

The

S

abbath

*News for and about
Seventh Day Baptists*

January 1995

R

ecorder



Opening Doors of Ministry

There's a zeal
in the East

Updates from
Mexico
and
Rwanda

Missionary Society Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the members of the Seventh Day Baptist Missionary Society will be held at the Pawcatuck SDB Meeting House, 120 Main St., Westerly, R.I., on Sunday, March 19, 1995, at 2:00 p.m. for the following purposes:

To elect voting members, a Board of Managers and officers to hold office until the next annual meeting and until their successors are elected.

To hear and act upon the reports of the Board of Managers and officers for the fiscal year January 1, 1994 to December 31, 1994.

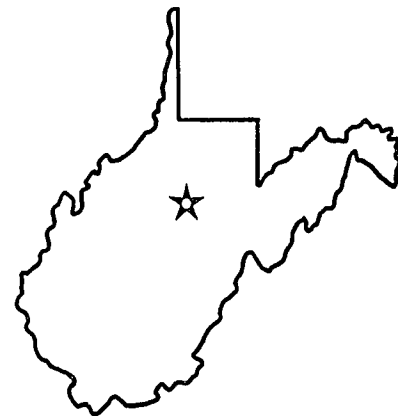
To ratify the appointment of independent public accountants for the current fiscal year.

To consider and act upon such other matters as may properly come before said meeting or any adjournment thereof.

The Board of Managers has fixed the close of business on February 28, 1995, as the time at which members entitled to notice thereof and to vote at the meeting and any adjournment thereof shall be determined.

—Cindy Nadeau, secretary

A Cordial Invitation...



...Come to West Virginia for General Conference in 1995.

(See details on page 19)

Summer Christian Service Corps 1995

Are you...

- 17 and a high school grad? (by June '95)
- a member of a local SDB church?
- wondering what to do this summer?
- wanting to serve God?

-or-

- a church member wanting an SCSC team?
- a church looking for a camp staff?

Summer Christian Service Corps can answer your questions. You can serve God and get acquainted with some of our fantastic youth. You will also see what it's like to commit yourself to a challenging experience.

For applications, write to:
Jan Bond, P.O. Box 94, Shiloh NJ 08353
Ph. (609) 451-7451

Worker training: June 16-25
Director training: June 15-19
Project dates: June 26—July 31

Application Deadline:
March 1, 1995

The Sabbath Recorder



January 1995
Volume 217, No. 1
Whole No. 6,792

A Seventh Day Baptist publication

The Sabbath Recorder (ISSN 0036-214X) (USPS 474460) is published monthly (combined July & August) by the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference's Tract and Communication Council, 3120 Kennedy Road, PO Box 1678, Janesville, WI 53547-1678. This publication is distributed at no cost to members and friends of Seventh Day Baptist churches and is made possible by donations from its readers. Second-class postage paid at Sun Prairie, WI 53590.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Sabbath Recorder*, 3120 Kennedy Road, PO Box 1678, Janesville, WI 53547-1678

This is the 150th year of publication for *The Sabbath Recorder*. First issue published, June 13, 1844. Member of the Associated Church Press. *The Sabbath Recorder* does not necessarily endorse signed articles.



Kevin Butler
Editor

Leanne Lippincott
Assistant Editor

Contributing Editors

Calvin P. Babcock, Ernest K. Bee Jr., Charlotte Chroniger, Myrna L. Cox, Rodney L. Henry, G. Kirk Looper, RuthAnne Peil, Don A. Sanford.

WRITERS: Please type manuscripts double spaced. Only manuscripts that include a stamped, addressed envelope can be returned. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcomed; however, they will be considered on a space available basis. No remuneration is given for any article that appears in this publication. Paid advertising is not accepted.

Features

Opening doors of ministry by Russell Johnson	4
There's a zeal in the East by Russell Johnson	6
Good meetings in Mexico by Kirk Looper	9
A future for orphans and refugees in Rwanda by Kirk Looper	11
A long way from Nortonville by Glen Warner	22

Departments

Focus	12	President's Page	18
Women's Society	13	Local news	20
Pearls from the past	14	SR Reaction	25
The Beacon	16	Family flux	26
Young Adults	17	Editorial	27

Who are Seventh Day Baptists?

If you've never read *The Sabbath Recorder* before, you might be wondering who Seventh Day Baptists are. Like other Baptists, we believe in:

- the saving love of Jesus Christ.
- the Bible as the inspired word of God and a record of God's will for man. The Bible is our authority both for our faith and our daily conduct.
- freedom of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- the congregational form of church government. Every member of the church has the right to participate in the decision making process of the church.

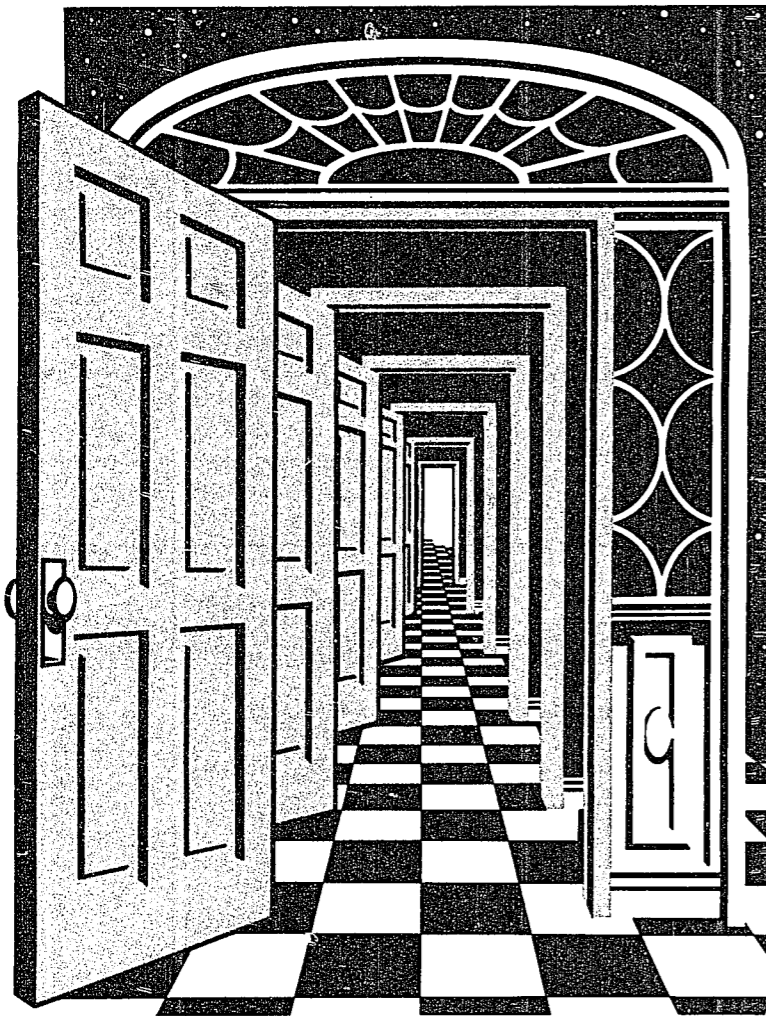
The seventh day

God commanded that the seventh day (Saturday) be kept holy. Jesus agreed by keeping it as a day of worship. We observe the seventh day of the week (Saturday) as God's Holy Day as an act of loving obedience—not as a means of salvation. Salvation is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ.

It is the joy of the Sabbath that makes Seventh Day Baptists just a little bit different. If you would like more information, write: Seventh Day Baptist Center, 3120 Kennedy Road, PO Box 1678, Janesville, WI 53547-1678. Phone (608) 752-5055; FAX (608) 752-7711

Opening Doors of Ministry

by Russell Johnson



How can Seventh Day Baptists open doors to reach more people during this changing of the centuries? Where will we discover the most fruitfulness for Christ's Kingdom?

The gap is widening between the values of secular North Americans and God's children. This comes from a society that accepts no moral absolutes, and "each man doing what seems right in his own eyes." God's wisdom and clear moral standards have been rejected by much of our society. Conventional wisdom discounts Christian

faith as archaic and "unenlightened."

Although some speak about a need for integrity and values in our society, most would not turn to Christ to establish such a foundation. Still, the thoughtful observer will notice that under the veneer of self-assurance, many people have a deep and nagging concern about current and future trends. The natural man doesn't discern the problems of our society to be a consequence of ignoring God's commandments and precepts.

How can Christians make a dif-

ference in these times? What is the best way to minister the truth of Christ to unsaved people?

Asking three basic questions will shape a church's vision and plan for winning the lost:

- Who in our community needs to hear what Jesus has done for them?
- Would they listen to us based on their personal experience of our loving them?
- How can we change their mistrust into a desire to hear?

The answers will be found not in adopting some new program, but in

perceiving the age-old human need for true friendships. The quantity, quality, and durability of sincere relationships that believers initiate with the unchurched will determine the number of people touched.

For several years, church growth writers have told us that the most effective method for winning people to Christ comes through the invitation of a friend. Materials geared to help churches grow continue to indicate enjoyable human contact as the best tool for God's people. The "salt" and "light" resulting from the love of God at work in the believer becomes an effective witness in a good relationship.

People are still seeking real, enduring friendships with no price tags attached. Because of this, many are joining with cults that show concern for them. Prior contacts with those called "Christians" may have given the impression of a greater concern for advancing the institution—the church—than concern for people as individuals.

People today are not always looking for ideas about their problems; they are looking for the real answers that God has given to life issues. But they need to see those

answers *in us*. Only in this kind of friendship will they understand the reality of "therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17 KJV).

Jesus clearly set a pattern for His disciples. His pattern of outreach to sinners was not a methodology, but a touching of hurting lives with love and truth. The religious leaders of His time viewed Jesus with scorn as a friend of sinners and publicans.

This much-needed restoration of the Great Commission once again sends His servants to where the sinner is found. Jesus never intended for His workers to wait at the church to receive those He wanted to save. The desire to release people from sin is magnified by firsthand knowledge of those being torn and ravaged by sin.

The child of God realizes that these sinners cannot deliver themselves from the power of sin. They need willing messengers of Christ's mercy combined with the powerful presence and conviction of the Holy Spirit. They need to hear the message of Good News shared in a combination of personal experience and the truth of God's Word.

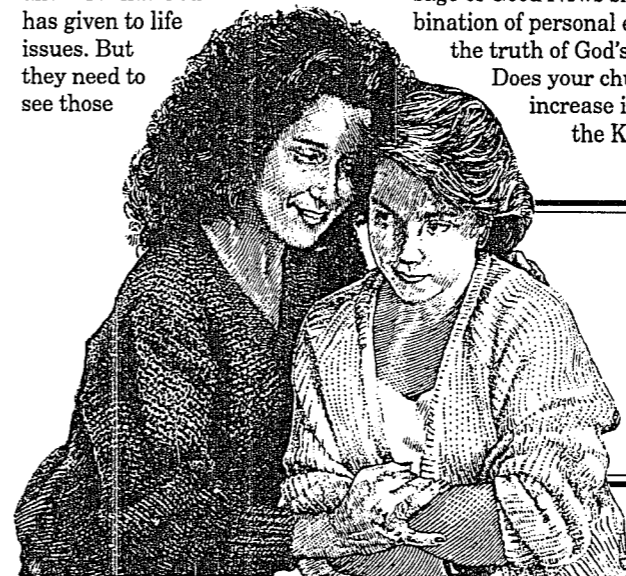
Does your church plan to increase its witness for the Kingdom?

You should set priorities to seek both new and deeper trust relationships with those who are not yet Christians. You should invest as much time actively working with sinners as you do in fellowship with believers. Transferring members from other Christian groups should never be mistaken for evangelism. It is also important to remember that God's Sabbath is only a part of the Seventh Day Baptist responsibility to testify. We are to share the full message of Jesus: a message that transforms life.

The Bible states, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another," (John 13:35). Where North Americans feel wanted and loved, they will be present. The power of God's genuine love needs to be unleashed as a major outreach tool of the church. We need to expand the circle of sharing far beyond the fellowship of believers into the hurting world around us.

If your church will provide unchurched individuals and families with relationships of genuine caring, you will see the blessing of new souls won and transformed for Christ. *SR*

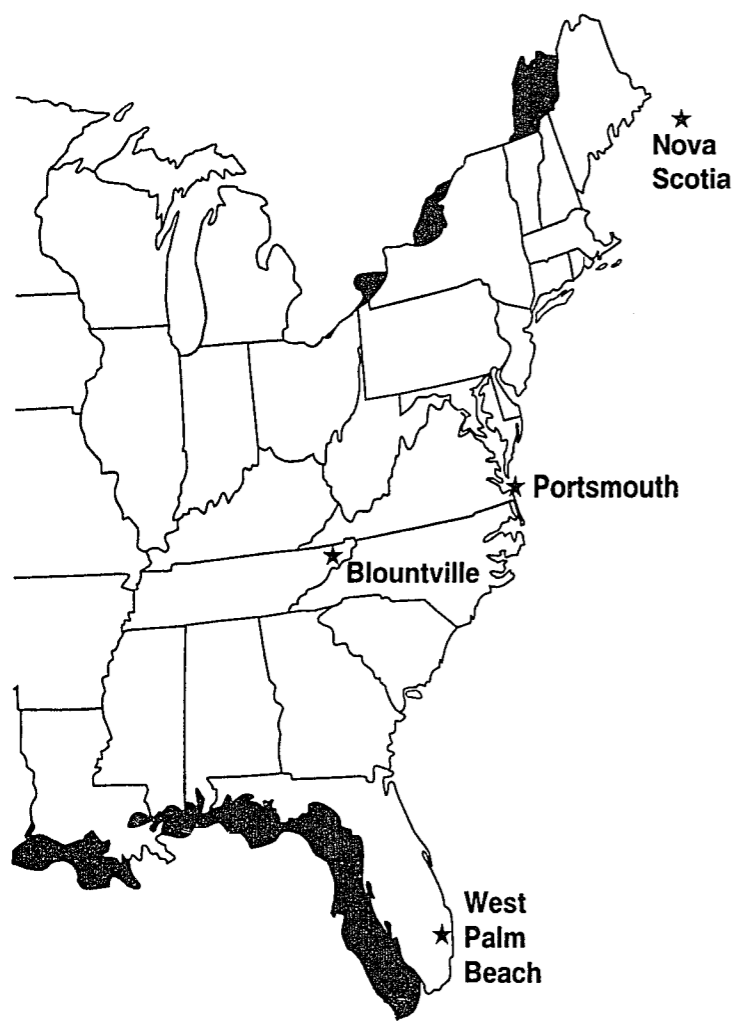
Russell Johnson is National Extension Minister for the Seventh Day Baptist Missionary Society.



Materials geared to help churches grow continue to indicate enjoyable human contact as the best tool for God's people.

There's a zeal in the East

by Russell Johnson



The apostle Paul ministered with this kind of zeal to start churches in every possible community. His passion for the Gospel of his Messiah moved him to start churches in more communities than would seem humanly possible within one lifetime.

Perhaps the key is revealed in those words, "humanly possible." He had learned to trust God for what he would accomplish. Some might call Paul an overachiever, or too religious. He simply lived with a commitment that still puts fire in our hearts: the urgency to share with everyone the message of deliverance over the power of sin.

New believers, who have personally experienced release from the power of sin or skepticism, have a "first love" conviction that the Lord will do anything necessary to advance His Kingdom through their lives. Like little children, positive attitude and absence of fear provide foundations for their attempts to do things for God.

How much zeal for His vision does God see in me? What am I willing to do, and what am I willing to give up to see a new church started to honor God? Would I give up a year of attending my local church to be part of a team of couples to start a new SDB church in a nearby city?

How many of God's people have sufficient zeal for Him to use a year of accumulated vacation time to give themselves to starting a church for the Lord? Some people might mortgage their future to acquire a new house, a new room, a new car, or some other thing for the family. But would they mortgage their time and resources to commit a year to start a new church in their area?

There is a common factor found in new groups that regularly experience decisions and baptisms for Christ: their level of zeal. "Zeal" is a rarely-used word in our vocabulary, but it clearly describes people who demonstrate a holy passion for the work of the Lord.

Christian zeal employs Biblical priorities to focus and shape our everyday life activities. These pri-

orities first establish a clear burden for God's commands and commissions. Then, they map out loving, bold, creative, and effective ways to actively practice ministry to people both inside and outside the body of Christ.

Zeal is reflected in different ways in different believers, but it is the essential description of what motivates them.

Nova Scotia, Canada

Living in Springhill, Nova Scotia, Gary and Gayle Meagher quietly serve God with this kind of willing spirit. Their goal is to start a church in that eastern Canadian province.

Gary has time and salary set aside so that he will be able to take a whole year off in 1996. He wants to take some time for the two of them, and then to use the majority of the year for a concentrated work in starting a church in the thriving capital city of Halifax.

During the past two years, Gary has sought contacts through ads and letters. Using his experience as a Baptist deacon, he has approached Baptist pastors all across the Nova Scotia area, seeking any who might be convicted of the Sabbath truth.

Satan has no love for such concentrated efforts for the Lord. We ask Seventh Day Baptists to be in prayer that Gary and Gayle experience shielding from all evil as they prepare for this work. Their commitment is a "first love" zeal for the work of God. The Verona, N.Y., SDB Church members have been moved by God to be prayer partners and to take a special supportive interest in this couple.

Portsmouth, Va.

King David once declared, "zeal for your house consumes me" (Psalm 69:7-9). This man of God had a zeal for the activities of God.

When the 50 or so people from the local community of Craddock attend the Abundant Life SDB Church (Portsmouth, Va.) each Sabbath, this kind of love is very evident. They want to praise God and learn from His Word! Visitors from other SDB churches remark about the simplicity and sincerity of this group's time of sharing and worship.

As Paul said about the Corinthians, there are few financially well-to-do among those of the Portsmouth church. However, God has recently provided this group with three separate buildings: one to distribute food to those who are in need; one to provide a ministry center for youth, church offices, director's housing, and worship; and another to house those recovering from sin's addictions.

How much zeal for His vision does God see in me?

Craddock, in Portsmouth, has a pleasant oval-shaped park surrounded by a street which is lined with shops. The food distribution has been moved from the pastor's home to a rented building formerly used as an oriental food restaurant. The ministry center is located just a short distance around the oval in a two-story brick building first used as a bank and then as administrative offices for a small grocery chain.

Both the ministry center and recovery house were purchased through the grace of God at a small fraction of their market value. The owner of two townhouses, upon learning of their envisioned use, offered them to the church for a quarter of their assessed market value. These homes were immediately put to use. They provided housing for those who had accepted Christ and needed a place to recover from sin's destructive power and rebuild their lives in Christ.

The YMCA board, which had previously received the main ministry building as a donation, re-

quested that the church make an offer. It was immediately approved, and low-interest financing was arranged through the bank of one of the YMCA board members. The people of Abundant Life have been enthusiastically at work converting the building to its future ministry functions.

Buildings can be useful, and may be a part of God's provision, but these physical locations are ineffective unless life-changing, Holy Spirit empowered ministry is at the core of what happens. When the Spirit stirs the hearts of God's people to exhibit genuine compassion for the lost, the power of Christ comes to bear most fully on those who are alienated from Him. In the presence of such zeal for His work, He seems most evident to provide for all His people's needs.

Abundant Life's people are committed to work together to do the menial tasks of operating a church organization, seek opportunities to nurture people by study of the Word, and routinely share the Gospel to those in need of redemption. Most of them experienced the devastation of sin, and are now determined to help those who are still in crisis with the same grace they received in Jesus.

This past summer, the church sponsored two teen-age evangelistic teams. During the first month, the teens journeyed through the southeast doing outreach wherever they went. In the second month, they returned to do work in the Portsmouth area. The fruits of their local labor had 450 people attending the community fair in the town square, and new families have begun to regularly attend and work with the church.

A full-time evangelist couple is expecting to join the work in early 1995. The church is enthused about the possibilities for increased min-

istry to the vast multitude who live in this greater metropolitan region known as the Tidewater area.

Blountville, Tenn.

Zeal is not only identified by vision and enthusiastic effort; it is marked by persistent endurance when things don't happen quickly or easily.

After a time of struggle and endurance, the vision of a pastor and wife, the hopes of local people, and

Like Abundant Life, the people at Blountville seek and minister to anyone who has a real need and is seeking genuine change in their life.

West Palm Beach, Fla.

Zeal without an opportunity or plan is like burning fuel without an engine or a transmission. Energy needs to be channeled and converted into directed effort toward a specific purpose.

**Our God is a God of
the impossible and improbable
in the eyes of the world.
He does not act to impress or amaze us.**

the prayers of believers across the nation are being fulfilled. Shepherd's Fold Ministries, Blountville, Tenn., is now legally organized with 19 charter members.

Out of what might have been seen as a struggle against all kinds of insurmountable difficulties, God has resurrected hope, love, and new ministry potential. The Lord has brought together a worshiping body that has reached attendance in the 40s at recent special meetings.

The ministry of this group is modeled around the character of Paul's words to the church at Rome: "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves; never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position" (Romans 12:10-16).

West Palm Beach Baptist—Seventh Day has had this directed zeal. They chose to honor God by doing more than they had been, and doing it with excellence. Building on their tutorial program for struggling junior and senior high students, and a community outreach effort designed to let residents know of the church's ministry, the group developed a special outreach to youth. This summer program, conducted at the end of July, reached only a small area of the neighboring community due to staff limitations.

Thirty young people within two age groups were sought to attend a club built around developing community and family values. However, the word still spread, and 50 young people registered before the six days were completed, and others still asked about joining. Two young people made decisions for Christ the first day of the Community Kid's Club.

Since then, residents from the community have been showing a clearly increased level of interest in the church. Church members now have the opportunity to minister to

several families who have attended worship services since that time.

What generates zeal? The answer lies in pursuing closeness to God. One might say that zeal is in renewed depths of love for God.

The rediscovery of zeal comes about through a decision to renew the knowledge of the depths of the riches that we have inherited in Christ Jesus. This kind of commitment is also seen in sincerely caring, as recorded in Acts 2:42-47—"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

Our God is a God of the impossible and improbable in the eyes of the world. He does not act to impress or amaze us, but He is simply not confined to accomplish His will within our restricting limitations (Mark 10:27).

He is only limited by our willingness to seek and trust Him to provide a way—no matter how unusual or unexpected—to empower His work through us (Matthew 7:7-11). Those who seek find. Those who knock have the door opened. Those who ask find their request granted.

The lasting results in each church, old or new, are proportional to their level of zeal for the one and only Redeemer in each believer's heart. Draw me nearer to You, O Lord! *SR*

Good meetings in Mexico by Kirk Looper

It's an understatement to say that my visit with the churches in Mexico was enjoyable.

The trip went relatively smoothly, and we were warmly received. When the Rosalio Camacho family met us at the airport, we were immediately introduced to the hospitality and gracious attitude that permeated both the Camacho home and the church.

We soon met several of the deacons and other church leaders, as well as many of the members of neighboring churches. They braved rainy weather to meet us, and greeted us in spite of the language barrier. (They didn't speak English, and I didn't know Spanish!)

A special "thank you" goes to our translator, Patty Petersen. She temporarily put aside her responsibilities of home and family to take this trip, and dedicated her time to the Lord's work. She was extremely helpful in clarifying and updating the information in her report and in one given by the Missionary Society. I pray God will bestow a special blessing on her because of her willingness to do His work.

During our three-day visit to Mexico (Sept. 16-18), we met with

Deacon Guadalupe Garcia of the Buena Vista church, Deacon Apolinar Hernandez of the Kilometer 20 church, and Maria Camacho, who represented the Mexico City church. We also met with Obed Vidal, who represented his father, Pastor Angel Vidal of Poza Rica.

Along with these leaders, we met families from the Tampico and Kilometer 20 churches. All were very Spirit-filled. Although we didn't always understand everything that was taking place, the worship services and Bible studies were very enjoyable.



(Above) Rosalio Camacho (l.), pastor of the Tampico church, and Deacon Guadalupe Garcia (r.), leader of the church in Buena Vista.



(Right) Deacon Apolinar Hernandez, leader at the Kilometer 20 church.

Desire for a missionary

Both Guadalupe and Rosalio suggested that it would be helpful to have a missionary teach at their churches. They believe that this would encourage the Mexican churches, motivating them to work harder. It would also make them feel less alone in their efforts to witness for Christ.

Such a missionary would be tangible proof that SDBs in the United States love their brethren in Mexico and are committed to them. It would also promote unity among the churches in Mexico.

Rosalio indicated that they would consider a single man, or possibly a married couple, for the missionary position, with the fol-



Some of the church members who attended the meetings in Tampico. They came from the Kilometer 20 church, and the churches in Mexico City and Tampico.

lowing qualifications:

- 1) He must be a man of faith.
- 2) He must be well-grounded in Scripture.

- 3) He must speak Spanish, at least "conversationally." (He would not be required to preach, but he would be trained to teach.)
- 4) He must have a "buena disposition." (Someone who is

- ready to work hard and is willing to do what needs to be done.)
- 5) He must be able to place himself under the authority of leaders without wanting to "take over."

A special "thank you" goes to our translator, Patty Petersen. She temporarily put aside her responsibilities of home and family to take this trip, and dedicated her time to the Lord's work.

Publications

Money is needed for a songbook which is being prepared for publication. This would be a "revolving" fund. (Money would be withdrawn to pay for the books, and income from sales would replenish the fund.)

Kevin Butler, editor of *The Sabbath Recorder*, was able to transfer the *Recorder* from the Macintosh to a DOS-format program. He sent Rosalio a copy, on disk, and it has been translated into Spanish. This will allow Rosalio to share the *Recorder* with non-English speaking Mexicans. (Thank you, Rev. Butler.)

The SDB Missionary Society has sent a translation program to help Rosalio write let-



Normacita Camacho has fun writing in the sand. She is the daughter of Pastor Rosalio and Norma Camacho.

ters and other documents in English. We are excited about this possibility of communicating in English.

Other needs

Some of the needs of individual churches in Mexico are as follows:

- Brother Joel (age 77) plays a one-octave accordion at church. It is in poor condition and needs to be replaced.

- The church roof in Poza Rica needs rebuilding.
- Young people who are studying to be future church leaders need money for bus fare so they can attend classes.

While we enjoyed our Mexican visit, we left with a touch of sadness. We would miss the hospitality and graciousness shown us during our stay.

It is hoped that others from our U.S. and Canada Conference will be able to visit Mexico. Just be sure to let them know that you are coming, so they can plan for your visit. You should allow about six weeks for correspondence. (You can also FAX your messages to Pastor Camacho, if you phone him ahead of time.)

We are praying for the growth of the churches in Mexico, and that they will overcome the resulting "growing pains." We encourage you to pray for them also. *SR*

A future for orphans and refugees in Rwanda

by Kirk Looper

Over the past several months, Elie Nduwayesu, a Rwandan pastor, has been requesting information about Seventh Day Baptists. He wanted to know what one had to do to become an SDB, and how to fellowship with other SDBs.

It was easy for me to send him the information he requested, and to explain how he could become a Seventh Day Baptist. I also told him how he could organize the churches he serves into a Conference in Rwanda.

While communicating with Pastor Nduwayesu, I discovered that he is ministering to the Rwandan refugees in Uganda, not in the churches in Rwanda. But that makes little difference to him. He merely wants to affiliate with a denomination that is not already established in Rwanda. Apparently, the religious groups already established in Rwanda have taken sides in the civil war, so the people are not safe in the churches. Pastor Nduwayesu believes that an entirely "new" denominational affiliation will provide a fresh start.

Between September 1993 and April 1994, he organized many small SDB groups in the Ugandan refugee camps. In the spring of '94, he was allowed to enter Rwanda, and began organizing groups in the refugee camps there.

Pastor Nduwayesu took a census in three districts of the people left in his church groups in three districts. Figures for some of the refugee camps are listed below.

In the Cyamutara camp, he discovered that 20 widows were caring for 1,760 children, one to two years of age.

Pastor Nduwayesu would like to establish "orphan villages"—settlements housing about 300 orphans, plus foster mothers to care for them. Several villages abandoned during the civil war have already been given for this purpose. Needed items include mattresses, blankets, cups, plates, jerry cans (to carry water), wash basins, and soap. This plan calls for a one-time cost of \$45,200, plus a working budget of \$45,000 annually. Pastor Nduwayesu has asked if the SDB Missionary Society could possibly help with any of this cost.

However, before he can do any of this work, the new SDB group in Rwanda needs to be registered, at a cost of \$1,000. In addition to registration, the group is required to have a headquarters, which rents for \$1,200. A copy machine is also needed, plus a computer or typewriter (\$5,000). And since electricity is limited or practically nonexistent in Rwanda, a generator would be very handy.

We here at the Missionary Society realize that this entire project involves a large amount of money. However, maybe some of these items can be supplied by our local churches. We believe that the refugees remaining in Rwanda, and those returning to their homes from Uganda, are going to need all the help we can give. If you have used clothing, blankets, food (nonperishable), Bibles (French preferred), and cups or glasses (plastic), they can be sent to:

**Seventh Day Baptist Church/Rwanda
%Lutheran World Federation/Uganda
Pastor Elie Nduwayesu
Kampala, Uganda**

Please mark your package with, "Goods in Transit to Rwanda." Any funds you would like to send can be handled through the Missionary Society office. That address is:

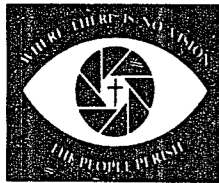
**SDB Missionary Society
119 Main St.
Westerly, RI 02891**

Since Rwanda is in the process of reorganizing, Pastor Nduwayesu would like to get the denomination registered. Registration will be more difficult after the reorganization is completed.

The work in Rwanda is not going to be easy, and those left behind are going to have a big clean-up job. Referring to the orphans in a June 20 letter last year, Pastor Nduwayesu wrote, "We found horror, hopeless people in need, and many orphan children. Most of them have been physically affected; some have no arms, no legs, no hands, no feet, or have only one of them. It is terrible." *SR*

Camp Name	Children (1-10 yrs.)	Older People (55+)
Byumba	4,000	205
Kiramurugi	2,800	130
Rutare	1,620	95
Kisalo	2,300	48
Kiziguro	1,000	20
Gahini	1,100	160
Kayonza	980	34
Rwamogana	3,400	60

The **S**abbath **R**ecorder October 1994
En Español



FOCUS on Missions

Revival in Zambia, new fence in Malawi

by Kirk Looper

Zambia

The Conference of Seventh Day Baptists in Zambia is coming along very well. They had their annual meeting in August and were quite surprised when over 5,000 showed up. Planning for only half that number, they were really caught at a loss. They had to find food and items for all the extra people. Even though this was a blessing, the added bodies also presented a financial problem.

Out of the 5,000 who came, 1,300 accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and hundreds rededicated their lives to the Lord. Praise God for His blessings and calling!

Several women at the conference wore uniforms designed for their ladies organization. The uniforms were made from cloth donated from Mr. and Mrs. D.K. Elsey, Devon, England. The women are very proud of their uniforms and thank God that the material was made available. They have enough for a few more uniforms but need many, many more. It was suggested that if funds were available, more cloth could be sent.

Zambia's general conference was held in the northwest province of Solwezi. The general secretary and one pastor are concerned over the



(Above) One of the altar calls which drew hundreds into God's Kingdom in Zambia.

(Right) Leaders of the Zambian Conference are concerned with the safety of these buildings.



safety of the shelters, especially when it comes to fire. Indeed, a fire nearly burned the shelters a week before they visited the area.

They persist in their request for help in purchasing iron sheets and other building materials for their churches. This will ensure safer

buildings. Church membership continues to increase and the buildings are extended to accommodate the growth. However, the buildings are surrounded by tall, dry grass.

Blantyre, Malawi

During 1993 we received a request to place a new fence across the front and rear of the mission house in Blantyre. The process took a little time, but it is finished. We are glad we could get this project completed. This will aid in the security of the house. The previous grass/wire fence afforded very little security. People could easily slip into the yard and steal chickens, vegetables, and any other valuable. The new brick fence will also provide a little privacy. *SR*



The new brick fence gives security and privacy to the mission house in Malawi.



Women's Society page by Charlotte Chroniger

Ministry outreach ideas

"And Jesus was going about all the cities and villages... proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom..."
(Matthew 9:35 NASB).

Jesus spent much of His time ministering to the people in the cities and villages of Israel, meeting their needs and declaring God's love for them.

It's exciting to hear about what some of our SDB churches are doing to reach out to their local mission field and be a light and a witness for the Lord and for Seventh Day Baptists. Maybe some of these activities will give your church some new ideas for ministry in your city, town, or area.

Alfred Station, NY

The Alfred Station, N.Y., SDB Church recently hosted a **Homecoming Weekend**. Besides a special worship service on Sabbath morning, a Homecoming Fair was held on the following Sunday. The SDB video was shown every hour; SDB books, totebags, and pins were sold and tracts distributed; and food items and crafts were sold. The church's Chime Choir performed for those in attendance.

Alfred Station also sees **Vacation Bible School** as a community outreach. By having the closing program on Sabbath morning, they were blessed with 144 in attendance, including many community families.

The church has used local newspapers and cable TV stations to advertise the ministries the church has available to the community. As people become more aware of the Seventh Day Baptist presence in their town and its positive influence, the church has a greater

chance and responsibility to reach out to those people.

Texarkana, AR

The Texarkana, Ark., SDB Church used a concert by Stained Glass to reach out to community

The North Loup SDBs also provide a **Community Christmas Eve service**, and they help with **community dinners**. The **camping program** in the summer is a major outreach to non-SDBs and non-Christians.

Maybe some of these activities will give your church some new ideas for ministry in your city, town, or area.

folks. Each year the Texarkana congregation holds **revival meetings** with guest speakers sharing the Good News. This year they are planning five nights of services.

An active **youth program** has drawn in community youth as they enjoy camping, Christian concerts, etc. The Texarkana church shares its facilities with a black congregation, which is able to minister to the black neighborhoods around the church.

North Loup, NE

The North Loup, Neb., SDB church hosts an annual **Turkey Supper** to kick off hunting season. Large parties of hunters attend from all over, and many non-SDB families have made attending the supper a tradition.

Because the North Loup church is one of only two churches in town, they combine with the Methodist church to sponsor:

- Men's Lenten Breakfasts,
- Women's Lenten Coffees
- Women's Christmas Luncheons
- joint Musical Festival.

San Diego, CA

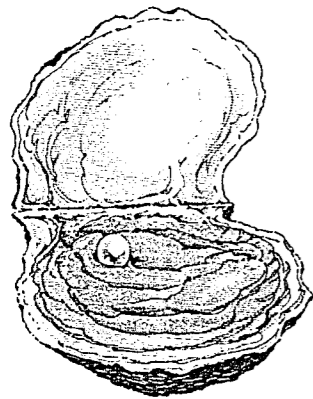
The San Diego, Calif., SDB Church has used **sports programs** as an outreach to their community, and have encouraged home Bible fellowships. They have had a **ministry to the destitute** and were involved in the "Reclaim the City" monthly prayer ministries.

Hebron, PA

The Hebron, Pa., SDB Church's Outreach Committee pays for **Christian magazine subscriptions** for several young people. The committee also edits and publishes a monthly newsletter.

These are only some of the ways that we as Christians can reach out to our communities, and be a positive witness to the people. As we let others know that we really care, we will be able to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with them.

Will your church or women's group be able to develop any of these ministries for your area? How is your church fulfilling its mission outreach goals? *SR*



As a part of the Women's Board program at Conference in 1920, Mrs. T.J. (Harriet) Van Horn presented a stereopticon slide presentation entitled, "Prose and Poetry of the Home Missionary's Work."

After giving a call to awaken the missionary spirit among members of the denomination, and the call for workers to enter the field, she spoke of the "Romance of Missions."

To many who read the thrilling stories of mission work in distant places, there is a halo of romance about the subject that is alluring. Of course, it is the unusual and striking incidents which occur occasionally in the life of a missionary that make good reading in a book or magazine. In a half-hour's talk, one could perhaps recount all the really picturesque happenings of four years of arduous toil. I remember that Susie Burdick once said to me that much of missionary work is mere drudgery.

I do not want to mislead any youthful hearers and build up a charming house of cards which will tumble into a rubbish heap at the first blast of discouragement and disappointment. Such winds blow frequently across the mission fields. I do not say they are the prevailing winds.

She summarized the Great Southwest as one big mission field stretching from "rice on the wind-swept prairies of western Oklahoma to lovely Memphis, sitting

Pearls from the Past by Don A. Sanford, historian

Little mission on the prairie

where three states clasp hands beside the Father of Waters. Southward from Kansas City, till we reach the fruit laden, flower decked town of Hammond in Louisiana, or farther west and south to Port Lavaca, Texas, we find isolated ones who love God's Sabbath."

Her descriptions of such places as Gentry and Little Prairie (or Nady) in Arkansas are very graphic. She described the church at Little Prairie as being typical:

"It is set up on posts, having no basement or underpinning such as is familiar to us. The open space beneath gives free access to the hogs that roam through the woodland, and their grunting often forms an accompaniment to the voice of the preacher, and sometimes successfully vies with him in claiming the attention of the congregation. Following one such occasion, our missionary gathered some stray boards and other material and enclosed the space beneath the building so effectually that the disappointed grunts of his unwelcome visitors that evening gave him the keenest satisfaction."

Much of Rev. T.J. Van Horn's work during his missionary tour was in areas where there were no churches. Harriet thus records one summer's activity in Oklahoma:

There came a summer day when the missionary, restless to be at his Master's business, declared that he meant to go exploring. "They tell me," said he, "that one can travel straight west into Oklahoma for sixty miles without seeing a church house. I mean to hike until the Holy Spirit tells me to stop. Surely there is some place there where I

can carry the Gospel."

So he started out on a July morning and walked all day. He found wide prairies, green with tasseled corn and waving grain; deep woods threaded with Indian trails that led to lonely cabins or isolated farm houses; an occasional school house in some wayside grove. But not a church.

And as he called at homes and asked the question that lay upon his heart, repeatedly the answer came, respectfully, but sadly:

"No, we are not Christians here."

At only three dwellings that long summer day did he find the answer he sought.

"Yes," many of them said. They "would like to have meetings."

"Yes, the school house could be used."

"Yes," they would come if he would "wait till the haying was done."

And so began the work, intermittent, slow in gaining the confidence of the people, but persisted in, against the odds of heat and dust and distance and bad roads and a callous indifference that was difficult to overcome.

Gradually, suspicion gave way before a persistent friendliness. The people seemed to like to come to meetings. And through many discouragements, the work went on whenever the missionary could be spared from his other stations.

I wish you could have seen the little children. Mothers brought their tiny babies and laid them to sleep on the school-house desks. When these were all occupied, pallets were made on the floor of the teacher's platform for the other small sleepers. I have seen nine babies sleep on the floor, a dog under the Bible stand, scarcely standing room left for the preacher, and a cat walking down the aisle.

One evening three dogs threatened to break up the meeting, but they were turned out after an exciting struggle, and peace settled at once. The people do not mind such things; they are used to it.

I remember one Sunday, Mr. Van Horn was preaching from the text. "What then will you do with Jesus who is called the Christ?" How anxious I was that they should get that earnest message.

You can fancy my own dismay when three small maidens commenced to march around the room, across in front of the platform, up behind the preacher, down the other aisle and so around in happy single file, oblivious to everything but their own play. Another infant found a broken desk and pumped it up and down with huge delight and most unseemly racket.

More and more nervous I grew so as my northern notions convinced me that the sermon was being unheard and unheeded. Yet, at the invitation, five mothers and fathers responded and came forward in quiet tears to accept Jesus as their Saviour.

You do not need to be told that that was a wicked country. Bootlegging was a regular business. Horse-stealing, murders, drunkenness, fights and crimes I cannot mention were known. A feeble little Sunday School had been attempted, but died for lack of leadership.

There came a summer day when the missionary told them that with their permission, he and his wife would like to spend their vacation with them, camping out beside the school house. If the children would like to learn to read music, he would teach them. They should also be taught the Bible and some simple lessons in "How to Become a Christian." And if the people wished to come, there would be preaching every night.

Then followed three weeks that will remain long in the memory of some and not least in the hearts of the missionaries. Stock in that

country is allowed to run on the range. So a fence was built around the tent to keep the pigs out. It was jokingly said that the preacher brought his wife and immediately put her "in the pen." (This joke has an added significance in the fact that a large majority of the families on Beck's Prairie had representatives in the State Pen.)

An open fire served to do the cooking. An iceless refrigerator kept food cool while the mercury hit 115°. A hammock slung between the trees, and a cot spring in the tent furnished sleeping accommodations. One small visitor remarked that the loose boards forming the floor of the tent made a fine place for snakes. So, seven days in the week, the children came to our vacation Bible school. They came on foot, on horseback, in mule wagons, occasionally by auto, through Oklahoma dust and heat.

We had good times together. At night, after a long day at the threshing, followed by late chores, the people came to hear the gospel. How we longed and prayed that they might find Jesus. O those homes without Christ.

One day word came to the school house that a little child had died and the parents wanted the missionary to conduct the funeral service. It was a dreary scene. The hot Oklahoma sun was scorching the prairie. In the bare little graveyard, blackened with a still smoldering fire, a group of friends and neighbors had gathered to show their sympathy. Neglected graves were overgrown with a tangle of briars that caught our feet. Head stones had fallen and been left to lie where they fell.

Under the scant shade of a solitary tree the small white casket was placed on two rude chairs and the company grouped closely about it. Sweet hymns were sung, the missionary read blessed words of hope from God's Book, and spoke tender sympathy and cheer to the sad hearts of the mourners. He pled


for those who had never accepted Jesus to give their hearts to Him, and to so live that they might look forward with hope and joy to a blessed life beyond the grave.

There was many a man in that company who had never thought of Jesus as his own Saviour. Many a mother who had no hope of a home in heaven. How the missionary longed to win them to Jesus.

At length the moment came when the friends must look for the last time on the little white face. But that mother was a Christian, and as she bent with streaming eyes over the dear baby face, she cried, "O my darling, it is so hard to give you up. But I will meet you in heaven." Very reverently the little grave was made down close to the edge of the dark forest, while strong men wept and women sobbed and little children looked on with strained, curious faces.

Yes, those homes without Christ! One of our brightest, sweetest pupils was a 12-year-old girl whose mother was of Indian blood and whose father was in the penitentiary for horse-stealing.

And the little children! Must they grow up, knowing nothing of the mighty Name except as it was spoken in oaths? Those mothers—could they bring up those darling children aright, where in their own hearts they did not know the Saviour? We felt as if we could not have it so. How we coveted that whole prairie for Christ!

As Harriet Van Horn continued her account, she recorded some of the success that she and T.J. had on that field, yet expressed the continued need for more workers in the field. Her closing words were: "How is it, young people? And all others? When the Master asks you to do your share, be it with time or money or self, to carry the gospel to these little ones—what will your answer be?" 



the BEACON

Produced by the Youth Committee of the Board of Christian Education
For and by members of the SDB Youth Fellowship January 1995

Getting in S.H.A.P.E. at Conference

by Erin Burdick

Attention youth!

I realize that it has only been a short while since Conference in Kansas and that the memories are still fresh in our hearts and our minds. But it is that time of year again—time to start planning the youth activities for Conference '95.

The officers of the National YF have already been to Buckhannon, W.Va., to check out the town and campus. I am proud to report that we are all very pleased with what we saw. No definite plans have been made, but we are looking into: bowling, skating, miniature golf, and the 4th annual Pastors vs. Youth Basketball Game (Go Youth!!!) to name a few.

The only bad thing is that none of these activities are free, so please encourage your youth group to have fundraisers to help support these activities. We are all expecting a fun week and, with your support, we can make it happen. Please send any donations or suggestions to Matthew Calise, 74 Carolina Ave., Salem, WV 26426.

Thanks again!

Love through Christ,
Cathy Rogers
National YF President

What do you get when you put 26 young adults, Pastor Andy Samuels, Pastor Steve and Angie Osborn, and Dan Richards together and let them loose on a college campus for five days? A little bit of mayhem, a good deal of fun, and a whole lot of learning!

We started off Pre-Con '94 in Lindsborg, Kan., with a whiz-bang orientation of the week's theme, "Learning your S.H.A.P.E." Centering around your Spiritual gifts, Heart (or passion), Abilities, Personality, and Experiences, Pastor Andy directed us to learn what God created each of us for and then to do it. Two classes a day, as well as a personality test and a spiritual gifts test, helped each of us round out our S.H.A.P.E. by the end of the week.

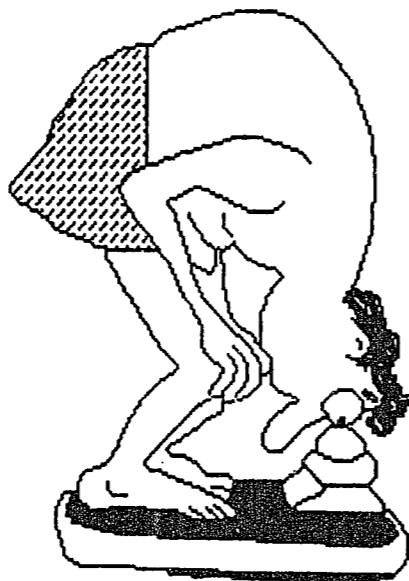
Our daily schedule also included arm liftin', heart rendin', heart poundin', praise and Bible quotin', Scripture

totin', worship times; swimming pool trips; and an invigorating Open Forum where we could ask about *anything* we wanted to know (including something about how to change the oil in a car...).

By Sabbath night we were ready and raring to go, and—in the cautionless excitement of the moment—let ourselves be talked into a soccer game by Pastor Andy. After two sweating, grunting, and sometimes vicious hours, most of us limped off the court only to wake up the next morning with bruises and aching bodies (but mind you—only one black eye!).

Sooner or later, however, Sunday morning had to come (along with the bruises), and Pre-Con had to end for another year. This time, though, we had our S.H.A.P.E.s to hold onto and God's plan for us to follow.

(Reprinted from the Conference Crier.)



Suzannah Peil
Chairman



Myron Samuels (pictured)
Kory Geske
Members at Large

Your Young Adult Interest Committee

We're a Conference committee that has been designed to meet the needs of the growing young-adult population in our Seventh Day Baptist churches. Although we operate as a Conference committee, we are also here during the year to meet the needs of the young adults in our churches.

Does the young adult group in your church need a kick-start? Have you found any Bible study or Sabbath School materials that have been particularly effective in building and strengthening your young adult group? Are you interested in what young adults throughout our denomination are doing?

If your answer was "Yes!" to any of these questions, get in touch with someone on this committee or write us using the address below. To make a difference in our denomination, we need to start *getting involved!*

If you have concerns, questions, or ideas that can strengthen our relationships with God and each other, we would like to hear from you!

Ready to become a part of an *active* young adult interest committee?

Write or call us!
c/o Lara Bates
P.O. Box 51783
Riverside, CA 92517
(909) 788-7844



Lara Bates
Secretary



Leeann Rogers
Activity Coordinator

What about missions?

by Myrna Cox

The call of Christ is never a call to "the easy life." Yet a life of service to Christ has compensations offered by no other life. We can always count on His presence along the way, with His blessing and reward at the end of the way.

During the first two centuries, the Gospel was taken from place to place by traveling evangelists and teachers. Believers customarily took these missionaries into their homes, then gave them provisions for their journey when they left.

Read 3 John 5-11. This Scripture tells us that as we support missions, we are:

1. Being faithful (v. 5)
2. Doing well (v. 6)
3. Doing right (v. 8)
4. Doing good (v. 11)

There are two ways we can support missions.

1. One may go as a missionary.
 - a. Evidently some had done that (v. 5)

2. Provide for those who do go.
 - a. Every little bit is commendable (v. 5)
 - b. Support of missionaries does two things:

A life of service to Christ has compensations offered by no other life. We can always count on His presence along the way.

- b. They were commended for two things:
 - For going out for the sake of Jesus (v. 7a)
 - For not taking money from believers (v. 7b)
- c. Many serve as missionaries today.

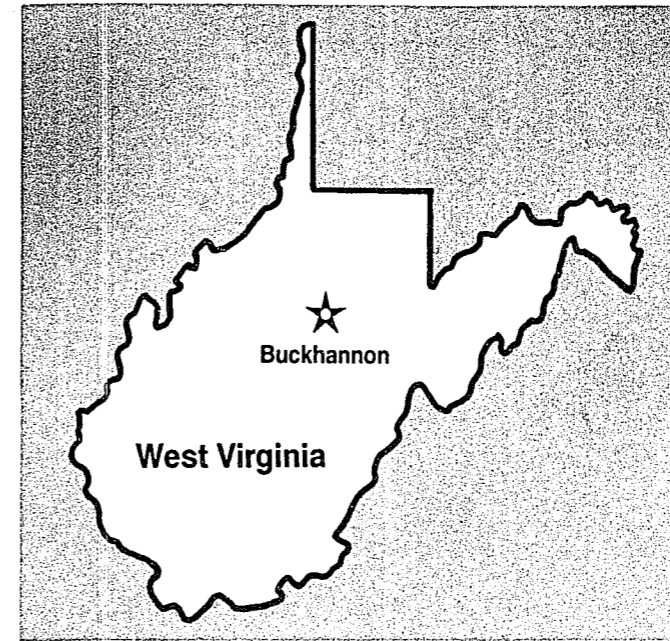
- Brings them forward on their journey (v. 6)
- Makes us fellow helpers in their mission (v. 8)

Opposition to missions was condemned.

1. Diotrephes opposed missions in three ways:
 - He disregarded their recommendation (v. 9b)
 - He would not receive the missionaries (v. 10b)
 - He would not allow others to support them (v. 10c)
2. Some Christians do not support missions today by not providing for those who do go, and some actively oppose church support of missions.

We can draw comparisons here between "good and evil" and of "being of God or not." How do you choose to serve?

Do not be one who is said to be opposed to missions. Joyfully serve those close around you and far away in whatever manner you can (love, physical and monetary support, encouragement, etc.), and be "filled with an inexpressible joy" that comes from knowing and obeying God. *SR*



Planning for Conference in wild, wonderful West Virginia

You are cordially invited to come to General Conference August 6-12, 1995, at West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon, W.Va.

Members of the Conference Host Committee (Stanley Allen, chairman) toured the Wesleyan campus with Conference President Myrna Cox and Acting Executive Secretary Calvin Babcock.

The group—representing the youth and church members at large, as well as denominational officials—found the facility to be excellent. The institution's personnel are cordial and accommodating. Cost factors in connection with holding Conference there are reasonable. So it was decided to recommend that the necessary steps be taken, with the approval of the General Council, to finalize arrangements.

The location is ideally suited for holding our Conference. There is a relatively compact arrangement of buildings on level ground—yes, there is level ground in West Virginia! The campus layout requires a minimal amount of walking from place to place; dormitories, cafeteria, gymnasium, meeting rooms, and chapel/auditorium are all easily accessible.

Buckhannon is centrally located in West Virginia. And West Virginia is centrally located in an area with great potential for relaxing, exciting, or educational activities before and after the business and spiritual experiences of Conference.

—Our nation's capital, with all of its historic monuments, magnificent governmental buildings, and superb muse-

white water recreation river." And there is much, much more to do and see in West Virginia, whether vacationing extensively or sightseeing leisurely for just an hour or two.

Put the dates on your calendar and start planning right away to attend and participate in Conference as part of your Joyful Service—"...rejoice in a great and

The location is ideally suited for Conference. Yes, there is level ground in West Virginia!

ums, is just "next door" to West Virginia's eastern panhandle.

—Within easy driving range of Buckhannon are (according to an official state magazine) "seven lakes, eight wildlife management areas, two state parks, a chunk of the Monongahela National Forest, five superb streams for fishing or kayaking, and one world-class

glorious joy which words cannot express..." (1 Peter 1:8).

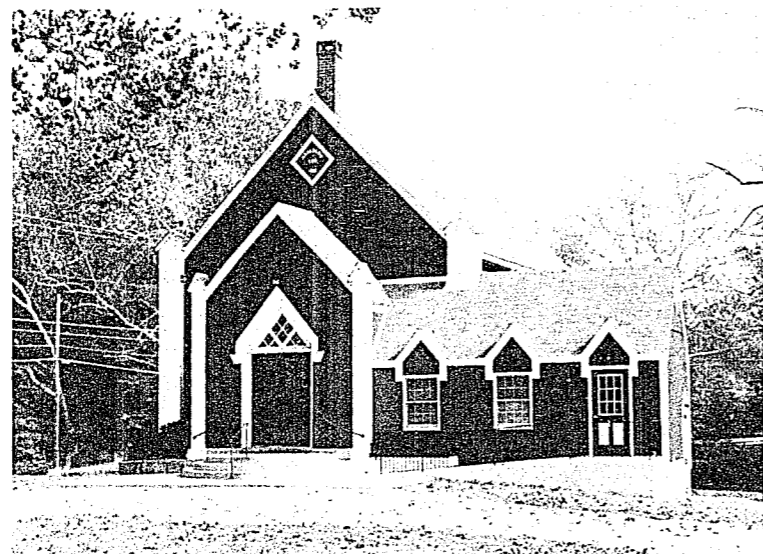
Watch this column from month to month, and the 1995 General Conference Host Committee will provide you with more details about this cordial invitation to come to *wild, wonderful West Virginia!* *SR*

Marlboro gives thanks by Diane F. Cruzan

On November 12, 1994, the Marlboro SDB Church in Bridgeton, N.J., celebrated its annual Thanksgiving Dinner. This seemed an appropriate time to also dedicate the recently completed addition to our church building.

Although we had discussed the need for new restrooms for many years, the vote to actually build the addition was made in January 1992. We then hired an architect, decided on a final design, dealt with building code requirements, and raised money for the project. The contractors began work on April 13, 1994. The addition includes two new restrooms (one upstairs and one downstairs) and has made our church handicap accessible.

Although everyone in the church had a part in making the addition a reality, three individuals were



The newly remodeled Marlboro Seventh Day Baptist Church.

singled out and thanked for their contributions during the dedication service:

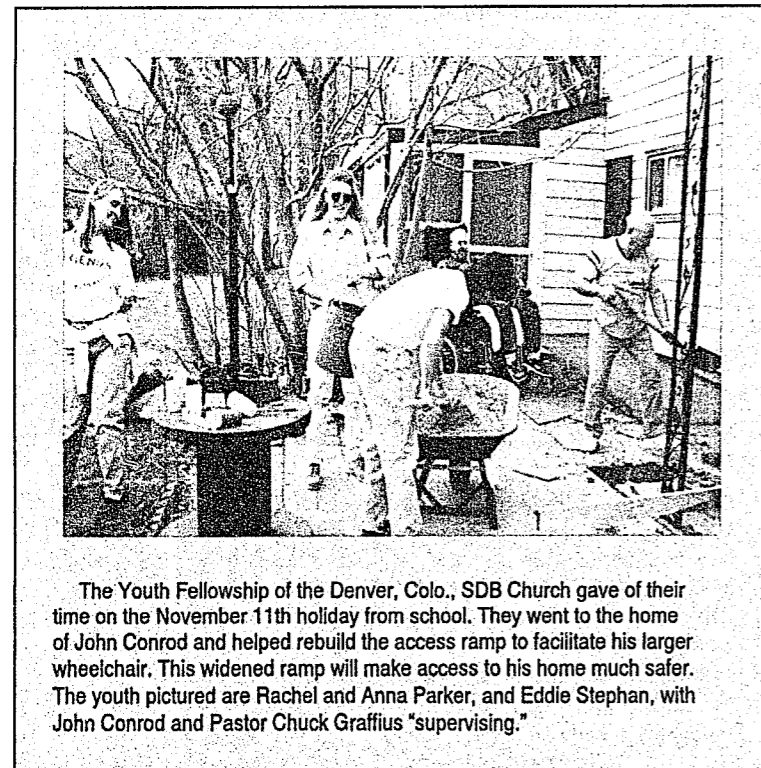
- Trustee Randy Dickinson was responsible for the overall project and put many hours into it. His services were greatly appreciated.

- As church moderator, Sharon Davis had continually reminded us of the need to improve or replace the old restrooms. She received a mirror made from parts of a church window which had to be removed for the addition.

- A framed photograph of the finished project was given to Pastor Mel Stephan, thanking him for his enthusiasm for the addition.

Because this was a time of thanksgiving, we also honored Letha Miller for her many years of piano playing for Sabbath School, church services, and special programs, and for her service in many other areas. She was given a bell to add to her collection and a poem written especially for her.

We at Marlboro have much to be thankful for, with the new addition being just one small part. We pray that all we do here is in accordance with God's will and will aid us in serving others. **SR**



The Youth Fellowship of the Denver, Colo., SDB Church gave of their time on the November 11th holiday from school. They went to the home of John Conrod and helped rebuild the access ramp to facilitate his larger wheelchair. This widened ramp will make access to his home much safer. The youth pictured are Rachel and Anna Parker, and Eddie Stephan, with John Conrod and Pastor Chuck Graffius "supervising."

Sabbatarian Baptists

by James M. Dunn

(The following is reprinted with permission from the October 18, 1994, Report from the Capital. James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, featured Seventh Day Baptists in his "Reflections" editorial.)

Cotton Mather, Puritan divine, called Rhode Island "a cesspool" of religious practice. He wrote that "there never was held such a variety of religions together on so small a spot of ground... everything in the world but Roman Catholics and real Christians."

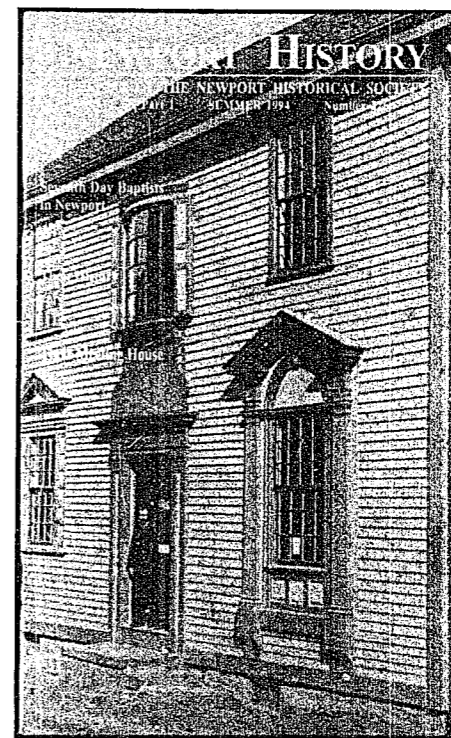
Sabbatarian Baptists were early among those variegated versions of the faith in Rhode Island. Along with Roger Williams and John Clarke, Samuel and Tacy Hubbard should be known as Baptist founders. They brought out Seventh Day Baptists.

The term "Sabbatarian" was used as a derogatory reference. The names "Christian" and "Baptist" were also "dirty words" early in history.

You may not have noticed that Seventh Day Baptists are one of the supporting bodies for the Baptist Joint Committee. In fact, you may not know about Seventh Day Baptists. Enough of that particular gap in Baptistology!

Newport History, the bulletin of the Newport (R.I.) Historical Society, devotes the Summer 1994 issue to Seventh Day Baptists. It is a signal honor for Don A. Sanford, a direct descendant of the Hubbards, to be chosen by the Newport Historical Society to write this important story. Sanford is the historian of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference.

You will learn more than you ever knew about Seventh Day Baptists reading this beautiful 48-page



account of their beginnings. [This issue is available from the SDB Center, PO Box 1678, Janesville, WI 53547. Telephone (608) 752-5055. Cost is \$5 postpaid.]

This brand of Baptists is also examined carefully in the September 1994 *American Baptist Quarterly*. Raymond D. Irwin has carefully crafted "A Study in Schism: Sabbatarian Baptists in England and America, 1665-1672."

Irwin writes, "The old notion that Rhode Island was the original home of 'soul liberty' has never been challenged seriously. Scholars perennially view the founder of the colony, Roger Williams, as a renegade radical who believed that government could not constrain consciences without encouraging hypocrisy." The unconstrained conscience and a hatred for hypocrisy has haunted and energized Seventh Day Baptists from their rocky Rhode Island origins until today.

[This look at their roots is available from: *American Baptist Quarterly*, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, Pa., 19462-0851; \$6.00 plus postage.]

These who observe Saturday as the Sabbath have argued that Judaic codes continued in force, particularly the divine dictate demanding observance of the Sabbath. They accuse "first day Baptists" of rejecting basic biblical precepts. Yet in most particulars, members of this smallest of our national Baptist bodies believe and behave like other Baptists.

Seventh Dayers have clung tightly to and ferociously defended their beliefs. They have more experience with persecution than most believers in the Baptist family. They turn to one another for support, form strong family ties, and take their identity from their formative faith perhaps more than any other Baptist by the name.

They have understood the absolute necessity of the separation of church and state. For their entire history, an indifferent or disinterested or even hostile state has been willing to run roughshod over their day of rest and worship.

The Baptist Joint Committee has a special place in their affections. I was reminded of this once again as I spent a week at their 1994 Conference in Lindsborg, Kan.

Court cases and friend-of-the-court briefs have been the battleground on which the Baptist Joint Committee has repeatedly fought for the freedom of Sabbatarians to worship as they see fit and not to be punished by law, custom, or culture. We stand with Seventh Day Baptists for full-fledged, wholehearted, religious liberty. It is none of government's business to appoint the time for worship... never has been. **SR**

A long way from Nortonville

Reflections on the life and ministry of Alton Wheeler

by Glen Warner

(Excerpted from Rev. Warner's message at Alton Wheeler's memorial service.)

Alton once told me about plowing a field with his father's horses as a young man in Nortonville. It was a cold day on the Kansas plains, so he stopped the team and laid down in the new furrow for a few moments to get warm. As he lay there, he said a great and deep sense of peace and of God's Holy Spirit came upon him. He felt bathed in holy love. This would be repeated many times in his life and bring him the continued assurance that God's hand was upon his shoulder.

I like to think of this young man looking up into a very starry night sky on those plains, and seeing the constellation now known as Cassiopeia, which is described as a slightly irregular "W."

He would call this the "Wheeler W," and I guess he saw it throughout his life. I once pointed out that "Warner" also started with the same letter, but he said he had discovered it first. It is thrilling to realize that the psalmist, the prophets, the Apostle Paul, the Wise Men on the way to Bethlehem, and even the Lord himself had looked up at those stars.

After completing high school, Alton went off to Salem (W. Va.) College, where he spoke of strongly resisting the call of God. He was into math and engineering, but he later wrote, "I am personally one of those persons who fought the call of God and played the role of the fugitive like Jonah till I was miserable in college. With the passing of the years, I could never, with honesty, feel that I could turn from the ministry because I had such a dramatic and traumatic experience with the Lord that I could not soon forget our confrontation in which He won. Nor have I been able to convince

myself, through the passing of years, that God has changed His mind. With me, it is not that the 'people' won't let me change, nor that it would be a shattering of pride or a disgrace for me to devote my life to some other type of work. The fact is that God has called, and I have answered."

His real classroom was the world, where he and the Lord would meet situation after situation. They learned to understand people and their complex, gnarly problems. Together, they would crack the case, and before the persons knew it, they were in a Bible study, learning more about this Savior. Alton's life stands as testimony to what God can do and will do with a fully consecrated life. He developed this tremendous skill of being able to take the smashed pieces of a life, mix it in the mortar of faith, and, with the person, pour a new foundation for a better life. He could never do enough for you.

From Salem, he went on to the Alfred School of Theology, headed by Dean Arthur Main. Alton fell in love with the Lord and His Word. He also fell in love with the dean's granddaughter, Ethel Main. That was one of the smartest things he ever did, he later said. They were married and began a most creative life together, staying lifemates for over 50 years. "Coupleswise," they nurtured their love and respect, hanging in there through the years. Ethel's loving care of Alton, over the past few years especially, was remarkable, and she was the shining angel of his life. "Number One Angel," he called her. This may not be the modern idea, but they developed a oneness of spirit and an excitement for living that many, many people greatly desire in life.

The first pastorates were in Nile and Richburg, N.Y., very quiet

places that allowed for games of Parcheesi in the evenings.

From there, it was on to Battle Creek, Mich., where many lifelong friends were made. It was there that Rolanda and Douglas became members of the family. The family shared the mission of many projects, and Battle Creek was remembered by Alton as a very lively church. It was there that they developed a church camp on Cotton Lake, "from scratch." It was a very definitive period of time in his ministry, when evangelism and its practical meaning took shape.

Forty-one years ago, the Riverside, Calif., Seventh Day Baptist Church called Alton to be their pastor. On October 14, 1953, Alton and the rest of the Wheeler family arrived at Riverside, and an impressive installation service was conducted by the Rev. T. Denton Lee and Elder E.S. Ballanger.

The service was in the form of a marriage ceremony, in which the new pastor promised faithfulness to God, and the congregation responded with a pledge of fidelity to God and the pastor. Thus began a pastoral ministry that was to touch hundreds of families and thousands of individuals in the area.

This was one of those relationships that seemed made in heaven. Within a year, church attendance doubled. Alton's ministry focused on different special emphases, and the congregation responded strongly.

When the call came to be General Secretary of the denomination [1965], Alton felt torn and that he could not leave a field like Riverside so soon. Many prayers were said about this by Alton, Ethel, family, and friends. So it was that he accepted the top leadership position and, not unlike the Apostle Paul, left his beloved congrega-

tions. There were many tears and the sacrifice of praise was offered out of broken hearts. But it was God's will, and there was healing and fulfillment.

His correspondence of those days is still exciting to read as he began coping with 300-year-old traditions, policies, and furniture and carpeting! He and Ethel picked new colors for the offices on Watchung Avenue in Plainfield, N.J. He finally got approval to move desks and cabinets around, throwing out "stuff" that had been stored for unknown reasons. Headquarters didn't know what had hit it!

Within months, there emerged "Facing Frontiers with Faith," a five year emphasis, a master plan at last, each year dealing with our national ministry on different levels. He paid the price many times over, as his friends of those times know and will testify to. He once said that he felt it would take 20 years of unremitting effort to turn us around. Story after story could be told of dry bones living again, as faith was reawakened in lives across the nation.

So Alton was busier than ever. He traveled widely for the denomination. Dr. Pete May called him our "Dean of Pastors." In the leadership roles he played, he became a pastor to some of the leading churchmen in the world. This was a long way from Nortonville, but he always found the Lord to be absolutely sufficient for any and all needs. His Oxford Bible still traveled in his coat pocket, and he studied it day and night. He served in key leadership positions with the World Federation of Seventh Day Baptists, the Baptist World Alliance, and the Central Committee of other worldwide Christian organizations. He earned the respect of many others who struggled to define the church's mission in the world during the 1960s and '70s.

Then there is this vintage Wheeler statement: "If I had a dozen lives to invest at this mo-

ment, I would invest them all in various phases of the Gospel ministry. In fact, it is a 'magnificent obsession.'"

Many of us who watched Alton's deteriorating health in these final years prayed for him, even though he himself felt it might be selfish to ask for himself. No doubt he wanted to be free of the pain which troubled him so, but his first priority remained always a complete submission to the Lord's will. The faith that carried him all his life was tried in the fires of physical suffering. He wanted to be a whole person again, he said, but it seemed that the Lord was calling him on to another mission.

What a testimony. What a life. What a man. But Alton would say, "What a Lord!"

So much more could be said, but he would say, "Tempest fugit. Gotta dash."

The other day, after Ethel had called to say that Alton had left us, I went out on our back deck there in Ohio and looked up into the night sky, where the stars were shining as they have for all the millennia, in their eternal brightness. After the tears, I found the Wheeler "W" shining in brilliance there within the Milky Way. I had read that the brightest super nova ever recorded was in the 16th century. That was an explosion of energy with the luminescence of several billion times that of our sun. It had come from the Wheeler "W."

Likewise, a man named Alton reflected the light of the world brighter than anyone else I ever knew or hope to know. That mighty "W" in the sky stands for Wheeler, all right; it also stands for wise, winning, and most of all, for the way. The wonder of creation draws us to our God who created those stars. And as I think of how He makes it run with such incredible precision, I know He is well able to care for this one we loved, even in what we call death.

We thank God for this life that

started when horses pulled plows and left us when shuttles fly into space. We thank God for this Spirit-endowed life;

*"Lone
Like the Tishbite,
Like the Baptist
Bold,
Cast in the rare and apostolic
mold"*

(Richard Foster)

I would like our last thoughts to be from the lips and heart of this mature man in Christ...

"Can you at this time, no matter what our age is, say with Paul in 2 Timothy 4, 'I am ready to be offered. I am ready to be offered'? I was amazed that when I went to Africa and had a series of Bible studies there with the pastors, studying eight hours a day, that the pastors in Malawi interpreted this passage as, 'I am ready to be set free.' The reason was they were suffering so much in their country; they had so little, and the death rate was so high, that death was to them not merely a sleep. It was a release, it was being set free, it was at least realizing the fact that they were going, in God's time, to be with Him in heavenly glory. No more would they know poverty and suffering and agony, as they had known it in their country land. Paul goes on, 'I am ready, for I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, and not just for me, but for everybody else who looks forward to His appearing.'

"Do you have that confidence?"

"Do you have that joy?"

"Do you radiate that kind of a happiness in your life?"

"Are you out sharing with others?"

"If you are, you can say with Charles Fuller, 'You, too, have a parcel of land up there. It's waiting for you. It's all ready, and it will be there when you Go.'"

December	MONTHLY GOAL	\$785,904
November	Investment Income (est)	\$720,412
October	Investment Income (est)	\$654,920
September	Investment Income (est)	\$589,428
August	Investment Income (est)	\$523,936
July	Investment Income (est)	\$458,444
June	Investment Income (est)	\$392,952
May	Investment Income (est)	\$327,460
April	Investment Income (est)	\$261,968
March	Investment Income (est)	\$196,476
February	Investment Income (est)	\$130,984
January	Investment Income (est)	\$65,492

1994 income needed—\$785,904.
Per month gift income needed—\$28,372.
Total needed each month—\$65,492

The spirit of money

by Gary Moore

The U.S. economy continues to shine. In September the World Economic Forum released its closely watched annual survey called "The World Competitiveness Report." *The Wall Street Journal* summarized America's competitiveness this way:

"The U.S. has replaced Japan as the world's most competitive economy for the first time since 1985. The strength of the U.S. economic recovery, entrepreneurship, and nearly a decade of economic restructuring helped boost the U.S. to its top ranking.

"The U.S. has created 30 million new jobs in 20 years.... By contrast, Europe's employment levels have stagnated for 25 years, and prospects for European job markets remain clouded as high labor and production costs lure industry investment to more competitive sites in the U.S., Asia, or Eastern Europe.

"Robert Hormats, vice chairman of the international arm of Goldman, Sachs & Co., said the study's numbers are consistent with other benchmarks of U.S. competitive strength, such as productivity and unit labor costs,

where there have been recent improvements."

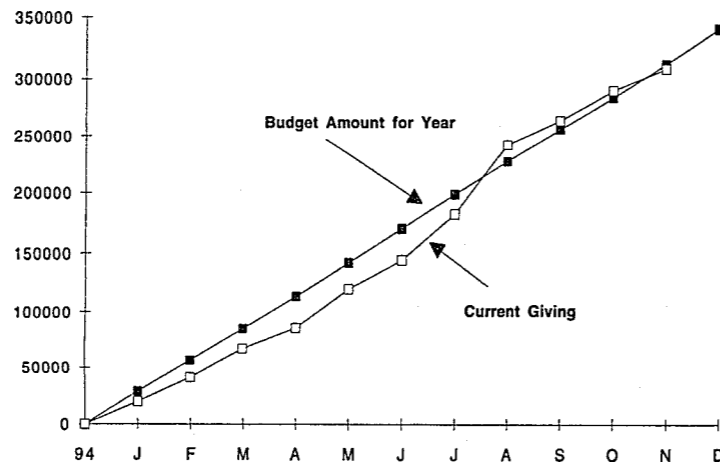
But, of course, that doesn't mean most Americans are happy about the economy. Beneath the headline "They Stubbornly Feel Miserable," the *Economist* magazine recently confirmed that the recession ended in every area of the country almost two years ago. But it went on to say:

"A recent *TIME* magazine poll showed (in a finding repeated in a variety of local surveys) that fully 65% do not think the recession has ended in the area where they live. This is, to put it mildly, astonishing... the numbers fly squarely in the face of this."

I'm reminded that wise old Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 5:10, "Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income" (NIV). **SR**

Gary Moore is the author of "The Christian's Guide to Wise Investing" (Zondervan, 1994). He counsels investors, does commentary on the UPI Radio Network, and lives in Sarasota, Fla.

Current Giving 1994



SR Reaction

Opinions do not necessarily reflect the views of the SR or all SDBs. Letters may be edited according to space and editorial style.

Dear SR:

An article last year by Pastor Bernie Wethington, "We Have Something to Say," made me think of a different title from my own life: "You Never Know Who You Invite to Attend Your Church."

I have tried to encourage friends to attend through the years, with the possibility of losing them after they came. So, one day when I ran into a friend who had worked with me, I wasn't prepared for his enthusiasm when he asked where I went to church. He asked me many questions, always smiling. I encouraged him by saying that he knew someone else—a very good friend—who also worked with him, so he had two friends to sit with when he came.

He came and did not leave. However, I never knew where he formerly went to church, except he said he was a Baptist.

One day, he spoke of his faith at the front of the church, from the pulpit. He had been raised as an SDB in a church out West!!

When he died, he left a large sum of money to our church.

E. Helen VanValkenburg
Battle Creek, MI

Dear SR:

I would like to respond to the article, "Good News, Bad News," by Pastor Harold King in the November issue.

I like the tone and the emphasis made on focusing first and foremost on Christ. That is vital—that is crucial. But I must take issue with one statement:

"I don't know if He [God] wants everybody to be a Sabbathkeeper."

As a matter of fact, God does want everybody to be a Sabbathkeeper. It is part of His expressed will for all people. Do we not understand the Ten Commandments to be the defining statement of God's will and purpose for His people? In giving the Decalogue, He is telling us, "This is how I want you to live." (And not just the Jews; these laws are intended for all believers. Not for salvation, but for holy living.)

So we cannot agree with the notion that God may not want everyone to be Sabbathkeepers. By the same thinking, we might posit, "I'm not sure God wants everybody to 'have no other gods before me,'" or "I don't know if God wants everybody to 'make no graven images.'"

Indeed, as Pastor King affirms, God wants all not to perish. But let us also certainly affirm that He wants all who are saved to come to obey Him. That includes obedience to the Sabbath command.

Larry Graffius
Lost Creek, WV

Dear SR:

Recollections of the Andover, N.Y., SDB Church were good to recall in the November Recorder article by Carrol Burdick.

When Camp Harley Sutton at Alfred Station, N.Y., was being developed, there was work to be done on the camp grounds as well as adapting the old building

they moved from the Alfred University campus.

Edson Langworthy, a former member at Andover, ran a garage in the village there until his retirement. He gave hours and hours of his time and experience to the project. Not having children of his own, he delighted in helping develop a place where the younger generation could play and learn the Christian way while making new friends.

A woman from the Andover church, Mrs. Lelia Livermore, gave her experience and efforts for two seasons cooking for the campers. Elderly persons usually prefer a bit of quiet so they can relax after their busy years, but Lelia loved to be with her young fellow campers and gave them each a hug now and then. Dishes from the Andover church kitchen were brought to the camp.

Several hundred dollars from the Andover church treasury was used to purchase roofing and plumbing materials for the new camp site. Edson's brother, Lynn Langworthy, who had transferred his membership from Andover to the Alfred church, was as interested as Edson and contributed time and experience to the plumbing of the new camp buildings.

The steeple of the old Andover church building has been removed, but it still looks like a church. It speaks to those who would care to know of dedication and willingness to serve.

Albert N. Rogers
Alfred Station, NY

Accessions

Elston, MO
Jon Warren, pastor
Joined after testimony
Henry Thomas
Fern Thomas

Lake Elsinore, CA
Leland Davis, pastor
Joined after baptism
Robin Ezra
Brian Noss
Joined after testimony
Lee Goode
Sue Goode
Kim Goode
Barbara Williams

New Auburn, WI
Dale Smalley, pastor
Joined after testimony
Chuck Martineau
Amy Martineau

Nortonville, KS
Robert Harris, pastor
Joined after testimony
George Graves
Marcene Combs
Joined by letter
Stephen Saunders
Irene Saunders

Plainfield, NJ
Joe Samuels, pastor
Joined after baptism
Melvin Hargrove

Obituaries

Davis.—George Talbott Davis, 81, died on November 16, 1994, in Columbia, S.C. He was born in Boulder, Colo., the son of the Rev. Alva and Flora (Talbot) Davis. He was a Navy veteran of World War II, a salesman, and author of "The Devil in the Second Pew." He was formerly head chef at the Lexington County Hospital, and was a regular guest on the "Today in Carolina" television show.

George was a charter member of the Kathwood, S.C., Baptist Church and its Benevolent Committee.

Survivors include his wife, Ann (Smith) Davis; three daughters, Carolyn Owens, Joan Mills, and Connie Alley; one brother, Alfred; one sister, Margaret Burdick, and four grandchildren.

Services were held on November 19, 1994, at the Kathwood Baptist Church. Burial was in Greenlawn Memorial Park.

Peat.—The Rev. Albourne Leslie Peat, 88, died on November 22, 1994, in London, England. Born in Jamaica on April 2, 1906, Pastor Peat came to the Lord under the preaching of Pastor N.A. Edwards in Jamaica. Albourne was eventually called to pastor the same church following Edwards' death. Albourne was called to pastor the Mill Yard SDB Church in London after the retirement of the Rev. James McGeachy (who had served this, our oldest, SDB church for over 40 years). Pastor Peat was installed on March 7, 1970, and had served as pastor since.

Survivors include his children Carol, Leslene, Albourne Jr., Aldean, Calvert, and Halsey; several brothers and sisters in Cuba and Jamaica; many grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Memorial services were held on November 30, at the Brixton Seventh-day Adventist Church, London. Interment was in Wandsworth Cemetery, Earlsfield, England.

Births

McNeme.—A daughter, Leana Rose McNeme, was born to Steve and Vivian (Bass) McNeme of Somers, MT, on October 16, 1994.

The Nortonville, Kan., SDB Church felt highly honored to have five of its active members celebrate their 80th birthdays in 1994. They were Zella Babcock, Bill Prentice, Norris Wheeler, Ruth Harris, and Ed Johnson.

Marriages

Barrett - Samuels.—Edson Barrett and Seanette Samuels were united in marriage on October 8, 1994, at the Reformed Episcopal Church of the Atonement in Philadelphia, PA. The bride's brother, Pastor Andrew Samuels, officiated, assisted by Pastors Joe Samuels (the bride's uncle), Kenroy Cruickshank, and Willie Hill.

Prentice - Combs.—Carl Prentice and Marcene Combs were united in marriage on October 15, 1994, at the Nortonville, KS, Seventh Day Baptist Church. The Rev. Robert Harris officiated.

Gosling - Pottinger.—Myron Gosling and Helen Pottinger were united in marriage on October 23, 1994, at Crossroads Baptist Church, West Palm Beach, FL. Pastor Andrew Samuels officiated, assisted by Pastors Errol Bolt and William Vis.

KEVIN'S

CORNER

This time around, I didn't wait until the new year to try to lose some weight. My extra poundage had really been on my mind (and mid-section) so I renewed my determination to shed the excess baggage.

I've kept careful record of my food intake, made more nutritious choices, started exercising regularly, and the pounds and inches are coming off! Now, to maintain.

As I approached this SR, I wondered how I could relate this personal project to missions. Well, this weight loss has been my "mission" for the last couple of months. Like missions, it takes discipline, determination, training, and a heavy (sorry) dependence on the Lord.

I had a certain goal to reach, used proven methods developed by earlier "pioneers," had to learn a new language (reading nutrition labels on foods)...

This is kind of stretching it, huh?

Maybe I could share about a missionary who visited our church in November. We held the usual fat-laden donut and coffee hour afterwards, where he declared that he would not be eating. (I didn't eat a donut either, but for purely personal gain—or, loss.)

"I eat only one meal a day," the missionary declared, "so I may identify with the starving people in Haiti!"

This gets closer to the missions theme, doesn't it?

"All right," I figured, "I'll check a book of illustrations." My lighter frame was tempted to jump up and down as the very first item I found on missions was this from Philip Yancey in *World Concern Update*:

I don't know what comes to your mind when you hear the word *fat*, but I have a good idea. In America, fat is nearly always a dirty word. We spend billions of dollars on pills, diet books, and exercise machines to help us lose excess fat. I hadn't heard a good word about fat in years—that is, until I met Dr. Paul Brand.

"Fat is absolutely gorgeous," says Brand, a medical doctor who has worked with lepers in India. "When I perform surgery, I marvel at the shimmering, lush lay-

ers of fat that spread apart as I open up the body. Those cells insulate against cold, provide protection for the valuable organs underneath, and give a firm, healthy appearance to the whole body."

I had never thought of fat quite like that.

"But those are just side benefits," he continues. "The real value of fat is as a storehouse. Locked in those fat cells are the treasures of the human body. When I run or work or expend any energy, fat cells make that possible. They act as banker cells. It's absolutely beautiful to observe the cooperation among those cells!"

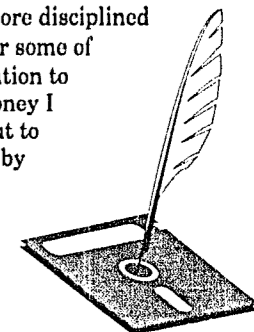
Dr. Brand then applies the analogy of fat to the body of Christ. Each individual Christian in a relatively wealthy country like America is called to be a "fat cell." America has a treasure house of wealth and spiritual resources. The challenge to us, as Christians, is to wisely use those resources for the rest of the body.

Ever since talking to Dr. Brand, I have taken sort of a whimsical pleasure once each month in thinking of myself as a fat cell—on the day I write out checks for Christian organizations. It has helped my attitude. No longer do I concentrate on how I could have used that money I am giving away; rather, I contemplate my privilege to funnel those resources back into Christ's body to help accomplish his work all around the world.

This story almost makes me sorry for losing so much of my "absolutely gorgeous" surplus. But for too long I had seen myself as a "fat cell"—only in the physical sense. I am quite willing, yet unable, to send some extra "lush layer" of fat to those less-endowed. But I am often able, yet unwilling, to share when it comes to financial fat.

Maybe this year will be different. As I trim the physical fat and become more disciplined in that area, couldn't I transfer some of that will power and determination to my finances and time? The money I save on junk food and going out to eat would surely be welcomed by many in need.

Could more of us relatively wealthy Americans do the same?

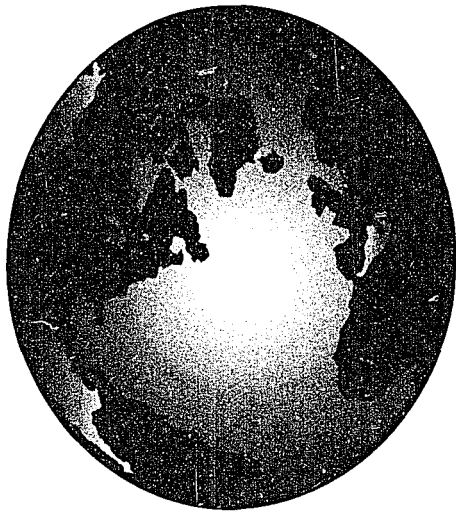


The Sabbath Recorder (ISSN 0036-214X) (USPS 474460)
3120 Kennedy Road
P.O. Box 1678
Janesville, WI 53547-1678

Second Class postage paid at
Sun Prairie, WI 53590

EVERY BAPTIST CHURCH IN THE WORLD

ONCE EVERY 5 YEARS AN OFFERING FOR THE BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE



BAPTIST WORLD OFFERING

You can touch the world! Here is a special opportunity to help Baptists around the world through the Baptist World Alliance.

You are a part of 38 million Baptist believers representing a community of 100 million in more than 200 countries.

Your support will help the BWA to: Unite Baptists worldwide, lead in world evangelism, respond to people in need and defend human rights.

BWA DAY
FEBRUARY 4, 1995

Send your Baptist World Offering to:
Baptist World Alliance
6733 Curran Street
McLean, VA 22101-6005 USA

