Loving Others

I read Andy Nash’s “What Does Jesus Want From Us?” (Sept. 17 Cutting Edge Edition) reluctantly because so many articles think nothing about Adventist bashing—“If only Adventists did . . .” “The problem with Adventists . . .” etc. But I found this article refreshing.

—Robert Rouillard
University Place, Washington

I would like to see more articles about loving others. The table “How Adventists Are Perceived” should not surprise us. In our fundamental belief 21, “Christian Behavior,” we do not mention anything about kindness, mercy, loving others, or forgiveness. In fact, we don’t even quote any of Jesus’ words. It seems to me that these are more important “behaviors” than what we wear or eat.

I am positive that Jesus and Ellen White thought love was of utmost importance. How often did Jesus talk about what we wear or eat?

—Lynn Rose
Silver Spring, Maryland

Canadians Left Out

You’ve done it again! The $25 Club (see September N A D Edition) has been offered only for U.S. income tax payers, not Canadian. And I assume the $25 refers to U.S. currency, not Canadian.

If you make the offer to Canadians, I’ll let you have my donation too!

—James Astleford
Executive Director
ADRA/South Sudan

Touché! We greatly value Canadian readers and regret the omission. Canadians who wish to contribute should send checks in multiples of $35 Canadian to the General Conference. Unfortunately, charitable gifts mailed outside Canada do not qualify for tax deductions.—Editors.

The Vanishing Middle

Praise God for Bill Knott’s “The Vanishing Middle” (Sept. 17). How profound and yet how simple. God’s truth is in the center, and He is there with it. Can we not move to Him and toward each other?

—Eunice Johnson
Phoenix, Arizona

With interest I read this article. About 10 years ago I began attending church again. I’ve struggled to learn I was too conservative for “liberals” and too liberal for “conservatives.”

One consolation was the realization that Christ was rejected by both the conservatives (Pharisees) and liberals (Sadducees) of His day. Could it be that Christ would be—or is—rejected by the conservatives and liberals of today?

It seems that the same spirit that crucified Christ is alive and well in the Adventist Church. We need Christ to remove the barriers dividing the conservatives and liberals so that believers can walk in the middle of the road to eternal life, rather than being pressured to walk in either ditch.

Thanks to Bill Knott for lifting up Jesus as the answer to a problem that seems to have plagued God’s people for centuries.

—Name Withheld

Snack Attack

I thought the list of church survival tips in Carol Nelson’s “The Church Nursery: A Worship Alternative” (Sept. 17) was very good—except for one. Providing a snack for your child in church seems to me to be unnecessary. If a child is fixed a proper breakfast and if other interesting quiet activities are brought along, a snack would not be needed.

Unfortunately, I’ve seen the snack idea carried on to even the older children (age 5 and up). It also can prove to be a real mess for the church janitor to have to clean up Cheerios, raisins, and other wonder snacks that parents pack for their little ones. Let us teach our children to reverence the house of the Lord and refrain from eating in the sanctuary altogether.

—Connie Smith
Eau Claire, Michigan

The State of the Church (cont.)

Stephen Chavez’s “The State of the
Church” (Sept. 10 World Edition) was hard-hitting. I had just returned from sitting in on the Mayor’s Breakfast in Kansas City, Kansas. The mayor was telling the pastors present (all Kansas City clergy were invited; a few came) about Colin Powell’s call for a united effort in all churches to help the youth of the country by opening up the church doors to after-school programs, tutoring, helping troubled kids, etc. The mayor was asking the clergy to make promises as to what their churches could do.

I felt out of place in this effort. Was I ready to help in uniting with other churches to save the young? I was not clergy, just a visitor, but even then I had little to say. May we start to open our doors and lives a little wider to those in need, not just the Pathfinder Clubs.

—Vivian Broussard
Shawnee, Kansas

Giving Prisoners a New Start
Regarding Caron Oswald’s “Giving Prisoners a New Start” (Sept. 10). When so much of the world has given up on inmates, Amazing Facts sends in an evangelist (Brian McMahon), and 80 dear souls are added to the list of those who deeply desire to live their lives for Christ. What a beautiful, encouraging story! Oh, that this same chance at a new life could be given to inmates in every prison!

I write as one who daily sees men hungry and thirsty for a personal relationship with their Creator and Redeemer, yet they know not how to proceed. Our chaplains are overburdened and made impotent by so many rules and regulations. Often they are held responsible for more than a dozen different faiths, hopelessly trying to facilitate each one.

America’s prisons are a tremendous mission field, untapped for the most part. I pray our Seventh-day Adventist Church will take a more aggressive approach in reaching these dear souls.

—Richard Dibell
Adrian, Michigan

Divorce and Remarriage
Regarding “Going It Alone” in Calvin Rock’s Faith Alive! column (Sept. 10). The latter part of Matthew 5:32, in the NIV translation, cites “marital unfaithfulness” as the justifiable cause for divorce. If God has given us marriage and betrothal as the metaphor for our relationship with Him, then considering marital unfaithfulness as simply a physical act would weaken the comparison. Isn’t putting a substance, emotion, or behavior over the support, nurture, and love of your spouse like putting another god before our love, loyalty, and relationship with God? Isn’t either one breaking or being unfaithful to a relationship?

Biblical language and translations aside, I believe that the concept of “marital unfaithfulness” calls us as grace-filled Christians to a higher standard for marriage and a less legalistic standard for divorce.

—Kathy Beagles
VIA E-MAIL

I found Calvin Rock’s response correct in regard to church policy, but to state categorically that the Bible allows remarriage based solely on the actions of the other (death, remarriage, or adultery) may not be so clearly biblical. Where does the Bible teach that one person’s sin creates another’s innocence?

In 1 Corinthians 7:15 Paul states that divorce is justified for the Christian if they have been abandoned and there is no longer recourse for reconciliation. It seems to me that the Bible distinguishes between choosing to abandon a marriage and being abandoned. The former forfeits my right to remarriage, but the latter releases me to peace and freedom. We clearly follow this principle when adultery is present. Why do we reject Paul’s expansion of adultery to include abandonment?

—Dick Tibbits, D.Min.
Orlando, Florida

NEXT WEEK
“We Are Not Legalists”
A Sundaykeeping church learns about the Sabbath.
“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matt. 5:38, 39, NIV).

Late last summer, while racing to the only area golf course within our respective budgets, my friend Gary and I were discussing the recent two-part Los Angeles Times series critical of the Adventist Church (specifically, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency) and the church’s two-part response. That same week I had been contemplating Jesus’ against-the-grain admonition to “turn the other cheek” and I wished out loud that, like the Communication Department, all church departments would react to “strikes” so graciously that they actually steal the moment—as Jesus always seemed to do.

“I wish that we’d stop being so concerned about image,” I commented. “I wish we would just say ‘Thank you for reminding us of our faults. As much as we try to uphold Christian ideals, we often fall short. And that’s the whole reason we exist—because we recognize our need for a Saviour and anticipate His return.’”

Mental missive accomplished, I parked the Honda and popped the trunk.

The weather that August afternoon was scorching, my golf game was not, and by the back nine I was both hot and bothered with the slow-playing twosome just ahead of us. Back and forth into various fields, streams, and national forests they’d dribble their golf balls. And when they’d finally reach the green, they’d take forever to line up their putts, which never went in anyway. Then they’d stand on the green and, fingers jabbing, tally their scores. It was all very annoying.

The fourteenth hole was a short par four, and although the slowpokes were still putting, I was sure that I could tee off safely. (So was Gary, which I didn’t appreciate.) I drove the ball low and hard to about 20 feet left of the green. Gary spanked his ball up the fairway, and we grabbed our golf bags. We approached the green as the twosome departed.

“Hey,” the skinny guy yelled my way, “it’s a good thing you didn’t hit your drive straight—because if you had, you would’ve hit us.”

“Well, you’ll have to stay up ahead of us then,” I replied. “Excuse me?” he said. I just kept walking.

It was an awkward exchange—one I immediately regretted. I wasn’t sure whether skinny’s statement was meant to scold or simply to state, but either way my response was less than gracious.

On the next hole, a par five, I hit my best drive of the year—maybe the best of my life. Uncharacteristically straight, my nicked Pinnacle soared over a ridge and skipped down the fairway. I couldn’t wait to see where it had landed.

I never found the ball. A parenthetically the twosome had either picked it up or whipped it into the woods. A fair punishment, I thought, unzipping my bag.

Grace, it seems to me, comes in three forms—giving, forgiving, and forgiving anyway. I’ve never had much trouble with giving. When my composition students used to phone begging for “a little extra time,” I was always glad to grant it. Neither have I wrestled (very much) with forgiving, with accepting someone’s apology and moving on.

But forgiving anyway? Forgiving someone who’s hurt/inconvenienced me and who doesn’t even seek my forgiveness? That comes a little harder. Yet that’s precisely the grace that Jesus modeled—“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34, NIV)—the kind He urges us to imitate.

That I didn’t turn my other cheek doesn’t annul my opinion that the church should turn theirs. I still think we miss golden opportunities. Yet once again I’m reminded that I am the church, and that the best way to turn heads is to turn my own.

You might say it’s the difference between a birdie three and a bogey five.

1 It’s called Gunpowder Golf, and to the best of my knowledge, no major PGA tournaments are scheduled there anytime soon.
2 See “Currents of Change Roll Seventh-day Adventists” (Aug. 13) and “A History of Complaints Dogs Adventist Aid Agency” (Aug. 14), Los Angeles Times. The church’s same-day responses were later printed in the September NAD Edition of the Adventist Review.
3 In fact, the more I think about it, the better it gets.
Our pastor is so legalistic that he thinks chocolate is evil.” This quote came from the letter of a young adult complaining about the rigidity of his local church.

How did health get so involved with religious works? Is a person who follows and promotes a good diet legalistic? If not, why do so many young people think so?

Preventive medicine, natural remedies, exercise, and vegetarianism now attract all ages. Their motives vary, but most informed people agree with these “new” concepts. Health magazines and books have never been so popular. But in a denomination with a long history of health consciousness, enthusiasm wanes.

“Health reform,” a term first used in the nineteenth century, is being rejected by many young Adventists. Maybe it started with their parents or grandparents who focused on the diet part, associating it with a place at the heavenly table. A vegetarian diet and perfectionism went together like a knife and fork.

When did the weight get out of balance on the other end? Maybe we got tired of our behavior being judged by our diets rather than our love. Others might say that we live in an era of antiestablishment, and church establishments aren’t perfect. Throw in a mixture of skepticism, fads, nostalgia, peer pressure, and insecurity, and we get an unhealthy stew that simmers on a side burner, waiting to boil over.

Two extreme images of the “health message” emerge. One side seems to believe it’s needed for salvation; the other rebels at being told how to live, as faith doesn’t need it. Both camps criticize the organized church. Here we find the problem with “health reform”—something meant to bless has become an analogue of contention. There is no harmonious feasting for either side. We get indigestion being together!

Enter the “Paul principle.” Remember that passage about eating meat offered to idols (1 Cor. 8)? Even though the setting was quite different, we find a connecting principle: don’t offend those who live according to their conscience. If people want health information, they will ask. At the same time, don’t make life harder for the weak on either side.

I’m not talking about drugs and alcohol. We know their danger. It’s the little things—the overindulgence in favorite foods, even food addictions. It’s not planning exercise, being obsessed with work, and neglecting our spiritual lives.

My neighbor (not a church member) told me about her cholesterol of 300. Considering that she is not yet 40, vegetarian, slim, and active, it puzzled me. Her only vice is chocolate. I’m not blaming chocolate for her cholesterol, but she is addicted, getting headaches if she misses her daily ration. I understand. Some people can eat just one—I can’t. All the fat and sugar that go with this food make it tasty. In its natural form chocolate is bitter.

We belong to a society hooked on feeling good at the moment and putting off long-range goals. Better health isn’t legalism—it’s a valuable goal, helping us serve better and face difficulties with more stamina. It also helps beat discouragement and depression. Practicing good health habits will make us less likely to burden our children and friends as we grow older. Some think it helps us prepare for the end-times. That may be true, but it helps with our own end-times as well. Physicians say that we not only live longer, but have a gentler, quicker demise. Most of all, a healthy body receiver can pick up messages from the heavenly dimension more clearly. But it does not get us to heaven.

“Health reform” can be as bitter as pure chocolate or as sweet as a cold melon. It all depends on your choice. Be in good health!
Hey, kids, guess what! In this edition of Herald’s Trumpet, we’re awarding not three, but five prizes—a book called Yuki: An Alaskan Adventure, by Kenneth C. Crawford. It’s the perfect book for cold weather. If you don’t live in cold weather, turn up the air-conditioning—or have someone fan you really fast with the Adventist Review.

In our last contest (the October 8 World Edition) our three winners were: Hugo Mendez, from Tampa, Florida; John Henri Rorabeck, from Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin; and Jennifer and Marina Jorgenson, from Vancouver, Washington. Our winners received Bible Word Search and Sort, by Anita Marshall. Where was the trumpet? On page 15.

If you can find the trumpet this time, send a postcard telling us where you found it to Herald’s Trumpet at the Give & Take address below. We’ll randomly select five winners and print them in the December 24 AnchorPoints Edition.

Who knows—you might be reading Yuki in your warm bed sometime soon.

HATS OFF TO ADVENTIST YOUTH

Laura Mosier could preach a sermon about the true meaning of the word “missionary.” In fact, she has! After attending GO ’97, an international young adult missions conference, Laura spoke about her own missionary convictions in her home church in Dodge Center, Minnesota. Laura has worked on mission projects in Tanzania and Zambia, Africa.

At home she gives Bible studies to a neighboring friend. She met her current roommate at Union College while attending community college classes. Laura invited her friend to family worship and church activities. Against many odds, the young woman felt moved to attend Union College. “Laura is an outstanding member of the church,” says friend Hazel Boucher. More important than any sermon, Laura lives her beliefs. Thanks, Laura. Your cap is on the way!

It’s not often that a young person is among the “most respected” leaders in a small-town church. But Jared Brophy has won the hearts of his entire congregation! A deacon, sound system operator, Sabbath school teacher, volunteer handyman, and organizer and head of the church’s annual maintenance days at Fairfield, Washington, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Jared has proved that he is both trustworthy and capable. “We are grateful he is a member of our church,” says Pastor William Skidmore, Jr. “We all appreciate Jared.” Jared is a member of the class of 1999 at Upper Columbia Academy.

Hats off to you, too, for your steady support in your church.

LOUDER THAN WORDS: Laura Mosier’s actions give weight to a recent sermon she preached about her missionary convictions.

SOUND SUPPORT: Among his many contributions to the church, Jared Brophy makes sure the sound system is up and running every Sabbath.
My take on what I think took place, and what it means for us.

The Big Events of 1968

January
5 Dr. Benjamin Spock (at podium above) indicted for activity against Vietnam War
23 U.S.S. Pueblo captured by North Korea
30 Viet Cong launch the Tet offensive
February
8 George Wallace enters race for U.S. presidency

March
24 Panamanian president Marco Robles impeached by National Assembly
31 Lyndon Johnson announces he will not run for president

April
4 Martin Luther King, Jr., assassinated
23 Columbia students seize university buildings; bloody clashes
By Roy Adams

“In the last days the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord . . . He will teach us of his ways, so that we may walk in his paths’” (Isa. 2:2, NIV).

In its January 11, 1988, issue, Time magazine ran a cover story looking back on the year 1968. The piece brought the following letter to the editor from Ana Maria Lebre, of Parede, Portugal. “Born in 1970,” she wrote, “I would give 20 years of my life to have been a teenager in 1968. I envy my parents when I hear them talk about the Kennedys, the Beatles, Martin Luther King, Jr., Bob Dylan, etc.”

Ana’s letter reminded me again what an awesome experience it was to have lived through the exciting period of the sixties, and settled me in the determination to write something about it before the end of 1998, the thirtieth anniversary of what, by all accounts, was the most explosive year of that entire turbulent decade. (See sidebar.)

Entire Ground Trembling

I remember the sixties. A time of great spiritual and social turbulence. Student protests on college and university campuses; workers’ strikes; agitations; sit-ins; demonstrations in the streets; rioting and looting in the cities; mass military draft card bonfire burnings all over the United States; police in riot uniforms, with tear gas and water cannons; troops patrolling city streets in full combat gear; the spirit of revolution hanging heavy in the air as old foundations crumbled everywhere; the entire ground trembling with uncertainty and instability; the whole world seemingly in one massive upheaval.

It was an exceedingly complex time, the sixties. A strident time. A reckless time. A time of youthful rebellion. “Do your own thing” became the defiant slogan of the day.

And we did. Mood-altering drugs and sexual promiscuity came into vogue. And by the hundreds of thousands, “dropouts” and “flower children” gathered around makeshift bandstands in huge (so-called) strawberry fields to worship the gods of sex and drugs and psychedelic music.

Why Did It All Happen?

I still vividly recall driving through the streets of Sydney, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, one spring morning in 1963, and seeing for the first time those huge bold letters on the cover of a Time magazine trumpeting before the world the radical question: “Is God Dead?”

That question epitomized all the complex philosophical, ideological, social, and political issues unleashed in all that burning passion amid the confusion of the sixties.

Why did Christian and Jewish

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<th>May</th>
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<td>29 Hair opens on Broadway</td>
<td>23, 24 Cleveland ghetto riot; 3,000 National Guardsmen deployed</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>August</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Ten million citizens begin civil and economic disobedience in France</td>
<td>8 Richard Nixon nominated at Miami convention</td>
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<td>June</td>
<td>August</td>
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<td>1 “Mrs. Robinson” No. 1 on the music charts</td>
<td>20 Soviet tanks roll into Czechoslovakia, ending Prague Spring</td>
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<td>June</td>
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<td>5 Robert Kennedy assassinated</td>
<td>26-29 Riots at the Chicago Democratic Convention; 24,000 armed troops deployed</td>
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<td>June</td>
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<td>19 Poor People’s March in Washington, D.C.</td>
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theologians, who we must assume were not all crazy or stupid, arrive at this unconventional conclusion? And what did they mean?

Perhaps the clearest answer came from the Jewish author Richard Rubinstein, himself one of the “God is dead” theologians of the sixties. So far as he was concerned, the death of 6 million Jews during World War II made it impossible to believe any longer in a loving God. “When I say we live in the time of the death of God,” he wrote, “I mean that the thread uniting God and man, heaven and earth, has been broken. We stand in a cold, silent, unfeeling cosmos, unaided by any purposeful power beyond our own resources. [And then came the clincher:] After Auschwitz, what else can a Jew say about God?”

The sad fact is that the Christian church was around while Auschwitz was happening. While Dachau and Treblinka and the other notorious Nazi concentration camps were taking place. More than 40 million Protestants (let alone Catholics) in Germany alone. By and large, apart from a few courageous souls like Martin Niemoeller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Christians preferred to bury their heads in the sand.

A nd because the Christian church was too apathetic, too timid, too naive, too cowardly to raise its united voice against that monstrous evil, millions of thinking people around the world have since been led to dismiss its preaching and theology as an empty, irrelevant sham, and to regard the God proclaimed in it as dead.

Do you see? What we’re talking about here—the larger issue before us—is what happens when Christians neglect their moral responsibility in the world. Suppose Christians in Europe in the 1940s, moved by the moral courage and ethics of Jesus, had been able to mobilize in their tens of millions in opposition to the manic in their midst—suppose they’d shouted with one united voice: “N ein!” “N o!” “Stop!” I wonder if the sixties, as we know it, would not have been altogether different.

Beware the Status Quo

But before we criticize the Christians of the thirties and the forties in Europe too harshly, we should look inside ourselves and ask whether we’re any better now. Whether we’re any less cowardly now.

Seventh-day Adventists, as a church, have a splendid record in terms of their relationship to governments and authorities. We support established governments and properly constituted authorities. I do not envision, I do not advocate, any change in this fundamental position. That stance, however, should never blind us to the evils and oppression of the power structures wherever we happen to live in the world. The Christian does not countenance violence. The Christian does not incite people to riot against legitimate authority. The Christian is for peace.

But the Christian is not a passivist. And God forbid that we today should repeat the shameful silence, the scandalous cowardice, of the forties.

The critical failure of Christians in Nazi Germany lay in their acceptance of the status quo. And that, I submit, is precisely our problem now. Many of us have the idea that we’d have acted differently had we lived in Nazi Germany. We’d have raised our voice in protest against that evil menace in our midst. But in saying that, we’re speaking from the perspective of more than 50 years of hindsight—many of us within the safety and security of democratic governments, and at a time when it has become politically correct to think that way.

What we need to remember is that for many years prior to the 1940s, Hitler and his henchmen in the Nazi Party in Germany had been preparing the ground, working skillfully to create a psychological climate that made the atrocities they planned to...
unleash not only acceptable but also attractive to the German people. How we would have acted had we lived then can be determined by how we're acting now. Every generation exists in a certain emotional climate—a certain psychological atmosphere—that makes it difficult to see beyond the moral and ethical confines determined (and I might even say dictated) by the status quo in that generation.

Today we may see no Hitler in our streets, no steel-booted storm troopers on the horizon, no blood-curdling Gestapo banging on our doors in the dead of night. But what we often fail to realize is that the demon who inspired evil genius in the thirties and for-realize is that the demon who inspired our ability to resist popular pressure to brutalize. We need to gauge constantly our ability to resist popular pressure to do or to accept or to countenance things or beliefs or behavior we know is still alive and very well today.

A nd his intention is the same: to confuse, to numb, to kill—to take us out by any means at his disposal.

Through the tyranny of the status quo, his principal tactic in Nazi Germany, he still works to enslave and brutalize. We need to gauge constantly our ability to resist popular pressure to do or to accept or to countenance things or beliefs or behavior we know are wrong and immoral; constantly we must test our resistance to coercion and mind control—whether from our peers (rubbing shoulders with us in classes or churches or clubs) or from the larger society. Do we buckle under the pressure of public sentiment?

Mark McGwire succeeded this past summer in breaking a longstanding baseball home-run record. Remember the buildup to that event? A lot of good, harmless fun, and a chance to take the mind away from sordid politics. But through all the excitement and the hype something potentially dangerous caught my attention. Why—asked friends more familiar with the game—didn’t those pitchers (pros at what they do) walk McGwire and thwart his seemingly inexorable drive toward the record books? The answer was as accurate as it was ominous: “The crowd would have killed them.”

When I talk about the psychological climate of the status quo, that’s the type of thing I have in mind. If anyone thinks it’s easy to buck the tide of popular opinion, they need to think again.

The late Canadian pastor Rudolf James used to tell the story of the boy who stood to ask a question in class one day and was ordered by his teacher to sit down. When he refused, the teacher grabbed him on both shoulders and rammed him into his seat. “I said, ‘Sit down,’” the teacher said, and held him there a second or two.

Not to be outdone, the boy replied, “I’m sitting down, but I am standing up in my mind.”

The story can be misunderstood, but it has a deeper point. A re we standing up in our minds against the subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) pressures of a decadent, almost pagan society? To tell the truth, I’m personally scared as a cat of the status quo. Because so often we ourselves don’t know how much it’s changing us. It’s like entering a room with a foul odor. You stay there for a while, and it doesn’t offend you anymore. Your senses become numb to the stench. They say that if you drop a frog in hot water, it will jump out immediately, like any one of us. But put that frog instead in cold water, then gradually increase the temperature, and it will remain there and boil to death. That’s the lethal power of the status quo.

The present generation of youth and young adults comprises perhaps one of the smartest in the history of the world, particularly when it comes to their mastery of the technological gadgetry of our times. So when I see those same bright young people with cigarettes in their mouths, when I see them emptying bottles of booze in binge drinking parties and shooting heroin and other dangerous substances up their veins, then I’m astonished, dumbfounded.

Why do they do it? Why, in spite of their enormous mental savvy, do they walk with eyes wide open into virtual suicide?

The status quo—that’s why. We should never underestimate its awesome power.

The Shining Moment of the Sixties

I remember the sixties. A nd it wasn’t all negative. Hear again the letter from Anna Maria, cited at the beginning, and this time I give the full text: “Born in 1970, I would give 20 years of my life to have been a teenager in 1968. I envy my parents when I hear them talk about the Kennedys, the Beatles, Martin Luther King, Jr., Bob Dylan, etc. I wish I had the will and the belief in my ideas that the youth of the sixties had” (italics supplied).

It was these idealistic youth of the sixties who relentlessly probed beneath the hypocrisy and selfish greed of what they labeled “the military-industrial complex” in the United States, and raised their voice in outrage against the bloody carnage of the Vietnam war, a conflict that left 47,000 Americans and 200,000 South Vietnamese dead. Braving arrest and imprisonment, students leveled the spotlight on the CEOs of the big weapons production companies heading to their banks and stockbrokers every Monday morning with their briefcases full of war-generated cash. Merchants of death they were. A nd that’s what riled these perceptive young adults. It was, in retrospect, one of the shining moments of the sixties.

We Must Face the Music

As in the Nazi era and as with the Vietnam war, there are sinister individuals and entities today who profit from human tragedy, individuals and entities with vested interest in the perpetuation of violence and crime in our society. The big media moguls—the Rupert
Murdoch's of the world—profit from such calamity. Crime sells newspapers and magazines. Violence increases television ratings. And there are "respectable" corporate people making big bucks from the illicit trade in sex and drugs.

I envision a generation of young Christians—young Adventists, if you please—who, instead of seeking to push the moral envelope ever wider to accommodate an increasingly degenerate social climate, would instead confront today's equivalent of the military-industrial complex and ask: Why? Why can't we grow up normally? Why are you trying so hard to ripen us before our time? Why do you expose us, day after passing day, to the latrine of human decadence? What is your responsibility when, following your nightly promotion of immorality and promiscuity, we come down with AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases? Why are you trying so hard to ruin us?

These are the kinds of questions intelligent young people should be asking today with increasing passion and outrage. When someone opens a new play on Broadway, for example, in which Jesus is represented as a homosexual, bedding down His disciples, how I wish that millions of Christian youth, scandalized by such sacrilege, would rise up in outrage and be prepared to use their considerable economic power to boycott any business or entity that sponsors this kind of gratuitous garbage.

I hope I am fully aware about what I am saying. I'm not suggesting that we can bring about the kingdom of God on earth. Knowing what we do as Adventists, we never adopt the fantasy that we can shape this world into the kingdom of God. Our ultimate hope has always been in the coming of Jesus. Nothing less.

But before He left, Jesus Himself admonished us to "occupy" till He comes. This suggests, among other things, that contemporary Adventists should truly seek to become the salt of the earth, engaged constructively in the issues facing modern society. We must return to the activism of our early pioneers who, while they proclaimed the Advent, refused to be silent on the moral issues of the day. We cannot afford to be so heavenly minded that we become good for nothing here on earth.

My Dream

I remember the sixties. And the words of that giant cut down in those turbulent times come back to me: "I have a dream . . . ."

I have a dream that the coming generation of Adventists will be so caring, so politically and socially progressive, so ethically sensitive, so generous, so loving, so humanitarian in their outlook and action, so kind, so unselfish, so supportive of the weak, the disadvantaged, and the marginalized in society, that even in our jaded times multitudes will be attracted to the beauty of holiness and will say to one another, in the sentiments of the ancient prophet quoted at the beginning, "Let us go up to that shining city on the hill, to the mountain of the house of God."

I have a dream that the present generation of Adventists would be so totally and unashamedly committed to the message and mission of Jesus Christ, so accepting of all people, so color-blind, so gender-blind, so country-blind, so culture-blind, so status-blind—so blind to every other divisive element that tears at the fabric of contemporary society—that the world would behold in them the veritable incarnation of God in our times. So that never again will honest men and women be led to draw the obscene conclusion that God is dead.

Yes, I remember the sixties. It was the worst of times. It was the best of times. Perhaps like Ana you weren't born yet, or were too young to remember it. No matter. Yours is the privilege to live so fully, so courageously, so vigorously in your time that even if the world should last another thousand years, people will still say (to borrow the sentiments of Sir Winston Churchill): "This was their finest hour!"

Why not?
Why do we celebrate Christmas the way we do? Christ wasn’t born on December 25; that was an arbitrary decision made by the Church of Rome. Santa and the tree have become materialistic and pagan symbols. I love the Lord, and I would never intentionally offend Him. Yet I’m fond of Christmas—the carols, the lights, the ornaments, and the nostalgia of my childhood memories.

We try to keep our celebrations centered on Christ and the Nativity scene, but of late I feel uncomfortable even with that, given that we are celebrating Christ’s birth on the wrong day. What are your thoughts?

Deirdre’s reply: Celebrate Christ, not the day. If you feel uncomfortable with December 25, then consult some historians to find a date closer to the probable date of His birth. The point of Christmas is Christ. What a wonderful opportunity to share Him not only with believers but also with pagans, who often wonder at the goodwill the season sparks.

I think you offend Christ less by lifting Him up during the Christmas season than by shunning Christmas because of the misplaced date of His birth. I repeat: celebrate Him, not the day.

An Adventist girlfriend of mine from years past came “out of the closet” about her sexual orientation recently. She shared with me that she hadn’t been to church in years because of the people’s lack of acceptance of her gay lifestyle. She told me she had concluded that being gay was biblical and that we all follow our own paths to God (which I didn’t contradict at the time, but now think I should have).

I was rather stumped about how to respond. I didn’t want to condone her choice, but I didn’t want to close another door on her either, so I kind of just “uh-huh’d” my way through our conversation. In the end I feel as though I missed a great opportunity, maybe one that God had lined up, to—well, to condemn her actions (not her, of course). Or exhort her to change her orientation (as if that is easily done).

I did tell her that those of us who aren’t in a position to be sexually active in a way that God can bless when we are single—whether we are gay or straight—should be celibate. But even that may have been hard to take, coming from a person who—unlike a gay person—has the hope of someday being able to marry and fully experience romantic love.

Should I have given her a Bible study on the subject?

Allan’s reply: I know it feels as though you missed a “great opportunity,” but I heartily affirm that you did the right thing. You listened. OK, so it felt awkward, and afterward you felt that you should have made some great life-changing intervention. But all things considered, by listening you provided her with probably more healing than she has experienced in a long time. A’s you “uh-huh’d” your way through it, I believe your friend felt heard.

From what you’ve written, it seems that she’s struggling with many issues. She may have used your listening ear to do a variety of things, such as: (1) begin the process of confession, (2) admit the separation she feels from the Christian community, (3) explore the theological issues she’s grappling with, and (4) find acceptance instead of condemnation.

Her willingness to emerge from the closet and confide in you is a first step. A’s you continue to listen and provide support, seek out the Holy Spirit and have Him use you as a conduit for change. I’m certain that as you continue to listen to your friend and allow the Holy Spirit to use you as a tool, God will reveal His desires for her. It will be up to her to choose which path she desires to follow, but God will use you in miraculous ways as His ambassador.

Send your questions about young adult life, Christian lifestyle, and Generation X culture to: The X-Change, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, or via e-mail to: dream_VISION_ministries@compuserve.com

A. Allan and Deirdre Martin are cofounders of dream VISION ministries.
Inside a Split-t-i-n-g Church

I N ever T hought It W ould H appen to U s.

BY ANNA WOOD

In this piece an Adventist young adult shares her perspective on a fragmenting local church. (The names have been changed.) While we think that this heartfelt piece will be helpful to many, we recognize that perspectives and circumstances vary in situations like this. We might also note that the church described here is not one of those written widely about—namely, Damascus, Grace Place, Sunnyside, or Cloverdale.—Editors.

Karen stopped me as I left the vestibule of the church. "Don't forget prayer meeting on Monday," she said, giving my arm a little squeeze. I nodded and turned to go.

This wasn't an ordinary prayer meeting, but one in a series of intercessory prayer sessions that a group of us had started. Confused, hurting, angry, we were turning to God in our time of need. We were asking Him to heal what was happening in our church.

Not My Church . . .

Our congregation has always been a safe loving circle of friends to me. I attended the academy across the road from first grade on. Through the long processions of pastors, principals, and differing church decor, congregational unity was a constant. Sure, there were ripples in the calm facade, but things were always resolved—or so I thought. Other churches engaged in civil wars about the validity of prophecy, women elders, and the like. Not my church, I thought smugly.

Then came our new pastor. Pastor Steve's boundless energy was fascinating at first. His infectious grin and bright eyes made him an instant favorite with the children and youth. His aggressive visitation bore fruit in the form of missing members returning to the fold. There was standing room only at church, and the board began to consider creating an early service.

We were excited about the possibilities for service that Pastor Steve represented. He urged members who were mechanics to set up an oil change center in the front parking lot of the church for low-income drivers. He vowed to whip the Community Services center into shape. He met with the deacons and elders and urged them to take on greater responsibility. A work bee was organized, and the courtyard bloomed with new spring flowers. Pastor Steve spoke vigorously against the number of committees in the church, stating that we needed fewer committees and more action.

Pastor Steve’s zeal was perhaps misunderstood by some. Inevitably he stepped on a few toes . . . and then a few more.

“If You Don’t Like It, You Can Leave”

His enthusiasm for church leadership unflagging, Pastor Steve and his wife visited every Sabbath school class and joined the discussions. His visit to the young adult group, however, met with mixed success. The day’s topic was service. Pastor Steve joined in eagerly.

“Have you ever heard of the Saddleback church?” he asked. “Tell me what you think of this. They tell you right as you come in that if you're not there to serve, there's a church down the street where you can sit comfortably. They make service a priority. And it’s one of the fastest growing churches in the state. What do you think of that?”

He looked around the circle of faces.
“But how can they require service of their members?” someone asked. “How do they know that all of their members are ready to serve?” asked another. “Isn’t service an outgrowth of our love for Christ and not just something we do to be doing it?”

“W hat about trying to use works to get into heaven?” another member broke in. “Isn’t that as bad as doing no good deeds at all?”

“You can’t legislate righteousness,” someone said sharply. “W ho does their pastor think he is to tell them they’d better leave if they don’t want to serve God his way?”

The comments came fast and furiously. Some agreed and some disagreed with the Saddleback idea. The group leader valiantly tried to keep the conversation on topic. Pastor Steve vigorously defended his beliefs, and opposing members vigorously defended theirs. When it appeared that no resolution would be reached, Pastor Steve suddenly stood. “Nice worshipping with you all,” he said abruptly, and walked out.

The members looked at each other in stunned silence. The group leader cleared her throat. “Well,” she said, “let’s move on . . .”

Pastor Steve continued to try to make many changes in the church structure. When he turned his attention to the academy, some of the more cautious members murmured that he was perhaps out of his sphere of influence. Others, taking up his standard, loudly proclaimed that he could not lead a church that refused to follow. Instantly members rallied around the pastor, blaming others for his absence. More people stayed home on Sabbaths or visited area churches.

Attendance dropped sharply.

Factions developed and spoke out bitterly at committee meetings. Members canvassed other members in the parking lot after Sabbath services to see if they were “for” or “against” the pastor.

Whatever happened to “My house shall be called a house of prayer”? I wondered as I fled to my car, skipping my usual fellowship time.

Phone calls were made to urge members to contact the head elder in support of the pastor. Church leaders were slandered and verbally abused by members and other church leaders for their views. A brutally Pastor Steve took a two-week leave of absence, declaring that he could not lead a church that refused to follow.

Instantly members rallied around the pastor, blaming others for his absence. More people stayed home on Sabbaths or visited area churches.

A attendance dropped sharply.

“We can’t blame all of this on Pastor Steve,” our head deacon reminded us. “This was all here before, just pushed under the surface. W e may be part of the family of God, but we’re the dysfunctional part,” he joked.

Not everyone was embroiled in the conflict. M any of our newest members were blissfully unaware of the controversy. O ne told me, “I just love Pastor Steve! I wouldn’t miss a sermon. I know you have to drive so far, yet I see you every week— W elcome!”

I managed a weak grin and turned away. At that point I was attending regularly only to see how everything would end. The feeling of “waiting for the other shoe to drop” gave my stomach a vicious twist every time I walked into church. I kept wondering why someone didn’t step in and stop the conflict—the pastor, the elders, someone. W here were the “temple cleansers” when you needed them? W hy wasn’t anyone doing anything?

Then a guest minister from a nearby conference set me straight. He opened his Bible and preached on Luke 18:1: “T hen Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up” (NIV). M any wept as he looked at us kindly over his glasses and said, “God’s people, stop fussing at each other.”

I was forcefully reminded of where we had gone wrong. W e had all been talking to each other about the controversy, the pain, and the frustration, and had been giving God only the barest fraction of our attention. I had been looking for ammunition against the pastor and those who agreed with him, and had been acting more like a soldier in a civil war than a daughter in a family.

T hat day I determined, by the grace of God, to change my actions. I held my head up and greeted the people whose opinions differed from mine. I talked of casual subjects and steered conversations to neutral ground. W hen Karen invited me to pray with her, I was ready.

Right Outside the Door

O ur prayer sessions were timed to coincide with the church board and elders’ meetings that had been called to hear the complaints of the aggrieved members. W e gathered to pray in the youth sanctuary, separated by only a hallway from where the elders were in deep discussion.

The prayer warriors were mostly
young graduates. Reverent seekers
slipped silently into the circle of peti-
tioners, then slipped silently away.

Pour oil and bind up wounds. In any split, people are
hurting. Pay special attention to (1) teenagers, who, unlike
children, are old enough to know that something is
going on, but don’t entirely understand it, and (2) new
members who might be especially affected. Reach
out to others and bring about forgiveness. Foster a
spirit of peace.

Don’t neglect fellowship. Don’t run to your car
at the end of the service to escape your church family. Talk
of the goodness of the Lord with your fellow church mem-
bers. Talk about your garden, your grandkids, your answered
prayers. This is not to say that discussing the division is
taboo—just don’t overdo it. Never say anything in the foyer
that you could not say in the presence of Jesus.

Test every spirit. Remember that the fruits of the
Spirit of God are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, good-

ness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22).
Test the spirit of those who approach you about the divi-
sion in your church. If they are not of the Spirit of God, or
you find that your spirit is not in harmony with His, pray. And
let others know that you are praying for them.

Take some time away. We all know that we can’t
change the church if we leave the church. Taking a breather,
however, is fully acceptable. Spend a Sabbath on the beach.
Let the pounding of the surf or the rushing waters of a river bring
God’s peace to your heart. Spend some time with small children.
Their take on the world may give you a refreshed perspective on
your own.

Don’t lose heart. God will rule. He has overcome the world.

I read the story of the persistent
widow. So we continued to pray.

Reconstruc'ction

Meetings have been held in an
attempt to give everyone a chance to
be heard. Tearful speeches and vitu-
perative accusations have contrasted
with sober commentary and patient,
prayerful statements. The enemy of
our souls must relish the confusion,
even as this division tears at the
heart of God.

Pastor Steve will give his last ser-
mon this Sabbath. He is leaving to
start another ministry, and church
leaders expect that some of our mem-
ers will leave with him. We will miss
them all, but we will rebuild— for
though we have lost the leader of our
congregation, we have not lost the
Head of our family.

We have to believe that it is not
the end of the world. Members of
my congregation have requested a
Week of Prayer as soon as possible.
The young adult group declared a
"Friendship Day" at a local park and
invited members to come and simply
fellowship with one another and focus
on Jesus. We are implementing some
of the changes that Pastor Steve sug-
gested, but by God’s grace we are doing
so with a zeal tempered by His love
and patience. The wreckage is being
cleared away. Through prayer the hurts
are beginning to heal. Forgiveness is
flowing from God’s throne.

Our church has changed, in many
ways for the better, but what costly
lessons we had to learn. What a terri-
ble price to pay to discover that our
church was not invulnerable to divi-
sion. My smug attitude that nothing
could ever challenge my church has
been replaced by a deep respect for
those currently struggling to hold on to
thems. My prayer is that all of our pain
won’t be for nothing. May we never
forget this.

No, we will never be the same. By
God’s grace, we will never be the
same.

Anna Wood is a pseudonym.
Gospel Outreach: A Mission With a Passion

BY FRANK STANYER, GOSPEL OUTREACH PRESIDENT

Gospel Outreach (GO), an international evangelistic ministry sponsored by Adventist Church members, has flourished since its creation in 1993.* GO’s slogan, “People Introducing People to Jesus,” arises from the idea that people from any given culture can best share the gospel in their own particular language, setting, and way of life.

In early 1993 GO entered Ifugao Province in the Philippines when it began sponsoring Edgar Navales to the Mountain Provinces Mission as a lay evangelist. Today several churches exist as a result of Edgar’s work among people who are noted for their paganism.

By the close of GO’s first year 12 sponsored lay evangelists had worked in the Philippines and Bangladesh. Today GO sponsors 159 full-time gospel workers in 23 local Adventist missions. These missions are located in 18 developing countries, including Nepal and Sri Lanka in Asia, and Burkina Faso and Chad in Africa.

GO conducts its ministry within the 10/40 window—the area of earth bounded by 10 degrees north latitude and 40 degrees north latitude. Sixty percent of the world’s people, less than 5 percent of whom are Christians, live within that window. Ironically, this region receives only 10 percent of all world evangelism funds provided by Christian bodies. The 10/40 window is clearly in need of gospel work.

Because of unfavorable conditions for Christian outreach, the 10/40 window has been neglected in the past. But today work leaps forward as God gives clear evidence that He is truly preparing the earth for the soon return of Jesus.

GO’s work in Bangladesh provides an example of their outreach accomplishments. Although Bangladesh has long been a difficult place to evangelize, GO presently sponsors 16 gospel workers in that country. Several years ago 25 persons were baptized in a year. Now 500 individuals are baptized annually.

GO understands that many needs in mission lands go beyond the need for a worker to proclaim the gospel. In fact, quite often other needs must be addressed before God’s Word is ever mentioned.

GO’s project in Buddhist Sri Lanka shows the typical procedure used to establish a Christian presence in a difficult environment. Health lectures, kindergarten classes, and a religious study center all make a definite impact on a population that until recently has been quite resistant to Christianity. But reluctance gives way as felt needs are met in an atmosphere that becomes increasingly more accepting.

A Buddhist priest in charge of a large temple in Sri Lanka faithfully walks nearly four miles (six kilometers) each Sabbath morning to attend church with his Adventist friends. He challenges the teachers with his quick understanding of the Sabbath school lesson. At Kurengala both Muslim and Buddhist mothers beam with joy as they watch their preschoolers sing songs about Jesus the Saviour. People from several religious backgrounds come early and linger long after the health lectures are over, seeking to learn what Seventh-day Adventists believe. As a result, some have declared their faith in Christ and have been baptized.

Each GO-sponsored lay evangelist is recruited, hired, and supervised by a local Adventist mission. This puts the church firmly in control of all that happens. Gospel Outreach simply provides funds to make these endeavors possible. Today when mission budgets are tighter than ever, GO provides a welcome helping hand and brings encouragement and success to many situations that were previously languishing.

Mission presidents express enthusiasm about the help that Gospel Outreach provides. Besides stipends for lay evangelists, GO provides Bibles.

FIRSTFRUITS: Sixty-five candidates stood to receive baptism at Lomé, Togo, the firstfruits of the 10 GO-sponsored teams who are working there.

A HOLY HOUSE: The GO-sponsored chapel at Am-iyong, in Ifugao Province, Philippines, is a bright beacon of truth in a very pagan part of the country.
Church Leaders Tackle Tough Issues in Brazil

BY CARLOS MEDLEY, ADVENTIST REVIEW NEWS EDITOR

Should the role of the General Conference change in the next millennium? How can the church handle the influence of congregationalism? What can the church do to empower its pastors?

These are just some of the questions addressed by church leaders from around the world during a four-part discussion session at the Annual Council meetings in Foz do Iguacu, Brazil, September 29-October 6.

These discussions gave General Conference Executive Committee members a chance to voice their concerns about trends affecting the Adventist Church. Their input will guide General Conference leaders in future planning.

Dividing into three groups, the committee dialogued on the role of the General Conference in the twenty-first century, congregationalism, and empowering the local pastor.

To stimulate dialogue, Columbia Union president Harold Lee presented a paper on the role of the GC. The document raised many difficult questions. For example:

“Is it feasible in an age of emphasis on nationalism to seek to sustain a truly international church organization?”

Lee offered two possible models for administration: allowing the General Conference to grow at a moderate rate as the world church membership grows, or shifting resources closer to the front lines. In the latter model, the GC and unions would essentially be administrative units. Departments handling core church ministries, such as stewardship and family ministries, would be staffed at the division and local conference levels.

“Doing nothing is not a viable option,” Lee warned. “The GC leadership must face the problems courageously, seriously, and strenuously if they expect the coming generation to take global mission seriously.”

Several GC employees, however, took issue with Lee’s statistics. But one North American pastor told the group that the “issues presented by Lee [of centralization and cost] are very real, and we need to address them without getting sidetracked by statistics.”

South Pacific Division president Laurie Evans agreed: “Harold Lee reflected some real perceptions from the field. We must support a closer unity of the GC and the divisions.”

Dolores Slikkers, a lay member from Michigan, told
Angels on Talk Shows: The Marginalizing of Christianity

BY KERMIT NETTEBURG, ASSISTANT TO THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION PRESIDENT FOR COMMUNICATIONS

With a rare weekday at home, I turned on the tube. I hadn’t watched daytime television in years. I wondered what was on.

Sally was on, and her entire show was devoted to “An Angel Touched My Life.” She had several people tell about miracles that had occurred in their lives, especially instances in which a person helped them— and then disappeared.

Christianity on daytime television! I was overjoyed! After Sally I flipped the channel and caught some of Leeza. She had people who have been secretly videotaped in bedrooms and bathrooms, with the tapes being sold to pornographic websites.

Enough of that! I flipped another channel and picked up Jerry Springer. He had a 15-year-old boy who was running a prostitution service for his 14- and 16-year-old sisters. The mother knew about it, and thought it was O.K. The father was “surprised” to hear this news on the show.

My elation about the talk show featuring angels burst like a water balloon landing on rough cement. The show on angels had been just another freak sideshow, a strange carnival attraction fit for television talk. People who believe in angels, it seemed quite clear, were not being presented as real people showing real trust in a divine reality, but as just another group of weirdos.

Has it come to this: That real Christianity is fit content for the freak shows we call daytime talk television? I fear so. Christianity may be as irrelevant to public life as it was in early Rome.

That’s a sobering thought, until you remember which side in that conflict has endured.

the group that in the business world many corporations are thinking “lean” and trimming their staffs. She suggested that the time has come for the church to think about reducing its bureaucracy.

George Knight, professor of church history at the Adventist theological seminary at Andrews University, shared some keen insights on the topic of congregationalism and its effects on the church. Knight told the group that Adventism is one of only two universal churches, the other being the Roman Catholic Church.

Some church members believe that the church’s administrative structure has grown too large. No other denomination except the Roman Catholic Church has four levels of administrative structure (GC, divisions, unions, and local conferences and missions), he said.

Knight noted that congregationalism has played a major role in Adventist history, but that the phenomenon has more than one face. Traditionally congregationalism is identified where one local church breaks away or acts independently of the sisterhood of churches.

But Knight suggested that another more widespread and serious aspect of congregationalism occurs when “individuals silently ‘vote’ with their checkbooks as to how to dedicate their money and their time.”

Lee Huff, Euro-Asia Division president, responded:

News Commentary

“T here are three areas of congregational concern: theology, finances, and organization. It is time to look at structure, because it affects the money. It’s time to address the four levels of organizational structure.”

Graciela de Souze de Di Prinzio of Argentina noted that congregationalism is often spurred because church members don’t feel they have a meaningful voice in planning the work of the church.

“They desire deeper involvement in the church,” she said. “When money is needed, laypersons are called, but they are left out when the planning is done. [Church] members are receiving higher education, and they want to have their questions answered. They want leaders to listen and dialogue.”

GC vice president Robert Kloosterhuis wondered if current GC initiatives may have provoked the problem. He asked if administrators have unintentionally encouraged congregationalism by making appeals for project giving.

Rick Remmers, a pastor from Columbia, Maryland, addressed the role that spiritual leaders play in congregationalism: “We need to reach out to pastors who are developing tendencies toward congregationalism before...
Did You Know?

Majority of Americans Favor School Vouchers

For the first time since polling began on the issue in 1993, a majority of Americans—51 percent—say they favor full or partial government subsidies to pay tuition costs at any public, private, or church-related school.

Americans have been slowly warming to the concept of school vouchers. Last year Americans were evenly divided on the issue, with 49 percent favoring vouchers and 48 percent opposing them. This year just 45 percent said they oppose school vouchers—the converse of 1994, when 45 percent said they favor vouchers and 54 percent opposed them.

The poll was conducted in June by the Gallup Organization and Phi Delta Kappa, a professional education association. In the past school vouchers were generally supported by Republicans and opposed by Democrats. Civil libertarians and teachers’ unions have been especially hostile to the concept.

But the June poll found rank-and-file Democrats are even more emphatic in their support of vouchers than are Republicans—51 percent to 47 percent, the Washington Times reported.—Religion News Service.

For Your Good Health

Bad Bounces

Backyard trampolines injured almost 250,000 children under age 18 during a six-year period ending in 1995, with the number of annual injuries increasing 98 percent during that same time. Soft tissue injuries, fractures, dislocations, and lacerations were the most common injuries treated at hospital emergency rooms, and annually more than 1,400 children required hospitalization because of a trampoline-related injury.—Pediatrics.

Feeling Down, Then Out

Life getting you down? Watch out. Men diagnosed with depression are three times more likely to develop heart disease compared with controls of the same age. And while depression often leads to poorer health habits, researchers found that depression remained an independent risk factor for heart disease even after controlling for smoking, hypertension, and diabetes.—British Medical Journal.

—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.
Reclaiming the Sabbath
A new generation discusses “those endless hours.”

BY SARAH COLEMAN

The lingering smell of apple cobbler still hangs in our living room, a last reminder of our after-church foodfest.

A grown-up yawns discreetly. “It’s been a long, long week.”

“Yes,” someone echoes from the corner. “I never miss my Sabbath lay activities!”

A mid understanding chuckles, several women adjust their skirts and settle lower on the sofa. “I tell you, I can’t live without it!”

Ryan and I groan and stare at the screen door. “Mom, can we go outside and play?”

She nods. “But remember what day it is!”

“Aw, man!” Charley moans once we’re out of earshot.

“It’s Bible tag . . . again!”

“I hope the sun sets soon.” Ryan yanks on his shoelaces.

“I want to play a real game.” We jog toward the trees, a ragtag band of Sabbathkeeping kids, unaware of the trend we’re already setting.

As we get older, we straggle into church and dash out at noon; we clean our rooms before sundown on Friday and wait impatiently for Saturday night. We sneak to town during academy and sleep during college. By the time we reach the real world, Sabbath has lost its sparkle. Worn out with the stress of “legally” resting, many young adults set their own Sabbath boundaries instead.

“I’m really against somebody coming out and telling [me] how [I] need to spend the Sabbath,” Paddy McCoy, 22, states simply. “You have to search your soul to find out what’s good for you.” This independent approach to the question of the Sabbath leads truth-seeking young adults to find and uphold biblical Sabbath standards for themselves. Many young Adventists keep the Sabbath joyfully, staying in tune with church traditions.

Some young people, however, have rejected the example of the older generation and choose to focus on their own interests on the Sabbath.

“I think that a lot of our role models haven’t always modeled a good Sabbath for us,” says Renee Harms, 22. “I’ve seen too much sleeping and not enough service.” Deanna Darby, 18, notices the same trend. “Most of my friends . . . come home, have lunch, and go to sleep. I suppose it’s because they don’t feel like there is anything else to do.”

“Sabbath was just a habit for [many of our] parents,” says Jeff Scoggins, 28. “Young people just don’t go for habit.”

Key Ingredients

But Sabbath doesn’t have to be a boring habit. For so long we’ve religiously kept the same sundown-to-sundown traditions, never dreaming that God may want us to revitalize our rituals. What, after all, can we do on the Sabbath? What does God want us to experience during His holy hours? Seeking young adults have found some key ingredients that bring Sabbath to life for them.
Fellowship:

“Sabbath is a time to touch bases with people,” says Paddy McCoy. “Church is a thing that could happen in the living room.” For Paddy and many other young adults, quality time with friends and fellow believers fills the core of their Sabbath experience. Call it accountability. Call it bonding. Call it whatever you like, the results are still the same: true fellowship strengthens faith.

Service:

Adventist young adults are also exploring new and sometimes controversial ways to follow the example of Jesus in meeting human needs on the Sabbath.

Sam McKee, a second-year student at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, enjoys serving others in Benton Harbor, Michigan, on Sabbath afternoons. Benton Harbor ministries teams from Andrews University hold children’s programs, provide street ministry, and work with health screening. These efforts often require hard physical work, and have sometimes been criticized by fellow Adventists who believe they might better be done on another day of the week.

Other young adults choose to focus on less strenuous but equally valuable Sabbath service. Jesse Dovich, 21, plans on going door-to-door in Lincoln, Nebraska, offering to pray or simply talk with the people he meets. Deanna Darby prepares and distributes free food and clothing with her church in a Baltimore, Maryland, low-income neighborhood.

Motivated by Jesus’ nontraditional approach to relieving human suffering on the Sabbath, Adventist young adults are placing service ever higher on their Sabbath priority lists.

Rest:

Although opinions differ on the best way to enjoy Sabbath rest, young adults show a remarkable tolerance for others’ convictions. “The little details are much less important than the focus of what we do,” says Dan Wysong, 21. “We should be focusing on Christ.”

Paddy McCoy’s Walla Walla College professor Glen Greenwalt once suggested that his class analyze their most recent Sabbath and ask themselves if they could spend eternity in the same way. “If you could,” concludes McCoy, “then you’re doing it right.”

Worship:

Today’s young adults place a high value on authentic worship experiences. “I wouldn’t want to miss church all the time,” says Dan Wysong, “but the most valuable Sabbaths I have are the ones I spend in the mountains or by the ocean . . . being at one with God in His creation.” Attending church, camping, jogging, studying the Bible alone or with friends, praying, reading spiritual books, and other unique worship experiences are all valuable options.

“Sabbath is always different,” Jeff Scoggins explains. “The more scheduled [Sabbath] is, the more tense I get.” For most young adults, worship is an intensely personal response to the presence of Christ.

According to Martin Weber, however, Sabbath keepers should ensure that their worship is also intentional and conscious. “People of all ages need a worship experience on Sabbath,” says Weber, a pastor and the father of two children in their early 20s. Weber believes that worship sets a standard for the rest of the Sabbath hours. “If there was no worship on the Sabbath day,” Weber comments,
Thoughts From the Young

On church: “Hold more worship services in public places, such as parks, so other people can watch and join in. I want it to be out in the open that I fellowship.”—Paddy McCoy.

“I wouldn’t force people to go [to church] because no one can force you to be religious . . . but church is good for structure and to teach morals.”—Lisa Momb.

On Sabbath activities: “On Friday evening I love to make a top-10 list of the things that God has done for me or in me during the week. I love to hike up in the woods with my guitar and sing Him songs as the sun is setting. But the coolest Friday evenings are when we celebrate the Sabbath with someone who is keeping it for the first time. We have a party to let them know that the Sabbath is a celebration of life and its awesome Creator!”—Sam McKee.

“I want to design my Sabbaths so they focus on Jesus.”—Dan Wysong.

“We have spent too much time in our lives looking at what we do instead of why we do it.”—Jeff Scoggins.

“If the rules you’re following have nothing to do with your relationship with God, then you need to find a way to let your relationship grow. It all comes down to love.”—Jesse Dovich.

“Man . . . has a work to perform on this day. The necessities of life must be attended to, the sick must be cared for, the wants of the needy must be supplied. He will not be held guiltless who neglects to relieve suffering on the Sabbath. God’s holy rest day was made for man, and acts of mercy are in perfect harmony with its intent . . . Heaven’s work never ceases, and men should never rest from doing good.”—Ellen White, The Desire of Ages, p. 207.

When I Was a Kid . . .

Eleanor Friesen, a learning assistance teacher at Caribou Adventist Academy in British Columbia, Canada, shares her Sabbath memories and convictions.

“Sabbath was always special because the house was clean and food was prepared. Sundown worship was probably one of the most relevant parts [of the Sabbath] for me. I wasn’t necessarily excited because it was Sabbath, but because we got to spend time with our friends. Many times, especially as teenagers, we couldn’t wait until the sun went down so we could go and do something. The fun started after sundown.

“I think there’s a more relaxed attitude about [the Sabbath] now. I am a little disturbed because many people don’t have the Sabbath as a special day anymore. I think a lot of people are forgetting that it’s important to go to church on Sabbath. A celebration can be a holy time as well as being a fun time. Too many people take the joy out of the Sabbath. We forget that there is a blessing in keeping the Sabbath holy.”

“people might be tempted to sleep in and let the day drag out.” For some young adults a meaningful church service plays an important part in Sabbath celebration.

The Unifying Factor

Some focus on fellowship. Some stand up for service. Others simply enjoy the rest the Sabbath provides. Young adults represent a wide spectrum of views about the Sabbath that often conflicts with their elders’ convictions. But from Saturday morning snoozers to soup kitchen volunteers, their consensus is the same. “Having a relationship with God is what’s important,” says Lisa Momb, 21. This belief alone can unite young and old in a common Sabbath purpose.

“God created the Sabbath as a day for us to actively seek a relationship with Him,” Paddy McCoy observes. “I always stress that relationship.” Although Sabbath celebration styles vary across race, age, and geographic boundaries, our reason for keeping the Sabbath holy must remain steady.

“Love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom. 13:10, NIV). When a desire to love Christ better binds us together, our differences will become less prominent than before.

Sabbath offers us blessings, peace, fellowship, rest, and communion with God. How much more glory will we find when we focus completely on Christ during these sanctified hours? The Sabbath will be transformed into something precious and freeing when we realize the true plan Christ has for it. Like so many of his peers, Sam McKee has already caught a piece of this glory. “Unfortunately,” Sam says, “the sun goes down on Saturday just like every other day of the week. I always wish it could stay in the sky just a little longer.”

Sarah Coleman wrote this article during her summer internship for the Adventist Review. She currently attends Walla Walla College as a junior English major.
Christian singer, songwriter, and scholar Michael Card attends the Presbyterian-affiliated Christ Community church near Nashville, Tennessee. Several years ago Card became convicted of the seventh-day Sabbath. In this interview with Sam McKee, Card discusses Jesus, the Sabbath, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in general.

SAM: A record company executive once told you, “You sing about the cross too much.” What makes you so in awe of the life of Jesus?

MICHAEL: I keep seeing implications of the life of Jesus that I’ve never heard anybody talk about. There’s a depth to it. More books have been written about Jesus than anybody else, but you can’t get to the bottom of His life. I’m fascinated by this Person. I really believe if more Christians would fall in love with Him again and be fascinated with Him in that sort of almost romantic way, nonbelievers would be a lot more drawn to Him than they are.

What’s one of those deeper implications?

Everything that Jesus said or did, no matter how seemingly insignificant, was the perfect thing to have said or done. So what you have in the Gospels are a series of perfect encounters. Jesus becomes the pattern for encountering other people. The implications are huge. When Jesus talks to Nicodemus, this elderly theological statesman, how Jesus dealt with him was the perfect way to deal with a person like that—or the woman at the well, or whoever. Everything He said or did was perfect. It’s not just “He was a real good teacher. He was a real smart, real loving person.” He’s a perfect person who said the perfect things.

I’ve read that your family keeps the Sabbath from Friday evening to Saturday evening. How did you discover and start keeping the Sabbath?

It’s clearly a biblical teaching. We started out of this desire for simplicity and this appreciation for rest. But I think, really, the thing that pushed me over the edge was a Seventh-day Adventist brother who said, “God didn’t change any of the other commandments, so He hasn’t changed that one.” The rationale behind that argument, I thought, was pretty airtight.

I hope this isn’t seen as heresy or anything, but we combine the two, because in the church there is the tradition of the Lord’s Day, which is Sunday. We have the best of both. I think biblically we have Sabbath to rest. For most people, going to church on Sunday is not a rest day, especially if you have kids. So we try to honor the Sabbath and rest on Saturday. And then we have the Lord’s Day on Sunday. So I think that’s the best of both worlds.

How do you spend this time during the Sabbath?

We put up the wall. We don’t answer the phone. We don’t do all the stuff we do on all the other six days. We don’t go anywhere. We take naps. It’s quiet. We live in the middle of 100 acres of pretty wild forest, and that’s part of it.

Have any other musician friends picked this up?

Yeah, I think it’s a big part of Phil Keaggy’s life. I know Steve Green [keeps the Sabbath]. He lays low on Saturday and rests. I don’t know if Wes King does. I know that the desire of his heart is to live biblically, so if it’s not an important part of his life, it will be.

Is there any special message or advice you’d like to pass on to your Christian brothers and sisters in the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

I would encourage Adventists to communicate more of what Adventism is all about. Frankly, most of the world does not know. They don’t understand. I still hear people say, “Oh, a Adventist—are those like Mormons?” It makes your blood run cold.

There’s so much unique and so much good that Adventists have to offer the community of Christ at large, and I would just encourage them to be more communicative about that. It would be neat to hear what you guys are saying.

Sam McKee is editor of Giraffe News, an Adventist magazine for youth and young adult leaders, published by the Center for Youth Evangelism (Internet: cye@andrews.edu).
When Danger on Seventh Street came in the mail, I prepared for some light reading. I wasn’t aware at the time that Jerry D. Thomas is the author of a series of children’s books (The Shoe Box Kids and Great Stories for Kids 1). The volume cover showed two children tied to chairs and looking scared. My mind went back to Nancy Drew and the Hardy boys. Ready for nostalgia, I opened up the book, expecting a complete story. What I found were several stories, some of them more than one chapter in length, others complete in a few pages. In turning back to the cover, I saw, in small print under the title, “and other stories.” Disappointed, I still determined to read them.

Written in the tradition of Uncle Arthur (Arthur Maxwell, author of the Bedtime Stories series many of us grew up with), these children’s stories keep the attention as well as being character-building. Thomas provides stories about the results of bragging, tattling, lack of respect, and cheating, and how to deal with emergencies, guilt, death in the family, and troublesome people. The author avoids sensationalized miracle tales. These stories involve struggle, decisions, and everyday miracles—life as seen through the eyes of a child looking for adventure, mystery, and fun.

Set mostly in urban environments, these stories are well-written and illustrated. Other than the somewhat misleading cover, I enjoyed the book and plan to give it to a little friend. The series would make a special gift for a child in your life.
If Only Our Churches Could . . .

The church has been compared to a hospital. Recently I went to a hospital and learned something about my church.

Following a brutal racquetball game with Gary “Killer” Krause, my right knee swelled like a menacing puffer fish. Unable to run, I called Nebraska Orthopedic to make an appointment with Dr. Strasberger.* After evaluating some tests, he told me precisely what the problem was and how we could proceed. He took ample time, defined his terms, and patiently answered all my questions; in other words, he treated me with utmost respect. He could have said, “There’s a problem. It’s your knee. Let me fix it.” Instead he described a probable torn medial meniscus, how others have responded to arthroscopy, and what my recovery would likely entail.

I walked into Bryan General Hospital cradling two crutches under my left arm. The hospital insisted that I bring crutches. Someone knew I would be in worse shape for a while before I got better. Yolanda, my life companion, accompanied me. I wasn’t nervous, probably because this was my third surgery (the first was my mother’s C-section). I was, however, uncomfortable with some expectations, including their peculiar “dress code.”

After I had slithered into the thin blue dress with a scandalous slit, two nurses approached. One was obviously brand-new to this start-an-IV-on-a-real-human procedure; she fairly trembled with apprehension. Over the years I have donated gallons of blood, but I found myself looking away as the young nurse tentatively applied the tourniquet and, needle in hand, searched for a bulging vein.

That’s when the experienced nurse spoke up. I will always be grateful to her, for she kept a running commentary of encouraging advice, and even stepped forward to assist at one point. As nearly as I can remember, she spoke these words in calm, soothing tones: “There, that looks like an excellent place to start . . . That’s it . . . Good . . . No, try not to stick the needle all the way through the arm . . . Now pinch it with your thumb and slip it out . . . Here, let me try—this is kind of tricky.”

How I wished I could transplant her patience and tact into Adventist churches. She helped enough to ensure success (I lived) and to assure the other nurse of her value and trustworthiness. We must instill that assurance into our youth and other “inexperienced” people.

Following visits from a grinning Pastor Greg and two smirking colleagues bearing a sensitive, compassionate get-well card (“Snap out of it!”), I was wheeled on a gurney to a very large, very cold tiled room. I scooted onto the chilled operating table, suddenly wishing I had worn a faux fur coat with my dress, when a nurse covered me with a heated blanket. Dr. Strasberger (who looked less vegetarian now) explained in detail what was going to happen. A mazingly, every person who contacted me while I was in the hospital, from the receptionist on, explained what he or she was doing and what would happen next. I would not hesitate for a moment to go back to Bryan for treatment.

When I sat up to receive the huge spinal block needle in my vertebrae, I must have transmitted my concern. (I was, in fact, praying.) A nurse placed the fallen warm blanket across my far shoulder, held it there and asked, “Are you feeling a little anxious?”

I could see only her eyes. I smiled and admitted, “A little.” I cannot explain to you how I appreciated her question right then.

After the cutting portion of surgery, Dr. Strasberger led me on a guided tour of my knee. Someone pulled back the curtain across my chest so that I could watch the monitor with sedated interest while the good doctor intoned, “Here’s your ACL . . . here’s where the patellar chondromalacia was, and here’s . . . the frontal lobe of your brain, which appears remarkably empty . . .”

One prominent, throbbing, all-important lesson emerges for the body of Jesus. It’s a lesson I constantly teach. It’s one I’m continually learning afresh: communication is the key to life.

Communication is the key to your church’s life.

* He sounded vegetarian.

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Illustration by Terry Crews
Blind as a Bat

Have you ever seen a bat? They are shy creatures; many people never see them. You might have your best luck seeing bats on summer evenings when it takes such a long time to get really dark. When you first see them flying around, you might think they are birds. But the way bats fly around looks different from the way birds fly around. Bats zigzag all over, darting left and right.

Do you know why they swoop around so crazily? They are catching and eating insects. Bats may not be cuddly and cute, but you still have to appreciate them—if it weren’t for bats, there would be many more bugs. One bat, all by itself, can catch up to 1,000 insects in an hour!

How can they do that? Radar. Bats make high-pitched squeaking sounds as they fly. They listen for the echoes that bounce back. From the echoes they are able to tell an object’s shape, size, and distance. If the echo bounces back quickly, they know something is nearby—and they can tell if it is an insect to eat or a tree to dodge.

Because bats dart around so strangely, and because they can fly in the dark, some people think bats are blind. In fact, there is a saying that someone who has trouble seeing is “blind as a bat.” But bats aren’t blind. They can see very well.

Bats can see—they just act as though they can’t. Jesus said that some people have the opposite problem. They can’t “see”—they just act as though they can. He wasn’t talking about seeing with their eyes. He was talking about seeing with their hearts—understanding.

Mostly He was talking about some of the Jewish leaders. “They are blind leaders,” Jesus said. “And if a blind man leads another blind man, then both men will fall into a ditch” (Matthew 15:14, ICB).

These leaders complained that Jesus didn’t wash His hands according to their rules. They taught that the way to God was by following their rules. Jesus said no: “I am the way” (John 14:6, ICB).

Jesus will show us the way to God. He says, “I will lead the blind along a way they never knew. . . . I will make the darkness become light for them” (Isaiah 42:16, ICB).
One morning I arrived early for my train in Kearny, New Jersey, a little town where the train station is out in the open. My car faced the 2,000-square-foot park. As I waited with the windows rolled down, I watched a gray squirrel cross the road with a large green nut clenched in its mouth. As it stepped onto the grass, another squirrel fell in behind, as if it wanted what the first squirrel had. Indeed, the nut must have looked like a tasty treat to a squirrel.

I waited to see what the first squirrel would do with another in hot pursuit. To my surprise, it continued walking nonchalantly and headed up a nearby tree with a small white sign that said “Remove Dog Litter, $50.00 Fine.” Casually the first squirrel made its way around the tree trunk a couple times, the second squirrel following right behind. Then they retraced their steps and headed back over the sidewalk that crisscrossed the park. A gain the first squirrel climbed a tree, as did the second one. I continued to watch with amusement, thinking, The second squirrel must really be hungry to continue on like this. Not once did the first squirrel stop to chase off the second one. Patiently it walked from tree to tree, not seeming to mind having another squirrel tag along.

About that time the train bell went off and the gates went down. Each day I see pretty much the same people step onto the train, and we sit in pretty much the same seats. The ride is only 14 minutes long, and most entertain themselves with the morning paper while others doze off. This train stops in Hoboken, New Jersey, almost a Grand Central for New Jersey commuters. There I step off the train into a lava-like stream of New Jerseyans rushing to catch the ferry, buses, other trains, or the PATH train—a remarkably clean subway system that runs under the Hudson River into New York City. Stepping into the PATH line, I hope for a seat on the 13-minute ride into Manhattan’s 33rd Street station. The faces at this train stop are familiar as well. On many mornings I would see a certain young woman smile at me, and before long we were chatting nonchalantly as we squeezed into the door openings. It didn’t take long for her to open up and start talking about the things that mattered to her—and it wasn’t which business meeting took most of her day or which client had the most money to bring her company.

Interestingly, many New Yorkers are very health-conscious, and on any given morning you will see Central Park filled with those pursuing—as they would any serious job opportunity—a healthy body. One morning my new friend asked for a cookbook, which I lent her, not realizing it mentioned the Seventh-day Adventist lifestyle. Before long she was eagerly asking about my lifestyle and how it affected my life. We were not overtly discussing Adventist beliefs, but simply what it meant to be a Christian in the society I lived in.

Eventually she began asking more specific questions, such as “What’s a Seventh-day Adventist?” and “Do you believe in the Bible?” and “What about the second coming of Christ?” My answers were short, but detailed enough to interest her. Then one day she asked what I thought of going to church.

I smiled as I remembered that morning at the park when I watched one squirrel happily carrying something other squirrels would both appreciate and enjoy. It never tried to get the attention of the other squirrels, nor did it hoard what it had. In fact, the squirrel didn’t look odd or out of place; it was glad to be among its own.

One can easily be overwhelmed at the thought of reaching everyone in New York City. How do Christians reach millions of people who don’t seem to need anything but more time in their days?

Perhaps the answer lies with the squirrels of New Jersey: one life at a time.

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