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*"The Lord is the everlasting God;
he created all the world.
He never grows tired or weary.
No one understands his thoughts.
He strengthens those who are weak and tired.
Even those who are young grow weak;
young men can fall exhausted.
But those who trust in the Lord for help
will find their strength renewed.
They will rise on wings like eagles;
they will run and not get weary;
they will walk and not grow weak."*

Isaiah 40:28-31, TEV

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Between the Covers

As 1995 comes to an end, I am reminded that we are all a year older and still not in the Kingdom.

It has been a memorable year because I have had the privilege of meeting many of you.

This issue features a special interview with Milena Brechelmacher, from Saravejo; her story is moving and her dedication to serve Jesus is steadfast. Marija Trajkovska also tells her story of serving the refugees in this area. "The Church in Harmony" is a good story to read aloud to your husband; you both will laugh and cry at the reality it portrays.

The holiday season is always extra busy. Take counsel from Ben and Mary Maxson and control the time tyrant so you can enjoy the blessing of your family, who are the most precious people you will ever influence. Let Jesus lift the weights that Margaret Nathaniel tells us about. He is waiting to help you.

May Jesus surround you and your family in His sweet love and care as we remember His birth on earth 2,000 years ago.

Maranatha!



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Time Pressures and the Pastoral Family

*Ben and Mary
Maxson*



Ben and Mary Maxson work at the General Conference. He is the director of the Stewardship Department, and she is the editorial secretary for the Adventist Review. Ben enjoys golfing and computer. Mary likes crafts, cooking, and music. They are both avid readers.

My husband is never home! All he can think about is his ministry and his church."

"I never have time for my family. The pressures of what everybody wants me to do are just too much."

These typical statements are a mere reflection of a kind of pressure and pain that is experienced in pastoral ministry. "The all consuming 'ministry' seems to control our lifestyle, our home, and our future." Is there a way of resolving this conflict? Following are a few suggestions that might help *balance the lives of those involved with the ministry.*

The problem

Some of the factors that shape and sometimes create problems for a minister and his family are:

1. Pastoral ministry is a job that is never finished. There is always one more person to see, one more thing to do.
2. The demands on a pastoral couple's time are endless and continual.
3. Ministers and their families have to deal with a variety of people, all of whom have differing expectations of the pastoral family.
4. There are a variety of

reasons why people go into the ministry, and each person has a different view of what "being in the ministry" means.

Facing reality

It must be remembered that pastoral ministry is not just a job or a career. It is a calling and as such, creates greater commitment and dedication than a mere job. It is imperative not to lose sight of the role God plays in this calling.

It is true, ministry is a never finished task. Pastors may have to learn that some things on the ministry "to do" list may never get done. That is all right!

As difficult as it is to admit, each person in ministry is driven by his or her own compulsions. Previous life experiences have shaped the way a person deals with ministry demands.

Pastoral ministry is usually a team ministry. One level of that team is that of a pastor and spouse. But there is another level that is often forgotten. The ministry team is bigger than the pastoral home—it includes each member of the church.

Looking for a solution

One of the most important ways for a pastor to resolve the pressures

associated with the ministry is to understand his own compulsions. One's perfectionist tendencies, need for acceptance or competitive drives often compel him to do that which no one else expects him to do. Often times, these compulsions drive the pastor to even do another's job.

Once it is understood what tips the balance, the pastor needs to look at the problem in the light of the gospel. *Knowing that God accepts us because of Christ and not because of our performance is the beginning of healing for our compulsive tendencies.*

The next step in finding a solution is to clarify or identify the values of a pastoral team. What is important to us as individuals, families, and spiritual leaders in God's church?

The third step in finding a solution is to work together in establishing priorities. Each pastoral couple will have their own unique list and order of priorities. *Obviously, one's relationship with God must be at the top of those priorities.*

It is amazing to discover how often other areas fall into line more easily once room has been made for God. Maintaining a spiritual walk with God makes it easier to deal with the pressures of pastoral life. It also helps the pastor and his family relate to others in a less stressful way.

Once values are clarified and priorities are established, the parameters or boundaries of the ministry need to be negotiated. If those limits are not clearly established, congregations will not recognize ANY limits. Parishioners will simply keep looking for more help, more ministry, more work.

These boundaries need to be worked out together as a family. They should include such things as:

-  regular time off
-  personal devotional time
-  normal weekly schedule
-  family time
-  vacations
-  office hours
-  average hours per week

Obviously, all the above must be flexible and will vary with circumstances. However, clearly defined parameters form the foundation for controlling the endless demands of ministry.

Conclusion

It is unrealistic to expect a 40-hour week in pastoral ministry. Church members are asked to give of their time over and above their 40-50 hours of work. Can we expect to do any less? My thinking has been that I work the first 50 hours a week for my salary and the other 10 or 15 as my "service." However, to average 80-90 or more hours a week is probably downright sinful and certainly nothing to be bragging about. God does not expect that kind of sacrifice and usually those kind of hours are the result of our own compulsions.

God intends ministry to be a privilege and pleasure as we see Him work through us, not a curse or burden we have to bear. And certainly, not a cross to those around us. ✿

Our Pastor Never Stops

Author Unknown

Occasionally someone will say, "Our pastor never stops to visit in our home." If the pastor never stops at your home, you probably should thank God. It means death has not struck, that no serious illness has laid you low, or that the surgeon's knife had not been necessary, or that you have had no serious family problem or that you are not a spiritually delinquent member. As a rule, your pastor does not have time for "social calls." It is not that he would not enjoy doing so, it is simply a matter of priorities . . . putting first things first. Your pastor does not have time to do everything he would like to do. However, you may be sure of this: your pastor is willing to come to the hospital or your home, the jail, the street corner, or anywhere at any hour of the day, or night when he is needed. Call him if you need him. Otherwise he will not know of your need until it is too late. For the moment, thank God you have not needed him. One day you will need him and he will be there when you call. Now he is visiting someone else who does need him.

Weights

Margaret
Nathaniel



When we were sweet sixteen most of us were slim, trim and good-looking, but what happened when we turned 40? We gained excess weight in odd places and didn't look as good as before. Right?

Well, this happened to me as, I presume, it does to most everyone else. And recently the scales have been bothering me for I have reached 132 lbs and though I have tried, I cannot seem to shed those 10 pounds I need to lose to make me feel comfortable.

At about the same time as I began worrying about my weight, my husband, who was also fighting

Margaret Nathaniel is the Shepherdess Coordinator for the Southern Asia Division. Used with permission.

against weight, went on a very strict diet and exercise program for a whole month and shed more than five pounds. He felt so much better. After a couple of months when he lost another five pounds he remarked, "I feel so good these days. It was as if I was carrying a bag with 10 pounds of grain all this while and now I don't have that extra weight to deal with and it sure does feel good."

His statement made me think. Weights. What does the Bible have to say about weights? I looked in the concordance and found one verse that fit what I had on my mind. Hebrews 12:1 says, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us. . ."

Along our Christian pathway we pick up weights—weights of fear, depression, doubt, failure, discouragement and discontentment. We need to lay them aside. How do we accomplish that? We use the same tools to rid ourselves of spiritual weights as we do to rid ourselves of physical weights. First is *Diet*. We need to enrich our spiritual diet by spending more time reading God's Holy Word.

Some good food is found in Psalm 103:3-5, 10, 13.

1. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." His forgiveness includes all our iniquities and not just some.

2. "Who healeth all thy diseases." Spurgeon, quoting on Psalm 103:3, says, "What is pride, but lunacy; what is anger, but a fever; what is avarice, but a dropsy; what is lust, but a leprosy; what is sloth, but a

dead palsy. But the healing balm of God's love casts out fear, envy, lust, hate and every other evil infection." "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

3. "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction." Sin destroys. God restores. Sin leads to the grave but God redeems our life from the grave. *Desire of Ages*, page 311 says, "The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan."

4. "Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness." The Hebrew word for "to crown" may also mean "to surround" as in Psalm 103:4. You surround them with your favour as with a shield.

5. "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things." "O taste and see that the Lord is good." The Hebrew word here means to "try the flavor of, experience for yourself."

6. "So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." Sin accelerates the aging process. "Grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt, distrust, all tend to break down the life forces and to invite decay and death. God offers a fountain of youth at a bargain price." Isaiah 40:31 says, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Positive emotions in a vital connection with God actually stimulates the nervous system and energizes the whole person.

7. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins." He carried the responsibility for our sins and carried the

load and let us go free.

8. "Like as a father pitieth His children . . ." Jesus' parable of the prodigal son illustrates the restless spirit of the sinner who sees God as stern and severe and desires to escape His restraints. Only when the prodigal returned, broken in spirit, miserable in body, and totally disillusioned with the glamour of sin, did he begin to realize how much his father had

cared for him all along.

The second step is to *Exercise*. This exercise comes only with faith. Exercising our faith in God comes when we commune with God in prayer more and more each day. Our faith grows stronger as we talk to Him and tell Him all our joys and sorrows and allow Him to lead by letting go and letting Him have His way in us.

If these two points are con-

sidered and put into practice, we will surely lose all the weights which hinder our spiritual growth. We will feel much lighter and be able to witness more for Him without getting tired with those extra weights that weigh us down.

May God help us during this New Year, 1996, to prosper and be in health, both physically and spiritually. ❀

He Supplies Our Needs

Esther Gebhardt

Recently I drove into the city to attend to business. After feeding the parking meter, I stepped into the street and then stopped short. There lay a dead sparrow. He had obviously been in the way of a passing car. As I stood looking at the little feathered body, the thought came to me, "Does God know about *this* sparrow that has fallen here in a Bloemfontein street?" I looked at the busy street scene and knew that a fallen sparrow was no scene-stopping event.

Two of my favorite Scripture passages read as follows: "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? . . . Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Matt. 6:26; 10:29-31, NIV).

I found the following promises from *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pages 95-97: "He who has given you life knows your need of food to sustain it. He who created the body is not unmindful of your need of raiment . . . It is He who made the flowers and who gave to the sparrow its song, who says, 'Consider the lilies,' 'Behold the birds.' . . . On the lily's petals, God has written a message for you, written in language that your heart can read only as it unlearns the lessons of distrust and selfishness and corroding care . . . He has filled the earth and air and sky with glimpses of beauty to tell you of His loving thought for you . . . If He has lavished such infinite skill upon the things of nature, for your happiness and joy, can you doubt that He will give you every needed blessing? . . . Who would dream of the possibilities of beauty in the rough brown bulb of the lily? But when the life of God, hidden therein, unfolds at His call in the rain and the sunshine, men

marvel at the vision of grace and loveliness. Even so will the life of God unfold in every human soul that will yield itself to the ministry of His grace, which, free as the rain and the sunshine, comes with its benediction to all."

In the gardening calendar, it is almost time to plant the spring-flowering bulbs. May you find the money and time to plant bulbs of your favorite spring lilies. Then, as you watch the growth and development of plant and flower (doubly enjoyed because you are the gardener), may you find your heart being set free of some of the corroding care that can so easily encumber us in today's demanding times.

May we each find the loveliness of Christ-like character blossoming more fully in our lives during 1996. ❀

Esther Gebhardt is Associate Coordinator for Shepherdess in the Southern Africa Union Conference.

The Church in Harmony



John Duckworth

It was a church in Harmony, all right. In fact, it was the *only* church in Harmony, a little town I'd pulled into just moments before. I was admiring the church's shining steeple and freshly painted white clapboard siding when a young man came out to greet me.

"Welcome!" he said, and smiled. "Will you be joining us this morning?"

"Well, sure," I answered. "I'm just passing through on business, but since it's Sunday morning—"

"Wonderful!" he enthused. "We're glad to have you. You're a bit early, though; service won't start for a few minutes. Since it's such a nice day, why don't we just stand out here and chat?"

"Sounds fine," I said, glancing around. "I was just admiring your building. Looks perfect as a postcard."

"Thank you. We like it, too. As you can see from the cornerstone, Harmony Community Church was built in 1879. It's not too big, but it seems just right for us. We try to be big enough to serve people, but small enough to know them."

"That's good," I said. Just then I happened to glance past the big oak doors into the foyer. Then I noticed a picture on the wall, hung in a fancy, gilt-edged frame. It was

a portrait of a rather large, stern-faced woman.

"Who's that?" I asked.

"Oh," the young man answered quietly, respectfully. "You mean Miss Bertha June Biggs. She was a very special person, you know."

"No, I didn't know."

"Oh, yes, Miss Bertha June Biggs was our founder, in a manner of speaking. We owe a lot to her. Almost single-handedly, she made Harmony Community Church the peaceful, beautiful place it is today."

"You don't say. How did she do that?"

The young man smiled and got a faraway look in his eyes. "Miss Biggs was a lady with the courage of her convictions," he said. "She never hesitated to stand up for what she knew was right. She opposed the forces of evil wherever they were found—even when they were found in the church."

My eyebrows went up. "Evil?" I asked. "In *this* church?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. Miss Bertha June Biggs had uncanny spiritual sensitivity. She could always tell if something was wrong in the church—even if everyone else thought things were fine. It takes a very spiritual person to do that, don't you think?"

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"It certainly does," I said.

He leaned against the wall. "Take those preachers, for instance," he said earnestly. "Miss Biggs was here when Harmony got its very first pastor. He was fresh out of Bible school, and the whole congregation was grateful to get him. All except Miss Biggs, of course. She knew what was *really* going on."

"She did?"

"Naturally. She knew that young pastor was wet behind the ears. He couldn't *possibly* know how to run a church." His voice dropped to a whisper. "He also wanted to do all kinds of terrible things."

I leaned closer. "Like what?"

"Like electrifying the pump organ!" he cried. "Can you believe it? Miss Biggs knew that would never do. It would lead to a weakening of the organist's ankles and probably the congregation's morals as well. You can see that, I'm sure."

"Well, I—"

"*Anybody* could" he said. "Fortunately the board of deacons saw it, too, when Miss Biggs pointed it out to them. They got rid of that pastor, so the church and the organist would remain strong."

"Oh," I said.

He sighed. "Unfortunately, the organist was too unspiritual to see the value of strong ankles, and she quit. But Miss Biggs knew that was fine, because the organist had always endangered the congregation's hearing by playing too loud, soft, high, low, fast, or slow—and by making a racket when she turned the pages of her sheet music. But that wasn't the worst of it."

"Oh?"

"She hardly *ever* played Miss

Biggs's favorite hymns," he said. "Nor did the organist realize the danger of singing the 'Amens' at the ends of songs, which Miss Biggs knew was unhealthy—except of course in the case of the Doxology."

"Uh . . . of course."

"After that, another pastor came to Harmony. He was the Reverend Peachtree, Miss Biggs' favorite. She approved of him for the first twenty-three hours or so—but then he stood up to preach. Miss

head in sympathy for what Miss Biggs had been forced to endure. "The Reverend Peachtree went *six minutes overtime*," he intoned, incredulous. "With her spiritual insight and all, Miss Biggs knew he had to go."

I stared at the picture, too. "What did she do to get rid of him?" I asked.

The young man gasped. "Get rid of him?" he cried. "Miss Bertha June Biggs never 'got rid of' anybody. She simply exercised her discernment, as was her duty." He paused and regained his composure. "She wrote some thoughtful, anonymous letters to Reverend Peachtree, suggesting that he explore some of the marvelous opportunities available in other parts of the country. He must have appreciated her helpfulness, because he left within the month."

"Naturally," I said.

"Then came the next pastor, a Reverend Trimble. He met Miss Biggs's common-sense standards for preaching. But he had an unfortunate quirk that could have ruined the church if left unchecked."

"What was that?"

The young man frowned. "An obsession with missions."

"You mean Miss Biggs didn't like missions?"

My informant threw up his hands. "Of *course* she liked missions. Why, her favorite song was 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains,' which she successfully requested every Sunday night. But the Reverend Trimble didn't understand missions at all; he was always trying to convince people to *be* missionaries, which Miss Biggs knew perfectly well was heresy."

"Oh," I said.


*By now,
no preacher dared venture
near Harmony,
having heard of Miss
Biggs' exacting spiritual
standards.*

Biggs could see right away that he wasn't going to work out."

"Why?"

"Because he moved his arms too much when he talked. Just *watching* him made people tired, Miss Biggs said, and would cause them to fall asleep during sermons. And he didn't use enough illustrations about street urchins. Miss Biggs loved street urchins, you know. Not the actual urchins—she'd read you could get a disease or something if you got too close to them. But she loved to hear about them in sermon illustrations."

"I see."

"Still, she could have ignored all the Reverend Peachtree's shortcomings—if not for the shocking thing he did at the end of his very first sermon."

"What was that?"

The young man gazed at the picture on the wall, shaking his

"Nor did she like it when the Reverend Trimble invited all those missionaries to come and show their slides of foreigners and other things that were best left to *National Geographic*. One Sunday night a visiting missionary showed so many slides there was no time left to sing 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains.' Miss Biggs knew the kind of harm that sort of thing could do to a church, so she made sure Reverend Trimble left, too."

"Hmm," I said. "She must have had a high position on the church board."

"Sadly, no," the young man said. "It was hard just to get the board's attention, since they were always busy wasting the church's money, taking offerings for unnecessary things like roof patching and gas bills. One year they even wanted to get new pews!"

"Really," I said.

"Miss Biggs knew the old ones were perfectly fine. As she told the board, if the congregation would just wear thicker clothing, the splinters would be no problem at all."

"And did they?"

"The truly spiritual ones did. But quite a few backsliders—no pun intended—chose the coward's way out and left the church. That upset the board, so they resigned, too."

"That's terrible!"

"Oh, no, not at all. Miss Bertha June Biggs' campaign of purification was succeeding. By now no preacher dared venture near Harmony, having heard of Miss Biggs' exacting spiritual standards."

"Was that good?"

"Of course! That meant she could turn her attention from removing preachers and deacons to removing members of the

congregation who failed to measure up. Now *there* was a task. Most members had already left—no doubt recognizing their spiritual inferiority—but there were still a few left to weed out."

"Such as?"

He thought for a moment. "I remember reading in the records of a Claude P. Flackberry, Sr. His prayers were always too long. He'd go on and on about the sick and the lame, the needy and the hungry, the lost and the destitute—all things Miss Biggs knew should not interest a good churchgoer. Fortunately, he passed on before he could lead the rest of the members astray."

"And the others?"

"They were everyday 'wolves in sheep's clothing,' as Miss Biggs called them. She graciously helped speed them on their way by letting the townspeople know what sins these members had confessed at prayer meeting. She had a verse for it, of course: '... That which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the house tops.' I believe that's Luke 12:3—King James version, of course. Miss Biggs was always very careful with her use of Scripture."

"So I see."

"After these impure elements were removed, the Harmony Community Church was able to rest in peace at last. Miss Bertha June Biggs had finally transformed it into a truly harmonious body."

"How many members of this body were left?"

He beamed. "Just one—Miss Bertha June Biggs."

"And where is she?"

"When her job in Harmony was done, she moved away. She went to another church, I expect."

I scratched my head. "I don't understand," I said. "Miss Biggs

killed the church. I thought you said she made it what it is today."

"I did," the young man replied. "It's a place that's 'big enough to serve you, small enough to know you.' Why, it's the finest restaurant in all of Harmony."

I blinked. "Restaurant?"

"Well, of course," he said. "Once the building was empty, my partners and I couldn't let it go to waste, could we? It's solid as a rock and pretty as a picture." He knocked his knuckles on the clean, white siding.

"But I . . . didn't see a sign," I objected slowly.

He nodded. "There's just a small, tasteful one on the other side of the building. Don't want to look *too* commercial, you know."

"Of course not," I replied faintly.

"So," he said cheerfully, "shall I seat you now? I'm sure our food service has gotten underway. We have a lovely Sunday brunch. The salad bar is where the pulpit used to be. You'll find the sunlight streaming through the stained glass is just—"

"Uh, no . . . no, thank you," I said, feeling numb. "I—I have to be going."

"Oh," he said, disappointed. "Well, do keep us in mind."

"I will," I promised, walking to my car. "Believe me, I will."

"Good!" he called after me. "And if you ever hear of any other churches that are being . . . *purified*, be sure to let us know."

I turned around. "Why?" I asked.

"Because," He said, smiling. "We're thinking of opening a *chain!*"

I shuddered.

It'll never work, I thought. But as I drove away, passing that peaceful little church in Harmony, I just couldn't be sure. ❀

The Tarnished Angel

Delores E. Bius



I paused while trimming our Christmas tree to examine the angel that traditionally topped our tree. It had been in our family ever since we were married. But after close examination, I decided not to use the angel another year. Its once shiny wings were tarnished, and the pretty white robe had turned slightly gray.

Well, maybe now was a good time to shop for a couple books I wanted to buy for friends, and at the same time pick out a new angel.

At the Christian bookstore, I enjoyed browsing among all the books and records and gifts. Then on one table, I noticed an ornament with a little sign in front of

Delores E. Bius, mother of five sons, is a freelance writer from Chicago, Illinois.

it. "Give Christ the uppermost place on your tree." It was a beautiful silver star centered with a nativity picture that could be illuminated with a small bulb. I decided this was truly a more suitable topping for our tree than the tarnished angel.

Back home again I soon fitted the star on top of the tree. And the family agreed that the star was even prettier than the angel had been, even at its best.

The next afternoon I filled a small basket with gifts for Mrs. Coleman, a shut-in friend from church, and drove to her home. She insisted I stay for tea and the next hour sped by while we chatted.

"By the way," Mrs. Coleman commented, "our new pastor is such a godly man. Why he's been to visit me a number of times already, loaned me several books from his library and brought me tapes of his sermons too. The congregation must love him. We are indeed fortunate to have such a conscientious man as our pastor."

I tried to stifle the critical words that were on the tip of my tongue. What Mrs. Coleman didn't know was that the honeymoon was over as far as the majority of the congregation

was concerned. Disenchantment had set in.

"Well," I conceded, "he does have his good points, but I don't think he will be around too long. He comes on a bit strong when you hear him preach three times a week. Some of us believe we need someone different in the pulpit."

The older woman's blue eyes turned from a soft powder

blue to almost black.

They reminded me of a stormy sky before a deluge. Shaking a long, bony finger at me, Mrs. Coleman scolded, "I'm surprised at you! Why, I always thought so highly of you. I considered you my own ministering angel. But you've just toppled off your pedestal and tarnished your wings, in my estimation.

Why, the Bible warned us, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm' (Psalm 105:15). How dare you criticize God's servant?"

I was left speechless by my usually gentle friend's spirited rebuke. I reached for my coat and excused myself, murmuring, "I really must go now. The children will be home from school soon."

On the way home, I searched my heart and soon realized that Mrs. Coleman had been right. I deserved her censure. Here the pastor was trying to lead his

I decided not to use the angel another year. Its once shiny wings were tarnished, and the pretty white robe had turned slightly gray.

congregation to a closer relationship with the Lord, and we were all rebelling. Like balky sheep, we were reluctant to follow the loving leadership of our shepherd. Also, because of my failure to yield control of my tongue to the Holy Spirit, I had sinned with my words. All in all, like the angel that used to be atop our tree, my spiritual clothing was in need of repair. Upon arriving home, I knelt in prayer and rededicated both my life and tongue to the Lord.

As I rose from my knees, the telephone rang. It was Mrs. Coleman, she said, "My dear, please forgive me for scolding you the way I did. I am truly sorry I was so outspoken. I could have been more gracious.

"You're such a lovely Christian. I've always admired you and perhaps I even idolized you. This is wrong. People always topple from pedestals because they are human. Only the Lord Jesus is perfect."

I explained that her rebuke had started me thinking, and that I realized the Holy Spirit was working through her to speak to my heart. I promised her that instead of finding fault with our pastor, from now on I would pray for him.

She seemed relieved that I was not offended, saying, "I guess I was disappointed when you stepped out of your usual consistent Christian character and exhibited feet of clay."

Later that day I retrieved the tarnished angel from the "junk drawer" in my room. Placing it on my dresser, I mused, "You'd better keep this angel in a spot where it can remind you daily of the need to walk close to the Lord. From now on, let the Holy Spirit have full control of your life and your lips." ❀

... Through the Shadow of Death ...

Adele Kangabe Sefuku

There is a Rwandese proverb which says, "You don't come out of the grave twice," but Mrs. Adele Kangabe Sefuku's life testifies differently. She is the mother of seven children; her husband was an ordained minister. She felt God's call to be a literature evangelist in 1987. Pastor Sefuku was sent to a new district and Adele, using her skills in literature ministry, established branch Sabbath schools and saw 50 people baptized.

In 1989 she experienced death's first cold chill grabbing for her life. A torrential rain had fallen. The river she had to cross flooded to the point where water covered a large part of the valley, mostly submerging the bridge. Adele spent the night with an extremely poor family she had never before met. The house was too small and the rain came through the roof. Even though the family was reluctant, Adele prayed with them before retiring and assured them of God's protection. She slept on the ground without mattress or blanket. During the night they heard the cries of unfortunate families being washed away. The next morning, the family's home remained in spite of the fact that more solid homes were carried away.

Because of the mud, walking was difficult and it took six hours to get to the place where she could cross the river. With her clothes and bag containing her books tied to her neck, Adele stepped into the water. People who had offered to transport her on their shoulders for pay thought she was suicidal. Her response had been that she had someone who was much stronger. As she trudged through water almost up to her neck, she sang "Walking with Jesus, I fear no evil" and "The Lord is my Shepherd." Onlookers mocked and ridiculed.



When she arrived home, the church members collected money to buy a mattress, blankets and sheets for the poor family who had given her lodging. Impressed by Adele's testimony and miracles God performed, the family and neighbors, 19 in all, were converted and became SDA church members.

In April, 1994, war broke out in Rwanda and on a Sabbath at Rwamagana, 3,000 people sought refuge from the genocide in a Catholic school. Adele's husband and two of their children died along with 500 others. Adele not only received a machete cut on her forehead, but was also bludgeoned several times on the head and face. A number of teeth were broken, her right arm fractured and her left hand was wounded by an exploding grenade. She learned that she had lain in the hospital four days without medical help—the IV hanging empty. During this time she was without food, water, clothing, or even a blanket—the "living" had fled. The assassins came back to finish the wounded. The flies covering her body, sucking at her wounds, confirmed to them that she was dead. Her children, the ones who escaped death, found her and got medical help. For 21 days she lay in a coma. For more than three months, Adele underwent surgery and other medical treatments.

In October she assured her publishing leader of her plans to continue in the publishing ministry with more zeal than ever before. When asked how she would address the colporteurs of Rwanda, her response was spontaneous and immediate, "They have an obligation to prove to God that they are thankful for His protection by doubling their efforts to spread the printed page."

Literature Evangelist, July-September 1995. Used with permission.

The Aqua Velvet Coat

Hazel Marie
Gordon



Hazel Gordon lives in Atlanta, Georgia. She is a gifted musician and serves the Southern Union as advisor to Women's Ministries. She is a pastoral wife, mother, and grandmother. Her husband, Malcolm, is president of the Southern Union.

This article appeared in the Southern Tidings, December 1993. Used with permission.

It was while I was attending college that I first saw aqua blue velvet. I can still see it now, the sumptuous, soft, rich color; artistically draped in the form of a lovely coat, worn by one of the most beautiful girls on campus. She was not only owner of this exquisite coat, but was also one of the sweetest and most intelligent girls I had ever known. Whenever and wherever one met Margie, she had a bubbly "Hi! and how are you?" demeanor, followed by an appropriate inquiry that was meant to bring out the best in each one she greeted. She was a darling girl both inside and out. The aqua blue velvet coat looked just right on her. You see, she was our very own campus princess.

The following June in my little home church, witnessed by several hundred friends and family, I found myself walking down the aisle in a beautiful white, long, lace and organza dress, complete with a whispery veil, feeling very much like a princess myself. Standing at the end of the aisle was my prince, so tall and handsome, my ministerial student prince, the realization of my happiest hopes and dreams. For you see, I had always wanted to be a minister's wife, to be a worker

in my beloved church. My dreams were coming true.

After a honeymoon in Wisconsin, we settled in a small upstairs apartment just off campus. Malcolm was soon busy as a student publishing assistant. By the time school started that fall, we were able to save a good portion of the money toward the expenses for the upcoming year. Everything was going according to plan; we were convinced that two really could live as cheaply as one, and that it wouldn't be that difficult for me to continue my education and be a good wife, too. A few months later, evidenced by an expanding waistline, we would endeavor to alter the age-old axiom to see if three could live as cheaply as one. Malcolm, fine upstanding young man that he was, took on a part-time job in a printing shop located in a neighboring city, at the same time carrying a full 18 hours plus of college work. However, in spite of our best efforts of strictest economy, there really wasn't money in the budget for a "lady in waiting" wardrobe. Somehow we did manage to find a Sabbath outfit, but it was the aqua blue velvet material that I had my heart set on. I could make it myself, employing my newly acquired

sewing skills learned the previous year in home economic class.

A short while later on an infrequent shopping trip with a friend, I found just what I was looking for—beautiful, luxurious, aqua blue velvet. I wistfully described my find to my husband followed by, “I know we really can’t afford it, Honey, so don’t worry. It’s all right; it really is.”

Time quickly passed and the holidays arrived. It was already a tradition to spend Christmas Eve at the Gordons and Christmas Day at the Johnsons, highlighted by a scrumptious meal together. Mother Jerine and Father Doug Gordon went all out for Christmas. Throughout the entire year, they put away money in a Christmas Club and purchased gifts they found on special sales. Theirs were never extravagant presents but much needed and practical items for each family member that were always much appreciated.

I will never forget that special Christmas. As each package was handed out, we would try and wait so as to focus our full attention on the recipient to share in the excitement and joy of their particular gift. Soon it was my turn to open a most beautifully wrapped box. What could this possibly be? I didn’t dare hope for the costly aqua blue velvet, but there it was. I couldn’t believe my eyes. I remembered turning to my young husband, and looking into his love-filled eyes and saying with tears, “Oh, Honey! You shouldn’t have. I know we can’t really afford it,” only to hear him say, “I knew you really wanted it; it’s because I love you and want to make you happy.”

Through the years I have been showered with gifts from this precious man, not all of which could be wrapped and ribboned.

Many of these tokens of love carried a larger price tag, but none of them more meaningful or precious than the aqua blue velvet of so many years ago. It was truly a gift of great love, sacrifice, and selfless devotion.

With the holiday upon us, let’s think about this special time of year—not just in terms of the hustle and bustle of expected hospitality and gifts—but as a time of special opportunity to ease the burden of a deserving family, or of giving to a special church project, to share books and homemade treats with family, neighbors, and friends. Perhaps in the midst of your giving, you could be the one to provide someone with their very own “aqua blue velvet” experience. As we busily search and select gifts for family and friends, let us not forget our Heavenly Father. He, too, would love to have an “aqua blue velvet” gift from “His beloved.”

Dorothy F. Albaugh pens it so beautifully in her poem.

The Costliest Gift

by Dorothy F. Albaugh

*With every gift I lay away
In readiness for Christmas Day.
Lord, may I also lay aside
Something else this Christmastide.
Help me to lay aside regret;
To have the courage to forget
And start again with this new year.
Help me to lay aside my fear,
My grief and doubting. Men may feel
I have no present when I kneel
To you; but only you and I
Know what it cost me to lay by
These gifts I give you. Please, Lord, fill
My empty cup with what you will.*



Christmas Prayer

Our father, at this season of love, caring and family, when we say “Our Father,” may we reaffirm our membership in your family, a family that includes every woman, man, and child on earth. Our family includes the young mother in jail for attempted fraud who will not see her children this Christmas, the teenagers who are so rowdy at the mall, and the millions of refugees in Bosnia and Rwanda.

The crack baby is our sister, our niece; the co-worker we are tempted to gossip about today is our brother or sister; the pastor in Zaire who earns \$10 per month is our brother, as is the rude driver we muttered at during this morning’s commute.

At this season of love and remembering, help us to remember you as Our Father, a father who gave the supreme gift to show us how to love.

And as we read again the Christmas story, may we remember that as we seek the Christchild, we may find him wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a homeless shelter. Amen.

Carolyn Kujawa



Is There a Christmas Tradition in Your Family Closet?

Paul Lewis

It was a cold, ten-degree Christmas Eve when the Walchushauser family spread a bale of straw on the porch and wiggled into their sleeping bags to spend the night. Huddled together, they discovered that the story of how Jesus first entered the world took on a warm new dimension. The multisensory drama was so vivid that they've slept on the porch every Christmas since.

Several states away, the Simpson children are nervously singing, reciting their poems, and presenting "mini-pageants" prepared again for this year's family Christmas gathering.

In yet another home, the Carters return from the annual Christmas cantata at church to light the eight candles surrounding the carved, miniature nativity scene on their coffee table. As the rising heat from the candles makes the small figures turn on

their base, the family joins hands and sings, "Happy birthday, dear Jesus..." The birthday cake is cut and enjoyed in honor of His birth.

Traditions like these are the threads from which our most valued memories are woven—the customs and practices which call us aside from the ordinary routines to focus on someone or something precious to us. Family traditions are enormously important because they help stabilize and hold a family together from year to year and generation to generation. They help children absorb the beliefs and values we want them to enjoy and pass on.

Some family traditions occur more frequently than just the holidays. The Sunday evening dinner menu at the Schaffers' is always cinnamon toast, hot chocolate, and conversation. No one misses it. It's a cherished family tradition, and simple joys like these help keep families stuck tightly together.

A helpful family exercise some evening would be to clear away the dinner dishes, provide paper and pencils, and ask each person to list those activities which he or she regards as traditions in your family. The answers may surprise you and

will likely range beyond holiday times to encompass many regular facets of family living.

Once you've pooled your answers, evaluate what you find. Two criteria are: 1) Do these traditions usually involve everyone in the preparing as well as the participating? Those that do will more likely be valued and preserved into the next generation. 2) Does the tradition emphasize authentic spiritual and human values rather than expensive gifts and activities? Traditions worth keeping are usually expensive only in terms of time.

Be sure that several of your family's important traditions include church activities and times with other friends in the Body of Christ. Many traditions can meet the needs of the sick or elderly, missionaries, and single parents and their children.

Family traditions can't be bought no matter how wealthy you are. These treasures are acquired simply, installment by installment, as time passes. The strength of values and the warmth of memories they carry will help you and your descendants through good and bad times. Meaningful family traditions, holiday or otherwise, are worth the effort! ❁

Paul Lewis is the editor of Dads Only newsletter and lives with his family in Julian, California.

David C. Cook Church Ministries. The Christian Education Article Service, July 1995. Used with permission.

Down the Road with the Refugees

Marija Trajkovska



The evening of August 12, 1995, didn't seem very different from others. I sat in my favorite armchair resting from lecturing at the English summer school at the Belgrade Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Then I turned on the television to see the news. There before my eyes, streamed huge lines of refugees riding their tractors and wagons coming from Serbian Krajina toward the Yugoslavian border.

Evening after evening, I watched, sympathized, and prayed for them. But this evening, as I cried silently over their tragedy, I determined to do something, however small it might be. My husband wasn't home right then as he was driving a refugee family to the nearby town to friends who would provide shelter for them for some time.

As he stepped into the house, I said, "George, I've been thinking. I've decided to do something for these people. I know, I can't do much, but I simply must do something. I have to . . . Maybe my students and I can go to the school

kitchen tomorrow afternoon and instead of the usual afternoon activities, we can bake some pies, croissants, and pancakes. Maybe we can go to the highway then and distribute the food to the people."

Delighted with the idea, he said he would be willing to help in whatever way he could. The next day, he shared our plan with our business manager, who in turn, shared it with our union president, Radisa Antic. He, too, wanted to help financially.



These refugees had traveled more than ten days and now were delayed hours to be registered to enter the city of Belgrade. They waited there so

thirsty, hungry, dirty, exhausted, and desperate. As we talked among ourselves on how to start helping them, George and I decided to buy some watermelons to quench their thirst. This would be in addition to the food to be prepared at the school kitchen.

I shared my idea with my students and they became as eager and enthusiastic as I. After our English lessons, we went downstairs to prepare the food. Everybody went to work together, boys and girls, and they were quite good

at it, too. We have a baker's son, and he was a great help and an expert at making croissants. Six hours later we packed into the school van and headed for the highway. George was already there, with two students and our five-year old son, distributing watermelons and some candies for the children.

In two days we distributed 5500 kg. of water, melons, several thousand pieces of pies, croissants, and several hundred pancakes made by our 25 students.

Disbelief at first, then tears, and faint smiles accompanied their simple words of thankfulness. "Thank you, thank you good people" they sighed in gratitude.

I thank God for the privilege of serving Him and our fellowman. ✿

Marija teaches English and is the women's dean at the Belgrade Seminary.

God Never Fails

An Unknown Pioneer Pastor's Wife

One chilly winter day, I sat thinking about the problems I could not seem to solve. Our irregular salary did not meet our needs even when it did arrive. My husband, James, traveled much of the time from one district to another. Our boys enjoyed good health, but little Ruth was not a strong child. We did not own decent clothing. I patched and repatched with spirits sinking to the lowest ebb. The water gave out in the well, and the wind blew through cracks in the floor.

Although people in the parish were kind and generous, being in a new settlement meant each family must struggle for itself. My faith began to waver at the very time I needed it most.

Early in life I was taught to take God at His word. I reviewed the promises in dark times until I knew, as David did, "who was my fortress and deliverer." Now a daily prayer for forgiveness was all that I could offer.

My husband's thin overcoat hardly kept out the cold in October and he often rode miles to attend some meeting or funeral after a scant meal of Indian cake and a cup of tea without sugar.

Soon it would be Christmas. The children always expected their presents. The ice on the lake was thick and smooth, and the boys spent free hours trying to carve a pair of skates. Ruth, in some unaccountable way had taken a fancy that the dolls I had made were no longer suitable; she wanted a nice, large one. She insisted on praying for it.

It seemed impossible; but oh, I wanted to give each child a present! I felt that God had deserted us, but did not tell my husband of my doubts. He worked so earnestly and heartily, and I supposed him to be of good courage. I kept the sitting room cheerful with an open fire and tried to serve our scanty meals as invitingly as possible.

The morning before Christmas, James went out to visit a sick man. All I could send along for his lunch was a piece of bread. I wrapped my plaid shawl around his neck, and tried to whisper a promise in his ear, but the words died away upon my lips. I let him go without it.

The dark, hopeless day dragged on. I coaxed the children to bed early, for I could not bear their talk. When Ruth went to bed, I listened to her prayer. She asked once more for a doll and for skates for her brothers. Her bright face looked so lovely when she whispered to me, "You know I think they'll be here early tomorrow morning, mama" that I felt willing to move heaven and

earth to save her from disappointment. When alone, I sat down and gave way to bitter tears.

Before long James returned, chilled and exhausted. He drew off his boots and thin stockings. His feet looked red with cold. "I wouldn't treat a dog that way, let alone a faithful servant," I said. I glanced up and saw the hard lines in his face and the look of despair—James felt discouraged too.

I brought him a cup of tea, feeling sick and dizzy. He took my hand and we sat for an hour without a word. I wanted to die and meet God, and tell Him His promises weren't true. My soul filled with rebellious despair.

Suddenly the sound of bells reached us, and a loud knock at the door. James sprang up to open it. There stood Deacon White. "A box came by express just before dark. I brought it around as soon as I could get away. Reckon it might be for Christmas. I determined that you should have it tonight. Here is a turkey my wife asked me to fetch along, and these other things I believe belong to you." He hurried into the house with the box, then said good night, and rode away.

Without speaking, James brought a chisel and opened the box. He drew out a thick red blanket and we could see that the box was full of clothing. It seemed at that moment as if Christ fastened upon me a look of reproach. James sat down and

covered his face with his hands. "I can't touch them," he exclaimed, "I haven't been true. God has been trying me to see if I would be faithful. I saw you suffering too, but I could not comfort you. Now I know how to preach the awfulness of running away from God."

"James," I said, clinging to him, "don't take it to heart like this, I am to blame. I ought to have helped you. We will ask Him together to forgive us."

"Wait a moment, dear, I cannot talk now," he said. Then he went into another room. I knelt down and my heart broke; in an instant all the darkness, all the stubbornness rolled away. Jesus came again and stood before me, but with the loving word, "Daughter!"

Sweet promises of tenderness and joy flooded my soul. I was so lost in praise and gratitude that I forgot everything else. I don't know how much time passed before James returned, but I knew he too had found peace. "Now, my dear wife," he said, "let us thank God together." He poured out words of praise to God.

The hour grew late. The fire died out. We touched nothing in the box but the warm blanket. James walked to the fireplace, piled on some fresh logs, lighted two candles and only then, we began to examine our treasures.

We found an overcoat. I made James try it on, just the right size! I danced around him for all my lightheartedness had returned. He insisted I put on a warm cloak that lay gently folded in the box. My spirits always infected him, and we both laughed like foolish children.

We found a warm suit of clothes, three pairs of woolen hose, a dress, yards of flannel, and a pair of arctic overshoes for each of us. In one shoe I found a slip of paper.

"Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days, so shall thy strength be," it read. Another note had been slipped into the gloves. The same dear hand had written, "I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee: Fear not, I will help thee."

The wonderful box had been packed with thoughtful care. Each of the boys received a suit of clothes, and for Ruth, there was a red dress. Mittens, scarfs, and hoods had been tucked into the center of the container, and another box contained a great wax doll. I burst into tears again, and wept for joy. It was too much! When we found two pairs of skates, we exclaimed again. We unwrapped books, stories for the children to read, aprons and underclothing, knots of ribbon, a gay little tidy, a lovely photograph, needles, buttons and thread; even a muff, and an envelope containing a ten-dollar gold piece.

We cried over everything we took up.

The clock struck midnight. We felt faint and exhausted with happiness. I made a cup of tea, cut

a fresh loaf of bread, and James boiled some eggs. We sat before the fire, and how we enjoyed our supper! There we talked about our life and how sure a help God had proven to be.

The boys awoke in the morning with a shout at the sight of their skates. Ruth caught up her doll, and hugged it tightly without a word, then she went into her room and knelt by her bed.

When she returned, she whispered to me, "I knew it would be there, mama, but I wanted to thank God just the same, you know." We went to the window and watched the boys skating on the ice with all their might.

My husband and I both returned thanks to the church in the east that sent us the box and have tried to return thanks to God every day since.

Hard times have come again and again, but we have trusted in Him, dreading nothing, never having so much as a doubt of His protecting care. Over and over again, we proved that, "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." ❁

"The plants and flowers grow not by their own care or anxiety or effort, but by receiving that which God has furnished to minister to their life. The child cannot, by any anxiety or power of its own, add to its stature. No more can you, by anxiety or effort of yourself, secure spiritual growth. The plant, the child, grows by receiving from its surroundings that which ministers to its life,—the air, sunshine, and food. What these gifts of nature are to animal and plant, such is Christ to those who trust in Him." — *Steps to Christ*, p. 68



An Interview with Milena Brechelmacher

Milena Brechelmacher
As interviewed by Sharon Cress

Milena Brechelmacher and her husband, Ivan, pastor the Adventist Church in Sarajevo. She sat down with me for two hours in Budapest and through a translator, shared her life in this challenging situation. This is her story.

✘ My family background

I was born in Bosnia, which is now called the Republic of Serbia. My parents were Seventh-day Adventists, but I never got to know my father well because he died at the age of 24. Despite trying circumstances, I had a happy childhood because my mother always found time to pray and play with my younger sister and me. She was a good Christian influence on us while carrying the burden of a struggling single parent.

I met my husband, Ivan, at the Rakovica Theological School, where we were both studying theology. There was a rule in those days that you had to pastor for two years before you could

marry, but because he was already 29 years old, the rule was waived, and we were married and began our ministry immediately.

✘ My family now

We have two daughters, Elizabeth, age 22, and Irena, age 20. They are living in a flat that belongs to their grandmother about 50 km. from Zagreb in a village called Sisak. Many refugees come there. My younger sister now lives in Belgrade.

My mother lives in a part of Bosnia which is very dangerous. I have not been able to communicate with her for two years. The last time we talked, she was going to try to flee with other refugees from her town when the chance arrived. The Adventist pastor from this area (Prijeđon) where my mother lives has escaped the town. He was threatened, his house ransacked, his telephone wires cut, and his belongings stolen.

✘ Our ministry

We began our ministry in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, in 1971. At this time conditions were calm in the former Yugoslavia. We were under Communism; however, the Adventists were able to worship together, both

Serbs and Croats. There were restrictions on the church. We were not allowed to spread literature through the area, and we couldn't hold public evangelistic meetings. But we did hold evangelistic meetings in the church and were able to evangelize this way.

My husband lived in Sarajevo as a child. He went to high school there and remembers the city as it was in those days. His father was the conference president. From 1980 to 1983, Ivan and I also pastored in Sarajevo. During that time, my husband tried many innovative and daring things for evangelism. The conference president warned him to be careful because these activities might end him up in the Communist prison. But the Lord was good, and he was able to carry out his projects and never did spend a night in jail.

✘ How we came to Sarajevo

In April, 1994, when we were pastoring in Sisak, Ivan was asked to go to Sarajevo and baptize some new converts. He saw such a great need among the people that he stayed until June. During this two-month period, I kept our church going by pastoring and preaching. I would try to contact

him and get instructions on what he wanted me to do with the church so the church programs could continue, but communication was very poor and unreliable. He felt that circumstances were such that he was desperately needed in Sarajevo and could not leave.

After two months, I decided that I must join him. I was not allowed to enter the area or get anywhere near the city, but I was determined to join my husband in Sarajevo. There seemed to be no way to get into the area. Finally, I had an idea. I organized a humanitarian transport group of four trucks filled with fruits and vegetables for the Sarajevo people. I led this convoy through and over the Igman Mountain and managed to arrive on the outskirts of Sarajevo. I was stopped there for nine days. There were so many more barriers. When we finally were allowed to enter the city, all the fruits and vegetables had spoiled.

As I entered the city, I began to cry. I had not seen my husband in two months, and I did not recognize the beautiful city where we had previously pastored. Everything was shattered by missiles and bombs. Glass was broken and lying around. There were scattered bricks and garbage everywhere. The city was besieged and no one could go in or out. I remembered the city as it was in 1984 when the olympics had been held there. At that time, it had been given a new face lift and was called the "city with a soul" because whoever went there kept a part of it in their soul. I could not believe this beautiful place had been destroyed.

✧ **Our church in Sarajevo**

The church in Sarajevo where

Ivan and I pastor has 134 members. The membership stays about the same all the time, because as some church members are able to flee and escape, others are baptized. These Adventists are Serbs, Croats, and Moslems and they all love each other, sing and pray together, and truly demonstrate that in Jesus there is not distinction of heritage.

Sometimes during the worship services, we sing louder and louder to try to drown out the missiles and bombs that are falling. Our church is always crowded for services, and there is a que to get in. We have two sessions.

Our church has never been bombed, and the people in Sarajevo believe that God is protecting it in a special way. They feel safe if they can get into the Adventist church. Many come for refuge.

The church members have received me as an angel from heaven because they know that I am not there because my husband is "assigned" to be there. These church members know that we are there with them because we chose to come there and minister to them. The members would like to flee and get out. Ivan and I volunteered to come and stay.

The church in Sarajevo is a true model of the early apostolic church. The members search for fresh vegetables for each other and for us. We have some dried beans and rice, but nothing else. Last month, my husband was able to get a transport of other food in—we have been one year without.

✧ **Living in Sarajevo**

The only way to get in and out of Sarajevo is through a tunnel at the airport where food and

necessities can be carried on your back. Czech ADRA donated sugar and oil so we have some of that now, but we have had no powdered milk in over a year. In the open air market sometimes there will be fruits and vegetables but they are so expensive, we cannot afford them.

But water is the greatest problem. ADRA had arranged for us to have water 1/2 hour each day in the part of the city where the church is located. But now we don't even have that. We have to go to the well and try to get water. It is very dangerous. We can get some industrial water that can only be used for bathing and washing. This water is so polluted it cannot be purified for drinking. The well where the church members go to try to get water is on the outskirts of the city. They used to try to wait until they thought it might be a "safe time." But now they just go anytime because there is no safe time. Last month one young lady, who was studying with us and a friend of the church members, was killed on her way to the well.

✧ **My personal life**

Life is hard on the pastoral wife and the women church members in Sarajevo. I do not have the necessities that most pastoral wives do—shampoo, soap, personal products. We do not have stockings and very rarely the privilege of having new underwear. One time when I was able to leave the city, I brought two boxes of new underwear to the church ladies. They were overjoyed. One particular problem is to keep myself tidy and attractive.

In the midst of the chaos of this long siege, I believe that trying to stay clean and practice

good hygiene is important for a good mental attitude. One symptom of depression is lack of personal hygiene and caring for oneself. This is always a challenge without much water and essential products. I believe this is important to all of the church ladies in Sarajevo, so I encourage them to fix their hair and keep themselves well. They must never forget that they are women made in God's image.

I remember one day the 83-year old church member saint who cooks every day for the 20 ADRA workers and generally mothers them was sitting over in the corner carefully filing and rounding her nails so they would be attractive.

The furniture in my flat is a menagerie collection gathered and donated from those who have been able to flee. Winter is very difficult for us because there is no electricity and no heat. We stay warm by burning furniture or anything that will burn. Many people make a stove out of an old pot by cutting a hole in the side and a burner on top and using it for cooking and heat.

✠ A special blessing

Last Christmas I enjoyed a special surprise when my two daughters unexpectedly came into the city because they wanted to spend the holiday with us. They did not tell us they were going to make this dangerous journey. They brought us huge bags of fruit, which they had carried on their back. When they arrived on the edge of the city, they spent 12 hours being detained in the freezing tunnel trying to get in. They were determined that we would be together for Christmas, that we would have fruit for the holiday,

and that they would get through with it intact. God protected them making this dangerous journey.

✠ Time to return

I have been asked several times why I stay in Sarajevo. A few people say that they will go once, but they are so glad to get out safely that they will never go back. They want to know why Ivan and I go to minister there. I tell them it is because I see real people with real needs. Our members lives depend on my help. I do not dwell on the danger, I just minister. I always tell people, "We were not sent, we volunteered. We trust in God and His protection." Prayer is most important to me. God has spared my life many times.

I will leave Budapest in a few days and travel back to Sarajevo. It is a difficult trip.

We will travel all one day and night to arrive in Zagreb. There the ADRA van will meet us, and we will then travel anywhere from six to ten hours to Metkovic. This is a secure road but travel conditions vary so much that we never know how long the trip will take. We will then cut to another road through Mostar, which is in Herzceg-Bosnia and controlled by the Croats. Then we go into Bosnia, controlled by the Moslems. This border crossing is always very difficult between these two groups of people. There we are only about 50 km. from Sarajevo. Normally this would be a 30-minute drive, but the danger gets more extreme. We must go through the Igman Mountain. The only road to the city is controlled by the Moslems. The mountains on either side are controlled by opposing forces. Then the final

10 km. becomes even more dangerous. We can be easily seen and targeted by both sides, which believe we are from their opposing side. We can be tracked by infrared even at night. When we are finally through this area, we come to Hrasnica where we report to the military officials.

This is where we must go through the tunnel to enter the city. The tunnel is at the airport, and is only 1 meter high and 60 or 80 cm. wide. I have to almost crawl to get through. It is muddy and dirty. I am filthy when I come out the other side. Everything Ivan or I bring into the city, must be through this tunnel tied to our backs.

There is a track through the tunnel with a special chair, which rolls on it, for bringing the president in and out. One time the officials let me ride in this chair with all the provisions piled on me while Ivan pushed me through. It made me feel very important!

✠ In summary

When the conflict first began, we received many emergency supplies of food and medicine. Now the war seems old and forgotten by many. The relief no longer regularly comes and times now are the worst they have ever been. Many are exhausted and tired. Some people have forgotten Sarajevo because of the news targeting other areas with their reports. But we know that God has not forgotten us or our church members in Sarajevo.

The most important thing other pastoral wives can do for me is to remember me to our Heavenly Father. His love and protection are never in short supply for me! Please pray for Ivan and me and our dear church members in Sarajevo. ✠



Shepherdess International News

Africa-Indian Ocean Division

Leola Whaley, Shepherdess Coordinator for the Africa-Indian Ocean Division, reports that Shepherdess chapters have been started in the East and West Zaire Unions. There are ten chapters in all. Material in French has been sent to help them get started. They praise God for this new awakening in Zaire.

✿ A new Shepherdess chapter in Cote d'Ivoire Mission in Abidjan has been organized. Ten pastors' wives from the local fields were present for the three-day retreat.

Topics discussed were: "The Pastor's Wife as a Housewife," "The Pastor's Wife as a Mother," "The Pastor's Wife in the Church and in the Community," "Worship in the Pastor's Home," "Prayer Life of the Pastor's Wife," and "How to Manage on the Pastor's Salary."

The ladies were enlightened on how they can help their husbands and requested a similar meeting along with their husbands. The Mission President promised to arrange to have a meeting for both wives and husbands in the near future.

There was a social hour Saturday night. The meeting closed with a consecration service on Sunday evening.

Asia Pacific Division

Four pastoral couples led out in evangelistic meetings in Iloilo City, Philippines, in May



From left to right are Pastor Walt and Brenda Groff from Northern California; Pastor Gideon and Esther Buhat, West Visayan Mission; Pastor Jim and Sharon Cress, General Conference Ministerial; and Pastor Carl and Ella Johnston, from Seminars Unlimited.

1995. Almost 1,000 people have been baptized as a result of the "Team Ministry."

✿ A busy housewife for the Lord. Mrs. Joan Gacula-Arrogante, the wife of Pastor Ruel G. Arrogante, district pastor of San Francisco, Agusan del Sur, holds VBS classes in her home. She is a housewife, a mother, and a church school board treasurer, but in spite of these responsibilities, she can spare time ministering to the needs of the children in her neighborhood. Her ministry proves that all wives can be ministers to the children. Joan is a modern Martha but she has a Mary's heart.



North Pacific Union pastoral wives who attended the NPU Evangelism Council.

North American Division

✿ Alaska Conference

Jacquie Biloff pilots a Cessna 180 to fly her pastoral-husband and others to appointments, making friends along the way. One of these friends is now attending church with her.

✿ Oregon Conference

Wedding gowns and hula hoops. Laughing women and crying women. Home-made truffles and store bought "Hugs" and "Kisses." Late night gab fests and an early morning trip to the hospital for the birth of baby Daniel. What do all of these have in common? They are part of the memories made at the 1995 Shepherdess Retreat held at Gladstone Campgrounds to "Revive the Memories."

Guest speaker, Raquel Santillana, reminded us that when

God created the world it was good, but when He created woman, it was very good! God gave women a very special place in His creation with unique qualities that balance

men. We are valuable to God and called to His service.

Saturday evening each person shared a memory from their teen years while modeling items from a

wedding dress to a hula hoop. One moment we were all in tears as Fran shared about being abandoned by her mother at an orphanage, and then we shared hilarious laughter as nine-month pregnant Phyllis demonstrated her teen talent of hula hooping. (That night we whisked her off to the hospital where she delivered an 8 lb. 12 oz. baby boy who was instantly adored by all the shepherdess aunties!)

We revived memories and we made new memories. We will never be the same. God has chosen us as His women to live the memory of lives transformed by His call.

✿ *Washington Conference*

A sense of bonding and closeness not often achieved came about when 26 ministers' wives attended the Washington Conference Shepherdess Retreat at Warm Beach Christian Camp, February 24-26.

They arrived Friday afternoon at the camp, located north of Everett. As they settled into their rooms in the Olympic View Lodge over looking the Sound, they found vases of colorful flowers graciously welcoming them.

Following a delicious dinner, Shepherdess President, Jan White, welcomed the women as they gathered in the lounge around a cozy fireplace. Erika Olfert led in singing songs of praise to God. Jan shared her thoughts on the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation, and illustrated it with the following experience that would be any woman's nightmare:

As an overture of friendliness to a couple in her church, who seemed to feel offended about something, Jan invited them to dinner one evening the following

week, forgetting that she had offered to let the new school teacher and family stay in her home until they found a place to live. With the house overflowing from their combined families, they decided to take a picnic supper and go out for an excursion. Imagine Jan's horror when she suddenly realized on the way home that it was the very evening she had invited the other couple to dinner!

Not knowing what else to do, she called and apologized profusely. The next day she went to their home and apologized again, but she still sensed a certain coolness and skepticism in their attitude. So she went to the florist and ordered a beautiful bouquet of flowers to be sent to the couple. Although it took some time and continued effort, today they are good friends and can both look back and laugh at the incident.

She then invited others to share some of their embarrassing mistakes and the methods they chose to make amends. The meeting ended shortly after nine o'clock so that those who wished could retire early, but most elected to stay and visit a while. When they returned to their rooms, they found chocolate mints and devotional bookmarks on their pillows, reinforcing the delightful feeling of being pampered.

With breakfast at 8:00, the relaxed weekend schedule allowed for sleeping in on Sabbath morning, unless they wanted to take an early morning hike around the campground. Rozella Stroud and Karen Nuessle led out in the Sabbath morning worship experience, sharing their thoughts on the topics of answered prayer and women of the Bible, and they encouraged women to contribute from their experiences.

The brisk but sunny Sabbath afternoon was free for meditation, visiting, resting, and hiking. Several enjoyed walking on the mud flats and watching the flock of trumpeter swans feeding there.

Saturday night agenda included a "Hen Party," and a few took advantage of the opportunity to "dress up" in nightgown, wedding gown, national costume, etc. During the refreshments break of popcorn, juice and cookies, Jan White and Debbie Fogelquist announced a surprise—gifts for each shepherdess from the ladies in their churches. Excitement prevailed as the gifts were carried in and exclamations of appreciation filled the room. Everyone felt the love and affirmation the gifts represented.

After breakfast on Sunday morning, the women gathered in the lounge for a prayer circle. At Erika's suggestion, a decorated can placed in the middle of the circle was filled with written prayer requests, symbolizing that there are many problems we can't find a solution for, but "God can." Then the ladies participated in conversational prayer, interspersed with songs and tears. This brought the special weekend to a climax. The women returned home strengthened and inspired by their retreat. They expressed unanimous desire for another retreat next year, which has been scheduled for January 26-28 at Warm Beach. They hope that more of the pastors' wives will come to strengthen the bonds of fellowship and sharing.

Trans-European Division

The Trans-European Division Ministerial Council met for six days in Budapest, Hungary, August 28-September 2, 1995.

Almost 900 pastors and spouses came and enjoyed the plenary sessions, seminars, and programming geared to their personal interests. The Shepherdess meetings were hosted by Gaya Currie, Shepherdess Coordinator for the Trans-European Division, and Sharon Cress, from the General Conference Ministerial Association.

Pastoral spouses gathered in an airy sunlit room to fellowship and share together. We drank from the wells of Sandra Pearson, from the Office of Human Resources at the General Conference, and Jeannie Melashenko, from the Voice of Prophecy. Sandra led the women through organizing a devotional life and prioritizing their time to accommodate time with Jesus. Jeannie touched each of us when she shared her personal story of how she realized that Jesus loved her and considered her of worth. Her illustration of a broken vase and the light that shines through movingly illustrated how Jesus can use broken things.

Translators gathered the women around them and translated the seminars into the various languages.

Ron and Karen Flower's plenary session on Family Life was of particular interest to all the pastoral couples. Their humorous illustrations added memorable moments to the presentation.

The last day of the pastoral meetings provided a time for sharing and questions. It was moving to know that while there are specific circumstances that surround each woman, we share many of the same challenges and stresses. This World Ministers' Council will long be remembered for quality of programming and depth of fellowship.



Some of the pastoral wives who attended the Council. Gaya Currie and Sandra Pearson are in the foreground.



Maarja-Terttu and Kalervo Aromaki from Finland



Saulé and John DelaPaz from Lithuania



Maxine Daly and pastor/husband from England



Lynn and Reidar Kvinge from Norway



Pastoral wives from the Polish Union with their Ministerial Secretary



Harald and Ann-May Wollan from Norway

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