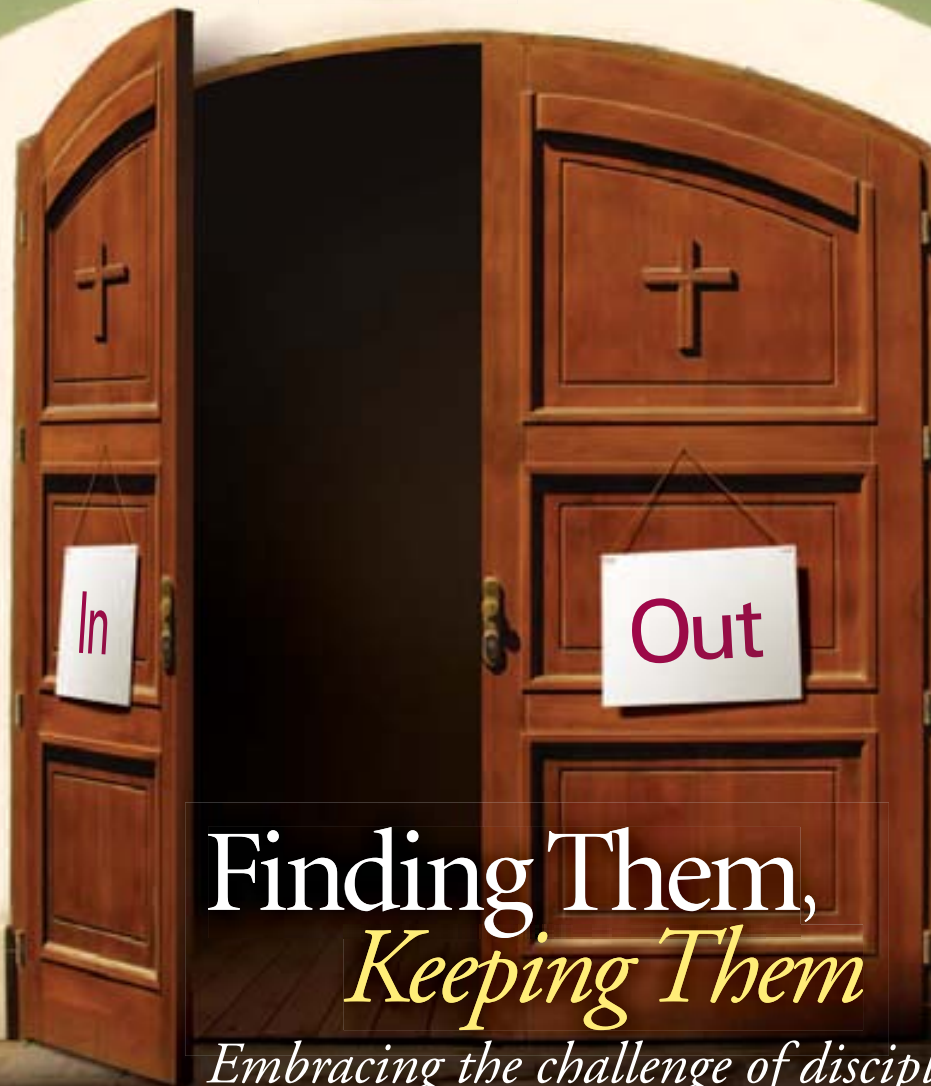


December 2012

ADVENTIST WORLD



Finding Them, *Keeping Them*

*Embracing the challenge of discipling
new members*

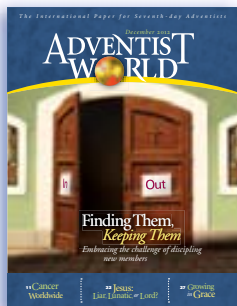
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ADVENTIST WORLD

December 2012



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An Act of Imagination

Try this experiment:

Imagine for a moment that all of your relationships with fellow Adventists were suddenly erased, leaving no residue of memory or comfort.

Imagine that no familiar smiles greeted you at church, no one spoke your name, and no one put an arm around your shoulder with affection.

Imagine that no one invited you to share a meal, or asked about your family, or laughed with you at life's little oddities.

You are now beginning to see the church as the newly baptized sometimes see it—a formidable structure of vital truth but thin relationships, a “fellowship” organized around high ideals and even higher expectations, but one their hearts find difficult to love. Little wonder, then, that a painfully large number of those who follow Jesus into the waters of baptism are somewhere else within a year—convinced of truth, but missing the human warmth that makes church more than doctrine.

Now try this experiment.

Imagine for a moment that you are standing at the doorway of your church, standing where Jesus would stand, wrapping all whom God is calling into the warmth of His embrace.

Imagine giving your name—and your heart—to “strangers,” asking them to share a meal in your home, listening to their stories of how grace conquers pain.

Imagine introducing them to your friends, opening doors that someone once opened for you, building networks of both prayer and playfulness.

This month's cover feature opens up one of Adventism's most challenging dilemmas—how to welcome and hold the many whom the Spirit is moving into this end-time remnant faith. Like me, you'll probably wince a bit as you read, for this is one place we still are falling far short of the Savior's expectations for His people.

And if you're one of those who didn't find the companionship you needed on the first try, give us at least one more chance to get it right. We've already imagined doing a much better job of welcoming you next time we see you.



Bill Kautz

WORLD REPORT

After Debate, ANNUAL COUNCIL VOTES Statement on Church Polity



PHOTOS BY ANSEL OLIVER



Left: OFFICIAL READING: General Conference vice president Lowell Cooper reads the statement.

Right: READING STATEMENT: Annual Council delegates read the statement on church polity, procedures, and resolution of disagreements.

■ Following three hours of respectful study and discussion, world leaders of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists voted to approve a “Statement on Church Polity, Procedures, and Resolution of Disagreements in the Light of Recent Union Actions on Ministerial Ordination” on October 16, 2012, during the Annual Council of world church leaders held in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

The vote was 264 in favor and 25 opposed.

The move comes after three local union conferences—the North German Union in the Inter-European Division, and the Columbia Union and Pacific Union in the North American Division—separately voted this year to permit ordination “without respect to gender,” something the Adventist Church as a whole has twice rejected in votes at the movement's quinquennial General Conference sessions.

The voted statement expresses disapproval of the independent actions of the union conferences, appeals for all church units “to consider thoughtfully the impact and implications of decisions” made independently of the world community, and affirms the role of women in the church's life and ministry. The document also points toward continuing studies on the theology of ordination, the results of which are expected to be ready in 2014, ahead of the following year's sixtieth General Conference session. No sanctions are applied, or suggested, in the document.

“This statement deals with church structure and procedures. It does not address the question of ministerial ordination practices per se,” the

Continued on next page ▶

WORLD REPORT

statement said. “The central issue is one of church polity—how the church defines its organization, governance, and operations.”

“Decisions to pursue a course of action not in harmony with the 1990 and 1995 General Conference session decisions (with respect to ministerial ordination) represent not only an expression of dissent but also a demonstration of self-determination in a matter previously decided by the collective church,” the statement said. “The General Conference Executive Committee regards these actions as serious mistakes.”

The statement text continues: “The world church cannot legitimize practices that clearly contradict the intent of General Conference session actions. . . . Accordingly, the world church does not recognize actions authorizing or implementing ministerial ordination without regard to gender.”

But the statement is also clear in stating the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s position on women: “The General Conference Executive Committee specifically affirms the important roles that women fill in the life of the church. Their giftedness and commitment is a blessing to the whole church and a necessary part of its work in mission.”

The measure passed on a secret, paper ballot after the day’s discussion, which began with comments from Ted N. C. Wilson, General Conference president. Wilson expressed the hope that the world church’s units would continue “focusing on the mission of the church, uniting in Christ, even though we will face some differences and disagreements.”

During an extended comment period, Daniel Jackson, North American Division president, sought to reas-

sure world church leaders that the division supported the church’s mission, despite the polity question discussed in the statement.

“We want to make it abundantly clear that the NAD without any hesitation expresses our unity with the world church,” Jackson said. “We are not just an adjunct to the world church; we are brothers and sisters with every person in this room.”

Speaking with *Adventist World* the day after the vote, Barry Oliver, South Pacific Division president, said “many people” in that region “are hoping and praying that our church will one day soon find a way to fully recognize the special gifts God gives to all of His people. In a global church, however, we need to work together and find a way to meet all of our perspectives.”

Audrey Andersson, executive secretary of the Trans-European Division, also speaking after the vote, said her division has “a process in place, and at the division we are committed to support the process.”

—reported by Mark A. Kellner, news editor, with Edwin Manuel Garcia, *Adventist News Network*

Jonathan Duffy to Lead ADRA International

■ Directors of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) International elected Jonathan Duffy, current CEO of ADRA Australia, to serve as president of the humanitarian arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A unanimous vote October 10, 2012, confirmed Duffy as the fourth president of the 28-year-old agency.

According to Geoffrey Mbwana, board chair for ADRA International and a general vice president of the



FILE PHOTO

NEW ADRA PRESIDENT: Jonathan Duffy, since 2008 CEO of ADRA Australia, was elected president of ADRA International, the global humanitarian service of the Adventist Church, on October 10, 2012.

Seventh-day Adventist world church, the search “was a very transparent, very objective process, one that gathered information from all levels of the organization. This gave us a global input leading us to get the best candidate, whom we believe will lead this organization to the next level.”

Mbwana said that Duffy “brings the leadership qualities we were looking for. He also has the managerial experience and a very clear vision, as well as experience in the organization.”

Duffy said, “I am extremely honored to be selected for this role. ADRA has been a tremendously positive force in the humanitarian arena, bringing hope and healing to millions over the past 28 years. I believe that we have such great potential to make an even larger difference, especially with the very dedicated and talented staff around the globe. I look forward to working with the ADRA International staff, the ADRA Network, our board, organizational partners, and many supporters.”

Before joining ADRA Australia in 2008, Duffy served as director of Adventist Health for the South Pacific Division, where he had extensive experience in health promotion and community health development. He also holds a Master of Public Health degree from Deakin University in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

—reported by Mark A. Kellner with information from Crister L. DelaCruz, ADRA

South American Publishing Council Recognizes Editors' Work

■ Seventh-day Adventist editors at two church-run publishing houses in South America are integrating their communication ministry.

More than 40 editors from the São Paulo-based Brazil Publishing House and the South American Spanish Publishing House in Buenos Aires, Argentina, met in Brasilia in September 2012 for the region's first publishing council in more than two decades.

The council recognized the work of editors, encouraged collaboration between the two publishing houses, and provided resources and networking opportunities, church leaders said.

"Publishers are always offering so much to people, but they don't always

receive the support that they need in return," said Erton Köhler, president of the church's South American Division.

Numerous prominent Adventist editors led presentations during the conference. Former *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* editor William Johnsson shared lessons learned during his decades-long writing and editing career. Church historian, author, and editor George Knight offered examples from early church pioneers who helped shape the Adventist ministry of communication.

Alberto Timm, an associate director of the White Estate, and Wilmar Hirle, associate director of publishing ministries for the Adventist world church, spoke on major cultural and ecclesiological challenges the church is currently facing, and how editors can help offer clarity and context.

To Almir Marroni, a vice president for the South American Division, the conference served to motivate publishers, who, he said, play a key role in preparing the world for Christ's second coming.

"The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes the importance of the ministry of those who were called by God to communicate the gospel through the written word in the last days of history," Marroni said.

—*South American Division News with Adventist News Network*

Adventist Student Is "Best" in Nicaragua

■ A Seventh-day Adventist student was named Nicaragua's "best student" after earning first place in a national competition measuring proficiency in math and science.

Nathon Leopold Hilton, 16, was recognized by Nicaragua's Ministry of



STUDENT HONOR: Nicaragua Adventist Vocational School student Nathon Leopold Hilton (center) is awarded by the country's minister of education for scoring the highest in a national academic competition at a ceremony in Chiquilistagua Stadium in Managua on September 13, 2012.

PHOTO COURTESY COVANIC

Education as the country's top-scoring student during a ceremony at Chiquilistagua Stadium in Managua on September 13, 2012. The honor was based on Hilton's performance on a national test covering mathematics, physics, biology, and chemistry.

Leopold, an eleventh grader, is the first student from Nicaragua Adventist Vocational School to receive such recognition, said school principal Felipe Cordero.

"We are excited for Nathon and that this recognition highlighted the school," Cordero said, adding that school faculty and staff are committed to both strong academics and spiritual growth.

The school plans to hold a program to honor all the students who made district finals in various subjects, Cordero said.

More than 200 primary and secondary students are currently enrolled at Nicaragua Adventist Vocational School. The church's Nicaragua Mission, headquartered in Managua, operates the school. Nearly 3,000 students attend 25 Adventist-run primary and secondary schools in Nicaragua.

There are roughly 62,000 Adventists in Nicaragua, a country with a population of about 3.2 million.

—reported by Javier Castrellon/IAD Staff



PHOTO COURTESY BRAZIL PUBLISHING HOUSE

EDITORIAL MEETING: Dozens of Seventh-day Adventist editors from two church-run publishing houses in South America met at regional church headquarters in Brasilia, Brazil, to integrate their efforts and network with colleagues.

MÁRCIA EBINGER, *South American Division*



IN SOUTH AMERICA, Seventh-day Adventist Web Evangelism Rises

For first time online viewers interact with pastor during series

From the Seventh-day Adventist Church's South American headquarters in Brasilia, South American youth spent eight nights in "Countdown." The web-based evangelistic effort ran from September 20-23 in Portuguese, and from September 27-20 in Spanish. Transmitted on esperanca.com.br and esperanzaweb.com, the two events were coordinated by the Youth Ministries Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South America, along with the Evangelism, Novo Tempo [Hope Channel] Network, and other departments. The initiative made possible, for the first time, interaction between participants and the official speaker, Luís Gonçalves.

The Public Identifies the Topics

The general program coordinator, Areli Barbosa, explained youth-targeted evangelism efforts require different language and music, and an opportunity for interaction between participants and presenters. "We are keeping up-to-date on modern media that reaches the youth, but the message we share is prophetic and biblical, that is, the same message that has [already] transformed so many lives," he said.

According to Gonçalves, end-time topics were covered for two main reasons: "People are focused on the Mayan calendar and the possibility of the world ending this year, so it's time to clarify the facts. In addition, we had a survey on the Internet offering various topics. Of all the options, prophetic subjects stood out as the public's preference."

For that matter, those who think youth aren't interested in last-day events are fooling themselves. In a Youth Department survey, topics related to the Apocalypse and the end of the world were voted as being of greatest interest for Internet presentations. With these results in hand, the four topics chosen were "Signs of the Times," "If there's just one God, why so many religions?," "The seal of God and the mark of the beast," and "The enigmatic number 666."

Another important impact of the series sharing messages of biblical prophecy was that the hashtag #ContagemRegressiva made it, at various moments, onto the Trend Topics Brazil, a real-time list of Twitter's most-published phrases. "We reached almost 2,000 tweets per hour at the start of the program, which translates to 1.7 million views (the number of times those tweets appeared on user time-

lines) per hour," said Rogério Ferraz, the program's technical coordinator.

Other numbers also stand out. Over the four nights of programming in Portuguese, 43,000 computers were connected with an estimated public of 84,000 users. In Spanish, there were 23,000 computers for some 45,000 users. These numbers were calculated with a sample of Internet users who responded to the question "How many people are watching the program with you?" Fifty-two percent watched the series with one or more companions, while 48 percent watched alone.

The average age of those watching "Countdown" in Portuguese was between 25 and 34 years old, and in Spanish the most frequent users were between 18 and 24.

Ferraz noted the program required a team of more than 40 professionals who, as he stated, "worked hard and held nothing back from making sure that every programming detail was done right."

Besides the numbers, another thing that stands out was the interest many showed for learning more about the topics presented by Gonçalves, the program speaker. Dozens of Internet users, from South America and around



Left: ONLINE EVANGELISM: Luís Gonçalves (center) was the speaker for “Countdown,” a region-wide outreach of the church’s South American Division. **Right:** YOUTH PARTICIPATION: Seventh-day Adventist youth participate as volunteers.

PHOTOS COURTESY SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION

the world, sent questions about the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ, the millennium, the number of those who will be saved, etc. More than 50 countries were connected, including Mexico, the United States, Spain, Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Colombia, South Korea, Fiji, Slovakia, and the Dominican Republic.

“Countdown” Points to Future Initiatives

Erton Köhler, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South America, said about this new evangelistic format, “The Internet-using public is growing. As a church we have to go where the people are. And if they’re on their computers, we have to go to them, speaking a language they understand.”

The project will have a sequel, Köhler said. “Once a year we will have Web evangelism in this same format. Beyond that, we will have video chats and other initiatives.” He pointed out that this first program will continue to be enhanced and “growing, maturing, we will reach a better understanding of how we should move forward with the Internet public.”

Leaders celebrated the fact that 1,869 people responded to the calls that were made at the end of each program—an example of technology being used to convert hearts to Christ. ■

Members Volunteer in Web Evangelism

In Mogi das Cruzes, Sao Paulo, Carolina Rodrigues do Prado, 17, hopes that the program helped promote volunteer evangelism projects such as the one she has been coordinating for two years, called Tweet KM. It’s a group of 400 youth from various parts of the country who gather virtually to pray for friends and to post videos and Bible materials in a language used by youth. It has just one mission: to share the gospel with everyone.

“For us, Countdown was really important because it motivates us to use our talents to serve God,” says Rodrigues do Prado.

What People Said About Countdown

Johnatan Elías Adarme Rodríguez—Colombia: “This program has incredible potential, not just for South America, but for other areas, too. Here we have youth gathered in homes with groups of friends to watch “Countdown.” I suggest that other countries copy the idea.”

Fabiana Büchert Lerch—Venezuela: “Excellent initiative. There should be more programs like this.”

Silvia Fulchignoni—Brazil: “The program was really good. I wish we had live Bible studies online every day. I’m a businesswoman and my time is so limited.”

Viviane Souza Paz - Brazil: “You deserve congratulations for the [presentations]. I’m from another religious denomination and I’ve never understood the Bible as well as I do [now].”



As we come to the end of another year this is the time many Christians around the world celebrate the birth of Christ. It is good for us to remember the great sacrifice Jesus made in coming to this earth, and I would like to invite you to take a few moments as together we consider the greatest gift ever given—Jesus Christ.

We read in 2 Corinthians 5:19 that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”

What a promise-packed verse this is! God was in Christ reconciling us to Himself. Here we have an amazing picture of the plan of salvation—a picture of a God who takes the initiative to restore the relationship that He once had with human beings, a loss keenly felt when humankind chose to separate themselves from their Creator.

Imagine that night so long ago in the hillside town of Bethlehem. A baby is born: not in a comfortable bed, but in a barn—a stable, surrounded by creatures He Himself designed. Lying there in the manger, He appears to be just another infant born into the humble life of a small Jewish family. Yet amazingly, He is both fully human and fully divine.

We see God in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself through the helplessness of an infant; through the innocence of a child; by the faithfulness of a young carpenter; through the compassion of a great healer; in the wisdom of a respected

Called *to the* Ministry *of*

By TED N. C. WILSON

RECONCILIATION

Our sacred responsibility

teacher; and through the humility of an innocent man turning the other cheek. We see Him on the cross, arms outstretched, seeking to reconcile the world to Himself.

He came to a world that despised and rejected Him; a world in which “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11). What kind of God is this, who seeks to save the lost, who loves His enemies, who remains quiet in the face of fearsome attacks?

This is a God who seeks reconciliation with us. That’s what He wants—more than anything. He longs for us to be with Him—not only in the future, but *now*.

Reconciliation Now

His work of reconciliation did not end at the cross—it continues still, as He serves as our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary, ministering in the Holy of Holies, pleading His blood on our behalf.

Christ is actively participating in this important ministry right now. How wonderful it is to know that the God of the universe, who was willing to humble Himself and come to this world, where He experienced our trials and sorrows, is the same Jesus who is now our advocate and high priest ministering for us in a real heavenly sanctuary.

We read in Hebrews 4:15, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” How wonderful it is that our Savior understands us completely. And perhaps that’s why He prayed 2,000 years ago, not only for His disciples, but also for us when He asked His Father to “keep through Your name those whom You have given me, that they may be one as We are” (John 17:11).

Keys to Reconciliation

Jesus realized that there was a need not only for us to be reconciled to Him, but that reconciliation would not be complete unless we are also reconciled to each other. This is why He has given to us “the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18). We are all called to this special ministry, and God has empowered us through His “word of reconciliation” (verse 19), that is, the Bible. It is through His Word that we find the keys to reconciliation with one another—confession, forgiveness, hope, and healing. Whatever difficulties, disputes, and frustrations we are now facing, the Lord has made a way for reconciliation, for unity among His believers.

His humble yet focused life, His selfless ministry to others, His amazing sacrifice, are examples for us, encouraging us to set aside anything that keeps us from being reconciled to Him and to each other.

New Every Day

What amazing love Christ has shown to us, and what a wonderful time this is to remember His birth and gift of

*It is through His **Word** that we find the keys to reconciliation with one another.*

reconciliation. But while the warmth of the season may embrace us today, how will things be in January—after the celebrations have ended, after the new year has begun? Jesus tells us, “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21:5), and that miracle of re-creation, of reconciliation, is not limited to seasons. It is a free gift, offered to us each day. “The Lord’s mercies” “are new every morning,” wrote the prophet Jeremiah. “Great is Your faithfulness” (Lam. 3:22, 23).

How can we make certain that the reconciliation Christ offers is a real, 24/7, all-year-long experience for each of us? By being connected to Him through His “word of reconciliation,” the Bible; and by building a relationship with Him in prayer. As we take the time to read and study His Word, we will become more acquainted with His ways. And as we follow His example, we will become more like Him, taking on the ministry of reconciliation.

Just as prophecy made clear when the time of Christ’s first advent was near, we can, through the sure word of prophecy found in the books of Daniel and Revelation, know that the time of His second coming is almost here. The prophecies of these books trace with precision events that were centuries away when these prophecies were written.

Looking Forward With Hope

Now, in 2012, as we look back at how those prophecies were fulfilled at precisely the right time, we can look



A One-Day Church

Batoka, Zambia

forward with great hope and assurance that fulfillment of the few remaining prophecies is very near. If you need that hope and assurance, I encourage you to study these prophecies, and read Ellen White's book *The Great Hope*. It will amaze and inspire you. For a free downloadable copy of this book in English, Spanish, French, or Portuguese, along with a study guide, visit www.thegreathope.org. For other languages, visit <https://egwwritings.org> and search for the book *The Great Controversy*.

United in Him

Even though more than 2,000 years have passed since Jesus walked the dusty roads of Palestine, not much has really changed on this earth. Nations still oppress other nations. Young and old still get sick and die. Crime still plagues the planet. People still push for favorable positions. Friends, enemies, loved ones, still quarrel. Yet God is the same today as He was yesterday. He is still in Christ, reaching His hand out in reconciliation, healing wounds, making people whole, offering each of us the opportunity to be united together in Him.

And one day very soon angels will again appear in the sky, as they did so long ago above the hills of Bethlehem—this time not to herald the birth of the babe, but to accompany the King in His glory, coming to take His people home. ■



Ted N. C. Wilson is president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



DICK DUERKSEN



FROM TREE TO CHURCH (top): From a youth-led evangelistic series held beneath a tree, the believers in Batoka now have a building in which they can meet regardless of the weather. **HELP FROM AFAR (bottom left):** Young men from another village help with some of the construction projects. **READY FOR TRAINING (bottom right):** Women from the church's Dorcas Society meet to plan community service projects—even before the building is completely finished.

building and have turned their One-Day Church into a worship center for God.

When we arrived, we were met by a couple young men tearing down the blockades they had placed in the church doorways.

"The floor is finally dry and ready for tonight's meeting," they proudly told us. "This will be the first meeting on concrete!"

The young contractors are not members of the Batoka congregation, but have come from "way over beyond the big market" to help the members lay bricks and prepare the floor.

The Seventh-day Adventist church in Batoka, Zambia, stands as a lighthouse on the Livingstone-Lusaka highway, a "youth-led" congregation that is growing and shining brighter every day.

The One-Day Church program is a collaborative effort between the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries (ASI), and Maranatha Volunteers International. These stories come to you each month from Maranatha storyteller Dick Duerksen.



There was no Seventh-day Adventist church in Batoka, and a group of youth from the Dambwa Main church, 125 miles (200 kilometers) south in the Zambian town of Livingstone, decided to change that. Challenged by youth director Webster


Silungwe, the youth drove to Batoka, conducted an evangelistic crusade, and started a church beneath a tree.

Maranatha and ASI have partnered to transform as many "tree churches" as possible in Africa, and Batoka got one of the first new One-Day Churches in Zambia. The new Batoka church, built by the youth evangelists, opened for worship in February 2011.

On August 29, 2012, our Maranatha team dropped by to see what has happened with the church in Batoka. What we found was truly amazing.

Even though it was late Wednesday afternoon, the Dorcas leader was already there, preparing to conduct a Dorcas training program in the church that evening. Four other women were also there, each helping plan portions of the church's community outreach.

The church has a new concrete floor, red brick walls, cathedral windows awaiting glass, and an additional platform area prepared for steel roof panels. The members have taken full ownership of the



Cancer Worldwide

By ALLAN R. HANDYSIDES

What's the story in your region?

Cancer is a major global disease. It's estimated that about 13 million new cases and 7.6 million deaths from cancer occurred in 2008. This is an increase from 2003, when the World Health Organization's *World Cancer Report* noted about 10 million new cases and some 6 million deaths.¹

No region of the world is cancer-free. Age-standardized cancer rates allow identification of particular geographic variations, but not all databases are of the same quality. Generalizations, however, can usually be made with some degree of reliability.

Regional differences in cancer rates are very distinct. The United States rates high, with some 334 cases of cancer per 100,000 men. Australia and New Zealand, with 356.8 per 100,000, has worse statistics. Northern Europe at 303.5 and Western Europe at 337.4 per 100,000 also have high rates. The risk of dying from cancer is even higher in Central and Eastern Europe. Women in the same regions also have high rates of cancer, particularly breast cancer.

The lowest cancer rates occur in Central and West Africa, and South-Central Asia for men and Central and North Africa for women.²

Affluent societies carry a higher burden of cancer, usually related to tobacco smoking and other factors

associated with a Western lifestyle.

In developing countries, 25 percent of tumors are associated with chronic infections such as hepatitis B (liver cancer), human papilloma viruses (cervical cancer), and *Helicobacter pylori* (stomach cancer).

In some Western countries there has been a decline in cancer mortality rates, because fewer people are smoking. Worldwide, lung cancer is the most common, followed by breast cancer and then colon cancer.

Cancer deaths are most often related to lung, stomach, and liver cancer. The increase in the world's population is responsible for some of the gross increase in cancer statistics.

Because some cancers are more amenable to treatment, cancer of breast, prostate, and uterine/cervix, for example, are the cause of death in only a minority of patients so affected.

Causes of Cancer

Many factors impact the prevalence of human cancer. These range from cancer-inducing agents, or carcinogens, to chronic infections, dietary and lifestyle factors, alcohol consumption, and genetic susceptibility. Some 20 percent of cancers are associated with chronic infections.

The most hazardous human carcinogens include tobacco, asbestos, aflatoxins, and ultraviolet light.

Tobacco

Tobacco smoke is irrefutably causally associated with lung cancer. Less recognized is the association of tobacco with laryngeal, pancreatic, kidney, bladder, and—in conjunction with alcohol—oral and esophageal cancer.

The age a person begins to smoke affects incidence of cancer. Adults aged 55 to 64 who smoke 21 to 39 cigarettes per day and commenced smoking before age 15 are three times more at risk to die of lung cancer than those who started after age 25.

Certain varieties of tobacco (e.g., black tobacco) may be more dangerous than others, but there is no safe tobacco.³

Alcohol

The *World Cancer Report 2003* listed alcohol as second in its summary of cancer causes. Heavy alcohol consumption causes cancer of the oral cavity, pharynx, larynx, esophagus, and liver, and increases the risk of breast and colorectal cancer. A causal relationship between alcohol and colon and rectal cancer is also strongly suggested, and the risk of head and neck cancers in heavy drinkers is some five to 10 times higher than in nondrinkers.

The risk correlates to the amount of alcohol consumed. Changing pat-

terns of consumption suggest increases in less developed countries with a decrease in more developed countries. The actual carcinogenic effect of habitual drinking, however, is likely underestimated.

Alcohol is estimated to be involved in causing 3 percent of *all* cancers (4 percent in men and 2 percent in

7.6 million people worldwide died from cancer in 2008, compared to **6** million in 2003.

women). Of course, apart from its carcinogenic effects, alcohol is associated with a plethora of other problems.

Occupational Exposure

Some industries expose workers to a variety of chemicals. The first cases of occupational cancer were identified in the eighteenth century among chimney sweeps, who developed scrotal cancer.⁴ Currently there are about 25 chemicals, or groups of chemicals, for which occupational exposure has been established as carcinogenic risk.

In developed countries most such risks have been eliminated, especially for asbestos, crystalline silica, and heavy metals, but there are hazardous materials that are probably carcinogens that bring the total to nearly 50 potentially carcinogenic chemicals. Awareness of such dangers is helpful in assuring vigilance and regulation of industries.

Some agents occur in the general environment, such as chronic hepatitis B and C viruses, aflatoxins, radon, and solar radiation. Diesel exhaust has been implicated in lung and bladder cancer.

Environmental Pollution

The environment, with its polluted soil, water, and air, is responsible for up to 4 percent of all cancers.⁵ The “environment” that we create with smoking, drinking alcohol, dietary factors, lack of exercise, and excessive sun exposure may be implicated in the majority of human cancers.⁶

Unavoidable nonoccupational toxic substances to which we are environmentally exposed include the following:

- **Asbestos**, one of the best-documented causes of cancer, specifically mesothelioma. Asbestos dust may contaminate not only the workplace but the homes of asbestos workers when transported on their clothes.

- **Air pollution**, which includes industrial work materials, not the least of which are vehicular emissions. These emissions may contain such products as benzene, toluene, xylenes, and acetylene—all known carcinogens. Urban populations have a higher risk than rural populations. Very high lung cancer rates have been noted in nonindustrial workers living at home. Studies show that non-smoking Chinese women, for example, are exposed to *indoor* air pollution from their cooking and heating practices. Vapors from hot oil may contribute to such cancers, along with the smoke of their heating source and fuel.⁷

- **Water pollution**, which can be combated with chlorination to reduce bacterial and viral problems. The chlorinating process, however, may produce harmful chlorination by-products. Studies suggest a causal relationship between chlorinated water and bladder cancers.⁸

Contaminated water is a source of arsenic exposure, which links to skin cancer, lung cancer, and cancer of other organs. High arsenic levels have been found in drinking water in several areas of Argentina, Bangladesh, Chile, India, Mexico, Mongolia, Taiwan, Alaska, and other parts of the United States.⁹

Food Contamination

Not only the environment but also our food may be contaminated. Even natural foods can be infected with natural molds that can produce toxins such as aflatoxins. Residual pesticides can also be a problem.

In Africa and Asia fungal growth and aflatoxin production are recog-

Number of cancer cases per 100,000 men in 2008:

- 356.8** Australia/New Zealand
- 337.4** Western Europe
- 334** United States
- 303.5** Northern Europe

nized problems. Animals consuming such foodstuffs, in turn, become problematic. When such contaminants are antibiotics, hormonal growth promoters, pesticides, and heavy metals, they may be concentrated in the meat, milk, or eggs.

Organochlorines, such as DDT, have been associated with increased risk of pancreatic and breast cancers, lymphoma, and leukemia. Attempts to correlate polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) with breast cancer have proved conclusive.¹⁰

Infection Agents and Cancer

Ellen White spoke of cancerous effects of flesh foods in unpublished testimonies in 1896. In 1905 she spoke of flesh that was “filled with tuberculosis and cancerous germs.”¹¹ It was not until Peyton Rous in 1911 published “Transmission of Malignant New Growth by Means of a Cell-free Filtrate” that an infection link to cancer was first documented in scientific literature.¹² Only in the 1980s did advances in molecular biology permit the detection of very small quantities of an infectious agent in biological specimens. Since then at least eight different viruses, four parasites, and one bacterium have been causally linked to cancer.

Hepatitis B and C and the human papilloma viruses are transmitted by sexual means and blood contamination. The Epstein-Barr virus is also transmitted by human-to-human contact, as is HIV infection. The human T-cell lymphotropic virus causes lymphoma/leukemia, and is similarly transmitted by human-to-human contact.

Human herpes virus 8 (HHV-8) has been associated with Kaposi’s sarcoma. *Helicobacter pylori* are associated with stomach cancer. Parasites of

the liver fluke families, acquired by eating raw or undercooked fish, have been associated with liver cancer. As yet there is no evidence of animal viruses causing human cancer, but the concept of a cancer germ was dismissed in medical literature until the past few decades.

Diet and Nutrition

It’s been estimated that some 30 percent of human cancers are related to diet and nutrition. The incidence of various cancers differs by world region. There are many potential causes of such variation, but cancers of the breast, colorectum, prostate, endometrium, ovary, and lung are generally more common in developed countries. Cancer of the digestive tract is more frequent in developing countries.

The most consistent finding is the association of reduced risk of various cancers with the eating of fruits and vegetables. The Adventist Health Studies support these findings, particularly showing that meat eaters experience a threefold to fourfold increased risk for colon cancers. There is a consistent association between red meat (pork, beef, and lamb) and processed meat, with increased risks being noted in many studies.

Simple sugar (mono- and disaccharides) may be associated with increased colorectal cancer. The higher carbohydrate content of a vegetarian diet, with its complex carbohydrates, appears to offer a protective effect.

Fat has been the focus of most hypotheses about dietary factors and cancer. Studies on ratios of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats have, as yet, not yielded clear data, although olive oil is associated with reduced risk.

30%
of cancers are related to
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nutrition.

A Gift From God

The Adventist health message of healthful eating, exercise, fresh air, rest, and trust in God is a gift to us from our loving, merciful Creator to help us to live full, healthy lives while we await His soon return. Let’s thank and praise Him for this bountiful gift. ■

¹ World Health Organization, *World Cancer Report 2008*, www.iarc.fr/en/publications/pdfs-online/wcr/2008/.

² *International Journal of Cancer* 127, no. 12 (Dec. 15, 2010): 2893-2917.

³ World Health Organization, *World Cancer Report 2003*, pp. 22-28.

⁴ P. Pott, ed. *Chirurgical Observations* (London: Hawes, Clark, and Collins, 1775).

⁵ *Harvard Report on Cancer Prevention*. Volume 1: *Cancer Causes and Control* 7 (suppl.): 53-59.

⁶ L. Tomatis, A. Aitio, N. E. Day, E. Heseltine, J. Kaldor, A. B. Miller, D. M. Parkin, E. Riboli, eds., *Cancer: Causes, Occurrence, and Control*, IARC Scientific Publication, no. 100 (Lyon: IARC Press, 1990).

⁷ “Carcinogens in Food: Priorities for Regulatory Action,” *Human Experimental Toxicology* 15:739-746.

⁸ “Chlorination, Chlorination By-products, and Cancer: A Meta-analysis,” *American Journal of Public Health* 82:955-963; *Drinking Water and Cancer*. *Cancer Causes and Control* 8:292-308.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Relevance to Human Cancer of N-Nitroso Compounds, Tobacco Smoke, and Mycotoxins*, IARC Scientific Publications, no. 105 (Lyon: IARC Press, 1991).

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 313.

¹² Peyton Rous, in *Journal of the American Medical Association* 56 (1911): 198.



Allan R. Handysides, a board-certified gynecologist, is director of the General Conference Health Ministries Department.

It was day 24 after we had lost Bella, our faithful little dachshund.

She had been a cheerful member of our family for the past 15 months, playing with the children and adoring my wife, Thandi, as the alpha animal of the family pack. We had planned a one-week family vacation, and the night before we were due to leave, a church member had come over to pick her up and look after her during our absence. She'd taken care of Bella before, and so we were surprised to hear the phone ring a half hour later and our friend telling us that Bella had run off and was nowhere to be found. "No problem," my wife said. "I'll go over and call her; she always listens to me and will come." Little did we know that this moment would be the beginning of many unsuccessful searches, tears, and disappointed hopes, and would test our family's collective faith.

"Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24).

I need to explain that we live in rural Tennessee, U.S.A., close to Southern Adventist University. The area where Bella had gone missing is surrounded by seemingly endless forests, dotted by small houses, farms, and estates—backcountry.

Three hours passed before my wife returned exhausted, frustrated, anxious, and mosquito-bitten. She had roamed the woods until after sundown, dodging poison ivy and unfriendly big dogs, calling out for Bella, who had apparently walked into the green unknown without leaving a trace. What had happened? It seemed so out of character.

"Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

The next morning saw me bright and early, together with our oldest son, Jonathan, returning to the scene of Bella's disappearance. We walked hill and dale in search of the beloved canine member of our family. We returned empty-handed, decided to postpone our departure further, phoned the animal shelters in the area, printed "Lost Dog" posters, stapled them onto electricity poles, and talked to neighbors in the area. Everyone was alerted and everyone was praying, including our three sons, ages 10, 8, and 4. *How was I going to explain to them God's way of dealing with our crisis if Bella never showed up again?* The question kept nagging at the back of my mind as we finally set out on our 10-hour journey to our vacation destination. Everybody in the car was unusually subdued.

By MARTIN G. KLINGBEIL

The LOST DOG

A story of family faith



“I begin to ponder the question of how we can **process** the loss of Bella.”

“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

Three weeks have passed since Bella has disappeared. We’ve returned from our vacation, and the house seems empty without her. No flapping ears flying through the backyard, no friendly bark when I return from the office, no permanent vacuum cleaner under the dinner table, no constant sidekick following Thandi around the house. The animal shelters by now are used to our calls and visits, we’ve been repeatedly back at the spot, our Sabbath school class is praying—but still nothing. What are the chances of survival for a 7.5-pound (3.4-kilogram) little house dog lost in the huge forests of Tennessee? The question pops up repeatedly during our family worships. We talk of sparrows falling to the ground, the numbered hairs on our head, and God’s care for all of the above (Matt. 10:29, 30). But after more than three weeks, I’m not so sure who in our family circle would score highest on the faith scale right now—most likely it wouldn’t be me. I begin to ponder the question of how we can process the loss of Bella.

“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

On the morning of day 24 our youngest, Matthias, prays a simple earnest prayer: “Lord, please help us find Bella.” And when my wife tells me about it, I’m touched—and worried about the effects of an unanswered prayer on his tender soul. Then, in the evening, the phone rings, and my wife answers the phone. We just hear her say incredulously: “You found her?” before she closes the door behind her to be able to listen to the caller without the noisy interference from her four men. Someone, a half mile from where she ran away, has seen Bella scrounging for food around a workshop high on a hill in the forest. In a flash we are in the car, racing toward the venue. The story unfolds: she’s been seen almost daily up there, and eventually one of the workers has made the connection between the handmade posters on the electricity pole straight across the entrance to his driveway and the forlorn little dog. We are so excited. Could it really be her? The description fits, and my wife sets off into the woods once more calling out for her as I stay with the children at the car.

“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

Day 25 of our search for Bella, and still she is not home. After two hours of searching into the night and being drenched in a thunderstorm we’ve returned home.

A feeling of déjà vu sets in. Was it just a mirage? Somebody suggests we should try trapping her, and so a good friend and I build an improvised trap. In the afternoon our two families head out once more into the woods. While we try to set the precarious trap, Thandi and the children comb the woods behind the workshop calling out Bella’s name. Suddenly there is a different ring to her voice, and as she comes within earshot we hear the long-awaited words: “I’ve found her; I’ve got Bella!” Everybody scrambles over, and there she is: a little bundle of fur in Thandi’s arms, flea- and tick-ridden, only skin and bone, with crusted blood covering her chest, pain-filled eyes—but *our Bella*. Unmistakably and miraculously! This is a moment where everything runs together: tears and laughter, anxiety and relief, doubts and a newly strengthened faith. *Our little dog is home.*

“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

The emphasis in this familiar verse has changed: *I believe!* I feel joy over this faith-building experience for my children, who are beginning to grow a relationship with Christ. But this is not just about Christian pedagogics—this is about me. My thoughts wander from lost dogs to lost sheep and, finally, to the prodigal sons and daughters out there. The elements are all there: the wandering off into a hostile world, the father’s search, the devastation of the child, the excruciating wait, the long-awaited return, and, finally, the joyous celebration in each other’s arms. Maybe the scale is 1:10 as we are talking canines versus people. But there’s new meaning for me, and it has to do with the father. Was it 25 days or years he spent watching the winding road leading up to the estate? Against all the realistic rationalizations and careful compensations of my lack of faith, there is the sharp image of the father leaning against the window frame, still waiting for his sons and daughters to return: “*Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!*” ■



Martin G. Klingbeil lives with his family and a completely restored Bella in Collegedale, Tennessee, U.S.A., where he teaches archaeology and biblical studies at Southern Adventist University.



Finding Them— *I once was lost,*



Baptism is a spiritual highlight in the life of an individual and the larger church community.

It is a public testimony of the acceptance of Jesus Christ as personal Savior and the commitment to follow biblical truth. It is also a symbol of a new direction in life and practically means that one now is a member of the body of Christ and His church (Eph. 1:22, 23; 1 Cor. 12:13). Through the church there is ample provision for instructing, strengthening, protecting, and organizing the followers of Jesus—so that they will be ready to

By GLENN P. HILL

The Long Road Home

"Where have you been all these years?" Patty asked while staring intently into Paul's eyes.* It had been a long time—almost three decades. Paul had been an enthusiastic new convert who had poured himself into the life of the church. But somehow he had slipped away. Over time he had become disengaged, and eventually the church lost track of his whereabouts. Some people would have been offended by this seemingly nosy question. For some, it would have come across as arrogant, as if to say, "Well, I have my act together,

what's wrong with you?" But that was not the way Paul took it. Somehow, he could sense that Patty really cared and wanted him to come back.

During the past five years I have been serving as the pastor of the Elmhurst Seventh-day Adventist Church near Chicago, U.S.A. Along the way I have watched people interact with each other, asked questions, and listened as people described where they were in life and why they were involved, or not involved, in the life of the church. Some of these people

no longer attend our church. Others are on their way back after being gone for a while.

I wish that all churches could make some kind of simple change that would cause nonattending people to come back. But it isn't quite that easy. It is true that there are things we can do to make our churches safe to visit—and safe for people to come back. But that is only part of the story. Each person is different. What attracts one person repels another. In conversations with nonattending members I have been startled to hear specific names listed as reasons to stay away from church. And then, other people list those same names as reasons for returning to church.

A common theme in those who return is people who take a personal interest in them. Chiquita mentioned one couple that "wouldn't let go." She remembered specific contacts from these individuals:

By BENJAMIN D. SCHOUN

Keeping Them *but now am found.*

fulfill God's mission. It is a lifelong commitment and is not available on a tryout basis.

How disconcerting then when we hear that members of the church, the body of Christ, drop out, become inactive, or plain disappear. Yet that's what happens to significant numbers of our members. For the past several years as a church we have been engaged in membership audits, comparing the listed number of members to the real number of members. One division of the General Conference had to reduce its membership by

240,000 because many people had disappeared from the church and could not be found.¹ We praise God when we find new people who commit themselves to Jesus Christ and the truth He has revealed in the Scriptures. Yet once people have joined the church, we urgently need ministries to keep them in the fold where the family of God fellowships with Jesus Christ and each other.

Healthy Growth

The world Seventh-day Adventist Church currently has structured its

activities around the theme "Tell the World," focusing upon three different elements: First, we want to emphasize spiritual growth, Bible study, and prayer as we *reach up* to God. Second, we underline our witness to the world outside of the church—*reaching out*. Finally, we have decided to highlight nurture and retention as we *reach across* to fellow members within the church. Unfortunately, too often we are guilty of neglecting this third kind of activity. This is not only a problem within the Seventh-day Adventist Church but also in the larger Christian

phone calls, visits at the door, and birthday cards. Probably none of these would have been enough to draw her back. But together, they had a cumulative effect.

It is hard for me to say when a person has "come back." In my church there is so much variety in the way this looks. Some

people who never came to church now come occasionally. Others attend church quite regularly, but are not very involved in the life of the church. Others are actively making a difference in the lives of people in need. They find this to be healing after years of being away. Still others have come back into active involvement—some to the point of becoming church leaders.

One thing is clear. *There is no single path back into the church.* It also is not something that happens after a few simple adjustments or personal contacts are made. Probably no single program will bring all people back to our church. There are, however, a few basic realities that make a big difference in the outcome.

Perhaps the biggest such reality is a genuine concern for the individual or family that is missing. There is no way to fake this. If I pretend that I want you to be here, you

will realize that it is not genuine. Another reality is meaningful contact. This may be expressed differently in various cultures. In our church, it includes hugs, kisses, phone calls, personal visits, letters, e-mail, or text messages. And behind all of this lies God's "secret weapon." Each day I pray for these people. The Holy Spirit can go where I cannot go. He can make my motives right so that I don't have to "fake it." ■

* Most names in this material have been changed.



Glenn P. Hill is pastor of the Elmhurst and Naperville churches in Illinois, U.S.A. He is currently doing research for his D.Min. project, focusing upon member retention and reclaiming.

community, as has been noted by Michael Green, well-known seminary professor and church leader: “There are few areas in the Christian church where we fail more catastrophically than in the care we give to new believers.”²

The need for nurture, or making strongly committed disciples, begins the moment a person is baptized. “People,” adds Green, “need a lot of help at this watershed of their lives when they may have entrusted themselves to Christ but are very confused about what they have done and unclear about what it will involve to live as His disciples in a world that has little time for Him. They need information. They need encouragement. They need to be drawn into the community of Christians. They need to get to know people in the church. They need help in developing a devotional life. They need to get into the habit of worshipping and to know what they are doing. They need to learn the reason for the hope that is within them. They need to be nourished by

the Word. . . . They need someone to look after them and help them over the initial hurdles. They need examples of Christian living to emulate. They need, above all, to be loved.”³

Lyle Schaller, another author researching this important area, points out that churches tend to have two circles—a membership circle and a fellowship circle. By joining the church, people automatically become part of the membership circle. But that does not mean that they are also automatically part of the fellowship circle. In the fellowship circle people know each other well, and they have a strong sense of belonging. Most of the leaders come from the fellowship circle. They refer to the church using pronouns such as “we” and “us.” Unfortunately, there are too many members who do not see themselves as part of the fellowship circle, and in some cases even the membership circle. They still feel like outsiders even though they technically are members. They tend to use pronouns such as

“they” or “them.” The transition from membership to fellowship often begins with a simple invitation to participate in smaller circles in which people are more directly involved with others in study, sharing, ministry tasks, or leadership roles. Schaller’s research suggests that it is necessary to have six or seven groups or circles for each 100 members who are 13 or 14 years of age or older.⁴ This is an important way to assimilate new members into the church and to strengthen them and keep them.

Reaching Out

Sometimes long-standing members get discouraged, suffer an unkind word from another member, have a conflict with a leader, face a deep personal crisis, or are overcome by temptation. They no longer attend services regularly and slowly begin to fade from active participation in the church. This should be cause for alarm and should set into motion ministry activities that aim at reclaim-

By GALINA I. STELE

Pray Them Home



After the collapse of the Soviet Union, evangelistic campaigns were conducted all over the territory of the former Soviet Union, and people were baptized by the thousands. In the context of these rapid political and economic changes, the Seventh-day Adventist Church membership grew tremendously from 37,388 in 1990 to 109,889 in 1995—in just

five years.¹ Unfortunately, the growth rate slowed down as the years passed by—but not the rate of those who were leaving. The challenge of retention became a part of life in the Euro-Asia Division (ESD).

Why Do They Leave?

Many factors can contribute to apostasy as well as to retention. Along

with other studies, a survey focusing upon retention was conducted by the Institute of Missiology in the ESD in 2007. Based on the opinions expressed by the pastors and administrators targeted in the survey, the most significant loss factor was lack of friends or a limited number of friends in church. The second and third factors involved inadequate preparation for baptism, especially during public campaigns, and noninvolvement in the life and ministry of the church. The following reasons were also mentioned: influence or persecution from relatives and friends; lack of pastoral care; absence of church buildings; frequent change of rented facilities; difficulties with Sabbathkeeping; consolidation of local religions and traditions; economic crisis and instability.

When respondents were asked how best to retain the newly baptized

ing these members of the “family.”

Scripture is full of examples and exhortations to seek those who have drifted away from the community of faith. The prophets are filled with appeals to the people of Israel to return to God. “Return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning” (Joel 2:12; cf. Hosea 12:6; 14:1; Neh. 1:9; 2 Chron. 30:9).⁵ Jeremiah wrote: “Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding” (Jer. 3:22). The entire book of Hebrews is an appeal to Jewish Christians not to fall back into unbelief. “Do not harden your hearts.” “Do not throw away your confidence.” “We do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved” (Heb. 4:7; 10:35; 10:39). Jesus told three stories that focus on the lost—the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son (Luke 15:1-32). The first two emphasize the urgency of searching for the lost and reclaiming them. The third parable, of the lost son,

emphasizes the enthusiasm of receiving back the lost son and the efforts made to include him in the family once again. The son deliberately left the spiritual fold of his father’s house. But he came back—and there was great rejoicing when he did! Certainly we have a biblical mandate to find and receive those who are not now walking with us.

I know the feeling of loss I sense when I hear that former church members or students I taught at the seminary are no longer part of the church family. It hurts, and I want to plead with them to return to Jesus. While recognizing their God-given freedom of choice, I am challenged to make sure they have not left the church because of lack of friendship or fellowship, or because of a misunderstanding or hurt.

Paul Tompkins, youth ministries director of the Trans-European Division, did research on young people who had become inactive in a particular church.⁶ He found that a critical

time for young people to stay in the church or leave it was between ages 15 to 20 years. Friends are the top reason young people enjoy attending church. Some indicated that the critical and narrow-minded attitudes of older church members made them decide to leave the church. As Tompkins interacted with these youth who were no longer involved with the church, he found that 90 percent of them still considered themselves to be Christians. About 50 percent felt that they would one day return to the church of their youth. Only one third of these inactive youth had been baptized, suggesting that they had not been disciplined very well during the period when they were still involved with the church. Tompkins concluded, “It is imperative that those who are inactive are followed up and not left to drift away unnoticed.”

What Can We Do?

The church’s Nurture and Retention Committee is working on ideas

members, the answers included the following important elements: maintaining a missionary spirit, involvement of the church in evangelistic activities, and a well-organized system of small groups. Other important factors that were mentioned involved solid preparation for baptism, development of friendships in church, and quality worship. Pastoral visitation was also cited by some of the respondents as a factor that could help disciple new members.²

What About Prayer?

Several years ago a number of Siberian churches (in Omsk, Novokuznetsk, and Tumen) had an interesting experience. Six months before an evangelistic satellite event, each member in these congregations composed a prayer list, which was later combined for the entire church. Prior to the campaign they organized a 24-hour

prayer chain that worked for almost two months: one month for the campaign held by a local evangelist before the event, and another one for the satellite program and follow-up meetings. As a result, 90 percent of their prayer list candidates were baptized. In Tumen the outcome was similarly astonishing. The church members started their prayer ministry nine months before the event. At the end of the meetings 46 people were baptized, 42 of whom were from the prayer lists. One brother was particularly happy: all three people he had listed—his son, wife, and mother—had been baptized! But what about retention? Interestingly enough, months later 90 percent of the baptized people in these congregations remained in the church.³ As we think about reclaiming those who have left or retaining those who have just joined we should not overlook

the power of prayer. The same Power that converts people helps them also to stay and be active in the church. That is good news indeed. ■

¹ Galina I. Stele, “An Analysis of the Growth in the Euro-Asia Division (1985-1995) Leading to a Strategy for Developing Home Churches” (D.Min. project, Andrews University, 1996), p. 48.

² *Idem*, “Разве я сторож брату моему?” (“Am I My Brother’s Keeper?”), *Alfa and Omega* 2, no. 30 (2009): 21, 22.

³ Interview with B. G. Protasevich, “Opit Vostochno-Sibirskoi Unionnoi Missii” (“Experience of the East Siberian Mission”), *Zhivaya Tserkov (Living Church)* 2, no. 5 (2008): 15.



Galina I. Stele, a native of Russia, has recently joined the GC Office of Archives, Statistics, and

Research as a research and program evaluation assistant. Galina, together with her husband Artur, served for many years in the Euro-Asia Division.

to help churches and church members to more effectively “reach across” to those who have become or are in the process of becoming inactive. One of the most simple but effective ways to reach across is to visit those who are not attending anymore. That was the basic strategy of one of the foremost evangelists of our denomination who focused on reaching the prodigals. Fordyce Detamore visited, and visited, and did more visiting of those who had left. His visits brought back many. It is something that does not need special training or advanced studies. It just requires a large dose of love, patience, and the capacity to listen.

Small group fellowship is a more contemporary way to cultivate interaction and friendships. These can be study groups, sharing groups, or activity groups of various kinds. Every new convert needs at least seven friendships in the church if he or she is to be well assimilated in the church. The underlying goal of small group fellowship is to develop relationships and build trust with new converts or those who are becoming or have become inactive.

Along with these relationships, people need to be involved in the life of the church. They must be given a responsibility. Their participation in a ministry of the church nurtures commitment to and identification with the church.

There are many new resources available as tools to cultivate discipleship among new members. One curriculum is called “Growing Fruitful Disciples,” prepared by the General Conference Sabbath School Department.⁷ Another initiative, called “Churches of Refuge,” has been launched by the Center for Youth Evangelism. It seeks to nurture safe, loving, and accepting spiritual communities that welcome young people.⁸ An academic course, “Discipling, Nurturing, and Reclaiming,” will be

offered in many of our colleges and seminaries to help future pastors, church leaders, and members become aware of the needs, strategies, and resources in this area.⁹

As we begin to take note of those who have left, Ellen White has these words of exhortation and encouragement for us. “Hunt up the [prodigals], those who once knew what religion was, and give them the message of mercy. The story of Christ’s love will touch a chord in their hearts. Christ draws human beings to himself with the chord which God has let down from heaven to save the race.”¹⁰ What a privilege to catch a glimpse of the joy that fills all of heaven when one prodigal son or daughter returns. ■

¹ Part of this number was influenced by failure to update records of people who had died. Others had moved away and joined another Adventist church by profession of faith or rebaptism, resulting in duplicate records.

² Michael Green, *Evangelism Through the Local Church: A Comprehensive Guide to All Aspects of Evangelism* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), p. 292.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

⁴ Lyle E. Schaller, *Assimilating New Members* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), pp. 67-98.

⁵ All Scripture quotations in this article are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁶ Paul Tompkins, “Never Give Up,” *Leadership Development Journal, Trans-European Division* (May 2012), summarizing conclusions from his D.Min. research; *idem*, “Bringing Home Our Adventist Prodigals: A Strategic Plan to Reclaim Youth in the Trans-European Division” (D.Min. project, Andrews University, 2009).

⁷ Visit www.growingfruitfuldisciples.com for more information.

⁸ Check these Web sites: www.cye.org/cor/about.html. For Europe: www.churchofrefuge.eu/. Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/CYECOR>.

⁹ Additional resources devoted to reclaiming ministries include the following two Web sites, which are independently funded but staffed by Adventist members: www.creativeministry.org/article/67/store/reconnecting-ministries, part of CreativeMinistry, reflecting the work of Paul Richardson and others. Operation Reconnect is a Web site operated by Mike Jones. Jones went through his own experience of leaving the church and coming back. The site lists books, DVDs, a blog, and other ideas and resources, and can be found at www.reconnectnow.org.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, in *General Conference Bulletin*, Apr. 12, 1901. Ellen White used the commonly employed word “backsliders.” Today this word is considered offensive and is avoided.



Benjamin D. Schoun is a general vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day

Adventists and lives with his wife, Carol, in Laurel, Maryland, U.S.A.

Membership

Is a Rede

Adventist World executive editor Bill Knott recently sat down with G. T. Ng, secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, to speak about membership audits and their importance for member retention.

For many, membership matters are about statistics, not ministry. How do you see keeping updated records as a ministry to the church that will help us serve our members better?

First of all, auditing membership and member retention are not mutually exclusive. This is very important to realize. Membership audit is an exercise in which we use a redemptive approach to locate those who have been missing. There are three major ways we lose members: through apostasy, through those missing from church attendance, and through death. Second, membership audit is a redemptive process. We need to locate missing members. No stone should go unturned as we try to locate those we no longer see at worship. This may go as far as publishing a list of names of missing members and circulating this list in the local church, district, and probably both conference-wide and union-wide. We should work diligently to ascertain their whereabouts. If they have emigrated to other countries, we need to write to them. So this is a long and tedious process because we depend on the local network of church members. Third, regarding those who have been dis-

Audit

Imptive Process



G. T. Ng

couraged, we need to organize our elders and deacons to visit them on a regular basis, redeeming them, because they have actually been lost twice—once before coming to Christ, and once after joining His church. If eventually after a year of sustained appeals, they say, “No, don’t bother me,” then we have to say, “You know, my brother or my sister, the doors of the church are always open. The Father’s arms are always open. If ever you want to return to the church, you are always welcome. We can always rebaptize you, and we will restore your name. But for now, after a year

of work, we need to take your name off the membership book.”

So you suggest that the audit process is designed to motivate the church to go looking for the lost?

Yes, and many of the union conferences around the world are discovering just that. They say, “Look how we have done evangelism. We have not done a good job. Look at the number of missing [members]. We have been remiss in our responsibility of nurturing these people. We have to do a better job.”

It really is not for the sake of just the record, is it? It’s to motivate the church to do its evangelism and its mission better.

It’s part of the revival and reformation process.

How is this ministry connected to the revival and reformation process?

How could it not be? We can’t get away from it. By doing the audit, we will understand that follow-up should be part of evangelism. Often in the past, after evangelism was over, we didn’t follow up. We have to use a better and more productive methodology. As some South American countries have discovered, by highlighting small-group ministry they have a better rate of success in retaining members after baptism because these individuals have already been incorporated into the church before they are ever baptized.

Have you found that some places are fearful of doing audits because it will somehow change their reputation?

The fear has been substantial in some regions, but I have good news to tell you. The fear is now subsiding in many parts of the world. West Africa is taking the bull by the horns. They are very serious. It is also an ethical issue. When we submit statistical reports, can we vouch that the figures that we submit are really valid figures?

Is this an ongoing process, or do you see this happening once in a window of three to five years?

We are in this for the long haul, because we haven’t been doing audits for the past 60 years of the life of the church. I think it will take more than three or five years to achieve an accurate record. Moreover, I think one of the more resisting factors are the administrators themselves, because the quota at a constituency meeting depends on membership figures. We have actually learned of executive secretaries being told by their presidents, “Do nothing; I don’t want a membership audit to be conducted in my quinquennium on my watch.”

When the church is actively involved in the steps you describe, going out and finding the missing, inviting them to return, is this doing something spiritually for the members themselves?

That is why this process is part of revival. We are caring for people. I’m afraid that many times we are guilty of infanticide, unfortunately. We leave the baby to sink or to swim, and many times they die. We ignore our responsibilities, and that’s really a crime. Scripture calls us to “grow up into Christ.” Doing that means helping each other, caring about each other, and keeping each other spiritually accountable. ■

NUMBER 4

Jesus: Liar, Lunatic,

By OLEG KOSTYUK

Jesus never existed. That was the dominant view in the Soviet Union throughout the twentieth century. The leadership of the country took this view so seriously that arguments against the existence of Jesus were included in school and university textbooks.

Today this view is far from dominant, as neither skeptics nor critical biblical scholars could refute the wealth of evidence for the existence of Jesus.¹ But the debate over who Jesus really was has never been as intense as it is right now. The past decade has seen a particular increase in controversies regarding Jesus. In 2003 and 2005 it was Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, in 2006 it was *The Lost Gospel of Judas*, in 2007 it was *The Lost Tomb of Jesus*, in 2012 it was *The Resurrection Tomb Mystery*. To the believer it can be easy to dismiss all of these controversies as senseless noise coming from an unbelieving world; yet it is crucial to understand how truly inaccurate these claims are. While

most people and scholars seem to agree that Jesus did in fact live, there is much discussion about the key question of who He really was.

Jesus Is God

For a Christian the key question is whether or not Jesus really was God. Some say that He was a wisdom sage;² others opine that He was an apocalyptic prophet;³ still others say that Jesus was the Savior.⁴ There are even biblical scholars who claim that the Gospels themselves present impediments to the interpretation that Jesus was divine. Skeptics point to the fact that in the earliest Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) Jesus never explicitly claimed to be God. They claim that the concept of Jesus' divinity was a later Christian invention that can be found only in the Gospel of John (John 8:58; 10:30; 20:28), which was written much later than the other

Son

God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly man, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things. (John 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:15-19; John 10:30; 14:9; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:17-19; John 5:22; Luke 1:35; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:9-18; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Heb. 8:1, 2; John 14:1-3.)

OR Lord?

three Gospels.⁵ So are they right? Is the divinity of Jesus simply an invention of early church founders?

The Gospel according to Mark is generally regarded as the first written account of Jesus' life. From its very beginning we can see clear claims that Jesus was in fact God. Mark 2 tells the story of Jesus healing the paralytic. What is interesting to note in this story is that Jesus does not just heal the man, but forgives his sins. The crowd's reaction to this statement is remarkable: "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7, NIV).⁶ Those who witnessed this act knew that the forgiveness of sins is a prerogative only of God. But here Jesus clearly demonstrated His divinity by words and by action. In the same chapter Jesus goes on to declare that He is "the Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28). This was truly a bold statement. Even God Himself respected the Sabbath; so with this proclamation, Jesus was putting Himself on equal ground with God.

In the very next chapter we find another clear example of the divinity of Jesus. The scribes accused Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons (Mark 3:22). But Jesus' response presents another divine claim: "In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house" (verse 27, NIV). Satan is a strong man of this world, but Jesus is stronger, and He releases the hostages of satanic bondage. Only God has the authority to bind Satan.

A careful reading of the first few chapters of the first recorded Gospel suggests that (1) Jesus had authority to forgive sins; (2) He was the Lord of the Sabbath; and (3) He had authority over Satan. All of these are characteristics of God and God only.

Perhaps C. S. Lewis said it best in his book *Mere Christianity*: "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really

foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."⁷

We live in a world in which very smart and learned people claim that Christ was no more than a wise teacher who was only later tagged as "divine" by His followers. Yet we see that even the earliest account of Jesus' life has clear and overt references to His divinity. If God (in Jesus) was willing to come to our rescue, we can but give ourselves to Him in exchange—heart, warts, and everything. His atoning sacrifice is our only hope. His presence fills the hole left in our hearts when Adam and Eve listened to the serpent. His victory will be ours. ■

¹ There are at least eight undisputable facts about Jesus: (1) Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist; (2) Jesus was a Galilean who preached and healed; (3) Jesus called disciples and spoke of there being 12; (4) Jesus confined His activity to Israel; (5) Jesus engaged in controversy about the Temple; (6) Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem by the Roman authorities; (7) after His death Jesus' followers continued as an identifiable movement; (8) at least some Jews persecuted at least parts of the new movement (Gal. 1:13, 22; Phil. 3:6), and it appears that this persecution endured at least to a time near the end of Paul's career (2 Cor. 11:24; Gal. 5:11; 6:12; cf. Matt. 23:34; 10:17). Cf. E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 11.

² Scholars who suggest this viewpoint include John Dominic Crossan, Robert Funk, Burton Mack, and Stephen J. Patterson.

³ Bart Ehrman, Paula Fredriksen, Gerd Lüdemann, John P. Meier, and E. P. Sanders adhere to this theory.

⁴ Some representatives of the Jesus the Savior theory include Luke Timothy Johnson, Robert H. Stein, and N. T. Wright.

⁵ Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don't Know About Them)* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), p. 249.

⁶ Texts credited to NIV are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

⁷ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), pp. 40, 41.



Oleg Kostyuk, a native of Ukraine, is the writer and host of *CrossConnection*, a weekly live program focusing upon the New Testament Gospels that airs on Hope Channel. He lives with his wife, Julia, in Columbia, Maryland, U.S.A. You can watch him every Tuesday on hopetv.org/crossconnection.

By STEFAN SERENA

In the Hands of the People

Accessibility for all



The life of Ellen White was remarkable in many ways. God allowed her to see and experience the history of the universe firsthand—providing sweeping yet detailed views of heaven and earth, the battle between good and evil—ranging from the fall of Lucifer all the way down the millennia until the time when peace will be restored. She was chosen to communicate God’s divine counsel to a fledgling movement destined to reach the entire world with His love. What may be even more intriguing, however, is that people remembered her as someone who indeed lived what she preached.

Unfortunately, time would last longer than she hoped. One Sabbath in February 1915, at the age of 87, Ellen White fell, breaking her hip as she walked into her study. She would not recover. On March 3 she received what would prove to be her last vision. It emphasized once more the importance of going “deeper and deeper into the study of the things of God” (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Apr. 15, 1915, p. 3). As she brought her last testimony to a close, she wrote:

“I have no assurance that my life will last long, but I feel that I am accepted of the Lord. . . . I have felt that it was

imperative that the truth should be seen in my life, and that my testimony should go to the people. I want that you should do all you can to have my writings placed in the hands of the people in foreign lands. . . . I am impressed that it is my special duty to say these things” (*ibid.*).

A Pivotal Time

As we draw closer to the culmination of all earthly things, our need of divine wisdom is greater than ever. At this pivotal time in earth’s history, growth of and access to global interconnectivity have soared dramatically, particularly with the development of the Internet and World Wide Web, smartphones and a huge array of applications, better known as “apps.” By the end of 2011 one third of the world’s population had access to the World Wide Web, with an 11-year growth of 1,000 to 3,000 percent in many parts of the world, such as Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America, and a 528 percent increase globally (www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm).

Despite their potential dangers, these recent developments in the technological world enable us to follow Ellen White’s instructions much more effectively than

MODERN TECHNOLOGY: Electronic communication devices make Ellen White's counsels available to more people in more formats than ever before.

ever before; and the Ellen G. White Estate is making great efforts to seize these opportunities. At the newly created Web site, <http://egwwritings.org>, anyone anywhere with an Internet connection can read, hear, and download the writings of Ellen White, currently available online in more than 60 languages, at no cost to the user. This Web site is the beginning of an ambitious project to ultimately provide online all of the Ellen White books in 2,500 different translations.

Wide Range of Free Resources

The Web site itself offers a wide diversity of tools and materials, such as advanced search functions, integration with social networks, a host of research documents and additional resources, as well as a topical and scripture index (to find quotations based on topics or Bible references), to name only a few. The site also offers the ability to jump from a paragraph in one language to the same paragraph in another, and to read and scroll both simultaneously, which may be particularly helpful for many who speak languages other than English.

Books can be downloaded in a variety of formats to be read offline. More than 120 audio books, currently available online in nine languages, are available free of charge. Besides their usual uses, the audio books can be used to further the gospel in areas with low literacy rates. To further enhance accessibility, a scaled-down, text-only version of the Web site (<http://text.egwwritings.org>) enables users with slow Internet connections to easily read and study Ellen White's writings online.

Users of smartphones running iOS or Android will appreciate the free apps to be found on the Apple Store or Google Play, respectively. While the apps provide the best experience and even feature a built-in study center to highlight passages and take notes, a mobile version of the Web site (<http://m.egwwritings.org>) is available as well, taking into account the screen and bandwidth restrictions of phones.

Digital Resource Center

Whether we are in need of divine counsel or simply have questions pertaining to Ellen White's life and legacy, Adventist history or the Bible, the White Estate Digital Resource Center (<http://drc.whiteestate.org>) provides responses to questions on a wide range of issues that have come to the Ellen G. White Estate dating from the 1920s up to the present, such as "What does Ellen White say about marriage? true Sabbath observance? last-day events? heaven?" This is an invaluable resource for answers to many questions asked today.

Photos Available

Recently the White Estate made available more than 2,100 downloadable high-quality photos of Adventist pioneers and important institutions. The photos can be accessed at <http://photo.egwwritings.org>. Not only will these add to the interest in Adventist history in general, but they can also be used freely for noncommercial purposes such as in nonprofit publications.*

Helping Hands

The Ellen G. White Estate is striving to place the important writings that they have been entrusted with into "the hands of the people in foreign lands" and to make them more accessible to everyone. However, everyone is invited personally to support these efforts in a variety of ways, the most important one being prayer. Other options include simply spreading the word or donating at <http://partner.egwwritings.org>, which will help with the digitization of books to be made available online.

Many great achievements in history were possible only because of the collective efforts of many individuals. Fulfilling God's vision for His church is no exception. Ellen White wrote, "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history" (*Life Sketches*, p. 196). ■

* If usage (judged on the honor system) is for-profit publication/Web site/video production, etc., a US\$60 donation is requested by the E. G. White Estate.



Stefan Serena, a native of Switzerland, serves as technical coordinator at the Ellen G. White Estate in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.

A Universal Flood

Does the Bible teach that the Noah's **flood** was universal?

An unbiased reading of Genesis 6-8 unquestionably demonstrates that Noah's flood was universal. Reasons for its denial are located in sources from outside the Scriptures, such as scientific arguments and the mythology of the ancient Near East.

Universal catastrophism can no longer be ignored. For instance, those who argue that the temperature on the planet is rising know very well that this phenomenon will result in catastrophes of a global nature. We may not be able to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the flood was universal, but we can clearly argue that this is what the Bible teaches. We will summarize here some of the biblical data.

1. Universality of Sin: The first two chapters of Genesis are mainly interested in the creation of our planet and all forms of life within it. It has a clearly universal outlook. Although the fall into sin takes place in the Garden of Eden, sin itself soon became a universal phenomenon (Rom. 5:12). By the time of Noah the human heart was corrupt beyond repair and “every inclination of the thoughts” of the human heart “was only evil all the time” (Gen. 6:5). “The earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence” (verse 11). Humans had corrupted their ways and, in order to correct this situation, the Lord was ready “to destroy both them and the earth” (verse 13). This emphasis on the universality of the problem points to the universality of the means used by the Lord to deal with it.

2. All Humans: The language used to refer to humans is also universal and all-inclusive: “My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal”; God was grieved “that he had made human beings on the earth” (verses 3, 6). It is obvious that the phrase “that he had made” is referring to the creation of humans in Genesis 1:26-28. In other words, God is bringing to an end the lives, not of certain ethnic groups, but of the humankind He had originally created. The Lord’s preservation of Noah and his family demonstrates that the rest of humanity perished in the Flood: “Only Noah was left” (Gen. 7:23).

3. All Living Things: The language used to refer to the animals is also universal. God is bringing to an end “all life

under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it” (Gen. 6:17; cf. Gen. 7:22). The language used here goes back to the Creation account (Gen. 1:30). In other passages we read: “Every living thing that moved on land perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth” (Gen. 7:21). The Lord was to “wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made” (verse 4). Again, the language points back to Creation (Gen. 2:6; 1:25). This is “the end,” the eschatological end of that generation. During the Flood God judged humankind: He gave humans a probationary time (Gen. 6:3), investigated the evidence (verse 5—“the Lord saw”), concluded that the earth was filled with violence (verse 13), pronounced a sentence (verse 7), and executed judgment against His creation (Gen. 7:11-24).

4. All the Waters: The Hebrew word *mabbul* is used exclusively to refer to the flood of Noah and not to local floods. Its waters destroyed all living things, including humans (Gen. 6:17), and covered the highest mountains of the earth (Gen. 7:20). The torrential rain and the breaking of the fountains of water of the earth lasted 40 days (verse 17). Noah had to wait inside the ark one year and 10 days (verse 11; Gen. 8:13, 14).

The Flood was a divine act that perhaps we’ll never be able to explain through the study of the natural world. It was a divine act of de-creation—almost returning the earth to its original condition—followed by the divine act of re-creation through an eternal covenant with humans and nature. When sin had apparently conquered the world, God preserved for Himself a faithful remnant through whom He would fulfill His plan for the human race. This universal judgment against human sin became a type of the universal judgment at the return of Christ (Matt. 24:38, 39). At that moment He will preserve His end-time remnant people. ■

* Scripture quotations in this article are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.



Angel Manuel Rodríguez is retired, living in Texas, United States, after having served the church as a pastor, professor, and scholar.

Growing in Grace

By MARK A. FINLEY

Jesus invites us to come to Him just as we are. It is not necessary to change before we come; as we respond to the invitation, by the convicting power of His Holy Spirit we will be changed. We come to Jesus just as we are, but we don't stay as we are. The same grace that pardons us empowers us; it's all of grace. His grace enables us to grow as Christians. There's no such thing as a genuinely committed Christian who is not a growing Christian. Jesus daily imparts the grace we need to grow. In this lesson we will study how to keep growing in grace.

1 Read 2 Peter 3:17, 18. What solemn warning and earnest appeal does the apostle Peter give to each one of us?

2 As a result of Adam and Eve's fall in the Garden of Eden, our planet was plunged into sin. Read Romans 5:17, 20. What does Jesus offer to counteract the ultimate consequences of the Fall?

What incredible good news! God's grace is greater than our sin. Where sin abounds, God's grace abounds much more. Through grace the chains of sin are broken. Through grace Satan is a defeated foe. Through grace we are victorious over the wiles of the evil one. Whatever hold sin has upon us, as we daily grow in grace the stranglehold of sin is broken.

3 Read James 4:6. What is one of the basic conditions of receiving God's life-changing grace?

Humility of heart is a fundamental prerequisite of receiving Christ's transforming grace. Pride shuts us out from His grace. It is our acknowledgment of our basic need for Jesus and His grace that prepares us to receive it.



AGNES SCHOLLIERS

4 Read Titus 2:11-14. According to the apostle Paul, what does this grace of God, which has appeared to all humanity, accomplish in our lives?

5 Read Romans 6:14; 8:14-17. How is the bondage of sin broken in our lives? What does it mean to be under law? What does it mean to be under grace?

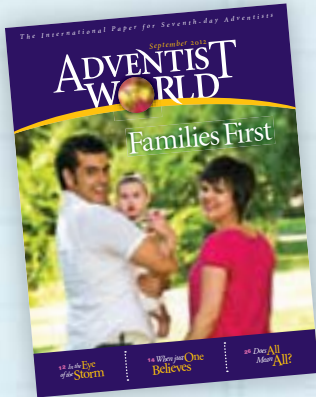
God's grace breaks the bondage of sin in our lives. We are no longer under the condemnation of the law we have broken. To be "under the law" means to be under the law as a method of salvation. If this is true for us, we will daily feel the pangs of guilt over breaking the law; we will be in bondage. Filled with condemnation, we will feel hopeless of ever being saved. But if we are under grace, it is a different story altogether. To be under grace means that grace is our method of salvation. His grace pardons us, empowers us, and transforms us.

6 Read 2 Peter 1:2-4 and James 1:21. When will we grow in grace daily? How can growth in grace take place in our daily lives?

God reveals His grace in His Word. As we fill our minds with the Word of God, His grace will flow into our lives. As we meditate upon His Word, we will have fresh glimpses of Jesus and His life-changing power.

7 What promise does the apostle Paul give about receiving His life-changing grace in 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18?

As we behold the glory of God in the selfless sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, our hearts are changed. We cannot remain the same in the light of God's love streaming from Calvary. Growth in grace occurs as we spend time with Jesus. Beholding Him, we become like the One we most admire. Why not make a decision today that you will spend time with Jesus every day and watch what He does in your life? ■



Letters

God First

The title on the cover of the September 2012 *Adventist World* is a bit misleading. It boldly proclaims: “Families First.” The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy put God first. I’m sure the context of the cover articles put God first. But don’t assume that everyone will read the articles. Some just look at the cover to get the message.

Way too many families in our churches have made idols out of their children and their family members. Moreover, they cater to them. If families would put God first, sacrificially heed His call to minister to the world, the curse of self-centeredness would be removed from them.

KATARINA STANIC
Visalia, California, United States

Dealing With Worry and Fear

God has used your publication in a positive way in my life. I’ve read *Adventist World* since 2009, and I really love it. Every issue that has fallen into my hands has inspired my life in an extraordinary way through a range of wonderful articles. God obviously uses what this magazine publishes to convey His messages to His beloved children of the world. Praise His name!

I was going through a dark period the first few months after my baptism. For example, instead of me marveling at the joy Israel felt after finding his beloved son Joseph (Gen. 46:29, 30), I focused only on the suffering he had endured after Joseph’s disappearance (Gen. 37:32-34). I could not help asking questions revolving around why God had let His servants suffer. I was so scared that I found it difficult to sleep.

The November 2011 issue included the Bible study “Dealing With Worry and Fear,” by Mark Finley. Finley’s article helped me understand that Satan was the author of my suffering. He undoubtedly wanted to prevent me from enjoying joy in Christ.

I will never forget the moment I arrived on the point of the article that answered the question “What invitation are we given when overburdened with care, worry, and fear?”

The answer is a cure for my suffering. This occurs by “casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you”

(1 Peter 5:7). I felt relieved of the weight of my misery. Since then, these sacred words resound in my heart whenever I am faced with a difficult situation. Jesus knows all our problems, and we’ll always make out if we trust in Him.

DIANE TATYANA
Bujumbura, Burundi



Pray for Our Treasurers

I’m a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Bénin. I appreciate very much the article “Embezzlement in the Church,” by Robert Lemon (July 2012). It will help treasurers fulfill their roles better. Let’s pray for them so that they may receive divine help to be faithful in their service to the church.

THIERRY AHONON
Dassa, Bénin

Seeing Face to Face

I was born and raised in an Adventist family. My joy of being an Adventist always increases when I read *Adventist World*. Even though I get it late and copies are not easy to obtain, all I need is a new magazine to feel that I belong to a large family that believes in Jesus and works for Him.

Prayer & PRAISE

I need God’s guidance as I’m starting a self-supporting project as a private tutor. Please pray that the Lord leads me.

NKOSILATHI, *Zimbabwe*

Please pray that my husband of 18 years will soon join the Adventist Church.

NICOLE, *United States*

Please pray for our small church. We lost a good pastor, and because of problems in the economy, a lot of members have moved away. We are down to four families who attend. We feel helpless, except for the fact that we know that where two or more are gathered He is there also. This is what holds us together.

J.B., *United States*

Pray for me because I need to find a good job. I want to be a Christian woman who flourishes at all levels so I can transmit to others the hope, joy, and love of Christ.

LINDA, *France*

My sister needs a job. Also, please pray for a friend and me to pass our mock exams.

SANDRA, *Zambia*

When the Lord returns, I will not merely see my brothers and sisters thanks to a picture, but face to face. I'll hear about what they are doing directly, rather than in writing. I will also praise the One we have served so long together.

Let's press on. Soon our King will appear with glory in the heavens.

JONATHAN MOBIA

Bangui, Central African Republic

Patient Appreciation

Thank you for *Adventist World*. Other church members and I, from the Central church of Coquimbo, like receiving it. It is also appreciated by the patients of Coquimbo's San Pablo Hospital. A group of women, as part of their mission work, collect and distribute copies of the magazine once church members in our congregation are finished reading them.

God bless you. May you prosper.

ANA LUISA VEGA PASTÉN

Coquimbo, Chile

Correction: The cover story "For People, By People" (October 2012) misspelled the last name of Kim and Joyce Bisl. We apologize for our error. —EDITORS

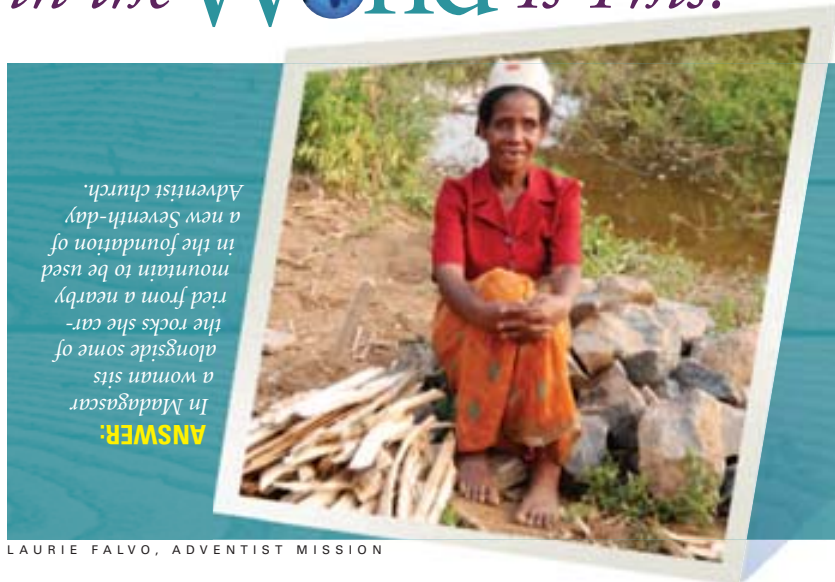
Letters Policy: Please send to: letters@adventistworld.org. Letters must be clearly written, 100-word maximum. Include the name of the article and the date of publication with your letter. Also include your name, the town/city, state, and country from which you are writing. Letters will be edited for space and clarity. Not all letters submitted will be published.

Please pray for my friend who has joined cadet training.

SHIRLEY, Kenya

The Place of Prayer: Send prayer requests and praise (thanks for answered prayer) to prayer@adventistworld.org. Keep entries short and concise, 50-words or less. Items will be edited for space and clarity. Not all submissions will be printed. Please include your name and your country's name. 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.

Where in the World Is This?



ANSWER:
In Madagascar
a woman sits
alongside some of
the rocks she car-
ried from a nearby
mountain to be used
in the foundation of
a new Seventh-day
Adventist church.

LAURIE FALVO, ADVENTIST MISSION

“Let's press on. Soon our **King** will appear with glory in the heavens.”

JONATHAN MOBIA

Bangui, Central African Republic



Countries with the largest percentage of consumers downloading e-books:

- 24%** India
- 21%** Australia
- 21%** United Kingdom
- 20%** United States
- 18%** Brazil

Source: USA Today



Spirit of Giving

Christmas is a time for giving. You can help others by giving away things you no longer need or use—things you can safely share. Here are some suggestions.



- Books
- Clothing, including shoes
- Computers, and related items
- Eyeglasses
- Food, especially nonperishable foodstuffs
- Housewares (think vacuums, dishes, pots . . .)
- Mobile phones
- Money
- Time

In the Dark

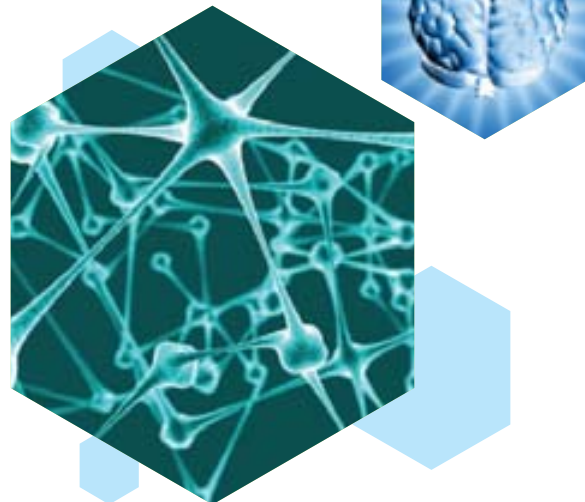
22 percent of the worldwide population is without access to electricity.

Source: *The Rotarian*



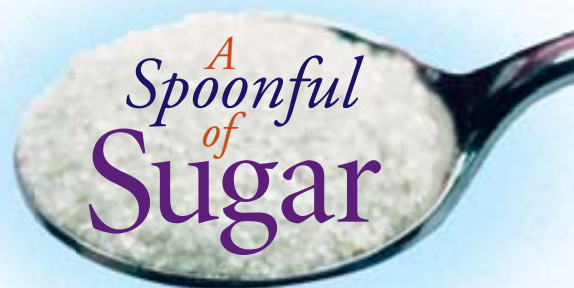
100 billion

neurons in a human brain...



...can store **100 terabytes** of information. A typical desktop computer can store 1 terabyte.

Source: *Smithsonian*



One teaspoon of table sugar, swallowed dry, cures hiccups in 95 percent of people.

Source: *New England Journal of Medicine/Women's Health*

“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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To Writers: We welcome unsolicited manuscripts. Address all editorial correspondence to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, U.S.A. Editorial office fax number: (301) 680-6638

E-mail: worldeditor@gc.adventist.org

Web site: www.adventistworld.org

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Vol. 8, No. 12

50 WORDS OR LESS

My Favorite... Bible Character

■ I love reading about David, who constantly reminds me to praise God. God considered David “a man after His own heart,” although David was far from perfect. God favors us despite our flaws, providing we continue to repent of our sin and accept Jesus as our Savior.

—NICOLE, *Brooklyn, New York, United States*

■ Moses is my favorite Bible character. He was perhaps the greatest human leader who ever lived. He was humble and meek. He accepted his fate, even after being told he would not get to enter Canaan. No wonder we are going to sing “the song of Moses and the Lamb” in heaven.

—MISHAEL, *North Carolina, United States*

■ Jesus’ mother Mary was a good woman. She was virtuous, and she taught Jesus the Scriptures. Although there were problems, Jesus loved His mother and asked John to look after her when He was dying on the cross.

—DELYSIA, *Perth, Australia*

■ The story of Jonah, the fleeing prophet, reminds me of the reassuring presence, patience, and above all the goodness of God in the midst of the storm.

—ROSE-MARIE, *Mauritius*

Next time, tell us in 50 words or less about your favorite hymn. Send your response to: letters@AdventistWorld.org. Put in the subject line “50 Words or Less.” Be sure to include your name and the city and country from which you are writing.



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