

ADVENTIST REVIEW

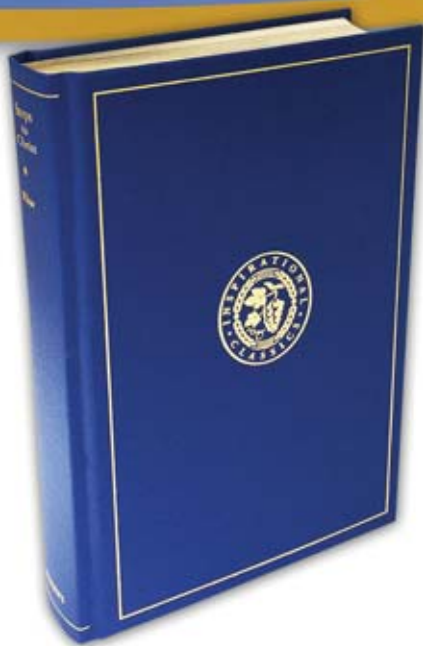
SEPTEMBER 2017: MY COUSIN, THE TURNIP +
SUFFERING IN SILENCE + WHY SHOULD I CARE?
+ "COMPASSION: OUR FIRST INSTINCT"? + WHY
ADVENTIST CLERGY AVOID PARTISAN POLITICS



WHO IS MY BROTHER?



INSPIRATIONAL CLASSICS



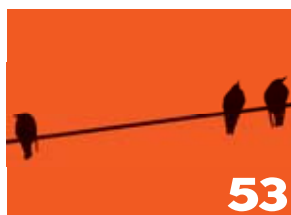
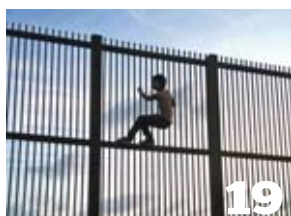
Ellen G. White's
**STEPS TO
CHRIST**

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EDITION WITH HISTORICAL
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TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:



- 1 Good and Bad News About the Biblical Flood
- 2 Adventist Hospital Recognized for High-Value Healthcare
- 3 Andrews Seminary Approves Document on Homosexuality
- 4 4,000 European Young People Gather in Spain for Region-wide Event
- 5 Pathfinder 'City' Welcomes 23,000 Young People in Brazil

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BILL KNOTT



*Good preaching—and good listening—
is ultimately doxology, the way we
worship Jesus with our minds.*

Renewing the Covenant

Every Sabbath, in every place where believers gather around God's Word, a holy covenant unfolds that features what one famous preacher called "the foolishness of preaching" (see 1 Cor 1:21).

This covenant is rarely heard or written down, but functions in that hopeful space between the preacher's lips and all who lend their ears.

In its ideal form, the covenant is made anew each time one party stands behind a pulpit or the other is seated in a pew. But, truth be told, it's also frequently nullified through inattention, lack of effort or preparation, or stubbornness that never yields. On many days, in many places, it's still a fragile covenant, for it is made by broken and unfocused sinners—like preachers and their hearers.

The preacher—Anglo or Hispanic; African or African American; seasoned or beginning; male or female—is offering these terms:

"I'm bringing you the living and active Word of God, which describes itself as 'sharper than a two-edged sword.' You shouldn't be surprised that it will sometimes make you feel uncomfortable, even when I'd rather offer you smooth words. I'm not yet comfortable with the Word I'm sharing, for I have placed myself under its authority, just as I'm asking you to do.

"I've lived and wrestled with

this Word through hours—days—of studying and prayer, because I won't bring something undeserving of your time and your attention. You may trust that what I share is shaped by my commitment to obey the Lord and be faithful to His teachings. These words are nothing light or trifling: I'm asking for your ears today because I believe that this is what the Spirit is saying to the church—today. Remember, please, I'm also preaching to myself."

The listener—who may be scribbling on a tithe envelope or making copious notes on a sermon worksheet—is offering these terms:

"I'm quieting my life this hour to do that most unusual of tasks—allowing another human being to speak unfiltered truth into my life. I acknowledge my usual contrariness—the habit of disagreeing just because I can. But for these moments I'll willingly suspend my disbelief because you say the Word you preach is not your own, but something vital Jesus knows I need to hear. With prayer and all the clarity I have, I won't go chasing rabbits while you preach. I dare not miss God's Word, which will, regardless of your words, discern the thoughts and intentions of my heart.

"I'll make new room for both familiar truths and difficult ideas as I listen, trusting you

won't shape your words to things you think might win my smiles or my applause. I'll offer you my tears and joy, my hope and deepest longing, for I have pledged I won't go home the person that I was."

And where such covenants are made—where preachers and their listeners consciously pledge their deep allegiance to the Word—the Body grows; its wounds are healed; revived coals are fanned to flame.

This is, some say, a fantasy—an unreal, even impossible, arrangement, for who could expect such solemn stuff at midday on a Sabbath?

And the answer is: "*We can. We must. We do.*"

Until we Adventists make such covenants our norm; until we give the Word—from both directions—all the seriousness it deserves, we are just filling time and winnowing some concepts.

Good preaching—and good listening—is ultimately doxology, the way we worship Jesus with our minds. We have a right to mutually expect that all who preach and all who listen will be attentive to the Word—will bring to this unrivaled hour the best that human praise can give.

So who will make a covenant with me? ♣

Bill Knott

It seems the leaders of the church might want to look at the cost of the huge organization we have created and consider going back to some basics.

SHARON WALKER, MARIPOSA, CALIFORNIA



RIGHT OR LEFT

The article “Neither to the Right nor to the Left” (June 2017) reminded me of a picture my daughter Jaelyn Knight sent to me. Her 2-year-old son, Jordan, and his 2-year-old friend, Easton, were arguing about the number 12 they discovered on the side of a building.

Easton said, “Look, there’s the number 1.”

To which Jordan replied, “No, it’s the number 2!” They bantered back and forth until Mommy enlightened them about the number 12.

Are we not like these 2-year-olds? So many of our arguments could be solved if we would get out of the Left-1 or Right-2 ditch and allow the Holy Spirit to help us see the 12. It has both numbers, but the insight we need is beyond our proud understanding.

Renee Ford

Cumming, Georgia

RESOLUTION

My thanks to Bill Knott for his presentations at the Washington Conference camp meeting. My parents were unable to attend, but are avid readers of *Adventist Review*. It was very thoughtful of Knott to take time to speak and pray with my parents over the telephone.

I also appreciate Delbert Baker and his “Ten Commandments for Resolving Conflicts” (June 2017). I recently transferred out of a church embroiled in controversy over its pastor—most of it, ashamedly, hearsay and unfounded. If the resolution commitments Baker suggested

would have been employed, the situation would probably have turned out very differently than it actually did.

Thank you for your continued good work on the *Adventist Review*.

Robert Aaron

Shelton, Washington

GOOD COUNSEL

I’m responding to the editorial by Bill Knott, “Securing the Future” (June 2017). Having read this article, I agree that the cost of Christian education is out of control. When did we go from churches supporting our students, and students “working” at campus

jobs, to the dollars spent now? I realize teachers deserve a living wage, but when did we as an institution make it so hard for youth to get a Christian education?

It seems the leaders of the church might want to look at the cost of the huge organization we have created and consider going back to some basics. Maybe then there would be enough money to help our students get the education they need in the world today. Just a thought.

Sharon Walker

Mariposa, California

THOUGHTFUL INSIGHTS

In the May 2017 *Adventist Review* the thoughtful insights of the following three pieces, “Forgiveness and Resilience,” “We Can’t Give What We Don’t Have,” and “The Making of a Miracle,” have shared the theme of Christian living that Jesus wants for everyone. Drinking from God’s well of forgiveness and trust is a fountain embracing life, blessings, and encouragement.

Thank you to Dixie Rodriguez, Jimmy Phillips, and Costin Jordache.

Natalie Dodd

Centerville, Ohio

FEAST

What a joy it is to curl up and feast on articles in *Adventist*

The June issue spoke to my heart, reminding me that God calls us to reach people who some believe are worthless, too sinful to be accepted.

TABITHA ABEL, CHILOQUIN, OREGON

Review when going through a dark valley. To be reminded that all people are precious in God's sight. The June issue spoke to my heart, reminding me that God calls us to reach people who some believe are worthless, too sinful to be accepted.

Thank you, Gerald Klingbeil, for quoting Ellen White—"Our neighbors are the whole human family"—and that when the wants of any person are brought to our knowledge, "it is our duty to relieve them as far as possible." No one is excluded.

Don McFarlane admonished us to follow Jesus' example, but he did not add that reaching to "untouchables" comes at a high price.

Hyveth Williams wrote of Satan hijacking one's spiritual identify, and the pain caused when falsehoods are believed and sentence is passed without recourse.

Costin Jordache reminded me that God is always there even if we, or others, miss Him.

The dessert of this grand feast was Wilona Karimabadi's words of conviction. We must get out of the safe zones and reach people who are different from ourselves because "God has asked us to." Thank you for that instruction.

Tabitha Abel

Chiloquin, Oregon

IN A FEW WORDS...

FIRST CAFÉ CHURCH OPENS IN NEW YORK CITY

A pastor in a nondenominational church once told me that he would do what it takes to get people in the door so that he could preach the gospel to them. I am for reaching young people. I am 63 and have many family members not in church. I hope this method of evangelism works to get young people to serve God in any way possible.

Terry Hinchey, via Web

TWO BUNCHES OF ROSES AND GOD THE CREATOR

Knowing God fully through nature is surely not possible. But knowing God fully through words is also hopeless. So we'd better avoid exalting words about God, instead focusing on the Word Himself. Letting nature (science) help us understand what the words about God mean is as important as letting the words help us understand the meaning of nature (science). Science can help us understand the Bible, and the Bible can help us understand science. Unless we do both, our faith will be unbalanced and our science will be shortsighted.

Jack Hoehn, via Web

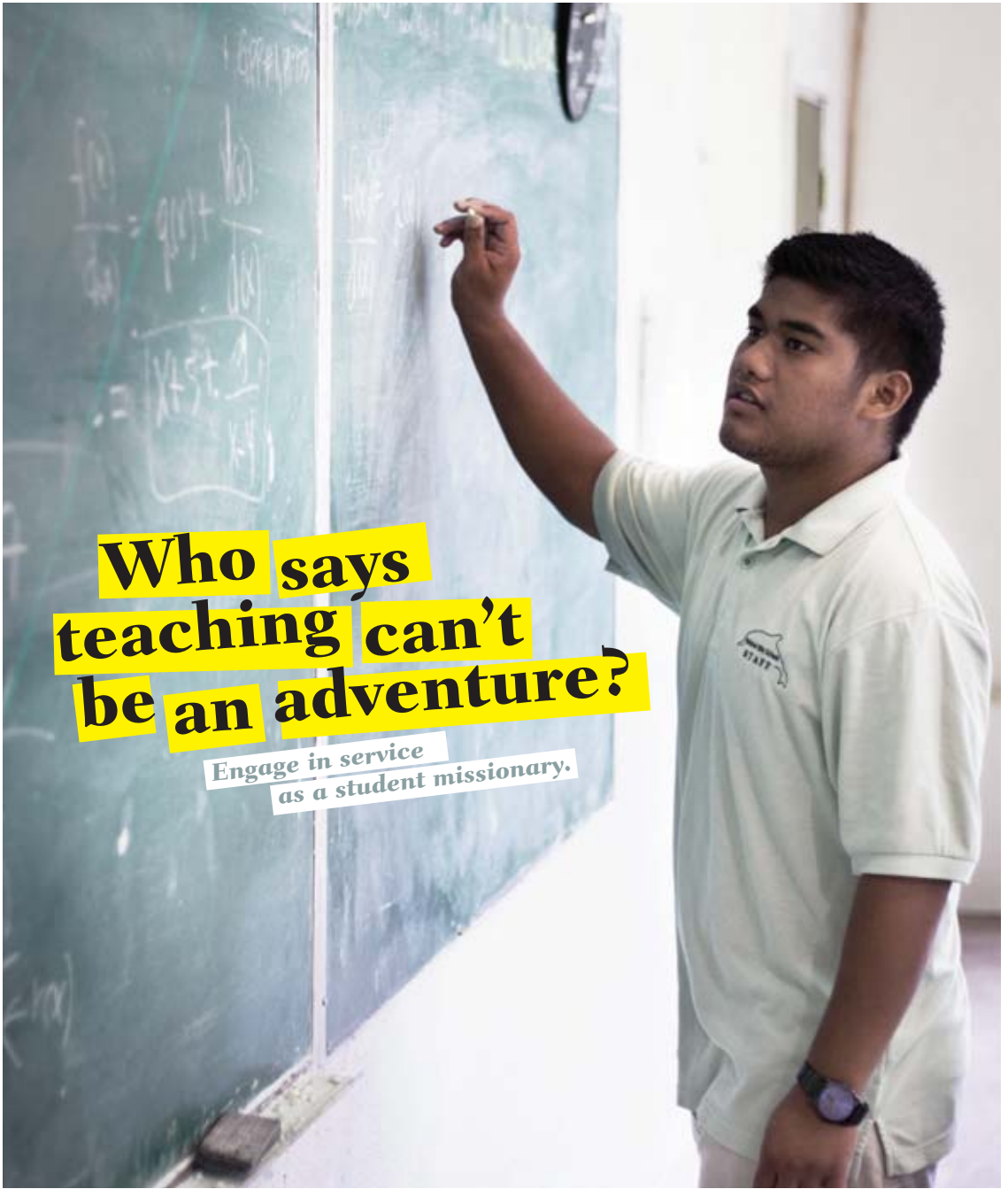
OAKWOOD UNIVERSITY WINS "CHOIR OF THE WORLD" TITLE

This is so wonderful. Jason Ferdinand is dedicated to his ministry in music. To God be the glory.

Sonya Johnson-Ruiz, via Web

YOUR TURN

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



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Conference participants listen to presentations on the first full day of the Faith and Science Conference in St. George, Utah, United States.

PIETER DAMSTEEGT/NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

FAITH AND SCIENCE CONFERENCE DISCUSSES CREATION

SCIENCE TEACHERS AND MINISTERIAL LEADERS MEET TO “AFFIRM CREATION.”

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

This is the one of several reports on the North American Division Faith and Science Conference, which took place in St. George, Utah, United States, July 6-14, 2017.—Editors.

More than 330 Seventh-day Adventist science teachers and ministerial leaders in North America braved scorching summer temperatures to make their way to St. George, Utah, United States, for a region-wide

Faith and Science Conference, which kicked off on the evening of July 6, 2017. The event, which carried the theme “Affirming Creation,” was sponsored by several church organizations interested in the study and promotion of a biblical understanding of origins, including the North American Division (NAD) Office of Education, the world church’s Faith and Science Council, and the Geoscience Research Institute (GRI).

The conference sought to explore the biblical, theological, and philosophical issues that shape Adventists understanding of origins, as well as the problems and answers that specific scientific disciplines present to a biblical understanding of earth history.

“Our goal is not to argue or engage in debate for the sake of debate itself,” said NAD education director Larry Blackmer in his opening



LOMA LINDA HEALTH RECEIVES AN EMMY.

Loma Linda University Health featured prominently during the forty-seventh annual regional Emmy Awards. The awards were presented by the Pacific Southwest Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Satur-

day night, June 24, 2017, in San Diego, California, United States. *Life on the Line*, a documentary TV series that highlights Loma Linda's stories of transforming lives, won Emmy Awards in six of its seven nominated categories.

Through a wooden sculpture and two bunches of roses, Edward Zinke discusses the role of nature in knowing God. His presentation took place on the first full day of the Faith and Science Conference.

PIETER DAMSTEEGT/NAD



remarks. "Our goal is to affirm Creation by emphasizing the positive aspects that a biblical understanding of origins brings to the table, even as we keep asking questions and searching for answers."

The event sought to be proactive and to provide a teachable approach, providing Adventist teachers and pastors with sound tools to help them face current and ongoing challenges to the discussion of origins, said organizers.

It also fostered what NAD ministerial director Ivan Williams defined as "cross-pollination," or meaningful exchanges between disciplines. "Our conference ministerial directors are here because we want not only to delve into the theological fundamentals of origins but to listen and learn from sound Adventist scientists," he said. "This exchange will certainly enrich both groups."

One of the key questions regarding nature for Bible-believing Christians is whether it's possible to know God through nature, said Edward Zinke, a theologian and one of the organizers of the event, in his devotional message on July 7.

"How can we know God? Can we know a person by looking at his or her work of art?" Zinke asked. He answered, "We get characteristics from the artist, but not the artist himself. In that sense, nature provides an incomplete knowledge of God."

To illustrate his point, Zinke showed a wooden sculpture and asked attendants to guess what kind of author fashioned it. Opinions, of course, varied.

"You can guess and guess wrong," Zinke said, "unless the artist reveals himself."

To further explain the imperfect role of nature in understanding

God, Zinke showed the audience a bunch of fresh roses. "What can you tell about the roses' Creator?" Zinke asked. Answers included "He is an artist"; "He loves beauty"; "He is good."

Then Zinke showed another bunch, this time withered roses. "And now?" he asked. Suddenly there was silence in the audience.

"It was such a simple illustration, but very impressive," said Rudy Alvir, associate ministerial director of the Florida Conference. "It made us assess our assumptions."

"Sin brought changes in nature that obscure and distort its revelation of God," said Zinke. "Knowing God fully through nature is hopeless, so we'd better avoid exalting nature to focus instead on the God of nature." He quoted a statement by church cofounder Ellen G. White, who, referring to God's handiwork in nature, wrote, "It is not the work, but the workman, that is counted worthy of honor."*

"Even in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were dependent upon God's revelation to understand themselves," said Zinke. "But God said, 'I want a fellowship with you.'"

That intimate fellowship was what Adventist teachers and pastors in North America were encouraged to look for throughout the conference.

The event included presentations, question-and-answer sessions, and field trips. ▀

* Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 413.



Oakwood University's Aeolians perform at the 2017 Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in Wales, United Kingdom.

MICHAEL MARSHALL

OAKWOOD UNIVERSITY CHOIR WINS "CHOIR OF THE WORLD" TITLE

CHOIR DIRECTOR JASON FERDINAND NAMED "OUTSTANDING DIRECTOR"

BY NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

Cheers and prayers of thanksgiving rang out in the United Kingdom and across North America as word spread that the Oakwood University Aeolians won the World Choir Title (Choir of the World) in the choral category during the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod, Wales, Great Britain, on July 8, 2017. The university also received a second award as Jason Ferdinand, the Aeolians' director, was named outstanding director of the World Choral Festival.

The competition, which started on July 3, 2017, began in 1947 as a festival to celebrate the "peace and harmony" that showcases some of the world's greatest musical talents. Each year the International Musical Eisteddfod welcomes more than 4,000 performers, and as many as 50,000 visitors join the festival in the small Welsh town "to sing and dance in a unique combination of competition, performance, and international peace and friendship." The event culminated with the choral competition.

"On behalf of the entire Oakwood University community, we

celebrate the success of the Oakwood University Aeolians on another history-making accomplishment," said Leslie N. Pollard, president of Oakwood University. "To be named Choir of the World . . . is a singular honor that represents the excellence of our university and the best of our Rocket City.



Oakwood University's Aeolians celebrate being named Choir of the World after the announcement of their win on July 8, 2017. MICHAEL MARSHALL

Congratulations to the director, Dr. Jason Ferdinand, and especially our Oakwood University students. You have distinguished yourselves and made us proud and thankful."

In a previous report from the university, the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod is described as "not merely an annual festival promoted by one nation for international audiences, but a festival of music-making in which representatives of the peoples of other nations can take an active part."

The winner of the Choir of the World competition received the coveted Pavarotti Trophy and US\$3,440 (€3,000).

In a press release, university representatives said, "We are proud of the Oakwood University's Aeolians for achieving success on the world stage and representing Oakwood University, Huntsville, and most important, God to the world."

The Aeolians also performed in London, Birmingham, and Manchester. Oakwood University is a historically Black Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher learning in Huntsville, Alabama. 🍀



ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY CELEBRATES 20,000TH DINOSAUR BONE FOUND.

Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas, recently celebrated a milestone at its annual dig for dinosaur bones in northeastern Wyoming, as the 20,000th officially documented bone of the Dinosaur Research Project was found and

uncovered. Art Chadwick, Southwestern research professor, with the support of other professors from Southwestern, Loma Linda University, and Southern Adventist University, has led the project since he started it in 1996.

SABBATHKEEPING GROUP JOINS LOCAL ADVENTIST CHURCH

THE GROUP HAD BEEN FOLLOWING ADVENTIST DOCTRINES FOR YEARS.

BY BETTY COONEY, PACIFIC UNION RECORDER AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

Hawthorne Seventh-day Adventist Church, a congregation in Hawthorne, California, experienced major growth in April 2017 when Carson International Group joined in membership, adding 46 people, 40 of them by profession of faith. An additional dozen people plan to prepare for baptism or join the church by profession of faith later.

Usually, becoming a member of the Adventist Church by profession of faith is reserved for people who have been already practicing Adventist beliefs, but that for some reason are not yet on the official members' roll. Carson International Group was not part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church organization, even though it had been following Adventist beliefs, and even hired an Adventist pastor to minister to them, according to John Cress, Southern California Conference executive secretary and ministerial director.

Months before, Los Angeles Metro Region director Gerard Kiemeney had prayed with John Jenson, from the South Bay church, and a member of the region staffing committee. "What if God impresses two churches to get together?" he asked. Pursuing that possibility, Kiemeney met with the

Hawthorne church board and found them receptive. Then he interviewed the pastor, knowing they needed the right pastor for the delicate task of bringing two congregations together. When the board asked, "Why not just invite them to come here?" the idea of the Carson International group joining a mother church was born.

"My conviction," said Kiemeney, "is that the idea is God-birthed. In Him it's going to work."

Later, commenting on the joining of the two culturally diverse congregations, Kiemeney added, "When the Holy Spirit moves among us, it's no longer about differences, it's about what they hold in common. . . . You will meet, mingle. You will call them to follow Christ, going to seek and to save the lost. In Your hands there is no failure, only success."

"'Together Is Better' is the message today," said Cress during the official merger ceremony. "It is rare for churches to join. It is a unique, rare moment. Jesus has brought this about."

Cress concluded with a blessing on the church: "May the door of the church be wide enough to welcome all who hunger for love and fellowship, and narrow enough to shut out pettiness and pride."

Filemu T. Filemu (Mu) had shep-

herded the Carson International Group before the merger and is serving as pastor of the Hawthorne church. "The church and the community represent many cultures," Mu said. "We have Filipino, African American, Caucasian, Hawaiian, Indonesian, Fijian, Hispanic, and Tongan. And I am Samoan!"

Among other activities, more than 40 members of the church gather on Sundays at 6:00 a.m. in a "stop and pray" area in the front of the church, which faces busy Marine Avenue. The group is inter-generational and cross-cultural; children come too.

"After our prayer and study time together on Sundays," Mu continued, "we have exercised in the church gym. It's been a bonding time for the generations and members of both groups that have come together. When we walk as part of our time together, I encourage members to pray for our church that someone will come here and meet Christ."

"We want to be open to the neighborhood," Mu added. "Recently I was changing the information on the sign in front of the church. Some people walking by asked, 'What is this?' pointing to the church. 'It's a church,' I told them. 'Come visit us, or come for lunch!'"

ADRA TAPS TECHNOLOGY TO PROVIDE WATER TO 1.5 MILLION.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) International announced a new partnership with global water technology leader Grundfos, in a move to provide access to clean water to 1.5 million people in Africa, Asia, Central and South America, and South Pacific

over the next five years. The partnership aims to improve and save lives by using renewable energy and water innovation technologies that provide more efficient and sustainable water access than more traditional methods.

NEWS BRIEFS

1



ADVENTIST CAMP STAFF MEMBER RECOVERS FROM BEAR ATTACK.

A bear attack took place about 4:00 a.m. on July 9, 2017, at Glacier View Ranch in Boulder County, Colorado. The bear wandered into the main area of campus where several staff members were sleeping. Unprovoked, the bear attacked, dragging the staff member about 10 feet. Dylan (who asked to be identified only by his first name) survived the attack, despite deep gashes to his head.

2



AMAZON JUNGLE IS LOCATION OF NEW ADVENTIST FILM PRODUCTION.

The Adventist Church in South America launched production for a new medium-length film, slated to be released in March 2018, just before what is known in the region as “Holy Week.” The *Libertos* audiovisual production is using locations in the Amazon forest, in northern Brazil. The new half-length film will be part of the Adventist Church’s mission-promoting strategies around a time people in many Christian countries remember Christ’s sacrifice and are particularly open to hearing the gospel.

3



STARGAZING EVENT PROPELS VISITORS TO BIBLE STUDIES IN UKRAINE.

An informal stargazing club has led to dozens of people requesting Bible studies in Ukraine. From June 30 to July 2, 2017, visitors to a “Generation Strong” event in Teplyk, Vinnytsia Oblast, answered astronomy quizzes, took part in informative lectures, and lined up for telescope observation sessions of the moon, Jupiter, and Saturn. Guests were also provided with science-based facts, many of which suggest the presence of intelligent design in the universe.

4



ADVENTIST LEADER IN ENGLAND MEETS WITH LOCAL IMAM.

South England Conference (SEC) president Emmanuel Osei visited Imam Toufik Kacimi, chief executive officer of the Finsbury Park Muslim Welfare House, in London, to deliver words of sympathy and condolences in the aftermath of the Finsbury Park terror attack. In response to the SEC president’s visit, Kacimi expressed appreciation for the solidarity shown by the Seventh-day Adventist Church as he praised the work of the church in the area.

5



MOM STUDIES THE BIBLE WITH HER SON’S MURDERER.

A Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist who launched a ministry to prisons after studying the Bible with her son’s murderer is one of the leaders behind an initiative to provide Bible studies to hundreds of inmates in Itabuna, Bahia. Inmates in the Itabuna Prison in Brazil can now apply for a sentence reduction after completing a Bible course offered by Seventh-day Adventists in the area.

6



SWISS ADVENTIST CLINIC OPENS NEW HEALTH CENTER.

A Seventh-day Adventist-operated clinic in Switzerland recently inaugurated a new medical and therapeutic center to promote the health message of the church. The new medical and therapeutic center offers therapeutic rehabilitation in cardiology and neurology, as well as orthopedic rehabilitation. It also provides occupational therapy, neuropsychology, and physiotherapy, along with nutrition and dietetics for internal medicine and pain therapy.

A volunteer participating in It Is Written's health initiative in Mongolia checks vitals on a patient.



MISSION TO MONGOLIA FULFILLS AN ANCIENT REQUEST

IT IS WRITTEN INITIATIVE BRINGS NEW CONVERTS TO THRIVING CHURCH.

BY YURE GRAMACHO, NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION

In A.D. 1266 the great Kublai Khan, leader of the Mongol Yuan dynasty, asked two Italian merchants to return home with a letter requesting 100 well-educated Christian missionaries to come back and teach his people about the gospel.



It Is Written speaker/director John Bradshaw baptizes one of the 71 people who joined the church on the last day of the evangelistic series in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Unfortunately, Kublai Khan's desire went unfulfilled. Until now.

The Great Khan could never have guessed that 750 years later a ministry called It Is Written (IIW), in

partnership with the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mongolia, would respond to this ancient request, focusing its attention on Mongolia with a lifesaving message of hope.

A CAREFULLY CRAFTED PLAN

After three years of spiritual preparation, planning, and ministry, the IIW team, along with the Mongolia Mission, held a large evangelistic campaign June 4-11, 2017, under the theme "In What Can You Trust?" More than 120 volunteer missionaries came from abroad, and 14 churches and companies in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar got involved in this bold missionary challenge. On the last day of the series 71 people were baptized.

"Since 2015 IIW has been actively involved in humanitarian and gospel work to help Mongolians get a clearer picture of Jesus as their help in this world and their hope in the world to come," said Erik Flickinger, associate speaker for the ministry.

The humanitarian work began in 2015 by drilling water wells at two local churches where the local community had no access to fresh, clean drinking water. To get water, residents had to push carts of empty water jugs to a water station, sometimes located a mile from their home. Today three churches have hot and cold running water and attract people who otherwise might not take notice of them.

The Mission: Mongolia project involved medical, dental, and optical clinics as well as nightly Bible presentations by IIW speaker/director John Bradshaw.

Organizers wondered how many people would show up for the evangelistic meetings in a country with 97 percent non-Christian population. On the first night they had their answer: more than 700 people attended. People continued to flock to the nightly evangelistic meeting at the Central Palace of Culture in Ulaanbaatar.

A SUCCESSFUL DELIVERY

Starting on Sunday, June 4, IIW carried out a major health project in Ulaanbaatar. The team of more than 120—including around 80 medical professionals from at least five countries—conducted clinics at several locations around the city, providing a wide range of free health services. In cooperation with city government, physicians, ophthalmologists, dentists, nurses, physical therapists, and many others ministered to thousands of people.

The medical missionary team was divided up and went to hospitals, nursing homes, a school, a center for blind individuals, Adventist churches, and even to a jail, offering dental, vision, surgical, and other services, touching many lives through this work. They provided medical services that in many

cases people would not otherwise be able to receive.

Missionaries sacrificed vacation time and money to travel to the other side of the world to make friends for Jesus. At the same time, evangelistic meetings were held in downtown Ulaanbaatar each night, giving people an opportunity to know Jesus, not only as healer but as Lord and Savior.

“Our journey to Mongolia could not have ended on a better note. More than 70 precious souls publicly confessed their love for Jesus through baptism,” said Yves Monnier, IHW evangelism director. “There may not have been much water in the Tuul River, but there was enough for us to completely immerse every person.”

Monnier shared a special moment for him. “I had the honor of baptizing a young woman with muscular dystrophy. I just cradled her small body in my arms, and we both went down in the water,” he said. “You should have seen her when we came up out of the water: smiling and crying all at the same time.”

Monnier asked church members around the world to keep praying for Mongolia, as locals keep working with others who are continuing to study. “Hundreds more are now being prepared for future baptisms,” he said.

It seems that Kublai Khan’s original request is being fulfilled thanks to the efforts of Adventist missionaries who proclaim a better, everlasting empire, and the coming of a new Khan (King)! ▀

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY NAMES VP FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

NEW POSITION CREATED TO PROVIDE FOR CAMPUS EQUITY AND DIVERSITY.

BY ANDREWS UNIVERSITY NEWS

On July 6, 2017, Andrews University (AU) president Andrea Luxton announced that Michael Nixon accepted the invitation to serve as the school’s first vice president for diversity and inclusion.

Nixon, an Andrews University alumnus and graduate of the John Marshall Law School in Chicago, was offered the position after a formal search process that took place over two months on the university campus.

The search committee was made up of 13 members, all Andrews University administration, faculty, staff, and students, and chaired by Luxton. The committee ultimately conducted in-person interviews with five applicants for the position, followed by presentations to the campus community in late June by the two finalists. During their campus visit the finalists for the position also met with university administrators and leaders from the Lake Union and Lake Region conferences of Seventh-day Adventists.

The committee’s work, and the final selection of Michael Nixon, reflected the job description that called for this new position to provide “spiritual, administrative, and academic leadership for the equity and diversity vision, resources, and programs across the university.”

During the search process, Nixon—who first moved to the Andrews University community when he was 10 years old—shared: “In all my years being associated with Andrews, I have never been more optimistic about its future than I am now. This renewed focus on seeking true, gospel-infused diversity and inclusion on campus is an amazing commitment.”

In one of his presentations to the search committee, Nixon noted that the work of diversity must be a collaborative, God-centered process. “It should be a process that seeks to understand and respond to the complexities of our diverse campus community and commit to transform our perspectives through trust-building conversations and engagement that will work to revamp our campus culture permanently,” he said.

Nixon also noted, “This will take arduous work. We will surely make mistakes, but if we remain committed to each other, this shared commitment to be transformed—along with our commitment to Christ—will infuse us with His Spirit and enable us to become the institution we have been called to be.”

Nixon served as legal coordinator for the Fair Housing Justice Center in New York City. His previous experience included the establishment of an Office of Service and Social Action at the University of Saint Francis while serving as an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer, and working with the Council of American Islamic Relations and in the John Marshall Law School Fair Housing Legal Clinic while attending law school in Chicago. ▀



Michael Nixon

In a study released June 11, 2017, researchers from Yale and Harvard universities concluded that Seventh-day Adventist clergy in the United States are the most evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans when it comes to politics. The study also found that nearly half were not registered to either party.

Based on these numbers, it might

only 1,218,397 reside in North America. Unlike many Protestant churches, the denomination cannot be characterized as an “American” church, but rather a global church with congregations in almost every nation on earth. Andrews University in Michigan, which houses the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, ties for second in the US News Diversity Index for National Universities in the United States. It is an academic center for the whole world of Adventism.

A discussion of Adventist global engagement involves not only religious ministry but also health care and education, which require significant cooperation with local governments around the world. The denomination operates thousands of other institutions: schools, colleges, universities, and medical facilities, including approximately 175 hospitals and many more local clinics.

UNITED, BUT NOT UNIFORM

Despite the church’s diversity, Adventists have a sense that all Adventists everywhere “are in this together.” Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, which is also global and operates thousands of institutions around the world, there is no “pope” who can make infallible declarations, if necessary, to keep things on track.

Instead, the Adventist Church is perhaps the world’s largest representative democracy among faith groups. Local congregations send representatives to conference meetings, which send representatives to union conferences, to national and international divisions, and ultimately to the General Conference sessions that elect church leaders. Every five years the Adventist Church rents out a huge stadium and associated conference centers, and representatives from around the world come together to discuss issues of doctrine and leadership, hear reports from world divisions, and vote on administra-



WHY ADVENTIST CLERGY AVOID PARTISAN POLITICS

ADVENTISTS HAVE A UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION TO MAKE.

BY MICHAEL D. PEABODY, ESQ.

be concluded that the political divide engulfing the nation may have invaded the churches. But in reality Adventist clergy have long put politics on the back burner while they focused on the mission of the international denomination.

The researchers did not conduct a poll, but instead drew inferences from a list of 180,000 clergy of many religious groups in the United States. Using methods described in the study, they found that approximately 130,000 pastors had registered to vote.

According to the study, there are about 5,330 Adventist pastors in the United States. Of these, 51 percent were identified with a political party, divided equally between Democrat and Republican party affiliation. The rest were not registered with either party.

A 2014 Pew Research study also found that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was the most racially and ethnically diverse denomination in the United States.

In 2016 the Adventist Church reported that as of 2015 there were 19,126,438 members of the denomination around the world, of which

tive and organizational issues.

Some of these decisions, such as a 2015 vote at the General Conference session in San Antonio, Texas, that chose not to extend ordination to female pastors, can be controversial, and are debated for years before and after. Despite these disagreements, it is remarkable that representatives from nations that might be at war with each other can come together as “brothers and sisters” in a common mission.

A factor keeping politics out of Adventist pulpits could also be that Adventists observe a weekly Sabbath, with most refraining from discussing politics during the 24-hour period from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. Most do not read newspapers or watch the news during that time, although many engage in social media on other topics.

This means that you’re unlikely to find a partisan political discussion taking place during a church service or Saturday study sessions, and pastors who want to address political issues will probably do so privately, away from the pulpit on another day of the week.

While there may be tax-exemption considerations involved with taking political stands in the pulpit, Adventists understand the practical reality that a pastor in one country does not serve the global mission well by pushing politicians to take military action in another part of the world, even though denominations with no international aspirations may have no qualms about this kind of engagement.

While Adventists in North America are patriotic, they have traditionally avoided engaging in armed conflict as combatants. Their dedication to this principles is exemplified by people who made significant sacrifices such as Congressional Medal of Honor awardee Desmond Doss and military draftees who chose to undergo chemical testing in Operation Whitecoat, rather than take up arms.

INFORMED AND ENGAGED

Adventists have long emphasized the value of political independence and the separation of church and state. One of the church’s founders, Ellen G. White, noted that while voting was important, “those who teach the Bible in our churches and our schools are not at liberty to unite in making apparent their prejudices for or against political men or measures.”¹

“Let political questions alone,” White counseled. “Every teacher, minister, or leader in our ranks who is stirred with a desire to ventilate his opinions on political questions, should be converted by a belief in the truth, or give up his work.”²

In 1952 General Conference president J. Lamar McElhany wrote, “The church has never attempted to instruct its members as to how they should vote, or for whom they should vote. These are matters that must be left to the members’ individual conscience. Nor has the church placed any ban or censure on its members if they as qualified citizens choose to exercise their right to vote, or on any who may choose not to vote.”

McElhany continued: “We believe every member . . . is entitled to exercise his or her right of franchise. The stability and foundation of good government rests upon the people. If those who are stable and law-abiding and have a high regard for the principles of good government hold themselves aloof from the task of choosing good and fit men for governmental leadership, they thereby make themselves responsible for failures in government. This is a responsibility good citizens should seek to avoid insofar as their votes make this possible. . . . It is important that all issues that are to be placed on the ballot should be carefully studied by every conscientious voter.”

The result of these factors is that partisan domestic political disputes take a back seat to the larger

sense of the mission of the Adventist Church.

The Adventist Church remains relatively small in the United States, so when Adventist politician Dr. Ben Carson, U.S. secretary of Housing and Urban Development, was briefly the front runner in the 2016 Republican primaries, it made for interesting discussion among the ranks of Adventists.

For Adventists, having a single member with national influence is a big deal. Yet the denomination maintained a nonpartisan stance, issuing a press release acknowledging that while Dr. Carson was a well-respected physician, “it is important for the church to maintain its long-standing historical support for the separation of church and state by not endorsing or opposing any candidate.”

Because of its careful avoidance of partisan politics, and focus on specific issues, not personalities, the church has cultivated an atmosphere of nonpartisanship that has allowed it to be a leader on church-state issues. Both Democrat and Republican leaders have endorsed its legislative initiatives on workplace religious freedom. The church’s international humanitarian work has been recognized and respected by governments around the world.

We are living in an age when partisanship is reaching a fevered pitch. Fear-inducing rhetoric of politicians, the press, and social media is combining to inspire unstable people to take violent action. If you can’t catch a break from what’s happening in the world, there is still a “safe space” to find some shelter from politics.

Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:28, 29). 📖

¹ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 391.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 392, 393.



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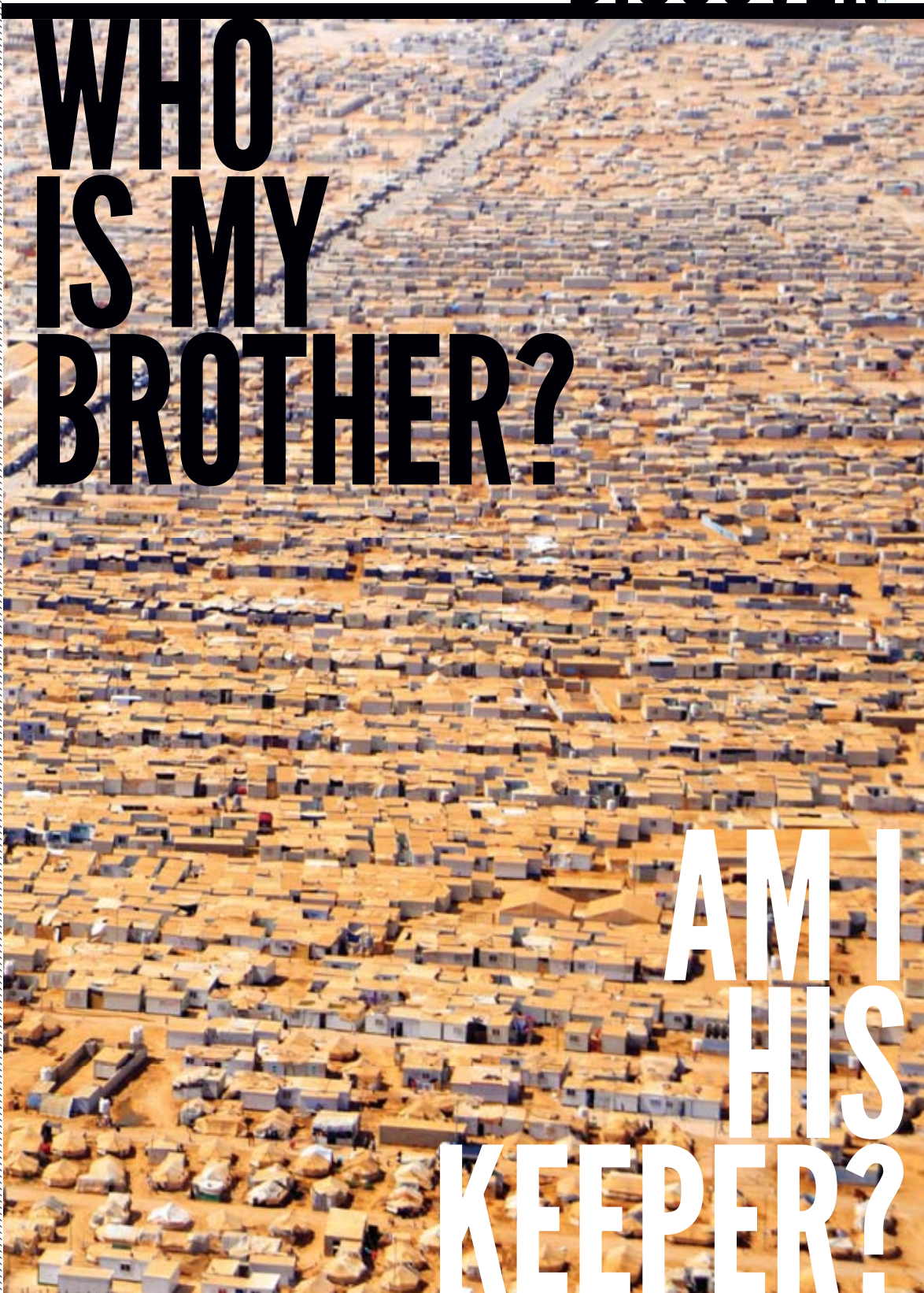
ALSO IN THIS SECTION:

- » WHY SHOULD I CARE?
- » MY COUSIN, THE TURNIP
- » THE WORD AND HIS WORD

DISCOVER

**WHO
IS MY
BROTHER?**

**AM I
HIS
KEEPER?**



KENDRA HALOVIK VALENTINE

Numerous stories in the first book of Scripture in one way or another wrestle with this rhetorical question asked by the first older brother: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” They all give the obvious answer: Of course! Was Abraham his nephew’s keeper? Yes, several times (Gen. 13-14)! Was Ishmael his half brother Isaac’s keeper? He should have been, but he was quickly banished (Gen. 21:9). Were the twins Esau and Jacob each other’s keeper? No? Later, yes? Were Joseph’s many brothers jointly their brother’s keeper? Certainly not when they sold him into slavery. Was Joseph keeper of his 11 brothers? The book of Genesis concludes with Joseph providing a safe place for his brothers and their families.

As the stories of Scripture continue, violence and intolerance of others entrench themselves in society as clans become tribes and tribes become nations and alliances form. Some groups of people place those seen as “others” into slavery. The hatred Cain felt toward Abel spreads to entire communities of people as the human situation degrades.

While there are brotherly and sisterly moments in Scripture (the book of Ruth, the call of the prophets—especially the book of Jonah, for example), the separation and hostility between people groups seems rock-solid. Certainly the Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, Assyrians, and Babylonians were Israel’s enemies, not Israel’s brothers. Cain’s denial of responsibility for his brother becomes the norm.

THE GOSPEL RECORD

In Jesus’ day His hearers still wanting to diminish their responsibility for others debated a slightly different version of the question: not “Am

I my brother’s keeper?” but “Who is my brother?” or “Who is my neighbor?” Those most cautious against outsiders believed their brother and neighbor to be those only of their own kinship group; your brother was one only of your own blood.

Others, more generous, expanded the notion of “neighbor” to include at least all Jewish people living in their own village. The most liberal of the day believed that any Jew one met was one’s brother and therefore “neighbor.” But still, care and responsibility were due only within the boundaries of one’s ethnic group.

Then came Jesus. He expanded even the most inclusive view, giving it radical new dimensions. His parable of the good Samaritan made it clear that a Samaritan—related, but beyond the immediate ethnic group—was also indeed a neighbor (Luke 10:25-37).

Jesus tells the parable while on his way to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51), walking through Jewish and Samaritan villages and encouraging His disciples to go ahead of Him preparing the way (Luke 10:1ff.). But what happened in territories even beyond these? What happened when Jesus went into enemy territory, that is, into Gentile land? Do the questions “Am I my brother’s keeper?” or “Who is my brother?” apply there?

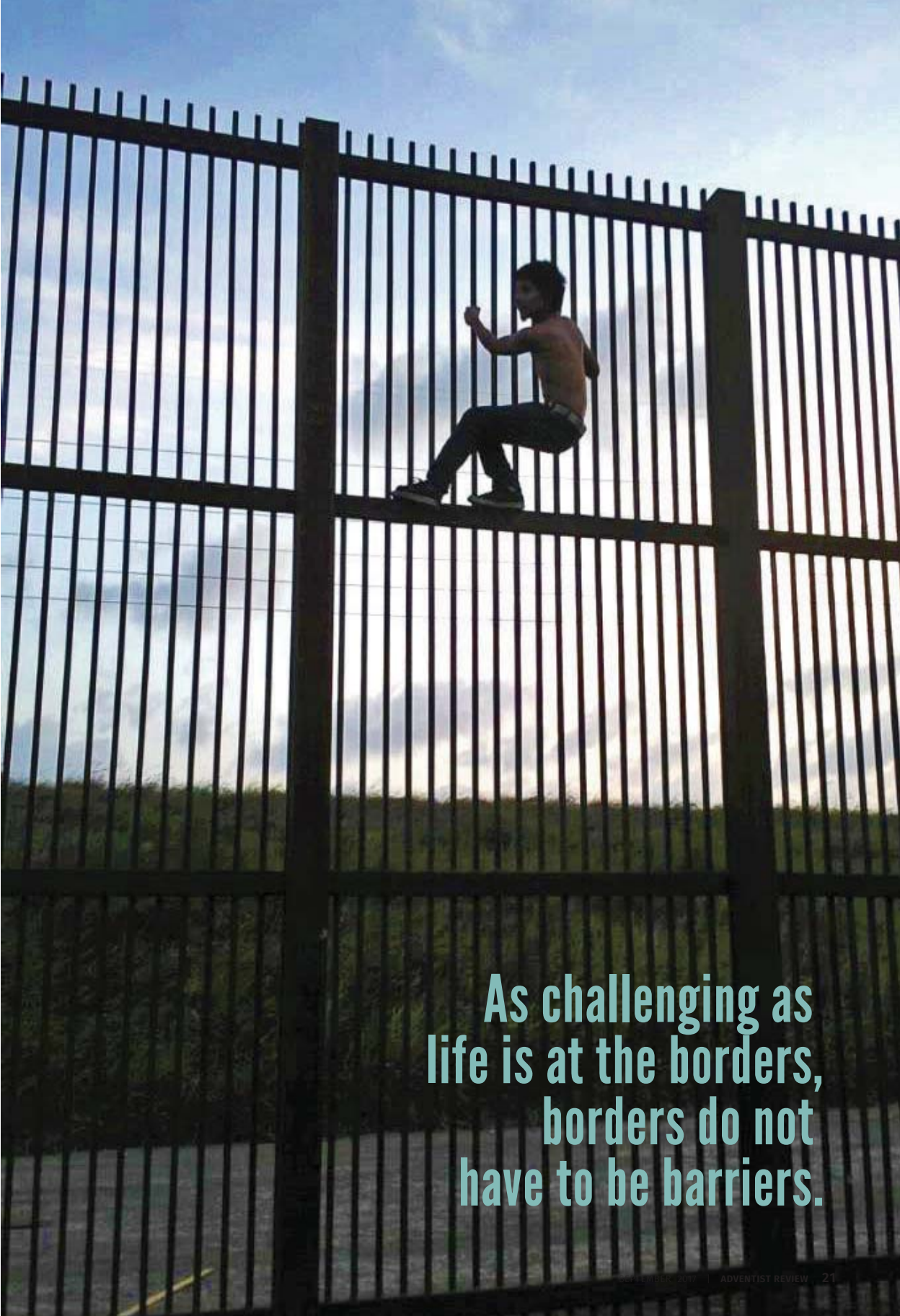
In Mark, the very first Gospel written, we have a clear answer to Cain’s challenge of whether we are responsible, and how far our responsibility to care extends. The answer comes through a rather difficult story, one in which Jesus surprises us with the distinction He makes between people who are “children” and people who are “dogs”:

“But from there He [Jesus] arose and went away to the border of Tyre [and Sidon]. And He entered into a house. He had wanted no one to know, yet He could not escape notice. But immediately a woman heard about Him, whose little daughter had an unclean spirit. She came and fell down at His feet. Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth. And she begged Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. And He said to her: ‘First let the children be satisfied, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.’

“But she answered and said to Him: ‘Lord, even

On the previous page: An aerial view of the Za’atri camp for Syrian refugees in Jordan. In 2015 the population of the camp was estimated to be 83,000.

Right: A border wall near Brownsville, Texas.



**As challenging as
life is at the borders,
borders do not
have to be barriers.**

the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.'

"And He said to her: 'For these words you may go; the demon has left your daughter.' And she went to her home and found the child lying on the bed, and the demon had gone out. Then He returned again from the border of Tyre, and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee up to the region of the Decapolis."¹

This Greek, Syrophenician woman, referred to in Jewish idiom as a "dog," can certainly not be a "sister" to Jesus, can she? She's not even a "neighbor," is she? One can imagine Mark's Jewish Christian readers asking such questions. And Jesus—the one who radically expanded the category of neighbor and brother in the good Samaritan parable and earlier in this first Gospel (Mark 3:31-35)—seems to call this unnamed woman with the sick little daughter a "dog." Why?

One can argue that the canine reference was to a "lap dog" rather than a scavenger dog, since Greeks sometimes had pets. But most scholars reject such an idea not only because it imposes contemporary culture onto the first century, but also because it does not resolve the problem: who wants to be an animal, even a pet?

One can argue that this is only a parable about the gospel going first to Jews, then to Gentiles, though the parable's implication is to Gentiles as dogs. Isn't that troubling—especially today?

One can argue that Jesus was testing her faith, and that she more than passes the test. But how should we understand Jesus' apparent reluctance to heal? Admittedly, Jesus' response to people in need does exhibit great variety. Then again, what if it is a test and she fails? You may respond that in Mark's Gospel people fail a lot, but Jesus never gives up on them.

One can argue that Jesus was testing His disciples, using their own insulting and prejudiced language in a way that hooks them into the discussion; then He turns the tables on their thinking about those outside the Jewish community. Perhaps, Mark doesn't give that answer yet, because he doesn't even mention the disciples as Matthew does (Matt. 15:21-28).²

PUTTING OURSELVES IN THE PICTURE

Looking at the story in its cultural setting helps: Jesus was doing what any honorable male in his culture would do when confronted by a strange

woman. She was out of line to be so aggressive. She should have had a male ask on her behalf, rather than just burst in on Jesus.

But since Jesus challenged other aspects of His culture's patriarchal values (and will again even before the end of this story), why does He seem to buy into His society's racism and sexism at this point?

It is certainly a difficult story. Jesus appears to be calling the Greek, Syrophenician woman a "dog." It may have sounded to some like a standard insult, although probably one she had heard many times before. It bothers us. Did it bother her? How could it not? Although it probably didn't surprise her. There were clear and well-established boundaries between Jews and Greeks in the first century. There were strict rules of not eating together—there would be no sharing of food or fellowship.

Interestingly, Jesus challenged some of these very traditions about eating and those who were unclean earlier in this same chapter (Mark 7:1-23). So why on this occasion does He seem unwilling to put His own arguments into practice?

This episode and this woman call for particular attention. This was a surprisingly different kind of woman. A close reading of the text reveals that she was likely an aristocratic woman of Greek ethnicity living in the territory of Tyre² on the Mediterranean coast. During times of scarcity the wealthy of Tyre were known to take the bread from poor Galilean farmers.³ In social status she is above Jesus, yet this mother falls at Jesus' feet.

Both she and Jesus are out of place, in the borderlands, and Jesus' first words to her underscore this uncomfortable location. Literally, they are on the border between Syrophenicia and Galilee. But they are also on the border of other boundaries: male/female; Jew/Greek; lower class/upper class; Galilean (depleted of bread)/Syrophenician (taking bread).

Am I my brother's keeper when we are living on such borders? when the brother is across the border? when differences that separate are highlighted and unavoidable? Who is my brother, my sister, my neighbor at the border between Israel and Jordan? at the border between Sudan and South Sudan? Ukraine and Russia? North Korea and South Korea? Mexico and the United States? What about the uncertain and confusing borders of conservative and liberal?



To follow the radically inclusive Christ means that we do not ask the question that avoids responsibility.

Then the story takes a surprising turn. Scripture says:

“But she answered and said to Him: ‘Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.’

“And He said to her: ‘For these words you may go; the demon has left your daughter.’”

This Greek, Syrophenician woman—the only person in Mark’s Gospel to address Jesus as “Lord”—observes that the dogs are already eating! Simultaneously with the children, the dogs are eating crumbs under the table. Call her what you want, she knows she has a need that must be cared for: her daughter must be free of the demon. She is convinced that Jesus can heal. She is convinced that a crumb of His healing power is sufficient for her family. And Jesus affirms her words, performing the only miracle in Mark’s Gospel done from afar.

JESUS’ EXPANSIVE MINISTRY

The very next action Jesus takes after this encounter in Mark’s Gospel is to go to the Decapolis—10 cities on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, alien territory where foreign Greek culture flourished and was held out as the ideal (Mark 7:31). There Jesus will heal a deaf man who couldn’t speak properly. Jesus will blur more boundaries when—over on that “other” side of the Sea—He will take seven loaves and a few small fish and feed a huge multitude (Mark 8:1-10).

This time it isn’t people from Jewish villages (Mark 6:30-44), but non-Jewish foreigners, and—

just like the earlier miracle—there are broken pieces (crumbs) left over (Mark 6:43; 8:20). Jesus’ mission had expanded to include Greeks!

The questions—Who is my brother? Who is my sister? Who is my neighbor?—were receiving shocking answers: Greeks of the Decapolis, the hungry of the region, great multitudes who had been strangers. Jesus’ encounter with the Syrophenician woman modeled the disciples’ prejudices to teach them a desperately needed lesson.⁴ The episode is a turning point in Mark’s Gospel: the family of God includes people across borders!

CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Recently a sabbatical project took me to two continents where I interacted with people from 15 different countries, people beyond my own borders. I conducted a survey of five questions about this story of the Syrophenician woman.⁵ The responses reflected the way culture affects our reading of a passage, and how we are blessed by those readings.

Those from Asian cultures tended to focus more on the domestic aspects of the story: of the mother-and-daughter relationship, village life, the frequency of scavenger dogs near doorways, and where families eat meals in storefronts. While many did not express concern that Jesus appeared to be labeling the woman a “dog,” they were definitely interested in the dog part of the story.

Australians tended to want to explain or address the demon-possession description of the daughter. What caused the daughter’s malady? How to understand demon possession then and now? All readers were shaped by their own cultural setting: by their assumptions about mangy dogs or household pets; by understandings about the spirit world or skepticism about demons; by borders and language barriers; by cultural clashes and gender assumptions.

Crossing cultural borders myself caused me to imagine the challenges Jesus’ Gentile mission must have faced as He interacted with people who didn’t know the stories of Abraham; or who were unfamiliar with the Ten Commandments; or who had different assumptions about what and how to eat; or with whom one should share table fellowship.

Imagine the cultural clashes between Jesus’ disciples and the secular Greeks of the Decapolis. Yet the disciples were to learn that these Greeks, even

God's question echoes throughout the ages: "What have you done?"

their oppressive Roman colonizers, were still their brothers and sisters and neighbors. Although it was "a slow and painful process," the Christian community would eventually come to include Syrophenician women and men as sisters and brothers.⁶

The healing power of Jesus is that amazing: it can transform Greeks and also the people who used to call them "dogs." For Mark's readers their households were to be inclusive, and their radical inclusivity was embodied every time the community celebrated the Lord's Supper. As Jewish Christians and Greek Christians ate together remembering Jesus' broken body and spilled blood, they embodied broken-down boundaries between people. As challenging as life is at the borders, borders do not have to be barriers.

But it sure isn't easy to put into action. Where are borders acting as barriers today? I think of the faces of Syrian refugees living for years in camps along the borders between countries; Rohingya boat refugees from Myanmar refused asylum; children riding trains from Guatemala and southern Mexico to the United States in order to escape drug violence. Some faces that feel even more foreign include: ISIS fighters; Americans who hold up flags while using anti-American rhetoric; advocates of Al-Qaeda and sharia law. Who is my brother?

Mark's Gospel challenges me. If Jesus is the Christ, if the gospel is here, then all these people are my brothers and sisters.

LOOKING FOR ANSWERS

"Am I my brother's keeper?" is not an innocent question. A simplistic, plain reading of this important text misses its real meaning. It must be read literarily rather than literally. It is not a question requiring an answer. It is actually a lying wrongdoer's denial of responsibility and accountability. "I do not know" where my brother is, Cain said to God. "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9, NRSV).⁷ It wasn't really a question seeking an answer. It was a denial. The intent was clear: Don't


blame me. It's my brother's fault, not mine.

All readers of the story condemn Cain's denial of responsibility. And the next question God asks Cain is: "What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground" (verse 10, NRSV). God's question echoes throughout the ages: "What have you done?"

Because of Scripture's clear condemnation of Cain, we carefully avoid asking his question when we see refugees, homeless, or hungry people. We know God's response, so we change the question to: Who is my brother? And quickly respond, "Other Adventists," right? OK, I'll expand the answer to "other" Christians. Perhaps even to all Christians living in my country. But Mark reminds us of a Jesus who crossed borders into the region of Tyre and met a woman with whom he had nothing in common. She was what many considered a "dog," but by the end of the encounter her needs were cared for; her daughter was healed.

Then Jesus began a preaching and healing ministry across every border His feet could take Him. If we stay close to Jesus, our brothers and sisters are those both in our villages and across borders who need care: the hurting and the hungry of our world.

To believe Jesus' ministry was about the kingdom of God arriving (Mark 1:15) is to embrace His model of justice; that is, to work for a just society. To follow the radically inclusive Christ means that we do not ask the question that avoids responsibility.

But to the question "Who is my brother?" we respond: our brothers and sisters are not only those living in our town, of our same nationality and ethnicity, who embrace our faith, but they are those across the many borders of our world. Come: learn from Jesus that a Greek, Syrophenician woman with an unclean daughter is our sister. 

¹ My own translation of Mark 7:24-31 from Koine Greek.

² Tyre was considered a traditional enemy of Israel (see Isa. 23).

³ Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), p. 209.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), pp. 400, 401

⁵ The survey and research project had been approved by the Institutional Research Boards at La Sierra University and at Asia-Pacific International University.

⁶ Boring, p. 207.

⁷ Bible texts credited to NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

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MY COUSIN, THE TURNIP

Though the public hasn't yet caught on, most scientists understand the tentativeness of their conclusions: a theory, deemed correct today, could by the next generation be the stuff of myth. Most likely it will be.

With macroevolution, however, nothing is provisional about it, at least according to atheist fundamentalist Richard Dawkins.

"Evolution is a fact," he wrote. "Beyond reasonable doubt, beyond serious doubt, beyond sane, informed, intelligent doubt, beyond doubt evolution is a fact. The evidence for evolution is at least as strong as the evidence for the Holocaust, even allowing for eyewitnesses to the Holocaust. It is the plain truth that we are cousins of chimpanzees, somewhat more distant cousins of monkeys, more distant cousins still of aardvarks and manatees, yet more distant cousins of bananas and turnips . . . continue the list as long as desired."

So certain of evolution, Dawkins argued that allowing equal time for teaching creation in school would be like giving Holocaust deniers the opportunity to present their views as well.

"Imagine," Dawkins wrote, "that as a teacher of European history, you are continually faced with belligerent demands to 'teach the controversy,' and to give 'equal time' to the 'alternative theory' that the Holocaust never happened but was invented by a bunch of Zionist fabricators."

Meanwhile, during a TV interview, in the context of how the universe began, Dawkins said, "Lawrence Krauss, my colleague, we did a film together called *The Unbelievers*. And he has written a book called *A Universe From Nothing*. And he produces a physical theory, mathemati-

cally worked out, to show that you can get something from nothing. That nothing and nothing in some strange way cancels itself out to produce something. And quantum theory allows that to happen. Well, I'm humble enough to say I don't understand it, and I am not arrogant enough to say that because I don't understand it, it can't be right."

Dawkins equates Holocaust deniers with those who don't think humans are distant cousins of bananas and turnips; but sees no reason to question the theory, "mathematically worked out" (mind you), that "nothing and nothing in some strange way cancels itself out to produce something," i.e., the universe?

Dawkins' statements show that science has always been, and remains, a human endeavor, with all the subjectivity, prejudices, and cultural limits that humans bring to their endeavors, even those supposedly as objective as science. That Dawkins could espouse this silliness and get away with it (after all, "It's science!") proves that our age is blinded by the cultural architecture that dominates it, just as every age before us has been by the culture that dominated them.

Scripture should be Christians' best defense against every culture's myths. Unfortunately, look how quickly culture vanquished the biblical Sabbath for the myth of Sunday, a failure not in the Word but in those who failed to heed the Word. That's why only strict adherence to Scripture can spare believers from the myths that our culture (now dominated by the narratives of science) espouses—including (but not limited to) belief that we're the cousins of turnips and, yes, that everything came from nothing. ♣

Clifford Goldstein is editor of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*. His next book, *Baptizing the Devil: Evolution and the Seduction of Christianity*, is available from Pacific Press.

CLIFF'S
EDGE
CLIFFORD
GOLDSTEIN



SCRIPTURE SHOULD
BE CHRISTIANITY'S
BEST DEFENSE
AGAINST EVERY
CULTURE'S MYTHS.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

*Social
means
we're all
involved*

MALCOLM CORT

When God first made us, He meant for all of us to treat each other with equal respect. He made us equal simply by making only two of us who would be everybody's father and mother. We would all be children of the same parents, and the same family. In His ingenious ideal strategy there would be no room for anything but mutual love and mutual respect. Mutual admiration, respect, and caring is no mere human invention.

LOSING THE IDEAL

Things didn't go as God preferred. The first son murdered the second son. Within a few generations our history was reporting not only murder but also bigamy (Gen. 4:19-24), with its implications for the diminution and degrading of the woman's status. Along the way, human societies have designed for themselves a variety of systems in which social justice is applied in lawful, state-administered systems that have the power to label behavior as appropriate or otherwise. Also, we have given these state systems the power to enforce our agreements on law and order even with capital punishment. But our systems do not always match or function according to Bible believers' understandings, or Christ-centered definitions of justice.¹

APPOINTING RULERS

Because of the dignity God originally bestowed on the man, Adam, and his wife, Eve (Gen. 1:26-28), we know that systems that provide fairness and respect for everybody are not just a good thing. They have a divine original to model after. They are a God thing, a biblical thing.

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, tried to help his son-in-law set up such a system in the desert of Sinai. However commendable Moses' efforts to be a good ruler, Jethro saw that his son-in-law would soon wear himself out trying to singlehandedly assure everyone of fair treatment. Jethro first put to him a tactful question: "Why do you alone sit as judge and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?" (Ex. 18:14).²

Moses' honest reply shows not only his idealism, but also the blind spot that Jethro may already have recognized: "Because the people come to me

to inquire of God" (verse 15). Apparently, at this point, Moses never reflected on how awkward it might be socially to consider oneself the only channel God can use to communicate His will for His people. However, being a teachable man, things turn out well for him. Following good counsel, he is able to "select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth . . . , and . . . place these over them [the congregation] as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens" (verse 21). They will judge and rule on "every minor dispute," and bring to him "every major dispute" (verse 22).

HOW JUST ARE THE RULERS?

The challenge for Moses and Israel and society today is that, despite the divine model, despite the soundness of the idea of establishing justice systems, and despite the fact that the word "justice" may be a part of the very name of their responsibility, the leaders and rulers we appoint often wander away from the purposes and duties of their assignment.

Amos denounced the people of influence in his time for oppressing those who were poor and crushing those who were needy (Amos 4:1). Isaiah, another eighth-century prophet, decried the commitment of the nation's legislators to make laws that deprived society's most vulnerable of their rights (Isa 10:1, 2).

Many today live in palpable fear of the justice system that, theoretically, is designed to serve them. They fear that the medical bill from one unexpected illness will drive them into poverty; that their son might be arrested or even shot because, perhaps, he got too much melanin; that the Medicare and Medicaid rug³ could be pulled from under their feet just when they need it most.

They fear the corruption that allows those in power to cover up their abuses and stifle the truth about their injustice. For many, this insecurity about their nation's justice system is based on strong historical precedent, and is not without its consequences for the wider society, limiting economic, educational, and other areas of progress. Journalist Soledad O'Brien once said: "I've learned that fear limits you and your vision. It serves as blinders to what may be just a few steps down the road for you."

Christians have been known to raise very different questions about public involvement for the

Justice is respect and care for all the children of my race, God's human race.

sake of justice. Some resist conversation about government-run social programs or possible abuses on the part of systems personnel, such as police, immigration authorities, or social services managers. For them it constitutes meddling in politics. Christians, they say, are to stay out of politics. The early church, some say, paid attention to its own widows (Acts 6) but bore no responsibility for the social needs of the wider public.

Others find it difficult to believe Jesus would have us not care about any but our own church members. Are we to believe that all the prisoners in His sheep and goats parable (Matt. 25:31-46) were Adventist? The United States today far outstrips any other country in incarceration rates. As of 2016 there were 737 imprisoned per 100,000 population. In Russia, next in line, the rate is 615 per 100,000. Ukraine is third at 350 per 100,000.⁴

Jesus' sheep and goats parable affirms those who visit Him in prison and denounces and repudiates those who do not. Is it His intent for us to honor His spirit by caring about Adventists in jail—maybe all there because of their faith? Is there an Adventist Christian who can seriously argue for ignoring the non-Adventist prison population—perhaps because they ought to pay for their crimes?

Again, prison is an expensive place to spend a vacation. According to the *Huffington Post*, citing a study by the Independent Budget Office, New York City paid \$167,731 to feed, house, and guard each inmate in 2012. Is it political meddling to be concerned about the outlay of taxpayer resources that are being channeled into the prison industry? Is it Christian love to ignore certain prisoners? Is it good stewardship to avoid conversations about the resources lost to such a system, be they material, or—ininitely more important to God—the gifts and talents and lifetimes of His children sunken in crime or even unjustly mired in a prison dungeon by someone's error?

Closer study turns up yet more remarkable data on American incarceration: if we photographed the

entire prison population, the greatest proportion of the faces looking down or out of the picture would be Black (40 percent). Blacks may be only 13 percent of the North American population, but more of them are locked up than any of the United States' other racial groupings. Whites, 64 percent of the U.S. population—five times the Black population—would be 39 percent of the faces in our picture. Latinos, 16 percent of the U.S. population, would make up 19 percent of our prison photograph.⁵

Some may draw conclusions about the cause of these figures according to their beliefs about the supposed innate nature of races in our society. Unfortunately for themselves and others as well, some are convinced that Blacks are more criminal-minded than all other races. This unscientific notion may be enough to satisfy some imaginations. It is just one more evidence of how much we have lost from Eden.

Though it allows some to redirect any possible blame or caring responsibility from themselves, it holds no interest whatsoever for people who recognize all humanity's descent from our common father and mother, Adam and Eve, created in the image and after the likeness of God (Gen. 1:26, 27). It is baseless for those who understand that God made all nations as one race (Acts 17:26). It is nonsense to those who commit to experiencing, through the saving grace of God, complete personal restoration to our Eden home completely restored.

A sense of how much Eden loss we now live with, and of the stern biblical denunciation of the flawed systems we construct and operate for our selfish selves, should compel and constrain Bible-believing, Christ-exalting, cross-bearing followers of Jesus Christ to an ever more earnest integrity of living that implicitly criticizes society's manipulators and exploiters. And it should move us to passionate and consistent defense of society's vulnerable, who may have no voice but our own to speak up against their abuse and for their care.

A WELCOME PLACE

An inscription on the Apartheid Museum in South Africa prominently displays these words of Nelson Mandela: "To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."

These words express the essence of living out justice at the personalized level whether we are

We should care because apathy about evil is itself a great sin.

victims or not, whether our families, friends, or loved ones are victims of social injustice or not. We should care because apathy about evil is itself a great sin.

As a former justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, Thurgood Marshall wrote: “We must dissent from the indifference. We must dissent from the apathy. We must dissent from the fear, the hatred and the mistrust. We must dissent from a nation that has buried its head in the sand waiting in vain for the needs of its poor, its elderly, and its sick to disappear and just blow away. We must dissent from a government that has left its young without jobs, education, or hope. We must dissent from the poverty of vision and timeless absence of moral leadership. We must dissent because America can do better, because America has no choice but to do better.”

We should care, not for subjective reasons, but because we are God’s, and members, with the guilty and downtrodden, of His one family. His Spirit within us is the only guarantee of genuine worship, acceptable in His sight. He says: “Such [selfish] fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high” (Isa. 58:4, NRSV).⁵ True fasting and worship involve more than adopting an aspect of humility, bowing down the head, or wearing sackcloth and ashes—conspicuous cultural markers of worship genuineness.

The essence of true and acceptable worship is “to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke”; it is “to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin” (verses 6, 7, NRSV).

It is to realize, given Eden as our reference point, that those whom I view as separate and different because of their skin, equally with those I welcome because of theirs, are all my “own kin.” It is to know and live the fact that Jesus died for them no less than for me. It is to remember and live the words of Jesus Himself, that whatever I will not do for one of the least, I’m refusing to do for Him (see Matt. 25:45). Apathy about justice is not a function of good spiritual health.

I can’t change the world on my own. But I can change my world. I can show Christ’s love to the victimized. I can care for the Black prisoners

equally with the White; for ungodly prisoners equally with Adventists; for those in jail for crimes equally with those there for conscience. I can care for police officers equally with the unfortunate victims of police brutality.

I do not determine the rightness or wrongness of police shootings, or who is rightly or wrongly in prison. I love them all and minister to them all—never charged, exonerated, accused, or condemned—because Jesus says they are He. I do not take sides, except that I take Jesus’ side of service and love, regardless of creed, regardless of race. I offer my church and home and life as a welcome place for foreigners, those evicted from their homes, or whose homes have burned to the ground. I offer it as a place of food for the hungry, a place of consolation for the grieving, whether gang members or their victims. I understand that fear of being accused of taking sides can immobilize me and prevent me from showing God’s children God’s compassion.

However you define it, justice is, for me, a gift God grants to honor, respect, and care for all the children of my race, His human race.

¹ “Sociology Guide—a Student’s Guide to Sociology,” retrieved from www.sociology.com, July 28, 2017.

² Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

³ Two government-run programs in the United States of America designed to help older and low-income Americans obtain private health insurance.

⁴ International Center for Prison Studies, Products and Services. Retrieved from: newsvote.bbc.com.uk/email/news, July 28, 2017. Note that American victimization rates are not higher than those of other countries. It is simply that the American justice system has a higher commitment to locking people up: Michelle Y. Lee, “Yes, the U.S. Locks People Up at a Higher Rate Than Any Other Country,” *Washington Post*, July 7, 2015.

⁵ Leah Sakala, “Breaking Down Mass Incarceration in the 2010 Census: State-by-State Incarceration Rates by Race/Ethnicity,” *Prison Policy Initiative*, May 28, 2014.

⁶ Bible texts credited to NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

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THE WORD AND HIS WORD

As unique as God, its author

JO ANN DAVIDSON



In a time of easy access to so many different Bible versions, even as electronic options trump the need to turn pages in search of texts, the time has come to explore the utter distinctiveness of this single-volume library. This article reviews the Bible's strength in six areas: origin, monotheism, prophecy, focus, historicity, and transforming power.

UNIQUE ORIGIN

The Bible is very different from other ancient literature—as the psalmist notes: God “declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any [other] nation” (Ps. 147:19).¹

Converted rabbi Paul calls the Scriptures “the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2), a compilation unlike anything produced by other ancient people or nation. Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman civilizations left behind written materials, including poetry and narrative. But nothing remotely similar to the biblical material with its history, biography, ethical discussion, laws, letters, and prophecy, penned over thousands of years and written by dozens of different people.

Yet despite its diversity of authors and genres, the Bible demonstrates thoroughgoing consistency. Its divine Author intended that the books of its collection be a blessing to all humanity, bringing the “everlasting gospel” to “every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6), a truly cross-cultural gift.

UNIQUE MONOTHEISM

While the peoples surrounding Israel served multiple gods and goddesses, biblical writers allow for the existence of only one true God. In striking contrast to the bloodthirsty, polytheistic pantheons around, He is a loving, self-sacrificing Savior (John 3:16).

UNIQUE PROPHETIC PREDICTION

No other oracles from other ancient gods included predictions reaching hundreds and thousands of years into the future and attaining precise fulfillment. The sweeping prophecy of Daniel 2, with its march of nations from Babylon to the climactic establishment of God's kingdom, is without parallel in other ancient oracles. So too

are other long-range, timed, biblical predictions such as the 1260- and 2300-day prophecies.

I remember sharing the Daniel 2 prophecy with a woman who listened carefully with a faraway look in her eyes. Then she responded, “Yes, that's how it was. I've been a history teacher for years.”

Those who find numerous Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah fulfilled in the New Testament are sometimes accused of “reading Jesus back into the Old Testament”

Jesus Himself, on Resurrection Sunday, would then be accused of doing the same, and doing it twice! To two disciples on the road to Emmaus His instruction becomes a paramount text of hermeneutics. Jesus' denunciation was stern: “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” Having issued His rebuke, He led them in an Old Testament review through Moses, the Prophets, and the Scriptures, on “the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:25-27), leaving them to exclaim, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?” (verse 32).

As He later He summed up with the disciples in Jerusalem, His life was the necessary fulfillment of all that was “written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning [Him]” (verse 44).

Ellen White underscores Christ's hermeneutic: “The strongest proofs that [Jesus] is the world's Redeemer are found in the prophecies of the Old Testament compared with the history of the New. Jesus said . . . , ‘Search the Scriptures; for . . . they are they which testify of me’”—a clear reference to the Old Testament, since “there was no other scripture in existence save that of the Old Testament.”²

Jesus mentioned this same perspective to leading religious clergy who rejected Him: “If you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me” (John 5:46).

Old Testament promises of a coming Redeemer feature myriad details, perhaps as many as 190, that are all strikingly fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Such prophetic prediction is beyond human ability. Daniel acknowledges this to pagan King Nebuchadnezzar: “There is a God in heaven who reveals

secrets, and He has made known . . . what will be” (Dan. 2:28).

God Himself issues the challenge through Isaiah: “Show the things that are to come hereafter that we may know that you are gods” (Isa. 41:23). No question, biblical prophecies are unique.

SALVATION FOCUS

The many gods and goddesses of Israel’s neighbors fought nasty battles, becoming drenched in blood, flinging body parts around with glee, even eating each other’s children. Their gory and violent story reflects the passions of fallen humans, while the unique God of Scripture strives to restore His sin-stricken and sin-damaged human family to a wholeness we have lost.

From the first promise of redemption right after the Fall (Gen. 3:15) to the final assurance and fulfillment depicted in the book of Revelation, the Bible presents a singular record of God in search of a lost and broken humanity. He is overwhelmingly the subject of most of the verbs, and His commitment to our present and ultimate good is unrelenting.

With the miraculous incarnation of Jesus, God went to the extreme to assure salvation, all the while continually contending with human ignorance, willful stubbornness, and disobedience. Jesus voluntarily took our death sentence. He hung naked on the cross, bearing in His own body the storm of the wrath of God against sin. He drew into Himself the deadly hostility of Satan, along with the hatred, sinfulness, and malice of the entire human race, to banish all evil to eternity and save us who hardly realize we need to be saved.

Psalms 130 begins with acknowledgment of the depths of human wretchedness: “Out of the depths I have cried to you, O Lord. . . . If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared” (Ps. 130:1-4, NASB).³

This is an astonishing sequence: God’s forgiveness of sins does not leave us with a cheerful, domesticated idea about Him. Rather, it draws from us a new awe for the humanly incomprehensible majesty and greatness of the God who can redeem us sinners from so grave a predicament.

With all due respect to the religions of the world, no other knows such a being: God, the

Exalted, choosing to come under His own judgment against sin in order to deliver us from our deserved condemnation! In a reversal that has no parallel in the history of religion, the incarnate Lord gives His own body and blood to save us, offering whole-person salvation—body and soul—contrary to the prevailing Greek philosophical thinking that disparaged the value of matter and the human body.

UNIQUE HISTORICITY

Like the Bible writers, ancient polytheists claim that their gods act in human history. But biblical uniqueness once again becomes clear on this point: Yahweh’s actions are always consistent with His long-term purpose of bringing salvation, even using His enemies to accomplish His long-range goals; even seeking to save His enemies!

As Joseph explains to his brothers who sold him into slavery: “You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, . . . to save many people alive” (Gen. 50:20).

Perhaps this is what led Paul to write that “all things work together for good to those who love God” (Rom. 8:28). Yahweh superintends all of history’s vast complex as He strives for each person’s heart, a truth demonstrated in Jesus’ long-suffering dealings with Judas, his betrayer. Ellen White observed: “Nothing that could be done to save Judas” was left undone. “Though Jesus knew Judas from the beginning, He washed his feet. And the betrayer was privileged to unite with Christ in partaking of the sacrament. A long-suffering Savior held out every inducement for the sinner [Judas] to receive Him, to repent, and to be cleansed from the defilement of sin.”⁴ A God of such faithful mercy is impossible in any other ancient literature.

Uniquely, among ancient Near Eastern religions, biblical writers also insist that decisions made in this life are of ultimate importance, with no reincarnation to undo and redeem ourselves. Individuals are given one life in which to accept or reject the salvation God offers in Jesus (Heb. 9:27, 28).

Theology emerges from God’s actions in history. In Scripture He provides and preserves the faithful record that we may check and analyze. Bible prophets are instruments through whom He speaks for Himself, declaring that the supernatural, unique, nonrepeatable events in the Bible are

fundamentally crucial for knowing who He is.

Archaeology has confirmed hundreds of details from Luke's first-century historical account, such as wind direction, depth of water at a certain distance from shore, the type of disease a particular island has, and names of local officials. Colin J. Hemer gives more than a dozen reasons Acts had to have been written before A.D. 62, or only about 30 years after Jesus' crucifixion.⁵ Luke, the book's author, has been validated as an impeccable historian, consistently proven right in hundreds of details in his history of Jesus and the first-century church, written while eyewitnesses were still alive and could have disputed him.

The same is true of the Bible's other historical books. Overall, human history as a major concern in the canon finds no equivalence in the records of Israel's neighbors, supporting the suggestion that modern history may derive from ancient Hebrew Scripture.

TRANSFORMING POWER

Despite its factual reliability, Christian faith in the Bible is never a matter of pure reason. For saving faith cannot be engendered simply by the force of accurate data. As Peter reminds, persuasion comes when the gospel is preached "by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven" (1 Peter 1:12). The Holy Spirit exactly fulfills Jesus' promise by bearing witness to Him who is our resurrection and our life (John 15:26; 11:25).


In John Calvin's words: "The testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason" because "the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit."⁶

This is a critical issue: it is not enough to suggest that Jesus was an excellent teacher. Buddha teaches many things about compassion; Muhammad speaks about the one true God. But only Jesus can change sinful lives and restore us to fellowship with Him. And He awaits us in His Word, promising to comfort us and pardon our iniquity (Isa. 40:1, 2).

But we must be willing to listen to that Word, so we can learn from God what we could not otherwise know. Sometimes "God is forced by our deafness to shout the good news."⁷ But if we listen, everything will sound differently once we have heard God speak.

**"Yes," she said,
"that's how it was.
I've been a history
teacher for years."**

The Bible is a thoroughly geographical and historical book that calls us to a relationship with the God-man of history. It is a complete system of truth that each one may examine for themselves as both a high privilege and a moral duty. Because it is of God, there will forever be more to learn. Society's growing inability to deal at length with serious issues must not undermine our work of engaging the full biblical context with ears and eyes of faith. Nothing in the Bible makes any religious sense unless we accept that God Himself speaks in His living Word.

Committed to its truth and submitted to His authority, we may access the life-giving power that renews God's people generation after generation. 

¹ Unless otherwise noted, Bible texts in this article are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1878), vol. 3, pp. 211, 212.

³ Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), p. 655.

⁵ See Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990). Other celebrated historians give similar testimony: for A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), "the confirmation of historicity [in Acts] is 'overwhelming'; and 'any attempt to reject its basic historicity must now appear absurd'" (p. 189).

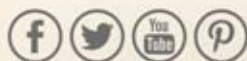
⁶ John Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter*, trans. William B. Johnston (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), p. 254.

⁷ Stephen H. Webb, *The Divine Voice: Christian Proclamation and the Theology of Sound* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), p. 47.

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CONNECT



CONFRONTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Adventists can play a part in the solution to this evil.

Tucked away down a country road in the heart of the Chiang Rai province in Thailand, you'll find the Keep Girls Safe shelter. The shelter, run by Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), houses about 30 girls who would otherwise be targets for human trafficking.

Pim is 14 years old. She came to Keep Girls Safe seven years ago when it became apparent that without intervention, she would likely follow a path that is all too well known for young girls in this area. Like her stepsisters before her, Pim was destined for prostitution.

Human trafficking is becoming much more commonplace in societal conversation, but the subject still has many complicated



ASHLEY EISELE

levels to it. The reported number of those being trafficked for commercial sex or forced labor is nearly 21 million, but that number is actually believed to be much higher. While violence, threats, and kidnappings occur, some victims don't even realize that they are victims, often being coerced to believe they are simply working off debts owed to their captors.

For Pim and others like her, the "choice" was made for them by the very people who should have been caring for their safety.

Pim's family home is in a village not far from the Keep Girls Safe shelter, and it's clear their house is one of the nicest in the community. Pim's mother left the family when she was still very little, leaving her with a father addicted to drugs and alcohol. But for as much money as Pim's father has thrown away on his addictions, he has earned more through his stepdaughters. The two young women moved to Bangkok years ago and chose to join the sex industry, which means that they are free to send money back home. Those approaching Pim's father about taking his youngest daughter for the same purpose promised him more income from her work, but that is never true.

INTERVENTION

Seventh-day Adventists are uniquely qualified to respond to those in need with strength and compassion. After all, we've been given the keys from God Himself and tasked to take them to the world. If nothing else, we know the power of prayer to deliver even the weakest victims from the harshest circumstances. But like many things, prayer combined with action is required.

In terms of trafficking, the most effective time to save a vulnerable person is before they become a victim, so that's where ADRA's intervention begins.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING FACTS

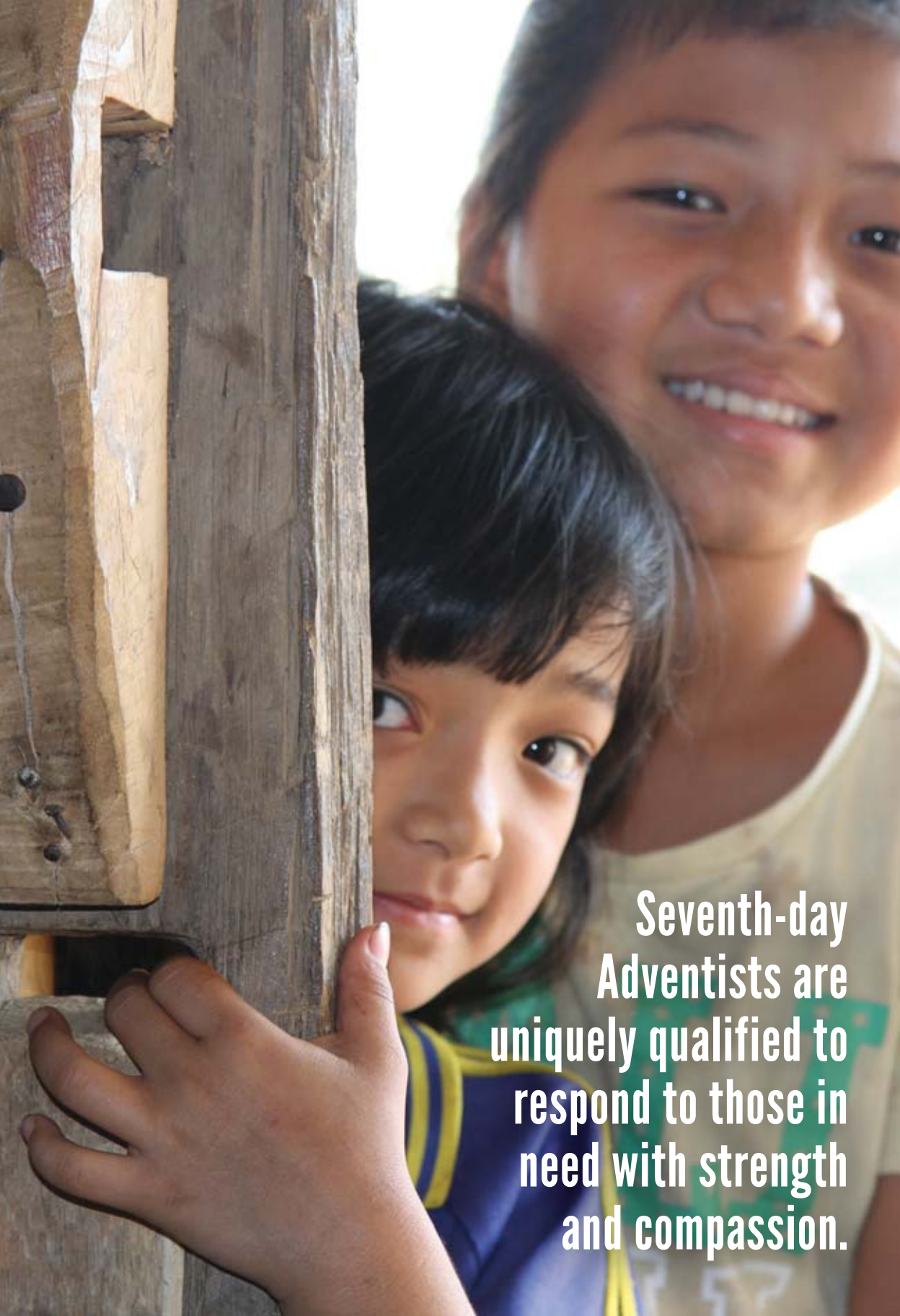
According to the most recent reports, 20.9 million adults and children are bought and sold worldwide for sexual servitude and forced labor.

An estimated 79 percent of human trafficking is for sexual exploitation, making it the most common form.

The International Labor Organization estimates that each year forced labor and human trafficking is a \$150 billion industry worldwide.

Fifty-five percent of trafficking victims are women and girls; 45 percent are men and boys.

Human trafficking does not always involve travel to the destination of exploitation: 9.1 million victims of forced labor (44 percent) moved either internally or internationally, while most, 11.8 million (56 percent), were subjected to forced labor within their place of origin.



**Seventh-day
Adventists are
uniquely qualified to
respond to those in
need with strength
and compassion.**



Pim (second from left) with some of her friends from the Keep Girls Safe shelter.

It's not enough to pluck girls like Pim from their homes and protect them. Therefore, ADRA Thailand goes into communities to spread awareness about human trafficking, teaching groups about child rights, the value of education, and how to recognize the risks associated with trafficking. From there, it goes peer to peer—children teach their classmates, their siblings, their family, etc. And from there the knowledge spreads to help others.

Pim is safe for now in the Keep Girls Safe shelter. She can visit her father only with shelter staff. Unfortunately, he can request her return at any time, which is a terrifying prospect given that he is still intent on sending her to Bangkok if she comes home. But he is not interested in that now. With her at Keep Girls Safe, there is one less mouth to feed and one less thing for him to worry about.

A SAFE PLACE

Like most girls at Keep Girls Safe, Pim was slow to warm up to being away from her home. But now the girls she lives and learns with are a second family. They share chores and take turns

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Recognize the signs in your community and when you travel: polarisproject.org/recognize-signs.

To request help or report suspected activity, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888. Or text HELP to: BeFree (233733).

Upload hotel room photos to TraffickCam: traffickcam.com/.

Donate to ADRA: ADRA.org.

Support enditnow, an Adventist-led push against violence, including modern slavery: enditnow.org.

Learn more about programs that shelter and provide resources to women rescued from trafficking in the U.S., such as The Samaritan Women in Baltimore: thesamaritanwomen.org.

cooking meals while receiving an education and valuable training that will help them be successful when they are older. In a place like this, the girls can just be kids sharing endless giggles, silly card games, music, and hugs all around. These glimpses of hope show the heart and joy that this shelter provides to these vulnerable girls.

BIG BUSINESS

Ending human trafficking is a complicated endeavor because it's big business, earning criminals up to \$150 billion every year, making it the third most profitable criminal activity in the world. The illegal trades of running drugs and guns are the only activities that bring in more money than trafficking human beings. Thus those making a profit from this evil industry look for every opportunity to expand their operations. Reports of human trafficking trend upward during major disasters and humanitarian crises when families are broken apart, women and children are isolated, and desperate people are vulnerable to exploitation. When ADRA teams were respond-

ing to the refugee crisis across Europe in recent years, a vital part of their work was counseling displaced people on how to avoid traffickers who prey on those in crisis.

Pim's story, along with reports in the media, put a spotlight on Thailand and other countries that are commonly connected to this practice. But human trafficking has gained a foothold in our own backyards here in North America. Polaris, an organization based in Washington, D.C., says that while official estimates are not available for the United States, the number of victims would easily reach into the hundreds of thousands. It's estimated that one in every six runaways that are reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children are likely victims of child sex trafficking.

HOPE

Even in the face of these overwhelming statistics, there is still hope. As we are made more aware of how far and wide human trafficking reaches, there are more eyes on this issue globally than ever before. As a faith-based movement, we can respond. There is so much that we can each do, and it begins with education and awareness. Our own church communities need to be able to recognize the signs of trafficking in our own areas and reach out to law enforcement if needed.

There are also relatively simple ways to harness technology to fight trafficking. For example, frequent travelers can upload photos of their hotel rooms to an app called TrafficCam that uses the pictures to scan and match images that are shared of victims online and in ads. And similar to the Keep Girls Safe shelter in Thailand, there are organizations providing shelter, training, and resources to women who have been rescued from trafficking right here in the United States. It is certainly worth the effort to find ways to contribute your time and/or financial resources to be of assistance.

We are called to look out for the "least of these" in our communities around the world, especially for the vulnerable and those in crisis. There is no better time than now to act on the gospel by doing exactly that. 🌱

Ashley Eisele is associate director for communications, ADRA International.

SUFFERING IN SILENCE

How a drama reveals a profound reality

ABIGAIL BEAVEN

She won't make a sound . . .

I fill my lungs with the still, warm air, trying to quiet my trembling hands. Three girls laugh blithely, enjoying their conversation and completely oblivious to me. I gather my courage and tentatively walk toward them. As I step out of the shadows, I have to squint to keep bright lights from blinding me. Coming up behind the three, snippets of their conversation drift to my ears, mingling with the song broadcast on the electronic sound system, song that perfectly mirrors my actions.

"Alone in this fight with herself and the fears whispering if she stands she'll fall down . . ."

Summoning all my strength, I pick up the conversation as if I were invited to speak. This elicits no response. The two girls I am nearest to simply turn their backs as if I hadn't spoken. They purposefully shut me out, and all four of us know it. A hush falls over the room; the only sound is the music.

"She wants to be found . . ."

I try again, slightly more assertively. I come around so they have to notice me. I join the conversation. My heart beats wildly as the girl nearest me reaches out, takes hold of my thin shoulder, and shoves me to the ground. The wooden floor

digs into my sweaty palms and the hard surface jars my hip unforgivingly. Mouth dry, adrenaline coursing through my veins, I gently pick myself off the ground. The three girls have turned away, completely reabsorbed in their chatter. Stumbling slightly, pain still clinging to my body and heart, I dart to a safe place where I know I'll be alone. The song continues as I begin to slowly unzip my backpack.

"The only way out is through everything she's running from, wants to give up and lie down . . ."

Hands now shaking uncontrollably, breath ragged, eyes blurred from the near-blinding lights, I reach into my backpack and grasp the familiar metal weight. Thoughts crash in my head, a raging storm of emotion and confusion. I try to decide if I'm doing the right thing. I reveal my only way out: a small pistol.

LEFT OUT

Not long ago at Nosoca Pines Ranch, where I was working for the summer, I had auditioned to play Martha in the Friday night Passion play. With an inherent interest in acting, I was thrilled that I'd have a chance to participate in this production. Roxanne, who was judging the auditions, was clearly impressed by my performance, and I



**A name jumped
out at me.
“Abigail Beaven:
Left-out Girl.”**

TEREZA FLACHOVÁ

eagerly awaited the role sheet to come out, knowing I'd get my desired part. When the sheet was finally posted, however, someone else's name was listed as Martha.

What? Bewildered, I began to scan the sheet for my name. Roxanne told me I did really well; and it's not like a lot of people are jumping at the role. I had put a lot of thought into choosing it. I wanted a role with quite a few lines, a relatively important role that I could have fun with. I felt as if I could put more passion and emotion into Martha, with her outspoken fears and insecurities, than I could with Mary and her sweet, demure presence. I thought I had picked the perfect way to engage in the play, but I must not have been good enough.

I glanced through the list of all the major characters, and my name was nowhere. However, on the side, under the small section for characters in the pantomimes, a name jumped out at me. “Abigail Beaven: Left-out Girl.”

At first, I was confused and a little upset. My haughty heart clenched at this supposed affront as I surveyed the paper one last time to make sure my blue eyes hadn't tricked me.

I wasn't even going to have lines, and irony of ironies, I was going to play a left-out girl!

At least I have a lot of experience in this role, I

thought bitterly. However, at the first rehearsal, all those who were involved in the pantomime were given a separate extra practice. To the words of the song “Stand in the Rain,” we were to demonstrate various evils and hurts of the world, in stark contrast to the wonders and light of Eden. As the play progressed, we would appear recurrently, becoming dirtier. In the Garden of Gethsemane we would leave our dirt on a praying, weeping Jesus.

In the final scene of the play Jesus, coming back to earth, was to give us new, white robes and forgive us. No words would be spoken by any of us throughout all this. We had only raw action and emotion on our side, without the cumbersome half-truths so common to the spoken language.

I quickly realized that I had in my hands a much more potent role than I had been hoping for. This was relatable. Instead of merely being a character to advance the story, kids could project themselves onto me, or one of the other modern-day characters, and follow our stories, painful as they were. They'd see how finally, finally Jesus did come back and forgive us, even though we had made terrible mistakes or had been treated horribly. This was how I could impact a child's life.

MORE THAN ACTING

We performed that play three times. I was sure that at some point the role would become routine, but I never had to fake the emotion. Drawing on past experiences—my own pain—I was able to breathe life into this character. It was almost as if I were acting out my own redemption story. When Kevin, the staff member portraying Jesus, gave me a white robe and hugged me after all my suffering, my smile was real, just as my tears had been. It was such a stark reminder of the simple truth I often easily forget.

My real blessing—or pain, for that matter—didn't come from the actual play or role itself. What genuinely shocked and saddened me was the number of kids who found me afterward to talk to me.

"I really liked your performance. I know just how you felt."

"Those girls were so mean. That's what happens to me at school."

The ones who spoke least communicated the most. The silent hug and few tears told me more than mere words could have. They were alike, however, in their surprise to see me acting out their own lives, because it meant that someone, somewhere, had understood. They felt like it was them against the world, and that no one could hope to understand. I knew this feeling well. When I struggled and grappled with self and the world, I knew I was all alone.

So did many campers who tentatively, with caution and stage-lit wonder dancing in their eyes, opened their hearts and told me their stories.

My eyes were suddenly opened to an unknown epidemic. The reason it is unknown, and perhaps the greatest and most tragic irony, is that every one of us believes we are alone in the fight against ourselves and our fears. I know this is true because I experienced it; and every child who came to me told me it was so.

The epidemic is this: we adults like to believe children are innocent and naive, incapable of grasping life's complexities. But this is erroneous. They can see that we live in this broken and chaotic world, where circumstances are beyond our control. They know what pain is. The mere fact that these children, who come to Adventist camp to have a great time and learn about Jesus, could relate to this suicidal wretch should be a huge wake-up call.

My eyes were suddenly opened to an unknown epidemic.

This world is broken. These children, 12 to 16 years old, think they are by themselves against the world. Most, if not all, of the ones who talked to me at least know about a God who loves them and wants to be their Best Friend. But how many have never heard of His love and are truly alone?

There is no simple cure to this epidemic. We don't live in a world of black and white boundaries, only foggy grays and blurred lines without obvious solutions. I don't know the right answer. I do hope, however, that simply by being there for the children in our churches and communities, by letting them know they are needed and wanted, by showing them that they are so much more than their circumstances or mistakes, we can give light and hope to this dark world.

The testimonies and stories of these children I met at Nosoca Pines Ranch weigh on my heart. I have become privy to an unknown epidemic. Our patience, listening ears, refraining from judgment or condemnation, will do more good than we know. We are responsible for the next generation, which is responsible for the one after that. Show them they are not alone in this fight with themselves, and the fears that whisper if they stand they'll fall. Give them the support they desperately need to stand.

Then watch them fly. 🌱

* Superchick, © 2010.

Abigail Beaven is a premed student at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska.



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Helping the vulnerable

Hope for Paws Animal Rescue, based in Los Angeles,¹ followed up on a call alerting them to a homeless poodle that had been hit by a car. They found her—dirty, matted, and terrified—sitting by herself on the street, her back pressed against a concrete wall. The rescuers approached slowly, not wanting to frighten her further, unsure of how she would react.



**IN NEED OF
RESCUE**

SANDRA BLACKMER

“They look at me and they beg with their eyes—and they deserve a chance.”

Although clearly scared and uncomfortable with their presence, the dog didn't try to run, but allowed the rescuer to stroke her gently and slip a leash around her neck. Eventually the rescue worker was able to lift the little white poodle and hold her tightly to her chest, softly speaking words of comfort.

Many animals that have been abused and neglected often respond with abject fear and sometimes aggression toward those trying to help them, but this little female—that the rescuers later named Layla—brought her rescuer to tears when she lifted her head and began gently licking her face.

“I think she likes you,” her partner said.

Rescuing Layla, however, was the easy part. Doctors at the local animal hospital found that Layla had serious intestinal damage and was in critical condition. She was hospitalized, and struggled to survive.

Foster parents for Layla were found and visited her daily, hoping they could lift her spirits. It worked! Layla gradually grew stronger and in time was healthy enough to go home with her foster family.

Today Layla is a happy, playful dog living in a caring home and getting the love and attention she needs to grow and thrive.

While the rescue workers admit they gave Layla the *chance* she needed to get better, “it was her foster parents,” they say, “that gave her the *reason* to get better.”²

SAVING ALL THEY CAN

About 6.5 million dogs and cats enter animal shelters in the U.S. every year.³ Although this is a staggering number of unwanted animals, it's on the decrease—down from 7.2 million in 2011.⁴ This encouraging trend is a result of aggressive marketing to raise awareness of the importance of spaying and neutering, more stray animals being successfully returned to their owners (thanks, in part, to microchipping), and more people adopting pets. Sadly, some 1.5 million dogs and cats—most of them healthy—are still euthanized annually.⁵ The good news, however, is that more than 3 million are adopted.⁶

“Last year we took in a total of 434 cats and adopted out 380 of them,” says Melissa Gurnett, cofounder of Happy Jack Cats,⁷ a no-kill cat rescue and adoption group in Boise, Idaho. “The number

of unwanted cats is huge, and we can't help them all, but it makes a difference for that 'one.' If I can do it for the 'one,' that's all I focus on at that point. Then I go on to the next one. There's a cumulative result from that.

“They deserve a chance,” she adds. “They look at me and they beg with their eyes—and they deserve a chance.”

In existence since 2015, Happy Jack Cats is an organized network of foster homes, where volunteers care for kittens and cats until “forever homes” are found for them. Funding comes from grants, donations, and adoption fees.

Gurnett doesn't allow just anyone to adopt the cats, however. Applicants must fill out forms, provide references, allow home visits, and pay a fee.

“People don't treat right what they don't value,” she says. “If they're not willing to let us make sure that the cat is going to a good home or to pay that nominal fee, knowing that we're losing money anyway [on what it costs to care for the cat], they're not going to value it. They're not going to take care of it.”

Gurnett added that spaying and neutering pets impacts the growing population of unwanted cats and dogs significantly. “There has to be social change,” she says, “including low-cost spay and neuter clinics that are accessible to everyone.”

Gurnett isn't alone in her passion to save unwanted animals. Animal rescue groups abound. The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the largest animal protection organization in the U.S., advocates not only for cats and dogs but for all animals that are victims of cruelty, dealing with issues such as factory farming, seal slaughter, horse cruelty, animal fighting, and wildlife trade.⁸ Local humane societies have been established in countless cities and towns across the nation. There is also the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA),⁹ Farm Sanctuary,¹⁰ and Best Friends Animal Society,¹¹ to name only a few—as



well as rescue organizations for dolphins, elephants, birds, reptiles, and countless other animal groups.

Why do these people do it?

Because animals “have no say in their own fate, and it’s up to us to speak and act on their behalf,” says HSUS president Wayne Pacelle in his book *The Bond*.

“We all have our own ideas about how to make the world a better place. . . . Some are called to serve the poor, bringing food, shelter, medicine, and opportunity where the need is greatest. There are men and women devoted especially to the welfare of children, protecting them from violence and exploitation and finding homes for the orphans. Many dedicate themselves to preventing or curing disease, while others labor to protect the environment from pollution or careless development. And by the millions, men and women in America and beyond have set their hearts and minds to the work of preventing cruelty and alleviating the suffering of animals. . . . It is for each of us to act and to give as our conscience asks, and in that pluralism of concerns, everybody is covered.”¹²

HOW DOES JESUS SEE IT?

The most frequently cited Bible text regarding God’s care for animals is Matthew 10:29, in which Jesus says that even though sparrows hold little

monetary value to humans, not one of them falls to the ground outside our heavenly Father’s care.

Every creature was created by God, and evidence of His love and care for them and His expectation that we be good stewards of His nonhuman creatures abounds in His Word.¹³ Animals have intelligence and emotions, feel pain and experience joy. Only in recent years has science begun revealing what Ellen White noted more than a century ago: that the effect of cruelty to animals on both those who inflict and behold it is the destruction of “the tenderness with which we should regard these creatures of God! The intelligence displayed by many dumb animals approaches so closely to human intelligence that it is a mystery.”¹⁴

Jesus left heaven and came down to this world in human form to rescue us from this sinful planet. He found us vulnerable, diseased, injured—as was Layla—and gently spoke words of comfort and hope. He held us in His great arms of love and revealed the true character of God. Some of us may react with fear and perhaps even aggression, but when we see the concern and love in His eyes and consider the unfathomable gift He has given us in laying down His life that we may be with Him in heaven forever, fully restored to perfect health—how can we not respond with love and boundless gratitude?

And how can we not extend that love to all others, even His nonhuman creatures, and do all we can to rescue them as well? 🍏

¹www.hopeforpaws.org

²stories.barkpost.com/dog-rescue-videos/

³www.aspc.org/animal-homelessness/shelter-intake-and-surrender/pet-statistics

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷happyjackcats.org

⁸www.humanesociety.org/about/?credit=web_id93480558

⁹www.aspc.org

¹⁰www.farmsanctuary.org

¹¹bestfriends.org

¹²Wayne Pacelle, *The Bond: Our Kinship With Animals, Our Call to Defend Them* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), pp. ix-xiv.

¹³Jo Ann M. Davidson, “And It Was Good,” *Adventist Review*, Aug. 21, 2008, pp. 8-11, <http://archives.adventistreview.org/issue.php?id=2030&action=print>; see also Jo Ann M. Davidson, “Who Cares?”

Adventist Review, June 25, 2009, pp. 51-54, and Sigve Tonstad, “What Are We Really Doing to God’s Creatures?” *Adventist Review*, Mar. 17, 2010.

¹⁴Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 315; see also p. 316 and *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890), pp. 441-443.

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

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The author (left) visits with new Karen arrivals in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

OUR SIBLINGS: REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

The nation, and our church, as a place of belonging

The door opened. Hearty handshakes and greetings in Arabic ensued. As we entered the apartment I scanned the room for clues about the religion of our new acquaintances. Thousands of refugees from their country had been fleeing death and destruction.

Chai tea and cookies quickly appeared on the portable coffee table as the banter of new friendships progressed: where home used to be, how they had arrived, stories of suffering, pain, and ultimately the death of a son, tumbled out in halting English.

WE'RE MUSLIMS FOR JESUS

Sensing it was safe, I asked, "Is your family Muslim or Christian?"

"We're Muslim, but we love Jesus!" our host replied.

"We'd love to hear your story!" we encouraged.

"After we arrived, my wife

developed pain in her legs. We went from doctor to doctor, but no one could help. A coworker invited us to his church to pray for healing, but I declined. Eventually the pain became so unbearable she could no longer walk. Desperate and out of options, we agreed to go with our coworker. One Sunday they picked us up and took us to their church. They prayed for us. The next morning my wife was able to walk and she fixed me breakfast. Jesus did that!" his face beamed.

"Yes, He did!" we agreed.

Because we lived three and a half hours away, my wife, Trudi, and I tried to connect this couple with local Adventists who could build relationships for eternity. I queried the pastor of the nearest Adventist church if anyone in his congregations was able to shepherd our new friends. "No" was his candid reply.

ARE WE PAYING ATTENTION TO GOD?

God has a strategic plan for accomplishing the Great Commission. But are His people perceptive enough to join Him?

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth. . . . He himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. . . . He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps

reach out for him and find him” (Acts 17:24-27).

As individuals and people groups, we are not who, when, and where we are by accident.

God puts people where they are so they can find Him. He put Abraham and his descendants at the crossroads of kingdoms and commerce so they could communicate His good news of eternal salvation for all humanity to as many traders, immigrants, and refugees as possible so they all could find Him.

At the appointed time Jesus sacrificed Himself for the redemption of Adam and all his descendants on a cross located at those same crossroads. Afterwards the Holy Spirit empowered people to proclaim that message to the world. Luke writes, “Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken” (Acts 2:5, 6). Transformed by the event and convicted of the truth, this international congregation took the gospel back to each of their countries, where it was communicated in culturally relevant ways so people there could find Him.

God’s strategic plan for everyone to hear the gospel in their own heart language was so effective that hostile Greeks later spoke this amazing admission: “These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also” (Acts 17:6, KJV).

It is no coincidence that large numbers of refugees are relocating from countries hostile to Christian missions. God’s workaround to reach closed countries includes refugees and immigrants. Though alerted to God’s strategic plan more than 100 years ago by Ellen White, Adventists remain conspicuously underrepresented in many refugee related operations. She wrote: *“If we were quick in discerning the opening providences of God, we should be able to see in the multiplying opportunities to reach many foreigners . . . a divinely appointed means of rapidly extending the third angel’s message into all the nations of earth. God in His providence has brought men to our very doors and thrust them, as it were, into our arms, that they might learn the truth, and be qualified to do a work we could not do in getting the light before men of other tongues.”*

God is sending His children right “into our arms” to embrace as our brothers and sisters, so they can find Him.

**In every hungry, thirsty,
naked, and destitute
foreigner we embrace we
are embracing Him.**

THE ADVENTIST FAMILY

Around the world, becoming Christian sometimes marks people as targets for elimination. They face destruction along with their homes and villages. Some experience torture, rape, and the execution of loved ones. Tens of thousands of our brothers and sisters in Christ have suffered this way.

In an attempt to escape tyranny, believers and people of no faith flee to refugee camps with prison-like conditions where, in many cases, soldiers and the local population exploit and abuse them. With nowhere to go, some live in these camps for more than 20 years, with their children never experiencing life in a free environment.

Nations that agree to accept refugees subject them to years of background scrutiny. If they pass, they are briefed on life in their host nation, provided legal documentation, and flown to a city that has agreed to take them. Resettlement agencies assign caseworkers who speak their language, arrange housing, and help them process numerous forms. Children are enrolled in the educational system, while adults take language classes, and usually obtain entry-level work in slaughterhouses, factories, warehouses, or housekeeping. Sadly, however, because of language barriers and location, refugees may have no contact with others who share their faith.

How can we help? We can help by listening to Jesus, who has spoken to this very situation in unmistakable terms: in every hungry, thirsty, naked, and destitute foreigner we embrace we are embracing Him (see Matt. 25:35-40). And we can take specific actions.

PARTNERS IN

A conference, “Mission in an Era of Migrants and Refugees,” will convene September 13-16, 2017, at Andrews University. For information, visit: www.nadei.org/article/434/evangelism-services/church-planting/upcoming-church-planting-events/mission-in-an-era-of-migrants-and-refugees-conference

The following organizations are also involved in ministries to immigrants and refugees. Visit their sites for ideas and inspiration.

- www.nadei.org
- www.unhcr.org
- www.acf.hhs.gov
- www.refugeeministries.org
- www.reachtheworldnextdoor.com
- www.asapministries.org
- www.rcusa.org
- www.cwsglobal.org
- www.lutheranservices.org
- www.crs.org

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. *Take note* of where God is placing refugees and immigrants, children of His, and siblings of ours. Prayerfully develop strategic plans broad enough to meet the challenge, yet flexible enough to accommodate their diversity.

2. *Educate, train, and equip* administrators, pastors, and volunteers to work among our foreign siblings in the implementation of our plans—a significant undertaking that requires cross-cultural sensitivity and a commitment to a foreign-missions approach at home. This increased cross-cultural awareness will impact the world church in a dynamic way.

3. *Revise policy and practice* as necessary to reflect new priorities. A decade spent working with refugees has taught me that church policy and implementation sometimes inadvertently relegates minorities and refugees to “second-class” citizenship. Witness, for example, immigrant pastors who shepherd their flocks while working in factories or slaughterhouses. This is a terrible waste of talent. Many have skills and vast experi-

ence from their native countries, but their effectiveness is neutralized because we leave them on the socioeconomic margins, oblivious to our companionable duty.

4. *Listen* to those with demonstrated success. Jimmy Shwe, shepherding a multichurch district in North Carolina, has simultaneously organized 50 ethnic Karen groups, companies, and churches around the North American Division over the past eight years. Reflecting on the challenges he faces, Shwe recently said, “I think my English is not good enough. People don’t understand me. They want to support Christian education for our children, but when I ask for help funding ethnic pastors, there is no interest. If we have no pastors, we will have no churches, and children will not have a place to worship. We ask for water, and they give us rice.”

5. *Be prompt* in response: time is of the essence. Receptivity to new ways and ideas decreases over a five-year period as immigrants become acclimated to their new environment.

6. *Volunteer* where needed. Members with a gift for working cross-culturally should be encouraged to contact local resettlement agencies. Adventists who understand that refugees are family will be at every arrival gate to welcome and shepherd new arrivals.

7. *Identify Adventist* arrivals and help them organize as a group, company, or church as quickly as possible. Celebrating the Sabbath in their own heart language as a church empowers them to reach out to others in their language group, something that would have been difficult back home. They can minister where we cannot.

8. *Love* beyond misunderstanding. Multiple language and culture encounters inevitably engender misunderstanding, so we must “love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).

Sending trained missionaries abroad is still our gospel duty. But embracing our new siblings from distant borders is, indisputably, the opportunity of the moment. God Himself is giving us the chance to share His love with His children by warmly welcoming them home. We can help them find Him. 🌱

*Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Oct. 29, 1914.

Don Starlin is president of Randall Electric Company, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

MISSING PIECES

ring the doorbell and listen to the recognizable sounds of laughter, someone “rushing to the door.” There’s something special about being a welcome guest. Then again, maybe it’s because my 8-year-old friend, Chad, knows I come bearing gifts. Three days ago my friend Linda asked me to babysit her son, Chad, on Sunday: “It would be for the entire day!” The exaggerated tone indicating the length of time made me wonder if this was a babysitting endurance test. Yet here I am with a new 100-piece puzzle entitled *Boats on the Harbor*.

Late in the afternoon the puzzle is almost complete. Well, as complete as it can be. Standing over the puzzle, we notice four missing pieces. Where in the world are these four pieces? By now my joy and amusement for *Boats on the Harbor* has passed. I consider simply buying the puzzle again.

Twenty minutes later, after looking under the table and living room furniture, Chad shares an idea: “What if we make the missing pieces? We have cardboard and paint!” He shrugs, “Why not?”

I consider the necessary tools: scissors, cardboard, messy paint. Sigh.

We settle on a work area where paint will not create permanent damage to flooring or furniture. As I begin the tedious process of outlining pieces, Chad shares observations about the “unique features of a puzzle.” He describes it as the story of life, pieces coming together to create one finished picture, photo, person. How do you know all this; you’re only 8! Yet his words begin to resonate. Here I am, carefully re-creating the shape of missing pieces, cutting, preparing them for Chad to paint, all the while

knowing: we will never have a perfect puzzle; there are missing pieces!

My part of the project finished, I watch Chad paint blank pieces into seamless transitions. He lets me paint the last piece, the blue sky. Once done, Chad looks at the puzzle, runs his hands over it. “It’s beautiful.”

At home I pack materials for my Monday morning. I accidentally trip on my purse, and all its contents spill out. I see it: hiding underneath the wallet, a napkin with four puzzle pieces. Scribbled on the napkin: “Found the missing pieces after we painted. Didn’t need them.—Chad.”

I place the pieces on the table. On their own, no semblance of *Boats on the Harbor*; the pieces must come together for a picture to surface. I remember Chad’s musings of puzzles reminding him of life. The realization strikes: in daily life we all need help finding missing pieces. Standing in the middle of our daily lives, looking ahead, uncertain of how the big picture will turn out, we often believe (in error) that we can control it. What must that look like from heaven? Humanity and its individual pieces? The ones the Holy Spirit helps us find for ourselves, for others, or with others to create something beautiful with inspiration and grace.

The next morning, headed to work, I instinctively grab one of the puzzle pieces and take it with me; a welcome guest to remind me of the pieces of my journeys ahead. 🍀

Dixil Rodríguez, a university professor and volunteer hospital chaplain, lives in Texas.



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COME TOGETHER
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ENGAGE



A BRIDGE FOR EVERY GAP

Can we walk together? Yes we can.

The injustices of our world are the divisions of our world: tribalism, nationalism, racism. Many other kinds of prejudices and hatreds are passed along mindlessly from one generation to the next. In some places people try to avenge offenses suffered by their ancestors hundreds or even thousands of years ago.

SISTER LUISA—PART I

For longer than most of us could remember, Sister Luisa had been a pillar in the church. She seemed like everyone's mother. Every time the doors opened, she was there. And as the others arrived, she never failed to have a smile, a hug, and a word of encouragement for each one.

Then one terrible day Roxana, a young woman hardly out of her teens, stood up and said: "I saw it with my own eyes: The last time the church received a shipment of clothing for the poor, Sister Luisa took several



LORON WADE

bags, stuffed them full of clothes and gave them to her family and close relatives.”

Some folks glanced nervously at Luisa and saw that she was staring at the floor. After the meeting several looked for her to offer a word of support and encouragement, but she had vanished. For the first time anyone could remember, she didn't stay around to speak to the young mothers and help the deacons put things away before they locked up the building.

One of Luisa's friends stopped by her house the next day. Tears came as they talked about what had happened. “Aren't my poor relations as worthy of help as anyone else?” said Luisa. “Just because they are related to me, does that mean I can't help them? Why didn't Roxana tell me if that's how she felt? Why did she have to get up and accuse me in front of the whole church?”

“You're absolutely right,” her friend said with a sense of indignant sympathy. “It's just terrible what she did.”

Within a week it seemed that everyone in the church had lined up on one side or the other. The older women, in general, sided with Luisa, while most of the younger members said they admired Roxana for her courage. A few even said that Luisa acted as if she were the owner of the church. It was good that somebody had put her in her place.

WHAT IS, AND WHAT SHOULD BE

Divisions shouldn't completely surprise us: we live in a sinful world, and division and breakage and breaking up are the essence of sin. And sadly enough, the church, the institution established by Jesus to bring people into unity with Himself, has not been free from this kind of strife.

Jesus saw it coming, and it weighed heavily on His heart. He prayed for His disciples, and “for those who will believe in me because of them”: “The goal is for all of them to become one heart and mind—just as you, Father, are in me and I in you” (John 17:20, 21, Message).¹

The apostle Paul also worried about

unity in the church. Believers at Corinth had split into factions, each bragging about who had baptized them (1 Cor. 1:12, 13). And when they celebrated the Lord's Supper the wealthy members took part while the poor had to sit there looking on (1 Cor. 11:18-21). So divisions and discrimination in the church are nothing new.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul talks about two different levels of unity. “Make every effort,” he wrote, “to keep the unity of spirit” (Eph. 4:3, author's rendering). He sees this kind of unity as one of the fruits of the Spirit, recognizing that it is not a normal condition—we are not naturally harmonious and agreeable. Then, in the following verses, he talks about the gifts of the Spirit and says that God has sent them to help the church mature and grow until it reaches “unity in the faith” (verse 13).

Through the work of the Holy Spirit we can have unity of spirit while we are growing toward unity in the faith, that is, unity in our understanding of truth. We can be of one heart even when we are not all of one mind. We can love and respect people who may not agree with us.

But it is not God's plan for us to agree to disagree and leave it there. As we study the Word under the guidance of the Spirit, we will grow toward unity of faith until, one day, we can “stand fast in one spirit *and* one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27, author's rendering).

Does this kind of unity sound utopian, almost too much to hope for in the real world where people seem to disagree on just about everything? I think it does. True unity, in the church, at home, or anywhere else, is a miracle, a gift from God. Jesus said that it would set us apart as distinct and different. “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

ALMOST TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

Jesus prayed, “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to com-

**We can be of one heart
even when we are
not all of one mind.**



plete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:22, 23).

Commenting on this passage, Ellen White wrote: "Every time I read this statement, it seems almost too good to be true. But I receive it and believe it, and I thank God for His full and abundant promises."²

That's what we need to do: receive, believe, and, more than that, live God's promises, including this one about the wonder of complete unity. Then we will have abundant reason to praise and thank God for it.

SISTER LUISA—PART II

After Roxana's public rebuke, and everybody's taking sides, Luisa almost disappeared. If she came to church at all, she arrived late and left early. For a lot of us, church seemed like a different place.

Several months went by this way. Then one day the head elder announced that next Sabbath we would be celebrating Holy Communion, the rites of the Lord's Supper.

Roxana came to the meeting that day. You could see her sitting in one corner toward the back.

The Communion table was resplendent and colorful. The bread and wine, representing Jesus' broken body and blood, were laid out on spotless silver trays. The sweet fragrance of the grape filled the little church. The pastor began reading the familiar texts: "This is My body which is broken for you" (1 Cor. 11:24, NKJV).³ "This is My blood . . . which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28, NKJV).

Roxana said later that as she heard these words, her eyes seemed to focus on the bleeding Savior, and her soul was touched. She saw herself a forgiven sinner, covered by the mercy and grace of God, and she thought of Luisa. *She's a sinner, too, struggling against the power of a fallen nature, just as I am. How could I set myself up to pass a harsh judgment on her for what she did?* As Roxana opened her heart to the work of the Spirit, she was horrified to realize the deadly effect the controversy had caused the church.

Luisa was there too. She had spent many waking moments since that awful day, thinking about how Roxana had hurt her, how unfair it had been, and how some of the others had turned their backs on her after her years of faithful service.

But now, in the presence of Jesus' loving sacrifice, her eyes, too, began to focus in a different direction. Her feelings of hurt and self-pity began to melt away. *Roxana is a young woman, just starting in life. I've made enough mistakes myself. After what Jesus went through for me, how could I continue to feel so much resentment about what she did?*

As Luisa was thinking about this, she saw Roxana coming toward her with tears in her eyes. "Sister Luisa, I'm so sorry," said Roxana. They embraced as both of them wept openly.

As the rest of us witnessed the scene that day, it seemed that a ray of sunshine had come down from the sky, and the power of the Spirit came near.

STICKING WITH JESUS

It is by focusing on our relationship with Jesus, by keeping it strong and constant, that we become faithful and growing Christians. It is also by keeping our relationship with Jesus strong that we can be united in the church, at home, and every place else.

When Jesus is the centerpiece, when our thoughts are dominated by gratitude for what He has done, then our souls will find rest in Him, and nothing else will be as important. This is the great commonality of the gospel. Nothing but the gospel can be so effective in bridging every gap and overcoming every barrier:

"All of you who were baptized into Christ
have clothed yourselves with Christ.
There is neither Jew nor Gentile,
Neither slave nor free,
Nor is there male and female,
There is also neither Brown nor Yellow,
Black nor White,
Old nor young, rich nor poor,
for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26-28,
author's adaptation).

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² Ellen G. White, *This Day With God* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1979), p. 120.

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Loron Wade is a retired professor of theology, living in Montemorelos, Nuevo León, Mexico. Much of this article comes from a chapter entitled "Unity in the Body of Christ," in his book *Simply Put* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2009).

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A COMMUNITY IN CRISIS

*Canadian pastor's
strategic plan makes
inroads to help residents*



Member of Parliament Kirsty Duncan (left) poses with Allan Chichester, his wife and sons after he received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Allan Chichester accepted the call to serve as senior pastor of Toronto West Seventh-day Adventist Church soon after the November 2005 killing of 18-year-old Amon Beckles on the church steps. Beckles was attending the funeral service of his 17-year-old friend Jamal Hemmings, the grandson of a church member and himself a gunshot victim.* Chichester, with the help and support of his Toronto West congregation, established a strategic marketing plan based on Jesus' biblical model to meet the needs of the traumatized community. Seven years later Chichester was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in recognition of his work in the Etobicoke North community. His community service programs were based on his Doctor of Ministry professional project, "A Strategic Marketing Plan for Community Ministries at Toronto West Seventh-day Adventist Church." Member of Parliament Kirsty Duncan presented the medal during a special investiture service.

Adventist Review assistant editor Sandra Blackmer recently talked with Pastor Chichester.

WHAT DID YOU DO BEFORE COMING TO THE TORONTO WEST CHURCH?

Initially I served as an officer for the military in Guyana. I eventually resigned—with full military honors—after refusing to work on Sabbaths. It became clear during that time that the Lord was calling me into ministry.

I received my degree in theology from the University of the Southern Caribbean, and worked for six years for the Guyana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, first as a pastor, then later as the associate youth director, as well as conference radio narrator and district pastor. In 1996 my wife, Lauren, our son Royon, and I moved to Trinidad, where I served as senior pastor of Caribbean Union College and Lauren as assistant professor and chair of the Home Economics Department. Our second son, Relon, was born in Trinidad in 1999. In 2001 I received a call to the Ontario Conference in Canada to serve as senior pastor of the Kingsview Village church. In January 2006 I was transferred to the Toronto West church in the community of Etobicoke North.

YOU CAME TO TORONTO WEST ON THE HEELS OF THE SHOOTING IN 2005?

Yes. When I arrived, the church was experiencing major trauma. There was no textbook on how to recover a church from trauma like that, so it was a matter of praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to pull the church together.

As I focused on the church to help it recover, a man from the community came to me and said, "Pastor, we're glad you're here; but we feel left out as a community, because the community is also in trauma." That opened my eyes to the necessity of ministering to the community at large.

WHAT ROLE DID YOUR DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROFESSIONAL PROJECT PLAY AS YOU PREPARED TO MINISTER TO THE COMMUNITY?

My professional project developed as part of the response to the needs of the community. The church had already been engaged in numerous awareness programs. Some worked well; others did not. I realized that we needed a strategic plan. While we were engaged in strategic planning, I started my doctoral studies at Andrews University.

HOW DID YOU DETERMINE WHAT OUT-REACH MINISTRIES WERE NEEDED?

I began by ascertaining the top 10 real and felt needs of the Etobicoke North community. I realized that we had been attempting to minister to the community without stopping to fully determine what those needs were.

We designed a community day called the Day of Love and Care. We wanted people to experience the love of Christ. During that process we learned that many people from the Middle East and the Far East were making the community home. Hence, there were cultural differences to be addressed, which explained some of the ministry challenges the church had been experiencing.

“Pastor, we’re glad you’re here; but we feel left out as a community, because the community is also in trauma.”

WHAT KIND OF CHALLENGES?

One of the challenges was cultural intelligence. We had begun a midweek meal just ahead of our prayer meetings. We hoped people would come in for the meal and stay for the meetings. People came, but the numbers kept declining. We later discovered that our menu was not ethnically sensitive. We are mostly a West Indian congregation, so we prepared West Indian-style meals. This did not always meet the taste preferences of the ethnically diverse community. So we created a

“I realized that we had been attempting to minister to the community without stopping to fully determine what those needs were.”

menu that was ethnically sensitive for the Day of Love and Care program, and it worked very well.

WHAT COMMUNITY NEEDS DID YOU RECOGNIZE?

Employment, housing, learning English as a second language, food, health, and family support, among others. Based on our church resources, we addressed the needs for clothing, food, and fellowship as we planned for the Day of Love and Care.

Many of the people in Etobicoke North were new immigrants to Canada, with a great need to learn English and to find employment. In time we established an English language program.

WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO FOR THE DAY OF LOVE AND CARE?

We wanted to do something especially for children, so we added a children’s ministries department as part of our community services. We also decided to provide both new and used clothing.

We found that the implementation of the strategic process led to a 300-percent increase in attendance at the second annual Day of Love and Care.

YOUR CHURCH MUST NOW BE VERY FAMILIAR TO YOUR COMMUNITY.

Yes, because many of their needs were addressed. Today the church has a permanent food bank that caters to community needs.

Before I transferred to the Toronto Central church in 2014, there was another shooting in which a 15-year-old young man was killed. His funeral was held at the church. So Toronto West became even more well known as a church that wants to reach out and help.

THAT MUST HAVE BEEN A VERY DIFFICULT TIME FOR YOU, THE CHURCH, AND THE COMMUNITY.

It was. One of the saddest days I spent there was doing the funeral of Andrew Naidoo, who had been killed close to his home, just across the fence from the church. It was heartbreaking to see his grieving mother.

SOUNDS LIKE THE CHURCH MEMBERS HAVE BEEN SUPPORTIVE OF THESE PROGRAMS.

Yes, the success of the programs depended largely on the help and willingness of members. The church is very involved and supportive.

Before I arrived at Toronto West the members had already been making significant efforts to minister to the community. My presence and program introduced additional ministries that made the church even more relevant.

IS TORONTO WEST AN ETHNICALLY DIVERSE CHURCH?

It is diverse in the sense of countries of origin, but it is largely a West Indian church, along with some members from Africa, Canada, and the United States.

WHAT'S THE MEMBERSHIP?

Approximately 1,300. It's one of the largest Adventist churches in Canada.

WHAT IS THE MOTIVATION BEHIND WHAT YOU'RE DOING?

My goal is to meet people's needs and lead them to Jesus Christ.

In a way, I've been ministering to people all my life. I grew up in a single-parent home in Guyana.

I was born in the middle of a major ethnic conflict, when Guyana was seeking independence. Acquiring food was difficult. During that challenging time my grandmother got food from the welfare department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It's amazing how God works! I became sensitive to the needs and challenges faced by young people who grow up in such circumstances.

When I was young, my home church organized a soup kitchen, where they supplied meals at a discount price for people in need. In three churches that I pastored in Guyana I established feeding programs for children. So I've been doing this all my life.

WHAT DO YOU ENVISION FOR THE FUTURE?

I am utilizing the same strategic marketing plan at Toronto Central that I used at Toronto West. We are now ministering to the community by providing food, clothing, and school materials for children at the Day of Love and Care program. I've also been asked by my doctoral professors to turn my professional project into a manual for the world church to help our churches to become more contextually relevant in their communities. My aim is to utilize what God has blessed me with to bless other churches.

HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN YOU WERE PRESENTED WITH THE QUEEN ELIZABETH II DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDAL?

I was elated; I was amazed. It came as a surprise. I'm very thankful to God for bestowing upon me this significant honor through the government of our country and am grateful for the work that God has allowed me to do here in Canada.

WHAT IS THE KEY TO COMMUNITY SERVICE AND OUTREACH?

It would be to follow the model of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to mingle with people the way Jesus did, desiring the best for them, discover their needs, minister to those needs, and then encourage them to follow Jesus.

To find out more about Chichester's strategic marketing plan model for community outreach, e-mail a_chichester@hotmail.com.

*<http://archives.adventistreview.org/article/218/archives/issue-2005-1547/adventist-news-3>.

“The success of the programs depended largely on the help and willingness of members. The church is very involved and supportive.”

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALLAN CHICHESTER

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FAINTING SPELLS

Are they genetic?

Q: I am 35 years of age. In my teens I experienced a few fainting spells under stressful circumstances. Do I need to worry about future fainting for me and for my children? Are there going to be more problems as I get older?

A: Fainting can be a frightening experience. Fortunately, especially at a younger age, faints are more frightening than dangerous, except for the chances of injury should a fall occur. Most commonly, faints occur when there is a temporary decrease or interruption in the blood supply to the brain. The technical term for a fainting spell is *syncope*.

Syncope is very common, affecting about 25 percent of the population. While most people with syncope manage the condition easily, in approximately 1 percent, faints can occur frequently, which increases danger. If fainting occurs, consult your physician to ensure that there are no underlying or precipitating factors that need to be treated.

Do you need to worry about the future for you and your children as far as syncope is concerned?

The commonest faint is termed *vasovagal syncope* (*vvs*). It occurs mainly under the age of 35 years and tends to decrease with age. Research shows that there may be a genetic component, and hence an inherited tendency to vasovagal syncope. The actual triggers may not be genetically determined.

The cause is overstimulation of the vagus nerve, which slows the heart rate and decreases the blood pressure. This reduces the blood volume returning to the heart. Blood flow to the brain is diminished,

and fainting follows. There can be various triggers for vasovagal syncope, including:

- Emotional stress
- Sight of an injection needle or blood
- Standing still for prolonged periods, e.g., on a parade ground
- Straining at stool or during urination

It's important to exclude disorders such as epilepsy, which is characteristically associated with convulsions (seizures), tongue-biting, and incontinence of urine. The patient has no memory of the actual event. Epileptic attacks may also be preceded by a characteristic sensation (taste, smell) called an *aura*, which may serve as a warning in approximately two-thirds of cases.

Do you need to worry about the future for you and your children as far as syncope is concerned? Often young people "outgrow" the problem. As we age, a new set of issues arises. Our blood vessels become stiffer and adapt less readily to changes in position, such as standing up after sitting. This can be exaggerated when there is some dehydration, or when on medications for high blood pressure or an enlarged prostate. Rhythm and heart valve disorders of the heart may also lead to syncope. Vasovagal syncope is not a predictor of these conditions.

Whatever our circumstances, and our level of brokenness and fragility, we can rely on our faithful, caring heavenly Father:

"He [the Lord] gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. . . . They will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Isa. 40:29-31). No need to worry! 📌

Peter N. Landless, a board-certified nuclear cardiologist, is director of the General Conference Health Ministries Department. **Zeno L. Charles-Marcel**, a board-certified internist, is an associate director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference.

THE BREAK-IN

Your place is so peaceful." My mom sat on the top step in our garage as we talked about the day's events. She and my dad were visiting from Massachusetts. Greg and I were relishing every moment!

I turned and looked out the door. It was peaceful. Just a little gravel road surrounded by fields with a little yellow house we call home. The deer trample on my tulips, while their fawns cavort across the lawn. Raccoons, wild turkeys, and the occasional bobcat take a shortcut across our yard. Yet we've always felt safe here. Good neighbors, the kind who lend freely. In fact, I often walk down the road, leaving our side door unlocked. *Nothing could ever happen here. We live in the country!*

That night we went to bed after putting our little cat, Pebbles, in the garage. *No hungry bobcat is eating our cat!*

The next morning just as the sun came up Greg stepped into the garage. Quickly, he returned. "Jilly, Pebbles is outside! How did she get out?"

I had no idea. Greg hurried back to the garage and did a quick inventory of his tools. *The pressure washer for the house. It was missing!*

Careful investigation revealed that the thieves had broken into the garage, stolen the pressure washer, and locked the door on their way back out. Unfortunately for them, they left tracks in the mud, tracks that the police could easily pick up. The local sheriff came and asked many questions. He suggested it could be someone we knew. *What person did we know would do something like this? We have great neighbors and friends. It was hard to think. Hard to be suspicious of anyone.*

I didn't feel necessarily alarmed, but Greg insisted on certain safety precautions. Just normal, routine steps to protect ourselves. After all, we didn't know who had done this—or if they would be back.

What I hadn't expected was the disruption of my sleep. I didn't feel nervous going to bed that night, but an hour after falling asleep a car drove by, and I instantly awoke. Heart pounding, ears straining. *Was someone coming back? Would they try the house this time?* I lay back and took a deep breath. *Father, I need You. Why am I afraid?*

The next night, and the night after, the same thing occurred. Every time a car passed I was jolted awake. Lying in the dark. Staring at the ceiling. I knew God had promised that there is no fear in love (1 John 4:18). *Why then was I afraid?*

On this journey with Jesus I've finally made a discovery. Every trial, every experience, in my life serves two purposes: first, it teaches me more about the character of my Father in heaven; second, it shows me a new edge in my own heart that still needs polishing.

What was this particular edge? Fear, and that God wants me to trust Him. Completely. Without reserve. And in return, He'll give me His perfect peace.

And you know what? Our home is peaceful after all! 🍂

JOURNEYS
WITH JESUS
JILL
MORIKONE



EVERY TRIAL,
EVERY EXPERIENCE,
TEACHES ME MORE
ABOUT MY FATHER
IN HEAVEN.

Jill Morikone is administrative assistant to the president of 3ABN, a supporting Adventist television network. She and her husband, Greg, live in southern Illinois and enjoy ministering together for Jesus.



A GENUINE INTEREST IN THE WELFARE OF OTHERS

We are challenged to make a difference.

ELLEN G. WHITE

“It was to be impressed upon the minds of all that the poor have as much right to a place in God’s world as have the more wealthy. Such were the provisions made by our merciful Creator, to lessen suffering, to bring some ray of hope, to flash some gleam of sunshine, into the life of the destitute and distressed.

“The Lord would place a check upon the inordinate love of property and power. Great evils would result from the continued accumulation of wealth by one class, and the poverty and degradation of another. Without some restraint the power of the wealthy would become a monopoly, and the poor, though in every respect

fully as worthy in God’s sight, would be regarded and treated as inferior to their more prosperous brethren.

“The sense of this oppression would arouse the passions of the poorer class. There would be a feeling of despair and desperation which would tend to demoralize society and open the door to crimes of every description. The regulations that God established were designed to promote social equality.”¹

“God’s Word sanctions no policy that will enrich one class by the oppression and suffering of another. In all our business transactions it teaches us to put ourselves in the place of those with whom we are dealing, to look not only on our own things, but also on the things of others. He who would take advantage of another’s misfortunes in order to benefit himself, or who seeks to profit himself through another’s weakness or incompetence, is a transgressor both of the principles and of the precepts of the Word of God.”²

THOSE WHO ARE DISENFRANCHISED

“God-fearing men and women have been brought to the depths of poverty by illness or misfortune, often through the dishonest scheming of those who live by preying upon their fellows.”³

“Families live in hovels, with scant furniture and clothing, without tools, without books, destitute both of comforts and conveniences and of means of culture. Imbruted souls, bodies weak and ill-formed, reveal the results of evil heredity and of wrong habits. These people must be educated from the very

foundation. They have led shiftless, idle, corrupt lives, and they need to be trained to correct habits.

“How can they be awakened to the necessity of improvement? How can they be directed to a higher ideal of life? How can they be helped to rise? What can be done where poverty prevails and is to be contended with at every step?

“Certainly the work is difficult. The necessary reformation will never be made unless men and women are assisted by a power outside of themselves. It is God’s purpose that the rich and the poor shall be closely bound together by the ties of sympathy and helpfulness. Those who have means, talents, and capabilities are to use these gifts in blessing their fellow [men and women].”⁴

OUR RESPONSIBILITY?

“Real charity helps [men and women] to help themselves. If one comes to our door and asks for food, we should not turn [them] away hungry; [their] poverty may be the result of misfortune.

“But true beneficence means more than mere gifts. It means a genuine interest in the welfare of others. We should seek to understand the needs of the poor and distressed, and to give them the help that will benefit them most. To give thought and time and personal effort costs far more than merely to give money. But it is the truest charity.”⁵

“Attention should be given to the establishment of various industries so that poor families can find employment.

“In ministry to the poor there is a wide field of service for women as well as for men. The efficient cook, the housekeeper, the seamstress, the nurse—the help of all is needed.”⁶ “. . . Those who are taught to earn what they receive will more readily learn to make the most of it.

“And in learning to be self-reliant, they are acquiring that which will not only make them self-sustaining, but will enable them to help others. Teach the importance of life’s duties to those who are wasting their opportunities. . . . Bible religion never makes [men and women] idlers. Christ always encouraged industry.”⁷

LET US STAND FOR THE RIGHT

“Jesus sought to correct the world’s false standard of judging the value of [men and women]. He took His position with the poor, that He might

True beneficence means more than mere gifts. It means a genuine interest in the welfare of others.

lift from poverty the stigma that the world had attached to it. He has stripped from it forever the reproach of scorn, by blessing the poor, the inheritors of God’s kingdom. He points us to the path He trod, saying, ‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.’ [Luke 9] Verse 23.”⁸

“We are all woven together in the great web of humanity, and whatever we can do to benefit and uplift others will reflect in blessing upon ourselves. The law of mutual dependence runs through all classes of society.”⁹

“‘The poor always ye have with you’ (John 12:8), Jesus said, and none need feel that there is no place where they can labor for Him. Millions upon millions of human souls ready to perish, bound in chains of ignorance and sin, have never so much as heard of Christ’s love for them. Were our condition and theirs to be reversed, what would we desire them to do for us? . . .

“Christ’s rule of life, by which every one of us must stand or fall in the judgment, is ‘Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.’ Matthew 7:12.”¹⁰ 📌

¹*Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890), p. 534.

²*The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 187.

³*Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 192, 193.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 195.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 194, 195.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 197, 198.

⁹*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 534, 535.

¹⁰*The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), p. 640.

This excerpt is taken from *A Call to Stand Apart* (original Ellen G. White source material for the paraphrase), pages 61, 62. Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.



MOB RULES

A case of mistaken identity

If there was a day I saw death with my own eyes, it was July 24, 2016,” says Steve. “I now know that God has a purpose for my life.”

READY TO DO GOOD

It was a fine Sunday morning. The sun kissed the blue sky above the lakeside city of Kisumu. On Sundays the hustle and bustle of the city diminished, save for people going to and coming from Kibuye Market, the largest open-air market in East Africa.

On the other side of town six members of the Adventist Youth Society (AYS) gathered outside Bethlehem Seventh-day Adventist Church to set out on a mission to Ojala, about 25 miles (40

kilometers) from Kisumu. They were going to visit a man who had been fellowshipping at the Bethlehem church.

Mzee Zephaniahand was sick. Steve, one of the six-member team, had a medical missionary friend who promised to call on Mzee to diagnose the problem and advise an appropriate treatment plan. They planned to meet at Ojala, so they could go to Mzee’s home together.

When the group arrived in Ojala, Mzee was not home. He had gone to Obambo, a nearby center, to see a doctor.

Mzee’s son, whom they did find at home, told them that his dad would be back by noon.

BEWARE OF STRANGERS

About noon the group heard a woman wailing and cursing, calling for neighbors to help her catch someone suspected of abducting children. Her child told her that three men had tried to abduct him from a farm near their house. Incidents of child trafficking had been rife in this neighborhood, so the mother did only what was natural for someone in her position.

The villagers immediately poured from their homes armed with all manner of crude weapons.

The distressed woman told them where the suspects had run, and they set off in pursuit, passing Mzee’s home, where Steve and his friends sat in the shade.

A few minutes later the crowd returned to the village dejected, their pursuit unsuccessful. The alleged suspects had apparently vanished.

Upon reaching Mzee’s home,

one young man from among the returning group, evidently under the influence of alcohol, suggested that the group sitting under the shade could be the suspects. His comment attracted the attention of the crowd, and it started interrogating the men because they were strangers. Soon the crowd became rowdy and unreasonable.

The mob began demanding blood, armed with machetes, clubs, hammers, whips, and stones. One of them carried a large stone as if he intended to drop it on the heads of the strangers. They said they were going to hold them captive until Mzee returned from the hospital to tell them if he knew the six youth.

PRAYING FOR SECURITY

Unfortunately, Mzee was not back by noon. His son contacted him by phone to inquire when he would be back. Mzee told his son that the doctor had injected him with a medication that required immediate bed rest. He said he wouldn't be back until 5:00 p.m. The mob agreed to wait. The inebriated youth in the mob were unhappy with this "unnecessary delay." In a cell phone video recording, one vigilante carrying a machete said, "If things are bad, you just slash [them]," a sentiment apparently shared by many.

Even though the woman confirmed that the six are not the same people who intimidated her son earlier, the mob seemed more determined to lynch them than to see justice served.

Mzee's son and two local youths somehow managed to slip the six youth into the house and lock the doors. The mob started throwing stones at the roof and threatening to burn down the house.

Inside, Wycliffe, one of the youth, started to pray; the others joined him. Frida confessed that even though all hope was gone and she had no energy to press on, the prayer session renewed her strength. They all told God that if this was to be their last day, they would rest assured that they belonged to Him.

They sent messages to church leaders about the situation. They also sent messages through to the Bethlehem AYS WhatsApp group. Everyone prayed for them.

ENTER THE POLICE

Two police officers arrived a few minutes later.

The youth told God that if this was to be their last day, they would rest assured that they belonged to Him.

But overpowered by the mob, they retreated. They returned with four more colleagues in a Land Cruiser. The mob got more unreasonable at the sight of the police, who had no choice but to shoot in the air to disperse the crowd.

The crowd dispersed, but they still lurked, waiting for an opportunity to pounce. The police took advantage of this opportunity to slip the captives into the truck and drive them to a nearby construction yard, where they sorted out the issue.

It was now half past 5:00, and Mzee had not yet returned. The police decided to drive them to the Maseno police station for booking.


They had just boarded the truck when the old man appeared. Approaching the truck, he observed the captives. "I don't know these people," he said.

Suddenly it became obvious why the old man was kept away the whole day. If he had made that statement in the presence of the mob, the youth would have been killed.

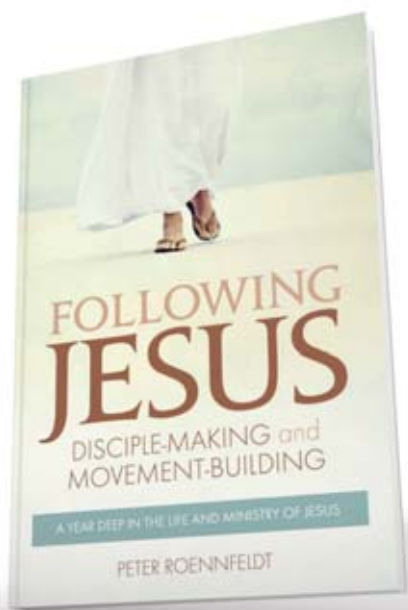
The police drove them to the Maseno police station, where they were booked. They got out on bail, but had to be at the police station the following day to record their statements.

When they arrived to record their statements, the police let them go. None of the villagers appeared to press charges, so their case could not proceed.

Exactly one week after the incident, a mob lynched a couple in Kisian, a small center near the Kisumu International Airport and a few miles from Ojala, on grounds of child trafficking.

The six youth are convinced that had it not been for divine intervention, their story would have been tragically different. 

Kevin Otieno writes from Kisumu, Kenya.



Following Jesus

Following Jesus: Disciple-making and Movement-building, by Peter Roennfeldt, Signs Publishing, Warburton, Victoria, Australia, 2017, 253 pages. Softcover, US\$9.99 (Kindle edition). Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, *Adventist Review*.

Following Jesus is not a book to read for the sake of reading it. It is rather a handbook for understanding the life, times, and message of Jesus. Beyond that, it is a call to discipleship; a call to understand the radical claims of the gospel and put them into practice. Peter Roennfeldt, a pastor and church planting specialist, developed this book over 10 years as part of a small group of men who met once a week “to share God’s Word, encourage each other, and pray together.”

The fact that the book is divided into five phases, and 50 chapters (guides), suggests that the author intends readers to take their time as they journey through it, not binge on it in a few days or weeks. Each chapter is loaded with notes about Bible times and customs, a harmony of the Gospels, and suggested chapters to read from *Messiah*,

Jerry Thomas’ paraphrase of *The Desire of Ages*. Each chapter is loaded, but still easy for lay readers to read and digest.

While *Following Jesus* is an excellent resource for personal study, it is also a perfect companion for small groups that want to encounter Christ on a personal level. Roennfeldt suggests using this as a springboard for writing one’s own responses and reflections in a personal journal. There is also space in each chapter to write answers to questions and put into words one’s own reflections that can either be shared with others or kept to one’s self.

In *Following Jesus*, Peter Roennfeldt has done readers a great service. Rather than using the Gospels as a collection of proof texts, he uses the Gospels to introduce readers to a Person, a Savior who changes lives. By the time you finish, you will say with the disciples, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32).

Read this book—either alone or in a small group—and enjoy the journey. ▀

"Coming home from school, I would always feel sick when I saw my house. I'd drop my things on the porch and refuse to go inside. I don't remember ever voluntarily going in that house."

—Ty Gibson



download the story here:
hopetv.org/thoughtears



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We asked our readers how they are engaged in their communities.



Have they adopted a highway? Do they serve at a homeless shelter? Do they deliver meals on wheels? Do they volunteer at a hospital, school, library? We asked what they do, and how community involvement has affected their lives. Here are their responses.—Editors.

We're part of a team that goes to the streets of Melbourne and washes clothes for those who are homeless. Every second Friday night our team heads to the same street and serves up fantastic home-cooked food for those who are homeless. We also do a meal every first and third Sunday of the month in a disadvantaged suburb of Melbourne. Jesus did it, so that's good enough for us.

ADAM BOKOS, MELBOURNE, VICTORIA, CANADA.

I volunteer at a local animal shelter. Over the past 10 years tasks have included fostering kittens and puppies, training dogs, and assisting in surgery. We now photograph dogs, cats, and rabbits to enhance their chance of adoption. It is gratifying to support the dedicated shelter staff.

BARBARA HOWE DJORDJEVIC, BANNING, CALIFORNIA.

My church organizes food drives for those who are elderly in our area. I regularly participate. I find this outreach particularly helpful because it pushes me to give them what they've asked for—not what I would like to give. This has quieted my prideful, know-it-all self.

KAYLA EWERT, SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND.



I spend time with a friend who has Alzheimer's, to give the spouse a break each week. I coach a single mom of four in budgeting and filling in her financial gaps. It brings far more reward to me than the time or money I spend. Helping her see God work in her life has been awesome.

CAROL BARKER HUENEGARDT, LINCOLN, NEBRASKA.

I volunteer to meet with people in and outside my community in giving personal and group Bible studies. I try to meet their needs, although it's not easy to meet all their requests. It's fun to be out with them. All I ask is for God's grace to move on.

ONYEKA JOMBO, ABUJA, NIGERIA.

When we are on holiday, we students help households with housework. We are involved in all our church programs. Apart from this we visit people in the countryside, prisoners, as well as those who are sick. We preach to them.

IRD GUSTAVE KIDNOSKI.

It's an amazing work to help families have a new start with safe, affordable housing.

[I make] regular blood donations at the San Diego Blood Bank. My four children grew up watching me donate; now they all donate too.

KEN LA PLANTE, VISTA, CALIFORNIA.

As a Seventh-day Adventist minister, I patrol (ride along) as chaplain for the Takoma Park (Maryland) Police Department. The opportunities to witness to the community and the officers are priceless.

DAN PABON, SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND.

I'm poor. I try to be a good example and show the power of being humble.

TIMER RAMIREZ, MEXICALI, CALIFORNIA.

My husband drove for Meals on Wheels for 10 years before managing the food bank for the Community Services center at the Beltsville Adventist Church. I volunteer at the butterfly exhibit at Brookside Gardens, and as a docent and information desk staff member.

BEVERLY JEAN RUMBLE, COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND.

I just returned from my fifteenth Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter Work Project with Habitat for Humanity International. This year it was part of a build celebrating Canada's 150th anniversary. It was the Carter's thirty-fourth year. It's an amazing work to help families have a new start with safe, affordable housing.

BUCKY WEEKS, HOMELAND, CALIFORNIA.

I haven't, but I would love to.

JOSÉ LUIS.

“Compassion: Our First Instinct”?

When Mark Freeley’s golden retriever Storm plunged into the water off the coast of Long Island in New York last July, Freeley at first didn’t know what to think. Then he noticed a fawn struggling to stay afloat.

“Storm is trying to save this baby deer!” you can hear Freeley say on the video that captured the event.¹

The dog grabbed the fawn in his mouth and carried it back to shore. After releasing the young deer, he nudged its body and pawed its leg, as if trying to make sure it was OK.

**COMPASSION
RESULTS IN
IMPROVED HEALTH
AND LONGEVITY.**

Rescue workers responded to the call for help and transported the fawn to a local wildlife sanctuary. They expected it to make a full recovery.² Storm is being lauded as a doggie hero!

Some are skeptical about Storm’s motivation for rescuing the deer, but his owner believes it’s in the dog’s nature to help. “It showed he really had a care and was worried about the fawn,” Freeley said.³

A June 2013 article in *Psychology Today* titled “Compassion: Our First Instinct” by Emma M. Seppälä, Ph.D.,⁴ suggests that “a growing body of evidence,” based on studies with both infants and animals, indicates that “at our core, both animals and human beings have ... a ‘compassionate instinct.’” Apparently, even in this world of self-centeredness, scientists are saying that “adults’ and children’s first impulse is to help others”—and we reap personal benefits as well. Compassion, it seems, not only boosts our happiness level but also results in improved health and longevity.⁵


Social scientists have demonstrated that “compassion is contagious” and that “acts of generosity and kindness beget more

generosity in a chain reaction of goodness”—a concept not new to most of us.⁶

In this world in which sin and selfishness reign, and the acts of terror, cruelty, and crime reported daily are more than we can fathom, where does this “instinct” to help others come from? Many scientists cite Darwin’s theories of evolution to explain it, but as Adventist Christians, we look to Another.

In this *Adventist Review* we’ve reported numerous acts of compassion involving such issues as bullying, refugees and immigrants, hunger and poverty, violence, and unwanted and abused animals. Countless individuals, both inside and outside the church, are on the front lines helping the most vulnerable. But why do they do it?

Perhaps it’s because in each of us there may reside—even in small measure—a reflection of the goodness of the One who created us in His image and whose character is described as “love.” In other words, as we look to Jesus and behold Him in His Word, even on this very dark planet people can offer hope and compassion.

We won’t live in a perfect world that fully reflects God’s character until Jesus takes us home to heaven. But until then we can take courage that He is still among us, inspiring those who are open to His Spirit to help those in need. 

¹ www.washingtonpost.com/news/animalia/wp/2017/07/18/this-video-of-a-dog-saving-a-drowning-baby-deer-is-the-sweetest-thing-youll-see-all-day/?utm_term=.85e543ba0310

² Ibid.

³ www.nytimes.com/2017/07/18/nyregion/dog-rescues-a-drowning-deer-and-becomes-a-social-media-hero.html

⁴ www.psychologytoday.com/blog/feeling-it/201306/compassion-our-first-instinct

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

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

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