Homes and Hope in HONDURAS

Undoing some of the damage done by Hurricane Mitch

Five Ways to Support Your Pastor
What Should We Leave Behind?
I agree with Royson James that there should be no question about what our church is about ("What Should We Leave Behind?" August NAD).

However, I fail to see why we should not feel free to let it be known that Adventists, in compliance with Scripture, oppose homosexuality, even though Toronto has a huge gay population— all the more reason to denounce the gay lifestyle. We should be as Paul (1 Thess. 2:4). The Living Bible puts it this way: "We change his message not one bit to suit the taste of those who hear it; for we serve God alone." Will we keep quiet in Toronto about Sabbath for fear of a headline "Aventists Slam Sundaykeepers?"

—Clayton Howell
CALHOUN, GEORGIA

I am a Seventh-day Adventist. My parents are third-generation Adventists. My uncle was once the head of a regional conference. I myself attended Adventist elementary school for seven years, graduated from an Adventist academy, and attended Andrews University. I also worked for the church for more than a decade. I tell you all this because I am also a lesbian.

I am writing to express my deep sadness over the article "What Should We Leave Behind?" written by Royson James in the August NAD issue of the Review. James is right to fear that the church will be painted as intolerant and hateful, because that is indeed what many gay Adventists who remain in the church experience from church leaders and their congregations.

There are many Adventists who do accept and cherish fellow church members who are gay. Their courageous loving example is to be commended.

To their credit, some Adventist leaders occasionally mention that all Christians should love the homosexual while hating the homosexuality. Unfortunately, this message is often ignored by the membership; they end up hating both.

—Lara Summers
VIA E-MAIL

Seventh-day Adventists distinguish between a homosexual orientation and a homosexual lifestyle. The demonstration of Christian grace for all people— regardless of their sexual orientation— is urged. —Editors.

Heard the News?
Brand new Seventh-day Adventists are learning . . .

✓ about Jesus and His matchless love
✓ how He works today
✓ help for knowing Him better
✓ hope in His soon return

More names are coming and we need your help.
Be a champion for a new believer today.

Send your check for $25, $50, $100, or $1000. Spread the Good News!

Send contribution to Adventist Review, New Believers Plan, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904
This is in response to Royson James' column in the August NAD edition. What I think he was saying is: “How do we want to be remembered in Toronto? Do we want to be seen as intolerant and hateful (like Fred Phelps, the Kansas minister who pickets against gays), as people whose main mission is telling others what we think they’re doing wrong? Or do we want to be seen as a church that loves and cares for people as Jesus did?”

James brought up an issue about which I would like to make a suggestion. He indicated that we wouldn’t want to be remembered primarily for slamming gays. But wouldn’t it be wonderful if we were remembered for simply and lovingly telling the Toronto gay community that they are Jesus’ children and He loves them? In general, Christians have not been known for extending God’s love and grace to homosexuals, yet there are thousands who long to find fellowship and support in a Christian community. Is it too much to hope that our church could be the one to bring reconciliation?

—Carrol Grady
SnOHNish, WASHINGTON

My wife and I are Canadians serving our church in the missions. We have also worked in Toronto and love that city, which we consider our home.

Royson James’ article in the August NAD edition touched a responding chord in our hearts. Indeed, it would be great if the Adventist Church could make an “out-of-this-world gift” to the city of Toronto for its hundreds of homeless folks.

May I suggest that we start the ball rolling right away. If each Adventist visitor to Toronto made a gift of $100, we’d get $7 million (which could be rounded to $10 million by special donations from wealthier believers).

My wife and I would be willing to give a month’s salary toward such a project. Who wants to follow suit?

—Pastor and Mrs. Eddy (Erna) Johnson
New Caledonia Mission, South Pacific Division

What a wonderful idea Royson James suggested in the August Adventist Review: helping the homeless in Toronto next summer. Enclosed is our “mite” to help this huge undertaking succeed. God bless.

—Di and Allan Roth
College Place, Washington

A generous sum was enclosed with the above letter.—Editors.

Stale Chips for Jesus
I confess that I do not read many of the Review articles from beginning to end, but the August NAD edition story “Stale Chips for Jesus” kept me glued until the finish. Not only did Candace Wilson Jorgensen have an excellent message, but she organized it in such a way that I did not feel like stopping short. I hope she comes up with another winner soon.

—Vernon Oliver
Huntsville, Alabama

Letters Policy
The Review welcomes your letters. Short, specific letters are the most effective and have the best chance at being published. Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: Reviewmag@Adventist.org; CompuServe network: 74617.15.
Taking Wings on the Web
By Carlos Medley, Adventist Review news editor

Two years ago the Adventist Review began distributing its electronic edition via the Adventists Online Forum on CompuServe. Since that first issue, hundreds of readers sent us e-mail, phone calls, and letters. The message was loud and clear: “We’re happy that the Review has entered the information superhighway; it’s nice that the magazine is available on CompuServe, but when will the Review get on the Internet, where more people can access it?”

The Review staff has heard the message, and as part of the magazine’s 150th anniversary we’re pleased to announce the launching of our new website—the Adventist Review Online Edition (www.AdventistReview.org). The Internet has emerged as the communications vehicle of the 1990s, and it’s imperative that we use the new technology to extend our reach to Adventist believers around the world and introduce others to the Adventist faith.

The site will contain updated feature stories and articles within 48 hours of the magazine’s press time, allowing you to access the issue several days before it arrives in your mailbox.

Here’s a summary of the features you’ll find each week.

Review Content: Though you won’t get the whole magazine online, you will see two feature stories, an editorial or column, and church news. We’ll also show you our contents page and a sneak preview of features from the upcoming issue. You’ll be able to download the magazine (to read this format you’ll need the Acrobat Reader software).

Web-Only Articles: Along with the above content you’ll also find a monthly article written by a nationally known Christian author or a feature about a widely known personality. You can also take time to participate in our biweekly poll or register to receive an online newsletter.

Have you ever wanted to meet a Review editor in person? Then check out our list of staff speaking appointments. You’ll find out when Review editors will visit your area.

Reader Interaction: Of course we want your feedback. Give us your ideas about the website and the printed magazine. Tell us how we can serve you better. Send us your letters to the editor, article queries, prayer requests, and other correspondence. For aspiring writers, our writers’ guidelines are listed for your convenience.

In addition to these features, you can subscribe to the printed magazine with just a few keystrokes and a click of the mouse. Whether you live in Baltimore or Bangkok, Pittsburgh or Pretoria, you can purchase the weekly magazine online. All it takes is a valid American Express, Discover, MasterCard, or Visa credit card.

Now the Review is as close as your home PC. We’re only a click away. We’ll always be there when you need us.
Mary’s Choice

Last March the Washington Post published an article that riveted my attention. Written by staff writer Joel Achenbach (under the general title: “Beyond 2000/The Frontiers of Knowledge”), the piece explored the challenges of what its subtitle called “The Too-Much-Information Age,” providing a gripping description of some of the issues facing our information-saturated civilization on the eve of the new millennium.*

“In 1472,” Achenbach observed, “the library at Queens’ College in Cambridge, England, had precisely 199 books.” It was a time, he said, when some scholars, with a fair measure of plausibility, could claim that they had read “every important book ever written.”

No more. Today “institutions and individuals alike” are struggling to cope “with a deluge of books, journals, tapes, legal records, documents, e-mail and uncounted gushers of raw data.” The attic is jammed, the basement is crammed, all the closets are full, and yet the stuff just keeps on coming. “More than 50,000 books are published every year in America alone. The number of different journals published globally is estimated at 400,000. The media moguls promise that soon every home will have access to hundreds of television channels. The World Wide Web . . . now has millions of sites.” “The library [of Congress] has 113 million items already, and every morning 20,000 more . . . slam into the loading dock.”

How does anyone interested in keeping current cope with all this? If you’re like me, you sometimes feel as if the waters of Iguaçu, Victoria, and Niagara had consolidated into one massive flow, and you were standing where it all came down.

So What To Do?

What we need more than anything else, I think, is perspective. We need to understand the transitory nature of much of this stuff. Caught up in the unfolding drama of Watergate in the seventies, I recorded scores of hours of the historic Senate hearings on the crisis. Firsthand historical documents for posterity, I thought. I still have the tapes. But the tape recorder is gone. And in the words of John Carlin, chief archivist of the United States, “There are [only] about half a dozen machines left in the world that can play those tapes.”

Similarly, much of the data now flowing across the Internet will likely become irretrievable not many years from now, made useless by the rapid advance of the very technology that gave them birth.

Caught up in the contemporary information chase, we can easily neglect the things of eternal value. Let’s think: How much time do I spend surfing the Internet? And how does that compare with the time spent in prayer and Bible study? Are these spiritual exercises receiving anything close to equal time?

Confront yourself. Be honest about it. Unceasing activity is the blight of our times. The whole civilization looks like one vast unstable mass in constant flux. Says U.S. Congress librarian James Billington: “Our society is basically motion without memory. . . . Which, of course, is one of the clinical definitions of insanity.”

How do we rise above the prevailing distraction and bring a sense of order, focus, and sanity to our lives again? Where do we find seasons for solitude? moments for calm? When do we find occasion to smell the jasmine? to laugh? to be human? Time to listen to the concerns of those who hurt? to mull over a chapter in a good book? to analyze a passage in the Bible? to commit to memory a promise from the Scriptures? Time simply to sit at the feet of Jesus—to come apart, alone with God?

Picture Jesus in a little house in Bethany 2,000 years ago. As He discourses, Martha is busy in another room—busy with the microwave, with the latest in culinary technology downloaded from the Internet, with checking websites for the latest recipes. Busy with the urgent.

But Mary sits at the feet of Jesus—doing nothing—unproductive. Or so it seems until Jesus, in response to Martha’s protest, interprets the scene for us: “Martha, Martha,” He says, “you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:42, NIV).

*Washington Post, Mar. 12, 1999, pp. A1, A22. All non-Scripture quotes in the editorial are from that article.
Have you heard the story about the angel’s warning? It goes something like this:

A group of people are riding together. They see someone at the side of the road who seems to be asking for a ride. They would never think of stopping to pick up a hitchhiker, but something makes them pick up this person.

The person seems pleasant; they chat about the events of the day. Soon the topic turns toward religion. The person then says, “Jesus is coming soon, much sooner than you think.” And with that the “person” is gone.

The group of people are convinced they have been visited by an angel.

Disappearing Angel Story

It’s a great faith-building story: angels visiting humans to warn that Christ’s coming is near.

The only problem: it’s not true.

The disappearing angel story is an urban myth. In its earlier versions the group is riding covered wagons, heading west to Ohio. In its later versions the group is made up of college students, going home for vacation—heading east to Ohio. There have been hundreds of versions.

The story is an example of what Peter called “cunningly devised fables” (2 Peter 1:16). The New Revised Standard Version translates that phrase as “cleverly devised myths.” Sometimes I think the devil creates these false “faith-building stories” so that he can dash our hopes when we learn that the stories are false.

Appearing Angels Story

There’s a better story about angels warning of end-times. It’s in Revelation 14, and it features angels who appear, not disappear. One angel says the hour of God’s judgment has come. A second angel says to come to God’s true church. A third angel asks saints to be patient and remain faithful to God’s Son and His commandments.

That’s a real faith-building story. For 150 years people—millions and millions of them—have had their faith built.

These angels build faith because:

✔ Their story is true.
✔ Their story comes from God.
✔ Their story brings good news about a God who cares for human beings.
✔ Their story gives hope for those who love God.
✔ Their story shows the triumph of good over evil.

Real Faith-building Stories

There are more faith-building stories in the Bible. Joseph, who was discarded by his brothers but not by God. David, who was a man after God’s own heart, even though his life is littered with the tragic consequences of sin. Peter, who denied that he knew Jesus but found complete forgiveness. Esther, who risked her life because of the peril to God’s people. Enoch, who lived a life of complete dependence on God in a world of complete alienation from Him.

And Jesus. My faith is built on Him. My faith exists through Him. My faith is strengthened by recalling His life. When I hear Him quote Scripture to His enemies, I am encouraged to read the Bible more. When I see Him in prayer all night, I fall to my knees to ask God for wisdom and guidance. When I watch Him quiet the storm on Galilee, my own troubles are less troublesome.

Paul calls faith “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). My faith is built on real stories. In fact, at the heart of Adventism is a faith built on Christ and His righteousness.

Alfred C. McClure is the president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.
The sun gives its last burst of radiance
Before plunging us into darkness.
A final fiery red glow,
Diminishing into a deep, deep black.

The world adjusts its sights to the dark.
The stars glimmer in the heavens above.
The moon peeks out from behind a
solitary cloud,
Illuminating the path before me.

My eyes search the skies for one
constellation—
The one I look to for hope.
Right there in mighty Orion's belt
I behold heaven itself.

—Kristen Axford, Upper Columbia Academy, Spangle, Washington

ADVENTIST LIFE
One afternoon while my wife was napping, I thought it would be amusing to paint her toes red with some polish she had gotten in a grab bag at the pharmacy, but she woke up as I pulled the brush from the bottle so I painted the nail on my big toe instead. I thought nothing more of it until the following Sabbath when I was removing my sock for the first elder to wash my feet at Communion. As I saw my big toe emerge, painted red, I was momentarily speechless. Mentally I tried to compose a brief explanation. All I could say was "It's a long story." He replied, "I understand. Let's pray." So we did.

—Sam Darby, Douglassville, Pennsylvania

One day I was teasing my sons about our wish for grandchildren, using twins for an example. Our son Martin asked how I liked the name "Polly." I said that I liked it fine. Then he added, "How about 'Esther'?

"Son, any name you choose is fine with me!" I replied.

"All right, that settles it," he said. "We'll name the twins 'Polly-Esther' and their little brother we'll call 'Rayon'."

We all laughed, after which he added, "Well, what would you expect a man of the cloth to name his children?"

—Elder Larry Evans, Morristown, Tennessee

H E A V E N

HEAVEN

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—Kristen Axford, Upper Columbia Academy, Spangle, Washington

HERALD'S TRUMPET
Oops! Herald the Review angel is back, and Herald's trumpet is once again hidden somewhere in this magazine.

[Both the trumpet and the angel got away from us in the September 23 AnchorPoints Edition, where the trumpet was supposed to be hidden but wasn't.]

In our last contest (August 19 Cutting Edge Edition), we had 39 entries. Our three winners were: Caleb Lewis, from Keene, Texas; Phyllicia Benabe, from Cebia, Puerto Rico; and Karina Jane Roman, from Quezon City, Philippines. Caleb, Phyllicia, and Karina each received a book from Pacific Press. Where was the trumpet? On page 6.

If you can find the trumpet this time, send your postcard to Herald's Trumpet at the Give & Take address on this page. The prize is... a surprise! Look for the three winners' names in the November 18 Cutting Edge Edition. Have fun searching—and keep trumpeting Jesus' love!

WE NEED YOU

Send Give & Take submissions to...
Give & Take, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904; Fax: 301-680-6638; E-mail: 74532.2564@CompuServe.com. Please include phone number. Submissions will not be returned.
The Day My Burden Fell

I was Adventist—and lost. Here’s how God found me.

BY KIMBERLY B. HARRIS

The following is one of some 17 additional articles (beyond the top three winners) accepted in our 1998 AnchorPoints Essay Contest for young writers.—Editors.

ONE OF THE PITFALLS OF GROWING UP
Adventist is that we often don’t fully appreciate the experience of salvation. We spend our childhood and youth compliantly obeying the many “rules of religion,” unaware of the underlying principles. It’s only after we accept Christ’s gift of redemption that we come to realize the value of the principles we hold.

I Didn’t Want the Hassle
It was Sabbath morning. No matter what I did or where I was on the seventh day of the week, I still thought of it as the Sabbath. I didn’t see myself as “breaking” the Sabbath. I just didn’t keep it.

And I’m not being sarcastic. I really felt there was a difference. I usually spent the Sabbath doing many of the same things other Adventists did: I went for a country ride, I played with my dogs, I walked, I visited family. Two things I did not do, however: I did not attend church and I did not talk to God. I didn’t attend church because I didn’t want to find myself evaluating my wandering life or my Christian experience; and I didn’t talk to God because I didn’t know what to say to Him. So I preoccupied myself with other “acceptable” things.

I can’t remember now what prompted me to return to church. I just started dropping in from time to time. After a while it was getting pretty regular. I had a major problem, though—guilt. I spent much of the time fighting a sense that I was lost. I kept hearing Satan’s accusations taunting me and hounding me. I had trouble concentrating on anything being said because of my sins screaming at me from inside my head. I knew that I was a sinner, repulsive to God. I knew that I could not stand in His presence. But I wanted to sit peacefully in His sanctuary so bad!

Finally one Sabbath I couldn’t bear it any longer. I cried out silently to God, “Please, just let me sit here. Just let me listen to the service. Just let me stay. You don’t have to talk to me. You don’t have to acknowledge me. I only want to sit here in peace.”

I didn’t expect God to accept me. I just wanted Him to ignore me. I thought He was the one tormenting me with guilty feelings. I didn’t know that He only wanted to love me, until He said my name. He said, “Kim, you can stay. You can be with Me any time you want. You can talk to Me, and I will listen.” (Which reminded me of His assurance in Isaiah 43:1, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.”)*

I can’t express the emotion I felt when I heard Him say that. I was relieved of my burden of guilt, like the Christian in Pilgrim’s Progress who arrives at the cross. His burden was cut off his back and rolled down the
But I Was Still Broken, Still Wounded

For months following that Sabbath I continued to attend church. Every Sabbath I sat down in the pew and asked Jesus, “Please, cover me with Your white robe to hide my own scar—let one before our Father.” I could see Him smile as He draped His white cloak over my shoulders and sat down beside me. He would take my hand and hold it.

Often Satan would come and accuse me, and tell the Lord that I’d given myself over to him. I would be so
ashamed, knowing that he was right. But Christ never hesitated to defend me. With eyes that burned like fire, Christ would look directly at Satan and reply, “The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Kimberly, rebuke you! Is not this woman a burning stick snatched from the fire?” (see Zech. 3:2). I would clutch His coat around me, rest in Him, and Satan would flee.

Although I rested in Christ, I was still a broken, wounded spirit. Although I now knew that He loved me and accepted me as I was, I didn’t know He could restore me to the innocence of my childhood. I learned to love Him for the gift of peace He had given me. But He also offered hope.

The Turning Point

One night I attended vespers at the Collegedale church, on the campus of Southern Adventist University. Paul Julian was speaking that evening—about the different things in our lives that we cling to, and how they keep us from Jesus. At least, that is how the message came to me.

I was so very moved by the presentation. But when Julian gave an altar call, I was not ready to make such a commitment. I couldn’t bring myself to surrender my life to Christ and give up the relationships I clung to. I knew it would break my heart if I gave it to Jesus, and I told Him so. He said to me, “Dear Kim, isn’t your heart already broken? I will not hurt your heart if you give it to Me. I will heal it.”

As I struggled with my pain, I remembered a similar altar call from my childhood. It was back at my home church, and the evangelistic series was winding up. I was 7 years old. I can’t remember the sermon, nor can I remember the call. But I do remember my thoughts. They had a large picture of Jesus hanging in the front, and I was thinking, I want to be with Jesus. I had gone forward and sat on the front pew and just talked to my Friend.

That Friday night at the Collegedale vespers my thoughts were similar. I wanted to be with Jesus. I left my seat and walked up the already-crowded aisle. Tears ran unhindered down my face and peace rushed over my body. I returned to my seat with that peace wrapped around me. I knew that I had once again been in the presence of my Friend.

The next morning I went to the Sabbath school class taught by Paul Julian, hoping to find more peace with Jesus, as I had the night before. When Julian entered the room, he spotted me, and said enthusiastically, “I saw you come down front last night. God bless you!” I was stunned. There must have been hundreds of people in the aisle of the church during that altar call. I had no idea how he could recognize me, except by the power of the Holy Spirit. Once again God was confirming His interest in me.

God let me know that I really was the apple of His eye.

I wanted someone to talk to about the changes in my life. I needed someone to help plant my feet firmly in my new walk, and I thought I could really use a human shoulder to lean on for a little while. I had a friend who knew Paul Julian, but I really felt as though I needed to talk with a woman. So my friend recommended Julian’s wife, Deborah. My friend asked Deborah if I could speak with her, and she sought me out.
A gain, G od was reaching for me. Everyone H e worked through made contact with me. I felt so loved by H im, to be sought after so diligently. Deborah and I got together, and I told her my whole story—a story of betrayal and lost hope, of wandering in search of love and fulfillment, of my strivings to fill the void left when I’d lost my dreams. Deborah listened, and loved me. I told her of how I had given my life back to G od, and in spite of deep sorrow over the wounds of my heart, I had peace. I told her of G od’s promise to me in Zephaniah 3:20: “‘At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes,’ says the Lord.” I told Deborah I knew I could live with my broken heart until Jesus comes again to restore my life to me.

The Healing

Deborah’s response to this took me by surprise. She told me that I didn’t have to wait until Christ’s return to be restored. She said Jesus would heal me now. I listened to her, but I was unsure. How could G od heal a broken heart? Could H e take away pain? Even if H e could, I wasn’t sure I wanted to let go of the pain. W hat all would this involve?

A lthough I had accepted Christ’s forgiveness, I had not yet given up all of the treasures of my heart. I was afraid of the pain involved in letting go. I didn’t know if I had the strength to let go. I was scared of the loneliness that might come if I did let go. I left Deborah’s house a little confused, but yet a little hopeful, too— that my heart would not always ache.

A s I drove home that afternoon I popped a cassette tape into my player and let it play in the background as I reflected. It was a new cassette by a Christian artist, one I’d never listened to before. A fter a few minutes the words of a song caught my attention— words about the story in Luke 5:12, 13, about the man with leprosy whom Jesus healed. The leper had known rejection and loneliness. H is life was hopeless until he heard of Jesus. H e sought Jesus out and asked Jesus if He was willing to heal him. Jesus answered, “I am willing.” A nd H e healed him.

Jesus said to me, “M y power is real. Your pain can be ended. I’m willing to help you. I’m willing to heal.”

Blinded by my tears, I pulled off the road and cried in Jesus’ arms. A lthough I didn’t know it yet, H e had just answered the plea of my heart, and the healing had begun.

Everything Is New

In the days that followed I began to experience the peace G od had promised me when I first stepped into H is sanctuary. I continued to struggle to let go of my pain, to let go of my heart’s treasures. I asked to be anointed for emotional healing, and I was. I began to meet with Jesus every day, and found out that H e was not only the Saviour of my soul but also my friend, my soul mate.

T oday I know that I am cherished; I am beloved. I am a very special person. Everything I had been searching for—for so many years—was given to me one climactic day, 2,000 years before I was born. On another special day I accepted that gift. A nd I will never give it back.

Kimberly Harris, a stay-at-home mom to toddlers Kyle and Rachel, lives in Collegedale, Tennessee.

**The Experience of Salvation**

In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example. This faith which receives salvation comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God’s grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God’s sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God’s law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment. (2 Cor. 5:17-21; John 3:16; Gal. 1:4; 4:4-7; Titus 3:3-7; John 16:8; Gal. 3:13, 14; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; Rom. 10:17; Luke 17:5; Mark 9:23, 24; Eph. 2:5-10; Rom. 3:21-26; Col. 1:13, 14; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26; John 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:23; Rom. 12:2; Heb. 8:7-12; Eze. 36:25-27; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rom. 8:14; 5:6-10.)—Fundamental Belief No. 10.

*Scripture references in this article are from the New International Version.*
You too will be blessed as you minister to the one who ministers to you.

BY RANDY MAXWELL

IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE A TRAINED PROFESSIONAL with years of schooling—perhaps even a Ph.D.—and years of practical, on-the-job experience. Now picture everyone from the delivery person to the 80-year-old great-grandmother of one of your best clients telling you how to do your job. How would it feel to have your motives, lifestyle, and integrity scrutinized and questioned by those you served? What would it feel like to have your competency and job performance constantly called into question by people who had absolutely zero training in your field? What if you were expected to be on call 24 hours a day to provide comfort, counseling, advice, and guidance to these same people, while never being able to have a problem yourself? Sounds like a tough job?

Welcome to the world of the pastor. Pastors are supposed to be perfect in every way—great speakers, theologians, counselors, administrators, evangelists, perfect spouses and parents. But, as the following statistics from a 1991 interdenominational survey of pastors conducted by Fuller Institute reveal, the stress of the job takes an enormous toll:

- 90 percent of pastors work more than 46 hours a week.
- 80 percent believe pastoral ministry has affected their families negatively.
- 33 percent say that being in the ministry is an outright hazard to their family.
- 75 percent report a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry.
- 50 percent feel unable to meet the needs of the job.

Things You Can Do to Support Your Pastor
90 percent feel they were inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands.

70 percent say they have a lower self-image than when they started in the ministry.

40 percent report a serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month.

33 percent confess involvement in some inappropriate sexual behavior with someone in the church.

70 percent do not have someone they consider a close friend.*

You may have never guessed that your pastor struggled with feelings of loneliness, inadequacy, and depression. But now you know. So what can you know about it?

Call a moratorium on criticism.

Get control of your tongue. James accurately depicts the power of the tongue and the pain it can produce. "All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be" (James 3:7-10, NIV).

Determine not to use your tongue to tear down the pastor. Look for ways and words to build up and encourage your shepherd. If you do have a legitimate beef, then talk directly to the pastor and avoid spreading the seeds of your discontent among other members. They can't help the situation, and your criticism will only breed a spirit of negativism in the church.

The same goes for criticizing the pastor in the presence of his or her spouse. Complaining to the pastor's wife or husband to "get through to the pastor" is a cowardly and insensitive tactic that often makes church attendance unbearable for the spouse. Follow Paul's admonition not to "let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (Eph. 4:29, NIV).

Pray for and with the pastor.

Instead of criticizing the pastor, pray for and with him or her. Pastors are special targets of the enemy. Discouragement is Satan's number one weapon against God's spiritual leaders.

We can support our pastors by praying specifically for God to protect and bless them in several key areas.

• Humility. Ask God to give your pastor a servant's heart and a teachable spirit.

• Wisdom. Pray that your pastor will be sensitive to God's leading, able to discern His plans and purposes.

• Health. Ask God to place a hedge of protection around your pastor, keeping him or her in good health and safety when traveling.

• Family. As the survey above indicated, pastors feel that the demands of ministry have had a negative impact on their families. Pray for the pastor's relationships with his or her spouse and children. Pray that, next to God, the pastor will put the needs of his or her family first.

• Time. Pray that the demands of ministry, such as counseling, committee meetings, visitation, and sermon preparation won't overshadow the time your leader needs to spend alone with God. This must remain a top priority in order for God to powerfully use your pastor.

• Integrity and anointing. Pastors are tempted by the same things you are tempted by. Pray for them to maintain their integrity in all circumstances. Pray for the anointing of the Holy Spirit to be on their ministry. Without the Holy Spirit, a leader's work, no matter how successful by earthly standards, is of no lasting value.

Besides praying for your pastor, consider praying with your pastor. I approached my pastor last year and asked if I could serve him by being his personal prayer partner. He was genuinely grateful for this offer of spiritual support and friendship and eagerly accepted my offer. When our busy schedules allow it, we get together once a week to share joys and disappointments, prayer requests, and the dreams and frustrations of ministry. If you would like to become your pastor's prayer partner, I strongly recommend you get the book Partners in Prayer, by John Maxwell (no relation). This book will lead you step-by-step in how to be a partner in prayer with your pastor.
Send your pastor cards or notes of appreciation.

I remember seeing a survey of what motivates employees to perform their best, and was surprised to learn that appreciation was a greater motivation than money. The pastor is accustomed to getting blasted for things he or she did or said, or didn’t do or say. Surprise your pastor by sending a card letting him know he is in your prayers. Acknowledge the spiritual gifts you see manifested in your pastor and let her know how her ministry has been a blessing to you. Let your pastors know you appreciate the sacrifices they are willing to make to follow God’s calling.

Send your pastor on a retreat.

I remember a six-month period when our church was between pastors and I was the head elder. For six months, in addition to my full-time job, my wife and I filled in as interim pastoral couple at the church. By the end of the six months, we were physically and emotionally exhausted. The church showed its appreciation and love by sending us away for an all-expense-paid weekend in nearby Sun Valley, Idaho. We still talk about that weekend as one of the most refreshing getaways we ever had.

With several other members, pool your resources and send your pastor and family away for a weekend retreat where they can rest, play, and get away from the demands of ministry for a while. The family will never forget your kindness.

Take the kids.

You will endear your pastor and his or her spouse to you forever by volunteering to keep their kids for a few hours so they can spend time alone with each other. Ministry is often stressful to marriage. The spouse of the leader is under the same microscope of parishioner scrutiny as their mate, and has to play second, third, fourth, or fifteenth fiddle to the needs of others. Call the pastor and ask him or her to get out their calendar and pick a date when you will baby-sit the kids and they will go out on a “date.” Your pastor will rise up and call you blessed!

Loving and supporting your pastor is a privilege and a practical fulfillment of the golden rule. You will be blessed as you minister to the one who ministers to you. And the benefits you and your church will receive from an encouraged, prayed-for, rested, and appreciated pastor will be too many to count.

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Randy Maxwell is an author, speaker, and creative director of advertising at Pacific Press Publishing Association in Nampa, Idaho.
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The skiff glides over glassy water as I watch the full moon—its swollen face staring down on the island of Guanaja. It’s 4:00 a.m. in Honduras. I’m on my way home after two weeks on this tropical island, full of beauty but scarred by destruction. I came with 75 other volunteers, most of them students at Mount Ellis Academy in Bozeman, Montana. And like them, I’m leaving with a bazillion bug bites, a serious sunburn—and a feeling of utter content.

How much can a small group in Montana do to undo the damage from Hurricane Mitch? Quite a bit, as it turns out.
On the morning of October 27, 1998, Hurricane Mitch moved across the Atlantic Ocean and descended onto the Honduran island of Guanaja. Winds raged to 265 miles per hour and waves swelled to 30 feet. For the next 72 hours Guanaja’s 6,000 residents fought for their lives. By the time the hurricane finally left, it had taken 90 percent of the island’s homes, schools, and churches with it.

Months after the storm, Guanaja is still struggling to its feet. Piles of debris litter the beaches—a sewing machine, a teddy bear, a shoe serve as reminders of better times. Fragments of annihilated homes, boats, and downed trees are heaped against the hills. Every so often someone picks through the wreckage in hopes of recovering something useful. Some locals have salvaged lumber and rebuilt homes, sometimes with every board a different color. Large
coconut palms stand like beheaded statues on the beach; others have been reduced to stumps. The ocean is littered with stilts that once supported homes but now lean every which way, like sea grass blowing in the wind.

As soon as Mount Ellis Academy students heard of the hurricane’s destruction, they began planning and raising funds for their spring break mission to rebuild Guanaja. Late last March they arrived on the beach in the village of Mangrove Bight, where their temporary beach village looked like the set of M*A*S*H. They camped in army-green canvas tents, ate rice and beans, and nursed sore muscles. They dealt with sand flies and beach crabs. They came with hammers and left wearing blisters. They came with boundless energy and left exhausted. They came with DEET and left bug-bitten. They came with lumber and left sawdust. They came with houses to build and schools to repair. It was worth the heat and the bugs and the risk.

As the skiff pulls into the rickety airport dock, I turn to the west and watch the moon dip below denuded hills, and I realize that this is not the same place it was 14 days earlier.

Since their twin-prop plane had landed on Guanaja’s runway of broken pavement, the volunteers from Guadalajara, Mexico, had built a small airport. They had also brought two 250-gallon fuel tanks to keep the island running for a month. Now the runway was covered with debris from the storm, and the islanders had to be creative in their use of building materials.
Montana had worked on 13 buildings. They replaced or repaired schools and houses all over the island. They made friends with the incredibly warm and giving islanders and experienced life in a faraway place. Sure, trees are still missing and families are still without homes on Guanaja, but the students left something more important than buildings. They left hope.

Anne Sherwood is a professional photographer who lives in Bozeman, Montana, and works for the Bozeman Daily Chronicle.

HURRY UP AND WAIT: Denise Serack waits for a boat ride. The difference in the pace of life and the standard of living between Guanaja, Honduras, and Montana, United States, couldn’t be more pronounced. But in a delicate symbiosis, people with needs and people with skills and resources serve each other in a process that benefits them both.

ROOM WITH A VIEW: The closeness of sea and land is an everyday reality that’s picturesque in mild weather, but deadly when tropical storms pass through.

MAKING HIS OWN SHADE: Mel Anderson’s cowboy hat provides the same service in Honduras as it does on the high plains of Montana.
## Mission Trips Taken in 1999 (as of August 11, 1999)

YouthNet is the official volunteer agency of the North American Division, encouraging volunteerism, community service activities, and mission trips. The following churches and institutions sponsored groups on mission trips during 1999.

(Those with an asterisk [*] are Maranatha Volunteers International projects.)

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## ADRA Responds to Mitch

Hurricane Mitch hovered over Honduras for more than 48 hours. By the time it was gone, all 12,000 of the residents of Guanaja were left homeless. Some people found shelter in boats, some in the remains of toppled houses, and some in one of seven concrete buildings left standing. Across the entire country hundreds of thousands were left without shelter, trying to respond to many millions of dollars of damage to the country’s economy and infrastructure.

Within hours emergency shelters operated by Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) were providing temporary housing to thousands of Hondurans. Local churches and Pathfinder Clubs helped to deliver food, potable water, blankets, and material for temporary shelter.

In addition to medical supplies provided by charitable organizations in the United States, Canada, Germany, and Japan (to name a few), ADRA distributed food and hygiene kits in a dozen cities across the country. The 30-pound food kits contained beans, rice, vegetable oil, spaghetti, and soup—enough to feed a family of five for two weeks. The hygiene kits contained toothpaste/brushes, soap, toilet tissue, a drinking glass, hairbrush/comb, candles, matches, bed sheets, and towels.

Now that the immediate needs of the population have been met, ADRA continues to assist in building permanent homes for families who lost theirs during the storms, and restoring wells and other sources of drinking water. More than $8 million worth of food, water, medicine, clothing, and shelter have reached hurricane victims as the result of ADRA’s efforts.

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</table>

In addition to those listed above, Maranatha Volunteers International has taken 21 other groups (open to anyone) on mission trips to such places as Honduras, Dominican Republic, Mexico, India, United States, and Canada.
Out of the Ashes: A TOUCH OF GRACE

Why is it so awkward just to say “Thank you”?

BY CAROLYN RATHBUN-SUTTON

MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE” (2 Cor. 12:9). “Amazing grace! how sweet the sound...”

We write about it; we quote Scripture about it; we sing about it. Yet the concept of grace is so mind-boggling that I don’t hope to be able to understand it fully this side of heaven. In the meantime, however, glimpses into the richness of God’s grace keep coming in the unrolling of events in my daily life—such as that afternoon when, for one brief moment, I was heralded as a national hero.

Firestorm

In late August of 1987 a firestorm, caused by lightning-induced forest fires north of Yosemite National Park, forced the evacuation of our community in Twain Harte, California.

Fed by high winds, the inferno belched billows of heat-wavery smoke, which boiled up toward the heavens into a towering mushroom-shaped cloud. This fearsome entity, like a creature gone wild, roared with a vengeance toward our little mountain neighborhood on Confidence Road.

Our community was evacuated the second day of the fire. At the home of good friends who had taken us in, my husband and I caught glimpses of our endangered community on nationally televised newscasts as firefighters from around the country poured in to fight our battle for us.

During this waiting period I experienced a growing sense of unworthiness at the life-threatening risks firefighters were taking in an attempt to save my home. Phoning the local Red Cross and county evacuation centers, I offered to assist with meal preparation, child care, clerical work, cleanup—anything to make me at least a little deserving of the risks being taken on my family’s behalf.

“We appreciate your offer, ma’am,” replied the last harried-sounding official, “but one more person in here would make things tighter than they already are.”

Then, four days later, along with our neighbors, we drove back up onto Confidence Road, not knowing if our home had been spared or if it was one of those reduced to a mound of charred rubble. Soot and cinders were still falling, coating the surrounding pine trees with a lifeless gray pallor.

Rounding the final corner, we saw our house—covered with ashes, but still standing. In our particular neighborhood, the firefighters had saved every home.

You can imagine the gratitude and affection we residents felt for the men and women who had saved our homes. They became the instant heroes of Tuolumne County. “Firefighters, We Love You” signs went up along the highways and roads. For the next few days, when the firefighting vehicles rolled out of the mountains down Main Street heading toward another hot spot, citizens—some still wearing surgical or gas masks—would stand on the sidewalks waving and cheering; some of the old-timers would doff their caps or salute.

Trailing Heroes

Two days after we all returned to school, my principal asked me to run down to the city of Modesto on a school errand. Turning onto Highway 108, I happened to fall in behind a 10-engine convoy of firefighters. My heart once again filled with unspeakable gratitude for these exhausted, soot-weary warriors who had risked so much for me.

For a time I stayed a few respectful car lengths behind.
But when the highway widened into four lanes, I smoothly swung to the left, crept past the escort car and abreast of the last fire engine. It was a beauty! The driver, happening to glance down, smiled.

A little embarrassed, but emboldened, I drew alongside the second engine from the rear and then the third and then the fourth. The gold insignia on the door read “Fire Department, Moraga, California.” What a tired-looking crew! Yet I felt a measure of excitement being so close to nationally televised heroes.

I was just about to pull equal with the fifth engine when my lane narrowed abruptly. Paying so much attention to my heroes and their equipment, I had not been heeding the road signs. The driver of the truck from Moraga noticed my predicament, hit his brakes, and motioned me to pull in ahead of him.

Suddenly I grew uneasy. Had I done something illegal? After all, I had just intercepted the line of an officially escorted convoy.

“Road Construction Ahead. Prepare to Stop,” a sign warned. The next thing I knew, we—the convoy and I—were being flagged to the shoulder of the road. A sinking sensation in my stomach suggested I was somewhere I wasn’t supposed to be. So as firefighters jumped down from their trucks, I slid down in my driver’s seat, lowering my head to become as inconspicuous as possible.

To add to my growing consternation, a badged official from the front fire marshal escort vehicle appeared, walking down the line of trucks—in my direction. Of course, with the air conditioner off now, with the outside temperature around 96 degrees, and with the windows rolled up tight under a hot afternoon sun, my eyeglasses slipped slowly toward the end of my perspiring nose. A voiding eye contact with the ever-approaching fire marshal, I was momentarily distracted by loud voices.

“Zap!”

A thunderlike explosion roared across the top of my vehicle, rocking it violently. I screamed and jerked my head about. Through foamy cascades running down my windows, I was able to distinguish three firefighters wrestling a big fire hose, whose gushing nozzle they quickly pointed away from my car and toward a field on the other side of a barbed-wire fence.

That’s it, I thought. I’ve just been zapped with the Firefighters’ Seal of Disapproval, and it’s only going to get worse. Sure enough. In my rearview mirror I could see two of them striding toward my car. My imagination ran wild, and for an instant I pictured myself before a judge trying to explain why I’d broken into an official firefighting convoy on its way to taking care of urgent business. I could just see the writing on the courtroom wall: Firefighters of America v. Rathbun.

An insistent knocking on the car window brought this troubling reverie to a temporary halt. With heart beating wildly, I reluctantly raised my eyes, completely unprepared for what I saw. Standing there were two big firefighters, each holding an assortment of canned soda. I blinked and stared.

“M’am,” called the nearest one through my tightly closed window, “we had an accident with our fire hose.”

“Yeah,” enunciated the second man loudly, “we didn’t mean to get your car all wet—although it’s really clean now.”

“Here,” said the first, still at high volume, “have something to drink—on us.” A nether bead of perspiration trickled down my collar as, through the window, I looked down at his strong hands, one grasping a 7-Up and the other a cherry soda with clear droplets of water and fragments of ice still clinging to their frosty sides.

Returning somewhat to my normal senses, I began to realize that these men hadn’t approached to serve me court orders. Managing to roll down the window a few inches, I extended my hands for a couple of the drinks. I was still unable to speak.

“You sure you’re all right, ma’am?” he asked. “Your car appears to be fine, so don’t worry.” Dumbly, I nodded.

The men exchanged an uneasy glance. And then, in the uncertain silence, using mostly backward steps, they cautiously withdrew.

Feeling more at ease, I spent the next half hour taking long drafts of cold soda and finishing my English paper corrections. That road construction crew was certainly taking its sweet time. Sounds of laughter from a group of firefighters leaning against the front of the Moraga truck drifted through the car window. Glancing at them in the uncertain silence, I pictured myself before a judge trying to explain why I’d broken into an official firefighting convoy on its way to taking care of urgent business. I could just see the writing on the courtroom wall: Firefighters of America v. Rathbun.

Hesitantly I eased out of the car, wrestling with the camera case. Walking back toward the fire engine,
I timidly said, “Thank you for the drinks.” The firefighters looked over at me. A n awkward silence hung between us. “Would you mind terribly if I took a picture of your truck—you can just stay there, if you like.” Suddenly I couldn’t hold it in any longer.

“You guys,” I choked out, surprised at my emotion, “you guys—or some just like you—saved our house this week. We’re really, really grateful.”

Then I started fumbling with the camera adjustments and blinking back tears. The fireman who’d given me the sodas approached.

“If we saved your house, ma’am, that makes us feel real good. By the way, I know how to work these things,” he said, taking the camera from me. “Now you go ‘long over there and get in that picture too.”

Oh, I thought, my little pink schoolteacher dress is so wrinkled! And how I suddenly regretted not having put my contact lenses in that morning. I walked over to the group. One fireman put a kind arm about my shoulders, two others leaned in, and we all said, “Cheese.”

Circle of Heroes

At that moment a line of what must have been around 60 vehicles from the other end of the road construction site began driving by. Seeing the fire engine convoy and the firefighters, the drivers and their occupants went wild—honking, shouting, waving.

“Thank you,” “God bless you,” and “We love you” filled the air. From all around me came the hearty but modest replies, “We’re happy to do it.” “You’re welcome!” “You bet!” The firefighter who had taken the picture handed me the camera.

“Hey, you’re all national heroes, you know!” one burly driver called jubilantly to them, to us. For the photographer-fireman, with a twinkle in his eye, had just nodded to me, indicating I should wave back at the oncoming traffic as well. So there, in the middle of that circle of heroes, awash in cacophonous waves of gratitude and love, I too stood and waved and received unmerited praise; unmerited, amazing grace.

I, the unworthy one, unworthy of inclusion in a portrait of heroes; unworthy of those lives risked for my house—the house of a stranger. I who had wanted to do something—anything—at the evacuation centers to be deserving. But I who in the end had done nothing.

Double Exposure

What a story I had to tell my husband that night! And what a picture I had to show!

And what a picture God has to show when we receive His grace. When He looks at this picture the family resemblance between us and His holy Son is uncanny. What God sees, while He looks at this picture, can be found in the words “How beautiful you are, . . . how beautiful you are! . . . there is no blemish in you” (S. of Sol. 4:1-7, N A SB).

We Seventh-day Adventists have a message about an impending judgment. But the best part of this message is that we can meet the Judge with hope, with joy, and in the security of a heavenly Advocate. And all because of grace.

“We survive,” noted a friend of mine, “on the fuel of grace; every breath we draw is a gift from God.” And God has called us to be transmitters of this grace—to live our lives in such a way that they “paint a portrait of God’s character for hurting hearts.”

Ellen White writes that “[God] offers us the privilege of cooperation with Christ in revealing His grace to the world” (Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 355). If we are purposeful partakers of God’s grace—through prayerful, daily communion with our Father and through the open-hearted reading of His Holy Letter to us—we will then authentically communicate God’s love, because we have first known God’s love in our own hearts.

How blessed we are that the divine Hero has given each of us every reason in the universe to exclaim— in a borrowed expression from the apostle Paul—“To me, the very least of all saints, these flashes of grace are given to share with others the unfathomable riches of Christ” (based on Eph. 3:8).

Carolyn Rathbun-Sutton is a former teacher and editor who is now enjoying life as a wife, mother, and freelance writer in Grants Pass, Oregon.
Mommy, tell me a story about when you were little,” begged Reuben as he cuddled next to his mother on the couch one evening.

“Yes, when you were little,” echoed Raina.

“O.K. I’ll tell you a story about something that happened when I was about 1 year old, just after I learned to walk,” M oth e r said. “M y momm y told me this story many times.”

T he two children snuggled close to M oth e r as she began:

W hen I was just one year old my parents—your grandpa and grandma—lived on several acres near a small town. T wo Shetland ponies, named Ginny and Star, lived in the pasture there. T hose ponies loved to be near each other, and would playfully bite at each other, and whinny back and forth as they talked horse language. T hey certainly didn’t like to be separated.

“O ne day my mother heard the ponies making quite a fuss, so she ran outdoors and discovered that Ginny was out of the fence. Of course, Star wanted out too. M om called Daddy, and together they ran to the pasture to help my two brothers catch Ginny. A s M om left, she told me to go to my grandmas house next door. I started toward G randma’s place, but then turned and followed my parents.

“Daddy tried and tried to get Ginny back through the sagging fence wire, but Ginny liked the grass better outside, and wouldn’t come.

“M eanwhile, Star was getting more excited, and was running around the field whinnying frantically.

“J ust then I crawled under the fence and began to toddle across the pasture toward my mother. W hen Star came near me, she suddenly stopped running and turned around with her back toward me. M y mom was terrified as she watched Star back up and kick savagely in my direction.

“I flew back, turned a backward somersault, and landed on my back. M om screamed and ran to me, fully expecting to find me badly injured. B ut when she picked me up in her arms, she could find only a tiny cut on my ear!

“E very time your grandma tells me that story, she says she believes that my guardian angel flipped me back out of the way. I f the pony’s hoof had hit me, I would have been badly hurt. A nd you know what? T hink your grandma is right.”

Reuben let out his breath slowly and whispered, “I’m sure glad you didn’t get hurt, Mommy. I like that story.”

“M e too,” smiled M oth e r.

A s she tucked the two children into bed, M oth e r smiled. “It’s good to look back,” she said. “It’s good to remember times when God has been with us in the past.”

Tell Me a Story

On Tuesday (or whatever day you like), invite your family to worship God together.

☞ Ask an adult at your worship to tell a story of a time when he or she knew that God cared for them. How did they feel when they realized that God had helped or protected them?

☞ Ask each person to take just five minutes and write a short story about a time when God cared for them. (You can have an adult write down your story as you tell it to them, if you want.) D raw a simple picture beside the story that shows what happened. N ow put your pages in a special folder or notebook that you will keep nearby the place you have family worship. Y ou’ll want to add other stories to the collection in the future!

☞ Read a Bible story in Exodus 15:1-21 about a time when God protected His people. W hy do you think bad things sometimes happen to God’s people?

☞ Sing a song about being thankful for God’s help. T ry “Anywhere With Jesus” or “He’s Able.”

☞ Be sure to thank God for specific times when you know God has been with you and your family.
The Ambassadors are alive and well and living in Berrien Springs, Michigan. The seven-member gospel group from West Africa first made an impression on North American audiences in fall 1998, with multiple appearances during the NeXt Millennium Seminar, the NET '98 televised evangelistic outreach sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church and held on the Andrews University campus.

The group developed its distinctive sound in the mid 1990s, while the members studied at the Adventist Seminary of West Africa, in Ikeja, Nigeria. Syncopated rhythms pay homage to the songs of their home continent, and their a cappella harmonies converge in a dense wall of ebullient sound. A repertoire strong in contemporary African arrangements might be expected for a group from West Africa, but American audiences are particularly moved by their unique versions of Negro spirituals. Their reception at AU in fall 1998 was as immediate as it was enthusiastic.

"We didn't know exactly what people in North America would think of us," said Jean-Claude Nkou, a first tenor from Cameroon. "So we were encouraged when so many came up and said, 'When are you guys singing again?' and 'Where can we see you?'

Multiple appearances during NET '98 meant the group's name and music would go out across six continents and to more than 7,600 downlink sites worldwide. It was a dream to perform in America, members said, but a dream they ultimately expected to end. "We knew that our time here was limited," Nkou said.

When NET '98 concluded in November, it was expected that the Ambassadors would return to Africa. But the response to their music and the numerous requests for performances convinced them that another dream was in the works. If North America was a great place to perform, why not also a great place to study? "Increasingly we felt that God had brought us to this campus to do more than just sing," said Emmanuel Osuyah, the group's lead tenor, who, like the majority of members, hails from the West African country of Nigeria.

All of them held bachelor's degrees, but their dream was now to pursue graduate degrees and to do it at Andrews University. (Since the Adventist Seminary of West Africa [recently renamed Babcock University] is an Andrews affiliate college, all of the group members technically already hold Andrews degrees.)

But as nice as graduate school is, it costs money. If the group wanted to stay in America, it needed help. The financial miracle quickly came in the form of external donors from the Detroit area who took a particular interest in the group and wanted their music to get wider exposure in North America.

In January all seven group members enrolled as Andrews students, to pur-
WORLD NEWS & PERSPECTIVES

ADRA Provides Relief for Displaced Timorese

Following the recent vote for independence in East Timor and the subsequent political instability, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is helping refugees as they seek refuge in neighboring Indonesian provinces.

With tens of thousands of refugees from East Timor moving into surrounding mountains, western Timor, and other Indonesian districts, ADRA/Indonesia is responding to the urgent food needs. ADRA is putting together 2,500 food baskets for displaced families in the Noelbaki District.

"ADRA hopes that the food will help to lessen the burden on the Noelbaki district to take care of this unexpected advance in population," says Doli Situmeang, ADRA/Indonesia director. "The food baskets will provide rice, instant noodles, and other food items to each family." This response was made possible with ADRA donations from Australia.

In addition to the many displaced persons moving out of East Timor, thousands are said to have died in the anti-independence, militia-sponsored violence following the announcement of election results on September 4.

A DRA/Indonesia has several other development and disaster relief projects in the East Timor, including its clean water project funded by the Netherlands that concludes this month. Other projects include a US$2 million food-for-work project for 30,000 people per year, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); a drought relief project to assist 255 families in Merauke, Irian Jaya; and an orphanage project that started nearly one year ago, funded by the Netherlands and England.

Mongolian Membership Up by One Third

Still developing its presence in Mongolia, the youthful Seventh-day Adventist Church increased its official membership by one third on August 28. The baptism of 12 people in the Ulan Bator church was also the first time anyone over the age of 25 has been baptized in Mongolia.

More than 70 people regularly worship in the Adventist congregation each week in Ulan Bator, the capital of Mongolia. Others worship in home churches in the city and in rural areas. Many of these worship groups are run by teenagers in a church dominated by young people.

With the breakdown of Communism in the mid-

NEWSBREAK

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ADVENTIST REVIEW, OCTOBER 1999 (1433) 49
Environmental news makes depressing reading—air, river, and ocean pollution, global warming, record-breaking storms, severe droughts, loss of habitat and the creatures they support, antibiotic-resistant bacteria—the list seems to grow inexorably.

That temperatures have risen 7-10 degrees Fahrenheit in the past 30 years in the Northern Hemisphere was reported recently by U.S. News, and ice has been thinning in the arctic region, according to Science News.

“In the past decade, conservation biologists have repeatedly warned that humans are bringing about a tsunami of extinctions that rivals the collapse of the dinosaurs,”1 wrote Will Nixon in The Amicus Journal. And that Brooklyn’s Gowanus Canal is polluted so horribly it’s nearly devoid of anything biological is another claim reported in Science News.

To add to the bad news, Minnesota epidemiologist Kirk Smith, in the New England Journal of Medicine, wrote that there’s further evidence linking antibiotic use in agriculture and drug-resistant pathogens in animals that are then sometimes passed on to humans, causing severe illnesses.

It’s no wonder Mark Hertsgaard said that readers of a recent book about the environment would find themselves muttering, “My poor world.”2

John describes, in Revelation, the judgments that are coming, but we seem to be busy trying to hurry up the process, intent upon bringing them on ourselves.


NEWSBREAK

1990s, Mongolia became more open to religious activity. Although historically a Buddhist country, during the Communist years all religious activity was actively suppressed. Today younger Mongolians tend to be atheistic, while some of the older people retain links to Buddhism.

“There’s an exciting new climate of discovery of spiritual things,” says Gary Krause, communication director for the Adventist Church’s Global Mission program. “In the Adventist Church in Mongolia the experienced, senior members are in their late 20s. We’re happy for a young church here in Mongolia that really wants to accomplish its mission.”—Adventist News Network.

Adventist Radio Reaches Large Audience in Bolivia

The Orion Nuevo Tiempo radio network recently launched its eighth radio station in the Bolivian city of Trinidad. The latest listener surveys show that Orion stations are among the most listened-to radio stations in the cities of La Paz and Cochabamba. The stations have the highest listener ratings among religious radio stations, reports Flavio Ferraz, Bolivia Union communication director.

Oakwood College Faculty Member’s Volume Makes Reader’s Digest’s Best Book List

Plant Energetics, a book authored by Oakwood College faculty member Alexander G. Volkov, was recently named a Best Book in its category by the publishers of Reader’s Digest.

The award recognizes Volkov’s pacesetting investigation of plants and their life processes. Using instruments similar to those that perform electroencephalograms on humans, Volkov measures thermodynamic processes in plants, showing the role electrochemistry plays in the life cycle of plants, a process that uses biophysics and bioelectrochemistry.

Plant Energetics is used as a textbook at Columbia University, the University of Pennsylvania, and other institutions, a college spokesperson reports.
For Your Good Health

Keep Your Cool
Researchers found that strokes were twice as common among Finnish men who scored high on an anger scale compared with those who reported the lowest levels of anger.—Stroke/American Heart Association.

Workout for Your Mind
Regular exercise has proven more effective than placebo pills in reducing anxiety in people.—Professional Psychology: Research and Practice.

A Sweet Tooth You Don’t Want
If you have diabetes, tell your dentist to take extra time to care for your teeth. Persons with poorly controlled diabetes can have high glucose levels in their saliva, which results in dental plaque and an increase in cavities and gum disease.—University of California, Berkeley Wellness Letter.

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

AWR Letter Box
Dear friends at AWR: “I am a college professor who has been placed in prison with the death penalty ahead of me. I am getting many spiritual blessings by hearing your radio programs. It seems as though you are my friends and I know you well. These messages give me new hope and comfort now.”—Safeer, Pakistan.

“I am truly enlightened by the programs you deliver. I hope you add more programs and extend your broadcast hours.”—Romeo, Philippines.

“I am very glad that after I heard your radio program I dared to write to you. Your Bible lessons are so interesting. I learned some new things from the Bible: I didn't know that there is a holy day which we should keep—Sabbath. And it was very interesting for me to read that after death a man just sleeps.”—Tanya, Russia.

For more information about Adventist World Radio, write to: 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904-6600; or call toll-free: 1-800-337-4297; e-mail: awrinfo@awr.org; website: www.awr.org.

Adventist Musicians to Orchestrate Hymn Festival

“Faith Ablaze! Hymns of Heart and Heritage” is the theme of a two-day hymn festival at Andrews University on November 19, 20.

Sponsored by the International Adventist Musicians Association (IAM A) and Andrews University, the festival will celebrate that “flame of living fire expressed through hymns of living faith spanning two millennia,” says Elsie Buck, IAM A president.

The festival will include a Sabbath service, interactive evensongs, an excursion to the church where “The Old Rugged Cross” was first sung, and a wind symphony concert.

For more information, call (616) 471-6341 or visit the university website at www.andrews.edu.

News Notes

Ronald Smith, editor of Message magazine, was recently elected vice president of spiritual nurture and outreach at the Review and Herald Publishing Association in Hagerstown, Maryland. Smith will carry his new responsibilities in addition to his position as Message editor.
Who Sinned?

Last year I gave birth to a child with multiple disabilities. Some have hinted that God is “punishing me” because I have not been “living up to the Adventist lifestyle.”

While I try to push these thoughts aside, I am filled with guilt and remorse. Do you think I caused my daughter’s disabilities by drifting off course?

Absolutely not. I am appalled that well-meaning Christians would dare to add a further burden to your already heavy shoulders as you face the challenge of parenting a child with physical and mental disabilities. As you struggle to understand the perspective of Jesus Christ in all of this, I refer you to the book of John, chapter 9.

In this chapter Jesus and the disciples are walking along a road when they encounter a man born blind. The disciples ask a question that no doubt springs from their culture, making an accusation that is not unlike the insinuations you, and many others, face today. “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (verse 2).*

From Bible times to modern times, when some of the “saints” see children, families, people who disturb their comfortable view of life, they seek a way to attach blame, thus absolving themselves of any connection with the random pain and suffering of the world. In the face of such pointed cause-and-effect indictments, the liberating words of Jesus Christ offer solace and hope to those who are hurting.

’Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life’” (verse 3).

The issue here, according to our Saviour, is not one of blame, but one of hope. Whenever suffering, disarray, chaos, pain, malfunctioning, aberration, deviation shatters our world, there is opportunity for the power and strength of Jesus Christ to shine through. The months and years ahead of you will require enormous amounts of physical and emotional energy, spiritual reserves, inner strength. But in the midst of the heartache and trauma, Christ promises that His work will be displayed in the life of your daughter. Praise God for His grace that overarches all of the trying details of our lives.

Please understand that there are others whose scaled eyes will prevent them from ever seeing God’s glory being displayed in your family. Even when they were presented with the firsthand facts of the miracle, the Pharisees of Jesus’ time refused to see “outside of the box” that represented their culture and upbringing. In response to the testimony of the man no longer blind, they shouted, true to course, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” (verse 34).

In the face of the huge challenge that lies before you, I suggest that you surround yourself with those who understand. Find people who can spell you for a few hours while you walk, read, window-shop, attend to your own emotional and physical well-being. A number of researchers have found that in the face of crisis, it is not socioeconomic status, income, or education that sustains families, but good communication, family closeness, flexibility, and tolerance.

At such a time as this, you need to feel supported, buoyed up, strengthened. While you describe yourself as having “drifted,” and have come back to the faith to meet criticism and accusation, I believe your church can still be a needed source of help at this time. Look for those with a sympathetic heart and an understanding spirit. While they may not be the most vocal and obvious members of your congregation, they are there.

In my years as a Seventh-day Adventist I have been associated with 14 different congregations. In each one I have found believers who cared enough to touch my life, heal my hurts, forgive me, sustain me, believe in me, carry me through difficult times. My prayers are with you as you search for those who will walk beside you, poised on the threshold of discovering God’s glory in your daughter’s life.

*Scripture quotations in this article are from the New International Version.

Sandra Doran researched families of children with disabilities for her doctoral work at Boston University.
Talkin’ to the Master

Even as her life was falling apart, she knew how to keep it all together.

BY BOB RIGSBY

SHE LAY ON THE OPERATING ROOM TABLE awaiting the arrival of the surgeon. Never one to place much trust in doctors, she had nevertheless been convinced there was no other choice but to amputate the painful ulcer-ridden leg. But she didn’t have to like it. Time and chance, disease and age, bad choices and bad luck had taken their toll, and she was weary. Life was and had been hard.

Discrimination, subtle or overt, had likely made being Black, and a woman, a challenge to her in life. But other problems had added to the burden. Diabetes and hypertension had not only robbed her of her vision but were now claiming her leg: the leg that had carried her through the ecstasies and anguishes of her life.

Worse, though, was the laryngeal cancer, from years of smoking, which left her breathing and “talking” through a tracheotomy. To call it “talking” is to be generous, for she “spoke” with a breathy and raspy whisper that seemed to take as much effort for the listener to hear as it took for her to utter a few words.

A Divine Appointment

It was with a quiet resignation that she entered this sterile room of amputation. Yet there was a calm dignity about her: a quiet resolve and silent strength that possessed her. As we prepared her frail body for this surgery of separation, it seemed she was trying to tell us something, and we inquired if she was comfortable. Thinking she had not heard, I asked again, “Are you all right?”

With a voice more vigorous and clear than I had thought she was capable of and an expression of stern rebuke, mixed with not a little annoyance at being interrupted, she emphatically explained: “I’m talkin’ to the Master!”

A hush fell on the room as she continued her conversation with the One who was clearly her comfort and friend.

It may be my imagination, but I thought I saw a holy radiance in those sightless eyes. The One with whom she conversed seemed to be more real than the knife that sat coldly by—ready to do its unpleasant task. She “spoke” with reverence, ease, and honesty—as with a close and trusted friend. Bluntly she told her friend she was not at all happy at losing her leg. She thanked Him for His mercy and tender regard. She praised Him for His nearness, His compassion. She ended with a simple request—for strength—and confidently thanked Him for listening.

“I’m ready now,” she whispered to us. For a brief moment I turned away with a moist glistening of the eyes. Now it was I who needed a few private moments with the Master.

Bob Rigsby is an anesthesiologist who practices at Florida Hospital in Orlando.
In the wake of jubilee speculations in certain segments of the Adventist Church in the 1980s and early 1990s, the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference came out with a document to address the issue. Prepared in October 1990, it is still pertinent. We present here a condensed version, slightly modified and updated.—Editors.

**EVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS ARE FIRM** believers in the imminent return of Jesus Christ to this world as the grand consummation of the plan of salvation. This vital truth is incorporated into the denominational name.

**No Time Setting**

While the general signs foretold by Jesus would occur in the “time of the end” to signal the nearing Advent (Matt. 24:32, 33), He warned His people away from time-setting speculations. “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32). After His resurrection, when the disciples asked if He would then restore the kingdom to Israel, Jesus refused to detail time frames. “And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts 1:7).

In spite of Christ’s cautions against time setting implicit in these statements, in recent years some well-meaning persons are endeavoring to pinpoint the time of Christ’s coming through calculations based on Israel’s civil institution of the jubilee year. We believe this disregard for Christ’s clear-cut warnings is unfortunate. Furthermore, the “assured results” of jubilee calculations are an illusion and nothing else.
The Jubilee Cycle

The Mosaic legislation that provided for the jubilee system in Israel's economy is recorded only in Leviticus 25:10-54; 27:17-24. It is directly alluded to twice more (Num. 36:4; Eze. 46:17). As a civil institution its chief function was to prevent the permanent alienation of landed property from its original owner. Every 50 years most houses, and all lands, sold in the previous jubilee cycle reverted automatically to the original possessor or his heirs (Lev. 25:23, 24).

Asecond provision in the jubilee legislation enjoined the release of Hebrew slaves. Ordinarily a Hebrew slave could "go out free for nothing" in his seventh year after any six full years of service if he chose to do so (Ex. 21:2, 3; Deut. 15:12-14). However, should his service cross the jubilee year, he was automatically released (Lev. 25:10, 39-41). Because of this civil institution the value of land, houses, and even physical labor was determined by the number of years that would elapse between the sale of the property or the onset of service and the next jubilee (Lev. 25:14-16, 23-28, 47-54; 27:17-24).

The Sabbatical Year

The jubilee cycle was intimately related to another piece of civil legislation regulating the use of the land, namely, the sabbatical year. Just as Israel observed the Sabbath after six days of labor, so the law required the land to "keep a Sabbath unto the Lord" (Lev. 25:2-5). For six years the fields and orchards were to be sown,
Fascination with jubilee cycle calculations appears in reality to be only a variant form of numerology, a dead-end attempt to find hidden significance in biblical numbers.

In recent years scholarly study has produced 10 pieces of evidence for the sabbatical cycle in postexilic times. Plotting these particular years on a graph, they have extrapolated the placement of each sabbatical year for the era of the second Temple. On this basis it can now be determined that 457 B.C., A.D. 27, and A.D. 34 (of the 70-weeks prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27) were sabbatical years (see William H. Shea, “Unity of Daniel,” Symposium on Daniel [Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1986], pp. 226, 252-255).

On the other hand, there is no record in the Bible, or outside the Scriptures, of an actual observance of the jubilee cycle. Both biblical and nonbiblical sources are silent on the actual practice of this civil institution God designed for national Israel.

Misuse of the Jubilee Cycle

We readily grant that the metaphorical use of the jubilee institution—release and restoration (Lev. 25:10)—makes it a natural type of Christ’s coming and the great restoration of all things from the bondage of sin (cf. Acts 3:20, 21). However, we believe it unwise and misleading for our members to speculate on the date for the consummation of all things through an application of the jubilee cycle. We summarize our reasons as follows:

1. The sabbatical and jubilee cycles were civil institutions designed to regulate certain aspects of the secular life of the nation. They were not integral parts of the sanctuary ritual system (as were the spring and fall festivals).

2. Inasmuch as there is no record of an actual observance of a jubilee, there is no factual basis from which we can compute jubilee cycles. A ny choice of an initial date is purely arbitrary.

3. There is uncertainty on how many years constitute a jubilee cycle. The biblical data seems to indicate that it was a true 50-year cycle, composed of the 49-year sabbatical cycle plus the jubilee year itself (Lev. 25:8-10). This would require the land to lie fallow for two successive years, the forty-ninth (sabbatical year) and the fiftieth (jubilee year) (see Lev. 25:4, 5, 11). (“Jubilee, Year of,” International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, rev. ed.).

However, in the Jewish book of Jubilees, written toward the end of the intertestamental period, a jubilee con-
sists of only 49 years. Later rabbinic authorities are divided on the subject: The majority hold to a 50-year span; the minority opt for a 49-year span (see “Jubilee, Year of,” The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible). Obviously, this fact prevents any computation from being certain of accuracy.

It is evident that calculations based on a 49-year cycle will be off considerably from calculations based on a full 50-year cycle on any extended time line. It follows, therefore, that this very uncertainty over how to count a jubilee cycle renders its employment as a kind of time “prophecy” invalid and mere speculation.

4. There is no initial date from which to figure jubilee cycles. Interest in calculating such cycles has led to a focus on what we now know to have been sabbatical year dates: 457 B.C., A.D. 27, and A.D. 34. In recent years some have assumed that the sabbatical year of A.D. 27 was also a jubilee year. They also assumed that Jesus’ sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth (in which He read a portion of Isaiah 61—also assumed to allude to the jubilee cycle) took place in A.D. 27. (The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary suggests A.D. 29 as the more likely date.) On the basis of these and other assumptions, they asserted that the world’s final jubilee would fall in 1987.

Jubilee speculation next zeroed in on the year 1994 as the fiftieth jubilee year. The Jews, released from captivity by the Persian king Cyrus in 537 B.C., had returned to Palestine 80 years earlier. The decree Ezra carried with him in 457 B.C. from Artaxerxes I had nothing to do with jubilee considerations: the restoration of lands to the owners or their heirs and the release of slaves. Rather, it had to do with the reorganization and granting of a degree of autonomy to the nation of Israel under Persian lordship.

It should be noted that in order to end a series of 50 jubilee cycles (beginning in 457 B.C.) in 1994, the calculator must arbitrarily use 49-year cycles. If they use 50-year cycles over this long span, it pushes their ending date forward another half century. A gain, we see the arbitrary and speculative nature of jubilee cycle calculations.

5. There is no way of determining how many jubilee cycles (assuming we could calculate them) will elapse before the Lord comes. It is purely an arbitrary decision to select 50 cycles. The fact is that any number of jubilee cycles could occur in probationary time, the Bible being almost totally silent on this topic.

6. There is no biblical evidence whatsoever for the time elements of the sabbatical year and the jubilee cycle to be used to determine prophetic fulfilments. These civil time cycles are really quite different from apocalyptic time prophecies. For example, apocalyptic time prophecies are quite specific. No guesswork. Daniel is told, for instance, that the “saints” would come under the persecuting domination of the little horn for “a time and times and the dividing of time” (Dan. 7:25). This symbol is explained to be a period of 1260 prophetic days by John (Rev. 12:6, 14), that is to say, 1260 years on the year-day principle (Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6).

A specific period of time is allotted postexilic Jewry (70 prophetic weeks, or 490 years, Dan. 9:24) during which the Messiah was to appear. Furthermore, Daniel is told that the specific year of the Messiah’s appearing could be calculated as 69 prophetic weeks (483 years) elapsing after the giving of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem (verse 25).

In contrast with the certainty of these time prophecies are jubilee cycle speculations. The latter lack all certainty. The beginning date from which to measure the cycles cannot be ascertained, and there is no way of knowing the correct way in which to count them (49 or 50 years). Fascination with jubilee cycle calculations appears in reality to be only a variant form of numerology, a dead-end attempt to find hidden significance in biblical numbers.

7. There is nothing in the writings of Ellen White to support jubilee cycle calculations for the time of Christ’s coming. Ellen White does allude to the institution twice (in similar phraseology) in connection with the second coming of Christ (Early Writings, pp. 34, 35, 285, 286). As she describes the scene of Christ’s return breaking in on this planet, she exclaims, “Then commenced the jubilee, when the land should rest.” That is all. It is obvious that she is employing the term as a metaphor of the ultimate release and restoration of all things from the bondage of sin that will be ushered in by the glorious advent of Christ (cf. Acts 3:20, 21).

Ellen White’s Timely Counsel

Jubilee speculations, both past and present, rest on the assumption that the church can determine rather specifically the time for certain end events—including the return of the Saviour. There is dissatisfaction with only believing “the Advent near.” Fixing an exact date for an event seems to resolve the mental dilemma more satisfactorily for some Christians than exercising faith in God’s promise.

Appeal to the Church

We believe Jesus is coming again, and that He is coming soon. There is a wealth of evidence for this truth in the ever-changing contemporary scene. Speculations on locating the jubilee year divert the attention of the curious-minded, but they really do not stir the church into action. On the contrary, the tendency is to adopt an attitude of “wait and see.”

Today the church faces an enormous challenge in its global mission. It cannot afford to be distracted from its task. Millions have never even heard the name of Christ, much less the special emphases of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14. Since hundreds of people groups must be penetrated, we must rally to the challenge of sharing this faith with them.

The Lord is coming. Let Him come and find His people, not engaged in doubtful speculations, but actively discharging the orders of His commission (Matt. 28:18-20).
What inscription would you put on the weekly bulletin to capture the essence of your congregation’s mission? “A House of Prayer for All People,” as Pioneer Memorial Church had when I studied at Andrews University in the seventies? That is indeed an open invitation to worship and is apt for a university church that is a home away from home to students from some 80 countries.

Would you consider “Reverence My Sanctuary,” as the bulletin declared in the church where I was married?

How about: “Not a Home for Saints . . . a Hospital for Sinners”? I like that. It’s unpretentious, inclusive, redemptive—the type of tag I’d like my church to wear in a sick, sick world.

But some members didn’t warm to the idea when it was suggested some 10 years ago. The words conveyed a message that was true, they acknowledged, but one that was a bit too gritty. The idea of a church as a hospital didn’t quite engender the warm and cozy feeling some members wanted to promote. Members want to enter a positive, feel-good place on Sabbath mornings, the church board concluded. Worshipers seek a refuge from the world, not a bed in a room full of sick people. They attend church to get away from the mad, crazy world, not to get a reminder of the pathetic place they inhabit during the week.

The board may well have been right. The church is indeed a refuge, an escape from life’s cruel and harsh realities. For some, Sabbath Services are often the only times they experience true peace and the joy of fellowship with fellow believers. Too many of our members enter the sanctuary on Sabbath morning to escape cheating spouses; ungrateful children; unreasonable bosses; bullying siblings; demanding parents; dead-end jobs; and a host of other wretched social conditions. Essentially, we’re talking about broken people.

If we could but see and hear the stories of each member as he or she walks into church each Sabbath, we would weep and mourn and be so weighted down with a sense of gloom that we would never leave our knees. Pastors who visit their members and are connected to their needs know this. Like the Saviour weeping over Jerusalem, they agonize on their knees before their Lord, day and night, so that when they stand in the pulpit, the words they speak will be words of comfort and life.

The idea of the church as a “hospital” is fine so long as we understand that a hospital is a place where someone comes to get well, not to die. For every tragedy and death there is a triumph and a birth. God, the Great Physician, wants our church, our congregation, to be in the healing business. Members and visitors come to our church seeking love and acceptance—the prerequisite for mental health. Others come for fellowship and the spiritual instruction needed for successful living.

Our roles as choir members, Sabbath school greeters, deacons, elders, preachers, or teachers are equivalent to those of doctors, nurses, surgeons, technicians, orderlies, or other health-care aides who work to get the sick off the critical list and back to a healthy life. The simple task to give each patient/church member/visitor a glimpse of Doctor Jesus each week, to follow up with frequent midweek checks, and prescribe a lifestyle of sustainable happiness.

So if you sing, do so after much prayer, and fasting even, so that God will direct you to the song most needed by an ailing soul in the pew. Your song may just be the tonic needed for a particular member, better and more potent even than the sermon, and the right channel through which the Holy Spirit can find easy access to someone’s arteries that have been clogged with anger, hate, bitterness, immorality, and petty jealousies.

When Jesus was found eating with outcasts and sinners, the Pharisees asked why Jesus would, in effect, stoop so low. “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick,” Jesus answered (Matt. 9:12).

Yes, I like that inscription.

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How all of us share in the ministry of the gospel

BY ELLEN G. WHITE

O A C C O M - p lish the great work of giving the last warning to the world, there is need of earnest, well-directed effort. As a people, we have not always moved with the wisdom and foresight demanded by the importance of our mission. Our leading ministers labor too hard, and, as the result, are almost constantly exhausted. Some of our leading men die prematurely, literally worn out, while there are among us men of ability who are really doing nothing in the cause. Our ministers weary themselves in doing that which should be left to others, while those who might help them, and who, if rightly instructed, would be willing to help them, are rusting from inaction. God's cause has not advanced as it should have done, for the very reason that ministers and leading men have felt that they must do everything themselves. They have tugged and toiled to keep the wheel rolling, and are weighed down with responsibilities and burdens in the various departments of church work, in the Sabbath school, and in every other branch of the cause. They think they must do all this or it will not be done; and truly it would not be done, because they have failed to take others into their counsel and to train them to work.

While upon this subject, my attention was called to the following paragraphs touching the same point:

"Some pastors seem to think that they must take the lead, manage and manipulate every department of church work. They must arrange the details for every enterprise. Now, there may be churches in which the pastor must do all this or it will not be attended to at all; but in very many churches..."
there is plenty of lay talent for all these purposes, and if the pastor would interest himself in pushing that element to the front, he would save himself much annoyance and hard work, and at the same time be rendering a service to those he thus interests in the general work of the church.

“In some respects the pastor occupies a position similar to that of the foreman of a gang of laboring men or the captain of a ship’s crew. They are expected to see that men over whom they are set do the work assigned to them correctly and promptly, and if occasion shall require it, only in case of emergency are they to execute in detail.

“The owner of a large mill once found his superintendent in a wheel pit, making some simple repairs, while a half-dozen workmen in that line were standing by, idly looking on. The proprietor, after learning the facts so as to be sure that no injustice be done, called the foreman to his office, and handed him his discharge and full pay. In surprise the foreman asked for an explanation. It was given in these words: ‘I employed you to keep six men at work. I found the six idle and you doing the work of but one, and your work could have been done just as well by any one of the six. I cannot afford to pay the wages of seven for you to teach the six how to be idle.’

“This incident may be applicable in some cases, in others not. But many pastors fail in not knowing how, or in not trying to get the full membership of the church actively engaged in the various departments of church work. If pastors would give more attention to getting and keeping their flock actively at work, they would accomplish more good, have more time for study and religious visitation, and also avoid many causes of friction.”

For our leading ministers, our camp meetings have been seasons of severe and wearing labor, unfitting them for important work which required their attention at the close of the meeting. As they meet and counsel together, they lay their plans for labor; to execute these plans successfully, they need a clear brain, calm nerves, and a heart filled with courage; but they lack all three of these essential qualifications.

Let those who love the Lord and His truth unite . . . to . . . pray for God’s blessing upon the minister.

They have made a serious mistake in regard to the work resting upon them, and have done much that others should have done, and that would have been a blessing to them, giving them a precious experience in laboring for Jesus. While all cannot be ministers, all can and should act a part in the work.

There has been a failure to call into exercise talent which might be employed in the work, but which needs development and cultivation. We have had but few ministers and but few men to bear responsibilities, because we have had so few educators. We have lost much because we have not had those who were apt to teach, and who could conduct a training school for the inexperienced, and press them into the service.

The real workers in this cause are few, yet the work covers much ground; and it is often impossible for the laborers to look after the interest awakened, and they fail to discern that they must enlist the lay members of the church, and teach them to work, that they may hold all that has been gained, and continue to advance. The plan of labor has been such as to lead the people to feel that they could do very little themselves; if anything was to be accomplished, they must have a minister . . .

And let those who love the Lord and His truth unite by twos and threes to seek places of retirement and pray for God’s blessing upon the minister who can hardly find time to pray because he is constantly engaged attending to so many requests, sitting in councils, answering inquiries, giving advice, writing important letters. Let the fervent, effectual prayer of the righteous ascend to God, that the word spoken may be a message of truth to reach the hearts of the hearers, and that souls may thereby be won to Christ.

This article first appeared in the July 24, 1883, edition of the Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald (now the Adventist Review) under the title “Cooperation With Ministers.” Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen G. White exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.
As soon as they burst through the emergency room doors, I knew something was wrong. The mom and dad, still in damp bathing suits, threw their limp 2-year-old daughter at us and screamed something about a swimming pool.

Within moments physicians, nurses, and technicians swooped into Trauma Room One. The resuscitation team slapped wires from the heart monitor onto the child’s chest. They inserted a plastic tube into her throat and forced air into her lungs. I spotted the hospital chaplain with the child’s parents in the hallway, his arm around the dad’s shoulders.

But nothing we did—no amount of drugs or machines or prayers—could bring her back. Ten years later I can still see the dad draped across his daughter’s body as it lay on the hospital gurney. I can still hear her mom’s convulsive sobs echo across the caverns of my memories.

During the years I worked as a nurse in that emergency department, hundreds of desperate people tore through those doors. The young and old, rich and poor, educated and not-so-educated, blue-collars and executives—I learned that no one is guaranteed safe passage through human experience. Heartache slips in and out of life’s shadows. When it chooses its victim, neither power nor money nor prestige avail: nothing can restrain its hand.

I think it’s because I’ve seen the tragedies rip so often into others that as I draw nearer to my fiftieth birthday I find myself reexamining my own priorities. That’s why a Calvin and Hobbes comic strip caught my attention.

Calvin is shoulder-deep, busy shoveling dirt from a hole, while Hobbes, his stuffed tiger, watches.

“What have you found?” Hobbes asks.

Calvin’s eyes sparkle. “A few dirty rocks, a weird root, and some disgusting grubs. There’s treasure everywhere!”

“At first I smiled. Children find treasure in the most unlikely places, and no one is surprised when they showcase rocks and worms. But when I recognized another message in Calvin’s treasure, my smile faded. Like Calvin, I used to showcase valueless things like rocks and roots. Now I showcase “real” treasure—financial investments, university degrees, job prestige, and a continuing litany of “bigger-better-more.”

I don’t believe it’s coincidental that the day I read Calvin I was also studying my way through Ecclesiastes. King Solomon had it all—money, power, prestige. And he used them all to satisfy every whim that tantalized his flesh and thoughts. “All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them,” he wrote in chapter 2, verse 10. “I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure.” For years, possibly decades, he fed his lust for bigger-better-more. Not until he neared the end of his life did he finally recognize the worthlessness of his treasures.

“Vanity of vanities,” he called them. He could have called them dirty rocks, weird roots, and grub worms.

To his credit, Solomon admitted the truth about his treasures before it was too late to make things right. Before his body returned to dust (Eccl. 12:7) he discovered the bankruptcy of bigger-better-more. At last he understood true treasure. “The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, . . . whether it is good or evil” (verses 13, 14).

I taped the Calvin cartoon to my refrigerator door. It will remain there a long time, a reminder to check my spiritual bank account day by day. It will remind me to ensure that my real treasure—my relationship with Christ—matures with every deposit of personal Bible study, prayer, and fellowship with other believers.

Someday I might be on the other end of the emergency room doors. I don’t want to discover, at that moment, that my treasures were nothing more than dirty rocks and grubworms.

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