

Sabbath Recorder

A Seventh Day Baptist Publication

November 2016

OUR LIVES ARE
A CONSTANT
AUTUMN –

SHIFTING,
CHANGING,
FADING....



“Autumn”

by Lauren Cruzan

Autumn —
Seasons changing,
Ever shifting,
A new dawn upon us.

Colors —
Now changing,
A slow fade
To what’s to come.

Leaves —
Falling down,
Drifting to the ground,
Know that their time has come.

Trees —
Shedding the old,
Exposing bare branches,
Making room for the new.

Autumn...
Fall...
Change...
Is all too reflective of human experience.

You,
Me,
All of us,
Are autumn —
Seasons of our lives
Constantly changing,
Ever shifting,
As a new dawn awaits us.

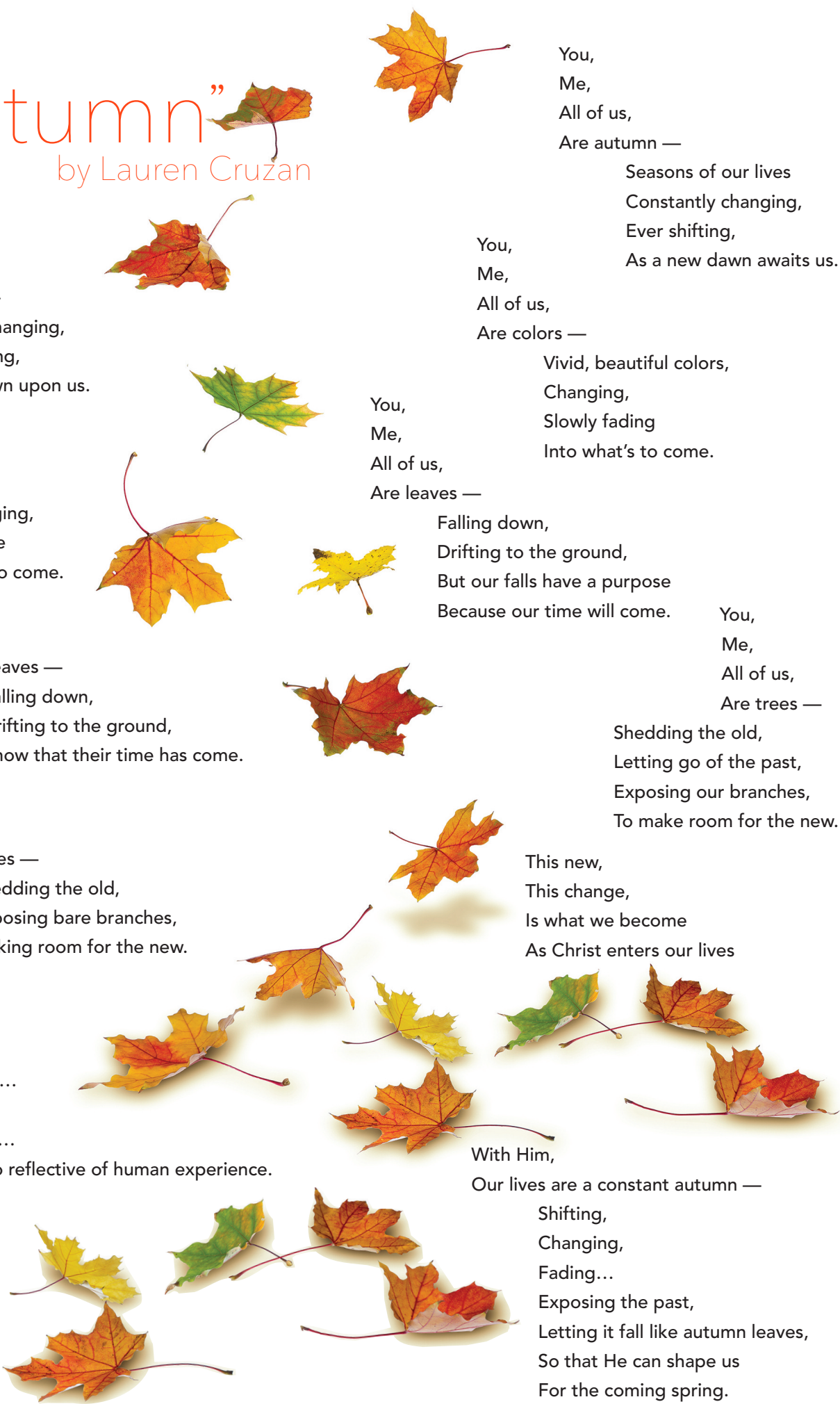
You,
Me,
All of us,
Are colors —
Vivid, beautiful colors,
Changing,
Slowly fading
Into what’s to come.

You,
Me,
All of us,
Are leaves —
Falling down,
Drifting to the ground,
But our falls have a purpose
Because our time will come.

You,
Me,
All of us,
Are trees —
Shedding the old,
Letting go of the past,
Exposing our branches,
To make room for the new.

This new,
This change,
Is what we become
As Christ enters our lives

With Him,
Our lives are a constant autumn —
Shifting,
Changing,
Fading...
Exposing the past,
Letting it fall like autumn leaves,
So that He can shape us
For the coming spring.



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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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It happened that as he made his way toward Jerusalem, he crossed over the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten men, all lepers, met him. They kept their distance but raised their voices, calling out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

Taking a good look at them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." They went, and while still on their way, became clean. One of them, when he realized that he was healed, turned around and came back, shouting his gratitude, glorifying God. He knelt at Jesus' feet, so grateful. He couldn't thank him enough—and he was a Samaritan.

Jesus said, "Were not ten healed? Where are the nine? Can none be found to come back and give glory to God except this outsider?" Then he said to him, "Get up. On your way. Your faith has healed and saved you."

—Luke 17:11-19 MSG

The Thankful Heart

The Thankful Heart

By Levi Bond
SDB Church, Portland, OR

I am working on a record in my life. I have been a substitute school custodian for over 12 years. I did this job for a year while I was looking for a full-time job. Once I landed one, they kept me on the list for occasional calls. Now that I am working a 4-10 schedule at my full-time job, I am available to work most Fridays at a school. One of the ways I have managed to keep this job, continuing to work as several administrators have turned over, is because of a habit that

"I am doing a pretty good job of showing my thankfulness for this job." Then conviction hit me: "How am I doing at being thankful for other blessings in my life?"

I have developed. At the beginning and end of each school year, I visit the maintenance office in person and deliver a thank you note. That thank you note includes a request for more work. I did this again last September as a new school year began. I started thinking as I drove home from this errand, "I am doing a pretty good job of showing my thankfulness for this job." Then conviction hit me: "How am I doing at being thankful for other blessings in my life?"

In this scripture we have ten lepers who were blessed by being healed. But only one, a lowly Samaritan, turned around, acknowledged and thanked his healer. To put a different twist on this scripture, I thought, "Have I received ten blessings but only been thankful for one of them?" That is an issue that I am still working on.

Looking at what this Samaritan did, his thankfulness went in two directions. One was to Jesus, who was at the time a man, and the other was to God who did the healing. When I consider what the two greatest commandments are in Matthew 22:37-40, being thankful certainly fits in. They are, first "*Love the Lord Your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,*" and second, "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*"

On the love your neighbor side, there are plenty of ways to show thankfulness. For ages we have done it verbally with a "Thank You." There is also the pat on the back, a written note or card, and nowadays we have email, Facebook, text messages, and the list goes on. Gifts are another way to show our thankfulness. One more way to show thankfulness is by reciprocating assistance to people. Our church in Portland has a history of pitching in to help each other move. I have received help moving twice, and it was invaluable. As a way of showing my thankfulness, I have helped others when they moved.

On the God side of the greatest commandment, there are countless ways to show our gratitude for what He has done for us. When you dedicate your life to Christ, it is your whole life. Prayer, praise, and worship like we do at church are a great start. Our time dedicated to devotions and ministry show our gratitude to God.

Tithes and offerings are another very important opportunity that we have to show our thanks to God. He provided it all — and as a way of showing our gratitude, we have the opportunity to support His church with 1/10th of it plus other offerings as He leads. Tithing is one of my

Are you like the leper who turned back to say thank you?

favorite topics to speak about, because I have had the blessing of doing it for several years now, through some ups and downs in my income. I also like to bring it up as a guest speaker at churches because no one can accuse me of being a pastor asking for a raise. Tithing is an important, lifelong discipline that shows gratitude to God.

There is one more aspect of showing gratitude to God in this scripture that should not be overlooked. This Samaritan gave his praise and thanks in public. It says he came back *"Praising God in a loud voice."* This guy came back and found Jesus on a sidewalk somewhere, and praised God in front of witnesses for his healing. Why is that important? He was sharing his testimony with others. Out in the world that we live in, our testimonies of deliverance are a lot more effective with hurting people than just handing out tracts and telling people, "You need Jesus." All of those things are important, but our testimonies are what really brings it home. I have very limited experience with the drug rehab ministries, but I have observed one thing about those ministries. Their most powerful outreach tool is former drug addicts getting on stage or going into the community telling their testimonies to other drug addicts. For a former drug addict to reach out to another and say, "I was there, and the Lord delivered me!" is an incredibly powerful tool.

There are also consequences to not being thankful to God. When I was visiting our sister church in Seattle a few years ago, Pastor Gary Hemminger gave the children's message. In that message he pulled out a nice looking apple and told the children that he really wanted a donut. Then he told the children and the rest of the church how God was providing for the Israelites with manna, but instead of being thankful for that provision, they started complaining and wanted meat. In anger God gave them all the meat that they could eat, plus a plague.

The tragedy of the story of Israel is, if they had followed God's plan for a little longer, they would have had plenty

of food. God wanted to give them the land of Canaan. They sent 12 spies. The spies came back reporting how they saw bundles of grapes so large that it took two men to carry them. Then they lost faith, because the people were scary giants. Some were descendents of Anak, so maybe genetics had something to do with it — but I believe there was another reason that they were giants. It was because the Canaanites had plenty to eat.

Back in 1999, I got to be a giant when I was stationed in South Korea in the US Air Force. When you compare an American who grew up in a country where food is abundant to anyone who grew up in a more difficult environment, the American looks like a giant. I remember one weekend we went to an amusement park with some Korean friends from our Bible study group. I and another American were in a long line waiting for a ride, and a DJ was entertaining us playing music and chattering in Korean. Later our Korean friend told us that the DJ was making fun of us, because we were towering over everyone else in line. You could also compare North and South Koreans. North Korean people are similar genetically, but they are on average four inches shorter than South Koreans, because they grew up in an environment of severe famines.

My point is, one of the reasons the Canaanites were giants is because they had an abundance of food, and God wanted to bless Israel with that. We will also suffer consequences if we are ungrateful in our relationships to other people and to God.

We need to examine our hearts on this issue. Are you like the leper who turned back to say thank you? Or are you one of the other nine? Are you giving thanks to God and the people around you? Are you thankful for the manna that the Lord has provided for you? Having a thankful heart is not a one-time decision. It is a daily choice that we have to make as we follow our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. [SR](#)

What I am
Thankful
for...

*"I thank God for the privilege
of coming to him in prayer
to keep my sanity in this
sometimes insane world."*

*— Paula Brown
Bradenton SDB Church*

"I'm thankful that I
have so many things
for which I am thankful
that I cannot narrow
them down to just a few
sentences, paragraphs,
or pages. I'm thankful
that God is so generous!"

— Pastor Scott Hausrath
North Loup SDB Church

"I am thankful for His grace He gives
me daily. The love that He gives me.
He never gives up on me. I am most
thankful for a God who loves me.
Amen."

- Brian Patee

"garage door openers, weed-eaters,
the first 15 minutes of my day that
begins in the quiet embracing of the
one person I love most in the world"

— Anonymous

“God is so good! gracious! loving! forgiving, understanding,
patient! creative! fun! wise! BIG! and perfect!

He is Eternal, Alpha, Omega, Provider, Protector,
All-Powerful, Creator, Comforter, MY Savior, Designer,
Father, Master, Lord and King!

I'm thankful He loves me more than I can imagine, is
my BFF! always with me, my guide by my side, and has
blessed my life with years of Christianity, family and friends.

He alone is “I am”! He alone is the Lamb! He alone is
worthy of our Praise! Hallelujah! I am forever grateful!”

— Cheri Appel

“I am thankful for a sovereign,
loving God who invites us to
enjoy Him and empowers us to
glorify Him. I am also thankful
for the restful Spirit He gives as
we submit to Him.”

— Christine Davis

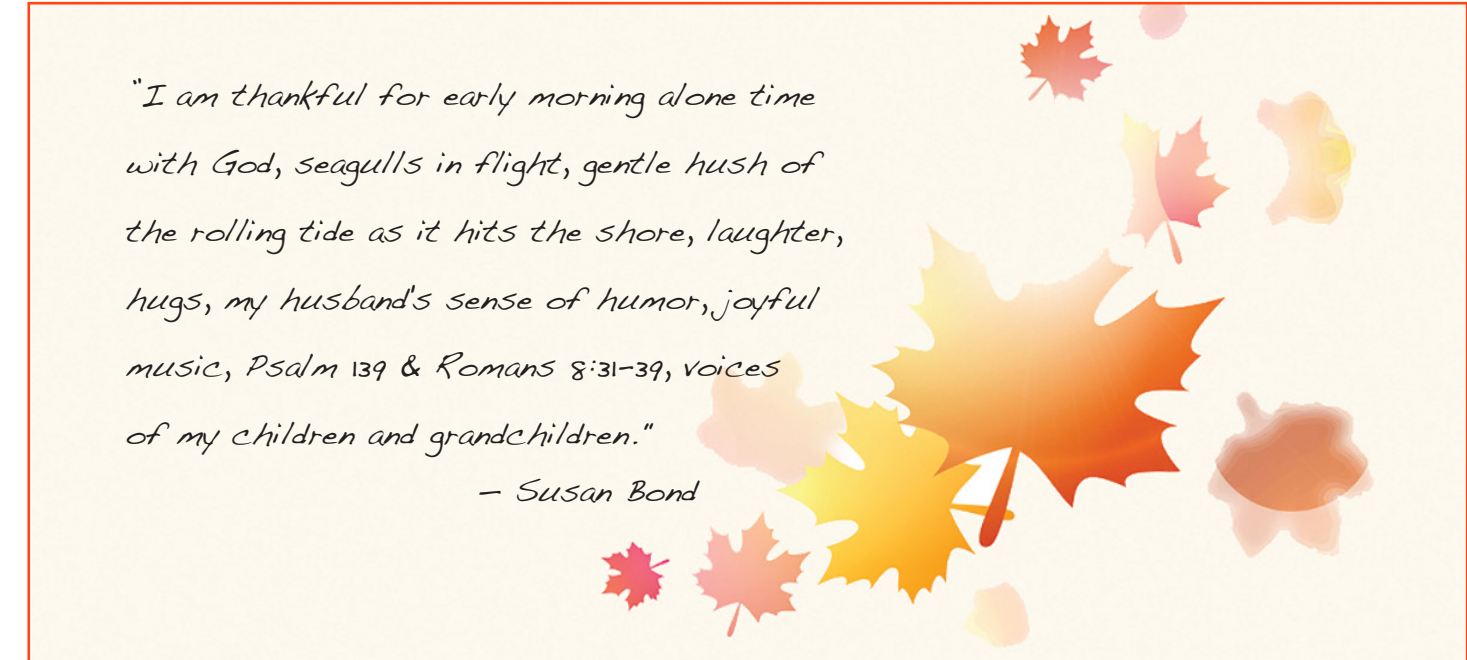


“I am thankful for so many things:
wife, family, friends, the church
I serve, the churches I have served.
The list could go on and on. I am
thankful, most of all, to God for
giving me His love and grace,
which has made me rich beyond
measure. Thank you, God!”

— Pastor Dave Taylor
Central SDB Church, MD

“I am thankful for the Internet and live streaming.
I live in Reading, PA, and the closest SDB church is
just outside Philly, some 50 miles away. Praise God
I am able to attend Alfred Station SDB in NY and
Maranatha SDB in Colton, CA. Belonging to an
American Baptist Sunday church I feel right at home
with Alfred Station. I truly enjoy the messages from
Pastor Ken and Pastor George at Colton. Someday,
maybe, Reading will be home to an SDB church!”

— Gary Benjamin



"I am thankful for early morning alone time with God, seagulls in flight, gentle hush of the rolling tide as it hits the shore, laughter, hugs, my husband's sense of humor, joyful music, Psalm 139 & Romans 8:31-39, voices of my children and grandchildren."

— Susan Bond

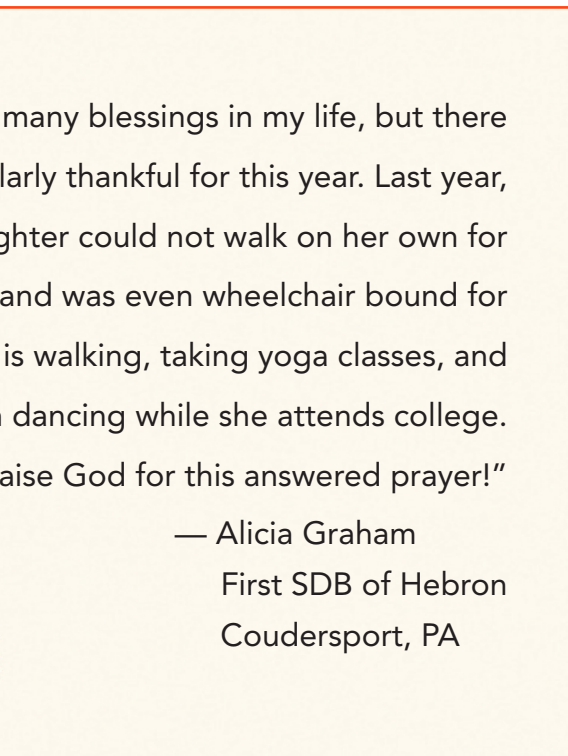
What I am Thankful for...

"I am thankful for the strength God gives me each day to help pack the food we get at our church to feed people who need it. I have a roof over my head, a good place to sleep, food on my table, and a good church and family. I am truly blessed."

— June Kenyon

"I am happy that God works with us to make something good happen out of every difficult situation."

— Pastor Michael Spearl
Bradenton SDB Church



"I am thankful for so many blessings in my life, but there is one that I am particularly thankful for this year. Last year, my 18-year-old daughter could not walk on her own for almost eight months and was even wheelchair bound for awhile. Now she is walking, taking yoga classes, and even dancing while she attends college.

We praise God for this answered prayer!"

— Alicia Graham
First SDB of Hebron
Coudersport, PA

THANKFULNESS

by Donna VanHorn

“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.”

— Psalm 150:6

Our family was together for dinner at our place on Thanksgiving eve. That in itself is something to be thankful for. In this era of global conflict and a variety of domestic stresses, family unity is increasingly scarce. The disconnect could be the result of a family member away on military service or — God forbid — a life sacrificed as a result. Or it could be irreconcilable marital discord. Whatever the reason, relational issues within the family are stressful — to say the least. So, back to our dinner. Our two daughters, their husbands, and their families were elbow to elbow with Jerry and me. As we always do at this particular once-a-year meal, everyone is invited to offer a specific reason for thanks. We took turns around the table. If we're honest with ourselves, there are myriad reasons to thank God for His provision. Without hesitation, my 10-year-old granddaughter said she was thankful for a roof over her head. How simple, I thought. It's something many of us take for granted...an everyday blessing, if lost for whatever reason, would be noticed immediately. Thank God for the simple things — and the honesty, innocence and spot-on insight of kids!

THANKFUL HEARTS

My name is Anold Sulani from Malawi. I was born as the fifth child of late Pastor Sulani who passed away last year. I live in the district of Mangochi in the southern part of Malawi. I was professionally trained also working as a teacher.

I am thankful for first my life and my faith after it has been tested with trials and temptations — the one in July and August lifted my faith in Christ and made me to realise the potential in me which I had not discovered before. I have now realised who I am.

I live with three daughters of my sister: Mercy, Promise, and Joy (as you know, Malawi due to poverty, most nephews rely on uncles.) All these are girls, 15 and 16 years.

One night Mercy complained about strong heartbeat and she faint seconds later. The hospital was away and no one could support me because not married now. It was very strange that 10 minutes later she begun to communicate telling she was seeing darkness and she was somewhere with dead people, and live people, and are not letting her free. I began to pray and I took three hours praying (the first thing in my life) from 7 pm to 10 pm. Later the girl was released after this three hours operation. It was like I was at war on this day 16 July.

The similar event also took place on 16 August and, when I prayed to command demons out in the name of Jesus, it didn't take three minutes. She became free.

I thank God that I didn't go to any popular church leader to pray for me and Mercy. From that day I believe that Seventh Day Baptist had powerful God like other churches (even greater than).

Amen.

Faith In Humanity Restored

— Jon Cruzan
Milton SDB Church, WI

On Friday 8/19, Sue and I, along with two grandsons, were returning to Milton from several days of vacation at Indiana Dunes State Park. We were in our RV, named *Espresso*, making our way west on I-90 through the Chicago area. We had enjoyed great fun but it was time to get home. *Espresso* was full of sand, dirty clothes, bicycles, odds and ends of food, and the other detritus that accumulates on such a trip. We were tired and anticipating good old Milton.

Even though it was 4 p.m. on Friday afternoon – Chicago rush hour time – things were going well. Traffic was very heavy but moving reasonably well. I was in the far left lane as we approached the O'Hare area when I smelled something "hot." A quick check of my gauges indicated no issues, so I chalked this up to three packed lanes of traffic and a hot afternoon. Then I noticed what I thought was a puff of smoke. I tried to ignore this but then saw more wafting from somewhere underneath *Espresso*. This was disconcerting to say the least.

I needed to get off the road and shut *Espresso* down. Remember, I'm in the far left lane and the highway is packed. I surveyed the left shoulder (what could be called a shoulder) no room for an RV – maybe no room for anything if you wanted to stay alive. I had no choice but to immediately work right. I was able to get over nearly immediately and there was an off ramp. I think others may have seen the smoke and allowed me some leeway. I prefer to think of this as an act of God (parting of the Red Sea comes to mind).

I zoomed up that off ramp having no clue where I was. I turned right and maneuvered into the first parking lot that presented itself. Another act of God. This lot was big enough for *Espresso*, was not busy as part of the adjacent building was under renovation, it was shaded (quite hot out), and I knew I would not have to move *Espresso* anywhere else.

I shut down and got Sue, Ivan, and TJ out immediately. Another act of God – there was no fire. I didn't know what the problem was, but no fire and no more smoke!

I carry AAA for these unwelcome but possible eventualities so I got a tow on the way – ETA 75 minutes minimum. Remember that it is now about 4:30 on Friday afternoon. Chicagoans are already gearing up for their weekend.

Having a tow on the way was one thing. Knowing where to have *Espresso* towed was another. I have no idea where I am in Chicago and, clearly, no knowledge of mechanics. I decided to go into the "Immediate MD," an urgent care open in the building where I had parked. They didn't appear to be busy. Lindsey welcomed me immediately. She told me I should bring Sue and the boys into the waiting room; that they would be welcome to stay there until the urgent care closed. I gave her my tale of woe and asked if any of the staff there knew of a mechanic in the area. She asked the MD on duty who quickly googled a list of mechanics in the Jefferson Park area (I didn't know I was in Jefferson Park). I read the list but still didn't have much of a clue, so I just picked one of about twelve listed. Another act of God. I called and talked to Pete at "Pete's Automotive" – three or four blocks down the street. Pete assured me he could handle the problem, that he would be there until about 6 p.m., that he could lock *Espresso* in his gated lot overnight and begin work on it in the morning. Of course, the unspoken problem here was the clock was running and I didn't know when the tow would arrive. Would it be before Pete left for the evening?

Lindsey and the "Immediate MD" took very good care of us, i.e. AC, bathroom, snacks, magazines, etc. I was dazzled by their customer service. While we waited, my eye on my watch, I made several calls to AAA to check progress on the tow and to Pete trying to keep him updated.

The tow arrived. Another act of God. The driver was amazing, his equipment was large enough to tow *Espresso*, and he adopted us like his family. Yes, even though it was past 6 p.m., Pete was still open and said to come on down.

Thank you, Everyone,
for all of the
“Thankful Thoughts”
shared in this
Sabbath Recorder!
— the Editor

*“I am thankful that the
Lord is guiding my life
in such remarkable ways.”*

*— Laura Spearl
Bradenton SDB Church*

Fast forward a bit. We get to Pete’s and everything is fine. He is confident he can fix my problem on Saturday morning: it’s a brake caliper issue on one wheel. My two sons-in-law, Tom and Leif, have arrived from Milton to pick up their sons and Sue. Pete offers to let me stay in *Espresso* overnight but I was having a problem with the electrical connection so my family dropped me at the Marriott just up the Interstate a bit. Clean sheets, aroma therapy body wash and shampoo – badly needed respite at that moment.

Saturday morning: I asked the desk clerk at the Marriott about getting back to Pete’s at Jefferson Park. I was less than 100 yards from the Cumberland train station just across their parking lot and Jefferson Park was just two stops down the line. This is new for a Milton boy. I got on the train (\$3.00), got off two stops down, and was directly across the street from Pete’s Automotive. It was too early for Pete to be open so I had a bite and some coffee in the front window of a DD which gave me a direct view of Pete’s. Pete arrived just before 8 a.m. I walked over and got things started. I was on the road home by 10 a.m. and in my driveway by noon. The morning experience at Pete’s was one I will not soon forget: it was so outstanding – but that is another story.

So what’s the point of all of this? I was presented with a very serious challenge to the very safety of my life and

the lives of my wife and two grandsons. Along with that challenge, I was presented with what I can only call several acts of God. 1) there was no fire; 2) I was able to cross three packed lanes of rush hour traffic quickly and safely; 3) I found a shaded, big-enough parking lot immediately; 4) Lindsey and the staff at “Immediate MD”; 5) Pete and his staff at “Pete’s Automotive” (he was like an guardian angel); 6) a phenomenal tow truck driver; 7) AAA who got the job done; 8) sons-in-law Tom and Leif; 9) the Marriott pampering; 10) the CTA staff; 11) well-behaved grandsons; 12) I was in a safe area of a very large city; and 13) my own God-given and developed personal characteristics that allowed me to deal with this crisis in a relatively calm, logical manner.

I expected the worst (you know the stories we believe about people in a big city), but experienced the best that humanity has to offer. I was treated better in Jefferson Park than I have been, at times, in Milton over the past few months. My faith in the good of humanity has been restored. My good friend and Pastor, Nate Crandall, urges all of us to tell others about what God is doing in our lives. This is not the most comfortable thing for me to do. It might not be for you either. But, I simply had to share this incredible experience. What HAS God been doing in my life? I think He has been most busy, don’t you? SR



by Kevin Butler

At our annual Conference in Houghton, NY, this past August, I had some fun reminiscing and telling stories from my college days there. I shared about several experiences that took place on the stage at Wesley Chapel when I co-hosted the college's monthly variety shows.

The job of the host was to keep the show moving and to provide some entertainment and laughs between the more "serious" acts. We did that with silly skits, songs, and professor impersonations — some were rehearsed, while others were "inspired" at the moment. Lots of work, lots of life lessons, and lots of fun!

Time to graduate

Then I fast-forwarded to graduation time. It was one week before we got our diplomas; one week before I would start my first full-time job, working with my Dad up at GE in Utica; four months to the day before Janet and I would get married.

I was up late the night before, working on a skit (of all things) for our senior retreat. But I had to get up pretty early to do my regular morning sign-on shift at the college radio station.

The phone rings at Davis House. Somebody else answers it and says, "Butler, it's for you!"

I get to the phone in the living room, and it's my Dad.

Dad never called me...must've been about the job, or he and Mom coming down for graduation. So I say, "Hey Dad, what's up?"

"Kev, your Mom died last night."

Wh— wh— What?

"We think she had a heart attack. I found her this morning in her favorite chair in front of the TV. Dusty the dog was at her feet."

Wh— wh— What?

"I need you to come home and help with the arrangements." (It was a 3-1/2 hour drive back then.)

"Uh, okay... I'll be there as soon as I can." And I hang up the phone.

There's no "rehearsal" for something like this.

Time to go home

I look around my room and my head is just spinning. *Mom??* Grabbing my shave kit and a bunch of clothes and dress shoes, I put them in my car.

And then I remember— *"Arrghh!! The radio station!!"*

It was too late to call somebody at the last-minute, so I drive over to the studio, warm up the transmitter, cue up the reel-to-reel tape for the Morning Chapel Hour — moving like a zombie — wondering who is coming in to read the news.

As I was writing a note, and hoping that the news person could handle things on his own, in walks Steve Lennox. Steve, my boisterous, vocal, pre-seminary, fellow soccer player, fellow soccer announcer, fellow actor, and good friend.

He knew right away that something was wrong.

Your life — your story after story along the way — has brought you to where you are now.

I got up and just said, “Steve, my Mom died last night...”

Boisterous, vocal, full-of-life Steve did not say one word. He put his arms around me. And he hugged me. And he held me.

I will never, never, NEVER forget that.

If you’re looking to do ministry in God’s Kingdom, that was like a full year of seminary right there. When someone’s hurting, it might be best just to show up, shut up, and hold them.

Steve took over the morning shift, and I headed northeast to Vernon.

Life lessons

You know, we can make plans, and have happy times of anticipation and family celebrations, and then the bottom drops out.

There’s no chance for rehearsals for times like that. Yet, God’s Spirit and presence, in every step and story along the way, can be a type of “rehearsal” for your new challenge.

He’s saying, “As I was with you then, I am with you now.”

Life is full of faith, family, and education.

I had a full education at Houghton. A little bit of it was in the classroom. But my education also happened on the soccer field, on the stage, in a radio studio. God’s Spirit and God’s presence was there at every place.

Some of those buildings in Houghton are long gone. Some of the buildings where things took place in your life are gone. Some of the special people in your life are gone.

We still have our stories.

Your life — your story after story along the way — has brought you to where you are now.

God’s Spirit and presence in each of those chapters and stories is the basis of His story in your life.

Bible lessons

Jesus was always using stories and everyday illustrations to connect with his listeners. From Matthew 13 —

Verse 24: “Jesus told them another parable.”

Verse 31: “He told them another parable.”

Verse 33: “He told them still another parable.”

Verse 34: “Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables...”

And what were the stories about? Everyday things: sowing seeds and harvesting; talking about agriculture. Mustard seeds and birds; talking about nature. Yeast and baking bread; how God is involved in the everyday things of Life.

Matthew 13 goes on with more parables about the hidden treasure and the pearl, and the parable of the fisherman “catching all kinds of fish.”

We can attract “all kinds” of people with our **stories** and the Gospel message. Then we “catch” them when we allow God to work through us with **actions** of love and caring.

Like with a silent hug.

Moving to John 11, Mary and Martha confront Jesus after their brother dies and is entombed. Did Jesus come back with a story or with lots of words?

What did He do? Jesus wept. First, He **wept**. He **felt**. He **loved**.

And *then* he **acted**. “Take away the stone.” “Lazarus, come out!” “Take off the grave clothes!”

From stories to actions

We can share our stories and get our friends’ attention. And it’s not just to keep things moving, or to keep them laughing — but to get to the point, which is how the Lord has been with you! Then we need to weep with them, to hold them, to take away their death sentence, and allow God’s Spirit and love to revive them to eternal life!

Can we do that? Can we imitate Christ?

Not “impersonate” (mocking the external), but imitate (taking on the character of) the Lord as it says in Ephesians 5:1.

Let’s not be ashamed to be like Jesus. Share your story, but also know when to shut your mouth, and hug, and love.

I’m thankful that Jesus was not telling stories just to tell stories, but He was *living* a story. He was building a story for us, to live our story.

I’m thankful that our words and our actions allow us to tell and live His **story**, which was His death on the cross (an **action**) — the greatest story ever told!!

Share your **story**, and point to Jesus!

Then, with your **actions**, imitate the one Who is the inspiration and author of your story.

May all of your stories lead back to Jesus, and His love. Amen. SR

Thanksgiving is just around the corner! A day to spend with family, eat good food, and be thankful for all of the blessings that the Lord has given to us. Of course, it would probably be better if we did those more often than one day out of the year. Especially that last one. And it should be easy! With all that God has done, how can we not be thankful?

But it's not always as easy as it seems, is it?



Sometimes you suddenly find yourself down in the dumps. And there's not usually an easy way out of there. Sure, maybe you can distract yourself for a bit. But once that's over you're still in the same place. So what do you do?

To be honest, I don't know. I haven't run into any good "get happy quick" schemes. But I know we're not alone in this. Plenty of Biblical figures have been in a rough spot too, and they wrote about it for us.

First, let's take a look at the Psalms. David, a man after God's own heart, often sings of his sorrows. Psalm 22 pulls no punches with its opening couple of verses: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest."* And just in case you feel a little uncomfortable about God being spoken to in such a manner, take a quick peek over at Matthew 27:46 or Mark 15:34 where we see that Jesus Himself quoted the first line of this Psalm as He died on the cross. If His example isn't good enough for us, then whose is?

We can delve into the book of Job next. After two chapters of undeserved tragedy, Job mourns. He asks why God has made him — a righteous man — suffer through all of this. His friends insist that he must have sinned in some way and that he is now facing punishment, but Job continues to assert his innocence. In fact, we see earlier in the book that Job's blamelessness was the reason for his suffering. Satan wanted to do harm to Job as a challenge to God: he claimed that the only reason Job acted this way was because of the Lord's blessings in his life. Satan thought that if Job lost everything, then he would no longer fear God.

These sections of the Bible are two of my favorites when it comes to mourning. Not only because they show that it is healthy and acceptable, but also because of what comes next. If we go further in Psalm 22, we can watch it transform from a desperate plea for help into a confident assertion of praise, certain that the Lord will come to his aid. In Job, God himself eventually answers. He points out that humans cannot even begin to comprehend His power and majesty. After Job repents, God gives Job twice as much as he had before.

So maybe things are hard right now. Trust me, I've been there. Just know that it's okay to be disheartened, even during that time of year when we're supposed to be thankful. It's okay to ask God, "Why?" But don't let your situation turn you away from Him. Continue to walk with Him, and He will carry you through this. Remember, we were never promised a life without suffering. In fact, Jesus promised the exact opposite for us in the second half of John 16:33: *"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* SR



Support Missions and Send a Gift

Make a donation of \$50 or more in the name of someone else and we will send them a card and glass globe ornament on your behalf.

SDB Missionary Society Christmas Gift List 2016!

Over the last few years, several of our families have made it part of their year end tradition to select items from our suggested gift list to support the ministry work of our Seventh Day Baptist brothers and sisters around the world. During this season when much of the world celebrates the greatness of our Father's love and the greatest gift of all, Christ Jesus, I hope you will consider sharing a gift, as well.

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S RELIEF SUPPORT

- 1 Helping orphans transition into new Christian homes (Suggested Gift: \$30)
- 2 Aid for Children Distressed by War & Conflicts (Suggested Gift: \$50)
- 3 Dengue and Malaria prevention Mosquito Nets (Suggested Gift: \$10)
- 4 Buy Seeds for sustainable food gardens in Uganda (Suggested Gift: \$25)



FOREIGN COMMUNITY OUTREACH MINISTRIES

- 5 Shoes and Clothing for the sick and poor (Suggested Gift: \$25)
- 6 Life saving medicine (Suggested Gift: \$12)
- 7 Share of an Evangelist's motorcycle in developing world ministry (Suggested Gift: \$110 / Share the Cost: \$11)
- 8 Bibles and Gospel tracts for developing world congregations (Suggested Gift: \$20)
- 9 Provide food and water in communities facing natural or manmade disasters (Suggested Gift: \$45)



SDB MISSIONS DISCIPLESHIP & TRAINING PROJECTS

- 10 International TIME Program books & leadership Bibles (Suggested Gift: \$25)
- 11 Ship SDB Helping Hand Overseas for a year (Suggested Gift: \$22)
- 12 Share of Mission Lodging & Transport (Suggested Gift: \$100)



Your Brother in Christ,

Contributions for Gifts can be sent to: SDB Missions, P.O. Box 156, Ashaway, RI 02804
or give online at: www.sdbmissions.org

SDB Missions is a 501(c) non-profit organization. All donations are tax deductible to the full extent of the IRS codes.





*When peace like a river attendeth my way,
when sorrows like sea billows roll,
whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say:
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

Thanksgiving is just around the corner and with all the negativity it can be difficult to be thankful. Being a Christian is not like being a princess in a fairy tale. Yes, there is a happily ever after, but that doesn't come here on this earth, with this life. Becoming a Christian, much like marrying a prince, does not ensure smooth sailing for the rest of your life. Rotten things happen in the best of times, and in the worst of times, and being thankful in the midst of it seems inconceivable.

We expect the things of the Christian life to be all "hunky-dory." I don't know why life, Christian or otherwise, can just be plain grueling. Yet we still plaster the "church face" on: the buoyant "Jesus loves me and that makes everything rainbows and butterflies" face. Maybe we do this because of some misguided notion that we're doing something wrong if everything is not okay. Perhaps we know there are bigger problems out there or, heaven forbid, someone will know that our lives aren't perfect. We think in order to be thankful everything must be right in our worlds.

Masking any uncomfortable feelings becomes a burden (I think) because not only are we hiding from the rest of the world, but we're also attempting to hide from and be dishonest with God. We may not be trying to cover up an outright sin but, like Adam and Eve, we are trying to cover our nakedness, the exposed nerve, because it hurts.

Horatio Spafford penned his now famous hymn after suffering great tragedy, not once, but twice in a short period of time. He was not okay, surviving, or hanging in there when he wrote "It Is Well With My Soul." He

was broken. Things were the very opposite of "well." His lot at the time was awful — and yet he writes, what I would argue, is a piece filled to the brim with thanksgiving. (See www.sharefaith.com/guide/.../it-is-well-with-my-soul-the-song-and-the-story.html for the story.)

Spafford was honest with God. His sorrows were huge. God gave him the ability to say, "no matter what, it is well with my soul." Being well in your soul does not mean that you're not feeling rotten. It does not mean that life is good. It means that no matter the damage, you can take comfort in knowing that, though trials abound in this life, it's not the end.

When we walk about as if everything is fine when it isn't, we lose sight of the fact that this life isn't the end. This life isn't supposed to be perfect — Christian or not. When you are ignoring the imperfection of life, I don't believe you can say with any honesty that it is well with your soul. I think that would make it very difficult to be any sort of thankful.

Be brave. Be honest. Be truly thankful. Don't cover your life with a glossy Christian veneer and lose the ability to say, "It is well with my soul." It is scary to let go of the mask for many reasons. Just because you let down your mask doesn't mean that you have to tell the world your sorrows — and it certainly doesn't mean that you have to spill your guts to everyone who asks what's wrong. You have the right to tell people that you don't want to talk.

Spafford's words resonate with thanksgiving even though he was in the midst of tragedy. I don't think he was happy. He wasn't okay but, even so, he had the ability to be thankful. So even though life may not be roses, I am thankful for the opportunity to say "It is Well with My Soul." ^{SR}





Walking on the Waves

Someone with even a passing knowledge of Christianity and its iconography knows the story of Jesus walking on the water. It's widely regarded as one of Jesus' most impressive and powerful miracles. What I'm more interested in, however, is the second part of the story.

What strikes me as interesting about Peter's attempt, and subsequent failure, to walk on the water is, that despite believing he could walk on the water, his inability to is a result of being of "little faith." Before stepping out, he'd asked Jesus, if it was really Him, to tell him to come out onto the water. Peter manages to actually make it out a ways before sinking – as result of fearing the storm and the waves. Jesus then scolds him for having little faith and returns to the boat.

Now, if we look closer at what actually causes Peter's failure, Matthew (the only apostle whose Gospel mentions Peter trying to walk on water) doesn't actually mention Peter losing faith (at least in the NIV translation). Peter fell because he was afraid when "he saw the wind" (Matthew 14:30), and immediately asks Jesus to save him. So why does Jesus chastise him as having "little faith"?

When adversity strikes, our first thought is to look to God for comfort. The lesson we can learn from Peter is that sometimes our problems are because we didn't look to God when adversity wasn't there. If God is only our bad-weather friend, how can we expect him to prevent more bad weather from coming? [SR](#)



Being “Practical” As We “Clean House.”

A few weeks ago, I stumbled across an article on the internet that made me smile. It was written by a librarian who was also a *Lord of the Rings* fan. She notes that about 30 minutes into the first *LOTR* movie, the wizard Gandalf spends what seems to be a significant amount of time rifling through a library in Gondor looking for a rare manuscript with a piece of information he needs. The librarian goes on to suggest that Gandalf would’ve saved valuable time if the library and archives he was searching had been properly maintained and organized! For a variety of reasons, this ingenious little article resonated with me — but not least because for the past couple of years, it seems my entire life has been swallowed up in “cleaning house.”

We have done a substantial amount of cataloging, archiving, and shelving of items here in Janesville over the past couple of years. We sorted through our backlog of deposited items and took on new material as we made our various transitions organizationally. This housecleaning has led to a more organized and maintained collection, to say the least. But the organization has not been reserved for my work in the office alone — I am also slowly chipping away at cleaning and archiving my files at home, including a variety of written materials collected by my grandfather, Edwin Shaw, and my great-grandfather, Elston Shaw. My life seems to be one enormous cleaning project everywhere I turn!

But my cleaning projects have turned up a variety of unexpected things which have demanded reflection. One such stray piece of paper from my basement (apparently collected by my great-grandfather Elston) has given me significant pause. The paper is yellowing, and across the top of it is typed (in the inimitable violet of a fading typewriter ribbon) the words, “LET’S BE PRACTICAL.” Underneath that rather intimidating title is one sentence followed by ten questions. They are pointed, and reveal much about the anonymous person who wrote them. The questions target the circumstances under which the members of SDB churches live and work. They focus on SDB ownership of businesses in the towns where our churches are located, and the prospects for work in the towns where our churches are located, especially for our young people. The logic of the questions seems to imply that there is a connection

between how our people make a living and their continued participation and membership in our churches. That a lack of SDB owned and operated business presaged negative consequences for us as a people. In addition, the author seems very concerned about SDBs needing to leave the towns where our churches were located to find work.

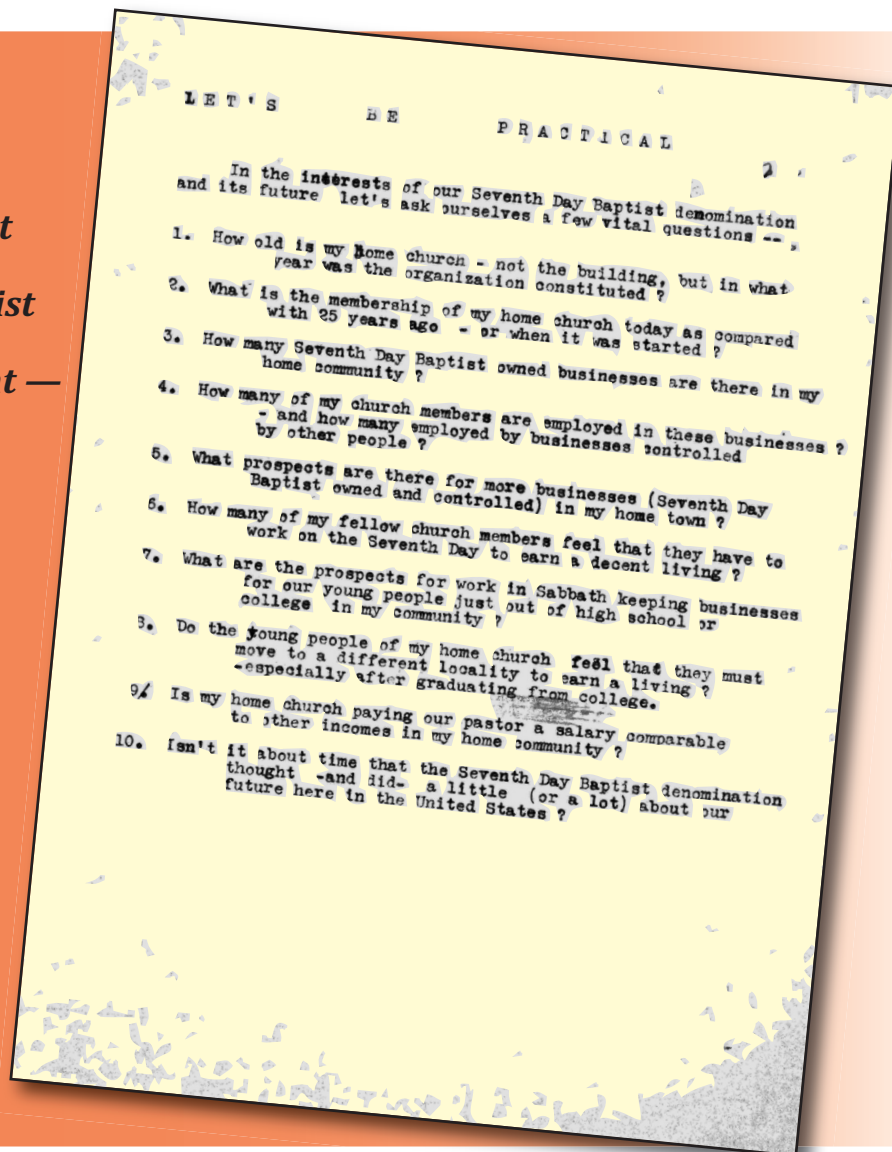
Certainly the author of “LET’S BE PRACTICAL” is concerned about the vitality of our churches and the communities in which they serve. And he would not be the only one. For most of the past century and a half, SDBs have been very concerned about the relationship between our faith and the increasingly varied ways we make a living. The move in the US from an agrarian, rural economy to an urban, industrial one has put stress on our churches. Responses to this stress have varied. One idea was to collect information on jobs available in SDB towns and publish it for distribution. The Vocation Committee of the General Conference undertook that project, mostly unsuccessfully, in the early 20th century. More recent efforts to directly partner young adults willing to move with churches in need of infusions of young people also were not very successful.

Another response strategy was to seek legal protections for our religious liberty in the workplace. Examples of these efforts include the mobilization to defeat the Blair Sunday Rest Bill in Congress in 1888-89 and also the debates surrounding Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, passed in 1972 — which as originally passed, included protections for Sabbath keepers, though they were soon rolled back in the courts.

But despite the considerable work undertaken, these efforts to publicize jobs and protect our legal rights were both largely ineffectual in actually aiding our people in finding ways to make a living in the locations where our churches have been located. Worse, these efforts failed to recognize the changing economic and social landscape of America, as both people and jobs moved into the cities and away from the rural areas. That is not to say that SDBs did nothing in response to these changes. Significant efforts to plant churches in urban areas (or at least, closer to urban areas) were undertaken, and the fruit of those efforts represent a significant portion



“Isn’t it about time that the Seventh Day Baptist denomination thought — and did — a little (or a lot) about our future here in the United States?”



of our active congregations today. But more work remains to be done.

The final question on my yellowing sheet is perhaps the most telling of all: *“Isn’t it about time that the Seventh Day Baptist denomination thought — and did — a little (or a lot) about our future here in the United States?”*

While the question may be a bit alarmist, it does seem to point to a real historical trend, which may have reached its logical conclusion. A recent report from *Business Insider* collected data from the 2010 Census to note that 80% of Americans now live in urban areas; 50% of all Americans live in just 149 counties; while the other 50% of Americans live in the remaining 3031 counties. A quick survey of our Directory reveals that those 149 counties are a ready mission field for us if we are willing to undertake it. Where the people are, so also is the need for the Gospel. A refusal to engage guarantees that we will fail in our responsibility to be on mission with God to reach people with the Gospel. You won't reach what you can't touch.

Which brings us back, finally, to the author's questions about our local SDB churches. If we are to mobilize for kingdom service anywhere in these troubled times, we must begin by first engaging in our local churches and communities. Is your local church healthy? Are you caring for each other in robust covenant community? There will be no work for SDBs outside of our churches in the broader world if we cannot live out our faith in the contexts of our own local churches. Are you caring for those in your congregation who have difficulties in their lives? Are you living out the blessings of salvation by grace through faith? Is your Sabbath observance unto God as a life-giving sacrifice of your own agenda and time? Are you engaging the people around you who do not know Jesus for the sake of His kingdom? If we are to think —or do — a little (or a lot) about the future of SDBs in the United States and Canada, we must begin with ourselves. We are left to wonder: what did the author of “LET'S BE PRACTICAL” do to share the Gospel with neighbors and to bolster the work of the local church? Let us be practical in the ways that we seek to serve the God who has called us to Himself in Christ. [SR](#)

What's Going On?

Redemption Evangelical Fellowship – Riverside, CA

Nuestra mision es predicar el Evangelio de Nuestro Creador y Redentor Cristo Jesús. (*Our mission is to preach the Gospel of our Creator and Redeemer Jesus Christ.*)

<https://www.facebook.com/Redemption-Evangelical-Fellowship-189298117785555/?pnref=story>

Back in March 2014, we got a call from Pastor Miguel Leiva from the Iglesia Bautista del Septimo Dia (Seventh Day Baptist Church) in Houston, Texas, letting us know that there was a church in Riverside, CA, that had contacted him about SDBs. Nick Kersten made contact with Paulino (Paul) Marquez later that month. That set the stage for months of telephone conversations, and ultimately a visit from Pastor George Lawson of the Maranatha SDB Church in Colton, CA.

In November 2014, SDB Executive Director, Rob Appel, along with his wife and daughter, made a visit to the Redemption Fellowship to meet Pastor Paul and get to know this church and to answer any questions they might have about SDBs. It was the spark that started the fire between the Redemption Fellowship and the Conference.

Pastor **Paul Marquez** is the lead Pastor and has a MBA and a Master of Science of Professional Management from Miami University in Florida. He has been in the ministry for 30 years and is married with one daughter.

Along with Pastor Paul there is another Pastor in the congregation. **Enrique Sandoval** has a MDIV from Andrews University in Michigan. Enrique has been a Pastor for 21 years and serves as the Evangelism/Outreach Pastor and is married and has two daughters.

Pastors Paul and Enrique co-founded the start of the Redemption Evangelical Fellowship eleven years ago and filed with the State of California in 2010.

Along with George Lawson and me, there have been others that have been instrumental in working with and visiting the Redemption Fellowship over the past two years. The Rev. Gabe Bejjani, Pastor of the Riverside SDB Church; the Rev. John Pethel, Director of Church Development & Pastoral Services; Jeremiah Owen, Director of Communications; and



recently, Pastor Jim Schorr, of the Foothill Community Church in Montrose, CA.

In my many visits to the Redemption Evangelical Fellowship, both at the church and with visits with just the pastors, I have gotten to know the people and leaders there. Dr. Feutes teaches Sabbath School and is a professor at an Orange County college in California. Victor Hernandez is also a pastor and teacher.

The Redemption Evangelical Fellowship has requested membership in the Seventh Day Baptist Conference. They have sent in their papers and we are in process of working with them on these documents before we send them to the Standing Committee on Faith and Order.

Please be in prayer as we go through this process. SR



NEXT MONTH: Kingdom of God SDB Church in Kingman, AZ.

LIFE ON MISSION

Touching lives for Jesus



INFORMATION FROM THE HOST COMMITTEE

Churches in the Pacific Coast Association where you can worship with on the Sabbath before Conference (July 22, 2017) and the drive times to Azusa Pacific University:

- Bay Area SDB Church in Pinole, CA (8 hrs)
- Kingdom of God 7th Day Baptist Church, Kingman, AZ (on US 40, 4.5 hrs)
- Riverside, CA (1.5 hrs)
- All Nations SDB Church, Gardena, CA (1.5 hrs)
- Foothill SDB Church, Montrose, CA (1 hr)
- Maranatha Community Church, Colton, CA (on US 10, 45 minutes)
- Lake Elsinore Fellowship (1 hour)

The 2017 HOST COMMITTEE would like to facilitate your arrival at Conference in Azusa, California, by offering you the following choices:

We will pick you up **ONLY** at **Ontario, CA (ONT) airport or the Ontario or Pomona Amtrak Stations.**

If you arrive at LAX/Los Angeles, SNA/John Wayne, LGB/Long Beach, or BUR/Burbank airports, plan to take the Metro Gold Line (at www.metro.net) from Union Train Station in downtown Los Angeles which drops you off at the APU campus. 99% of all busses go to Union Train Station.



SDB LINK Connects You to Seventh Day Baptist Publications

The new SDB LINK app is now available for iOS and Android devices!

Now you can take the *Sabbath Recorder* with you on the go. For access to the library of current and past issues of the *Sabbath Recorder*, go to your App Store and download the SDB LINK app. Looking forward, we will be adding new digital tracts and other SDB publications. We are still looking to raise the funds to help cover the costs of developing and supporting the app. If you feel led to help, you can donate at:

<http://seventhdaybaptist.org/donate>
(designate SDB LINK)

HOW TO CONTACT GENERAL COUNCIL:



Email address to all of the General Council members:
sdbgeneralcouncil@seventhdaybaptist.org

Regular mail can be sent to:
Susie Fox, General Council Chair
1722 Taylor Station Road
Blacklick, OH 43004



Ethics of End-of Life Choices Part 2

Last month I wrote about End of Life issues surrounding CPR and feeding tubes. This article touches on other medical issues.

VENTILATOR

When someone needs help with breathing or suffers respiratory arrest, the doctor may suggest using a ventilator (breathing machine that forces the lungs to work). A tube attached to the ventilator is put down the throat into the trachea (windpipe). Sedation may be necessary as this can be an uncomfortable procedure. People on ventilators cannot communicate and may experience anxiety and fear of not being able to breathe or shortness of breath. A person with chronic lung disease, heart failure, or neurological disease may never be weaned off. A DNR order will prevent placing a ventilator but not prevent other treatments. Alternatives to a ventilator are oxygen, pressurized face mask, special vest, and medications. If a tracheotomy needs to be performed, that tube is attached to the respirator. Risks of a trach include: collapsed lung, plugged trach tube, and bleeding.

Turning off the ventilator does not mean that the patient will die right away. The death is not from withdrawing the machine but the underlying health condition. It is allowing natural death to happen that would have occurred earlier had the machine never been turned on. When the decision to turn it off is made, if the patient has an ICD (implantable cardioverter defibrillator) it needs to be turned off. A pacemaker can stay on as it will not keep a dying person alive.

HOSPITALIZATION

Should a person be admitted to the hospital at the end of their life? For some, hospitalization may cause increased anxiety as they get used to new caregivers and new routines (especially for dementia patients). Hospitalization may increase the possibility of contracting an infection. There is a possibility that restraints or sedation may be used especially for dementia patients. Aggressive treatment of their condition may occur along with the possibility of diagnostic testing because equipment is available even if the patient does not want further treatment.

Alternatives to hospitalization include treatment at home with antibiotics or increased pain control. The family can have a "Do Not Hospitalize" order written.

DIALYSIS

If the patient has acute kidney failure, dialysis may keep him alive until the kidneys can recover. Those with chronic failure can be kept alive for several years before dying from heart disease or infection. On dialysis days the patient will feel wiped out. If the decision is made to stop dialysis the death is peaceful.

ANTIBIOTICS AND PAIN CONTROL

Antibiotics can be given orally with few side effects. They should not be withheld unless that is the patient's desire. Most often they will be given to cure pneumonia or another infection and the person will feel better.

Depression, spiritual distress, broken family relationships, and lack of sleep can worsen pain. Drugs help, but so do alternatives such as spiritual counsel from clergy, family or friends, meditation, music, prayer, hypnosis, and massage. Pain pills should be taken as prescribed even if they make the patient drowsy. For those who have no history of addiction, these pills are not addictive. As pain increases, the medication may be increased but it is done slowly and does not cause death. Palliative sedation may be requested in the last few hours. Albert Schweitzer wrote: "We must all die. But if I can save him from days of torture, that is what I feel is my great and ever new privilege. Pain is a more terrible lord of mankind than even death itself."

When discussing end of life decisions, if the answers point to withdrawing or withholding treatment, the hard question becomes for both patient and family, "Can I let go and just let be?"

Being able to say yes can be helpful to everyone. SR

OBITUARY

MONROE — Berwin Lenton Monroe, 85, went to be with Jesus the morning of September 23, 2016.

Mr. Monroe was born July 20, 1931, in Fouke, AR, the son of Nathan and Elva Monroe.

Berwin graduated from Fouke High School in 1949, graduated from Salem College, WV, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry in 1954 and attended other professional schools and trainings.

He worked with The Food and Drug Administration, The Arkansas Health Department, and The Research and Medical Center.

Berwin Monroe and Dr. Rodney Carlton began the Arkansas State Crime Lab in 1969.

Berwin and Winifred Monroe were united in marriage on September 4, 1954. He is most remembered for his faithfulness to God, church, and his family.

He was involved in starting and attending The Little Rock Seventh Day Baptist Church until his infirmities prohibited his attendance months before his passing.

Berwin is survived by his wife, Winifred Monroe; sister, Meleta (Calvin) Babcock and their children Kathy, Donna, and Newell; sister, Collette Soper; Kenneth (Kay) Monroe; Berwin's son, Jeffrey Monroe (Pastor of The Little Rock Seventh Day Baptist Church) and his wife Donna. He is also survived by Jeffrey and Donna's children and grandchildren: Joshua (Dawna) Monroe, daughter, Nikita; Rachel (Don) Delong, sons Jason, Mark, and Liam; Benjamin (Brittany) Monroe, son Jacob and daughter Lillian, Timothy (Emily) Monroe, daughter Sadie; Caleb (Nikki) Monroe, daughters Katelyn and Annabelle; Gabriel (Kayleigh), son Elijah; Sarah Monroe; Joseph Monroe; Susanna Monroe. Berwin's daughter, Cheryl (Dale) Hinson and their children Brandon Hinson and Amanda (Zachary) Hoyt, sons Hayden and Logan. Berwin's son, Kerry (Marla) Monroe and their daughters, Camillia (Kyle) Estes, daughter, Kyla; and Meagan (Ryan) Romano. Berwin's son, Galen Monroe.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Nathan (Elva) Monroe; brothers Lusbert (Judy) Monroe, Glathan (Julia) Monroe, Everon Monroe, sister Nateline Monroe, and grandson Josiah Monroe (son of Jeffrey and Donna Monroe).

Berwin was loved by all of his family, including his church family at The Little Rock Seventh Day Baptist Church. He will be greatly missed until we meet again in heaven!

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Philadelphia, PA

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Joined by baptism

Kevin Brey

Joined by testimony

Kemuel Bennett

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NOVEMBER MEMORY VERSE

Youth/Adult

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

— Joshua 1:9

Junior

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

— Joshua 1:9

Primary

Be strong and courageous.

— Joshua 1:9

Life on Mission: Be Transformed!

Romans 12:2: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

As I’m committing to memory the scripture verse for this month (October) my thoughts paused on the words “not conform” ... “be transformed.” The patterns of this world are ever shifting, daunting, and consuming. There are constant conflicts that we are faced with and the choices that face us are continual and ever present. We can know that there is danger in giving in to the temptations of the world and all this to just feel “normal” in our present culture. Today it is easier to try to fit in, blend in, and give in to the popular trends in the world rather than to live by Biblical principles.

In Psalms 1:1-3 David wrote, *“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.”* We are faced with a choice today. We can either decide to give in to the patterns of selfishness and self-desires — or we choose to yield good fruit by responding to God’s Word, allowing it to guide us and help us grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18)

This weekend in our service, Pastor JR spoke about vital connections that are important and crucial if we are going to have a renewed mind and spirit in God’s service. We reflected on the essentials of being in a vital connection with God — an open channel through mental communication, thought, and prayer; being plugged in so the circuit can cycle around all day long. The second is simply reading God’s well-preserved, faultless Word — being a “Bible-craving Christian” to fill our appetite with spiritual food.

As these two essentials are constant requirements for an alive Christ-follower, I reflected on another message I heard not long ago that challenged me to think differently and be open. Be transformed. The message first suggested that “we need to be willing, on a moment-by-moment basis, to offer ourselves to God and to allow His Holy Spirit to expose what He wants in us.” This is an act of faith and not one that we necessarily express

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President’s Page

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through feelings. Psalms 139: 23-24: *“Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”* Oh how much God loves us and wants a willing offering.

Secondly, I remember that a crucially important attitude we need to embrace each day is that of being willing to continually deny ourselves — willing to set aside our own “justified” feelings, our own rights, our own frustrations, offenses, and anything that is not of faith, to do His Will. This is something that we do on the “inside.” This is not always easy when we feel justified by the world’s standards to react or attack in certain situations. In this example, I’m reminded of Proverbs 10:19: *“When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise.”*

Finally, I reflected on the important mindset we must have in order for our lives to be transformed — that being one who is willing to obey God’s Will, no matter what He tells us to do. No matter how we feel, what we think or what we want, we are to be willing to get up and do exactly what God has asked us to do. 2 Corinthians 8:11 reminds *“Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means (ability).”* Often I need to chase this thought with a prayer, *“Lord, make me willing to be willing,”* because it’s easier to ignore the will of God and the needs of others to favor myself.

In desiring to live my *Life on Mission for God*, there are three thoughts that come to mind when considering daily transformation of our mindset to focus on God’s perfect will. Contemplate offering oneself daily: ***“Lord, I desire to respond to your purpose, cause me to not make myself more important or press my will even if I have the right to, and may I be willing to obey Your leading in my life.”*** 



I will say to the Lord,
"You are my place of safety and protection.
You are my God and I trust you."

- Psalms 91:2 MSG

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