

# ADVENTIST Review

December 16, 1999

Cutting Edge

Irene

*She gave. But how much?*

Wrestling With Darwin

I Choose Him



# LETTERS

## From Violence to Peace

I praise God for the deliverance of Phyllis Scott-Zimmerman (Sarah



Kelnhofer, "From Violence to Peace," Oct. 21), but I feel the need to take issue with her emphasis on self-defense. I remember an article I read in

which a woman was raped. She tried to defend herself, unsuccessfully. Then she finally *prayed* for help, and the man got a look of terror on his face and ran off.

I believe that if this woman had prayed for deliverance *first*, she would never have been raped. Christ specifically taught that we are to pray for deliverance from evil (Matt. 6:13). We have many examples in the Bible of people being protected by God (for one example, see 2 Chronicles 20:22). I myself was taking a walk one day when I heard a growling noise. I looked to my left and saw a large dog charging at me with his teeth bared. I had no time to do more than say "Lord!" But that was all that was needed; the dog instantly turned away from me. I believe that prayer is a better defense than anything Scott-Zimmerman is teaching. Prayer should be our first line of defense, not a last resort.

—Barbara Bailey

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

When I read "From Violence to Peace" I was reminded of my own journey back to God. When I first walked into a church in Overland Park, Kansas, I showed up in my "best," a skin-tight

pair of black flared pants and equally tight silk shirt—my discotheque attire. Phyllis Scott-Zimmerman's and her two friends' journey to God was facilitated by loving Christians. This too was my experience. A couple named Brenda and Tom opened their home and their hearts to me, as did the members of their church.

Today, while there is an abundance of programs and methods being tried out to reach the unsaved and once-saved, there is a corresponding lack of personal connection on the part of most church members to the soul-saving work to be done. There are no shortcuts. No program, no matter how moving, gripping, or convincing can or will ever replace the human embrace. The pathway to heaven is paved by loving relationships such as that between Scott-Zimmerman and her friends and Gladys.

It is my belief that we will see 100 baptisms today where there is now one, and full churches where they are now only half full, if we would all take Gladys' approach to soul winning and be a friend.

—David Moench, pastor

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

## How Can I Protect My Children?

I applaud T. Gregory Matthews' companion article "How Can I Protect My Children?" (part of the feature "My Best Buddy," Oct. 21), but he forgot to mention one of the most useful methods of protecting children from the Internet.

I know how powerful the Internet can be. I am providing Ellen G. White's five big books, including *The Desire of Ages*, as Bible studies online for countries in which they execute people for studying the Bible. In spite of my obvious bias for the Internet, the best Internet child protection is to *unplug*.

You're making a better investment in your child's education if you budget the \$30 a month for educational software.

We live in an age in which there are inexpensive educational kits that would allow your kids to do things as interesting as gene-splicing at home (ask your local science teacher). Buy a telescope or a microscope, learn a foreign language—you can have fun *with* your kids.

And if your family still needs to receive e-mail, several companies provide this for free.

—David Cole, Y2HOPE.COM

KENWOOD, CALIFORNIA

## A Clean Reflection

I hate to write a critical letter, but I feel compelled at least to say something concerning the editorial "A Clean Reflection," by Kimberly Luste Maran (Oct. 21). I was uncomfortable with the detailed description of the horror movie in the article. I could appreciate Maran's point, but I feel that God's truths are better illustrated through God's stories, rather than Satan's stories.

—Kimberly Harris

COLLEGE DALE, TENNESSEE



## The Other Six Days

Stephen Chavez's editorial "The Other Six Days" (Oct. 21) cuts through the surface of church life to what really makes a difference and is significant. Chavez raises salient questions that every Adventist Christian should seriously ponder and prayerfully find answers to. I was profoundly blessed. Thank you.

—Willie Oliver  
SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND

The editorial "The Other Six Days," by Stephen Chavez, is much appreciated. Chavez's approach was both candid and objective.

We in North America do spend an inordinate amount of time overemphasizing the who, what, when, where, and how of worship, and like spectators at a sports event, we're out for blood if it's not done our way. More folks than we could ever imagine leave Sabbath school or church with little, if any, blessing—their worship, their meditation, their very Christianity criticized. And unfortunately, many of them never return, their fellowship lost in the untimely, unbecoming, and often unbelievable censure of well-meaning people who idolized methods over the Man.

—Iris Stovall  
HYATTSVILLE, MARYLAND

## This Isn't a Performance

Thank you very much for printing "This Isn't a Performance," by Janalee Shaw, (Oct. 21). As a violinist who is regularly asked to play for church and church functions, I think it is very important that all musicians remember that when we are onstage, the focus should not be on us, but on God. We need to remember that the music should also direct thoughts heavenward, rather than toward the "performer." Every time I perform I have to remind myself to direct my own thoughts heavenward so that Jesus Himself will guide my fingers to pro-

vide music that will benefit the worship service.

A thought: Maybe there will soon be an article on audience etiquette during special music?

—Preston Hawes  
LACOMBE, ALBERTA, CANADA

## Thank You

Thank you for printing excerpts from Chris Blake's book *In Search of a God to Love* in the *Adventist Review* recently.

I generally don't purchase "religious" books. However, reading excerpts from the book in the *Review* resulted in my purchasing the book to find out "the rest of the story."

It struck me that this is a book to be shared with others. I purchased five more and gave them as gifts to "believing unbelievers" and "unbelieving believers" alike.

In my work as a criminal investigator I meet many people who seem to have lost all hope because of the pain they have suffered at the hands of every kind of abuse. And they often blame God.

Personally, the book has helped me put God back into sacred perspective. I too had become hardened as a result of painful life experiences and the suffering I see and deal with daily in my job. I plan to continue purchasing this book as long as it is available, and share it with those around me who have lost hope.

—Karen D. Patton  
COLLEGE PLACE, WASHINGTON  
See review on page 27 of this issue. —  
Editors.

## Letters Policy

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# ADVENTIST Review

*"Behold, I come quickly . . ."*

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

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**To Writers:** We welcome unsolicited manuscripts. (Please query before submitting long articles.) Include address, telephone number, and Social Security number, where available. Address all editorial correspondence to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600. Editorial office fax number: (301) 680-6638.

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# As the Century Turns

WILLIAM G. JOHNSON

**W**ith the hypnotic number 2000 rolling up on the screen, let's step back and take a look at where our church has come from and what happened to it in this century.

First, some numbers that startle me.

Exactly 100 years ago Adventist world membership totaled 64,003. As of December 31, 1999, world membership is projected to reach 10,782,042.

That is an increase of 16,800 percent during the twentieth century! Who could have foreseen it? Certainly not the pioneers of this movement or those alive as the planet spun into the new century. Their eyes were fixed on a much more modest number—144,000.

It's tempting to fixate on numbers to try to quantify the church. Anciently God told His people to forget about measuring Jerusalem: "Run, tell that young man, 'Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the great number of men and livestock in it. And I myself will be a wall of fire around it,' declares the Lord, 'and I will be its glory within'" (Zech. 2:4, 5, NIV). I believe He has a similar message for us today. God's plans are far bigger than our statistical efforts can encompass. God is interested not only in numbers of people but in the quality of their lives.

Nevertheless, these numbers—this multiplication of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—reveal much about the goodness of the Lord and the genius of this movement. At the very least they show that Adventism is not merely a viable force but one that has within it an energy and focus propelling it to explosive growth.

Think of how we began 155 years ago, and what might have been. We could have turned out to be one more apocalyptic sect setting dates for the eschaton and vanishing from the pages of history. We could have gone bush, fled society. We could have become a Waco.

For a little while that option beckoned. Our pioneers held a "shut door" theory, believing that the door of mercy was closed so no one else could be saved. It was a wrong idea, and God quickly showed them it was wrong. He blew the shut door wide open by bringing new people into the little band and opened their eyes to mission.

Ever since, this movement has set aside dates and been about mission. We Adventists dream the impossible dream—the gospel to all the world before Jesus comes. The Saviour's com-

mission motivates us: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . . teaching them" (Matt. 28:18-20, NIV), and John the revelator's dream inspires us: the everlasting gospel to every nation, tribe, language, and people (Rev. 14:6).

Thus this century has seen the Advent message carried to the limits of the earth. Adventist churches have been plant-

ed in the Far North beyond the Arctic Circle and at the tip of South America, on the tiny island of Pitcairn in the vast Pacific, and in the mountains of Nepal. Many missionary groups have been at work—God uses a variety of agencies—but Adventists have developed into the most extensive, farthest-flung denomination on the planet.

However, the genius of

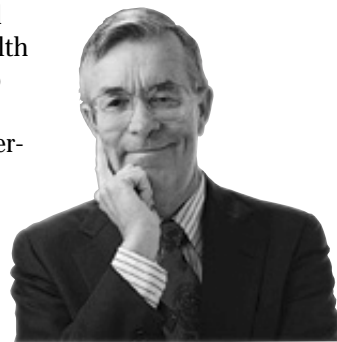
Adventism embraces more than the hope of the Second Advent, central though that is. We are a people of the Sabbath, a day of grace that symbolizes our total life in Jesus Christ. The Sabbath stands for the liberation that the Saviour offers—from the bondage of sin, work, and material things. And this is a quality of life for which the people of the world hunger and thirst.

Intimately tied to quality of life is our unique emphasis on health. The verdict is in. The century has established that Adventism works at the most basic level: as a population we have better health and live longer.

Again, we could have hoarded the health message to ourselves, but we did not. Health became a part of our mission to the world, not only in giving instruction but in establishing a network of hospitals and clinics around the globe. Already 100 years ago the Battle Creek Sanitarium became famous for its cutting-edge science. And now Loma Linda University and Medical Center are at the forefront of medical research.

Which leads me to a final What might have been? What if Adventists had never had an Ellen White? No health message and no health mission. No educational work. No publishing. Where would we be today? Far different, far smaller, far narrower, and maybe not at all.

But, as the old spiritual put it, "This train is bound for glory." By His grace the best is yet to be.



*Adventism works  
at the most basic  
level.*



# On Haystacks

KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

**W**hat in the world is a haystack, I wondered, and why are we going to eat them? My church was having a fall celebration social, complete with games and prizes, a film, and a hayride around the large, wooded church property. And haystacks.

I stretched my imagination, I pulled and pushed it as far as it would go, and could not figure out what edibles would make up a “haystack” and how we’d eat it. I asked some of the folks who were setting up the food what it was, but they didn’t explain it. All I got was a mysterious smile and a “Just wait and see. You’ll love it!”

Soon enough I discovered the composition of the infamous Adventist haystack—corn (or tortilla) chips, lettuce, tomato, onion, salsa, sour cream, shredded cheddar cheese, and beans. I devoured this unusual but tasty treat, not realizing that a tradition had been born.

About once every month for years after that experience, my family would enjoy a haystack Sabbath lunch. It became custom. Despite my initial preteen rebellion at calling it a haystack—weeks later I succumbed—I still reveled in how good haystacks were and relished the concept and actualization of making it a part of our lives, part of our family legacy.

*Traditionalism* is defined by the Merriam-Webster’s *Collegiate Dictionary* (tenth edition) as “adherence to the doctrines or practices of a tradition” and “the beliefs of those opposed to modernism, liberalism, or radicalism.” Pretty open and closed definitions. No debate. And not a lot of room for h’mmm . . . dare I say improvement?

The definition for *liberalism* seems more charitable. Webster defines this term in part as “the quality or state of being liberal”; “a movement in modern Protestantism emphasizing intellectual liberty and the spiritual and ethical content of Christianity.” Seems to be room to work with here. Maybe space for improvement upon present practice?

Picture this—the young in our church scoff at stuffy traditionalists, and worship has become merely a repetitive discourse on do’s and don’t’s, with the occasional vicious barb directed at them, and their celebratory liberalism, by older generations. They believe that the church is too quiet and staid, and turn away in disgust at the machinations and ritu-

als that the older set adhere to. They simply shut their eyes, ears, and minds to the solace and beauty of tradition.

The more aged in our church fear the young opinionated firebrands, and worship has become a nervous, defiant gesture at keeping things the same, with the young wondering at their conservative conventionalism. They believe that the young

have gone doctrinally “soft” and soak their religious lives in the heavy ink of “old school” theology and policy. They plainly discount the energy and elegance of a liberal spirit.

I believe strongly in tradition. Indeed, at Christmas I give special gifts. I sing carols. I eat more pumpkin pie. I look forward to seeing the Nativity skit at church. I would not change any of these. But I could certainly improve upon them. I could give different gifts—my time to the shelter downtown, my compassion and learning to children who don’t know what Christmas is, my “modern” expertise to help an older person use the Internet.

Jan Glidewell writes in the *St. Petersburg Times*: “You can clutch the past so tightly to your chest that it leaves your arms too full to embrace the present.” We must not grasp so avariciously to past traditions that we miss new ideas and innovations that can enrich our Christian experience. If we stay in the past, we cannot move to what awaits us in Paradise.

Consciously discarding those nuances and concepts that are not biblically sound and implementing those that can positively shape ourselves will make a difference, a beneficial difference in our lives.

I think haystacks are great. That won’t change. But there are variations to the dish: you can use olives and not onions, Doritos instead of plain chips, add taco-flavored vegemeat to the beans, use refried beans or black beans, serve with jalapeños and not with sour cream—the possibilities are endless. Certain things, like the chips and beans, do remain constant. But if other ingredients are added, it won’t always be the same haystack. Sometimes it will be a better one.

*If we stay in  
the past, we  
cannot move to  
what awaits us in  
Paradise.*





# GIVE & TAKE

## ADVENTIST LIFE

We are a "college church," and during years of high enrollment the college would make regular use of some of our classrooms. With tight schedules that didn't permit a normal lunch break, students sometimes wandered into the church office, asking whether we had a vending machine. The request was so regular that I brought the matter up at a weekly staff meeting, suggesting that perhaps we should provide this as a service to the students. This led to a discussion of where such a machine could be located and also member reaction to seeing a vending machine in the church, even in an inconspicuous place. Finally our youth pastor came up with the day's bright idea: "Let's call it a Morris Venden machine, and then no one will mind."

—Gail Price, Kettering, Ohio



ILLUSTRATIONS BY TERRY CREWS

The song "I Just Wanna Be a Sheep" was frequently requested by our enthusiastic campers at the Arizona youth camp this past summer. At staff worship, which met at 6:30 every morning, Ethan, a weary counselor, suggested his choice for a chorus to open our devotional time that day: "I Just Wanna Be Asleep."

—Deb Tatum, Phoenix, Arizona



## SABBATH SCHOOL CLASS COLLECTS COINS FOR ADRA

**RIBBONS OF NICKELS:** The Huntsville, Alabama, Central church junior and earliteen Sabbath school class collected \$500 for ADRA during this past church year, in the form of nickels. These coins were attached to blue and pink one-yard ribbon lengths (that's right, girls against boys!). And by the end of the year they had collected the equivalent of approximately 225 yards of nickels, or about 9,000 nickels! The ribbon lengths were hung around the Sabbath school room and reminded us all each week that even nickels can help others around the world. The class members, who had fun counting ribbons each week, chose to help build a school in the Philippines with the money they collected.

—Merri Christensen, Owens Cross Roads, Alabama

## QUOTES

"I have trouble with people in the church who don't sin the same way I do."

—tongue-in-cheek comment by Larry Blewett in a recent Fellowship Sabbath school discussion, Keene, Texas

"Jesus Christ didn't die on Calvary to save our skins, but to save our souls."

—Dan Matthews, September 25, 1999, at the Forest Lake, Florida, church in connection with the church's fiftieth anniversary celebration



## CHRISTMAS EXPECTATION

then . . .  
expectation  
like early-morning dew  
trembling  
with cheetah eagerness  
upon the grass  
Christmas  
came  
born of heaven  
earth-cradled  
white on wings

in snow-dust days  
enfolding the earth  
everywhere around  
. . . the wonder of it all  
His birth  
anchored firmly  
in eternity  
the Founder Himself  
reflected  
in a child's eyes.

—Patricia Andrews, White Rock, British Columbia, Canada





BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

**T**HE SILVER CHAIN SWUNG GENTLY from a draft creeping into the house through partially finished walls. The chain, as it brushed up against the dusty 60-watt bulb protruding from one of the wood rafters, played a song with the hollow whistle of wind that sneaked in the poorly sealed windows. *Tink, tink . . . ti-tink.* The lonely noise went on for a long moment. Then a short phlegmy cough punctured the quiet and the shuffle of papers, and a chair leg scrape ended the winsome song.

Irene pulled her pink knitted shawl tighter about her thin shoulders. She stiffened her spine as if in defiance of the biting November air seeping into her house, and padded to her white enamel stove. The ancient stove, chipped and yellowing, popped to life as she turned the knob. Irene placed a copper teakettle onto the burner, and as the flames licked the pot of water she opened the cupboard.

Eyeing a lone package of Sunshine brand crackers, a salt-shaker, and a small box of raisins, Irene sighed and closed the cabinet door. She reached for the loaf of wheat bread that sat alone on the top of her small refrigerator, still in its pan and covered with a clean kitchen towel. Pairing a thick slice of bread with her last apple (she'd actually eaten half of it for breakfast), Irene pushed the newspaper across the table and dropped into a chair.

The earth had just said goodbye to the sun as it turned away toward the moon. Long dark shadows filled the room's corners, unlit by the sole bulb weakly shining above the table. Irene, while planning her next few hours before she went to sleep, wiped her face and fingers carefully with a damp cloth and went over to the stove to silence the shriek-

ing kettle. She would finish studying her Sabbath school lesson and look up that reference to the Garden of Eden in hopes of finding a relevant supplement to incorporate into the lesson study. *If it doesn't make sense in today's society, the moral may be lost,* she thought. *I know I can find . . .*

*Bang, bang, bang.*

Swiveling quickly, Irene focused her attention on the door as a knock sounded again, decibels higher. She scurried over to the portal and looked out the cloudy peephole. Youthful, scrubbed shiny faces peered up. Crowded on her porch were almost a dozen children and teens from her church. One youngster was dutifully depressing the doorbell button, not knowing that it had never been connected to the house's circuits. Another was raising a gloved fist to pound on the door again. Several of them were carrying bundles.

After rubbing her palms gingerly across her bunned hair, Irene unlocked the door. She pulled it open and said pleasantly in a surprise-imbued voice, "Hi, kids, what are you doing here?" and after a brief pause added, "Come in, come in, it's cold out there."



### Hard Work Pays Off

The Pathfinder group had worked on creating the food baskets for several hours. It was Sunday, and a couple kids gripped every so often about missing football on TV. But





## *A friendship of giving develops between one woman and her church.*

bellyaching or not, each person had a responsibility in getting the baskets completed. Calvin and Jaime were distributing the packaged goods—one can of vegetables, two cans of beans, one box of pasta—while James selected the oranges, apples, pears, and bananas. Chuck was outside playing basketball with John (somehow, they conveniently didn't have a job to do). Jake and Jeremy were placing small bags of cookies in each basket. Mary, Heather, Mrs. V, and I were in the kitchen, baking pumpkin pies. The pies would be the finishing touch to the baskets, each placed on top of the other items. Then we'd enshroud the entire basket in tinted cellophane tied with colorful curly ribbons.

Feeling at the very least 10 feet tall, my friends and I took the cooled pies and tied up the 15 baskets. We carried them out to the vehicles, placing some in the trunk of the car, some in the back of the van, and some on our laps.

We drove around the area, stopping at church members' homes. Mrs. V, one of our Pathfinder coordinators,

had a list of people she knew would welcome the groceries. She and her husband drove to each house—they didn't split up because all of us wanted to go to each home and present the gift—and pulled up to the last residence at about 5:00 p.m.

We stopped outside a smallish square house, with high steps and a tiny porch, that didn't seem to fit in with the neighboring dwellings. No shutters, awnings, or flower boxes graced the outside and, indeed, the house's dingy-looking frame was in sore need of repainting. In places, bare pieces of wood stood next to formerly painted sections of the exterior walls. A light was shining blearily through the high window on the front door. The rest of the windows were black.

We squeezed onto the porch and knocked. We waited about a second, eager to see how happy this person would be with our gift, and knocked again. Louder. We jabbed a finger at the doorbell buzzer and knocked again. Finally the bolts slid back, and Mrs. Irene Peacock stared down at us. She

looked at our packages and quickly ushered us in.

### **A Beautiful Friendship Begins**

Irene was surprised to receive visitors, and perhaps a little bit uncomfortable—wary of making her guests feel discomfort. She knew what her home looked like and how it affected people. Her husband, 20 years older than she, had been working on building their home, but had died many years before, leaving the house unfinished. The exterior walls were done (almost), but the inside was just a mass of beams, a wooden skeleton with the very barest of essentials. She had a kitchen sink and a bathroom with the needed plumbing devices. She had electricity wired into the house and hence had a couple appliances and light fixtures. The petite wood-burning stove in the kitchen kept her warm (not frozen). The bedroom was the most complete, with plaster walls that offered a bit of privacy, a bed, end table, and reading lamp. The rest of the house, com-



prised of a small living room area, bathroom, and spare bedroom, were visible by looking through the wood frame that kept the place from collapsing.

We placed the large heavy basket on her table and began handing her the other items Mrs. V had thoughtfully brought along. A fluffy blue blanket, a pair of comfy no-skid slippers, a white wool sweater, a few pairs of socks. At a loss for words, Irene gathered the goods and deposited them in her bedroom. She hurried back. "Thank you," she said, taken aback. "This is so nice. You children are so kind." We stayed a little while longer, but as we left that evening we vowed to come back.

### **Irene's Gifts**

Retired after working many years at several occupations—school-teacher, nurse, Bible worker—Irene relied mostly on meager retirement checks and money she raised from selling homemade bread outside her home on Sundays. When her husband, who had been a carpenter and part-time literature evangelist, grew very sick and died, Irene sacrificed to pay the many hospital and doctor bills. The couple did not have insurance, and so Irene did without what most would call necessities until all the debts were paid. And even though she was strapped financially, Irene always gave to the church.

Irene, a church deaconess, taught Sabbath school. I remember going into the sanctuary after my youth class and seeing a large group surrounding her as she stood at the pew lectern. Surprisingly well-versed in Greek (she studied Greek in college) and the nuances of modern culture, she'd ask thought-provoking questions. Each lesson was offered in a relevant way, and Irene would draw on news from around the planet and incorporate it into the lesson's theme. She knew what to do with "upstarts" who'd get carried away on irrelevant points, too, especially one member who'd cause conflict occasionally. She'd clear her throat,

peer into his eyes, and say fondly, yet firmly, "Shut up, Herbert." Everyone in her class, which was the largest in the church, had a deep appreciation for her knowledge, wisdom, and loving presentation.

Investment was very important to the Peacocks. Both Irene and her husband had given sacrificially to the church, beyond all expectations. Irene's Investment project was to give to the church any money she found

*It wasn't Irene's financial worth that made an impact; it was the time she took to express her love—and God's—to us. Year after year she gave.*

lying about. She did not own a car and had to walk to the grocery store and Laundromat. All the way there and back, Irene would look for change. She'd find money, mostly coins, everywhere she went and turn it in on Investment Sabbath. Once, while raking her yard on a windy day, Irene was excited to find a \$10 bill in the leaves. Her income at this time was extremely limited. She didn't have enough money to even "indulge" in buying potatoes—her favorite food. They were too expensive. But Irene felt that the Lord gave her the bill to give to His church, and in it went with the rest of her coins.

The gifts weren't only monetary.

The congregation was very dear to her, and in addition to teaching Sabbath school, during the break before the worship hour Irene would go around the church and greet everyone with a handshake or hug and a big welcoming smile. And for every member's birthday, from the youngest to the oldest, Irene would present the person with a card that would include a personally written note of encouragement and Bible texts. Not able to buy the cards, Irene would sometimes make the mementos from ones that people had previously given her.

### **Giving Back**

The news of our trip to Irene's home—and the need she had—raced through the church. Members, collectively and singly, decided to give back to Irene. Many more fruit baskets were delivered. Close-by church members began picking Irene up each week for church—something that one member had done for years but was unable to continue, and thus for several years Irene had been riding the bus—while others would buy her reference books and Bible translations they knew she'd appreciate and use.

Each winter, blankets and warm clothing, including robes, sweaters, boots, and slippers, were purchased and delivered. Whatever season of the year it was, Irene was remembered. And very soon after the disrepair of her home was discovered, a group of men from the church bought and installed wallboard inside her residence. Another member chopped up a dead tree, and Irene had a large supply of firewood for years to come.

The church was always "open" for her and loved Irene greatly. It used her talents wisely and received her gifts of knowledge, patience, and understanding with joy and much gratitude. It wasn't Irene's financial worth that made an impact; it was the time she took to express her love—and God's—to us. Year after year, no matter if the gestures were



# Keeping It Together

Tips, resources, and places to go for help in ministering to needs

• Teenagers looking for ways to help others? Here are five ideas for teen volunteers. Check out the entire list at [www.byg-pub.com/books/tg2rw/volunteer.htm](http://www.byg-pub.com/books/tg2rw/volunteer.htm).

1. **Homeless shelters and food banks.** Most cities have shelters that help the homeless with meals, beds, and other services, and most welcome volunteers. You may be able to help prepare or distribute meals, work behind the scenes in the business office, etc. One place to look is the telephone directory for a local homeless shelter.
2. **Special Olympics.** This is an international program of year-round sports training and athletic competition for children and adults with mental retardation. There is a wide variety of volunteer opportunities including sports training, fund-raising, competition planning, etc. Look in the telephone directory or search the Special Olympics website for more information.
3. **State parks.** Many state parks offer volunteer programs with anything from educational programs to train construction and maintenance. Contact a state park near you and see what options are available.
4. **Animal shelters.** Many of these are nonprofit or government organizations and, therefore, welcome volunteers to help take care of animals, keep facilities clean, and work with the public. Check out your local telephone directory for listings of shelters in your area.
5. **Website creation.** Many small charities and organizations do not yet have websites. You can help by learning how to create a website and volunteering your services. You could also raise money to pay for the website, or seek help from a local company in the form of a donation. Check out [www.webreference.com/](http://www.webreference.com/) for help in creating a website.

• The site [www.impactonline.org/](http://www.impactonline.org/) offers a program called Volunteer Match, a free online matching service for volunteers and nonprofits.

• Catalogs and resource guides and information on community service are available through AdventSource. Call 1-800-328-0525 (7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. CST, Monday-Thursday; 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Friday) to request a catalog or place an order. Here are some of the products available:

1. *Ministries of Compassion*—official handbook for Adventist Community Services, inner-city programs, and social action projects, shows how to get organized, conduct a needs assessment, find funding, and develop basic services for church and community.
2. *Who Cares?*—an action adventure waiting to happen, this book is packed with concepts and stories that will give ideas on how to help the people around you, members and nonmembers alike. Every service idea suggested has been performed (and survived) by youth.
3. *Inner-city Coordinator*—designed for church members who have a special calling to minister in the inner city. Duties include planning, identifying needs, community relations, advocacy, and program development.
4. *Good Neighbor Plan*—simple, flexible ways to serve your neighborhood and community, learn to determine local needs, and target your ministry to those needs.
5. *Summer Ministries*—shows how to lead your church, regardless of its size, into the rewarding area of targeted, project evangelism. Lots of ideas from single-day events to full-scale inner-city programs.



• Little things mean a lot. Show your church family how much you love and appreciate them in little ways. Smiles, hugs, cards of encouragement, and batches of cookies go a long way. Call a different member each week and pray briefly with them over the telephone. Offer to watch the children of a young couple while they have a “date.” Take someone who doesn’t have a car to the supermarket once a month. Cook and deliver a meal to the pastor’s home on a Friday evening. Most of these things don’t take up a lot of time or money and yet can make a world of difference to someone. Whatever you do, do it with a loving spirit.

reciprocated or not (most times they were), she gave.

The kitchen, silent now that her visitors had gone, was still chilly. The light chain began to clink gently again in the silvery moonlit room. The bulb was dim now. Irene, wearing thick new socks, snuggled deep down

beneath her new blanket, the melancholy music of the chain and whistling wind soothing her to sleep.

*Kimberly Luste Maran is an assistant editor for the Adventist Review. She would like to thank her church family for their help with this article. Irene passed away*

*several years ago but will not be forgotten, as those who knew her look forward to seeing her when Jesus comes again.*





# The Other Son

*"And he said, 'There was a man who had two sons'" (Luke 15:11, RSV).*

**I**t was beginning to gnaw at him, this irksome fretting over his departed brother. His brother—the selfish ingrate, the traitor, the prodigal.

All day and far into the dreary night his father and mother waited and pined pathetically. Whispering and sighing over the other son, the missing one, they set an empty place at the table, filled the goblets with red grape juice, broke the warm bread, and gazed out the window toward a country far beyond the dark furrowed fields. Fields plowed by *his* straining back and watered by *his* sweat.

Still he worked on, though obeying his father brought no gladness whatsoever. How could it? He was forever resentful, wondering about his brother. *What is he doing right now? What forbidden pleasure, what indulgence, is he tasting? What is he getting away with?*

He brooded. He compensated, making certain that everyone knew this was *his* house, these were *his* things, and *his* tastes overshadowed those of others. When the hired workers or even his sisters appeared to be enjoying themselves, he grew stern and indignant. "This is work, not play," he grumbled. "Play is the devil's tool, the enemy's seed-sowing license and disobedience. As if you didn't know." He shamed them to silence.

Then he would grit his aching teeth and plunge ahead, not looking up, not savoring the space granted, not celebrating the assurance of his inheritance. He slept through holidays. He walked stiffly away from problems. Though he followed good health principles, he buried himself under his work and his numbness, and tried only to survive. To arrive at death safely.

Eventually, by innuendos and malicious motives, though appearing to desire only what the father wanted, he spread blame and disharmony throughout the household. He questioned his father's choices and splintered peace wherever he found it. After all, if he couldn't be at peace, nobody should be.

"Doesn't it seem that we should have more workers?" he asked innocently. "Why is so much money spent on those

festivals, on the music and the youth? Wouldn't it be better to put money toward more seed for the fields?" All the while he inwardly questioned, *Will my brother really get what he deserves? Will I?*

Feeding on overripe fears, he scratched out a patch of identity, his rancor cutting like a scythe through slender grasses. Though lonely to the core, he held grudges and accepted only those who gritted out their lives as he did. He embraced the frozen past until it clung to him.

Now, some years later, he was in the field at harvest, and as he drew near his father's house, in the cool twilight he heard music and dancing. He called one of the servants to ask what was going on.

"Your brother has come," explained the servant, "and your father has killed the fatted calf, because your brother is safe."

*My brother? That disloyal, irreverent scoundrel?* He turned and

stomped away. Away from the noisy celebration. Soon he heard footsteps and turned to see his father running toward him with robes flapping and sandals slapping.

"Come, join us!" said his father breathlessly. "Your brother has returned!"

"Join you? No, you go on with your merrymaking. It's what you've always wanted anyway!" he shouted. "I could have left also. The years I've served you, working hard, never disobeying—but did I get a fatted calf? Go ahead! Spend it *all* on him!"

"You know that all that I have is yours." The father looked down and placed two strong, weathered hands on his elder son's shoulders. "I would be so happy," the father said hoarsely, his eyes filling, "if both my sons who have left would come home this day."

He stared incredulously. What was his father saying? He had been there all along. *He* had never left home.

Had he?

*Chris Blake lives with his family in Lincoln, Nebraska. He teaches writing and communication at Union College.*



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# Wrestling With Darwin

*A believer takes exception to the claims of evolution.*

BY ALLEN E. SHEPHERD, JR., M.D.

**A**T VARIOUS TIMES IN MY LIFE I HAVE struggled with the theory of evolution. The first crisis developed while I served as a missionary physician in Africa. I had been reading a variety of respected scientific works and was troubled by the evidence that evolutionists could marshal to support their theory. Some of this evidence I could not explain, nor could I make it fit into a Creation model. Confronted by the radically different truth-claims of these two systems, I finally realized I would have to choose between the assertions of the God of the Bible and those of modern science. The two systems seemed incompatible, especially for one who keeps the Sabbath as a memorial of Creation.

My dilemma was made more difficult because some who embrace evolutionary theory feel that belief in a God or Creation is ludicrous. Others take a patronizing attitude, implying that creationism cannot bear careful scientific scrutiny. My pride recoiled from such treatment, for I wished to be respected for my thinking rather than ridiculed. After prayer and careful reflection, I made a choice to believe the Bible and the God depicted there as Creator: although I had evidence of His existence, there was no absolute proof. Some things had to be taken on naked faith, I concluded. Evolutionists advanced some arguments I could not answer.

Recently, however, two scientific concepts have come to my attention that have confirmed the decision I made years ago. The first is "irreducible complexity," explained by Michael Behe in his 1996 book, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*.<sup>1</sup> The second is the inadequacy of natural selection, commonly known as Darwin's belief in the "survival of the fittest," to explain the origin of the species, and particularly, of biologic diversity.

Irreducible complexity is a characteristic of systems containing a number of elements that must be arranged accurately for proper function. In his book Behe examines the intricate chemical machinery of life. He describes the elegant design of bacterial cilia (their small tails), the delicate

balance of the clotting cascade in mammalian blood, and several other systems. He then shows conclusively that these systems could not have developed gradually over time because all components must be present together at once for them to function.

Behe finds a useful illustration of irreducible complexity in the common mousetrap. This small machine is made of several simple components assembled to trap rodents. Each part is designed for its task. If the parts are not the right size or strength, or are not assembled in just the proper fashion, the trap would be nothing useful: no mice would ever be caught.

There is a base to stabilize the mechanism, a spring and hammer to trap the mouse, and bait to entice the animal to trip the catch, and so on. If the spring is too strong, or too weak, or brittle, the entire machine will not work. The catch must be made just sensitive enough, but not too sensitive, or the machine will fail. All parts must be properly manufactured and precisely assembled from the outset. There is little tolerance in the design: deviation from the plan leads to malfunction.

Biological systems are just like the mousetrap, Behe explains, except that they are astoundingly more complex. All chemical components must be present in the right form, in the right place, and of the proper concentration, or the reactions of life cannot occur. Evolutionary theory postulates that these systems gradually developed over time, each component changing gradually. But, as with the mousetrap, if one component is missing or improperly constructed, the whole thing will fail. All components must therefore have been created simultaneously. There could have been no gradual development. A mammal, after all, does not have millions of years to work out the clotting mechanism of its blood, modifying some other system as it goes. It needs that mechanism the minute it has its first small wound, or it bleeds to death.

After presenting these arguments, Behe reviews the professional journals and college biology texts to see if anyone



has been able to explain how these systems could have developed gradually. No one has.<sup>2</sup> (See chapter 8 of the book.) Not a single research student, teacher, or theorist has been able to explain the development of these systems by means of evolution. Behe therefore concludes that Darwinism, far from being an adequate explanation for the origin of species, cannot explain the development of molecular systems, is “mere bluster,” and should be banished from the intellectual arena. The evidence points rather to a Designer who planned and created these beautiful things so wonderfully adapted for life.

I have also taken the opportunity to read what critical reviewers have said about *Darwin's Black Box*. None has refuted the main premise. The most common remark is “We in science just need more time to work this problem out”—a sort of atheism of the gaps.

The second concept that has underlined my faith is the demonstrated inadequacy of natural selection (“the survival of the fittest”) to explain the diversity of life seen in nature.

In his landmark 1859 book *The Origin of Species* Darwin first describes the amazing variation seen when animal breeders carefully selected for certain traits. He was particularly impressed with the fascinating birds that pigeon fanciers had developed. After his round-the-world voyage on the H.M.S. *Beagle*, he began to consider what trait or traits nature might use to select her diverse offspring. He struck upon a selection based on survival advantage. In other words, nature is as close and careful a breeder as any human, and she selectively breeds those species that are best able to survive. He called this “natural selection,” or survival of the fittest. He suggested that if a trait had a survival advantage, more individuals of that species would eventually possess that trait, as more of them would survive. The trait would gradually move through the population, and the population would change, resulting in new species, and with time, new

families, classes, and orders, etc. Darwin theorized that this process is the cause of the great diversity of organisms seen in the world.

A careful examination of this phenomenon, however, shows that “survival of the fittest” does not result in diversity, in fact, but tends toward uniformity. Diversity occurs when organisms are protected from competition by occupying a niche in the ecosystem. They are thus free to develop along certain lines that would not be avail-

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able if they had to compete. In a completely competitive environment, the fit would indeed survive and diversity would be lost.

One need only visit any of the islands of the sea, including the Galápagos, made famous by Darwin's visit, to see examples of this. All these isolated environments have suffered innumerable extinctions since the introduction of foreign species. The “fit” simply took over, and the native species disappeared.<sup>3</sup> In fact, since Darwin's day no one has produced evidence that any new species have evolved, while science has clearly shown that hundreds and perhaps thousands of species have died out. Stretch this phenomenon out for even a few thousand years, and you would end up with very few species left.

An illustration from the modern marketplace helps to make the point.

Through “survival of the fittest” Microsoft has come to dominate the software industry. For various reasons (including claims of unfair business practices by its competitors!) it has prevailed. (I wish I had bought Microsoft stock a few years ago!) This has led to not more diversity in the software industry, but less. Small companies are put out of business or eaten up by the giant unless they are protected by law or some other mechanism. New companies are formed only with great difficulty because they cannot compete with this monopoly.

The business monopolies of the late nineteenth century—in oil and steel, for instance—also demonstrate this process. United States antitrust laws function like the isolated niches that tend to protect biological species. America's diverse economy would become dominated by certain aggressive companies if these laws did not keep this from happening.

While on his trip around the world, Darwin also stopped at the tip of South America in the Strait of Magellan and observed the Onas, a fascinating people who had developed tolerance of the severe weather found at those latitudes. The Onas wore little clothing, could sleep on the near-frozen ground, and would hunt in open boats when the temperatures were between 35° and 45° F.

Where have these hardy people gone? They have been destroyed by sickness introduced by the explorers or absorbed by the larger culture that has come to dominate that part of the world. In spite of their adaptation, they were not strong enough to survive, and thus became extinct, as so many cultures have. Since Europeans began to travel the globe, hundreds of cultures have disappeared. Diversity is not greater but diminished since the competition started.

Before me is the entry “Dogs” in my encyclopedia. I can recognize all manner of shapes and sizes from the huge Saint Bernards to the tiny Chihuahuas—a very diverse lot. If I took a breeding





pair of each of these kinds and placed them in a large preserve and allowed natural selection to work unhindered for 50 years, I would not, in fact, have more types of dogs at the end of my experiment. Would I not get hundreds of small to medium-sized light-brown mutts who had excellent health and ability to survive? Did the fittest survive? Yes, for the concept does explain how certain species can come to predominate. But did this process lead to more diversification? No, it resulted in less.

Natural selection works in a negative fashion to actually limit diversity. A few days ago I heard a report on public radio describing the alarming loss of native languages occurring throughout the world today. The host stated that 95 percent of the languages present today will become extinct during the next 100 years. Chinese, English, Spanish, and French have come to dominate because of world trade and the universal availability of the radio. Also, modern governments try to unify their countries by teaching one language in the schools. Parents who speak a language with few speakers teach their little ones a tongue that is widely recognized so that more opportunities will be open to them. The smaller language groups thus die out as the elderly speakers pass on. This illustration again shows the power of uncontrolled natural selection. Natural selection cannot be the reason for diversity, but tends to eliminate the

*Survival of the fittest doesn't result in diversity, but tends toward uniformity.*

weakest, and thus limit, rather than promote, diversity.

Evolutionary theory cannot explain the origin of complex life systems, nor can natural selection explain diversity.

Evolutionists have accused creationists of "checking their brains at the door" when considering the evidence offered by science. Creationists are frequently castigated as simple-minded and prejudiced by their belief in the Bible, a discredited book. There was a time when, as a scientist, I could see the validity of their criticisms, for I had made a decision based on incomplete evidence. But things are different today. I need feel no embarrassment or shame when I meet such scientists and confess my faith. Their theory has as many difficulties as mine, and does not really explain anything at all.

I do not have all the answers. I cannot show, for instance, how radioactive

dating methods can be integrated into a Creation model. I have not heard any good explanation. I have to believe that God is behind the evidence I see, and that the earth is young, even though it has the appearance of great age. "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Heb. 11:3, NIV). But I know that those who would deride me for this belief hold positions that require as much faith as mine.

Even more important, I have seen how God cares for the intellectual needs of those who have committed themselves to Him. He does not leave us to be continually belittled by unbelievers or tortured by doubt. He asks us to trust, and then, in His time, gives us those evidences that can be accepted as reasonable. His tender mercies are new each day. Glory to His name.

<sup>1</sup>Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup>See chapter 8 in *Darwin's Black Box*.

<sup>3</sup>See Joel L. Swerdlow, "Biodiversity," *National Geographic* 195, No. 2 (February 1999): 2.

Allen E. Shepherd, Jr., M.D., F.A.C.S., is a surgeon who writes from Portland, Indiana.





# He Touched Me

*His expectations for the weekend weren't met.  
But what he did take home was worth far more.*

BY: GREG COGGESHALL

**R**ECENTLY I ATTENDED MY FIRST Adventist Singles Ministries retreat at a conference camp in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Some might think an event like this is just a group of single people getting together “in the name of God” to find a mate and get married. I have to admit my motivation for going was just that—I hoped to find a relationship that might lead to marriage.

When I arrived late Friday evening (my flight was delayed), I quickly checked in and unloaded my luggage. Then, with great anticipation—and fear—I headed out to meet the others. Coming from Maryland, I did not know or recognize anyone. Feeling like an outsider and beyond my comfort zone, I hung around the few people I had met on the ride from the Little Rock Airport to the camp. Mike, who drove me to the camp, introduced me to some of the others, and that helped me to feel more relaxed.

The evening ended, and I went back to my bunk feeling rather despondent. There did not appear to be any potential partners at the retreat for me. *I should have just stayed home and done something else this weekend*, I thought. *It's going to be a long two and a half days. Maybe I should leave early tomorrow and salvage part of my holiday weekend.*

Sabbath morning came, and I headed over to breakfast feeling lonely and uncomfortable. Walking to the back of the line, I was greeted by Christy and Taresa, the two women whom I had met the night before at the registration desk. They were with another man, named Matt, whom they seemed to know. I turned toward them to hear at least some of their conversation. Somehow it helped me not to feel so alone, but connected to these strangers in some way.

During the conversation, the man explained that he lived

in a small town in western Maryland called Frostburg. *Maryland!* I thought to myself. Then I said, “I know where that is. I'm from Maryland too.” Matt, Christy, and Taresa helped me to progress from a lonely outsider to feeling as though I knew someone. We ate together; conversation flowed, and I felt accepted.

Through the people I met at breakfast I experienced God's love and presence. Their acceptance allowed me to relax, open up, make new acquaintances, and enjoy the fellowship. As we ate, I learned that Matt was leading the vesper program Sabbath evening. Earlier he had become quite concerned over the condition of his throat. Christy, Taresa, and I purposely wandered outside his room as he practiced. And yes, his voice did sound strained and raspy. While we were listening Christy quietly motioned for us to follow her. About 50 yards away we held hands and prayed for his voice. That evening he sang and praised God without difficulty. I was impressed by this answer to prayer. But God was not finished yet.

That night we went on a cruise on the lake. We were on the last of three barges (actually small pontoon boats) to back away from the shore. The engine of the boat died when the driver put it in gear. The driver tried again to go forward, but the engine died once more. This continued for nearly 20 minutes. By now the other boats were a few miles away enjoying the pleasant moonlit sky and calm waters. Someone suggested joining together for prayer. As the nine of us held hands, some mentioned that they had been praying silently. The driver gave a very simple prayer: “Dear God, we are not going anywhere right now. We can enjoy the lake, the moon, and the wonderful evening right here or, if You see fit, we would enjoy all those things as we travel





around the lake. Amen.”

We sat back and waited with great anticipation to see what God would do. I could hear the engine becoming much stronger. Then the driver put the boat into gear, and we took off without any sputter or hesitation. No one was around to hear, but that didn't stop our shouts of joy and praise to God for the “miracle” that He had just performed.

I grew up in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but had only read or heard about miracles as they affected other lives. Never before had I experienced the work of God firsthand in such a marvelous way. Later I would look back on these two episodes and remember how God had set the stage so that He could touch my life and show me His love.

If I had not been there at the breakfast line to meet Matt, Christy, and Taresa, I would not have been there when they prayed for Matt's voice. And I would have only heard the story about the pontoon experience instead of being a participant.

Sunday evening it was announced that one of the attendees had decided to rededicate their life to Christ and

be rebaptized. This would take place Monday morning after breakfast at the lake.

*I had only  
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other lives.*

The next morning about 75 people gathered for the last meeting. The spiritual leader for the weekend was Pastor Van G. Hurst from the Texas Conference. After the baptism Pastor Hurst gave a simple, nondramatic invitation to those in the audience. “If God has touched your life during the past few days and you desire to rededicate your life to Christ, then come on

in and let's take care of it right now.”

Three people came forward and walked right into the lake, street clothes and all. One woman did not even stop to take off her socks and shoes. Six people were baptized that day.

Tears were abundant among those who were baptized as well as those in attendance as God poured His love into each of us.

During my plane ride back to Maryland, I began thinking over the events of the weekend. I was sad that it was over. I would not be seeing my newfound friends any time soon, and I longed for the unconditional love that I felt from God and the others during that weekend. I had nothing but photographs and souvenirs to take home with me.

But as I pondered over all that had happened, a comforting thought came to my mind: I can continue to have God's love with me wherever I go.

*Greg Coggeshall works as a senior programmer/database administrator and lives in Burtonsville, Maryland.*





# Michigan Targets Public Campuses

*Conference reaches out to students on public college and university campuses.*

BY SANDRA BLACKMER, COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR, MICHIGAN CONFERENCE

**A**dventists believe in Christian education. The young people in our church are a priority, and we back up our commitment to them with both our time and our money. We boast of having one of the largest Protestant church-related educational systems in the world. For this we praise the Lord as well as the vision, sacrifice, and hard work on the part of Adventists from the early years of our church history until today. Through our schools and dedicated Christian teachers we can have a powerful impact on the mental, physical, social, and especially the spiritual development of our children. This is how it should be, and most of us are very grateful for the positive influences Christian education has on our youth.

Our churches, however, are also filled with young people who, for a variety of reasons, attend secular or public schools. Unfortunately, these youth are often overlooked as we work for the salvation of the children in our churches. Somehow we seem to forget that they too need the spiritual and social nurturing that is provided in our Adventist schools. This includes not only the youth in elementary and high schools

but also the young adults attending public colleges and universities. These students need resources to help them grow in their own relationship with Jesus, as well as training to become effective witnesses to their college peers. The Michigan Conference recognizes these

suited to this ministry. Pipim became an Adventist through the influence of Adventist students on a public university campus, Ghana's University of Science and Technology, where he studied engineering. Later, after accepting the call to the gospel min-

istry, Pipim served the Central Ghana Conference as its coordinator of campus ministries. He has also been instrumental in the establishment of churches in the U.S., Canada, and Europe.

"Despite its many potentials, the public university campus is still an unentered territory in the Western world," said Pipim. "It is a courageous decision of faith on the part of the Michigan Conference to create a whole new department to reach out to students in our public universities and colleges."

The public campus ministry program is located at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and is being used as a pilot project. Pipim is working closely with the pastors of the local churches to establish a vibrant Adventist fellowship/company on the university campus and to reach out to the 60,000 students in the area—37,000 on the University of Michigan campus alone. And the program is definitely having an impact. According to Dan Hall, senior pastor of the Ann



**A DAY ON THE MALL:** About 40 religious groups have a presence among the 37,000 students attending the University of Michigan. During a special activities day, when each campus group is allowed to set up a booth in a large mall area advertising the services or function it provides, there was barely walking room in the aisle between the booths set up by religious organizations.

needs and has now targeted campuses of public colleges and universities in the conference for evangelism.

The Michigan Conference executive committee voted to hire Samuel Koranteng-Pipim to be the director of a new campus ministries program for public universities. Pipim recently completed his Ph.D. in systematic theology from Andrews University. Although he was born and reared in Ghana, West Africa, his background and training make him especially





**NEW PROGRAM DIRECTOR:** Because of his background, Samuel Koranteng-Pipim is especially suited to serve as the director of the new Michigan Conference public campus ministries program. Pipim himself became an Adventist through the influence of Adventist students on a public university campus.

Arbor church, their first annual collegiate retreat had an “explosive response.” Students from Michigan State, the University of Michigan, Andrews University, Eastern Michigan University, and Washtenaw Community College drove to Camp Au Sable in Grayling, Michigan, to learn more about the Lord and fellowship with their Christian peers. “The retreat was a wonderful expression of God’s promises and love to us,” said Doelynn Strong, a student from the University of Michigan. “It was great to see young adults worshipping together, singing songs around a bonfire, and enjoying one another’s company—truly a blessed experience, and I am happy that I was able to be a part of it.”

Ten Adventist young people who have traveled from different U.S. states and even as far away as Korea are also currently assisting with the program. They are serving as “missionaries” during a 10-week session that reaches out to students on the University of Michigan campus. These are committed young people. Not only are they receiving no college credit for this session, but they are also paying \$500 each to help cover the project expenses. The team is headed by Sebastian and Cynthia Teh, from China, who were responsible for recruiting the young people to help with the program. Cynthia was formerly a Communist who became discouraged with her beliefs after the

massacre at Tiananmen Square and, because of a series of providential experiences, eventually became an Adventist.

The fellowship Pipim and his team are attempting to establish on the university campus will aim at (1) keeping Adventist students in the faith, (2) maintaining a visible presence on campus, and (3) utilizing students for evangelism on campus. “I want to inspire the students to become excited about the Adventist message,” said Pipim, “so excited that they will love to witness to their peers.” He also believes in keeping things simple and not “getting carried away by every new fad.” Therefore, Pipim is approaching his new assignment with what he describes as a simple philosophy: “The only kind of Adventism that is relevant and appealing to young people is one that is unashamedly biblical, focuses on evangelism, and seeks, by God’s grace, to practice the truth, no matter what the cost.” This belief will undergird all the programs and activities. The lessons learned in this pilot project will then be helpful in establishing

fellowships on other campuses.

There are many challenges and opportunities involved in this evangelistic effort. The assistance of parents and pastors is needed in locating the Adventist young people currently studying in public colleges and universities. Also needed are prayers, encouragement, and financial support.

“If you ask why we should reach out to these students,” said Pipim, “I’d respond by saying this: Many of the students in public colleges and universities are losing their faith because of their school environment. Others are facing spiritual and intellectual challenges to their faith. Still others are lonely, feeling neglected by their church. Remember that these are our own children, and reaching out to them is part of the gospel commission. By enabling the students to combine spiritual excellence with their academic or professional aspirations, we are actually fitting them for heaven. And in the short run, Adventist graduates from these public institutions will benefit the church by lending their influence and support to all areas of the mission of the church.”



**AN ADVENTIST PRESENCE:** Leticia Addai, a student at the University of Michigan and president of the Adventist fellowship already established on campus, answers questions for those who stop by the Adventist booth and encourages them to sign up if they want to learn more.



# Lest We Forget

BY JEAN SEQUEIRA, EDITORIAL SECRETARY AT THE ADVENTIST REVIEW

International airports are known for their hustle and bustle, and Heathrow Airport, London, is no exception. Collecting my baggage and placing it on a trolley, then having “nothing to declare,” I walked past the customs officers into the busy terminal.

Next stop, a telephone booth to let my mom know I’d arrived safely. As I was jingling through my purse for British coins, sounds of a different kind flooded my ears. Over the loudspeakers a lone trumpet poured forth the emotional strains of “The Last Post.”

And everything came to a halt.

Tellers refrained from foreign exchanges. Starbucks assistants ceased selling refreshments. Hungry travelers stood, sandwiches and cups in hand. Sweepers’ unwieldy brooms stood motionless. Luggage carousels came to a halt, and, as the *Times* reported the next day, “the Concorde was rescheduled by 45 minutes so that the roar of its engines would not disturb the peace.”

## NEWS COMMENTARY

What on earth was going on?

Then I remembered. The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Inauspicious to some, but today people from many countries stopped everything for two minutes’ silence, remembering those who had died on their behalf in past wars.

What an unforgettable sight! What thoughts filled my mind!

Respect. Gratitude. Sacrifice. Freedom. Commitment. Dedication. Thankfulness.

Not bad values to set one’s sight upon in today’s mixed-up society.

Cynics might discount as outdated an idea that started with a bugle call in 1918 signaling a cease-fire at the end of the Great War, in which 10 million lives were lost and 20 million were injured.

On the other hand, perhaps by remembering the sacrifice others made, we may be more ready to value the freedom some have today.

## NEWS BREAK

### Persecuted of Religious Minorities in Turkmenistan: Churches and Temples Destroyed

In what appears to be a policy bid by the Turkmenistan government to rid the country of religious minorities, churches and temples have been destroyed and religious workers imprisoned.

On November 9 the Seventh-day Adventist Church received a notice stating that its building in Ashgabat would be destroyed and warning the pastor to remove his belongings, since he lives on the church premises. Five days later the demolition crew arrived, and the building was bulldozed to the ground.

The destruction order was signed by the city council following the refusal of the country’s Religious Affairs Committee to give legal status to the Adventist Church in Turkmenistan. The committee is composed of the Muslim mufti, an Orthodox leader, and a civil official.

The Adventist Church in Turkmenistan was legally registered during the Soviet regime, and permission to construct the building was given by the Turkmenistan president in 1992.

In 1994 a law on religious organizations was passed,

requiring a minimum of 500 adherents for reregistration. Despite providing the required list, the church was repeatedly refused registration, and the members were subjected to police harassment and fines for attending illegal meetings. Since the church continued operation, the authorities decided to destroy the building, reports Victor Krushenitsky, secretary-general for the International Religious Liberty Association Russian Chapter (IRLA-Russia), who received the information.

“This is not an isolated incident,” says Krushenitsky. “Since September the Turkmenistan authorities have destroyed a Hare Krishna temple and closed down Baptist meetings. The local Baptist pastor has been imprisoned since that time and has not yet been tried. Adventist Church workers have been arrested, fined, and some have also been jailed.”

“This is a very bad situation in general,” adds Anatoly Krasikov, president of IRLA-Russia. “These actions are a complete violation of religious freedom and are a tragic reminder of continuing intolerance and discrimination against minority faith communities.”

Concluding his comments, Krushenitsky appealed for action against this clear violation of religious rights. “If we keep silent on this situation in Turkmenistan, such actions may be repeated in other Central Asian republics, with consequent tragic results for the lives of many who



## Religion in the News

### Christian, Jewish Leaders Issue Statement Supporting Public Schools

Top officials of the National Council of Churches and the Central Conference of American Rabbis have issued a statement supporting public education to mark the start of the new school year.

"We call upon our leaders of government at all levels, and people of all faiths and backgrounds, to commit themselves to the protection, financial security, and continued reform of our public school system," reads the statement.

It was signed by Rabbi Charles Kroloff, president, and Rabbi Paul Menitoff, executive vice president, of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, a Reform Jewish group. It was also signed by Bishop Craig Anderson, president, and the Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, general secretary, of the National Council of Churches, an ecumenical organization of Protestant and Orthodox denominations.

"We call upon all people to stand up for justice and equality when it counts most—in the formative years of our children's lives," the leaders wrote.—*Religion News Service*.

## For Your Good Health

### TV Can Cause Children's Sleep Problems

Children who watch the most television daily are more likely to have sleep problems, including bedtime resistance, difficulty falling asleep, anxiety about sleep, or shortened sleep duration. The reasons are unknown, but researchers speculate that television viewing may shorten sleep time or limit the time kids spend on physical activities, causing poor sleep quality.—*Pediatrics*.

### Vitamin D Deficiency May Lead to Hip Fractures

Adequate calcium in your diet is an important part of good bone health, especially for women. But a new study suggests that adequate vitamin D levels, whether through sun exposure or diet, are a second important factor in bone health. The body requires vitamin D to absorb calcium into the bone. Researchers found that women with hip fractures had lower levels of vitamin D than other women studied.—*Journal of the American Medical Association*.

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

## N E W S B R E A K

are not of a majority faith in those countries."—*Adventist News Network*.

### Africa-Indian Ocean Division Surpasses Evangelism Goal

The Africa-Indian Ocean Division, as of September 30, reported 528,579 baptisms thus far for the current quinquennium. Division leaders had set a baptismal goal of 500,000 for the five-year period ending June 30, 2000.

The Sahel Union is currently leading the division with the highest percentage of goals reached. With 7,324 baptisms the Sahel attained 168 percent of their goal. The Rwandan Union has led the division in the highest number of baptisms. Baptisms in Rwanda total 169,061, or 155 percent of the union goal.

"I was overwhelmed when I received the good news [of the baptisms]," said President Luka Daniel. "By God's special grace, before the quinquennium ends we shall reach a faith goal of 700,000 new souls."

Along with the baptisms, the division also approved three new entities, the South-Central Cameroon, New West Nigeria, and East Ghana conferences.

Being organized as conferences, church members can elect their own leaders and help support the worldwide work of the Adventist Church. The total number of con-

ferences in the division now stands at 15, as compared to eight at the beginning of the quinquennium.

### Outreach Meetings Double Attendance at Kansas Church

When Adventist members in Bazine and LaCrosse, Kansas, decided to reach out to the city of Hays, they tried a unique approach, says John Treolo, Kansas-Nebraska Conference communication director. They won friends in the community *before* holding an outreach series.

The two congregations organized three Christian concerts. At the third program recording artist Steve Darmody introduced evangelist Richard Pollard to those in attendance. On the opening night more than 250 visitors attended. When Pollard's Revelation Seminar meetings ended, 44 persons were baptized.

### What's Upcoming

<b>Dec. 11</b>	General Conference Session Offering
<b>Dec. 25</b>	Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for the Southern Asia Division
<b>Jan. 1</b>	Soul-winning Commitment Day



# Look How Much She's Grown . . .

**W**e almost without conscious thought pull out pictures of Alexa when we get together with family and friends. Allan doesn't hesitate to say he is a shamelessly "proud papa" as he takes out a walletload of pictures of "his girls." Dee has scrapbooks full that document every phase of the pregnancy and commemorate each year of Alexa's life. What strikes both of us with awe and amazement is how much she has grown from day to day.

What an incredible journey the past three years have been.

Along with the birth of our precious Alexa came the opportunity to share, sweat, and struggle with the questions you all sent in to the X-Change. Over these three years it wasn't just Alexa who grew.

Thanks to you for helping us stretch, study, and search. That is the power of spiritual relationships. Your candor, curiosity, and commentary always asked us to be honest with what God's doing in our lives. It isn't easy not to have answers most of the time, but in the process we learned that God is more than simple answers to complex questions. We learned that the spiritual life is a work in progress, and God is the artist. Life is art. In discovering that time and again, we grew.

Thanks to Andy Nash for his sincere love for our church and inspiring humility. Cutting Edge continues to give new generations of believers an opportunity to speak out, even those who are outspoken. It reminds us of the strength of our diversity, and that even God's spiritual body has arms, legs, and tonsils. And in the midst of our differentness, God is glorified by the way that we love one another. Andy helped Cutting Edge be edgy without being cutting. In learning how we need each other, we grew.

Thanks to Steve Chavez for teaching us so much about

mercy, grace, and patience. Exceptional editing, valuing our perspective, and giving us more slack than you should ever give slackers, Steve honed our words to say what we thought we had written. If ever there was someone with the gift of interpretation, Steve would be the poster editor. Thanks for taking our ramblings and refining them into readable reflections. Patience is a virtue, and from Steve's virtuous style we grew.

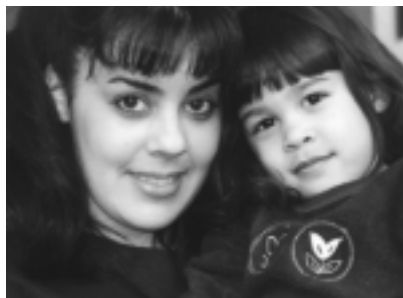
Thanks to Bill Johnsson and the *Adventist Review* for the visionary lead in encouraging questions and allowing us to respond in the X-Change

column. Change is hard. But the *Review* understands that no real growth happens without it. More than cosmetic font substitutions and clever style remodeling, there is a heart at the *Review* to foster growth, and from that we grew a lot.

Finally, thank God for being the Answer. We continue to have questions, as do you; it is so reassuring to know He can

use more than 750 words per column and three years to respond to us and *through* us. So we, along with you, continue to grow.

It has been our honor to X-Change thoughts, hurts, and healing with you. And as with any good friend, although we may not write regularly anymore, don't be a stranger. Stay in touch. As always, we'll pull out the family pictures, and we'll all ooh and aah at how much Alexa has grown. But all the while God is cooing too as He proudly displays how much we've grown.




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*Allan and Deirdre Martin (dream\_VISION\_ministries @CompuServe.com) are cofounders of dre.am VISION ministries, dedicated to empowering young people in Christian lifestyle and leadership.*





# Bigger Than Life

**M**om and Dad were scurrying around getting ready. Jim Branch, a friend of theirs from college, was in town on business and was coming for dinner.

Dad switched off the vacuum cleaner and wrapped the cord. "I can't believe you've never met him, Sarah," Dad said. "But that won't matter. You're going to love him."

Sarah wandered into the kitchen to see what Mom was doing. "I'm so glad you're finally going to get to meet Jim Branch," Mom said as she poured juice. "Have we ever told you the story about how Daddy's car broke down on the way to pick me up the night he was going to ask me to marry him?"

Sarah rolled her eyes. She had heard the story a million times.

"A friend saw him walking beside the road and stopped to help," Mom continued as though Sarah had never heard it.

"When he found out Daddy was on his way to propose he insisted that Daddy take his car instead. He walked home so Daddy wouldn't be late for his big date. That was Jim Branch. There! We're all ready."

Just then the doorbell rang. Sarah raced to the door and opened it to find the biggest man she had ever seen standing there. No one had ever told her Jim Branch was nearly seven feet tall. Sarah's mouth fell open as she took about six steps back. Jim Branch ducked to get through the doorway, then shook Daddy's hand and slapped him on the back. He picked Mom up clear off the floor and swung her around. And then he spoke.

"It's great to see you!" he said in the boomiest voice Sarah had ever heard. "And this must be Sarah," he said, looking her direction. Sarah took another three steps backward.

Jim Branch squatted down in

front of her. "Oh, what's that I see behind your ear?" he asked as he reached up and plucked something out of the air. He opened his palm to reveal a quarter. "Oh! I see another one," he said, pulling another quarter from behind her other ear.

"There you go," he said, handing her the money. "That's your payment for letting this big old goofy guy into your house." Sarah giggled nervously.

"Watch this," Jim Branch said as he pulled a dollar bill from his wallet. In about 15 seconds he had folded it into a bow and handed it to Sarah. "Don't spend it all in one place," he said with a wink. Then all seven feet of him stood back up.

This time Sarah didn't back away. Jim Branch was big, but he wasn't scary anymore. He was already Mom and Dad's friend, and he was going to be her friend too.

## Family Time

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

✎ With your family's help, think of at least three ways that Jim Branch in the story is like God.

✎ Read Luke 1:11-13, 30, and Luke 2:8-12. Are people always happy to hear from God? What does the angel say to all these people? Why?

✎ Why do you think Jesus came to earth as a baby?

✎ Ask the adults in your family to name someone they were afraid of the first time they met, but who is now their friend.

✎ Take everyone in your family to a mirror. Practice making your scariest faces. Now make your kindest face. Which face do you think God wears? How do you know?





# Waiting

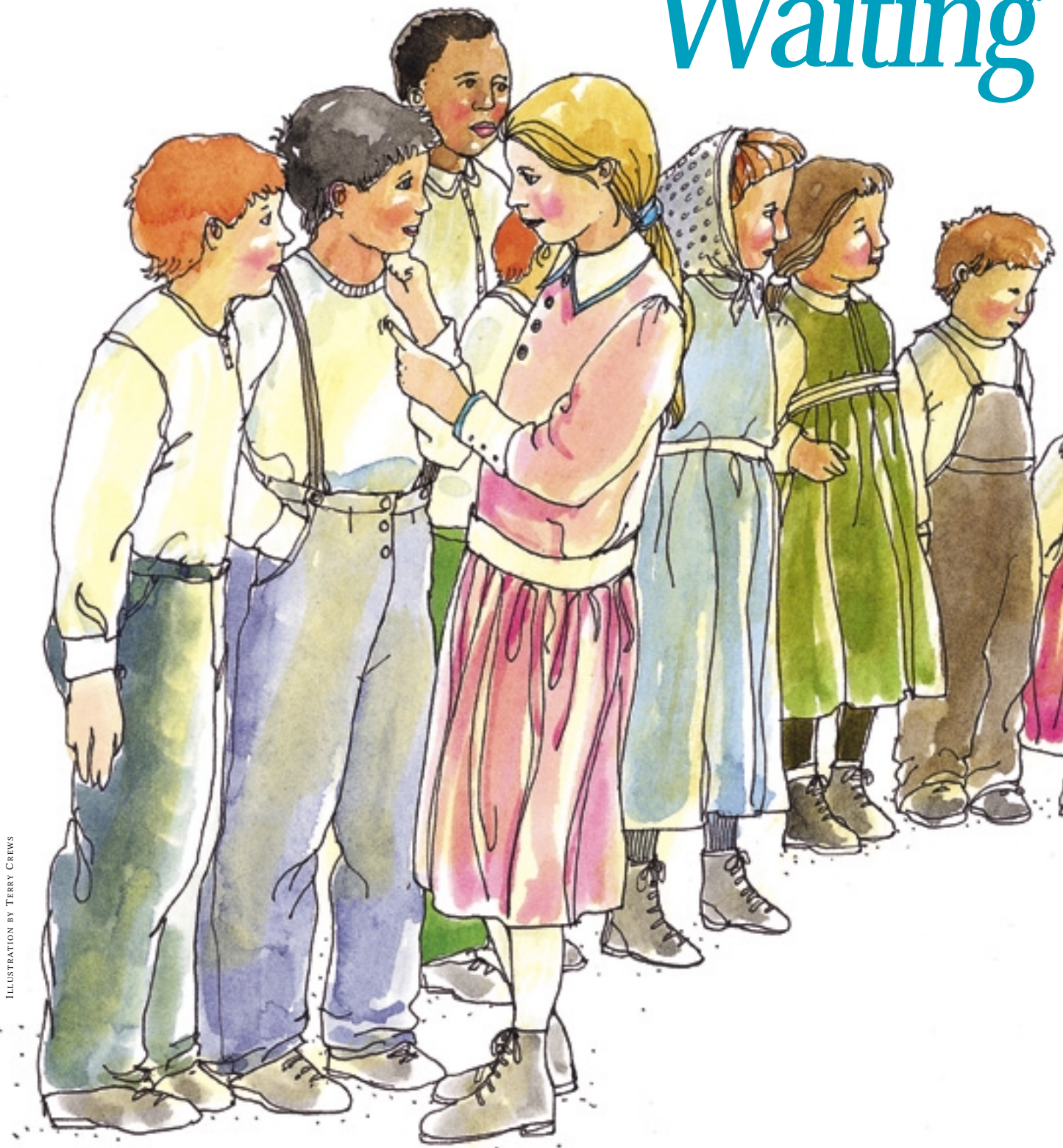


ILLUSTRATION BY TERRY CREWS



# to Be Chosen



*Have you  
ever found  
yourself waiting  
to be selected?  
For a ball game,  
a job, whatever?  
Then you know  
the feeling.*

BY CLAIRE EVA

**T**HE RAVEN-HAIRED octogenarian, a lovely gentleman with dreamy blue eyes, had just bared his soul to me. And I was bewildered by my lack of responsive joy. Why could I not share in his happiness, despite the incongruity of my inward pity?

The narrative reaches back to 1910—to a growing Midwestern university town. No. It actually began much earlier. Two affluent middle-class families immigrated from Germany to America in the late 1800s. One, a family of educators; the other with an artistic, inventive bent. One family produced a young woman, the other a young man. And the two offspring fell deeply in love, despite the strong disapproval of the girl's family.

Perhaps they had cause to doubt the stability of the interior designer and his inventor father, but were they the better for denying and disowning their own daughter for her choice of a life companion? Despite the opposition, the marriage of the young couple was a happy one, soon blessed with two children and a third on the way.

But in 1910, when little Lawrence was 5 and his sister Gladys was 8, tragedy struck. Their young mother died suddenly as a result of a premature and difficult childbirth. And it was only a matter of months until the children were left fatherless as well.

Sitting beside his nursing home bed, the old fellow told me how his paternal grandparents had taken the two children home with them. "My grandfather was an inventor, you know," he said with admiration. "When he died, he had a patent pending for a new salve he planned to market."

"I used to love to watch him play the organ," he continued. "He would peer above his small wire-rimmed glasses to look at the music." (I later studied a picture of his grandfather, who looked like a gentler Albert Einstein, with a full head of white hair.)

Lawrence recounted the sad day when all of this ended. "We had two years with . . . [our grandparents]. But they weren't able to keep us. Guess it was too much for them in their old age. I can still see my grandpa's troubled expression as he said goodbye at the steps of the Methodist children's home. I'll never forget watching him walk down that dusty road."

## Awkward Moments

I was puzzled at the next layer of words he added to his story.

"I wanted so badly to be chosen by someone. To have a home of my own. Each time someone came and they lined us up, I hoped it would be me."

"Lined you up? What do you mean?" I queried.

"Well, in those days, whenever people came to adopt some child, or, often as not, to get some boy to help out on the farm, they would call us all, and we would line up in a long row. Then the prospective parents or foster parents would walk down the long line, look us over, and choose the child they wanted."

*How awful. How belittling,* I thought. My heart burned as I imagined it—the vulnerability, the hopeful expectations, and finally the painful disappointment of all of those waiting, longing children.

My mind wandered. I envisioned long lines of children everywhere, waiting to be chosen. I recalled children waiting to be chosen for athletic games. The strong, the skillful, chosen



first, and then the final awkward moments when the unwanted, physically challenged child was shuffled from team to team.

But my vision didn't end with children. I saw all kinds of competitive quests. Anxious applicants awaiting news from the university. Other individuals waiting for that special job. Being on a list of many. Hoping. The few chosen joyful; the many unchosen saddened, wondering why. Why weren't *they* good enough? Why weren't *they* wanted?

I regained my focus as Lawrence went on. "The years moved by, and I had just about given up hope of being adopted out. Until one day, when I was 12 years old. Someone was coming—a farmer by the name of Osball. He was from the south of town and was looking for a boy to help on the farm.

#### "I Choose Him"

"Mr. Osball brought along his daughter. She was about my age—13, I think. Anyway, we had all lined up. He let *her* choose, you know. She walked down the line. When she came to me, she looked me squarely in the face and said, 'I choose him!'"

Lawrence's face beamed with the expression of it—"I choose him!" He was so proud. So happy to have been chosen. Perhaps my personal "story" was getting bound up with his telling. For the story that brought him joy brought me pity.

Oh the longing to be wanted, desired, and chosen—foremost, regardless of beauty. Sight unseen. Everybody longs for that. And then I felt the truth of the matter. A gentle Spirit spoke: "That's what I've done! I've chosen all of the Lawrences of the world. I've chosen you!"

As if digging for buried treasure, I searched through the book of Ezekiel and found what I had recalled—what I felt led to:

*"On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths. No*

*one looked on you with pity or had compassion enough to do any of these things for you. Rather, you were thrown out in the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised.*

*"Then I passed by and saw you. . . . I said to you, 'Live!' I made you grow like a plant of the field. You grew up and*

*When she came  
to me, she looked  
me squarely in the  
face and said,  
"I choose him!"*

*developed and became the most beautiful of jewels"* (Eze. 16:4-7, NIV).

Lawrence's experience on the farm

was a good one. Mr. Osball was a kind foster parent and a patient teacher.

"When I was 17 I ran off to Hampton Roads to join the Navy," he said. "But I loved those five years on the farm."

#### That's Our Story

A younger form of the man I admired had gained a love for nature and horticulture during those formative years that spilled over into all of his later years.

It was often said of my father that he had the loveliest yard on the street. I'll never forget the sweet fragrance of roses filling our home, and those extra-plump tomatoes, brown-wrapped, and set out for me to take to my own home.

And in the retelling of his story, I have been reminded again what it means to be chosen. Not last, but adoringly, *always and forever—first*. For those of us who believe, this is our story.

Claire Eva is a freelance writer, pastor's wife, and former classroom teacher living in Clarksville, Maryland.





# BOOK

• M A R K •

## Searching for a God to Love

Chris Blake, *Sycamore Tree Books, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Boise, Idaho, 1999, 256 pages, US\$11.99, Can\$17.99, paper. Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, assistant editor, Adventist Review.*

It's become increasingly difficult to be an apologist for Christianity. With so many non-Christian religions and philosophies being highlighted in the media, society's infatuation with "tolerance," and the

premium placed on being "nonjudgmental," presenting the unique and daring claims of Christianity (and Adventism in particular) requires more than just a string of Bible quotations.

In *Searching for a God to Love* Chris Blake acknowledges the spiritual void that people spend their lives trying to fill, and attempts to present Christianity in a way that will appeal to those who know practically nothing about its core teachings, as well as to those who have been acquainted with some dysfunctional form of its past representations (Blake is quite frank in acknowledging that some of the most

senseless and cruel episodes in history were acted out by Christians against nonbelievers—and other Christians).

Blake, a columnist for the *Adventist Review* and communication professor at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, mines several years' worth of research and quotes a variety of sources—theologians, entertainers, philosophers, athletes, novelists—to describe Christianity as a lifestyle that can be embraced by reason as well as by emotion. While he warns that God cannot be reduced to "a set of religious precepts easily held and manipulated," in anecdotes and sparkling illustrations he invites readers to consider a God who is the intelligence behind a complex universe, the motive behind every pure act, the reason to be optimistic about an often uncertain future, the only source of undiluted love.

In an engaging, entertaining way, Blake presents topics such as ultimate truth, the origin of the universe, freedom of choice, life after death, the Sabbath, salvation, the Second Coming, eternal life. Don't expect a Bible study, however. The primary audience Blake is writing to wouldn't know Genesis from Gestalt. He quotes the Bible not as evidence but to make a point.

One of the most captivating chapters of the book, "A Path of Astonishment," chronicles the seven days of Jesus' life leading up to and including His crucifixion and resurrection. In dramatic, realistic images Blake describes the emotional, physical, and spiritual torture that Christ endured before His death. Stripped away are the sanitized images we've seen in paintings and in Hollywood film and video productions.

The most glaring weakness of the book is the lack of an index. There are so many apt illustrations that it would be helpful to have a way of referencing them. Perhaps this omission will be corrected in later editions.

As I read *Searching for a God to Love* I often reflected on what I would think of the book had not my earliest memories involved a loving God who died

for me and would soon return to take me to be with Him. I think I'd find Blake's arguments persuasive; they would certainly be worthy of serious consideration. He treats his readers with respect, as people able to make a decision based on evidence. But reason can take one only so far. At some point there has to be a leap of faith, and this book provides a useful launching pad.

The highest compliment to be made about *Searching for a God to Love* is that Blake has done what far too few Christian writers have attempted to do: speak to the secular mind.

## Scraps of Wisdom From Grasshopper Junction

Leslie Kay, *Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland, 1999, 159 pages, US\$12.99, Can\$19.49, hard cover. Noted by Ella Rydzewski, editorial assistant.*

Chris Blake isn't the only *Adventist Review* columnist who has written a book this year (and there is also

Clifford Goldstein—but we will get to his book later). Leslie Kay has written a delightful little book that makes a great gift. Subtitled her book *Rediscover*



*the Lost Art of Being Content*, the author shares with us life in the Arizona desert. Circumstances take the family to a desolate place of rattlesnakes and sagebrush, but they manage to create a small farm in this old mining area. Kay is a talented writer and handles her writing as she does life, with humor and an awareness of the sacred.



# cutting edge

m e d i t a t i o n s

## Not All Guarantees Are Created Equal

After several disappointments I figured out that a guarantee is no better than the person or entity who makes the promise. My Buick is guaranteed from bumper to bumper for five years or 50,000 miles, or the end of the world, whichever happens first. I take some comfort in this because I figure that General Motors will be around for a while.

Every day we hear great guarantees. “Guaranteed Lowest Prices” on whatever the loudest huckster is selling. “Lifetime Guarantee” on new pots and pans at exaggerated prices. Whose lifetime? Mine? The guarantor’s or the lifetime of the pan itself? It doesn’t say. How about these: “As long as we both shall live” or “Until death do us part”?

Yes, for any guarantor to be meaningful and trusted, we must ponder his/her integrity and life expectancy.

One of my sons gave me a singular money clip. It is made of two small strong magnets encased in black leather. When folded against each other they are able to secure and make available more currency than I usually have.

What a guarantee! Printed on an enclosed piece of quality paper was my assurance that the clip would never change color nor shrink in size. Implied was that it would not explode without notice and being nonallergenic, would not cause incontinence or cradle cap. In fact, it seemed to be immune from everything but matrimony, which was not mentioned specifically but was included in the global assurance. I was thrilled.

I turned the paper over. Blank. I removed the lovely velvet lining of the presentation case. Nothing. No name, no address, zip code, area code, phone, or fax. I’ve felt uneasy about that guarantee for about 25 years now, though the clip still controls as many bills as I have.

What a contrast to Isaiah 58. God’s guarantee is quite explicit. We can celebrate our relationship with Him by demonstrating His love as He allows us to represent Him in Christian compassion. And then the guarantee. He will allow us to really enjoy His Sabbath blessings, including riding upon the high places of the earth and being fed in every way. And the Guarantor? “For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” (verse 14). His integrity and capacity are never wanting, and He’ll be around for eternity.

We can say it with Paul: “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12).

—William A. Iles, Longwood, Florida

## E-mail

Both e-mail messages had been forwarded so many times I had to scroll through several screens to find the text.

The first, forwarded from a Catholic friend, Jane, had been written by a nun who would soon be traveling with a group of her peers to a sister parish in a war-torn area of the world. She briefly mentioned some of the problems of the area and requested prayers during their trip—not for safety, but that they might be used by God to assist the oppressed. [Jane and I had discovered a mutual belief in prayer several years ago, and sharing prayer requests has become a regular part of our friendship.] With a smile I posted the message on the refrigerator and have repeated a prayer each time I notice it.

The second message, “A Warning,” forwarded by an Adventist friend, was cited as an excerpt from a speech by Janet Reno, who in talking about cults was quoted as saying that one of the identifying characteristics of a danger-





ous cult could be a belief in the second coming of Christ. There was no contextual information included with the message, nor could I determine who had authored it. Frowning with a feeling of frustration, I printed this message to share with my husband. We discussed it briefly and tossed it in the trash—both literally and electronically.

In retrospect, I should have combined the two messages and should be praying for Janet Reno as well as the nuns.

How often does our negativism cause us needless stress? Are we looking for ways to be martyrs? Yes, we may experience difficulties because of our faith. But have we forgotten the angels who are camped around us (Ps. 34:7)?  
—Lyn Connelly, Riverside, California

### Introspective Query

*Why, O God, have I been created? Where is my place in life? How will You use an often depressed, slow-moving, constantly seeking, scarred person? I am broken by my poor choices and inadequate responses to obstacles in life!*

I had always, or at least often, felt like an empty vessel. I felt less than perfect, useless, and unlovely until I determined to brighten my austere surroundings with flowers.

You see, I learned that in order for potted plants to grow well, good drainage is required. I “knew” that before, but I always thought that’s why there was a drainage hole in the pot. However, through reading articles on gardening and through experience, I learned that wasn’t enough.

The hole in the pot is there to

drain the water. Yet, left on its own with no assistance, precious rich soil leaks out. I read there are various ways to correct the problem. Some solutions are to use crushed stone, marbles, or broken pieces of pottery.

Broken pottery?

Sure, they say, smash a damaged pot with a hammer and use a sherd over the drainage hole. It holds the soil while the water freely drains.

*That’s me, I thought. I was chosen for my imperfections and lack of beauty. My brokenness suits me to maintain the richness in other people’s lives.*

Unseen, unlovely, and imperfect, inert but being, my brokenness serves.

Thank You, Lord!

—Louise Ford, Merrimack Valley, Massachusetts



# Rooftop Christmas

BY KATHY BOLLINGER

**T**he precision with which the cotton ball angel flew into the air made my heart leap with joy. I was standing over the floor heater vent, the most coveted place in my grandma and grandpa Hanson's home in

Sioux Rapids, Iowa, waiting for Christmas dinner. My mind, however, was not on eating. All I could think of was creating little angels from cotton balls and watching them take flight via the comforting heat that arose from beneath me.

Hearing the noise of my cousins' arrival, I set my angels into flight just waiting for the oohs and aahs that would surely come once they had seen the liftoff. I proudly turned so I could witness the awe on their faces. Instead of admiration I saw mirth, and my ears blistered as my cousin Bobby told me how stupid I looked throwing cotton balls.

Well, that did it! Did he know how to wreck a day! My mood plummeted from happy to the level of grump in a matter of seconds. I snorted through dinner, snarled during the cleanup, and sat sullenly by myself later as the adults chatted and the cousins romped. This, of course, was noticed by my parents, and after I was given the choice of cheering up or going to Aunt Jeannie's room, I stomped up the stairs to her room.

While I was trying to devise a plan to make everyone feel sorry they had been so mean to me, my eyes fell upon the window and the snow-covered porch top. That was it! I would climb out there and freeze to death. I hoisted the window open and climbed out carefully, since I didn't want to fall and get hurt. I viewed the beautiful winter panorama before me. The whole little neighborhood was a wonderland, and the snowy, curvy road was a Christmas card setting. The beauty was so poignant I almost forgot I was supposed to be freezing to death, but when my shivers took over I decided to crawl back through the window and get a coat so I wouldn't be cold. The bulky garment that I dragged out of the closet must have been my grandpa's. It was warm, and thus I decided that freezing to death wouldn't be so bad.

I got a little choked up picturing the looks of sadness on

my family members' faces after their discovery of my stiff, lifeless form. But then something happened. Sitting awhile atop the crunchy roof waiting to die from exposure, but not planning to get too cold, I heard music. Beautiful

Christmas carols drifted up to where I smugly huddled, and my mood began to change. I heard "Silent Night," "Away in a Manger," and "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing." Something in their messages began to warm my heart. My grandma was playing those familiar songs, my family was there, and I wanted to be there too. I thought about the circumstances that had brought me to my cold perch, and they seemed embarrassingly selfish. Freezing to death was such a foolish idea when the

options were weighed, so I scrambled back into the house, shut the window, replaced the coat, and descended the stairs with a new outlook on Christmas and my family. They welcomed me with smiles.

Since then I've not been tempted to revert back to the cold route in solving a problem. I've discovered there are other ways to deal with disappointments and frustrations. An interesting fact is that when God is present, things run smoother than when He is not called upon. Daniel said, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. And it is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men, and knowledge to men of understanding" (Dan. 2:20, 21, NASB).

I'm not sure where I fit in along with those Wise Men who visited the Baby in the stable, but I do know that God loves me. He took time long ago to help a little girl on a rooftop find peace on Christmas. I thank God for His goodness, mercy, and above all, His patient creative way that once again drew me to Him with arms of love.

*God helped  
a little girl  
find peace at  
Christmas.*

Kathy Bollinger is a middle school teacher at the Seventh-day Adventist Schools of Lincoln, in Lincoln, Nebraska.

