Adventists and Adoption

All Is Calm

The Christmas Card
I Couldn’t Write

Adventists and Adoption

All Is Calm
Adventist Young Adults

Andy Nash is always thought-provoking. Thank you for his balanced reporting of the goings-on of young adults (“Coloring Outside the Lines,” Oct. 15 Cutting Edge Edition).

I found most insightful his call not to “let this cycle repeat itself.” The Gen Xers were the study of the Valuegenesis report. What have we learned as a church? What are we doing with what we learned? The millennials are coming of age. Are we to lose them in record numbers also by not learning from past mistakes?

— J. Philip Williams
Jefferson, Texas

I found it interesting that Andy Nash could find so many young people who wanted to get involved. I have found the opposite to be true at my home church.

As a 28-year-old on the church board, I have been asked—no, begged—to get more young people to be on the board with me. I can’t find anyone who wants to give up one evening a month to do it. I have been asked to help put together a greeters/ushers group consisting of young men and women. I can’t find people willing to come to church 15 minutes earlier to do it. Not to mention our young adult Sabbath school’s attempts at visiting the elderly, feeding the homeless, and giving rides to people who don’t have cars— all of which failed because of lack of participation.

To all those who want to be more involved, please come to Orlando. We have plenty of empty slots to fill.

— Bryan Emde
Apopka, Florida
bDEMDE@aOL.com

The coming kingdom will not be hurried by the young achieving seats on committees and boards or other positions of “power,” nor by their parents relinquishing these positions. There are too few “jobs and seats” at any level in the official church to accommodate those with talent to fill them. If this results in a “trend toward parallel ministries,” let it be the simple response to the Holy Spirit’s calling, informed by clear understanding of Scripture and tempered by love of the truth. Let’s celebrate that calling and that trend.

As for the possibility of “diminished denominational giving,” “fragmenting,” and “duplication,” why should we worry? If we individually and corporately are listening to and following the One who owns the hills and the creatures on them, will not He empower us to pay the bills on time, organize the fragments where necessary, and keep the duplicator running?

A bout the desires of the young, recall the counsel of a Jewish rabbi: “Leave them alone. If God is leading them, you would not want to be found fighting against God; if He is not, they will come to nothing.” We could take the rabbi’s counsel one quantum leap further: “Don’t leave them alone. Support them. Nurture them. Pray for them. Pray with them. Lead them. Follow them. Or get yourself out of the way.” And I am talking to myself, too.

Let’s encourage and teach young and old to recognize and embrace the ministry that each has graciously been given already. And if you desire those jobs and seats, you desire a hard thing. More power to you. You’ll need all of it. It’s free. And it comes from above whether you’re young or old.

— Merlin Nichols
Chetwynd, British Columbia, Canada

Reading about ministries such as eXcite98 is very exciting to us older members. A fter all, our denomination was founded by the 1844 generation. They spent whole nights studying the Bible to learn what God had said and what it meant in their day.

They had one advantage over our present Xers in the presence of a personal messenger from God to help them understand the hard things. If this generation will study the Word and accept the instruction recorded by God’s messenger, they will do great things for Him. The Holy Spirit is always ready to advance God’s cause. “The eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him” (2 Chron. 16:9, NIV).

— Robert A. Dexter
Reno, Nevada
What do you think about our young people in the church? I think we have nothing to fear for the future unless we let their talents and enthusiasm be misdirected instead of accepted and used to their fullness. The eXcite98 artist Aaron Soeprono (not Soeproalo) is our grandson, and are we ever proud!

—Lester Medford
Loma Linda, California

The Power of Human Touch

My thanks for Gerald Colvin's article on the value of massage therapy for the baby (“Your Baby and the Power of Human Touch,” Oct. 15). As a licensed massage therapist and a registered nurse, I have seen the power of human touch literally transform an ailing body and spirit into a new person. We have for too long devalued this precious gift that God has given us through our hands and have forgotten that Jesus Himself used His human hands to touch and help.

It has been my reward to see the heavy armor fall off of hurting people when massage is applied in the right way and with the right intent. I understand that massage is not for everyone, but even a hug can go a long way when given with the right motive.

—Benita Steel, R.N., L.M.T.
Kettering, Ohio

End-time Preparation

Alex Bryan hit the proverbial nail on the head with "Hurricane Pope John Paul II" (Oct. 15 News Commentary).

In Matthew 25:5 we read that all the virgins slept. However, the difference between the two groups was preparation. The wise also slept, but they had a life-changing experience with God—as some Adventists have today. They had the oil of the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, the foolish lacked this vital connection—as many Adventists do today.

—John A. Lockley
Tupelo, Mississippi

Church Music

I’d like to respond to Dr. Ron Nielsen’s plea for help regarding their church music (see Oct. 15 letter). It’s amazing that a church of 150 members has so many talented musicians. I dare say it won’t have them for long if they continue the “spectator sport—dry formalism” music. May I suggest that they read Psalm 150? The psalmist tells us to praise God with trumpet, tambourine, harp, lyre, dancing, strings, flute, and even clash of cymbals. Doesn’t sound like dry formalism to me. It seems that all of their musicians are included.

I have attended churches that have two or three lively praise teams (using various instruments) that practice so that the music is a blessing, and they alternate weeks so that all can be involved and not be tied down every week.

I am of the older generation, but I find that when some familiar songs (“Crown Him With Many Crowns,” “Power in the Blood,” “The Old Rugged Cross”) are included with new ones, we older folks are blessed and gradually learn the new songs if they are repeated several times. It is ideal if the words can be projected onto a screen so that everyone can read them. I even like it when the leader explains that people can feel free to stand or sit during the praise time.

—Patti Hare
Lake Arrowhead, California

Bless you, Dr. Nielsen. You have two little old ladies (LOLs) at the piano and organ! Many LOLs began their church music contributions as teenagers and are still at it, often because they are the only backup. If you have trumpets, guitars, clarinets, harmonicas, etc., available in your congregation, praise the Lord! Use them! Most LOLs will applaud you. I’m one of those LOLs.

—Esther C. Christianson
Alvarado, Texas

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—Esther C. Christianson
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A Witness in the Stones

Ancient Israelites left monuments to mark their pilgrimage. Modern Adventists can likewise trace their progress.
Coming Out of the Dark

When we were children, it was easy enough to make the world dark. The little world in which we lived and moved could be turned into all sorts of interesting places when we got tired of playing in the sunshine.

A blanket hung from the upper bunk created Aladdin’s cave, where we plundered imaginary treasure stores. Mother’s best comforter draped over an end table became a deep, dark prison cell to which we banished siblings or the dog as we relived the Middle Ages. And which of us didn’t relish burrowing behind the winter clothes in the deepest closet as someone hunted for us in an endless game of hide-and-seek?

Yes, it was easy enough to make the world dark when we were children, for darkness was a diversion from the customary light. There was a mystery about the dark that we found fascinating, and all the more so because we knew that a brush of the hand or a turn of the closet doorknob would lead us safely back into the world of light.

It was darkness without danger that we relished, the novelty of seeing familiar things when they were no longer wrapped in light. But by now, I suspect the novelty of darkness has waned for most of us. The passing years have taught us that the darkness with which we played as children and the darkness with which we deal as adults are two entirely different things, as different, as the old cliché says, “as night and day.”

Now we know that the prisons we have created for ourselves by our choices in life can’t be waved away with the brush of a hand or a turn of the closet doorknob. We’ve discovered, to our sadness, that there aren’t any piles of gold waiting to be scooped up when we recite the magic word. And we’ve learned that many times when we hide ourselves in the game of life, no one comes to seek us.

Darkness is no longer a safe and temporary choice. For some, it is dark in the soul even when the winter sky is bright and blue.

As we look back at the year that has passed since the last Christmas, I know that many of you who read these words have had your moments or months of darkness since we considered the old story. For some of you, it has been anything but a year of sunshine and white, puffy clouds. Jobs have been lost through layoffs or illness. Marriages have creaked and groaned and even dissolved with the stresses of child-raising and career pressures. Friendships that were once warm and tender have chilled as thoughtless words or acts intervened. Good health, once taken for granted, has become a question mark as fingers refuse to bend or legs to move as quickly as they once did.

Some have spent long hours in hospital beds, waiting and praying for some other company than the television talk shows. For others, the darkness has seemed tangible and real as you’ve wept for a friend or relative claimed by death in the last 12 months.

Because of all these things, because each one of us has been touched by the darkness during the last year, we look again this Christmas at the old story—the old story that we never seem to get tired of, the story that every year can fill our weary hearts with light and life. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness”—and here’s the good news—“the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:4, 5, RSV).

Those who cite the holiday’s pagan origins and protest that we have the timing wrong have a point, but an ultimately inconsequential one. Their treeless homes and unlit windows simply underscore that good news has not yet arrived where they live. For Christmas is nothing if not an exercise in hope, a stretching of the ligaments of joy, a reaching backward—and for Adventists, a reaching forward—to the promise of Emmanuel, the One with us, in whom all God’s promises unite and find fulfillment.

We were the people walking in darkness, longing for the Light more than watchmen for the morning. On us, through this old and wonderful story, once again the light has shined.

This Christmas, let no one steal your joy.
Have you noticed? We all seem to like Christmas music. Why?

This past year I've devoted much of my writing to diversity—generational diversity. Few issues, of course, typify generational diversity as music does.* Year after year the discussion—spoken and unspoken—repeats itself:

"I find your music offensive."

"Is offensive less desirable than boring?"

"Look— it's not what we want. It's what God wants."

"Doesn't God want variety?"

"Not that kind of variety."

And now, as the coastal winds of praise music sweep into midwestern America and other unentered areas, I shiver at the storms sure to stir.

So what's the deal with Christmas music? What endears it to almost everyone? What possesses contemporary music-loving Adventists to lock mittens with traditionalists and stride down Main Street happily bellowing "O Come, All Ye Faithful," "The First Noel," and "There's a Song in the Air"?

Is it because Christmas music is fresh and new? Of course not. Most of our Christmas standards are as old as or older than our hymns. "Go, Tell It on the Mountain," for example, far predates the 1939 hit "Ere Mountains Reared Their Forms Sublime."

Is it because Christmas music is filled with, like, totally hip melodies and lyrics, dude? Not exactly. "What lies He in such mean estate?" ("What Child Is This?") and "Incense owns a Deity nigh" ("We Three Kings") are hardly the language of lunch at TGI Friday's—or even Shoney's.

Is it because God places a special blessing on Christmas music—just as we're all drawn to Jesus Christ, we're all drawn to the songs of His birth? Perhaps.

M aybe, though, there's another explanation: We like Christmas music because we like Christmas memories. These songs warm our warmest images: cider and sweaters, family and fireplaces, gifts eagerly given—and just as eagerly received. Even when that shiny red wrapping paper reveals a purchase we wouldn't in a million years have made for ourselves—a Mount Rushmore paperweight, Pat Robertson's latest book, a heavily zippered jacket with a large elk on the back— we smile at the thought behind it. N o, we might not fully understand why we need a mermaid calendar, but we sure do treasure the tiny hands proudly presenting it.

That, I think, is the attitude we must model toward each other's music—each other's gifts to God. Let's face it—new generations of music will always rile us. In fact, I'm personally uncomfortable with some of the music coming up behind me. (W hy doesn't everyone just listen to Michael Card?) So what should I do—mass-produce a tract condemning all music Andy Nash deems unfit? W hile this would undoubtedly boost my self-righteousness quotient, it would accomplish little else.

Rather, I do well to confine my concern to a single sincere question: Does this music draw you closer to Jesus Christ? If the reply is yes, then my diatribe ought to be done. I've sensitively registered my opinion, and I now best spend my time and energy actively loving the person, the people, whose music I just don't get. If I'm really feeling Christlike, I might even sing along with them.

Each December at Lake Buena Vista in Orlando, Florida, Disney presents a living Nativity for the public, free of charge. Set to Christmas classics angelically sung, the pageant features the Wise Men and other characters hauling in extravagant gifts and placing them before the Christ child. Finally, the little drummer boy—an adorable 5-year-old—marches in to his simple song.

Weaving between the various characters, gazing at their faces, the drummer boy sees the glorious gifts at the feet of Baby Jesus. Without an angelic voice—not to mention gold, frankincense, or myrrh—the drummer boy pauses, wondering what gift he can give. T hen, as though buoyed by the kind, reassuring smiles around him, the drummer boy confidently raises his sticks and resumes his march—"I'll play my drum for You, da-rumpa-pa-pum"—ultimately kneeling before the manger.

At that moment—and those like it—not only is all calm. All is bright.

* Obviously, tastes in music can't be carved neatly along generational lines. I know young adults who prefer traditional religious music, just as I know seniors who prefer contemporary religious music. I also know a third group who enjoy a blend of traditional and contemporary—which, of course, inspires a fourth group to warn against mixing light with darkness.
ADVENTIST LIFE

My husband and I have always told our daughter, Kaelibeth, that Jesus lives in her heart. At Christmas time we talked often about Baby Jesus.

One day Kaelibeth said, "Mom, when Baby Jesus gets bigger and comes out of my heart, can I give Him a hug?"
—Michelle R. Caviness, Dayton, Ohio

When my children, Stefan and Bonnie, were little, they were playing church in the home garage. "Hey," said Connie, "let's sing Christmas carols—you know, Stefan, the one that goes, "O come ye old faithful . . .""
—Phyllis Cougle Jordan, Presque Isle, Maine

A MERRY—AND BLESSED—LITTLE CHRISTMAS


ENCINITAS, Calif. (AP)—He still wants you to “have yourself a merry little Christmas,” but he’d also like it to be blessed.

Composer Hugh Martin has changed the lyrics to the yuletide classic he wrote for the 1943 Judy Garland movie Meet Me in St. Louis. Now, instead of “Have yourself a merry little Christmas,” the chorus reads: “Have yourself a blessed little Christmas.”

“My faith means everything to me now. I wasn’t even a Christian when I wrote it,” Martin, now an 82-year-old Seventh-day Adventist, said Friday.

In 1990 the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers placed “Merry Little Christmas” on its list of most performed ASCAP standards.

Martin began thinking about revisiting the tune in 1974 after he became born again.

“Have Yourself a Blessed Little Christmas” will be published next holiday season.
—submitted by Floda Smith and Shirley McLaughlin, Salmon, Idaho

WHAT TO SAY WHEN . . .

In this issue, advice is given on how to treat people sensitively who face infertility and adoption. We invite your advice on relating to people facing other sensitive situations—death, divorce, miscarriage, injury, etc. What should/shouldn’t you say and do?

Send submissions to: Sensitivity, Give & Take, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.
Dearest Katie,

You are the only person to get a Christmas letter from me. I got your package tonight. I opened the ornament, and I loved it! It’s my absolute favorite of all time! Did you make it? It’s wonderful! Then I read your card, and “hearing your voice” made me feel all teary-eyed. I realized how badly I wanted to “sit down and tell you all about it.” But it happens to be 1:00 or 2:00 a.m. where you live, so I’ll write this letter. I think it will be therapeutic for me.

It all started when I began to write our usual Christmas (generic) letter, which is usually upbeat and (hopefully) humorous. I wrote the whole letter but didn’t think it was funny or honest, and I hated it. I read it over when I was staying late at work tonight, and I was trying to figure out how I could put more heart into it. Then I realized that an honest letter would not be appropriate for most of my friends and family members because I don’t think they want to know. The letter—an honest letter—would sound like this:

What I Wish I Could Write
Dear Friends and Family,

We hope your holidays are filled with joy. This year has gone by in a blur for us, but we’re relieved, because it’s been a very painful year. We’ve taken several vacations, made substantial achievements at work, and bought lots of new stuff. We even got our eyes lasered and can now see without glasses or contacts. But our most heartfelt desire and deepest hopes to have children have not been fulfilled. We tried artificial insemination, but it didn’t work, and it only seemed to add to our heartache and paralyze us with fear that nothing will work, no matter how hard we try. We feel frightened and cheated and somehow unworthy of this great blessing that seems to be carelessly bestowed upon ill-equipped teenagers and abusive parents everywhere. We have prayed and prayed—and many of you have faithfully prayed for us—but still no children. Our sadness just grows with each passing day.

We think we should feel better by now—adapted or reconciled somehow—but it just feels worse and worse. We go long periods of time not even talking to each other about it (what’s the use?), then from somewhere renewed hope springs and we generate the emotional energy to try something new. It fails—and we truly feel worse than when we had no hope or energy to try. Hope is so painful because it opens old wounds, and healing is set back further.

As you may have noticed, we have cut back contact with those of you who have children because we are overwhelmed with grief when we are reminded (by seeing you with your children) of what we once thought our lives would be like. And sometimes, frankly, you remind us of how unfair we think life can be sometimes. We started trying to conceive long before many of you considered it, and now almost all of you have children and we still don’t know what’s wrong. So you feel awkward and we feel awkward, and it’s just too hard to be around you.

Sometimes, not knowing what to say, you suggest that we
stop trying so hard, which blames us further for wanting or trying too much and puts us in a bind trying not to try. Other times you suggest that we adopt so we can then “relax” and get pregnant, which demeans adoption and infuriates us further. Oh, and please—don’t regale us with stories about how it took you three whole months to conceive, so you know how we feel. You have no idea. Don’t bother to share your story with us unless you’ve tried longer than we have (three and a half years), because that sounds to us like “We thought we had it bad, but you are really bad off.”

What We Need and Don’t Need
You may be wondering by now, what do they want from us? Well:
■ Don’t give us advice and personal experiences (shorter than three and a half years!) and folk tales.
■ Do mention if you’ve read something new on infertility.
■ Do ask us how things are going and just listen.
■ Don’t be ashamed that you have a happy family—we don’t want your kids. We want our own. We’re glad you’re happy.
■ Do keep reaching out to us and inviting us over. Be sensitive that some days are harder than others and that we may decline or accept depending on how vulnerable we feel that day. It has nothing to do with you personally. Our sense of life’s unfairness isn’t directed toward you. Our struggle is with God and with ourselves.
■ Do keep sharing your lives with us. Keep the door open so that we have options not to isolate ourselves so much.
■ Do take us up on it when we say we are available to baby-sit. When we are feeling stronger, we often offer to baby-sit. At that time it’s healing for us.

Great Expectations
We have an appointment in a few days at an adoption agency. Inside we feel happy, and despite our best efforts, that pesky hope is starting to grow again. We hate to let our hopes soar too high, because the fall is very hard and seems to cripple us further with fear. Now we are afraid that somehow we will literally be evaluated and found to be unworthy parents—in writing.

Though this is how we really feel, please don’t worry about us, because we are in God’s hands. His hands are the only ones that can hold such a huge volume of grief and anger, fear and self-doubt. God knows how we feel, and He Himself comforts us—even when we direct our anger and frustration at Him. So in the deepest sense, we know everything will be all right. We know He hears our prayers, and the Bible tells us that He never fails to give family to those who ask Him.

We look forward eagerly to the new year because we are confident that the Lord has heard our prayers and that a plan is in the works. We hope that you too take great comfort in celebrating the birth of our Saviour and that you look forward with eager expectation to experiencing His love in the new year.

Love, Mindy

Mindy Snow is a pseudonym. The author gave permission to print her letter.
Note: This package on adoption should not be seen as our “answer” to the preceding piece. We recognize that adoption isn’t right for everyone. But for those interested, Pamela Maize Harris presents a major treatment.—Editors.

Carl and Linda... and Elizabeth

Carl and Linda Smith had given up. It just hadn’t happened. No babies after 10 years of marriage, despite energy, time, and money spent on infertility treatments.

“We had finally concluded that we were not going to have kids,” says 41-year-old Linda.

“We put our names out there to doctors, lawyers, and others,” adds Carl, 51. “We got no bites, so finally we just gave up.”

Age had seemed to be an issue with adoption agencies, too. Their policies seemed to exclude “older” couples (those in their 30s and 40s). Dead ends loomed at every attempt to create a family.

God had His reasons, they concluded—and eventually they gave up their dreams.

Then one day Linda received a call at work about a baby available at a hospital in Chattanooga, where they lived. The birth mother was ready to make her adoption plan, and she wanted the Smiths to be the parents. Linda dug out a car seat stowed away in the garage.

Linda was surprised at her own excitement. “I realized I hadn’t resolved the infertility issues,” she says. “I wanted this baby, and I prayed that God would allow us to have our little family.”

But at the last minute the baby’s mother decided instead to give the baby to the social services agency—who adopted out the baby to another family.

“I was heartbroken,” says Carl. “That morning as I stood by my truck at work, it hit me how God felt losing His only Son. I prayed that somehow God would work it out for us to have a child.”

“I just knew we were going to get that baby,” says Linda.

Looking back, Linda and Carl believe that the experience was the Lord’s way of showing them they still wanted a family. They were still open.

What happened next they call downright “miraculous.”

Exactly a week later Linda’s sister attended a nursing seminar. She overheard two nurses sitting nearby, talking about a couple—they couldn’t remember their names—in their Sabbath school who wanted a baby. One of the nurses, Mary Ann Roberts, a professor at Southern Adventist University, had a young friend, Taylor, who wanted to place her 14-month-old, Elizabeth, in a loving two-parent family.

Linda’s sister quickly joined the conversation, helping the nurses with the names “Carl and Linda.”

“Do they still want a baby?” Mary Ann asked Linda’s sister.

“Absolutely, yes,” she replied.

At 1:00 that afternoon Linda sat at her work desk reflecting on the events of the past week—namely, losing...
their chance for a baby. We should have tried an adoption agency again, she thought. Lord, please work out an adoption for us or allow us the miracle of having our own child.

An hour later Linda took a call from her sister at the nursing seminar. “Do you still want a baby?”

“Yes!” cried Linda.

A meeting was set for 5:15 for Linda and Carl to meet Taylor. Two hours later baby Elizabeth went home with them.

“T here is no doubt in our minds that God wanted Elizabeth in our home,” says Linda. “Elizabeth was a miracle, an answer to prayers.”

But Taylor’s parents and grandparent s didn’t approve of their 18-year-old’s adoption plan. They disowned her, threw her possessions in the street, and placed pressure on her to reverse her decision. There would be a car in the deal for Taylor, her family said, if she would just change her mind.

Taylor assured the Smiths that she wanted Elizabeth with them, then suddenly changed her mind under pressure from her family.

Finally, on the way to court, where she would tell the judge her final decision, Taylor stuck by her original intent: the Smiths would become Elizabeth’s legal adoptive parents.

“I’m proud of you,” said the judge. “You haven’t had family support for your decision, but I want you to know that I support you. Be proud of your decision. Start your life over again. You have done the right thing.”

W hile the legal battles were stressful, expensive, and perplexing, the Smiths believe the Lord’s hand was in every aspect of their experience, including the tremendous support from their church family.

Taylor has gone on with her life. She has a boyfriend and works at Burger King. She still drives the new car her family had tried to persuade her with. “I made the right decision,” she told the Smiths recently as she dropped off a stuffed Sylvester the Cat.

Meanwhile, the Smiths revel in taking Elizabeth to Sabbath school every week. “I promised the Lord that I would do everything in my power to get Elizabeth into the kingdom,” says Linda.

“The Lord gave us this daughter,” says Carl. “His hand is in everything. The circumstances are too unusual for us to believe otherwise.”

Geneth . . . and Hunter . . . and Carter

Geneth Wolfer is single, a physician, 40-plus.

For 18 years she has practiced medicine.

Back in high school she dreamed of adopting children. “It has been part of my thinking forever,” she says.

When she approached agencies about adoption, she walked into a stone wall. They were “very negative,” says Geneth. With plenty of married couples out there trying to adopt, why would an agency even consider a single woman?

Still, Geneth plugged on—researching the Internet, law, and the actual process of adoption.
Adoption Etiquette

Insensitive things to say to or about adoptive children or families

1. “Which are your real children?” (All are real children.)
2. “This is her adopted daughter, Elizabeth.” (Drop the word “adopted.” Elizabeth is her daughter.)
3. What nationality is she? (Whose business is it?)
4. You are such wonderful people to adopt these children. (Patronizing.)
5. He’s adopted, you know.
6. Didn’t your real parents want you?
7. What’s wrong with her? How could she give up that baby?
8. Is that your real mother? (Better terms to use are biological and natural.)

She began the home study process. She calls it a “search and destroy of your life, an attempt to determine if you are a fit parent.” The paperwork preceding the home study is enormous, says Geneth, but the bottom line is this: Are you pro-child or pro-self?

She spent 25 hours at the computer answering the questions. They covered everything: finances, life insurance, health coverage, references, theories and thoughts on discipline, family history, relationships.

Then fingerprints; criminal checks—local and FBI—tests for HIV, hepatitis, and tuberculosis; physical exam; confirmation of employment.

The process normally takes three months. Social workers interview you, visit your home, investigate your references, and evaluate your personality and fitness for parenthood.

Geneth began to create spreadsheets of international adoption agencies, restrictions, availability of children, and other research. She viewed children’s photos on the Web. She acquired videotapes of children from around the world. She began to hone in on a sibling group from Siberia. Obtaining their developmental records, she began writing out the check to have their records reviewed independently. But before she lifted her pen to write the check, she checked the website, adoption.com, one more time. She noted an ad she hadn’t seen before:

“Home desperately needed for a newborn.”

“Desperate?” she mused. “I’ve got a chance.”

It was a little girl from Florida. Mixed race. But when Geneth called, the baby was already taken. That’s when she met Anamaria Kotzin, an adoption facilitator from Washington State.

“Don’t worry, A namaria said. “I’ve got another one for you.” A baby due three days later in Oklahoma City. A little boy with two potential birth fathers and a cocaine-addicted mother.

Did the cocaine addiction worry her?

Not at all. “I had done the research and knew that most babies that are pure cocaine exposed don’t have long-term effects from it,” she says. Short-term effects include withdrawal after birth.

After six months in the adoption process, Geneth was about to hold her first baby. “A lot of excitement,” she says. It was a Monday night, and she plowed through clothing collected by her family as she packed and prepared for the trip. Then it happened. The call from A namaria.

“Sorry to tell you this, but the birth father has stepped in and said, ‘It’s my baby and I love him.’”

Then a familiar refrain: “But I’ve got another one for you.”

Geneth was skeptical. But A namaria provided her with another phone number. This time in California. A baby due the end of September. The women talked: a wanna-be mom and a birth mom. They talked an hour. The next day A namaria called Geneth. “It’s yours!”

Geneth packed her suitcases again and waited. Not long, though. Hunter was born August 6.

A fter six canceled flights and a day in the Atlanta airport, Geneth finally arrived in California. She walked into the nursery and looked at the “wellest baby in ICU.” He was six weeks early, jaundiced, skinny, irritable. A couple hours later she held the four-pound-six-ounce baby. While Hunter spent 10 days in the hospital, Geneth flew back and forth to California to hold, feed, change, and care for him.

He thrived.

“I don’t believe this,” said more than one doctor at his healthy recovery.

Geneth retained a California attorney, the birth mother relinquished her parental rights, and Geneth’s mother took Hunter “home” to a California hotel until the state of Tennessee’s Interstate Adoption Compact officials provided clearance for Hunter to enter the state.

That’s when the legal nightmare began. Geneth’s Tennessee attorney determined that the California surrender was an illegal surrender. The California attorney had complied with neither California’s nor Tennessee’s laws.

A retainer fee had already been paid to the California attorney, but the surrender had to be completely begun again—with an appearance before a California judge.

“The birth mother signed,” said Geneth. “I signed. The papers went to the Interstate people on Monday. A nd on Monday morning the papers were ‘hand walked’ to the state people.”

“We were cleared in 24 hours to leave the state—something that normally takes 10-14 days.”
How did a newborn change the life of a busy doctor? What is it like to realize a dream since high school? What does it mean to finally be a family? How did Geneth feel holding a four-pound infant on the plane trip back to Tennessee after an eight-month odyssey?

“I was amazed at how the pieces all fit together despite all the trouble,” she says. “It didn’t feel quite real yet.” Mostly, she says, she just sat back and enjoyed every moment of her new venture into motherhood.

But her adventure in adoption was about to take another twist. A national call from Anamaria. “Remember that little guy in Oklahoma City whose birth father decided to keep him?”

“Yes.”

“Well, you could be interested?”

“Uh, no.”

She had not intended to add to her family for another year or two. Well, it won’t be so bad, she thought. Things are in place. The home study’s complete. It didn’t work out.

“I’ve got another one for you,” Anamaria said.

That one didn’t work out either. “I’ve got another one for you due April 1,” Anamaria said.

When Carter arrived two months early in Oklahoma, Geneth boarded a plane, saying to herself, “I’ve done this before; I’ve braved a preemie already.”

Carter Price Wolfer spent several weeks in the ICU. “They gave me a hospital room to stay in,” says Geneth, who again flew back and forth between her Tennessee practice and her son. Carter too thrived under her care and attention.

Famous Adoptees

Newt Gingrich (politician)
Marilyn Monroe (actress)
Dan O’Brien (Olympic Gold Medalist, Decathlon)
Nancy Reagan (actress; wife of U.S. president)
Dave Thomas (founder of Wendy’s)
John J. Audubon (naturalist)
Ted Danson (actor)
Gerald Ford (U.S. president)
Melissa Gilbert (actress)
Tom Monaghan (founder of Domino’s Pizza, owner of Detroit Tigers)

Willie Mays

Famous Adoptive Parents

Julie Andrews (singer/actress)
Erma Bombeck (humorist)
Harry Belafonte (singer)
Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman (actors)
Jesse Helms (U.S. senator)
Bob and Dolores Hope (comedian/singer)
Robert Fulghum (author)
Michael Landon (actor)
Willie Mays (professional baseball player)
Jerry Lewis (comedian, singer)
Ed McMahon (TV personality)
She's My Hero

BY PAMELA MAIZE HARRIS

She's my hero.

She's my daughter's birth mother.

Sydney chose to give life to a tiny embryo. Had she chosen abortion, I would never have known this creature. Never have met a baby girl named Malissa Olivia.

Sydney's decisions have permanently fashioned their magnitude on my soul.

She could have chosen to raise Malissa alone. All alone. But she told me, "The healthiest thing for a child is both a mother and a father. I decided to sacrifice to have something better for her—not me."

She told me this the day before yesterday. We talk about twice a month and sometimes write e-mails. We talk about Malissa's latest antics, and we tell each other how much we love the other.

Malissa's birth is a secret to Sydney's family. She told me this the day before yesterday. We talk about twice a month and sometimes write e-mails. We talk about Malissa's latest antics, and we tell each other how much we love the other.

Malissa's birth is a secret to Sydney's family. She could not tell them. And she continues to grieve for Malissa. She could not tell them. And she continues to grieve for Malissa. She is not of my faith, and I am not of hers, but we both share this soul-bonding love for this little wiggly, inquisitive mite. We believe in God-breathed destiny. "You are an answer to my prayers," she tells me.

To help defray the expense of adoption, I sold my 1957 black Chevy. It had been my grandfather's and my proud possession for nearly 20 years. But it was only metal, not a rosy, smiling, giggling, sparkling Malissa. It collected dust. I cried when I sold it.

But the car was nothing. Nothing compared to what Sydney gave up when she handed me a bright and shining star, gift-wrapped in ribbons of potential, a sweet voice that now says "Mama," and smiling lips from her first day on earth.

This little rosebud is an eternal gift. She is my daughter for eternity. We are forever bound together. I love her with a depth that exceeds any imaginable description.

Sydney's decisions have permanently fashioned their magnitude on my soul.

There are other reasons. The legal snafus for Geneth have cost her dearly, more than $3,400 just for the birth certificate. "You can figure an adoption that happens well, without difficulty, is going to cost between $10,000 and $20,000 for a newborn," she says.

"I have seen how it can be handled badly," she says. "I have seen it handled well. I understand that if you change the life of a child, you've changed all the generations that follow. It's a positive thing. I want to help kids get homes."

What Sydney gave her was the opportunity to have a role model—a mother and a father, Allen and me. What an honor.

Malissa "writes" funny letters about her life for family and friends. "Malissa's Adventures" arrive in Sydney's mailbox thousands of miles away every month. She reads them aloud to Malissa's birth father. They laugh. They tease each other.

Malissa's Adventures arrive in Sydney's mailbox thousands of miles away every month. She reads them aloud to Malissa's birth father. They laugh. They tease each other.

"Ah, sounds like she might have your feistiness," says one.

"She has your eyes," says the other, looking at the pictures that always arrive with the letter.

In her first 10 months Malissa has completed 19 flights, had her picture in the Los Angeles Times, and flown into an international airport, where we invited Sydney, who lives nearby, to come see us and talk.

I shot a roll of film of Sydney and Malissa together in an airport waiting area. We asked a fellow traveler to capture the three of us forever on film. The photographer has no idea what this photo might mean to a young woman someday. I will put it and the others away for her. For later.

Someday she will ask me about Sydney. She will wonder.

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Someday she will ask me about Sydney. She will wonder.

I will pull out the pictures. Show her Sydney's hugs and kisses and tell her how very much she was loved. Sydney loved her so much she chose to live the rest of her earthly life with the nagging grief of separation from her. Sydney unselfishly gave Malissa both a mother and a father, Allen and me. What an honor.

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An Overview: Two Adventist Placement Organizations

**Adventist Adoption and Family Services**
Offers two types of services:
- newborn infants
- special needs

Approximate Costs of Adopting a Newborn From AAFS:
- $11,525, includes medical, legal fees, counseling, and other pregnancy-related costs
- PLUS
- home study
- postplacement visits
- travel

AAFS Places:
- 5-10 newborn infants per year
- 25 special needs children per year

Special-Needs Children:
- definition varies from state to state, but includes:
  - sibling groups
  - racially mixed children
  - children from high-risk backgrounds
  - children who are school age (not preschool)
- placement is often subsidized until child reaches 18 in many states
- may present more challenges, but not necessarily
- 200 available at any one time

Source and Contact:
Sharon Crosby
Adventist Adoption and Family Services
6040 SE. Belmont Street
Portland, OR 97215
Phone: 303-232-1211

**International Children’s Care**
- founded by Robert Folkenberg after the 1978 Guatemalan earthquake
- goal: to help orphaned children around the world
- operates SDA orphanages in the following countries: Romania, Guatemala, Mexico, Dominican Republic, India, Brazil, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Thailand
- handles 10-20 adoptions per year
- has been handling adoptions for past 18 years
- majority of adoptive parents are Adventists
- focuses on orphaned and abandoned children
- adoption costs range $6,000 (plus travel) or less, depending on country, where variation in fees exists
- totally nonprofit and dependent on donations; not subsidized by the Adventist Church
- social worker team assists in the process
- adoption process takes six to seven months on average
- $5 application pays for booklet on services, information regarding fees, and a preliminary application for adoption
- assists communities hit by hurricanes and other disasters in which a lot of children are in need

Source and Contact:
Enrique Illingworth
International Children’s Care
2711 NE. 134th Street
Vancouver, WA 98686
Fax: 360-573-0491
Phone: 360-573-0429
The Last Days: What Are You Getting Ready For?

J ust so you know up front, I’m generally not a last-days alarmist. I don’t peruse “survivalist literature.” Hal Lindsey’s books I viewed as late great ways for him to scare up boatloads of income. When my son came home from academy with an assignment to locate in a newspaper 10 signs of the end (wars and rumors, famines, earthquakes; people who are fierce, reckless, disobedient to parents, swollen with conceit), I suggested blandly that he might also find the same evidence in newspapers of 80 years ago.

It’s October as I write. Newsweek prophesies on its cover “The Crash of ‘99?” Fortune preaches financial cataclysm. Esquire billboards “The Coming Economic Collapse.” Esquire’s Walter Russell Mead calls it “the storm of the century,” in which the Dow “could easily fall by two thirds— that’s 6,000 points.” In the United States “housing prices would plummet, leaving millions . . . sitting on mortgages that are worth far more than their homes. Millions of people would lose their jobs, and tens of millions more would watch their wages drop as employers frantically tried to cut back their payrolls. Any cities would face bankruptcy as their tax revenues collapsed.

“AII these things and more have already happened in many countries around the world. Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Russia, South Africa— stock markets in those countries have fallen by as much as 90 percent. Unemployment rates are exploding, and countless people face the loss of their businesses, jobs, and homes. Even starvation.”

Elsewhere in Esquire the Y2K problem is appraised by Jason Matusow, Microsoft’s year 2000 strategy manager: “There is no one company or person who can [fix] it. A nybody who has spent significant time working on this will recognize that the problem is as serious as anyone has said it could be.” A s anyone? Planes crashing, million-dollar phone bills, batty traffic signals, no bank cards?

A dd to this a plethora of terrorist possibilities, including a few nuclear arsenals up for grabs. Moreover, various environmental catastrophes loom, and last Friday an unflappable computer programmer told me he was pulling money out of his bank prior to January 1, 2000. I realized then that if the substance doesn’t get it done, the panic will.

We’re going down, people. Three nights ago when the reality hit me, I couldn’t sleep. Most of the early-morning hours I spent reading and praying. Last night I shared my concerns at family worship. We discussed possible scenarios and our futures as individuals and as a family, about whether we should sell our house, how we might respond to chaos licking like dark flames around us. Afterward we huddled in prayer. We are of good spirits because we reached a conclusion: our only hope is in Jesus, the light of the world. Nothing has changed there.

“W hat are you getting ready for?” Seventh-day Adventists, what are you getting ready for? Are you content trying to survive until the Second Coming? Is that God’s call for us?

No. Let the survivalists stockpile their Spam and their Smith and Wessons. Let God’s people move to new models of the transforming grace of Christian community. Christianity has never been about isolationism and never will be. Watch the signs of the times come clearer. In the midst of this collapse, Adventist homes open to the dispossessed and fearful. Adventist churches and schools become cities of refuge and outposts of mercy. Sanctuaries house the homeless. Playgrounds plow up into gardens. As a world self-destructs, Acts 2 emerges before our wondering eyes.

We’re going up, people. Music, poetry, and testimony powerfully move us past lamentation to balm. Our choirs swell as “outsiders” join in, sensing the peace and joy that comes not from this world’s merchandise. God blesses us in a thousand ways, whether or not we lose our savings or our lives. While other citizens quiver and kill, lie and steal, we remain true to our only King. Accepting, sharing, forgiving, and faithful to the end. Hallelujah! Glory! This is our finest hour.

Chris Blake teaches communications at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska.
Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

George R. Knight, professor of church history, Seventh-day Adventist University, Nampa, Idaho, 1998, 586 pages, U S$24.99, Can$35.99, hardcover. Reviewed by Herbert E. Douglass was selected to be the author.

Douglass was well prepared for the task. He had served in the church as a college president, professor of religion, book editor, and associate editor of the Adventist Review. He had also taught college-level courses on the gift of prophecy and had been an avid lifelong student of Ellen White.

The result of his labor is a book of monumental proportions (more than 600 large double-columned pages, with probably three or four times the number of words as its predecessor). There is not a single volume in the history of Ellen White studies that covers such a vast array of topics.

Messengers of the Lord is not only massive; it also reflects a broad range of knowledge of the literature related to Ellen White and her work. The footnotes provide a gold mine of sources for those who have an interest in exploring the various subtopics covered in the book.

Douglass has divided the book into eight sections and 47 chapters. He entitles section one “God’s Communication System.” The focal point is a general discussion of God’s use of prophets in the Bible.

The second section provides a biographical overview and introduces many of Ellen White’s personal characteristics. Section three treats her prophetic ministry, while the fourth section shows her as the prophetic voice of Adventism within the context of the denomination’s history.

Section five centers on several of Ellen White’s major contributions to the church in such areas as health, education, and publishing. Section six, one of the most important, treats principles of interpretation and provides insights into the production of her writings.

The seventh section evaluates the criticisms of Ellen White and her work. The last section (eight) covers in three chapters the “continuing relevancy of God’s messenger” for the Adventist Church and its members. Then there are the 16 appendices, which provide a range of specialized topics all the way from discussing Ellen White’s growth in understanding of her visions to a complete copy of her last will and testament.

Douglass has written an encyclopedic work. Both church members and those finding their orientation outside of Adventism will find the book useful and informative. While some people will read it all the way through, it is probable that more readers will use it as a reference volume.

While readers may not agree with every one of the author’s interpretations, it is safe to say that all will be enriched by reading and studying his work. Messenger of the Lord is one of those books that should be on the shelves of every person interested in Adventism and/or Ellen White and her ministry. It could even serve as a worthy Christmas gift.

Walking on the Edge

Thirteen Interactive Bible Studies for Adventist Students in Public High School, Stuart Tyner and V. Bailey Gillespie, Hancock Publications, a division of La Sierra University Press, Riverside, California, U S$9.95 (quantity discounts available), paper. Contact AdventSource, Lincoln, Nebraska (1-800-328-0525). Noted by Ella Rydzewski, book review editor.

Tyner and Gillespie have written these outstanding lessons to meet the needs of church youth unable to attend Adventist schools. Often on the edge of the church cliques, these students long to be embraced. Words on a page cannot embrace, but in the hands of a sensitive and insightful leader they help create spiritual identity. An excellent resource for spiritual directors, the lessons work for groups or individuals.
The Review and Herald Publishing Association accomplished two purposes by opening its doors to the public this past September. One was to offer Adventist Church members the opportunity to visit the Hagerstown, Maryland, facility and purchase books and periodicals for "warehouse prices." The second was the chance to acquaint members of the Hagerstown community with the publishing house's purpose and products.

In the latter group were two of Hagerstown’s deputy sheriffs, who spent most of the day at the booth sponsored by Listen magazine. They had come at the request of Listen editor Lincoln Steed to promote safety, home security, and crime prevention. They left with "a new source for materials and information," according to Deputy First Class Jim Holsinger, who described his day at the Review as "a great experience" and mentioned his pleasure at having met people from such places as Ohio, Arizona, and Georgia.

Holsinger and his fellow officer, Deputy First Class Forest Sprecher, went back to their offices with an armload of Listen and Winner magazines and catalogs listing other items produced by the Review and other Adventist organizations that will be helpful to them. Sprecher also mentioned having found new resources for his work with DARE, which promotes a drug-free lifestyle for young people.

Firsthand Look

Adventists who attended the Open House were able to see some of the Review and Herald's involvement with NET '98. As they toured the factory, visitors saw the web press in the midst of a print run of 40,000 Bibles for the satellite evangelistic series. The Review's first printing of 100,000 Bibles had been insufficient to meet the demand. In the bindery and shipping departments visitors saw posters, Bible lessons, and other NET '98 materials being processed.

The second annual event attracted a wide variety of people. Some came from close to home—employees’ family members and friends, retired Review workers, and local church members. A significant number came from the community—the pastor of a neighboring Lutheran church, a truck driver who had seen the loading dock many times but had never been inside, and people who said they drive by the publishing house every day and have always wondered about it.

"We tried to anticipate what might interest the different people who..."
early 8,000 baptisms and professions of faith will come from NET '98 in North America, according to a survey of participating pastors completed during the last week of the satellite-linked evangelism initiative of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.

The number is down from the estimate of baptisms in NET '96, which was more than 14,000. Answers were given in response to the question “What is your best estimate of how many you will baptize from these meetings by the end of this year [1998]?”

The surveys also revealed that attendance on the opening night (October 9) was more than 161,000. A bout 36,000 of those attending on the opening night were not church members. Total attendance is about equal to the figures for NET '96, while the nonmember attendance is down from an estimated 45,000 in NET '96.

Half the participating churches this year had more than 55 people in attendance. A tendance at the uplink site on the campus of Andrews University was 4,800.

The average nightly attendance throughout the five-week series was about 80,000. Half of the respondents reported having 12 or more nonmembers in attendance the evening the survey was taken. About 25,000 of the average attendance were nonmembers.

Of the 8,000 new members that pastors expect to add to their congregations as a result of NET '98, only about 1,300 are children from church-member families. Another 8,500 to 9,000 nonmembers who attended NET '98 have already agreed to continue one-on-one Bible studies, Bible classes, or small groups even though they have not made a decision to join the church.

The studies were conducted by the Center for Creative Ministry for the North American Division. At the ninety-fifth percentile confidence level, the error factor is 8 percentage points.
plus or minus. Round one of the interviews was conducted on October 11-16, 1998. Round two was completed on November 8-11, 1998. A total of 1,985 congregations have been identified as hosting local meetings as part of NET '98 in North America.

Telephone interviews were conducted with a random sample of 142 participating pastors during the week immediately following the opening weekend. Another survey of a second random sample of 161 participating pastors was conducted during the last week of the series.

A larger sample will be interviewed in the spring of 1999 to get information on baptisms and professions of faith several months after NET '98, and to get more detailed evaluations of various aspects of satellite evangelism.

Church Losses Mount in Central America

The Adventist Church recently received word on the extent of damages to Adventist churches and missing church members in Central America as a result of Hurricane Mitch.

At pre-storm time there were 10 known Adventist dead and four missing in Nicaragua. Forty-two homes of members were destroyed and 100 additional homes incurred substantial damage, says Luis Oscar Palacios, Central American Union treasurer.

In Honduras there is no data on dead or missing members. However, 202 members' homes were destroyed on the mainland and 70 percent of all the homes on Guanaja Island were destroyed. About 200 homes of members incurred major damage, and 1,200 Adventist families lost most of their personal possessions.

All Adventist churches and schools in Honduras are still standing, but there is flood and mud damage.

In El Salvador there are no known Adventists dead or missing. Five homes of members were totally destroyed, and more than 150 families lost their personal possessions. There was no damage to churches or schools.

In Guatemala 30 members' homes were destroyed and 300 families lost their possessions. But we know of no damage to churches or schools.

"Please pray for our Adventist people in Central America and for the children and youth who more than ever before will need divine providence to continue their education for lives of Christian service in this afflicted region," Palacios says.

Another Enrollment Record for NAD Colleges

Aventist colleges and universities in North America set another enrollment record this fall for full-time equivalency (FTE) enrollment. This year's tally of 16,887, up...
Did You Know?

Pentecostals Make Up 25 Percent of World’s Christians

More than 25 percent of the world’s Christians are Pentecostal or charismatic, a Pentecostal historian said at the recent eighteenth Pentecostal World Conference.

Vinson Synan told the gathering in Seoul, Korea, that there are close to 2 billion people who have accepted the Christian faith worldwide. He estimated that of that number, 540 million are charismatic or Pentecostal, reported the Assemblies of God News and Information Service.

“The continuing explosive growth of Pentecostalism indicates that the renewal will continue into the next millennium,” he said.

More than 10,000 people attended the meeting, which is held in part to foster the sharing of ideas and worldwide networking among Pentecostal leaders.

The conference was held September 22-25 at Yoido Full Gospel Church, which is believed to be one of the world’s largest churches. Statistics also show that Christianity, rather than Buddhism, is now the major faith group in Korea.—Religion News Service.

For Your Good Health

Your Best Foot Forward

A new survey reports that only one woman in four regularly wears shoes with more than a one-inch heel to the office. Fewer than 3 percent wear three-inch or taller heels. The twentysomethings lead the shoe revolution. Only 16 percent of women under age 30 wear heels higher than one inch to work. High heels place pressure on the forefoot and can lead to foot problems. And pressure on the balls of the feet increases with heel height.—Health and Fitness News Service.

A Key Battle Zone for Your Children

The transition between age 12 and 13 is a critical time in the battle against teen drug use. A new survey shows that few 12-year-olds know how to buy marijuana or know someone who has used hard drugs. By age 13, teenagers know other students who use marijuana and hard drugs, learn where to buy drugs, and significantly change their attitudes about drug use.—National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse.

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

Comparative Fall Enrollment Report 1994-1998

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News Notes

✓ Correction. In September world church leaders participated in the 100th anniversary of River Plate Adventist University in Argentina. The November 12 Review incorrectly noted the event as the 100th anniversary of the Adventist work in Argentina.

What’s Upcoming

Dec. 19 Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for the North American Division
Dec. 26 Ingathering campaign ends
Jan. 2 Soul-winning Commitment Day
Revival

It’s Not the Size of the Truck That Fascinates Them

BY SARAH E. COLEMAN

It’s not the high-tech sound equipment stored inside its matching trailer. No, it’s not even the portable Velcro wall or sumo wrestling suits. What really captures the attention of the crowds are YouthNet eXtreme’s talented, Spirit-filled team members.

“At first I thought you were really weird,” writes Jonathan, a junior high student from Colorado. “But now I feel similar to you guys. I want to tell the world I follow Jesus.” After an evening presentation by YouthNet eXtreme, Jonathan and eight of his buddies sang, prayed, and read the Bible for two hours without prompting or supervision from their teachers.

“Kids like Jonathan are what we’re all about,” says YouthNet eXtreme traveling director Brian Yeager, age 24. “We want to show them Christ in a radically different way.”

Team member Cory Wetterlin, age 20, agrees. “When we come into a place, we’re not just like mannequins on a stage. We’re real people, and we talk to them like real people and hang out with them like real people. Through showing the way we are, we want to show [them] that God is a real God and He’s willing to be personal as well!”

From coast to coast throughout North America during the last five months, YouthNet eXtreme team members have had plenty of opportunity to put their special philosophy of ministry on display.

Dream Team

Originally the brainchild of Adventist college pastors, chaplains, and a few other visionaries, YouthNet eXtreme has been in the works for almost three years. Now based at the Center for Youth Evangelism in Berrien Springs, Michigan, and supported by the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, the unique traveling ministry team was carefully assembled.

Each team member was prayerfully selected. Applicants had to show flexibility, commitment, and desire to serve in what promised to be a very challenging ministry.

Cory Wetterlin, a 20-year-old from Walla Walla College, brought drama, music, and lighting talents to the team. Laura Whidden, 22, from Andrews University, specializes in music, public relations, and outreach. Bernita (Bré) Smith, 25, a sophomore at Southern Adventist University, also took this year off from college to share talents in drama and music. Director Brian Yeager has served as a youth pastor, traveling ministry coordinator, drama team director, and sound technician. United by a shared vision for reaching Adventist youth and young adults with the gospel, these four individuals work together to create unforgettable dramas, songs, activities, and experiences.

Although YouthNet eXtreme works in conjunction with the North American Division Youth Ministries office, the team’s financial support comes primarily through other sources. A dventist and non-A dventist sponsors, small ministry site charges, occasional offering collections, and regular private sponsors keep the team on the road. Mackie Sound, a nondenominational supplier of audio components, miraculously donated $15,000 in equipment to the team, including a 40-channel mixer, speakers, microphones, and amplifiers.

“God has provided for our needs,” says Yeager, “and I...
know He'll continue to do so.”

Much of the 1997-1998 school year was spent in developing YouthNet eXtreme’s extensive advertising and publicity program, but the rewards have been many.

Hundreds of youth ministry leaders across North America have first learned of the availability of the team through special posters, brochures, and news releases that launched the project.

The equipment used by the team is also an important feature of the unusual outreach ministry. The team’s 1999 Ford F350 crew cab dooley, attractively painted with logos and an eye-catching picture, pulls a matching 36-foot gooseneck trailer that holds all the team’s luggage and equipment. This unique mode of transportation provides an open door for ministry as the team travels from site to site across the nation.

“We’re booked well into 1999,” says Yeager, who says he realizes that every day is an opportunity to witness. “We’ve got the scheduling to add a team after the General Conference session in 2000 if we want to. It’s really picking up momentum.”

The Ride of Their Lives

In June 1998 YouthNet eXtreme members began their two-year trip across North America, eager to spark a revival using their custom-designed youth programs. Through previsit contacts, the

YouthNet eXtreme Goals

1. Revival
   “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32).

2. Forming an army of youth
   “And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NIV).

3. Empowering leaders for youth ministry
   “Jesus said, ‘Feed my lambs’” (John 21:15, NIV).
team finds out what local youth and youth leaders say they need and seek to provide specially tailored youth ministries.

“We’ll provide whatever you need,” says Yeager. In Hollywood, California, the team functioned in a supporting role by designing pamphlets and supplying organization for a youth rally. At Mountain View Conference camp meeting in West Virginia, they supplied a full 10 days of youth and young adult programming entirely on their own. And in Colorado they presented a Week of Prayer for elementary, junior high, and high school groups.

“We don’t like to be bored,” Wetterlin observes. “And we don’t want to make the kids bored.”

For YouthNet eXtreme no two programs or locations are the same. “We stay everywhere,” says Yeager. “Floors, hotels, dorm rooms, gymnasiums, summer camp cabins—anywhere people will put us up.”

But no matter where they go, the team’s focus remains fixed. “We’re all about revival,” Yeager affirms. “Youth have been sitting in church basements for too long. It’s time for them to experience life-changing Christianity.”

Spirit in Action

At the Mountain View Conference camp meeting in West Virginia (almost canceled due to severe flooding in the area) YouthNet eXtreme had an opportunity to see the Holy Spirit in action. At the end of their 10-day ministry effort, 11 youth were baptized in the summer camp swimming pool and 20 more expressed a desire to be baptized in the near future.

Sixteen-year-old Katy, who had never felt accepted in her church, gave her testimony for the camp meeting congregation. “The YouthNet eXtreme team was able to explain to me that I don’t have to be perfect to accept salvation. Instead, I can accept it as a free gift. For the first time in my life I am willing to accept Jesus as my personal Saviour.” Katy was one of the young adults baptized that week.

Known for their enthusiastic attitude and high energy levels, team members nonetheless take a mature approach to the challenges of their ministry. It’s difficult, they say, to keep a positive outlook when they’re surrounded by crowds every day of the week. “It’s important to take personal time,” Yeager notes. “If you struggled with something before, it’s going to be even bigger once you’re on the road. You just have to take a time-out.”

Personal devotional time and prayer help keep the team focused and able to address potential difficulties. Laura Whidden says that her biggest struggle lies in addressing the audience honestly and admitting that she’s just as human as they are. But the reward comes when kids approach her afterward, glad to see that someone finally understands their problems. “Jesus can heal me, too,” they often tell her after a performance or discussion.

“This is incredible,” said one awestruck pastor from West Virginia. “This is the first time we’ve had something that ministers to the youth and doesn’t offend the adults.”

If YouthNet eXtreme’s performance in the first five months is any indicator of how well their two-year outreach will go, Seventh-day Adventists and other evangelical Christians across North America will be hearing much more from the team.

The big rig with the dedicated team will be fanning revival fires wherever the Spirit leads.

Sarah E. Coleman studies at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington. Last summer she interned at the Adventist Review.

I have had a great struggle getting along with other Adventists or getting them to get along with me. I’m either too loose or too uptight. I can’t be the only Adventist who lives a balanced lifestyle. Yet I can’t seem to find others who are like me. How do I go about finding Adventist friends I can get along with?

Ailan and Deirdre’s reply: We live in a diverse world. Even with the name “Adventist” you’ll find a wide range of people whose personalities and perspectives are as varied as their fingerprints. Having friends who share your tastes and views is fine, but we would challenge you to consider having friends who are different from you as well. Both adages apply: “Birds of a feather flock together” and “Opposites attract.” Spice up your friendships by being open to both.

You may be trying too hard to establish friendships with people who are “just like you.” You will certainly become frustrated if you expend most of your energy struggling “to get them to get along with you.”

Instead of using your energy to push others into friendship with you, let us suggest the following:

Be a humble listener. Nothing is more attractive to friendship than a person willing to listen to another with genuine interest. Listening is an art we can all hone to improve our friendships.

Be an accepting yet principled companion. As you have personally experienced, it is distasteful to have others label you, so make efforts to be open to all sorts of people. This is not to say that you waver on your beliefs or values; having distinct personal boundaries is very important to friendships. But good relationships flourish when your friend knows you accept her or him. Likewise, expect no less from people you call friends. Acceptance is central to thriving friendships.

Be patient. Ask God to bring friendly people into your life. Ask Him to make you a better friend. Take time with the relationships you are nurturing. Don’t rush. Don’t push. Friendships need time to develop and can’t be coerced into existence. If you spend the time being humble and accepting, you can reap great friendships that last a lifetime.

New for 1999

Thank you for another great year for X-Change. Please keep your questions coming. But to add a new twist to the column, we invite you to answer some questions too. So in this new year, from time to time we’ll pose a question to you, our readers, and have you reply with your answer/comment. You can send it via e-mail to: dream_VISION_ministries@compuserve.com.

Along with the question and your reply, please be sure to include your name, age, and location. We’re eager to hear from you, and although we won’t be able to print every reply submitted, we’re looking forward to growing with you from the exchange of thoughts and ideas.

Here’s our first question for you (4U):

A lot of our non-Adventist friends, both Christian and not, are showing a great interest in the Sabbath. What are some creative ways you celebrate the Sabbath? Do you have some meaningful Sabbath traditions you would be willing to share? How does the Sabbath have an impact on you?

We look forward to your replies. Thanks again for a great year, and we’ll see you in 1999.

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

Deirdre and Ailan Martin are cofounders of dream VISION ministries, dedicated to empowering young people in Christian lifestyle and leadership.
It’s possible for Adventists to attend church every Sabbath and be horrible neighbors. To have the most impressive evangelistic satellite system in the universe and the coldest church on earth. To be vegetarians and act like pigs.

Not so long ago many Seventh-day Adventists took the hymn “Onward, Christian Soldiers!” literally as they battled over theology. At times, on both sides, love got lost in the clouds of correct-doctrine gunfire. Thousands were spiritually injured. One person stopped to say hello to the senior elder in his church foyer on a Sabbath morning. The elder glared at him, reached into his pocket, and handed him a coin. “Here,” he said, walking off. “Give me a call when your theology has changed.”

Today yet another family no longer worships in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

We should never forget what Jesus said about shutting the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces (see Matt. 23:13). It’s one thing to stand firmly for what we hold as truth. It’s another to be unchristian while doing it.

The Way We Treat Each Other

Jesus had a thing or two to say about it.

By Gary Krause
Gongs and Cymbals

"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1, NIV).

Resounding gongs and clanging cymbals are still scaring people out of Adventist churches from America to Australia, Malawi to Malaysia. They're correct, proper, pious. But they don't love, and all they can see are other people's faults.

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" Jesus asks. "How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" (Luke 6:41, 42, NIV).

Our Lord's instruction is simple: "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged" (Luke 6:37). We need to look at our lives and make sure we can live with our own consciences, rather than playing conscience for everyone else.

So many sincere and committed Adventists feel burned out, inadequate, discouraged. They feel as if they don't measure up, that they've been "weighed in the balances, and... found wanting" (Dan. 5:27). The last thing they need is another self-righteous finger of accusation in their eyes, another reminder of their failures. They need a good dose of no-strings-attached Christian love. God calls us to build up, not knock down. Encourage, not discourage. Support, not judge.

"You, then, why do you judge your brother?" asks the apostle Paul. "Or why do you look down on your brother?... Each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another" (Rom. 14:10-13, NIV).

Vegetarian Hypocrisy

We don't have far to look for hypocrisy in the church. Some Adventists harangue young people for listening to rock music but happily listen to their favorite country singer's barroom tales of boozing and illicit love affairs. Others chastise fellow believers for eating meat while they drain the world's sugar supplies and never exercise. Still others condemn fellow church members for wearing chains around their neck while their brooches have you reaching for sunglasses.

Even though we know we should look to Christ, not others, it can still be faith-shattering when we discover major doses of hypocrisy in the church. Paul's advice to the Jews has relevance for Adventists:

"If you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?... You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: 'God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you'" (Rom. 2:19-24, NIV).

We all need to stop hypocritically adopting facades of piety and presenting to everyone an unbelievably good picture of ourselves. In many cases it's a defense because we've seen what some church people do to others who make mistakes. But why shouldn't we expect Christian cripples in the church? Why are we surprised to see people limping on spiritual crutches? There's a violent controversy raging, and we're all casualties. God's healing touch, His transforming grace, takes time in our own lives, so why should it work overnight in everyone else's?

This doesn't mean we should hold a weekly sin testimony time at church and parade our failings in front of everyone. It does mean we should create an environment in which people broken by sin can be assured of love, forgiveness, and noncondemnation. Beneath all the nice Sabbath clothes, Sabbath smiles, and Sabbath handshakes, each of us equally needs God's love, grace, and forgiveness. We need to embrace with love the casualties of the great controversy between good and evil.

Religious leaders attacked Jesus for breaking the rules of their club and associating with "publicans and sinners" (see, for example, Mark 2:16 and Luke 5:30). They were right, of course. The holy Son of God spent much of His time with bad people. What's even more amazing is that bad people wanted to spend time with Him. They loved to be near Him.

Even though Jesus intimately knew the power of sin, He was a friend to sinners. He never condemned a tax collector or a prostitute, but He did condemn pious, loveless religious leaders. He said, "They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders" and "shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces" (Matt. 23:4, 13, NIV).

It's possible to uphold the highest standards, emphasize all the doctrines, and still have love. In fact, love should enhance, not contradict, our 27 fundamental beliefs (see Matt. 22:37-40, NIV). Showing love to fellow sinners doesn't mean we're condoning sin. It simply means we don't throw the first stone. Or even the second one.

Straight Priorities

Sometime ago I was asked to preach at a church in a large city. It was cold, so after putting on dress trousers and a good shirt and tie, I pulled on a big wool sweater. (I owned only a light summer coat.)

A fter Sabbath school I found my way to the minister's room, sat down, and started to review my sermon. A fter a few minutes the senior elder—a retired pastor—came and greeted me warmly.

"You've got your coat with you?" he asked casually.

"Ah, no, I haven't, Pastor." "Oh, it's in the car, is it? You'd better go get it."

"No, it's not in the car. I didn't bring it with me."

"You didn't bring it? But you're preaching today, aren't you?"

"Well, I thought so."

"Well, why didn't you bring your coat?"

"To be honest, I was cold."

"Are you planning to preach from..."
the rostrum or down below?"

"I assumed I’d be preaching from
the rostrum, but if you’d prefer me to
preach from down below, I can do
that."

He seemed worried.

"Look," I added, "I’m very sorry. If it
embarrasses you that much, I can eas-
ily take my sweater off."

"It’s not me, Gary," he said. "You’re
disappointing God and the rest of the
congregation."

I don’t remember the whole conver-
sation, but I do remember him asking
whether I would dress like that if I
were going to see royalty. I asked him
if he always put on a suit and tie when
holding family worship at home.

I’ve thought a lot about that inci-
dent. This man, whom I like and
respect, certainly had a different per-
spective than I did. To a large extent it
reflects the era in which he grew up—
and supremacy.

Our homes, education, and genes dif-
come from different backgrounds.
Our homes, education, and genes dif-
er. Our family experiences, blood-
sugar levels, and pain-tolerance levels
differ. Our nationalities, food prefer-
ences, and hair colors differ. It’s a
wonder we get along at all.

How can we ever have any type of
unity in the church if we’re so different?

Gnats and Camels

In Matthew 23 Jesus warns people
to obey their religious leaders, but not
to follow their example. In fact, He
pronounces a number of woes against
these leaders and calls them hyp-
ocrites. "You give a tenth of your
spices—mint, dill and cummin," Jesus
says. "But you have neglected the more
important matters of the law—justice,
mercy and faithfulness" (Matt. 23:23,
NIV). They were so meticulous that
they tithed the herbs in their garden.
But they forgot about justice and
mercy and faithfulness. "You blind
guides!" Jesus exclaims, driving home
His disgust. "You strain out a gnat but
swallow a camel" (verse 24, NIV).

Gnats may bite and annoy us from
time to time, but we can largely ignore
them. It’s impossible to ignore camels,
particularly in rutting season when
they get violent. They can easily injure
or even kill you with a well-placed
kick. Gnats may occasionally get your
attention, Jesus says, but they’re noth-
ing compared to huge spitting camels.

I couldn’t imagine heavenly angels
looking down and sobbing: "Oh, no.
Gary isn’t wearing a coat today, and
he’s going to stand on the rostrum.
What are we going to do?" A nd as I
looked out on the congregation that
Sabbath morning, I saw that 90 per-
cent of the young men were wearing
sweaters (and without ties).

But if I ever preach in that church
again, I will wear a coat. I’ll make sure
of it. Why? Because love and not giv-
ing offense are camels of the faith. As
the apostle Paul says: "Let us therefore
make every effort to do what leads to
peace and to mutual edification"
(Rom. 14:19, NIV). Insisting on my
right to wear a sweater is a gnat.

The camel of all camels is love (see
Matt. 22:37-40), and as we Adventists
face the next century, I hope that we
do a whole lot more loving and a lot
less criticizing and judging. Our unity
depends on it.

Building Trust

Naturally there are times we see
someone doing something morally wrong
or damaging to the church’s mission to
build up the kingdom of God. We
shouldn’t ignore it. But before we race
to "set them straight," we need to ask
ourselves whether we’ve earned the right
to do so.

First, do they even know us? How
would we feel if a total stranger—
someone who has sat on the other side
of church for as long as we can remem-
ber and never spoken a word to us—
suddenly started correcting us?

Second, do they know we love
them, and do they trust us? If not,
speaking to them will only build up
barriers of distrust and anger.

How different it is when we make
people our friends—when we take
time not just to talk to them, but to
listen to them. To show that we care.
To show them that we think they’re
important, that we enjoy worshiping
with them and love them as brothers
and sisters in Jesus. To show them
that we need Jesus just as much as
they do. In such an environment we
can support each other and, "speak-
ing the truth in love," help each
other back on track when we stray
(Eph. 4:15, NIV).

If I Have Love

Where would we be without God’s
love softening our harsh edges, forgiv-
ning our mistakes, binding us together
in love? "Love is patient, love is kind.
. . . It is not rude, it is not self-seek-
ing, it is not easily angered, it keeps
no record of wrongs. Love does not
delight in evil but rejoices with the
truth. It always protects, always trusts,
always hopes, always perseveres. Love
never fails" (1 Cor. 13:4-8, NIV).

Where would we be if God were in
the business of cloning church members?
Where would our church family be with-
sout Susan the Questioner? Peter the
Constant? Ray the Administrator?
Emily the Compassionate? Philip the
Carer? James the Adventurer? Lynn the
Anchor? Alan the Wearer-of-Coats?■
Do you know how to cook? One thing you’ve probably noticed when you cook is that some things get softer and other things get harder.


All these changes have to do with chemistry and what the different foods are made of. Fruits and vegetables contain mostly carbohydrates. Their firm structure dissolves in the heat. Eggs contain protein. Those molecules weld together when they get hot.

Aren’t you glad that different foods behave differently when they get hot? Wouldn’t it be awful if everything we ate had the consistency of oatmeal? Not that there’s anything wrong with oatmeal. I love oatmeal. I’m just glad there are also crunchy things like apples and chewy things like bagels.

Sometimes when people get into trouble we say they are in hot water. Both “trouble” and “hot water” are uncomfortable places for people to be.

Different people behave differently when they get into hot water—just like food. Some people fall apart. Their structure dissolves in the heat. They can’t handle it. Other people get stronger. They can pull themselves together and tough it out.

It all depends on what they’re made of—their structure, their foundation.

Jesus told a story about these two kinds of people. You’ve probably sung about it. “The wise man built his house on rock. . . . The foolish man built his house on sand” (Matt. 7:24-26, ICB).

What makes the wise man wise? His foundation is in Jesus—the rock. The wise man is strong because Jesus is strong. Do you want to be like the wise man? Build your foundation in Jesus. Learn about Jesus. Follow Jesus.

Does that mean you won’t ever have trouble? No. But you do have this promise: “God is our protection and our strength. He always helps in times of trouble” (Psalm 46:1, ICB).

Then what should you do if you get into hot water? The Bible says, “If one of you is having troubles, he should pray” (James 5:13, ICB). Praying can bring you close to Jesus. His strength will weld together with yours. Together you will survive the hot water stronger than ever.
God’s Top Ten Reasons for Choosing the Shepherds

On the night when Jesus was born, God could have chosen to announce the good news of His birth first to kings and queens, priests and scribes, or uncles and aunts. Instead, He chose to reveal this outstanding news to smelly, insignificant shepherds.

Reading between the lines in the Bible account, we find 10 good reasons why God could have chosen them. I call them “God’s Top Ten.”

10. **They were near.** The Bible says, “And there were in the same country shepherds...” (Luke 2:8). God wanted the right individuals present that night to witness this glorious event. Just as God whisked Philip from the baptismal pool, He could have miraculously transported witnesses from faraway places. But with the right ones so close by, such a miracle was not needed.

9. **They were available.** “...keeping watch... by night.” Babies don’t always come at a convenient time of day. My wife went into labor with our first child at 10:30 p.m.—right as I was preparing to retire for the night. Though it was the middle of the night, the shepherds were up, alert, and available.

8. **They were responsible.** “...keeping watch over their flock by night.” They were not sleeping on the job. They could be trusted to handle this good news responsibly.

7. **They were self-denying.** “...shepherds abiding in the field... by night.” Those interested in pleasing themselves would not bother to investigate this good news at such an unreasonable hour. The shepherds, however, were accustomed to hardships as they daily lived without the comforts of home.

6. **They were brave.** “...shepherds abiding in the field... by night.” Like David of old, they could also tell of their scraps with lions, bears, and wolves. Such courage would be needed to share the events of this night.

5. **They were humble.** When the prophet Samuel paid a visit to the home of Jesse to anoint a new king of Israel, the last one considered was a shepherd boy. The job of a shepherd was not a coveted position. The good news that was given to them was not for their glorification. All glory was due to the newborn King.

4. **They were men of faith.** They believed and studied the Scriptures. They believed the angels. They believed that the promised Messiah would be found in a feeding trough. They believed that God would take care of their sheep while they were away. They believed that the Babe they saw in the manger was indeed Christ the Lord.

3. **They were men of action.** “Let us now go even unto Bethlehem...” (verse 15). The angels did not tell them explicitly to go and find the Saviour. A great blessing was bestowed upon them in giving them the announcement and the location of His birth. Such information demanded an immediate response. In complete agreement they encouraged one another to leave right away and find the Babe. The Bible says, “And they came with haste” (verse 16).

2. **They were willing to share.** “And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child” (verse 17). This momentous event, though revealed to the shepherds, was not to be kept a secret. The Babe born in a manger was the Saviour of all. Hence, His arrival must be broadcast exuberantly far and wide.

1. **They were a type of the true Shepherd.** Jesus is the Light of the world, the Bread of Life, the Living Water, the Door, the Great Physician, our High Priest, the True Vine, and so much more. Candlemakers, bakers, carpenters, doctors, or vine dressers could have surrounded the manger that night. But no one picture captures what Christ is to us better than that of a shepherd. A good shepherd provides for all the needs of the sheep—water, food, protection, medical attention, shelter, rest, refreshment, comfort, and security. A good shepherd is a constant companion, a faithful guide, a gracious host, a sure provider, and a mighty defender.

God did not arbitrarily give this startling announcement to just any group of people or shepherds that night. He had at least 10 good reasons for choosing those He did. ■

Terrell McCoy writes from Little Rock, Arkansas.