

Adventist Review

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ONLINE DATING**



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Adventist Review

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ON THE COVER

The world of online dating can be both awkward and rewarding. What makes the difference?

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My Father Sang to Me

» Thank you for printing Steve R. Morris' article, "My Father Sang to Me" (Jan. 17, 2013). My dear wife of more than 66 years, after experiencing several strokes, is now in a "care center." Some months ago when Helen's health was really starting to fail, we could still sing together. When we had finished singing "Lift up the trumpet and loud let it ring: Jesus is coming again!" Helen turned to me and said, "Lyle, when Jesus comes we will be young again."

Helen is now unable to sing. I sing to her and sometimes her lips move to the words. Yes, the precious gift of music sure lifts us above the heartaches of this life.

Keep up the good work in bringing us these precious messages.

LYLE HAMEL

Waverly, West Virginia

The Blood-dimmed Tide

» Grateful thanks to editor Bill Knott for his starkly beautiful statement of what is in our own troubled hearts in "The Blood-dimmed Tide" editorial (Jan. 10, 2013). Indeed, the center cannot or will not hold. Our emasculated lawmakers, after weeks and months, will come up with an answer to the pandemic violence in this country that will be so anemic as to satisfy no one and effect no change. The real answer is in our own homes, where parents permit their impressionable children three to four hours of video each day, racking up as many "kills" as possible, and then wonder why the "gentle Jesus, meek and mild" has no appeal whatsoever. If that element is changed, there is a chance . . .

ERNEST STEVENSON

Orlando, Florida



What Is a Mystic?

» As much as I like Bill Knott and loved his Sandy Hook editorial in this edition (see "The Blood-dimmed Tide"), I am left wondering how such an article as "What Is a Mystic?" could have passed his scrutiny. Eric Anderson has attempted to substitute the words "mystic" and "mysticism" for spiritual. We all know there are spiritual beings, including us, but as the Bible points out there are both good and evil spiritual entities. Mysticism and mystics have historically been associated on the side of spiritualism and gnosticism. To dumb down, dilute, sanitize, minimize, and redefine this word raises big red flags. Satan, in order to, if possible, "deceive the very elect," must deliver his deceit in a near-perfect truth package.

To be brief, I will make one point by reading between the lines of just one sentence. Eric Anderson wrote, "To be as clear as possible, a Christian mystic practices 'companionship with Christ.'" Reading between the lines defined by the spiritual disciplines he alludes to, a Christian mystic practices deeper levels of experience through emptying their mind, *cloaked as* companionship with Christ. I wish it read: "A spiritual Christian abides in Christ."

DAVID EICHMAN

Roseburg, Oregon

» The January 10, 2013, cover article is titled "What Is a Mystic?—Seeking Companionship With Christ." I suggest that the word "mystic" has connotations that would preclude our using it to define our seeking a relationship with God, i.e., its connection with the darkness Satan wishes us to experience. Jesus tells us that we are to be "children of [the] light" (John 12:36; see Eph. 5:8 and 1 Thess. 5:5).

The word "mystic" is defined in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (Eleventh Edition) as a "follower of a mystical way of life." "Mystical" is defined as "having a spiritual meaning or reality that is neither apparent to the senses nor obvious to the intelligence, . . . subjective communion with God or ultimate reality." Our relationship to God is not to be based on subjective experience, but on the Word of God and our willing submission to Him in faith and love (John 4:22, 23).

God has told us, "The mystic voices that spoke at Endor and at Ephesus are still by their lying words misleading the children of men" (Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 290). A "mystical" experience may come from the demonic, and may be a bridge to "spiritual formation" and worshipping the wrong God (see White's *Early Writings*, p. 56).

May the Lord help each of us to have true worship and communion with Him based on submission, deepening repentance, faith, love, and cheerful obedience to all He reveals to us.

FRANCES FOSTER

Colville, Washington

» The January 10, 2013, *Review* is one of the best. I especially appreciated the article by Eric Anderson, “What Is a Mystic?” Its emphasis on union with Christ is truly inspiring. By taking the time to experience an intimate relationship with the divine, we have access to Christian living, learning, and direction. The term Christian “mysticism” takes our devotional/prayer time out of the sphere of the ordinary and trivial into the presence of God. In such sacredness is beauty, love, and trust.

Recognizing that no one Christian group has a monopoly on the Holy Spirit is a humbling experience and an antidote for spiritual pride. Even Ellen White used devotional and biblically based material from trusted sources in the Christian world of her era.

The article “Unstoppable Growth,” by Ronny Nalin, was also insightful.

ELLA RYDZEWSKI
Clarksville, Maryland

» I am writing regarding the article “What Is a Mystic?” While it is true that we need a much deeper personal experience with God, it is necessary to repeat the same mistakes that occurred around the turn of the twentieth century with our

church’s brush with pantheism? Do we really wish to see God’s judgment poured out on our institutions again for drinking the forbidden, mystical waters?

DANIEL WINTERS
Osaka, Japan

» In regard to “What Is a Mystic?” I was shocked and saddened—to say the least. The sincerity of the author is evident; however, we do have this counsel in Ellen White’s *Testimonies for the Church*: “The study of God’s word should take the place of the study of those books that have led minds into mysticism and away from the truth” (vol. 6, p. 132). Also we know that “*the most dangerous falsehoods are those that are mingled with truth*.” It is thus that errors are received that captivate and ruin the soul. By this means Satan carries the world with him” (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 338; italics supplied).

We know that in the end-times Satan will come as an angel of light. Even the cover picture seemed to be focused on “mystical light.” Please encourage us to be in the Word rather than reading the words of authors who are not following all the light we know to be truth.

GERITA LIEBELT
Libby, Montana

» I was thrilled beyond words to find Eric Anderson’s article (Jan. 10, 2013). It was water to parched ground for me when he shared his journey with a group I attended.

This is just what church members need. The beauty of the Seventh-day Adventist message is wonderful, but this is the key piece: to know and adore Jesus. I love to read Ellen White’s *Steps to Christ* to help get my spiritual juices going, but Anderson has called our attention to many giants of faith throughout history who say many of the same things in different words. Thank you for publishing this article.

SANDI REYNOLDS
Oregon



Operation ELF

» The title of Michael Oxentenko’s cover article “Operation ELF” caught my attention (Dec. 13, 2012). The devil, banished forever from heaven, knows he is lost and will use any means necessary to ensure we are lost as well. God’s love for humankind caused Him to send His Son to save us. Satan’s hatred toward God is turned to deceiving and keeping as many as possible from eternal life with God.

NATALIE DODD
Centerville, Ohio

My Miracle

» I’m writing to thank Stephanie Knight for her article “My Miracle” (Dec. 13, 2012). Not only was her story encouraging, but her vulnerability in talking about her battle with depression is refreshing and humble. So many Adventists are ashamed of their battle with depression, but it’s as real in our people as with any other. Praise God for His light in this dark world, and for His love and perseverance when we get depressed and discouraged. Faith is the victory. May the little miracles in our lives give us the faith to hold on to Jesus in the darkest hours.

JANINE ROSS
Mill City, Oregon

We welcome your letters, noting, as always, that inclusion of a letter in this section does not imply that the ideas expressed are endorsed by either the editors of the *Adventist Review* or the General Conference. Short, specific, timely letters have the best chance at being published (please include your complete address and phone number—even with e-mail messages). Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: letters@adventistreview.org.

“Praise God for His light in this dark world.”

—JANINE ROSS, Mill City, Oregon



Bill

Knott

The true story
of the Adventist
experience
through 150 years
is a continuing
“people’s history”
of the grace and
goodness of God.

After the Flood

“Après Moi, Le Déluge.”

A famously egotistical phrase, Louis XV of France (1710-1774) dismissed the judgment of history on his long and decadent reign. “*After me, let the flood come.*”

Those inclined to treat the utterances of kings as prophecies saw a grim fulfillment of Louis’ statement in the flood of social rage and violence that swept his grandson from the throne just 15 years after Louis’ death. As his grandson mounted the guillotine in the Place de la Concorde, the old king’s vanity and arrogance were widely viewed as the incendiaries that had lit the torch of the French Revolution.

History has long since made its judgment about Louis XV, even though some revisionist historians have recently attempted a rehabilitation of the king’s reputation. Almost no one, however, defends the blunt arrogance captured in the famous line.

Which is why you have never heard any Adventist pastor, administrator, or congregational leader say anything like “*Après moi, le déluge.*” They know enough of history and human nature to avoid the gross egotism that cost Louis’ grandson his head.

But there is a variant of the old French king’s line that has acquired the *gravitas* of apparent truth, if only because it is heard so often.

“*Avant moi, le déluge.*” “Before me, there was a flood.”

Nothing is so common among Adventist leaders on every level as to hear the history of the organization they now lead described as unmitigated chaos before they arrived on the scene. In the post-Flood narrative that many tell, there was nothing but boulders, evaporating lakes, and thin vegetation when they emerged from the ark of safety to lead the remnant. And it required all their skill and all their time to rebuild from nothing the organization they inherited. Bad decisions had been made in times past; finances had been exhausted; policy manuals had grown dusty with disuse; festering problems had been ignored. And while, at least in some cases, some of these things may be true, there is a grim symmetry in noting that their successors in leadership will be saying very much the same things five or 10 years from now: “*Avant moi, le déluge.*” “Before me, there was a flood.”

Leaders from local elders to General Conference personnel tell such stories because they underline the significance of personal effort in negotiating the challenges of the modern-day church. And let me be the first to say that I stand in reverent awe before the contributions many such leaders are making to the cause—in congregations, in conference offices, as departmental leaders, as senior executives. Their effort is, in many cases, herculean. Our system of governance and church leadership, however, is notoriously spare with affirmation: we rarely stop to say to those who lead and serve—“*Well done, good and faithful servant.*” If we did, we might hear the recent history of this movement described more accurately—and more charitably.

For the true story of the Adventist experience through 150 years is not a story told by leadership about how well it did in serving, but a continuing “people’s history” of the grace and goodness of God in the midst of human brokenness. This is not a history captured in dusty pictures of former leaders decorating office walls, but a history known in kingdom growth, in food shared with the hungry, in faith deepened and developed, and in children nurtured in the ways of God.

In His goodness God blesses His church with gifts of service, administration, and helps so that His kingdom expands. And when any leader’s time of usefulness is completed, God calls another to serve His people. If they are wise, new leaders will view the history of the group they lead from the longer-term perspective of the people—those who have watched leaders and programs and initiatives and campaigns come and go. What built the people’s faith? What grew them as disciples? What taught them kingdom values? What sparked the people’s witness?

Leaders who ask—and answer—such questions need never fear for their reputations, on earth or in heaven. The verdict of history will be identical with that of Jesus: “*Well done, good and faithful servant. ... Enter into the joy of your lord*” (Matt. 25:21, NKJV).* ■

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Refocusing Our Vision

OLD AGE IS CREEPING UP ON ME. IN DECEMBER I DECIDED TO HAVE MY

eyes tested once again. The exam confirmed what I already knew: I needed distance glasses for driving. Night driving had become a real problem for me, so I tried to avoid driving at night as much as possible. It's quite amazing how much better I can see with my new glasses. Night driving is no longer a problem; my vision is sharp and clear.

There are times in our spiritual lives when our vision becomes fuzzy. We see, but we do not see clearly.

Jesus performed a fascinating miracle upon a blind man whose vision was completely gone. After touching his eyes, Jesus asked the man if he could see. The man responded, "I see people; they look like trees walking around" (Mark 8:24). The blind man saw, but his vision was not clear. Then Scripture records that Jesus touched the man's eyes a second time "and he saw everything clearly" (verse 25).

This is the only miracle in the Bible that Jesus worked in two stages. It has extreme significance for our own spiritual journey. There are times that our spiritual vision is cloudy and divine realities seem obscure. Heaven may seem far away. At times like this we too need "the second touch."

Jesus is the divine optometrist; He is a vision specialist. "Fixing our eyes on Jesus" (Heb. 12:2) our spiritual vision is renewed. The words of a wise old preacher are still true: "If you look within your own heart, you will be depressed. If you look around you, you will be distressed. But if you look to Jesus, you will be blessed."

Why not take a long look, a really long look, at Jesus today? ■



Mark A.
Finley



Say It Again! This month we remember the words from some Adventist African-Americans.



FRANK L. PETERSON

"Looking forward, we see in the providence of God a new year of 365 days presented to us, one day at a time, thus giving us a new chance. Let us start the year right with Jesus, to walk with Him and to work with Him."

—Former President of Oakwood College (now University) (1945-1954)



WINTLEY PHIPPS

"One day I will be in heaven and will hear a knock on the door of my mansion from Jesus, who will say, My son, I am about to go to some other parts of My universe where they have never seen a child from earth who has been redeemed, and I want you to go with Me and sing just before I speak."

—When asked what he looks forward to in heaven



INEZ BOOTH

"I know you've done bad things. But so did David in the Bible. David was a murderer, but God forgave him and called him a man after His own heart. And He'll forgive you, too, if you just ask."

—Inez Booth was involved in prison ministry for more than 55 years. This was a constant encouragement to inmates.



NORTH AMERICA

6,000 Adventist Youth Commit to Continued “Revolution” at Seattle GYC Event

Annual event touched city with witness, ministry to homeless

By **CALLIE WILLIAMS AND MICHEL LEE**, GYC, reporting from Seattle, Washington

THE ELEVENTH edition of the annual Generation of Youth for Christ (GYC) conference drew 6,000 Seventh-day Adventist youth from 49 countries to Seattle in December 2012. Under the theme “Acts: The Revolution Continues,” participants heard challenging and inspiring sermons and reached out to one of the least-churched cities in North America.

The theme of revolution was infused in this year’s programming: from Seventh-day Adventist pastors Adam Ramin, Wes Peppers, David Shin, and John Bradshaw to seminars on a variety of topics relevant to young people today to small group discussions led by everyday revolutionaries in their workplaces.

Outreach Day, a perpetual highlight of GYC conferences, took place on Sunday and consisted of outreach to local neighborhoods and homeless ministry. More than 2,500 Adventists illuminated Seattle with GLOW tracts and flyers personally inviting thousands to evangelistic series hosted by local Adventist churches. Four hundred forty-one residents preregistered for these series, some even excitedly promising to bring their families. One presenter was forced to move his prophecy seminar to a larger auditorium after attendees

brought back an unexpectedly large number of preregistrants.

Two more buses took attendees to find and feed those who were homeless, a new Outreach Day activity that seeks to exemplify GYC’s desire to serve as

Jesus did. As Jeff Marshall, vice president of evangelism for GYC, had predicted the day before: Seattle was a different place than how GYC had found it.

Prayer is at the very center of divine revolutions, as noted by Ellen G. White, a pioneering cofounder of the Seventh-day Adventist movement: “From the secret place of prayer came the power that shook the world in the Great Reformation” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 210). On the evening of December 31, 2012, attendees gathered for a powerful prayer session with the desire to see a revolution in their lives and those of others in the new year.

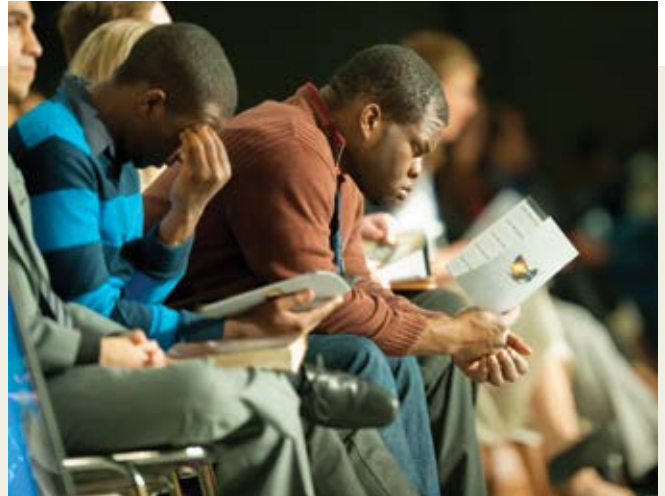
“This conference helped me see my own need for revolution,” said Michael Luchak, one GYC attendee, “and I want to be willing, at any cost, [to] reach another soul.” Luchak speaks for countless young people who made commitments to seek God and His mission, and his words resound with speaker David Shin’s reminder that Christ Himself would save humanity at any cost to Himself.

Before the disciples were ready to continue the revolution their Master started, their hearts had to be ready. In the closing message on the morning of January 1, It Is Written speaker/director



KEYNOTE SPEAKER: John Bradshaw, Seventh-day Adventist pastor and It Is Written speaker/director, addresses congregation at GYC 2013 event in Seattle.

PHOTOS: GYC



OUT TO WITNESS: One of many busloads of GYC participants who went throughout Seattle, Washington, to witness and help others

CONCENTRATION: Young adults listen intently to a GYC presentation.

John Bradshaw emphasized that revolution begins with a yielded and willing heart. Acts is an unfinished book: there was no farewell or end of action. Attendees can continue the Acts experience today.

The movement of GYC pushes for service close to home. “Our job as leaders is to connect [young people] to the local church, because that’s where the rubber meets the road,” said Justin McNeilus,

president of GYC.

Attendees went home not only to impact their local churches but also to initiate regional GYC conferences, mission trips, and public campus ministries. In response to one appeal, attendees came forward to offer between three and seven years of their lives to overseas missions.

Although a common response from young people is that they are unquali-

fied, many in leadership positions overlook them. Israel Ramos, a GYC cofounder, urged young people to focus on the talents God has given them in order to further the revolution described in the book of Acts: “The church [of Acts] is focusing on what it has instead of what it has not . . . what’s powerful about that is everyone can have Jesus, and He’s the only resource you need.” ■

■ NEWS

Theology of Ordination Committee Ends First Session

Members, officers optimistic about final outcome

By **ADVENTIST REVIEW STAFF**

MEMBERS OF the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) ended its first session—held January 15-17 at a meeting site near the church’s world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—on an optimistic note.

“We have real hope that the church will be able to find a way to resolve the differences we have on the issue of ordination,” committee chair Artur Stele, director of the General Conference Biblical Research Institute, reported to church leaders worldwide via a phone conference following the session. “We left the meeting feeling very optimistic and confident that God is leading us. We

have many reasons to thank the Lord.”

The General Conference Administrative Committee organized the TOSC in September 2012 to study the concept of ordination from a biblical perspective and whether it is intended for only one gender. The study committee comprises 106 members, including theologians, laypersons, pastors, and Bible students from each of the church’s 13 world divisions. The General Conference appointed Artur Stele as chair, Geoffrey Mbwana as vice chair, and Karen Porter as secretary. About 25 percent of the members are women.

La Sierra associate professor of reli-



TIME OF PRAYER: The committee members spent much time seeking God’s presence and guidance throughout the three-day session.

gion, Kendra Haloviak Valentine; assistant to the General Conference president, Mark Finley; and newly appointed Solusi University president, Joel Musvosvi, presented the daily devotionals. Seasons of prayer invoking the Holy Spirit’s presence and guidance were then followed by the



MICHAEL PORTER

INTENSE STUDY: Prepared papers on various aspects of ordination were presented to the 106-member committee.

presentation of papers by individuals assigned to study various aspects of ordination. These papers included topics on how to deal with doctrinal issues in the church, the history of ordination, and hermeneutics.

After each presentation, time was given to discuss the material presented with the entire committee. On the sec-

ond day smaller groups met for reflection and to develop suggestions and recommendations on the papers. Based on the suggestions and recommendations from the working groups, the presenters will refine their papers, and second drafts will be sent to the divisions' Biblical Research Committees and to the TOSC members for input

before the next meeting.

Differences of opinion were animatedly expressed on the second afternoon of the session. One member told the *Adventist Review*, "But then Pastor Stele stopped and said, 'Let's pray,' and the whole atmosphere changed. There was a warm Christian spirit, and we felt free to openly share our views."

A letter to the General Conference Executive Committee from the TOSC chair, vice chair, and secretary summing up the session read, in part: "Members of the committee could not help expressing their gratitude to God for the sweet spirit that prevailed in these meetings. Please continue to pray for the committee as it works under the leadership of the Holy Spirit in this study."

The second of the four scheduled sessions will be held in July 2013 in Maryland. ■

■ UNITED KINGDOM

Adventists Launch "Mission to Cities" in South England Conference

Area, which includes London, is targeted for growth

By **KIRSTEN ØSTER-LUNDQVIST**, SEC communication director, reporting from Watford, Hertfordshire, England

"**WE NEED** to mingle with people who don't look like us," declared Ian Sweeney, British Union Conference president.

His straightforward message reached the 800 people who had found their way to the South England Conference (SEC) Evangelism Expo at Newbold College on January 13, 2013.

The focus of the day, and what drew leaders from the Trans-European Division (TED) office, was the launch of "Mission to the Cities," an initiative originating from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. London will be the TED city of focus for mission in October 2013.

This evangelistic program is a combined effort of the division, union, and the conference, but rooted in the local community. With plans being made for a variety of evangelism initiatives across London, Janos Kovacs-Biro, TED evangelism director, presented the initiative and was thrilled to see members getting excited and their willingness to participate in Mission to the Cities. Recognizing this was the launch of the initiative, and for many the first they had heard about it, Janos expressed that members would need more training. It is expected that local churches will crystallize the program and make it practi-



SEC

GO AND TELL: Pastor Ian Sweeney, British Union president, exhorts members of the South England Conference at recent Evangelism Expo.

cal for local communities.

The day was packed with an impressive diversity of workshops and presentations aimed at motivating church members to become involved in evangelism and sharing God. Pastoral intern Anthony Fuller found it refreshing to

see and learn from ministries such as the Watering Hole in the Southampton area, pastored by Rosemary Lethbridge.

Sam Ouadjo, a pastor who recently moved to Holloway, had arranged bus transportation for his former congregations in Ipswich and Colchester as he recognized the importance of his members, and especially newly elected leaders in the churches, catching the vision of taking the gospel to London.

Maureen Rock, a pastor of both the Hanworth and Hounslow churches, was thrilled to see her members catching the vision for Mission to the Cities. Mani Cudjoe from Reading found the expo an eye-opening experience, both in how passionate people were about evangelism and also about the opportunities available to share the gospel.

Simon Martin, who pastors, and is planting a church, in the Luton area, set

the bar high with his morning sermon, recognizing that “God may be missing in our culture today, but we are to make Him known.” He emphasized, “We make God known when we move out of our comfort zones.” Martin challenged the congregation with his sermon, and throughout the day you could hear the challenge become a consistently repeated catchphrase: “We need to make God known.” ■

■ WORLD CHURCH

End Child Abuse Campaign Releases Multilanguage Digital Kit

Adventist Risk Management is sponsor of the Seven Campaign

Reported by **ADVENTIST RISK MANAGEMENT**

THE SEVEN Campaign to end child abuse has prepared a digital kit that is available at the campaign Web site (www.thesevencampaign.com). The digital kit includes information and message points about the campaign, a petition form, logos, and posters, all of which are free to download. The digital kit is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French.

The digital kit can be used to raise awareness about the issue of child abuse at local churches or schools, or to reach out to the community. Child abuse is an issue that should not be ignored or taken lightly. The Seven Campaign encourages people to become educated about the issue and to take active steps to make a difference. One of the banners on the campaign Web site reads “The best things in life are free. Use your voice, your life, your influence to make a positive difference.”

Visitors to the campaign Web site are encouraged to (digitally) sign a promise to take action. The promise says:

- Tell seven people how to stop abuse now, by sharing the resources.
- Speak out against abuse—don’t remain indifferent.



A CHILD'S TEARFUL PLEA: Flyer produced by the Seven Campaign asks recipients to use their influence to help end child abuse.

- Advocate for change with my voice and vote.
- Mobilize my peers.
- Lead by example.
- Express my support creatively through the Virtual Gallery.
- Share the Seven Campaign with seven people.

The Seven Campaign is a grassroots

campaign that aims to raise awareness and mobilize church members and supporters to take a stand on the issue of child abuse. Launched by Adventist Risk Management and a group of Seventh-day Adventist denominational partners, the campaign seeks to equip individuals and churches with the tools to make a difference in their sphere of influence. ■

NORTH AMERICA

Poll Shows Mixed Views on Religious Liberty in U.S.

While many fear rights diminished, they also want one view to dominate, survey says

By **LAUREN MARKOE**,
Religion News Service

HALF OF Americans worry that religious freedom in the U.S. is at risk, and many say activist groups—particularly gays and lesbians—are trying to remove “traditional Christian values” from the public square.

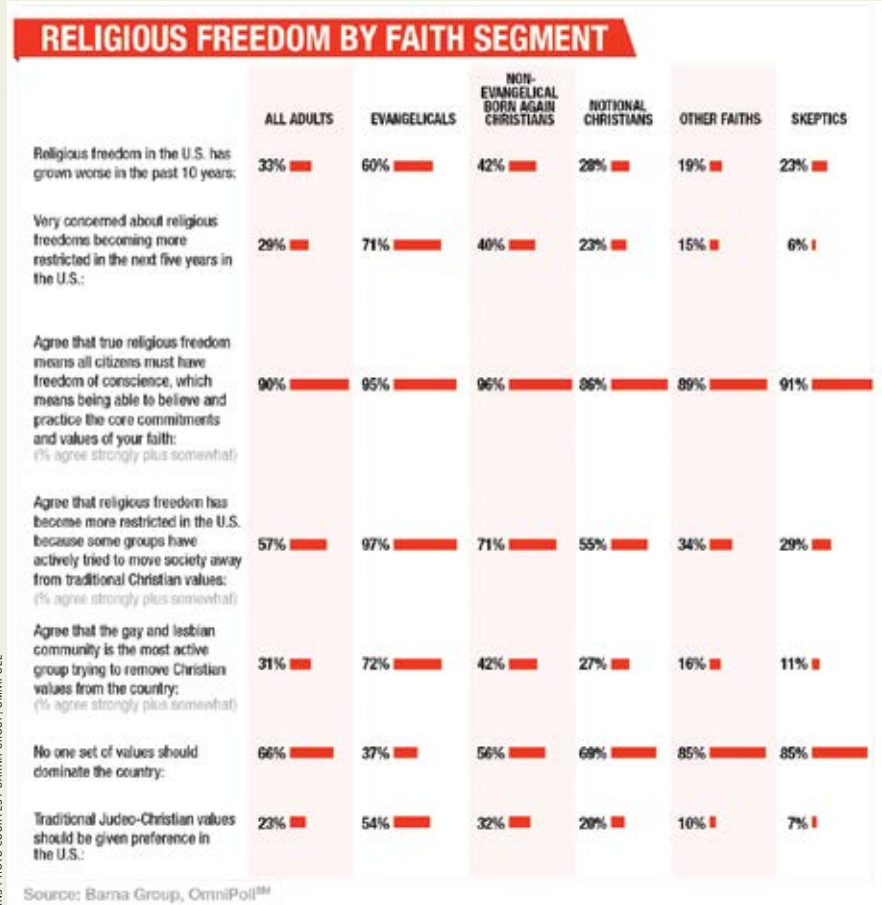
The findings of a poll published January 23, 2013, reveal a “double standard” among a significant portion of evangelicals on the question of religious liberty, said David Kinnaman, president of Barna Group, a California think tank that studies American religion and culture.

While these Christians are particularly concerned that religious freedoms are being eroded in this country, “they also want Judeo-Christians to dominate the culture,” said Kinnaman.

“They cannot have it both ways,” he said. “This does not mean putting Judeo-Christian values aside, but it will require a renegotiation of those values in the public square as America increasingly becomes a multifaith nation.”

Religious freedom has become an increasingly important political issue within the past year, as Republican candidates hammered President Barack Obama for a contraception mandate that many conservatives feel tramples on the religious freedom of employers who must cover birth control in their health plans.

The poll of 1,008 adults showed that 29 percent of respondents were “very” concerned that religious liberties are



SURVEY SAYS: A poll released January 23, 2013, shows that Americans have a relatively gloomy view of the state of religious freedom in the U.S., with one in three respondents blaming “the gay and lesbian community” more than any other.

under threat, and 22 percent “some-what” concerned. Evangelicals were the religious group most likely to be concerned, at 71 percent.

Asked for their opinion as to why religious freedom is threatened, 97 percent of evangelicals agreed that “some groups have actively tried to move society away from traditional Christian values.”

And 72 percent of evangelicals also agreed that gays and lesbians were the group “most active [in] trying to remove Christian values from the country.” That compares to 31 percent of all adults who held this belief.

The results are somewhat at odds with a March 2012 poll sponsored by Religion News Service and the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI),

which found that a majority of Americans—56 percent—did not feel that religious freedom was under attack in this nation.

But results between the two polls align in that the PRRI survey concluded that White evangelical Protestants were the most worried about religious liberty. It found them to be the only religious group in which a majority (61 percent) considered it under threat.

The Barna poll, conducted in November 2012, has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. ■

Editor’s Note: The Adventist Review shares news from Religion News Service as a service to readers. Opinions expressed in these reports do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Review or the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



WE NEED YOU

We are looking for brief submissions in these categories:

Sound Bites (quotes, profound or spontaneous)

Adventist Life (short anecdotes, especially from the world of adults)

Jots and Tittles (church-related tips)

Camp Meeting Memories (short, humorous and/or profound anecdotes)

Please send your submissions to Give & Take, *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; fax: 301-680-6638; e-mail: marank@gc.adventist.org. Please include phone number, and city and state from which you are writing.

POEM

I Don't Need a Ring

I don't need a ring to show
I'm faithful to my wife.
For every day I show her
What she's brought into my life.

It's all the little things that really count
And words we often say,
Like "Love you, hon" and "You look nice"
And "I'll fix that drawer today!"

SOUND BITE

"Our faith is not in
God's blessings,
but in the God
who gives the
blessings....
Little is much when
God gives it."

—**PASTOR ROOSEVELT MARSDEN,**
*ATHOLTON SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH, COLUMBIA, MARYLAND*

Some fall for money, some for fame,
And some can't live apart;
I love my wife for all the warmth she
Brings into my heart.

So rings and things may be all right,
It's not for me to say,
But I would rather have her heart
Than symbols any day!

—**D. CARL ANDERSON,** GROVELAND, CALIFORNIA,
*AFTER A DISCUSSION WITH A YOUNG CHURCH
MEMBER REGARDING WEDDING RINGS*



© TERRY CREWS

ADVENTIST LIFE

My daughter Elizabeth had brought her children to our Montana home in mid-December for a visit. We had already plowed and shoveled the snow from earlier in the week. When Elizabeth went outside to bring something in, she commented, "It's snowing again."

After she left the room our 5-year-old granddaughter Kandice remarked, "Well, maybe God is just trying to make it fun for little kids."

—**AUDREY NEUHARTH-PONASKI,** KILA, MONTANA

When my husband, Leon, was pastor of the Village church in College Place, Washington, near the campus of Walla Walla University, he had invited one of his friends to speak at the Sabbath service. After my husband introduced the speaker, he returned to his seat on the platform.

The guest speaker arose, turned to my husband, and asked, "How long do I speak?"

My husband replied, "You may speak as long as you wish, but the people go home at noon." This brought many laughs from the audience.

—**ALICE ROBBINS,** LOMA LINDA, CALIFORNIA



BY GERHARD PFANDL

SOME
THOUGHTS
ABOUT
THE **UNITY**
OF THE
CHURCH

Theological disunity is threatening the Adventist Church today as never before in our history. The pressures of culture, independent critical ministries, and congregational and ecumenical tendencies in various places have created confusion in our church today. The unity of the church is of vital importance for successful evangelism—yet it is not the product of human ingenuity or cleverness, but the work of God. If God had not led the Seventh-day Adventist Church from its inception through the prophetic gift manifested in Ellen White, this church would most likely no longer exist, or it would be a small church like the Advent Christian Church, which also came out of the Millerite movement, with fewer than 100,000 members today.

Division in the church is the work of Satan. Repeatedly in the early history of our denomination Satan attempted to bring division and error into the church. Each time the church was saved by God's intervention through the prophetic gift.¹ Since then, every generation has had to deal with Satan's attempt to bring disunity into the church. He has been particularly successful, it seems, in recent decades. However, in spite of it, by God's grace, the world church is still remarkably united.

The unity of the church is first and foremost a spiritual unity and only secondarily an issue of an organizational structure. What welded the apostles and the early church members together was not an organization but a common experience. First, of course, were the three and a half years in the presence of the Master. Second, it was the experience of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in Acts 2. Church organization came later.

IN THE SAME DIRECTION

NG

We find a similar experience in our own early church history. For almost 20 years after 1844 there was no church organization. People opposed any kind of organization, identifying it with Babylon. What held the early pioneers together was a common experience, the imminent expectation of the Second Coming, and the work of the Holy Spirit through the ministry of Ellen White.

A second element of the unity of the church is the common message that defines us. While we have much in common with other Christian bodies, our distinctive doctrines, the landmarks as Ellen White called them, constitute a special bond among Seventh-day Adventists. In her usage, landmarks meant the sanctuary truth, the Sabbath, and the nonimmortality of the wicked.² Today I would add the remnant concept and the prophetic gift in her ministry as part of our unique doctrines, but all 28 fundamental beliefs are important. “What makes this body of beliefs significant and authoritative,” writes Angel Rodríguez, former director of the Bibli-

cal Research Institute at the headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, “is the fact that it is biblically grounded. It is the result of careful biblical study affirmed as such by the global community of believers.”³

A third element of the unity in the church is a common lifestyle. According to Scripture, the Christian life should be lived in a certain way, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1-3).⁴

Seventh-day Adventists are known worldwide for a specific lifestyle. It is not only our commitment to Scripture, to religious freedom, to ADRA, and the extensive mission program around the world, but also our commitment to our health message. The fact that our lifestyle excludes harmful substances, such as coffee, alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, and that we emphasize the importance of fresh

air, sunshine, water, exercise, and a wholesome diet based on biblical teachings, is a witness to the world and a factor that unites our membership worldwide.

Yet, our lifestyle can never take the place of the gospel. We are saved only through the substitutionary death of Jesus—but being saved has practical consequences. Our lifestyle witnesses to the power of the gospel and contributes to the visible unity of the church.

Essential Commitments

It is vital for the church to be united in order to be effective in witnessing to the world. Without the spiritual unity, and without the unity of message and lifestyle, we will not be able to convince a skeptical world to listen to the three angels’ messages and prepare the world for the Second Advent. Church history has repeatedly shown that when a church allows pluralism to destroy its unity, its witness becomes muted. To achieve the desired unity in our church, I am suggesting four necessary commitments:

1. *Commitment to Jesus*

“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). First and foremost, each member needs to have a personal relationship with our Lord. Jesus compares this relationship with Him to the vital connection that exists between the vine and its branches (John 15:4, 5). “Without Me,” he says, “you can do nothing” (verse 5). Echoing this diagnosis, Ellen White wrote, “Unity with Christ establishes a bond of unity with one another. This unity is the most convincing proof to the world of the majesty and virtue of Christ, and of His power to take away sin.”⁵

How important, therefore, that the individual member have a strong relationship with Christ that is nurtured through feeding daily on the Word of God and the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy. We cannot feed others spiritually unless we have been fed ourselves.

2. Commitment to His Church

As Seventh-day Adventists we believe that this church is God's remnant church. Our thirteenth fundamental belief states: "The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, from its very inception in 1863, has claimed to be the remnant church of prophecy. We believe that God called this church into existence for the proclamation of the three angels' messages and that He has had a hand in the organization of this church. This does not mean that only Adventists will be saved. God has His people in all Christian churches (Rev. 18:4), but the Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's visible remnant church through which He brings His final message to the world. The election of Israel was an election not for salvation but for service. Similarly, the Adventist church has been chosen to serve humanity in the time of the end by proclaiming God's message to a dying world. We are saved as individuals, not by belonging to a particular race or church.

Commitment to God's remnant church means that we are Adventists first and members of a particular country or race second. Racism in any shape and form has no room in our church. We are a global church, and it is not helpful for the unity of the church when local church organizations decide to go their own way in theological and practical matters, irrespective of the position of the global church.

3. Commitment to His Teaching

The prophet Amos wrote, "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3). The implied answer is "No,

they cannot." Can church members work effectively together if they do not agree on what they believe? Not really. If one preaches that Jesus began the second phase of His sanctuary ministry in A.D. 31 and another preaches that He did this in 1844, people will be confused. It is not helpful for the mission of the church to relegate our distinctive doctrines to the backwaters of our witness. It is these distinctive doctrines that have made us what we are today.

Church historian George Knight wrote, "Hewitt, in seeking to explain Seventh-day Adventist growth in contrast to the lack of growth in his Advent

Christian community, notes that 'the distinctive beliefs and practices of the [SDA] denomination, while causing it to be viewed with suspicion by many traditional Christian believers, have seemingly given its faithful members a

resoluteness of individual and group character that goes far to explain their successes.' Dean Kelley sheds light on this dynamic when he notes that if people are going to join a church they want to join one that provides a genuine alternative to the larger culture."⁶

All our doctrines, including the distinctive doctrines of the church, have been formulated, we believe, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and should be proclaimed with vigor. After more than 40 years of ministry in three different world divisions and personally having observed the progress of the work in about 70 countries of the world, I can say with conviction: Where our distinctive doctrines such as the remnant, the sanctuary, and the gift of prophecy are accepted and proclaimed, the work is growing; where this is not the case, the work is languishing. God cannot bless our ministry if we are not in harmony with the teachings of His Word.

4. Commitment to the Mission He Has Given His Church

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen" (Matt. 28:19, 20). The marching orders of the church are clear—go into *all* the world and proclaim the *whole* truth, not just a few morsels of truth. Of course, we bring people first to the foot of the cross so they can receive forgiveness and experience salvation, but before they are baptized, they should know and accept all the doctrines of the

church, including the distinctive doctrines and the health message, so they can intelligently participate in the mission of the church.

As church members, ministers, and administrators God invites us to move

forward *together*—in doctrine and practice. There is still a job to be done before we can run into the arms of Jesus at His glorious return. What a day this will be! ■

CAN CHURCH MEMBERS WORK EFFECTIVELY TOGETHER IF THEY DO NOT AGREE ON WHAT THEY BELIEVE?

¹Some examples are the early fanaticism Ellen White had to meet, the famous General Conference session in Minneapolis in 1888, and the Kellogg crisis.

²Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 30.

³Angel M. Rodríguez, "Oneness of the Church in Message and Mission: Its Ground," unpublished paper, p. 8.

⁴Texts in this article are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁵*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1956, 1980), vol. 5, p. 1148.

⁶George R. Knight, *The Fat Lady and the Kingdom* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1995), pp. 135, 136.



GERHARD PFANDL IS ENJOYING AN ACTIVE RETIREMENT AND CONTINUES TO SERVE PART-TIME AS AN ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF THE BIBLICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS. HE LIVES WITH HIS WIFE, MAUREEN, AND THEIR CAT, MILO, IN BURTONSVILLE, MARYLAND.

Of Mangoes and God's Compassion

THE SURGEON LOOKS AT MY RIGHT THUMB AND INSPECTS THE RANGE OF

motion. He stands back and observes me going through the familiar hand exercises and picks up my medical chart. "We're done here, Dixil," he says. "The X-rays look wonderful. Do me a favor and keep the splint on for another six weeks, and I will see you then. I know you'll be traveling soon, so let me remind you: no writing, no lifting, and very limited computer use."

Standing 10 feet above ground, anchored between two "questionably sturdy" mango tree limbs, I think about my conversation with the surgeon, but only for a fleeting moment. *He didn't actually say I couldn't climb trees.* From below, Jon, my translator for the day, encourages me to stretch a little farther to grab a beautiful red mango. As I stand suspended between the tree branches, I am in awe of creation, not only of nature but of people as well: "How will we share these with your friend Abram?" Jon asks.

I am back where I started several weeks ago: in a private orphanage in Rwanda, spending time with the children. *I cannot leave without visiting one last time.* Today I came to spend time with one child: 8-year-old Abram. Introduced to Abram during my initial visit, he was sleeping, wearing striped pajamas one size bigger than his small frame. The nurse told us that in the past, Abram would literally run toward the trees and climb with effortless agility. He would always bring a beautiful bounty of mangoes for everyone.

That was two years ago. Now, with 14 malignant tumors spanning from his legs to his torso, Abram can no longer climb trees. Now he waits for someone to bring him mangoes. *I wonder how difficult it must have been for this child to learn he could no longer climb trees.*

Jon carefully picks up Abram, and we take the short walk to the orphanage. Placing the mangoes on the kitchen table, I notice that Abram is holding the last mango I plucked from the tree. *The mango is ripe, ready to be eaten.*

While the other children play outside, Jon and I place Abram in his bed. *He's still holding the mango. He wants to eat it!* I glance at Jon who immediately leaves the room and returns with a small knife. Removing my splint, I carefully begin to peel a mango. Abram points at my hand and asks, "Hurt?" I shake my head no. *It's true. At this moment all that makes my heart hurt is to see Abram smiling through his own pain.*

I had never fed children who could feed themselves. Cutting the mango, *the obvious* was no longer sought out: *I am my brother's keeper, helping at this very moment.* With just one good hand I can use a knife. Therefore, it seemed only fitting to extend my hand a little farther and place the fruit on his lips, so that Abram would not have to move from his comfortable spot. As I do this, an unexpected surprise is granted to me: *a smile. It was not a smile of gratitude alone; it was a smile of joy, unforgettable joy.* Regardless of all that is growing inside Abram, he still has joy to share.

When Abram is finished eating and we have wiped his face clean, he says there is a surprise for us. Sitting under the mosquito nets, Jon and I hear Abram sing "God Is So Good" in the most broken, beautiful English. When Abram gets to the second verse, I recognize a slight change in lyrics. Instead of "He *answers* prayers," Abram has changed it to "He *hears* our prayers." I ask him why the change. Abram smiles. *God listens, and God's compassion has no limits.* Then he closes his eyes and sleeps.

We recognize that a child has just reminded us that for all the tangible mission work we complete, there must be room for the Holy Spirit to remain among us, inspiring us to engage in selfless acts built on the rock of amazing grace. ■

DIXIL RODRÍGUEZ, A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR AND VOLUNTEER HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN, LIVES IN NORTH TEXAS. JOIN THE CONVERSATION AT SEARCHINGTHEOBSVIOUS@DIXILRODRIGUEZ.COM.



Dixil
Rodríguez



MUST LOVE

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

Gianna Davis, a teacher in Florida, has been busy. While working at a day-care center, this young adult and Oakwood University graduate finished her first master's degree in early childhood education. Then she worked on her second degree while teaching high school.

Davis currently still enjoys a full life teaching sixth grade and fifth- through eighth-grade science at an Adventist elementary school. "I also lead a culinary cuisine club for fourth through eighth graders, I run a small business specializing in individualized gift baskets and gourmet cakes. And I cater and party plan on a local level." While all these

activities have enriched her life, they've left little time for dating.

"I was so busy with school and work; and every church I went to the choices were slim to none," explains Davis. "So I did the online thing and met a guy. He's been really good for me." Davis and her guy are doing the long-distance thing right now—they spent time together during her recent winter break from school—but are making plans to move closer to each other.

Davis isn't alone in wanting to find a life partner—or in trying to find one through online dating. Annually, the online dating industry brings in \$1.049 billion in revenue. Of the 54 million single adults in the U.S., 40 million have

tried online dating.¹ While there aren't exact numbers on Adventist singles in America—or around the world, for that matter—it is safe to assume that a portion of those 40 million online daters are Adventist and single.

Looking for Love?

For the first time in U.S. history, unmarried households, with 50.2 percent of the population, exceed that of married households, which are at 49.8 percent.² Reasons? One, according to Claudio and Pam Consuegra, is that nationwide more couples are in "non-traditional" relationships, which may include but are not limited to cohabitation before marriage.³

Couples are also waiting longer to get married. For males the median age for marriage in 1970 was 23.2 years old; for females, 20.8. By 2011 the median age was 28.9 for men, 26.9 for women. According to Claudio, "they're having to postpone the decision because of financial reasons, because of bad marriage

ADVENTISTS AND ONLINE DATING

GOD

experiences they [may] have witnessed, and they have not found someone who has the same values and principles.”

The Consuegras also point out that the word “single” doesn’t mean the same thing to everyone. As one young adult shared with them: “I’m not single. My mom is divorced and 52; she’s single. I’m just not married yet.”

Unequivocally, being single isn’t a bad thing. Whether a person isn’t ready to make a marriage commitment yet, or they have chosen singleness as their preferred way of life, their existence can be incredibly fulfilling. God certainly doesn’t require people to have mates. A glance through the Bible bears witness to the fact that singles do extraordinary things—and can sometimes serve God more wholly than those with spouses and/or children. A list of outstanding Bible singles might include Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Martha, Lazarus, Miriam, Elijah, Jeremiah, Lydia, and Paul.

But if a person *is* looking for love, where do they turn? With people wait-

ing longer to find their mates and “settle down,” options seem to decrease. People graduate from college and migrate, leaving home churches and friends behind. For many who finally decide that they’d rather not be single, online dating is a viable option—especially in a culture in which people are both busy and tech-savvy. “I found my husband in college,” says Lindi Fulwider Allen from Madison, Tennessee, “but I do think [online dating] can work. Especially for older people out of college and having a hard time finding a person who fits their needs. People do misrepresent themselves and it can be dangerous, but I know people who are Adventist and found their mate this way and are happily married.”

“My wife and I met online, and this month [December 2012] is our fifth wedding anniversary,” Texas resident Chris Clapp says. “There were some not-as-good experiences before for both of us, but things worked out for us.”

There are many sites out there that cater to singles (think JDate for Jewish singles, SingleParentMeet.com, or even Geek 2 Geek),⁴ but there are few sites that offer something specifically for Adventist singles. Below are brief interviews with the creators of three different Adventist dating sites, which offer three unique approaches.⁵

The Scott Firm Experience

“I started The Scott Firm because Christians really don’t have a way to meet other people of faith who desire healthy, happy, and holy relationships,” explains Brandon Scott. “After a soul-stirring sermon at church many folks, from across the country, expressed to me that it was hard to ask someone out, so my colleagues and I created a healthy environment to do so through upscale, interactive events and actual match-making/coaching.”

So what is The Scott Firm? According to founder Scott, “it’s a premiere faith-based relationship firm that helps people in these stages of their life: dating, engagement, and marriage.” Scott has been matchmaking for more than three years, and The Scott Firm was birthed more than a year ago. The service is

unique because “we have a variety of ways for our clients to meet like-minded people (matchmaking, live interactive events, seminars, church tours, etc.) and save *time*.”

Typical online dating can be extremely time-consuming, explains Scott, and no one is fully

IF A PERSON IS
LOOKING FOR
LOVE, WHERE DO
THEY TURN?

vetting each person (background check, making sure they are not married, unstable, etc.). “At The Scott Firm we can validate each person’s real expectations, values, love languages, nonnegotiables, life goals, dating trends, and physical preferences—saving each person an average of one year of dating the wrong person(s).”

Scott, taking Genesis 2:18 to heart, believes this service is helpful to Adventists. “Most of my Adventist clients say that the seven-step process we guide them through is truly ‘life changing.’”

Their goal is to help build healthy Adventist relationships that will lead to healthy families and healthy communities, which will then “help build a healthy nation.”

“The world says that your next relationship is at the bar or nightclub,” adds Scott. “We as Christians must be more creative in meeting people of like mind and character who have the same expectations. As a faith-based matchmaking service we help people understand how to learn from their past relationships, to be honest about where they currently are and what they ultimately want.”

Scott says he prays with every client he works with, understanding that “God is the ultimate matchmaker. My clients and I, throughout the process of matchmaking, pray God’s will be done in getting them to where He wants them. We are facilitators to watch His hand at work.”

SOOMA

In addition to being an accomplished recording artist and musician, Rachel Hyman is passionate about helping others develop strong relationships. One reason was her own experience growing up and watching her parents get divorced and remarried several times. Another big reason: “As Adventists, as a people who carry a very special message for our world, I feel that our message will only be as strong as our families are,” says Hyman. “Ellen White, in *The*

Adventist Home, said that ‘one well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached.’⁶ [But] dating, for a Christian, can be hard. Christians who want to honor God in their romantic relationships can really benefit from godly advice along the way.”

Hyman created SOOMA to be a learning environment in addition to a dating site. “It’s a place where Adventists can come and get answers to their relationship questions,” Hyman explains.

WHILE ONLINE DATING IS QUITE DIFFERENT FROM MORE TRADITIONAL WAYS OF MEETING A MATE, IN THE END, SOME OF THE SAME PRINCIPLES APPLY.

“SOOMA is a homophone of the Latin *summa*, which means ‘summary.’ MySOOMA.com was designed to be a dating site that would give a kind of summary of the principles of dating—the whole picture, including the spiritual aspect. . . . I wanted to create, not just another dating site that helps Adventists find other Adventists, but a Web site where Adventists could get advice on compatibility so they’d have guidance in selecting the best match. I also wanted to create an opportunity for Adventists to be able to get their relationship questions answered.”

SOOMA offers relationship counseling from licensed Adventist counselors for singles or couples who are looking for guidance and help in their current relationship or relationship search. SOOMA also has hundreds of videos, blogs, and sermons on relationships available on their Web site—all pertaining to the subject of Christian dating.

After three years of working on the site and running it since December 2011, Hyman still sees it as a ministry.

“Marriage is a ‘God thing.’ Offering advice on how to have the best marriage and also offering a place for people to meet other people with the same biblical values is definitely something that can benefit our church in a spiritual way.”

Hyman, who became acquainted with her husband through the Internet, hopes her site will promote healthy Adventist dating. She says, “I love seeing happy Adventist daters, and I long to see Adventists happily married. I desire the marriages in our church to be a powerful influence for good in our world. . . . I

hope SOOMA will be a place for all of these wonderful things to happen.”

Of mySOOMA.com

Hyman says, “Another principle that was very close to my heart as I was building the site was that of integrity. So many dating sites today, including Christian ones, display immodest and distasteful advertisements.

Though building the site was expensive, I promised myself to never let Google advertise on my site, even though I would get money out of it. There are other countless things I made sure the site would have [in order] to hold a higher standard; from doing my best to make sure spammers weren’t harassing members, to deleting members who I felt were not after true love, to keeping content on our Web site as biblical as possible.”

One positive outcome from the site comes from Hyman’s best friend. “She was really discouraged because she couldn’t find a dedicated Adventist man in Denmark to date and marry,” says Hyman. “I encouraged her to join SOOMA, and about a week after she joined, she met an Adventist man from Norway. They have now been dating for six months.”

Adventist Contact

An Adventist architect⁷ came to the Washington, D.C., area in the 1970s. He was determined to marry an Adventist woman. There were single people to meet, but how? He got together with

Archa Dart, a longtime marriage counselor and pastor, and started Adventist Contact in 1974. “We worked with a lot of first-rate people,” says Adventist Contact’s founder.⁸ “We got the best consultants together that we could, and we have refined and rewritten Adventist Contact’s very complex matching system.” Adventist Contact obviously didn’t start out on the Web, but by January 2008, after 18 months of work, AdventistContact.com was launched. The founder is quick to mention that “Adventist Contact is 100 percent Adventist. We’ve been a nonprofit corporation since 1974 as a religious organization because we serve only unmarried Seventh-day Adventists.”

“We’ve been working with Sharon Wright,” explains the founder. “She’s done an excellent job getting us on the Web. We’re now more automated than we’ve ever been. We can handle large numbers of people.”

According to Adventist Contact’s founder, “a lot of people who have Adventist dating services are not Seventh-day Adventists; they have nothing to do with the Adventist Church.” It’s the “Adventist” that makes Adventist Contact special—and the in-depth profile members fill out. “These non-Adventist [sites] who have a generic match—age, height, education—they don’t even cover Sabbath activities, Ellen White, etc. We cover that,” the founder says. “We are the original [matchmaking] service. We have successfully matched many Adventists, probably more than anybody else. I’ve already invested the time, effort, and money to get Adventist Contact on the Web, to get it instant matches and good matches. . . . People who have filled out our profile [and others] say that Adventist Contact is more thorough than any of them. . . . We’ve tried to make it the very best we can.”

It was Adventist Contact’s thoroughness that helped Deena Metcalf Nixon to meet her husband back in the 1980s. After Nixon and her future spouse wrote each other a few times, they met—and each made sure they were open and honest about themselves. “We

will soon celebrate our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary,” says Nixon, “and we are still very in love! There’s no way we would have met if it hadn’t been for computer dating—I was in New Mexico, and he was in California.” Nixon adds, “Online dating may not work for everyone, but it can work for those who are honest and truly seeking God’s guidance. Any time you begin a relationship you need to be careful and make sure you are following God’s lead.”

Must Love God

Not everyone agrees that online dating is for Adventists. An *Adventist Review* Facebook friend, “Valerie,” says, “I tried it . . . didn’t work for me. I found that there’s a lot of dishonesty on the sites. A person can be anyone they want to be online. They can fabricate anything or everything about themselves.”

Another Facebook friend, “Jacquelyn,” agrees. “A few years ago I looked into one just to see what all the hype was about, and decided that even if I was inclined toward such a thing, it would not work for me. I decided when I first went to college 10 years ago that I would leave everything in the Lord’s hands. If it is His will, then He will bring me and my future husband together . . . I am not going to run ahead of the Lord. When [people] do that, they often make mistakes that can make lives far more difficult than the Lord intended. . . . I’d rather leave it in the Lord’s hands and be content with every day that He gives me—even if I am to remain single for the rest of my life.”

One thing most can agree with, however, is that while online dating is quite different from more traditional ways of meeting a mate, in the end, the same principles apply when making a decision to actually get to know someone you’ve met through the Internet.

“I mentioned that my choices were limited,” says Davis. “That was one reason I went online. The second is that the world is such a large place that I did not want to limit my opportunities—the world is bigger than just my corner. I also realized that I can be a witness to anyone I meet at any time.”

Navigating the Online Dating Pool

Willie and Elaine Oliver, director and associate director of the Family Ministries Department of the General Conference, share these tips for those thinking about trying Internet dating:

- **Be honest** about the picture you put online, and be sure the other person is too.
- **Don’t beat around the bush.** What are you really looking for—fun, friendship, or marriage?
- **Don’t compromise** on your values just to get a date.
- **Be careful about sharing**—don’t share too much information too soon.
- **Don’t be shy**—get offline and set a date in person.
- **Be smart**—meet in a public place.
- **Tell a friend**—within a short time, introduce the person to someone you trust who knows you well and has your best interest at heart.
- **Stick to dating someone of your faith.** And make sure they follow the same Adventist principles you do.



More Online

For more information, including links to articles of interest, and fuller versions of interviews, visit www.adventistreview.org.

Glad she tried online dating, Davis says, “This has definitely been a good experience. I have become a stronger, more confident person when it comes to putting myself in new situations. [I met] a Christian with strong family ties, ‘corny’ sense of humor (like mine), and focus-driven. He’s a committed, determined, and hardworking person.” Davis recommends “going for it,” saying, “Never cheat yourself—allow yourself the possibly of meeting that person God has for you. Also, keep in mind that even if it doesn’t work, you may have made a friend for the kingdom.”

Davis warns against compromising faith. “I had to pray and do some serious thinking about each individual I encountered. I had to make sure that my walk with the Lord would be increased and not hampered by whomever I allowed in my life. Their loving God was a must.”

Happily married, Clapp offers a similar caution: “What my wife and I tell others is that people you meet on dating sites need to be ‘verifiable.’ People don’t live in a vacuum; they have friends, family, etc. For us, it turned out that her sister knew who my parents were, and I had gone to college with people she had gone to elementary school with.

“If you go into it with the thought that everyone on there is sweet and perfect, you’re possibly going to be (a) disappointed and (b) taken advantage of. If you go into it with the thought that everyone out there is a freak, you’ll find lots of them and get even more discouraged. Be open to it, but verify. If they claim to have gone to a college that doesn’t exist; if they ever ask for money;

or if they claim to live close but are out of the country for a while—these are all red flags. Run away! But there are a lot of real, regular (and extraordinary) people out there on these sites. Talk. Communicate. Take your time and really get to know them, and not ‘just’ online.” ■

¹ Statistics gathered by the Statistic Brain Web site, sourced from Reuters, *Herald News*, *PC World*, and the *Washington Post*.

² U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey.

³ From an interview with Claudio and Pam Consuegra, director and associate director of the Family Ministries Department of the North American Division, conducted on March 20, 2012, by Stephen Chavez.

⁴ The *Adventist Review* is not endorsing these sites.

⁵ These businesses are run by Seventh-day Adventists and are mentioned in this article to highlight some of the options available—and the philosophies behind finding an Adventist mate through the Internet. The *Adventist Review* is not endorsing these sites.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1952), p. 32.

⁷ In obedience to the words of Christ in Matthew 6:1, 3, the founder of Adventist Contact tries to maintain anonymity.

⁸ The information in this segment of the article was obtained largely from an interview conducted by Stephen Chavez in March 2012.



KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN IS THE YOUNG ADULT EDITOR OF THE *ADVENTIST REVIEW*.

AN EXCITING MISSION IS WAITING FOR YOU!

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” Mark 16:7

Missionary Teacher



QUALIFICATIONS:

- Must be a baptized Adventist Christian for at least 1 year
- Must be a citizen of one of the following countries:
 - U.S.A. / Australia / Canada / England / New Zealand / South Africa
- Must have completed a Bachelor's degree

BENEFITS:

- Annual salary of 15,000,000won/1,300,000usd per month with a possible pay raise
- Housing and furniture provided
- Insurance coverage for illness or injury
- 600-700 USD for six months service toward airfare
- Severance pay for 1 year's service

DUTIES:

- Actively participate in weekend programs and mission activities
- Teach a minimum of 4 English classes and 1 Bible class per day
- Uphold SDA lifestyle and standards

English Teacher



QUALIFICATIONS:

- Must be a baptized Adventist Christian for at least 1 year
- Must be a citizen of one of the following countries: U.S.A. / Australia / Canada / England / New Zealand / South Africa
- Must have completed a Bachelor's degree
- Superior English teaching skills required

BENEFITS:

- Annual salary of 31,200,000won/2,600,000usd per month with a possible pay raise
- Housing for an additional cost of 300,000won to 400,000won per month
- Insurance and coverage for illness or injury
- 600-700 USD for six months service toward airfare
- 100,000won for previous teaching experience in your home country
- Severance pay for 1 year's service

DUTIES:

- Teach a minimum of 6 English classes (Adults and Juniors) and one optional Bible class per day
- Actively participate in weekend programs and mission activities
- Uphold an SDA lifestyle and standards

Contacts:
Korea Head Office :
 SDA Language Institute Tel: 82-2-2215-7498
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Email : cometokorea@sdateachers.org
Website : www.koreasda.org
Face book : www.facebook.com/sdalanguage

Rogelio's Testimony

“AS LEADERS OF THIS CHURCH, WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO PAY ATTENTION to the people coming in and out of our doors each Sabbath.”

Pastor Jamey Houghton was speaking to the Hillcrest church board last spring, but he might as well have been talking directly to me. My thoughts immediately shifted to Rogelio, a first-time visitor to my Sabbath school class a few weeks before. I'd thought enough to get his phone number, but I hadn't followed up with him since.

Well, better late than never.

As the board meeting shifted into church business, I scooped my iPhone out of my pocket and sent him a text.

“Hi, Rogelio, it's Jimmy Phillips from Hillcrest church. Not sure if you remember me, but I just wanted to let u know that we really enjoyed having u in our study a few weeks back.”

I didn't have to wait long for a reply.

“Of course I remember u, Jimmy. I'd been hoping u would contact me.”

A few days later I met up with Rogelio at a local café. For the next two hours we sat at the corner table and he told me his story.

Rogelio grew up in a broken home, but he'd been much more successful in building his own family. Shortly after graduating from high school he married Melissa. More than 12 years and three kids later they'd managed not to repeat the mistakes of their parents. However, God wasn't really a part of their lives.

One day—seemingly out of nowhere—his youngest daughter, Isabella, began asking if the family could start going to church.

“Who's been talking to you about church?” Rogelio asked.

Isabella didn't have an answer.

About six weeks later Rogelio flipped on his bedroom radio, only to find it tuned to a station he didn't recognize. There were no hip-hop beats or catchy Top 40 tunes. Instead, someone was reading. Resisting the initial urge to hit the scan button and move on, Rogelio listened as a man named Chuck Smith recited the Creation story from the book of Genesis. It was the first time he'd heard these words.

Rogelio was intrigued and began attending a large nondenominational church. During the week he started reading his Bible. Faithfully, he started in Genesis and read a chapter or two every day, absorbing the text and trying his best to apply the things he read to his life. He found some things easy to understand, while other parts of the text were less straightforward. But as he came upon Exodus 20 and read about the Sabbath, the words seemed plain enough.

If this is true, why am I going to church on Sunday? he thought.

A man of action, Rogelio pulled out his computer and searched for a church in Bakersfield that kept the seventh-day Sabbath. That led him and his three kids to Hillcrest Adventist Church in March 2012.

As I listened in awe to his story, I sensed that he was a person open to the truth. It just so happened that another Bible study I had been leading was wrapping up, so with a step of faith I made Rogelio a proposition.

The next week we started our weekly Bible study, covering a variety of key subjects, from a deeper dive on the Sabbath to the mark of the beast. Rogelio eagerly soaked everything in, always making sure to measure everything I said from God's Word.

In early December Rogelio was baptized at Hillcrest.

As I sat in the pew reflecting on our amazing journey, I thought about what would have happened if Pastor Jamey hadn't prompted me to send that simple text last spring. I have no doubt Rogelio would have found truth—God has infinite methods of reaching people who have open hearts.

No, more than anything it would have been my loss. I would have missed out on sharing in the joy of my Lord.

These days I tend to look up at the door a little more often during Sabbath school. After all, you never know who's going to walk in. ■



Jimmy
Phillips

JIMMY PHILLIPS (JIMMYPHILLIPS15@GMAIL.COM) WRITES FROM BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA, WHERE HE IS ELECTRONIC MEDIA COORDINATOR FOR SAN JOAQUIN COMMUNITY HOSPITAL. VISIT HIS WEB SITE AT WWW.INTRODUCINGTHEWHY.COM.



Lake Titicaca Tour

WAS SABBATH REALLY THE BEST TIME TO VISIT?

BY ELTON WALLACE

It was called Railroad Hotel. We didn't find the inn inviting, but it seemed to be the only one in town. The town was Puno, Peru, on the shores of Lake Titicaca. We had come from La Paz, Bolivia, by bus, boat, and train; and the Railroad Hotel was next to the train station. We didn't learn much about its quality; we just put down our bags and looked around.

There was a phone in the lobby; I found *Adventista* in the phone book and borrowed a coin at the desk.

It was late Friday afternoon, and we were missionaries in Africa headed home for leave in California. I had heard about Puno a half century before from Fernando Stahl at Lodi camp meeting. I suppose it was he who had bent my young mind toward mission service. I'd

learned about Lake Titicaca from Stahl: that it was 12,500 feet above sea level in the heart of the Andes, the highest great lake in the world with great ships and floating islands. Floating islands?

Our own mission service had taken us to Asia, then Africa, but I wanted to check out those floating islands.

Part of the Family

My call was answered by a pleasant voice that changed from Spanish to English when she heard mine. Mrs. Muñoz was from Los Angeles. Where were we? "The Railroad Hotel? Don't check in," she said. "I'm only a block away. I'll be right there." She took us to her apartment over the mission office, the hotel porter carrying our bags.

She and my wife bonded immediately; missionary women understand each other. We had supper; we talked. But I was thinking about Fernando Stahl.

Mrs. Muñoz read my mind. Would we like to worship with our Aymara believers on an island of reeds floating on the lake?

The next morning at the pier she found a boat, and we were off through a field of reeds in a cloud of diesel smoke. The great bay was shallow, maybe 10

feet deep, with a forest of reeds growing at its bottom, their tips waving high about the water to the horizon.

We could see no islands yet, nor would we for an hour. Our pilot followed avenues cut through the water, and there really were islands, one with an Adventist school and church. We pulled up to a reed pier among reed houses.

Villagers had gathered in the school building. We were late; Sabbath school was already in session. They made room for us on the benches. Older folk sat on the floor; they found benches uncomfortable, they said. The schoolteacher, David, was leading the lesson study, half in Spanish, half in Aymara. Mrs. Muñoz introduced us, then translated for us in a whisper as David resumed the lesson study.

An Interruption? Or an Opportunity?

Then we heard a boat, sounding like our boat. But it wasn't filled with missionaries in the footsteps of Fernando Stahl, or believers from another island. These were tourists, Mrs. Muñoz said. The floating islands are an attraction, of course. But on Sabbath morning on an Adventist island? The boat approached, its diesel engine coughing loudly. David raised his voice to be heard above the sound. Except for that, no one paid any attention. No one but me, that is.

There was nothing on this island but the school and the homes of Adventist people, all of whom were in church. What could tourists be doing here today? The motor died into silence, and voices rose—loud, excited voices. “We can't let them disrupt us like this,” I muttered, rising to go out and direct them and their boat to another island. “If no one else will take care of this, I will.”

But I only half rose; my wife had me by the sleeve. “We are visitors here too,” she said.

“But they'll disrupt the meeting,” I said. “David will take care of them.”

By now they were coming through the door that their guide had thrown open. I counted 18 voluble Italians, room-filling personalities. David carefully laid his Bible and quarterly on the stand beside him. His smile was genuinely welcom-

ing. Italian voices subsided. David spoke: no Indian tongue now, but careful Spanish that Italian ears could understand.

More church members slid onto the floor so the visitors could be seated.

David began what seemed to be a prepared speech. “A thousand years ago our ancestors, peaceful folk, lived on the mainland,” Mrs. Muñoz translated. “When a more aggressive tribe threatened war, our people, who knew the ways of the water, set out in canoes to our little fishing stations made of bundled reeds floating far from shore. With their families and worldly goods, they took refuge. ‘They can never follow us here,’ they said.

“When powerful newcomers took our land, my people stayed on the lake. They broadened the islands, they built reed homes, they stole ashore to collect soil for gardens. They raised chickens and goats. They learned to eat the lake's tender reeds; their goats ate the rest. Here their children were born, and their children's children for generations.”

The tourists listened in rapt attention. It seemed as though David's voice lowered a little. “Then the Spanish came, bringing a new kind of government and

“IF NO ONE ELSE WILL TAKE CARE OF THIS, I WILL.”

a new religion whose forms, at least, my people accepted and long followed. Eventually independence brought further change in our ways and greater freedom. Most important was the coming of a man from North America, a missionary, a Seventh-day Adventist with a message that changed our lives forever. He taught us that Jesus is coming again.”

Here David took his Bible from the stand and turned to several appropriate texts, reading carefully in Spanish. “The man's name was Fernando Stahl. He taught us that the seventh day of the week, *sábado*, is the Sabbath of the Lord, consecrated at the close of Creation week, observed by Jesus, and still holy. So we are called *Adventistas del Séptimo Día*. Thus

our worship here today.” Taking up his Bible, David again read some fitting texts.

Command Performance

Gradually I became aware that David was preaching an evangelistic sermon to this tourist audience. He wasn't sending them away; he regarded them as candidates for the kingdom, and he would miss no opportunity to share his faith with them. Briefly but convincingly, he touched on other doctrines: Christian lifestyle, the spread of the Word to the entire world, even Italy.

“This isn't only a church building,” he said, “this is a school.” And he raised his hand to a motto on the wall above his head: “God's children in God's school.” The message that followed about Christian education was as good as I've ever heard. He pointed to the children's drawings pinned to the wall and their projects displayed on the table. Then he asked if there were any questions. There were: thoughtful questions, framed in careful Italian. And good answers.

Then the tourists stood to go, but not before calling on two students to stand at the door holding baskets. As the tourists filed out, they filled the baskets with generous gifts to the Lord, His church, and His school. They were quiet now, even reverent.

I was nearly brought to tears by what I had seen. And to think I would've sent them away.

After they left, David turned without a word to his quarterly and completed teaching the Sabbath school lesson. They asked me to preach in the service that followed. Me, preach after what I had just seen? I tried.

At the close of the service David prayed in the Aymara language. I wonder what he said. Perhaps, “Suffer the tourists to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.” ■



ELTON WALLACE AND HIS WIFE, EVELYN, SPENT 35 YEARS SERVING AS MISSIONARIES IN ASIA AND AFRICA. THE MANUSCRIPT FOR THIS ARTICLE WAS FOUND AMONG

ELTON'S THINGS AFTER HE DIED. EVELYN NOW LIVES IN ANGWIN, CALIFORNIA.

Breaking the Ice

**SOME PEOPLE ARE
HARDER TO THAW
THAN OTHERS.**

BY PHYLLIS COCHRAN

Good morning. We've been expecting you," the supervisor said, ushering me to the desk in a small room where I would work with several other employees of the telephone company.

I was beginning a new job within the same organization for which I had worked for years. I was anticipating challenges and was excited about meeting interesting people; I also was expecting the atmosphere to be inviting.

For most of the first day nearly everyone was friendly and helpful. I listened to the chatter among the office workers. They seemed close, like family, telling humorous stories of weekend happenings. Several of the younger women, like me, were single and had no children. They appeared carefree and fun to be around, except for one particular woman—Tia.¹ She avoided me, never responding to my friendly attempts to get to know her better.

Throughout the next few weeks I saw the gap in our relationship widen. She would walk past me on the way to the copy machine, acting as though I didn't exist. I was perplexed, because I usually was able to break the ice with small talk when meeting people for the first time. But with Tia, it didn't work.

Tia's attitude might not have bothered me several years ago, but I had since committed my life to the Lord and strive to love others as Christ taught me through Scripture. I remembered the verse in John 15:12 where Jesus says to "love one another as I have loved you." Was I naïve? How do I love this woman? I began to pray. "Lord, please help me overcome these feelings of rejection by this woman."

I would lie in bed at night trying to understand this kind of behavior in an office where everyone else seemed most compatible. *Why do I allow this person to bother me?* I wondered. As the days wore on, however, I wore down. I finally stopped trying to befriend Tia.

An Answer to Prayer?

One morning a few weeks later I was certain the Lord had heard my prayer. The supervisor announced, "Our office will be divided into two departments soon, with some of you moving across the building to a new division."

Wow, I thought. *God must have arranged this so I can escape the situation with Tia.* When the moving day arrived, I could hardly wait for our names to be announced. Surely the Lord would separate us, and I would be free from this frustration.

Instead, when the supervisor read the

list of names moving across the hall to the new division, Tia's name and mine were both called. *How could this happen? This isn't the way God works!* I thought.

Carrying notebooks, folders, and worksheets, I trudged across the hall and peered into a huge room as large as an auditorium. Surely my assigned desk will be across the room from this woman. Again I was bewildered when I learned that I was assigned a desk directly in front of Tia. To make matters worse, Tia and I were selected to take the 1:00-2:00 p.m. lunch break, so we were the only two left in the room for the entire hourlong earlier lunch break. There seemed to be no way to avoid this uncomfortable situation, so I decided I would mind my own business, tend to my work, and ignore Tia.

Seeking Wisdom From God

I soon began to rely on another of God's promises in the Bible, one that my pastor had used in a sermon on temptation: "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:13, NKJV).² *Was my seeking to find a way to avoid this uncomfortable circumstance a temptation?* I wondered.

One day not long after that, during the noon lunch break, I was quietly working on a project when Tia's phone rang. Tia talked softly on the phone and then began sobbing.

After she hung up, I turned around and asked, "Are you OK?" I was expecting her to say, "Mind your own business." Instead, she spoke to me for the first time.

"It's my dad," she said. "He has lung cancer." Tears streamed down her cheeks. Having the same lunch break with Tia in light of God's providence now began to make sense.

"I'm really sorry," I said. "I understand how painful your dad's health must be for you and your family. We lost our daughter from a brain tumor just before her ninth birthday. I will pray for your dad. God hears our prayers."

Tia wiped her eyes and then opened up—letting go all her pent-up emotions.

She talked for nearly an hour, and I listened. She then blew her nose and wiped her face, and after promising I would pray for her dad, we returned to our work.

A Growing Relationship

Each morning after that I would ask Tia how her dad was doing. I sensed that she too had prayed and seemed more comforted.

A year passed and Tia's dad died, but we continued our newfound friendship. Our department was consolidating with another office in a city some distance away, and I accepted a different position in the new branch office. On my last working day with Tia, I returned from lunch to find an orange-colored rose in a bud vase on my desk with a card. "I'll miss you," it read. "Love, Tia."

Tears welled up. I turned around to face Tia and whispered, "Orange was our daughter's favorite color." Tia stood up and we hugged. In unison we shed tears.

Expect the Unexpected

The Lord did not answer my prayer in the way I initially wanted; instead, He worked out His greater purpose for both of us. With Christ's help I had met the challenge. While I had been tempted to ignore Tia, the Lord enabled me to love her.

After leaving to take up my new duties, I kept in touch with Tia. We continued to talk and meet occasionally. A few years later, however, Tia also was diagnosed with lung cancer. Our conversations began to center on Jesus in our lives and our dependence on Him. At 47 years old she went to sleep in Jesus, and I now look forward to our eternal friendship in heaven. ■

¹pseudonym

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PHYLLIS COCHRAN IS A FREELANCE WRITER WHO ENJOYS STUDYING THE BIBLE AND SPENDING TIME WITH HER FAMILY AND FRIENDS. SHE AND HER HUSBAND, PHIL, RESIDE IN WINCHENDON, MASSACHUSETTS.

Pebbles

SHE WAS JUST A LITTLE THING—A HALF-STARVED GRAY TABBY BARELY OUT OF kittenhood—when she first adopted us. We named her Pebbles, and she loved being in our yard sleeping in the flowerbeds, rolling on her back in our gravel driveway, and pouncing on unsuspecting bugs and birds. When my husband, Greg, and I would go for a walk, Pebbles would trot alongside us for a while, and then take refuge beside the road to wait for our return. We never had to call her; she always emerged from the weeds whenever we walked past. Back arched, tail up and waving proudly, she'd escort us home.

We'd had Pebbles about four years when the unthinkable happened: she disappeared. Upon our return from a business trip, Greg and I discovered that she'd been missing for several days. As dusk descended, we traipsed into the field, calling and pausing, straining our ears for the slightest sound. Pebbles always came home. What had happened to her? Maybe she had gotten caught by one of the owls or hawks that lived near us. Perhaps a hungry coyote had helped itself to an easy meal.

I turned to Greg as we trudged wearily home. "Do you think she's hurt? Or maybe dead?"

He reached for my hand. "Only God knows right now," he said, "but we can trust Him with her life."

We arose early the next morning and ran to the front porch. No sign of her anywhere. *How could a little stray tabby cat have wrapped herself so completely around my heart?*

Mechanically I prepared breakfast and forced a few bites down my tight throat. After Greg left for work, I pulled on an old coat and jeans. Breathing a prayer, I stretched my leg over the barbed-wire fence across the street and hopped into the thickets on the other side. I forged ahead, dodging deer droppings and poison ivy, yanking my coat off a thornbush. Always stopping. Always calling. But I heard no "meow."

After about an hour I struggled back to our gravel road and turned into a field. Walking the tree line, I called once more, and then I heard it—a faint "meow." *Was I hearing things?* I stopped and called again. "Meow!" It came louder this time.

"Pebby, I'm coming!" I yelled. As I drew closer her meows strengthened. Then suddenly I saw her back arched, tail waving proudly. She rubbed against me and purred, and I sat down and cried.

Why hadn't she come home? I wondered. *Maybe she'd been lost. Maybe the way home had looked too far. Maybe she had grown too tired to walk anymore.*

Knowing she disliked being carried, I started walking for home, hoping she'd keep pace with me. Instead, she just sat and looked up at me. I bent down and picked her up, holding her close against my chest. She didn't struggle; she had no fight left. She just knew I loved her, and she wanted to go home.

As I carried her back to the house, my mind traveled to the many times my Father, the Shepherd, has looked for and called to me; the times He's braved the brambles and thickets for me; the miles He's walked in my pursuit. Sometimes I purposefully hid. Other times I got lost and couldn't seem to find the way back to Him, or I was so worn out with the fight that I didn't think I could take another step. It was then that He would bend down, gently pick me up, and carry me home. Close against His chest. Close to His heart. How thankful I was that He had cared enough to search, that He hadn't given up easily, that He loves me.

Pebbles and I crossed into our yard. She hadn't stirred an inch. We walked around to the garage and I gently placed the exhausted kitty on the floor.

"It's OK, Pebbles," I whispered. "You're home. ■"

JILL MORIKONE IS A MUSIC TEACHER, A CHURCH PIANIST, AND A HOST ON THE *3ABN TODAY* COOKING SEGMENTS.



Jill Morikone

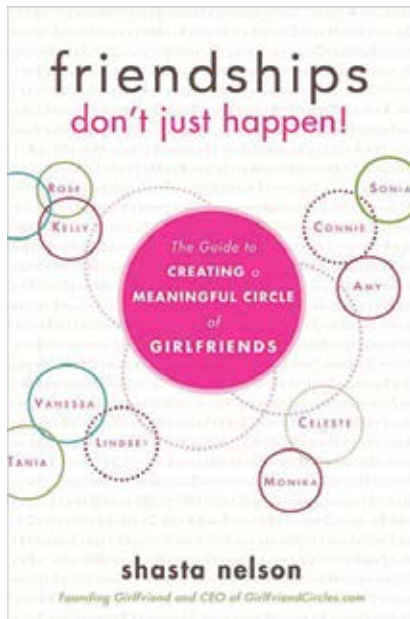


Tools of the Trade

BY MONTE SAHLIN

Friendship continues to be the avenue through which the vast majority of people come to Jesus and join the church. This has been validated in scores of surveys among both Seventh-day Adventists and the larger Christian community. One of the most important things that the church can do is to encourage members to develop skills in making and caring for friends.

Friendships Don't Just Happen! is a very practical and well-written book on this topic. It's written by an Adventist but published by one of the major secular publishers in America—Turner Publishing Company—for general release



in major bookstores.

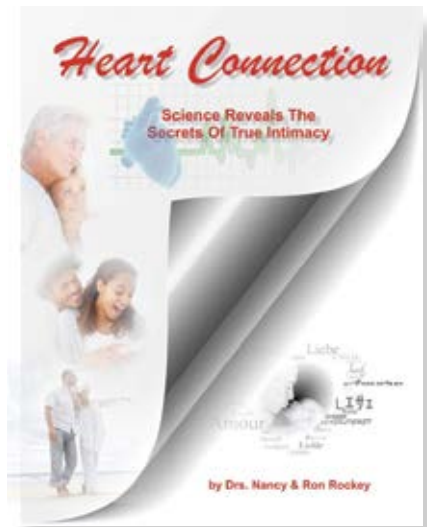
The author, Shasta Nelson, is from the new generation of young adults who are pioneering new businesses that succeed in the marketplace and faithfully witness to the good news about Jesus Christ. Nelson has appeared on the *Today* show, has been featured in the *New York Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and has appeared on Martha Stewart's radio program.

The book includes three sections: the first on making friends, the second on “turning friendly people we meet into friends that matter,” and the third on how to keep friendships alive and meaningful. It is strongly spiritual as well as practical. It would make a great discussion book for a small group or a textbook for a class on friendship evangelism. It may be of particular interest in women's ministries groups.

This book could easily be the basis for a seminar offered to the community, because it's not loaded with “insider” language and provides practical help for the average person. You can get a copy from any of the major online booksellers or chain bookstores.

Help for Couples

There are couples in your local church that need help with their relationships. This may not be obvious when everyone comes to church dressed in their best—including an acceptable “Sabbath face”—but it's a reality. Nancy and Ron Rockey are a pastoral couple fully qualified as family counselors who have been addressing this need for decades through their weekend seminars and retreats and materials. They recently published *Heart Connection: Science*



Reveals the Secrets of True Intimacy, which includes discussion questions at the end of each chapter. There is a related workbook for couple retreats or groups.

This can be a helpful tool for any pastor faced with couples who need assistance, as well as material for a Family Life Seminar in the community. You can get copies at www.fixablelife.com or by calling (888) 564-2046. ■



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Homosexuality, Marriage, and the Church

Roy Gane, Nicholas P. Miller, and H. Peter Swanson, eds., Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 2012, 600 pages, US\$24.99, softcover. Reviewed by Clifford Goldstein, editor of the Adult Bible Study Guide.

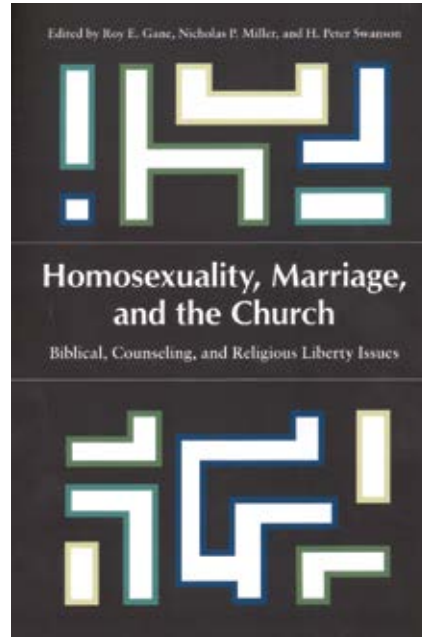
The great challenge for God’s covenant people, be they antediluvians or those living right before the Second Coming, has been how to live in, and witness to, the prevailing culture without succumbing to the aspects of the culture that conflict with God’s teachings. They haven’t done very well, either. From Baal worship to Sundaykeeping, from polygamy to Darwinian evolution, many of the “faithful” have sailed along nicely on whatever way the wind blows.

What now, then, as the church faces a cultural tornado: the new attitudes toward homosexuality, especially in the Western world, where same-sex practices are, if not the norm, then certainly no longer excoriated and, in some cases, practically celebrated?

What’s a church to do, especially when the greatest challenges are coming not from without, but from within, from professed Adventists who claim that the church’s historic stance against homosexual practice is bigoted and, worse, antibiblical, and that the texts traditionally interpreted as condemning the practice really don’t?

Hence, *Homosexuality, Marriage, and the Church*, 600 pages and 20 chapters dealing with the question of homosexuality from biblical, legal, and clinical perspectives.

Right out the gate, the most powerful and (in my opinion) important sections confront the main question for Christians: *What does the Bible teach on the sub-*



ject of homosexual practice? In the first 200 pages Richard Davidson, Robert A. J. Gagnon, Roy Gane, and Miroslav Kiš make short work of the claims that Scripture does not speak out against same-sex practices. Especially insightful, and somewhat disturbing, was Gagnon’s chapter, which dealt with the arguments of two Adventist scholars who argue that the Bible does not condemn “all same-sex” love. If portrayed correctly, the sophistry and exegetical gymnastics used to promote that view make some apologetics for Sundaykeeping look reasonable. For example, according to Gagnon, these men argued that the story of Jesus healing the centurion’s slave (see Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10) indicated His acceptance of homosexual unions because, most likely, the centurion and slave were in a sexual relationship, and the fact that Jesus never said anything against it proves that Jesus approved their sexual union.

Roy Gane, meanwhile, looked at the question of what the Bible teaches about these practices, and concludes: “But in a religious community that accepts the

Bible as its authoritative guide to faith and practice, the attempt to harmonize Scripture with the acceptance of homosexual practice is futile.”

And although for most people that conclusion is obvious, that’s only part of the problem. The other problem is the religious freedom of those whose faith convictions place them at odds with the prevailing legal and moral atmosphere. Alan Reinach, a lawyer in the Pacific Union Conference, wrote that the “California Supreme Court has equated sexual orientation with race.” Think through, then, the potential implications for a Seventh-day Adventist pastor who cannot in good conscience marry a same-sex couple. This could be just the beginning of sorrows for those who refuse to compromise in what’s a clear biblical teaching.

I’ve touched on only the first two sections; the last two deal with counseling issues and then testimonies about those who have struggled with same-sex attractions and how they have dealt with it.

In the end, unfortunately, some will not be satisfied with anything other than the absolute acceptance of “loving, exclusive, committed same-sex unions,” and those who don’t accept that must be prepared to be labeled as homophobic bigots. It’s true that homosexuals have been treated in very unchristian ways, and for that there’s no excuse. But unchristian attitudes flow the other way, too; just ask those who insist on taking the position that this book does.

Whether or not you agree with the conclusions, any Adventist interested in, and concerned about, what we as a church are facing needs to read this text. You might come away encouraged, infuriated, even worried (maybe a mixture of all three), but you will certainly be more informed as well. ■

Even Stomach Bugs Matter

THE COOL WATER WAS SUPPOSED TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER, BUT IT DIDN'T. Shivering in the middle of a warm pool in 80-degree weather and wondering if the Sprite I drank previously was on its way up was not the best way to spend a vacation afternoon.

The day before, my daughter had complained that her stomach was feeling off. So I gave her some Pepto-Bismol, and we hoofed it around Disney's Epcot Center theme park for the rest of the day and thankfully, she felt better. But the following morning our plans to drive out to the beach and enjoy the Florida coastline were thwarted when I woke up feeling "off." By brunch at a local International House of Pancakes, all I could tolerate was a few sips of Sprite and nibbles on dry toast.

I spent the next few hours trying to sleep it off in our hotel room, but my poor kids were dying not to waste the rest of the day indoors. So I mustered up the courage to try some water therapy, naively hoping that in some strange way I'd feel better.

My pool visit was soon cut short by a run back to the hotel elevators, quickly followed by a sprint to our room, where things got much worse. By late afternoon the signs of dehydration were becoming very apparent. Had this event occurred in my own home with my own doctor nearby, it wouldn't have been anything more than a serious annoyance. But here we were in a hotel, hundreds of miles from home, with the next part of our vacation looming quickly ahead—a flight to the Bahamas the next day. If this didn't quit soon, I'd have to go to the emergency room. But where? I thought of my poor kids—*we'd have to drag them along with us. What if I couldn't fly the next day? What if I did get on the plane and was still sick?*

My husband ran down to the hotel gift shop and found some Gatorade for me to try to sip. Then he and the kids left to pick up their take-out dinner order.

I am not one to pray over my own minor illnesses. Truthfully, I've always felt that such requests do not merit prayer. Colds go away, headaches are relieved with Advil, and even stomach bugs run their course and leave you a few pounds lighter but still alive. There are too many real problems in the world that need the Lord's attention and too many good people with serious conditions in need of miracles. I needed to pray for them, not me.

But in desperation, we'll try anything, won't we? So I talked to God out loud in that hotel room in Orlando, Florida. I don't remember the exact words I said, but I'm pretty sure they were along the lines of "Please help me; I can't go to the ER here. Don't let our vacation be ruined." In all honesty, I felt a little ashamed to pray about the possibility of not making it to the Bahamas the next day, with all the real problems in the world in need of prayer.

I lay back down and determined to sip that cherry-flavored Gatorade and will my body to keep it down. If it could just stay within me long enough to replenish my body, I knew I'd be OK. And that's exactly what happened. With each sip I cautiously swallowed and waited. Ten minutes, then 20, then 30, and I was keeping it in. With each drink I felt the muscle aches of dehydration release and the dry headache dissipate. And within an hour my situation had remarkably improved. When my husband returned with a plate of cold fruit for me to try, I ate it with caution, but immediately felt the effects of good nutrition in my body.

But more important than a quick road to recovery, I truly felt the presence of a Best Friend who cares about everything that matters to us—even when it seems frivolous and unimportant. I know without a doubt that God heard and answered my prayer for healing—to just be well enough to keep going on our family vacation. And in that moment, He heard me, healed me, and helped me feel how deeply He loves me.

I've often thought about that night in the months since. Every time I hesitate to pray over something seemingly insignificant in the grand scheme of things, I remember that experience. It doesn't matter the size of our problems—all of it matters to Him. ■



WILONA KARIMABADI IS EDITOR OF *KIDSVIEW*, ADVENTIST REVIEW'S MAGAZINE FOR CHILDREN.





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