

December 1999

ADVENTIST Review

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION EDITION

The background of the cover is a collage of three distinct images. The top-left image shows firefighters in action, with one wearing a jacket labeled 'BFD'. The bottom-left image shows a group of soldiers in full combat gear, including helmets and rifles, standing in a line. The right-side image shows a man in a suit and tie, looking towards the camera. The entire collage is set against a warm, orange-toned background that resembles a close-up of a human hand or a similar organic form.

The Church and Race Relations

North American Adventists
Convene Historic Summit

LETTERS

All We, Like Money, Have Gone Astray

I was delighted with the article by Kim Peckham entitled “All We, Like Money, Have Gone Astray” (special *Adventist Review* money issue, Sept. 30). This sinful world can get a bit heavy sometimes, and it’s nice to walk on the lighter side once in a while. Thanks.

—Bonnie Eichman
ROSEBURG, OREGON

Trust but Verify

The article in the *Review*’s special money issue (Sept. 30) entitled “Trust but Verify” makes a valid point about avoiding investments in “sin stocks” connected with tobacco, alcohol, and gambling. But being socially responsible in how we invest and spend our money can extend far beyond. One example: the Volkswagen was purportedly developed in Nazi Germany and financed and promoted by the Hitler reich. Because of the Nazi extermination of 6 million men, women, and children during the Holocaust, some people even today will neither purchase nor invest in this product. Such a position may seem extreme. But would we feel differently if we had lost a friend or relative to a Nazi death camp?

—Steve Riehle
SANTA MARIA, CALIFORNIA

Reaching for a Better Humanity

I was very blessed when I read the article by Jan Paulsen, “Reaching for a Better Humanity,” in the September NAD edition of the *Review*. But as I came to the end I felt something was missing. Paulsen says we must forgive, but he doesn’t tell us how.

I was in a very abusive marriage. I thought that most of the abuse was directed at me, but as the months and years after the divorce passed, I learned how my husband had abused my children in all ways possible. How do you forgive someone who has hurt your children?

Intellectually I knew I had to forgive him but emotionally I couldn’t. He hurt my children, and they live with the nightmare he put them through. I wanted to forgive, and constantly prayed for God’s help. For three years I struggled, until one day it hit me that I was always asking God to help me but I hadn’t taken hold of the help and strength that He had already given me. Once I took hold and accepted it, then, and only then, could I forgive.

Christians are very good at giving the intellectual side of a problem—what we ought to do—but we must never forget the practical side of how to gain victory over sin.

—Name Withheld

Reflections on a Personal Journey

I just arrived back from Romania. I picked up the *Adventist Review* (Sept. NAD Edition) and read “Reflections on a Personal Journey,” Jan Paulsen’s very

personal, touching, and emotional story about the loss of his brother and father.

It moved me so—that Paulsen would share that very personal spiritual journey. Thank you for being so very transparent. It was so refreshing walking in the cemetery with Paulsen as he reminisced about his feelings. I share that blessed hope with him.

Thank you again for being so human . . . and sharing it with the world!

—Mary Maxson
SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND

The Next 20 Years and Crisis Control

I am responding to the articles “The Next 20 Years” (William G. Johnsson) and “Crisis Control” (Rex D. Edwards) in the September NAD Edition. The best way to face whatever changes that might come along is to dwell on the “things” that will never change. I am getting just a little tired of the “gospel” of change. Yes, it seems to me that the church has accepted a variety of things as “gospel” in the name of change. The most maligned is the Adventist home in Adventism in which careers are now more important than fatherhood and motherhood, in line with the changes in the secular world. Children are becoming just short of a nuisance, as they are more and more, and ever at an earlier age, dumped at day-care centers.

I would like to suggest that yes, Christians must trust one another because they trust the Lord of the church, but let’s never forget that the Lord of the universe trusts us. When He gave charge to His church to

carry the gospel to all the world He certainly did so by trusting us decrepit humans, which gives us really the authority and privilege to trust one another.

—H. D. Schmidt
LOMA LINDA, CALIFORNIA

Power-filled Camporee (revisited)

Thanks for the great coverage of the Discover the Power Camporee, compiled by Celeste Ryan, in the September NAD Edition of the *Review*.



I wish to point out one area of concern, however. On page 16 there is a photo captioned “Let the drums roll,” which mentions a daily parade to the airfield for “airplane stunt shows.” As a professional aviator, I cringed at this phrase. “Stunt” implies something that is done without much thought, planning, or training. The exact opposite is true of aerobatic demonstrations, which is the proper term for the aerial displays the Pathfinders enjoyed.

The flying routines are carefully choreographed and rehearsed by pilots in peak physical and mental condition, until they become almost second nature. It could be said that pilots who demonstrate aerobatics embody most if not all the traits that Pathfinders hold in esteem—mental and physical fitness, avoidance of harmful substances, discipline, tenacity, teamwork, and the pursuit of excellence.

—Liam J. Lang,
airline transport pilot
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

Five Things You Can Do to Support Your Pastor

I am writing in response to the article “Five Things You Can Do to Support

Your Pastor,” by Randy Maxwell, in the October NAD *Review*. There seem to be a lot of articles on how kind we should be to pastors. I agree with that. However, I can’t seem to remember any articles that tell how members should deal with pastors that are not what they should be. It is a two-way street, and balance is essential. Where’s the balance?

—Luci
CONNECTICUT

Who Sinned?

The Sandra Doran: Dialogues column entitled “Who Sinned?” (October NAD issue), about how others make a person and family feel when dealing with a child of multiple disabilities, is important. I believe many of those who grew up with “fire and brimstone” preaching may have this attitude of “who sinned?” while those in the past 20-30 years will have a more “enlightened” view. I have lived in two Southern Union conferences in areas where a large percentage of Adventists live, and for the most part they have a positive and helpful attitude toward my 7-year-old son, who has multiple disabilities. I have found through my living experience of the past seven years that women’s ministries groups and publications are uplifting to the spiritual soul for a mother with a child with disabilities.

As for the “saints and sinners” of the church, you may be surprised that when God gives a “special child” He doesn’t choose someone in a spiritual low but someone who is climbing up the spiritual ladder. Remember, God is the one who can see into those hearts. And remember that prayer is a powerful tool—use it to lighten the life of the child/parent/family involved with the multiple disabilities, and you may find yourself enlightened also.

—Becky J. Webster
OOLTEWAH, TENNESSEE

ADVENTIST Review

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NEXT WEEK

Alive!

When the plane went down, he was left five miles from shore, swimming in shark-infested waters.

ADVENTIST Review

"Behold, I come quickly . . ."

Our mission is to uplift Jesus Christ through stories of His matchless love, news of His present workings, help for knowing Him better, and hope in His soon return.

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Full-Strength Joy

Christmas is no time to chide the faithful.” Whoever wrote those words addressed to preachers certainly understood a thing or two about both preachers and Christmas.

To begin with, the writer recognized that we preachers tend to be a chiding lot—always reminding the faithful of all the work that remains to be done and bemoaning a general lack of effort and industry. Some wag has suggested that there is no scene so restful but that a sharp-eyed pastor can find some task to do in it and a three-point outline for a sermon on the evils of laziness.

And second, whoever wrote that “Christmas is no time to chide the faithful” understood that Christmas, of all seasons of the year, is a time to celebrate and not to scold. There will be time enough—and cause enough—for scolding in the new year. Christmas is the annual permission that we give for the mystery and the wonder of the birth of our Saviour to touch our lives in new and vital ways.

I’m well aware that by writing these words I have probably complicated the lives of dozens of preachers across the land. Now they will feel awkward, maybe even chagrined, about delivering the sermon that almost every pastor reaches for in the weeks before Christmas. You know the one. It usually goes by the title “No Room in the Inn.”

And if I were going to give a summary of it, I’d add that it is largely one long exercise in finger-wagging from the pulpit for all the greed and worldliness and anxiety of daily living that have caused each of us to shun the Christ child during the past year. Those of us who’ve annually sat through (or delivered!) such well-intentioned scoldings secretly surmise that all that is being accomplished is the production of even more guilt—the gift that keeps on giving.

The landscape of Christmas, which was so bright and cheery when we entered church, is now overshadowed by one enormous rain cloud created by the preacher’s words. We duck our heads, restrain our songs, and soberly commit to “put Christ back in Christmas this year . . . once again.”

It seems, sometimes, as if we Adventists cannot take our

joys full strength, as if we cannot revel in the timeless story of God made manifest in flesh without the attendant homily calling for more volunteers at the soup kitchen. We fear the gospel exuberance that might make us forget our

duty, as though a time of listening to the good news is somehow time away from ministering to a needy world. We tarnish Christmas joy by rarely quieting our souls or our hands long enough to receive the holy Child into our lives.

But this is a gospel season, friends—an all-too-brief appointment with the truth of our belovedness: that God loves us in spite of ourselves and our sins; that, moved by love, He did not spare His only Son; that Jesus, filled with grace and truth, came to where we are and became what we are. This is the proper season for full-throated, chorused “Hallelujahs,” for quiet carols harmonized by candlelight, for letting joy seep into us through senses and

through celebration.

We won’t succeed in curbing the rampant commercialism of the holiday by simply urging that believers avoid the malls or give a generous percentage to the homeless shelter downtown and the orphanage in Gambia. Money given—even to a good cause—is no proof of love, nor does it show our comprehension of the gospel.

Only praise is proof of love, and giving then its natural expression. Until we praise, our Christmas currency is simply tax, a grudging acquiescence to the authority in the statehouse or the pulpit that may choose to motivate by fear or guilt.

Let’s hear it for a free, unfettered joy in Jesus as we near another Christmas. Let’s say more about deliverance than duty, redemption than responsibility in how we speak of Christmas to our children and in our churches. Let Adventist homes and congregations be the places to which beleaguered neighbors turn to see the light that still shines in the darkness.



Stewards of God

MEADE C. VAN PUTTEN

Every human being on Planet Earth is a steward of God. When God created Adam and Eve, He gave them the responsibility of taking care of His earthly creation. He put them in charge under Him, for “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof” (Ps. 24:1). They had access to everything that He had created, except for one thing—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

As a continual reminder that humans don’t hold ownership of the earth, God placed one restriction on Adam and Eve. He made the tree of the knowledge of good and evil off-limits. He forbade them to eat from it or even to touch it on penalty of death (Gen. 2:16, 17). When our first parents violated this command, sin, misery, suffering, and death entered our world. But God had a plan for rescuing humans from the pit of sin into which they had fallen.

In *The Desire of Ages* Ellen G. White tells us that God has a thousand ways of working of which we know nothing (p. 330). God could have sent angels from heaven to carry His message of love and grace to the world. But instead He chose us to do this work. He chose men and women to tell the world about His love and mercy, and He did this for our benefit.

Even today God could send heavenly showers of financial support just as He supplied manna in the wilderness for the children of Israel in days of old. But instead He places means in the hands of His children and asks them to use a portion of it to support His work on earth. And it is for our benefit.

Why does God do it this way? He knows that selfishness is the root cause of sin in the universe. God also knows that selfishness resides in human nature. To help us overcome inborn selfishness, God chose to enlist our support in taking His good news to the world. He invites us to share in this work by supporting it with a portion of the means that He has entrusted to our care. Through this invitation He purposes to shape our characters for a heavenly society in which selfishness will forever remain unknown.

Ellen G. White, God’s messenger to the remnant people,

writes that the Lord gave us the law of tithes and offerings to test us on several points:

1. *Our loyalty and allegiance to Him as our Creator, Provider, Life-giver, and Redeemer.* The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was to Adam and Eve what the law of tithes and offerings is to God’s people today.¹ Loyalty and allegiance always involves obedience.
2. *Our love for God and His cause is shown by our obedience.*² Jesus said: “If ye love me, keep my commandments”; and “If a man love me, he will keep my words” (John 14:15, 23).
3. *Our honesty.* God asks, “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings” (Mal. 3:8).

4. *Our faith and trust in God.*³ God says, “Test me in this” (NIV); “Prove me” (KJV) and see that I can be trusted to keep My word and My promise to you to “pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it” (verse 10, NIV).

5. *Our gratitude.* The psalmist asks the question “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?” He answers, “I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people” (Ps. 116:12, 14).

This life prepares us for eternity. If God cannot trust us to use wisely our earthly resources and the temporal possessions He has given us now, how can He entrust us with eternal riches in the world to come? Let us think on these things.

¹ *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 65.

² *Education*, p. 23; *My Life Today*, p. 323; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 48, 49.

³ *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 1, p. 1106; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 49.

*Good stewardship
prepares us for
eternity.*

Meade C. Van Putten is a retired associate treasurer of the North American Division.



GIVE & TAKE

CAMP MEETING MOMENTS

We asked for short articles and photos regarding camp meeting moments in the July 15 *Adventist Review* (Cutting Edge Edition). Here are some of these in this issue and look for more to be published in issues to follow for the next several months. You never know just when a camp meeting moment will “pop up!”

ADVENTIST LIFE

One year at Michigan camp meeting they asked for a good offering to help with expenses. The next day the call was made for another offering for the same thing. The man calling for the offering said: “Yesterday we got a lot of buffalos; today we need some green stuff to feed them.”—*Dorothy Kidder, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

In this day of RV camping and modern conveniences this little story tells what camp meeting was like about 90 years ago. Winnie is my 96-year-old friend who likes to tell stories, and one night she was talking about going to camp meeting when she was a little girl. The time she remembered best was when her mother took the family cow along so Winnie and her sisters could have milk every day. The cow was staked out next to their tent. Their campsite became the center of attention for all the children.—*Larry Lambeth, Baker City, Oregon.*



ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS

REMEMBER WHEN?

SPOKANE, WASHINGTON, 1915: I was 11 years old, and it was an experience I will never forget. We were an isolated Adventist family, and I had never known another Adventist near us that I can remember, so to me camp meeting was wonderful with the children’s meetings and other children to play with. In one photo I am the girl, with another person walking beside me, pushing a baby carriage. In the partial view of the camp photograph, one of the tents with a parked car beside it was ours.—*Bertha Colson, Bloomington, Indiana.*

Some memories of camp meeting go back to our time in Michigan. My baby was overdue, and the doctor wanted to attend camp meeting. He and his family went with the understanding that my husband was to call the campground when we needed him. Sure enough, the first weekend of camp meeting my husband had to call, and the doctor hurried home, a trip of one and a half hours. The doctor made it in time, delivering my daughter two hours later. Then the next year my family got to attend the same camp meeting, and our daughter celebrated her first birthday in a high chair set in front of our canvas tent.—*Valerie Hamel Morikone, West Virginia.*



Adventists Confront Racial Issues

Tension and suspicion between national and ethnic groups has long been a staple in North America's history, affecting the way we live, work, and worship. Throughout its history the Seventh-day Adventist Church has had to grapple with the way members of our prophetic movement—who represent every nation, kindred, tongue, and people—relate to one another.

At the end of October a summit on race relations was held at the General Conference, sponsored by the North American Division. For three and a half days summit participants, mostly members of the North American Division executive committee, listened to plenary presentations and participated in breakout groups that discussed a host of subjects designed to foster understanding and equality, and celebrate racial, ethnic, and gender diversity within the church.

The following pages contain excerpts from the plenary speakers, analysis of the summit, personal reflections from summit participants, and a record of the recommendations voted at the close of the summit.—Editors.

Legacy

BY WILLIAM G. JOHANSSON, editor, *Adventist Review*

I grew up racist.

Of course, I didn't know it. If you had told me I was racist, I would have thought you were out of your mind. I might have introduced you to my Ethiopian friend Tshome Wagaw, whom I met at Avondale College.

Tshome was very dark-skinned, and we were buddies. When school was out for the summer, Tshome came home with me, ate at our table, slept under our roof. He and I sold books together—except that he way outsold me and broke all records for the state.

Me, a racist? Crazy idea.

But I was. I wasn't prejudiced against people with a dark skin, a yellow skin, or any color of skin. But toward the native peoples of my homeland Australia, the Aborigines, I was racist. I thought of them as scarcely above beast level, and certainly inferior to White Australians.

Racism is like that—selective. Often racism is directed toward a group right alongside us. It sees differences as a threat and tries to handle them by building a wall.

Another thing about growing up racist: the reason I wasn't aware of it was that my attitudes were the same as those of my brothers and sisters and the kids I played with at school and on the street.

We were all racist, but I don't think we were born that way. Put a group of little children together—Red and Yellow, Black and White—and they're color-blind. They cope with language differences and find ways to cross communication boundaries easily and smoothly.

But the corruption begins early. It comes from outside. From parents and siblings, then from other kids and then adults, they learn to pinpoint some people as different, people to be avoided or made fun of or despised, people who gradually lose their humanity and become caricatures, stereotypes.

One of the great goals of life is to figure out who we are, to face ourselves and live with ourselves stripped of masks and pretense. That includes exploring the springs of childhood that shaped the man or woman. Including the springs of racism.

For me, one of the major agents of self-discovery came from leaving Australia to live and work in India. Far from family and friends, I learned to appreciate an alien culture. In seeing the value of people of another skin I came to understand myself better—who I was and where I came from.

I remember sitting one day in an audience of maybe 20,000 people. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was addressing a political rally. He was speaking in Hindi but suddenly broke off and, looking straight at the two White faces in the crowd—mine and a friend's—he switched to English. Then he went back to Hindi.

Gradually, gradually the light dawned. I saw what I was, what I had come from. And I despised it.

America—meaning the United States of America in particular—is racist. This country is now my country, and it is blessed as no other on God’s good earth. But I weep at its history marked by the slaveowner’s lash and the exploitation of a people who happened to spring from a particular stock.

I grieve over the manner in which the “classless” society still divides and separates person from person. Immigrants step off the plane or boat with stardust in their eyes, but everywhere in the land of the free and the home of the brave they get this message: Keep to your own. Don’t try to move out of your class. Don’t be uppity.

The gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to freedom and oneness. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28, NIV), writes Paul. A shining vision, which we do much better at preaching than living.

Somehow we figure that the gospel will take care of the poisons we absorb as kids. Just accept Jesus and learn the fundamental beliefs, and everything will be fine.

But it isn’t. The gospel has to be brought to bear specifically on poisons such as racism and social injustice. We need to be made aware of longstanding attitudes that oppose the gospel, that Christ went to the cross to put to death. I’m talking about Christian education in the most basic sense: confronting our poisons and prejudices, leading to confes-

sion, repentance, and new being.

I believe with all my heart that God has a shining vision for Seventh-day Adventists. Of all the hundreds of denominations out there, we are the most diverse, the most international. The call of Revelation 14:6, 7 impels us—the everlasting gospel to every nation, tribe, language, and people—and finds ever greater fulfillment among us.

Here, I believe—here, in this my people—God wants to demonstrate to human beings and to angels the power of the risen Christ to do what no Great Society program of Lyndon B. Johnson’s or civil rights legislation or affirmative action (and all these had a role) can accomplish. God wants to show the watching universe that a people, *one people*, can come together in love and mutual respect and appreciation to meet the returning Lord. One body, one new being, infinitely diverse but intricately and indissolubly one—that is the dream.

We’ve come a long way, my friend, but we’ve yet a ways to go. So long as ethnic jokes get a laugh among us, so long as we can’t get past color or accent, so long as Jews have a hard time finding acceptance in our congregations, we Adventists had best keep our boasting mouths shut tight and open them only to beg the Lord for forgiveness.

How long, O Lord? How long before we let You strip the masks away? How long before we yield to the Spirit of love and grace? How long until we love each other as You love us?

Race Summit Goals and Objectives

The North American Division comprises a kaleidoscope of races and ethnicities, resulting in the need to reach a new level of unity in diversity in Christ—a new paradigm or way of thinking, valuing, and perceiving one another. The purpose of the Summit on Race Relations was to bring leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America together, not in confrontation but in trust, to tackle our most critical issues; to listen carefully and respectfully to one another and to the whole faith community; to search for solutions, focusing on what is right rather than on who is right; and to hold ourselves and the Church accountable in areas in which change is needed.

Goals

1. To identify racial barriers within the church that contribute to distrust and disunity.
2. To identify Christian methods of resolving racial conflict and preventing cultural tension through education, love, and diplomacy.
3. To identify specific manifestations of racism in the church (personally, culturally, and institutionally).
4. To recommend specific strategies for dismantling racism through consciousness raising, education, advocacy, or activism.
5. To recommend a replicable methodology for social change with specific, manageable, and realistic goals that will encourage a new level of unity within the North American Division.
6. To recommend ongoing strategies for improving race relations within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Desired Outcomes

1. To identify initiatives that the North American Division needs to develop and promote to better model the ministry of Christ and achieve racial harmony in the church in the new millennium.
2. To identify the impediments that need to be overcome in energizing congregational and individual action.
3. To recommend strategies for motivating and translating the initiatives to North American Division conferences, institutions, and other entities.
4. To recommend strategies for translating the initiatives to the congregational level.

“Floppy Disk” Event or Revolutionary Summit?

BY RICHARD OSBORN, vice president for education,
North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists

Two years ago I received an invitation from the White House to join in a dialogue about race relations with 100 religious leaders. For more than two hours we conversed at our tables with Cabinet officers and engaged in dialogue with President Clinton. He asked how religious communities could become part of his initiative to help improve race relations in the country.

Around 6:00 the next morning the phone startled me out of my slumber. I heard a familiar bass voice at the other end. Wintley Phipps, one of four Adventists invited to the White House (along with Barry Black, José Rojas, and me) told me that he had been up most of the night, unable to sleep. He wondered if such diverse religious communities could really help solve the problem of race relations in the nation. Similar thoughts had crossed my mind. In thinking about the fragile nature of race relations in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, could we offer ourselves as an example of unity? And if not, what other institutions in society had the moral authority to work on this problem?

One of the reasons for holding the unprecedented four-day North American Division Race Relations Summit in October 1999 was to begin a process for helping Seventh-day Adventists address in our own religious community what has become a major problem in the broader society.

When the idea of a summit was going through the planning process, I raised my concerns with my fellow division officers. Would we have enough time, and small enough groups, to develop a trust relationship that would enable members of different races to be truly vulnerable with each other? Talking about such topics, even with close friends, can sometimes be uncomfortable.

Did the summit accomplish its purpose of developing a new paradigm for finding unity in diversity in Jesus Christ through open conversation and trust building? Could initiatives and strategies developed at the summit be used in unions, conferences, and local congregations to develop unity? Or as renowned speaker Samuel Betances asked us: “Will this just be a ‘floppy disk’ event: easily put in and just as quickly taken out?”

As a motivating meeting to make racial conciliation a high priority back home for the more than 300 leaders who attended, the summit far exceeded my expectations; it had the highest sustained quality and inspiration of plenary speakers of any I’ve attended in my professional life. In general discussions and in 21 workshops, ample opportunity existed to hear from the authorities in the field and to begin a discussion about the issues.

While large meetings are often known for public posturing by attendees, the small breakout groups organized by Roy Naden became one of the most valuable features of the summit. Not enough time existed to probe all of the issues extensively, but a good beginning took place that can be useful as a model in the future.

The group I attended included an extensive discussion about regional (Black) conferences. Regional conferences were organized in the 1940s in all unions except those on the West Coast. Their membership and financial growth have been remarkable. However, advance surveys of attendees revealed that their highest priority was in having a church not seen as divided along racial lines.

My group included a lengthy discussion by Black lay and church leaders who had experienced racism in the appointment of church leaders and funding, issues that had led in

part to separate conferences. One African-American maintained that having separate conferences was a “nonnegotiable.” A White leader who attends a multiethnic church wondered if a better way might exist. Some Black leaders suggested that integration never worked and that we should focus on desegregation instead. I sensed that this issue would continue to generate discussion and division that could override much of the dialogue.

After our meeting two African-Americans from a younger generation, who felt everything should be “on the table,” continued the conversation with me. Members of all races wondered whether a structure adopted in 1901 needed to be modified for the church to be effective in the twenty-first century. In such a restructuring, we could contemplate how the church could avoid past problems of racism by truly representing the unity of Christ in church structure, leadership, and financing. With some justification, skepticism of such a possibility has prevailed among many leaders, but the conversation needs to continue.

The summit’s most inspiring moment came when the three division executive officers spoke, representing the multiethnic nature of our division. Treasurer Juan Prestol, a native of the Dominican Republic, received a standing ovation when he concluded, “I choose to be part of the solution.” Secretary Harold Baptiste, born in Tobago, cautioned that Christianity was never intended to make us

comfortable, and urged us to “agitate, agitate, agitate until we do the will of God.” President Alfred McClure’s response took a surprising turn when he passionately apologized for the way the church has treated its minorities through the years. He said with sincere and deep conviction, “I’m sorry,” a feeling shared by many in the audience and emotionally received by those who had personally experienced the pain of racism (see p. 12).

The summit voted recommendations to the North American Division year-end meeting that have the potential for making the effects of this summit long-lasting and revolutionary. Meetings at local levels will not be able to afford the wide array of inspiring speakers; however, if planned properly, the more intensive personal discussions that need to occur may result in changes on a personal and corporate level. A well-structured Web page designed for future implementation will help give further initiative and can be found at www.nadadventist.org/RaceSummit.

Is this just talk, or will the effort continue? Rosa Banks, summit organizer and our division’s associate secretary and director of human relations, has been indefatigable in prodding the church to be more inclusive while recognizing the strengths that each racial group brings to our church. I am confident that she will continue to lead the charge, along with all who attended the summit, in reflecting the ministry of Christ as we attempt to model race relations to the world.

Recommendation From the Delegates

WHEREAS the North American Division has recognized the need for a frank and open discussion on race relations within the church at every level, and has responded by convening the Race Relations Summit in October 1999, and

WHEREAS the powerful presentations and discussions have demonstrated the necessity of developing a broad strategic plan of desegregation and harmony based on our Lord’s prayer for “oneness” in His body, it is

RECOMMENDED that the North American Division appoint a committee, in which all members will meet on an equal footing to:

- *plan a second Race Relations Summit* in the year 2001,
- *create a vision for the future* of our church based on values so its public and internal image will be one of integration and racial harmony,
- *create a strategic plan* with measurable objectives and identify persons to achieve that vision,
- *build on the moral imperative of Jesus* for unity that will lead to a true diversity that incorporates culture, race, gender, and disability,
- *create a strategic plan for the church* to achieve that vision, in
 - a. the ecclesiastical structure, with measurable objectives for diversity, that will include seeking potential leaders and mentoring them, and
 - b. congregations, to develop approaches to increase sensitivity to each other’s history, personal experience, dreams for the future, and the utilization of their spiritual gifts, and the intentional cooperation and exchange of the members of diverse congregations, and
 - c. education addressing the five voted key issues, utilizing all the media of the church, reaching all levels of the church and the education system, K-16, presenting practical pathways to inclusivity,so the Holy Spirit may have full say in the community of faith, preparing us on earth for the fellowship of heaven, where all forms of diversity will be affirmed and celebrated forever.

An Expression of Sorrow and Apology

BY ALFRED C. MCCLURE

Speaking from his heart as the Race Relations Summit was drawing to a close Friday afternoon, October 29, North American Division president A. C. McClure addressed the gathering. Following is a condensation of his remarks.—Editors.

I want to talk with you for a moment or two as your president. Then, I want to share some words with you as a pastor. And finally, I want to speak as a friend, as a person.

First, as your president: We're not perfect, but the [NAD] leadership team has tried with some success to become a truly diverse staff. We have excellent leadership in various cultural groups. But I want to also say that we need it equally at every level of our structure.

I have something else to say to you as your president, and I want to speak specifically to my African-American brothers and sisters with whom I and all my Anglo colleagues have assumed a special relationship because of that abominable scourge of slavery. I want to say to you, I apologize. I'm sorry. [Prolonged applause.]

I'm sorry for the way you've been treated by our church, almost from the time of its birth. For example, here in Washington, as was recounted yesterday, where we had the unique opportunity to exercise leadership in race relations, to take a lead in desegregation, we ran away from it.* I don't know all the circumstances. But I want to say on behalf of your church, I'm sorry. I don't know if any other president has said that publicly—it doesn't matter. But I do want to say it today.

Now, I've done my best to launch this conversation, and I pledge to do all that I can to see that we do not lose the momentum of this event. I want to see the ship sail so far out to sea it cannot reverse course. [Applause.]

As a pastor my heart is with the [local] congregation—that is the true body and soul of the church. When it's all said and done, all that is of great importance happens in the

local congregation. Thus, as a pastor I want to say that I'm going to seek in every way possible to press forward the agenda. And through my prayers, preaching, and whatever other influence I may have, I, along with you, want truly to promote harmony and understanding in every congregation in North America.

Now, in order to do that, I'm going to commission all of our staff here in the NAD office to make race relations a top priority. I'm going to ask them to develop a curriculum of understanding and make it available to all congregations in the NAD. [Applause.]

Finally, I want to offer a few words just as a person—stripped of title, role, position. Just as your brother, your friend, Al McClure. I've been moved emotionally, as well as intellectually stimulated, by the conversation of these few days. And I've been impressed that once again we're changing our church's racial environment.

But I'm persuaded that change cannot be a mandate, because it takes people to will the change. It cannot happen by mission statement, for only people can transform print into life. And it cannot happen by a strategy, for the most beautiful and comprehensive document voted by the most enthusiastic committee has to be implemented by people.

Change needs me in my personal life to show love, honesty, understanding, empathy, and acceptance in every interpersonal contact I have every day. The change will happen through me as a person, and through you, and you, and you.

Mine, I know, is a very small light. But by God's grace, this little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine as we collectively strive for unity and harmony in anticipation of the Lord's return.

*McClure was referring to an incident in 1943 when an Adventist woman died after being turned away from an Adventist hospital in Takoma Park, Maryland, because of the color of her skin.

Excerpts

Diversity, in order to work, must involve people of various backgrounds exercising leadership at every level of the organization. It is the challenge of ensuring participation, inclusiveness, and collaboration of all of God's children in the pursuit of the common goal of getting the job done. . . . It is a shame that the most segregated hour in the United States is the worship hour.—**SAMUEL BETANCES**, keynote speaker

If you cannot encounter God in the neighbor you can see, please don't tell me you have a relationship with a God you can't see. That's not my theology, that's Jesus'. The encounter we have with God always involves an encounter with the neighbor. You cannot reject someone of another race without simultaneously rejecting Jesus. If Jesus is "sacramentally" present in that other person, then as you reject that other person, you are literally rejecting Christ Himself.

—**TONY CAMPOLO**, plenary speaker

Can any of us be bold enough to say, "I am willing to be resocialized by mandates of the [biblical] text"? That's what's called for here: a complete resocialization, by brothers and sisters.

—**CAIN HOPE FELDER**, plenary speaker

What we must do with cultural biases is that we must learn to transcend them for the greater good.

—**EDWIN J. NICHOLS**, plenary speaker

All people are able, valuable, and responsible; and should be treated accordingly.—**BETTY LENTZ SIEGEL**, plenary speaker

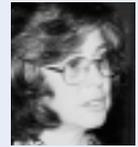
At the core of the Adventist identity lies an all-encompassing change of loyalty: from a given culture or race to the God of all cultures and races.

—**WALTER B. T. DOUGLAS**, plenary speaker

Reactions From Summit Participants

I didn't grow up a Seventh-day Adventist, so I don't have the history of how the church has developed. This has been a broadening experience. We are too segmented in our programming and in our individual churches. We're not doing well in integrating. This should be thought of as the beginning of a process.

—**Lynn Nicolay**, LAY MEMBER, BOULDER, COLORADO



I'm impressed. We've addressed some sensitive things in our past as a church. We need to focus on the future. There are many diverse groups in our church, not just Blacks and Whites. There are barriers to integration beyond Blacks and Whites, and they have to be overcome.

—**Manuel Cruz**, PASTOR, EL PASO, TEXAS



I'm excited that we're dialoguing. There's an increasing comfort level because of that. We have a great opportunity to be an excellent example to the world. We're setting a new direction for the church. We're talking cultural and sexual differences as well as greater sensitivity to other races.

—**Bruce Wells**, COLLEGE ADMINISTRATOR, SOUTH LANCASTER, MASSACHUSETTS



This has been an effective dialogue of seeing a problem and seeking answers. Race is a big problem in the church. It divides us. We can't be soul winners if we let our differences separate us. Real barriers will be broken by the younger generation. This is a good first effort, but out of 300 participants, only four are young people.

—**Juleun Johnson**, COLLEGE STUDENT, HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA



A lot of thought went into this summit. There's been a lot of honesty and forthrightness. Some issues haven't been addressed. Our breakout group said, "We're not going to talk Black and White, we're going to talk multiculturalism." We have to respect each other's individuality. We bring richness [to the church] as individuals.

—**Finnie John**, HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGER, SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND



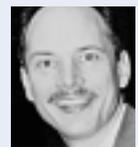
The summit has been very good. Although I have to say that Hawaii doesn't have a lot of these problems. We're already a diverse society. But apparently there are a lot of hurting people here. It's been very open. Everyone was permitted to express themselves.

—**Naomi Yamashiro**, LAY MEMBER, KAILUA, HAWAII



It's encouraging to see open dialogue. It's easy to recognize some of the differences and issues; it's much harder to come up with practical solutions. To put these things into practice we need a miracle. We have to do more than come up with a policy. We want practical strategies. Maybe then we can see direct actions, rather than just more committees and policies.

—**James Berglund**, PASTOR, OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON



OUT OF HIS

He didn't look the part of a professional basketball player—until . . .

BY KARL HAFFNER

HE LOOKED LIKE A BALLERINA PLAYING in the Super Bowl. In contrast to the other giants, he was short, slow, and White.

"Look at that guy wearing number one.

What's he doing in the NBA?" I asked.

"I was just watching him too," my buddy Mark replied.

In our quest to visit every arena in the National Basketball Association, never had we seen an athlete who looked more displaced. He appeared as athletic as Rush Limbaugh. But he had the heart of Forrest Gump.

"Probably a star in a no-name college, but never here in the big leagues," Mark said.

"Yeah," I stared as he rifled brick after brick toward the rim. "Look! The ball boys throw four warm-up balls to Hakeem for every one they throw to Blondie."

"I bet you can count his total minutes played this season on no hands."

Showtime

Without warning, the arena lights dimmed as the athletes scurried off the court. "And now, ladies and gentlemen," the announcer blared, "introducing the starting lineup for the world champion Houuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuston Rockets!"

The deafening beat of Queen blasted, "We will . . . we will . . . rock you!" The cheerleaders danced as though they had overdosed on caffeine. Fireworks exploded. Fans acted as though the president had canceled all taxes. The starters galloped through a tunnel of metallic-red pom-poms. "Let the showdown at The Summit begin!"

Blondie plopped himself on the end seat with the other reserves. He appeared as comfortable with his role as a slug in a puddle. He cheered the dunks. And whined the miscalls. And high-fived his winded teammates. But he never broke a sweat.

The game unfolded as expected. The Rockets made the Minnesota Timberwolves look like a pickup team at church.

Fans were more interested in the departure of Dusty Hill (lead singer and bass guitarist for the rock group ZZ Top) than in the blowout. Hill signed autographs and posed with

pushy fans as he moseyed from center court toward the exit. All eyes seemed riveted on his two-foot-long beard; that is, until Blondie stepped on the court.

Blondiemania

With three minutes and 11 seconds remaining in the game, the announcer said, "Now playing for the Houston Rockets, number 1, Scott Brooks."

Somehow that announcement breathed new excitement into the 34-point massacre. Apparently Mark and I were not the only fans who noticed the underdog.

"That guy never plays," quipped the season ticket holder next to Mark. "When he touches the ball you *know* the game is over."

Although the game was over, the excitement wasn't. The crowd erupted in cheers whenever Brooks dribbled the ball. "Shoot, shoot, shoot . . ." a choir of fans chanted.

As if to fulfill his destiny, Brooks fired a shot—an air ball that didn't get much closer to the rim than the scorekeepers. "Oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo," the audience collectively sighed. Undaunted by his failure, the chanting continued. "Shoot, Scottie, shoot! Shoot, Scottie, shoot!"

Again Brooks launched a prayer toward the net. It clanged off the front of the rim like a shot duck.

But the crowd persisted. "Scott-eeeeee! Scott-eeeeee! Scott-eeeeee!"

With 13 seconds remaining, Scott Brooks got one more chance—a 15-foot jump shot from the side. The ball sailed toward the hoop and kissed nothing but the bottom of the net. It was like Rush Limbaugh becoming Magic Johnson for one second.

The audience erupted. You'd have thought the Beatles had reunited. "Scott-eeeeee! Scott-eeeeee! Scott-eeeeee!" Playing to a standing ovation, Scott Brooks danced at center court—his arms flung heavenward like Rocky after a knock-out punch.

Give It a Shot

It was a boring game with a brilliant ending; brilliant because the underdog barked. The no-name made a name.

The sap scored.

And we all felt as though we lent a finger to that final swish. We helped write that story for Blondie to tell his grandkids someday. We supported, and he sparkled.

Which makes me ponder: Why not encourage more often? Why not invest more of myself in bringing out the best in my wife? Why not applaud my kid's attempt regardless of the achievement? Why not cheer the person, irrespective of the performance?

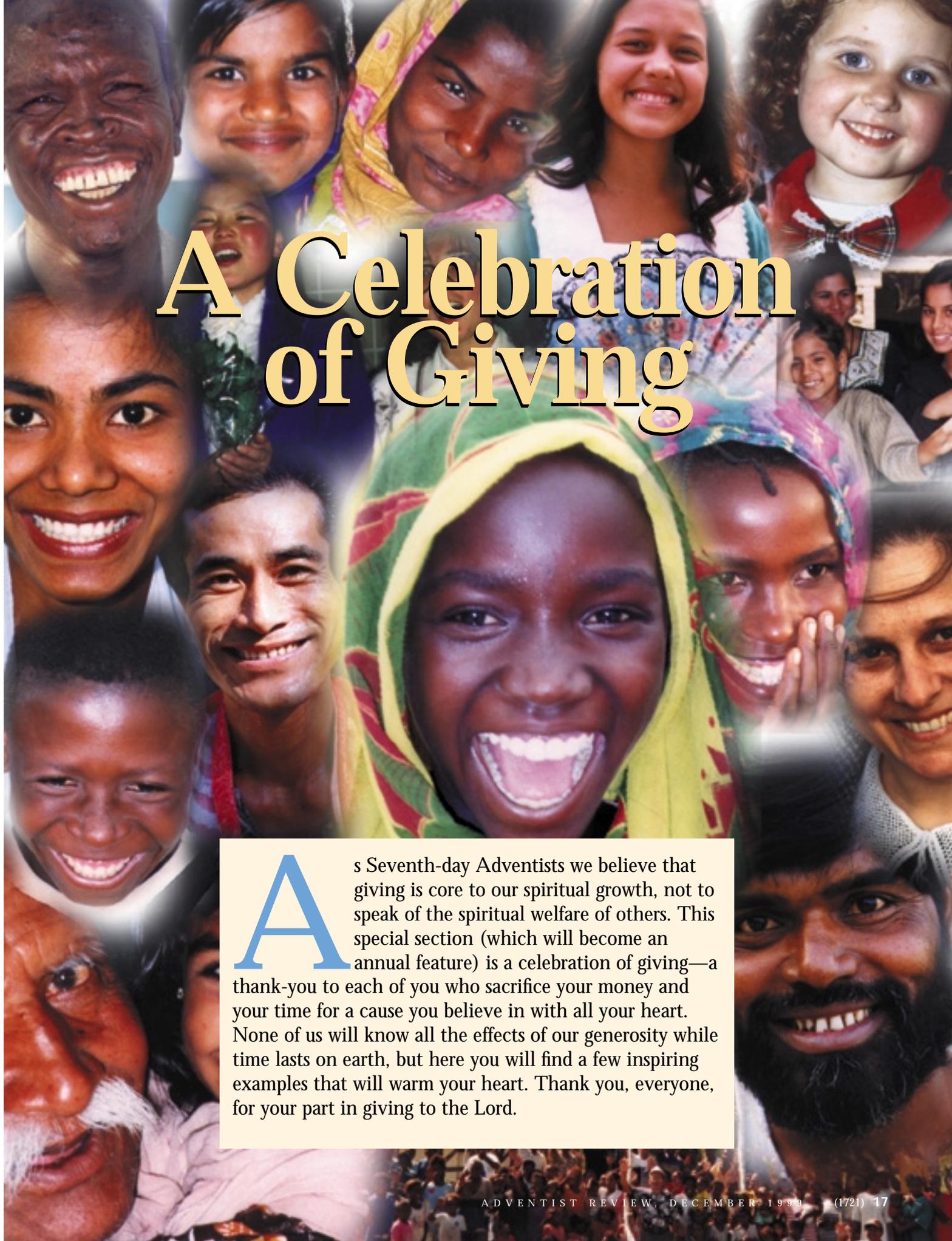
Why not? Can't imagine a good reason.

So give it a shot today. High-five your coworker's promotion. Support your husband's dream to earn a new degree. Be your kid's biggest cheerleader. Gamble a compliment or two.

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thess. 5:11, NIV). It makes the game more fun—for everybody.

Karl Haffner is senior pastor of the Walla Walla College church in College Place, Washington.





A Celebration of Giving

As Seventh-day Adventists we believe that giving is core to our spiritual growth, not to speak of the spiritual welfare of others. This special section (which will become an annual feature) is a celebration of giving—a thank-you to each of you who sacrifice your money and your time for a cause you believe in with all your heart. None of us will know all the effects of our generosity while time lasts on earth, but here you will find a few inspiring examples that will warm your heart. Thank you, everyone, for your part in giving to the Lord.

It's About Giving Back to God

BY LUDMILA G. LEITO

I COULD FEEL THE ENERGY in her voice through the phone. After trying to contact Rachel McCammon for several days to coordinate our calendars, we were finally able to schedule an interview by phone. Like any good reporter, I had the questions I wanted to ask her in front of me. This was going to be quick and easy, I thought. I ask the questions; she answers them—simple. But even as we introduced ourselves, I quickly realized that my prethought questions would be unnecessary. Rachel's contagious energy soon had us talking like old friends. Rachel McCammon's special gift is making people feel good. She doesn't do this because she needs to; not even because she wants to, but simply because that's who she is.

After moving to Maryland from North Carolina in 1992, Rachel and her family became members of the New Life Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gaithersburg, Maryland. The New Life church had a building project under way. They hoped to move into their new church by the year 2000. But thanks to a generous donation from the McCammon family, the members of New Life will be able to move into their new church at an earlier date. When I asked Rachel why and how they could make this wonderful donation, she answered without hesitation, "It's God! He has given me so much that I can't just sit back and do nothing. Our church had a building project scheduled for completion next year. Why wait till then when we can help out now? The church needs its own home!"

Rachel's generosity jumped out at me. The one thing she seemed to want to make clear during this interview was that "it's all about God!" "It has nothing to do with the money," she explained. "I don't know why God has blessed my family and me like this, but I'm thankful. What I do or what I give is not done to show others what I have, or even to remind myself of what I have, but simply to thank God." Rachel had



wanted the church donation to be anonymous. She didn't want to make a big deal of it.

By nature Rachel is a giving person, and such donations represent only one way of giving to God. She has two daughters, Sametria (15) and Renesha (13), and is accustomed to teenagers (and kids of all ages) being in her home. "I love to have kids over to my house. There's no greater joy than helping young people discover God," she says. And what better way to be involved with kids! She continues this involvement as the Adventist Youth (AY) leader at her church. "I'm always looking for new and creative activities to encourage the kids to come and stay in church. Through

dealing with my girls and their friends, I've learned what their generation is really looking for."

As we spoke, she told me that she was in the middle of preparing for a church cookout at her house later during the weekend. "I enjoy doing things like this for our church and friends as much as I can. I feel that it's important for us to stay close and get together in these kinds of settings."

Rachel works as a computer programmer for a large Internet provider. She has been married to Sam McCammon, a security supervisor, for 16 years. She enjoys spending time with her family (including the family dog, Katrina) and being involved with the youth.

Rachel wants people to know one important thing she believes about giving: "God calls us all to do something! When He gives us a blessing or a gift, we should be compelled to give something back to the Lord. He can take an ordinary person and bless them with a gift that will benefit all those around them."

Ludmila G. Leito is the administrative assistant for the director of the World Youth Department and the music editor of View, a magazine for young adults.

Making an Impact

A college and church community work together to help a grieving family.

BY BRIAN CARLSON

RUSSELL BRAWNER, a young father of three boys, thought a weekend canoe trip would be an excellent opportunity to bond with his two oldest sons, Bryant and Kendon. Unfortunately, his dream of enhancing family closeness turned into a nightmare when the trip ended in tragedy. As Russell and one of his sons floated down the Platte River on a sunny Sabbath afternoon they came to a stretch of rapids. Their canoe ran into a logjam and became stuck. Russell crawled carefully out of the canoe, hoping to free it. But he misjudged the force of the churning water, and it pulled him under the logjam. Rescuers found him too late 30 minutes later.

Meriel Brawner found herself faced with the daunting task of being a single mother. Their local church embraced the little family. Members brought dishes of food so that the grieving mother would not have to worry about cooking. They set up a memorial fund to help ensure that Kendon, Bryant, and Andrew would receive their education in Adventist schools.

As the shock of Russell's death diminished, Meriel remembered a list of home improvement projects that her husband had hoped to complete. There was painting to do, a ceiling to fix, and various other jobs. Her hopes of finishing the projects seemed dim.

Union College, along with assistance from the local

church, decided to step in. Project Impact, the college's annual day of volunteer help to the local community, provided an opportunity to ease Meriel's burden.



Project Impact lasted more than the proposed one day.



"We wanted to show [Meriel] how much the students of Union College cared for the Brawner family," said college chaplain Rich Carlson.

On Thursday morning, August 26, a group of college students and faculty arrived at the Brawner house with paintbrushes in hand. They spent the next five hours repainting the trim on the entire house. Then they painted a shed that had been recently donated. But there were too many projects for one day.

Don Blue, a former Union College student who had witnessed Russell's accident, made it a special project to help get the work done. Along with countless volunteers from the college and

the church, he accomplished a lot of work. The house's chimney needed to be torn down and rebuilt. The kitchen ceiling had to be replaced. They redid the bathroom and added a shower stall, a new vanity and sink, and drywall. The workers enclosed the back porch to provide a place for a washer and dryer. Someone donated new doors for the front and back entrances of the house.

Other volunteers took on additional roles. They took the three boys bowling several times. One family did all the yardwork, and another woman assisted with housecleaning.

Project Impact was supposed to last for only one day. But this year the Union College family discovered they could make an impact every day.

Brian Carlson is a communication intern, Christian Record Services, Lincoln, Nebraska.

You Gave; Here Are Some of the Results

WHEN YOU PUT YOUR OFFERINGS into the plate on Sabbath, do you ever feel as if you're dropping them into a black hole? Do you ever wonder, *What can my small gift do compared to the amount of work to be done?* We asked some of the church organizations that receive your gifts to tell us what happened with the money they received from you last year. Our sacrifices do make a difference.



Ami Timan is one of about 19,000 Global Mission pioneers who are actively planting churches in many countries of the world. He lives and works on a tiny stipend of about \$40 per month. The dedication of these pioneers is inspiring and humbling.

Global Mission

Last year your gifts, among other things:

- built 2,400 churches around the world.
- gave 20,000 Global Mission pioneers a stipend that averages about \$40 a month, literature to give away, and training and materials to plant churches in their own countries.

By the way, every single penny that you give to the Annual Sacrifice Offering goes directly to the field. What would not happen without your gifts? Mike Ryan, Global Mission's general field secretary, says that the work would go on, but fewer churches would be planted in a year, and unentered areas would

remain unentered for longer. If you would like to learn more, visit www.globalmission.org.

Adventist World Radio

Last year your gifts, among other things:

- paid for electricity to run the radio stations. The electric bill for the Guam station alone is about \$26,000 a month.
- leased \$1 million worth of time to use a transmitter in South Africa.

If your offering doesn't come to AWR next year, Don Jacobsen, president of AWR, says that they will have to cut

Bernard, in the Ivory Coast, took his radio and rode his bicycle around to the nearby villages, where he set up in the town center. He attracted a crowd in each place, and now some dozen villages hold regular group meetings around AWR broadcasts.



about 6,000 broadcast hours next year. Every cent that people give goes directly to funding AWR broadcasts. England's BBC estimates that 20 million people listen regularly to those broadcasts (many of whom are allowed no contact with Christians). If you would like to learn more, visit www.awr.org.



Chaplain (Capt.) Pablo Perez grabs a book for a soldier. (Photo by Sgt. Michael T. Koentop)

Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries

Last year your gifts, among other things:

- gave 25,000-30,000 prison inmates access to literature through Adventist chaplains.
- provided more than 1,200 active-duty military service personnel with Sabbath school materials, devotionals, Bible kits to give to other soldiers, and helped to provide servicemen's centers where soldiers can go for their spiritual needs.

• gave chaplains on secular college campuses and in health care materials to work with.

The entire budget for literature for chaplains comes from the one offering per year that you give to ACM. Col. Richard Stenbakken says that if ACM didn't receive this offering each year, at least 5,000 to 6,000 families would stop receiving material, which is sometimes the only connection people have to their church and also their best resource for reaching out to those around them. For many people both Adventist and not, the chaplain is the only link they have to anything spiritual.

General Conference 2000 Offering

Next year your gifts will:

- help make it possible to enter the area of the world that is the hardest to reach, the area known as the 10/40 window.

- establish 1,040 new congregations where no congregations now exist and where there are almost no Seventh-day Adventists.

In the area called the 10/40 window lives more than 60 percent of the world's population. Only 1 percent is Christian and .001 percent are Adventist. With our gifts we will go specifically to the people in this difficult area to bring them Jesus. If you would like to learn more, visit www.globalmission.org.

NAD Women's Ministries

Last year your gifts, among other things:

- hosted 498 leadership training events.



The GC 2000 Offering (April 8) will help to reach the people in the 10/40 window—the area of the world that presents the greatest challenge to the gospel message. The goal of the offering is to plant 1,040 new congregations in the 10/40 window.

to discover and realize their leadership and ministry within the home, the church, and community,” says director Mary Maxson. In 2000, Maxson says, the goal will be to focus on outreach and leadership training, because “if women are not equipped with a vision, it's difficult to lead spiritually.”

NAD Religious Liberty

Last year your gifts, among other things:

- handled legal problems for about 1,000 Adventists who were discriminated against in the workplace and in family courts.

- helped to educate the general public and church members on issues that impact religious freedom in North America through seminars, books, videos, and other materials.

- sent 200,000 subscriptions of *Liberty* magazine to thought leaders, civic leaders, elected officials, judges, supreme court judges, attorneys, doctors' offices, and to 535 members of Congress.

- provided college scholarships to six winners of the religious liberty oratorical and multimedia contest.

Faith for Today

Your giving helped Faith for Today:

- produce 17 new *Lifestyle Magazine* programs that air on Trinity Broadcasting Network, Odyssey, Kaleidoscope, Wisdom, and the Armed Forces radio and television networks. These stations make up more than 450 markets across the United States that broadcast *Lifestyle Magazine*.

“By adding these new programs to our stable of existing *Lifestyle Magazine* programs, we were able to ensure that we would not lose the free or bartered airtime on these networks,” says Donna Webb, director of public relations for Faith for Today. “Since we do not purchase airtime on these outlets, if we don't have fresh new programming when the stations request it they will push us to a graveyard time slot or, worse yet, pull us off their station entirely.”



In early May, after a tornado ripped through a 20-mile strip of Oklahoma City, more than 500 Adventist volunteers lent a helping hand to relief efforts.

Even the kids got involved. Pictured are Cody (age 7), Carson (age 5), and Cierra (age 3) Hughes, who came by a relief center to donate money from their bank accounts.

“We feel sad for the other people,” explained Cody. “We want to help too.”

Parents Billy and Linda Hughes, members of the Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, say the tornado passed right behind their house, but they only lost electrical power.

“The kids realize they've got a lot to be thankful for,” says Linda. “They gave their money because they wanted to do something to help.”



Spiritual Leadership Seminar

- held 51 evangelistic meetings that resulted in 269 baptisms and reclaimed 287 former members.

- enabled 3,226 non-Christian women to attend 167 spiritual retreats.

In 1999 women's ministries focused on outreach to non-Christians, friendship evangelism, and reclaiming former members.

“Our vision is to lift up Jesus Christ and Him crucified by enabling women

“... for the Lord loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7).

A New School Spirit

A growing spirit of compassion defines Walla Walla Valley Academy.

BY ROSA JIMENEZ

A 7-YEAR-OLD BOY SUFFERS SEVERE facial burns in a household accident. Telling 280 students about the tragedy, an academy principal asks each student to give a dollar to help with the boy's medical expenses. In less than a week students raise more than \$1,000.

A freshman boy's mother dies of cancer. Living several states away, the boy can't afford a plane ticket to attend the funeral. In class a Bible teacher listens as a student asks if they can pray for the boy's dilemma. Before the prayer the teacher suggests that this group of students might be the freshman's answer to prayer. They dig into their pockets, purses, and car ashtrays. Walking the halls, they ask other students to chip in. Two hours later they have \$200 for the airfare and the satisfaction that comes from helping someone in trouble.

These stories, and many others, define a growing spirit of compassion at Walla Walla Valley Academy, a spirit that spurs even the simplest acts of kindness.

"We are a family. If you are feeling down, you can go up to any student and ask them to pray with you," says Albert Rick, a senior.

"We encourage and help each other," says Rebecca Wells, another senior. "It's a spiritual openness."

To some students the many activities available help make WWVA a family: Senior Survival, Bible Conference, Bible studies, prayer conferences, vespers, music programs, and more. To others, it is the focus on service: special programs at retirement homes, worship presentations in churches, Service Day, and more. But the common thread is God. "More important than academic excellence, great extracurricular activities, or outreach programs, is that we have Jesus Christ at the center of our school," says Jaci Cress, a junior.

"We hope young people know that Jesus really cares about them," says John M. Deming, WWVA principal since 1991. "We try to make spiritual things real."

At WWVA talking to God is a priority. In the classroom

teachers often pray before class. Personal prayers become everyone's prayers at the daily chapel service, where Deming invites students to make prayer requests: Luke's grandmother is having a tough time moving into a retirement home; Maria's aunt fell; Louisa's mom might have breast cancer; Brenton's grandmother has been diagnosed with leukemia.

"We share personal issues. I think that makes us care more, not just for each other, but for anyone else who needs help," says Deming.

Ken Silver, a retired police officer and Korean War veteran, is WWVA's custodian. "We are proud of these kids,"

Silver says of the students. "They'll gladly lend a hand if asked."

At a Veterans Day chapel presentation, Silver asked students to help homeless war veterans living under local bridges and in culverts. Within a few days students brought more than enough coats, sleeping bags, and blankets for the veterans.

"One young man told me he was disappointed his mother had cleaned out closets and given away extras. He asked if he could buy a sleeping bag to give." Silver says members of the local VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) were moved by the gifts and offered their

support for other school projects.

Others have also commended the school's spirit of giving. In March Philanthropic Services (PSI) named WWVA the recipient of the annual Academy Award of Excellence, honoring the school's record of service, academics, finance, and alumni involvement. The honor included a \$20,000 award.

"It was so great that people thought enough of us to give us this money. It made me want to give to someone else so they could have the same feeling I had," says Erin Cleveland, a senior.

"Giving warms your heart," says Rick. "It makes you happy to be alive and feel like you have a purpose."

"We are a family."



Rosa Jimenez writes for the Office of College Relations at Walla Walla College, Walla Walla, Washington.

A Supernatural Habit

BY JULIE LENEÉ SCOTT

God Doesn't Need Our Money

At first glance, that doesn't seem quite right. Maybe it's because of the comments of the building committee chair in church last week. Or perhaps it is because of a recent missionary magazine describing the work and resources needed around the world. But the Biblical truth is that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (1 Cor. 10:26). There is no denying the many needs in the world, but God has all the world's resources at His disposal.

God Is Omnipotent

Omnipotence stretches beyond our biggest ideas. That God is omnipotent (see Job 38-41) is blessedly reassuring in

times of crisis, and profoundly stretching in times of complacency. That means that even a tithe check on Bill Gates's stockholdings would be indescribably puny in God's checking account. He does hold the world in His hands. But He has chosen to give us the choice of whether or not to be under His rulership. This freedom of choice means that God doesn't need our money, but He has chosen to use us to distribute His resources.

Giving Changes Us

I learned something about myself and giving a couple years ago. A non-SDA friend found himself under financial difficulty when he was trying to complete a degree at a local community college as an older student. He told us of his plight, and my husband and I helped with what was at that time a large portion of our savings. He thanked us profusely and promised to pay us back as soon as he got a job. He got a job; we didn't get paid back. At first it bothered me. Then, many months later, I let go of that money and gave it to God. I let go of my irritation. I quit mentally accruing interest. The freedom that resulted was tremendous. I was reminded that God had provided for all our needs without that money.

Giving Is a Win-Win-Win

First, I win because I learn not to hoard my toys in my corner of the sandbox; it is surprising how difficult it is to learn that sharing is more fun. Second, others win, because sharing reduces some of the stress and financial difficulty in their lives. Third, and most important, God wins because He gets more of me, and that is what He most desires.

God will convict us to give with no strings attached until we finally learn how. Then He can start to change the world through us.

Just Imagine . . .

A billion dollars! If every Adventist in North America tithed we would be giving an extra \$1,000,000,000.* Just imagine what we could do if we gave that kind of money.

- Maybe we'd begin to rely on God more.
- Maybe we'd read our Bibles more.
- Maybe we'd volunteer more.
- Maybe we'd smile more.
- Maybe we'd pray more.
- Maybe we'd be more grateful.
- Who knows, maybe we'd want to give even more than a measly 10 percent.

Maybe your first reaction wasn't to think of the effect of giving an extra billion dollars for the church would have on you personally. You could easily make a long list of projects the church could fund with that amount of money, but from God's point of view, maybe that's not the most important result. Just imagine what that kind of giving would do for us personally. When you think about it, the money is really inconsequential.

* The GC Stewardship Department estimates that 33 percent of Seventh-day Adventists tithe their income.

Compiled by Jeff Scoggins, communication project manager, and Myrna Tetz, managing editor, *Adventist Review*.

Julie Leneé Scott is assistant professor of marketing at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington. She is currently on leave to complete her doctorate at the University of Washington.



AWR Letter Box

"I have the opportunity to listen to your radio programmes every day. I have benefitted spiritually. I truly believe that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour in the world."—**Akhtar**,* Pakistan.

"I heard AWR by accident when I tuned my radio one day. I am sure that Jesus Himself led me, because I've been longing to learn God's Word for a long time. In the countryside where I live it is only on Sundays that we can learn the Bible. Now I give thanks to AWR for giving me good spiritual food every day."—**Christian**, Madagascar.

"We live in a small village where there is no Adventist church. But some time ago I heard the *Voice of Hope* program on the radio. I felt as though I had visited the church! And now I await each new program as a great holiday. Thank you for this service."—**Ludmilla**, Russia.

Dear friends at AWR: "I often listen to your broadcast programs. The Spring Breeze program has revealed much truth to us. Now all my family members have become believers."—**Sun**, China.

"I have listened to your programs for a period of time. Slowly I am getting to understand Christianity. I am using the guidance of Jesus to order my life. I often pray to God for protection. Every time I sit by the radio listening to your programs, I feel as though God especially cares for me."—**Guo**, China.

"I am very pleased to listen to your programs and see that from a European point of view your programs are very family-related. Such programs are not easily found on European stations."—**Peter**, Germany.

"Your programs are full of knowledge and provide tranquillity and peace to mind and heart."—**Pranab**, India.

For more information about Adventist World Radio, write to: 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904-6600; or call toll-free: 1-800-

337-4297; e-mail: awrinfo@awr.org; website: www.awr.org.

*pseudonym.

Issues of Pay Get Fair Play

Church leaders wrestle with the challenges of fair pay for pastors and professors.

BY CARLOS MEDLEY, ADVENTIST REVIEW NEWS EDITOR, AND BILL KNOTT, ADVENTIST REVIEW ASSOCIATE EDITOR

What is fair pay for Adventist pastors in North America? Can the church afford it? Why is it so hard to attract new teachers to the church's colleges and universities? Do Adventist professors need a pay raise? Is the church being bilked by unscrupulous members? What will it take to devise a serious outreach strategy for reaching North America's cities?

These are just some of the burning issues that church administrators, pastors, teachers, and lay members grappled with at the North American Division (NAD) year-end meetings held November 1-3 in Silver Spring, Maryland. During the annual business session church leaders throughout North America hear reports, vote new policy items, and approve the division budget.

Wage Worries

By far the most compelling issue this year was the growing problem of compensation for college and university professors, pastors, and other denominational employees.

Richard Osborn, NAD vice president and education director, gave an interim report to NAD executive committee (NADCOM) members from the division's Higher Education Remuneration Strategy Taskforce. He told the committee that Adventist colleges and universities are facing serious problems from a shortage of Adventist professors with doctoral degrees. He noted that the average age of tenure-track faculty

members has increased significantly in the past 20 years.

The reasons for this current situation were the high cost of doctoral programs, low numbers of faculty openings, and the shrinking pool of



ALFRED MCCLURE: "It's not easy to change church structure."

young experienced Adventist teachers from which to draw. He expects that Adventist colleges will need about 500 professors with doctorates in the next 14 years just to replace the retirees, not including administrators, support areas, and other needs.

"At the present time we do not have enough individuals working on doctorates to replace those who will retire over the next decade," he warned. "What will it take for Adventists currently working on doctorates to work for the church?"

Osborn also mentioned that Adventist schools, at times, put together pay packages that exceed normal policy in order to attract teachers. "In some cases the professor has ended up making more than the [college or university] president," he said.

The report included several recommendations, as, for example, bringing remuneration levels into parity with similar regionally-based Christian institutions and establishing new performance standards. He said while some staffs are overpaid, full professors and top administrators are being underpaid.

Osborn's paper followed an interim report from the taskforce. This committee is studying pay packages for pastors and other denominational employees.

Pacific Union president Thomas Mostert, who chaired the committee, said his group is studying the church's principles of remuneration, the problems in the church's compensation system, and how other organizations

approach their wage system. "The committee was still debating whether the church should maintain its traditional 'sacrificial wage' concept or move to a 'community wage' concept," he added.

Mostert warned that any new proposals would require additional dollars, and added that his committee would also explore ways of raising the needed funds.

In response to both reports some committee members voiced the need for the church to downsize staff so more funds would be available to pay pastors and professors. Gerson Perla, layperson from the Pacific Union, said, "I continue to see organizations throughout the division that do not work efficiently. In an age of voice mail and cell phones, why does everybody have an individual

secretary? That's not the way companies run," he said. "We're willing as laypeople to write bigger checks if we see the organization become leaner and more efficient."

Robert Fawkes, also from the Pacific Union, said, "With the redoing of the pastoral salaries, that's going to require some cuts. It might not hurt to downsize the number of [education] institutions and consolidate the professorial staff, cutting the cost and providing the same amount of education."

Ted Wilson, Review and Herald Publishing Association president, said, "I appreciate the poignant questions that were asked of the taskforce in this report. I appreciate the directed tendency toward a sacrificial approach [to remuneration]. Sacrifice, the spiritual component, and the service factor have to play a part in the future."

NAD president Alfred McClure noted the difficulties that administrators have in changing the church structure. "We call ourselves the Adventist education system. In a loose sense that's true. But in a technical sense that's not true, because most of our colleges are owned by different organizations, with their own constituency. There's no group that has overall control of the colleges. Theoretically it may make sense to do what's been suggested [downsize], but practically it's not possible."

Another lay member asserted that the church has not maintained the emphasis on Christian education that it has in the past. "I don't see the emphasis anymore in our churches," says D. Yaret Castro, from the Pacific Union. "I firmly believe in



NEW RECORD: NAD treasurer Juan Prestol announces that tithe has increased to record levels.



CLOSE THEM DOWN: Lay member Robert Fawkes says it may be necessary to close some institutions so that faculty members can get better pay.



PASTORAL CONCERN: Arizona Conference president Herman Bauman said some churches may go congregational if changes in pastors' wages aren't made.

Christian education, but the passion for it is not there. How will we get qualified teachers if we don't educate our members at the church level and talk about the importance of it?"

Herman Bauman, Arizona Conference president, voiced his concern for pastors. "The source of all the funding for this church comes from the local church, and the pastor is the one that's always overlooked. Pastors' salaries have been falling behind the cost of living for years and years. We're going to get into a situation in which we'll be encouraging more and more churches to go congregational so that they can meet local needs. We must be careful that we don't turn off the ones who are where the base of the total support [of the church] is."

NADCOM voted to receive the two reports. However, no action will be taken to adjust worker salaries until the taskforce completes its work and presents its final report.

Gradual Growth

In his secretary's report, Harold Baptiste said the Adventist membership in North America brushed the 900,000 mark for the first time as of July 1, 1999. A modest 1.8 percent increase in membership during 1998 brought almost 36,000 members into the church in North America. Adventist churches also increased to 4,759, with another 385 companies bringing the total number of worshipping congregations to 5,144.

The latest numbers reflect the changing face of the Adventist membership in North America. Seven percent of Adventists are of

Hispanic origin; nearly 19 percent are African-American. In a seven-year period from 1991 to 1998, tithe contributions from Hispanic congregations increased by more than 60 percent. The tithe increase in the same period from regional (African-American) conferences was more than 17 percent.

Financially Fit

NAD treasurer Juan Prestol reported that gross tithe for 1998 totaled \$569,714,073, a gain of \$35,544,895,

or 6.7 percent, over last year and 25 percent over the past five years. Prestol said the figure is a new record high and represents a fifth straight annual increase. As of September 1999 gross tithe in North America reached \$408,608,556.65, a 6 percent increase over the same period last year.

Regional conferences and smaller Anglo conferences led the list of those experiencing tithe gains during 1998, according to Prestol. The Northeastern Conference, headquartered in New

York City and serving African-American congregations throughout New York and New England, recorded a remarkable one-year tithe gain of 21 percent. Not far behind was the South Atlantic Conference, where tithe increased by 16.1 percent.

Montana (3,696 members), Nevada-Utah (5,020), Indiana (5,749), Arkansas-Louisiana (8,194), and the Lake Region Conference (23,244) all experienced tithe gains of 10 percent or better. Overall, the North American

Renewed by the Spirit

More than 300 laypersons, administrators, and pastors gathered at the General Conference auditorium on Sunday night, October 31, for the opening session of the North American Division year-end meetings. While millions of parents and children prowled the neighborhoods of North America in a search for candy, keynote speaker Russell Burrill led participants in a searching study of the characteristics of healthy congregations. Burrill, director of the North American Division Evangelism Institute, is a leading advocate of planting new congregations across the continent.

Here are excerpts from his thought-provoking presentation.—Editors.

Healthy churches will not live with a cloak of sanctity covering their failure to produce the fruit of the Spirit in the life. There are too many churches saying, "Oh, we believe the right thing, but we can *hate each other*." You can't do that and have the fruit of the Spirit in your life. The possession of the Spirit means the possession of both the fruit and the gifts of the Spirit. That's why healthy churches do not excuse their lack of love and joy under the umbrella that "*we have the truth, and how we treat each other doesn't matter, because we have the truth*." Let me remind you that it was Jesus who said, "I am the truth." And it was Jesus who said the essence of Jesus is love.

I don't know why we got into the paradigm, but we excuse our lack of love because we have "the truth." So when new people join us we tell them, "*Well now, you've found the perfect message, but watch out for the people! Look at Jesus; don't look at the people*." I understand what we're trying to say there, and I've said it too, especially with some churches I've worked with. But in essence, that's not what Jesus said when He said that "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have *love* one to another." If you don't demonstrate love, you don't have the truth, no matter how many of the "27"



"A CHURCH IN EVERY ZIP CODE": That's what Russell Burrill advocates.

you profess to believe. Healthy churches will practice love and acceptance without condemnation and without minimizing sin. They will truly hate the sin and love the sinner. It won't be just a cliché with them. They will really believe it.

The presence of the gifts of the Spirit is further evidence of a healthy church. Not only must those gifts be discovered, but the people must begin using them. We have allowed our people to spend a lot of time discovering the gifts, but I find it breaks down with discovery—they never use 'em! We've been fairly good at helping people discover their gifts; we've been very poor in enabling them to transfer the identification of that gift into a ministry that they're involved in the local church. And we need to work on that. Healthy churches are churches that are full of the Holy Spirit. And when

the church receives the Holy Spirit, both the fruit and the gifts of the Spirit will be manifested.

It is time to stop excusing our lack of the Spirit in this church by claiming, "*Well, we don't have the Spirit, but we've got the truth*." The Spirit leads into truth. . . .

If we have the truth, we will have the Spirit, and He will be manifested in both the gifts and the fruit. If these things are lacking in the church, it means the church needs to get down on its knees and once again cry out to God for an infilling of the Spirit of God. . . .

By the way, I don't believe the Spirit of God can come into the church unless I've got a Spirit-filled leader. That's why it begins with us in leadership. We've got to demonstrate in leadership that we are Spirit-filled people and that the fruit and the gifts of the Spirit are manifested in our lives in the way we treat one another and in all our administrative duties. Because how we treat others is indicative again of the fruit of the Spirit in our life.

Why should we create healthy churches? Because the focus of Adventism is on preparing a people for the coming of the Lord.

Division experienced a 6.7 percent increase in tithe during 1998, a rate more than three times that of inflation.

According to Prestol, an average of \$17 million is contributed each week in tithe and offerings by church members in North America. Next year's division budget will total \$74,817,135, up 5.5 percent from last year.

Loss Leaders?

NADCOM members heard a startling report from Adventist Risk Management vice president Arthur F. Blinci, who warned the committee that the church has suffered more than \$7.2 million in losses of funds in the past 15 years. These losses have

exceeded insurance premiums by \$1.5 million during the period.

Blinci said local congregations receive between \$15 to \$18 million each week. These funds are handled by 4,750 local treasurers, most of which are volunteers. In the 10-year period from 1990 to 1999, losses caused by volunteer and employee fraud tallied more than \$3.5 million. In local churches some losses reached as high as \$800,000 in a single case. Many of these losses would have been prevented with proper internal controls, he said.

In 1999 alone the church filed claims for \$1.6 million in losses, more than double the insurance premiums paid. As a result of the church's unfortunate track

record Blinci said it was difficult to obtain adequate insurance coverage. Next year's premiums will reach \$950,000, an increase of \$240,000, or 33.5 percent. Any future loss coverage will be limited to \$3 million with a 25 percent coinsurance provision.

Blinci, who also presented his concerns before a U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee, urged church administrators to educate pastors and church leaders on the importance of internal controls for church members handling money. He also urged conference leaders to perform timely audits of all churches and schools and deal responsibly with those who have committed fraud and abuses.

NAD Year-end Meeting Briefs

In other business the North American Division executive committee:

- Received a report from the Columbia Union Conference requests taskforce, which looked at possibilities for changing church finance and structure in order to provide increased resources to revitalize the local church.

The group looked at staffing levels and finances for the General Conference, NAD, and union and local conferences. It also studied previous restructuring reports and tithe-distribution policies and concluded that the current levels of organization are adequate and appropriate for the mission of the church.

Taskforce chair Max Trevino, Southwestern Union president, noted that the GC was currently studying the distribution of tithe from divisions around the world and concluded that no action should be taken until the GC Commission finishes its work.

Some NADCOM members, such as Rocky Mountain Conference president James Brauer, voiced strong discontent at the taskforce's report because they believed many organizations could be downsized and streamlined. Other members failed to see any benefit to the local church outlined in the report. However, Columbia Union president Harold Lee reminded the group that the effort to restructure was still "a work in progress."

- Heard a report on the division's Ebony Evangelism outreach initiative from Southwest Region Conference president

Robert E. Lister. Through this cooperative venture, involving all regional conferences, Southwest Region's membership has grown from 13,000 to 18,000 members, and 29 new churches have been planted. Thus far in 1999 nearly 600 baptisms have resulted from the initiative.

- Voted recommendations from the NAD Summit on Race Relations held October 27-30. The recommendations include the appointment of a committee to plan a second Summit on Race Relations in 2001, create a strategic plan for inclusiveness with measurable objectives, and build on the moral imperative of Jesus for unity that will lead to a true diversity.

Rosa Banks, NAD associate secretary and summit organizer, also suggested ways in which church leaders can hold dialogues on race at the union, local conference, and local church levels. (See the *Adventist Review's* coverage of the Race Relations Summit on page 8.)

- Approved the recommendation of the Atlantic Union Conference to restructure the Northeastern Conference into two conferences: the Northeastern Conference, consisting of the state of New York, and a new North Atlantic Conference, consisting of Connecticut, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

- Voted to designate the year 2000 as the Year of Youth and Young Adult Evangelism.
- Voted new guidelines for transferring churches between conferences and accepting a group into another conference.



NOT PLEASED: Joni Hamilton, a Georgia-Cumberland Conference layperson, and James Brauer, Rocky Mountain Conference president, voice displeasure with the taskforce report.

Faith or Medication?

SANDRA DORAN

I have begun seeing a doctor who has recommended that I take a medication to deal with my depression. Some have suggested that as a Christian, I should not have to rely on pills to control my mood, but should just exercise more faith in God. What do you think?

Let me say at the outset that I believe the manner in which you decide to address your depression is a very private matter, ultimately to be decided by yourself and a competent professional. That others would intrude on such a deeply personal part of your life and make a value judgment on your faith is neither appropriate nor kind.

While many would view mood as a simple function of choice and willpower, such an outlook does not take into account the complex processes involved in human thought and behavior. To have a positive outlook on life is not always something that can be commanded by forcing ourselves to “look on the bright side.” The brain is an intricate organ whose subtle differences can affect our ways of looking at life in dramatic ways. Even those born with a naturally “sunny disposition” can experience a physical change in the brain because of painful life experiences. The genetics, structure, and neurochemistry of the brain play a major role in people’s ability to face life with confidence and hope.

This is not to imply in any way that God is left out of the picture. I believe that our loving God is just as concerned about our emotional health as our physical well-being. If God would not consider it a lack of faith for a person to access the latest research and medical techniques in combating a physical illness, why would He be disappointed in us for seeking emotional wellness from the vantage point of the most recent advances in modern science?

It is never easy to consider taking a medication for a mood disorder. While it is not hard for us to justify that a diabetic needs insulin or a cardiac patient needs heart pills, we shudder at the thought that the defect within us is not physical, but emotional or psychological. Somehow, we see this part of ourselves apart from our biology, connected only to that area within us that should be entirely under our control. But the unfortunate fact is this: We live in a sinful world. There is bad and there is worse. “Bad” is having to

take a medication when we would rather that everything just go away. “Worse” is continuing to suffer, day in and day out, from a brain biology that predisposes us to melancholy, flatness, and gray days.

Sometimes we feel as if it is an admission of defeat on our part to resort to a pill to “make us happy.” But the issue is far more complex than that. All personal human behavior

affects not only ourselves, but others. Says John Ratey, author of *Shadow Syndromes*: “Al-Anon estimates that every alcoholic’s addiction intimately affects at least four other people, and the same can be said of [emotional problems] as well. Emotional problems affect the whole family—often the workplace as well—not just the person with the problem. A husband who takes [a medication] to help modulate his temper is not just taking a pill to be happy, he is taking a pill to make his children happy. He is taking a pill

not as ‘an escape’ or a ‘quick fix’ or an ‘easy way out,’ but as a gesture of responsibility toward his family.”*

Should faith play a role in your handling of depression? Most definitely. Can faith play a role whether you choose to combat your problem with medication or not? Certainly. My prayers and heart go out to you during this difficult time in your life. May God grant you the strength to reach out for the lifelines that can get you through this time of darkness on a sinful, defective planet.

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Cor. 4:16, 17, NIV).

* John Ratey and Catherine Johnson, *Shadow Syndromes* (New York: Bantam Books, 1997), pp. 19, 20.

Sandra Doran is an assistant to the superintendent of schools for field supervision in the Southern New England Conference and supervises student teachers for Tufts University.



A positive outlook is not always something that can be commanded.

Change Is Good

BY ROYSON JAMES

Cities are incubators for change. Here conventional wisdom is constantly challenged. Established ways of conducting business run smack into innovative approaches, often to the economic ruin of longtime businesses and the launch of creative ones. Old technology gives way to futuristic designs. There is a constant rebirth, remaking, recycling, and renewal—all too often in the name of commerce.

Change comes at a price; it is seldom embraced. It breeds uncertainty and spawns fears. Second-guessing is its natural partner. And it often features a clash between visionaries and those who seek comfort in the familiar.

The unsettling dynamics around change is played out in local congregations all over North America. In one church the majority of the members vote to relocate to another neighborhood, but a vocal minority refuse to accept the change without a fight. Some members want a livelier, more praise-oriented worship service; others like it just the way it is, thank you—soft and quiet.

Even in our personal lives, it is not easy to make choices, turn on a dime, follow another path when the current one is so familiar and comfortable.

Not long ago I was preoccupied with getting a project completed before a fast-approaching deadline. A friend called and insisted I drop everything and accompany him to a concert. I resisted and protested, pleaded and offered every excuse in the book to no avail. My friend would not be deterred. I relented and went, all the time resenting the intrusion. But a funny thing happened. My friend's company was a refreshing change from the hours of battling the project alone. The concert was the right antidote and just the change of pace I needed. I returned to my project with new vigor. Change is good.

Conversion is like that. When the Holy Spirit grips the heart and convinces it of God's tremendous love as seen in the matchless life of Jesus Christ, the response should be one of joyful surrender. But how we battle the Spirit and try to frustrate His will! Only later do we discover the beauty and peace that are found in total surrender to the will of

God, as revealed through the Holy Spirit.

If the Holy Spirit were to come to us in familiar ways, He'd never be able to convict us. We'd know all His angles and easily subvert His advances. Thank God that is not the case. There is also no way of predicting the workings of the

Spirit. A sermon that has no impact on me finds fertile ground in my seatmate's heart. Someone shouts and hollers "Hallelujah" as another parishioner one pew away flinches in horror, wondering, "What's the matter with her?"

Our denomination, exploding in numbers as we enter the twenty-first century, is in for many challenges as we balance our traditional positions and practices against modern realities. More and more, each of us will be required to "give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12), not being able to lean on a clear pronounce-

ment from the church hierarchy on a variety of difficult social and religious concerns and issues. Only deep study of God's Word and much prayer will be able to anchor us in the truths God has prepared for us.

But be not dismayed. God has promised that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

Indeed, change is a constant in the modern age. Despite the chaos around us, the fear of Y2K, the crumbling of the foundations of society, we have a sure hope. The principles in God's words are enough to secure us in a world of tumultuous change. We indeed have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the billows roar. What an advantage! What a surety in a world racked with fear "for . . . those things which are coming on the earth" (Luke 21:26).

Such good news and such rare hope are too good to keep to ourselves. Let's spread the word.

When the Holy Spirit grips the heart, the response should be one of joyful surrender.

Royson James is a columnist for the Toronto Star.



Christmas and Peace—Part 1

Practical suggestions for sharing peace at home and in our community

BY MYRNA TETZ

IT'S A STRANGE COMBINATION, THIS. Christmas and peace. A conundrum, if you will, for the season we look forward to the most is the one that will demand the most from us. And even though we know that in order to produce the perfect Christmas we will have to work very, very hard, we happily anticipate this time of family, friends, and colleague get-togethers. We'll have to purchase and trim a Christmas tree, hang the spruce welcome wreath on the front door, shop for gifts, and schedule the programs we want to attend. There are Christmas cards to send; fruitcake, gluten, and cookies to make; and enough granola for a week's worth of extra guests.

We'll attend the traditional church and school programs with the three boys from grade 2 posing as unlikely candidates for the positions of the three Wise Men or the embarrassed grade 5 girl and grade 6 boy cast in the roles of Mary and Joseph. And we'll assist with church-related Christmas events.

Intentionally deleting the memories of unseasonable family tensions, we'll bask in the pleasant memories of past Christmases. We'll remember our feeble attempts at creating a vegetarian turkey, the Christmas tree that shed the needles within a few days, and the hanging of lights on the eaves, with the person atop the ladder proclaiming, "This will be the last time."

The amount of money we spend for gifts we'll vow to reduce, and so we purchase the *Family Circle* magazine advertising "60 Gifts to Make in Minutes." By the time we get the materials and struggle with the patterns and directions, the gifts are not the creations we had envisioned, nor are they ones that will illicit peals of "just what I always wanted" from the recipients.

Yearly we ask, "Is there a way to reduce the stress of the Christmas season and increase the joy and happiness that relaxed fellowship during this joyous season should bring?" The answer is: probably.

Here are 10 suggestions that could add a measure of peace, relaxation, and happiness to a family's Christmas.

1. It's a good idea in late November to decide which cherished dreams are really attainable, and then work toward those that have some shred of hope of actually becoming realities. The goal of simplicity is undoubtedly a good one, for more will be accomplished and enjoyed as we base our decisions on realism. We may have to exact contentment with lesser material props, but that might be one of the best decisions we make.

2. Writing, addressing, and mailing Christmas cards early is just plain good planning.

Every year I intend to mail our Christmas greetings on or near December 1. How many times has this happened?



GIFT COVERINGS: Sewing fabric coverings, used from year to year to enclose gifts, saves time, money, and is environmentally friendly.

Probably never. And always some are mailed on December 24, for somehow I have this feeling that if they're post-marked on the day before Christmas I have complied with the rules for holiday mailings. I have to admit that my dreams often exceed actuality, but it's a goal I've not rejected.

3. The rewards of staying within a reasonable budget are definitely long-term. Opening beautifully wrapped gifts with longed-for contents combined with visions of long-term credit card debt just do not seem to be a good match. There's so much one could purchase with the Christmas theme that, if money was not a problem, we could redecorate our whole house just for three or four weeks in December. However, keeping Christmas simple, even though money may not be lacking, is still a worthwhile goal. Spending for exotic settings in our homes might be better spent in more worthwhile activities with longtime, life-changing results for the giver and the receiver (see No. 10 and Reflections, p. 46).

4. For us, shopping is a together activity. Time is reserved to include the purchasing of gifts for family members with the ambience of Christmas music, the decorations, and the holiday mood the malls and shoppers exude. Some, however, shop much earlier preserving precious time for other Christmas activities. It's important, whatever the choice, that it is a family occasion and that each member is involved in the selection of gifts for others.

5. You'll find that sewing coverings for gifts (in November, let's say) from seasonally decorated cloth will become a time-saver and is also environmentally friendly. Simply cut the cloth to the size you wish, sew the sides, and turn down the top for threading a tie. After the gift is inside, pull the tie ends to close the bag. Then, instead of burning the proverbial midnight oil on Christmas Eve, the gifts could be examined, shaken, and enjoyed for several days before the exhuming begins, and it's possible you could retain a larger portion of your sense of humor.

6. If you bake early and freeze what's freezable, you may compliment yourself on good planning. Most varieties of cookies, pies, entrées, and breads retain their freshness after a few weeks in the freezer, and you'll enjoy simply retrieving already-prepared portions of meals when you host those out-of-town guests.

7. If you have a family reunion scheduled and you are the host, divvy up the jobs. Make lists and schedule who will empty the dishwasher, set and clear the table, shop for fresh salad greens (maybe pay for them, too), and tidy the family room. Since a lot of these tasks are generally perceived as

The goal of simplicity is undoubtedly a good one.

women's responsibilities, don't forget to include the men; they'd feel fairly expendable otherwise.

8. You may be a person who expects to spend a portion or all of the Christmas holiday alone. One person went to a soup kitchen and helped prepare hundreds of Christmas meals. Her testimony? "When I talked with people who came to eat, I felt grateful for all I have." A man in Great Falls, Montana, spent several hours one Christmas taking neighborhood kids to a snowy hill for a sliding good time. "At the end of the day," he admitted, "I was sore and wet. But it gave me a good feeling to see the kids enjoy themselves."

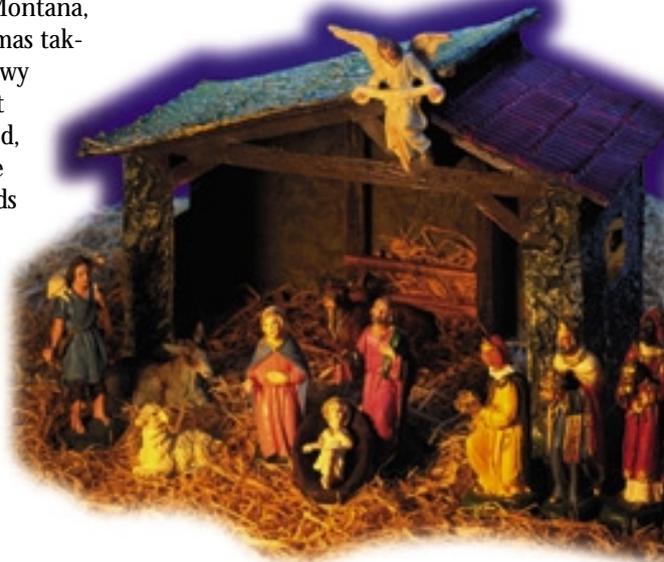
9. For a happier Christmas, give up your expectations. When we build the season based on the help we hope to get from our spouses, our children, and our parents, we are setting ourselves up for disappointment.

Those who will not let go of their unvoiced expectations pay a high price. This Christmas, vow to expect from family members only those things that are voiced, are not demands, and are not built on something over which you have no control. "To expect too much is to have a sentimental view of life," wrote Flannery O'Connor, "and this is a softness that ends in bitterness."

10. Above all, you'll want to save time for sharing Christmas with others who have less than you. It's important to assist your church with the filling and distributing of Christmas baskets. Take your children and make it a family affair. If your church doesn't do this, then make it a personal project. One Christmas basket to an unsuspecting family (you could get a name from Social Services) could be the favorite Christmas memory.

It's important to remember that the greatest gift of all is love—our Saviour's love given so freely and our love shared unselfishly. Let the words of love flow through you, and your home will radiate with the warmth you have dreamed would be there.

Myrna Tetz is managing editor of the Adventist Review.



Christmas and Peace—Part 2

BY D. RON WATTS

TWO THOUSAND AMERICAN AND BRITISH soldiers were killed or wounded in 15 minutes at the bloody battle of New Orleans on January 8, 1815. But the battle was without purpose.

The United States and Great Britain had signed a treaty of peace two weeks before. The War of 1812 was officially over, but neither General Andrew Jackson nor Sir Edward Pakenham had received the message of peace.

Nineteen centuries ago a Babe was born in a Bethlehem barn. Isaiah had predicted the birth seven centuries before and titled the Child “The Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). Angels from the realms of glory sang at the Bethlehem birth: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth Peace” (Luke 2:14).

The enmity of man toward God should have ended right there. A member of the Godhead had Himself taken human flesh and become man. How could the children of Adam believe any longer that God was their enemy? The twentieth century is almost gone, and yet multitudes have not accepted the truce.

While it is highly unlikely that His birth occurred in December, it did take place. And though December 25 has not been specified by the Father as the day to celebrate that birth, it need not be excluded. Every day is an appropriate day to proclaim His peace.

Ellen White suggests, “You will find it a difficult matter to pass over this period without giving it some attention. It can be made to serve a very good purpose” (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 9, 1884).

The merchants of North America have discovered that their sales increase if they hitch their sales wagons to His star. Radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet herald that birth; should not we?

In His sermon on the mount Jesus pronounced a particular blessing on the peacemakers. May that blessing be on each church leader and member who seeks to help people find peace with God this season.

Four ways for you and your church members to share Christmas peace with the community.

1. Invite your friends, workmates, and relatives to church during the Christmas season. It’s easier to do this in December than at almost any other season. The unchurched, the inactive, and the

backslidden are often more willing to accept an invitation and attend. The lonely and hurting seem more aware of their need for God and for caring friends.

2. Plan special programming centered on the holiday theme. A musical presentation by your choir or the church school children, or a reenactment of a Christmas story by the youth will give incentives for guests to come to worship with you.

3. Advertise your programs in advance and encourage members to bring their friends. Then make it a memorable and heartwarming experience that will bring visitors back.

4. Experiment with an “open house month.” Provide a special gift from your church to all visitors who attend. Help show your community that Seventh-day Adventists believe in the birth of Christ and love Him with all their hearts.

Article reprinted from *Celebration* magazine with author’s permission.

D. Ron Watts is president of the Southern Asia Division.



Church Headquarters Personnel Share Christmas Peace

In the early part of each December, the Seventh-day Adventist world headquarters invites thousands of visitors from the metropolitan area to attend its annual Walk Through Bethlehem. This event, which depicts Bethlehem during the time of the birth of Christ, allows guests to take an interactive tour to experience the sights, sounds, and everyday life from this time period.

Facilitating a capacity crowd of 2,000 for each of the five nights, the church headquarters turns much of the office building into a virtual replica of the city of Bethlehem. For six evenings during the holiday season church employees and their families shed their work clothes for robes and the opportunity to slip into a role that allows them to entertain and share the importance of the birth of Christ with the community.



For the Heart of the Need

Because the Light's Better Here

The old story is told of a man standing under a street lamp, head down, busily looking for something. His friend, David, stops to help.

"What did you lose, John?" he asks.

"I dropped my watch and can't find it anywhere."

"That's a shame," says Dave. "Let me help."

So for the next 10 minutes Dave gets down on his hands and knees and helps John look for his watch on the pavement under the street lamp.

Finally, after covering every square inch several times, he turns to John and says, "Are you sure you dropped it here?"

"Well, not exactly here," John replies.

"What do you mean?" exclaims Dave. "Where did you drop it?"

John points out into the darkness. "About 20 yards over there."

David can't believe what he hears. "You dropped it over there, but we've been searching here? That's ridiculous. Why on earth have we been looking here?"

"Because the light's better," says John.

For too long the Christian church, including Adventists, has been preaching mainly "where the light's better." The Christian church has spent the vast majority of its resources on areas in which there's already a strong Christian base—where the light is stronger. And we've virtually ignored those parts of the world where the name of Jesus has never been heard.

Sixty percent of the world's population—3.4 billion people—live in the 10/40 window. This artificial rectangle extends from West Africa to East Asia, from 10 degrees north to 40 degrees north of the equator. Only about 1 percent of these people believe in Jesus, and less than .001 percent are Seventh-day Adventist.

And yet historically the Christian church has neglected this area and put its human and financial resources where the light is better and the work easier. According to mission researchers, only 8 percent of all Christian missionaries go to the 10/40 window.

Since 1990, through Global Mission, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been focusing more on the needs of people in the 10/40 window. In fact, these people will directly benefit from the Heart of the Need Offering (the General Conference 2000 Offering that will be collected over the next several months). Every cent collected will help establish new congregations in areas where the light of the gospel shines dimly, if at all.

Work needs to be done under the world's street lamps. But it's the people in the darkness who desperately need light.

Gary Krause, Global Mission communication director

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To find out more about the 10/40 window, or to contact Global Mission, visit our website at www.global-mission.org or call 1-800-648-5824.



HOPE FOR THE FUTURE: The General Conference 2000 Offering will help bring the hope of Jesus to people in the 10/40 window.

10/40 Window People Suffer From:

- Extreme poverty
- The devastation and threat of wars
- Short life spans
- Rampant disease
- Disasters in many forms
- A lack of a knowledge of Christ
- Little religious freedom

An Agenda for the New Millennium

It's time to focus on the heart of our message and mission.

BY JAN PAULSEN

The following was the keynote address to the international leaders of the Adventist Church at the Annual Council of the General Conference Committee, September 28, in Silver Spring, Maryland.—Editors.

AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS QUINQUENNium we counseled together about a spiritual motif or focus that we as a leadership group would hold to and promote during the current five-year period. We decided to focus on the theme "Experience Life as It Is in Jesus." We would make it instructional (i.e., we would study its content and meaning in Scripture); and we would make it invitational (i.e., we would call all to "come and experience" the richness and fullness of the complete life of faith in Jesus Christ).

That life will ultimately reach its peak at the second coming of our Lord. And, therefore, fittingly, we have chosen as the focus for our spiritual reflections at this final Annual Council of this quinquennium the theme "Experience the Certainty of His Coming."

While no Christian community owns this "certainty," it is very fitting that we as an Adventist family—we who since our inception 150 years ago have more than any other Christian communion made the teaching and proclamation of Christ's second coming our spiritual "trademark"—should make this our focus as we enter the year 2000.

Many Christian communions and individuals approach and plan for the year 2000 with a mixture of celebration and mystery. And for some it has a blurred or ill-defined religious

content. Some expect cataclysmic events to take place. To us the year 2000 has no more religious content than 1999 or 2001 have. The only significant event in the future with ultimate consequence is the second coming of Christ. At that moment history will be summed up. Finality will have been reached. We will be home. It seems right that we should pause at this Annual Council to remind ourselves of that certainty, and to explore how that certainty should impact our lives today.

Not by Accident or Coincidence

We have no control over time—the Lord makes His own decisions. But we have significant control over our lives, our values, and our choices. We have the right, the freedom, and the responsibility to set our agenda and to arrange our priorities. The mission of the church is not finished yet, and it will not be finished by accident or coincidence or pure chance. In full awareness that these are the last days in which we live, and in contemplating the mission that lies before us, we must of necessity set ourselves a very deliberate pace, and there will be a number of specific choices that will have to be made. Finishing the mission is a very disciplined task. It must be highly focused.

It seems good to me, especially when we as church leaders sit together in council, that we be acutely conscious of our mission and that we are a *spiritual* community, and nothing else.

The question that has been put to me most frequently during the past six months is *What do you see as the greatest challenge ahead for the Seventh-day Adventist Church?* I want to reflect on that for a few moments.

The challenges, as I see them, fall essentially into three



main categories; and I want to pose them as questions:

1. Is our mission succeeding? Is the community of Seventh-day Adventist believers growing? However difficult it may be to “number Israel” fairly and accurately, we **know** whether and where we are growing, where we are reaching out, where we are gathering a harvest, where we are expanding—we know! We also know, with considerable pain, where we are barely keeping afloat, and we know where we are “taking on water.”

Some growth is defined under Global Mission’s entry into unentered areas, but most of it is growth in terms of reaching out into communities in which we are already established, and where the laity living in those communities assert their rights and privilege of participation. As a witnessing community we must constantly ask ourselves: Is it happening? And we must care what the answer is. The day it no longer matters, or we grow tired of this whole thing, decay sets in.

2. Is life in the Adventist community an appealing one? Is the Adventist Church truly a “consumer-friendly” community? Is it really an attractive and happy quality of life that is to be found and experienced in our church? To the ordinary man and woman on the street, quality of life will always have greater appeal than dogma will ever have. I praise God, and I look with wonder at the extent to which we are growing, particularly in some areas of the world. The Spirit is alive, the church is alive, and the days are full of wonder. New members are joining because everything that was presented to them seemed promising and appealing. Christ stands there with open arms, the teaching and quality of life that He offers are attractive, and the new believers become part of the family. Sadly, after a while, some are gone. Maybe they just drifted away quietly. Why?

If we were able to conduct reliable “exit interviews,” I wonder whether we might not find that they are gone

because something happened to the quality of life, as they experienced it, in the church—or maybe something in the quality of life they had hoped to find in the church but did not.

Somehow it all promised so much; but alas, it did not happen. There have been hurts and disappointments that they just could not cope with. The human failings became so large.

Your church and mine must cultivate an appealing and warm quality of life within our community. It is people we are constantly dealing with, and

*We know where
we are barely
keeping afloat,
and we know
where we are
“taking on water.”*

some of them are very fragile; but they are loved by the Lord.

The Lord’s servant wrote as follows: “You are related to humanity, and you must be patient, kind, and pitiful. You need to cherish thoughtfulness and subdue selfishness. Let your inquiry be: ‘What can I do to bless others?’ If your heart is yearning to do them good, even at inconvenience to yourself, you will have the blessing of God. Love, lifted out of the realm of passion and impulse, becomes spiritualized and is revealed in words and acts. A Christian must have a sanctified tenderness and love, in which there is no impatience or fretfulness; the rude, harsh manners must be softened by the grace of Christ.

“O my brother, my sister, educate yourselves in the school of Christ. Let the spirit of controversy cease at home and in the church” (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 335).

The church is meant to be a good and secure home in which understanding, tolerance, and support are in evidence.

3. How are we doing at holding together? Unity may in part be a by-product of our common faith, our common policies, our common *Church Manual*, and our shared resources; but achieving unity and maintaining it must be part of a deliberate design. It must be seen as a determined objective that has to be worked at, and not left to chance or something that comes of itself.

I know, we tend to say quickly that “unity” and “uniformity” are not the same thing; and then we turn the page and we go on to a different matter. But come back to it and hold it there for just a moment: **Unity** is what we have in “one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.” We have it in what holds us together as one body. And we have it in our shared history and tradition. Unity is deep. It is not made up of a loose collection of segments. Unity is intrinsic and indivisible. **Uniformity** is an unnatural collection of many segments pushed together that may impose a strain on our fundamental unity, unless we are open and strong enough to allow room for the variance that is there. And the variance that is to be found among people is simply the elements of a finely woven “texture of humanity.” We are all children of our culture, and the accompanying diversity should not be a threat to anyone. Rather, *diversity is a matter of beauty and complementary fulfillment.*

Diversity means reciprocal enrichment. But it requires mutual acceptance and understanding. It also means that we have to allow room for the variance to express itself within our family—within the unity of the Adventist faith that binds us together. I suppose that what I am appealing for

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."

Unity is both fragile and strong. Unity is fragile in that it will not survive compromises for the sake of convenience. It cannot survive adjustments of principles to accommodate the secular society. If that happens, fragmentation inevitably sets in. But where loyalty to Christ and respect for fundamental principles are protected, unity is strong enough to receive differences and diversities *constructively within* the family. And it is strong enough to survive, whatever the challenges and however rough the road ahead might be.

Unity is neither a luxury nor a bonus; it is essential to the survival of the church. Unity is Christ's gift to the church. It is what we intrinsically have and are in Him. It is what He wants for us. But we must be very deliberate in looking after it, for it is not self-sustaining and does not look after itself.

A Sacred Identity

A young woman, a theology student at one of our universities, whom I met while visiting a church a few weeks ago, said to me: "We are so glad that you are the president of the General Conference because we think you understand the academic community, and you are not going to bother the educational institutions about the directions they choose, and particularly about the content and structure of their ministerial training programs."

The statement is as perceptive as it is misguided.

I would like to think that I understand the academic community—although nothing stands still. That community was part of my professional life for many years. In my mind, that community is not on trial. I have no hostility whatsoever toward it. Quite

the contrary. I have an enormous amount of respect and fondness for the fine quality of professionals who work in Adventist education. They don't come any better! I also trust them to be committed to the Lord, and to love Him as I do, and to serve and protect His church as I would. So I proceed in my view of and relationships with the aca-

There should be no question in anyone's mind that the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as an international community, must have a significant say in what constitutes training for its ministry.

demical community on the basis of trust. There is no acceptable alternative.

But to my fellow servants in Adventist education let me remind you, if reminding is needed, that it is our history, our sense of calling, our mission, our sense of the lateness of the hour, and our God-given values that give Adventist education its identity. *That identity is sacred!* Do not try to change it. If you cannot live with it, try to find another way to serve the Lord. This is not a hostile comment, for I want Adventist educators to stay, and I want them to be creative in their ministry of teaching, and I want them to feel free and safe in their ministry. But I want them also to preserve, pro-

tect, and hold high the identity that is ours. And that identity is not vague. I want them to care for it out of love for the Lord and His church.

As for the content of ministerial training programs, we took an action a year ago that I recognize caused some consternation in some quarters. Not so much, I think, with regard to the content of the action itself as with regard to how it is to be implemented. Maybe the wording needed some help. Let us not get hung up on that. When all is said and done, there are some fundamental points that must not be lost sight of.

There should be no question in anyone's mind that the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as an international community, must have a significant say in what constitutes training for its ministry. That community is much larger and broader than the campus of a particular educational center, although that institution is also part of that community—part of the larger Adventist Church—and not somehow outside of it. That larger church community, involving professionals both in education and field ministry, together with its elected leaders, with lay participation, must in creative consultation define and design a structure of ministerial training that provides this church with a ministry that reflects accurately who we are, a ministry that has the drive and vision to complete our mission.

Creating the mind of a Seventh-day Adventist minister is a unique and sacred trust. My own wish and hope is that the details of that process or activity can be accomplished essentially at division levels, and that the international board appointed for and by the General Conference function as the support structure, providing guidance and broad direction to the divisions, and seeing to it that the intent of the Annual Council action be accomplished. Where difficulties arise the international board will serve as a point of reference, and help in the resolution process.

So to the division and union presi-

dents, the chairpersons of the respective boards and heads of educational institutions, I say: "We want it to happen. For the good of the church, and with an eye to securing our future, please move briskly to accomplish what we have agreed on in this matter."

The Heart of Our Mission

I would also like to say a word about evangelism and witness, and the General Conference's potential role in this matter. The General Conference is not set up to take control of the evangelism agenda of the church. I am sure it would be counterproductive if we tried. The ownership of that initiative belongs primarily to the local church, where the membership live and where the everyday dynamics of life are experienced. However, the General Conference can be a significant support instrument and cross-divisional coordination center for major outreach activities, such as those we have come to know as NET or ACTS 2000 or PENTECOST. Through the NET programs the North American Division has given a very significant boost to world evangelism, and for that I thank the division's leadership. Through the ACTS 2000 programs currently going on, significant lay leadership in North America, in partnership with divisions, with It Is Written, and with AGCN, has carried both the vision and the purse to make those witnessing activities possible. The target is 100,000 baptisms; and it is clear that that number will be exceeded. I acknowledge that contribution and thank the mission-driven lay leadership for it.

But it all points to something that has unlimited scope and potential. Resources are probably the only human limitation. I would wish that as we go into a new quinquennium the General Conference would set up an advisory council on evangelism and witness, as a somewhat permanent fixture in our "jungle" of committees. Its purpose would be: (1) to focus our thinking and planning on witness, (2) to advise on specific multidivisional initiatives, and (3) to make financial

recommendations to our budgeting process.

When all is said and done, if there is any church that should have such a council with a deliberate witness agenda, it is the Seventh-day Adventist Church, because *mission* is why we're here.

We already have a Global Mission office with its assignment primarily in unentered areas. And we have agreed that we will make a special effort in the 10/40 window as we enter a new millennium. I just want to make sure that we coordinate our planning to maximum efficiency. Witness for our Lord is the one thing that must succeed. Where that does not happen the very breathing of the church falters, and its vision of the future becomes dimmed and uncertain.

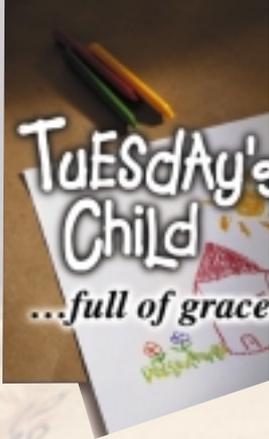
Experience the Certainty of His Coming." That is where we are today. That is the invitation that comes to us from the Lord, and that we are asked to pass on. We are in motion—relentlessly, inexorably moving toward and focused on that one event that will sum up history and bring us home.

In the words of the song "Are all

the children in?" no, not all. Not yet. And therein lies our mission.

Jan Paulsen is president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.





Friends Forever

The Taylor family had company, and Kelly wasn't happy. This was a whole family, and they were going to be staying for a long time. There were six of them, and they were from another country, and Kelly was going to have to sleep on the floor in Sam's room so the mom and dad could have her bed. It might not have been so bad if there had been a girl her age, but the kids were all teenagers.

"Why are they at our house?" whined Kelly.

"These people have nothing," Dad explained to Kelly and Sam. "Soldiers came to their house and told them they had five minutes to leave. Then they burned down their house. They have come to our country to start over, and we are going to show them Jesus' love while we help them."

During the next few weeks the Taylor house was a busy place. There were six more people to feed at every meal, so Kelly spent a lot of time setting and clearing the table and helping with dishes. There was a lot more laundry to do, so Sam quickly learned how to sort clothes and use the washer. People at church heard about the special family living with the Taylors and brought things for them. Soon dishes, linens, clothes, furniture, and even a washer and dryer filled the garage. The Taylors had to park in the driveway.

The mom and dad found jobs. The teenagers started school. In the evenings they all studied English. That's when Kelly and Sam were the biggest help.

One evening Kelly was helping Arbresha, who was 17. "You good helper for me to learn English," Arbresha said, giving Kelly a hug. "Come. I fix your hair."

First Arbresha combed Kelly's long brown hair till it was silky smooth. Then Arbresha's nimble fingers braided it into the most exquisite hairstyle Kelly had ever seen.

"Pretty," said Arbresha as she stuck the last hairpin into Kelly's hair. Her eyes danced.

Kelly just giggled. But after that, she asked

Arbresha to fix her hair every morning before she left for school.

After a month the family found a home of their own. One afternoon when Kelly got home from school most of the things in the garage had been packed into a borrowed pickup truck to take to the new house.

Arbresha was still there. "I'll miss you," said Kelly, wrapping her arms around the bigger girl's waist. "I miss you too," said Arbresha. "But we live close by. I still see you. And I always be your friend."

The Bible says, "A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends" (Job 6:14, NIV). People who need our service also need our friendship. We make friends when we serve others for Jesus.

Family Time

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

✎ Ask the adults in your family to tell you about a time when they needed someone to be a friend to them or when they made a friend by serving.

✎ Read a Bible story, in Daniel 6 about a man who made a friend by serving well. How do you know Daniel served well? Who was his friend? How do you know?

✎ With your family's help, find something in your house that you could use to serve someone else and make a friend at the same time. Will you use it for that this week?

✎ When you pray, ask Jesus to send someone to you who needs your service and your friendship. Write down that prayer request and put the date by it. See how long it takes for Jesus to answer your prayer.



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The Night the Angels Sang

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:13, 14).

My husband was out of town, my daughter far away in Africa. My son and his family lived on the opposite coast of this vast expanse called the United States. It was December, with Christmas coming. With no family nearby, I decided against putting up decorations just for my enjoyment.

The hustle and bustle of church programs, carol singing, and Christmas concerts flooded my soul with reminders of the Bethlehem Babe, and for this year it would be enough. Then Denise, my women’s ministries associate, phoned, turning my emotions upside-down: “Remember we’d planned to do something for the women at the shelter in downtown Washington, D.C.?”

“What do you have in mind?” I asked.

“Well—some kind of party—a Christmas celebration.”

“Sounds great!” I responded. “Where shall we have it?”

Denise thought for a moment, then replied, “How about the church lounge? It’s been redecorated and looks good.”

I hesitated. If I lived in a shelter downtown, would I want to go to a “party” in a church lounge? The question haunted me, until a still small voice impressed me to have the party at my house. That didn’t make sense—I wasn’t prepared for guests—but if these women were coming, I’d better make my home welcoming for them. So, choosing the theme of “angels,” I whizzed to the local stores buying up leftovers from the frantic frenzy of December’s shoppers.

I hurried home, and golden angels soon peered from my windows. Musical angels graced the sideboard, another blessed the dining table. Apple juice warming in the kitchen sent cinnamon-scented aromas wafting through the house.

The van from the shelter brought a dozen women out to my suburb, where a group of church women greeted their newfound sisters. Piling into waiting cars, we drove off into the cold, dark night heading for the annual Walk Through Bethlehem put on by volunteers at the General Conference headquarters.

Lingering in the “village,” we watched the potter busy at his wheel, women selling their wares, and a bridal party wending its way through the village. “Oohs” and “aahs” showed our visitors were receiving a blessing.

Returning to our cars, laughing and talking, we headed home for supper. What a happy bunch of women! Crowding into my little sitting room, we enjoyed the tasty food provided by the church women. Some goodies even disappeared into coat pockets for later enjoyment. Then, with lights dimmed and candles flickering, we sat in a circle reading the Christmas story from the Bible.

As a surprise, each guest received a bouquet of flowers, then we shared our dreams. “What one thing would you like for Christmas?” I asked.

Their answers humbled me. “A job.” “An apartment.” “A place where I can have my children with me.” “To live without drugs.” Their serious faces emphasized the reality of life. No flippant wants or desires were voiced that night. No pleas for trinkets or baubles, just raw day-to-day needs. My hushed prayer was that God would protect and watch over my sisters in the days ahead and grant their wishes.

And then, most unexpectedly, a voice from somewhere inside of me began to sing, “A-men, a-men, a-men, a-men, a-men.” You know, that chorus we sometimes sing? But this time it was different. As I sang, an angel-like chorus filled the room as one by one the women from the downtown shelter joined in the spirit of the evening, each adding their own verse: “Thank you for the flowers!” “It was good to be here!” “Have a happy Christmas!” “God bless you, everyone!”

It was unforgettable—a circle of women from all walks of life holding hands and praising God. My lonely Christmas was over—the room forever hallowed. A cherished moment that returns each Christmas as I open a box of angels to make my home more welcome for whoever chooses to enter and share with me the true blessings of Christmas.

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