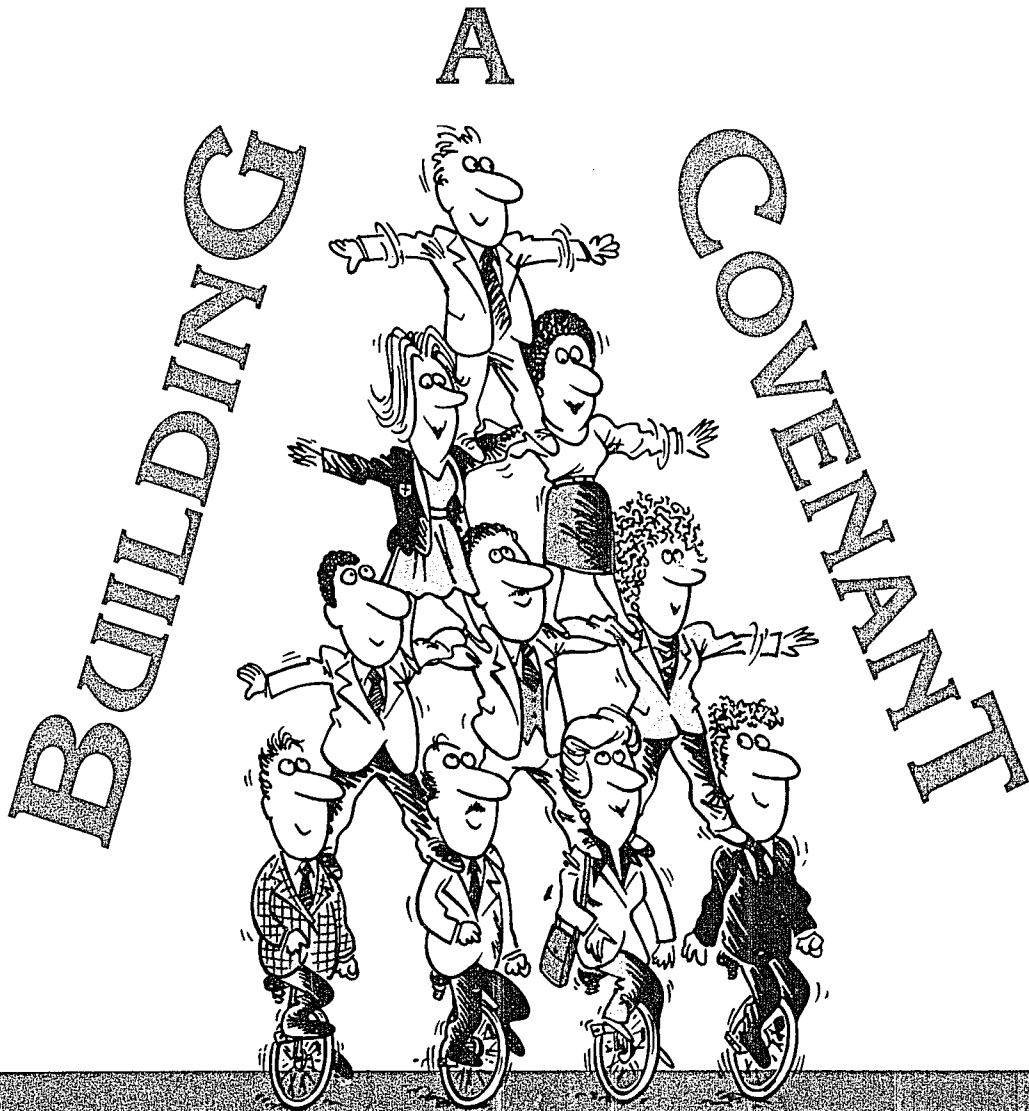


The **S**abbath
Recorder
News for and about
Seventh Day Baptists
March 1997



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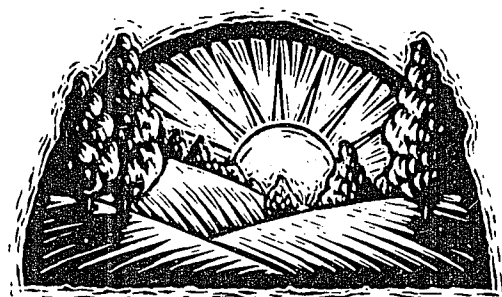
from
NABWU PO Box 6630 McLean, VA 22106-6630 USA
Telephone/Fax (703)893-2710

Historical Society
Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Seventh Day Baptist Historical Society will be held at the SDB Center in Janesville, Wis., on Sunday, May 4, 1997, at 2:00 p.m. in connection with the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors.

The Society serves the denomination in the collection, preservation, and communication of SDB history. As a membership corporation, its work is financed by membership dues, endowments, contributions, and the sale of its books.

Any member of a Seventh Day Baptist church may become a Contributing Member for a \$10 annual fee, or a Life Member for \$100, payable to the Historical Society at the SDB Center, PO Box 1678, Janesville, WI 53547.



The Cleansing

What broke the gloom of fog filled night
God's washed clean earth, the Sun's pure light
One God blessed man, just a grain of sand
Found present there
deeply inhales the springish air
uplifted soul prompts lips to sing
As Christ previews His coming spring

Chauncey H. Wealand
Member of the Faith SDB Church
Doniphan, MO

Upcoming Events

March 16 Missionary Society Annual meeting	June 2-19 Summer Institute: History and Polity, Janesville
March 16 Council on Ministry Annual meeting	July 14-20 SDB World Federation meetings, Jamaica
May 17 Sabbath Emphasis Day	August 3-9 General Conference Lindsborg, Kansas

The Sabbath
Recorder



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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 SDBs 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; E-mail: sdbgen@inwave.com

Biblical covenant and kinship

by Rodney Henry

One important measure of character can be observed by the promises and commitments a person makes and keeps. Those who are strong in character are able to keep their commitments.

Our God is a God of promises and commitments. In fact, throughout human history, God has related to His people through a system of promises and commitments called covenants. A covenant is a solemn promise, commitment, or agreement.

The first mention of the word "covenant" is with Noah. God promised that He would spare Noah and his family and that He would never again destroy the earth with water.

The next mention of covenant in the Bible is with Abraham. God promised that He would make Abraham the father of a great nation, give him a land for these people, and through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Abram responded by putting his faith in God.

When God called Moses to redeem Israel from the slavery and bondage of Egypt, it was based on the covenant or promise that God had made to Abraham. "Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant" (Exodus 6:5). In this

burning bush encounter with Moses, God identifies Himself as "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." God identifies Himself with the promises made to Moses' ancestors, and with the kinsmen of Moses.

The old covenant

At the foot of Mount Sinai, God entered into a covenant relationship with the Children of Israel (Exodus 19:1-9). In this covenant, God agreed to be their God, and they agreed to be His obedient people. After both parties made promises to each other, God gave them the responsibilities of the covenant in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20).

The covenant relationship was not based on the law; it was based on God's merciful redemption which they had already experienced. The covenant preceded the law. We see the close relationship of the law to the covenant when God directed the Ten Commandment law to be put inside the Ark of the Covenant (Deuteronomy 10:2).

The Children of Israel were a kinship system. The very name "Children of Israel" means that they were descendants of the man,

Israel (formerly Jacob). However, there were those who left Egypt with them who were not biologically related to Israel but became part of the people of God by entering into the covenant by faith. Later, many would become part of the Children of Israel by marriage or conversion. Relationship with God was a community experience, not always based on genealogy, but covenant.

Early Israel was neither a racial nor a national unit, but a confederation of clans united in covenant with Yahweh. This covenant both created her society and held it together. (*A History of Israel*, John Bright, page 158.)

Israel was a kinship system based on covenant. They were related on a physical level biologically and on a spiritual level in covenant with God and each other.

Enter the new covenant

With the coming of Jesus Christ, the most world shattering event occurred: God came to earth as a

man. He ushered in a new, spiritual Kingdom of God based on a New Covenant, in His blood (Luke 22:20). The people of God would continue to relate to Him based on covenant.

As the early church grew, it became apparent that the majority of the church would no longer be racially similar. Non-Jews (gentiles) far outnumbered the Jews, and the church spread throughout the known world.

What did this rapid inclusion of non-Jews do to the kinship system that was part of the Children of Israel? The church, unlike the Children of Israel, no longer had a relationship on a biological level. But this did not destroy the kinship relationship of the church.

It is my understanding of the New Testament that the kinship system continued with the new people of God, the church. The kinship system was no longer biological but spiritual, yet this did not make it less of a kinship system.

All those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their savior have become part of the new people of God. The new people of God, the church, is in continuity with the old people of God, the Children of Israel. The Apostle Paul says, "If

When a new person joins the local church, every covenant member agrees to be responsible for the new covenant member in addition to being responsible to each other.



you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29).

The wild olive branch (gentile church) was grafted into the natural olive tree (Israel) and shares the same roots. (See Romans 11:17ff.) As believers, God has made us a part of the kinship system of Abraham and the covenant of Abraham, "heirs according to the promise." The church is a spiritual kinship system in continuity with the kinship system of Israel.

Brothers and sisters

Over and over in the writings of the Apostle Paul, he refers to fellow believers as brothers and sisters. Paul understands that all those with a common earthly father are related as brothers and sisters. He also understands that all those who have a common heavenly Father are spiritually related as brothers and sisters. Paul perpetuates the understanding of kinship in the church by perpetuating the language of kinship, "brother and sister."

The church is a kinship system based on the new covenant which is in continuity with the covenants of old. Every believer around the world is in covenant relationship with each other, just as every believer around the world is a part of the body of Christ.

It is impossible to live out the body principles on a practical,

day-to-day level with all believers around the world. It is equally difficult to live out the covenant relationship with its responsibilities on a worldwide basis. That is why God established the local church as the context for covenant living and body life.

Covenant and kinship: foundations for our future

Seventh Day Baptists are a kinship system. This means that we are related to one another through biological ties or through emotional ties. We function like an extended family. One does not have to be from Seventh Day Baptist lineage to be a part of the extended family of Seventh Day Baptists.

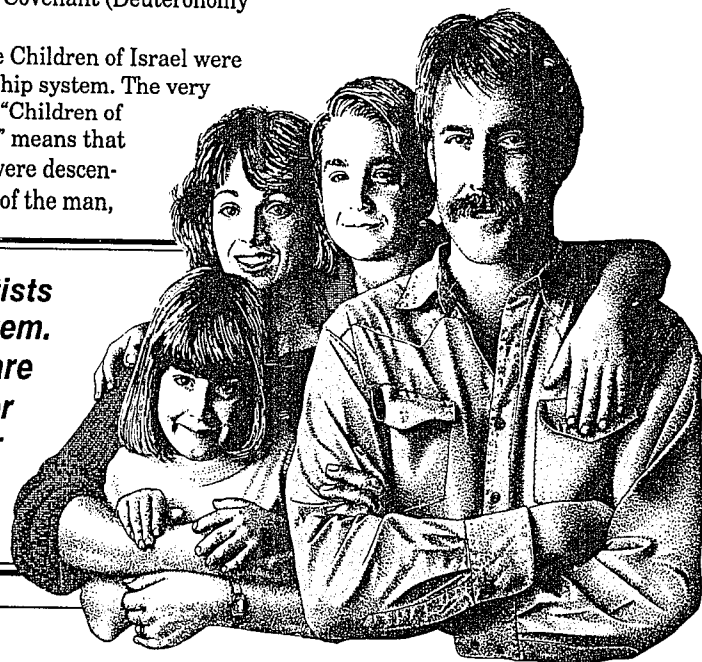
God intends for us to be a loving family of brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus gave a commandment about love. "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35).

The great commandment is Christ-like love. Though Seventh Day Baptists have much to live and learn about this love for one another, it is a command that we

Ideas for Strengthening Local Church Covenants

- Preaching and teaching on Biblical covenants.
- Review current local church covenants.
- Have covenant renewal times.
- Read the covenant at communion time.
- Read the covenant when bringing in new members.
- Hold one another responsible for covenant living.

Seventh Day Baptists are a kinship system. This means that we are related to one another through biological ties or emotional ties. We function like an extended family.



have lived out with some success. Seventh Day Baptists are, by and large, a loving people with family-oriented churches. We are a kinship system.

Seventh Day Baptists are a covenant people; a people of commitments and promises. This means that our churches are organized based on our relationship with God and each other. We commit to live out this relationship with God and each other based on a solemn agreement, the local church covenant.

What happens when you join?

When you join a Seventh Day Baptist church, you agree to the covenant and often sign a statement of the covenant. This covenant articulates the responsibilities of our relationship with God and with each other.

Joining a Seventh Day Baptist church is a solemn commitment

and promise to live by the stipulations of the local church covenant as God grants you strength.

Covenant involves relationship and responsibility. When a new person joins the local church, every covenant member agrees to be responsible for the new covenant member in addition to being responsible to each other. The new covenant member is also agreeing to be part of a covenant relationship where she/he is responsible to and for the other members.

God will use those in covenant relationship, to make us the people He wants us to be. God intends to work through those who are in covenant relationship.

As Seventh Day Baptists, our kinship comes naturally. But our covenants are based on commitments and promises which we must live out under the power of the Holy Spirit. Covenant requires exercising our responsibility to God and to the other members

of the covenant relationship.

Covenant living tests our spiritual maturity. Our spiritual character is tested by our ability to make and keep promises and commitments: our covenant.

A review, with a look ahead

The foundation upon which the Children of Israel based their tribal kinship system was the covenant, according to John Bright. For the Apostle Paul, the new church's foundation was a continuation of this kinship system; the covenant in which we are "brothers and sisters" and "Abraham's seed."

The foundation upon which Seventh Day Baptists will move into the 21st century will be a kinship system based on covenant. To do this, we must dust off the concept of covenant in our local churches. We must understand our covenant responsibilities and recommit ourselves to living out these responsibilities.

cont. next page

Biblical Covenants Compared

Covenant	Covenant Promises	Covenant Expectations	Covenant Sign
With Noah Genesis 9:1-13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never destroy creatures on earth with a flood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be fruitful and multiply • Everything is food if without its blood • Accounting for shedding man's blood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rainbow
With Abraham Genesis 17:1-13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descendants a great nation • A land for his people • All nations blessed through him 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith (Genesis 15:6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circumcision
With Moses Exodus 19:1-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A treasured possession • A kingdom of priests • A holy nation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith • Obedience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circumcision • Sabbath
The New Covenant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An abundant, eternal life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repentance • Faith • Obedience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry: Baptism • On-going: Lord's Supper

Building a covenant for our future growth

Seventh Day Baptists are a kinship system. As such, we enjoy incredible intimacy and togetherness. It is rewarding and supportive for Seventh Day Baptists to just be together. Each church is like an extended family.

However, we are going to need to make a place for new people to fit into our loving kinship system. For me, the issue of future growth does not hang on whether or not we should be a kinship system. We are and will be a kinship system. But will we be an open kinship system or a closed kinship system? Open systems will welcome and provide for new people, and closed systems will not.

I would speculate that the early church right after Pentecost was somewhat a closed kinship system. The first church controversy, recorded in Acts 6, was about non-Jewish widows being neglected in the church. Peter was reluctant to take the message to Cornelius, a gentile (Acts 10). The Jerusalem Council was called to deal with the issues brought up by many gentiles coming into the church (Acts 15).

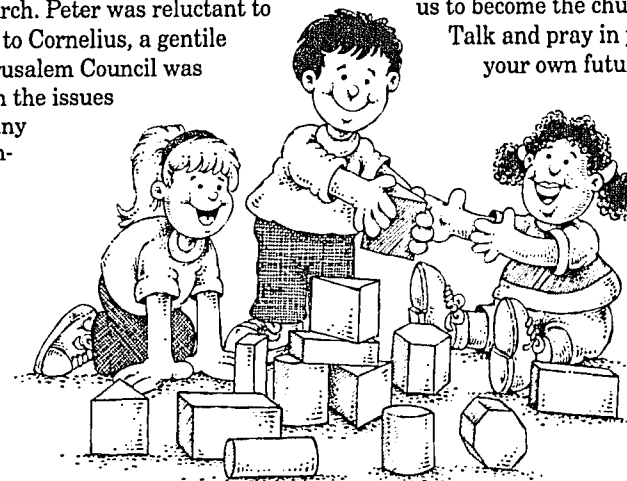
This sounds to me like a group dealing with the issues of a closed kinship system.

The way that the early church overcame this problem was to talk and talk and pray and pray and pray. In each case above, the Holy Spirit came upon the group, and they took the right action and made the right decision.

Seventh Day Baptists will become a more open kinship system through talking and prayer. As we face the future, we do so with excitement and some fear of change. The excitement can be harnessed and the fear managed within a kinship system based on covenant love and responsibility.

This year our Pastors' Conference will focus on "Pastoring in a Kinship System." We will be talking and talking and talking, and praying and praying and praying that God will lead us to become the church He wants us to be.

Talk and pray in your local church about your own future. Shoulder to shoulder, Seventh Day Baptists will face the future together. That's just our way.



—by Rodney Henry

In this kinship system, the nuclear family is responsible for education and accountability in Christian living. A kinship system based only on strong biological and emotional ties may not be able to continue, given the decline of the American family.

Who becomes responsible for education and accountability in Christian living when traditional families are falling apart? Can the church stand in and provide what some families cannot? It seems to

me that we are faced with the double challenge of strengthening families and, at the same time, dealing with churches whose families are falling apart.

A kinship system based on covenant will accept the responsibility to strengthen families. Our relationship with each other is not just biological or emotional, it is spiritual. By way of covenant, we have promised to "watch out for each other for good."

A kinship system based on our

love for God and each other, plus our commitment to live out the responsibilities of covenant, can lay a firm foundation for the future. Our churches can provide a healthy foundation if we build our kinship system on covenant responsibilities as well as on our strong biological and emotional ties. *SR*

Rev. Rod Henry is Director of Pastoral Services, and Dean of the SDB Council on Ministry.

A covenant theology for a covenant people

by Matthew Olson

Seventh Day Baptists are a people with a shared faith in Jesus Christ. That shared faith is the basis for the organization of the local church.

Within the local church, relationships are established and maintained through the use of a covenant. The Seventh Day Baptist *Manual of Procedures* states, "Seventh Day Baptists are a covenant people. That is, a solemn agreement, entered into by a number of people before God, is the basic foundation of the local church. To be without a covenant is to be without a church."

This system for establishing and maintaining relationships has worked very well for Seventh Day Baptists. It has provided for a strong, flexible structure through which SDBs are bound together.

Since the covenant is the means by which relationships are established and maintained in the local church, it is important that we clearly understand what a covenant is. It is also important for every member to understand how the covenant functions within their local church. In that way, the covenant and the relationships for which it provides will both be strengthened.

In order for that to happen, Seventh Day Baptists need to do three things. We must carefully consider what being a "covenant people" means. We must also explore how the concept of covenant differs from other methods of establishing and maintaining relationships in a local church. Finally, we must seek to understand how our covenant theology influences the denomination in terms of its structure and interpersonal relationships.

Our covenant theology's Biblical roots

In Scripture, covenants are generally made between God and an individual, although they often include all of that person's descendants. They are unilateral in nature, established by only one member of the agreement, usually God. They are bilateral in implementation, however, and require the faithfulness of both parties.

Perhaps the first covenant is when God promised Adam the fruit of all He had created. Adam, in turn, was called upon to nurture God's creation and to serve as its steward.

Since that first covenant, God has established covenants with Noah, Moses, Aaron, Phinehas, and David. The Old Testament covenant with which we are probably most familiar is God's covenant with Abraham. In it, God promised to be Abraham's God, and that Abraham and his descendants would be God's people. The sign of that covenant was circumcision, and if God's people would obey His commandments they would dwell in the Promised Land.

What began with a covenant with Abraham and his descendants grew to include all people called by God. The Lord has extended this covenant through the sacrifice of His Son and our regeneration through the Holy Spirit. Through this covenant we have been justified, sanctified, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to keep our covenant with God.

From the Bible, then, we learn that a covenant is an agreement established by God between Himself and those chosen by Him. It

generally includes a promise on God's part, a vow by both parties to remain faithful to one another, and is sealed by a sign of some sort. Covenants may also include provisions for punishment if either party fails to uphold the agreement.

Our covenant theology's historical roots

The Bible provides the best framework for understanding the covenant, but other sources are helpful as well. The Biblical understanding of covenant was used as a pattern by those seeking to reform the Church. Many who left the Roman Catholic Church during the Reformation placed a great deal of emphasis on the covenant.

During the Reformation, men like Zwingli, Bullinger, and Calvin sought to understand the covenant from a Biblical point of view. Like Luther, they rejected the Catholic Church's doctrine regarding the "covenant of merit." Unlike Luther, however, they used the concept of covenant extensively in developing their theology.

So too did those involved in the Separatist movement, but with an entirely different result. They, like the other Reformers, adopted the covenant as a central part of their theology. But they applied it to the local body of believers in such a way that a new style of church government resulted which came to be called "congregationalism."

One of the earliest advocates of this idea was Robert Browne. Browne believed that every church should be organized around a voluntary covenant. Each member had the responsibility of contributing to the common good.

The local church was seen as an independent entity which could govern itself and appoint its own leaders. The only head of the local church was Christ.

Browne eventually set aside these beliefs and rejoined the Church of England. Others, however, adopted his ideas. These men and women were unwilling to wait for the Church of England to reform itself. They sought to separate themselves from that institution. Among them were Baptists who came to believe that the seventh day of the week was the proper day of worship.

These Biblical and historical foundations have helped form our current understanding of the covenant as Seventh Day Baptists. The importance of these foundations cannot be underestimated, for through the teachings of the Bible—and their interpretation by those who have preceded us—we have come to rightly call ourselves a covenant people.

Other covenant people: the credal system

Today we have a covenant theology similar to many other groups.

Our theology helps us govern ourselves in the local church. Our theology helps us understand how we relate to one another and to other churches. Our theology helps define what it means to be a Seventh Day Baptist.

These things are important and should be clearly understood by us as we take up our place among the people of God. Our theology greatly influences us whether we recognize it or not, leading us to certain conclusions which provide a clear separation between ourselves and many other Christian groups.

That separation can best be seen by considering the alternative. For if we had not drawn upon the Bible and the thought of Separatist pioneers, we may have come to entirely different conclusions regarding the covenant.

Seventh Day Baptists, as we have seen, greatly emphasize the importance of the covenant. Many other denominations, however, place great stress upon covenant with radically different results. Seventh Day Baptists, like most other Baptists, consider themselves to be a "covenant people." Other denominations, especially those within the Reformed tradi-

tion, consider themselves covenant people as well, but do not use a covenant to provide the means by which they hold themselves together. Instead, they use a creed.

To provide a unifying structure for a church or denomination, the credal system involves intellectual assent to an authoritative statement regarding the main points of the Christian faith. It is not unusual for these churches to require members to profess their belief in this creed before joining the church. Those who hold teaching or preaching offices in such churches may even be asked to sign a document which clearly indicates their loyalty to the creed.

In this manner, the church or denomination assures homogeneity within the group. The members of the body may or may not have similar backgrounds, educational levels, and so on, but they do share a precisely defined set of core beliefs which serve to unite the members of the church or denomination.

The members look to the creeds they have adopted to provide them with a precise explanation of the articles of faith upon which they agree. The creeds color every aspect of the denomination's theology and provide a touchstone when discussing the beliefs of those outside their church.

Advantages of the credal system

There are some considerable advantages to organizing a church or denomination in this way. We will look at four such advantages and then consider how our form of bringing ourselves together, the covenant, matches these benefits. We will also consider a way in which I believe the covenant provides even greater benefits for Seventh Day Baptists.

First of all, as was mentioned earlier, a creed can provide the church with a cohesiveness which can be difficult for non-creedal churches to attain. When I was



in seminary I was often asked what "Seventh Day Baptists" believed about a given issue. My response was always, "Which Seventh Day Baptist?"

Those who share a creed, on the other hand, have a remarkable degree of agreement amongst their members about what they do and do not believe. This is a direct re-

Finally, a creed helps a believer to define his or her faith. When asked the question, "What do you believe?," a Christian who has joined a creedal church is rarely at a loss. At the least, they can quickly provide a copy of the creed to which they have assented. At best, they have come to clearly understand the content of their confessions and can participate in a

Robert Browne. That is, we have organized our local churches around a voluntary covenant.

Each local church is also fully independent, drawing up its own constitution and appointing leaders as its members are led to do so by the Holy Spirit. The head of the church is Christ, and there is no creed to which members of the body must assent to hold membership. Each member is encouraged to develop his or her gifts for the benefit of the local body of believers.

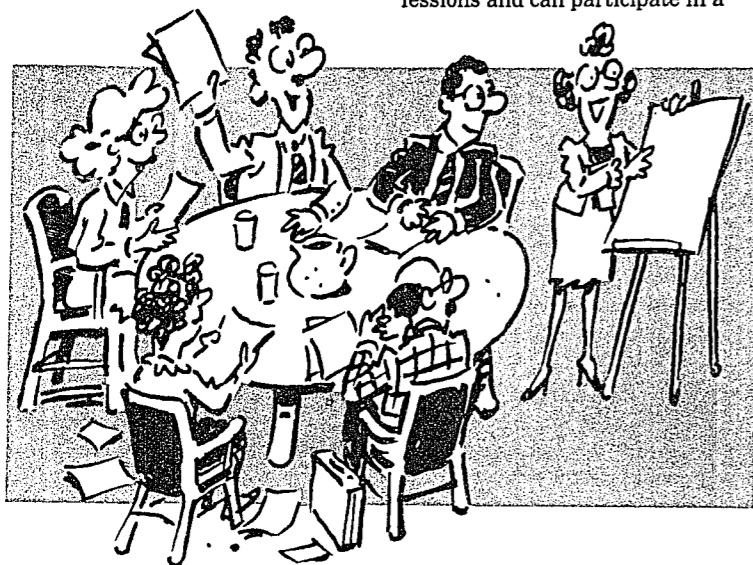
Relationally, our covenantal system has informed the way we associate with other churches and with one another. For our interchurch relationships, we have developed a system in which we are careful to respect the autonomy of the local covenant body. Through voluntary associations, churches which are geographically close to one another join together to work on mutually beneficial projects.

The same holds true on the denominational level as well. Various agencies are set up to carry on work of a national or even international interest that local churches might have trouble supporting alone; but the independence of each local church is in no way compromised by this association.

Interpersonal relationships among members of a local church are most directly affected, however, by our organization around the covenant. The covenant used by the Seventh Day Baptist Church of Berlin, N.Y., enjoins our members to remain faithful to God, to the Scriptures, and to one another. It also encourages the members to share the Gospel with those who are outside the church.

Within the local church, each member is called upon to do all he or she can to support the work of the church. The covenant also calls upon the membership to support the church both financially and through regular attendance.

cont. on page 23



sult of their reliance upon a creed to provide a framework for holding themselves together.

Another benefit of a creed is the level of security it provides to its adherents. There is something comforting about a creed. It gives those who cleave to it something to look to when their faith is being assailed. Of course, the final source of comfort for all Christians at such times is the Bible, and those who belong to creedal churches would gladly agree to this. Yet for many, the Bible is an unwieldy document which can be difficult to use. The confessions of a creedal church are neatly indexed and relatively brief.

Creeds also provide an effective gateway for the church. That is to say, it is relatively easy to define who is "in" and who is "out." If you agree with the creed or creeds, you are "in." If you do not, you are "out." It is, for the most part, as simple as that.

detailed and theologically informed discussion of the basic points of the Christian faith.

Our covenant theology's influence

As you can see, there is more than one conclusion possible when it comes to applying the covenant concept within a denomination. And the creedal model appears to have many benefits as a means of providing a church's unifying structure.

Seventh Day Baptists, however, have a much different system. Instead of looking to a creed to provide a sense of unity, we have looked to the covenant to do that. This has resulted in benefits which, I contend, equal and even exceed those provided by a creed.

Structurally, the covenantal system has led us to adopt the congregational polity first espoused by

Thorngates visit two Africa Conferences

SDB covenant is worldwide

by Janet Thorngate

Sabata La Bwino! Isabatha Elungileyo! Sabatha Elihle! (Good Sabbath!—in the African languages of Chichewa, Xhosa, and Ndebele.) Two good Sabbaths were spent in Africa—and many exciting days between.

We were impressed with the efficient, business-like way sessions were conducted and the open, frank nature of the discussion.

As it turned out, we were late in arriving at the Africa General Conference sessions in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Long, confusing lines at the border crossings, a flat tire on the rental car (we're not used to driving on the left with a "right-sided" steering wheel!), and misinformation as to the distance from Johannesburg, South Africa (850 kilometers; 580 miles) slowed the process.

We entered Bulawayo, a city of 500,000 (second largest in Zimbabwe), with some apprehension but soon found our contact person. Host Pastor, Tyson Mwalughali, led us to the Njube Lutheran Conference Center, a pleasant campus of church and school buildings among the purple-blooming jacarunda trees. How wonderful it was to be welcomed warmly by fellow Seventh Day Baptists!

Africa General Conference

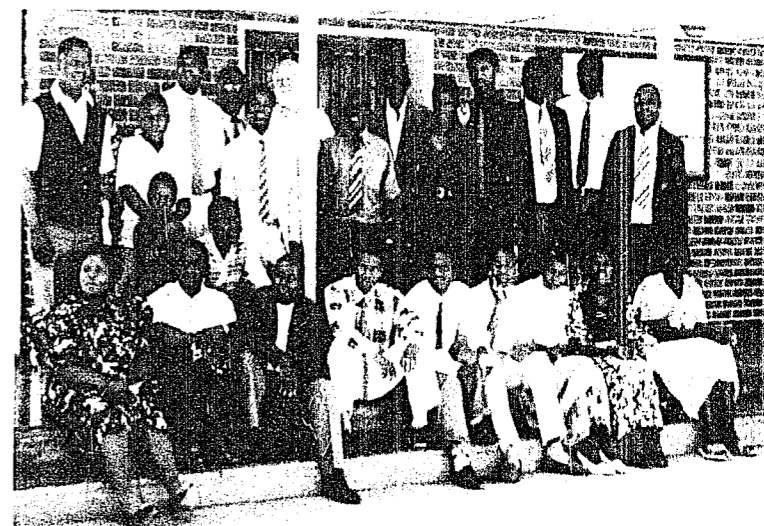
Sabbath morning worship had begun without Pastor James Siwani of South Africa, our travel partner, who is general secretary of this new Conference. Pastor Royal Mkandawire of Malawi, Conference coordinator, had preached in place of Pastor Dale Thorngate, who had come to represent the SDB World Federation. Lunch had been delayed for us late arrivals, however, and the next three days of the Conference went smoothly—a thrilling experience for all.

The 18 people from Malawi had arrived late Friday night after a long, two-day bus trip across Mozambique. Most of them were pastors, ministerial students, or Conference lay leaders, both men and women. About the same number of people attended from Zimbabwe, mostly lay members of the local church, including several women and children.

Each session opened with worship: lively choruses led by young men from Malawi, Scripture readings, prayer (usually in the native language of the person praying), hymns (usually sung from the Malawi hymnbook in Chechewa), and a sermon or meditation on the Scripture. All sessions were conducted in English with many portions translated into Ndebele, the native language of most of the Zimbabwe members present. We Americans were impressed with the language facility of the delegates—but that's not all that impressed us.

On Sabbath afternoon, Pastor Thorngate and I each had the privilege of making a presentation. Mine was on the history of the Sabbath and of Seventh Day Baptists. It stimulated a lively discussion of the ancient heritage that we all share, whatever our cultural contexts or the language of our Bibles.

Pastor Thorngate brought offi-



Delegates at the SDB General Conference of Africa held in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. (Back left) Rev. James Siwani, General Secretary, South Africa; (back right) Rev. Royal Mkandawire, Coordinator, Malawi; (third from right) Rev. Tyson Mwalughali, host pastor.

cial greetings from Seventh Day Baptists in the 17 Conferences of the World Federation and talked, as requested, about Seventh Day Baptist polity and evangelism. Discussion of those topics continued frequently in the next two days as the delegates dealt with many questions of how best to achieve the goals of this new Conference—a combined effort of the established African Conferences to encourage and develop Seventh Day Baptist work in other African countries, particularly Zambia, Mozambique, Zaire, Rwanda, and Ghana. They also have contacts in Kenya, Cameroon, and Tanzania.

Pastors Siwani and Mkandawire alternated leadership of the business sessions, with Canaan Phiri of Malawi as recording secretary. We were impressed with the efficient, business-like way sessions were conducted and the open, frank nature of the discussion. A frequent

are potential sites of the next bi-annual sessions in 1998. (The first was in Malawi in 1992; the second in South Africa in 1994).

This third Africa General Conference session closed with a large fellowship circle of prayer and song. All enjoyed an attempt to sing the South African "hand shaking song" they had tried to learn at the sessions there two years ago. Most laughingly confused at the spontaneous choreography of this effort were the Ameri-



Highlights of the South Africa Conference included celebrating 90 years of SDBs in South Africa, along with publication of their history book written by Rev. James Siwani and edited by Janet Thorngate.

Siwani attended the SDBWF sessions in Rhode Island in 1986. What a thrill it was for us to finally meet their families and to share wonderful meals in their homes!

We received a delightful musical welcome to South Africa when, upon coming into Pastor Siwani's yard, the door opened and out filed at least a dozen people singing a traditional welcoming song in their native Xhosa language. This group included guests from Transkei who had arrived early by bus for the Conference. Here, as elsewhere, the pastor's open home nurtures much church fellowship.

The three-day South Africa Conference, Friday through Sunday, was held nearby at Enkuthazweni, Urban Foundation Community Center in Kwazakhele Township where many of the Port Elizabeth members live. Not far away is the site they have recently purchased for a new church building. Previously, they have met in schools, but currently must meet in the Siwani home.

In the nearby city of Uitenhage, the church also has a site waiting for a church building. A major goal of their Conference is to raise the money for these two much-needed

church buildings for the two largest of their seven churches.

Once again, the experience of worship was the high-point for us during this joyous time together. Quite formal and liturgical, their service is full of meaningful ritual led by a choir whose intonations and responses weave rhythmically between Scriptures, prayers, and messages. All singing is done a capella, directly from the Bible, in Xhosa. The pastor announces the passages, then the choir sings interludes as people find their places.

We were blessed with special musical selections prepared especially for us on Sabbath: duets, trios, choir numbers from the different churches—a glorious concert of praise! We were also honored to share in a service of ordination of

two new deacons, Mr. Tokota of Port Elizabeth and Mr. Dywele of Transkei, and in the special choir-induction ceremonies for five young women.

Highlights of this Conference, which led to our invitation to attend, were two special celebrations: the 90th anniversary of SDBs in South Africa, and publication of James Siwani's book, which traces that history along with the parallel stories of other Sabbathkeepers in South Africa.

These sessions were conducted in English with translation into Xhosa. They, along with Dale's Sabbath sermon and our repeat history and polity sessions, were videotaped for later reference. Worship and business sessions were conducted in Xhosa with Pastor Siwani, Mrs. Mazomba, or Boyce Tokota (a member of the church recently elected to the Port Elizabeth city council) translating into English.

About 75 people attended this Conference, but all were saddened that few from Uitenhage and none from Peddie churches could come because of the taxi wars. (Taxis are their main means of transportation, and the drivers for these



En route to Africa, Rev. Dale Thorngate (left) visits with Pastor Douglas Chapman of the Mill Yard Church in London, England.

competing private companies were shooting each other!)

We left Africa encouraged

We left South Africa feeling great love and admiration for these brothers and sisters in Christ who have such great hope for the future. They have survived a difficult past. They value both the Christian faith and new educational opportunities which prepare them to make significant contributions to the building of the new South Africa and the growth of their churches.

We left Africa proud of the Seventh Day Baptist presence and witness there, and greatly encouraged by the competence and commitment of those we met and shared so openly with. Seventh Day Baptists around the world can rejoice in the significant contributions Africans are making to their individual countries, and the growth they are nurturing in churches across national borders. *SR*

Note: The book, *The Unknown Made Known: A History of Sabbathkeepers in South Africa*, was published jointly by the South Africa Conference and the SDB Historical Society. It is available for \$5.00 plus shipping. Contact the SDB Center, P.O. Box 1678, Janesville WI 53547 USA.

Port Elizabeth, on the Indian Ocean, is a city of 500,000 people. Its climate reminded us of Daytona Beach, Fla. October was spring time in bloom!

topic throughout the sessions was financial support of the Conference and potential funding sources. They discussed financial resources and problems within their country Conferences, support of pastors, support of education for pastors and future pastors, and stewardship education for leaders and local churches.

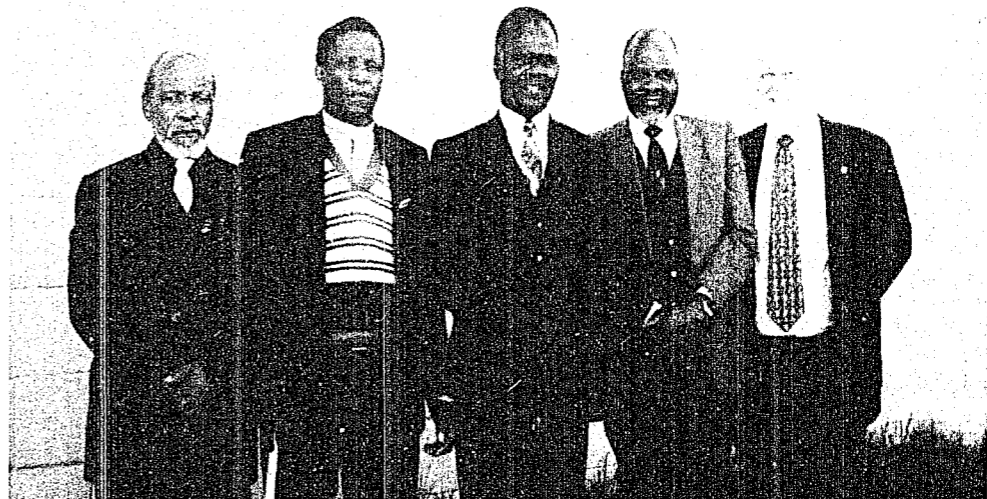
One goal of the Conference is to stimulate interest in and support of the work in other countries by holding Conference sessions in those countries. Reports since this Conference indicate that interest and attendance in the Zimbabwe church has greatly increased since the Conference sessions there. Zambia or a West Africa country

can visitors, now looking forward to experiencing the real thing on their next adventure—the Seventh Day Baptist Conference of South Africa.

South Africa Conference

Two days and 1,400 kilometers (over 900 miles) later, we arrived with Pastor Siwani at his home in Port Elizabeth on the Indian Ocean at the southern tip of South Africa. It, too, is a city of 500,000 people, the site of this annual session of the Seventh Day Baptist Conference of South Africa. Its climate reminded us of Daytona Beach, Fla. October was spring time in bloom!

We were met at the airport by Elspeth Mazomba, secretary of the Conference, who along with Pastor



South Africa pastors welcomed the Rev. Thorngate (right) to their Conference. (From left) Pastor M.W. Mali of Peddie Church; Pastor J.M. Mgodlwana of Mt. Frere, Transkei; Pastor N. James Siwani of Port Elizabeth; and Pastor William Siwani of Uitenhage.

Nurturing our covenant children

by Irfon Hughes

Christian parents believe that God keeps His word, and that He has deliberately placed each child in our care. As the Author of regeneration and faith, He will bring the majority of these children to Himself in due time and in a manner consistent with His glory.

Our goal is not to bring our children to "crisis" and gain a decision, but to so present to them a clear concept of the nature of God, the wonder of grace and the joy of believing, that they will come to Christ as their hope and comfort, and as the One who loves and forgives.

Commitment to pray

The adventure of faith has three main components. First of all, it demands a commitment to pray for our children.

No opportunity should be lost to bring our desires for our children before God. We know He alone can do above what we can ask or think; He alone can regenerate and give faith to our children. It is inevitable that as parents and church members, prayer should occupy us.

This is surely going to affect our faith and dependence on God and lead to real humility. We will soon discover that our children grow in the fear and nurture of the Lord in spite of us, not because of us!

As we spend time before God for them, so our piety should become more real and personal. This will deeply affect and encourage faith in our children.

John G. Paton says of his father, "If anything really serious required us to be punished, he retired first to his 'closet' for prayer, and we

boys understood that he was laying the whole matter before God; and that was the severest part of the punishment for me to bear!"

By our praying for and with our children, by the church's constant intercession for them, we increase our own sense of dependence. What is also communicated to our children is a sovereign Lord's rule over all things, and that He is a God to be revered and enjoyed.

Value of God's Word

Secondly, we must impress upon our children the wonderful value of the Word of God.

It is our duty as families and churches to spend much time in teaching and applying the Word to our children. We will do that by our devotion to the Word—not the trite "quick fix" Scripture to justify this prohibition or that punishment, but a consistent devotion to it.

When they are young they need to learn of our Lord Jesus from the Gospels. As they mature, they can relate their lives to men and women in the Old Testament and to the privilege of the grand New Testament doctrines. This again is an adventure of faith since parents learn to explain the doctrines simply, and so confirm and establish their own understanding more consistently.

Nurture by example

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we nurture our children by our example.

As parents love each other because of their common faith, so a loving Christian home becomes attractive to them. As Christian order is seen in the house—in leadership,

submission, and gentle authority—so our children will see God's profitable pattern for themselves.

It is grievous when parental bigotry and tyranny drive children to reject Christian values, but who can blame them? It doesn't mean that such children will not come to Christ, but it does mean we have hindered much of the work of God.

Similarly, the church must—by its love, concern, and godly example—help our children to see that the love of Christ and the glory of God is the goal of every home and believer.

Believing in God's covenant promises for our children enriches and challenges every area of life. It also saves us from "crisis theology," which demands a decision before we can truly impress Christian principles and Christian joy upon our children.

Many who aren't "covenantal" know from experience what covenantal Christians know in truth—that the giving of faith is a miracle which God alone can do, and our duty is by care and love to bring up our children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

The God who promised is faithful and in confidence we venture on His Word. Sometimes the promise may be long delayed, but we know our God is sovereign in all He does. We therefore bow to His wisdom, and trust in His grace for our children. **SR**

Rev. Irfon Hughes is pastor of Immanuel Chapel in Upton, Mass. Reprinted from Tabletalk magazine, (July 1992), with permission of Ligonier Ministries, Orlando, FL 32854, 1-800-435-4343.



Women's Society page by Charlotte Chroniger

Encouraging one another

"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

The Seventh Day Baptist Manual of Procedures says that a Covenant is "a carefully worded document which states the responsibilities of members and their purpose for joining together as a congregation."

The Seventh Day Baptist Women's Society (of which all of you women are members if you are a member of an SDB church, branch church, fellowship, or group) does not have a Covenant. But we do have an article in our by-laws which reminds us of our responsibilities and purpose.

Article II says:

The purpose of this society is to encourage the women of the denomination in the interests of Christian culture, to foster individual responsibility and united action in matters of Christian citizenship, to enlist and direct united efforts of the women in projects of Christian service, and to stimulate interest in the various enterprises of the denomination.

What does this all mean?

First of all, we are to encourage each other to remain faithful and interested in the things of the Lord.

We may have monthly women's meetings in our churches when we can fellowship with other Christian women and consider ways to represent the Lord through our activities. We may have weekly Bible studies where we can learn and grow by studying God's Word and sharing our personal experiences. We may have opportunities to meet with women of other churches or

You can serve by offering to baby-sit your pastor's children so his wife can attend a spiritual retreat or seminar.



denominations to rejoice in the goodness of God.

We may teach a Sabbath School class; serve on a church, Association, or denominational board; pray for another Christian woman; volunteer to baby-sit—all so that other women can be encouraged to stay excited about being a Christian and serving the Lord.

As we encourage one another, we are also reminded that each of us has been given a personal responsibility for growth and service. Whether we are a lone Sabbathkeeper or part of a group, we are to be active women involved in the Lord's work.

The Women's Society, as led by the Women's Board directors, is to provide opportunities for SDB women to serve the Lord. You can serve through giving your offerings designated for the projects of the Women's Society:

- SCSC—provides training experience for SDB young people.
- Tuition Fund—money is made available to pastors' wives for

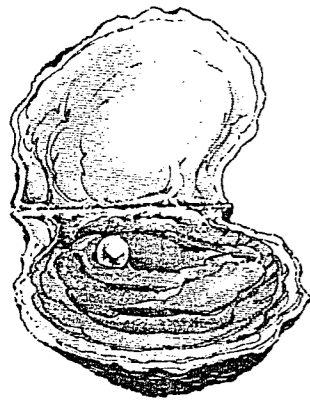
special Christian seminars, etc.

- Conference Nursery—money is given so that a nursery can be staffed at Conference for parents with young children.
- Love Gift—"over and above" financial gifts are given to churches, individuals, and mission projects to help with needs and ministries.

You can also serve by giving your time and talents for the Lord's work:

- Volunteer to be an SCSC project director or host mother.
- Offer to baby-sit your pastor's children so his wife can attend a spiritual retreat or seminar.
- Sign up to help care for children during Conference.
- Be willing to say "yes" when asked to serve on a committee or board.
- Organize a Women's Retreat or Bible Study.
- Arrange for transportation for senior citizens in your church

cont. on page 26



Pearls from the Past by Don A. Sanford, historian

Booth for the African

Mbona. Had Booth actually heard God speak? If not, how could the missionary know that God had spoken? Did he know God's message to white men? And how, and what?

Booth took out his pocket Bible and told them that it contained the words of God. Since he was more accustomed to preaching from the Gospels about faith, he was momentarily perplexed. "Where is there any passage which declares that God himself spoke to men?" he wondered. He could think of only one passage, Exodus 20: "And God spake all these words saying..." So Booth began reading the exact words.

He dwelled on the first two commandments. Since Chataika and his people had "a daughter of God" in their prophetess, Booth assumed that they did not want to hear about the Son of God.

"If the messages of the daughter of God are really inspired of God," Booth responded, "her words would agree with the words of God. Here's your chance to prove that she's a prophetess. Has she taught you the laws of God? The first and second commandments seemed to rebuke that."

Booth planned to quickly pass over the third and fourth commandments without comment. Then he was asked, "Tell us, which is that day? We are ready to give God His day. We have never heard before that God required us to give Him one day. That we did not know. Tell us which is the seventh day, and we will watch and mark, and give that day to God."

After some hesitation, Booth replied, "Today is the first day of the week. Yesterday was the last day of the week, so yesterday was the seventh day. Almost all white men worship on the first day, for that is their custom."

Booth was again surprised at Chataika's swift retort, who leaned forward and said, "Who gave you white men power more than God? Have you power to make laws, and put the laws of God under your own? What is this you tell us, that white men worship on the first day, when God has told them to give him the seventh day?"

After some discussion, Chataika supposedly said that he and his people would not keep the white man's day but would keep God's day.

A few years later, Booth reported that, in one area, church membership had declined after his departure. Some had left because they needed employment, other because they had become polygamists.

Those who had fallen away, Booth explained, had done so largely because of the "No Law" or the "Changed Law" teachings of missionary opponents. Some who had become polygamists argued that if Europeans could do away or change the law for the Sabbath, then Africans could adjust the law about adultery to suit their former customs.

The above account was taken from *Africa for the African, The Life of Joseph Booth*. The book was written by Harry Langworthy, the great-grandson of Joseph Booth, and published by the Christian Literature Association in Malawi, Blantyre, Africa.

Langworthy taught history at the University of Zambia, and later became Professor of History at Cleveland State University in Ohio. Booth joined the Plainfield, N.J., SDB Church in September 1898 after "persuasive discussion with A.H. Lewis and A.E. Main.

The Sabbath Evangelizing and

cont. on page 26



SR Almanac

A look at where we have been
from the pages of *The Sabbath Recorder*

One year ago—March 1996

Annual "Seeking Spiritual Maturity" theme focuses on Bible study. Articles come from Jonas Christner, William Craig, and Judy Waggoner.

"Pearls" column reviews history of *The Helping Hand*.

Luis Lovelace shares about his exploratory missions trip to Mexico.

February death of Rev. Charles Bond announced. Obituary to appear in April.

Ruth Hazen describes Central Maryland church's determination to meet despite post-blizzard conditions.

Five years ago—March 1992

Special issue highlights ministries of all SDB boards and agencies.

Conference President Mynor Soper asks, "Sabbath or evangelism: either/or?"

"Beacon" page reports on North Central Association's year-end youth retreat.

SDB World Federation meets in New Zealand. Federation executive Dale Thorngate provides the details.

Highlights shared from the latest Women's Fall Refresher in New England.

10 years ago—March 1987

Obituaries carried for two long-time pastors: A. Addison Appel and Marion C. Van Horn.

Tim Bond shares his perspective on the Easter season with "Good Wednesday."

Article highlights campus and activities around Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kan., site of General Conference.

First "Pearls" article appears.

Daryl and Barbara White deliver printing press to Mexican SDBs.

Jeffery Crandall begins as business manager at SDB Center.

25 years ago—March 1972

A "moon eclipse party" held at Camp Paul Hummel, Boulder, Colo. Pastor Elmo Fitz Randolph reports that

a fiberglass dome will soon be placed over the John Watts Memorial telescope.

The new Crandall Dorm dedicated in September at Camp Harley Sutton in Alfred Station, N.Y.

"Vocational Sabbath" promoted for March 18.

Another team of dedicated service workers again to serve during spring break in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Editorials speak of U.S. President Richard Nixon's bold trip to China.

New outreach group, "Light Bearers for Christ," announced by Mynor Soper.

50 years ago—March 1947

Short feature lists Theodore Roosevelt's "Nine Reasons for Going to Church."

Famous "Rogers Bible," a 1549 Cranmer translation, is transferred from the Alfred (N.Y.) University Library to the SDB Historical Society in Plainfield, N.J.

Dr. George Thorngate relates how Christian workers take advantage of the Chinese New Year by conducting special meetings at the China mission. Property undergoes extensive repairs.

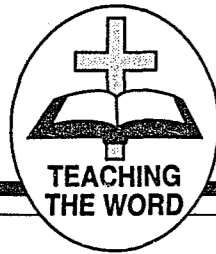
Lester Osborn disappointed at low turnout for evangelistic meetings in Indianapolis, Ind. Second week of gatherings cancelled. Those vitally interested in SDBs form a new fellowship in the area.

SR Editor K.D. Hurley announces resignation, effective May 15. Hurley feels compelled to continue his career in education, and notes that his eyes "have not held up well with continual desk work."

...where are we headed?

Pray for—

- real strength in your church's covenant
- family members of deceased pastors
- our denominational boards and agencies
- a blessed Lenten and Resurrection season
- this year's Conference meetings in Lindsborg
- preparations for summer camps
- an early spring!



Taking Teacher of the Year nominations

The Sabbath School Committee of the Board of Christian Education invites each Seventh Day Baptist Church to nominate one of their active Sabbath School teachers (pre-school through adult) for the 12th annual Crystal Apple Award.

The Board seeks nominees whose outstanding teaching skills have contributed to the Christian nurture of our people. We understand that not everyone worthy of recognition will be identified and honored. Nevertheless, we seek to honor one teacher on behalf of the many teachers who have shared Christ and His teachings.

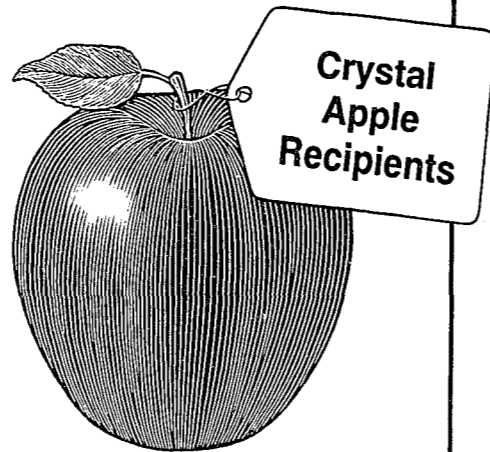
A member church (or branch church) of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA & Canada, Ltd., may nominate a teacher who:

- Is a member in good standing of the nominating church
- Exhibits the qualities of faith and teaching found in the life and teachings of Christ
- Currently serves as a Sabbath School teacher in their church

The local church pastor and Sabbath School Superintendent are asked to sign the form certifying the nominee's church membership, present Sabbath School teaching position, previous teaching experience, unique teaching skills or practices, and other Christian Education service. The postmarked deadline for nominations is June 30, 1997.

Nomination forms will be mailed this month to pastors and Sabbath School Superintendents. If you need a replacement form or further information, please con-

tact the Board of Christian Education, P.O. Box 115, Alfred Station, NY 14803-0115 or telephone (607) 587-8527. *SR*



- George E. Parrish
Battle Creek, Mich.
1986
- Shirley S. Cargill
North Loup, Neb.
1987
- Margaret B. Allen
Lost Creek, W.Va.
1988
- Helen K. Bond
Columbus, Ohio
1989
- June Johnson
Nortonville, Kan.
1990
- Ruth B. Bennett
Battle Creek, Mich.
1991
- Dan Richards
Texarkana, Ark.
1992
- Dr. Lewis H.V. May
Riverside, Calif.
1993
- Alan R. Crouch
Daytona Beach, Fla.
1994
- Madeline Fitz Randolph
Boulder, Colo.
1995
- Karen S. Payne
Dodge Center, Minn.
1996



Last August through November, the eastern coast of India was ravaged by storms which caused large-scale flooding. The Missionary Society was asked to help supply medicines, food, and shelter for many of the SDBs who were left homeless. It is difficult to imagine the needs that arise from such devastation. Let me bring you up to date:

About 150 of our members have died from the storms and flooding. At least 6,500 thatched houses have been destroyed, with another 1,900 damaged. In the Nellore District, nearly 1,800 houses were washed away and around 2,000 houses were damaged.

In all the four districts in which our churches are located, nearly 150,000 people have been affected. Most are daily wage earners and farm laborers.

Along with the loss of human life, livestock and property were destroyed, including 1,500 cattle. The flooding came so rapidly that people were unable to collect their cooking utensils, clothes, and food before fleeing to safety.

The government supplied building materials and distributed food packets for a few days, but this aid did not last long. Once again, the people were without food and clothing, and they were unable to recover their cooking utensils.

Recovery and rehabilitation take time. In the case of small farmers, it's a tedious process. The produce they expected from their standing crops was submerged and eventually spoiled. It is terrible to think of the plight of those who survived the flooding.

The Christian Social Action Committee contributed money to help offset the plight of these people, and we are grateful for the donations to the United Relief Fund that made funds available. We praise God for the ability to help our sister Conferences and churches.

Indonesia

It is exciting to hear from the leaders of the Seventh Day Baptist Conference in Indonesia. The work continues as they establish and de-

velop SDB churches on the island of Java. They tell of the work in Jakarta and the visits to the churches on Java.

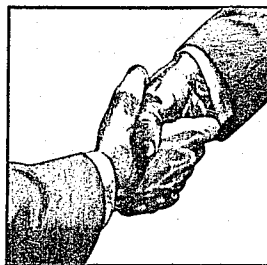
Peter Pentury is acting as the coordinator until the Conference can fill the position permanently. He has called our office several times, and has sent a few faxes. He is pleased that Dr. Ron Davis is close enough to preach at the Jakarta church almost every weekend.

The burning of Christian churches has apparently not affected the ministries of the Seventh Day Baptist church in Jakarta. Pentury reports that almost 50 churches have been burned around the island of Java. Please pray for the safety of the Christians in Indonesia.

Pentury also reports that the Conference plans to hold a seminar to teach SDB polity and doctrine to Indonesian pastors and leaders. Dr. Davis will assist with the seminar. It is hoped other Conferences and churches will send donations to help support this seminar. This will ensure the attendance of as many pastors and leaders as possible. The donations will be used to help cover travel and food expenses. *SR*



The flooding came so rapidly that people were unable to collect their cooking utensils, clothes, and food before fleeing to safety.



Seeking Spiritual Maturity: COVENANT BUILDING
An annual emphasis of the SDB General Council

...and more prefaces

Part three of Don Sanford's historical study, "Establishing a Church Covenant."

The basic contents of a church Covenant may fall into four distinct categories: 1) a preface or statement of purpose; 2) church fellowship; 3) church discipline; 4) personal responsibilities and support. The following continues the discussion on prefaces.

The Little Hoosick Church (later known by such other names as Petersburg, Stephentown, and Berlin, all in New York) prefaced their Covenant with a statement of their historic connection with the First Hopkinton Church, and their vote establishing them as a Sister Church in fellowship with them:

Whereas the Church of Christ at Hopkinton taking into Consideration the State of their Brethren at Hoosick and as they being so remote therefore they voted that the Brethren at Hoosick may covenant together and become a sister Church in fellowship with them; Therefore the Sabbatarian Brethren of the Hoosick and places adjacent do in the Presence of God and the Elect angels and Jesus Christ Who shall Judge the quick and the dead at his appearance Enter into Covenant to Walk together in all the commands and ordinances of Jesus as far as they are known unto us—Further we Ingage not to forsake our assembling ourselves together and not to leave our own meeting and Go to Other meetings on the Sabbath unless on the Case of Funerals. And we believe it duty to have Church-

meetings So we Covenant to attend our appointments unless a Reasonable Excuse—.

Similarly, in 1840, the Pawcatuck SDB Church in Westerly, R.I., included historical material in its Covenant preface:

We, the following named persons, members of the first and second Seventh Day Baptist Churches in Hopkinton, and the first Seventh Day Baptist church in Westerly, having had the previous consent and approbation of the above named churches; by the agency and assistance of Elder William B. Maxson and Elder Daniel Coon, were regularly organized into a distinct Church, in fellowship with the churches above named, at the Union Meeting House at the village of Pawcatuck in Westerly on the 16th day of April in 1840, styled the Pawcatuck Seventh day Baptist Church. And did then and there solemnly covenant to walk in, and maintain the commands of God and the faith of Jesus Christ, and all the ordinance of the house of God; taking the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament for our only rule of faith and practice and agreeable thereto to maintain a regular gospel Church discipline.

On November 17, 1809, the Verona, N.Y., SDB Church affixed their signatures to a similar statement of purpose:

Whereas in the course of Divine Providence there is a Number of Professors of Religion in their Neighborhood That have

removed at So great Distance from the Churches they first Covenanted with as to be Destitute of their meeting and Watch Care Generally and Believing in the propriety and Benefits of Religious meetings and a friendly Watch Care as also The Necessity of living the Religion We have professed, By the Recommendation of our Beloved Brethren, We Whose Names are here unto Subscribed, Do Enter Into the following Covenant or Agreement...

It is not uncommon for churches to include the specific doctrine of the Sabbath and the Bible as a part of their underlying agreement within the Covenant statement. Others, though not mentioning the Sabbath specifically, imply its observance as a part of the Commandments of God.

A more general statement of basic agreement on principles is common among many of our churches from the past and continuing in use today. It is found as a Covenant example included in the *Manual of Procedures* from both 1926 and 1972.

Art. 1. We agree to keep the commandments of God, and walk in the faith of Jesus Christ.

Art. 2. To accept the Holy Scriptures as our rule of faith and practice.

There are also many church Covenants which have no preface or introduction and simply begin with the specific items of agreement which mark the Covenant relationship. **SR**

Active and imaginative year

by Diane Cruzan

The Marlboro Seventh Day Baptist Church near Bridgeton, N.J., had a busy and productive 1996.

We kicked off the spring season with our *Interesting Party*, a gathering organized by the high school and college Sabbath School class. During the party, we all had a chance to share our most interesting possessions. Everyone brought something—from antiques to telescopes, from photographs to cookbooks, from snakes to alligators! The stories were at least as interesting as the objects they accompanied.

At the party, we also enjoyed the "W-competition." Anyone feeling hearty enough to join in was asked to bring as many different items as possible that began with the letter W. The tricky part was that all the items had to be "on your person" when the competition began. No one knew when this would be.

During the volleyball game, there was wallpaper hanging out of pockets, wigs falling off heads, and containers of water weighing us down. The winner in the children's division was Christopher Davis, with 16 items. Helene Miller and John Daniel Husted tied for second with 8 items each. The adult division was won by Jeanne Dickinson, 25 items.

Afterwards, we enjoyed pizza and games. The young people really used their imagination in planning this party, and it was a huge success.

A new Sabbath School class for young adults began in June. This class is currently being taught by Jeanne Dickinson and has from two to nine people attending—depending on who is home from college, or visiting here or away. Starting a new class is exciting and encouraging, and we are thankful to God for

the teacher and students.

Also in June, the high school and young adult Sabbath School classes met at the church to go on a mystery ride. Each was told to bring a certain amount of money and a packed lunch. Only one person knew the destination, which was the Wilmington and Western Railroad in Wilmington, Del. It was a beautiful day, and everyone enjoyed the one-hour train ride through the country, past horses,

*We thank the Lord
for giving us a place to
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believe as we do.*

streams, and old barns, back to the station, then off to another destination for a picnic lunch. The group came back with many photographs and good memories.

Several of our church members are now part of a program called "Adopt A Road." We meet several times a year to pick up trash on the road we have adopted. The road begins along the church property, and we are responsible for approximately a two-mile stretch. The county has installed signs at each end of our area that gives the church's name. We feel this is a good community service and good exercise as well.

Our annual Thanksgiving Dinner, planned and prepared by our talented Social Committee, was held on November 9. After this delicious turkey dinner (with all the trimmings), a short program

of songs and readings was led by Sharon Davis.

Last, but not least, we let our pastor, Rev. Larry Graffius, know that we appreciate him. Even though he and his family have been with us just over a year, they have become a very important part of our church. Pastor Larry received a card signed by all, and a poem written in his honor by Diane Cruzan. Pastor Larry is a good leader, and his enthusiasm is contagious!

On Christmas Eve, we came together for a candlelight service of carols, special music, and a chalk drawing by Pastor Larry. Many from the Marlboro congregation and community, as well as several from the Shiloh church, attended. We then gathered at the parsonage for a time of sharing joy and friendship—not to mention cookies!

Over the past year our church leaders, under the direction of our pastor, have been doing an in-depth study of where we are as a church now, where we would like to go, and how to get there. We are thanking the Lord for bringing us to our present strong and expectant state, and we ask His guidance and blessing as we make future plans for our church.

We have experienced much that is positive at Marlboro this past year, and like everyone, we have also experienced health and other personal troubles. We have met and are meeting these opportunities and problems together, in prayer and action. We thank the Lord for giving us a place to come to in good times and in bad, where we can be with those who believe as we do: that the Lord is in control and that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." **SR**

Riverside ready for next 100 years

by Marilyn L. Merchant

With its "Centennial Christmas" on December 21, 1996, the Riverside, Calif., Seventh Day Baptist Church brought to a close a year-long celebration of their heritage in Southern California.

Incorporating both secular and religious carols in "Caroling in the Park," the choir, in antique dress, strolled to and fro among the lighted live trees and forested backdrops. The Children's Choir, in their white robes and large red bows, led the congregation in singing the old favorites amidst the darkened, candle-lit church.

A most moving Nativity was depicted up on the bapistry level. Dr. Steven Packard read Scripture passages in his booming bass voice, the choir presented lovely anthem arrangements, and choir members sang solos. Thirty-one members and nine children filled the sanctuary with the glory of the ever new story of the first Christmas gift—a child.

The Centennial Committee had planned one celebration for each month of the year. We started out with a bang with a fantastic old-fashioned birthday party. There

gigantic opening program which has previously been reported in the *Recorder*. Our Associate Pastor's ordination was by and far one of the most poignant. Regretfully,

The Centennial Committee had planned one celebration for each month of the year. We started out with a bang with a fantastic old-fashioned birthday party.

was a concert by the children, a memorable old-fashioned Fourth of July fair to which the neighbors were invited, and an old-fashioned ice cream social—rather incongruously using mostly electric ice cream freezers. (Probably old-fashioned electric freezers!)

The Pacific Coast Association meetings were incorporated into the mix, along with a camp-out at Pacific Pines and, of course, the

some programs fell by the wayside—too little time.

We will now settle down to getting ready for the next hundred years! I wonder who will report it and where?

Thanks for all your good wishes expressed by letter and fax. We've had a wonderful time and hopefully have grown in wisdom toward our Heavenly Father's plans for us. Pray that we remain open to His leading. *SR*

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 Kevin,

I am sorry that your December SR offended some people, and I applaud their zeal in standing strong in their beliefs. I do want to say that I enjoyed the issue; I even used Victor Burdick's quote in most of the Christmas cards I mailed.

Isn't it interesting how some of us Christians are offended by "X-mas" because it leaves *Christ* out, and others are upset by *Christmas* because it puts Christ into a pagan tradition?

I'm one who likes to put Christ into everything, carrying Him wherever I go because indeed *He carries* me wherever I go. It's all a matter

of the heart, isn't it? (1 John 3:19-24).

I like what I read once about Billy Graham's visit to someone's home in a foreign country. There the host poured Billy some root beer, and himself wine, saying, "I do not serve you wine because I know you do not drink wine as unto the Lord; I pour myself wine because I drink wine unto the Lord."

My main purpose in writing is not only to tell you how much I liked the SR issue, but to also express my prayer that we all take Jesus' words in Matthew 24:10-13 to heart and continue to love.

Susan Bond
Jane Lew, WV

Dear Editor,

Re: "Come over into Macedonia..." (or Rome) in the January SR.

Rev. Russell Johnson stresses that Seventh Day Baptists have a strong love for God, and respect for each other as a family of like faith. This love has been there for a long, long time.

"Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:1-2).

Thank you. I was blessed by his article.

Barbara LaFrance
Westerly, RI

A covenant theology, cont. from page 10

Generally speaking, the covenants of other Seventh Day Baptists are similar. There are exceptions, of course, because we remain Seventh Day Baptists to the end. Some covenants are much longer than the one in Berlin, calling the members of the church to specific action in areas not addressed by Berlin's covenant. Other covenants go so far as to encourage agreement with certain beliefs (while recognizing the liberty of thought enjoyed by Baptists the world over).

Advantages of the covenantal system

While there is no central creed, a covenant manages to provide for all of the things a creed does, while avoiding to a large degree its negative aspects.

Like a creed, the covenant provides a sense of cohesiveness to those who subscribe to it. Perhaps it is true that any theological discussion among two Seventh Day Baptists results in three conclusions. There is no harm in that as long as we recognize that it is not what we believe which binds us together, but the covenant we hold in common.

Our unity is not founded upon shared beliefs, but upon a shared covenant which helps us to relate to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

And like a creed, the covenant provides a level of security to its adherents. If there is something comforting about a creed, there is something all the more comforting about a covenant. A covenant does not call our attention to a document when our faith is being assailed, but to God and those with whom we have joined together in a covenantal relationship.

The covenant, like the creed, can also provide an effective gateway for the church. This is accomplished through something we don't talk much about anymore but which

used to be very common; namely, church discipline. Those who preceded us in our faith found that the covenant provided an effective means by which a church member could be admonished by the covenant body when necessary. Through the covenant, this can be done so as to lead the errant member back into a right relationship with God and with the other members.

Like a creed, a covenant can help those who subscribe to it to define their faith. Not because we can point to documents which spell out the beliefs we hold in common. Instead, the covenant helps us to understand not just *what we believe* but *who we are* as it calls us to unite with God and our fellow believers in a local church.

Another benefit of the covenantal system

Besides providing for a sense of cohesiveness, security, an effective gateway to inclusion, and a means by which we can defend our faith, the covenant provides a benefit not found in any creed. The covenant provides what we might like to call "breathing room."

The local covenant, unlike a creed, allows the people who have subscribed to it the space they need to explore their faith and discover for themselves what it means to be a Christian. There are few, if any, prescriptive aspects in regard to belief within most of our covenants.

Generally speaking, the covenant describes our relationship to God and to one another within the context of the local church. It does not attempt to outline what we necessarily believe. It instead emphasizes our responsibilities to God and one another.

This leads to a greater degree of flexibility in regard to theology. There is no one mold all Seventh Day Baptists fit into. We can and do disagree theologically.

Some of the things I hold to be true about God might be hotly disputed by the person sitting next to me in church, and perhaps rightly so (especially if that person happens to be a practicing Arminian!). The covenantal system recognizes and allows for these differences. If I discovered tomorrow that Calvinism is not correct, it would be embarrassing, but it would not mean that I could no longer be a Seventh Day Baptist.

That is less true for those who define their faith with a creed. If there is a disagreement on a given theological idea, it can have a profoundly negative effect on the church. Arguments and divisions can arise over relatively fine points of interpretation. People can be excluded not because of sinful behavior, but simply for not believing what everyone else believes. This allows too little room for differences of opinion, and even less room for discussing those differences.

We are a covenant people

The way in which we bind ourselves together is not perfect, I'm sure. At the same time, I hold that it is superior to the other means by which churches bind themselves together in service to God.

There is a certain flexibility in our system which can be difficult at times. Yet that flexibility is not a weakness. It is a strength. It allows us to join together as a body of Christ even if we do not agree fully theologically.

It allows us to discuss our differences with a lower level of rancor and a higher level of respect. It allows us to work together for the cause of Christ in spite of our differences, and lends a unique strength to those churches called Seventh Day Baptist. *SR*

Rev. Matthew Olson is pastor of the Berlin, N.Y., SDB Church.

Obituaries

Bond.—Arthur O. Bond, 73, of Rochester, Minn., died on November 19, 1996, at his home. He was born on September 25, 1923, near Dodge Center, Minn. He

married Zona Chadwick, and they were later divorced. On July 2, 1960, he married Darlienne V. Sheldon. In 1960, he moved from Dodge Center to Rochester, where he worked as janitor at a Shopko store until retiring.

Arthur was a Marine veteran and a member of the Dodge Center Seventh Day Baptist Church.

In addition to his wife, survivors include one son, David Karsten of Stewartville, Minn.; one brother, Claston, of Dodge Center; and two grandchildren. Six brothers and sisters preceded him in death.

Funeral services were held on November 25, 1996, at the Dodge Center SDB Church, with Pastor Dale E. Rood officiating. Interment

was in Riverside Cemetery, Dodge Center.

Bird.—Derwin Edward Bird, 74, of Wabasha, Minn., died on November 27, 1996.

He was born on July 16, 1922, in North Loup, Neb., and grew up in Dodge Center, Minn. He was known for his musical ability and interest in sports. He was a radio sports broadcaster for stations in Mississippi and the Dakotas. Derwin was also a newspaper editor in Williston, N.D.

Survivors include one son, Larry, of Alexandria, Va.; one daughter, Kathy Lindemann of Greenbelt, Md.; and one sister, Ruth Bennett of Battle Creek, Mich.

Accessions

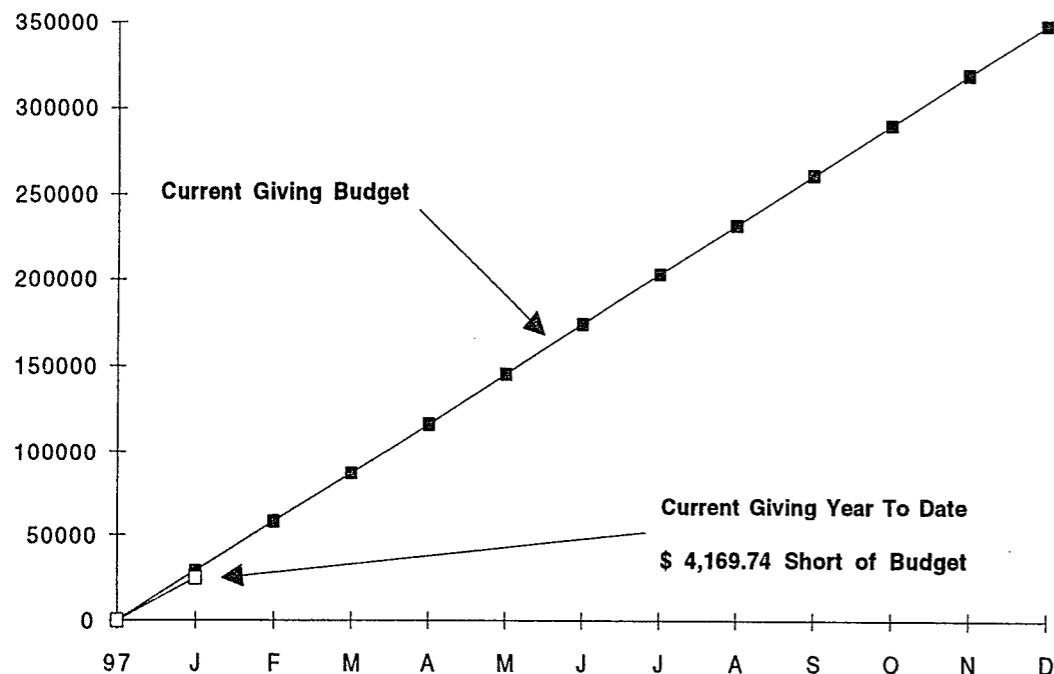
Boulder, CO

David Thorngate, pastor
Joined by letter
Mary Phillips

Westerly, RI

David Taylor, pastor
Joined by letter
David Bowyer

Current Giving 1997



Funeral services were held on November 30, 1996, at the Macken Funeral Home in Rochester, Minn. Officiating were Pastor Dale Rood of the Dodge Center SDB Church, and Pastor Casey Higgins of the Rochester Seventh-day Adventist Church. Interment was in Grandview Memorial Garden, Rochester.

Bond.

—Gertrude Anna (Bosley) Bond, 90, of Mineral Wells, W.Va., died on January 1, 1997.

She was born in Clarksburg, W.Va., the daughter of James and Susan (Smith) Bosley. On December 25, 1928, she married L. Main Bond. She was a member of the Lost Creek, W.Va., SDB Church, joining after the Roanoke, W.Va., SDB Church closed.

Gertrude suffered from crippling arthritis for many years. As her health declined, she was lovingly cared for by her daughter, Anna Margaret Spaur.

In addition to her daughter, survivors include eight grandsons, two granddaughters, and 18 great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband; three sons, Walter, Edwin, and James; four brothers, four sisters, and one great-granddaughter.

Funeral services were conducted by Pastors Edgar Wheeler and Steven Osborn on January 4, 1997, at the Floyd Funeral Home in Weston, W.Va. Burial was in Roanoke Cemetery.

Wheeler.

—Eva Mae Wheeler, 70, died on January 5, 1997, at her home in Larkinburg, Kan.

She was born on May 13, 1926, in Fort Madison, Iowa, the daughter of Homer and Josephine (Juelke) Shipman. She graduated from Atchison County Community High School, Effingham, Kan., in 1944. On June 6, 1944, Eva married Winston Wheeler.

Eva joined the Nortonville, Kan., Seventh Day Baptist Church on December 23, 1944. She was the church's statistician for many years, and also served on the Meal

of Sharing Committee. She was a 4-H leader for 10 years. In 1947, Eva and Winston founded Wheeler Hardware of Larkinburg.

Eva's pleasant smile and friendliness were assets to their thriving business. She served as bookkeeper, answered the phone, ordered and stocked inventory, and worked as a clerk. She was also a talented seamstress. Eva will be sadly missed by her family and many friends.

In addition to her husband, survivors include three sons, John of Colorado Springs, Colo., Mike of Larkinburg, and Jerry of Holton, Kan.; four granddaughters, and two grandsons.

Services were held at the United Methodist Church in Holton, with her pastor, Rev. Steve Saunders, officiating. She was laid to rest in the Larkinburg Cemetery.

Smith.

—Edith M. Smith, 87, of Pawcatuck, Conn., died on January 17, 1997, in the Westerly Nursing Home, Westerly, R.I. She was born on March 29,

1909, in Preston, Conn., the daughter of Updike C. and Ruth (Ballou) Whitford. She was the wife of the late Kenneth E. Smith.

Edith was a 75-year member of the Pawcatuck Seventh Day Baptist Church in Westerly. She served the church in many capacities, including deaconess and Sabbath School Superintendent. She was also an active member of the Women's Society. Edith was employed for 41 years as a textile worker at Charberts in Alton.

Survivors include two daughters, Shirley Cameron of Plainville, Mass.; and Barbara Ashcraft of Parkersburg, W.Va.; one son, Kenneth Smith of Lenexa, Kan.; seven grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren. In addition to her husband, she was predeceased by one son, Donald.

The funeral service was held on January 21, 1997, at the Buckler-Johnston Funeral Home in Westerly, with Rev. David Taylor officiating. Interment was in River Bend Cemetery, Westerly.

Philippine SDBs lose leader

by Rodney Henry

Rev. Eleazar Paypa, President of the Seventh Day Baptist Philippine Convention, was killed in an automobile accident on January 31, 1997. As a missionary to the Philippines, I worked closely with "Ely" for several years.

Pastor Paypa became the President of the Philippine Convention in 1983. In addition, Ely served as a pastor and was director of the T.I.M.E. program (Training in Ministry by Extension) in the Philippines.

Ely was born and raised on the Island of Mindinao, which is a bit like our old "wild West" days. There was war with the Communists, and war with the Muslims. After he became a "target" of the Communists, he decided to leave

Mindinao and take his family to Cebu City. That move, in 1984, allowed the two of us to work and train together on a regular basis.

Ely was a wonderful man, a good student, and an excellent leader. When I left in 1985, he took over the responsibilities of the SDB Philippine Convention. Under his leadership, the work of SDBs in the Philippines has grown.

Eleazar Paypa will be greatly missed by his friends all over the world. He will be especially missed by his wife, Nita, and their children; the Seventh Day Baptists of the Philippines; and the Henry family.

Please remember to pray for the Paypa family and the on-going work of the Philippine Convention.

or community so they can attend worship or run errands. The lists goes on and on.

Let us know how the Lord has been providing opportunities for your growth and service. (Send us your Women's Society/Ladies Aid program books, etc.)

Sometimes it's difficult to feel united in the Lord because of the distances between many of our churches. Make a special effort to attend your Association meetings, come to Conference and participate in all the wonderful activities for

growth and fellowship, and visit other SDB churches when traveling across the county so that we can get to know one another better. Let us truly unite in the purposes God has for us as Seventh Day Baptist women.

Prayer concerns:

1) For the SCSC teams, project directors, and host churches who will be serving the Lord in summer ministries.

2) For the women whom God is preparing to assume leadership of the Women's Board in the next

decade. (And that He may reveal who they are soon! If the Lord is speaking to your women's group about this opportunity, please let Board President Donna Bond know so she can send you information.)

3) For the Conference Planning Committee, led by Conference President Owen Probasco, as they continue preparing for our visit to Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kan.

4) For the women of our denomination as we all seek ways to grow and serve this year. *SR*

Booth for African, cont. from page 16

Industrial Association was formed independent of the Missionary Society to give financial support to the missionary effort in Africa. When various factors led to heavy losses in the coffee plantation, the Association officially disbanded after three and a half years, and Booth turned to other denominations for support.

In 1910, SDBs, through the Missionary and Tract Boards, began supporting Booth's ministry in Africa. That support was withdrawn two years later when Booth became more deeply involved in the political movement for African independence. However, he continued corresponding with some of the pastors through the decades.

Forty years later, some of the scattered groups of African Sabbathkeepers issued a plea for leadership. That call was answered by Ronald Barrar of New Zealand in 1947.

Thus, in a very real sense, Booth, whose coffee plantations proved unfruitful, planted the Word of God. Like the parable in Matthew 13, his efforts brought forth grain—some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty. The Ma-

lawi mission fulfilled some of his dreams of personal commitment to what he perceived as God's call.

In Harry Langworthy's introduction to his book, he wrote:

"The uneven nature of the different types of evidence from different periods gives an uneven picture. Perhaps the best example of imbalance caused by the sources is that about half the chapters and half the text are devoted to just eight years, 1898-1902 and 1910-1912, when Booth was associated with the Seventh Day Baptists, who thankfully kept everything."

Again, on his acknowledgment page, Langworthy wrote:

"In addition to the archives mentioned in the bibliography, I should mention that there were many libraries which directly or indirectly, through Inter Library Loan, provided material. The institution from which I received the most material and the most positive cooperation is the Seventh Day Baptist Historical Society. This study would have been impossible without their contribution."

I do not know how many in the Historical Society have contributed during the 20 years of the author's investigation. I do know that when I came on board, Janet Thorngate had become deeply involved in the research and preparation of this book, just as she had for James Siwani's book, *The Unknown Made Known: A History of Sabbathkeepers in South Africa*.

The 520-page biography of Joseph Booth is available from The Christian Literature Association in Malawi (CLAIM), P.O. Box 503, Blantyre, Malawi, for \$40.

Also available is a reprint of a book by Booth printed 100 years ago under the title, *Africa for the African*, edited by Laura Perry. It lists at \$7.00 U.S. money. The prices include posting for surface mail; for airmail, add 20 percent to the published price. (Checks in U.S. funds drawn on an American bank are acceptable, payable to The Kachere Series.)

Siwani's 118-page book was published in 1995 by the SDB Historical Society. It may be purchased from the Society at Box 1678, Janesville, WI 53547. Send \$5.00, plus \$1.00 for postage. *SR*

K E V I N ' S

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After eight years of staring at the same furniture arrangement in our bedroom, Janet and I decided to move some things around. (It sure is hard to be creative around that "anchor" of a water-bed.)

Thanks to my quick wit—and bad back—I immediately volunteered to sketch out a new arrangement on the computer. With everything to scale, we were able to visualize and "move" the furniture to the desired spots. That was the easy part.

The hard part? Not the actual moving of the heavy dressers, file cabinets, and desk. The hardest part is the sorting and tossing!

Back in '89, the house we were renting in Madison, Wis., was put on the market, so we had to move quickly. We simply (!) packed up everything and hauled it south to Janesville. No time to sort and toss.

Guess what I'm doing now?

One of the treasures I came across was a folder full of familiar looking documents. The plain manila folder was stuffed with copies of the Madison church covenant.

Inside, I found a simple, typewritten version sent to me by a deacon before we arrived on the scene. I found another that I had laid out on the new church typewriter, with lines centered and justified. Then there was the computer-formatted version in a more readable, modern font.

And finally, there they were. Copies of our covenant, printed with brown ink on ivory card stock! Those were the ones we proudly pasted inside our brand new hymnals one happy Sabbath afternoon.

No matter how we "dressed up" the church covenant, the words were still the same. Yet, the bottom line for any church covenant is more than just words; it is relationships. It's people. It's us.

Think about how God is so concerned—eternally—with relationships:

- Our very creation was based on His desire for a relationship with someone made in His image.
- The creation of the Sabbath was given to strengthen that relationship.
- The Ten Commandments are based on relationships with Him and each other.
- He has a chosen people; a unique relationship.
- The institutions of marriage and the family and the church—all based on relationships.
- He gave us His Son Jesus to cement our forever relationship with Him.

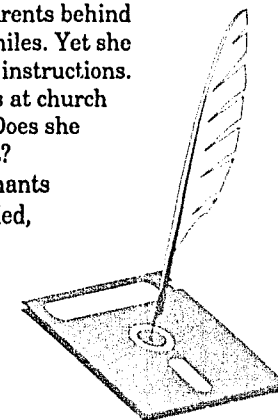
I'm afraid to ask, but I wonder how many other church covenants are lying buried in plain manila folders, waiting to be reviewed and renewed?

And I wonder how well our children have grasped the concept of covenant? As I am in the throes of teaching our eldest how to drive (thank you for your prayers), I feel like I am receiving the stronger lessons.

Initial questions on the very basics threw me, like, "Now, which pedal is the gas? How do you do the turn signals? How do you work the heater?" (Although I was quite warm...)

Jenny has seen her parents behind the wheel for countless miles. Yet she needed the most basic of instructions. She has seen her parents at church for countless Sabbaths. Does she understand the covenant?

Our local church covenants need to be carefully worded, but more importantly, carefully lived out and "test-driven" in relationship with God and His children.



Important Memo:

To: FRIENDS OF
THE SABBATH RECORDER
From: EDITOR KEVIN BUTLER

DID YOU KNOW THAT THE SABBATH RECORDER IS FUNDED BY YOUR GIFTS? YOUR DONATION TO THE SABBATH RECORDER IS PART OF THE TOTAL SDB DENOMINATIONAL BUDGET.

I HOPE THAT YOU HAVE BEEN ENJOYING THE MAGAZINE DURING THIS PAST YEAR AND WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE A TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION TO THIS PART OF OUR SEVENTH DAY BAPTIST CONNECTION AND OUTREACH. MAY GOD BLESS YOU AND THANK YOU.

GRACE AND PEACE,

Kevin



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