This isn’t the church I joined as a young man.

And I’m glad.

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church when I was young, you couldn’t worship with a white congregation in the United States if you were Black. You couldn’t get admitted to some Adventist colleges. Even if you were a leader at church headquarters, you didn’t eat in the main cafeteria. And, perhaps most shocking of all, you might be turned away from an Adventist hospital and die in a non-Adventist one (this happened).

Those conditions were wrong, terribly wrong. They denied the gospel itself. I’m glad we changed.

Of course, in other areas I don’t care for some of the changes, but no need to elaborate on them. The fact is, change is taking place—has been from the beginning, is right now, and will continue in the new century.

Chances are the pace of change will pick up as we go forward. The real question is will the changes bring us closer to Christ’s ideal for His people or further from it? As Samuel Betances puts it: “Change is inevitable; improvement is optional.”

This special issue, released at the turn of the century and the millennium (if you aren’t a purist), takes up the changing church. It’s a prophetic issue in two senses: it describes how the Adventist Church will look some years down the road (warning: fasten your seat belt!), and it dreams dreams of what the church might and ought to become.

Now, the very idea of change tends to disquiet us. Except for a very small percentage of the population, we’re all comfortable with the status quo. Notice what happens when we go to a new church. We choose a place to sit. And the next week? Back to the very same spot!

Jesus described human nature well: “No one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, ‘The old is better’”
When we talk about the changing church, we’re not throwing everything up for grabs. With all the changes that have happened, with the many taking place right now, and with the many more just ahead, the core, the heart will not change. The heart of Adventism is timeless, because it is tied to the Lord Himself, who tells us: “I am the Lord, I change not” (Mal. 3:6); and “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb. 13:8).

The changelessness of God is our security. Because He is constant, His compassions fail not and are new every morning (see Lam. 3:22, 23). He isn’t fickle. We can rely on Him. He is the Rock. We can trust Him.

So what counts most, what really counts, won’t change. No change in Jesus. No change in His salvation. No change in our fundamental beliefs. No change in our mission. No change in Jesus’ call for us to live as His disciples in the world. No change in “the blessed hope.”

Dear friends, keep these things in mind as you read this issue—which will interest, surprise, and maybe overwhelm you.

Kimberly Luste Maran, newest member of our editorial team, spearheaded this issue. Scores of people of all ages from around the world responded to our invitation to get involved and share their dream for the Adventist Church. We received way more contributions than we could possibly use.

To Kim and to all—my heartfelt thanks. This special issue goes out with a prayer that it will glorify our Lord and facilitate helpful change in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

As the millennium draws to a close, we all look to the next millennium with a lot of mixed feelings. As Adventists our foremost expectation is of Jesus’ second appearing in the clouds. However, as we look forward to that, I want to see our church primarily being more responsive to her internal needs, particularly having a membership and leadership that are effectively integrated in the way she prepares herself for the Great Commission—the gospel to all people on Planet Earth. I dream of a church that will, in a spectacular manner, rise and turn the world upside down with the gospel just as Paul did. A church that will fully reflect the character of God, a church that Jesus can look down upon, and turning to the Father, say, “Behold My brothers and sisters.”

Jacob Okello-Ameru
Uganda

Dream Center

Dreams. All of us have them. We dream about heaven, tomorrow, what we will do later today, whom we will see. . . . The new year and new millennium have made even the most reality-based among us dream about our futures. What about hopes for the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

Throughout this special issue of the Review we print the dreams of Adventist youth and young adults from around the world. What are your dreams?
Welcome to the New Millennium
Are you ready to embrace the trends?
TURNING THE CORNER onto Main Street evokes a familiar scene, one you wish you didn't have to witness each weekday afternoon. Michael, your son fresh from a nearby home-based preschool, who moments earlier was relaying compelling details about a classmate’s show-and-tell presentation that involved his father, a businessman who lives in Japan, via videophone, is now singing an all too often aired commercial and begging, if not demanding, that you take him to McDonald’s.

You quickly make a mental note to set an appointment for him with the family vitamin counselor, not knowing that Michael doesn’t have a deficiency, he’s really an enigma of a very highly paid partner in one of the top 10 advertising firms based in, well, every major country of the world, whose not-so-highly-paid account executives have successfully nabbed another “lifer,” a lifetime customer. What you should know, as you blatantly ignore your son and instead drive up to the entrance of Country Side Plaza in your town, A nywhere, is that it’s called brand loyalty, and not only are you hooked (after all, this is your third new Toyota Camry since 1994) to certain brand names and logos, but so are most 5-year-olds these days, not to mention . . .

Jasper, your 14-year-old Generation Y son from a previous marriage, who claims to have found his inner self and higher calling already, plays football, watches Dawson’s Creek reruns online from his laptop during class, and has a stockholders’ meeting tomorrow evening. He now plops into the seat beside you, after spending the afternoon at the mall with friends using his weekly discretionary funds, and inquires about supper.

“Dad’s turn to cook,” you say as you suddenly remember your promise to swing by HealthM art to pick up tofu burgers and vanilla-flavored Rice Dream milk.

Twenty minutes later you pull into your driveway and see your neighbor, Mrs. Washington, digging potatoes in her backyard. She waves you over to give you some beets, carrots, four ears of corn, and an acorn squash that she grew herself.

“Where are you guys going to plant a lawn garden?” she chides. “The only way you can guarantee that food is organic and clean these days is to grow it yourself. Besides, HealthM art,” she glances at your bag, “is way too expensive.”

Mrs. Washington and her family, the only regular churchgoers in your culturally diverse community, have cut excess costs wherever possible since her husband, downsized from his company after 12 years of service, started a home-based business. To make ends meet and help with household duties, her spry but elderly mom has moved into a small ground-level apartment Mr. Washington built for her on the back of the house, and her daughter Janelle, who has a 2-year-old, recently moved back home and is taking college courses online. Their oldest daughter, Nicola, 30, who hasn’t gotten married yet, is living in a boardinghouse in Devonshire, England, with 14 other people—singles and families—and reportedly has cooking duty only once every two weeks.

“Before I get married,” you recall hearing Nicola, a medical resident who runs a free clinic in her community on Saturdays, say last year, “I have to get rid of all these college loans.”

Once inside the house you wash your hands and sit for supper, thanking God for keeping you sane, supplying clean drinking water, and helping you find more time to spend with yourself and your family.

Welcome to the new millennium.

The More Things Change . . .

A round the globe, life in the third millennium is going to be different, yet
in many ways the same. After the world rings in the new year, fixes a few major computer glitches, and recovers from the worst “hangover” known to humankind, life will pretty much continue as we know it.

You’ll go back to work Monday morning. Your cell phone will ring. A new fast-food restaurant will go up on the corner in a matter of days. The second half of Ling’s school year will begin. And life and business will go on as usual.

Lest you get too comfortable, take note. Things will change, and not just in the ways you expect. It’s the end of the world as we know it. The end of the industrial age and the beginning of a technologically dominated renaissance we’ll live to see unfold. Call it McWorld. Call it the Digital Era. It’s early in the twenty-first century, and we’ve just given birth to the global age. Here are a few trends noted by futurists and analysts busy spurring on millennium fever:

Technology

Among the most interesting new gadgets—kitchen appliances, life simplifiers, and home enhancers such as large-screen televisions that hang on walls like well-framed works of art—will be the videophone.

“We’ll be able to see the face behind the voice,” says Gerald Celente, a researcher and author. “When you communicate like that, factoring in the psychological and social component, you have more of an interpersonal relationship.” Celente says that not only will the “televideophony” be accepted much like the answering machine was in the past two decades, but it will be valuable to families with relatives living far away. The new visual dimension will also enable salespeople to do product demonstrations without traveling, look the person in the eye, and understand whether or not they’ve connected with the person or if he or she is turned off.

A more and more people, downsized because their company moved production to another country to lower overhead costs, affected by work decentralization, underemployment, or bitten by the bug that makes them finally decide to try their hand at home-based business, as 12 percent of those downsized did in 1996, long-distance communication will be more like television. And, according to Celente, this will cause face-to-face business communication to become increasingly uncommon—and therefore increasingly important.

Business

Business ethics will become the buzzword early in the new century. Following the stressful life of the eighties and nineties when 52 percent of Americans suffered from stress on the job, our neglected and angry youth acted out through violence, and driven by the rise in spirituality, business consciousness, service, and the big picture will make the A-list of importance.

“The twenty-first century workplace will demand people with initiative, creativity, flexibility, willingness to participate, information technology-literacy, and global mindedness,” wrote A. G. Stell Kafalas, of the University of Georgia.

In the U.S. alone, 25 million of the 26 million new jobs in the first decade of the new millennium will be in the service sector. Retail sales, nursing, system analysis, tourism, and personal and home-care aid top the lists.

Traditional hierarchical organizations will give way to a variety of organizational forms, including networks of specialists and megamergers with global connections. A ready 51 of the world’s 100 largest economies are that of corporations. General Motors is bigger than Denmark, Ford bigger than South Africa, and Toyota bigger than Norway. Wal-M art, the company that recently added nearly 400 new branches, is already larger than 161 countries, and growing.

We can expect more mergers of large companies, banks, and financial institutions, notes futurist and author Tom Sine in his book Mustard Seed Versus McWorld, and with them will come corporate monopoly and increased political influence by an elite few.

Lifestyle

These successful businesses will practice compassionate capitalism because of the demand by consumers with changed values. Products that address real physical and emotional needs that enhance quality of life but do not destroy the earth in the process will be sought.

Technotribalism will be an early sign of changed values, when disenchanted achievers and young retirees move to remote or rural places to balance country life with high technology.
and when they fail to find it, edible lawns will spring up in our communities as people work to stretch their incomes and avoid chemically grown, environmentally engineered, cancer-causing food. And according to the World Bank, to fight the growing need for clean water, the world will spend $600 billion to augment water reserves in the coming years.6

Although middle-class life won’t necessarily slow down, look for a wave of voluntary simplicity to emerge giving rise to the sale of health food, alternative medicine, vitamin counselors, and what Celente dubs longevity centers. A variation of places such as the Oklahoma-based Lifestyle Center of America will combine spas, universities, health clinics, and resorts to provide help to the 71 percent of overweight Americans who are still trying to get healthy. Despite the Nikes, golf clubs, and sport utility vehicles we picked up in the exercise craze of the late twentieth century, 90 percent7 of us are still out of shape.

With the world population topping 6 billion in October 1999, we must also prepare ourselves to live in an increasingly diverse world. For example, the U.S. Census Bureau indicated that by 2010, Hispanics would be the majority in California, and in a 1997 New York Times article, (noted in Sine’s book) Katherine Seelye says that by 2050, we can expect that Whites will account for only 53 percent of the U.S. population, meaning it won’t be long until the U.S. becomes the first non-White Western nation.8

Family

In the new millennium, families as we know them will continue to change and evolve. With Generation X (44 million) and Y (77 million) young adults marrying at an average age of 25, and with nearly 50 percent of marriages ending in divorce,9 more and more people are living the single life.

Celente expects that by the year 2010, 31 million adults will be living alone.10 Loaded with college and credit card debt, many will revive the boardinghouse trend of the sixties and seventies, forming families in cohousing units that cut individual expenses, allow more time for community service, foster simplicity, and leave less time for loneliness. These new millennium “families” will share expenses, cooking duties, and friendship.

Extended families will form when young adults return to the nest, and older parents move in to help. With the first baby boomers retiring in 2010, the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicted a 138 percent growth in the home-health-aid industry by 2005, making elder care a lucrative career move. And you can expect them to be around for a while. Life magazine reports that in 1900 life expectancy was 47 years, that today one can expect to live on average to 76 years, and that by 2025 about 20 percent will be 65 or older.

Religion

In the midst of this global age, spirituality will thrive. But according to Sine, many will seek a postmodern faith offering a form of spirituality that requires little serious change in their lives. Its popularity flourishes in televi-
sion, pop culture, music, and art, but organized religion is weakening. By 2010, Sine says, only 27 percent in the world will identify themselves as Protestant, Orthodox, or Catholic, which will put a strain on the number of active missionaries.13

In his book Fragmented Gods, Reginald Bibby says that in 1957 you could have found 53 percent of Canadians in church on a Sunday morning; today you'll find fewer than 23 percent.14 That, coupled with the fact that church populations are aging in most mainstream denominations, and that in a recent survey of U.S. collegians 15 percent indicated no religious preference,15 shows that churches are headed for tough times, especially in the Western world.

As you enter the third millennium, you'll be part of the generations that spark a global renaissance, navigate a superinformation community of technology with a crystal-clear digital connection, and find yourself in an era of intense individuality directed toward common goals.

If you're packing, leave the canned goods, cases of bleach, and gas lamps at home. But Celente suggests taking the software: attitudes and ideas, programs, disciplines, nutritional health awareness, pioneering voluntary simplicity, self-responsibility, and the quest for higher consciousness.16

So, are you ready for the new millennium and all that it will mean to your life? Well, then, welcome.

Nicole Braman
eighth grade, USA.

Celeste Ryan works to raise public awareness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, as its media relations manager and public information officer.

2Ibid.
3Ibid., pp. 165, 166.
6Celente, p. 103.
7Ibid., pp. 90, 91.
9Celente, pp. 212.
10Ibid., p. 227.
13Sine, p. 126.
16Celente, p. 89.
The Changing Face of the Church

How can we be proactive as we confront the inevitable?

GORDON BIETZ

Not many generations ago most people grew up in the town of their birth, continued in the vocation of their parents, and rarely traveled more than a few miles from their home. When they did travel, it was by foot, by horse, or by donkey. Change for our ancestors meant one season turning to another and day turning to night.

There was a time when the most exciting thing to do on a Saturday night was to go to a tent revival meeting; and the most anticipated activity of the week was Wednesday evening prayer meeting. There was a time when people who went to church looked pretty much like you did. They liked the same music, they wore similar clothes, and they thought pretty much alike.

Today our life span will confront more changes than our ancestors experienced in a thousand years. We have moved through the manufacturing age and the information age to the digital age in one generation. We are experiencing a tidal wave of change. The new millennium will not provide cultural enclaves in which a Christian subculture can live out its life in isolation from the influence of the world. We are now faced with
a world that puts every race, every idea, every religion, every philosophy, and every worldview into our living rooms through the Internet.

The Changing Demographics

Take the United States, where I live. The U.S. Census Bureau says that the non-Hispanic White population will fall below 50 percent in California and Texas by 2025.1 “Perhaps the biggest demographic story during the next 30 years will be the diversification of America. Fully 73.7 percent of all Americans in 1995 were classified as non-Hispanic Whites. But the Census Bureau predicts that only 62.4 percent of the nation’s residents will fit that category in 2025.”2

For too many church members, identity comes not from being immersed in Scripture but from being immersed in their culture. But the life of the church must transcend cultural and ethnic divides. Our identity must come from our Christian roots, not our social roots; from our relationship with Christ and not from our relatives.

Leonard Sweet, in his book SoulTsunami, says, “The Dick-and-jane world of my ‘50s childhood is over, washed away by a tsunami of change. . . . It has created a sea change such as the world has never experienced before, including a huge shift in religious sensibility. While the world is rethinking its entire cultural formation, it is time to find new ways of being the church that are true to our postmodern context. It is time for a Postmodern Reformation.”3

Predicting Change

What will the future bring? Samuel Goldwyn said, “Never make forecasts, especially about the future.”4 Looking ahead 30 years in a world that changes as rapidly as ours does is risky business. Who would have predicted 30 years ago the rapid growth of the Internet and the computer? Who would have been able to foresee the rise of megachurches that have thousands in attendance, such as the Willow Creek Community Church outside Chicago?

We can cry “The sky is falling” as we experience these changes; and we can wring our hands pointing out all the bad things that come with the changes. But remember that “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:17, NIV). Let us remember that the gospel is all about change, the change of conversion.

The Descent Into the New Dark Ages

The church needs to recognize that this new millennium society is growing ever more secular and nonreligious in its orientation. As the title of a 1996 book by Robert Bork put it, we are “sloouching towards Gomorrah.”5 This last century of the millennium has had more “ethnic cleansing” than the world experienced during the Dark Ages. We live at the end of Christian world dominance. The world’s fastest-growing religion today is Islam, and many communities are dealing with a growing interest in witchcraft.

The Church of the Future

At least four major ingredients will characterize the church of the future.

1. Balancing change with conserving.

The church must maintain balance between adapting to the changes of the future and holding on to the past (see Luke 5:37, 38, NRSV). We must not reflect modern culture in a vain attempt to reach the culture. On the other hand, we must communicate in a language that can be understood.

The preservation of Scripture through the ages, the keeping of the
faith, and the conserving of truth are tasks given to a church that is to hold fast to the landmarks. There is a great deal of security and continuity in knowing that we “did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16, NRSV). We must never face the “cut-flower” phenomena—looking beautiful and bright, but cut from our doctrinal roots. Dead but not knowing it yet.

The church, then, is to resist change and hold fast to the landmarks. Ellen White ran into this problem in Minneapolis. The Holy Spirit was moving, and people were resisting the leading of the Spirit, claiming that the new light was abandoning the old landmarks.

“In Minneapolis, God gave precious gems of truth to His people in new settings. This light from heaven by some was rejected with all the stubbornness the Jews manifested in rejecting Christ, and there was much talk about standing by the old landmarks. But there was evidence they knew not what the old landmarks were. . . . The minds of men were fixed, sealed against the entrance of light, because they had decided it was a dangerous error removing the ‘old landmarks’ when it was not moving a peg of the old landmarks, but they had perverted ideas of what constituted the old landmarks.”

Customs engraved in the mind through many years of habitual behavior can become identified with truth. Change the order of worship, move the pulpit, or paint the mothers’ room a different color, and you may hear some unusual theological arguments.

The church will not remain as it is. It is not possible. We will change as we always have throughout our history. The only question is Will the change be a planned, balanced change that will bring the gospel to bear on our decisions, or will the force of events change us against our will? Without thoughtful proactive change, the law of unintended consequences will result in the church changing by following the cultural road of least resistance.

1. Unity in diversity. The church of the new millennium must be a mature church that isn’t threatened by diversity and is open to multiple ways of representing our Lord in this world.

Salvation did not come to the Jews through their laws, and neither will it come to our church by law. Seventh-day Adventism will not be held together by developing a muscular Adventism, by a strengthening of the central authority of the church, and developing a catechism, Talmud, or expanded church manual. Unity is not produced by new rules but by a revived mission. Unity is not brought about by new policies but by renewed vision. Unity will not come because we have tinkered with the structure of the church, but because we have a dream.

The glue that holds us together in this very diverse world must be shared convictions on the interpretation of Scripture, not a bureaucracy that seeks to “hold the line” by policy adjustments and church manual changes.

One night, as I lay restless on my bed thinking about what I have done for God, I realized that I had done nothing for the new millennium. It dawned on me that I was too late now, unprepared, facing the new millennium blank and aimless. Restless and worried, turning and twisting, I lay in bed till I could see the new day breaking through the darkness of the night. At last I fell asleep.

I saw myself on the bank of a big river. Far out in the east I could see the sun creeping up the hill. A voice from up above called out, “Esther, what have you done to meet the new millennium?” I was dumbfounded. The voice said, “Lift Me up and I shall draw all men toward Me.” And then I woke up with a start. I knew what I needed to do. Christ has to be lifted up in my life. I have to represent Him as His image so that the 46 million people of Myanmar will be prepared to meet Him in the very near future.

Esther Po
Myanmar

I wish that we would have more youth events. I really enjoy having such events as youth rallies and Pathfinder camporees with the whole conference because I love to see my friends and meet new people. I know lots of people enjoy getting together and talking and having fun, whether it be a game night at the church or a big camporee for Pathfinders. They’re both extremely fun!

We also need to have more outreach. We need to have groups go and find those who need food or clothes, who need to find a church, or who just need a friend to talk to. There are lots of people out there like that. We can all do something. If we just set our hearts, we can do it. Helping people is not as hard as it seems. If you just try, you can change anybody’s life around you. I also hope someday there will be more youth activities and more people changing lives.

Heidi J. Moen
seventh grade, USA.

My dream for the Seventh-day Adventist Church is that the church members would empower themselves with the love that proceeds from the throne of God. It would be in such a way that it would overflow in benefit from one to another. And for those who are not Adventists yet, my hope is that we may identify ourselves as God’s children and help them, and ourselves, feel drawn to Christ.

Nereu Elias de Oliveira
Brazil
Strengthening the tie that binds comes through thoughtful discussion in an atmosphere of grace and acceptance, not through dogmatic statements that vilify those who think differently. The church at the beginning of a new millennium must have an atmosphere of openness to discussion such as our church experienced at its beginnings.

3. Vision. There is power in vision. And for the church to survive, it needs to dream again. Dream of how it can minister to the world by meeting its spiritual and physical needs. Rotary International, a secular service club, has embarked on a mission to rid the world of polio by 2005. They have cast a vision of how they can make a difference in the world, and they are making a measurable impact on the incidence of polio in the world.

Certainly the Adventist Church, with its human resources and its motivation, should be able to cast a challenging vision that meets a real need in our world. Let us portray a practical spirituality to the world, a spirituality that casts a vision of meeting its spiritual and physical needs. Our church must not isolate itself from the suffering in the world. We are no longer able to live in isolated cocoons of security, affirming one another as our health message extends our life spans, while the life spans of people around the world collapse from ethnic cleansing and disease. Let our doctrines delight and inspire the hearers with their relevance to meeting human need.

4. Communities of hope. May our spirituality be manifest not only in contemplation but also in action! As we look to the new millennium may our spirituality be countercultural and community-building. It should be open to uncertainty while at the same time confident of the gospel. Our spirituality should be worn like a robe of righteousness and not carried like a chip on the shoulder.

People today are in need of hope. They desire a worldview that will give them confidence to face a changing world and a community of people that will support them in that world. People desire an understanding church that does not simply preserve the faith of the fathers but energizes the faith of the children. Under God, let us provide such a church for our world in the new millennium.


2Ibid.


4Ibid., p. 25.


6Sweet, p. 56.


Gordon Bietz is the president of Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.
The Changing Face of Mission

Appearing at a church near you: missionaries of every shape and size

KENNETH WEISS

The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to proclaim to all peoples the everlasting gospel in the context of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12, leading them to accept Jesus as personal Saviour and to unite with His church, and nurturing them in preparation for His soon return.

In three words: spread the gospel.

We live in a world in flux, matched only by a church in motion, with a requisite change in missions—not only who our missionaries are, but how people hear the good news. If we measure the future of missions by the number of souls on our planet, we have today a need to reach an estimated 6 billion people. More than 800,000 new members joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1998, pushing current total membership over 10 million! We praise the Lord as we continue to harness technology to reach the exploding population who have not yet heard of the love and hope of God.

The first major mission initiatives in the Adventist Church came from laypeople (who made up both the membership and the leadership) who developed the ideas and then set out to accomplish the mission. Then, for a period of about 150 years, major mission initiatives were usually church-originated, led, and funded. Today major initiatives are once again lay-initiated and lay-funded. Will this continue? In order to spread the gospel to a rapidly growing population, it is necessary to act and make decisions quickly.

The number of missionaries devoting part of their lives to spreading the gospel has grown at a magnificent pace over the past five years, and the large majority of these are not church employees. Creative missionary methods have arisen throughout time in response to the demands of different cultures and situations. Missions have taken the guise of farms, agricultural institutions, health and medical services, welfare and development programs, in addition to traditional preachers. A generation ago it was common to pray for missionaries in the foreign fields. Today the youth are the missionaries. A surge in participation in short-term missions, accompanied by continued efforts by Global Mission pioneers, couples the efforts of supporting ministries such as Maranatha Volunteers International with others such as Outpost Centers International and Adventist Frontier Missions.

A brief look back in time reveals the ease with which missions have adapted to technological advances. We now use print media and Picture Rolls together with tent meetings, radio outreach, satellite broadcasting, and Internet communication. It used to take a letter three to six months to make it from India to the United States; an e-mail makes the same trip in less than half a second.

The Internet promises to continue revolutionizing how people access information. A ready in several Seventh-day Adventist churches, virtual attendance is greater than those who go to an actual church building and meet together. “Internet communities” are prevalent everywhere, used particularly by the younger generations. People in developed nations as well as in developing countries will be using the Internet to receive Bible studies, sermons, inspirational music, videos—all of this at ever-increasing speeds.

As virtual reality becomes more commonplace, experiencing the reality of Christ touching hearts in every walk of life grows in importance. The “missionaries” who take part in missions—whether short- or long-term—return with changed lives, more ministered to.
There Is Another Way
Reconciling “back to the blueprint” and “get with the program”

ANDY NASH

Suddenly we’re not a movement from last century; we’re a movement from the century before last. Jesus still hasn’t arrived and, inflated numbers aside, neither has the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We’ve got problems, and we all know it.

How will we handle them? Probably two ways.

Some of us will argue that we need to get “back to the blueprint.” A standards slip, we’ll denounce our schools and write off our youth and airbrush our jewelry. We’ll shake our heads at those celebrationists and scoff at other Christians’ ministry ideas—why do we need them? We’ll cancel newfangled seeker services because we’ve never done it that way before. We’ll champion the fourth commandment—remember the Sabbath—and basically ignore the others. At home we’ll read Adventists affirm and listen to the Voice of Prophecy and watch 3ABN. At church we’ll protest “all this cross stuff”—give us the Gospels—and show our children which families to hate. We’ll talk a lot about new ways to reach people, but never really get around to doing it. We’ll use extreme examples to blanket-dismiss right-wing ideas. We’ll champion relevance and grace, and know in our hearts that Jesus is on our side.

There is another way.

We’ll stop arguing and start talking. As standards slip and attendance dips, we’ll covenant together: to share, to pray, to find common ground, to turn things around. We’ll shake our heads at no one but ourselves—praising God that He still manages to use us. We’ll borrow from other ministries without compromising, support our own without apologizing. We’ll attend each other’s gatherings—not because I love prayer meeting or because you love seeker services, but because we love each other. We’ll teach all the commandments. We’ll represent all major Adventist perspectives in our official media and free our best journalists to report thoroughly and objectively on this world church and trust our people to think for themselves. We’ll spread the whole gospel—first Jesus, then His revelation—and show our children the difference it makes. We’ll reach people in our own neighborhoods, then welcome them into our church families. We’ll avoid extreme examples, listening for the good in every voice, for there is. We’ll be faithfully relevant and gracious—graciously truthful. And side by side, we’ll watch Jesus come closer, closer, His light bursting our collective darkness, His lips teaching us a new song that, as it turns out, is sung best in two-part harmony.

Andy Nash, an assistant professor of English at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, is compiler/editor of the new book Unleash the Dream: A New Generation Challenges the Church They Love.

Kenneth Weiss is vice president for Maranatha Flights International.
Sharing Jesus Personally

There's more than one correct method for Adventist mission

Denzil McNeilus

The best way to approach our mission in the new century is exactly the same as it was in the first century—on-one, personalized sharing of the love of Jesus. There's no mystery surrounding this. Yet still we find ourselves falling into the trap of thinking that it's someone else's job; of thinking that the vital work of Adventist mission is the responsibility of professional evangelists, or professional preachers. Mission has to be much more than this.

The early members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church saw sharing the good news as part of being an Adventist. New churches were planted right across North America by laypeople. If you had asked them about it, they wouldn't have seen themselves as doing anything special—it's what Jesus' followers are supposed to do.

A time has gone by, we've increasingly seen evangelism as something that's done once or twice a year by professional evangelists. We may make a financial contribution, perhaps send out some brochures, or maybe even pray for the program. But basically we sit back and watch the experts “do” evangelism. Whether we like it or not, this is the stage we have reached.

But Adventist mission isn't just the work of experts. It isn't just the work of the pastor. It isn't just the work of the personal ministries director. It isn't just the work of colporteurs. It's the work of every believer—you and me. It doesn't matter if you're the General Conference president, the president of your own company, a student, a mechanic, a teacher, or a full-time mother or father—if you're a follower of Jesus, then you're a major part of the mission to share His love.

“Christ commits to His followers an individual work—a work that cannot be done by proxy,” writes Ellen G. White. “Ministry to the sick and the poor, the giving of the gospel to the lost, is not to be left to committees or organized charities. Individual responsibility, individual effort, personal sacrifice, is the requirement of the gospel” (The Ministry of Healing, p. 147).

The places where we can see the kingdom of heaven “forcefully advancing” (see Matt. 11:12, NIV) are where Adventist laypeople are involved, places where laypeople have taken the initiative and the responsibility for outreach. In the past decade the vast majority of new Seventh-day Adventist congregations have been established by laypeople. During this time Global Mission pioneers alone have established 12,000 new congregations.

“The work of the church is not to be left to the minister alone, or to a few leading men,” writes White. “Every member should feel that he has entered into a solemn covenant with the Lord to work for the best interests of His cause at all times and under all circumstances” (Gospel Workers, p. 200).

Aventist Laymen’s Services and Industries (ASI) is an organization of laypeople who want to do something for Jesus. We want to be vitally involved in Adventist mission. We believe the world needs a revival, but that the revival must start with us. If you look at the ministries of ASI, you'll see a kaleidoscope of different methods—from literature to health foods, music to video, Bible studies to prison ministries, spoken-word audio-cassettes to care for abused children. There's no one correct method of doing Adventist mission. We need hundreds and thousands of ways of sharing God's love. But we must never, ever take away personal involvement.

The New Testament is very clear that each of us is given different spiritual gifts that God wants us to use in building up His church (see 1 Cor. 12 and Eph. 4:11-16). And ASI members represent supporting ministries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church who want to use their gifts for God's mission. We want to do all we can to support worldwide initiatives to reach the unreached with hope.

Global Mission is a prime example of a church initiative working to support the mission of laypeople. One of its core values it insists that programs touch the hands of laypeople. We must build a larger, stronger team of laypeople supporting and working together with pastors for our common mission.

The organized church—from the local church down to the General Conference—must help strengthen the work of laypeople. Glossy new brochures or seminar materials aren't going to finish the work. State-of-the-art video or satellite equipment isn't going to finish the work. And I think we could all rally around the thought that an extra 100 committees at the General Conference aren't going to finish the work.

Under the power of the Holy Spirit, you and I and millions of other followers of Jesus showing and sharing His love are going to finish the work.

Denzil McNeilus is president of Adventist Laymen’s Services and Industries (ASI) and Sterling Bank.
ANDREA LUXTON

Even though I have not yet discovered enthusiasm for the swirl of events surrounding the breathless countdown to the millennium, I have found myself drawn to the question of what will make an impact on me and my community when all the parties are over. Living as a Seventh-day Adventist Christian among persons of faith and those of no faith has made me five prize qualities that recommend themselves to us at any time, and especially at beginnings.

Up Close and Personal

Let me start with a story that affected me deeply. I was 29, it was coming up to Christmas, and my mother had died a few days before Christmas one year previously. I was alone and struggling. I had invitations to go to a few places for Christmas, which had always been important in our house, but didn’t really want to celebrate at all that year. So I turned all the invitations down. Then, a few days before Christmas, a friend of my mother’s rang and asked me to drive her to the airport—that I could do. As I dropped her off she said, “By the way, there is something for you in the boot of the car,” and vanished. She was so casual that I drove home before I looked to see what it was. A box with 10 small packages. Each was labeled with a date, and there was a card telling me what to do. One small package to open for every day between when this friend left and when she returned 10 days later—something to help me get through what she realized would be a very hard time. This friend wasn’t someone who felt she could talk to me in a pastoral sense, but, as she said later, she had been searching
and praying for some way to reach out meaningfully to me, and believed that this was the answer. Those 10 small presents are probably the most valued presents I have ever received. I saw my friend’s care in her action, but I also knew the care of God. In the words of Ellen White, I met a “loving and lovable Christian.”

Compassion

Compassion, then, is the first deeper quality I would talk about: the compassion that, whether it relates to one individual or a whole group of individuals, suffers with those who suffer and mirrors a God who weeps with those who weep and stands with them in their pain. That is a compassion that reflects God’s grace, even in the midst of darkness, a compassion that looks creatively at ways of shedding God’s light. That is Christian living.

Living forgiveness

Let’s be practical again. I would suggest Christian living is also very much about living forgiveness—forgiveness of others and ourselves. Sometimes as Adventists we set such high standards for ourselves and the church that it is about who we are and what the church would agree with that.

But he also experienced the freedom of forgiveness that could lead him to declare with certainty that nothing could separate him from God’s love. A s Adventists, do we really live as though we are forgiven? And have we really learned how to forgive others? The judging is not difficult—the forgiveness often is. I don’t want to underestimate this problem, because there is a lot for which we have to forgive ourselves and one another. We have hurt one another, we have been prejudiced, we have gossiped, we have been dishonest, we have been untrue to ourselves, we have ignored the voice of our Lord. We have done all these things, but we are not living a Christian life if recognizing the faults is where we stop. Christians are told to forgive 70 times seven—even themselves!

Generosity of spirit

Maybe linked quite closely to the spirit of forgiveness is that great quality of generosity of spirit. I would call it the ability to look at another individual and see the best, not the worst; see the potential, not focus on weakness. That was certainly the way Christ lived His life. Look at those He called His closest followers and those He chose to spend time with: the Samaritan woman, Zacchaeus, the woman caught in adultery. Somehow Jesus saw beyond the surface, the traditional norms, and, seeing the best, brought out the best. Generosity of spirit, however, is not weakness, not laissez-faire—anything goes. Far from it. Jesus’ openness to seeing the good in people led Him to confront them also to see and respond to the potential in themselves. Sometimes generosity of spirit is hard for us. We do desperately want to get things right and live as God wants us to live. No problem with that at all—as long as we don’t close our eyes to seeing where God’s Spirit may be moving in the most unlikely lives, even our own.

Wholeness

There’s another quality that I am becoming convinced is vital to Christian living. I would call it a passion for life in its wholeness and, with our Adventist emphasis on creation, I would consider this a natural development of our approach to health. God has given us each a great gift in our own life, and a second gift in the life around us. That is why I firmly believe many of our stands on lifestyle issues. But beyond that, do we really value our life sufficiently to live it with passion and fullness? That isn’t the same as being joyful about life; it’s about intentional, heartfelt involvement in making the world a better place, and it’s about valuing fully what God gives us. We should not be the ones who see the devaluing of life in any form as “not our business.” It is our business, because it is about who we are and what the world is as a part of God’s creation.
Integrity

And then, finally, is the quality of integrity. Sometimes I think I know what this word means; sometimes I'm not sure I have grasped it. It has a lot to do with honesty, a lot to do with searching for the truth, a lot to do with somehow putting all the disparate parts of our lives together, and much to do with God. I think it means that we sometimes need to ask God to let us see ourselves as we truly are. Are we working very hard doing what is “good” but forgetting, as Martha did, what was “better”? Have we followed the commandments since our youth, but, like the rich young ruler, still not seen or accepted the true cost of being a Christian? And are we able to ask those questions and really want to hear God’s response to us?

I do not have all the answers about what it means to be an Adventist and live as a Christian. I am still searching. But I am sure that as a church we have a theology and an approach to life that offer great richness to us personally, and to the community around us. I am not sure that I, that we, have always allowed God to use us to express that richness. I have experienced others showing it to me. My hope is that others will find that same richness in the way I seek to live my life, and in the way we corporately represent what it is to live as Seventh-day Adventists.

Andrea Luxton is the president of Newbold College, a Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher education in Binfield, England. This article is adapted with the author’s permission from one originally appearing in the British Union Messenger.
The Church and Change

It is not change itself that's a major threat, but the possibility that we might lose our identity and mission.

GEORGE R. KNIGHT

The history of the Christian church has been one of continuous change. Take, for example, the New Testament church. It starts out in the Gospels as a loosely organized band of Jewish itinerants, but Acts of the Apostles pictures the church as undergoing vigorous turmoil as it moves progressively into the Gentile world. Then the books of Timothy and Titus and the letters of Peter and John show it facing challenges, opportunities, and problems that could scarcely have been imagined by the disciples in their earlier days.

Many of those changes were threatening to members and leaders alike. A prime example of the turmoil created by change in the early church was the ministry of Paul to the Gentiles. Suddenly the young Christian community was faced with a whole array of questions that hadn't existed before: What relationship should Christianity have to the Temple? Did a person have to become a Jew before becoming a Christian? How were Gentiles to relate to the ceremonial sabbaths or food offered to idols?

Such questions were not only threatening, but also disruptive. In short, change brought crisis. The early church either had to face the challenges or end up as a Jewish sect. The church either had to face change creatively or cease its dynamic growth.

Unfortunately, all changes aren't equally healthy and positive. They certainly weren't in the history of Christianity. The infiltration of Greek philosophy and other problems necessitated a reformation in the sixteenth century.

Seventh-day Adventism finds its roots in what is called the Anabaptist or Radical Reformation. That branch was not willing to stop with the insights of Luther, Calvin, or Zwingli, but had a desire to get back to the full teaching of the Bible.

In early-nineteenth-century North America the Anabaptist spirit was picked up by the restorationist movement. Restorationism was important to Seventh-day Adventism because two of its three founders (James White and Joseph Bates) belonged to a restorationist denomination. The central motivating factor undergirding restorationism was the creation of a church that was faithful to the Bible.

Thus restorationism saw the Reformation as beginning in the sixteenth century but not ending there. To the contrary, reformation was progressive and dynamic and would continue to the Second Advent as more and more truth was discovered and acted upon. As a result of that heritage, Seventh-day Adventism had a concept of progressive change built into the very foundation of its theological understanding.

Early Adventism and Change

There is absolutely no doubt as to the dynamic perspective of the earliest Adventist leaders. James White, for example, noted in 1857 that “it has been impossible to make some see that present truth is present truth, and not future truth, and that the Word as a lamp shines brightly where we stand, and not so plainly on the path in the distance.”

Ellen White was of the same mind. “The present truth, which is a test to the people of this generation,” she noted.
in relation to the seventh-day Sabbath, “was not a test to the people of generations far back.” At another time, in discussing certain issues related to the 1888 General Conference session, she wrote that “that which God gives His servants to speak today would not perhaps have been present truth twenty years ago, but it is God’s message for this time.”

That progressive understanding of present truth is also evident in two statements she penned 53 years apart. In 1850 she categorically stated that “we have the truth. We know it. Praise the Lord.” On the other hand, in July 1903 she wrote that “there will be a revision of these statements she penned 53 years apart. The early Adventists were not only to all future advancement. . . . Our exploration of truth is yet incomplete.”

The early Adventists were not only to change but they were opposed to tradition, even Seventh-day Adventist tradition and traditional understandings. Thus Ellen White could write in 1890 that “as a people we are certainly in great danger, if we are not constantly guarded, of considering our ideas, because long cherished, to be Bible doctrines and on every point infallible, and measuring everyone by the rule of our interpretation of Bible truth. This is our danger, and this would be the greatest evil that could ever come to us as a people.”

With those understandings in mind, it is not difficult to see why the early Adventist leaders were against creedal rigidity. James White, for example, argued in 1861 that “making a creed is not difficult to see why the early Adventists couldn’t subscribe to a position of infallibility.” He wanted Adventists to remain open to what the Lord might reveal to them “from time to time.”

Modern Adventism at its best has remained open to the spirit of its founders. Thus the preamble to our 1980 Statement of Fundamental Beliefs closes with the following sentence: “Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God’s Holy Word.”

Changes in Adventism’s Past

In the light of that background, we can begin to understand the massive changes that have taken place in Adventism over the past 150 years. Most modern Adventists probably wouldn’t feel at home if they could resurrect the early Adventist Church. They would certainly wonder where the “church” was, since the early Sabbatarian Adventists had followed the lead of George Storrs, who held that “no church can be organized by man’s invention but what it becomes Babylon the moment it is organized.”

For nearly 20 years the incipient denomination had no organization above the local congregation, whereas it presently has what is perhaps the most tightly knit worldwide organization of any Christian body in the history of Christianity.

In a similar vein, if modern Adventists could board a time machine, they might be surprised to find an Adventist Church that believed that it had no mission to the world, since the door of probation had been tightly closed in 1844. They would also find it hard to understand that early Adventists didn’t believe in schooling. A father, all, so the argument ran, to have schools or even to send children to school was a sign of a lack of faith in the soon coming of Jesus, since schooling implied a belief that time would continue long enough for children to grow up to use their knowledge. It wouldn’t be until the 1890s that Seventh-day Adventists developed a system of elementary schools.

Others of our number might be mildly shocked by James White arguing from Acts 10 for the right to eat swine’s flesh or by his wife including some “good oysters” on her grocery list in 1882. Still others might be alarmed by early Adventist worship. “Our last conference,” Ellen White penned, “was one of deep interest. Two were dug from beneath the rubbish. The present truth was presented in its clear light and it found way to the hearts of the erring. Before the meeting closed all were upon their knees, some were crying for mercy . . . , others were begging for a closer walk with God and for salvation. It was a powerful time as I ever witnessed; the slaying power of God was in our midst. Shouts of victory filled the dwelling. The saints here seem to be rising and growing in grace and knowledge of the truth.”

Well, you may be thinking, at least the church has remained the same in its basic understanding of doctrine. Wrong again! Most of the early Adventists couldn’t subscribe to a development of any Christian body in the history of Christianity.

A dream of what about you? “To accept dreaming is to accept forgetting, but it means also to build.” And it is to build that we dream today of what our church will be tomorrow, the church we shall leave to our children.

After rereading the Gospels, I start wishing we might dream the same dreams Jesus dreamed about His church; that we might be as He was, be what He was. He wanted a church after His own likeness, He who forgave, healed, comforted, and loved. Do we live this? He delivered us and taught us tolerance, because He desires “mercy, and not sacrifice” (Matt. 12:7). Do we dare that? But his dream does not stop here. He dreams and hopes that we shall also go, baptize, and preach the good news. Isn’t that what we have already been doing? Indeed! Yet we may dream that there are more of us, younger ones, coming from more countries . . .

We dream that the good news brought by Jesus be really “good news” for each of us and for all those we meet.

Heidi Dénechaud
France
Sabbath day. On that latter point, congregations had an appointed member who showed up on the doorsteps of various members on the first day of the week to take up the contributions of the saints. The list of transformations goes on and on.

Probable Changes in Adventism’s Future

There is every reason to expect that Adventism will continue to change as it enters the third Christian millennium. One change that is almost certain is continued growth. It seems difficult to believe that when I was baptized into Seventh-day Adventism in 1961, the church had a little more than 1 million members. In 1998 the membership passed 10 million. With a growth rate that has roughly doubled the size of the church every decade, we can probably expect 20 million Adventists in 2010 and 40 million in 2020 if time should last.

A long with rapid growth, the denomination can expect a continuing increase in cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. That diversity will most likely broaden the range of perspectives from which various segments of the world church will view controversial and not-so-controversial issues. The recent differences in opinion over the role of women in ministry may be a foreshadowing of the types of future discussions in several areas.

Eventually Adventism will have to decide either to allow cultural variations or to forbid them with all the risks of schism involved in such a course. It is probable that the denomination will have to decide between those things that are essential for Adventism and those items or practices that might vary from one culture to the next. That is already taking place to some extent. A fter all, the issue of “adornment” varies from culture to culture, as does the issue of acceptable worship music and musical instruments. Such topics, along with certain lifestyle issues, will undoubtedly come up for consideration in the future. Not only is the church growing in areas that have lifestyle challenges that have little in common with the New England villages of the mid-1860s, but even New England will have different lifestyle issues and challenges in the future than it does today.

Another probable change in the twenty-first century will be the growing dominance of the Latin-American and African divisions of the church. The largely North American flavor of the Adventism of the 1960s will continue to give way to influences from other world fields. It is only a matter of time before a General Conference president is elected from outside the North American/European/Australian sector of the church. Other geographic areas with great potential for the exponential growth of Adventism are the Pacific/Aisan divisions. Then again, it is possible that church growth might take off vigorously in such places as Western Europe and India.

Worship styles and church organization will most likely see significant change. A major reformation in administrative structures is important if the focus of the church is to remain on mission. Then again, the structures may become ends in themselves. Worship styles will undoubtedly continue to change both across and within cultures. There was a time, for example, when Adventists viewed church organs as less than Christian, and even in my relatively short tenure as a member I can remember when guitars were forbidden in nearly all congregations. Such changes and others related to worship style will go on as Adventism, in the spirit of Paul, seeks to reach out to the larger world.

On the doctrinal front, Adventism, if it continues to develop as it has in the past, will see a great deal of continuity. On the other hand, it is likely that some in the liberal wing of the church may seek to downplay certain Adventist distinctive, while those in the traditionalist wing may seek to develop some new ones. It is quite likely that a repackaging of the way the Adventist message is presented to the world will take place as secularism and non-Christian philosophies increase and as Adventism reaches out to those cultural enclaves that are most resistant to Western ways of thinking. Such repackaging will be similar to the challenge that the apostle Paul faced as he transcended the Jewish community of his day.

Healthy Approaches to Change

In the long run it is not change that is the major threat to Adventism, but the possibility that the church might lose its essential identity and mission. Ellen White relates us to that point when she notes that “we have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”

Ellen White had no problem with change that took place in an orderly fashion. Her view of progressive development is nicely illustrated in her approach to the topic of unclean foods. In 1858 she rebuked S. N. Haskell for making an issue of the topic. If, she wrote him, we wanted to hold that it was wrong to eat swine’s flesh, he should keep his belief to himself where it would “prove no injury.” Then, significantly, she added, “If it is the duty of the church to abstain from swine’s flesh, God will discover it to more than two or three. He will teach it to the larger world.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave us a mission. The mission was: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19, NIV). As part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I believe that we should take that as our personal mission. I feel too many of us don’t take it seriously. We say: “There are other Seventh-day Adventists out there spreading the gospel, so why should we butt in?” I feel we all need to have a part in spreading the gospel. My dream for the Adventist Church is that we all could work together to spread the good news.

Timothy Elliot
Eighth grade, USA
here and there, one believing this thing, another that. . . . The third angel is leading out and purifying a people, and they should move with him unitedly. . . . I saw that the angels of God would lead His people no faster than they could receive and act upon the important truths that are communicated to them." She reiterated that same understanding in 1905 when she noted that God has been "leading us on step by step."11

God's leading isn't over. He continues to lead as His people learn to follow. But His leading is not discontinuous with the past. God brings about change on the basis of His past leading.

There are two focal points of identity that are essential as Adventism moves from the past into the future. The first is those great truths about God and salvation that Adventism shares with other biblical believers, that give Adventism its "Christian" identity. The second is those great foundational or "landmark" truths (such as the Sabbath, Christ's heavenly ministry, the Second Advent, the nonimmortality of the soul,12 and the three angels' messages) that make Adventism distinctive as a people. It is within that context that God has led the Adventist Church across time.

We have everything to hope for in terms of the future as long as we submit to the progressive leading of God. Change is to be expected in living bodies. Only the dead don't change. God seeks a dynamic church that is prepared to meet the needs of an ever-changing world.

5See Counsels to Writers and Editors, pp. 30, 31.
Come closer

. . . to Jesus
There is no greater source of peace than coming close to the heart of Jesus. The Review brings you to that sacred place with editorials, devotionals, and the testimonies of other believers. Open up the Review and gain a new sense of direction and vigor in your spiritual walk.

. . . to Your Church Family
You know those other 10 million people who go to your church? Well, they’re an interesting bunch. In the Review you can hear them tell stories of what God has done in their lives and the adventures they’ve had in His service. The Review. A great way to build pride in your church family.

. . . to Bible Truth
If you hunger for deeper understanding of the Bible, you’ll find satisfaction in the Review. You’ll discover well-researched articles that bring light to important Bible subjects. You’ll find additional light (and maybe a little heat) on our letters page. There are many energetic minds in our church, and a lot of what they have to say shows up in the Adventist Review.

Now is the time to come closer to Jesus, to your church family, and to Bible truth. If you’re not a subscriber, you don’t get the 40 weekly issues of the Adventist Review. Decide today to get the whole Review.

To make sure cost isn’t an issue, we’re introducing an amazing low price for one year to new subscribers.

Order toll-free in North America
1-800-456-3991

INTRODUCTORY OFFER — NEW SUBSCRIBERS ONLY

US$19.99
plus US$10.20 postage outside US
Regularly US$38.95 Offer Expires December 31, 1999

Send check or money order to:
Subscriber Services
Adventist Review
55 West Oak Ridge Drive
Hagerstown, MD 21740 U.S.A.

For credit card orders only:
Email: shanson@rhpa.org
Fax: 301-393-3292
Welcome to the Next Generation

We enter this new millennium as amateurs, as children even, not knowing and perhaps not even understanding what the future may hold. This trek into the unknown is almost like a gutsy, potentially gory experiment. We are the lab rats, this precarious planet is the lab. But we are also the scientists, taught how to hypothesize, observe, calculate, and conclude. Our Manual teaches us how to live; our Instructor has breathed into us this life. We have all been students at one time in our lives, and recall those endless moments before the bell would ring, or those last droning words of the professor before class finally ended. Or those bittersweet days right before graduation, when we clung to each moment, knowing that things would never be the same again.

Things will not be the same again. Never again will we scrawl 19—on a check. Never again will we live in the twentieth century. We will no longer share the same millennium with Bach or Galileo, or Einstein. We will probably never again need record players or typewriters or slide rules. And we hope we will never again have the chance to celebrate a new millennium on this old scarred earth.

God, who is timeless and omnipresent, gave us the concept of time to motivate us and to guide the processes of our lives.

As the millennium approaches, a plethora of films that attempt to depict the end of time have surfaced at the top of the charts. Movies portraying the world ending in a giant tidal wave or a massive meteoric explosion or by a killer virus have all contributed to the world's frenzy and apprehension concerning the millennium and the end of the world.

Richard Leone, president of the Twentieth Century Fund, wrote: "History records that, as the last turning of the mil-
A Wake-up Call

Pierre Scott, a 22-year-old from Greenville, North Carolina, says that the new millennium is a wake-up call for us to start spreading God’s love, but it shouldn’t be.

“We shouldn’t just now start to live as though Christ was coming tomorrow. We should live that way always,” Scott says.

Michelle Ask, an 18-year-old from Colton, California, expresses fear about the future.

“I don’t think Jesus will come on January 1, but the whole concept of the new millennium brings me closer to my family and to God. It’s as if it’s the beginning of the end. We have to make clear-cut decisions. We have to choose sides—we can’t sit on the fence any longer.” So what about the future? The near future, such as January 2 and 3?

What happens at NET near future?

A Turbulent Story

Jesus, who lived and died two millennia ago, knew all along what the future would bring. He probably feels affinity with the youth of today; He caused a disruption almost everywhere He went, and we will always remember Him as young, never older than 33. His influence, like that of many of today’s youth, was global; He rebelled against social norms; He wanted relationships and understanding, not blind programmed lives; and He too had a story to tell.

The story of today’s youth is a turbulent one, and one that has not reached its climax or its end.

Generation X, the label given people born roughly between 1965 and 1985, characterizes a group of people who are a little bit dysfunctional and disorganized. Dwight Nelson, the NET ’98 speaker who took a sabbatical to study Generation X, spoke about them in an April 1998 interview printed in the Adventist Review.

He said Generation X is “the generation that comes from the most broken homes. The generation that comes with the most latchkey kids. The generation that comes with the most dysfunctional families. The generation that comes with the most economic instability tied in with the social dysfunction. And by the way, because of MTV, the entire planet is into the same mind-set, the brokenness, the same sense of relational longing.”

It’s true. But that does not make them less able to become ambassadors for Jesus Christ. These are the same youth who are venturing far out of their comfort zones as student missionaries for Christ. These same youth who are spreading their talents of music and literature and drama and sports to witness for their faith. These youth who are, in little ways, saving the world...
I entered the church through a side door; I heard voices singing a hymn. I had very little desire to participate in the meeting. Unity in the church? What an illusion! My problem had turned into an existential doubt. I felt uncomfortable. I wished to come in. This was my church, after all.

The organ was still playing. I’ll leave! I shouted within myself. Then I smiled bitterly as I thought of my situation: I have been baptized, and now I can’t understand myself. What type of church am I building with my brethren?

I swept my palm across my face. Only then did I notice that my face was bathed in tears. I started as I heard a real voice. I raised my eyes and saw burning eyes inviting me to come in. Did He weep for me? How did He know I was here?

He was a little older than I, between 30 and 33. He stretched out His hand to me and invited me in. His gesture relieved my pain and emptiness. He told me, “I love you.”

Nobody had ever spoken to me like this. I had never even told my neighbor in the pew “I love you!”

He wore jeans and a sweater. He told me, “Today I shall eat at your place!” He smiled at me. “Don’t forget!” I grabbed His hand and said, “Your word is enough!”

I started to walk with Him between the pews with poise, while the others invited me to join them. My tears had been dried, my wounds healed. I felt better. No one had ever spoken to me like this, and say “I love you!”

What type of church am I building with my brethren?

Emanuele Marcotullio
Italy

DreamCenter

by being environmentally conscious.

The same youth who are using technology to make connections with people who have never before had contact with the teachings of Jesus Christ.

The New England Youth Ensemble, which has been spreading God’s love through music for more than a quarter of a century, is made up of young musicians dedicated to their mission. Director Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse talks of how they have been ambassadors for Christ:

“The group has traveled to nearly 40 countries on their mission. In Russia, after the walls of Communism came down, we played for nearly 30,000 people at the evangelistic crusade in the great stadium in St. Petersburg. In South Africa, the orchestra visited areas like Soweto and Guatemala [then dangerous areas] and joined with the hundreds of Africans singing their native music.

In Israel, we played in Bethlehem, bringing the Israelis and Palestinians together in what was, as one official called it, ‘our one hour of peace.’”

Karen Studer, 22, who was a student missionary in Belize, is part of a group of young people participating in India 2000, a massive outreach program taking place from December 20 to January 2. The project, sponsored by Maranatha Volunteers International, will consist of building churches and doing medical research in the country.

“I think it’s up to the youth to take the initiative. Sometimes adults frown on our new ideas, but we can’t take no for an answer. We have to be on fire. We can make a difference,” Studer says.

Using Change Effectively

It was Karl W. Deutsch, professor of international peace at Harvard University, who said that “the single greatest power in the world today is the power to change. . . . The most recklessly irresponsible thing we could do in the future would be to go on exactly as we have in the past 10 or 20 years. I can imagine no more dangerous policy than the conservatism that exists today.”

Times have changed, and we should embark upon this new threshold of the millennium devoted to using change to our advantage. Youth are growing fast—children who once were bouncing in their playpens are now racing through the Internet; information that once was nearly impossible to procure is suddenly at our fingertips. And though our church and its principles should lead us through eternity, we must know that as society, technology, preconceptions, and expectations shift, so too must our methods of harvesting

The Next Generation: What Makes Them Tick

Technology Tempts Them—They grew up in the information age and are more adept than most people twice their age in utilizing different types of technology and data to solve seemingly impossible dilemmas. Use new media to witness and spread God’s love. Don’t keep information from them. They’ll get hold of it somehow.

Constant Feedback—Adults’ expectations often mold youths’ perception of themselves and the world around them. They need feedback in order to attain enthusiasm. Sparse, badly timed formal reviews probably will not keep up with their swift pace. If you appreciate them, tell them now.

Cherish Their Creativity—Society is changing, and youth know that. They have to learn to be independent at a younger age, and they must constantly reinvent their roles within society. They have learned to come up with their own ways to witness, to spread the gospel, and to solve conflicts; and they appreciate adults who give them the opportunity to do so.
souls for the kingdom.

Everybody has their “story of the century” etched deep in their subconscious or lurking on the surface of their everyday lives. Stories that have moved them, or that reflect their faith. Our story, the one of our church, and of the young Ellen Harmon, is far from being finished. God is still working with us, urging us to reexamine our propensities toward narrow ideologies and to observe the outcomes of our actions.

The risks are high, and change is often painful, but with our hearts and minds open we can have the opportunity to expose uncharted possibilities that will enable us to spread the boundless love of Christ throughout the world. We are all students, and all young at heart. We must believe without a doubt that one day this extensive experiment will end, when our Instructor will tell us that we can go home.

Jennifer Mae Barizo is a graduate student in New York City and a columnist for the Adventist Review.

“Most of us, if we intend to have an impact, will have to actually do some very courageous and crazy things” (Alice Walker). Personally and corporately we need to be a church that takes risks. This doesn’t have to mean compromise, recklessness, or change for the mere sake of change, but we must take risks.

Personally we have to be prepared to feel uncomfortable: we have to be prepared to wash the smelliest feet we can find and to reach out to those neighbors who live right next door to us. Because of what God has done for us, our attitude should be the same as that of Christ (Phil. 2:5-8).

As a church we need to risk our precious buildings, our new carpet, and our middle-class security in the process of being a church that reaches out to people. Let’s be creative; let’s be daring as Christians.

When it comes down to it, the answer to the perennial question over the church’s continued relevance is practical, not doctrinal or theological. The doctrines and theology must be put into practice to make a difference to us, our church and those around us.

Nathan Brown
Australia
HEN THE church listens to God’s people, what does it hear? Is the tune different in developing nations than in richer societies?

Our greatest song is our eschatological cry “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” But there are more subtle strains and refrains that also need a listening ear.

Poised on the eve of a new millennium, church leadership must plan for something impossible to know—the future. The ability to read and interpret the signs of the times is a core competency required of leaders as we move into the twenty-first century. Whether we realize it or not, change—destabilizing change—is the primary fact of life for church leaders and members today, and will continue to be the primary factor in the future. Destabilizing change is the field in which the church will sow the seeds of faithfulness and effective ministry. The forces of secularism, technology, globalization, diversity, relativization, and postmodernism have come together to create disequilibrium, which necessitates changes in the church.

What awaits the church in the next 10 to 25 years? Will the church reach out to the growing multiethnic masses in the urban centers? Will it compete with upwardly mobile lifestyles and diverse worship styles? Can the church keep pace with the new information culture?

Some of the questions are about machinery put in place almost 100 years ago. In an age of instant global communication, do we need five levels of church administration? Can we make sure that institutional concerns do not rob the gospel of its power to convict and convert? Does Adventism have the willingness and flexibility to reform and restructure in order to continue its global mission and enduring vision?
The Crisis of Change

Accelerating change defines our era. All institutions need to adapt. Futurist Alvin Toffler describes it as “simultaneous institutional crises, crisis in the education system, in urban systems, in the family system, crisis in all of the subsystems that make our society operate. These institutions were designed for industrialism, for a smoke-stack society. Now they’re collapsing under the weight of increased diversity, heterogeneity, complexity, and speed.”

Because the surrounding society is changing, the church must also change in order to stay in line with its eternal mission and principles. Constructed in and for a different era, Adventism in North America developed a particular understanding of mission, particular ways of functioning, and a particular structure. During the present century these patterns helped the church fulfill its prophetic role as a remnant community with a special message and mission in a rather “church-friendly” society.

But the culture has changed. It is no longer church-friendly. The context for ministry and mission has changed. Today’s marketplace is dynamic. The social and religious landscape is being redefined. The church finds itself today in a missionary environment, in which the majority of Americans, for example, are no longer believers.

Technological advances in communication and transportation have brought people together who once seemed far away. Demographic shifts occur with greater frequency. Church membership is no longer an essential for many. Sabbath and Sunday are thoroughly commercialized. Moral standards are confused. The church must learn to proclaim and embody the gospel of Jesus Christ in this new context. Is the church willing to analyze its new circumstances?

Today’s new environment demands responsiveness, innovation, and flexibility. Therefore, a new eclesiology with explicit implications for new organizational concepts is essential. The task facing church leaders today is to enable a complex organization to be faithful, effective, and efficient during a time of rapid change in a culturally diverse context. If church leaders are to rise to this challenge, they must learn how to transform not only what the church does (ministry) but the organization itself. Church structures, infrastructures, policies, and procedures that have been effective in another age and under different circumstances are not necessarily adequate for the future.

For the church to remain viable, leadership must anticipate change.

William Johnsson, editor of the Adventist Review, predicts that burgeoning membership will strain existing administrative structures. The church will need flexibility and innovation. Johnsson sees the world church bursting out of the patterns that have served so well for many years. “Ultimately the structures we now know will fall away as earth’s final remnant gathers to greet the returning Lord.”

I have a dream that one day this remnant church will rise up and live out the true meaning of its existence: to go into all the world and preach the gospel, baptizing men and women in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. I have a dream that one day in the church male and female, Black and White, liberal and conservative, will be able to sit down at the table of brotherhood—diverse in culture, yet one in the Spirit of the Lord. I have a dream that one day even my own local conference, and all other conferences will be transformed into organizations that are all-inclusive, devoid of racism, sexism, and favoritism. I have a dream that prostitutes, drunks, gamblers, and drug addicts will be accepted (without discrimination) into my local congregation, not judged by their past actions, but by their characters transformed in Jesus Christ.

Catherine Anthony England
(Adapted from the famous speech by Martin Luther King, Jr., August 28, 1963)
tional family structures, dominance of a market economy, outbreaks of ethnic conflict, all define the environment in which the church functions.

Pluralism dominates the religious world. Religions are no longer isolated by distance and communication barriers. As a result, people are aware of the wide range of competing faiths. The powerful values of individualism and a market economy suggest that each person has a wide range of choices for their private spiritual journey.

This new “religious marketplace” is characterized by the privatization of religious belief and practice, marginalization of organized religion, relativization of all religious thought and conviction, and trivialization of religious teaching and practice. In this competitive environment, people participate in the church on their own terms, not on the church’s terms. The church’s influence declines. Does the Adventist Church have the orientation and skills to compete effectively in a pluralistic environment?

The fear of congregationalism, a root springing up out of the church’s history, threatens the worldwide focus of the church. The problems of an uneven world economy also impact the church. The great expansion over the past 50 years has created new centers of Adventism in Africa and Latin America. This constitutes a good investment, but it has a heavy mortgage. At the same time, as many governments (in North America, for example) abandon or curtail their responsibilities to the poor, additional demands fall on the church.

The Key to the Future

A principle of organizational change is that shared vision and values must emerge and be constantly articulated if substantial progress is to take place. People need to know where the church is headed (vision) and what their role is (values). They need to hear this repeatedly.

A positive vision is any organization’s greatest force for change. This vision, initiated by leaders through a shared process with employees and members, must be comprehensive, compelling, detailed, and inspiring. The values of the Adventist Church have always been important. These are drawn from a heritage of inspiration and revelation, based in the Bible, and illuminated in the writing of Ellen White. Powerful values are shared in the stories told of our history as a faith community and a missionary people.

Our problem is a system unable to cope with present and emerging generations, both within and without. For the church to think it can hold on to the philosophy and structure of 1901, or even 1950 or 1990, and stay on the cutting edge at the frontier of mission, is to act like the proverbial ostrich. It can’t happen!

Structure is not an end in itself. Rather, it’s a means to an end. It’s simply a tool to advance the mission of the church. Reorganization is demanded whenever structures grow too cumbersome or are rendered less than optimally effective by changes and conditions.

The form, methods, and mode of mission must be altered in order to stay true to the church’s fundamental teachings and mission. If we don’t change, we will find no one listening to our precious message.

Managing the Transition

The church is, and always has been, called to live in the “in between,” between the Resurrection and the eschaton, between the “already” and the “not yet.” The church is called to be a “wilderness” people, constantly in transition, always open to the new challenges and opportunities that God and history provide.

Discerning leadership must be alert to the early-warning signs in the social environment so that they can promptly steer the church in a new direction that keeps it moving toward its ultimate destination. God’s church should
cosmetic. An incremental approach will not yield the results we need. Change must be approached from a systems or strategic view, informed by principles from Scripture. Pastors and administrators need continuing education in the principles and processes of introducing change. We want to grow the church, not blow it up.

Organizations tend to change when forced to, not of their own initiative. Knight observes that the Adventist Church has historically made changes only when it is on the verge of financial disaster and organizational dysfunctionality. Change happens when the status quo becomes more painful than making a change. The leaders who will make a difference in the future will be those with a renewed sense of discernment, the gift of hearing what the Spirit is saying to the church, and an ear to listen to the prophetic voices of its theologians and its people.

Systemic change is essential if the church is to be faithful. The current crisis facing the church, particularly in North America, is also an opportunity rich with potential. Embracing change as an opportunity for greater faithfulness, church leaders can view the current crisis as an opportunity to transform the church and thus participate in God's ongoing creative and redemptive mission for all humanity.

For full text of this article (including “Proposals for Change”) see our Web page: www.adventistreview.org.

1 George Knight, A Brief Look at the History of Seventh-day Adventists, p. 153.
2 Effectiveness is doing the right things; efficiency is doing things right.

H. arold L. Lee is the president of the Columbia Union Conference in Columbia, Maryland.
The Tapestry of Humanity
A reality are many. Classic among them is the Word of God that point to this inclusive, and it has beauty. Singularity. It is rich, it is strong, it is inclusive, and it has beauty.

The truth is that humanity is meant to become one in Christ; and when that happens, the unity that appears has an enormous capacity for inclusiveness. The passages and concepts from the Word of God that point to this reality are many. Classic among them is the thought that nationality, ethnic roots, social status in society, and “male or female” are of no consequence as we stand before God (Gal. 3:26-29); we are all swept up in Christ and made one (Eph. 4:5, 6). This is an unqualified assertion as to what happens to people who in faith have come to Jesus Christ. At that moment the believer is endowed with the gift of the Holy Spirit as a “deposit” or symbol of ownership, and as a promise (“guarantee”) that arising out of the Spirit’s presence in our lives unimaginable riches lie ahead as our inheritance with Christ (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13, 14). This gift of the Spirit is a reality to all who have accepted Christ and His lordship. And unity is part of this new reality. It is inescapable. The Spirit Himself is a symbol of— and the minister of— that unity among believers.

Do we hear what we are saying? Do we understand it? The truth is not complicated at all. It says to me: “In Christ you have become something that you were not before. The body of which you are now a part is big, diversified, and inclusive. And you are all one.” Unity is spiritual. To deny it, whether by words or acts that destroy it, is apostasy.

We must, therefore, take seriously the injunction of Paul to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit” (Eph. 4:3). Unity, like everything else in relationships between people, is not good at taking care of itself. It has to be worked at, it has to be nourished, and one has to be very deliberate about it.

Our church has rapidly become a very international family, and as you look at the world church most of the growth that is taking place may be happening half a world away from where you are. You may well ask and wonder: Are Seventh-day Adventists the same everywhere? Are they the same as you?

Yes, the “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (verse 5) is the same. The one Holy Spirit given to us all is the...
The year 2000! The new millennium is being awaited with hope and fear. People from different walks of life are predicting things that will happen by the turn of the new millennium. As the world today is under the grip of millennium fever, it is not surprising for church members to see so many soothsayers and doomsayers, false prophets and false christs, and to hear about y2K and millennium bugs of the computer world. These are all signs of Christ’s soon coming. Amid the rampage of ethic violence, violation of human rights, natural disasters, famines, diseases, wars and rumors of wars, what will be the condition of our church in the next millennium?

The dream that I have for the church by the turn of A.D. 2000 is that, first of all, it is fully aware of Jesus’ warning, characterizing the church as lukewarm and self-deceived. That its members have personal relationships with Jesus, and are possessed by His Spirit to do away with Laodicean characteristics. That the church is identified so much with Christ that people look to it as the center of healing and hope. That one recognizes stewardship in its true perspective and uses all resources liberally for the cause of God. That the church members are participants instead of spectators in the final act of the gospel drama as it reaches culmination. That the believers are fully prepared for space travel with King Jesus and His holy angels, knowing that the coming new millennium could never pass by without Christ’s second advent—the long-awaited blessed hope.

Ms. Zorampari
India

The destiny toward which our spiritual journey is taking us is the same. Our spiritual history and the basis of our doctrines are the same. The destiny toward which our spiritual journey is taking us is the same. A nd on arrival we shall be eternally next to each other. That, broadly speaking, is what makes us one spiritual family. A nd this is what primarily matters. Yes, we are the same.

A nd yet we are all children of our own history and culture, and it is natural for us all to express ourselves in that context. You do not have to travel very far or cross many boundaries before you discover the variance and diversity that is found in the tapestry of humanity. These are nonhostile realities. They are not a threat to anyone. They complement, fulfill, and add beauty to the whole. We are all richer for it, but the ability to appreciate its same. O ur spiritual history and the basis of our doctrines are the same. T he destiny toward which our spiritual journey is taking us is the same. A nd on arrival we shall be eternally next to each other. T hat, broadly speaking, is what makes us one spiritual family. A nd this is what primarily matters. Yes, we are the same.

A nd yet we are all children of our own history and culture, and it is natural for us all to express ourselves in that context. You do not have to travel very far or cross many boundaries before you discover the variance and diversity that is found in the tapestry of humanity. These are nonhostile realities. They are not a threat to anyone. They complement, fulfill, and add beauty to the whole. We are all richer for it, but the ability to appreciate its beauty, with a relaxed sense of feeling secure, is something we may have to work at. I am quite clear that it is not the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to so deculturalize the world that a bland, insipid humanity emerges with no cultural or ethnic identity.

A s I ponder how I should “make every effort to keep the unity” that is ours in Christ, the words “respect” and “acceptance” come immediately to mind; and Romans 15:7 speaks forcefully to me. T he text, which is quite special, says three things:

1. “Accept one another”
2. “Just as Christ accepted you”
3. “In order to bring praise to God.”

Paul writes this after, a few verses earlier, had pointed to a better way of relating to people—being more considerate and less self-seeking.

So I ask myself: How did Christ accept me? Well, Christ expressed this by dying for me while I was still a sinner (see Rom. 5:8) and full of risks. Amazingly, He has accepted me with all the flaws that are there— an unfinished product, but with potential in the right hands and under the right influence. T his tells me that acceptance of a fellow human being as someone of high value is something that I extend up front. A nd from there on life begins. T hat is how Christ has treated me. S ays the passage: Let that influence how I look upon other people and how I treat them.

But the text also says that by doing so I begin to live a lifestyle that brings “praise to God.” W e are all accustomed to singing the doxology in church. D oxology simply means “praise to God.” T he text tells me that to extend acceptance to another human being is to live doxologically. A n atmosphere of acceptance, I would suggest, is necessary in order to offer praise to God. W ithout extending acceptance, our words to another, I would suggest, tend to become hollow and lose their meaning.

M y appeal is that we work deliberately and personally, in our church and mission life, at becoming able to extend genuine acceptance to one another, crossing all kinds of cultural and ethnic “boundaries”; that boundaries that are a hindrance to the unity we have in Christ be dismantled; and that we in the process give up judgmentalism. It is a good thing in the family of Christ not to be overly opinionated about customs and cultures and about “where I have come from” and make value judgments based on that. T he church, the body of Christ, the family, is a new creation, and different rules of behavior and value apply.

T he tapestry of humanity has a richness and beauty that must be valued and looked after.

---

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

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

Reuben Kimwomi
Kenyan studying chemistry in Germany
The Heart of the Blessed Hope

We wait for a new heaven and a new earth.
ELLEN G. WHITE

Probably no passage from the pen of Ellen G. White is more treasured than her description of the raison d’être of Adventism—the second coming of Jesus. Our hope, like hers, is grounded in His promise that He will soon return to take those who love Him to be with Him forever.—Editors.

THROUGH A RIFT IN the clouds there beams a star whose brilliancy is increased fourfold in contrast with the darkness. It speaks hope and joy to the faithful, but severity and wrath to the transgressors of God’s law. Those who have sacrificed all for Christ are now secure, hidden as in the secret of the Lord’s pavilion. They have been tested, and before the world and the despisers of truth they have evinced their fidelity to Him who died for them. A marvelous change has come over those who have held fast their integrity in the very face of death. They have been suddenly delivered from the dark and terrible tyranny of men transformed to demons. Their faces, so lately pale, anxious, and haggard, are now aglow with wonder, faith, and love. Their voices rise in triumphant song: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof” (Ps. 46:1-3).

While these words of holy trust ascend to God, the clouds sweep back, and the starry heavens are seen, unspeakably glorious in contrast with the black and angry firmament on either side. The glory of the celestial city streams from the gates ajar. Then there appears against the sky a hand holding two tables of stone folded together. Says the prophet: “The heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself” (Ps. 50:6). That holy law, God’s righteousness, that amid thunder and flame was proclaimed from Sinai as the guide of life, is now revealed to men as the rule of judgment. The hand opens the tables, and there are seen the precepts of the Decalogue, traced as with a pen of fire. The words are so plain that all can read them. Memory is aroused, the darkness of superstition and heresy is swept from every mind, and God’s ten words, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, are presented to the view of all the inhabitants of the earth.

It is impossible to describe the horror and despair of those who have trampled upon God’s holy requirements. The Lord gave them His law; they might have compared their characters with it and learned their defects while there was yet opportunity for repentance and reform; but in order to secure the favor of the world, they set aside its precepts and taught others to transgress. They have endeavored to compel God’s people to profane His Sabbath. Now they are condemned by that law which they have despised. With awful distinctness they see that they are without excuse. They chose whom they would serve and worship. “Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not” (Mal. 3:18).

The enemies of God’s law, from the ministers down to the least among them, have a new conception of truth and duty. Too late they see that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is the seal of the living God. Too late they see the true nature of their spurious Sabbath and the sandy foundation upon which they have been building. They find that they have been fighting against God. Religious teachers have led souls to perdition while professing to guide them to the gates of Paradise. Not until the day of final accounts will it be known how great is the responsibility of men in holy office and how terrible are the results of their unfaithfulness. Only in eternity can we rightly estimate the loss of a single soul. Fearful will be the doom of him to whom God shall say: Depart, thou wicked servant.

The voice of God is heard from heaven, declaring the day and hour of Jesus’ coming, and delivering the everlasting covenant to His people. Like peals of loudest thunder His words roll through the earth. The Israel of God stand listening, with their eyes fixed upward. Their countenances are lighted up with His glory, and shine as did the
The faces of the righteous are lighted up, and joy fills every heart. And the angels strike a note higher and sing again as they draw still nearer to the earth.

The King of kings descends upon the cloud, wrapped in flaming fire. The heavens are rolled together as a scroll, the earth trembles before Him, and every mountain and island is moved out of its place. “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people” (Ps. 50:3, 4).

This article is excerpted from The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan, pp. 638-642. Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen G. White exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.
26 Things to Do
Before It’s All Over

You may ask: Before what’s over? This list and its headline are purposefully ambiguous. The new millennium officially begins in 2001, you have only a day or so before the new year, Jesus is coming soon, your life may change tomorrow, so... decide for yourself what to do and when. But one hint: some of these beg to be done today!

1. Start paying tithe.
2. Stop spending time with friends who begin every sentence with “I.”
3. Stop feeling guilty.
4. Think of the thing you fear most and do it.
5. Forgive somebody.
7. Take a solo road trip.
8. Change your phone message.
9. Write someone a letter.
10. Practice saying “No,” “Sorry, I can’t,” and “No thanks.”
11. Memorize a Bible promise.
12. Buy your kids a subscription to the Adventist Review.

13. Learn to tell one great joke.
15. Visit your grandparents.
16. Become a sports fan.
17. Cash in your spare change at the bank, then...
18. Donate it to your favorite charity.
19. Make a list of those things that make you happy. Do them!
20. Master the Internet. At least get connected.
21. Take a day off work and spend it with your kids.
22. Make out a will.
23. Get up in time to watch a sunrise.
24. Send thank-you cards to people who’ve made a difference in your life.
26. Grow a garden.

Stephanie Swilley is a graduating senior at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee.
WE WERE INTERNS. AS YOU MAY imagine, we did “intern jobs.” We ran many errands that included picking up/dropping off film, slides, photocopied materials, disks, and items needed for work-related social events.

A special potluck lunch, celebrating the staff members’ birthdays for the first six months of the year, was scheduled for an early April afternoon. Amy and I were assigned the task of culling balloons, paper plates, cups, and napkins from a nearby party supply store. We jumped in the office van and sped away toward the store. Arriving a few minutes later, we parked the vehicle, entered the store, and began the selection process.

Finished with collecting the necessary supplies, we dawdered a bit, looking around at the other merchandise. We found ourselves in front of a circular-shaped rack on which were many buttons—round, metallic, plastic-painted, flat-faced buttons with pins glued to their backs—the ones you wear on your shirt to make a statement about something or other. Amy pointed to one and said somewhat acerbically, “This is one we should take back to work.”

I glanced at the button and laughed as she read aloud with dramaticism dripping from her voice: “Jesus Is Coming. Look Busy!”

I envisioned a group of people scattered across a large room that was divided by cubicles. As the Boss, wearing a robe and dusty sandals, enters and strolls down the center corridor of the area, people turn back to their desks (away from gossiping with coworkers) and pick up their phones or begin to shuffle papers. It is a wave of practiced action—the Boss walks by, they do something worklike. Sharpen a pencil. File a report. Return a phone call. Restack a stack of papers. Check the printer. Type something on the computer.
Tie their shoes. Just look busy! Then, in my imagined scenario, the Boss exits, and relieved sighs break forth around the room. People get up, turn to resume conversations, go back to playing on the Internet, take off their shoes, finish a snack. Secure in their jobs because they managed to "look busy," the workers return to doing anything but work.

Have we slunk so far away from God’s planned humanity that we work at keeping busy, looking active, instead of being busy, especially at our Father's business? We humans designate earthly reasons for looking engaged—we would rather look busy and do less so we aren’t asked to do what we feel will be too much; and/or we appear busy and overburdened so that people will consider us to be wonderful and sacrificing martyrs, believing our cultivated look-at-me-I-work-so-hard-for-almost-nothing attitude.

I worked in a croissant factory when I was in high school. My junior class would work from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. five days a week at cutting dough, shaping it, pulling baked goods from the oven, inspecting them, and packaging the finished product. We worked very hard and, exhausted, could barely make it to class in the afternoons. A few months before the end of the year we discovered that the seniors, who toiled in the afternoons, sometimes had hardly anything to do and would on frequent occasion be sent home because we had finished all the work for the day that morning.

After discovering this, we machines would jam up, we’d wait just a few seconds longer than we should have to push stop buttons and alert factory supervisors of problems. We did this so that it would take longer to fix. We spent more time searching for trays and boxes, instead of hurrying to keep up with the machines. It seemed by silent agreement that someone each day would inconspicuously foul something up slightly so that we’d have to take a break from work to analyze and fix the problem. And we’d busy ourselves with anything we could think of so we didn’t have to labor as hard, just so it’d seem as if we were working arduously.

When I was about 12 my grandmother lived with us for a few months. My mother would ask me to mop the floor once a week. Whenever my mother lived with us for a few months. My mother would ask me to mop the floor once a week. Whenever

Oksana Samojlowa
Russia

But we must not work at merely looking busy. We must reach out, put our efforts into being God’s children—a witness and example to the world—teaching humankind to accept what God offers, to learn of His vast love, and to observe what He has commanded (Matt. 28:19).

Evangelism remains one of the most effective ways to reach people, and it is being pointed out that personal evangelism is bringing many people to the Lord. Of course, the evangelist should show his personal relationship with Jesus, but it is the manner of presentation that makes many people decide for the Lord, though each evangelist can stress the same thing—a personal relationship with Jesus. When the meetings are over, a good evangelist is gone and a new pastor is sent to nurture a church, their problems remain—they don’t go to church anymore. Or it may happen that they liked this happening with many people smiling, a lot of music, sound advice during family and health lectures, and they may not be interested in anything else.

Personal evangelism aims at working with an individual who wants to study the Bible, and ask questions and is interested in not only the joyful atmosphere of a campaign, but a sense of life and the solution of life’s problems. This all must be done with love, real interest in people’s problems and concerns. We should talk to people more without being afraid to be rejected, though without being too persistent. Many people need fellowship. They need someone to talk to, and they need someone’s advice. All means of technology must be used as well—this is an effective and quick way to bring the message to the vast majority. When telling the truth to people we shouldn’t ignore any doctrine, only some of them must be stressed more, such as the three angels’ messages. The improvement must begin with ourselves. Each one should answer the question: "Am I ready to meet the Lord?"

Each day is important; each day brings us closer to the day of the Lord’s coming; each day we are responsible for telling people the truth, we, who know it.

Oksana Samojlowa
Russia

Belinda Alexander
South Africa

"...The church should be more relevant—more contextualized. It must provide healing and encouragement. It must touch real people in real ways, revealing a living and lovely God!"

Great ideas. Sadly, this is often the point at which these dreams end. We struggle to reconcile our ideas about what the church should be doing with what we think is not doing, and therefore are disappointed. Perhaps, somehow, we have to go beyond mere critique.

It is my dream for the Adventist Church—and all its people—to reenact the gospel story daily. Through our unique talents, goals, and dreams we can express ourselves as created in God’s image and redeemed by His precious blood, in ways that will portray the life-transforming gospel message, making it come alive again and again. By our understanding of, and inspiration from, our visionary Leader, the Man, Jesus Christ, we can go beyond ourselves, break out of our traditional molds, and be creative, inspired, dedicated, resourceful, and vigilant for Jesus!

Herein lies the challenge: to reveal Christ through our theology and praxis for all He is: Creator-God, relentlessly pursuing lover of a perpetually fallen race, seeking to bring to Himself those who would ever flee from Him.

Belinda Alexander
South Africa

“The church should be more relevant—more contextualized. It must provide healing and encouragement. It must touch real people in real ways, revealing a living and lovely God!”

Great ideas. Sadly, this is often the point at which these dreams end. We struggle to reconcile our ideas about what the church should be doing with what we think is not doing, and therefore are disappointed. Perhaps, somehow, we have to go beyond mere critique.

It is my dream for the Adventist Church—and all its people—to reenact the gospel story daily. Through our unique talents, goals, and dreams we can express ourselves as created in God’s image and redeemed by His precious blood, in ways that will portray the life-transforming gospel message, making it come alive again and again. By our understanding of, and inspiration from, our visionary Leader, the Man, Jesus Christ, we can go beyond ourselves, break out of our traditional molds, and be creative, inspired, dedicated, resourceful, and vigilant for Jesus!

Herein lies the challenge: to reveal Christ through our theology and praxis for all He is: Creator-God, relentlessly pursuing lover of a perpetually fallen race, seeking to bring to Himself those who would ever flee from Him.

Belinda Alexander
South Africa

“The church should be more relevant—more contextualized. It must provide healing and encouragement. It must touch real people in real ways, revealing a living and lovely God!”

Great ideas. Sadly, this is often the point at which these dreams end. We struggle to reconcile our ideas about what the church should be doing with what we think is not doing, and therefore are disappointed. Perhaps, somehow, we have to go beyond mere critique.

It is my dream for the Adventist Church—and all its people—to reenact the gospel story daily. Through our unique talents, goals, and dreams we can express ourselves as created in God’s image and redeemed by His precious blood, in ways that will portray the life-transforming gospel message, making it come alive again and again. By our understanding of, and inspiration from, our visionary Leader, the Man, Jesus Christ, we can go beyond ourselves, break out of our traditional molds, and be creative, inspired, dedicated, resourceful, and vigilant for Jesus!

Herein lies the challenge: to reveal Christ through our theology and praxis for all He is: Creator-God, relentlessly pursuing lover of a perpetually fallen race, seeking to bring to Himself those who would ever flee from Him.

Belinda Alexander
South Africa

“The church should be more relevant—more contextualized. It must provide healing and encouragement. It must touch real people in real ways, revealing a living and lovely God!”

Great ideas. Sadly, this is often the point at which these dreams end. We struggle to reconcile our ideas about what the church should be doing with what we think is not doing, and therefore are disappointed. Perhaps, somehow, we have to go beyond mere critique.

It is my dream for the Adventist Church—and all its people—to reenact the gospel story daily. Through our unique talents, goals, and dreams we can express ourselves as created in God’s image and redeemed by His precious blood, in ways that will portray the life-transforming gospel message, making it come alive again and again. By our understanding of, and inspiration from, our visionary Leader, the Man, Jesus Christ, we can go beyond ourselves, break out of our traditional molds, and be creative, inspired, dedicated, resourceful, and vigilant for Jesus!

Herein lies the challenge: to reveal Christ through our theology and praxis for all He is: Creator-God, relentlessly pursuing lover of a perpetually fallen race, seeking to bring to Himself those who would ever flee from Him.

Belinda Alexander
South Africa

“The church should be more relevant—more contextualized. It must provide healing and encouragement. It must touch real people in real ways, revealing a living and lovely God!”

Great ideas. Sadly, this is often the point at which these dreams end. We struggle to reconcile our ideas about what the church should be doing with what we think is not doing, and therefore are disappointed. Perhaps, somehow, we have to go beyond mere critique.

It is my dream for the Adventist Church—and all its people—to reenact the gospel story daily. Through our unique talents, goals, and dreams we can express ourselves as created in God’s image and redeemed by His precious blood, in ways that will portray the life-transforming gospel message, making it come alive again and again. By our understanding of, and inspiration from, our visionary Leader, the Man, Jesus Christ, we can go beyond ourselves, break out of our traditional molds, and be creative, inspired, dedicated, resourceful, and vigilant for Jesus!

Herein lies the challenge: to reveal Christ through our theology and praxis for all He is: Creator-God, relentlessly pursuing lover of a perpetually fallen race, seeking to bring to Himself those who would ever flee from Him.

Belinda Alexander
South Africa