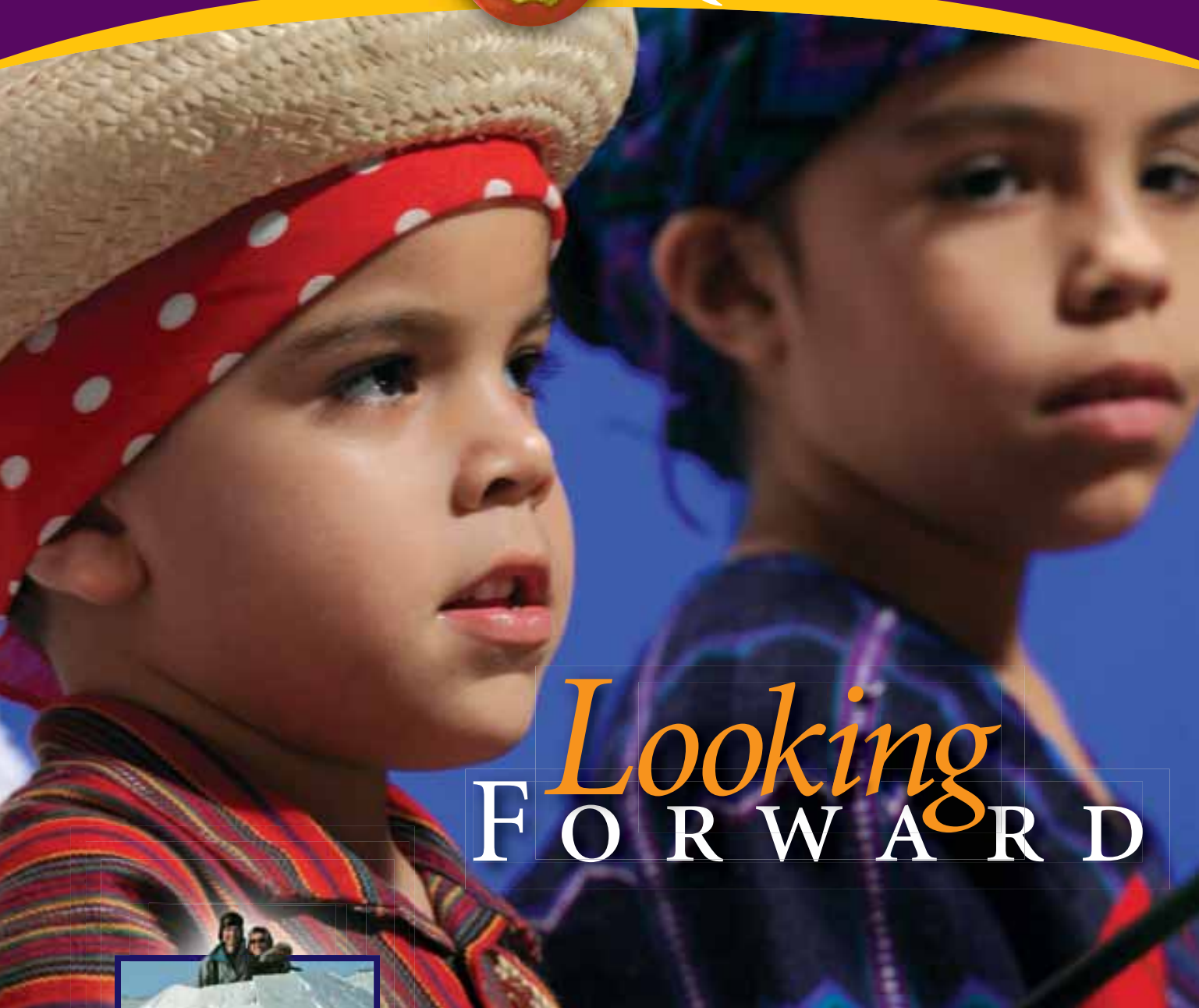


The International Paper for Seventh-day Adventists

March 2010

ADVENTIST WORLD



Looking FORWARD



SPECIAL FEATURE

CASTING A UNITED VISION

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March 2010



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WORLD VIEW

A Prayer for Atlanta

I watched my mother's eyes slowly fill with tears as she stared down at the tens of thousands of Adventists seated below her on the floor of the giant domed stadium.

"I wish," she said softly, "I wish my own mother could have seen this. She never knew that the church she joined was connected to a faith this big."

My mother's reaction from high in a skybox at the 2000 Toronto General Conference reminded me of how moving the sight of a General Conference session can be for believers. The scope and scale of world Adventism, now numbering 17 million members and 25 million persons in the larger family that includes children and youth, is powerfully encouraging, if only because so many Adventists know only the tens or dozens of fellow members they worship with each week. Like my Italian grandmother, a convert from another faith, most Seventh-day Adventists define their church by the people who smile at them each Sabbath, by the earnest men and women who teach the Sabbath schools and preach the sermons, by the deacons and deaconesses who care for the practical needs of both people and building.

And yet we hunger to know that this world-circling

movement is still growing, still expanding, still reaching regions where the name of Jesus is not known. Something in our hearts leaps up when we see new congregations planted in tired Western nations beset by secularism. We thrill to hear of undaunted believers in underground churches who practice our common faith in dangerous circumstances. Present in almost every nation of the globe, Seventh-day Adventists are always eager to learn about the progress of this cause.

This edition of *Adventist World* focuses the worldwide Adventist family on the 2010 General Conference session planned for Atlanta, Georgia (U.S.A.), from June 24 to July 3. This 10-day international gathering of the church will fundamentally align the church for the new decade, selecting leaders and adopting policies to keep the faith strong and the movement growing. More than 2,400 official delegates will be joined by more than 50,000 fellow believers on the two Sabbaths.

Taken together, the attendees in Atlanta will represent only .003 percent of the baptized members of the church—a tiny fraction, some might say. But they will carry the hopes and dreams—and prayers—of millions with them as they plan and pray and worship.

Start praying now for what God will do in Atlanta.

— BILL KNOTT

WORLD REPORT

First Adventist Church Under Construction in Gulf Region

■ Seventh-day Adventists in the Middle Eastern Gulf region anticipate worshipping in their first permanent church building by year's end, local church officials said at a January groundbreaking ceremony.

Victor Harewood, church leader for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman, along with some 250 local members, met on the plot in Ras Al

Khaimah to unveil the building's cornerstone, officially opening the construction site.

Ras Al Khaimah is one of seven emirates in the UAE. Its crown prince and deputy ruler, Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi, approved the building project in 2008.

"[The move] will give Adventists official registration, recognition ... and [the] ability to have our own church building," said Rajee Mathew, building project manager.

Previously Adventists met in



ROGER TAHER/MEU

GROUNDBREAKING: Builders break ground in January for the Gulf region's first Seventh-day Adventist church. The building will also serve as church headquarters for the United Arab Emirates and surrounding countries.

WORLD REPORT

church members' homes or rented worship spaces owned by other Christian denominations.

Church officials expect construction on the three-story building to wrap up in eight months. The first level is slated to house a worship hall seating up to 500.

The building will also serve as headquarters for the Gulf Section of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Harewood said, with space reserved for residences and office space for administrative staff. The region comprises Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and Yemen.

"We are all very excited about this development and pray that this project will be the start of a new era for our church in this part of the world," said Jóhann E. Jóhannsson, treasurer for the church's Trans-European region, which oversees the Gulf Section.

Support from the Trans-European region, as well as from the local Middle East Union and the Seventh-day Adventist world church headquarters, will help cover the projected cost of the building—approximately US\$3.2 million with an additional US\$170,000 to furnish and equip it.

With the recognition the building will give the Adventist Church in the Gulf Section, Adventists will "finally be able to organize the [church's] work in the region," added Kjell Aune, church president for the Middle East Union.

—Reported by Gureni Lukwaro, Trans-European Division, and Adventist News Network.

Hope Channel Programs on Czech State TV

■ State television in the Czech Republic has begun broadcasting a series of special programs prepared for young people by the Czech Hope Channel. Begun in January, the programs, called *Beyond Horizons*, were to be broadcast every Sunday morning for six months.

"Our goal is not to present ready-made solutions, but to offer secular viewers an alternative perspective," explains one of the authors of this new Christian youth TV magazine. The program will be hosted and moderated by professional actor and presenter Matous Ruml and Adventist pastor Jindrich Cernohorsky.

"Beauty," "Relationships," "History," "Play," "Crisis," and "A Star" are a few of the titles of the various episodes. Each of the 26 episodes presents, in language understandable to young people, an important topic that most people face during their lives.

For each topic, organizers invited an interesting and well-known personality who in some way represents the discussed subject. Viewers will have the opportunity to hear freestyle motocross rider Petr Pilat, who appears in the episode on extreme sports; astrophysicist Jiri Grygar, who takes part in the discussion on astrology; and violinist Jaroslav Sveceny, who talks about traditions. Each episode features music from contemporary artists and ends with a short reflection that offers a biblical alternative to prevailing contemporary consumerism.

Bedrich Jetelina, director of the Czech Hope Channel, explains: "This

CZECH HOPE CHANNEL PHOTO



NATIONAL PROGRAMMING: Czech Hope Channel crew works on filming a television program for nationwide broadcast.

series of programs is the fruit of a long-term collaboration between our media center and the editorial office for religious programs of the Czech state television. Our main goal and motivation in preparing this series is to help a young generation of our fellow citizens—mostly postmodern and secular—to discover that the Bible and Christianity can offer a valuable alternative to the prevailing worldview and lifestyle, and that the biblical approach to life's issues is realistic, functional, and fulfilling."

The programs are available at www.zaobzorem.cz.

—Reported by Euro-Africa Division.

Headquarters for U.K. and Ireland Nears Completion After Fire

Administrative offices for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United Kingdom and Ireland are nearing completion 14 months after a fire gutted previous headquarters.

The final phase of rebuilding—including a foyer, training rooms, a boardroom, and additional offices—is expected to take place within the year, regional church officials said.

The fire started November 16, 2008, in the roof space above the boardroom and quickly spread to 75 percent of the building. Employees moved back into headquarters December 18, 2009, despite ongoing construction.

“People like the new look of the office,” said Victor Hulbert, communication director for the Adventist Church in Britain. “They may be sitting in the same room they were in before the fire, but it has been upgraded ... and the windows looking over Stanborough Park give a stunning view.”

Hulbert added the new work space allows employees to “more efficiently fulfill the mission of the church.”

While work space at headquarters is still limited until construction is completed in late summer or early fall, Hulbert said the accommodations are still far superior to the cramped, temporary rental space the staff occupied after the fire.

The construction team was next due to focus on areas completely demolished by the fire, employees said.

A January cold spell temporarily halted progress. At press time the team was waiting for the temperature to rise above 5 degrees Celsius (41 degrees Fahrenheit) before they could continue pouring concrete for the foundations of the remaining work areas.



VICTOR HULBERT/BRITISH UNION CONFERENCE

Hulbert said he was “impressed” with the swiftness of the rebuilding so far and that the weather-related setback would likely not affect its projected completion.

—Reported by Megan Brauner and Elizabeth Lechleitner, *Adventist News Network*.

Leadership Development Office Sets Guidelines for Newly Elected Officers

What happens when a Seventh-day Adventist Church member with limited leadership experience is unexpectedly elected to church office?

The church’s Office of Global Leadership Development is making sure that members in that position have access to the resources necessary to become—in short order—effective, mission-focused leaders who can anticipate changes and challenges and respond in a responsible and appropriate fashion.

Leadership Development officials met in Beijing, China, in January for their third annual Global Leadership Development Summit. They reviewed the existing curriculum for regional church presidents, secretaries, treasurers, and other leaders to ensure no topics are overlooked.

“There are many people who are elected as, say, president, who have never served in that capacity before. And when they start their new job,

ON THE JOB: Adventist Church employees in the United Kingdom and Ireland back at work in newly refurbished office space. In 2008 a fire destroyed much of the building.

they sometimes don’t have the necessary skills—how to chair a meeting, how to consider issues in a legal context,” said Pardon Mwansa, who, alongside Michael L. Ryan, oversees the Leadership Development team. Both are Adventist world church general vice presidents.

While curriculum topics will be standardized across church regions, they can be tailored to fit the needs of a particular culture.

“One topic, for example, is decision-making. You’re still making decisions wherever you live and work, but how you make decisions in China is very different from how you might make decisions in, say, the United States,” Mwansa said.

The leadership team anticipates finalizing and approving the curriculum in time for June’s Adventist Church world session, during which leaders are elected to fill a number of positions at church headquarters as well as in each of the church’s 13 world regions, Mwansa said.

View leadership guidelines and look for new developments at leadershipdevelopment.adventist.org/curriculums.

—Reported by Elizabeth Lechleitner, *Adventist News Network*.

WORLD REPORT

Hans Birkel

By GERHARD PADDERATZ, editor of BWgung magazine, Baden-Württembergische Vereinigung, Germany

Receives PRESIDENTIAL HONOR

German Adventist raises €62,000 to help others

Hans Birkel, an 89-year-old Seventh-day Adventist, was recently honored by the German president, Horst Köhler, at a special ceremony in Berlin.

At the event Birkel and his wife, Renate, met Köhler and Minister of Finance Wolfgang Schäuble, as well as other dignitaries. Birkel was honored for his fund-raising for charity, especially his work in the sale of charity stamps. Charity stamps are special-issue 55-cent postage stamps that are sold for 80 cents. The surcharge goes to an umbrella organization that distributes the money to official German charities.

Although Birkel began selling charity stamps in 1996 when he was 76 years old, he has collected €62,000, or US\$87,736. Birkel has collected for different charities since 1973, and his record is impressive. He's raised €127,000 (US\$179,717) throughout the years for many different charities. And while he was at it, he also raised €95,500 (US\$135,142) for Seventh-day Adventist charities. Altogether, Birkel has collected almost

€285,000 (US\$403,303) during the past 37 years.

Despite his 89 years, Birkel still leads an active and dynamic life. He is an avid swimmer as well as table-tennis trainer. Good health is not something he takes for granted.

His first contact with Seventh-day Adventists came in the early 1960s while he was working as a volunteer football trainer. One of the players often brought along his sister, an Adventist, to practices and matches. As he developed an interest in the young woman, Birkel also developed an interest in her religion. Bible studies soon followed and Birkel was baptized in 1961. The following year he married the young woman who had awakened his interest in the Adventist Church.

Through his church pastor Birkel was introduced to the activity that would become his passion. The pastor took Birkel along to solicit funds for a welfare project in 1973. Soon Birkel was knocking on doors himself. He even developed his own system. He noted every home and business that gave at least five deutsche marks (the German currency before the euro) and then he would visit the next year with a thank-you gift. Since 1995 the gift—a jar of homemade jam made by his wife—has become a highly prized commodity. While Birkel does the collecting, his wife invests time and labor for charity. In 2006 she made 1,300 jars of jam for her husband to distribute.

Asked why he has spent so many hours and years of his life collecting money for others, Birkel replies, "Since I have come to know Jesus and the Adventist message, I am so happy. This is my way of helping to lessen poverty and suffering and helping others to become happy. Perhaps it is even a way for them to get to know Jesus and the Advent message."

For Birkel every contact serves as an opportunity to witness about his faith. Talking about his faith comes naturally to him. While others may have felt self-conscious during the special city tour and state dinner Birkel was given as a result of his volunteer work, he saw it as an opportunity to speak to Germany's president and finance minister about his faith.

Coincidentally, this year a new set of charity mail stamps have been printed. For the first time they will carry a pleasant aroma. Buyers will be able to choose adhesives with an apple, strawberry, lemon, or berry scent. —

Translated by Chantal Klingbeil; edited by Klingbeil with Adventist World staff.



Top: PRESIDENTIAL HONOR: German president Horst Köhler (right) greets Seventh-day Adventist Hans Birkel

during a ceremony in Berlin. Throughout the course of 37 years Birkel has raised almost €285,000 (US\$403,303) for various charities, including Adventist relief efforts.

Inset: CHARITY STAMP: One type of Germany's 2010 charity stamps will now be scented to match the fruit depicted.

DEUTSCHE POST & GERHARD PADDERATZ



Is the Face of ADVENTISM Changing?

*How to apply eternal values
to our changing cultures*

By
JAN PAULSEN

For some, seeing the words “change” and “Adventism” within the same sentence is unsettling. Is our church changing? Does it look different, sound different, express itself differently, than it did a decade ago? two or three decades ago? And if there *are* differences, how should we relate to them?

The idea of change can be deeply troubling. We prefer that which we know—the comfortable, the familiar.

Yet whatever belongs to today is in constant flux—in a process of “becoming.” I encounter the inevitability of change when I look into the faces of my children and my grandchildren, or when I open a newspaper or log onto the Internet. I hear the certainty of change in the words of young Adventist professionals who speak to me about their dreams for their church. I see the force of change in the worship of African women who move and sing with joy as they walk into church. I experience the power of change as I worship with Adventist believers in China who have for so long been cut off from their worldwide church community, and who say to me: “Do we still belong? Are we part of the family?”

The illusion that we as a church can stand still while the rest of the world is in constant motion around us is just that—an illusion. Our church exists within the parameters

of time, geography, and culture, so it also must change. We are buffeted by external forces—political, economic, cultural, and technological realities—which are largely beyond our control. And there are internal forces for change, as well, that exist simply because of who we are: a family of 25 million men, women, and children; hundreds of cultures, languages, and nationalities blended together in Christ. Change comes because the community of Adventism is growing; it’s dynamic and it’s alive.

Is the face of Adventism changing? Yes, in some ways. Is this something to be feared, something to be resisted? I think not.

Walking Backward Into the Future?

While change is inevitable, our response isn’t. There are essentially two attitudes we can adopt. We can turn our faces toward the past, fix our eyes on the path along which we have already traveled, and attempt to walk backward into the future. Thus, we come to see all change as inherently disturbing, as somehow breaking faith with our spiritual heritage; almost apostasy. We ask each other anxiously, “What should we do?”

Alternately, we can turn around and face the future, with all its uncertainties and challenges. We can acknowledge the

WORLD VISTA

certainty of change and seek to harness its energy and creativity. The past becomes not a destination, but something that helps define our core identity and values, and points to where we are going; and in this way we carry the past with us into the future. The critical question now becomes: “How can we guide and channel these forces for change into that which is good for the church and its mission?”

I believe that an Adventism that has become frozen within a particular time or culture has lost its way. It can no longer respond creatively to challenges; it has lost its ability to adapt its methods, its structure, and the way it uses its resources to carry out its mission in a changing world.

(2 Tim. 1:13, 14, NIV); “Continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it” (2 Tim. 3:14, NIV). Paul is saying, “Take care of your spiritual inheritance. Understand what you believe, then take it with you into life.”

There are things that come to Adventism from our past that are “nonnegotiables.” These are our spiritual inheritance. They are not open to be reinvented or modified or relegated to a place of lesser importance. They are our birthright, the touchstones of our faith, which give us our identity and mission; and we must take them with us into the future.

We serve a Lord who is no champion of the status quo. The gospel of Christ is a gospel of transformation.

Listen to the words of Ellen White: “We cannot be accepted or honored of God in rendering the same service, or doing the same works, that our fathers did. In order to be accepted and blessed of God as they were, we must imitate their faithfulness and zeal,—improve our light as they improved theirs,—and do as they would have done had they lived in our day. We must walk in the light which shines upon us, otherwise that light will become darkness” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 262).

How do we “walk in the light which shines upon us”? How do we bring the ageless truths of yesterday with us into the realities of today?

It requires a mind-set that doesn’t fear change simply because it *is* change. It requires an ability to discern that which is transcendent—those unchanging values and truths that allow us to negotiate safely through a world of change.

Unchanging Truth

Anything that is alive experiences change—it will come irrespective of how you or I feel about it. But in acknowledging this, do we then let change run wild? Do we allow change to drive and determine itself within the life and witness of the church?

The apostle Paul, writing to Timothy, returns again and again to the need to safeguard truth. “Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care” (1 Tim. 6:20, NIV); “What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching.... Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you”

What are these constants?

First and foremost, Christ, as He comes to us out of history, and as we meet Him in Scripture. He is and will always be the One and only—the “Solid Rock.”

Second, Scripture itself, for this is the voice of God giving values and direction to humankind. Scripture tells us about the second coming of Christ, about His ongoing ministry of reconciliation and judgment, about how He made us and life on this planet, about His prophetic gift to the church—it’s a list we could expand to embrace each of our 28 Fundamental Beliefs.

Third, God’s purpose for each of us, as individuals; for the personal spiritual bond between myself and my Creator must exist before I can take my place as a member of the corporate body of Christ.

And finally, our shared history as a church; all that answers the question: “What is the purpose of Adventism; why did God call this movement into existence?”

These four constants are not “up for grabs.” They are not “maybe’s/maybe not’s.” They have meaning within every culture, and they are not diminished by the passage of time or by changing societal norms. They exist above and beyond the world of change. And within the framework of these constants we find a huge body of identifying values.

When we understand this, when we’re clear on the truths that we will live and die for, we have no reason to be threatened by change. We approach change from a position of strength and certainty.

Navigating a World of Change

I can understand Peter's awe and bewilderment as he witnessed the glory of the transfigured Christ. "Lord," he says. "Let's stay here—let's build three shelters on the mountaintop, one for You, Elijah, and Moses" (see Matt. 17:1-5). But Christ went back down the mountain and continued His ministry to humanity.

Adventism doesn't belong on the mountaintop either; it belongs to the communities in which we live and work, with all their untidiness and disorder and change.

In recent years I've become acutely aware of various pressure points for change within Adventism which come from many, many different sources. And I've become more conscious, also, of the need for me as a church leader to cultivate a nondefensive attitude toward change—to look at it for what it represents in practice; to test it against the constants of our faith as they come to us from Scripture.

Where will change test us?

Pressure for change will come to us from the political realm. The church must function within the environment where it's placed; it has little choice. In the West the church has few constraints. Yet in many places around the world the church must find ways to adapt to political realities without compromising that which it values highly as a faith community. In places where we can speak out freely, the voice of Adventism must be clearly heard—in a way that's free from partisan politics—on those issues that touch our core values: freedom and human rights, justice, care for our fellow human beings. Individual church members should also ask, "Can I, should I, be more involved in shaping the moral and social landscape of my community or nation? How can I do that? What can I contribute? Should I become politically engaged?"

Society's changing attitudes to human conduct and morality will also test us. In many places there's a public dialogue about the definition of marriage and the implications of this for society. How do we as Adventists relate to this? It's something we didn't need to struggle with 20 years ago. The church cannot and will not endorse changing moral attitudes that run counter to the clear injunctions of Scripture, even when these find provision within law. Could it impact the operations of our church? Perhaps. The church has to explore the delicate balance between being obedient citizens of the land and being fair-minded human beings, without coming adrift from our biblical values. These things are never easy, and yet they must be faced.

Change will continue to come to us through technology—especially communication technology and media. This is an area in which I believe Adventism must have an

attitude of engagement. Are we keeping current with the possibilities these new media present to us? Are we willing to harness new methods of communication in the hopes of reaching those slices of humanity—particularly young people—who are becoming increasingly selective about their sources of information?


Another area in which change presents itself to us is in worship patterns. We're a global community, and each one of us is a child of our own time and culture. It's natural that there will be variations in the format of worship, or the style of music, or the level of formality or spontaneity. We don't all necessarily sing to organ accompaniment! I have to be very careful that I don't automatically brand anything that isn't from my tradition as sinful, simply because it's different. In the same way, when I meet people—even within my own faith community—whose appearance does not quite match my expectations, let me not be too hasty in concluding that they're somehow coming adrift from the Lord. Let's be gentle with people, for when everything else is peeled away, it's *people*—not things, ideas, or cultural expectations—that Christ is going to save.

A nondefensive attitude to change is especially critical when it comes to the way we approach mission. There must be a flexibility—a suppleness—in our thinking that allows us to respond effectively to the changing environments in which we find ourselves. So mission initiatives and programs may change from year to year. The way we use our resources—our spending priorities—will change. Policies and structures shouldn't be servants of tradition—we shouldn't invest them with an aura of sacredness simply because "that's the way we've always done it." Instead, church policy should serve the unity of the church and its mission, and the language of policy should be shaped by the simple question: "What is it we need to accomplish and what is good for the church?"

Gospel of Change

We serve a Lord who is no champion of the status quo. The gospel of Christ is, at heart, a gospel of transformation—of radical change. Christ said: "Nicodemus, you have to be born again. What you are now is not enough. I will change you and make you into a new person." And in Revelation, Christ declares, "Behold, I make all things new."

Change will come. It will come because our church is vital and alive, and it will come because the world we belong to is constantly changing. We will test change against the constants of our faith. We will ask, "Does this unify us as a spiritual community? Does it further our mission?" And then we will walk into God's future without fear. ●



Sleep Apnea

By ALLAN R. HANDYSIDES and PETER N. LANDLESS

My husband has a peculiar sleep pattern. He breathes deeper and deeper, then stops breathing, only to start breathing again with a kind of *snort!* He then pants a bit, slowly settles down, and then repeats the pattern. I make him roll over, but I'm not getting a good rest myself. And he seems to be more irritable than he used to be. Do you think this kind of snoring could be helped by surgery?

Millions of people worldwide have sleep apnea.

What you have very nicely described is “sleep apnea.” This is a problem that’s becoming more common and may well be a reflection of the increased prevalence of overweight individuals among us.

Sometimes called “obstructive sleep apnea,” this is when the upper airway is narrowed, causing the respiratory muscles to work harder—but there are many more ramifications than that.

Millions of people worldwide have sleep apnea. It’s more common as the population ages, and more frequently

found in men—especially those who are overweight, smoke, have thicker necks, and possibly have more soft tissue in their nasopharyngeal area.

Sleep apnea is a factor in high blood pressure. The rise in blood carbon dioxide and the fall in blood oxygen tension may be involved in triggering vascular changes.

It’s well recognized that as a group, people with sleep apnea are more likely to have ischemic heart disease, cardiac rhythm irregularities, and heart failure in their ranks than a control population.

It’s not surprising that your husband may be more irritable, because he’s not getting proper rest—and neither are you. People with sleep apnea are often tired during the day, complain of headaches, and exhibit forgetfulness. Some males may notice sexual dysfunction, and should be carefully screened for hypertension.

Some people have had relief from what has been called “somnoplasty.” This is a surgery in which soft tissue at the back of the throat is removed. The procedure involves the uvula and the soft palate. It can bring benefits, but by far the most useful treatment

is something called CPAP. The letters stand for Continuous Positive Airway Pressure. A device that increases the pressure in the airway is used to hold the airway tissue open during sleep. This takes a little getting used to, but the patients readily adjust to the apparatus and soon learn to appreciate the benefits enormously. By reducing the fluctuations in oxygen and carbon dioxide levels, CPAP removes some of the underlying mechanisms that may predispose to hypertension and heart risk.

Of course, CPAP should not be viewed as the definitive treatment. Most people with sleep apnea would improve enormously if they lost weight. You do not mention your husband’s weight, but I would guess he is some 20 pounds overweight. If this is the case, help him by reducing portion sizes at mealtime and encourage him to eat nothing between meals. People who consume a lot of fat, as in red meat, cheese, and greasy food, can reduce calories by avoiding such items. Many eat a lot of bread, and reducing this also will help him lose weight. Recently, guidelines on sugar consumption were given that recommend no more than seven teaspoonfuls a day for women and nine for men. This is easily exceeded when one considers that many soft drinks, which really are only flavored sugar water, contain up to 11 teaspoons per serving.

Don’t forget to encourage exercise. Begin with walking regularly. This will help by improving metabolic efficiency.

We also suggest you visit your doctor; it sounds like your husband needs to be under active medical management. ●



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Casting a United VISION

*Daniel R. Jackson on
the trials and triumphs
of the church in Canada*

By
SANDRA BLACKMER



CANADIAN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE: The Adventist university in Alberta, Canada, experienced a 17 percent increase in student enrollment this past school year. **Top right:** ADVENTIST CHURCH IN CANADA PRESIDENT: Daniel R. Jackson

Adventist World assistant editor Sandra Blackmer recently talked with Daniel R. Jackson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada, at the Canada church headquarters in Oshawa, Ontario. The candid and informative interview spanned topics from U.S./Canada relations to the role of women in leadership to how Canada's official sanction of gay marriage is affecting the church. Jackson has served as president of the 60,000 Adventists who live and worship in Canada for the past eight years.

BLACKMER: Tell me a bit about yourself.

JACKSON: Well, I'm a Westerner. I was born in Edmonton, Alberta, spent my early life in Edmonton, and attended Canadian University College. I've pastored in Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, and overseas in Sri Lanka and India. I've also served as president of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan and British Columbia conferences, and was elected president of the Adventist Church in Canada in November 2001.

What's been your greatest challenge as president in Canada?

Canada is a huge country—8,000 kilometers, or 5,000 miles, from coast to coast. How to develop and infuse in the minds of our conferences and local members a united vision—I think that's been the greatest challenge. How do we sail this big ship in one direction? How do we infuse an evangelistic process, an evangelistic zeal, into the whole

country? I can't say we've succeeded in doing that, but we've moved in that direction.

What's unique about the work of the church in Canada?

Canada is happy to be part of the North American Division. There is no country that we are closer to—not only geographically but also in terms of brotherly ties—than the United States. But Canada is also a nation of its own. We must deal with national issues, and because of Canadian law we cannot apply certain policies that are applicable in the U.S. There's uniqueness to us based on national law and national characteristics that makes us very different. So we must always keep in mind the best interests of the church in Canada.

There's broad ethnic diversity across Canada. How do Adventists here incorporate this reality into witnessing and outreach?

I believe the simple answer is community involvement. In



Sandra Blackmer is an assistant editor of *Adventist World*.

Toronto [Ontario] we have 60 churches—there are some 400 congregations throughout all of Canada. Because Toronto is very multicultural with huge diversities, we have many ethnic congregations: Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Ghanaian, and more.

We have a 1,000-member church in Markham, in the greater Toronto area, called the Apple Creek church. It's primarily a West Indian church. One way they've witnessed to the community is through public awareness campaigns. They've been very active in the areas of health, community development, and so on. Their pastor, Mansfield Edwards—who recently was elected president of the Ontario Conference—actually became chaplain of the York Regional Police.

The Cornerstone church in Coquitlam, British Columbia—which has recently completed an amazing facility makeover—has a predominantly Caucasian membership but is situated in the middle of a very densely populated Chinese area. They've held cultural events, they have a day-care center, they rent the church facility to a Chinese community group. Community involvement is the key.

How much of an Adventist presence is there in the more remote regions of Canada?

We have a church in Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories. We have a congregation in Whitehorse in the Yukon. We have an established group in Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut Territory. Nunavut is the largest ice desert in the world. When the sun goes down in October, it doesn't come up again until March.

We also have two congregations meeting in Port Hardy, on the northern tip of Vancouver Island. One is a Native congregation. About 15 years ago, an American Adventist teacher from Oregon wanted to minister to First Nations people in Canada. The British Columbia Conference hired him as a taskforce worker in northern Vancouver Island. He spent a good part of his first year there just walking the streets of the area. He would pray with people, tell them that Jesus loved them. He became known as the "Jesus man." He was supported by First Nations Adventist folk up there. Today there's a beautiful church that's a testimony to the perseverance of that person's commitment to God. They built this church like a Native longhouse and have a congregation of about 55 people. The teacher and his wife have been adopted into the local tribe. It's a wonderful multicultural story in which an American is working in Canada together with Natives, or First Nations, and other Canadians to develop this beautiful congregation.

Are you ministering to First Nations people in other ways?

Yes. We have the Mamawi Atosketan Native School in Ponoka, Alberta, attended by about 180 day students in grades 1 through 12—and there's just one Adventist among

Top: NATIVE ADVENTIST SCHOOL: Mamawi Atosketan Native School in Ponoka, Alberta. **Inset:** A VITAL MISSION: Adventist teachers instruct about 180 day students in grades 1 through 12 at the church's Native school.



them. It's located on the edge of a reserve. The violence, drugs, alcohol, sex, gangplay in that area is incredible, but the school is making a huge impact.

Some of the students go home to no food, some to very violent situations. Many of the people in that community sleep in the basement. They won't sleep on the main floor of their houses because of the gunplay. So this school, an Adventist school, is ministering to these kids. It's a ministry in the trenches, on the front lines.

In what ways do you integrate and retain youth and young adults in the church?

Our university, Canadian University College (CUC) in Lacombe, Alberta, is a very positive influence across the country. If any group models and promotes the integration of young people into the church, it would be our college.

We also provide our conference youth leaders across Canada with funds and other resources for youth training events and national youth rallies. Integrating young people into the church is one of the largest challenges we have.

About 335 teachers instruct some 3,500 students in 48 Adventist schools throughout Canada, so do local members and pastors view Adventist education as a priority?

There's a mixed bag on that. Last June we conducted a national pastors' convention at CUC. The emphasis of that convention was Adventist Christian education, to encourage our pastors to become more actively involved in education, because education is a part of who we are. It's a teaching of the church. Some pastors are actively involved in our schools; in other areas, it's not that way. About 300 pastors attended the convention, and I would say one third of them had never before seen our college.

If an Adventist pastor says, "I don't believe in Adventist education," I have a real problem with that. There are too many issues at stake. The lives of our children, the spiritual foundation of our children, are far too important for us to place them into the hands of [a public school teacher] you don't even know. You may get a very fine teacher who respects your child's religious worldview; but you also may get one who doesn't. If your child is taught not to believe in the Creation story and becomes unsure that God even exists, try to reverse that when they're 18.

How do you envision the education picture will look 10 years from now?

We're trying very hard to get into the minds of our people how important Adventist education is. I'm not sure we're succeeding, because like elsewhere in North America our enrollments are declining—with the exception of our college. We had a 17 percent increase there.

So where do I see it going? I see us trying very hard to encourage our members to brush out those intellectual and spiritual cobwebs and ask, "In light of the fact that Jesus is coming, why would I deliberately, willfully, place my children into the hands of somebody who has no faith in God, no belief in God's intervention in human events? Why would I do that?"

We want our schools to be strong. We invest a significant portion of our budget in our schools and will continue to do so.

In 2005 Canada became the fourth country in the world to officially sanction gay marriage nationwide and now prohibits discrimination against sexual orientation. What was the response of the Adventist Church in Canada to this?

Canada is not a Christian nation. It's a secular, pluralistic society. When the issue of same-sex marriage started to grow in intensity, we became involved. Our legal counsel at the time, Barry Bussey [now associate director of General Conference Public Affairs and Religious Liberty], made presentations to the House of Commons Justice Committee. When Parliament sent the issue to the Supreme Court of Canada to have it decided, one of the 12 presenters was Bussey. We, of course, used the Bible, but because Christians aren't in favor in Canada, we didn't come at it from a strictly

biblical perspective. Our position was not to suggest to the judiciary that they couldn't do what they wanted in this regard, but that they maintain the rights of Canadians who choose not to participate either in the forming of same-sex marriages or in hiring practices. In other words, in a free and open society you can have a law that provides for same-sex marriage—but we don't *agree* with it. Don't penalize the person who does not choose either to practice it or promote it.

So Adventists in Canada still have the right to choose not to perform same-sex marriages and the right not to hire a person who practices a gay lifestyle as a teacher or a pastor?

Right, absolutely.

Where do you see Canada on the issue of women in church leadership?

Sadly, even though there are places where women are employed in ministry, I'm not seeing the level of openness I would like to see. There's reticence on the part of some members and leaders because they're concerned about the implications of hiring a female pastor. I don't see the problem so much in the educational system as in the pastoral ministry and in administrative roles.

Are there women serving as pastors in Canada?

We do have some, yes. Women primarily serve as associates, but there are a few female senior pastors.

It can depend on the culture of the local church and conference. No matter how talented and gifted the woman is, the people in leadership there must be committed to her success or they will be setting her up for failure.

As long as we have the attitude that somehow the gifting of the Holy Spirit happens only in relationship to gender, then we really are minimizing the power of the Holy Spirit—and we're also minimizing our work.

Is there anything you would like to add before we close the interview?

Everywhere I travel in Canada I see men and women who love Jesus with all their heart and who really want to serve Him. From three women in Newfoundland who have developed a small worship group in a nursing home to conferencewide involvement in outreach during the February 2010 Olympics in British Columbia, beautiful things are happening. People are reaching out to others in many ways—simple ways and sophisticated ways. There are wonderful stories of ministry.

We can always find negatives, but the reality is that there are way more beautiful than negative things happening in Canada. ●

To read a fuller version of the interview, go to www.AdventistWorld.org.

I visited a friend who had been discharged from the hospital. There was nothing else the doctors could do for him. He was dying of cancer that had slowly eaten his life away. A strict vegan and health enthusiast, he often wondered what he might have done wrong to deserve that painful experience.

Prior to this visit we used to talk about issues concerning salvation and health. He had run track in high school, and I had been running for a few years. Trying to steer his mind off his pain, I brought up the topic of running. He replied, "Chongo, running is the last thing on my mind right now."

I felt like Job's friends when they went to visit him. The best time Job had with them was when they sat silently for a week. I didn't know what sensible thing to say next. My friend rescued me by talking about his family. We then sang his favorite hymns, read from the Bible, and prayed for God's miraculous healing.

He died six days later. I was away, and when I returned I visited his wife to offer personal condolences. We reminisced about his life, especially about his zeal for God and how he never met a stranger. At the grave site she stated as she wept, "How I wish you were present at your friend's funeral."

Death Is So Final!

I heard her pain of loss as I fought back tears. She was angry and disappointed that he could die so prematurely, and I wish I could share her pain. But Nathan Brown is right: "Pain is the most isolating human experience. No matter how much we watch, read about, laugh at, or sympathize with the pain of others, pain itself is always a unique and isolated experience. There is simply no way our hurt, our sorrow, or our fear can be shared."*

Of all causes of human pain, death seems to be the worst. Wounds can heal. Relationships can be mended. Death appears so final. It reminds us

DEAN EDWARDS



Great Day Coming

God gives hope for the dark times

By
D. CHONGO MUNDENDE

that life on earth is short and uncertain. Sometimes we blame God for the death, even when we know He is not responsible for the pain and anguish we feel. We know that God understands our sorrows better than we do. He expresses His love through Jesus, “the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).

The major problem is that death engenders discouragement, the devil’s greatest weapon against humanity. Discouragement tends to rob us of the joy and hope in Christ in this life and of the assurance of eternal life to come. The greatest antidote to discouragement is Jesus. Therefore, when we become discouraged we should run to Jesus, fixing our eyes on Him because He is “the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2). God loves us

The good news is that death is not the final answer. The righteous dead will live again. “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess. 4:16-18). Yes, a time is coming when the dead will hear His voice and will come forth from their graves to life everlasting (John 5:28, 29).

We ought to share this good news with others until the day God calls us home. Jesus died so that we don’t have to die the second death.

Great Day Coming

The greatest anticipated moment in human history is about to happen. Jesus will return. On that day death will lose its power. Loved ones will be reunited, never to be separated again. That resurrection morning can’t come soon enough! On that wonderful day our nature will be transformed. The righteous dead will rise incorruptible and immortal (1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:15).

Evil will cease; this world as we know it will be restored to the original conditions God intended; every trace of sin and death will be erased; God will dwell with us and wipe away the tears from our eyes. Think of it: no more dying, no more mourning, no more crying, no more pain (Rev. 21:4).

And through the ceaseless ages of

Of all causes of human pain, death seems to be the worst.

beyond measure, sending His Son to die for us (John 3:16).

Yes, God loves us and doesn’t want any harm to come to us. “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:11). How I wish I could always remember this statement when I am discouraged!

Some Days Will Be Dark

“These things I have spoken to you,” Jesus said, “that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). And in the words of Paul, “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).

But death is the ultimate challenge—even to a believer. Especially when diseases such as cancers are involved, notwithstanding your struggle to live right. However, it’s comforting to know that Jesus also suffered. Therefore, we can surrender our lives, our problems, to Him. He is the great burden bearer.

If We’re Ever Tempted

If we ever begin to doubt God’s love, we need to visit Calvary. At Golgotha, feeling forsaken by God as the weight of sin enveloped Him, separating Him from His Father, Jesus stared death in the face. “My God, My God,” He cried, “why have You forsaken Me?” (Mark 15:34).

Jesus in His agony could not even address God as “Father.” But God the Father was there, indeed. Unable to bear the sight of His Son naked and humiliated, He had enshrouded Golgotha in darkness. He “who knew no sin” had become “sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:5).

Heaven stood in silence as it witnessed the forsaken Commander struggle to save a rebellious planet. He treaded the winepress alone (Isa. 63:3).

eternity, humans will enjoy blissful fellowship with God and with one another in perfect harmony.

Therefore, let’s not be overly troubled when we suffer loss (John 14:3). Compared to eternity, we have only a few more years to contemplate the ravages of death.

The old die; also the young. The poor die; also the rich. Non-Christians die; but Christians also. The ignorant die; but also the educated. However, in every case, death is painful, whether anticipated or sudden. I yearn for that beautiful land where there is no cancer, no accidents, no parting, no sorrow, no death. I don’t embrace death, but every time I lose someone, I am reminded of that great day coming. And each death brings me closer to that reality. ●

*Nathan Brown, “Crashing Alone,” *Adventist Review*, June 9, 2005, p. 31.



D. Chongo Mundende is a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Edmond, Oklahoma, U.S.A.

Looking FORWARD

By
KIMBERLY LUSTE
MARAN

It takes every one of us to make this church family work!

There are all kinds of churches: some are small, others very large. Some worship in grand buildings, others right under the trees! Some are stoic, others are close-knit and affectionate. For a church to be successful, however, no matter the size or place, members need to work together. By working together, congregations get things done, and members are happier because of it.

There are many different jobs that need to be accomplished in a church. For example, who makes sure the bills get paid on time? Who helps the children in Sabbath school? Who preaches the sermon? Who collects the offering? Who helps with community service? Who keeps the place neat and clean?

Each of these jobs is important in a congregation, and when they are done well, the church is usually a happy, loving place. And from time to time, church members meet to discuss ways to better serve the community and one another—uplifting the name of Jesus, sharing His message, and reflecting His love in the process. It is vitally important to the local church for members to talk with one another on all the issues impacting the church and its community.

Your local church is representative of the entire Seventh-day Adventist

Church. With more than 17 million baptized members (and many more who aren't baptized yet, but still attend church each Sabbath) the Adventist Church is one very big church family.

And just like the local congregation, the worldwide Adventist Church has all sorts of ministries—and meetings to ensure the ministries are working in the best ways possible. In order for it to serve God in its best capacity, and hasten Christ's return, the church must function well. The largest meeting in which the work of the church is discussed and planned is called a General Conference session. This assembly, which brings elected delegates from around the world together for almost two weeks of intense discussion and decision-making, occurs every five years in different locations able to accommodate extremely large crowds.

More than 2,400 delegates* are selected from all the church's 13 world divisions as representatives of the local conferences and churches. They review important plans and policies of the church and change, remove from, and/or add to the church's manual (a document containing information and instructions about the operation of the Adventist Church). They also elect leaders to serve in key church governance roles. A typical delegate will likely spend eight hours a day in business meetings and floor-related activities during the 10 days of the gathering. Similar to the point where a tossed stone enters a calm body of water, the decisions made at a GC session ripple out and affect every

ring, all the way out to the largest ring, the local church membership.

The General Conference leaders elected at the session serve by helping the 13 divisions with their tasks of bringing more people to Jesus and keeping the current church membership informed, cared for, and nurtured. This is no small task! Many of these leaders, who come from all around the world, work hard for their church, remembering the responsibility entrusted to them by those who elected them.

The most recent session convened in St. Louis, Missouri, United States, in 2005. This year the session will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, United States, from June 24 to July 3. About 50,000 people are expected to travel from all parts of the world to the session to worship on Sabbath and fellowship with brothers and sisters from around the globe. Church president



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magazine.



ALDEN J. HO



SNAPSHOTS OF THE 2005 SESSION:
 (Far left, top middle, top right) Those who attended the session were able to enjoy the pageantry and performances of members from around the globe during worship times. (Bottom middle) Delegates vote by raising cards during a business meeting. (Bottom right) The convention center's Internet Cafe featured quick connections and long lines.



ALDEN J. HO



Food *and* Lodging

Jan Paulsen says the GC session is more than just business. "A gathering such as this is usually described as a business session of the world church. But don't be misled by the word 'business.' At the heart of all that we will do, and all our decision-making, there is really only one objective: to better prepare and equip our church for the mission God has given us."

Everything the church does is ultimately for Jesus. He is our leader. Jesus wants us to tell others about Him. When people go to a GC session, it always reminds them a little bit of heaven because there are so many church family members there who love Jesus. They also wonder if that session will be the last one because they want Jesus to come soon. I hope so, don't you? 🍊

Nutritious vegetarian meals will be served for lunch and supper in the Georgia World Congress Center each day of the session, beginning with supper on Wednesday, June 23, and ending with supper Sabbath evening, July 3. Meals will be served only to those who hold meal tickets, which can be purchased each day at the congress center or in advance from the session's Web site: <http://gc.bigfoottech.com>.

Hotels closest to the Georgia World Congress Center have already been reserved for delegates and General Conference staff, so reserving a room may be a bit of a challenge. But the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) makes public transportation a simple way to get to the congress center. For hotel room availability, visit one of several online reservation sites (Expedia.com, Travelocity.com, Hotels.com, Priceline.com, etc.) and make your own reservations.

A number of the nearly 6,000 hotel rooms reserved for the event by the General Conference may still be available. For information, contact:
 ACVB Housing,
 233 Peachtree Street, NE., Suite 1400,
 Atlanta, GA 30303, U.S.A.,
 Phone: 866-413-5137
 E-mail: housing@atlanta.net

Or visit the session's lodging Web site: https://resweb.passkey.com/Resweb.do?mode=welcome_ei_new&eventID=1392308.

* According to the GC Secretariat, 2,488 delegates are registered for the session.

GETTING *Down* TO BUSINESS

Matthew Bediako and Larry Evans, secretary and under-secretary of the General Conference, respectively, have attended several General Conference sessions (Bediako since 1975, and Evans since 1985). *Adventist World* managing editor Stephen Chavez asked them to reflect on this year's session in Atlanta.

After all these years, what are your impressions of the session?

Bediako: The people—people from all over the world coming together and singing and praising God, “Jesus is coming again!” They are bound by their mission.

Evans: At my first session I was overwhelmed with the size and the diversity of the world church. Now, of course, it's even more evident.

What significant agenda items will be coming before the delegates at this year's session?

Bediako: We will hear a report from a commission that was appointed to study structures and services here at the General Conference. That will be significant.

Assuming this recommendation passes, General Conference associate directors will not be elected at the session; they will be elected at the first Annual Council following the session.

At our last session, we voted to assemble a committee to look at the *Church Manual* and make some changes. In a world church, sometimes if you give



Matthew Bediako

detailed examples, they become very hard to implement.

Evans: As Matthew said, this is a reorganization, not a revision, but some interesting items will be discussed.

One of them is whether or not we should ordain a church deaconess. We ordain others, but will we ordain a woman as a deaconess?

Another issue connected with the Church Manual and the General Conference Working Policy is the question of ascending liability. We want to protect the church from spurious attacks. We are a representative form of governance, and we don't plan to diminish that. But we have to make sure organization matters are cared for.

Please describe the process by which an item comes to the floor of the session.

Evans: An item that comes to the floor usually comes from another organization. An individual, for example, will



Larry Evans

express a concern—that will go to his local church. And that local church can refer an item straight on to the conference, who then forwards it to the union [conference], the division, then when it gets [to the General Conference] we have a number of committees. So when a *Church Manual* item comes, it will go to a *Church Manual* Committee, then to the Administrative Committee, which we call ADCOM.

From ADCOM, whether they be constitutional items or *Church Manual* items, or organizational items, they then go to various committees or administrative councils.

Items going to the General Conference session pass through the Annual Council, so there's a long process.

So theoretically, an item can be under discussion for several years.

Evans: Some of them definitely are. Some of them have been revised every

STAY *in* TOUCH

The 2010 General Conference session has its own Web site: www.gcsession.org. Weekly, and eventually daily, updates will appear there between now and throughout the session.

Delegates

year, and by the time it gets there it may look quite a bit different from when it was first brought in.

Bediako: Someone coming to the General Conference for the first time may wish an issue would come [to the floor] and everybody would have an opportunity to say whatever they want to say about it. But they have to understand that it passes through several committees, and it comes with scrutiny, Bible study.

If on the floor, somebody raises a question, he has the right. It will not be discussed right there; it will likely be referred to a committee that deals with it.

Evans: We have established a new session steering committee. Agenda items or questions that come up will be referred to this committee; then it can be brought back to the floor during the session, or, most likely, deferred to the next General Conference session, depending on the nature of the item. We want to listen to what people are saying, and hear God's voice behind it.

Bediako: We send materials to the delegates ahead of time so they will have an opportunity to read them, especially those whose mother tongue is not English. We will translate materials into four or five languages.

These General Conference sessions are not cheap; they are expensive. But it's worth the expense, bringing the world [church] together. It fosters unity within the worldwide family. 🍊

The selection of delegates for the General Conference session follows the formula outlined by the Constitution and Bylaws. These individuals are selected by the General Conference, divisions and division institutions, union conferences, and conferences. Included within each of these categories are denominational employees and lay members. Below is the number of delegates to this year's session in Atlanta by division:

East-Central Africa Division (ECD)	213
Euro-Africa Division (EUD)	137
Euro-Asia Division (ESD)	133
Inter-American Division (IAD)	393
North American Division (NAD)	270
Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD)	87
South American Division (SAD)	294
South Pacific Division (SPD)	113
Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID)	216
Southern Asia Division (SUD)	163
Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD)	174
Trans-European Division (TED)	146
West-Central Africa Division (WAD)	149
TOTAL	2,488

Faithful *and* True

The *Adventist Review*, sister publication of *Adventist World*, has been the official record of General Conference sessions since 1863. The *Review* records the names of delegates, reports from the nominating committee, official actions, devotional messages, news reports, and photographs taken at the session.

During the 10 days of the session the *Review* goes from being a weekly publication to publishing every day. Text and photos prepared in offices at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta will be transmitted digitally to the *Review* and Herald Publishing Association in Hagerstown, Maryland, printed overnight, and enough copies for those in attendance at the session are shipped back to the center in time for the morning meeting.

Copies of the *General Conference Bulletins* will be provided free to delegates and offered for sale to those who visit the exhibition hall. Subscribers to *Adventist Review* will receive the *Bulletins* as part of their subscription. The *Bulletins* will also be available online at www.AdventistReview.org.

I can still see her puzzled expression before me. Our church group was on a study tour in southern France where, for an entire week, we had been exploring the history of the Huguenots who were martyred for their Protestant faith. She had been our tour guide and was very knowledgeable in questions of history, religion, and culture. Even though she had been exposed to many Christian

stand why one day in the week would be different from the other days. That was the reason for the puzzled expression I remember so well.

I probably remember the look that she gave me because it hurt. I had to ask myself once again: “Are you just an odd religious outsider?” This was not the last time I would get this look as it is an expression often used by secular people who live in their own “relative”

parable of a buried treasure in a field. A hardworking farmer found the treasure while going about his business. It was a coincidental discovery. It was serendipity. Remember how the first Adventists discovered the Sabbath. It was a lot like the farmer in the parable. It was a serendipitous discovery of a biblical truth that through the ages had somehow been buried and lost. Our spiritual forefathers

NUMBER 20 **Finding** *The Sabbath as a sign of salvation*
GOD'S **Rhythm**
 By DENNIS MEIER

traditions through her work, she had remained an atheist. We had developed a wonderful friendship, and on the last day she wanted to know more about Adventists. We were a strange and noteworthy piece in her denominational collection. *What was so special about this Sabbath day?* she asked. *And why were we so stubborn and obstinate about such an unimportant side issue?* I tried to make it clear to her why Sabbath was so important and holy. I was not successful. She could not under-

world. But I also discovered something else: I remember her expression so well because I could understand it. I have grown up in this secular world; I went to school and have been molded by it. And in many areas of my life I live and think similar to the average postmodern person.

Tradition or Identity?

So do we Adventists keep Sabbath simply because it has become a tradition? God forbid! Or perhaps Sabbathkeeping has just become our Adventist trademark? What, then, is the relationship between tradition and identity? Has our understanding of truth gotten stuck in the 1900s? Fortunately, I believe that for the majority of Adventists Sabbath is not simply a tradition or an identity feature.

In Matthew 13:44 Jesus tells the

“bought” this treasure. Many of our brothers and sisters have paid and continue to pay a high price for the treasure of the Sabbath.

God's Rhythm

Music is an important part of human life. Rhythm is the currency of music, and, in a sense, the Sabbath is a rhythm of time that governs and moves every aspect of our lives. An orchestra or a band can play a song slow or fast. They can vary the tempo, but if you want to sing and clap with the music you must follow the rhythm with everything you've got. You know, it is all about timing.

Jesus uses the parable of the buried treasure as a metaphor for the kingdom of God or the gospel. Would it be a little far-fetched or completely out of context to compare the Sabbath to



Dennis Meier is pastor of the Grindelberg church in Hamburg, Germany. He enjoys making music and spending time with his wife, Gunda; daughter, Thandi (9 years); and son, Levi (6 years).

the kingdom of God? Or to put it another way: isn't the accusation often made against our Sabbath theology that it has been made a salvation requirement? Just to clarify this point: I do not believe that you have to keep the Sabbath in order to be saved. This is not Adventist theology. Salvation comes only through Jesus Christ.

Salvation and the Sabbath

Some Christians think that the only important issues are "salvation questions." But if we were to follow this logic then discipleship would become unimportant, as a disciple is someone who has already been saved and because of this begins to order their life around God's will. A disciple also consciously prays "your will be done" (Matt. 6:10) and then, after this prayer, is prepared to search for and then practice God's will. This brings us full circle back to salvation. Looking at Scripture, I believe that it is God's will that we enter into His rhythm. It is God's rhythm—not mine. I do not decide, as many Christians believe, on which day I should rest (as long as it is one in seven), but God decides. In theological terms this is called *righteousness by faith*. It says: not my will but

Your will. Not my method but God's method. Not my righteousness but Your righteousness, Jesus.

Two biblical events illustrate this concept vividly.

1. Genesis 2:2 indicates that God *rested* (literally: "sabbathed") and that He blessed and made the seventh day holy. How "old" was humanity at this point in time? Not even a day old as humans stepped onto the stage of life only on the sixth day. God's seventh day was the first complete day for humankind. What works of gardening or "multiplying" could the couple look back on? Absolutely none! On the first Sabbath day Adam and Eve enjoyed God's works and not their own. This is why the Sabbath is a symbol of salvation and righteousness by faith right from the beginning.

2. Then comes the giving of the law. Moses climbs the slopes of Mount Sinai and receives the Ten Commandments from God's hand. The Sabbath is there in the middle of the law. But isn't the real issue that God had first freed His people and that this act led to the covenant law? First came the Exodus, salvation, and then the laws characterizing the covenant. Again, *righteousness by faith*.

Back to our treasure buried in a

field. Jesus says that the treasure is a symbol of the kingdom of God. I believe that the Sabbath is also a symbol of the kingdom of God (though not God's kingdom itself). As baptism is a symbol that in itself doesn't save anyone but rather is a vivid demonstration, so the Sabbath is a sign of salvation in our time. And what is really fantastic is that regardless of culture, language, social status, or age time is the one thing that is fairly divided: 24 hours, 7 days, for everyone.

What would my tour guide have said to all this? She had skillfully described the faith of the Huguenots in the old historical sites, emphasizing that we can thank these martyrs for our freedom of religion and conscience—yet she perceived our Sabbathkeeping as a step back into the Middle Ages. She taught me that Jesus needs to be the first focus also in our Sabbath theology as one cannot understand what is important to a disciple when one does not know the Lord the disciple is following. The Sabbath is nothing without the Lord of the Sabbath. Instead of only telling people to keep the Sabbath, let our Sabbathkeeping become a bright advertisement of our redemption—and yes, feel God's rhythm in our life! 🍊

Sabbath

The beneficent Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people. Joyful observance of this holy time from evening to evening, sunset to sunset, is a celebration of God's creative and redemptive acts. (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Luke 4:16; Isa. 56:5, 6; 58:13, 14; Matt. 12:1-12; Ex. 31:13-17; Eze. 20:12, 20; Deut. 5:12-15; Heb. 4:1-11; Lev. 23:32; Mark 1:32.)

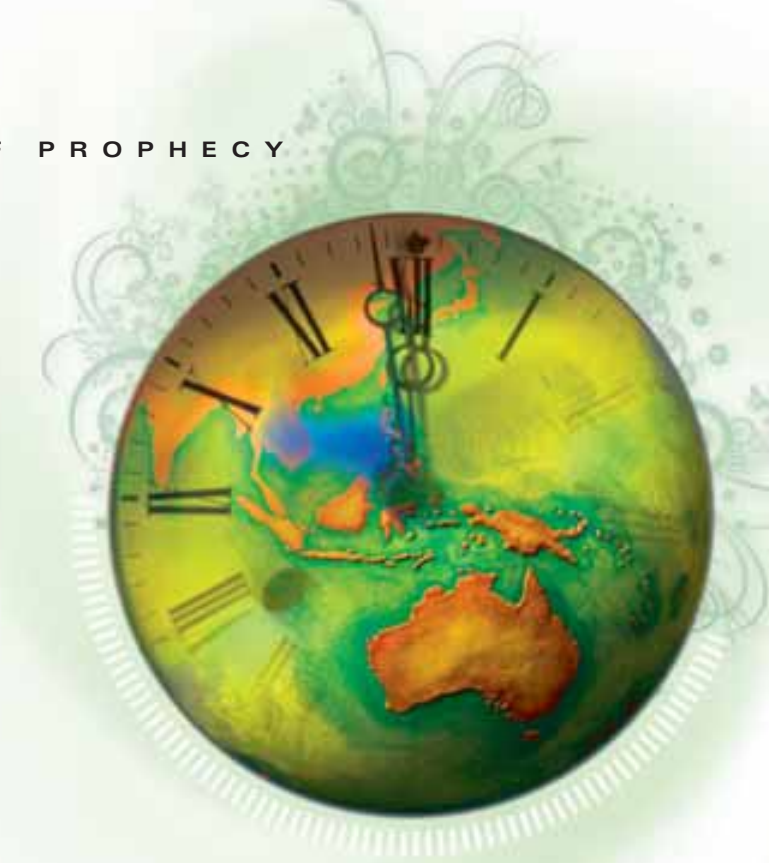
How much time does our world have left? Increasingly destructive natural and man-made disasters suggest that the end is near. And while we cannot know how much longer this world will last, we have a broad idea of future events from the writings of Ellen White. In this brief article we can touch on only some of them. So here are seven must-know facts about last-day events.

1. Since 1844 there is no need for time-based prophecies. The conclusion of the longest time prophecy in 1844 marks the beginning of the final period of earth's history. From this vantage point we can trace the outlines of final events, but we are warned that no new light will be based upon *definite or specific time calculations* of these events. The years since 1844 provide ample evidence in support of Ellen White's 1909 prediction that "great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones."¹ But she also lamented that Christ would have come already if the church had succeeded in doing the work God called it to do. His return is deferred "in mercy, because if the Master should come so many would be found unready."²

2. "Both our title to heaven and our fitness for it are found in the righteousness of Christ."³ A wrong understanding of the gospel may leave people unprepared for the future. Through confession and repentance the believer is brought into harmony with God and His law. True sanctification is a progressive work, having likeness to Christ as its goal. At the same time, we are given this assurance: "If you are right with God today, you are ready if Christ should come today."⁴

3. A false revival will sweep over the church, and genuine manifestations of the Holy Spirit will be ignored. The last-day message is designed to prepare a people for the Second Coming, but Satan will introduce an emotion-based counterfeit to draw minds away from the truths for this time. "We must not regard it as our work to create an excitement."⁵ "It is through the *Word*—not feeling, not excitement—that we want to influence the people to obey the truth."⁶

We are also warned that "we have far more to fear from within than from without."⁷ Satan will seek to unsettle people's confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy because he knows that he cannot have "so clear a track to bring in his deceptions and bind up souls in his delusions if the warnings and reproofs and counsels of the Spirit of God are heeded."⁸



Time

By CLINTON WAHLEN

to GO

Seven must-know facts about last-day events

4. We must be sanctified by obedience to the truth and have a clear knowledge of Christ's judgment ministry in order to survive the shaking. Satan seeks to divert our minds from Jesus so that we become preoccupied with worldly pursuits and pleasures. Soon, "the mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. . . . Satan will sorely harass the faithful; but, in the name of Jesus, they will come off more than conquerors" through obedience to the truth.⁹

On the other hand, many Adventists will renounce their faith: “By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side.”¹⁰ Ellen White even states that “the church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall,”¹¹ and that the majority of Christ’s true followers are in Babylon. “Thousands upon thousands will listen who have never heard words like these,”¹² notwithstanding that “by the vast majority they will be disregarded.”¹³

5. The final, glorious proclamation of Revelation 18 is a revelation of God’s character of love. As the end approaches, the witness of God’s people “will become more decided and more powerful.”¹⁴ “The last message of mercy to be given to the world is a revelation of [God’s] character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them.”¹⁵ Their faces will shine, “miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers.” Satan also will work—with “lying wonders”—and “thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand.”¹⁶

6. Whether a person receives the seal of God or the mark of the beast, the decisive factor is loyalty. The mark of the beast is “the sign of submission to earthly powers,”¹⁷ while the seal of God is for those remaining loyal to the divine authority. Although no one has received the mark of the beast yet, people will receive it not merely because they ceased “work with their hands on Sunday,” but because “with their minds ... [they] acknowledge Sunday as the Sabbath.”¹⁸ Those who receive the seal of God will be protected in the time of trouble and will “reflect the image of Jesus fully.”¹⁹

Once “all who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts” have been sealed, Jesus’ intercession ceases, probation closes, and the sins of God’s people are blotted out.²⁰ “The coming of Christ does not change our characters; it only fixes them forever beyond all change.”²¹ There is no need for any “second probation,” because any who persistently resist the conviction brought by the Holy Spirit would “never be convinced” anyway.²²

7. The latter rain will be more abundant than the early rain and helps prepare God’s people to stand through the time of trouble. Employing the biblical imagery of the harvest, Ellen White explains that “the ripening of the grain

represents the completion of the work of God’s grace in the soul. By the power of the Holy Spirit the moral image of God is to be perfected in the character. We are to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ.”²³ Especially during the time of trouble, Jesus notes every difficulty His people face, and even “the prison will be as a palace.”²⁴ But the wicked “have never trained the mind to love purity ... and now it is too late. A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven. Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire.... Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God.”²⁵

Ellen White often sought to draw people’s minds to the glories of heaven and the new earth. The reward of the righteous, she wrote, “will be known only to those who behold it.... On those peaceful plains, beside those living streams, God’s people, so long pilgrims and wanderers, shall find a home.”²⁶ Even then and there, the more we learn of God, the greater will be our admiration of His character and the more knowledgeably will we be able to testify that “God is love.”²⁷

¹ Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1992), pp. 11. Note that undocumented ideas in this article are also drawn from this important compilation.

² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁶ *Ibid.*, emphasis in original.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁸ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1980), book 1, p. 48.

⁹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948), vol. 5, pp. 81, 82.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1950), pp. 608.

¹¹ White, *Last Day Events*, p. 180.

¹² White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 606.

¹³ Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1967), p. 343.

¹⁴ White, *Last Day Events*, p. 201.

¹⁵ Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1941), pp. 415, 416.

¹⁶ White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 605.

¹⁸ White, *Last Day Events*, p. 224.

¹⁹ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings of Ellen G. White* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1945), p. 71.

²⁰ White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 613, 614.

²¹ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 466.

²² White, *Last Day Events*, p. 237.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 266. See also p. 277.

²⁵ White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 543.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 675.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 678.



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Left: Sung-Hun Choi. **Right:** HANDS LIFTED HIGH: Church members, suffering the effects of leprosy, at Youngshinwon church



Touching *the* Unto

Sung-Hun Choi—an Adventist pioneer

It was September of 1957. After a hot summer the harvest season had finally arrived. The rice was getting ripe in the fields and the chestnuts were becoming mature in the mountains all around. Although the fields had been devastated by the Korean War—even that could not impede the coming of the harvest season. Most Koreans, exhausted from hunger and war, were hopeful of a bountiful harvest.

Meeting the Untouchables

The day following the Chusok festival (a traditional harvest-moon festival), a group of strange-looking people visited the Hadong Seventh-day Adventist Church, located in the southern part of the Korean peninsula. Sung-Hun Choi, the church pastor of the Hadong congregation, was afraid to meet them because they looked severely disfigured. Fingers were in a fearful state of decomposition, eyebrows had fallen out, and serious skin




OFFICIAL BUSINESS: Sung-Hun Choi (center) with his wife and M. V. Campbell, a former vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

lesions were visible. The visitors were from the leper colony nearby. In fact, the sight was so revolting that he couldn't even look directly at them.

Choi, however, was passionate for God's work. When he got an invitation from the lepers to come and preach God's message, he made a decision to work for them. "I couldn't refuse their invitation because I saw their looks of appeal. I found that they really longed for God's message and heavenly hope," he confessed. This meeting was to be a providential encounter for Choi, as he decided to focus his ministry on people suffering from leprosy for the rest of his life.

Japanese authorities. It was the hardest experience for Korean Adventists. They couldn't meet in their own churches. Church leaders were scattered in all directions. However, some pastors decided to stick it out and watched over their churches and church members. They formed secret churches that gathered together to worship and pray. At Jangmae-ri, near Pyongyang, Choi established a secret church and held regular meetings every Sabbath. One Sabbath morning policemen came to the village in search of the secret church. The Sabbath school lesson had just finished. Choi sent the church members back to their homes as soon as he heard

of ignorance and prejudice he could not be close to them at first. Even though he would shake hands with his leper congregation after worship he thought it was impossible to eat together in their houses. He was afraid of becoming infected. One day a leper couple invited him to eat with them in their humble home as a token of their appreciation. He knew that if he declined the invitation with some excuse, they would be disappointed and turn away from Christianity because they were new believers. Even though he was afraid, he knew he should show them God's love as a pastor. He accepted the invitation and shared a special meal with them. From that time on he felt that he had become a real pastor to the lepers. He became a kernel of wheat to the lepers in Korea, providing not only much-needed resources to this forgotten community, but also sharing practically—through his ministry and personal involvement—their pains and joys.

Choi ministered for 40 years as a pastor. Most of the time he worked to take care of the lepers at Youngshinwon in Hadong, Aejuwon in Chungmu, Sosaengwon in Iksan, and in other places. He built many churches, training centers for the children of lepers, and old age homes for the aged lepers. After retiring officially from the ministry, he continued with the same passion until the end of his life. God surely used Pastor Choi to open a window of mission to his fellow Adventists in Korea and beyond. He was a wonderful man of God and is remembered by Korean Adventists as the saint of the lepers. He truly touched the untouchables. 

untouchables

By KUK-HEON LEE

Saved by a Miracle

Sung-Hun Choi was born in a tiny Korean village on February 3, 1913. It was nine years after the three angels' messages had been introduced to Korea, a small Asian country whose economy was—at that time—nearly exclusively dependent on agriculture. Like most of his neighbors, he lived in poverty since this was during the Japanese occupation and times were hard. Blessed with a strong independent spirit and sincerity, he overcame many trials and tribulations and as a young man made important choices. It was during this time that he became an Adventist. In 1940, when he was 27 years old, he was baptized at a local Adventist church and became a colporteur and lay pastor during the troubling years of World War II.

Hard Times

In 1943 the Korean Adventist Church was officially dissolved by the

of the police officers' approach. He waited for the police with anxiety, after hiding all the Bibles and hymnals. But nobody came to the secret place. The police just retreated from the village. God had used a village leader who had persuaded them to give up searching for the Adventists in the village. Thanks to his persuasive intervention the policemen had gone back, and Choi passed through another crisis untouched.

A Breakthrough and a Life Mission

In 1954 Sung-Hun Choi became a full-time pastor. After graduating from Korean Union College he went to Hadong as a church pastor and worked hard to preach the three angels' messages in this area. Around that time he met the lepers from the leper village near Hadong. This encounter changed his life, and he served lepers from that moment until the end of his life. However, this was not an easy task. Because



Kuk-Heon Lee ministers as a chaplain and professor at Sahmyook University, Korea. He

received his graduate degrees from Newbold College and Sahmyook University and is a specialist in church history.

QUESTION: Please explain the meaning of the purification mentioned in Hebrews 1:3.

The text reads: “After [the Son] had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”* The verse combines two elements: Cleansing and exaltation, but it does not specifically state how the purification happens. In order to clarify the text, let’s examine two other passages where those elements are also present, then explore the significance of purification in Hebrews.

1. *Cleansing and Sacrifice:* Notice these two passages: “But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God” (10:12). “[Christ] endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (12:2). The first passage reads “one sacrifice for sins” instead of the “purification for sins,” thus clarifying its meaning. The second one establishes that the sacrifice was Christ’s death on the cross; He made purification for sin in the sense that He offered Himself as a sacrificial victim. The cleansing/atonement sacrifice was offered once. In His exaltation He continues to officiate as our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary (8:2). This work is directly connected to our cleansing from sin.

2. *Cleansing and the First Covenant:* It is through Christ’s sacrifice that the sins committed under the first covenant were finally forgiven: “Now that [Christ] has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant” (9:15). According to Hebrews the sins committed under the first covenant needed cleansing because the blood of bulls and goats could not remove sin or purify sinners. The sacrifice of Christ legitimized the cleansing performed in type under the first covenant. This was a cleansing of sins committed under the old covenant as transgressions of the covenant law. This retrospective effect of the cleansing power of the sacrifice of Christ is not unique to Hebrews; it is implied elsewhere in the New Testament (cf. Rom. 3:25; Acts 17:30).

3. *Cleansing of Believers:* The purification of sin through the sacrifice of Christ is effective today for those who believe. The cleansing power of the cross now applies to

those who find in Christ their Savior and heavenly High Priest: “The blood of Christ ... [will] cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” (Heb. 9:14). All are called to repent from their dead works (6:1) and are assured that they will experience purification through Christ. This present cleansing is an intrinsic part of the intercessory work of Christ at the right hand of God (7:25), and addresses not only our past sins but also the nondeliberate sins committed during our Christian pilgrimage (10:26). In that journey we must

“throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles” (12:1). Through the power of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, where He bore the sins of many (9:28), our sins are forgiven by God. In the Israelite system this was represented through the daily services. The sacrifice of Christ and His mediation fulfill the typological significance of the daily services.

4. *Cleansing of the Heavenly Sanctuary:* The cleansing power of Christ’s sacrifice also has a future expression, represented in the cleansing ritual of the Day of Atonement: “It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these” (9:23). This passage clearly presupposes a typological interpretation of the Day of Atonement. By referring to the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, the apostle is pointing to the consummation of the cleansing effectiveness of the death or sacrifice of Christ that will result in the vindication of God and His people, and in the consummation of their salvation at His second coming (9:28).

This cleansing also looks forward to the establishment of God’s eternal kingdom (12:28) and to the moment when all the enemies of Christ will “be made his footstool” (10:13; cf. 2:14), that is to say, when He fully and finally defeats them. This executive judgment “will consume the enemies of God” (10:27) in the final cleansing of the universe from the presence of sin and evil powers.

*All scripture quotations in this article are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV)*.

Cleansing and Exaltation



By
ANGEL MANUEL RODRÍGUEZ

Angel Manuel Rodríguez is director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference.



CREATION

and End-time Truths

By
MARK A. FINLEY

Creation is one of the most vitally important truths in all Scripture. Our understanding of Creation impacts and influences our understanding of the entire Bible. In this lesson we will study the importance of Creation as it relates to other Bible truths.

One of Satan's great delusions at the end-time is to deceive God's people on the subject of Creation, and distort their understanding of many other basic Bible truths. The devil is a deceiver and a liar. His lies regarding Creation carry with them seeds of error that make the entire Bible, in the eyes of some, no more than a book of myths and fables.

1. How were we originally created?

"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27).

Each one of us is created in God's _____.

Sin has defiled the image of God in the entire human race. Our sins have separated us from God (Isa. 59:2). Our natures are fallen (Jer. 17:9). But through His Holy Spirit, the heart of a loving God longs to re-create His image in us.

2. What promise does our Lord give to those who commit their lives to Him?

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Write the meaning of this promise in your own words:

If God did not create us in the first place, He cannot re-create us. If God did not have enough power to make the world in the beginning, He certainly does not have enough power to transform our lives. We can thank God that all His creative power is available to re-create us into His image.

3. Throughout the Bible God is called the Creator of the heavens and the earth (Isa. 40:28; Eccl. 12:7; 1 Peter 4:19). If He did not create the world in the first place, what hope do we have that God will re-create new heavens and a new earth? Read the two passages below and share in a single sentence what they mean to you.

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind" (Isa. 65:17).

"Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).



4. Is there anything impossible for God to do?

“It is impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18).

It is _____ for God to _____.

The book of Genesis begins with these words: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). If the very first words of the Bible are not true, then we cannot have confidence in any of the Bible. Thank God they are true; for God cannot lie.

5. What does the psalmist say regarding the truthfulness of God’s Word?

“The entirety of Your word is truth” (Ps. 119:160).

“Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven” (Ps. 119:89).

The psalmist declared God’s Word is _____ and it is _____ in heaven.

The opponents of God’s Word cannot change the fact that it is true and settled in heaven. No so-called “scientific theories” can alter the truthfulness of the Bible.

6. Why is God worthy of our worship and supreme allegiance?

“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created” (Rev. 4:11).

God is worthy to be worshipped because He _____ all _____.

The seventh-day Sabbath is God’s eternal sign of His creative authority. If He did not create the world then the Sabbath has no meaning at all. The fourth commandment commands us to “Remember the Sabbath” (Ex. 20:8). Satan would love to destroy the Sabbath by introducing the deception that God is not the Creator. But whenever we worship God on the seventh-day Sabbath, we declare our allegiance to our Creator God.

7. How is God’s last-day message for this planet linked to the Sabbath commandment?

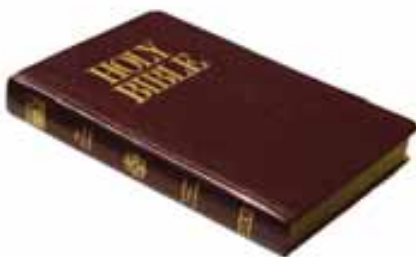
Revelation 14:6-11 pictures three angels flying in the midst of heaven. The first angel says with a loud voice: “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (verse 7).

In light of God’s final judgment, whom does this first angel call us to worship?

We are to worship Him who made _____ and _____.

The last battle in the long-standing controversy between good and evil is over the commandments of God. The Sabbath, the symbol of Creation, is at the center of the conflict.

Our loving Creator can re-create our hearts. One day He will create a new heaven and a new earth. Each week, as we worship Him on His Sabbath, He reminds us of our worth in His sight. Creation is the eternal truth that reminds us He can still work miracles in our lives and that His Word is true to every generation.



Next month’s study,
“**Eden’s Echoes of Eternity**,”
will examine our weekly legacy
from creation.

LETTERS



What Sacrifice

I was impressed with the article by Thurman C. Petty, “What Have We Done?”

(December 2009), and the compelling picture of Jesus, Creator of the universe, caring about us in this little corner of the universe called Earth. In fact, God loved us, long before Creation, with a love that we will not fully understand until eternity. Love infinite, immeasurable—the love of our beloved Master, Jesus!

ROBERTO DEIRÓ
São Paulo, Brazil

Gratitude

Thank you for listing the farming industry first in the editorial “Open-hearted Listening” (December 2009). So many times people list professions such as doctors, lawyers, CEOs, and say “even farmers.” I am a retired farmer, and it was a constant irritation to be at the tail end of such a listing. Your listing was of working people, and I appreciate it very much.

Thanks again. May God continue to bless the entire magazine.

JIM GRUBBS
*Hickory Corners,
Michigan, United States*

Heart Transplant

I find it important that Creation is brought to our attention once again, as accepting a creative God is very important. This was nicely explained in the article “Creation Wonders” (John T. Baldwin, Leonard R. Brand, Arthur Chadwick, and Randall W. Younker, August 2009).

The four reasons quoted in the paragraphs titled “Special Creation and Other Biblical Doctrines” are important and nicely formulated. But I missed a very important fifth reason: God also wants to re-create our heart.

We talk about Creation in the past and look to the new Creation in the future. Sabbath is the link between those two times of Creation. But in between God is willing to create in us a new heart, or re-create our old, hard heart. Creation means instantaneously. Many Christians think that a new heart is no longer created by God, but that we evolve into a better being. This is a wrong interpretation of what the Bible tells us and shows that even when accepting the seven-day Creation week, we can still be evolutionists in our own hearts.

Many honest Christians struggle with sins they cannot get rid of. They want to evolve to a better human, yet sin is sin. Everybody has weaknesses that ultimately may lead to sin; and yes, we evolve to a better human as step by step our personality is polished by God. But struggling again

and again with one specific sin makes us wonder why this is so. Do we still believe in a creative God able to re-create us in such a way that we are saved from our weaknesses? If we ask our Creator, might He re-create our weakness into a strength? Are we truly creationists?

JOHAN VANBRABANT
Zwevegem, Belgium

Magazine Appreciated

I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I appreciate your publishing encouraging experiences of people in search of God’s Word. I am touched with the samples of *Adventist World* I have read so far.

I am a Kenyan by nationality and an Adventist, too. I am in my first year of Dalian Medical University in China. It’s very difficult to find a Seventh-day Adventist church here, so I am requesting that you send me words of encouragement. I will share any messages with my friends so we can start our own Sabbath school.

CALVIN
Liaoning, China

“Do we still believe in a creative God able to recreate us in such a way that we are saved from our weaknesses?”

—JOHAN VANBRABANT
Zwevegem, Belgium

LETTERS

I am currently living in the East-Central Africa Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is great to always receive the *Adventist World* magazine. I commend the work that the team goes through to make sure we get it.

I continue to keep track of how the magazines have been of great help to a lot of people. I don't know about the other parts of the world, but I have been to eight African countries, and young people in Africa are the majority of readers of *Adventist World*. The Adventist youth are always ready to read about anything that can improve their livelihood and help them achieve more in life. It seems the church does little in empowering young people in Africa. I might be wrong, and if I am, I am open to correction.

An example was July 2009 in Geneva, Switzerland, where the Adventists and the World Health Organization (WHO) had a health conference. The

topic was "Including Young People's Participation in Health Decisions," and among the panelists, not one youth was represented, even though young people were sponsored to that meeting. I spoke, and it was noted. But it is not enough for this to be noticed, but really worked on.

Every country I travel to in Africa I look for an Adventist family to stay with, and I talk extensively with the youth in the church. They are wonderful people with passion for the Lord.

Please keep up the good work. I pray that you will continue to find funding for this great magazine so that in Africa and beyond we will always be edified by the Word of God.

TEMYLADE AYO ALADEOKIN
East-Central Africa

Inspiration

Can I purchase copies of this magazine to be distributed in my local

church? The content of *Adventist World* is superb. The copies we receive for the church elders have been received with much enthusiasm and pleasant surprise because of the work of our church throughout the world.

MARCOS DE OLIVEIRA
Maceió, Alagoas, Brazil

Unfortunately, at the present time Adventist World in South America can be obtained only through a subscription to Revista Adventista. But you can read it online in various languages—including Portuguese—at www.adventistworld.org. For other languages, once you are on the Web page, please click on the upper right window and choose any language of your preference.

Letters Policy: Please send your letters to the editor to: letters@adventistworld.org. Letters must be clearly written and to the point, 250-word maximum. Be sure to include the name of the article, the date of publication, and page number with your letter. Also include your name, the town/city, state, and country from which you are writing. Letters will be edited for space and clarity. Not all letters submitted will be published.



THE PLACE OF PRAYER

I thank God for the prayers you offered concerning my school. I was able to study a business course with full sponsorship. Please pray for my spiritual life and for my family so that the Holy Spirit may reside in our hearts and Jesus be the leader of our lives.

PATRICK, *Zambia*

I am a graduate from the University of Liberia. I am hoping to have my second degree in theology, but in my country we do not have any Adventist university or college. Pray that I may find financial help for my goals.

REMSEE, *Liberia*

I am a literature evangelist and need the Lord's continued favor and blessing on my work for Him. I know your prayers will help. Keep up the good work for Jesus!

PATTIE, *United States*

I am so glad to inform you about my job. God answered our prayers. Thanks again to all the members of the prayer group. My office may reduce staff so no one is certain what is going to happen, but I do have a contract extension to April 2010. Our God holds the future. Please pray for me that I may continue working. Greetings to the whole team and I wish you a Happy New Year.

HENRY, *Uganda*

I am pleased to let you know that your prayers have taken me to a certain level of certification in education, so thank God for your assistance to me. I still beg you to pray for me, that I may continue working hard.

JOSIYA, *Malawi*

I would like to pray for God to open doors so I can study medicine. I'd like to be a missionary.

PEDRO, *Paraguay*

The Place of Prayer; send to prayer@adventistworld.org. Send us your prayer requests and praise (thanks for answered prayer). Keep your entries short and concise, 75 words maximum. Items sent to this category will be edited for space and clarity. Even though we will pray for each entry during our weekly staff meetings, not all submissions will be printed. Please include your name and your country's name with your entry. You may also fax requests to: 1-301-680-6638; or mail them to *Adventist World*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600 U.S.A.

“Behold, I come quickly...”

Our mission is to uplift Jesus Christ, uniting Seventh-day Adventists everywhere in beliefs, mission, life, and hope.

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EXCHANGE OF IDEAS

Mangos in Heidiland

*In an absurd world,
God's people can still
come together*

As the scenic train works its way up into the heart of the highlands in the central Alps region, I take a minute to take a second look at my first-class carriage companions. At my right there is a couple of Japanese newlyweds. Next to them is a Pakistani man, and then a bunch of talkative English grannies. Or so they seem. I would love to ask them: “Where are you from, people? What are you doing up here? What are you looking for?”

Then I take my eyes off them and the captivating mountain landscape to focus on my bottle of cold mango juice. As I drink, I read the nutrition facts (as usual, too many calories), but there is a phrase at the bottom of the label that catches my eye: “Made in Switzerland”—it says in three of the four official languages of that country—“from mangos from India and Peru.” Mangos from India and Peru? Anonymous hands thousands of miles apart picked up the fruit and took it to some facility with export permits that eventually is allowing me—a South American sojourner up in the Alps—to enjoy a bottle of sweet Swiss-made mango nectar.

A moment later my mind moves away from the mangos to think of my American jacket made in Sri Lanka with Australian leather, and my hand towel made in Honduras with Egyptian cotton. What kind of world is this? What kind of world are we living in, where we can sip a bottle of juice made with fruit from two hemispheres but not get to know our next-door neighbor? How can we account for such absurdity? How could we ever start bridging such a gap?

A couple of days later I am at sea level again, ready to spend the Sabbath hours with brothers and sisters unknown. As I sit in church, a young man is welcoming everyone from the pulpit. “Our members come from many different nations,” he says, and starts naming their native countries. After mentioning more than a dozen, the worshippers begin helping him by voicing the ones he overlooked.

“I apologize in case I forgot some of you,” he says. “But no matter where you come from, here we are family,” he adds emphatically. Seeing his smile, I believe him. A moment later all of us raise our voices to praise Jesus.

I leave the church in high spirits. The gap is wide, but there is an opening when God's people gather to praise His name. And I know it is an opening that ultimately will take His followers to a place where people from every nation will meet to enjoy, among a thousand other goodies, the sweetest mango juice ever made.

—MARCOS PASEGGI, *lives in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada*



The PEOPLE'S PLACE

JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

We are looking for brief submissions in these categories:

Adventist 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)

Where in the World? (high-quality photos of members from around the globe)

Please send your submissions to The People's Place, *Adventist World*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; fax: 301-680-6638; e-mail: marank@gc.adventist.org. Please include phone number. Submissions will not be acknowledged or returned.

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS THIS?



SUBMITTED BY RADNEY REMO

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“Creating a positive attitude in others is a profitable investment.”

—Arni Holm (deceased), who worked for the church most of his life as a teacher, principal, pastor, and psychologist in the United States and Iceland; submitted by his wife, Soley Holm

ADVENTIST LIFE

At a recent academy (high school) homecoming, a former staff member was the weekend speaker. He told of arriving on

campus, fresh out of college, hired to be the math teacher. When the principal told him that one of the classes he would be teaching was geometry, he objected. In acquiring his math degree the teacher had somehow never taken a class in geometry. Advanced algebra—yes. Calculus—yes. Trigonometry—yes. But geometry—no. In spite of

his sputtering objections, he ended up teaching geometry.

He told of managing to keep one day ahead of his students. One day a student said to him, “My, I wish I knew as much about geometry as you do!”

To which the instructor replied, “You will tomorrow.”

—Phyllis Roehl, Lincoln, Nebraska, United States



TIM AND ANNETTE GULICK

ANSWER: In Taoyuan, Taiwan, members of the Taoyuan International Fellowship Seventh-day Adventist Church pose for a photograph after the Sabbath morning worship service.