EVERY EYE SHALL BEHOLD HIM: How One Thai Artist Sees It.
Heart to Heart

Ron Bowes, public relations director of Christian Record Services, did a superb job in his article “Heart to Heart” (Adventist Review, Sept. 9). He unfolded the secret of how to easily do even the most difficult and awkward assignments in Christian services: “Serving those who are blind is easily done when your heart is in the right place.” This in fact is the secret of all positive public and personal Christian relationships! Beyond scared faces can be seen beautiful characters; beyond perverted, sick or social outcasts can be seen balanced, healed, converted saints eternally praising God. God is not blind. Because His heart is in the right place, He pauses, stoops, saves, and stays with us at times when one could justify ministry in other areas and to other people with other needs. Editorial staff, I thank God for your choice of this kind of practical godliness.

— Joe Hagan
Orange, Virginia

Hello, My Name Is Darren Bucklew

The article “Hello, My Name Is Darren Bucklew,” by Robert R. Wresch, in the September 9 issue was informative and timely. However, there is one thing the author did not include in his article that would be helpful to all who are on the Internet and receiving those forwarded messages. When a message is received that could be suspect, it is very easy to determine if it is indeed legitimate or a hoax. Log onto the following website, <http://urbanlegends.miningco.com/library/blhoax.htm> and look for the subject. Doing this will many times stop expanding the hoax.

— Gus Brodeur
Avon Park, Florida

Policies and Practices

Calvin Rock’s reply (Sept. 9 Review) concerning a convicted rapist “teaching physical education at an Adventist elementary school” was unaccept-able.

As to the “number of variables”:
1. “How long ago did the offense occur?” is totally irrelevant. 2. “Was this his only such offense?” How would one determine that? Unless one considers only how many times he got caught. 3. “Was he a church member at the time?” This has nothing to do with the issue.

As for leaving room for “God’s grace to have effected genuine change”—leave room someplace else, not in an Adventist school! Physical education of all places, where the possibility of close contact may occur! And as to giving him the “benefit of the doubt” and making “appropriate use of his . . . now consecrated abilities,” give our children the “benefit of the doubt” and use his “consecrated abilities” in another area.

— Frenchy Erickson
Coon Rapids, Minnesota

I am writing in response to Calvin Rock’s column on September 9 in which he responds to a mother who is concerned because the Adventist school is employing a teacher who raped her daughter. Rock encourages the mother to “please leave room for God’s grace to have effected genuine change and for officials to decide . . . and make appropriate use of . . . his now consecrated abilities.”

As one of the officials who is required to make such decisions, I find that Rock’s advice confuses the concept of grace and redemption. Working for the redemption of a sexual offender does not mean placing them in a teaching position where they have constant access to minors who trust them. Certainly we all should pray for a work of grace in the offender. But in my opinion an adult who has violated a position of trust by raping a minor permanently forfeits his right to work with minors. There are many other careers not dealing with minors in which a person who has experienced divine healing can use his “now consecrated abilities.”

— Charles McKinstry, superintendent of schools
Riverside, California

As one whose sister was molested by a teacher (who was never disciplined because the church board did not feel it was necessary, since it had “happened only once” and who convinced my parents not to press charges) in one of our schools, I find the answer
Calvin Rock gave concerning a convicted child molester unsettling.

Yes, the person could very well have changed and become a new person in Christ. This does not mean that he/she should be allowed back into similar situations that caused the problem in the first place. It would not be considered wise to give a convicted bank robber a job as a teller, nor would it be wise to give a bar-tending job to a recovering alcoholic. Why should it be different with a sexual molestation?

My sister was neglected, totally overlooked. She still finds it hard to forgive my parents for not standing up for her. She has no love for the church. She was later molested by a pastor of one of our churches and, again, nothing was said because no one wanted to embarrass the pastor, since he said he was sorry.

This man should not be teaching children. A public school that allowed a convicted child molester to teach its children would be sued. If there has been one report of molestation by an individual, there are at least two or three unreported cases. Why are we willing to overlook the statistics and unwilling to protect the defenseless?

— Name Withheld

I am concerned with Calvin Rock’s response to the letter concerning a man who was convicted of raping a minor. The first consideration is correct. We must protect our children from possible sexual predators. The second is also correct, but fails to address the real issue. Yes, the offender can be redeemed; however, the admonition by Jesus was “Go, and sin no more.” He did not advise the woman taken in adultery to go to street corners, or houses of ill repute, and sin no more.

I worked in the mental health field for more than 18 years and have worked as a Child Protective Services investigator for more than a year. My experience and published research show that those who have molested children will almost always molest again, if given the opportunity.

God’s redemption is for everyone, but so is Satan’s temptation. It is unlikely that the school would have subjected the children, or themselves, to this risk had the man been open and honest about his past in his application/interview. By all means, this must be addressed!

— Tim Graves
Chattanooga, Tennessee

For Mature Readers

Angel Rodríguez states in his response to a question in “For Mature Readers” (August 12, 1999) that “With respect to male virginity, there is no biblical law that specifically deals with it, making it necessary to look for other evidence.” This may be true, but then he fails to mention the New Testament passage that does address the issue (1 Cor. 7:36-38). There Paul talks about an unmarried man who is betrothed to a woman but, in the context of verses 25-35, decides not to get married so that he can devote himself more fully to the Lord’s service.

This passage seems to be definitive for the issue of premarital sex or sex outside of marriage in the New Testament, explicitly from the man’s point of view. Although the term virginity may not be used in the text, it clearly indicates that the man is unmarried and may not engage in sexual activity before marriage, even when betrothed or engaged. I believe we can and should make more use of this passage than we do in teaching moral values to our young people.

— Edwin Reynolds, biblical studies chair, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies
Cavite, Republic of the Philippines
The Other Side

"I think there's got to be a special place in hell for adults who cause such deep hurt to the most helpless and innocent among us."

I wrote those words last March in an article on the sexual abuse of children (See "When They Hurt," Adventist Review, Mar. 25, 1999, p. 26). Was I too strong?

Marie Blaxe* would respond in the negative. Her letter, written in response to my article, confirmed me in my outrage. When she was between 10 and 12, she said, she'd been molested by a man who was a friend of the family. He fondled her and several times attempted to rape her. "Each time [,however], something came up to prevent this horrible thing from happening." Even so, she found herself contemplating suicide, "[lying] awake nights in terror for weeks," her hate intensifying for the culprit.

One would think that the memory of such experiences, however painful, would fade with the passage of the years. But in Marie's case (as with countless others), it didn't. And there lies the egregiousness of this particular crime. Now 77, Marie wrote as follows: "About five years ago I had a mental . . . breakdown." All the memory of those early days came back to her, and she actually thought she was pregnant, even though she'd had a hysterectomy at 36. Wandering the halls of her convalescent home, she said, "I declared up and down [that] I was bleeding. I even had labor pains."

This kind of reaction, more than 60 years after the fact, is almost completely beyond my ability to grasp. But it shows that my words were not too harsh. We're dealing here with an evil that's in a league all its own—repulsive, reprehensible, repugnant.

Another Letter, Another Side

Justified by Marie's letter, I was feeling perhaps a tad self-righteous in my outrage when another letter arrived, presenting another side of the issue, less frequently visited.

"I sit here today," the man wrote, "soon to be released from a military prison after serving 6½ years of a 10-year sentence, having been accused of sexually molesting my 6-year-old daughter . . ."

Ouch!

Difficult as it is for some of us to accept, there's a great deal of silent pain in our society today—the pain of those falsely accused. "I am not guilty," this man said, "yet my life, family, and career have been devastated." He was convicted, he said, "without any physical evidence, without corroborating medical findings, [and] even though my daughter testified the abuse did not occur." Now, he said, his younger daughter, just 4 years old at the time of the alleged incidents, and who had not been implicated before, "has, after six years of therapy, finally started to disclose to her psychotherapist 'tidbits' of abuse by her father."

At this point someone might be saying: "How do we know this guy isn't lying?" A fair question. But by the same token, how do we know that Marie isn't? We do not know in either case. For the purpose of this article, I take both at their word. And I would have to admit that human nature being what it is, no one can credibly argue that none of these charges of child molestation is ever based on revenge, that in no case are desired responses coaxed out of compliant children by incompetent or malicious professionals, or that there has never been any occurrence of false memory syndrome. To me it would be disingenuous to pretend these things never happen.

If the crime of child abuse is barbaric, imagine the nightmare of being accused of it falsely. The mere accusation, in and of itself, brings its own devastation. It's a charge from which no one can fully recover, short of the Lord Himself coming down with heavenly videotapes in one's defense. It's a nightmare almost as dark as hell itself.

And if this man who wrote to me is innocent, that precisely is his predicament today. My heart went out to him as I read these poignant lines from his letter: "My daughters . . . have been, in the past seven years, through foster homes, social services, and a gauntlet of therapists, social workers, and psychotherapists."

"I'll recover," he said. "[But] my greatest concern is for my children, wondering if they will hold on to a shred of the truth, or if they have been completely corrupted by an agency out of control."

That's the other side of this painful issue.

* a pseudonym
For a couple years now I’ve been corresponding with an atheist, who, from time to time, has been kind enough to sit down and write me lengthy letters about my naive faith, the age of the earth, the geological and astronomical evidence for evolution, and the necessity (in his view) to move past a life built on faith to one that rests upon “reason.”

It’s been a frank and stimulating dialogue, because as often as I’m able (which isn’t very often, thanks to these relentless weekly deadlines), I like to write back and tell him why I believe what I believe.

Although our correspondence is cordial, it’s probably an exercise in futility, because it’s unlikely that either one of us will be persuaded to embrace the other’s position. But through the process I have become more sensitive to the rational reasons to believe in a personal Creator, aside from the testimony of Scripture (after all, what self-respecting atheist would consider the Bible to be authoritative on the question of human origins?).

One of the most profound evidences for Creation is its simplicity. The oxygen that’s so vital to life on Planet Earth is produced in a delicate chemical reaction between living creatures that use oxygen and produce carbon dioxide as a by-product, and plant life that uses carbon dioxide to manufacture oxygen. Long before complex life could have evolved, the planet would have turned into a giant gas chamber if that process took more than a few hours or days to evolve (let alone millions of years).

Recently I heard Scott Weidensaul, an ornithologist, interviewed on public radio, describing the migratory habits of birds. One of the species he mentioned, the black pole warbler, is only four inches long, weighs less than a half ounce, yet is able to travel thousands of miles (mostly over the ocean) without food, water, or rest—to a location it has never been to. It is estimated that the energy black pole warblers expend on their migration is equal to what it would take to run four-minute miles—for two and a half to three days without stopping. A nother species, whose name I didn’t catch, makes its annual migration nonstop from Alaska to New Zealand—more than 6,800 miles.

It strains credulity to explain this behavior in terms of any kind of process that began with some cosmic explosion and evolved over millions of years of random, accidental evolutionary formations. (There are probably scientists who can explain all this without giving credit to an all-wise, all-powerful Creator God; but their explanations require at least as much faith as it takes to believe in a divine Designer.)

The implications of believing in a cosmos that is for the most part friendly, predictable, and ordered by an omnipotent God can easily lead one to conclude that life is not the result of some cosmic accident, the consequence of a set of random incidents that somehow “naturally” produced all that we see and know.

While we may not be able to explain to every inquiring mind how the creation process took place (other than “He spoke, and it came to be” Ps. 33:9, NIV), we can live as the crowning act of God’s creation. We can be governed by a higher credo than “the survival of the fittest.” We can see in every individual not only the imprint of a loving God, but also a life that has been redeemed by a Creator who created us, and even in our fallen condition considers us of inestimable value. We can use our reason to reflect God’s love and creativity in our work, rest, and worship.

The Bible may not contain the most comprehensive explanations about how things came to be, or why; and there are certainly lots of questions that have yet to be answered. But the bottom line is that either we are part of an intelligent process, or we aren’t. We know that intelligent beings can be unintelligent (MTV, double-bacon cheeseburgers, cigarettes, Adam Sandler movies, etc.), but I challenge anyone—especially my atheist friend—to demonstrate how a cosmic accident (read: “big bang”) could ever produce any more than a mass of confusion.

Even after thousands of years of sin, there’s still a lot to suggest the influence of a loving, wise, all-powerful Creator. Not everyone will be convinced by this evidence—but I am.
GIVE & TAKE

A NEW YEAR’S OPPORTUNITY

New Year’s Eve falls on a Friday evening, and many churches around the world are celebrating the new year in unique, special ways. Some are hosting satellite celebrations, while others are inviting the community in for a quiet, reflective evening. How did your congregation and/or conference ushering in 2000? Please send your brief articles (100-200 words) and photos to Give & Take—New Year’s Eve, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904-6600; fax: (301) 680-6638; E-mail: 104315.2145@compuserve.com.

ADVENTIST LIFE

Our new pastor, whom we now share with a congregation he has been with for a while, told us that the other congregation raised funds for their building by sponsoring and watching him catapulted in a bungee ball. The head elder, when welcoming him officially as our new pastor, jokingly challenged him to join our congregation’s fund raising, assuring him that our program had “no strings attached.”
—Roy Landless, Benmore, South Africa

As a conference department director, I’m frequently preaching in different churches on Sabbaths. I had been invited to preach one Sabbath at the Toronto Italian church—one of many ethnic churches in Toronto, Ontario. Usually the English sermons are translated by one of the members or the pastor. For some unusual reason, however, on this particular Sabbath all those who were present understood English sufficiently so that translation into Italian wasn’t necessary.

When I returned home, my wife, who had been in our home church that Sabbath, greeted me with the question “So, were you translated?”
To this I replied: “No. I’m still here.”
—Dirk Zinner, communication, youth, and adult Sabbath school director, Ontario, Canada

QUOTES

“Heaven is a home for saints and earth is their workshop.”
—Pastor Violeto Bocala, president of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, at the East Pasco church this past spring

“The gospel is good news, folks. It’s not just good advice.”
—Jack Sequeira, at Hope Camp Meeting, British Columbia, Canada, July 1999

“I HAVE FINISHED THE RACE.”

AND THEY’RE OFF! The Cayman Islands Mission of Seventh-day Adventists sponsored the Tenth International 10K Run on June 1, 1999. The event attracted more than 400 participants from several countries. Runners are pictured at the starting line in Georgetown, Grand Cayman. Inset: Pastor Jeffrey K. Thompson, Cayman Islands Mission president, presents Linton McKenzie, from the Jamaica Athletic Association, with the first-place trophy. McKenzie ran the race in 32 minutes and 30 seconds.

WE NEED YOU

Send Give & Take submissions to...
Give & Take, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600. Fax: 301-680-6638. E-mail: 74532.2564@CompuServe.com. Please include phone number. Submissions will not be returned.
Understanding the Buddha

How do we touch base with people whose worldview is so drastically different?

They are a very religious people, their countrysides and cities dotted with magnificent temples. The cream of their young men take vows and become monks, dedicated to a life of ministry in yellow robes. Their laypeople visit temples frequently, participate in festivals regularly, but seldom worship in congregations. They have no belief in a God who created or sustains the universe. They teach (and even train) themselves to view reality in ways Westerners have never imagined. The nearly 100 million southern Buddhists, as well as another nearly 300 million other Buddhists, trace their spiritual roots back 2,500 years to a small kingdom north of India.

Southern Buddhists view life as unsatisfying and unfulfilling, marked with aging, sickness, and death. The world is heading only for more trouble, more immorality, more violence, and less religiousness in the future, they believe.

If you ask them whether they are certain of crossing to nirvana (the Buddhist ideal of a future life of light and happiness), almost all will respond, "Not this time around." And most can't imagine how many more times they will pass this vale of sorrows before they at last find peace.

Removing their shoes at the entrance of their temple, they reverently bow three times before the image. As they place a lighted candle in a stand before the figure of the Buddha, they remind themselves that his teaching dispels ignorance. They
put three smoking incense sticks in the stand and remember the purity, the kindness, and the wisdom of the Buddha. They lay a bunch of cut flowers on the altar and remind themselves of the impermanence of all things—that all flesh is grass.

Not What It Seems

It would seem to the casual observer that Buddhists are always praying to images. However, most Buddhists don’t pray to the image, or even to the Buddha. Most believe what they have been taught, namely, that the Buddha has gone beyond all appeals for help. What their actions indicate, rather, is that they remember him—his perseverance, his confidence that there is an end to suffering, and his life of ministry to others. And, remembering, they renew their determination to eschew evil, do good, purify their minds, be a light to themselves, and attend to their salvation with all diligence.

It’s not that they don’t pray at all—like everybody else, they also feel the need for supernatural help sometimes. But if they pray, it is to “the holy things in heaven,” to the unknown gods—for the safe recovery of a grandmother on an operating table; for the heart to deal with an unfaithful spouse; for aid in reaching an irreligious son; for assurance that a boyfriend will love them always; for help to pass an exam. They pray for help with their lives, but they seldom pray for salvation, for they believe they must walk that road alone.

Buddhists believe the universe is flawed throughout, and that the only safe haven is Nirvana, an alternate state of existences, one of happiness and peace and different from everything we know. But here

Getting the Picture

A Buddhist artist grapples with biblical themes

BY JAMES H. ZACHARY

Clifton Maberly took time to brief a Buddhist artist about the significance and implications of the end-time visions of the Bible writers and of Ellen G. White. He then had him paint selected biblical images of the end-times. Samples of the paintings that resulted from that dialogue accompany this sidebar and the main article.

The Buddhist viewer, Maberly said, is immediately attracted by the dramatic images of the chaos and suffering of the seven last plagues. As the result of that time of suffering such as has never been since there was a nation, all people are clearly separated into two groups—those who curse and blame others and those who search their own hearts. In the paintings they see the rescue and reward of the good and the punishment of the wicked (see bottom right segment of painting at left), all concepts well known to Buddhists. But then comes the magnificent and startling last painting, the one of the coming ideal world.

Buddhists believe the universe is flawed throughout, and that the only safe haven is Nirvana, an alternate state of existences, one of happiness and peace and different from everything we know. But here
is a glorious new earth that is the best of what we have known. All parts of our lives are there—children, animals, work, farming, homes, families, friendship, food, music, arts and crafts, festivals, and storytelling at the feet of God Himself.

Yet after a closer look it is clear that nothing is the same; all things have become new. Children are playing gently with a snake. The change in the nature of children is as dramatic as the change in the nature of the snake. The painting has stimulated endless discussion about the desirability and the possibility of an earth made new. And the discourse inevitably ends in a discussion of the possibility of the Creator, Redeemer, and Restorer necessary for such a possibility. The Bible presents the only Paradise where all of creation is redeemed, the only Paradise where there is abundant life—but without old age, sickness, and death.

(That haven’t been commanded by anyone, incidentally, but just are there). How often have they promised themselves, usually in front of a respected monk, “I undertake not to kill other creatures, or cause their suffering; I will not steal, or take what is not given; I will not commit adultery, or indulge in inappropriate sexuality; I will not tell a lie; I will not use alcohol, or anything that would distract my spirituality.” Although they know they won’t be able to keep these rules perfectly, they determine to pick themselves up and keep on trying.

**Major Disconnects With Christianity**

Buddhists are shocked at what they see as Christianity’s easy grace, and at Christianity’s naive belief that sins can be easily forgiven and even “washed away” in a confessional. They believe you can’t erase a single deed. You can only keep on doing as much good as you can, and it could take many lives to balance things out. The dim past, they say, reaches through the present and forward into the endless future. We are responsible for what we think or say or do.

Buddhists have their inspiring stories. Their great pathfinder came into this world with signs and wonders rivaling the birth of Jesus: an immaculate dream conception, a miraculous birth from his mother’s side, the seven newborn steps onto lotus flowers that sprang up to cushion the future Buddha’s feet as he declared his intention to help all suffering people. Then heaven, well pleased, showered him with fragrant flowers. The well-known stories of the Buddha provide Buddhists inspiration for perseverance, dedication, sacrifice, and ministry.

What do Adventists have to share with Buddhists? Just one thing: God. A God who has made a difference in our lives.

But how do we even begin to witness to these noble people with their ancient ethical religion? Here are a few pointers that came out during the workshop.

1. We should keep reminding ourselves that a Buddhist lives in a world without either God or revelation. The only truths to which a Buddhist adheres are those they’ve perceived and tested for them-
The Buddha himself admonished them not to believe simply because they were taught, simply because their teacher told them, or because the Buddha taught it. Rather, they should believe only what they have tested and tried for themselves. This one element should make a world of difference in the way we share our faith with them.

The normal tendency would be to come to the Buddhist with our deep sense of God and with our faith in His final authority. We come with the confidence of those who have access to God's Word and understand it. This confidence, however, is often misread by Buddhists as inappropriate and even as ugly arrogance. In their eyes, instead of sharing God, we come talking as if we ourselves are gods— with the answers to everything in the universe. But when we come to a Buddhist with all the answers, they are offended that we think that only our ideas count, and that all their experiences and discoveries count for nothing.

2. We must take a step backward and separate ourselves from a too-close identity with the idea that truth is found only in Christ. In other words, we must separate fact from faith— separate what is self-evident from what can be perceived only by faith.

We shouldn't declare to a Buddhist, “There is a God.” However, we might ask, “Have you noticed that the Bible says there is a God?” We might then invite them to explore with us the possibilities and implications of such a claim. Later we can share our experience, our own reaching out to that possible God, how we are sure we found Him, how we have lived with that new discovery, and the difference it has made to our lives.

Such an approach is not offensive, for it would represent an account of your own search and discovery.

However, right here we can slip back into inappropriate arrogance and...
Window of Opportunity
BY JEFF SCOGGINS
Of the entire earth’s surface, about 10 percent is the area known as the 10/40 window. The Eastern Hemisphere, between 10 degrees and 40 degrees north of the equator, is home to 3.4 billion people—more than half the earth’s entire population. But estimates show that only 1 percent of those people are Christians and only .001 percent are Seventh-day Adventists.

The Adventist Church is concentrating heavily on reaching the unreached in the 10/40 window. That’s where millions of Buddhists live.

Maberly had students help him time the attention span of Buddhist people on the street who were shown the Theatre of the Universe story in paintings. Some were shown it from the beginning, some were shown and told it from the end, backwards. The latter approach kept attention four times as long as the former. What are the implications for our approach to witnessing? As Adventists, we can hardly resist beginning our witness with the Creation. But with the exception of village people, the Creation is too far back and too mythical to hold the interest of a Buddhist.

We should try to understand the power of the Buddhist’s deep-seated beliefs. Buddhists are convinced that the survival and happiness of the ones they love and have loved depends on their fulfilling spiritual duties performed on their behalf. During an evangelistic meeting in Myanmar, several visits were made to a man whose whole family had accepted Jesus. With breaking heart he said, “I believe all the teachings my wife has accepted. However, if I decide to be baptized, what will happen to my deceased parents?”

During an evangelistic meeting in Hong Kong we had two young people give their testimony each evening; and each evening they would burst into tears when they thought of the cost—the loss of the love of parents and family—that would follow their decision to leave Buddhism. In the 30 small fellowship groups, 75 young persons took the step to be baptized, and it took all the support of their small groups to help them with their decision to follow Jesus.

As we think of more than 1 billion Muslims, nearly 1 billion Hindus, and nearly 400 million Buddhists who have not come to know the Lord, we need to take bolder steps to reach this large portion of humankind. What can we do as individuals? We can pray, we can study ways to reach out, we can become involved, we can be trained. We can form teams to support those working in these communities, and we can plead for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Before Jesus returns, all must hear the message of God and His amazing love for humankind.

*For information, contact the Quiet Hour, 630 Brookside Avenue, Redlands, CA 92373. Telephone: 1-800-900-9021; e-mail: tqh@thequiethour.com

James H. Zachary is international evangelism coordinator for the Quiet Hour in Redlands, California.
Is Genesis 3:15 a promise of Christ's victory over Satan? Recently I heard someone say that it has nothing to do with it.

Christians have for centuries called Genesis 3:15 the protoevangelium—that is to say, the “first good news”—found in the Bible. The passage has been interpreted as a prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, through whom the serpent, Satan, was to be destroyed.

Today many scholars tend to reject the Messianic interpretation or any other interpretation that makes reference to Christian theology, arguing that the Christian view is found for the first time in the writings of Irenaeus (c. 115-202) and therefore is not biblical. Second, it is said that the term seed refers to the descendants of the woman and not to a particular descendant. Let’s look at the biblical evidence:

1. The Serpent Is a Symbol of Evil. The context of Genesis 3:15 clearly indicates that the serpent is a symbol of evil and rebellion against God. It misrepresents and contradicts God in an effort to persuade Adam and Eve to break away from the Lord, offering an unreal, alternate existence apart from Him. This power is identified in the New Testament as Christ’s archenemy, Satan (Rev. 12:9). In the Garden of Eden this evil power defeated Adam and Eve and extended its dominion over the descendants of the woman.

2. Victory Over the Serpent. The contrast between the serpent and its descendants and the seed of the woman suggests a final victory over the serpent. The serpent will “strike” the heel of the woman’s seed, but the woman’s seed will “crush” the head of the serpent. The Hebrew verb (sūp, “bruise, strike, crush”) is the same in both cases, suggesting that the seriousness of the assault depends on the part of the body that receives the wound. The attack against the woman’s seed is not permanent, but the fact that the woman’s seed aims at the head of the serpent indicates that the intention is to bring this evil power to a permanent end.

3. The Meaning of “Seed.” The Hebrew noun zeraḵ is usually employed as a collective noun to designate “offspring, posterity” in the sense of descendants as a single group.

However, it can be used to refer to a single descendant (e.g., 2 Sam. 7:12, 13). In Genesis 3:15 we find both usages present. We read about the descendants of the woman and the descendants of the serpent/Satan, but at the same time mention is made of a male descendant of the woman (hû’) who will crush “your [singular] head,” that is to say, the serpent’s head. Whenever “seed” denotes a particular descendant, the pronoun that follows it is in the singular.

The Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX), suggests that the translators understood the passage to be a promise of a future descendant. In this particular case they understood “seed” not in its collective sense but rather as designating a single descendant. Some have found in the LXX, rather than in Irenaeus, the first Messianic interpretation of Genesis 3:15.

4. Allusions in the New Testament. There are at least two allusions to Genesis 3:15 in the New Testament. The first one is Revelation 12. There we find similar terminology and the concept of a conflict between the woman and the dragon and her child and the dragon. The dragon is explicitly identified with the “ancient serpent” (NIV), an obvious reference to Genesis 3. The “seed” of the woman defeats the serpent, determining its future extinction (Rev. 20). According to Revelation 12, what was announced in Genesis 3:15 is now being fulfilled in the flow of history. The seed of the woman has crushed the head of the serpent and the consummation of that victory is rapidly approaching.

The victory of the descendant of the woman assures the future victory of her descendants over the dragon. This is what Romans 16:20, the second allusion to Genesis 3:15, states: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (NIV). This wonderful hope was first announced to the human race in the Garden of Eden.

Angel Manuel Rodríguez is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference.
A Life Touched by Prayer

Hindsight is a wonderful thing.

BY JENNIFER MAE BARIZO

With only a sepia-colored photograph of Dr. Chakarat Sukachevin before me, it's difficult to conjure up the story of a life.

At first only the small details surface—the sight of a mango tree silhouetted against a fuschia sky, the scent of curried noodles, the impassioned call of a wild elephant. But little by little the words flood back, like rains over the wet, green rice paddies, telling the stories of an extraordinary God-touched life.

Spiritual Roots

This is the story of Chakarat Sukachevin, but it begins with his father, Toilip Chee, a grocer, the first Seventh-day Adventist in northern Thailand. Toilip bought the book *Steps to Christ* from an unassuming colporteur in the early years of this century. The book stayed on his shelf for many months until the day he casually picked it up when there was no one to attend in the grocery store he owned in Chiang Rai, Thailand.

When Toilip accepted Christ and decided to get baptized, his strict Buddhist father threatened to kill him. But when he converted to the Seventh-day Adventist faith, the day of his baptism passed without incident.

The customers at Toilip's store enjoyed his change of heart. He promptly beckoned many of his regular customers, returning money that he had cheated from them in the past. He was lauded for his honesty and good sales ability.

People did puzzle over his new Sabbathkeeping customs, however. One Saturday a group of families came down from the nearby mountain, only to be greeted by a closed shop. But instead of causing an uproar, the customers decided to camp out in front of the store, waiting until sunset so that Toilip could serve them.

In 1937 Toilip's son Chakarat Sukachevin was born. One of his first memories took place when he was 6 years old. Sukachevin recalls complaining about a sore throat, a soaring fever, and not being able to eat or drink. His father bought him some Chinese medicine, but instead of improving, his condition worsened to the point that he could hardly breathe. He was taken by boat to the nearest hospital, since Japanese soldiers patrolled the streets. By the time they reached the hospital, Chakarat had turned blue and wasn't able to breathe at all. Doctors diagnosed a severe case of diphtheria and said that he would most likely die.

Chakarat's father and his pastor were dismayed, but they knelt in the waiting room and prayed. An hour later they returned to the boy's room and were puzzled to find many doctors and nurses standing around the boy's bed. His father assumed that Chakarat had died. But in fact the physicians were there marveling at the unbelievable improvement in Chakarat's condition.

His father told the boy, “Since God has saved your life, you must work for Him when you grow up. I want you to become a doctor.” For a member of a poor family, medical school was hardly a possibility. The God who saved his life, however, also provided a scholarship so that Chakarat Sukachevin could attend Mahidon Medical School and learn to save the lives of others.

A Practice Inspired by Prayer

It was Roger Nelson, a doctor and missionary to Thailand, who taught Sukachevin to pray for his patients at the beginning of their visits.

“After almost 30 years as a doctor, I still pray for each of my patients,” says Sukachevin, who is now an obstetrician/gynecologist. A gracious, benevolent man, he has his home-based office in an austere brick home on bustling New Hampshire Avenue, in Silver Spring, Maryland, far different from the green-tinged mountain ranges of northern Thailand where he spent his childhood.
Even in the early years of his practice "Dr. Suki," as he is affectionately called, glorified the Lord.

"For investment I gave the Lord one quarter for each new patient," says Sukachevin. Now he has second- and sometimes third-generation patients; he has delivered babies, and then 20 years later has delivered those babies’ babies.

"I asked God to handle everything. I trusted my patients to Him, for their fast recoveries, with prayer," Sukachevin says.

But in 1986 it was he who was in need of spiritual intervention. In January of that year he experienced profuse bleeding from his nose. He tried everything to stop the bleeding, to no avail.

"I felt something obstructing my left nostril, so I tried to blow my nose very hard," Sukachevin recalls. A round soft mass came out, nearly 2.5 centimeters in diameter. "I thought it was probably a polyp, and I almost threw it away, but I decided to send it to the lab instead."

Sukachevin, fearing that his name would be recognized at the lab, put his wife's name on the sample instead.

Two days later the doctor called to notify him that the mass was a cancerous growth. The tissue was sent to Walter Reed Medical Center, and five days later a call came, confirming that it represented cancer of the nasopharynx.

Sukachevin went to see a specialist, who checked his nose, throat, mouth, ears, and neck, but could find no trace of cancer anywhere. CAT scans also revealed no cancer. The doctor ordered chest X-rays and blood tests. No cancer.

"I did receive radiation treatment for several weeks," Sukachevin remembers. "The doctor told me that I was going to experience many side effects, such as loss of hair, nausea, and sore throat, but I prayed and did not get any serious complications.

"I lost only two pounds," Sukachevin adds, "and a few hairs. Jesus is still working in us to heal all our diseases—physically, mentally, and spiritually. The secret of divine healing is prayer."

"I’m the Lucky One Now"

The power of prayer was displayed once more 13 years later, in 1998, when Sukachevin’s nose again started bleeding profusely. He began to lose weight, and a CAT scan showed a growth in his nose to be 4.8 centimeters, twice as large as the previous growth had been. Full recovery was doubtful. But Sukachevin did not give up hope. He thought of the 13 years since the first tumor had been discovered. In that time he had developed a thriving medical practice in which he could share God’s love, and had been blessed with two grandsons.

Even in his bleak medical condition he said to himself, “I’m the lucky one now.”

When his wife, Kanchana, wept, he would say, “Don’t cry; just pray.”

His congregation in Maryland and members of a church in Thailand formed prayer bands, asking God to put His healing hand on their beloved “Dr. Suki.”
After much prayer, a complicated and risky cesium treatment was given to Sukachevin. This involved sticking a seven-centimeter-long plastic endotrachea tube up his nostrils.

"I remember driving home after the tubes were inserted and driving with a paper bag over my face, holes cut out for the eyes. I didn't want to be seen with those long tubes sticking out of my nose," says Sukachevin with a hint of laughter in his voice.

He recalls how after the second treatment he took a nap. In two hours he woke up.

"I felt like I was in heaven," Sukachevin says. "God told me that I'd be OK."

Soon a series of scans was done. The tumor had disappeared—it was completely gone. Four biopsies were taken—all negative.

"God was showing me that life was precious and time was short. He was trying to bring me closer to Him, because He is coming soon."

A Ministry Through Medicine

Sukachevin's faith deepened. He was determined to share it with everyone he came in contact with. He gave to patients who came to his office more than 500 tracts that told of the Second Coming and the Sabbath message. After he gave checkups, he would ask his patients where they went to church and then share his beliefs in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Together with Dr. Samuel Young, Sukachevin started the Capital Chinese Seventh-day Adventist Church, which now has nearly 100 members. When he retires, he plans to work full-time for God.

"But now it is easy to witness, because the patients come to me, and I can spread the Lord's good news. I want to be a living witness for Him," Sukachevin says with zeal in his eyes, obviously pleased with the medical ministry that God has given him. During his lifetime, Sukachevin has delivered more than 3,000 babies.

"God doesn't create sickness. When it happens, He is more than willing to help. But the more suffering I have had, the closer it brings me to God. If your life is peaceful, watch out. Satan doesn't care about bad people. He's trying to get you and me," he says.

"God has been such a miracle in his life," his wife, Kanchana, adds.

Sukachevin nods, and speaks once more of the incomparable power of prayer. "The other doctors are always surprised when the cancer goes away and there are no complications, but I always say with assurance, "Of course; I prayed!""

Jennifer Mae Barizo wrote this piece last summer when she was a student intern at the Adventist Review. She is now pursuing her musical training in New York City.
What are justifiable grounds for divorce among Seventh-day Adventists? Under what circumstances can church members remarry? What constitutes unfaithfulness? Does the Bible offer clear guidance to the real-life issues facing Adventist churches today?

These are some of the questions that faced more than 300 church administrators, pastors, and laypersons who gathered for the General Conference Executive Committee's Annual Council meetings in Silver Spring, Maryland, September 28-October 6.

The Annual Council is where church leaders vote policy items and statements on social issues, hear reports, elect personnel, and approve the church's world budget. This year's session took on special significance because it marked the first Annual Council coordinated by Jan Paulsen, who replaced Robert S. Folkenberg as GC president in March.

From the outset the General Conference Executive Committee members knew that heavy discussions were in the offing. In this, the last business session before the 2000 General Conference session in Toronto, committee members had to vote upon scores of proposed changes to the Church Manual and the church's constitution and bylaws. These changes still must receive final approval in Toronto.

By far the most difficult discussion emerged as the committee considered a revision to chapter 15 of the Church Manual, on divorce and remarriage. Many of the proposed changes came out of a report produced by the Divorce and Remarriage Study Commission set up in response to a request made from the floor of the 1995 General Conference session in Utrecht, Netherlands.
nearly two days. In the interim the Church Manual committee spent more than four hours rewriting their recommendations to include several suggestions from committee members.

“The document needs to have strong biblical support,” said Marion Shields, of Australia, who described herself as a divorced layperson. “In order for the laity to accept strong teaching, it needs to be supported with Scripture.”

Ben Maxson, General Conference stewardship director, told the committee, “The real task is not defining where we go wrong with a divorce, but providing practical guidelines for a local pastor and local church when there is no possible restoration. How do we bring them back into a growing relationship with the church?”

Along with the proposed changes on the marriage, divorce, and remarriage, a stewardship summit to study trends in church giving was proposed. Stewardship director Ben Maxson said the summit is needed because of changing patterns of membership support. Though the church is experiencing dollar increases, Maxson explained that when adjusted for inflation and growth, the effective per capita giving shows a marked loss.

Annual Council Briefs

In other business the General Conference Executive Committee:

- Heard a report on the state of the church from GC secretary G. Ralph Thompson. Thompson announced that the church membership had reached 10,492,465 as of June 30, up 585,929, or 6 percent, from last year.

Thompson said the annual accessions increased from 629,710 in 1994 to 818,754 in 1998, or 1.6 accessions every minute. However, he also noted that 26,227 members were dropped from church rolls, and an additional 17,986 were found to be missing members in the year ending June 30.

Today a Seventh-day Adventist presence can be found in 230 countries, Thompson said.

- Voted new procedures for discipline and removal of the General Conference president, secretary, or treasurer, should that become necessary. The recommendation must be approved at the 2000 General Conference session in Toronto.


- Voted to create the International Association of Seventh-day Adventists in Public Affairs. This organization would provide a spiritual support network for Adventists who serve their respective nations as elected public officials or in other influential positions.

John Graz, director of the GC Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department, said the association would help nurture their Christian faith and Adventist identity.

- Approved the convening of a World Stewardship Summit in the spring of 2001. GC stewardship director Ben Maxson said the summit is needed because of changing patterns of membership support. Though the church is experiencing dollar increases, Maxson explained that when adjusted for inflation and growth, the effective per capita giving shows a marked loss.
World Church President Provides New Motif for Leadership

Jan Paulsen addresses first Annual Council

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN, an assistant editor of the Adventist Review

World church president Jan Paulsen opened the 1999 General Conference Annual Council with a simple invitation to the 300 delegates and their families: “Experience Life as It Is in Jesus—Experience the Certainty of His Coming.”

Paulsen, the first European GC president, described what he sees as the greatest challenges to the church and discussed perceptions and practices in the academic community, ministerial training programs, and evangelism and witness.

“The year 2000 has no more religious content than 1999 or 2001 has,” declared Paulsen. “The only significant event in the future with ultimate consequence is the second coming of Christ.” Paulsen encouraged the delegation to use their right, freedom, and responsibility to arrange priorities for the 9-day session and set a very “deliberate pace. There will be a number of specific choices that will have to be made. Finishing the mission is a very disciplined task.”

After explaining the chosen theme for the new year, Paulsen touched upon what he feels are the greatest challenges ahead for the Adventist Church and posed them as three question areas: (1) Is our mission succeeding? Is the community of Adventist believers growing? (2) Is life in the Adventist community an appealing one? Is the Adventist Church truly a “consumer-friendly” community? Is it really the attractive and happy quality of life that is to be found and experienced in our church?; and (3) How are we doing at holding together?

Paulsen elaborated on the second challenge: “New members are joining because everything that was presented to them seemed promising and appealing. . . . The new believers become part of the family. Sadly, after a while some are gone. Maybe they just drifted away quietly. Why?” Paulsen went on to suggest that if the church conducted “exit interviews” for those who leave, it might find that these individuals have left because something happened to the quality of life they had initially experienced in the church, or because they didn’t find the life they had hoped for in the church.

The president also highlighted the differences between unity and uniformity, describing unity as “One Lord, one faith, and one baptism . . . intrinsic and indivisible.”

“What I am appealing for,” he concluded, “is that we be more ready to accept one another, and less inclined to be overly opinionated as we look across the boundaries of cultures and ethnicity, and that we be less judgmental in terms of my ‘culture’ and where ‘I come from.’”

Paulsen described the respect and fondness he has for the academic community of which he was a part for many years, but said he felt compelled to remind Adventist educators that the God-given values that give Adventist education its identity are sacred. He urged that these values be preserved, protected, and held high in a creative, growing environment.

Paulsen’s keynote address also took up one of the thorny issues from last year’s Annual Council—ministerial training programs at Adventist colleges and universities around the world. Paulsen beseeched leaders to act briskly on voted plans to appoint an international board that will provide guidance and broad directions to the divisions and “see to it that the intent of the Annual Council action be accomplished.”

The president thanked division leadership and mission-driven lay leaders for their involvement and urged them to focus on evangelism and witness worldwide. Calling delegates to put the gospel’s call to witness at the top of the church’s agenda, Paulsen also urged the General Conference to set up an advisory council on evangelism and witness.

The full text of Paulsen’s keynote address will appear in the December NAD edition.

riage chapter, the GC Executive Committee also recommended a reformattting of the Church Manual. The proposed restructuring would set apart significant procedural information (mostly in chapters 6-8) at the end of each chapter in a section called Notes. These notes could be updated as needed without bringing the proposed changes to a General Conference Session.

New Evangelistic Thrust

Giving evangelism center stage in the church’s work, General Conference president Jan Paulsen sounded a call for the establishment of an Advisory Council on Evangelism and Witness. The purpose of the international council would be to explore global and interdivision initiatives that will have a wide impact on the church’s work.

Paulsen envisions that the council will give creative leadership to evangelism. The council could advise church leaders on new pilot projects to reach a broad range of cultures and facilitate cooperative efforts of church entities on
Weighty Counsel

BY WILLIAM G. JOHNSSON, editor of the Adventist Review

This was my twentieth Annual Council and by far the weightiest.

The overload started with the backup materials supplied to delegates. Because of their volume council managers had to procure four-inch binders, which, when stuffed, weighed more than 10 pounds. A ton of paper passed through copy machines in preparation of these materials.

But the 1999 Annual Council had elements that made it more significant than the fat blue binders that delegates faithfully lugged in day by day and pored over:

1. A return to the center. In church president J an Paulsen’s keynote address at the opening of the council he challenged the church to establish a C ourc e on Evangelism and Witness at headquarters to plan and take initiatives that will impact large areas of the church. Subsequently he returned to the item and gave more details: he foresees a broad-based international group of laypeople and church employees who meet annually to think big and lay big plans for mission.

The effect on delegates was dramatic. They were galvanized; it was the defining moment of the council. Delegates rose in spontaneous expressions of support and gratitude. They sensed that the call back to first principles, to the rai son d’être of Adventism, would transform the General Conference itself and future Annual Councils. With all the policy and business items that need to be cared for, the church would keep straight its priorities.

2. A manual for the world. We Adventists hold fundamental beliefs in common, sing the same hymns, adhere to a simple lifestyle with the Sabbath at its center, and believe that Jesus is coming again soon. The Bible, Ellen White’s counsel, and the hymnal—these are the books that hold us together (and, of course, the Adventist Review!)

Then there is the Church Manual, that handbook of church practices and procedures. It has served the church well, but needs revision. It has been added to but not subtracted from; it contains a mix of materials ranging from how to organize a new congregation to specific requirements such as the one calling for the treasurer to put all bills on a spike. The manual needs to be streamlined to serve today’s exploding global Adventist Church.

The council made a significant start on this task. It voted to separate out optional material from the core, not deleting anything but locating the optional in a separate section. It further agreed to some reordering of the core material to provide for a more logical presentation.

These actions of the 1999 Annual Council will come to the floor of the General Conference session in Toronto next July for discussion and final vote.

3. A question of hermeneutics. One issue dominated the discussion: How should the church relate to issues of divorce and remarriage?

The 1995 General Conference session in Utrecht called upon the church to set up an international commission to study these issues. The commission met and drew up a report with recommendations, which church leaders at headquarters weighed carefully. In due course some changes were suggested for the Church Manual, and these changes—with a view to next year’s session—came to the 1999 Annual Council.

Debate on these matters was spirited, with participation by lay people, pastors, and church administrators; it extended over almost two full days. Here was the Adventist Church grappling with the widening gulf between biblical ideals and the reality of the brokenness of men and women in today’s world, trying to uphold a Bible standard while ministering in grace and compassion.

Back of the debate loomed the hermeneutical question: How should we relate to the silence of Scripture? For example, does that silence give us permission to add violence against a spouse to the biblical grounds for divorce? for remarriage?

4. World church dynamic. The world church came to the 1999 Annual Council, and the world church spoke. Pastors and presidents, women, voices from Africa and the Caribbean, from Europe and Asia, from South America and the South Pacific—scores, maybe hundreds, of speeches resounded. There were far fewer hallway or restroom “committees” than at any council I have known. Delegates stuck to the task and had their noses in the thick binders right up to the end of the nine-day meeting. Those called to chair the council had their hands full, but guided the proceedings with fairness and patience. Council organizers worked very hard and late into the night writing and rewriting recommendations in response to suggestions from the floor.

This was the Adventist Church, my church. It’s a world church, wonderful and dynamic. It was the church at its best.

major outreach projects, such as satellite meetings.

“We need to do bigger and larger things,” he said. “We need to be very visible, very up-front about the mission mandate that God has given the church. This council can give comprehensive thought to evangelism around the world. It will send the right signal around the world.”

Church leaders responded to Paulsen’s call with enthusiasm and joy.

“I think that it’s God’s will that we do this,” said Bertil Wiklander, president of Trans-European Division. “Many of us know that the church moves forward when administrative bodies also see themselves as mission-driven.”

James Cress, GC Ministerial Association Secretary, echoed Wiklander’s sentiments. “I think this is an example of leadership at its very finest. If you want a pastor to do something, you ought to do it. If we want a local congregation to get involved with something, we ought to practice it. I’m very encouraged. It will send a signal
that the GC is about getting the work finished."

Major Statements
The committee approved several documents that addressed a broad range of issues ranging from religious liberty to concerns about homosexuality. The most far-reaching statement was a consensus paper on birth control.

The document offers guidelines for Christian families in their birth control choices. "We are affirming the individual’s personal relationship with God," said Dr. Allan Handysides, health director of the General Conference, who chaired the committee that drafted the document. "This is not a statement of dogma. We are not assuming the authority to dictate, but to provide guidelines for those who want to know where the church stands."

According to the statement, the choice of birth control method is strictly up to the couple involved. The paper did describe barrier methods, spermicides, sterilization, hormonal methods, and IUDs as morally acceptable. On the other hand, the paper viewed abortion, the intentional termination of pregnancy, as "not morally acceptable for purposes of birth control."

"It’s appropriate for the church to give guidance and some orientation to

DOLLARS AND SENSE: Treasurer Robert Rawson says the church's financial health has continuously improved over the past five years.

THE AYES HAVE IT: Committee members vote on Church Manual changes.

Christian married couples coming from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures on aspects of birth control," said Leo Ranzolin, a general vice president of the General Conference.

Other documents voted included a statement of ethical foundation for the General Conference and its employees, a Seventh-day Adventist position statement on homosexuality, a statement about Adventism and the year 2000, and a statement of commitment and concern for religious minorities and religious freedom. The Review will print several of these statements in their entirety in future issues.

Church Finances
In his annual report to the committee, GC treasurer Robert Rawson maintained that the financial position of the church has steadily improved. The working capital—net current assets—rose from 42 percent of required levels in 1995 to 108 percent of required levels this year. He noted that a major reason for the climb was a $17 million recovery in blocked currency from Brazil last year.

Because of fluctuating international currencies, however, Rawson proposed that the working capital requirements be increased from the current levels of 20 percent of unrestricted income to 30 percent, with a five percent increase being implemented this year and additional one percent annual increases taking effect during the next five years.

For the first eight months of 1999 the GC reported $58,047,213 in tithe income, a slight decrease from the $59,367,612 reported for the same period last year. The unrestricted nontithe funds also decreased slightly, from $10,669,956 in 1998 to $9,350,729 this year. The reason for the decrease in these funds is fluctuations in international currency values.

As of August 31 the GC showed an operating gain of $9.4 million, up nearly 150 percent, or $5.6 million, from the same period last year. Part of the reason for the increase is savings the GC realized by paying off several special projects last year.

The treasurer also reported that, because of a sharp increase in 1998 tithe, the GC’s in-house operation expenses ran nearly $3 million under its operating expense cap of $24,598,470 (4.25 percent of gross tithe). Treasury officials anticipate that this year’s in-house operating expenses will fall $1.7 million under the cap.

The operating gain was significant because investment income totaled $658,718 (as of August 31), up from a mere $322,722 last year. After receiving the treasurer's report, the committee approved a $111.1 million world budget for 2000, up from $108.7 million in 1999. The committee also voted a supplemental budget for the church’s world divisions and GC institutions of $8.4 million.
I was scheduled to be out of town with our string quartet on Friday. I would miss my New Testament Epistles class. Rather than have someone else teach the class, I decided on an assignment.

We were studying prayer in the book of James at the time, so I offered my students two options: read several chapters in such books as *Steps to Christ*, *The Ministry of Healing*, etc., on prayer and make a one-page report; or spend 30 minutes in prayer and make a one-page report. Either assignment due on Monday. Many students chose to pray.

I was quite impressed with their reports and asked if I could write them up. I will not give names below, but will place a bullet where a shift occurs between students. Following are some of the interesting things they said in their reports.

- “The assignment to pray for 30 minutes was one of the most peaceful experiences I’ve ever had. . . . At first I had a difficult time focusing. So many things I wanted to say, so many requests and petitions to be named and made, that I had a hard time keeping up with my thoughts while praying. . . . Thirty minutes just wasn’t enough, so I actually talked to Him [God] for close to an hour.”
- “My half hour of prayer was relaxing. It was so nice to unload all my burdens. Since it was for a longer period of time than usual, I had time to think about things and pray about things that I didn’t realize I needed to take to God. Also, there were a lot of silent times I felt God talking to me. . . . I think I am going to take advantage of spare time I have and pray more than I do. I don’t think someone could pray too much.”
- “This assignment was awesome! It was wonderful to push everything aside and to take time to pray in depth.”
- One student related praying over a difficult situation and then stated: “I didn’t feel alone anymore. I felt that even though I still didn’t know what to do, Someone else did, and They were going to be on my side working with me.”
Several students talked about the time aspect of the prayer assignment.

• “I knelt by the side of my bed to begin my prayer. ‘Lord, how can I do this for a half hour?’ I asked. So I began. We live in a society that is so fast-paced that when we do take the time to slow down and observe or spend quality time with someone or something, we barely know what to do with ourselves. That is what I found at first. I was trying to cram everything into two minutes as I usually do so that I would get it all said before I fell asleep. After I realized that I had just shotgunned everything in just two minutes and that I still had a while to go, I started to get serious and started to pour my heart out to the Lord on many issues that I had been facing. Granted, I still fell asleep twice, but not for very long and I was still on my train of thought. I was putting myself before the Lord in a way that I never had. It was a very humbling experience. I had always understood the power of prayer and the need for it in my life. But never had I experienced this before. I won’t say light poured down or even [that] my heart welled forth with joy. It’s just a quiet stillness that I hadn’t had before.”

• “I started the prayer in my usual stilted way and was doing pretty well for a few minutes. But then I realized that time was going very slow and I still had 20 minutes or so left. So I just began to chat like I would if I were on the phone with my sister. I talked about all the crazy little things that had happened throughout the day, and the small frustrations of such insignificance that they wouldn’t usually warrant a prayer. At the end of the prayer I felt really good about everything that was going on in my life.”

• “The half hour I spent in prayer this evening was quite possibly the longest period of time I have ever spent praying. It went by faster than I thought it would, and I looked at my watch only once. . . . For the first few minutes I flew through my usual prayer topics—my family, my boyfriend, requests for guidance, and a few thank-Yous. Soon I slowed down, though, and went into more depth. A few friends that I don’t usually pray for or even talk to much came to mind, so I prayed for them. I took more time with those I usually pray for, and instead of just mentioning their names, I thanked God for them and for the good things He’s doing in their lives, and asked for assistance on their behalf in specific areas where they need it.”

• “When I started to pray I thought to myself that this was going to take forever. In the long run I honestly wish it had lasted longer. The enjoyment I received from doing this seemingly absurd thing was powerful. I prayed for everything I could possibly think of, things I was happy for, sad for, thankful for, and prayed for all those whose names came to my mind at that moment. . . . I prayed for everyone that I could think of. It was a very fun experience, and I think I will continue to do it.”

Other students talked about the way they prayed and its meaning for them.

• “For this assignment I was sitting at my computer doing another assignment when I felt the need to pray. And so for the next half hour I poured out my thoughts to God while typing them. It was a very interesting experience. I like writing down my prayers because it keeps me focused, and I can go back later and see what I’ve prayed about and how God has answered my prayers.”

• “It felt good to talk with God. That’s one thing I like about prayer. I can totally be myself. I don’t have to worry about expressing negative feelings or trying to cover them up. I already know God understands and knows how I feel; therefore, prayer lets me be free in voicing my thoughts and feelings. My conversation with God was like talking with my mom or my best friend, except it was even more open and personal. Just like with a real close friend, I feel able to jump from subject to subject with God without Him thinking I’m weird for not having my thoughts all collected together. I can ramble on, and I know God is still listening. I talked about school, my spiritual growth, my family and friends, and whatever else came into my mind.”
what I have been learning in class. In this prayer I asked God to help me gain His perspective on my life—especially on my prayers, so that I would pray in accordance with His will. It really made a difference.

“My prayer pretty much began as usual, but as I got deeper into it, I noticed the changes occurring. I was praying a lot more openly, asking that I be shown His will for my life and that I could learn to follow it. I gave my life to Him much more completely than I usually do in prayer because I was letting Him lead rather than trying to direct God where I wanted Him.

“There was a point in my prayer in which I expressed to Him some of the anger and resentment I had been feeling. I really opened up to Him and was honest about what I felt, and what was going on with me. And I heard Him speaking to me so clearly. It was as if because I had finally stopped to listen, He was answering all the questions I had been asking but hadn’t been waiting for the answers to. He didn’t solve all my problems, but He gave me peace.

“I think this assignment was really good for me, because it made me spend time in prayer. I often get so busy that my prayers are short and shallow. This made me look at prayer itself, instead of just the time it took to communicate with God. I think learning that prayer is about getting God’s perspective will change my prayer life. I mean, wow, it is a life-changing concept!”

I was pleased with the outcome of this little assignment in the lives of my students. Seeing these young friends experience the power and peace of God in prayer is one of the joys I find in teaching. And I thought others might want to share it.

Tom Shepherd teaches New Testament, ethics, and missions at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

One student prayed with his girlfriend.

• “So we began praying, and started praying for people, and for each other. We thanked God for all that He has done for us, and truly began to have a connection with God. It was really amazing to me, because we finished praying and she said to me that we had prayed for 45 minutes. I hadn’t really noticed the time passing. I am always amazed when I finish praying that I feel such peace in my life, and such happiness. It’s almost as if it didn’t matter what happened. I could handle it because I have God on my side. It’s an incredible experience.”

One student discovered prayer as a life-changing activity.

• “Usually when I really want to pray to God, I write out my prayers in my prayer journal. It keeps me focused. My mind doesn’t wander half as much as when I just talk to God. So when we received the assignment last Wednesday to pray, I got out my prayer journal. However, this prayer was different than most of my other prayers because of
“God Arranged This Program Just for Me”

Last night I was weeping as I turned on the radio. The first thing I heard was your voice telling me how to seek peace in time of difficulties. I listened carefully— it seems that God arranged this program just for me! Your words encouraged me, because I have been going through a lot of difficulties lately.

“After the program I dried my tears, my heart was lifted, and I said to myself: God is love, and I want to put my burden in His hand. He will give me faith and strength to face all these difficulties in life.”

Yong Mei,* Shanghai, China.

Yong Mei was responding to a Mandarin Chinese program heard on Adventist World Radio called Passion for Life. Zhao Ming,* the host of the program, says: “This letter came by fax, and when I saw that Yong Mei lived in Shanghai, I sent an e-mail to my parents and asked them to invite her to church. She went, and wants to go back again. I have also communicated with her through e-mail. I can see she is very interested in the Bible because she asks a lot of questions.”

Passion for Life is a one-hour daily program seeking to reach young people between 20 and 35 years of age. “It’s working,” says Zhao. “We receive between 60 and 120 letters every month, just in response to this program. We are praising God.”

Passion for Life is in two parts. In the first half hour John Ash, director of the Chinese Union Media Center in Hong Kong, teaches English as a second language, using topics of interest to young people. The current topic, “Friends Forever,” explores love, courtship, and marriage from a biblical point of view.

“Naturally, that attracts a lot of young people,” says Zhao.

“In the second part of the program,” Zhao says, “I talk about many things: study, work, dating, marriage, human sexuality, psychology, relationship skills, comparative religion, Bible study, faith, how to deal with difficulties, health—whatever we think will interest young people today. Most of the topics are those they ask about in their letters.”

A II of these topics are discussed from a Christian viewpoint. Zhao uses one key Bible text every day to center his discussion. “I have discovered that people in China are very interested in our beliefs because all of them are seeking meaning in life. As people in China gain material wealth, they become increasingly aware of their spiritual needs.”

Adventist World Radio currently broadcasts nearly 150 hours each week into China in six languages: Mandarin, Hakka, Cantonese, Minnan, and Shanghainese, as well as Uighur. Thousands of new church and house church members have had their introduction to the gospel through these broadcasts. “All of these contacts are very meaningful to me because they represent people who are thirsty for truth,” says Zhao. Please pray today for seekers after truth in China.

*Zhao Ming and Yong Mei are pseudonyms.

Andrea Steele is director of public relations and listener services for Adventist World Radio.
They Still Go
Adventist Volunteer Service

During the past year the following persons have left home to serve as volunteers in other countries. Most are young people, and they have returned home by now. But we want them to know that we recognize and appreciate their service.

Clarence Eugene Hodges, Jr., to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Indianapolis, Indiana.

Ryan Jones, to serve as English/Bible teacher, English Language Center, Kiev, Ukraine, Russia, of Paradise, California.

Jaclyn Jung, to serve as English language teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Sanjay Naria Khurchandani, to serve as physician/pediatric resident, Guam SDA Clinic, Tamuning, Guam, of Oak Park, Illinois.

Veda Nicole Knight, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Belle Glade, Florida.

Jill Allison LaFever, to serve as dental hygienist, Yaounde Dental Clinic, Yaounde, Cameroon, of Donna, Texas.

Dirkson Lee, to serve as English/Bible teacher, San Yu English Bible Center, Taiwan, of Loma Linda, California.

Carol Jean Marino, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Palisade, Colorado.

Christina Vitto Mendoza, to serve as English/Bible teacher, English Language Center, Almaty, Kazakhstan, of Chunky, Mississippi.

Scott Alan Miller, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Pamela Joan Nickel, to serve as teacher/girls’ dean, Davis Indian Industrial College, Paruima Village, Guyana, of St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada.

Christopher Lynn Patchen, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Startup, Washington.

Andrew Phillips, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Ottawa, Canada.

Julia Anne Pope, to serve as computer applications director, A D R A, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, of Springfield, Virginia.

Joseph John Pour, Jr., to serve as English/Bible teacher, English Language Center, Kyrgyzstan, of Coupeville, Washington.

Mark Richard Raedisch, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Metairie, Louisiana.

Denise Remon, to serve as English/Bible teacher, English Language Center, Golianovo, Russia, of Oconto Falls, Wisconsin.

Annie Eun Myung Sohn, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of Redmond, Washington.

Tanya Marie Spilovoy, to serve as English language teacher, San Yu International Language Institute, China, of Bismarck, North Dakota.

Philip Trilles, to serve as medical technologist specialist, Hong Kong Adventist Hospital, Hong Kong, of Montebello, California.

David Alan Wedel, to serve as English language teacher, Euro-Asia Division, Moscow, Russia, of Colton, California.

Lloyd Dean Wenzel, to serve as dentist, Guam SDA Clinic, Tamuning, Guam, and Sharon Joyce Wenzel, of Montrose, Colorado.

Kimberly Kay Widden, to serve as English/science teacher, Guam Adventist Academy, of Colton, California.

David Andrew Zabaleta, to serve as English/Bible teacher, Korea SDA Language Institutes, Seoul, Korea, of White Plains, New York.
Some ministers dress for the divine worship service as if they were engaged in a common business or social event. Pastors used to be distinguished by their conservative black or dark-colored suits and ties and white shirts; now they look just like everybody else. I think there’s a distinct need for improvement. Don’t they teach this in our colleges and seminaries?

My observation is that most of our pastors, including conference administrators, do dress appropriately for church services and otherwise. The exceptions, as I see them, occur for two reasons: the first is a lack of appreciation for the priestly character of the sacred office; the second is a well-intentioned but misplaced effort to be accepted as simply one of the people. Acting for either reason cheapens the pastor’s image and weakens his/her endeavors among both congregation and community.

That is not to suggest that successful performance of the minister’s role requires dour or unimaginative dress habits. One is struck by the fact that Israel’s sanctuary priests, by God’s design, were robed very attractively (Ex. 28).

On the other hand, it does suggest that, especially in the pulpit and in the performance of church rituals, the minister should have solemn regard for the principles of: (1) modesty (pastors who wear colors and combinations, etc., that draw attention to one’s person cannot effectively draw attention to Christ); (2) association (the dynamic that brings some community servants, such as judges, instant respect and even deference when professionally attired works similarly for the clergy; for pastors this need not mean uniforms or uniformity, but sensitivity regarding their function and jealousy for its image); and (3) representation (while all of Christ’s followers are “kings and priests” as Christ’s undershepherds [Rev. 1:6], ministers should, by their dress, reflect the dignified ethos of our Leader—the regal but humble Messiah).

A nappropriate Response

In thinking of Adam and Eve’s transgression, I am haunted by thoughts that God ordered such catastrophic results over one little act. Could God have found another way to punish them?

Sin is never a “little act.” Some transgressions have more visible, immediate, or long-lasting consequences than others. But any deviation from God’s will is in itself catastrophic and virally contagious.

Since all sin is contrary to God’s nature, no sin can escape His judgment. That judgment, death (Rom. 6:23), intended to eradicate the act, also of necessity destroys the actor in whom it is found—meaning all of us (Rom. 3:23).

What is truly striking in the case of fallen humanity is not the magnitude of the punishment versus the crime, but the plan of salvation by which we are spared the second death and the unspeakably costly sacrifice it entailed—the death of Jesus.

As for Adam’s act itself, Ellen White sheds valuable light in the following comments:

“The mildest test was given them that could be given; there was no need of their eating of the forbidden tree; everything that their wants required had been provided” (The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 1, p. 1083).

“In [God’s] great mercy, He appointed Adam no severe test. And the very lightness of the prohibition made the sin exceedingly great” (Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 60, 61).

“Our first parents were not left without a warning of the danger that threatened them. Heavenly messengers opened to them the history of Satan’s fall and his plots for their destruction” (ibid., p. 52).

Adam and Eve, when created, were perfectly equipped, ideally situated, and adequately warned. When they repented, they were completely forgiven and, as symbolized in Genesis 3:21, mercifully covered with the robe of Christ’s righteousness. That, for them, was the only rescue possible, and it is our only hope as well.

Calvin B. Rock is a general vice president of the General Conference. He holds doctoral degrees in ministry and Christian ethics.
Don't go far,” Dad warned. “I want you home before dark, and I want you to be able to hear me if I call.”
“O.K.” Both Todd and Andrew nodded. “We'll stay close.”
The boys headed for the woods behind Todd’s house. A ndrew thought living out in the country like Todd did was totally cool.
“Come on!” Todd urged. “I'll show you the bird's nest I found. Maybe the babies have hatched.”

It didn’t take long to find the tree. Todd gave Andrew a boost up so he could peek into the nest. Sure enough, three scrawny babies huddled inside. A ndrew gave Todd a boost and three tiny mouths flew open, begging for food.

“Let’s wait for the mom,” suggested A ndrew. “I want to watch her feed her babies.”

Todd looked around. “I know!” he exclaimed. “Let's climb that tree. We can wait on that big branch and have a perfect view of the nest when she comes back.”

“Great!” whooped A ndrew.

The boys scrambled up the tree. A gentle breeze rustled the leaves. Birds chirped all around them. Squirrels scampered up and across trees. It was so pleasant, the boys didn’t even mind that the mother bird didn’t return.

Suddenly A ndrew sat up.
“Shhh,” he said. “I thought I heard something.”

“What?” asked Todd.

“It might have been your dad calling,” said A ndrew. “Listen.”

Very, very faintly, Todd thought he might have heard his dad call, “Boys! Todd! A ndrew!”

But he wasn’t sure.

“Nah, that’s not my dad,” said Todd. “We don't have to go. We don't have to be back until dark.”

“He told us to stay close enough to hear if he called,” reminded A ndrew.

“We are close,” said Todd.

“We'd hear him more clearly than that if he were calling.”

Soon the sound that might have been Todd’s dad stopped.

A fter a while the mother bird returned. The boys watched her feed her babies. The branch was getting uncomfortable and they were getting hungry, so they jumped to the ground and headed back to Todd’s house. Todd's dad met them at the door.

“Did you boys hear me calling you a while ago?” he asked.

Todd looked at A ndrew and kicked the floor with his toe.

“Uh, we weren't really sure.”

“That's too bad,” said Dad. “If you had come when I'd called, we would be on our way to the basketball game right now. Mr. Johnson called and asked me if I wanted his tickets. A t the last minute he couldn't go, but he wanted to give his tickets to someone who he was sure would use them. Since I couldn't find you boys, I had to tell him to find someone else.”

A ndrew shot Todd an “I-told-you-so” look as Todd hung his head sadly.

Listen Up!

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

☛ Read a Bible story about someone who listened when he heard his name called. 1 Samuel 3:1-11. What would have happened if Samuel had pretended he didn't hear? What would have happened if Eli hadn't encouraged Samuel to answer?

☛ Ask the adults in your family to tell you about a time they listened to God's voice. What happened?

☛ Listen to the heartbeat of someone in your family. You can put a jar against your ear and their chest, or put your ear on that person's chest. Try using a rolled-up piece of paper for a listening device. How is this like listening to God's voice?

☛ Think of someone you may know who needs help listening to God's voice. How can you help that person listen?
Little Sparks of Light

I sat down on the log in front of my little bamboo hut and reflected on the past few weeks I had been here. Life in this village was so different from the college life I left behind. When I had departed from Southern Adventist University as a student missionary, I never imagined I would be sleeping in a tiny bamboo hut, cockroaches scurrying over my sleeping bag and the wind seeping through the cracks in the walls. I had never imagined I would be taking showers in an icy waterfall, wide-eyed children staring at me—children who had never seen soap. I never imagined I would find such a picture of poverty hidden in the mountains of Mindanao Island, Philippines. But here I was in the remote mission field I had always imagined in my dreams.

The intense heat of the afternoon faded into warm evening and then cool night. I crossed my arms tightly in front of me to preserve body heat, ignoring the goose bumps forming along my skin.

That morning I had accompanied the women in their daily search for sweet potatoes, bananas, and a green vegetable called sayote. They carried large baskets behind them, hanging by a strap on their foreheads. I knew they were trying not to laugh at me and my efforts to keep up with them.

And after I returned from the fields, I taught Bible classes for the some 30 children who had shown up. I found it hard to believe that they had never heard of Jesus and Samson, David and Daniel. I told them a couple stories from the Bible, and my partner, Fidela, translated for me. I could see the interest and wonder in their expressions, and even the mothers stopped to listen.

I heard footsteps and looked up to see Usa coming toward me. The 3-year-old boy hesitated when he saw me looking at him. I waved, but Usa still clung to his mother’s skirt. After a few seconds of hesitation, he headed toward me.

A large orange shirt hung loosely on his body. His little brown legs and feet were bare. Usa gave me a little grin as he sat down on the log and began inching his way toward me. I smiled and tapped the log next to me, inviting him to come closer.

"Hi, Usa." And then there was silence. He didn’t know any English, and I didn’t know Nativo. So we just sat there in the darkness. If I can’t talk with you, how do I reach you? I thought. How am I supposed to share God’s love with you? A gust of wind blew, and Usa shuddered involuntarily. His thin shirt with holes and tears provided little protection against the cold mountain air. I instinctively put my arms around him and drew him closer to me. He snuggled against me, trying to keep warm.

As we sat there in silence, I looked out over the mountains and saw a spark of light in the air, and then it was gone. A gain the light appeared, blinking on and off as it floated down toward the earth. I nudged Usa and pointed.

"Kumkat," he said.

The pattern of lights was unusual—a spark of light and then sporadic blinks trailing down. I hugged Usa tightly and repeated, "Kumkat."

We watched as more and more sparks of light appeared around us. There was a lull, and then another firefly revealed its presence near the banana trees. "Kumkat," Usa eagerly pointed out to me.

"Kumkat," I repeated and nodded. I pointed to another one flying above our hut. "Kumkat."

"Kumkat," he said with a smile. We sat there for at least a half hour in the cold, snuggled together, pointing out little sparks of light.

To me, they were sparks of hope. For even if we didn’t speak the same language, even if we were from different cultures, I had finally won Usa’s trust and friendship. I realized that sharing God’s love doesn’t require words. God provides kumkats—little sparks of light.

Helen Lee, assistant editor of Guide, is a recent English and religious studies graduate from Southern Adventist University. She was a student missionary in the Philippines when this experience occurred.