



The Sabbath RECORDER

Inside:

Bread in
the Manger
What's in
a Sermon?

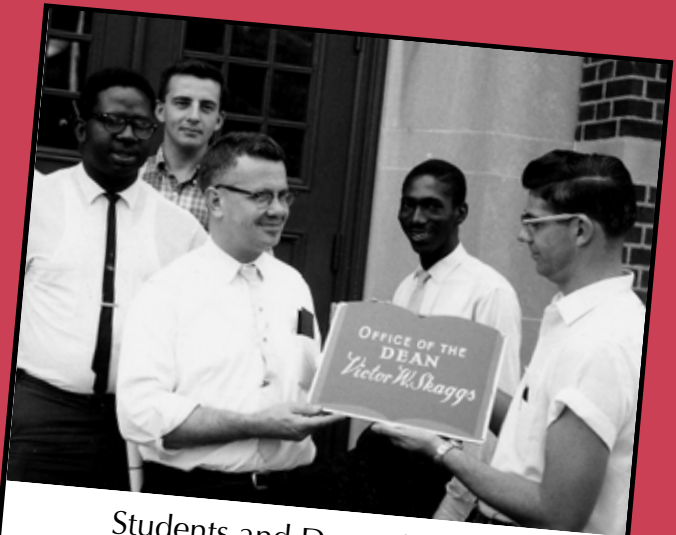
December 2009

News for and about Seventh Day Baptists



"The Gothic" at Alfred University

Educating our Leaders...



Students and Dean Skaggs at the Denominational Building in 1964

The Center on Ministry

Serving SDBs
for over 45 years



Summer Institute 2009 at the SDB Center



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 a people with a difference.

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



Visiting Orlando?

Join the
Kissimmee SDBs!
10:00 am Sabbath
School
11:00 am Worship
12:00 noon Meal

at St. Francis Anglican Church
2525 Fortune Road
Kissimmee FL 34744

Interim pastor
John Camenga 321-638-0456
Sister Donna
Brown Ducker 407-344-8763

From Pastor Dennis Palmer:

In January 2010, I will be entering a PhD program and will no longer be serving as pastor of the **Evangelical Seventh Day Baptist Church** in Lake Elsinore, Calif.

The church wants to fill the vacancy, but realizes that it cannot support a full-time pastor. If you wish to apply for the position as a bi-vocational pastor, send your resumé and cover letter to:

Dr. Ron and Chris Davis
219 West 11th St
Anderson IN 46016

For further information you may contact them personally at 765-425-2674 or contact Pastor Palmer at 951-657-9905.



EST. 1964

**SUMMER CHRISTIAN
SERVICE CORPS**

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

Churches: Do you wish to host an SCSC team for service and outreach?

Applications for team members and church projects have been posted on the Women's Board website at www.sdbwomen.org. Please read all information and send the completed application forms to: SCSC Committee, c/o Milton SDB Church, 720 E. Madison Ave., Milton WI 53563.

Student applications must be postmarked by **January 11, 2010**, and all church applications must be postmarked by **February 1, 2010**. There will

be NO exceptions.

Please note: the final week of the project will be at General Conference, July 25–31. We are also limiting our students to only two weeks of camp. Please see the website for more information. If you have any questions, please contact the SCSC Committee at the above address, or by e-mail at scsc@miltonsdb.org.



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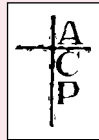


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Ⓔ = Editor's Circle members

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To Train and Serve our Pastors

The work of the Center on Ministry

by Gordon Lawton

The call of God to be a pastor always challenges the one called. Often our potential Seventh Day Baptist pastors feel a kinship with Isaiah—“Woe is me, for I am undone!” (Isa. 6:5)—and Gideon, “But Lord... how can I?” (Judges 6:15).

Yet God, through or in spite of His people, continues to call some to be pastors.

How God calls pastors

My own call came to a head when I attended Urbana '73 (a college-age missions conference) and realized that I had been saying “no” to God.

It was there, after I had graduated from college, that I yielded and said, “Okay Lord, if that is what you want, I will do it. But are you really sure this is what you have for me?” It was another 18 months before I started seminary to “investigate my calling.”

Three years later a church did call and I served three SDB congregations for just over 25 years. Then I was called to serve as the Director of Pastoral Services.

I tell you this because God calls each of us in different ways. Those who are called to be pastors are each unique and at a unique point in their lives, and we all can benefit from “book learning” and supervised or mentored on-the-job training.

Training: A long-time concern

For over 150 years, Seventh Day Baptists have been concerned about educating pastors. Even before that, some of the first SDB pastors in England (1600s) were very well educated. Several of our earliest pastors in the U.S. were educated in England, and SDBs were founders and on the

board of Rhode Island College, later named Brown University. Ebenezer David was a college-trained SDB from Philadelphia, ordained by the 1st Hopkinton (R.I.) church, who served in the Continental Army as a chaplain.

As this new country grew there was a focus on migration and survival, with not much time or money for higher education, nor were there schools on the frontier. But in the 1830s, Alexander Campbell began to challenge SDBs to become educated. This included pastors. You can read more at Don Sanford's *A Choosing People* (and see the note on page 8 about Alexander Campbell).

Our Seminary at Alfred

At the beginning of the 20th century, the seminary at Alfred, N.Y., was reorganized as Alfred School of Theology and continued to train pastors, especially SDB pastors. In the 1950s it became clear—with rising accreditation standards for Alfred University and reduced numbers of SDB students—that keeping the seminary open was not an economic option.

The Conference's standing committee on Ministerial Training (which had encouraged students to attend the School of Theology) dealt



The current Council on Ministry. Standing: Charlotte Chroniger and Barb Green. Seated: Steven James, Dale Thorngate, Ken Burdick and Steve Crouch.

with this issue for a number of years. Their reports in the late '50s and early 1960s are very interesting.

The outcome was that the seminary closed at Alfred University, and a Center on Ministerial Education was created and housed at the SDB Denominational Building in Plainfield, New Jersey.

The new C.O.M.E.

The Center's focus was to recruit new pastoral students to go to seminary, assist them financially, and offer course materials specific to SDBs that were not available at any seminary. This was the beginning of two programs: the Seminary Education Program and Summer Institutes.

The executive for the Center on Ministerial Education was given the title “Dean.” That is still a title I carry. In 1975 the COME was renamed Center on Ministry (COM) to affirm its broader scope.

While Rodney Henry was the Dean, he was also named Director

of Pastoral Services. That title described the expanding role of the Dean beyond the education of pastors to also include pastoral care to pastors and churches. I often tell those who want to know what I do that I am “a pastor to pastors.”

What do we do?

So what is COM?

COM is the Center on Ministry which encompasses the School of Ministry and the pastoral services functions. COM also stands for the Council on Ministry, six people elected by the Conference for 3-year terms, who oversee and guide the work of the Director of Pastoral Services. The Council is in the process of reviewing and updating the purpose of the COM.

Participants in the Seminary Education Program are loaned money to aid in their training. In exchange, they promise to serve an SDB church as pastor for at least five years, or they will repay the loan. There is

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 ”

credit given for each year of service that amounts to 20% of the total loan. Currently there are 10 students in this program with all but one being part-time students. Please be sure to read some of their testimonies in this feature section.

The bi-vocational challenge

A challenge for us is that the majority of SDB pastors are not full-time. This is a function of the intimate size of most of our con-

gregations. While this is not “bad,” it requires that each seminary student must also have a bi-vocational plan.

Nine of our students are currently employed in a position that has potential to be their bi-vocational plan. Two are computer programmers and one is able to telecommute. Two are schoolteachers, a third is a trained teacher and a fourth has taught in college. One runs a B&B.

You get the picture. These are talented persons who are answering the call of God and His Church to prepare for ministry.

All of our students are ministering in their local churches, and two would be counted as pastors already. Others are considering or applying for this program, and the cost of schooling continues to rise.

Please continue to uphold COM and its ministry in your prayers, as well as those who are hearing God’s call to pastoral service. **SR**

I’m happy to share some short descriptions of the programs and help available from the SDB Center on Ministry. Many of these have a more complete description at the COM website, www.sdbministry.org. If you have more questions, or are directed to “contact the Dean,” then please e-mail me or call the SDB Center (608) 752-5055. —Gordon Lawton

COM Services in the SDB School of Ministry

- **Seminary Education Program.** Financial aid is provided for seminary students seeking a *Master of Divinity* in preparation for the pastorate.
- **Certificate Education Program.** Financial aid is provided for seminary students seeking a *Certificate* in preparation for the



COM’s first Dean,
Rev. Victor Skaggs

pastorate. Usually this would be a person who attends seminary but does not hold a Bachelor’s degree.

- **Bible College Pastoral Ministries Education Program.** Financial aid for students who are seeking a *Bachelor of Arts in Ministry* and do not plan to continue on to seminary. This is an on-campus program at one of two schools selected by the Council on Ministry.

- **Training In Ministry by Extension (T.I.M.E.).** On-line and on-campus intensive courses for those currently serving as a pastor of an SDB church.

- **Summer Institute.** Courses in SDB History, SDB Polity, and Sabbath Theology taught at the Seventh Day Baptist Center in Janesville, Wis.

- **Summer Internships.** An opportunity for college juniors or seniors to explore their call to ministry. If they go on to seminary there is a scholarship.

Also an opportunity for seminary students to have on-the-job training as a summer pastor. Matching funds are available to SDB churches that arrange for a summer intern (generously funded by the SDB Memorial Board).



Changing my life

by Charles R. Meathrell



There have been several “periods of transition” for me over the years. I think we can all say that to some degree, but for me, the last couple

of years have been such a time.

I remember arriving at seminary that first day. I was going to my first intensive course in Atlanta and had not gotten a sufficient grasp of the traffic. (I overcame that handicap quickly.) I was embarrassed.

I was the last person to show up for that class, which happened to be an Old Testament course. I

had that feeling where you are in a strange city with millions of people and you’re forced to interact with total strangers. Indeed, I expected the embarrassment as I walked through the door, all eyes on me. What I did not expect was the changing of my life.

The course—the first of many—would be the first to totally remake my ideas about Scripture and the deeper meaning it holds. Truly, this course helped me to fall in love with the Old Testament, and the same went for the following course on the Minor Prophets. (I’ll bet the folks in Middle Island, W.Va., are sick of hearing about Hosea.)

But Hosea tells this story for me! Hosea demonstrates the reality—

as does the Bible as a whole—of God *buying His people back*. As the Council on Ministry has helped me through the process of achieving this next step in my life, God has found a new way to buy me back, and that has made all the difference for me.

The whole experience has been incredible. It is for that reason that I have encouraged many around me to go to seminary—because it has been the most spiritually enriching experience of my life.

I may have gone into this experience nervous and embarrassed, but thus far I have come out deeply enriched and thankful to God. Praise Jesus! This is the place where He has brought me. God is SO good. **SR**

Ignorance overcome

by Owen Lynch Jr.



Tyndale Seminary in Toronto is second to none. At the heart of Canada’s largest city, the campus is a sample of one of the world’s most multicultural societies.

This is one aspect that enriches my experience as we explore the breadth and depth of the Christian faith.

At Tyndale there are people from all walks of life, in various stages of life, each with a testimony and passion for the work of God. Some have quit jobs to study, while others have come through remarkable pain and loss. But we all have an unwavering belief that this is the will of God for our lives.

I continue to work full-time to support my family, study, and fulfill my commitments to my church. As exhausting as that sometimes may

be, I count myself among the most blessed of all students. I thank God that not only is my local congregation supporting me, but the entire Seventh Day Baptist family.

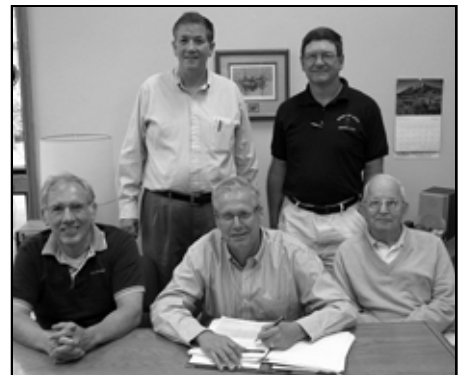
The Holy Spirit had been prompting me for several years to go in this direction. Truthfully, I was very apprehensive, thinking that such academic pursuits were not what they’re cracked up to be. I couldn’t have been further from the truth!

I thank God that He didn’t allow

my ignorance to block the view of His magnificence. I have encountered several professors—academically gifted men and women of God—who are also active pastors. They bring such rich experience to their teaching that my own love for the Word of God has deepened and my thoughts of our covenant-keeping God has widened.

In a nutshell, my experience at Tyndale University and Seminary has been priceless. **SR**

Members of COSAR. Seated is Earl Hibbard, Eric Rudert and Clayton Pinder. Standing left is Gordon Lawton, Director of Pastoral Services (the executive that relates to COSAR), and Jim Goodrich represents the Memorial Board.



Entrusted with so much

by Jamaal Fyffe



It used to be that my perspective on Jonah, and his refusal to go to Ninevah, was more or less unsympathetic. After all, when God instructed me to

head into a particular direction, I boldly complied in the most pious manner!

Forgive me for the sarcasm. Truth is, I can personally identify with Jonah in more ways than one. The most obvious of course, is the experience of hearing “the call” to ministry—and indeed I did.

The problem was that I did not respond, or at least I attempted not to for a time. Though I didn’t hear the audible voice of God instructing me to head toward that distant land called “Seminary,” I did hear it from significant people in my life.

Fast-forwarding to day one at Tynedale Seminary (Toronto, Canada), my first feeling was a peculiar one. In fact, I was as nervous as I had

ever been in my entire life. That was until my very first professor asked the class to stand with him for prayer.

Poof! At that point the nervousness had just about dissipated, and at that moment I began to understand how this experience would change my life’s perspective.

It dawned on me that my church, as well as my entire SDB family, had entrusted me with something important—and it was not to be taken lightly. I still felt a tremendous amount of pressure, and yet in responding to the “call” I had the support of my denomination, an honor I did not take lightly.

My experience at seminary has been life shifting in the sense that I feel better equipped to impact the secular world, knowing the impact will likely begin with the surrounding community of my home church.

I am deeply indebted to this family of believers who once trained me through SCSC, and now entrusts me with a greater responsibility. Thank you so much, and may God help us to change this shifting world. **SR**

COSAR

(Conference’s Committee on Support and Retirement)

To meet requirements of the changing IRS codes, the Committee on Support and Retirement (COSAR) worked hard in 2008 so that the new 403b retirement program for pastors and denominational employees would be in place by January 1, 2009. *(COSAR photo at left.)*

In addition to retirement, **COSAR:**

- Creates **salary recommendations** for pastors (at www.sdbministry.org)
- Created suggested **vacation guidelines** for pastors
- Provides **disability insurance** for pastors and Conference employees who are employed in their ministry at least 30 hours per week (current income info is needed annually)
- Administers **relief funds** for emergencies in pastor’s families (usually for medical bills)
- Administers **funds for counseling** for pastors and families
- Provides a **one-time moving grant** for retired pastors

COM’s Pastoral Services for the Churches

Help is available for:

- **Pastoral Search.** Materials for church self-evaluation and suggestions for the calling process. We can also help when calling a non-SDB.
- **Ordination and Accreditation.** Procedures are printed in the SDB Manual of Procedures and help in implementation is available from the Director of Pastoral Services.
- **Ministry Staff Development Program.** This three-year plan aids churches in creating a new program that will be ongoing as well as training the staff assistant for ministry. Church Planting Staff Assistants are possible. (Generously funded by the SDB Memorial Board.)
- **Mentors for new Pastors.** Seeks to connect new pastors with seasoned pastors for encouragement and learning.
- **Training for Denominational Workers.** Similar instructional material to New Worker Orientation (in other Services box), and Church Administered Lay Leader Education (CALLED) from the SDB Board of Christian Education.
- **Health, Harmony and Conflict Seminar.** To gain an understanding of conflict and some constructive options for dealing with conflict in the local church.



D.Min.—Retooling and Networking

by Kenneth Chroniger



The Doctor of Ministry is a graduate degree building on ministerial experience challenging the status quo in institutional ministry.

This quest took 10 years and learning involvement with McMaster Divinity College (part of McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada) and Acadia Divinity College (part of Acadia University in Nova Scotia, Canada).

In pursuing the D.Min., two opportunities occurred: Retooling and Networking.

Retooling the patterns of ministry happened under the guidance of men like Dr. John Webster, former professor of Divinity at Oxford University; Dr. Carl Schultz, professor of Hebrew at Houghton (N.Y.) College; and Dr. William Brackney, professor of Theology and Ethics at Acadia Divinity College.

Dr. Webster called for the use of the Creeds as a standard of Christian thought. Dr. Schultz stressed knowing the essence of the scriptural text and being able to communicate it. Dr. Brackney considered practices of ministry: the many roles of the pastorate, organizational life cycle, and the spiritual genealogy of the minister.

Networking brought Dr. Brackney to our General Conference, Pastors' Conference and Association meetings. Dr. Anthony Pappas' understanding of the small church became available through networking to our congregations. Pursuing this degree in a Canadian context allowed for

networking with pastors in both the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, and the Atlantic Baptist Convention.

What about the thesis? My thesis project was "The Covenant Document: A Tool for Centering Community inspired by the Trinity in the Seventh Day Baptist Congregation." Its elements included:

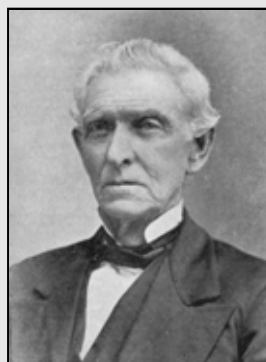
- Focus groups considering the state of the Covenant document among SDBs
- The existence of community within the Trinity
- The local congregation as an echo of the Trinitarian social relationships as an ecclesiological approach
- The Covenant concept as a means for community formation

through Biblical insights and Baptist history, and

- A linguistic analysis of 51 of our SDB church Covenants

Throughout this D.Min. process I was not alone. A partner in the journey is my wife, Peggy (Sutton) Chroniger. There was the interactive shepherding of Dr. William Brackney.

There are those who laid the foundation for this learning stage. My Dedication page reads, "I would dedicate this work to the Reverend Delmar Van Horn, my pastor in my later teen and college years at the Washington (D.C.) Seventh Day Baptist Church; the Reverend Ernest K. Bee Jr., my mentor and friend; and my parents, Pratt and Rose Chroniger." **SR**



Father of SDB Education

Rev. Alexander Campbell (1801-1888)

Reared and educated a Presbyterian, Campbell became an SDB in 1825 and was the leading spirit in establishing the DeRuyter Institute in 1837, the first of 15 such schools formed by Seventh Day Baptists. He was also an evangelist of wide, successful experience.

Campbell was pastor of SDB churches at Westerly, R.I.; DeRuyter, Adams Center, West Edmeston and Verona (all in New York). He served as president of the Seventh Day Baptist Tract Society, joint editor and proprietor of the *Protestant Sentinel* and the *Seventh Day Baptist Register*. His autobiography, edited by Rev. Charles Alexander Burdick, was published in Watertown, N.Y., in 1883.

(From SDBs in Europe and America, Vol. 2, p. 1368)

Best of both seminaries

by Dustin Mackintosh



Six years. I have been in seminary for six years—more than one-fifth of my life, and what an amazing journey!

I have enjoyed the strengths of two different seminaries. My time at Fuller Seminary in California was intellectually and theologically challenging. There I learned to really dive into the Scripture, understand the Word in its original language and culture, and I began to see the “been there done that” Bible as vast, unexplored territory full of brutally challenging truth

and beautifully redemptive grace.

My theology was challenged and I was driven to reexamine every belief in the light of God’s Word. But what a joy it is to discover the truths of God for yourself.

At Fuller, I learned a ton. I learned how much I didn’t know, and I learned the tools and skills for a lifetime of fruitful discovery.

My time at Denver Seminary has been very focused on preparing to be a pastor. At Denver, I have learned to preach in such a way that the congregation hears, understands and remembers. I have learned the details of church growth, church ministry, pastoral care, Christian education, and all sorts of other practical goodies.

But out of all of my experiences at Denver Seminary, the gold medal goes to the mentorship program and my mentors: Rod Henry and Bryan McPherson. The mentorship program is about actively pursuing spiritual maturity and integrity. It is like “steroids for the soul.”

At Denver I am being equipped as a pastor and refined as a Christian man.

I am deeply grateful for the support of my denomination, particularly COM who has made this journey financially possible. I started seminary unsure of where God was leading me. I near the end of this journey, and I know that God has called and prepared me to be a pastor. **SR**

Recruiting:

You Can Identify and Encourage Potential Pastors

Sometimes it’s easy to hear the call of God. Some have clearly heard the call to prepare for pastoral ministry. Others have trouble believing, for whatever reason, that God would call them to this; others are not listening or have shut their ears.

An important element in the call process is the affirmation of those who have regular contact with such a person. This affirmation sometimes comes as an annual license to preach. A call is often observed as the person serves, but that service is not always affirmed. “Atta-

boys” and other encouragement should be there.

Recruitment is in the job description of the SDB School of Ministry. Those who have heard a call from God to be a pastor or church planter often contact the Dean and ask about educational opportunities. If a person’s pastoral skills are made known, the Dean will speak with them about their call and then about training possibilities. There may be others, however, that you may know who need to contact the Dean. If you know of someone whom God is calling to be a pastor, please contact the Center or ask the person to do so.

We promise not to send out a recruiting poster with a hand pointing and words declaring, “COM Wants You!!” Whether or not a person is called to serve as a pastor, the truth is: “GOD Wants You!!”



These five seminarians stood still long enough for a photo at the 2009 Conference. Front: David Fox, Omari Rhoden, and Nick Kersten. Back: Shay Rankhorn and David Stall.



Solid education to Solid relationship

by George Calhoun



God is not a “concept” or a doctrine to believe in. God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and He seeks to have a personal relationship with each of us.

He doesn’t want us to merely believe in Him; He wants to relate to us on a deeply personal level. I say this because it is all too easy in advanced theological education to analyze, categorize, and utilize Biblical principles without ever seeking and submitting to God’s direction.

Nowhere does the Bible teach that

God gives us a plan, only to abandon us to work out the details on our own. Rather, the pattern in Scripture is a daily walk with the Lord where He gives assignments and works through us to accomplish His will.

God wants us to align our lives with Him so He can accomplish His divine purposes in and through us. He is our Lord and we must adjust our lives to what He is doing and the way He desires to do it.

As a young Christian fresh out of college, I spent an incredible amount of time talking with the Lord and allowing Him to talk to me. I grew by leaps and bounds as I followed His

lead and experienced His presence daily. Then I went to seminary...

Though I learned a great deal about God from seminary and my doctoral studies, I likewise discovered how easy it is to reduce our relationship with God to that of “religious studies” instead of a life-altering and Spirit-directed encounter with the Living God.

While I thank God for the tools I learned through a solid theological education, I am grateful that I have returned to my early days of talking to the Lord and allowing Him to talk to me. Once again, I find myself growing by leaps and bounds. *SR*

COM’s Pastoral Services for the Pastor

• In-Service Education

1. Continuing Education. Funds available for continuing education seminars.
2. Doctor of Ministry. Financial aid for a pastor to earn a D.Min.
3. Pastoral Sabbaticals. Financial assistance for pastors of member churches of the Conference who are seeking educational and spiritual renewal through a period of up to six months of full-time directed study.
4. Pastor’s Study Leave. To encourage pastors to take a study leave of 2 to 4 days each year in order to do long-range planning and preparation. The study leave would not be vacation time and would be taken for a specific purpose. A little financial aid is available.
5. Bi-vocational Training Support. This provides financial loan support for pastors preparing themselves for bi-vocational ministry with Seventh Day Baptists. The training is to provide a job outside of the church so that he/she can continue to function as pastor of the church. This funding is not for theological education.

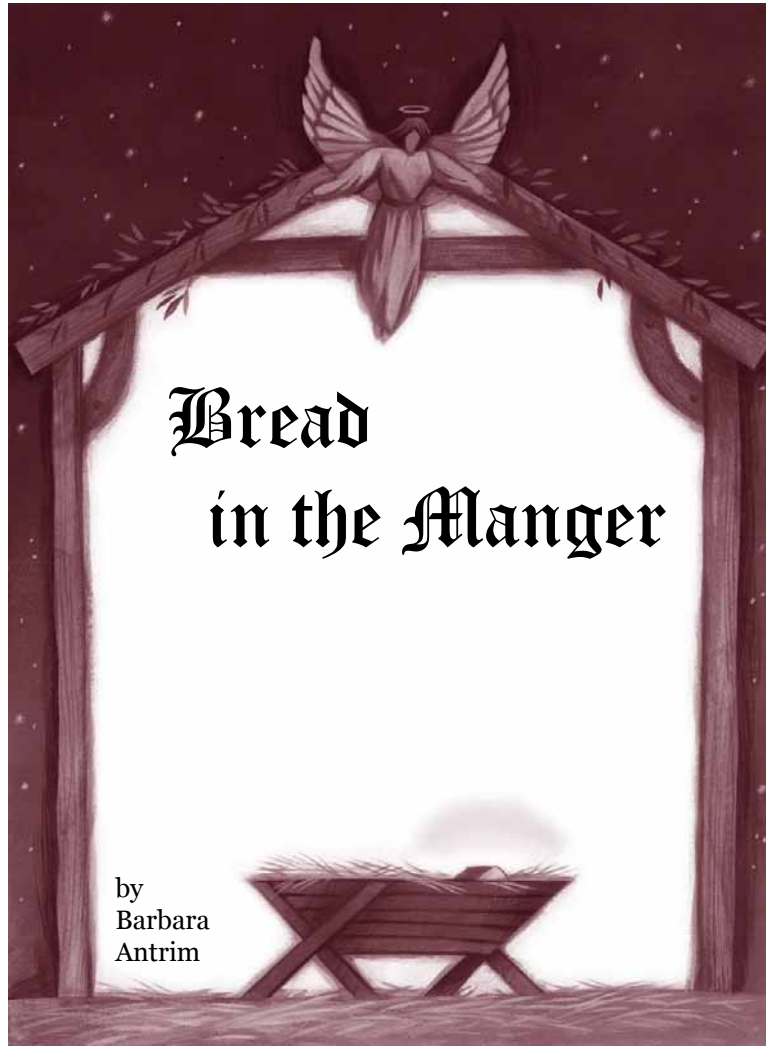
• **New Worker Orientation**. Six correspondence modules to help new workers understand who SDBs are and what they believe as well as some training in Bible study and presentation.

• **Pastor’s Expenses at Conference**. (Generally funded by the SDB Memorial Board.)

1. Current pastors. For pastors earning less than COSAR’s suggested minimum there is aid to match the church portion of expenses at General Conference.
2. Retired pastors. Funding is available every other year. See the COM website for details.

• **Pastors’ Conference**. An every-other-year gathering at a local SDB church for training, worship, fellowship and renewal.

• **Pastoral Conduct Statement**. This Conduct Statement was prepared by SDB pastors at the 1993 Pastors’ Conference. The hope is that all pastors will embrace the ethical behavior presented therein.



by
Barbara
Antrim

During the Christmas season we naturally study the story of our Lord's birth.

Several of my devotionals focused on the first and second chapters of the Gospel of Luke. Like most Christians I know, I didn't think that there would be anything new to glean from rereading the story. But it's like a favorite book—you sit back, relax and enjoy.

As I read through the week, my focus gradually began to change and gravitate to the manger. With Christ being born in a stable, his humble birth had always taken my attention.

I figured that I got the message: that Jesus had lived the life of a simple person, like an average Jew of his day. He had the same exposure to human temptation that we all face (but we never conquer).

None of that changed, but something new was added for me.

I began to see a more subtle message. The size of the manger is so close to that of a cradle, but it never seemed of special significance. More than one of my devotionals commented on the normal purpose of the manger. It is a place to hold food for the animals.

Bread in the Manger

John 6:32-33 also quotes Jesus, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is from my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

The same chapter reads, "I am the bread that comes down from heaven. If a man eats of this bread he will live forever. This bread is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world" (6:51).

We can find enlightenment in the smallest of things. This year, mine was a feeding trough for animals.

I saw more meaning in the communion bread than I ever have. It was like a light went on in my head about the continuity of the message—this is food for our soul.

"And he took the bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them saying, "This is my body, given for you; do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19).

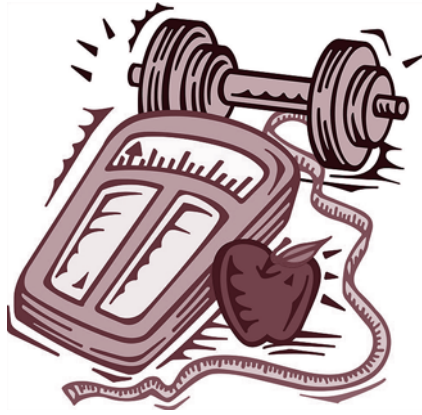
I will never see the Nativity scene again without also thinking of the Last Supper. **SR**

Barbara Antrim is a member and trustee of the Nortonville, Kan., SDB Church.

"Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35).

I was amazed when that phrase struck me anew. Jesus was telling us this on the day he was born.

The same theme was in evidence even before he was born. Quoting the ancient manuscripts, Jesus said, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). As we normally find in the Word, the consistency of the message is always there.



FACE your Exercising

by Barb Green, Parish Nurse
Milton, Wis.

If science came up with a pill that could cure or alleviate many diseases, everyone would want that prescription. That “pill,” friends, is exercise.

Dr. Walter Bortz in the *Journal of the American Geriatric Society* states, “There is no medicine that can help overcome the range of conditions for which exercise has been prescribed: Obesity, depression, diabetes, arthritis, hypertension, and coronary heart disease.”

Exercise also helps prolong life—protecting your heart, protecting against certain cancers, reducing the risk of dementia, helping you sleep, minimizing menopausal symptoms, protecting men’s sexual and urinary health, reducing falls and fractures in older people, and energizing those who have diseases.

If these reasons don’t convince you to get moving, perhaps this one will: Exercise helps control weight by burning calories.

Calories are units of energy provided by the food and drink you ingest. If you take in more calories than your body can use, the excess is stored as fat and you gain weight. Exercise offsets or burns the calories you eat and helps control body weight.

A good way to remember the types of exercise you need is to use the acronym “FACE.”

-F-

“F” stands for **Flexing** and stretching. These exercises can be done before and after your regular exercise for about 15 minutes each day. They keep you flexible and limber which gives you more freedom of movement for your regular exercise program as well as your everyday activities.

-A-

“A” stands for **Aerobic**. These activities increase your breathing and heart rate and your endurance. Adults need 30 minutes daily at least five days a week. Children and teenagers, 60 minutes per day.

Aerobic activities include brisk walking, yard work such as mowing or raking, dancing, jogging, swimming, biking, climbing stairs or hills, tennis or basketball. Choose something you enjoy. Ask someone else to do it with you.

Little habit changes can help: take the stairs; walk instead of driving; park farther away from the store. With winter approaching, you could walk at a mall, or at a school or your church. Be creative! Exercise during TV commercials instead of going to the fridge. Walk around while you’re on the phone.

-C-

“C” stands for **Carrying** a load, or strength training. These exercises make your muscles stronger

and increase muscle mass and bone density.

Weight lifting should be done two to three times a week. To get started you may need to join a Strong Women/Men Growing Stronger group or a fitness center. In Wisconsin, the Strong Woman program is offered through the University Extension office.


-E-

“E” stands for **Equilibrium** or balance. These exercises help prevent falls. Standing on one foot, heel-toe walking, and Tai Chi are all helpful.

Exercise must become a habit. Don’t get frustrated by looking at the big picture and thinking you will never get there. Start small and work up in time and intensity.

Squeeze exercise in. Set goals. Keep track of how you’re doing as part of your food journal. You will be surprised at your progress. Reward yourself (but not with food). If you can exercise regularly for six months you probably have made a lifelong habit.

Exercise is important to overall health and the ability to do things you want to do. As you age, it is the single most important thing you can do to maintain independent living. It goes hand-in-hand with healthy eating.

Remember to choose wisely during the holidays. Putting down your fork and pushing yourself away from the table is an excellent exercise. Try that and the ideas above and start 2010 a happier, lighter person. 



Women's Society page by Kristin Camenga
www.sdbwomen.org

Blessing God's Way

Honoring God in Pregnancy and Childbirth

by Margot Harris, Milton, Wis.

*"Do you not see that children are God's best gift? The fruit of the womb His generous legacy?"
(Psalm 127:3, The Message)*

During the past three years, I've hosted mother blessings (or blessingways) for pregnant friends. A "Blessing God's Way" gives women and families an opportunity to gather together and praise God for His design, and to help mothers experience the honor bestowed on them by God.

A birth blessingway is hosted at about 36 weeks of gestation to prepare the mother for labor during the last few weeks of pregnancy.

We are invoking God's favor upon her for her "way"—her pregnancy and transition as a mother. A "Blessing God's Way" gives glory and honor to our Creator. Psalm 114:1 says, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory."

The blessing should be shared with your closest friends and family, usually 10-12 women but men and children are welcome. Each guest shares how they know the mother. An explanation of a Blessing God's Way is read, including the rule that this is to be a time of encouragement and edification—no negative stories.

The celebration opens with a candle-lighting, words of affirmation, prayer and Scripture. These can be compiled along with photos into a keepsake book for the mom.

Gifts from the heart may be given: pampering items, a song, coupons for babysitting or housecleaning, devotional books, and homemade gifts are customary.

Then we proceed to pamper the mother and share positive stories

of birthing and parenting—perhaps brushing and adorning her hair with flowers, bathing and massaging her hands and feet, rubbing oils on her shoulders, or belly painting.

A central focus is time spent together in prayer. The mother is encouraged to share any concerns and release any fears she has about the upcoming birth. We lay hands on the mother and pray specifically: for her, the labor, and childbirth; the father, the baby, the siblings.

After a meal we conclude by creating a labor and nursing necklace. Each woman gives a bead to the mother to string on a necklace to be worn during labor, and keeps an identical bead for her own bracelet.

The bracelet serves as a visual reminder for us to pray for the mother. We can share a word for labor while we do this, such as "strength," "surrender," "joy," or "trust." These words are written down for the



Katie Lubke (r.) getting pampered at her Blessing.

mother to have during childbirth. Before the guests leave, they sign up to bring the mother a meal after the baby is born.

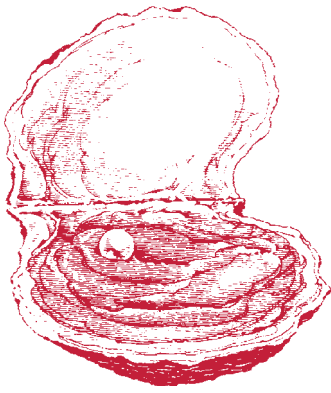
In our busy lives, it is wonderful to celebrate what God is doing. The church has the unparalleled opportunity to point women to God as their Designer and Father.

You can find more resources created by Doran Richards at www.blessinggodsway.com. **SR**



Margot Harris, wife of 10 years to Josh Harris, mother of Sawyer and Eva, attends the Milton SDB Church and serves on their health ministry team. She also teaches preschool Sabbath School and helps with AWANA. Margot works as a women's health nurse practitioner and lactation consultant, and volunteers as a La Leche League leader.

Note: A longer version of this article is at sdbwomen.org. We would enjoy your comments! Contact Margot at margotharris26@gmail.com.



Event more important than the date

An editorial “Christmas – Festivals” appeared in the December 23, 1852, *Sabbath Recorder*. Its author, Rev. Thomas B. Brown, pointed out the dilemma that Christians have faced for many years: the pagan adaptation of a Christian event. In part, Brown wrote:

Many thousands of people are under the impression that the 25th day of December is the veritable anniversary of the birth of Christ. We shall not go into any discussion of this question, as we consider it to be of no importance. The fact itself, that “the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” is very important to be believed; for “every spirit that confesses not that Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.”

The Scriptures, accordingly, set forth this fact with much circumstantiality. All those particulars of his miraculous conception and birth, which, taken in connection with his subsequent history, go to prove that the fullness of the Godhead had become embodied in human form, are presented with a minuteness of detail sufficient to satisfy the faith of every humble inquirer.

But of the *time* when this wonder of wonders—the manifestation of God in the flesh—began first to be displayed, the Scriptures say nothing, save that it was some time during the reign of Caesar Augustus, and while Herod was king of Judea.

Not an annual recognition of the time, but an habitual recognition of the fact, of Christ’s incarnation, is

the great duty which devolves upon believers; for the Christian life is sustained, not by the devout contemplation of these facts in which our redemption stands.

It was contrary to the genius of Christianity to institute festivals. History establishes no fact more striking than that of the continued proneness of men to make their religion consist

“**Many within and outside the Church have treated Christmas only as a festival without thought of its true significance.**”

of devout observance of times and seasons.... Give men, whether Jew or Gentiles, a system of religion which embraces a great number of such observances and they very soon show their disposition to rest on them, to the neglect of the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. It was no unnecessary alarm, therefore, that the Apostle to the Gentiles felt, when he saw the Galatians turning to such observances; and no unnecessary admonition to the Colossians, that they should beware of incurring censure on this score (Gal. 4:10-11; Col. 2:16).

Christianity is simply a scheme for rendering sinners just before God. And as this justification is accomplished—not by the works of the sinner, but solely and wholly by the work of the Lord Jesus—nothing is introduced into the scheme in the way of festivals and ordinances

which would for a moment draw away attention from “the Lord our Righteousness.”

Ordinances there are, indeed two very simple ones: one of them complied with at the beginning of the new life, and never afterwards repeated; the other repeated often, but so simple in its character, and so directly exhibiting the great fact upon which our redemption depends, that it can have no tendency to divert our mind in any contemporary direction.

But apart from these ordinances, or even in connection with them, Christianity is a system of such severe simplicity, that it cannot long interest the hearts of those who have never discovered the necessity of some other righteousness besides that which lives in external observances.

What Thomas B. Brown wrote is true to the extent that many within and outside the Church have, in effect, treated Christmas only as a festival without thought of its true significance. It is a sacrilege when we share gifts with one another without a thought of the greater gift that God has given to mankind. It is sacrilege when we try to outdo our neighbor with bright lights and fail to see the light which shone on the shepherds in Bethlehem and guided the Wise Men.

Yet how impoverished we would be if we did not step out of the routine of our daily existence once a year and proclaim the wonders of God’s grace and His Incarnation to meet us here on earth. **SR**

This Pearl first appeared in December 2001.

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Our Board's Vision and Mission

A U.S. vice-presidential candidate's infamous opening line was, "Who am I? Why am I here?"

In the memory of his nation—accurate or inaccurate as that memory may be—the candidate never got around to answering those questions. Yet, they were spot-on.

From time to time, we need to ask ourselves those questions, if only to remember the answers and to refocus; to set our eyes on God.

Organizations need to ask those questions, too. The Board of Christian Education is in the midst of a deliberate process that includes look-

ing at these fundamental questions.

While we may create better or more comprehensive language as we continue to work, we have adopted a statement of Vision and modified our statement of Mission. More will be said in the coming months. For now, we simply present the statements:

Vision

We see Seventh Day Baptist churches building people who are rooted in Christ, walking by the Spirit, and giving thanks to God.

We see Seventh Day Baptists sinking roots deeper into Christ and His Word, living lives that unmistakably show God's nature, and proclaiming God and His Word both in private and in public.

We see Seventh Day Baptist churches and individuals communicating God's Gospel, cultivating the Spirit's fruit, cherishing Christ's commands, and celebrating Christ as King.

We see Seventh Day Baptists becoming more and more convicted of sin and yielded to Christ, more and more compelled to speak God's message clearly, more and more committed to show and tell others about God's Sabbath, more and more confident that God is working through Seventh Day Baptist churches, more and more capable of building others in their local Seventh Day Baptist churches, and more and more competent and challenged to help plant new churches.

We see the Board of Christian Education helping churches build these people.

Mission

The Seventh Day Baptist Board of Christian Education provides programs and materials to encourage and equip Seventh Day Baptist churches to teach evangelism, nurture, discipleship, and stewardship.



FOCUS on Missions

Guinea-Conakry: Trouble with War

by Kirk Looper

We have heard very little from Guinea (sometimes called Guinea-Conakry), a small country in northwest Africa. Distinguished by beautiful land and people, this country is surrounded by Guinea Bissau, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

With the most recent civil strife, Sierra Leone became important; many refugees moved out of Guinea Conakry into that country. Seventh Day Baptists from Guinea contacted the SDB Executive Director of Sierra Leone for help while they were exiled from their homeland. This is how the people of Guinea came to our attention.

The refugees are being housed in tents and lean-tos in the elevated region of Sierra Leone. Temperatures are colder than they are accustomed to. In fact, we heard that two infants had passed away in late October, with more expected to contract illnesses and possibly die. The cold weather enhances this probability as it lowers the body's resistance to disease. People get chilled and catch a cold, or fall to malaria.

It has recently begun to rain causing the ground in the tents and lean-tos to stay wet. Without adequate protection the refugees get sick.

Leaders are requesting funds for floor mats, blankets, medicine and food. They continue to request help from the government and other Conferences. The SDB Missionary Society has sent \$500 at the time of this writing. We pray that more will come into our office.

Pastor Andrew Joel, General Secretary of the Guinea Conference, has sent out several requests as well. He exalted the support of the Sierra Leone SDBs, stating that they have helped with food, clothes and medicines.

He continues to pray for his people and asks for a blessing for the churches in Sierra Leone. However, much more is needed and he prays that the people of North America might also help. We invite your donations.

We received the following from the president of the Women's Board in Sierra Leone, Dorise McCarthy: "I

went into tears when I saw those people. Some of them were young children. By the grace of God Almighty, we do some things for them. I also got some medicines from the hospital where I am working.

"When I try to talk with some of the women they say that the Conference in Guinea has suffered too much, because no help comes and the Missionary Society has also forgotten about them. Some sleep on the floor in our churches (we have two where they are located).

"I am thinking more about the little children. Besides being a medical nurse, I am also a mother of six. So it pains me when I see children suffering. It was not long ago when we, the citizens of Sierra Leone, were in the same situation. We tend to forget about our personal losses and hardships quickly. Please, pray for us."

Our Missionary Society will try to raise funds for the people from Guinea and pray that we can continue to support these abandoned people. We know that the needs are great. Any-

one wishing to help can send their support to us so we can supply their needs during the month of December.

We should also consider the support that Sierra Leone has been giving the refugees. They have depleted their reserves and do not have funds to help if some disaster occurs in their own Conference. Please, pray hard and long for the Holy Spirit to awaken the spirit of love and comfort resulting in many donations to help these souls who have fled from a place of despair and subjugation.

Send any support you may be led to give to:
SDB Missionary Society
19 Hillside Ave.
Ashaway RI 02804

May God bless you richly for your interest and prayerful decision. *SR*





the BEACON

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

December 2009

Persistence!

by Dakota Watt, *Beacon* editor

*Hi. It's me again—Dakota.
How did you like Rachel's article
last month? Isn't God great??*

Do you have a barking dog at home? I do.

Her name is Mollecule. She just barks and barks and barks, etc., etc. When I tell her to stop, she's like, "Don't tell me what to do." But when my dad tells her to stop, she shuts up quickly and runs to him.

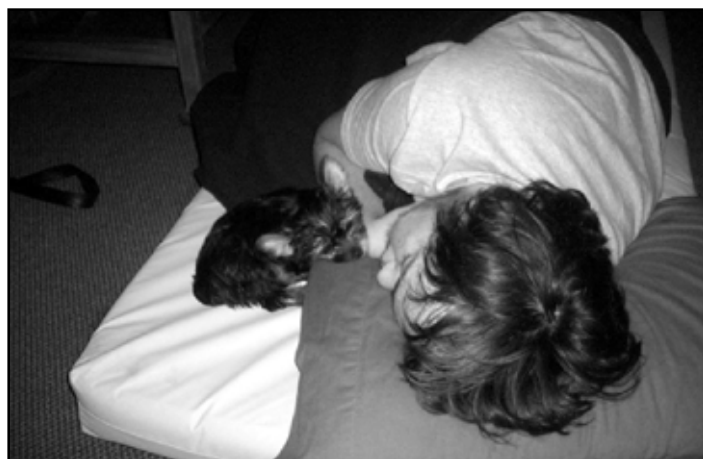
Mollecule doesn't really know that she's being annoying; she's doing the work she thinks she's supposed to do, which is to protect our house from danger (or from leaves, or garbage bags, or our other dogs, or wind blowing).

She's working hard every day to do what she thinks people expect her to do. She will not stop or become discouraged from her work.

When her master calls her, she runs to him because she knows that she has done a good job and is going to be rewarded.

Through this, I think of the Apostle Paul. He kept going and going and spreading the Word to everybody he could. Paul didn't let anything stop him—even stonings, beatings or jail. As it says in Hebrews, "You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised" (Hebrews 10:36).

*Me and
Mollecule
asleep at
Conference in
Lancaster, Pa.*



I think of Peter who also was jailed and met with adversity as he spread the Gospel. Peter said, "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:12-13).

Then there was Stephen. Stephen knew he was going to die for doing the will of God, right then and there, but that didn't stop him. He just kept on talking, even when the crowd was gnashing their teeth at him. Stephen said, "Look, I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56).

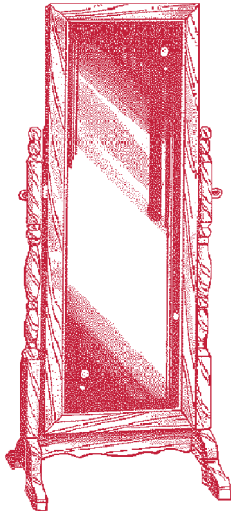
I am certainly not calling these men of God "dogs" or anything like that, but they were persistent. The

big difference is that these apostles understood what their work was and wouldn't let anyone or anything stand in their way. Like Mollecule, they wanted the favor of their Master.

They knew Who their Master was and they were going to work for Him until He called their name and they would run to Him.

I want to be like these men. I want to study and understand my work for God, and then I want to do it without stopping. I pray that I will never become discouraged from doing God's purpose for me on earth.

When I look at that ridiculous dog barking at anything outside the window, I will remember that I have been called to do a good work as well, and that I must never give up. I pray that you will do the same. **SR**



Reflections

by Leanne Lippincott-Wuerthele

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

Keep looking up

"Kindness is more than deeds. It is an attitude, an expression, a look, a touch. It is anything that lifts another person."

—C. Neil Strait

The Bible brims over with wonderful lessons that can be experienced in everyday life. But sometimes we're simply too preoccupied to appreciate them. They float past us, undetected, like barely discernable butterflies—or they fly over our heads like migrating geese. Either way, we're oblivious to them or their meaning.

As usual, I was running late for church on Sabbath morning. I didn't have time to eat breakfast so I grabbed a bag of pretzels as I rushed out the door.

It was one of those days I really hate: dark and dreary, with a steady rain pounding my windshield. Driving toward Milton, my mood matched the gloomy weather. If it had been closer to Christmas, I probably would have muttered, "Bah, humbug. Another red light."

Approaching the city limits, I slowed down for some road construction. Apparently that's when my "Stupidity Gene" kicked in.

[Not everyone knows this, but we all have at least one Stupidity Gene that we've inherited from some distant, dumb ancestor. Sometimes this gene remains dormant for years. In my case, unfortunately, this wayward gene—along with its unavoid-

able consequences—appears quite often and quite publicly.]

With my stupidity gene fully awakened I slowed for Milton's only stoplight. For some reason I became concerned about the pretzels "riding shotgun" on my passenger seat.

Boy, I better make sure the bag is closed so they don't spill.

I glanced down for an entire half-second before looking up again.

“

This stranger instantly forgave my dangerous carelessness and ended up consoling me.

”

To my horror, the car in front of me was just a few feet away. I yanked the steering wheel hard to the right, but it was too late. A crunching noise filled the air. And it wasn't my pretzels.

I jumped out of my car to make certain no one was injured. Everyone was okay but the older car ahead of me was an undriveable wreck.

Standing in the downpour for several minutes, I finally sought shelter under a tree, looking and feeling like a drowned rat. While a police officer interviewed the other driver, a woman—looking as "ratty" as I did—approached and huddled under the same tree.

Discovering that she was the car's owner, I started apologizing, profusely. She quickly interrupted. "Accidents happen," she smiled.

As we visited I learned she lives in Illinois and takes care of her wheelchair-bound elderly mother. One of her passengers was her autistic son whom she also cares for. "I'm just thankful that my house is big enough so I can take care of both of them," she remarked.

This stranger—someone who could have been angry and vindictive—was loving, gracious and kind. She instantly forgave my dangerous carelessness and ended up consoling me.

I thought of the verse in Ephesians: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

How often had I read those words and yet ignored them in action?

I made it to church in time for the last hymn, where my unkempt appearance prompted a lot of questions. I repeated my sad tale several times.

Actually, it turned out well. For one thing, no one was injured. (Cars can be repaired a *lot* easier than people.) Secondly, the entire experience had transformed my mood.

Through her kindness, this perfect stranger had demonstrated God's grace in action. I felt like Ebenezer Scrooge on Christmas morning, giddy with excitement. God is good, and His lessons touch our lives every day—if we simply watch for them. **SR**

"Servants Together..."



"in God's Ministry"

SDB General Conference

Springfield, Missouri

July 25-31, 2010



The President's Page
by Pastor Paul Andries

I love Christmas!

This time of year brings a level of sadness for me because summer is behind us. While I am not fond of winter, there is something that I look forward to at the beginning of the season: CHRISTMAS!

I love Christmas! I often sing Christmas carols throughout the year, and have even greeted others with "Merry Christmas" in July.

This "C word" generates a number of debates in various social circles and among a diversity of religions.

Discussions include: Is Christmas a Christian holiday? When and how did it originate? Who is Santa, St. Nick, Father Christmas, Pere Noel, the Jolly Man, etc.? When was Jesus born? Was Mary really a virgin? Should Christians celebrate or recognize the seasonal phenomenon? Why are people so cheerful at this time of year?

The questions we really need to answer are: "Was Jesus born? For what reason?"

An angel shared these words with Joseph, "She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

The Messiah would enter this world with no pomp and circumstance. Rather, he was born in a stable surrounded by smelly animals in the dead of night. There were no doctors or nurses or midwives, not even a helper. The only humans present were Joseph and his fiancée, Mary. Oh, an innkeeper was on the premises, but was engaged with his own affairs, giving no attention to the couple.

What loving parent would want their precious "bundle of joy" to be delivered in such an environment? I dare say not many. Yet the Creator and Sustainer of the universe chose such a rejected form of birthing room to model "true servanthood" from day one.

Centuries earlier, Isaiah recorded this description of the Messiah: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his

kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isa. 9:6-7).

If someone of such honorable status could be a servant to so many undeserving folk, then it should be easy for us to embrace, endorse, and encourage our oneness in Christ. We should do this not only at Christmas time, but as the New Year dawns, and winter gives way to spring, and spring to summer, and as we are assembled at Evangel University in Springfield, Missouri at the end of July. There we shall model the creed, "Servants Together in God's Ministry," and continue to do that into the fall and the duration of our earthly existence.

Unfortunately the arguments will continue regarding "Christmas."

No matter what man may say, I will forever love Christmas, because it reminds me of what my Savior did for me. I cannot embrace April without December, or "Easter" without Christmas—for they are both linked in the redemptive plan. Thank you, Lord, not only for Calvary, but also for the manger.

I pray that people will accept that Jesus was indeed born and that he was born to set the captives free. Whether you believe in Christmas or not, may this season be a great opportunity to teach those in your sphere who Christ is. Let the emphasis be on celebrating him.

As the refrain of the carol goes, "O come, let us adore Him; O come, let us adore Him; O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord."

Adoring the Lord is not just a "Christmas" thing. It is something that Christians should do all day, every day, all year.

May you and yours have a blessed, peaceful, joyous, and grace-filled Christmas! **SR**



by Executive Director
Rob Appel

What's in a Sermon?

When I am asked to speak as part of a church visit or meeting, I do my best to keep the message to 20 minutes or less. At some venues that are accustomed to a much longer sermon, the pastor has gotten up and summarized my message for another 30-40 minutes.

Sometimes we just can't help ourselves. Or can we?

I have been to other events where the speaker doesn't seem to know where the stopping point is. While rambling on, the audience has heard the stopping point 20 minutes ago. Now they're lost in the droning on.

All of us can remember a time when we've looked at our watch during a sermon. You realized that you were overwhelmed with too much content and stopped listening by the time the speaker got to the "how-to" of the lesson. You probably started wondering what you'd have for lunch.

The sad truth is that many sermons are too long and a good lesson is lost in the tedium.

A while back I went to a local restaurant and ordered a chicken entrée. The waitress was nice, the service was good, but when my meal arrived the chicken was dry. It was so dry that it resembled shoe leather—and tasted like it, too.

I was in a hurry, so I didn't bother to ask for another. I tried to eat a little of it, but instead just ate the rice and vegetables.

I decided I would not return to that restaurant again. Just like an overcooked meal, an overcooked sermon has the same result with the listeners; they won't be back.

So how long should a sermon be? I believe a sermon should be long enough to deliver the message in a complete and interesting way, but short enough to have a powerful impact.

Studies in communication remind us that the average person has an attention span well under 20 minutes. That's why TV sitcoms are 30 minutes long, and without commercials are right at 20 minutes in length.

I remember sitting with several young preachers one year at Conference. One of the pastors commented that they had preached for over an hour! I couldn't help but ask myself, "I wonder how long your congregation listened?"

Are long sermons okay? They are if they don't *feel* like long sermons. I'm not going to tell you how long (in minutes) every sermon should be. Some are too long before they even start. Others are so engrossing and so inspired that you regret when they end.

Speakers don't need to put their watches on the pulpit to see if their sermon is too long. They just need to watch the congregation. How many people are looking at *their* watches? How many are staring out the window? How many are

passing notes? How many are fidgeting and restless?

If you've lost your audience, you might as well cut your losses, close up shop, and try again next week. You won't recover by talking more.

There is a difference between a smoldering fire and an explosion. A smoldering fire is waiting for the oxygen to get to the heart of the matter. An explosion has seen that happen and is in the process of consuming everything in its path. The only difference is the time required for the combustion to take place.

If sermons are to have an explosive impact, the point must come across—with power—in a relatively short time. The average human being cannot stay focused on a speaker for more than a few minutes before his mind begins to wander. Some speaking techniques can help keep a listener's attention, but that attention cannot be held indefinitely. An old proverb says, "The mind can only absorb what the seat can endure."

Remember, a sermon should have a distinct purpose. This purpose is not the subject of the sermon, but the *result* of the sermon. What should the congregation do as a result of hearing the message?

If this purpose can be accomplished in 20 minutes, why stretch it out to 40?

If a sermon is to be powerful, it must end powerfully and impress on the congregation the need to act. **SR**



Two Gifts that Keep Giving

by Barry Clapper, LPL Financial Branch Mgr.
Financial Consultant for SDB Memorial Fund

At this time of year, it seems that giving is foremost on our minds.

Let's not forget to use charitable giving in our estate plans. Two of the most popular options are Charitable Lead Trusts (CLTs) and Charitable Remainder Trusts (CRTs).

Charitable Lead Trusts

These two trusts are essentially opposites of each other. The Charitable Lead Trust (CLT) pays income to a charitable beneficiary (like your local church or General Conference) for a certain period of time, after which the remaining assets in the trust will pass to a non-charitable beneficiary, such as children, grandchildren or the donor.

Charitable Remainder Trusts

With a Charitable Remainder Trust (CRT), the income is paid to a non-charitable beneficiary for a period of time, after which the assets become the property of the charity. Taxes differ significantly between CLTs and CRTs; please seek the advice of a qualified tax and trust professional before deciding which trust is best for you.

A **Charitable Gift Annuity** (several have been established for Seventh Day Baptist church members) is an alternative to the more complex trusts. Unlike trusts, annuities have no administrative or setup fees and may be more cost- and tax-effective.

You may use virtually any asset to fund a charitable gift annuity, and your charity guarantees immediate or deferred payments to you. The typical tax deduction—in the years that assets are transferred to a charitable gift annuity—is between 30% and 45% of fair market value of the donation.



Including charitable giving within your financial plan can enable your family to create an income stream, earn tax savings, and maintain a significant degree of control over assets. If you have specific charitable goals, you may want to present them at your next family gathering.

Please contact a Memorial Board member or myself should you desire more information to establish a Charitable Gift Annuity. **SR**

This article is not intended to provide specific investment or tax advice for any individual. Please consult your financial advisor or tax advisor if you have any questions.

We Want to Know What You Think!

An open letter from the Ad Hoc Committee for Denominational Restructuring

Coming out of the 2009 General Conference sessions last July, an *ad hoc* committee was to be appointed by the SDB General Council. This committee would work to formulate a new configuration for the Conference organizational structure and bring recommendations back to the 2010 General Conference to be held in Springfield, Missouri.

We are that *ad hoc* committee! We will look at how the SDB agencies, boards and denominational offices work individually, as well as how they work together to support our local churches. As we are working to evaluate the current structure and recommend areas for improvement, we solicit your input and prayers.



The committee's first meeting in Janesville (l. to r.): Susie Fox, Neil Murphy, Ron Ochs, Don Graffius and Jim Skaggs.

For your input:

- ***What do you think works well in our current denominational structure—that we should preserve as we move forward?***
- ***What do you think is outdated or cumbersome with how our denomination works—both during the annual Conference sessions as well as throughout the year between Conference sessions?***
- ***Are there any services that the SDB denomination could better provide to you, your local church, or your Association?***
- ***What suggestions do you have for improving the SDB denominational structure?***

Now is not the time to be passive or procrastinate. We want feedback from across the denomination on the above questions. You may contact any member of the *ad hoc* committee (just pick the one you're most comfortable talking with) and let us know what you think!

Thanks so much.

Your Committee,
*Susie Fox, Don Graffius, Neil Murphy,
Ron Ochs, and Jim Skaggs*

Contact us at: adhocsdb@gmail.com
or **SDB Ad Hoc Committee**
1722 Taylor Station Rd
Blacklick OH 43004

New members

Salem, WV
Joined after baptism
Robin Martin
Ann Zinn

Crandall.—A daughter, Nora Mary-Ann Crandall, was born to Paul and Bess (Miller) Crandall of Tucson, AZ on September 22, 2009.

Births

Tucker.—A son, Alexander Monroe Tucker, was born to Augustus and Irene Tucker of Huntsville, AL on October 8, 2009.

SCSC goes YouTube!

The Summer Christian Service Corps promotional video has been posted on YouTube. Type in www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqh0vDKcJX8 to see the first of five sections. You'll see SCSC participants telling what the program means to them, two pastors reflecting on how SCSC impacted their congregations, and a challenge to join. Access all the sections under "More from Webmaster" or by searching "SDB SCSC." Please see inside the front cover for application info!



Marriages

Calhoun – Hagberg. Joshua Calhoun and Kaia Hagberg were united in marriage on October 17, 2009 in Buffalo, MN. Pastor George Calhoun, father of the groom, officiated.

Burgess – Priest. Brad Burgess and Ana Priest were united in marriage on October 18, 2009 at the White Cloud, MI, Seventh Day Baptist Church. Pastor Bernie Wethington officiated.

Denominational Dateline

December 2009

- 5 Bradenton, Fla., SDB Church—*Rob Appel*
- 5 Albion, Wis., SDB Church—*Gordon Lawton*

January 2010

- 3-9 **SDB Week of Prayer**
- 9 Houston, Texas, SDB Church—*Appel*
- 9 Iglesia Bautista del Septimo Dia, Houston—*Appel*
- 11 NABF meeting, Dallas, Texas—*Appel*
- 15-18 Young Adult SDB Cruise, Calif.—*Appel*
- 23-24 COM Annual Meeting, SDB Center—*Lawton*
- 23-24 Memorial Fund quarterly meeting, Houston, Texas—*Appel, Jan Ehlers*
- 24 SDB Missionary Society, Ashaway, R.I., Executive and Board Meeting—*Kirk Looper*
- 24 SDB Women's Board, Tomah, Wis.—*Althea Rood*

- 29 TCC Core Committee, SDB Center, Janesville, Wis.—*Kevin Butler*

February

- 18-19 CLT meetings, Daytona Beach, Fla., SDB Church—*all executives*
- 20-22 General Council, Daytona Beach

March

- 6 Central Maryland SDB Church—*Appel*
- 8-10 Baptist World Alliance, Falls Church, Va.—*Appel*
- 11 Baptist Joint Committee, Washington, D.C.—*Appel*
- 13 Washington, D.C., SDB Church—*Appel*
- 13 SDB Christian Church, Arlington, Va.—*Appel*
- 26-28 Leadership Conference, Jamaica—*Appel, Andrew Samuels*

Obituaries

Harris.—Roy J.T. Harris and Elizabeth (McWilliam) Harris.

Roy J.T. Harris, 88, of Decatur, Texas died July 17, 2009 at Wise Regional Health System after a long illness. He was a veteran of the U.S. Army Air Corps during WWII. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin in 1950, he enjoyed a career as an electrical engineer.

Elizabeth M. Harris, 89, of Decatur, Texas passed away October 2, 2009 at Senior Care Health and Rehabilitation following a stroke.

A graduate of Crandall High School in 1938, Betty attended Milton (Wis.) College then transferred to Whitewater College to pursue a Business degree. As World War II began she moved to Plainfield, N.J. to work at the Recorder Press. While living there with relatives she was introduced to Roy and they were married in 1942. They returned to the Milton area to start a family.

While later employed in the faculty workroom at Milton College, she earned a degree in Business Administration in 1966. Roy's career took them to north Texas where she managed the books for Roy's ventures and other firms until 2000.

The Harrises are survived by their two children, Holly Pontier and Dale Harris; two grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Services were held at the Seventh Day Baptist Church in Milton for Roy on July 24, 2009, and for Betty on October 9, 2009. Rev. George Calhoun officiated. Burial (with military rites for Roy by the VFW Kienow-Hilt Post 1621) was in Milton Lawns Memorial Park, Janesville, Wis.

Mathis.—Janice (Jacob) Mathis, 56, of Jacksonville, Fla., went peacefully to be with our Lord on September 26, 2009 after an extended illness.

Janice was born July 24, 1953 in Battle Creek, Mich., and moved with

her parents to Pomona Park, Fla., when she was 6 months old. She graduated from Crescent City High School in 1972. In her younger years she was active in Girl Scouts, Junior Grange, Rainbow Girls, and Children of the American Revolution. She was a 7th degree member of the National Grange for 41 years. Janice was a member of the Seventh Day Baptist Church of Daytona Beach.

She is survived by her son, Steven P. Mathis of Jacksonville; her ex-husband James M. Mathis of Homer-ville, Ga.; her parents, James G. and Marjorie F. (Severance) Jacob of Pomona Park; a sister, Marian R. Fick of Port Orange, Fla.; three brothers, John M. Jacob of Nashville, Tenn., Mark H. Jacob of Houma, La., and Matthew W. Jacob of Jacksonville; many other relatives and countless friends. We will miss her—our loss is Heaven's gain!

Funeral services were held at the Clayton Frank and Biggs Funeral Home, Crescent City, Fla., on October 4, 2009. Pastors Wray Winborne and John Camenga officiated. Interment was in the Lake Como/Pomona Park Cemetery in Lake Como, Fla.

Ashcraft.—Patricia Ann (Tebbetts) Ashcraft, 73, of Banning, Calif., passed away on September 30, 2009 after a long illness. She spent her last days with her husband and children by her side.

Patricia was born on July 25, 1936 to Charles and Ethel (Trees) Tebbetts. She married Richard Paul Ashcraft on June 20, 1954. Blessed with 55 wonderful years together, they had four children and seven grandchildren.

She loved nothing more than spending time with her family. Because of her long illness, she served as the family prayer warrior to protect those she loved. She was a deaconess and treasurer of the Los Angeles Seventh Day Baptist Church.

Patricia is survived by her husband, Richard Ashcraft of Banning; two daughters, Patricia Lynn Gaylord of Seoul, South Korea, and Teresa Ann Waters of Littleton, Colo.; two sons, Richard Mark Ashcraft of Chico, Calif., and William Charles Ashcraft of Chino Hills, Calif.; and seven grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her sister Claudia and brother Charles (Butch).

Death Notices

Lillian Findlater, 103, of Philadelphia, Pa., died on October 11, 2009.

Edsel M. Davis, 81, of Lineville, Ala., formerly of Salem, W.Va., died on November 7, 2009.

K. Spencer Howard, 76, of Milton, Wis., died on November 9, 2009.

Dear *SR* readers,

Thank you for keeping us informed of your family news. You may e-mail updates to:

editor@seventhdaybaptist.org

If you mail in obituaries from a newspaper, please make sure that the death and service dates are listed, along with the location of the burial.

—*Editor*

SR Department Index for 2009

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KEVIN'S

ORNER

“Follow Me”— An easy call?

Focusing on the SDB Center on Ministry this month certainly brings to mind the call to full-time ministry.

Several Pastors' Conferences ago, then-Dean Gabe Bejjani started one of the sessions by dividing us into small groups (always an ominous beginning). Then he directed us to each recount our call into the pastorate.

What I first thought was going to be a “fill-in-the-gap time waster” began to develop into a brilliant move. As we recalled and shared our journeys, the old coals

started to glow brighter as we relived those exciting (and sometimes fearful) memories. I believe that, for most of us, it served to confirm our current vocation.

As Gordon Lawton shares on page 4, each pastor is called in a unique situation and in a unique way.

When Jesus called his disciples in Matthew 4, it seemed like such an easy and instant decision for them. He basically said two words: “Follow me.”

Why did they jump at the chance?

I had always assumed that it was Jesus' charisma or his power or his God-given authority. I'm sure that those factors were there, but I got some further insights last year while attending a conference for mission churches.

The keynote speaker was Dr. Joe Stowell, former president of Moody Bible Institute and newly-named head of Cornerstone University. Dr. Stowell shared from the passage in Matthew 4 and explained the deeper cultural significance of this calling and following.

When Jewish boys went to the synagogue to learn the Scriptures, some were “more adept” at learning than others. That's putting it nicely.

Only the best and brightest and smartest kids would get the chance to do something with their learning. All of the others would go into the trades—like, say, fishing. (Hear that, Peter and Andrew, and James and John?)

The best and brightest and smartest kids—if they did well enough and “played their cards right”—would earn the chance to give their life in service to the rabbi.

They would follow him and learn more from him and be a disciple of that rabbi, perhaps going on to be a Pharisee or scribe.

But the rabbi himself would not and *could* not do the asking; it had to come *from the student*. The younger person would basically ask, “May I follow you?” If the rabbi said “Yes,” it was a huge privilege and honor!

The guys who didn't earn that privilege went to work outside of the synagogue (in like, say, fishing). They would never have the chance to be a close “follower” of a rabbi. They would never earn the right to even ask if they could have that high honor.

Along comes this new and wise rabbi to some fishermen, and Jesus asks *them* to follow him!

That was unheard of—no regular rabbi would do the asking.

When they got that invitation, they left everything—immediately—to follow Jesus. They were set apart to become students (disciples) and servants of the Lord.

In Bible times, certain people, certain selected vessels, and certain appointed days were sanctified or “set apart” for God's use.

God wants to help all people by setting them apart to accomplish His mission. The Lord makes it possible for all of us to be equipped to help with His higher calling.

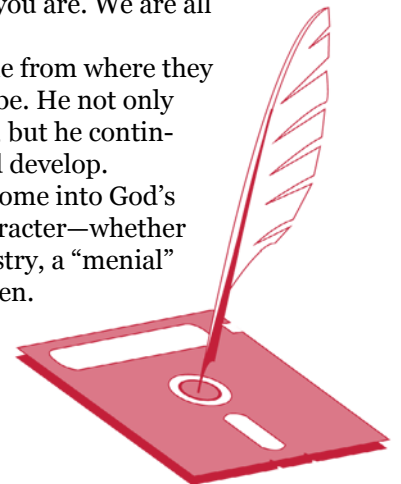
Jesus called certain fishermen away from their dirty, physical job to perform a different challenging, spiritual task. He may ask you to remain in your physically demanding position while molding you to be a minister right where you are. We are all in unique situations.

Jesus helps move people from where they are to where they need to be. He not only calls and redeems sinners, but he continues to help them grow and develop.

Jesus wants people to come into God's family to reflect God's character—whether that be in vocational ministry, a “menial” job, or anywhere in-between.

He helps us become what God wants us to be!

Let's follow our Leader.



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Editor Kevin Butler



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