastic solutions: get rid of the “deadwood,” demand rigid adherence to standards, loyalty oaths, tithe audits.

I say we get really radical: Let’s get back to the Great Commission; you know, the one that says, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations…” (Matt. 28:19).

It’s easy to sit back and wring our hands about all the deficiencies of our fellow members (especially if their vices are different than our own). But while we focus exclusively on the state of the church— and our fellow members—we tend to forget that there’s a large portion of the world that has yet to be touched by the good news of God’s salvation.

And in fact, as bad as it is inside the church, it’s infinitely worse outside the church. And that’s perhaps why many Christians have so little credibility in society. While most people are concerned with how to reduce teen pregnancies, how to curb random and crime-related violence, how to manage drug and alcohol abuse, many Adventists get lost in debates about what kind of music to listen to, whether a string of faux pearls is the same as a silk necktie, whether The Clear Word should be read from the pulpit.

In fact, most of us are so clueless when it comes to nonchurchgoers, that we find it difficult to have an intelligent conversation with our non-Adventist neighbors about anything beyond the weather or the World Series.

Here’s a dirty little secret: If you let it, the church and its institutions (church school, Pathfinders, choir, women’s prayer group, Dorcas, musical programs, gym night, and a host of other things) will completely absorb your time and energy, leaving little, if any, for actually socializing and ministering to those who have yet to accept Jesus as their Saviour.

Like you, I would rather invite my friends from church home for a meal or out to a social event. If I invited my non-Adventist neighbors, could I talk about how terrible it is that people are wearing jewelry to church? Would they be impressed with the state-of-the-art sound system recently installed in the church (at no small expense)? Could they appreciate the bravery of the nominating committee in electing a woman to serve as head elder?

No, better not drag them into my comfortable little world, parochial as it is. I’ll just concern myself with really important matters— if I can think of any.

But wait. Maybe I can reach out in some concrete way to the non-Christians in my life. Perhaps I can invite our next-door neighbors for a meal. Maybe I should go to the next meeting of our neighborhood association. I might even attend the meeting of the community task force grappling with the problem of neighborhood crime.

And when I’m asked what I do for a living, I’ll gladly confess that I’m a pastor in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and that we believe there is a solution for society’s thorniest problems. I’ll share with them the difference that Christ has made in my life, and I’ll be ready to answer their questions, or simply to accompany them on their spiritual journey— if they invite me.

And if they decide to visit my church? Well, I don’t want them sucked into the cesspool of petty bickering, finger-pointing, or the narrow-minded debating of nonessentials. So I’ll be praying that my new friends will see Jesus reflected in the lives of His people, my fellow church members. I’m going to pray that the Holy Spirit will motivate everyone— from the Sabbath school division leaders, to the deacons, to the hospitality coordinators, to the Community Services directors— to exude the sweet spirit of unconditional love, genuine acceptance, authentic transformation, and a passion to reach all those for whom Christ died. The Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth (John 16:13).

Our commission is to “go, tell.”

My friends, could I talk about how terrible it is that

*Overstated for effect. In fact, most of the Adventists I know are generous, hardworking, and devoted followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.
ADVENTIST QUOTES

“Irma has a bad memory. I know because she often asks me if I love her.”
— Pastor Jim Hartley, to the Red Deer, Alberta, church

“The Sabbath is a sign of sanctification, of being set apart. It’s not a penalty for being Adventist.”
— George Knight, seminary professor, at Georgia-Cumberland Conference camp meeting

“Many of those who claim to be ‘watchmen on the walls’ are in reality undermining the foundation.”
— Gordon Bietz, president of Southern Adventist University, at Florida Conference camp meeting

“When I get to heaven, I’m going to ask Jesus what the last number is!”
— 7-year-old Dylan Chinn, in a kids’ discussion about whether there was an end to numbers

JOTS & TITTLES
In this feature, Adventists share church-related tips. (We can use more jots & tittles.)

RECOMMENDED KIDS’ BOOKS: If you’re looking for a good set of children’s books, I recommend the Forever Stories series, published by Review and Herald. My kids love them, as evidenced by this picture.
— Lanita Medina, Camden, Maine

EMPTY SHOP IDEA: Because of the opening of large supermarkets around the area, my town of Paignton, like many other small towns, has a number of empty shops in its center. So we borrowed an idea from Grace Bainbridge, lay activities leader in the Torquay church. We asked an estate agent if the church could have an empty shop window for displaying Christian literature and information about the church. They were very pleased to let us have the shop window, and we now have a wonderful display of posters, Voice of Prophecy cards, church magazines, and the church name displayed prominently in the middle of town. Already two people are studying the Discovery lessons and reading the Focus magazine. Empty shop windows can be a wonderful way to spread the good news free of charge. It worked in Torquay; now it’s working in Paignton.
— Jen Read, Paignton, Devonshire, England

ATTENTION-GETTER: Daniel Duda, ministerial director and NET ‘98 coordinator for the Czecho-Slovakian Union, is clearly committed to publicizing NET ‘98 in an innovative way. All of the pastors in the union have the signs on their cars (some on both sides and the top) and are very active in promoting the series. “The signs are decals,” says Duda, “so they will come off easily after NET ‘98 is finished. You just heat them with a hair dryer and peel them off.” By early July, 36 of the 50 Czecho-Slovakian Union churches had registered for NET ‘98.

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Mouths will fall open. And some will shout, “Hallelujah!”

By Roy Adams

At a scientific conference in Washington, D.C., in November 1983 attended by some 600 scientists and environmentalists from around the world, two prominent American scientists painted a frightening picture of the aftermath of a nuclear conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union (as it was then).

According to these two scientists, whose views were apparently shared by the overwhelming number of their colleagues, one of the results of such a confrontation, involving even less than half of the massive nuclear megatonnage of the two nations, would be a cloud of dust and smoke weighing 1.2 billion tons. This lethal mass would cover the entire northern hemisphere and swiftly swirl south as well. It would block out 90 percent or more of the sun’s rays. Surface temperatures on the earth would plunge to an average of -13°F, and would remain below freezing for three months. Warm tropical areas like the Caribbean would be turned into the coldest winter. Nothing would grow. And those who happen to survive the blasts and radiation would freeze or starve to death.

It was not a pretty picture.

But someone will argue that the cold war is behind us now, and that there has been significant reduction in the nuclear arsenal. That argument, however, calls to mind a story I read in a magazine a while back—about two boys standing in a gasoline storage room, each with a box of matches in his hand. Agreeing they had too many sticks of matches between them, they each got rid of 20, leaving them both with 10 apiece. Is that room any safer?

That’s precisely where we are today. In fact, the world is even more dangerous now than during the cold war, because of the increased accessibility of outlaw and unstable nations to weapons of mass destruction. There’s even the possibility now that terrorists could get their hands on chemical, biological, or even nuclear weapons, and with these hold entire cities or nations hostage.

For those who know not God, it’s truly minutes to chaos. But for those who know Him, that same hour reads “minutes to morning.” For with the Bible in our hands, we’ve been given a preview of the final chapter of this planet’s present history. We have, thank God, a knowledge of how the drama ends. Our eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.

It’s all packed into Luke 21:25-28: “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. . . . When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (NIV).

Something Never Seen Before

The word translated “redemption” here is the Greek word apolutrosis, commonly used in the Bible to indicate a release by the payment of ransom. But here in this passage the word assumes a wider meaning, referring to the cosmic eschatological rescue operation of the redeemed from this earth.

In 1976 an Air France jet was hijacked and forced to land at Entebbe, Uganda. While the entire world wrung its nervous hands, Israeli military commandos swooped down on Entebbe in the dead of night, flying in below radar signal levels. In a
daring operation, they managed to rescue every single Israeli hostage. Before the Ugandan authorities were able to figure it out, the lightning-speed operation was complete, and those brave commandos with their grateful compatriots were air-borne far away from Ugandan airspace—heading home!

To understand what redemption means in the passage before us, think of that rescue at Entebbe, and then magnify it by 100 trillion trillion to the tenth power. That would probably begin to approximate what Jesus is talking about here. It will be a mind-boggling operation, unique in the history of the universe. And it's what I am calling “the final exodus.”

Learning From the First One

What can we learn from the first Exodus to prepare ourselves for the one ahead? That's a key point of this article. For a long time now I've been intrigued by the major confrontations between Moses and the intransigent Egyptian king in the lead up to the first Exodus. The dynamics of those encounters model for us some of the issues and pitfalls we will face as we prepare for our own exodus. The same one who goaded Pharaoh confronts us now with equal cunning.

Moses' first confrontation with Pharaoh comes in Exodus 5:1, 2: “Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: “Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.” Pharaoh said, ‘Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go’” (NIV).

Hence the drastic divine actions reported in the Exodus account. They were to do two things—make Egypt extremely unattractive to the Israelites; and make the Israelites extremely unattractive to Egypt.

By divine power the Nile River, the main source of the national water supply, was transformed into stinking blood. The fish died, making their own contribution to the general stench. What a huge embarrassment to the proud pharaoh, with diplomats...
and tourists from around the world holding their noses as they went about the capital!

The fish died, but the frogs came alive, invading homes and buildings and creating an elephant-size nuisance everywhere (see Ex. 8).

Then came lice by the millions—on humans and beasts (Ex. 8:16, 17); and in their wake “dense swarms of flies” pouring “into Pharaoh’s palace and into the houses of his officials, and throughout Egypt.” “The land,” the Bible says, “was ruined by the flies” (verse 24, NIV).

The second major confrontation followed. “Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, ‘Go, sacrifice to your God here in the land’” (verse 25, NIV).

How clever! How cunning! The devil doesn’t want us to leave Egypt. “Stay where you are,” he whispers. “You don’t have to leave the world in order to serve God—you can serve Him just as well right where you are.”

I read some time ago that Larry Flynt had become a born-again Christian but would retain his ownership of Hustler magazine. “You don’t have to leave Egypt,” the wily serpent must have whispered into his ears. “Serve God here in the land. Just make some minor adjustments. Give the magazine a Christian flavor. You can present pornography responsibly, in a Christian way!”

The devil is still making that same pitch to you and me. “Sacrifice to God here in the land. You don’t have to change your behavior, your habits, your lifestyle. Just serve God where you are, how you are. No need of release from the slavery of pernicious habits. Serve God in the land—your back bending under the cruel load, and with the whiplash on your bleeding shoulders.”

Moses saw through the crafty pretext, and so should we. “We must take a three-day journey into the desert,” Moses insisted (verse 27, NIV).

But Pharaoh had a counterproposal: “I will let you go to offer sacrifices to the Lord your God in the desert, but you must not go very far” (verse 28, NIV).

When we show signs that we’re determined to leave Egypt, the devil changes tactics: “OK,” he says, “go ahead. Make some changes. In fact, that’s good for business. But don’t be too drastic. Don’t take it too seriously. Don’t get too deep into this religion from the underworld?

The Final Confrontation

With Pharaoh’s refusal to budge, the intensity of the plagues increased—from nuisance to actual destruction. Thousands and thousands of livestock perished. Boils broke out everywhere. And the forces of nature—thunder, lightning, and killer-size hail—took their toll (see Ex. 9:1-26).

Pharaoh took notice, and Moses and Aaron summoned once again, confronted a frightened monarch pleading that the divine hand might hold back. When that happened, however—in answer to Moses’ prayer—Pharaoh, once again, refused to let go (verses 27-34), a fitting symbol of our cosmic archenemy, determined to retain his stranglehold over each of us until we perish at last with him.

Pharaoh’s last two offers come in chapter 10. “I have only the men go,” he says in yet another attempted compromise (verse 11, NIV). Leave your wives, your sisters, your mothers, your children, your livestock. In other words, take your bodies to the wilderness, but leave your hearts in Egypt.

And so he whispers to us still.

In his final offer—an offer that followed a series of yet more devastating plagues—Pharaoh suggested that the entire company might go, leaving only their cattle behind (verse 24). Just think about what livestock meant to a pastoral people like the Israelites, and you immediately get the impact of this crafty proposal. In today’s terms Pharaoh was saying: Leave your bank accounts, your stocks and bonds, your real estate, in Egypt. And even now, on the very eve of the Advent, he would have us think that we can keep our wealth and possessions untouched by the claims of Christ. “Leave your cattle in Egypt,” he says.

Once again turning aside the monarch’s deceptive offer (verses 25-29), Moses and Aaron were driven
It Will Happen Again

What a victory for the Lord! And the point here is that it will all happen again—on a grander, more spectacular, scale—in connection with the final exodus.

In the first Exodus God sent Moses and Aaron and said, "Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the Lord as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me" (verses 31, 32, NIV).

That did it! "During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, 'Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the Lord as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me'" (verses 31, 32, NIV).

Those soft-bellied, spineless cowards who gave Him up to be crucified— they'll come forth in a special resurrection to see Him in glory.

And so it will be in the final exodus. Just when God's faithful, unarmed pilgrims appear totally surrounded and helpless, just when every earthly support has been removed and the wicked host are ready to crush them in their fury—just then, in the midnight darkness of this world—a mysterious voice will sound across the universe: "It is done." And great voices in heaven will announce that "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15).

The sun, moon, and stars will be shaken from their natural places, and what popular scientists, sophisticated intellectuals, and scoffing materialists never dreamed could happen will happen. And they will see the Son of man coming with a trillion angels, to accomplish the most stupendous rescue operation in the history of the ages—the final exodus.

And so this excited editor wants to be a part of it! How about you? Hallelujah!

1 Except one woman who had earlier been taken to a Ugandan hospital with a heart problem.

2 E. G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 260. (Italics supplied.)

Roy Adams is an associate editor of the Adventist Review.
Getting Older’s No Big Deal

This isn’t all there is.

BY BERT WILLIAMS

At the crack of the bat I started back from my center field position, sensing immediately that the ball would land far beyond where I had been waiting for it. Turning my back, I ran head down, fearing the worst possible outcome: that the loaded bases would be cleared by a grand slam, and I would be reduced to chasing down the ball on the far side of the second-grade dodgeball game. But hoping against hope, I glanced back over my right shoulder as I ran and, discovering that the ball and I were on rapidly converging trajectories, reached up and grabbed it, recording the final out of the inning.

With visions of Vic Wertz’s fly ball and Willie Mays’s basket catch flooding through my euphoric brain, I accepted the grateful adulation of my teammates as eighth-grade noon-hour recess came to a glorious end. Probably no one else remembers, but I still do!

In another game and another time, I streaked forward from center field, hoping for a shoestring catch. Too late I realized that the ball would land behind me—actually about where I had been positioned at the beginning of the play. Though I did make some decent catches during the game, and although my teammates later assured me that there was quite a breeze blowing out to center field and that it was undoubtedly of gale-force proportions up where the ball had been, I know the truth—my skills as a center fielder are not, in my 40s, what they were becoming when I was 14.

Few things, I am discovering, are forever. Though I have not experienced a midlife crisis of life-shattering proportions, it is becoming easier for me to understand those who do. It is a time when one can no longer avoid the reality that things are changing, and not necessarily all for the better.

There are things that I do far better than an adolescent could do or even comprehend. So it’s not that I’m thinking that life is passing me by. It isn’t, yet. Nevertheless, I am becoming more conscious at an existential level that there are limits, that they are approaching, and that they cannot be avoided.

Some who view life through glasses with a decidedly secular tint claim that a normal human life span is enough. We don’t need eternal life in order to be fulfilled. We should live life now—seize the day, savor the moment.

Well, fine; I’m all for savoring the moment. I agree that life is good. So what am I missing here? Why should I cheerfully acquiesce to passing on in a few years if I am having so many savorable moments?

Even one so thoroughly secularized as Woody Allen, when told that he would be immortalized through the legacy of his creative work, is said to have sardonically replied that it would actually be his preference to achieve immortality through not dying.

Which is, of course, exactly what Jesus offers: “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him” (John 3:36, NIV).

Those who claim not to care much about eternal life often have at least one of two predictable characteristics: they may possess that naive illusion of innate personal immortality that so often afflicts members of the human race in their earlier years, or they may not care for eternal life if it has to come on God’s terms rather than their own. After all, eternal life, while a gift that is freely available, is nevertheless not going to be received by everyone.

Jesus’ words are clear: “Whoever lives and believes in me, he said, “will never die” (John 11:26, NIV).

“Whoever loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me” (John 12:25, 26, NIV).

This last text is hard for many to digest. “I don’t hate my life!” I can hear someone saying. “In fact, I love my life. I have what I want. Why should I give up my good life now for some uncertain future that I am not even sure I would enjoy?”

That is a sensible question. And I must admit, I have no success at generating any semblance of hatred for my life. I have a wonderful family, good friends, a job I find enjoyable and rewarding, hobbies that fill spare time with delightful diversions, and a sense of God’s presence with me in all these experiences. Am I really supposed to hate this? Does enjoying myself now actually disallow the hereafter?

The answer is maybe yes, maybe no.

To understand the meaning behind Jesus’ words about hating one’s life it is instructive to remember that Jesus also
recommended hating one’s parents (Luke 14:26)! However, He rebuked those who mistreated their parents in later years (Mark 7:9-13), recommended love rather than hatred, even for one’s enemies (Matt. 5:43-48), and clearly loved His own mother deeply to His dying day (John 19:25-27).

The answer is that what we would call gross exaggeration simply did not seem to be so to those people who lived in Palestine 2,000 years ago. What seems contradictory to us just wasn’t to them. I don’t know why that’s true; it’s just the way they thought and spoke. They drew stark contrasts and thought this use of speech made things clear. We find their exaggerated contrasts extreme and even appalling. It is simply a cultural difference that we must accept.

So let’s be clear: when Jesus recommended hating one’s family, He did not actually mean it in the way we would take the words. He meant, in the way we would say it, that the kingdom of heaven must have first place in our hearts, even before what is most dear in our earthly experience, our families.

The parallel with the text about eternal life is unmistakable. Jesus clearly did not want people to have hateful lives; He spent much of His time working to improve the quality of life for the people He met (e.g., Luke 8:22-9:17). He evidently found enjoyment in social occasions (Mark 2:15-17; John 2:1-11; 12:1-3), and He clearly did not hate His own life, as we would understand the term, but rather clung to it desperately when it was nearly over (Luke 22:41-44).

His point is that if the world is more important to us than the kingdom of heaven, the world is all we will get. This certainly means that eternal life will not be for everyone, and that spiritual priorities must have first place. But it clearly does not mean that eternal life is necessarily disallowed for those who find enjoyment in life’s good and wholesome pleasures.

Indeed, the present world and the world to come are parts of one unified experience for those who are in Christ. “The kingdom of heaven” is an expression that Jesus used to refer to both present experience (e.g., Matt. 4:17; 12:28; 13:31-33) and future glory (e.g., Matt. 5:10-12; Luke 22:29, 30).

“Heaven begins here,” Ellen White explains. “We respond to His invitation, ‘Come, learn of Me,’ and in thus coming we begin the life eternal . . . . As we walk with Jesus in this life, we may be filled with His love, satisfied with His presence. All that human nature can bear, we may receive here. But what is this compared with the hereafter?” (The Desire of Ages, pp. 331, 332).

So, O.K., my softball skills are eroding, but my musical skills are still improving. All right, I admit it: eventually, if life in this world continues long enough, it’s all going to go. My options are either a quick, unexpected passing or a slow decline—neither of them the stuff of especially pleasant dreams. If my limited time on earth is all there is to life, then I’ve got plenty of reason for disillusionment as the years pile up.

But that’s the point: this isn’t all there is. The earthly life of a Christian is, in fact, merely the prelude to an eternity beyond. If death should interrupt, it is only that: an interruption—an intermission—not some cataclysmic final ending.

It is not my intention to imply that the grief that accompanies the death of a loved one is unimportant or unnecessary. The anguish resulting from the death of one who has been close is very real—and not just for those outside of Christ.

And I do not relish the prospect, if time should last, of my own passing. Nevertheless, as my life moves along inexorably toward its earthly end, my focus of attention can be cheerfully elsewhere. There’s a bumper sticker around that says “Don’t take life so seriously. It’s only a temporary condition.” Those who are in Christ can turn that whimsical epigram on its head: “Don’t take death so seriously! It’s only temporary.”

And after all, we already have eternal life!

Bert Williams teaches at Maxwell Adventist Academy, Nairobi, Kenya.
Divine Providence in the Midst of War

The gripping story of a man named Philip

INNED DOWN UNDER

the violent cross fire of opposing armies, Philip and a small band of six other teenagers—seeking to defend their hometown of Derventa—were in desperate need of a shelter. Any shelter. Derventa was one of those unlucky towns that happened to be on the border of the “ethnic cleansing” wars that raged through the Balkans. With the tide of strife sweeping back and forth over its homes and population, Derventa was the recipient of repeated strafing and bombing attacks, threatening to bring civilized life to extinction within its confines.

Not aligned with the armies waging their war over this picturesque city in Bosnia, Philip and his band sought refuge in the
nearest building on the hillside, where they cowered under the fire of snipers wielding automatic weapons and grenade launchers. It was a strategic hillside. One army occupied the town center and commerce district, which lay hard by the Danube River—gateway to Western Europe upstream and to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean to the east—while the opposing forces commanded the high ground on which the homes and gardens of Derventa rose in the beautiful patchwork of life.

Crawling and stumbling through the darkness, the desperate band groped its way into a shadowy building that loomed before them in the night. The windows and doors had all been shot out in previous battles, and the roof had been nearly destroyed under the constant shelling. Avoiding the doors as being too risky, one by one the self-appointed militia crawled through the windows, finding protection from the raging battle as they lay on the floor of this masonry structure.

Safely hidden, in the darkness Philip and his friends began the exploration of their confines. Their first impression was that this was a rather large house. Groping their way through a large room, they stumbled across a folding chair. “Good,” said one of Philip’s friends. “At least we can sit down and rest.” Continuing on, they found another chair, and then rows of chairs—maybe close to a hundred of them, all lined up and facing the same direction. The focal point of the chairs was a strange kind of upright desk. A nd to the side was an electronic organ. Being of Muslim background, though not particularly devout in their religious practice, the group had no idea what the inside of a Protestant church looked like.

Not by Accident

Their refuge, as it turned out, was the bombed-out hulk of the local Seventh-day Adventist church, which was to become their hiding place for the next two months. After they had caught a little fitful sleep on the floor, daylight finally began to awaken them and reveal their surroundings further. There were several rooms in addition to the large one with chairs. One had books and pictures of interest for children. Maybe a nursery of some kind, Philip thought. (It was actually the children’s Sabbath school room.)

Sensing that they were in some sort of religious building but not understanding the architecture—it didn’t look like anything they had known either in their Muslim background or in the cathedrals they had seen—they made themselves at home, but kept a careful distance from the pulpit and organ. Somehow these seemed to have a sacred significance and must not be defiled.

One piece of the furnishings in the room particularly mystified the group, however. Just behind the organ on the back wall hung a strange wooden plaque. It had numbers on it—three rows of numbers, three numbers each, carefully arranged in a block, one row above another. The numbers were 157, 264, 421. What could that mean? They calculated them carefully—horizontally, vertically, diagonally. The number 157

Reconstruction

The world church offering for the rebuilding of churches damaged and destroyed during the recent war in Bosnia and Croatia is scheduled for October 10, 1998 (December 12 in the North American Division). It is an opportunity for Seventh-day Adventist churches around the world to help in the restoration of these buildings of worship for our brothers and sisters in the former Yugoslavia. Forty-four churches were damaged to varying degrees during the conflict, with 12 being totally destroyed.

Pictured here is the weed-infested remains of our church in Vukovar, with the author and Miroslav Pujic in the foreground. Watch for video reports on this topic in upcoming WorldStory segments on the ACN First Wednesday program during the last quarter of this year.
Unplanned Pilgrimage

Paul crossed the bridge to the other side of his hometown of Sarajevo in May of 1992 in search of some medicine for his ailing father. While he was there, the bridge was blown up and the war started. He was a refugee just across the river, only a few kilometers from his home, for the next four years. While there he became acquainted with the Seventh-day Adventist Church through the work of ADRA and became a mail carrier for the ADRA delivery service in Sarajevo, the only postal service in operation during the long siege of the city.

During his exile he joined the church and was baptized. Even though he could see across the river to his former home from a hill nearby our church, he was unable to return and knew nothing of the fate of his family for the duration of the war. Finally in May of 1996—four years after his fateful trip across the bridge—he was able to return home, only to learn that his father had died the year before. His mother and sister were living in terror in the back portion of their bullet-ridden, but still standing, home.

Paul’s courage and newfound faith have brought hope and restoration to his devastated neighborhood. He is determined to see not only the rebuilding of the damaged homes, but the restoration of hope to his community through a knowledge of salvation in Jesus.

Jesus—More Than a Picture

It was necessary frequently to sneak out to the abandoned houses surrounding this bunker to scrounge for supplies of food, water, and munitions. Still unable to use the doorway because of the danger of detection—and its openness to snipers in buildings nearby—Philip was particularly irritated by a picture that hung near the window he needed to use for access.

It was a picture of Christ with outstretched hands and the inscription “Come unto Me.” “It was incongruous to imagine the invitation of a God in this hell of a place,” he states. How can we come to Him when we are constantly under fire from all sides? How can there be a God in such a place? He angrily wondered to himself. He was tempted to rip it down, but was restrained by his respect and superstition of this religious site.

Then it was his turn to go in search of supplies. And just as he was about to climb out the window, he heard his name called audibly behind him. Quickly stepping back from the window, he looked for the caller, but there was no one. Precisely at that moment a volley of gunfire blazed into the opening, shattering to splinters what was left of the wooden casing surrounding what had previously been the window. They had been discovered. And now escape was mandatory. It would not be long until they were overrun and driven from their refuge in the church—or, more probably, killed there.

Philip, though not understanding it, felt a divine presence in the call of his name, which saved him from certain death that he had gone out the window. He had heard of prayer, but didn’t know what it was. Yet in his heart he prayed for a lull in the shelling just long enough to give them time to escape. At that moment the gunfire stopped. A serene calm descended on the war scene, and Philip shouted to his companions, “This is the sign. It is time for us to escape now.” Quickly abandoning their place of refuge for the past two
months, Philip and his friends vanished into the broken city, even as the shooting resumed behind them.

Months passed before the war was over. Exhausted from the effort to survive and depressed over the ruins of the battered hometown that surrounded him, Philip just wanted to get away. Assuming that his sister, Suada, had escaped to the home of their grandparents in another city when the war broke out, Philip set out to find her. But she was not there. Following up every lead on her location, he finally had in his possession the telephone number of a school near the city of Marusevec, in Croatia, where it was rumored that she had gone as a refugee.

"Come and See"

"I just wanted to see my sister," he says. "I didn’t know what I wanted to do after that, but I just had to get away from the destruction all around me." Upon establishing contact with Suada by telephone, Philip accepted her urging to come see her at the school in Marusevec. "What kind of a place is it?" he asked. But Suada would not say. "I can’t explain it to you on the telephone," she stated. "It is in a wonderful old castle. You will just have to come see for yourself."

"But what is it like?" he pressed. "Is it some kind of convent?"

"No," Suada replied. "You will just have to come and see. It is too wonderful to describe." So on her word Philip set out to see his sister with great wonderment at what he would find. He had planned to stay for only a day. But at the urging of Suada and the good people at the school, he extended his visit.

Suada shared with Philip some of the good books she had been given at the school. And to his astonishment, he noticed that the address of the publishing house in Belgrade was the same as the one he had seen in the bullet-ridden books on the shelf in the little closet at his hiding place in Derventa. He had to know more, so his study of the Bible and Adventist literature began in earnest.

School had already begun many weeks before. In fact, it was just now the end of the first quarter of classes at the Marusevec Adventist Seminary, where Suada and Philip were staying. But Philip was urged to enroll for the second semester. Being a college graduate with a degree in electronic engineering as well as a Muslim, he found it somewhat of a stretch to begin in the second quarter of ministerial training at an Adventist seminary. But with the help of a special tutor, Philip made up the work in Greek and theology that he had missed and successfully finished out the school year.

Later during a visit to the Central Adventist Church in Zagreb he met a young woman by the name of Blanka. After getting to know her better, in 1994 he was both baptized and married. The two spent three years as refugees in Germany. Then Philip and his new wife returned home to rebuild their lives, which had been shattered by the tragedy of war.

With his training in engineering, Philip now works in the manufacture of precision diamond-cutting tools. But as I interviewed him in the bombed-out doorway of what once was his refuge—but now is his church—he expressed his burning ambition to see this church rebuilt and restored again as a refuge in the city. This time not from the bombs and gunfire of war, but for his fellow citizens who seek refuge in his newfound Saviour, Jesus.

Gary Patterson is director of Mission Awareness.
If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,” said Amazing Facts evangelist Brian McMahon as he began the baptismal service on May 17 at the Maranatha Private Corrections Victor Valley Medium Community Correctional Facility in Adelanto, California.

Eighty candidates—one woman staff member and 79 inmates—patiently awaited their turn. For more than two hours applause and cheers welcomed each newly baptized person into the family of God.

The culmination of a five-week prophecy seminar, this unprecedented event is evidence of the amazing power of God through a new way of doing business in the California prison system. It’s called privatization. This prison is owned by an Adventist lay member.

For the 550 men housed at the Maranatha Private Corrections facility, this is a new day. Back in prison as a result of parole violations, these inmates have all done hard time. Some have spent more years behind bars than on the streets. Many know each other from years of frequenting California’s numerous state prisons. All are too familiar with the California Department of Corrections (CDC) incarceration program.

From the moment they step off the bus and hear “Right this way, gentlemen,” they know something is different about this prison. “Gentlemen” is not a name they’re accustomed to. They will be called by “Mr.”—not a number. They have a choice of where to sleep, what to eat, and how to live. For the first time in a very long time—they have a chance for true and lasting freedom.

“Being here is definitely a blessing!” says Mr. Van Winkle. “I was praying for help. I want to be the best father and husband I can be. And I have a heart condition. My dad died of a heart condition at age 32. Now I’m learning to eat right and live right. I know God had a hand in it.”

Upon arrival Van Winkle learned through a two-hour orientation that he had a choice. He could be a “regular” prisoner with the usual CDC standards or he could be a Newstart program prisoner. The challenge was given: “Now you have the privilege of investing in yourself, of turning your life around. You can start making choices here that will affect your outside life—that’s what we’re all about.” Since its inception, about 50 percent of the inmates have chosen to try the program.

The prison is divided into two sides. “On the Newstart side we deal with the physical, mental, spiritual, and social aspect of changing their lives,” explains Larry Kositsin, director of counseling and development. The program includes a vegan diet, no sugar, no caffeine, no milk or eggs, and two health classes to learn to prepare the food. “They clean out their systems, have better circulation, clearer thinking processes, and help reverse diseases,” says Kositsin.

Inmates attend morning exercise classes, afternoon substance-abuse classes, and a stop-smoking plan, and learn how to live drug-free. There is job training, anger management, counseling on family issues, and a class on how to prepare for work. Cosmetic dentistry is provided to restore appearance, and a video of the inmate’s new look is sent home to the family. In the dormitories are large-screen TVs with wholesome programming on weekdays—no violence, profanity, or sex. Sabbath viewing includes Three Angels Broadcasting Network and nature and other religious programs.

The inmates receive a minimum of 30 Bible studies. Two Adventist pastors teach small-group studies four hours each day in English and Spanish. Keith Johnson, of the Quiet Hour, comes each week. Mark Finley’s videos are available. On Wednesday evenings the class is taught by Terry Moreland, chief executive officer of Maranatha Private Corrections.

Moreland became involved in prison ministry in 1984 when he met Richard Bland, president of United Prison Ministry International, at an Adventist-Laymen’s Services and Industries (ASI) convention. He began to support the ministry, which is involved in 14 countries and all 50
AU Student Drowns in St. Joseph River

A tragic canoeing accident on July 25 took the life of Andrews University student In-Kook Ahn, of Korea. The 22-year-old senior chemistry major was part of a church-sponsored canoe ride on the St. Joseph River. At approximately 8:00 p.m. a canoe carrying Ahn and two other AU students capsized as it made a turn in the river near the village of Sodus.

The two other canoe occupants, Diana Nam and Hyun-Meyung Ha, were immediately rescued by boaters in the area, but witnesses say that Ahn went under the water before rescuers reached him.

More than 20 young people participated in the outing that was sponsored by the Berrien Springs Korean Seventh-day Adventist Church. The group took an approximate five-mile trip down the river from the Andrews campus to Sodus. When Ahn and his fellow occupants missed the designated landing point, the river current carried them a half mile downstream. The operator of a small fishing boat offered to tow the canoe occupants back to the landing site, against the swift current.

Upon passing through Oxbow Bend, a near-90-degree turn in the river’s course, the canoe capsized when it hit a fast broadside current. Ahn, not an experienced swimmer, had worn his life preserver all afternoon. But his expectation of the imminent return to the landing had given a false sense of security: during the half-mile tow Ahn removed his life preserver.

Divers and personnel from the Berrien County Sheriff’s Department searched for Ahn’s body over the weekend, but discovered it after 3:30 p.m. on Monday, July 27, not more than 100 yards from where he was last seen.

“This campus is shaken by the tragic loss of one of our students, and we are praying for In-Kook’s family and friends,” said David Faehner, vice president for university advancement. “A nytime a life of promise is taken from us, we grieve and wonder why. So this is a time for our whole community to come together, to remember In-Kook’s contribution to our campus life, and to support and pray for those most affected by his death.”

Ahn started studying at AU in 1995 and planned to graduate in 1999.

Musical Celebration Commemorates Brazil Campus

The largest musical event ever hosted by the Andrews Church in Brazil commemorated the fifteenth anniversary of the new 1,800-acre campus of Brazil.
I have a recurring dream. Well, more of a nightmare, really. I’m with a bunch of fellow Adventists as Christ returns. This is it—the fulfillment of the blessed hope, the consummation of the divine promise, the completion of God’s salvation. As the world ends in chaos, we look up to welcome our returning King.

Except my fellow Adventists are far from happy.

“Can’t be,” says one.

“A nother counterfeit?” wonders another.

“Doesn’t fit my chart,” mutters a third, looking down at an elaborate sheet of time lines and dates and symbols.

Consolidating their research, they are able to prove categorically and conclusively that this is not the Second Advent, because the king of the north has not attempted the defilement resulting in the abomination of desolation under the rule of Persia in which the armies of Armageddon overcome the hordes of the East under the sixth seal at the time of the multiplied myriads of trumpets that the 24 elders are to blow.

Could it be that one of the devil’s delusions is to have us so focused on end-time events that we forget about the God who is going to see us through? Is it not also possible that as Adventists we concentrate so much on the external Christ who is to return that we fail to recognize the internal Christ now active in our daily lives? The words of Christ to His disciples were not “I am leaving now, and I’ll see you when I return,” but “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

In our desire to proclaim Christ’s return, we must also emphasize His presence—day by day, every step of the way.

NEWS COMMENTARY

Aventist College in Engenheiro Coelho, São Paulo, reports Revista Adventista. Some 10,000 persons attended the program, arriving in 120 tour buses and 1,500 cars. The program featured evangelical recording artist Steve Green of Nashville, Tennessee. Other guests included the São Paulo governor, Mario Covas, and the mayors of the cities of Engenheiro Coelho and Artur Nogueira.

The highlight of the program was the unveiling of a plague recognizing the work of Walter Bogar, the college’s first president, who died on March 8. Bogar played a major role in making the new campus a reality, according to Revista Adventista.

Indian Church Leader Dies

Aventist members and friends from all over India gathered at Pune on August 11 to give M. E. Cherian a touching farewell. The former president of the Southern Asia Division died on August 7 after a long illness. He served as division president from 1990 to 1997.

Cherian, 72, also served with distinction as president of Spicer Memorial College, the church’s premier institution in southern Asia.

Rich tributes were paid at the funeral by his colleagues. Division president Ron Watts expressed his personal pain at the great loss. “He was one who knew how to smile even when he was in much pain. He also knew how to make others smile,” said Watts. To the large gathering, which included many of other faiths, he explained our firm belief that we will see the departed leader on the resurrection morning.

Born in 1926, Cherian began working for the Adventist Church in the early 1940s. He joined the staff at Spicer in 1944 and stayed until 1990, serving 27 years as president.

Expressing the family’s gratitude, Kenneth Cherian, the younger son, described how much the family was touched by the prayers and gestures of love. Truly Cherian was a leader who was loved and respected for his exemplary and honest life, a life committed to the service of people, says Dittu Abraham, Southern Asia Division communication director.

Churches Join to Launch LOVE TV in Jamaica

LOVE TV, the newest TV station in Jamaica, will be a dynamic force that counters the trend toward violence and sex on television, according to station officials.
Test Your Global Mission IQ

1. On the main island of a three-island nation in the Indian Ocean, the Adventist Medical System opened a dispensary funded by the American embassy, Global Mission, and ADRA. When three Adventist doctors set up the dispensary, health authorities invited them to manage two others. Despite the lack of electricity and drinking water, the new facilities serve a large clientele, some of whom have been inquiring about the “prophet Jesus.” What is the name of this island nation, situated between the African mainland and Madagascar?

   A. Réunion  
   B. Maldives  
   C. Mauritius  
   D. Comoros

2. Jagat Masih waited 57 years to see his dream come true of an Adventist church in his hometown in India. Now, thanks to Global Mission and Maranatha Volunteers International, a church is being built. Jagat became an Adventist in his youth. In 1972 he experienced two miracles of healing. Telling these stories became the basis for his witnessing. Today there are 26 baptized members in Dyalpur, in Jullundur. When the church building is ready, people who want to know more about the God who hears and answers prayers will attend. The state where Jagat lives shares its name with a neighboring province in Pakistan. It is state is—

   A. Punjab  
   B. Kashmir  
   C. Sind  
   D. Uttar Pradesh

Answers:

1. D. Comoros. Lying within the territory of the Indian Ocean Union Mission, this island nation previously had no Adventist presence. Its population of a half million is mainly Sunni Muslim; there is a small percentage of Roman Catholics.

2. A. Punjab is in northern India. This state, along with Haryana, forms the North India Section of the Northern India Union. This field has 25 churches serving 43 million people—a ratio of one church for each 1.72 million persons. Contrast that with 4,700 churches in North America—one for each 63,000 persons in the population.

   — compiled by Don Yost, General Conference Global Mission Office

NEWS BREAK

The station will provide healthy, family-oriented, and biblically based programming.

“The electronic media is largely out of sync with what is desirable. There is too much that is crass, crude, and vulgar,” says Mercliff Weir, communication director for the West Indies Union. “The church is aware of the power of the media to affect lives, and we believe TV will be a most powerful agency for the transmission of positive attitudes and the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

LOVE TV follows the successful launch of LOVE FM radio station in 1993 by the National Religious Media Commission (NRMC).

The NRMC was established in 1987 as the government deregulated broadcasting and allowed media expansion. Religious leaders in Jamaica believe that the use of popular media is one of the most effective means to ensure that religious beliefs continue to play a prominent part in society.—Adventist News Network.

News Notes

✔ CompuServe Users. You can access the Adventist Review online each week within 48 hours of press time, and several days before the magazine reaches your home. The Review is available free of charge in the Adventist Online Forum (Go SDA).

If you have e-mail, you can also contact the Review staff online. Send letters, prayer requests, and subscription requests to reviewmag@adventist.org.

✔ Pathfinders and leaders will enjoy five days of exciting activities and Christ-centered programs at the Discover the Power (DTP) International Pathfinder Camporee, August 10-14, 1999, in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. DTP staff are meeting continually, planning for the largest Pathfinder event in history. The registration limit for North America is 17,000.

Don’t miss the opportunity to attend the third and final “Walk-Around” and obtain the latest information for DTP Camporee. You are invited to meet at the EAA Museum in Oshkosh on November 15, 1998 at 8:30 a.m. For more information call 800-Youth-2-U.

What’s Upcoming

Sept. 19 Youth Spiritual Commitment Celebration
Sept. 19 Family Togetherness Day
Sept. 26 Pathfinder Day
Sept. 26 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for the Inter-American Division
Oct. 4-10 Health Emphasis Week
Oct. 10 Sabbath School Guest Day
A friend recently asked my opinion concerning her divorce, as it now seems to relate to the question of her remarrying. A few years ago my friend divorced her husband because of his drug problem, his refusal to seek help for it, and the problems that resulted therefrom. She was at that time, and still is, a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her husband has never been a member. Within the past year she has been told by two male friends that the possibility of being married to her presents a problem. They cite the latter part of Matthew 5:32 as the reason. Her former husband has not remarried. Your opinion please.

While the laws of many countries permit one to marry again if legally divorced (notwithstanding the reason), God’s Word makes remarriage for any cause other than fornication (adultery) reason for church discipline. Statements from the Church Manual (pp. 182, 183) that illumine this position are:

a. “In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus declared plainly that there could be no dissolution of the marriage tie, except for unfaithfulness to the marriage vow.”—Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 63. (Matt. 5:32; Matt. 19:9.)

b. “Unfaithfulness to the marriage vow has generally been seen to mean adultery and/or fornication. However, the New Testament word for fornication includes certain other sexual irregularities. (1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:9, 10; Rom. 1:24-27.) Therefore, sexual perversions, including homosexual practices, are also recognized as a misuse of sexual powers and a violation of the divine intention in marriage. Absent such they are just cause for divorce.”

c. “A separation or divorce, in which ’unfaithfulness to the marriage vow’ ... is not involved, does not give either one the scriptural right to remarry, unless in the meantime the other party has remarried; committed adultery or fornication; or died. Should a member who has been thus divorced remarry without these biblical grounds, he or she shall be disfellowshipped; and the one whom he or she marries, if a member, shall also be disfellowshipped from the church.”

The sister whose circumstances you describe would do well to consult with her pastor regarding her situation.

Going It Alone

Is it true, as I recently read, that the trend toward congregationalism in the North American Division is primarily a phenomenon of the middle- to upper-class Anglo sector of our church in that part of the world? If so, how do you explain the absence of this movement in our Black and Hispanic churches?

While congregationalism has manifested itself within Adventism in a surprising fashion during the past few years, to characterize its manifestation as a movement is probably ascribing more impetus to this phenomenon than the facts support.

Are the present examples of its growth peculiar to the Anglo sector of the North American Division? No. I am aware of several minority congregations in this division that have separated from our sisterhood of churches, and others that continue to function within the structure via this emphasis. In most cases the reasons are the same: differences of doctrinal understanding, conference authority, church finance, and, in some cases, worship style. The occurrences may be fewer and less heralded than in the majority Anglo sector, but they do exist, and they exist across ethnic lines in other divisions of the Western world as well.

As for the minority sector of the church in North America, the primary danger is not congregationalism, but Pentecostalism, dependence upon a worship experience that emphasizes “feel-good” music and preaching, while undervaluing doctrinal study and the historic mission of Adventism. Congregationalism and Pentecostalism are both growing threats to church unity. A key to preventing these and other divisive forces from escalating is for church leadership to sustain an informed, encouraged, and enabled pastorate. Shepherds who lead the flock by sound gospel proclamation—especially the truth of righteousness by faith—and fair operational policies are critical to this and every other index of church prosperity.

Calvin B. Rock is a general vice president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He holds doctoral degrees in ministry and Christian ethics.
Two New Believers
From the Land of Punt

BY ANDREA STEELE

Prologue: The warning came from a friend one night late as Said attended to the generator at the school where he worked and taught. “Don’t go home; they know you are a Christian.” Alarmed, Said slept at a friend’s home. The next day he went home the back way and took his wife—nine months pregnant—and three small children to his father-in-law’s house in another village. Then, aided by a sympathetic Christian with a small amount of money, Said fled the land of his birth by truck and on foot. The journey took five days. He sought other Somalis in Nairobi, and was introduced to several Somali Christians . . .

WHAT TO DO! YOU WANT TO broadcast to a country where, at last count, there was one Adventist. And where, for political and other reasons, it would be impossible to set up a recording studio. So who’s going to make the programs? And where?

Samuel Misiani, Adventist World Radio-Africa Region director, found himself in this dilemma when the Eastern Africa Division asked Adventist World Radio (AWR) to begin broadcasts in the Somali language.

So Sam took “a step of faith.” He had earlier made contacts with another Christian broadcast organization in Nairobi, Kenya, and discovered that they had a few Somali Christians on staff. Sam made friends with them, and soon had one, Dalmar, excited about beginning a new service in Somali.

Dalmar took a pay cut and went to work on contract. Since he was not an Adventist, Sam asked Dalmar to translate health and family life scripts and to read the Bible. Dalmar’s enjoyment of the new job infected some of his Somali program producer friends, who volunteered to help with the Adventist programs.

Then a miracle happened. Sam was happily surprised one Sabbath, after being away for a few weeks, to see a smiling Dalmar coming toward him in church. Dalmar said he had taken to heart what he was learning by translating and reading the scripts—even health and family life programs carry the essential Adventist message of salvation—and wanted to study the Adventist message more deeply. He had joined a baptismal class.

At about the same time, Dalmar told Sam that he had met another Somali Christian, newly arrived in Kenya, and thought his would be a good voice for the program. So Said came along to the studio—Said, who had fled his homeland; Said, who had had to leave his family behind.

What Dalmar hadn’t said was that he had shared his new-found beliefs with Said, who also became interested and joined the baptismal class with Dalmar.

They were baptized on Sabbath, March 28, the firstfruits of the AWR Somali broadcasts.

Epilogue: Said hasn’t seen his family for nearly a year. He has a new child whom he has never seen, whose name he does not know. His prayer is that he will be able to return soon to share his new faith with them and to worship in his own country without fear.

Andrea Steele is director of public relations and development for Adventist World Radio.
“Even doubtful accusations leave a stain behind them” (Thomas Fuller).

Three hundred years later that truism is alive and well in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

I listened during one recent Sabbath school class to a venerable brother attribute various of the church’s deficiencies to a failure to preach the three angels’ messages in any systematic and thorough way. He was sincere, but his assertion resonated with what I have recognized as a penchant among Adventists, at least in the North American Division—to flagellate themselves and castigate anonymous others under the rubric of the first-person plural.

As I have been pondering that point in recent days, I have found it increasingly difficult to reconcile the bright and optimistic tones of our Sabbath school mission stories with the dirge of self-deprecating descriptions of spiritual atrophy in our ranks. How is it that an apparently crippled and diseased church is able to present outward symptoms of spiritual health? How can it woo large numbers of converts worldwide?

Now, I understand the role of the Holy Spirit in the process of conversion; I understand too that God has many means and media by which to proclaim the gospel. Jesus Himself said, “I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!” (Luke 19:40). This is His work and not ours; we are mere agents. But we are called to be salt and light in a perverse generation, and I cannot accept a message of ineffable joy being delivered against a backdrop of miserable self-description. People look at us; they watch us, and they appraise our experience with Jesus Christ.

Do some take a perverse pride in tracing our pedigree as the Laodicean church? That is frequently trumpeted with more vigor, I believe, than the messages of hope, comfort, and salvation expressed in Jesus’ commission to us. There is an entire continuum of spiritual vitality in the Adventist Church. The story isn’t over yet, and it doesn’t end in woe and defeat. It ends in Jesus’ magnificent victory, His glorious deliverance of the happy righteous. Why do we seem more eager for the despairing instead of the uplifting?

Somber self-recrimination is not attractive, even where it is necessary, and it is not necessary in extremis. It obstructs God’s work and imposes on His earnest laborers a difficulty that He does not intend. He calls upon us to be joyous, to work in love, to feel and share His peace. While God admonished and chastened His people in ancient times—and in some trenchant terms—His was not an everlasting rhythm of condemnation. He recognized obedience, fervor, and loving discipleship, and rewarded it. Solomon’s request for divine wisdom (1 Kings 3) brought the Lord’s favor and much material blessing as well.

Jesus says, “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom...

BY COGGIE GIBBONS
prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34). The apostles and early Christian workers encouraged one another, and were admonished to do so by Paul: “Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another just as you also are doing” (1 Thess. 5:11). Our godly ancestors were in the habit of recognizing and acknowledging good work for the Lord, whatever it might have been.

Pernicious for its subtlety as much as for its destructiveness, the use of this mass implication by the first-person plural is a means of incorporating the speaker into the culpable mass of believers. Its subtlety is frequently matched by its hypocrisy. It affords a speaker or writer the opportunity to disingenuously defame others and yet avoid the unmixed scrutiny due an accuser. “We” too often seems really to mean “you” or “they,” and not “I.”

I have very seldom heard any fellow believer publicly accept individual fault for failure or negligence in doing God’s work or in living the life of discipleship to which He calls us. The chosen voice is always “we” or “they.” I do not want to keep this vein of thought and expression going. I want instead to recognize that there is good among us. By God’s grace, we do the right things at the right times on many unremarked occasions— noted, perhaps, only in Heaven’s scrolls. Many are the faithful, I am certain, who toil without our awareness. But God watches, and His angels write. Those faithful ones will have their reward.

I have not always been true and faithful in my service to the Lord. With no pride, I use the first person. But with exaltation, I use the third: His grace makes possible our good works; His love makes possible our salvation; His strength delivers us from our enfeeblement and sets us on our feet. Praise Him!

“For the Lord God helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I shall not be ashamed” (Isa. 50.7).

* Scripture references in this article are from the New American Standard Bible.

Edward “Coggie” Gibbons writes from Paget, Bermuda.
I wanted to reflect God’s love to my dying uncle. But how?

BY BRENDA D. HILL

I HAVE TO REMEMBER WHAT HE LOOKS like... I mustn’t forget what Uncle Rob looks like.

Three of us went to the hospital to visit Uncle Rob. It was suspected that Uncle Rob had acquired immune deficiency syndrome, the cursed AIDS. I was warned that he didn’t “look like himself.” To say that a person does not “look like himself” is a strange expression. If they don’t look like themselves, who or what do they look like? I felt the need of divine strength.

Lord, Help Me

Before walking into Uncle Rob’s hospital room, I prayed, Lord, help me not to fall apart, no matter how bad it is. I inhaled deeply, tightened my grip on the Bible in my hand, and walked into his room.

There were three beds: two were on the left side of the door; and the bed where Uncle Rob lay was situated—as if on purpose—on the side of the room where the door opened on its hinges. Uncle Rob was hidden from the view of his roommates and their guests.

The ventilation in the room wasn’t adequate. The odor seemed thick, so the door was left partially opened.

My first view upon entering the room was of the foot of Uncle Rob’s bed. I could tell Uncle Rob was in a fetal position. In spite of the cover I knew he was very thin. This observation, however, did not prepare me for the look on Uncle Rob’s face.

On the way to the hospital I remembered Uncle Rob’s full round face. As with all my father’s family, Uncle Rob had a wide smile that proudly displayed beautiful white teeth. Uncle Rob was five feet nine inches a year earlier when I had seen him, and he weighed 180-200 pounds. He had a dark complexion, the same as all my father’s people, with beautiful flawless skin.

But now I saw no more than a human skull with smooth black satiny skin outlining its bony structure. His brown eyes bulged from their sockets below a crop of black/gray hair that flowed from the top of his head. Except for those familiar large brown eyes, Uncle Rob did not resemble the man I had known. Indeed, he didn’t “look like himself.”

In the fetal position Uncle Rob appeared to be less than five feet tall and weigh no more than 100 pounds.

God is an answerer of prayers. At the very moment when
my insides started to curdle, my prayer was answered. A frightened gasp escaped my lips, no cringing, no dizziness from the shock of seeing Uncle Rob. Every human instinct and emotion normally experienced in response to the horror I saw was replaced by the divine compassion and love of an all-merciful and loving God.

To Be a Comfort

A nurse was bathing Uncle Rob at our arrival. As we walked in, she moved about the room robotically in what must’ve been a daily routine: peeling the protective gloves from her hands, tossing the gloves into the bright-red container, tossing the linens she had removed from Uncle Rob’s bed into the same container, and washing her hands.

One of my companions stood at the head of the bed, and I took my place at the foot of the bed.

My companion spoke to Uncle Rob in a tone meant to bring comfort: “God is the Great Physician; just pray . . .” This seemed to me to be one of those comforting clichés we Christians routinely say when we are at a loss for other words of comfort. This cliché, as others, sounded as hopeless as the look of doom portrayed on the face of the one who said it.

As my companion spoke, I started leafing through my Bible, looking for a promise I’d often claimed in my life, a source of strength for me: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

After reading it silently, perhaps more for me than for Uncle Rob, I focused once again on what my companion was saying.

I glanced at Uncle Rob and became aware that his eyes were fixed on me. Initially it seemed as though he was merely looking in my direction. But when I looked at Uncle Rob, he was looking directly at me. His eyes seemed to cry out for help, and I thought, O God, what do I do?

It Was Simple

As the sound of a coin hitting the concrete draws everyone’s attention, so came the answer to my fearful question. God said to me, “He’s going to die, and he needs Me.” Instantly fear set in. How could I help Uncle Rob now? Sure, I could read the promise to him, but would the promise mean to him what it meant to me?

As I continued looking into Uncle Rob’s eyes and listening to those comforting clichés, I silently prayed, “Lord, help!”

I gently pushed past one of my companions to the head of Uncle Rob’s bed. “Uncle Rob, I’m going to read you a text that may help you get through your pain.”

Did I say “may help you”? What kind of hope was that? I wondered. I realized how inadequate Moses must’ve felt when he was asked to go before Pharaoh.

“Then,” I said, “I’m going to pray for you.”

He responded in a frail voice, “OK.”

As I read the promise of God’s peace, I could feel Uncle Rob’s eyes searching my face. What was he looking for? Was he feeling alone? Of course he wants to be healed. Of course he wants to be pain-free.

When I finished reading, I silently prayed, “Now it’s on You, Lord.”

Then I started praying for Uncle Rob: “My Father and my God, I present my uncle Rob to You. Father, he’s sick and in a lot of pain. First, Lord, I ask You to forgive the sins in his life and accept him as Your child. Then, Father, I ask that You allow him to accept You as his Saviour. Father, then grant him peace of mind . . .”

Interruption.

In a voice that trembled—no longer tenor, but not quite baritone—Uncle Rob spoke. He interrupted my prayer with a humble prayer of his own: “Father, forgive me. I accept You as my Saviour. Please accept me as Your son. A men.”

I can’t remember how I ended my prayer—or even if I did. I didn’t break down and cry, but a flood of peace flowed through my body.

When I opened my eyes, Uncle Rob was looking at me. He seemed to be a little more relaxed, but there was still that look of need in his eyes. Was now, Lord? I silently prayed. Once again the answer was instantaneous: “Touch him.”

“What do You mean ‘Touch him’?” I yelled in my mind.

“Touch him,” came the gentle response.

The nurses wore gloves when they bathed him. One of my companions touched his shoulder atop the sheets of his bed. The other companion held on to the bed rail. Even as we prayed, we all had our hands on the sheet on top of Uncle Rob. But the warmth and softness of a real human touch was only a memory in his mind.

A sense of fear vanished. My uncle Rob, whom I loved, had not had a human touch for who knew how long. I had just been touched by God as I prayed for His peace—and He is perfect love had cast away all my fear. God had blessed me to be a blessing.

I gently started stroking Uncle Rob’s hair. From his forehead to the pillow on which he lay his head, I stroked his head. “You’ve always had pretty hair,” I told him. He seemed to melt at my touch and relax. He was no longer a skeleton clothed with a layer of skin, but a child of God, made in the image of His Creator.

What Now?

Uncle Rob lived another week after that. He died of complications related to AIDS.

When I received the news of his death, I didn’t feel sadness, nor did I feel the urge to cry. I fully intend to see Uncle Rob again and enjoy him throughout eternity.

Praise be to God!

Brenda D. Hill is a fourth-generation Seventh-day Adventist who wrote this when she lived in Douglassville, Pennsylvania.
Please, explain the phrase “I saw another beast, coming out of the earth” (Rev. 13:11, NIV).

I’m not convinced that the “earth” refers here to nonpopulated land.

The interpretation of symbolic language must be done as carefully and as free from personal ideas and speculation as possible. Neither human imagination nor personal feelings are the safest guides in determining the meaning of such language. The images and language used in Revelation bear meaning that is encoded, and a key is necessary to unlock them. In some cases John is informed about the meaning of a particular symbol, and that helps us to understand the message (e.g., Rev. 1:20).

In most cases symbols are not explained, and it is our task to try to understand their meaning. Many exegetes have concluded that the language and imagery used in Revelation are rooted in the Old Testament. So in order to understand them better we have to take that fact into consideration. Studies made on the language of the book confirm that conclusion.

This means that the parameters used in interpreting Revelation are provided by the Scriptures themselves. This requires painstaking study, prayer, and time. The use of a concordance is indispensable, and in some cases the use of a good Bible dictionary may be productive. If, after doing the required Bible study, we are still not able to find a biblical meaning for the symbol, it’s better to leave a symbol unexplained than to inject the text with our own speculation.

Adventists have traditionally taken the symbol of “earth” in Revelation 13:11 to designate a sparsely settled region. Since the Bible uses it in that sense, this interpretation is a good one or at least a possible one (see Jer. 2:6; Prov. 21:19).

This interpretation is also based on the fact that in Revelation 13:1 there is a beast coming out of the sea. Since the sea is a symbol of peoples and nations (Rev. 17:1, 2), earth could be a symbol of an underpopulated area. But this approach could be abused and result in wild interpretation of symbols.

I would rather look not just to a particular word, but to the imagery being used. John sees a beast coming out of the earth/ground. The imagery is from the field of agriculture. The verb “to come out” (anabaino) is used in the New Testament to describe a plant “growing up” from the earth or ground (Mark 4:7, 8; Matt. 13:7). This symbolism is strange, even bizarre. Is John describing for us a beast that grows out of the ground like a plant? If that is the case, is there any other biblical passage where we find a similar idea? Remember, before we try to explain the meaning of the symbol, we must find a biblical parallel.

Believe it or not, there is a biblical parallel found in Genesis 1:24: “And God said, ‘Let the land [earth, ground] produce [come out, bring forth] living creatures’” (NIV). The Hebrew verb used here is also employed to describe a plant growing out of the ground (Job 38:27). The “living creatures” are identified in Genesis 1:25 as different kinds of animals or beasts, including “wild animals.” The Greek version of the Old Testament renders “wild animals” as “beasts of the earth,” the same Greek phrase that we find in Revelation 13:10.

Here in Genesis 1:24, 25 we find terminological parallels as well as the same imagery used by John: beasts coming out of the ground like plants.

What is John trying to tell us through this imagery? In order to answer the question, we have to go back to Genesis. Moses is delineating the way God brought into existence the animals. God spoke, and the beasts came out of the ground/earth — into an environment virtually uninhabited.

In Revelation John is also describing a political power that has its origins in a largely uninhabited place — like the beasts of Creation week. John sees this power corrupting itself, speaking like a dragon, and fighting against its Creator. This is a simple case of apostasy that has its roots in the Old Testament and corresponds exactly with the prophecy of Revelation 13:11.

Angel Manuel Rodríguez is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference.

Symbols and Images

It’s better to leave a symbol unexplained than to inject the text with our own speculation.
They Still Go

The following persons are professional missionaries who have left their homeland to serve in other countries. This completes our most recent list published in August.

Regular Missionary Service

Stephen Owen N yirady, to serve as assistant director, A DRA/Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, of Ooltewah, Tennessee.

Masaji U yeda, returning to serve as Education Department director, Northern Asia-Pacific Division, Koyang City, Korea, of Obuko N emoto U yeda, and two children.

Ronald Elmar Vyhmeister, to serve as business administration teacher and computer system programmer, River Plate Adventist University, Montemorelos, Mexico, of Niles, Michigan.

Tomas A lbert and Kathy LaRae W aiters, to serve as art professor and nurse, respectively, M ontomorlos U niversity, M ontomorlos, M exico, of N iles, Michigan.

David Ronald W atts, to serve as president, Southern A sia Division, Tamil Nadu, India, and Dorothy M ay W atts, of Beltsville, Maryland.

W illis Daniel W eston, to serve as engineer, AWR-A sia, A gat, Guam, and N orma J ane W eston, of Vancouver, Washington.

Faye Joanne W hiting, to serve as OB-gyn physician, Davis M emorial C linic and Hospital, Georgetown, G uyana, of Redlands, California.

Laurie Lee W ileson, to serve as nutrition survey coordinator, A DRA/Sudan, K hartoum, Sudan, of Loma Linda, California.

Adventist Volunteer Service

The following persons have volunteered their time and talents to work in other countries on a temporary basis. They served the last part of 1997 and the first part of 1998.

Johnson Samuel C hristian, to serve as education consultant, Southern A sia Division, Tamil Nadu, India, of J esup, Maryland.

Kim A llen Dorsey, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of A ttorney D orsey, and one child, of Silang, C avite, Philippines.

D evairakkam Luke E benezer, to serve as business teacher, Bangladesh A dventist Seminary and College, District G azipur, Bangladesh, of W innipeg, Manitoba.

H erbert J ack E slinger, to serve as host, Jerusalem Study Center, Jerusalem, Israel, and W insome E slinger, of Dos Palos, California.

Donald C hristian F ahrbach, to serve as physician/family practice, Guam SDA C linic, Tamuning, Guam, and A lice J ane F ahrbach, of M unising, Michigan.

Carlton U riall F orbes, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, and Wanda F aye F orbes, of Decatur, Georgia.

L oury G eorge F orsey, to serve as construction manager, Guam SDA C linic, Tamuning, Guam, and C aroline E lizabeth G ases, and three children, of Dryden, New York.

Joseph F ranklin G ilbert, to serve as agriculture project coordinator, A DRA/R omania, Bucharest, Romania, of Oxford, Pennsylvania.

J ulie A nne G oo, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of A iberia, Canada.

R honda L. G rawes, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Japan English Language Schools, Yokohama, Japan, of A pion, Tennessee.

E ric E dward H aeger, to serve as physician/family practice, Guam SDA C linic, Tamuning, Guam, and M ichelle L uvon H aeger, of Rochester, New York.

A ndrew P aul H aynal, to serve as visiting lecturer, M asters’s in P ublic Health program, A ventist U niversity of the Philippines, Silang, C avite, Philippines, of Battleground, Washington.

J erome B en J ablonski, to serve as relief dentist, A ntigua SDA D ental C linic, Saint J ohn’s, A ntigua, W est Indies, and H eather B elle J ablonski, of Loma Linda, California.

C rointhia M aria J ames, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of S taten Island, New York.

F reda M arlene K night, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of B uckhead, Georgia.

H ugh K ang-H yun L ee, to serve as English teacher, SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of W indsor, California.

J ohn R oy L ohr, Jr., to serve as assistant program coordinator, A DRA/C ambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, of L ongwood, Florida.

B arbara M ain, to serve as project director, A DRA/C ambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, of T oronto, Ontario, Canada.

B obbie J ean M atthews, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of S acramento, California.

C ynthia M ejia, to serve as director and English teacher, Peruvian Union University, Lima, Peru, of E lkridge, Maryland.

Chad M otti, to serve as Bible/physical education teacher, Guam A dventist C ademy, of Grants Pass, Oregon.

J eebra R abnam M oses, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of L incoln, Nebraska.

J ulie M arie N edland, to serve as English teacher, English Language Centers, Moscow, Russia, of A pache Junction, Arizona.

C heryl K ay Nelson, to serve as project director, A DRA/C ambodia, of Bellevue, Washington.

N ikki C arol Oakley, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of H ockesin, Delaware.

A dam O braov, to serve as landscaping consultant, A DRA/C ambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, of O torio, Canada.

R obert L ee Oliff, to serve as teacher/evangelist, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Y elm, Washington.

A lfonso P etty, Jr., to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of P eoria, Illinois.

D onavon S chwiso, to serve as physician/general practice, A ndrews M emorial H ospital, K ingston, Jamaica, and M arcella S chwiso, of K ennewick, Washington.

M ark C lifford S chwiso, to serve as building supervisor, A DRA/C ambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, of Kirkland, Washington.

L ewis H enry S tanton, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of L oma L inda, California.

Z john A lexander S tevenson, to serve as English/Bible teacher and school assistant, Japan SDA School, Yokohama, Japan, of L incoln, Nebraska.

W anda C oleen T reed, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of K elowna, B ritish C olumbia, Canada.

K enneth R ichard T refz, to serve as dentist, Palau SDA C linic, Koror, Palau, of K elowna, British C olumbia.

J ason R andolph V ance, to serve as physician/ family practice, Guam SDA C linic, Tamuning, Guam, of L oma L inda, California.

R amon W en W est, to serve as professor of public health, A dventist International Institute of A dvanced Studies, Philippines and Indonesia, of Belfair, Washington.
Let's say you are curious about how a plant grows from a seed. Here is the scientific way to find out: First, you ask a question. Then you guess what the answer will be. Then you test it to see if you were right.

You ask, “How does a seed work?” You guess that maybe a baby plant is inside the seed, ready to grow. How can you test your idea? Take a lima bean and soak it in water to make it softer. Then carefully cut it open lengthwise, along the edges. You can see the baby plant.

It may not be as easy to test other questions you have. Let’s say you wonder why birds can sit on an electric wire and not get shocked. You absolutely cannot test it the way you tested the lima bean. Electricity can be very dangerous—you must never touch an electric wire.

So how do you find the answer to your question? You can look it up in a book. Other scientists have studied electricity to find out about how it works. A book can explain how electric currents flow and why birds are safe as long as they don’t touch something else at the same time. You can find answers by reading.

Unless what you are reading isn’t the truth. People have written all kinds of crazy things. Just because it is in a book doesn’t mean it is the truth. You can’t always prove something by taking it apart. You can’t always believe what people write or say. So what do you do when you have a question?

You learn to think for yourself. You gather all the information you can and then decide what you are going to believe.

The Bible says, “Test everything. Keep what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21, ICB). When you hear something new, test it against the Bible. Compare it to what Jesus said. Hold it up to the truth.

When you are young, your parents and teachers tell you what they believe. They want you to know what they have learned in their lives as they have asked questions and made discoveries.

But they are also getting you ready to think for yourself. They want you to learn how to make good decisions on your own. They want you to know how to test everything. They want you to be able to keep what is good.
Moving has never been a favorite pastime of mine. I like the security of coming home to the same place day after day, year after year. I like to put roots down real deep, so deep, in fact, that even God has trouble getting me to pull them up.

It was on one of those beautiful autumn days that come each year in Maryland when God decided it was time for me to pull up my taproots. My husband walked into my classroom after a particularly exhausting day with 25 kindergartners and asked, “Do you want to go to Singapore?” At that point I would have even gone to Alaska. God usually has big problems with me, though, when it comes to making changes. I will weaken one moment and say yes, but after I’ve thought about it I put those roots down a little deeper and hope that now I won’t be able to pull them up.

At least Jonah got on the boat. I probably would have gone down to the dock and then decided that I needed to stay. You see, Jonah was way ahead of me. He at least went somewhere, but I couldn’t even get going on this proposed Singapore journey. I had a house to take care of, cars to sell, and parents nearby, to say nothing of the children at school who needed me. God knew all of this, and one by one all the obstacles in my way were removed. He answered my prayers so fast that even I was a little taken aback. I was gradually being pulled up—root by root.

Since I don’t transplant very well, there were problems in Singapore. Of course I had to question God a lot and even get a little angry when things didn’t go smoothly. I’m not sure why I couldn’t have been like all those people you read about who go to the “mission field” and find it so wonderful to do whatever the Lord asks.

I wanted to work for the Lord too, but I wanted to do it my way; so I couldn’t figure out why God thought I should be a secretary. I thought I would always teach. After all, I’d been teaching since the age of 6 years, if you count dolls and a younger brother and sister. I figured God knew that anything else wouldn’t do.

But slowly I began to accept that, when He placed me in the office, maybe He knew what He was doing. Besides learning a lot more about myself, I discovered that I had other abilities God could use. I decided that God does love me a lot, and gradually began to feel my roots take hold.

No doubt you’ve seen the bumper sticker that says “Please be patient with me. God isn’t finished with me yet.” I’m sure God wonders if He will ever be finished with me. Six months after moving to Singapore I found out that God had another plan for me: He wanted me to consider moving to the Philippines.

Now, one move is bad enough, but two moves in two years is just too much. I decided that God had made a mistake. Then I read in the Bible about how God puts those He loves through trials and tests. It’s all about building character. (I probably have too much character, which is part of the problem that God has with me.) Actually, I was ready for God to spread some of that love around and just let me stay put.

Yes, I’m going. I’m just thankful that God hasn’t given up on me even when I’m telling Him what to do. I’m packing my bags and once again I’ll get on the boat. I may have to hang my roots up for a while and let God take care of them. Maybe if He plants them, they will transplant easier in the future. Maybe I’ll start to let God take charge of my life, instead of always saying “That sounds fine, God, but let me be in charge.” I’m not saying that I won’t want to turn around in the boat and go back, but I’ve gotten on, and I’m attempting to let God have control.

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