

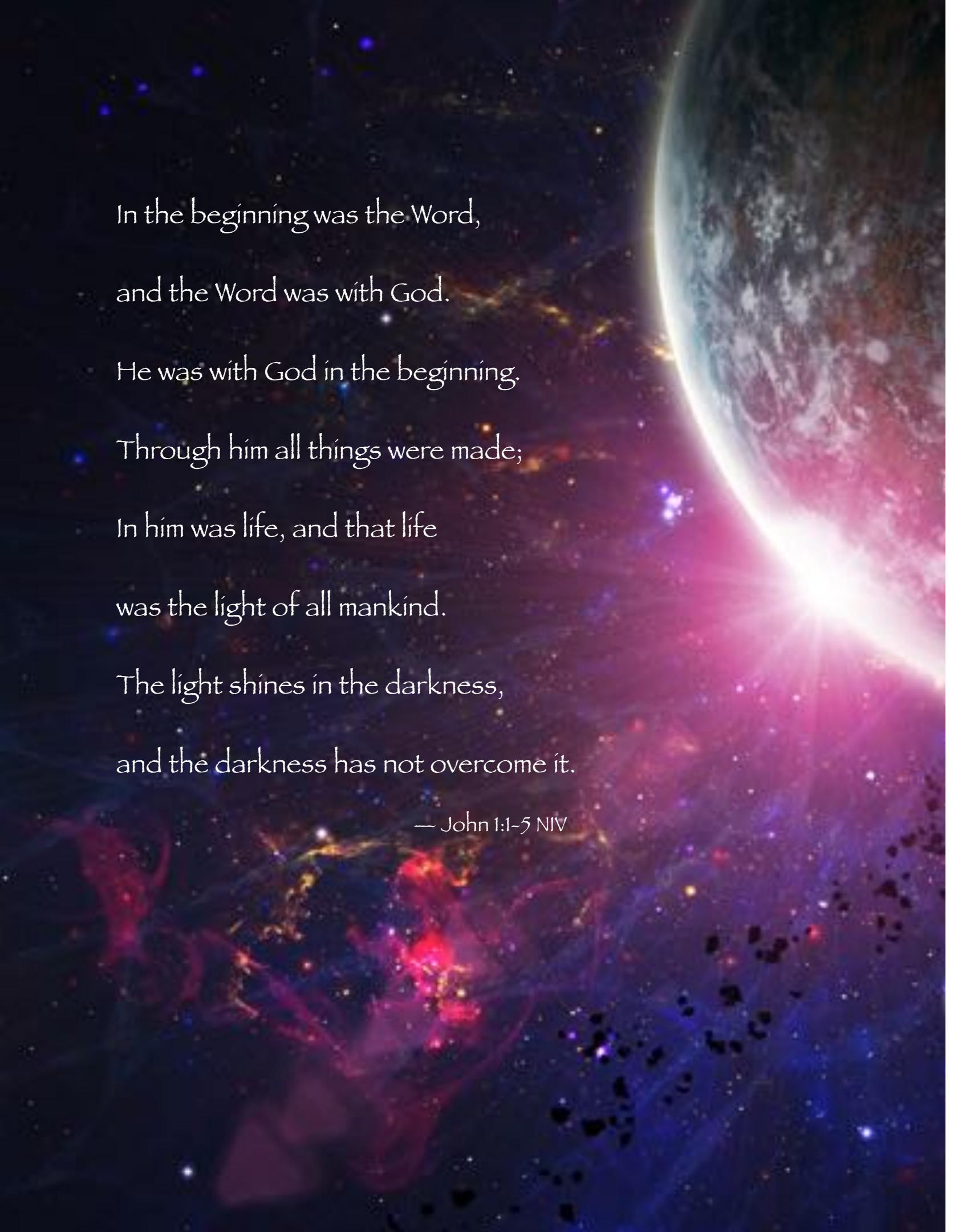
# Recount the Christmas Story

# The Christmas Story



A Seventh Day Baptist Publication

December 2014



In the beginning was the Word,

and the Word was with God.

He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things were made;

In him was life, and that life

was the light of all mankind.

The light shines in the darkness,

and the darkness has not overcome it.

— John 1:1-5 NIV

# *The Prophesies...*

Isaiah 7:14

The Lord himself will give you a sign:  
The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son  
and will call him Immanuel.

Isaiah 40:3-5

A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the Lord;  
make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.  
Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low;  
the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.  
And the glory of the Lord will be revealed,  
and all mankind together will see it,  
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Micah 5:2

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
though you are small among the clans of Judah,  
out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel,  
whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.

Isaiah 9:6

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:2

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

# *The Story...*

*God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."*

*Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."*

*"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"*

*The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."*

*Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the*

*Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." ...When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him.*



*In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ...So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.*



*While they were there,  
the time came for  
the baby to be born,  
and she gave birth to  
her firstborn, a son.*

*She wrapped him  
in cloths and placed him  
in a manger, because  
there was no guest room  
available for them.*

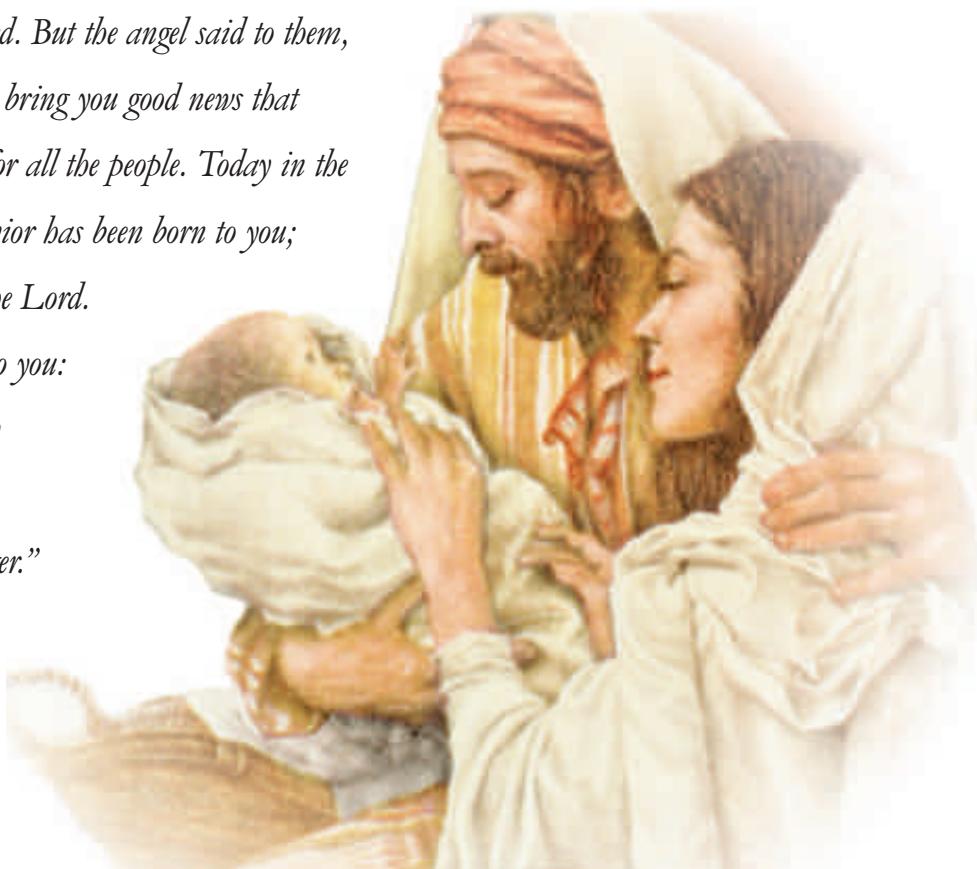
*And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.*

*An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them,  
and they were terrified. But the angel said to them,*

*“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that  
will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the  
town of David a Savior has been born to you;  
he is the Messiah, the Lord.*

*This will be a sign to you:*

*You will find a baby  
wrapped in cloths  
and lying in a manger.”*



*Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,  
“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”*

*When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another,  
“Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”*

*So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.  
When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child,  
and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.*

*But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.*

*The shepherds returned,  
glorifying and praising God  
for all the things  
they had heard and seen,  
which were just as  
they had been told.*



*After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”*

*When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written.”*

*Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”*

*After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.*



# *The Promise...*



*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world.*

All Scripture is quoted from the first chapters of the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John (NIV version).

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As noted below, SDBs enjoy "freedom of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit."

The celebration of the birth of Jesus on December 25 is a matter of choice. You may use this issue to celebrate the birth of Jesus whatever time of year you wish. However, we do celebrate the fact that God sent his Son into this world for our salvation!

– the Editor

## 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.

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# Sabbath Recorder

A Seventh Day Baptist Publication

December 2014

Volume 236, No. 12

Whole No. 7,011



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

POSTMASTER:

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

This is the 170th year of publication for *The Sabbath Recorder*. First issue published June 13, 1844.



Member of the Associated Church Press.  
*The Sabbath Recorder* does not necessarily endorse signed articles.

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

# Has Christmas Really Come to This?



You hear it all the time: "What do you want for Christmas?" Parents ask their children, spouses ask each other, and friends ask one another. The question is not, "What would you like to receive?" The question is, "What can I give you that will satisfy my obligation?"

Has Christmas really come to this? Our consumer culture is leading us to focus on obligation instead of opportunity. We find ourselves dreading the obligation to give, instead of treasuring the opportunity to bless.

Perhaps we can learn from a group of shepherds who were watching their flocks two thousand years ago:

*An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." ... When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ... The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. (Luke 2:9-12, 15-16, 20)*

The shepherds were told that they had been given a Savior. They didn't argue with the angels, declaring that they didn't need or want to be saved. They heard the angels' message, acted on it, and eventually received the Lord's Messiah. Because they received God's gift, they were blessed beyond measure, which led them to bless others, not out of obligation but out of opportunity.

The question to ask ourselves, then, is this: "Have I received the gift God has for me?" That gift is Jesus. None of us has the ability to give Jesus, but each of us has the ability to receive him: *to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (John 1:12-13)*

My encouragement to all of us this Christmas is to transform obligation into opportunity. The more we are aware of how blessed we are, the more we'll want to bless others. That's why I love experiencing Thanksgiving before Christmas. As we acknowledge how much we've received, we develop a desire to give. In this way, obligation to give becomes opportunity to bless.

It all begins with receiving. Have you received God's gift of Jesus? SR

*Sharing the journey with you,  
Pastor Scott Haurath  
North Loup, NE*



## Can You Spare Some Change?

Christmas is a wonderful time of the year, isn't it? Hanging decorations, buying and handing out presents, family and friends getting together, sharing in a wonderful meal. However, after all is said and done, does the Christmas celebration really change anything in your world? How will you or your world be different on December 26th? Will you feel more complete, happier, more at peace, or just more in debt? Because, even though the Bible never once tells us to remember and celebrate the birth of Christ, it is obvious that His coming was for the purpose of changing things and changing us. So it would seem that if our celebration of Christmas is done properly, it should change us.

When the angels announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds they said: "I bring you good news of great joy." Their words made it obvious that Christmas, Jesus' coming, was to be a joyful, life-changing experience. It should be an experience that relieves our fears, once again ignites our faith, and brings us peace. It seems that if, in faith, we have ever received God's free gift of His Son and the promise of eternal life through Him, every year at the time we celebrate His birth, there should be a change in us.

In Isaiah 43 we read, *Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the*

*desert."* We understand that God is speaking to the Israelites about His deliverance of them from Egypt and His provision for them in the wilderness. But what does it say to us and our wilderness?

God says, "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold I am doing a new thing." John the Baptist said he came to prepare the way and Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." God wants to do a new thing in our lives and He loved us so much that He gave us His Son. That is an amazing love, the kind of love than can change lives, but just knowing about that love can't change anything. We must experience and truly believe in that expression of God's Love. Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:17 that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new. When we come to Christ, we are responding to the new thing that God is doing. Every Christmas when we remember and celebrate the coming of Christ into the world as we ought to, we are recommitting ourselves to being involved in the new thing God is doing.

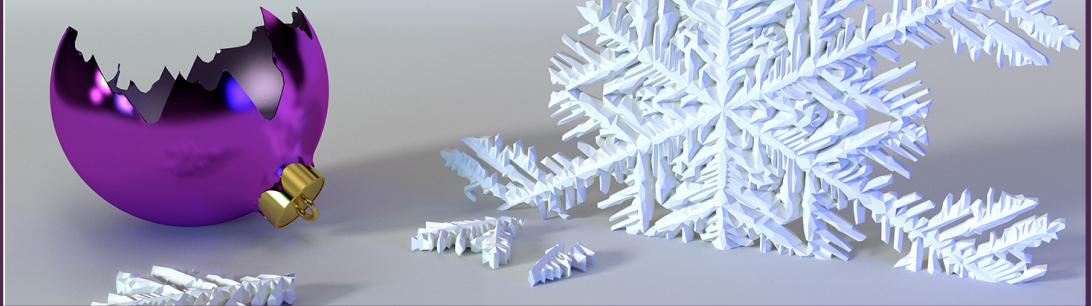
If our Christmas celebrations are just made up of parties, presents, and decorations, is it any wonder that there is never any change in our world after the season is past? If God gives you another Christmas holiday to celebrate, don't forget to keep Christ in Christmas and let Him change you. SR

— Pastor Robert Babcock  
Marlboro SDB Church, NJ



Women's Society page  
Katrina Goodrich  
[www.sdbwomen.org](http://www.sdbwomen.org)

## Not so Perfect Holiday



Imagine a barn. Not an empty one used for photo ops, weddings, or a wild animal home, but one that is actually in use providing a haven for animals after a long day of work. Livestock under the best of circumstances release odors that are unpleasant. Crowded together in a warm barn after a long day, with little air circulation, I imagine the smell might be overwhelming. The air is extremely dusty and there isn't anywhere that is truly clean to relax. Now imagine that you are nine months pregnant with your first child. People tell me, that among other things during pregnancy, your sense of smell is acutely increased.

There is a nice bed of hay to lay on that is mostly clean and dry. Probably uncomfortable but it's better than the hard floor. Then your water breaks and the previously dry hay is becoming more uncomfortable by the minute. Labor begins and things get even messier. Giving birth is painful even with inventions like the epidural. There is no sanitary, modern hospital to make the experience easier. No doctors and nurses to make sure everything is proceeding correctly. All you have is your husband, your donkey, and a barn full of livestock belonging to strangers. You don't even have family members or close friends who have been through this before to help you. Call me crazy, but I can't imagine this being a very serene moment. Certainly it's not perfect and holy.

This was Mary's experience with the birth of Jesus. Mary was in a strange town sleeping in the barn at an inn because there wasn't a place anywhere else. I don't believe this is what she had in mind for the time or place of the birth of her first child.

Christians recognize the birth of Jesus as one of the most important and holy moments in history (next to

the resurrection). December 25 is the designated day as Christmas — but we actually end up devoting an entire season to celebrating Jesus' birth. People tend to be kinder and think of others during this time. We give gifts and make a point of getting in touch with people to tell them we love them and are thinking about them. We sing carols about the birth of Jesus — like *O Holy Night*, *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*, and *Silent Night* — that evoke an idyllic image of the birth of Christ. There isn't anything inherently wrong with that. I love the beauty of Christmas carols and how they remind us of the love God has for us in sending His Son. I love that during Christmas we are reminded of truth and love.

It's just sometimes I tend to get wrapped up in the idea of a perfect Christmas. I want the perfect blanket of snow, a decorated tree, family, friends, a candlelight service. There isn't any room for real life to intrude and mess things up. But, of course, it does. Things go wrong. We miss the candlelight service. Friends can't come home. The tree looks like it should belong to Charlie Brown. It doesn't snow and for some reason that detracts from our enjoyment of the holiday.

Conditions were not perfect the first Christmas and they aren't going to be perfect for any other Christmas either. We should not allow the imperfections of the season to ruin it. Even though circumstances were far from ideal for Mary, I don't think that is what she was thinking about when she held Jesus. She was holding the gift of life for the first time and that made all the hardship worth it. Don't let the imperfections of a holiday detract from the remembrance of the ultimate gift of life given to us all so many Christmases ago. SR



## President's Page

Bill Probasco



## Unaccompanied Minor?

On my trips to visit our various SDB churches to share my theme of being “Steadfast,” I’ve been blessed to have a traveling companion from time to time. My wife, Valerie, has come with me to visit the Verona, NY and Riverside, CA churches, and my daughter, Holly, came with me to the Boulder, CO and Seattle, WA churches. (Just so it doesn’t seem like I’m playing favorites, my son Liam is coming with me on a future trip to Daytona Beach, FL!)

When I booked my trip to Seattle, for Holly’s ticket I used a frequent flyer ticket I had been saving. Now the interesting thing about that is I had to book my ticket and then separately book her ticket. This seemed to just be an extra step, no big deal. It wasn’t until we had everything purchased it became apparent that because she is 13 years old and her ticket was booked separately, she became an “unaccompanied minor.” This was good and bad, or at least had its perks and drawbacks. We had to go to the check-in counter and speak with an airline employee at the airport because Holly was “traveling by herself.” But because she was “traveling by herself,” she did get to board early! She breezed through security, but then had to wait for Dad to “go the long way” through (“please remove your belt and shoes and empty your pockets completely...”). Even after we’d found our seats on the plane, the flight attendants came around to check on her because, again, she was “traveling by herself.” Holly loved the special attention, yet never felt alone with me steadfastly sitting right next to her. She was an “accompanied, unaccompanied minor.”

This got me thinking about the Christmas story in a new way. God would make the decision to “give His

only begotten Son” into the world as an atoning sacrifice. Jesus the babe was sent “unaccompanied” into the world to take our place. There was no armed bodyguard protecting him, no strict protective agenda laid out for his every move. Jesus was in a very real sense sent to experience the world on his own.

Yet Jesus was never alone. God steadfastly “accompanied” him all along the journey (“this is my Son in whom I am well pleased”). He made sure to have loving parents, Mary and Joseph, to look after him — even getting him to Egypt before Herod could fulfill the dreadful prophesy found in Jeremiah 31:15.

Like my daughter at the airport, that first Christmas it was Jesus, here in the flesh, who was an accompanied, unaccompanied minor: getting extra special attention noting his arrival (“star in the East”), people to look in on him (shepherds, wise men), even a watchful Father that some might not immediately realize was nearby.

God’s steadfast love was “ap-parent” even if God wasn’t visible as “a parent.” Just like I was keeping a watchful eye on my daughter at the airport, God was watching over baby Jesus. But even more so, just when it seemed mankind was lost in its sinful existence, God showed His steadfast love by sending the Greatest Gift of All.

In fact, it’s that steadfast love He showed that truly is the joy surrounding the Christmas season. God didn’t keep that joy, He shared it. Maybe the best part of Christmas is what any 4-year-old can tell you — it actually is better to receive than give, especially when that gift comes from God!

Merry Christmas! SR



## Greetings from the 2015 Host Committee

We have information about the Shirt Fundraiser:  
Available items are Tee-shirts, Sweatshirts, Hoodie  
Sweatshirts, Polo Shirts, and Caps.

There is an online store set up to make it easy to  
order. The store will be open until January 15, 2015  
at:

<http://www.companycasuals.com/SeventhDayBaptist/start.jsp>

Prices are as follows:

### Tee-Shirts

\$13.00 . . . Youth M (10-12) and Youth L (14-16)  
\$13.00 . . . Youth XL (18-20) and Adult S-XL  
\$15.00 . . . Adult 2XL and 3XL

### Hoodies

\$24.00 . . . Adult S-XL  
\$27.00 . . . Adult 2XL and 3XL

### Crewneck Sweatshirts

\$18.00 . . . Adult S-XL  
\$20.00 . . . Adult 2XL and 3XL

### Polo Shirts

\$30.00 . . . Ladies' S-XL  
\$31.00 . . . Ladies' 2XL  
\$30.00 . . . Men's S-XL  
\$31.00 . . . Men's 2XL  
\$32.00 . . . Men's 3XL

Caps — \$20.00



Hopefully, smaller sizes will also become available.  
If they are available, they will show up on the online  
store.

Payment will be by PayPal. Shipping will be addi-  
tional and will be calculated with your order.

Proceeds will be used to offset the additional cost for  
the Youth Banquet and other Conference expenses.  
The Host Committee hopes to see you in Lancaster  
next July. If you have any questions, or trouble  
ordering, feel free to email [sdmoncrief@yahoo.com](mailto:sdmoncrief@yahoo.com)  
or call 856 455 4419. SR



# Christmas Bells

As the Christmas season approaches, I find myself remembering one of my favorite poems by one of my favorite poets: “Christmas Bells” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. It’s possibly better known as the Christmas carol “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day” (though the song cuts out the fourth and fifth stanzas). Longfellow wrote it on Christmas Day, 1863, and it starts out with the Christmas spirit one might expect:

*I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
Their old familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet  
The words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!”*

However, Christmas spirit wasn’t what inspired Longfellow to write this poem. His son, Charles Appleton Longfellow, had joined the Union to fight in the Civil War, and was severely wounded during the battle of New Hope Church—the bullet that pierced him was only an inch away from paralyzing him. Charles lived on, but Henry was distressed by his son’s injury, having lost his wife to a fire only three years prior. Hence the fourth stanza:

*“Then from each black, accursed mouth  
The cannon thundered in the South,  
And with the sound  
The carols drowned  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!”*

The narrator’s sadness grows until we finally get to the sixth verse:

*“And in despair I bowed my head;  
There is no peace on earth,’ I said;  
For hate is strong,  
And mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!”*

Thankfully, there’s one last thought that Longfellow decided to add. After all, his son was still alive! There was joy to be had!

*“Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
‘God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;  
The Wrong shall fail,  
The Right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good-will to men.”*

Something interesting to note is the finality of this ending. The poem is split into three parts: a first group of three stanzas about the joy of Christmas, a second group of three about the hopelessness brought on by the evils of mankind, and this last stanza that stands on its own. The other two ideas needed to be expounded on, while this verse stands alone to show that no more needs to be said. God is watching out for us, even if sometimes it feels like He isn’t. He’s there, He cares, and He will make sure everything is right in the end. With that in mind, I hope you all have a merry Christmas, and may there be peace on earth, goodwill to men! SR

— Seth Osborn  
Seventh Day Baptist Church  
Boulder, CO

# The Beacon

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



We are living in a beautiful, wonderful, slightly horrifying time called “The Information Age.” Someday, children will look back in their history books and laugh at our pathetic technology, but for now, we have more access to information than we ever have before. With the internet as prevalent in our culture as it is, blogging has become an extremely popular form of expression. In the online Christian community alone, there are thousands of blogs with writers sharing stories of God’s work in their lives. There are also just as many blogs which claim to have the answers — the writers use logic to try to “prove” Christianity.

“Proving” the existence of God has become an extremely popular topic in the online community. With a click of a button, a person can reach the masses — of course people are going to want to use this opportunity to evangelize. And so they should. The internet has brought the world closer together, and it is a great resource for reaching out to people who do not know Christ. If your church doesn’t have a blog or website, look into creating one. It’s a modern way to get the congregation thinking and talking in the days leading up to the Sabbath.

As great as the internet can be for evangelism, it can also be somewhat detrimental to Christians. Let’s re-examine the idea of “proving” that what God says is right. It’s hugely popular right now. Earlier this year, creationist Ken Ham debated evolutionist Bill Nye. The debate was widely anticipated and watched by many. However, the debate didn’t really have a clear winner. There wasn’t much point to it when it came to changing people’s minds — creationists thought Ham was right, and evolutionists thought Nye was. The debate created unnecessary conflict, and took Christ’s message of love and made it unreachable for the millions of people who supported Nye’s argument.

This is the problem with using logic and facts to try to “prove” anything about God — it takes away from the ultimate message. It’s also impossible. Ecclesiastes

8:17 ensures us that we are never going to understand God. We as mere humans can’t argue His existence because we can’t understand it. We know that God is love, and we know that whatever God says is true. That is what we need to be preaching.

I understand why people think they need to provide logic to explain God. We live in a cynical, independent world where people require reasons and facts to back up everything they do. Christians automatically assume that we should give statistics and reasons for doing what God says so that other people will be convinced of God’s truth.

But that’s not how it works. People aren’t brought to Christ through facts and logic. Jesus generally didn’t explain things with logic — when the Pharisees would ask him a question, hoping to catch him in a trap, he would respond in kind with another question or by saying some symbolic thing that didn’t really give an answer. It’s one of the awesome, sassy things about Jesus. Jesus never told us to give people logical reasons to follow him. He told us (and showed us) to love God and to love people. He told us in John 6:44, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.”

We as Christians don’t do anything in the process of bringing people to Christ. We can’t convince people that God loves them with any logic or facts or statistics. The only thing we’re called to do is treat people the way Jesus did, try to make our lives an accurate example of how God wants us to act, and be willing to step up to the plate when we have the opportunity to spread His word.

We do not win people to Christianity by explaining logically why Christianity is the best option. People are won to Christianity through God’s love, and our only part in that is to be facilitators of that love. SR

— Rebecca Olson  
Seventh Day Baptist Church  
Berlin, NY



# The Midnight Mission

by Vilan van de Loo

*The Nick of Time*

Nick Kersten  
Librarian-Historian

*An organization that would become a major force in the Netherlands*

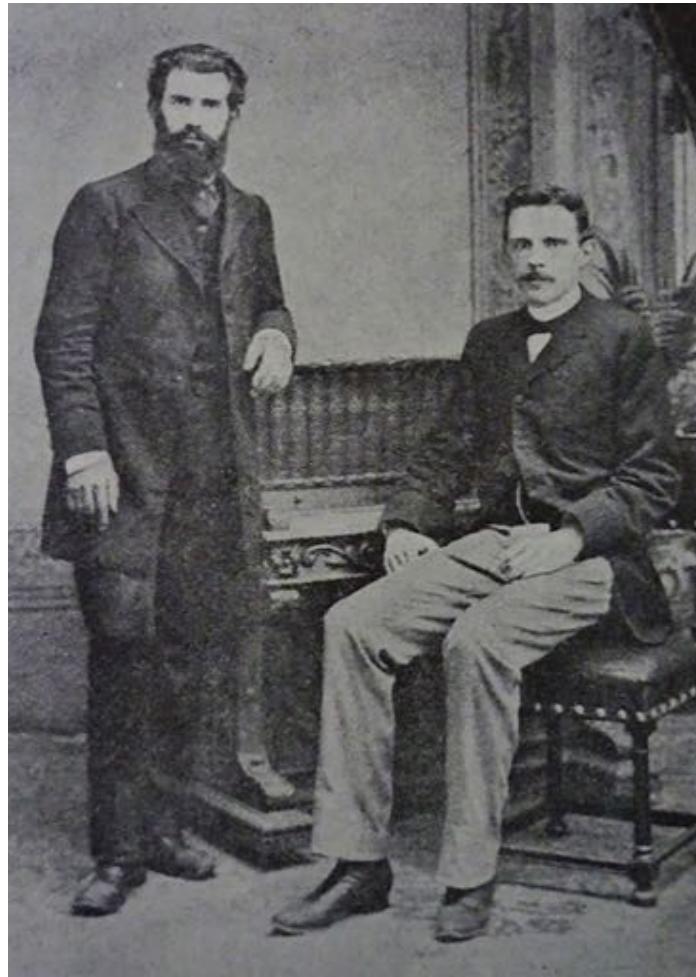
Imagine this. You are a man, mid-thirties, with close to zero combat skills, and you and your friend have a great idea. This is it: to stand in the entrance door to a brothel in the heart of the red light district in Amsterdam. When a potential costumer approaches, you will ask him if he really thinks that God wants him to visit a prostitute. You do this because you feel prostitution has no place in a Christian world.

Dear reader, what do you think will happen?

## The start

Two 7th Day Baptists could have answered the question, as this is exactly what they did in 1888. One was Johannes van der Steur (1865-1945), taller than his friend Gerard Velthuysen (1865-1936) who was more a bit of a bookworm. As early 7th Day Baptists, they were used to mockery for their beliefs. They were both from Haarlem, close friends, “like David and Jonathan,” and they were the first two working men in what was to become the Midnight Mission — an organization that would become a major force in the Netherlands.

There were others. Like Colonel L. Roosmale Nepveu (1825-1903), who had seen a Midnight Mission at work in Denmark. And there was the then-famous Rev. Hendrik Pierson (1834-1923) who added this work to his continuing fight against prostitution. He needed men with an iron backbone and similar Christian



*Johannes van der Steur (standing),  
Gerard Velthuysen (seated)*

beliefs to work the streets. Pierson’s basic idea was simple: without the male customers, the evil of prostitution would cease to exist. Somehow he got in touch with Van der Steur, offered him and Velthuysen a monthly allowance (most likely paid by Velthuysen’s dad, also a 7th Day Baptist) and they both moved to Amsterdam to start their work.

It could be foreseen that the brothels would give a violent response to this disturbing factor for the clientele. But there was also something else that made it difficult. Prostitution was regulated, and the local police made a profit out of the brothels. Plus, there was a general belief that a man “needed” sexual relationships. Only madmen would dare to protest.

### Development

At first, they laughed at Van der Steur and Velthuysen. Then, they scolded. And eventually there was physical aggression of all sorts. Often they had to run and hide, and the hiding places were few. It was a very difficult time. Reverend Pierson and his men did not give in. On the contrary; he and Van der Steur gave public speeches, making themselves and their point of view known to a larger audience.

Yet not all were enemies. Other men, not only from the ranks of the 7DB, joined them in Amsterdam and in other cities as well. The pattern that emerged was more or less the same: mockery and aggression. That attracted new friends, other Christians.

The organization spread like fire. Within five years there was a network of departments spreading all over the Netherlands, there was a formal “Vereeniging” (society) with a magazine of its own, De Midder-nachtzendeling (The Midnight Missionary), and there was a national discussion developing. Van der Steur became a well-known name when he attacked the national government for not letting an army captain dressed in his uniform join the organization. Would a captain be allowed to visit a prostitute and be forbidden to stand for his beliefs?

The Midnight Mission was the right organization at the right time. A different kind of public awareness was developing: all sorts of pressure groups discovered

the public space to influence the local and national authorities. But none of them was so confrontational as the men of the Midnight Mission.

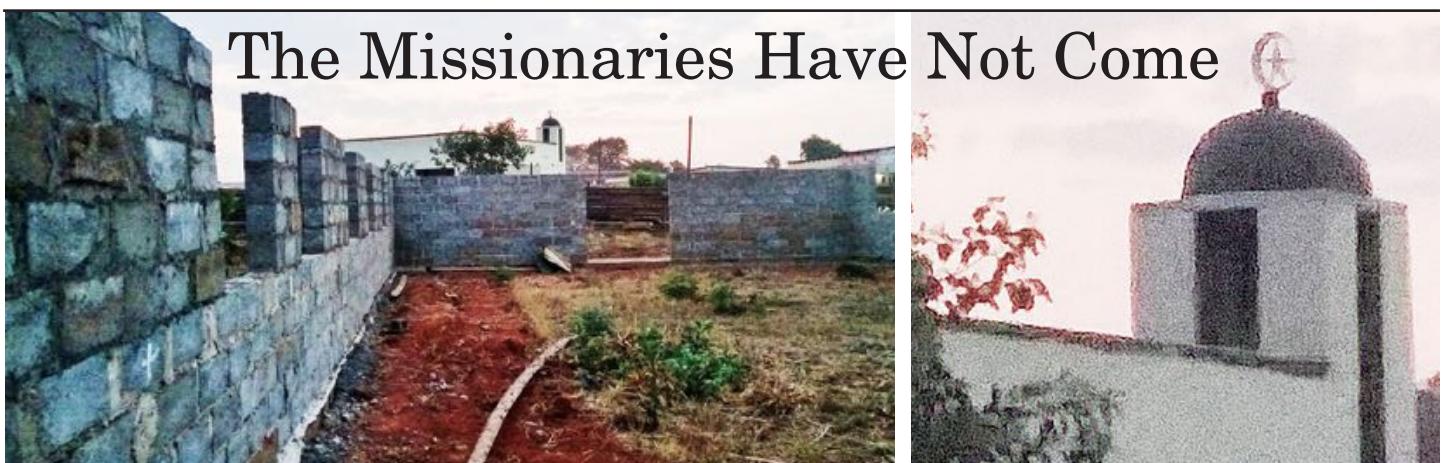
### Success

In 1911 new laws were installed in the Netherlands and prostitution was from then on illegal. It was not in the nature of the Midnight Mission to trust laws of human making, so they kept up their work. They also did this during the First World War, and they were prepared for a massive wave of prostitutes when the Olympics were held in Amsterdam (1928). The wave did not arrive, something that deeply puzzled the missionaries. Many meetings were spent on the subject, also attended by Gerard Velthuysen. After Johannes van der Steur had in 1893 departed for the Netherlands-Indies, Velthuysen became the heart of the mission. With his death in 1936, the organization never was the same again. In 1948 it merged with another organization.

And now? In 2000, prostitution was legalized in the Netherlands. It seems history repeats itself. I find this interesting and painful at the same time. While I’m busy raising funds for post-doctoral research on the Midnight Mission, I’m also working on a biography on Johannes van der Steur, the most famous man among the 7th Day Baptists in the Netherlands. In 1895 he quit the church. That was in many ways difficult, but not at all for his personal conscience. SR



*Vilan van de Loo is a Dutch independent researcher from the Netherlands. Her interests are history and literature. Her biography of Johannes van der Steur will be published May 2015 (in Dutch). Contact? Mai: vilan@xs4all.nl*



In the northern region of Zambia, not far from the border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there are about twenty-two Seventh Day Baptist congregations. Some groups have well over a hundred and other groups are as small as a dozen. They come together each Sabbath and other days in worship, fellowship, and service to each other and their communities. They have many of the same blessings and trials that bodies of Christ experience throughout the world.

I was blessed during October 2014 with a visit to one of their smaller branch congregations in Ndola, Zambia. This group has a plot in their community allocated to their use as a SDB church. Since they only had a temporary structure for their worship facilities, the small neighboring Islamic mosque petitioned the local government for rights to develop the plot. Desperately responding to retain the property for Kingdom work, the low income members scraped up funds each week to buy building materials and pay for help in construction. In a few months they have completed concrete block walls averaging head height encompassing a space about 30' x 60' for a permanent building. Now they have contributions in hand from international SDB brothers and sisters to help finish the job.

They told me that before I arrived, it would amuse them when members of their community walked by and would say, "Look the missionaries must have come." The congregation knew that God was doing the work through their own efforts, but much of the developing world has been conditioned to assume that only through the financial might of developed world sponsors can buildings be built and ministry be properly conducted. They were overjoyed that I was able to bring

some assistance to their labor, but equally encouraged that I could confirm that *they were the missionaries*. Not in the sense that they were going cross culture to carry the gospel, but in the eyes of their community they were people empowered and responsible to carry out ministry through reliance in God and guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is a fundamental role that Jesus expects all of His followers to carry out in their lives. We each are to follow His guidance and offer our lives that He may work through us — not just the pastors or missionaries.

This experience reinforced my belief that through the Missionary Society we need to be actively partnering with international groups. But it is just as important that we consciously continue to help their leaders foster a church culture that understands that if God will have a work done somewhere, He will equip the local church to provide a relevant portion, if not all of the resources needed, for the work. I also feel that it is spiritually unhealthy for local members to not give to ministry work. Repeatedly, from overseas pastors I have heard that in general their people do not know how to give. They have a problem that ministries throughout the world lament — they may have many church goers, but few that truly love and sacrifice for God in ministry.

Developed world SDB conferences in some ways are like older brothers and sisters established and able to help their siblings — which they should. However, elder family members must be mindful of the responsibility of empowering to foster a mindset that understands that the work is to be done and it is to be done in ways that promote cooperative and healthy discipleship growth for everyone. SR



## Discuss...Change...Adjust...Modify...Transform...Convert...Renovate

By this point most of you have seen or heard of the changes that our Conference is going through. Over the past 15 months we have had three key people, in central positions, announce their intention to move onto other ministry opportunities. These announcements, given that they were so close together, caused some disconcerting feelings and even some comments among our people. My hope is, with this article, to help dispel some of these concerns and show we are moving forward with opportunity.

We are going through a lot of changes! Changes usually cause some uncomfortable reactions. People most generally do not welcome change. However, the changes that we are experiencing have allowed us to renovate some of what we have been doing. RENOVATE in this case means to: "restore, and strengthen, with action." It also allows us to influence, train, and equip our churches to help with church renewal and planting in North America.

The General Council saw the opportunity to explore ways we could renew our ministries and to revitalize our churches with these executive openings. Through a very prayerful process, they examined programs, discussed ideas, brainstormed, and dreamed about the "what ifs." They sought the vision from God of what a more preferable future could be for our Conference, and how that would impact our churches. Below you will find the basic results of the work of the General Council. I will elaborate more on these people, and the services they will provide, in the January SR.

### **Director of Church Development & Pastoral Services — TBD**

The Director of Church Development works with Churches, Pastors, and Associations in the capacity of: Church Planting/Revitalization Coordinator; the first contact with new acquaintances and inquiries; Pastoral Services; and Crisis Intervention.

### **Director of Communications — Jeremiah Owen**

Communications come in many forms these days: from print, to texting, to Facebook, Twitter, email, phone, Skype, and video conferencing. It is easier than

ever before to get the Word out about the Gospel and what Seventh Day Baptists are doing in forwarding the Great Commission.

### **Director of Education & History — Nick Kersten**

Just like communications, today's education methods come in many formats. The SDB Education emphasis is focused on all age groups: those studying for the ministry through Seminary Education or Bible College, those in the T.I.M.E. Program, and Continuing Education for Pastors. There are programs and materials to encourage and equip Seventh Day Baptist Churches to teach evangelism, nurture, discipleship, history, and stewardship to their members.

Through our vast **History** as a people of faith, we will have a fuller understanding and appreciation of how and why, under God's leading in the past, we have come to where we are now. We will be "**Remembering our past to inform the present and envision the future.**" To accomplish this we will: 1. Maintain a repository for safe-keeping of, and easy access to, significant artifacts, documents, writings, and other materials; 2. Provide for continuing research into the roots and history of the Seventh Day Baptist Movement; 3. Interpret the significance of the past for the present, particularly as it relates to planning for the future; and 4. Communicate the history of Seventh Day Baptists through publications, creative use of all other media, and personal contacts and presentations.

### **Missions — SDB Missionary Society — Clint Brown**

Spreading the Gospel in the United States, Canada, and around the world is the goal of the Seventh Day Baptist Missionary Society. The Society carries out national and international missions through education, information, and suggestions for tangible assistance. These are stepping stones to becoming a beacon to others around the world. The purpose of the Seventh Day Baptist Missionary Society is to coordinate and carry out both national and international ministries by carrying the message of salvation through faith in Christ to all who will hear, so they may accept Him as Savior.

*Next Month: Meet the Players* 



## Christian Education

by Andrew J. Camenga

One of my earliest memories of Christian Education is striving to memorize the Beatitudes in order to achieve my goal: earning a collapsible pencil. The pencil had a white plastic barrel emblazoned with blue letters and a pencil insert that could be positioned to either be tucked into the barrel (and be safe for transport in a pocket) or to be sticking out (and useful for writing). My goal was the pencil. Their goal was that I hide God's word in my heart. Well, I no longer have the pencil, but I remain familiar with Beatitudes.

Several years later, once I was old enough to help and not be just a student, another memory surfaces: helping with Vacation Bible School. Part of me dreaded those days because Vacation Bible School meant that tables and chairs had to be rescued from the dark and mildewy dungeon to which they had been vanquished 51 weeks prior. Their dungeon, as all dungeons should be, was dark, somewhat musty, and decorated by spiders who weren't afraid to display their accumulated failed structures alongside their newly established engineering masterpieces. Undersized for most adults, this dungeon provided enough headroom for younger teens to work freely. And so, we were permitted to demonstrate our valiant natures by battling through the spider webs, vanquishing the mildew, and setting the tables and chairs free.

I make it sound worse than it was. The adults carried the burden of the work. They did not foist the unpleasant work on unsuspecting teens. It was just that when we showed up to help, removing the tables and chairs from the storage place under the stairs was a job that they could assign to us with confidence that we would understand and complete the task.

This, too, is a Christian Education memory. The asthma inducing work with mildewy tables and chairs preceded (and was necessary for) a week of people in the church teaching children younger than I about God and how He makes Himself known in the world.

These are two of the cherished memories that have come to the forefront of my thoughts as I've contemplated writing my last three articles as BCE's Executive Director. Beyond events from childhood and youth that led me to value intentional and organized Christian Education programs, I've thought about the people I've come to know and the ideas that others have given me through these years in this role. I am profoundly grateful to our Lord and to you for providing this opportunity to serve. I have seen pastors and teachers, youth group leaders and Christian education chairs, Sabbath school superintendents and camp directors demonstrate a desire to know the way of Christ, to serve the kingdom of God, and to encourage others to do the same. It has been a joy to see the breadth and depth of commitment that exists in the people of this conference of churches.

I encourage you to think about Christian Education in your church and to think about you yourself as a Christian educator. With these last three articles, I will share three Scripture passages that have deeply influenced my thinking and hope that you will ponder them and let the words become part of how you live. In turn, the passages encourage us to show humility, sticky-ness, deliberate-ness.

The first is 1 Peter 5:5-11:

*You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.*

*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace,*

*who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.*  
(NASB®)

Humility is a characteristic that many feel or think is inherently self-defeating — either it cannot be claimed as an attribute or it forces people to disclaim personal ability. In the first case, some think that a humble person cannot recognize their own humility. This sentiment assumes that as soon as you think or say, "I am being humble," that any existing humility will be extinguished by that realization. In the second case, some think that a humble person cannot recognize personal ability. This sentiment assumes that as soon as you think or say, "I am good at this," that any existing humility will disappear in a puff of smoke.

But humility is not a self-defeating characteristic. Humility is not a refusal to recognize personal strength or ability. True humility is driven by recognizing who we are in comparison to our Lord and embracing those gifts, abilities, and characteristics that He has given to us for use in His service (see Romans 12, the whole chapter).



You cannot be a Christian educator without being a Christian — someone who has discovered that we cannot please God without faith, without trusting God for all that we have and all that we can do. That reality must remain with us as we teach others. As long as we truly remember that fact and align our lives with it, we will have the humility necessary to serve and teach. For Christians, neither the teacher nor the student are masters — we are all servants of the living God. [SR]



## Applications for SCSC Team Members and Church Projects have been posted!

Go to [scscstainedglass.com](http://scscstainedglass.com), click on the "SCSC" subhead for information, then "SCSC Forms," and then "Students" or "Churches" for applications. Read ALL the information and send completed application forms to: SCSC Committee, PO Box 1678, Janesville WI 53547-1678.

Student applications must be postmarked by January 10, 2015.

All church applications must be postmarked by January 31, 2015 — **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

Please note: Students are limited to only two weeks of camp. Training dates are June 17-25. This will be a 3-week onsite project, with General Conference as the fourth week of project with the PDs supervising if possible. See the website for further information.

You may contact the SCSC Committee at the address above or at [SCSC@seventhdaybaptist.org](mailto:SCSC@seventhdaybaptist.org). [SR]



## Taking Care of Your Pastor

Think a minute about how you view your pastor(s). In your mind do they rank pretty close to God? Are they a handy target of criticism for everything about the church? Or are they a friend — a mere mortal who has struggles, temptations and discouragements just like the rest of us and are in need of our prayers and support?

At Conference this summer, Jane Rubietta, a pastor's wife, presented some of the following ideas in her workshop on caring for your pastor. She gave some very discouraging statistics: 60% of male pastors and 67% of female pastors suffer from depression; 47% leave the pastorate because of conflicts in the church; 1/3 leave the ministry permanently; 83% spend two or less evenings per week at home. Although the average stay for a pastor is 2.5 to five years, we are told that good ministry starts after 7 years. Pastor turnover causes many problems, including the church's impact in the community, and correlates with the health of the congregation and the pastor. An increase in arthritis, diabetes, cancer, obesity, depression and decreased longevity are some results.

It appears that for the physical, mental and spiritual health of both pastors and congregations and for the ongoing fulfillment of our mission we need to sit up and take notice of these facts. The Bible repeatedly reminds us that we should honor our leaders (Hebrews 13:1, 2, 17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Ezekiel 44:30). As Christ's followers we are called to pray for our pastors and to be present in their lives.

One way to bless the pastor and his family is to pray scriptures for them (John 17; Ephesians 1:16-23; Ephesians 3:16-21; Ephesians 6:19-20; Philemon 1:9-11 and more). Let the pastor know what you are specifically praying for him; pray with him; have members sign up for a day per month to pray for the pastor so they are

covered in prayer. Pray that they will be protected from the evil one. Write into the job description that the pastor takes care of his own soul: when is his Sabbath? Find out how he best connects with God and help him get to these experiences. Internet pornography may be a problem for pastors. Covenant Eyes is a program that keeps pastors accountable. Talk to the SDB Council on Ministry about paying the subscription fee for your pastor. Be realistic about pay, time off, hours worked and expectations.

Another way to bless your pastor is to employ your gifts in your church. Don't hide what God has blessed you with; use it for the work of the church. Use your talents: singing, playing an instrument, drama, artistic creativity, giving a children's message, and other talents can all be used to God's glory. When you volunteer it relieves your pastor of finding someone to do the job, but remember to allow your pastor to employ his gifts, too. If you have a skill or profession, offer to use it without pay. Consider supporting the church by tithing.

Let the pastor know you appreciate him. Send a note giving direct feedback about specific ways a message has helped you, offer to care for the children, send him food. Appreciation is the number one way of improving your pastor's morale. The second way is to keep yourself whole physically, morally, mentally and spiritually. Do not criticize the pastor's family. None of them are saints; don't expect them to be.

Over 400 pastors leave the ministry weekly in the U.S. Don't let this happen to your pastor. "And now, friends, we ask you to honor those leaders who work so hard for you, who have been given the responsibility of urging and guiding you along in your obedience. Overwhelm them with appreciation and love!" 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, The Message. SR

## BIRTHS

**GORDON** – A daughter, Samaiah Rose was born to Sabina (Duval) and Jason Gordon of South East Atlanta, GA on May 7, 2014.

**JOSEPH** – A daughter, Avielle Caroline Hale was born to Elizabeth (Hale) and Oded Joseph of South East Atlanta, GA on June 30, 2014.

## NEW MEMBERS

### SOUTH EAST ATLANTA SDB CHURCH

Stockbridge, GA  
Pastor Barry Dailey

Joined after Baptism

Maria Castillo  
Joshua Griffin  
Caleb Griffin  
Whitney Turner

Joined by Testimony

Breanna Dash  
Sandra Dash  
Naomi Griffin  
Deaconess Rose Henry  
Rose Muschett  
Camisha Samuels  
Marie Victor

### RIVERSIDE SDB CHURCH

Riverside, CA  
Rev. Gabriel Bejjani

Joined by Testimony

Charles Bontjes  
Dr. Lorna Kendrick  
Lorraine Moore  
Barbara Simandle

### SEATTLE AREA SDB CHURCH

Auburn, WA  
Rev. Ken Burdick

Joined by Testimony

Ben Figueroa  
Marcela Figueroa  
Jim Lindsey  
Ed Perterra

## OBITUARY

**KENYON** – Raymond M. Kenyon, 86, of Holly Hill, FL, made his final earthly journey to the loving arms of his Heavenly Father, on Thursday, April 24, 2014 following an extended illness.

Mr. Kenyon was born September 22, 1927 in Westerly, RI. Ray was the son of the late R. Merritt and Gladys Baker Kenyon.

After moving to West Virginia, he met Agnes June Murphy and they were married on August 2, 1967. He is survived by his wife June; son Rex Kenyon, New Smyrna Beach, FL; and four daughters, Joy Allen, Apopka, FL; Iris Renick, Holly Hill, FL; Gay Anderson and Holly Kenyon, Daytona Beach, FL.

Ray was also preceded in death by his sister, Alice (Allie) Kenyon, whom he loved dearly. Ray built Allie's first doll house which had running water and electricity.

Ray was a retired carpenter and construction worker, working in various states. He also built and sold Swift Homes. He was a member of the Kiwanis in West Virginia. He was a lifelong member of the Seventh Day Baptist Church, and served as a Deacon and a Trustee in the Daytona Beach SDB church.

A memorial service was held May 17, 2014 at the Seventh Day Baptist Church of Daytona Beach, FL with Pastor Wray Winborne officiating. Ray's final resting place will be at the Grafton Veterans Cemetery in Grafton, WVA.

DECEMBER

### Youth/Adult

...rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

– Colossians 2:7

### Junior

...rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

– Colossians 2:7

### Primary

Overflow with thankfulness.

– Colossians 2:7

*A*s Christmas approaches and you reflect again upon the savior's birth, the familiarity of the story may cause you to gloss over some of the details. One such element is how the machinations of man in no way hinder the program of God. Several events in Jesus' life followed a divinely appointed schedule and, on various occasions, he referred to that schedule (Matt. 26:18; Mark 1:15; John 7:6, 8, 30). The Apostle Paul was also acutely aware of God's timetable (Rom. 5:6; 1 Tim. 2:6; 6:15; Titus 1:3), and he made specific mention of how Jesus' birth was part of that plan.

***When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman... (Gal 4:4)***

God was not the only one on a schedule. At the same time, the emperor of Rome was advancing his own agenda, and on a much larger scale.

***In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (Luke 2:1)***

His decree, a prelude to greater taxation, affected everyone. It also required some, like Mary and Joseph, to register in a different part of the country. This massive government program probably made them (and others) feel inconsequential. All they could do was comply.

What is particularly striking is how God was in no way hindered by Caesar's decision. In fact, God used that decision to advance His own program, ensuring that His people were in the right place at the right time. It is doubtful that Mary and Joseph would have left Galilee if not required by the imperial edict. Doing so, however, placed them in Bethlehem at the moment of Jesus' birth, thereby fulfilling the prophet's prediction.

***But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. (Mic 5:2)***

We do not know if Jesus' parents saw the providential hand of God in the emperor's decree. Nevertheless, because they were attentive to God's leading (Matt 1:24; Luke 1:38), He did not allow them to miss this important step in His plan, a plan greater and more comprehensive than that of any human government.

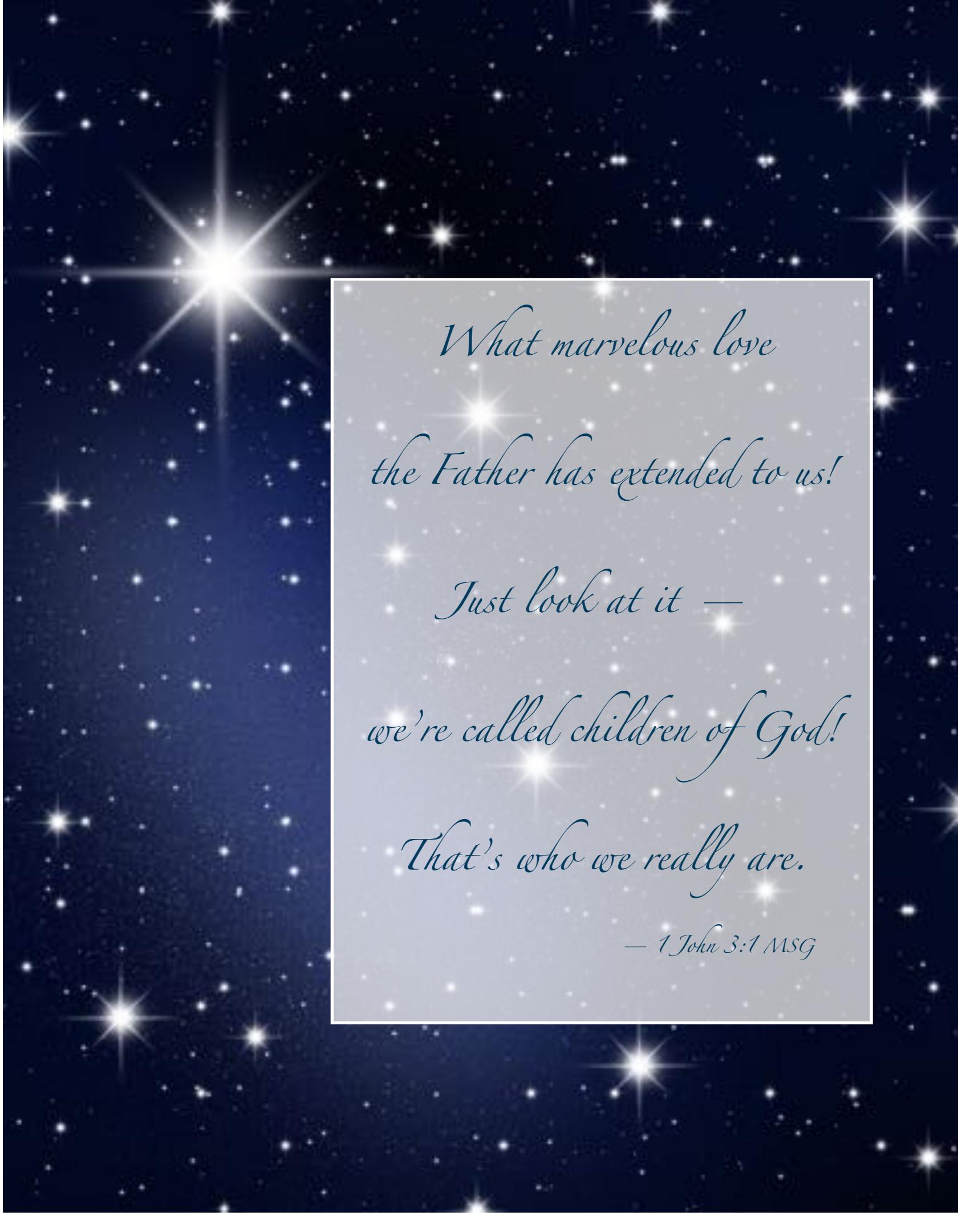
Our national leaders seem to be advancing their own agenda, with spending on a scale larger than any previously, a likely prelude to greater taxation, and you too may feel inconsequential. Whatever the outcome of their deliberations, all you may be able to do is comply. Yet, God is still in no way hindered by men's decisions. In fact, God can use those decisions to advance His own program. Moreover, like Mary and Joseph, if you are attentive to God's leading, He will not allow you to miss an important step in His plan, a plan greater and more comprehensive than that of any human government.

As Christmas approaches and you reflect again upon the savior's birth, remember how it followed a divinely appointed schedule. Keep in mind also that this schedule has more to come.

***...to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment — to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. (Eph 1:10)***

May this Christmas remind you how the machinations of man in no way hinder the program of God. May you enter the New Year with a steadfast commitment to and a renewed confidence in the One who is moving all of history, including your own. SR

— Rev. Paul Manuel, Ph.D.  
German Seventh-Day Baptist Church  
Salemville, PA



*What marvelous love  
the Father has extended to us!*

*Just look at it —*

*we're called children of God!*

*That's who we really are.*

*— 1 John 3:1 MSG*



Away in a manger, no crib for a bed.  
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.  
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay;  
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing; the Baby awakes,  
But little Lord Jesus – no crying He makes.  
I love Thee, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,  
And stay by my side until morning is nigh.