

YEAR-END MEETING
NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION COMMITTEE
Silver Spring, Maryland
October 29, 2001 8:00 a.m.

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

The devotional message entitled "What Are They Saying About The Church?" was presented by Alvin Kibble, Vice President of the North American Division. A summary of his message follows. He began his message by thanking Elder Schneider, Elder Carlson and all those responsible for inviting him to speak a word on behalf of our "sponsor", our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He continued: To those of you who have been holding me up in your prayers, I want you to know that I have been blessed by them. I thank God for our pioneer leaders, I really do, for we stand on some tall shoulders and if we are blessed today it is because of their stewardship. Don't ever overlook them because they are worthy.

For our devotion I would direct you to St. Paul's letter to the Philippian Christians in the first chapter and 27th verse. "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come to see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." Today's Living Bible puts it this way, "But whatever happens to me remember always to live as Christians should so that whether I ever see you again or not I will keep on hearing good reports that you are standing side by side with one strong purpose to tell the good news."

The title of my message this morning is, "What are they saying about the church?" What are they saying? They are talking about everything. They are talking about the plight of families whose loved ones are victims of the tragedy on September 11. They are talking about the reaction of the Arabs and the Arab world to the Taliban. They are talking about a national identification card that we as citizens of this country may need to use, in order to maintain national security. They are talking about Michael's (Jordan) return to basketball. They are talking about anthrax and germ warfare. They are talking about the low interest on mortgage, and the low price on gas. My son and I pulled up to a gas station, when he remarked, "I have never seen gas that low," and he had not, because he was born in 1974 and we were buying gas for \$1.04. They are talking about whether the Diamond Backs will beat out my Yankees in the World Series. They are talking about the alarming rise in divorce, but what are they saying about the Church? They are talking about the popularity of President Bush, but what are they saying about the Church? They are talking about the bombing of Afghanistan, but what are they saying about the Church? They are talking about the recession but what are they saying about the Church?

That is an important question, so important that Paul had to ask that question to the church at Philippi. He told them he was concerned about what they would be saying about the Church. Philippi, located in central Macedonia, and named after Phillip of Macedon, the

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father of Alexander the Great, was refounded as a Roman military colony. So the character and the ethos, and the climate of Rome, shaped, molded and established the climate of Philippi. It's population was both Roman and Greek, but the opposition and the suffering which partly occasioned this letter was due to the Roman character of the city. Paul, who was greatly endeared to this church as to no other church, expresses no anxiety that his Philippian friends might capitulate to false teachings, but that they would stand firm under pressure. Little chance that they were going to get caught up with false doctrine. But the decadence, the immorality, and the filth of Rome had spread to Philippi. The prostitution, the homosexuality, and even the incest of Rome had fallen upon Philippi. The average Philippian, like the average New Yorker or Washingtonian, was more concerned about being a part of the Empire of Rome than the Kingdom of Heaven. The first group to whom Paul referred as dogs were individuals who were trying to compel the new Gentile converts to be circumcised. And then the second group were some people who, by setting their minds on earthly things, had become enemies of the cross.

There was a question that was most popular. It was the most popular question of the age. Some suggest that it slipped in through the Greeks and the question was a philosophical question, what is truth? The question was spurred out of the belief that there were no absolutes: What is truth? What is goodness? What is evil? What is truth? And in the midst of this cancerous, decaying, crumbling culture, God had a church in Philippi. He had a church borne on the backs of some God-fearing women, who because of a lack of church facilities in the city, had begun meeting down by the river for prayer on Sabbath morning. The only thing that stood between Philippi and the Kingdom of God was this little church. As Rome and Philippi were asking the question, "What is truth?", this little rag tag Christian company dared to suggest that they had the answer. They dared to declare, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." What is truth? They dared to declare that Jesus himself had answered that question when He said to Thomas, "I am the way, the truth and the life." This little church dared suggest that Jesus had the answer.

This letter was predicated on the bond of affection that they shared with Paul. Theirs had been a partnership in the gospel from the very beginning. And that partnership had brought them to a point of mutual suffering. Imprisoned in Rome, Paul is in earnest to see them again. Listen to what he says, "I long for you with the affection of Jesus Christ." He is concerned for his friends in Philippi and their ongoing relationship with Christ. In Romans, Galatians, and II Corinthians, he is carrying on an argument with the church, but in Philippi he seeks only to exalt and to affirm and to give testimony. He had to write to them because he wanted to encourage them in their suffering, and he needed to tell them that they were God's defense. Paul is talking to his church, "I want you to stand strong." I may come to see you and I may not come to see you, but if I don't come to see you I am going to be listening to hear what they have to say about the church.

Now Church, don't let them say, you have no courage, that is what Paul is saying to them. On September 11 when the twin towers fell, the economic towers of the world were attacked, and the faith of some believers went on holiday. Some Church leaders wondered about the stability of the Church. That is why Edwina Humphrey needed to remind us "He's got the whole world in His hands." Wall Street does not support this church. This Church has nothing to do with what happens on Wall Street. Don't let them say that sin put you out of business. Don't let them say that you hired a bunch of apologists to stand in your pulpits who, instead of speaking truth to the powers that be, have crossed over and decided to play it safe and to be politically correct. Don't let them say that they have given up on their prophet. Are you going to let some faithless scholar talk you out of your faith? Don't let them say that the Church has no guts.

When our government came under attack, the leadership went into huddle and came out with a plan. Well the Church of God is under attack. Can't we find some Camp David or some upper room? Must there be business as usual? Don't let them say we have no identifiable core values to guide and influence us and keep us on course on a day-to-day basis. Don't let them say that we don't value our pastors and front-line workers. When you value someone you put their agenda above yours. When you value someone you get involved in what they are interested in. Don't let them say that we are more concerned with image building and window dressing than revival and reformation. Be aware that the people are in pain. If they are lonely then comfort them, even when it is not popular.

You've got to remind them that we were born out of suffering. You must let them know that we grow fat in suffering. Let them know that we suffer with Jesus because we are going to be raised with Him. Let them know that if we die with Jesus, that we will live with Him. Let them know that we are not afraid to suffer.

Don't let them say that you didn't support Christian education or evangelism because somebody on the board said that the money was tight. Don't let them say that the Church or the Conference does not preach tithing because the economy is not going well. Don't let them say that the president folded his tent and went home because some philanthropic enemies rose up in the camp. Don't let them say that. "Must Jesus bare the cross alone and all the world go free, no, there's a cross for everyone and there's a cross for me."

There were two sisters in Philippi, Euodia and Syntyche, who had been arguing in the Philippian church and were tearing up the church. I don't know how long they had been arguing, but issues if unchecked, if unresolved, can lead to division. These two sisters had some issues. My brothers and sisters you cannot ignore people's issues just because you don't think they are important. If you do, it can lead to division, which is why Paul felt compelled to speak to it and sent Timothy to look into it. He set up a little task force to help them resolve it. He may have said, "Sisters you must get that thing together. The whole city of Philippi is watching you. Don't let them say there is no unity in the household of faith."

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What are they saying about the Church? That may be the wrong question, what do they know anyhow, they are not in the church. Jesus asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? And they said, "Some say that you are John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets."

The gospel for Paul is ultimately about salvation. Salvation which comes from God and is effected by Christ. Because the law was the point of contention Paul focused upon the term "righteousness." The issue was not between works of the law and faith, but between confidence in the flesh or your righteous achievements and putting your confidence totally in God. Hence he positioned everything around knowing Christ. Not in some intellectual exercise but in an experiential way.

What do you say about the church? Well, I say this about it. It gave me my life and so I decided to give it my life. My Bible tells me there was a wise man who found a treasure in a field and the Word said that he sold everything but he did not buy the just treasure, he bought the field. In that field were some rocks and some wild trees, weeds and old dried up bushes and dirt and trash. But he bought the whole field because there was a treasure in that field. I know the Church is not all it ought to be, there is some trash in it, because I am in it, and some mess in it because you are in it. But I declare unto you that there is a treasure in this "field" and its name is Jesus. I made up in my mind that I would take the field with all of the trash and all of the mess and all of the shortcomings and all of the politics, and trials and the heartache because the treasure in the field makes the trash and the mess worthwhile.

Conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel you preach and then whether I come to see you or not, I will keep on hearing the good reports that you are standing side by side with one strong purpose.

PRAYER

Dowell W Chow

QUORUM

Harold W Baptiste, Secretary of the North American Division, verified the presence of a quorum.

CALL TO ORDER

Don C Schneider, President of the North American Division, called the first business session of the 2001 Year-end Meeting to order.

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APPROVAL OF STANDING COMMITTEES

VOTED, To approve the 2001 Year-end Meeting Standing Committees as follows:

STEERING COMMITTEE

Don C Schneider, Chair
Harold W Baptiste, Secretary

Members: Rosa T Banks, Matthew Bediako, Debra Brill, Dennis Carlson, Malcolm D Gordon, James W Gilley, Don Hevener, Clarence E Hodges, Delbert Johnson, Howard Karst, Alvin M Kibble, Harold L Lee, Thomas J Mostert, Jr, Kermit L Netteburg, Kenneth W Osborn, Orville D Parchment, Jere D Patzer, Jan Paulsen, Juan R Prestol, Robert L Rawson, Gordon L Retzer, Charles Sandefur, Benjamin D Schoun, Max A Trevino, Manuel Vasquez, Robert Woolford

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Don C Schneider, Chair
Harold W Baptiste, Secretary

Members: Raj Attiken, Helen Boskin, G A (Alex) Bryant, Hamlet Canosa, Donald W Corkum, Mumtaz A Fargo, Malcolm D Gordon, Richard Hall, Harold L Lee, Mike Lekic, Patrick Morrison, Thomas J Mostert, Jr, Kermit Netteburg, Derrick Nichols, Jerry N Page, Dionisio Olivo, Orville D Parchment, Jere D Patzer, Juan R Prestol, Gary Randolph, Gordon L Retzer, Charles Sandefur, Benjamin D Schoun, Dan Serns, Pat Stock, Max A Trevino, Rita Weisz, Ed Wright, Wayne Young

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DAILY PROGRAM

VOTED, To adopt the Daily Program as presented.

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YEAR-END MEETING AGENDAS

VOTED, To adopt the 2001 North American Division Committee Year-end Meeting Agendas as presented.

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528-01N SECRETARY'S REPORT

Harold W Baptiste, Secretary of the North American Division, began his presentation by praising God for His goodness. Our country is in crisis but God is good. The events of September 11 are having a profound effect on the world in which we live and a profound effect on the lives of each of us. The changes in society are both radical and subtle and are destined to influence our view of the world as well as our sense of values. We have seen what no one could have imagined, not even the perpetrators. No agency or individual in this country ever thought that it was possible for a skyscraper to simply fold within itself and crumble to the ground. The training and preparation of the many emergency rescue teams, always envisioned that a fire in a high-rise building would leave the charred ruins and provide some time for evacuations and attempts to save people. But this was not the case. In this case nothing was left and thousands of people perished in a most horrible manner. Nine members of the Seventh-day Adventist church perished in the explosions in New York City and here at the Pentagon. We need to be mindful of the families who are suffering such great loss. Yesterday there was a service in New York City, a memorial for the thousands who have not yet been recovered. Surely it is affecting our lives deeply.

With utter amazement, Non-Adventists and Adventists alike read or reread the account of Ellen G White's vision in New York City recorded in the ninth volume of the Testimonies. She painted the scene with pinpoint accuracy. Man's efforts were futile. There was chaos, fear, consternation, bewilderment, anger, and just plain confusion. Those who rushed to help the victims became victims themselves. The time has come for us to realize that earthly power cannot stand on its own.

But times of crisis are also times of opportunities. Under the leadership of our division president, members of this division are seizing the opportunity to render service to the hurting people of New York City and Washington DC. Many are operating in unconventional ways but they are all seeking to allow the fragrance of the love of Jesus Christ to bring comfort to these hurting souls.

That is the mission of the Church. That is the work of our division. We operate to address the needs of hurting humanity and to lead them to Jesus Christ; so all that we do must of necessity ultimately lead to individuals' becoming members of the Church and citizens of the Kingdom of God. Brothers and sisters, the coming of the Lord must be near in light of the things that are taking place around us.

Last evening you heard about some of the things that are going on in New York City and in other places in this division. Evangelistic programs are being conducted in various parts of the field. You will be hearing about that and the strategic evangelistic plan in the days to come.

Here is a brief report on the results of some of the evangelistic endeavors that have been undertaken in this division. In the year 2000 the total amount of baptisms across the division were 36,594. This was indeed a decline because in the prior year, 1999, baptisms were 40,766. So there was a shortfall of 4,172. The year 1999 was the highest year for baptisms in the division.

The baptisms for the second quarter of the year 2001 have already reached 15,279. That is an indication that we are on target for an increased number of baptisms during this year. The rate of growth in the church division-wide is 2.12percent which is .08percent higher in the year 2000 than it was the year before. The total membership of the division at the end of 2000 was 933,935. Comparing that with the previous year which was 914,106, the gain in 2000 over 1999 was 19,828 and we thank the Lord for that. At the end of the second quarter 2001, the membership of our division stands at 941,887. At the current rate of growth the membership in North America will number 1,000,000 by the year 2003.

There have been changes in the North American Division Secretariat during the past months. Volunteer Ministries which operated under the Youth Department has shifted to the Secretariat. This adjustment brings the Volunteer Ministry structure in harmony with the other divisions. Jose Rojas was chosen to continue leadership in this very important area.

Baptiste then called upon Jose Rojas to present a report of the Adventist Volunteer Ministries Network. Rojas reported that in 1995 the Adventist Youth Services Network was launched. The objective was to establish a network of volunteer ministries with various other ministries which would bring together the many ministries from across the land into a focused evangelistic mission. Much more happened than was projected when we launched this ministry in 1995. For example, our goal for volunteers serving in ministry by the year 2000 was to have 10,000 volunteers networked throughout North America. We are proud to praise the Lord publicly to say today that we had over 52,000 volunteers by the year 2000. Our work is meant to be a spark, a stimulus to the field, a catalyst to provoke something that is much bigger than we are and that should not depend on prodding from us for its operation. Our conferences, unions, and churches must not be dependent on someone else to do the

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ministry God has called us to do. As we come together all of these gifts, all of these ministries will be functioning. We will go in the same direction together. When we come together something powerful happens.

Rojas referred the committee to the Statistical Report of the North American Volunteer Ministries for 2000 which had been distributed. He then introduced the staff of the Adventist Volunteer Ministries Network: Sandra Brown, Candace Renk, Nancy Vasquez, and Cesar Gonzalez.

VOTED, To receive the report of the North American Division Secretariat.

MINISTRIES TO NEW YORK CITY—REPORT

Donald G King, President of Northeastern Conference, spoke of New York City as a grieving, sleepless city. We want to express appreciation to our division for the leadership that is being provided to the New York project and for encouraging, and inviting conferences to participate in a meaningful and practical way to reach the people of New York City for Jesus Christ. We thank each one who has sent and is sending people, whether they be volunteers or workers, to assist as resource personnel working along with the conferences in the infrastructure that already exists in New York City. I appreciate so much the conferences that called and asked, "How can we help? What can we do to assist you and to support you?" Dr. Fitzgerald Kerr, the Community Services Director for the Northeastern Conference, and Elder William Bremner, the Community Services Director for the Greater New York Conference, are working closely together with the Red Cross in training pastors to provide counseling.

We also have a program called the Police and Firemen Precinct Adoption Program, which was initiated prior to September 11. Twenty-five to thirty churches in the Northeastern Conference have adopted police precincts and fire houses and have invited these rescue officers to our churches to let them know how much they are appreciated for the work that they do in the communities. We are now able to reach families of the police and firemen who have died in the tragedy. As individuals come to New York we would like to incorporate them into the work that is already planned by the conferences. We also appreciate the desire on the part of workers to come and to do whatever they can to share the gospel on the streets of New York City. This is a tremendous field that is ripe for harvest.

Dionisio Olivo, President of the Greater New York Conference, reminded us of how the Lord has sent special messages to several cities. One of those cities is New York City. It is amazing how prophecy has been fulfilled before our very eyes. It is amazing to see the things that the Lord said through His servant about New York City. As prophecies are being fulfilled and as prophecies directed to New York City were so uniquely fulfilled, reaching the

masses of New York City became an emergency, not only to help the immediate need but to witness for the kingdom of God. The North American Division did what it should have done and mobilized the whole division to focus in a special outreach program in New York City. This action shows that we are working together. We appreciate what you are doing. As you come with a vision of reaching the masses at this crucial time, we appreciate your willingness to come and to help us to meet that tremendous challenge. To the North American Division and to all who have called, who have been there and are planning to continue to help us, thank you.

PRAYER

Prayer was offered by James W Gilley, Vice-president of the North American Division, to petition God for the power of the Holy Spirit and for His sustaining grace in the leadership of Elders Olivio and King.

NEW YORK PROJECT FACT SHEET—JAMES GILLEY

James W Gilley presented the New York Project Fact Sheet. A copy of this document is attached to the original copy of these minutes.

TREn/01YE to JRP

531-01N TREASURER'S REPORT

Juan R Prestol, Treasurer of the North American Division, reviewed the 2000 year-end financial results, within the framework of the events of the twelve months since October 30, 2000 to September 30, 2001. He covered the following areas:

- a. Background of the political and economic issues affecting the USA, Canada and Bermuda for the period covered in the report.
- b. Identification of key economic indicators for the period for all the division countries, and currency exchange issues.
- c. Results of the operation for the fiscal year 2000 in NAD gross tithe amounting to \$656,938, 361. Tithe increase over 1999 of 7.7 percent. World Mission Fund offerings increased over 1999 was 4.4 percent. The combined tithe and world mission fund offerings averaged \$12,826,990 per week during 2000.

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d. Of the total gross tithe received, the tithe from Hispanic churches represented 7.6 percent, from Regional churches 18.7 percent and from all other churches 73.6 percent.

e. The current ratio was 2.88:1, liquid assets to commitments was 240.87 percent, and percent of recommended working capital was 106.72 percent.

f. The slowing of the economy and the impact of the September 11 events. The possibility of a recession, and the increase in the unemployment indexes from 3.9 percent to 4.9 percent.

g. The history of political and natural disasters on the US market, and the need to watch income, liquidity, receivables, inventory levels, and payables.

h. Division-wide the expected increase in tithe income for 2001 4-5 percent over 2000.

The report also covered the areas in which treasury has been actively involved during the last twelve months, such as retirement, remuneration, housing, accounting software, multimedia training materials, union constituencies and the issues affecting the SDA Church in Canada. A series of graphs covering historical data on the Dow Jones, NASDAQ, S & P 500 and the discount rate were shown.

Prestol ended with an expression of gratitude to the Lord for His blessings on His work during the last year, and with an expression of trust and confidence in His guidance in the future.

VOTED, To accept the report of the Treasurer.

(A CD Rom containing the full text of this presentation is available from NAD Secretariat or NAD Information Technology Services.)

ADVENTIST REVIEW—NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION— SPECIAL ISSUE

Elder William Johnsson, Editor of the *Adventist Review*, stated that the *Adventist Review*, in times like these, wants to be a solid anchor with every issue pointing the people to Jesus and the Scriptures so that it will be a voice of hope, strength and confidence as we look for our Lord's return.

He interviewed Kimberly Luste Maran, Assistant Editor of *Adventist Review*, concerning the formation of the special issue of the *Adventist Review* which is a look at our

family around the world. This pictorial issue is designed to highlight both our similarities and our differences as a church family. It is a tapestry of Adventism which may be shared with all.

Elder Jan Paulsen, President of the General Conference, encouraged the membership to share this edition of the *Adventist Review* with libraries, government offices, at the United Nations, European Unions, Brussels, Geneva, New York, and legislative bodies around the world. He said, "Let these people have easy access to this magazine in their reading rooms and in their libraries. We are good at talking to ourselves, not so good at speaking to the public in an uncomplicated, non-defensive, relaxed, open, and free way. This paper is an instrument that can be used very effectively in talking to those who are not part of our community. Let them see what the tapestry of our church is, because it is the tapestry of humanity."

VIDEO—SEEDS CONVENTION

A video, "SEEDS, A Conference For A Church-Planting Movement" was shown. This video narrated the blessings and inspiration to be gained from attending a SEEDS Convention. This convention is held once a year at Andrews University for people from around the world. They come to grasp a deeper understanding of the Divine call for which our pioneers lived, planting churches for the harvest of the kingdom.

SIGNS MAGAZINE—REPORT

Robert Kyte, President and General Counsel of Pacific Press Publishing Association, reported that the Pacific Press is committed to mission and is committed to assisting the church in the ministries of outreach through the printed page. After the first effects of the shock wore off on September 11, plans were made to produce two significant and appropriate items which were designed to influence people who were reaching for answers: *Last Day Events* by Ellen White was sold and reprinted two times and is now available in paperback in Spanish, French and English. An article entitled, "Where Was God?" was printed for *Signs of the Times* and *El Centinela*.

Former members needed to receive this information so Pacific Press funded mailing these magazines to every Seventh-day Adventist. Employees made contributions to the "New York City Project" and are providing one hundred thousand copies of this magazine for outreach work in New York City. A gift was given to Pacific Press Publishing Association to be used 100 percent for student missionary activities. These magazines are available for use by students who want to do missionary work in New York City. Minnesota Conference, through the gift of a layman, is mailing *Signs of the Times* to every household in the state of

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Minnesota. Teams of lay people will follow-up with Bible studies to help to spread the good news of Jesus' love.

REVIEW AND HERALD PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION— REPORT

Elder Robert Smith, President of the Review and Herald Publishing Association, shared a progress report of the work of the past year. The year-end statement shows \$27,300,000 was reported in sales. It was determined that there was a need to decrease spending by 2 percent and to increase sales by 5 percent. Downsizing has reduced the staff to 237 employees. A complete reorganization has been done in the periodical and book departments. Mark Thomas is the vice-president for the book department and Larry Decker is the vice-president for the periodical department. Richard Coffin, formerly the vice-president for editorial affairs, is the assistant to the president.

Hepsibah Singh, Vice-president for Finance, reported that the Literature Evangelism Program is strong. The Lake Union, Southern Union, Texas Conference, New Jersey Conference, and the Southern New England Conference, are participating in the traditional Literature Evangelism Program. There are over 158 literature evangelists in the program. About 15 percent of the publishing house sales are derived from the Literature Evangelist Program. The program is still strong and we believe that the Spirit of Prophecy is true when it says that the publishing work will continue until the end and that it will spread literature like the leaves of autumn until Jesus comes.

Mark Thomas indicated that the reorganization at the Review and Herald office had begun on the morning of September 11. However, within hours, those plans were laid aside and the Review personnel were working on the publication of over 1 million brochures titled, "Attack on America", a sermon by Mark Finley. The brochure was immediately sent to all churches in the North American Division. Another 800,000 have been printed and are circulating now while another million is scheduled to be printed in the next two or three days. This brochure meets the somber mood which pervades our society since the attack. Because people are more aware of serious matters, they are more willing to listen and to read. It is important that our church be seen as a church which is out there in the front. We have hope, the best hope there is.

Message Magazine under the direction of Dr. Ron Smith has developed a set of tracts which speak to these times. They are an appropriate sharing tool for everyone.

CNN is advising people to get themselves healthy, stop smoking, drink more water, and eat healthy foods to get ready for bioterrorism. *Vibrant Life* magazine has tracts which

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deal with these subjects. These tracts may be shared with people who are beginning to realize what things are important in life.

The movie, *Harry Potter*, is scheduled to be released in the next few weeks here in the United States. *Beware of the Crystal Dragon* by Maylan Schurch is the first sharing book our office has done for children. It deals with the subject matter of the Harry Potter books which introduce children to the occult. As the occult becomes more pervasive these kinds of books will be very important for our children to read and to share.

Adjourned

Don C Schneider, Chair
Harold W Baptiste, Secretary
Don Hevener, Editorial Secretary
Marialyce Gibson, Devotional Recording Secretary
Esther Jones, Recording Secretary

