

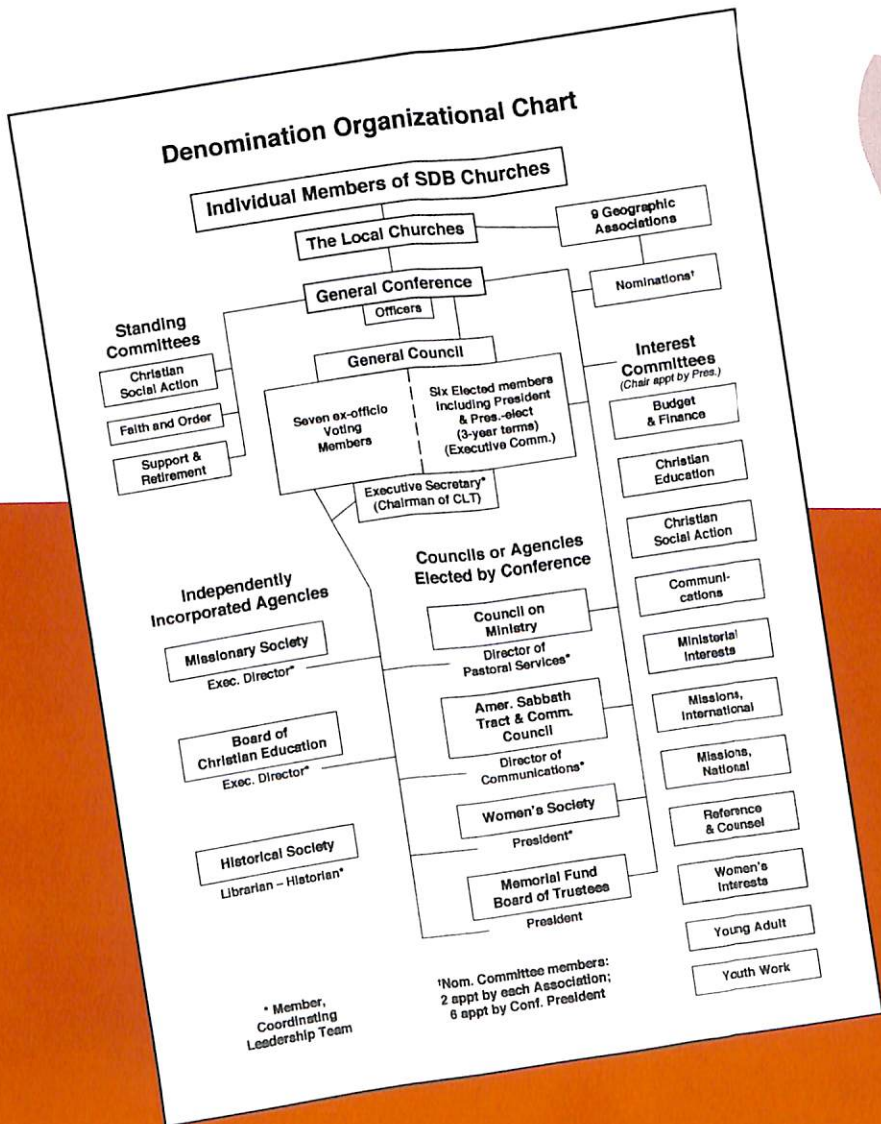


The Sabbath RECORDER

November 2005

News for and about Seventh Day Baptists

Okay, now check out this chart.



How SDBs work



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:

- salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus.
- the Bible as the inspired word of God. The Bible is our authority for our faith and daily conduct.
- baptism of believers, by immersion, witnessing to our acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord.
- freedom of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- the congregational form of church government. Every church member 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 our Lord. It is the joy of the Sabbath that makes SDBs just a little bit different.

For more information, write: The 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@seventhdaybaptist.org and the SDB Web site: www.seventhdaybaptist.org

An original Sabbath song—*What's In A Day?*—is featured in a newly-released CD by Wonnie Cooper entitled, "Blessings That Money Cannot Buy." The song was part of the worship service on Sabbath day at Conference this summer.

You can receive the CD by donating \$15.00 to the Building Fund of the Paint Rock, Ala., SDB Church. Mail your donation to:

*Seventh Day Baptist Church
P.O. Box 40
Paint Rock, AL 35764*



Thank You!



Thank you so much for your prayers and response to our "Educate a Pastor" appeal, with special contributions to the SDB Center on Ministry. Our students in seminary and the T.I.M.E. program greatly appreciate your generosity.

—Gordon P. Lawton
Director of Pastoral Services

SCSC

Summer Christian Service Corps

SCSC

Are you willing to serve with next year's Summer Christian Service Corps?

Does your church wish to host a team for service and outreach?

Applications for *Team Members* and *Church Projects* will be on a website or at your local church.

These applications will be on the Conference's website—www.seventhdaybaptist.org—for your convenience. We will also mail out member and project applications to each church, so contact your pastor or church office.

Please send the completed applications and other forms (for both Team Members and Church Projects) to: SCSC Committee, c/o Milton Seventh Day Baptist Church, 720 E. Madison Ave., Milton, WI 53563.

Team and church applications must be post-marked **no later than January 31, 2006**. There will be **NO** exceptions.

If you have any questions, please contact the Milton church at the above address, or e-mail the SCSC Committee at churchoffice@miltontsdb.org.

SCSC

SCSC



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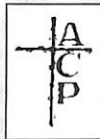


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Kevin Butler
Editor

Leanne Lippincott
Assistant Editor

EC = Editor's Circle members

Contributing Editors

Rob Appel, Susan Bond, Andrew J. Camenga, Gordon Lawton, G. Kirk Looper, Micayla Neher, Don A. Sanford, Morgan Shepard, Robert Van Horn.

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Four pillars of our polity

How SDBs govern themselves

by Gordon Lawton

“We believe in the priesthood of all believers and practice the autonomy of the local congregation, as we seek to work in association with others for more effective witness” (SDB Statement of Belief, part VI, second paragraph).

Every Seventh Day Baptist church has members or attendees who may ask from time to time, “Why are things done this way?” The answer often is that someone in the past (or the church as a whole) made a decision about that process, and since that time the example has been followed.

Sometimes these practices and decisions are in keeping with our polity as Seventh Day Baptists, and sometimes they are not.

The *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that the word “polity” comes from the Greek *politeia*, meaning “citizenship, government.” It defines polity as “a form or process of civil government or constitution.”

On the surface, then, SDB polity is the way in which congregations and Associations (the Conference is an association of churches) govern themselves.

For followers of Jesus the Christ, polity comes as a direct result of theology. We Seventh Day Baptists take the Bible as our “final authority in matters of faith and practice” (*SDB Statement of Belief*).

So, what we believe from the Scriptures should determine the way the local church is governed. Or, to say it another way, “What we learn from the Bible will direct us in what we believe, and how we operate and behave.” Consequently, our polity is based on our theology.

Four theological truths inform our polity:



1) The Priesthood of All Believers elicits congregational government.

When the Bible became available to the masses and people began to read God’s Word in their own language, many were surprised to discover passages which pointed to *equality* among

believers. This stood opposed to a hierarchy with bishops and priests, where the laymen below were dependent upon those above for their connection with God.

Jesus is declared in Scripture to be our High Priest. “He is the media-

We need to remember that even though congregational polity may look like “democracy,” it is really a theocracy.

tor of a new covenant” (Heb. 9:15).

Passages such as 1 Peter 2:4-10—where we as believers were called “a Royal Priesthood” and “a Holy Nation”—focused on the equality of believers rather than on groups such as “clergy” and “laity.” This helped form congregational government.

Democracy and congregational polity are similar.

A church may operate on what is sometimes called the New England Town Meeting model. Almost all decisions—sometimes even those authorizing the treasurer to pay

each and every bill—are made by the whole group operating as a “committee of the whole.”

But we need to remember that even though congregational polity may look like “democracy,” it is really a theocracy.

Because of the priesthood of all believers, we hold that the congregation seeks and discovers the will of God. In a democracy, the *people* choose what they want. In the church, we are to be seeking the will of God.

Jesus is the head of the Church, and we need to be listening as he speaks. It would be appropriate for the moderator of a church business meeting to call for a vote in this way: “All who believe this is God’s will, say ‘yes’; all who believe this is not God’s will, say ‘no’; and all who don’t know if this is God’s will, say ‘I don’t know.’”

It’s even possible that a church could agree that God did not care about a particular decision. In that case, the church should entrust the decision to a member and move on. (An example would be deciding on the type of paper towel to buy for the rest rooms, or what type of tree to plant on the church’s front lawn.)

The focus is to discover the will of God and honor Him in all that we do.



2) Regenerate Membership

The church is not a club, nor the servant of any family or group. The Greek word which we translate as church is *ekklesia*. This word is translated “assembly” or “congregation,” and comes from *ek*, meaning “from” or

“out of,” and *kaleo*, meaning “to call.” So, the church is the assembly of “the called out ones.”

The act of baptism symbolizes what has happened to individual believers through faith and by God’s grace.

If people have not responded to Christ’s call to follow him, then they should not be members of the congregation.

The first Baptists emphasized the baptism of believers rather than the baptism of infants. Theirs was not initially a stand on the mode of baptism—immersion rather than sprinkling or pouring. Rather, it was a stand on baptism *only for believers*, and baptism as necessary for church membership.

When Baptists first appeared on the scene in the early 17th century, most churches baptized infants. Baptists taught that baptism is only for those who have repented and been saved; that is, those who have responded to the call of Christ.

To Baptists, the act of baptism is not magical, washing away sin. Rather, it symbolizes what has

happened to individual believers through faith and by God’s grace (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Immersion has been called “an outward sign of an inward change.” This outward sign follows Jesus’ example (Matt. 3:13-17).

Following the example of the early Church, Believer’s Baptism is the sign of conversion (Romans 6:14ff; Colossians 2:11-12) and should occur prior to incorporating individuals into the local body of believers (Acts 2:41).



3) The Autonomy of the local church.

This was a new and revolutionary idea. For centuries, all anyone had known was the State-run Church, or the Church-run State. With the advent of the Protestant Reformation, the Bible began to be available in the common languages.

Martin Luther translated the Bible into German, and Olivetan did so in French.

The Bible was translated into English by men such as Wycliffe (1320-1382), Tyndale (1484-1536), and Coverdale (1535 and the Great Bible 1539). These Scriptures, along with the Authorized Version of KJV (1611), allowed the educated in En-

gland to read God’s Word and test what they had been taught.

The two issues already discussed came to the fore. If a person was not going to be part of the Church of England, or a Puritan, were they to be “lone Christians”?

As people of like mind and a common faith began to meet together, the understanding of the Body of Christ (as spoken of in the Epistles, and especially in 1 Corinthians 11-14) was made clear. This was the church visible, the local church.

As the physical church gathered and the will of God was sought and discovered, they needed to be free from hierarchical intervention. The local church needed to be “independent,” or as we now say, “autonomous.”

Autonomy of the local church is a basic tenant of SDB belief. It is in the

The local church needed to be “independent,” or as we now say, “autonomous.”

local body of believers where we seek the will of God and His direction for the Church Body.

4) Associational Principle of voluntary cooperation.

Those who established the first SDB church in America at Newport, R.I., had a friendship tie that led back to at least the Bell Lane SDB Church in London. Shortly after the founding of the Newport SDB Church in 1671, members who were the children of members moved to what was then Westerly, R.I.

Services began there in western

cont. bottom of page 9



The *SDB Manual of Procedures* lists “Eight Guidelines for Basic Congregational Form in Polity” (Appendix J7). These guidelines are:

- 1) Congregation chooses and revises its own constitution.
- 2) Members are received and dismissed by the congregation.
- 3) Leaders are chosen and dismissed by the congregation.
- 4) Leaders are responsible to, and for, the congregation.
- 5) Any leadership decision is subject to review and possible reversal by the congregation.
- 6) Church property is legally held by the congregation for its benefit.
- 7) Funds are reviewed and distributed by the congregation.
- 8) Final decisions on matters of discipline are made at the congregational level.

All those in favor...

How and why our annual Conference works

by Jim Skaggs



For one week every August, American and Canadian Seventh Day Baptists come together for the sessions of the SDB General Conference. These annual gatherings serve many purposes, some of them intentional and others happy accidents.

A remarkable amount of personal acquaintance exists among a people who are widely scattered across a large continent. Why? Simply because one out of every 10 Seventh Day Baptists get together every year for a week.

Worshipping together, studying together, eating together, renewing old friendships and making new ones—all of these are important and good things. But these aren't the reasons Conference meets annually. The business meetings are.

Why we formed a Conference

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference was originally organized so that local churches could accomplish together tasks they could not do by themselves. Its organization evolved over the years to meet new

needs and its organization gradually grew.

But from its beginnings, the denominational structure has never had authority over local churches. We are a denomination in which the authority runs "from the bottom up."

We are democratic to a fault. Churchill famously said that "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others that have been tried." Although a more centralized and authoritative form of church government might well be more peaceful and less messy, we have chosen democracy.

We meet to decide

Because we believe that no hierarchy speaks the will of God with any more authority than the individual Christian believer, and because we believe that Christians—together, seeking it—can be guided by the Holy Spirit, we have chosen to make our decisions by voting. So we meet to decide.

These meetings in August are where most of the important decisions are made. Budgets are adopted, bylaws revised, positions on political and social issues considered, doctrinal controversies revisited, officers elected, organizational issues resolved—and all of these happen by vote of the delegates present.

Decisions made during the business sessions at Conference govern the organization and policies of the denomination. Conference, in business session, is the highest temporal authority for Seventh Day Baptists.

Are you a delegate?

Only delegates to Conference are entitled to vote, and delegates are chosen by local churches. Sometimes

churches will send their delegates with specific instructions to support or oppose some action, but usually the delegates are trusted to use their own judgment.

We are a denomination in which the authority runs "from the bottom up."

Usually, the decisions that come before us are uncontroversial and little effort is made to ensure that only those entitled to do so are voting. But when issues are contested and the vote is likely to be close, non-delegates are expected not to participate.

When contentious issues do come up, debate sometimes becomes heated, misunderstandings and disagreements cause hurt feelings, and ill-considered words lead to damaged relationships. The apostle Paul, who had a great deal of experience with disputes in the Church, instructed the Romans: "I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought," and "if possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all" (Romans 12:3, 18, RSV). Happily, an angry controversy at Conference is not frequent, and as time has passed, seems less so.

Controversies can arise

Every few years an issue will arise that is so controversial or so important that churches are asked to send their delegates to Conference with instructions about how to cast that

church's vote. This process is called a "vote by churches" and when it occurs it takes two years to complete.

One Conference session will send the issue to the churches for a vote at Conference the following year. Very controversial issues are sometimes dealt with this way. (For example, the decision not to continue as a member of the National Council of Churches or the decision to adopt a pro-life position on abortion.) At the time, these were heatedly debated and the final votes were close.

They seem to have been defining moments in determining the direction Seventh Day Baptists would take in our approach to ecumenism and social issues, and it seemed wholly

matters that come to that committee. (The only exception is the Nominating Committee, whose members are elected by the Associations or named by the Conference president.)

Committees are organized by areas of interest and, consequently, are called "interest committees," like "Christian Social Action Interests," "Ministerial Interests," "Women's Interests," and so on. People tend to go where they have concerns or, sometimes, where entertaining controversy is likely to occur.

Committees must act; delegates have final say

The committees review everything referred to them by the

Any Seventh Day Baptist can bring a proposal to Conference. Every proposal will be referred to committee. And everything referred will be brought back to the business session for final action. The action taken becomes the policy of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference to be implemented by its agencies and officers.

Conference defines us

Many of the things that happen during Conference week are very important. We define ourselves as a part of God's people through the way we worship and study and fellowship together.

The programs and Bible studies, sermons and seminars help us to grow in the faith. The friendships, conversations, and play strengthen the ties that bind us together, however widely we may be scattered through the rest of the year.

But the main reason we meet is because of the decisions we make together. **SR**

Every proposal will be referred to committee. And everything referred will be brought back to the business session for final action.

appropriate to refer them back to the congregations for instruction.

Other matters, less controversial but at least as important, have also been referred back to the churches for instruction. The most recent revision of the *Statement of Belief* was considered for several years before being adopted.

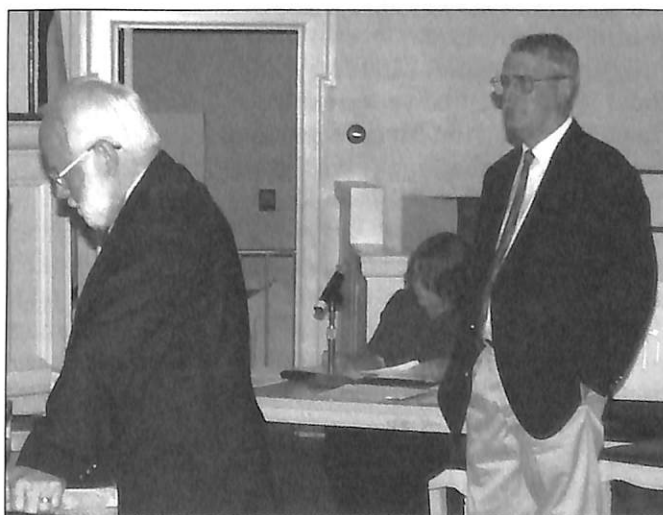
The way we use committees

The way we use committees is different than the way most organizations do business. As with other groups, nothing is considered for adoption by Conference that hasn't been considered by a committee. The differences arise with the composition of the committees and with their power.

Most other groups carefully control the composition of committees, but we don't. Any person at Conference, delegate or not, can attend any committee they wish and vote on the

business session and must act on all of them. Because the openness of committee membership (a good thing) could result in committees being "stacked" or biased (a bad thing), the committees aren't permitted to defeat or block anything sent to them—as committees in Congress and most other organizations are. Each committee must report back to the business session with a recommendation to adopt or defeat each matter that was sent to the committee. Delegates on the floor during the business sessions always have the final word.

Jim Skaggs is a newly-retired school teacher and a deacon of the Madison, Wis., SDB Church.



Jim Skaggs (right) has often served as Conference parliamentarian. Here he is ready to help President Dale Thorngate in 2004.

The call to Covenant

by Kenneth Smith



The “semi” ahead of me bore the name “Covenant Trucking.” With a long road ahead of me and two words to contemplate, I thought about the many uses of “covenant”—a term that I have heard all of my life.

Promise to the church

My memory goes back over 60 years or so, when grand “old pillars” of the church stood up to renew their covenants with God and His people. I thought of many of them and their role in my life; good folks, all long-gone to their reward.

What they meant when they said those words seemed very clear to them. They had made some personal promises, and they spoke with great feeling. I knew that they would do as they said they would.

These people spoke of how God had come into their lives and redeemed them. Simple words affirmed what they had said before—that they had an obligation because of God’s love and grace toward them.

A secular meaning

The word “covenant” also has a more general meaning, a secular meaning. “Covenant Trucking” may just be saying, “You can count on us to keep our promise to deliver your

goods safely and on time.” That’s great. I would like to hire a company like that.

One dictionary says that a covenant means an agreement between two people. The second meaning, according to Random House, is “the conditional promises made to humanity by God, as revealed in the Scriptures.” Obviously, a response to God’s promises is what is implied by “conditional.”

Deeply personal

God’s calls to Abraham, Moses, and Jeremiah are all covenant stories reminding us of God’s promises to His people. The “new” covenant call to Jeremiah brings us to a deeper level of what God requires. He reveals His compassion toward us, seeking those who respond whole-

since our covenant with God is a matter of the heart.

What is our covenant response to God’s love and grace within the fellowship of believers? In our small congregations, we have relationships with many of our fellow Christians outside of worship and prayer.

I know the life stories of so many who have had personal griefs to bare, and I have been privileged to see some of them demonstrate remarkable faith and service to others. We are such an array of human strengths and weaknesses!

What do others see?

We are Christ’s Church today. “Behold how they love one another!” We hope that others say that about us. Such love is needed to draw others into the circle of Christian faith.

How is my life to be viewed by that measure? How is my church viewed

A formal covenant statement should not allow us to neglect our own personal inventory since our covenant with God is a matter of the heart.

heartedly. The covenant is deeply personal.

The concept of covenant sets the scene for the “Christ Event.” It is not unusual for SDBs to focus on their covenant relationship just prior to the Communion service.

Formal expectations

Most of our churches have a formal covenant statement which lists some of the more obvious expectations of church membership and Christian living. This is commendable, but it should not allow us to neglect our own personal inventory

by the secular community? As a caring and loving fellowship?

What am I to do if there are personal conflicts in my church? What am I to do when some members are too aggressive in expressing their opinions while others are too sensitive and easily hurt? How can we create an environment of love that reveals Christ’s love toward each of us?

All of us are human! But that is no longer an excuse for those who are “new creatures” in Christ.

Love one another

Our covenant obligation is to love

others as Christ loves us. The covenant calls upon God's people to be set apart from a culture of injustice, oppression, and immoral conduct. Each generation is presented with new issues. Sometimes these are very personal ones that threaten the very fellowship of the Church. Clearly, we are called to "hold what is good" in the Christian community. We must be committed to a loving covenant relationship.

In the apostle Paul's letters, we learn of the conflict between Judeo-Christian values and those of the Greco-Roman culture. The love of Christ won out over time, but it wasn't easy.

Conflicts continue

Centuries ago, churches faced theological conflicts that resulted in many denominations and broken fellowship. Even if these divisions were necessary, the broken fellow-

ship may not have been. God will be the judge of that.

Today, we regret the conflicts over styles of worship, music preferences, and even dress codes. The Yellow Pages list churches by "traditional"

letters provide the best advice for Christians with a stubborn streak.

Our personal covenant with God in Christ stands beyond the covenant relationship with members of the

The covenant calls upon God's people to be set apart from a culture of injustice, oppression, and immoral conduct.

and "contemporary" forms of worship. It's difficult to accept that Christians are sometimes divided between those who prefer guitar music and those who prefer a pipe organ!

But the point is a very serious one.

If our covenant response to the love of Christ is what Scripture describes, we must walk the second mile to stay in fellowship. Paul's

Church. Everything springs from that godly covenant relationship. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Corin. 5:19). **SR**

Dr. Ken Smith is a retired SDB pastor and college president, and an elder at the Nortonville, Kan., SDB Church.

Four pillars, *cont. from page 5*

Rhode Island, and a meetinghouse was built in 1680. That church continues today as the First SDB Church of Hopkinton in Ashaway. It was not officially set off as a separate congregation (from Newport) until 1708.

Even after that time, family and filial relationships were nurtured at the "annual meeting" of the brethren, where there was preaching, celebrating at the Lord's Table, and fellowship. There was a sense of being independent congregations while being connected by common goals.

Out of these "annual meetings" came the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference in 1802. Historian Don Sanford, in his book *A Choosing People* (pp. 148-149), noted that the Conference "served five major functions during the 19th century. 1) It gave the people an identity; 2) it helped define doctrine; 3) it served as a communi-

cating agent; 4) it provided a means for education; and 5) it initiated some programs."

Norman Maring, in his 1991 revision of *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice*, wrote, "...Baptists be-

Family and filial relationships were nurtured at the "annual meeting" of the brethren.

lieved that each local congregation had power from Christ to govern its own affairs, but the Baptists early developed the associational principle to give visible expressions to the inter-dependence of local churches" (p. 17).

For Seventh Day Baptists today, this inter-dependency finds expression in the General Conference, re-

gional Associations, and participation in the Baptist World Alliance and the North American Baptist Fellowship.

Being a Seventh Day Baptist is much more than giving mental assent to the *SDB Statement of Belief*. It means being a Baptist, not only in terms of mode of baptism, but also in the historical sense of Baptists.

Seventh Day Baptists understand the equality of believers as a royal priesthood, insist on regeneration as a prerequisite for church membership, practice the autonomy of the local congregation, and cooperate voluntarily with other Baptists. **SR**

Rev. Gordon Lawton serves as Director of Pastoral Services for the SDB Center on Ministry, and is Dean of the School of Ministry.

Medical mission proposed for Jamaica in June 2006

by Amanda Graffius Barbee

The Lord has plans for each of us. In the last couple of years, my husband Perry and I have discovered that at least part of that plan involves short-term missions.

Our journey began with a medical missions conference in Kentucky two years ago. There, we discovered the many ways medical professionals can serve the Lord.

That February, we took our first trip to Honduras. We worked in the prisons for a week, helping to provide medical care. The Lord taught us many things and gave us a desire to go back again.

This past year, Perry and my brother, Gabe, went to Ecuador, working just outside the capital. We realized that this would be a great way for Seventh Day Baptists to help fellow SDBs in other countries.

As we approached the International Missions Committee and

port personnel in the clinics.

We currently plan to work with our sister churches in Jamaica next year, from June 2 to July 2. Our goal is to provide a basic medical clinic, a dental clinic, and maybe a reading glasses clinic and/or physical therapy. If we have forgotten another area of healthcare, just let us know.

We hope that, with help from our Jamaican brethren, we'll be able to evangelize and encourage our patients even before we attend to their medical needs.

Some of you may be thinking, *I want to help, but I'm not a health-care worker.* Never fear; we need you, too, but in different ways:



Amanda and Perry Barbee led a workshop on short-term missions at last year's Conference.

to work with us, support them financially.

Thirdly, we are looking for specific items, including over-the-counter products to help treat patients; Bibles to give to those who are interested; bubbles, pencils, balloons, and such to give to children as they wait; and financial gifts to purchase all of the above.

We hope that the Lord will bless this endeavor, and that it can become a regular part of SDB outreach. If you know someone who might want to help us, please pass on this information or announce it in your church.

If you are interested in this opportunity to serve or have any questions, e-mail us at pwbarbee@hotmail.com. You can also contact the SDB Missionary Society, 119 Main St., Westerly, RI 02891. Phone: (401) 596-4326; Fax: (401) 348-9494; E-mail: sdbmissoc@verizon.net. SR

As we approached the International Missions Committee and proposed a short-term medical mission project, we discovered that the Lord had been moving in other hearts as well.

proposed a short-term medical mission project, we discovered that the Lord had been moving in other hearts as well.

Please consider this a call to all healthcare professionals, as well as to those willing to be sup-

First and foremost, we need your prayers. We can't do this in our own power.

Secondly, we will need to raise all the funds to make this possible. If you know someone who wants

Letting go of a dream

Editor's note: Adam and Rachel (Parker) Mackintosh suffered a miscarriage in September. In their cries out to God—and through an e-mail to friends and family—the Lord has impacted many with His love and comfort.

Rachel had not intended to have a wider audience, but graciously agreed that we could share their letter with you.

May God continue to bless this young family with His grace, and His dreams.

Hello Family and Friends,

Many of you are hearing for the first time that Adam, Kayleigh, and I were expecting a new Mackintosh baby around April 7th of next year. This message is one of joy and yet heartache because our baby is now with Jesus.

We understand that the baby stopped growing when he (or she) was about four to five weeks old. I would have been 11 weeks pregnant today. If the ultrasound machine was accurate, my body waited about six weeks to miscarry.

This loss has not been easy. Both Adam and I cried a lot before we were even sure of what was going on.

There was a chance we had lost one baby, and were four to five weeks pregnant again. After seeing that the pregnancy hormone levels in my blood were going down, and that I was beginning to bleed more heavily, we knew for sure what was happening.

Because the baby was so tiny when the heart stopped beating, I could not see, feel, or hear any "signs of life." That made it both easier and harder to say good-bye.

Those are the facts, but there has been so much more for us to reflect on in our grief.

As soon as we knew that I was expecting, we told everyone we came in contact with. We do not regret that. Right from the beginning, Adam and I were both convicted that no matter what "could happen," this was a life

to celebrate; a life of great value to us and to our Heavenly Father.

We believe that this baby's life has purpose, even though he or she was so small. What we are learning now is only the beginning of what we will learn because of this tiny wonder.

We see God's grace in this. We're thanking Him for this loss—not because we wanted it, but because we're

***We're clinging to
the truth that
He knows the beginning
and the end.***

clinging to the truth that He knows the beginning and the end. He had a reason for allowing this to happen. The fact that this hurt is causing us to talk with God constantly is reason enough all by itself.

We know we're nothing without God, and this is causing us to cling to the only thing in our lives that won't change—our Heavenly Father.

In the middle of my tears at the doctor's office, I spoke out loud to the Lord. I told Him that I didn't understand why this happened, but I chose to trust Him. Adam and I ached, but I wanted our pain to bring God the glory He deserves because we believe He is good *all* the time. Though we don't understand, we will continue to say that!

I'm not the most patient person in the world. Just ask Adam! It seems that I am being challenged to be patient and to trust God's timing for everything.

For years, I have been learning to grieve the dreams I have for my life, only to begin dreaming the new dreams God has for me. That doesn't necessarily mean that the dreams I've had were ungodly. They just haven't been what God thinks is best for me. This baby is a life lost, and we are grieving that. But it's also a dream we're letting go of.

Our hope is that by sharing our testimony about this baby, we will bring God glory. He is good. He has a plan and a purpose for our lives, for your life, and for our baby's life.

"Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6).

Even the purpose of our baby's life is not finished—not until the day our Savior, Brother, and Friend Jesus returns. That brings us more hope than anything!

Adam wanted me to be sure to thank everyone for their thoughts, prayers, and words of wisdom and comfort.

Once again, our biological families, even though "far away," have been a constant source of love and support, always pointing us to Jesus. Our friends and church family here have also been wonderful, available for anything and everything we could need. Thank you all!

Please continue to keep us in your thoughts and prayers. We know that many of you have been through miscarriages yourselves, some with pregnancies much further along.

We love you all!

Adam, Rachel, and
Kayleigh Mackintosh

Exploring the Sabbath

by Linda Greene

Our obedience to God's commands must be our love offering, inadequate though it may be.

"Pray your flight will not take place... on the Sabbath" (Matthew 24:20).

✦ ✦ ✦

Jesus was speaking to Jews here about the last days when those in Judea would be fleeing to the mountains. Interesting. Why would he say that they should pray this would not happen on Sabbath? Did he say this since their traditions limited their travel on Sabbath?

It still seems strange because Jesus did not normally endorse those types of strict observances that Jewish tradition had added to the original Commandment regarding Sabbath.

Every other thing mentioned here—like nursing, and pregnant women and winter—would slow down and hinder their escape to the mountains. So would the Sabbath do that, too, for some reason?

Maybe. Those inflexible, man-made rules regarding Sabbath observance consumed them. Their unyielding need to "obey the rules" could blind their eyes, and they wouldn't realize that the end had come—or was about to come.

Rules and rituals would once again eclipse these truths they represented: Jesus' Second Coming and total victory over Satan.

Or maybe they would simply be too busy with their Sabbath "activities" to notice that something out of the ordinary was happening.

Either way, the Jews would be so distracted by what they were "doing" that their hearts would be oblivious to the fact that they needed rescuing.

It is interesting that Jesus seemed to feel that their observance of one of the Commandments would end up being an obstacle for them; that it would somehow result in keeping them from the rescue that was arranged for them in the mountains.

Can keeping the Commandments ever be an obstacle? Can our observance keep us from God's hopes and plans for us?

At first glance, that doesn't seem possible. We all know that we must

enough without that relationship with Jesus that covers our shortcomings with his redeeming blood.

We can't afford to take our focus off of Jesus, even for a little while. Otherwise, we might miss what he has for us, either for the short term or for all eternity.

We, too, can become blinded by our own self-righteousness. We can be so reluctant to lay it down that we don't see what's coming. In the end, the evil one can destroy us.

We cannot afford to feel self-righteous, even for one second. Satan can attack that quickly. We can be so focused on our own "filthy rags of righteousness" that we neglect to wear the shining robe that Jesus provides.

Our obedience to God's commands must be our love offering, inadequate though it may be. It serves

Can keeping the Commandments ever be an obstacle? Can our observance keep us from God's hopes and plans for us?


be obedient in order to be found in the center of God's will for our lives.

However, as I pondered this Scripture that has followed me around for a while, I find myself wondering if we, too, can become too distracted. Because of all of our "doing," can we miss where God is trying to direct us? Can we lose out on the relationship that He intends to be our ultimate "rescue"?

No matter how well we might think we "do," it's never good

as a "thank-you" for the salvation He has so mercifully offered to us.

We do know one thing for certain about this Scripture: Jesus anticipated that the Sabbath would still be observed during the last days, or he would not have given this caution.

I think I will continue to ponder this passage, because I have the distinct impression that there is more here than meets the eye. Let me know if you have any thoughts to add. 



For better or worse

by Jean Ritchie
Speaker at the 2005 Women's Banquet

My experiences of the last 22 years—including two marriages, five children, and seven grandchildren—have led me to ponder this article's title from a biblical perspective.

Even Christians who make this pledge before God during marriage vows are committed "for better or worse" only to a certain point. The definition of "worse" seems to exclude mental or physical abuse.

Don't get me wrong; I'm not justifying abuse. But where does the Bible say, "If you are abused, neglected, or tormented, you have the right to divorce"?

I fell into the world's way of thinking after feeling emotionally neglected. I was ashamed to face my church family after my divorce, but divorce had become so widely accepted that it was no "big deal."

Since then, I have learned that what we lack in our marriages was perhaps never supposed to be there in the first place.

The support and encouragement I longed for in my mate were the exact same things Christ longed to give me. The future husband I dreamed of as a child is what Christ wanted to be for me.

Strangely, Jesus took me back to the same place in my second marriage where I had been in my first. That way, I could learn what I had failed to learn the first time around.

The beauty of promising to marry "for better or worse" is that Christ enables us to love under either condition (just as he loves us) if we seek his support.

Having been on both sides of the fence, I don't think I'm judging. Rather, I'm trying to stir hearts and minds to look to the Creator of the marital bond for necessary resources:

His promise, His Scriptures, and His love.

If we are frustrated with our spouses, think how exasperated our Heavenly Father must get in the course of our lifetimes. At some point, probably all of us have neglected, abused, or tormented our Savior either in words or deeds. Yet he cherishes each and every one of us unconditionally. Many of us have even committed "adultery" against him, yet he hasn't annulled his promises to us.

When you're in the midst of frustrating circumstances, a blowout fight, or a lonely cry, I urge us to call out to God. If you ask Him to fill you with a never-ending, unconditional, passionate love for your mate, He will hear you.

In the darkness of a violent mental illness, with "arrows" aimed directly at me, I made that call to God time and again. In His mercy, He enabled me to love my husband while hating the sin that devastated me.

The supernatural-inspired love that Christ gave me for my husband was as passionate and beautiful on the day my husband died as it was on the day we married.

Sometimes, we don't understand what Christ is trying to do in our lives. But the reality is, we don't *have* to know. All we need to do is trust in him.

Make your relationship with Christ your priority. Give him your deepest love, greatest effort, and unwavering commitment. You'll find that he's there for you, no matter the circumstances. For better or worse. **SR**



Jean
Ritchie

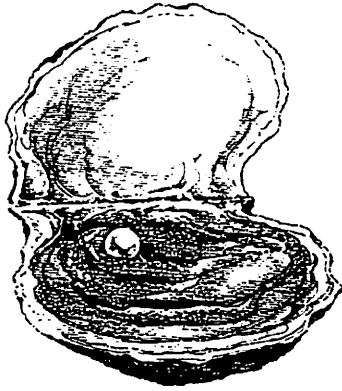
Report from Alfred church women

For the Women's Society of the Alfred, N.Y., SDB Church, 2005 was a busy year.

Once again, their resale "Op Shop" was their main means of support. Three of their church members run it with the wonderful help of Maureen Sollie of the Union University Church.

The Op Shop proceeds allow the Alfred church women to pay all of their society's bills, plus provide gifts to the area food pantry, SCSC, PROP, the SDB Women's Society, the Conference and their church, and even several SDB missionary ventures.

They've also been able to sponsor some receptions. The "happy ones" were held after an organ concert and following the ordination of their beloved pastor, Pat Bancroft. The two other receptions they put on were for the funerals of Janette Rogers and Esther Tuttle.



Propping up PROP

At this year's General Conference, COSAR (Committee on Support and Retirement) announced a raise in the monthly allotments of those in the old denominational ministerial retirement program. These individuals aren't covered by the current retirement plan instituted in 1978. PROP (Pastors Retirement Offering Project) encouraged this increase for retired pastors and their widows.

As your historian emeritus, this act stirred my attention. Not simply because I'm a recipient of a retirement allotment, but because it reminded me of the other changes over the past century concerning our religious workers' retirement years.

According to the *Seventh Day Baptist Yearbook*, the first mention of any benefit for retired ministers was a grant of \$1,000 in 1903, designated in the will of Susan Potter. (She was the widow of Charles Potter, the inventor of a popular printing press and a prominent denominational layman in the Plainfield, N.J., SDB Church.)

This relief fund was called the "Sarah P. Potter Bequest for Indigent and Superannuated Ministers," a name that continued until 1917. That year, the term "indigent" was dropped, and recipients were merely "superannuated."

In 1910, the *Sabbath Recorder* ran a series of articles detailing the financial needs of the "superannuated ministers," urging churches and pastors to provide for their retirement. One article compared a minister with a businessman:

In consecrating his life to the Master's work, the minister spent the best 10 years of his young manhood—and all the money he had saved—securing his education. However, the businessman spent his 10 years accumulating for himself—building up his business, and paying for his farm and a home of his own.

By the age of 30, all of the businessman's financial gains had gone towards supporting himself and his family. By the same age, the minister had put thousands of dollars into his education and hundreds more into books. All of his stock-in-trade was in his head and library.¹

Later that year, J.A. Hubbard, treasurer of the SDB Memorial

are unable at the present time to follow their chosen profession."²

That year, the Memorial Board reported a contribution of \$147.07 to an account under the title "Ministerial Relief Fund." That remained separate from the account of Sarah Potter.

In 1917, the Sarah Potter Fund dropped the term "indigent" but continued the "superannuated" designation until 1938. As a relief fund, it was included with other bequests for ministerial relief, with ministers having to apply and show specific need for assistance.

However, as late as 1931, an article appeared in the *Sabbath Recorder* entitled, "The Fund for Indigent Ministers." It pleaded for gifts to help

After an extended actuarial study, COSAR recommended that an annuity program be instituted whereby contributions made by a church or agency would be credited directly to the account of its pastor and other employees.

Board, wrote that there were 87 churches in the denomination with a resident membership of 6,048 and 2,218 nonresident members.

"It would seem that on an average each person could, if so inclined, contribute at least one penny a week, and a large percentage could give more. But if each one did give a penny a week to constitute a fund for the benefit of sick and broken-down ministers, it would amount to over \$400 a year. The interest on that sum would materially aid some of our ministers who

"superannuated and indigent ministers."³

In 1928, Conference appointed a Committee of Ministerial Relief. In 1937, General Conference changed the function and name of that group to the Committee on Ministerial Retirement (COMR). In 1975, the word "support" was added to form the present title, Committee on Support and Retirement (COSAR).

Under that original 1937 retirement plan, each retiring minister was granted an allowance of \$1.00 per month for each year of service, up to 40 years. Pastors' widows received half that amount. The agree-

ment stipulated that if a widow were to remarry, her allotment would end.

Lack of funds during the war years reduced the maximum payment to \$30 or \$35 per month. In 1947, the \$40 maximum payment resumed. It remained there until 1954, when it was raised to \$60 maximum per month, or \$720 per year.

The 1955 *Yearbook* reported that ministers may, if they so choose, elect to take Social Security. It recommended that all ministers be relieved of their payments to the Retirement Fund. It also recommended that SDB churches and agencies increase their Retirement Fund contributions from four to six percent.⁴

Many ministers chose this supplemental option, since some were covered by secular employment at times. However, a few opted out on the grounds of separation of church and state.

During the following decades, the retirement allotment gradually increased. In 1989, it amounted to \$8.80 per month for each year of denominational service up to 40 years, or \$4,224 maximum per year.

In 1989, Sue McMillan, a Sabbath-keeper from Belaire, Calif., who had had some contact with two of our

ministers, left a large grant to the Memorial Board. A PROP fund drive, using McMillan money as matching funds, allowed the Memorial Board to offer a maximum benefit of \$440 per month, or a yearly maximum retirement stipend of \$5,280.

Since then, other raises have been granted. With the recent allotment at General Conference of \$21 per month per year of service (for a maximum of 40 years), maximum monthly and yearly benefits are now \$840 and \$10,080, respectively.

The majority of current ministers or other employees of the denomination are not aided by PROP. In 1978, after an extended actuarial study, COSAR recommended that an annuity program be instituted whereby contributions made by a church or agency would be credited directly to the account of its pastor and other employees. Two factors may have prompted this action.

First, ministers and their wives were living longer after retirement and thus the current funding of the retirement account could bankrupt Memorial Fund allotments.

Secondly, a federal law called the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) declared that, after 1983, the trustees of any retirement fund may become personally liable

for any deficiency in the fund account.

COSAR initially coordinated a 403B plan offered by the Presbyterian Ministers' Fund under which all contributions by churches and individuals were credited to a person's account and would become their own regardless of whether or not they leave the denomination or served for less than seven years.⁵

Although this plan has undergone a number of changes, both in content and names, it still offers greater security and options for the current ministry.

None of the current active pastors are under the old PROP retirement program, but it's still reserved for those of us who are "superannuated" but not necessarily "indigent." **SR**

¹*Sabbath Recorder*, Vol. 68, #11, March 14, 1910, p. 322.

²*Sabbath Recorder*, Vol. 69, #20, November 14, 1910, p. 610.

³*Sabbath Recorder*, Vol. 71, #4, December 4, 1931.

⁴*SDB Yearbook, 1955, Report of the Committee on Ministerial Retirement*, p. 58.

⁵*SDB Yearbook, 1978, Report of the Committee on Support and Retirement (COSAR)*, p. 47.

Denominational Dateline

November

- 2-4 Coordinating Leadership Team, Seventh Day Baptist Center, Janesville, Wis.
11-13 South Atlantic Association, Miami, Fla.—Gordon Lawton
15 Carthage College, Kenosha, Wis.—Rob Appel
18-24 Denver, Colo.—Kirk Looper
19-20 Diaconate Workshop, Daytona Beach, Fla.—Andrew Camenga
22 Carroll College, Waukesha, Wis.—Appel
22-12/1 Arkansas—Calvin Babcock
23-27 Pittsburgh, Pa.—Lawton

- 26 Alle-Kiski Valley Fellowship SDB Church, Freeport, Pa.—Lawton

December

- 3 Hebron, Pa., Seventh Day Baptist Church—Camenga

January, 2006

- 22 Seventh Day Baptist Missionary Society Board of Managers Meeting in Westerly, R.I.—Looper
28 Berlin, N.Y., Seventh Day Baptist Church—Kevin Butler



2005 Sabbath School Teacher of the Year

James Goodrich of the North Loup, Neb., Seventh Day Baptist Church is the recipient of the Crystal Apple Award as the 2005 Sabbath School Teacher of the Year.

Jim received the award—consisting of a framed certificate and a crystal apple—during the awards ceremony at General Conference at Hope College in Holland, Mich., this past August.

People in North Loup know Jim as a faithful and creative Sabbath School teacher. He finds games and stories that enhance the lessons he teaches.

As he leads his upper elementary class, the young people and their parents are encouraged. They see in Jim's life a person obviously

dedicated to the Lord and His work. His teaching makes children want to attend his classes.

In evaluating Jim's more than 20 years of service as a Sabbath School teacher, one parent wrote, "I have worked with a number of children who have been in Jim's class, and they always have good things to say about him."

Yet, Jim provides more than just a fun time; he's teaching, and his students are learning.

The same parent commented that the children who have been



Jim Goodrich (left) receives the Crystal Apple Award from BCE Executive Director Andrew Camenga.

through Jim's class "know their Bible and enjoy studying God's Word." **SR**

Scripture Memory Honor Roll

Vision Christian Fellowship of Westerly, R.I., and the Central SDB Church of Mitchellville, Md., achieved something no other churches have: They are the first to be placed on the Scripture Memory Honor Roll.

How did they achieve this honor? By having a completion rate in the Scripture Memory Program that exceeded 50 percent of their average worship attendance. In other words, a lot of people in those two churches committed themselves to memorizing portions of Scripture—and they followed through.

While the challenge of the Honor Roll isn't easy, two churches have now proved it is possible. Will your church be listed on the Honor Roll next year?

Join the Roll!

For a list of the 2005–2006 memory verses, contact the SDB Board of Christian Education at (607) 587-8527, or check their website: EducatingChristians.org



At the annual meetings of the Central Africa Conference (CAC) in Blantyre, Malawi, in August of 2004, plans were made to travel to Mozambique to meet with the Seventh Day Baptist churches there. They needed help filling out their organizational papers and registering with the government.

The Mozambique leaders asked for someone who could speak Portuguese to help in translating. The plan was for personnel to meet in Malawi, where the work had started, and then travel to Beira, Mozambique, by automobile.

We marveled as we saw God working in the plans and activities of this trip.

The Missionary Society office here in the U.S. sent an e-mail to our brethren in Brazil, requesting that they send someone to Mozambique to help with the translation and organizational activities. They quickly responded with the name of Pastor Jonas Sommer. Then it was simply a matter of getting the constitution, by-laws, and statement of beliefs to Mozambique before setting a date for the visit.

After preliminary plans were settled, we coordinated with Malawi on transporting the representatives who would be going with us.

Following the receipt of the constitution and supporting documents from Brazil, the Mozambique officers developed their own constitution and the related documents that they needed to register with the government. Besides completing this initial preparation before we arrived, they had also started communicating with the government regarding registration.

Everything was set up and agreed upon by all parties involved. We were set to leave the U.S. on August 28. Since Pastor Sommer would be in the

States for the World Federation meetings after General Conference, it would be simple for him to meet me at JFK Airport in New York City. Our flight would take us to Johannesburg, South Africa, and then to Blantyre, Malawi.

Except for some minor troubles, we were blessed throughout our trav-

We met with leaders to discuss the constitution and related documents. This helped them finalize their copies, make corrections, and take them to the government offices.

els and meetings. We were delayed a total of seven hours before arriving in Malawi at 7:00 p.m., so we were especially thankful to see a delegation there to meet us. We soon settled down for a sound sleep since we were scheduled to leave at 6:00 the next morning for the eight-hour trip ahead of us.

The next day, we ended up not leaving until about 7:00 a.m. Then we had trouble with the van along the way and didn't get into Beira until after 10:00 p.m.

On Friday, Pastor Nantikwa worked on the van, changing needed parts. We tried to return to Blantyre on Sunday, but this time a dead battery stopped our trek.

Since we weren't close to a town with a battery charger, a passing motorist drove some of the members of our party into town to charge the battery. It was late in the day by then, so they slept in a hotel while the rest of us stayed with the van for security

reasons. The next day, we were able to finish the return trip to Blantyre.

While in Beira, we met with some of the pastors and Conference leaders to discuss their constitution and related documents. This helped them finalize their copies, make corrections, and take them to the government offices. Much of the work for registering had been completed.

We met with the mayor who explained how long it would take to get the registration done. We discussed Seventh Day Baptist polity with the government leaders. They were encouraged by our being there.

The presentations in Mozambique were done mostly by Pastor Jonas and Mr. Ned Lozani, General Secretary of the CAC. The Mozambique members depended upon their knowledge of Portuguese and Chichewa to communicate. I appreciated the work that had been done by those from Malawi and Brazil before and during the time we were there. I praise God for the leaders who were able to attend the meetings.

We left the Mozambique General Secretary with enough funds to pay for the registration and a few other needed items. A computer and photocopier would help them with correspondence, translating, and developing tracts and study materials. The General Secretary also needs a means of transportation to enable him to visit the churches in Mozambique. The churches are far apart and transportation within that country is not reliable.

May I recommend that a couple of churches adopt them as a missions program? They need about \$100 per month to pay for their office and for those who do the translation and paper work. Funds are also needed to pay for the tracts and study materials from Brazil, and for printing and postage. **SR**



the BEACON

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

November 2005

“Fear not”

by Micayla Neher

*“Fear not for I am with you,
do not be dismayed for
I am your God. I will strengthen
you and help you. I will
uphold you with my
righteous right hand”
(Isaiah 41:10).*

There are a lot of things to be afraid of. This fact was brought home by Hurricane Katrina’s devastation and the aftermath of Hurricane Rita in the Gulf, numerous tornado touchdowns in the Midwest, and major forest fires in the West.

These are some pretty major things to fear. But what about the “little” things? Like being afraid of bugs, frogs, leeches, snakes, thunderstorms, even tests.

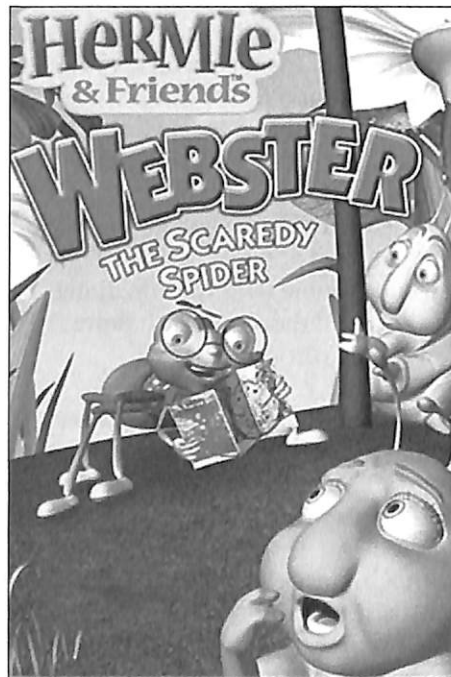
We all have fears. But God has told us many times to not be afraid because He is always with us.

The other day, I was watching a *Hermie and Friends* movie with my nephew. (I don’t know how many of you are familiar with “Hermie” and “Wormie,” but they are kind of like the characters in *Veggie Tales*, only bugs.)

This particular video was about their friend, Webster the spider. A “scaredy spider.”

The plot centered around Webster’s visit to the garden. At first, everyone was afraid of him because he was a spider. But what they didn’t know was that he was even more afraid of *them*. After all, he’s also afraid of things like sticks, stones, and leaves.

Webster meets Hermie and Wormie, and they try to help by telling him that God is always with him.



It’s amazing what we can learn from kids’ movies!

We learn that even though we may be afraid of taking that math test on Tuesday, or failing to score a goal, or even graduating from high school, God is right there—taking the tests with us and helping us score those goals.

God will never leave us.

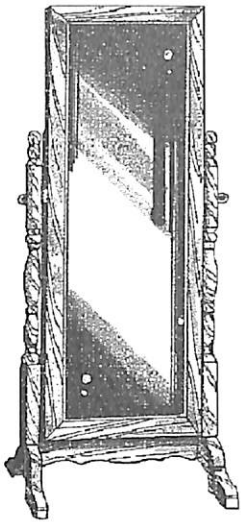
Did He ever leave Daniel when he was in the lions’ den? Did He ever leave Moses when he confronted Pharaoh? Did He ever leave Jonah when he was in the belly of the fish? The answer is a resounding, “No!” And He’ll never leave us, either.

When we’re “down and out,” we often feel like we’re all alone. But those are the times when God is closest to us. All we have to do is say, “Hey, God, I’m feeling down. Will you stand with me and keep me company?” At least, that’s what I do, and it always makes me feel a lot better.

And another point: God loves to hear from us. When you’re bummed out or simply feel like talking to someone, just “call Him up” and tell Him how your life is going.

So, the next time you’re feeling scared, remember Isaiah 41:10. Just crawl into God’s lap, “fear not,” and let Him take care of you.

Until next time, God bless. **SR**



Reflections

by Leanne Lippincott

"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face." —1 Cor. 13:12

Autumn glows

It's always been difficult for me to name a favorite season since each one has its own delights and drawbacks. Living in the Midwest, I especially enjoy autumn.

Winter officially begins on December 21, which means that fall is still alive and well when the "falling" has more to do with snowflakes than leaves.

I have fond memories of autumn while growing up in Milton, Wis.

I lived on Plumb Street, and it was a plum location. In our large front yard, we raked up the leaves that parachuted from curbside black walnut trees and neighboring maple trees. We then gathered them into piles that we leaped on with abandon.

My siblings and I took turns "burying" each other under the rainbow foliage, trying hard not to swallow any wayward stems. We also constructed flat "houses" on the lawn by strewing leaves to outline each room.

The best part of the "leaf gathering" occurred when Dad tossed the leaves into a rusty wheelbarrow for transport to our backyard. He pushed the leaves past a small, cement duck pond and dumped them in a dirt circle just beyond the garden. At dusk, Dad would light a match, cautioning us to step back so the resulting bonfire didn't turn into a funeral pyre.

I spent many memorable evenings in the fall charcoaling marshmallows and scorching hot dogs over burning leaves and twigs.

Standing there in the crisp air and enjoying the heat that emanated from the dying embers, my childish thoughts sometimes turned serious.

I thought of the glowing sparks that had danced about just moments before. As they shot skyward like miniature fireworks, did they eventually reach heaven? Did some angel capture those sparks in a glass globe and use them to light the way through dark storm clouds? Would that angel use them to light my way when I died?

An instant later, I was a carefree kid again, cremating yet another marshmallow as it fell off my "toasting stick."


Today, I still enjoy autumn immensely, although city ordinances



here in Janesville keep me from building bonfires in my yard.

I especially enjoy fall sunsets. They seem 10 times more brilliant than those that occur at other times of the year. My late husband used to tell me that increased pollution made the colors of autumn sunsets seem more intense. (Denny was such a romantic.)

Autumn also means exciting football games, lovely "mums" of every hue, caramel apples, Indian corn, apple cider, delicious squash, and colorful gourds and pumpkins. It means warm days and cool nights; sweaters and sweatshirts; busy, nut-gathering squirrels and migrating geese; Thanksgiving turkeys and expanding belts. Most of all, it means thankful, expanding hearts.

Enjoy God's gift of autumn. I know that I will! 



***In our large front yard,
we raked up the leaves that
parachuted from curbside trees.
We then gathered them into piles
that we leaped on with abandon.***



*Making Christ's Mission
OUR Mission*

Luke 4:18

Houghton, N.Y. August 6-12, 2006



The President's Page
by Robert Van Horn

The battle is the Lord's

"The spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18).

In his book, *Freedom from Bondage*, Neil Anderson tells of being a young pastor who saw the church as a beautiful sailing ship—a ship in perfect condition. It had new, immaculate sails to catch the wind, allowing it to move easily across a glassy sea.

Anderson visualized this ship as the "perfect" church. Everyone was well-dressed, and it had a church school for all ages. It also boasted children's clubs, recreational activities, a wonderful choir, and large offerings.

Then he saw another ship, one ravaged by time, weather, and war. Anderson began to realize that this second ship was the one that he needed to be on.

This imperfect vessel represented a church full of people in need of a savior. People who battle drug and alcohol addiction, and sexual bondage. Those who harbor anger and hatred, resulting in a bitterness that eats away at their very souls.

Eventually, Anderson realized that these two crafts were actually the same ship. The church is made

up of those who start out on a ravaged ship, but that vessel is ultimately transformed by Christ into a pristine one.

I can relate to Anderson's vision, because I have also found that spiritual warfare is continually being waged around us.

This was the apostle Paul's view as he shared that we wage war not against flesh and blood, and that

Paul shared that we wage war not against flesh and blood, and that we need to put on the whole armor of God.

we need to put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18).

In 1 Peter 5:8-9, our enemy is described as a roaring lion that is looking for someone to devour.

I'm afraid that many in the Church today are offended by these descriptions. They choose to hide like ostriches with their heads in the sand. These Christians refuse—either because of pride, fear, or some other trick of the devil—to become involved in the fight.

Some churches have done away

with songs like *Onward Christian Soldiers* (2 Titus 2:3 and 1 Corinthians 9:7) because the word "soldier" is too warlike.

We often pretend that everything is going okay in our lives. In actuality, we may be struggling with some outward battle or with ones that occur behind closed doors.

Some believers contend that we Christians can't let others know that we have a "chink in our armor." *What would they think of me?* Those very thoughts are the work of the devil, who specializes in keeping us in bondage.

The Lord has called the Church to carry out His purpose: Good News for the poor, freedom for prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, release from oppression.

Would you even recognize that a person sitting next to you in church is in a terrible battle? And if you *did* realize that, would you know what to do to help them win their fight? Why would that "pew-mate" even share his or her trial with you? What are you doing to show that person the love of Christ?

Church, let's wake up and accept our calling! 2 Chronicles 20:15 reminds us, "...Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's."

Remember this as you seek to "Make Christ's Mission Your Mission." **SR**



by Executive Director
Rob Appel

The Mission

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference unites, encourages, and equips local Seventh Day Baptist churches in their endeavors to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20).

Our new Conference Mission Statement declares that we will help local churches in their efforts to fulfill the Great Commission. The Conference will do this through encouragement, team unity, and equipping congregations with tools and training.

As a Conference of churches, this is what we are striving to do. As a Conference of individuals, there is much more that we *can* do.

Our Conference president, Rev. Robert Van Horn, has selected the theme of "Making Christ's Mission Our Mission."

"But what was Christ's mission?" you might ask. He preached the message of *Good News to the poor, to announce pardon to prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the burdened and battered free.*

Okay, so you're thinking, "How am I to give sight to the blind and free prisoners? How do I set the burdened and battered free while telling the Good News to the poor?"

- The poor—Do not limit your ministry only to well-to-do people. Christ's message was for all!
- Prisoners—Those who are in spiritual darkness.
- The blind—Those who are sick with sin, troubled in a lifestyle, or trying to overcome an addiction.

- The burdened—The broken-hearted.

During the coming months, President Van Horn will help us discover how we can Make Christ's Mission Our Mission. I would like to focus on that challenge right now.

Making Christ's mission our mission today

As natural disasters swell, so do the ranks of needy Americans. Many charities are shrinking rather than expanding because giving goes to specific needs rather than covering across-the-board requirements.

Hurricane Katrina devastated the U.S. Gulf Coast region. We all saw—and some even experienced firsthand—the stories of those affected most by the storm. If you are truly one of Christ's followers, you had to be moved by this tragedy. I know I was.

Some charities contend that their receipts are down because much of the giving has been earmarked for a specific natural disaster. (This was also true in 2001 after the horrific September 11 terrorist attacks.)

The targeted giving is causing layoffs in multiple charities and is eroding public trust in some of these organizations. It is also contributing

to donor fatigue, following the generous outpouring of help triggered by September 11.


Many local chapters of the American Red Cross are among those suffering declines in giving. United Way donations also are down. Last year, the Salvation Army was severely affected by the lack of Christmas donations in their kettles. Moreover, tithes and other offerings are noticeably down in local churches.

What does this mean to you?

This all means that giving needs to start at home! We cannot help but be affected by the pictures we see of the Gulf states. However, we need to contribute wisely. If our local church suffers, we are not being very good stewards of what God gives us.

Many churches have helped immensely in the recovery efforts in the Gulf region, but we don't hear much about that because the mainstream media usually fails to report it.

Go to Google on your computer and type in "Churches Helping in Katrina." You'll be amazed at the number of ministries that have been—or still are—involved in the recovery. That is where it is *supposed* to start—with the church.

Charitable giving to other causes is commendable, but remember to give to your local church. Your involvement and generosity will go a long way! 

Officer reporting in

by Morgan Shepard

Morgan Shepard is the Financial Director for the SDB Memorial Fund, and treasurer for the General Conference. As a Commander in the Civil Engineer Corps, U.S. Navy Reserve, he is serving in Iraq.

As you read this, I will have reached the halfway point of my tour in Iraq. As I look back, a lot has happened in the past three months.

I have traveled all over Iraq—from Baghdad in the south, to Syria in the west, Turkey in the north, and Iran in the east.

I've seen the urban sprawl of Mosul and Baghdad, the "grandeur" of Saddam's palaces, the arid countryside of central Iraq, and the beautiful mountains of the north and east. I've traveled by helicopter, Stryker, Humvee, and even in an armored Ford Excursion with a DVD player!

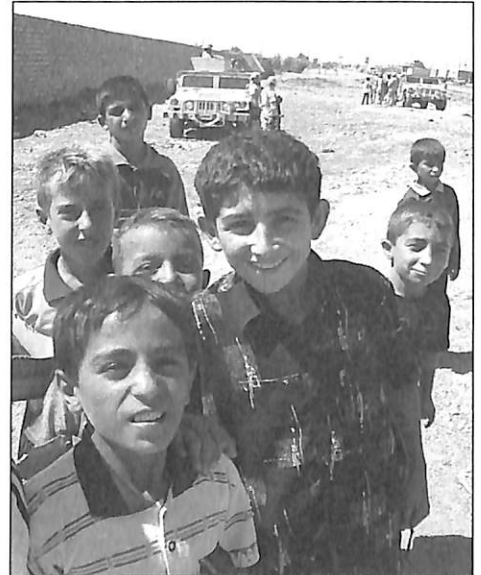
I've experienced 120°-plus temperatures, a choking sandstorm, the cool evenings of fall, and the soon-to-be rains of winter.

Darkness fell on Morgan Shepard during this midday sandstorm in Iraq.



plished more than she could ever imagine—and that's a lot with a 1-year-old! I realize more and more how much I love and miss both of them.

I work with dedicated military service members, civilians, and contractors, all helping the Iraqis rebuild their country one day at a time. Clean water is starting to flow, lights are staying on at night, clinics and hospitals are treating the sick, schools are again educating the children, and Iraqi police



Young boys watch as many from around the world help to rebuild Iraq for their future.

I work with dedicated military service members, civilians, and contractors, all helping the Iraqis rebuild their country one day at a time. We rely upon the protection of Psalm 91, the promise of Isaiah 40:3-5, and the hope of Romans 5:3-5.


Through video teleconferencing, I've been able to see my son, Benjamin, walk (and now run!), turn a year old, and get his first haircut. I've marveled as my wife, Kate, accom-

patrol the streets and borders.

I've worshipped with fellow believers who have a greater appreciation of the blessings they enjoy, even while far from home and loved ones. We lift each other up in prayer and

share God's blessings in our lives. Some of us are even discovering just what God wants us to learn in the desert.

We rely upon the protection of Psalm 91, the promise of Isaiah 40:3-5, and the hope of Romans 5:3-5.

So, what does it all mean? I don't know. It's just that a lot has happened during the last three months. How was *your* summer? 

“Service Classifieds” idea takes shape

by Ginny Burdick and Amy Goodrich

Over the past few years, SDB Young Adults have been working on an idea to get more involved in the denomination, especially through service.

Last year’s Pre-Con discussion morphed into a idea, not for a program but for an organized exchange of information for the good of the Conference, both now and in the future.

With the help of the Coordinating Leadership Team and the Missionary Society, this idea is taking shape. A person has been designated as a contact for individuals and churches who desire information, or want to be connected with resources for possible service.

Individuals can send information to the contact person concerning their desire for service. This may include short-term or long-term missions, service projects, or even relocation. After the initial contact, the resource person will send a form to be filled out with some personal information, the length of service they are looking for, the time frame they are available, along with the talents and skills they possess that could

contribute to a church or project.

On the other side, churches may also send information to the contact person about their needs for human resources. These needs may be short-term or long-term. The function of the contact person will then be to compile the workers and the projects to connect them with each other.

The needs can be general or specific. For instance, a church may desire help with music ministry. The contact person would list those individuals with indicated musical ability (available for the requested time) and send the church their contact information. It then becomes the church’s responsibility to contact these individuals and conduct the “matching” process. Also, individuals or groups wishing to serve may receive information from the contact person on those churches that are requesting human resources.

Please note: *The contact person does not finalize matching projects, but only assists churches and individuals in finding each other to meet their needs.*

Churches should be aware that not every need may be met. It is up to the individuals to look where help

is needed and to choose to serve. The idea is for a more formalized “Service Classifieds.”

It should also be noted that all age groups are included. Senior saints, youth, and adults wishing to serve or relocate are welcome, along with families or individuals wanting to find an area where they can use their talents and abilities within a church or new church plant.

This idea has evolved out of a desire that the Young Adults have felt to help in the growth of the local churches. This is a need of the Conference, and the Young Adults hope this will provide an opportunity to utilize our resources. In the past, people have wished to serve in projects without knowing who to contact or where to start. This concentrates information in the hands of one central person so there are no questions as to who to approach for information. With this in place, we hope that opportunities are not lost.

David Davis—a member of General Council and the Seattle (Wash.) Area SDB Church—is the designated contact for this new opportunity. You may phone him at (425) 226-0102 or e-mail: dave@davisplano.com. **SR**

Matthew Berg ordained at Conference time

On the morning of August 7, 2005, the first day of General Conference at Hope College in Holland, Mich., many pastors and well-wishers attended the ordination of Pastor Matthew Berg.

Matt’s good friend, Stephen Osborn—Associate Pastor of the Milton, Wis., SDB Church—led the service. It included a Scripture reading by new SDB Historian Nick Kersten, and remarks from Steve Packard, a member of the New Wine Fellow-



ship in Champaign, Ill., where Matt had been serving as pastor.

Kurt Berg of Riverside, Calif., gave a touching and challenging charge to his son, and Pastor Rodney Henry of the Denver, Colo., SDB Church led the prayer during the laying on of hands (*see photo*).

After a certificate presentation by Pastor George Calhoun (Senior Pastor at Milton SDB), the Rev. Matthew Berg closed the special ordination service with the benediction. **SR**

Marriages

Fitz-Randolph – FitzRandolph.—Ronald Fitz-Randolph and Merry Etta FitzRandolph were united in marriage on June 5, 2004, at the Seventh Day Baptist Church in Milton, WI. Pastor George D. Calhoun officiated.

Grahn – Cullen.—Eric Grahn and Kellie Cullen were united in marriage on October 2, 2004, at the SDB Church in Milton, WI, with Pastor George D. Calhoun officiating.

Shook – Randall.—William Shook and Miriam Randall were united in marriage on June 11, 2005,

at the SDB Church in Milton, WI. Pastor George D. Calhoun officiated.

Hintz – Camenga.—Jeff Hintz and Kerith Camenga were united in marriage on July 30, 2005, at the Milton, WI, SDB Church. Pastor George Calhoun officiated, assisted by the bride's father, Rev. Justin Camenga.

Lubke – Zamzow.—Neil Lubke and Katie Zamzow were united in marriage on August 19, 2005, at the SDB Church in Milton, WI. Pastors George D. Calhoun and Stephen G. Osborn officiated.

Births

Bloedel.—A son, Joseph Aaron Bloedel, was born to Jeff and Abbi (Marteny) Bloedel of University Park, IA, on December 9, 2003.

Bernhardt.—A son, Peyton Isaac Bernhardt, was born to Travis and Heather (Wright) Bernhardt of Manitowoc, WI, on July 11, 2004.

Mazza.—A son, Frank Adam Mazza Jr., was born to Frank and Maura Mazza of Shiloh, NJ, on February 17, 2005.

Sloan.—Twins Kaiden Charles Sloan and Melanie Louise Sloan were born to Gary and Karen Sloan of Shiloh, NJ, on June 5, 2005.

Davis.—A daughter, Sadie Elizabeth Davis, was born to Brian and Wendy Davis of Shiloh, NJ, on July 5, 2005.

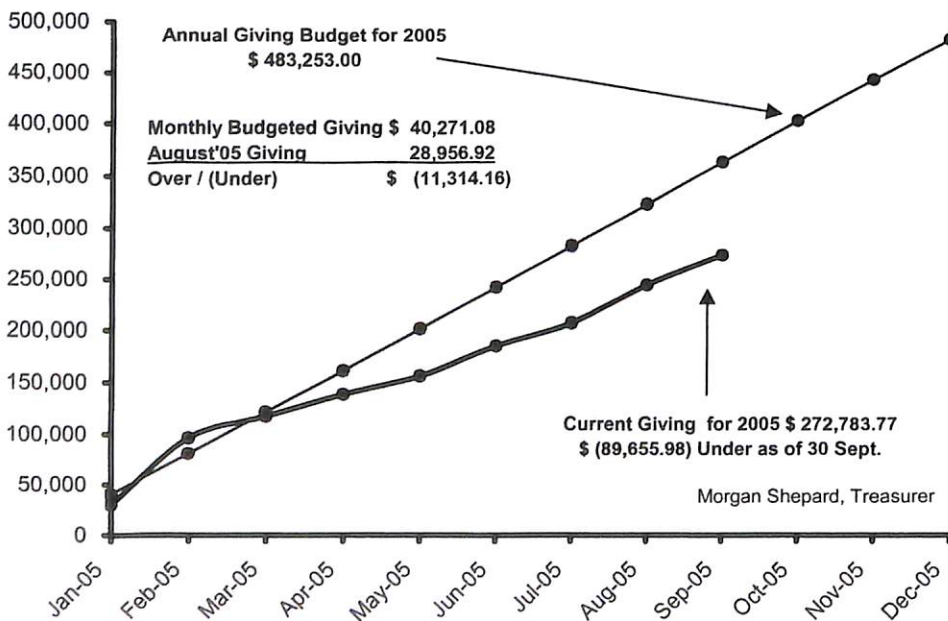
Ryschon.—A son, Aiden Thomas Ryschon, was born to Jordan and Kristen Ryschon of Scotia, NE, on August 16, 2005.

Bernhardt.—A son, Tyson Andrew Bernhardt, was born to Travis and Heather (Wright) Bernhardt of Manitowoc, WI, on September 7, 2005.

Sykora.—A son, Ivan Nikolos Sykora, was born to Leif and Mandi (Cruzan) Sykora of Milton, WI, on September 13, 2005.

Ryschon.—A daughter, Piper Danielle Ryschon, was born to Benjamin and Jeana Ryschon of Scottsbluff, NE, on September 16, 2005.

Current Giving 2005

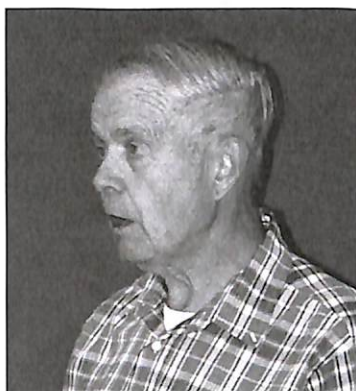


Obituary

Bowyer.—William B. Bowyer, 74, of Ashaway, R.I., died peacefully on October 5, 2005, at his home. He was the beloved husband of Gwendolyn (Crandall) Bowyer.

“Bill” was born on March 24, 1931, in Quincy, Mass., the son of William and Leona M. Bowyer. After graduating from Quincy High School, he received a B.A. degree from Bates College in 1953, and his master’s in education from Boston University.

He served in the U.S. Army and worked as a guidance counselor in the Warwick, R.I., school system for 30 years. He also served on the Hopkinton, R.I., and Chariho school committees.



*William Bowyer
1931–2005*

Bill was a long-time member and a deacon of the First Seventh Day Baptist Church of Hopkinton in

Ashaway. He later joined the Rockville, R.I., SDB Church.

After completing the T.I.M.E. program, he became a lay pastor, serving in SDB churches in Middletown, Conn.; Lost Creek, W.Va.; and Brookfield, N.Y. He also pastored the Rockville church.

Besides his wife, he will be sadly missed by his three children, David of Ashaway, Ellen Allen of Hopkinton, and Carol Crandall of Westerly, R.I.; one brother, Robert, of Auburn, Maine; three grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

A memorial service will be held at a later date, with private burial in the First Hopkinton Cemetery.

New members

Milton, WI

George Calhoun, pastor

Joined after testimony

Jeff Bloedel

Margie Strouse

Meagan Matthews

Jackson Butler

Joined by letter

Bethany Thompson-Gordon

Morgan Shepard

Kate Shepard

Women’s Society Updates

Notice: The e-mail address of the Women’s Board Banquet Committee Chairman Gail Price has been changed. It is now: juanitagail@aol.com.

Clarification: The SDB Women’s Board is still located in Daytona Beach, Fla. Only the SCSC Committee has changed its location to Milton, Wis.

Pastoral Changes



Accepted Calls

Bill Burks

to Fort Worth, TX

Glenn Robin

to Adams Center, NY

Wray Winborne

to Daytona Beach, FL

Retirement

Don Richards

from Middle Island, WV

Please send all your church news to PO Box 1678, Janesville WI 53547

-or-

editor@seventhdaybaptist.org

Robe of Achievement Nominations

The SDB Women's Society is accepting nominations for the Robe of Achievement for 2006. Please consider a woman in your church who meets the following criteria for nomination:

- *Was/is active as a volunteer in some phase of denominational effort*
- *Has shown evidence of special service with her family and/or community*
- *Must be a committed Christian*
- *Must be an active member of a local Seventh Day Baptist church.*

A complete résumé must be submitted containing a life history, including her achievements and activities. Without a résumé in hand, the committee cannot make a competent choice among many nominees. If an individual has been nomi-

nated before, and you still want that person considered, please resubmit the name as well as the updated résumé.

Send all nominations to:

**Robe Nominations
Audrey Fuller
908 N. Colonial Cir.
Daytona Beach, FL 32117**

or apply on-line at: www.sdbwboard.org

**Deadline:
March 31, 2006**

For further information, write Audrey Fuller or call her at (386) 252-6560.

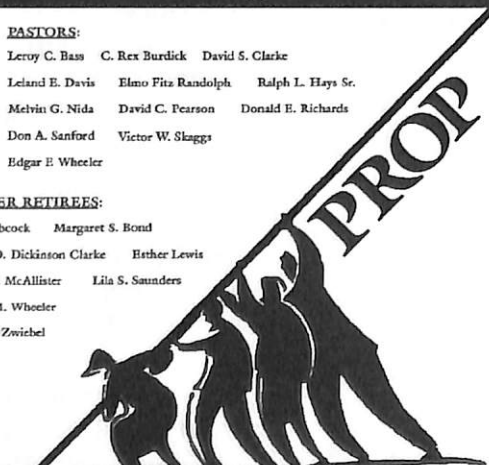
Give to those who gave so much.

PASTORS:

Leroy C. Bass C. Rex Burdick David S. Clarke
Leland E. Davis Elmo Fitz Randolph Ralph L. Hays Sr.
Melvin G. Nida David C. Pearson Donald E. Richards
Don A. Sanford Victor W. Skaggs
Edgar E. Wheeler

OTHER RETIREES:

Ida Babcock Margaret S. Bond
Ethel D. Dickinson Clarke Esther Lewis
Jean D. McAllister Lila S. Saunders
Ethel M. Wheeler
Jannita Zwichel



Pastors Retirement Offering Project

Contributions are needed for continuing support of SDB retired pastors and denominational workers, and surviving spouses of pastors.

Please donate to PROP!

PROP gets help

The SDB Memorial Fund trustees voted to provide PROP (the Pastors Retirement Offering Project) a generous grant of \$50,000.

Plus, the fund will match the next \$50,000 donated to support our retired pastors and denominational workers. **Please note:** This matching program runs through the end of 2005.

**PROP
Seventh Day Baptist Center
PO Box 1678
Janesville WI 53547-1678**

KEVIN'S

ORNER

“I live to serve you”

“Put three Seventh Day Baptists in one room and you’ll wind up with four opinions!”

Over the years, that well-worn quip *used* to be funny.

Yes, it’s true that SDBs maintain a strong “freedom of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.” Yes, we can often “agree to disagree and do it agreeably.” But I believe that a roomful of Seventh Day Baptists today might have more areas of agreement than not.

I work at the Center— of the universe??

One recent caller seemed shocked that “we” (the almighty workers at the Conference Center; hoo-boy!) would “allow” our lone Sabbathkeepers—those located far from one of our churches—to worship at other churches on Sunday.

I have a feeling that the person on the phone did not fully grasp Seventh Day Baptist polity (how we govern ourselves). He must have had us confused with a system that has “hierarchical headquarters” instead of an office center full of servants. (I told the caller that our people likely observe Sabbath in their own home, then may attend another church for corporate worship and fellowship.)

A review of this month’s features, and a prolonged glance at our organizational chart on the cover, provides a clearer picture of how SDBs come together and work for the sake of the Kingdom. (A larger version of the chart is at our website: seventhdaybaptist.org.)

In no uncertain terms, the chart points to the concept of the “Priesthood of All Believers.”

Who sits at the top of the chart? Individual members of our churches. Then come the local churches. The General Conference, with all of its committees and agencies and councils, comes underneath to serve the local church.

I appreciate how Executive Director Rob Appel (*see p. 21*) reminds us of the Conference’s newly-revised mission statement:

“The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference unites, encourages, and equips local Seventh Day Baptist churches in their endeavors to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20).”

The Conference exists—ever since it was formed in 1802—to serve the local church, and to do tasks corporately what we cannot do individually. We should never issue edicts or decrees, nor demand or expect absolute uniformity.

Common beliefs

One area that does call for some agreement is with our Statement of Belief. Its preamble says, “The following statement is not intended to be exhaustive, but is an expression of our common belief, which is derived from our understanding of Scripture.”

Much preparation went into our current 1987 Statement of Belief. We were approaching the 50th anniversary of the 1937 Statement, and many felt it was time for some new wording. With the need for extended prayer and study, and for first-and-second readings at Conference, this process took several years.

Working on the revised Statement was the focus of Pastors’ Conference in 1985, when I was a young guy just about to graduate from seminary. With all that “modern training,” I, of course, had all the answers. (Which likely made me look pretty stupid. Sorry, fellow attendees.)

I was *so* concerned with the theology and the phrasing and every little word.

In the two decades that have passed, I have come to realize a few things:

Documents are important. Words are important. But even more vital is how we live out those words and statements. How do we interact with each other at Conference? How do we work together in the local church? Do we love one another?

Lessons in servanthood

One time when I asked to get change for a tip at a restaurant, the cashier looked me straight in the eye and immediately replied, “I live to serve you.”

Now, her Brooklyn accent and ever-so-slight smirk revealed her witty sense of sarcasm. But it made me think how that should be our reply to fellow covenant members. That should be my reply as I field phone calls and e-mails.

“I live to serve you.”

That should be our reply to the One who gave us the example by declaring that he “did not come to be served, but to serve” (Matt. 20:28).

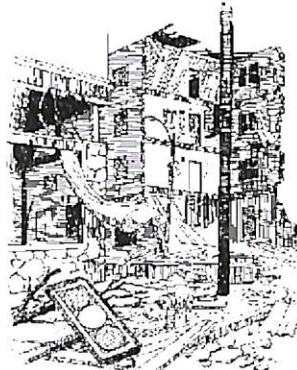
What a Year!



Hurricanes



Floods



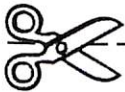
Earthquakes

Your gift to the SDB United Relief Fund provides help for medical and emergency needs both here and abroad.

Please give generously to the SDB United Relief Fund through your local church on Thanksgiving Sabbath, or mail your gift directly to:

*SDB
United Relief Fund
P.O. Box 1678
Janesville, WI
53547-1678*

**Please remember the
United Relief Fund
on November 26.**



YA Year-End Retreat

Camp Wakonda, Milton, WI

Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2005 to Sunday, Jan. 1, 2006

Name: _____ Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Secondary Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Traveling by (circle one): Car Plane Bus

City and Carrier _____ Flight/Bus# _____

Arrival Date 12/ ____ /05 Arrival Time _____

Departure Date 1/ ____ /06 Departure Time _____

Cost of the retreat is \$15.00 if paid by Dec. 1, 2005. After that date, the cost is \$25.00.
Please send all checks and registration forms to **Aubrey Appel, 615 St. Johns Ave., Milton, WI 53563.**
If you have questions, contact Kecia Thompson Gordon at (608) 868-6130.