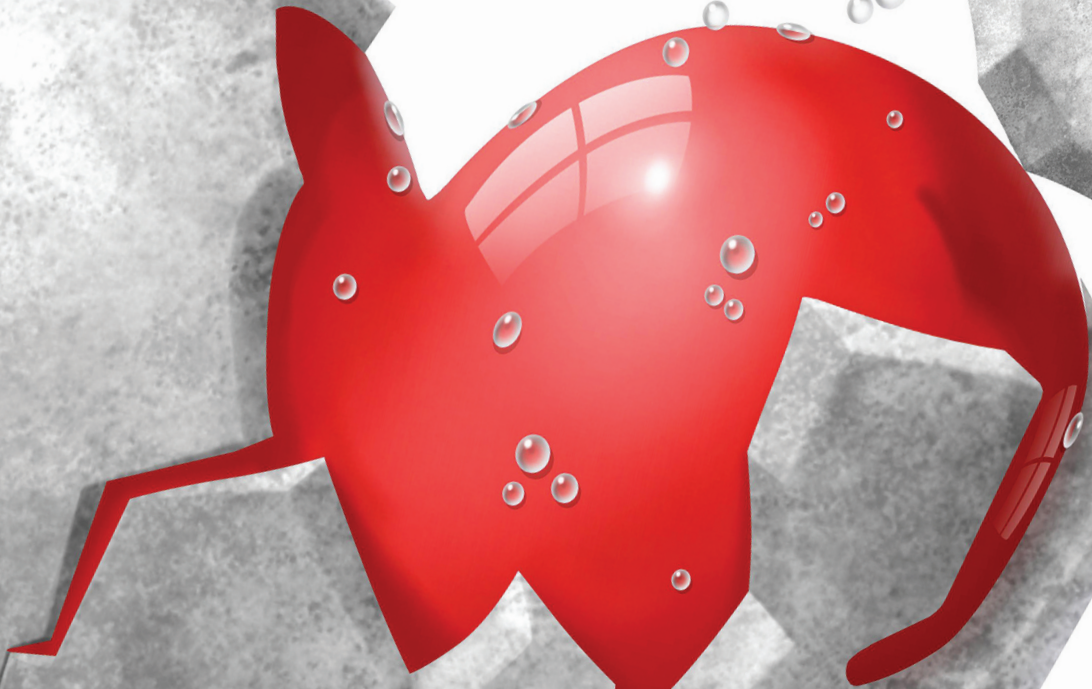


Sabbath Recorder

A Seventh Day Baptist Publication
February 2017



I WILL
REMOVE
YOUR
HEART OF
STONE



I'll give you a new heart,
put a new spirit in you.
I'll remove the stone heart
from your body and
replace it with a heart
that's God-willed,
not self-willed.
I'll put my Spirit in you and
make it possible for
you to do what I tell you
and live by my commands.

— Ezekiel 36:26 MSG

15 The Beacon

Plan, Pray, Trust
by Madge Chroniger

16 Focus on Missions

God Likes To Use the "Nots"
by Danny Lee

18 Women's Society

Other Cheek or Blind Eye?
by Katrina Goodrich

19 Pastoral Relations

Seven Things Pastors Would Like
Church Members to Know About
Their Children

20 Alliance in Ministry

Agape Ministry Iglesia Bautista
del Septimo Dia
by Pastors Joel and Judith Houts

21 Pastoral Relations

Chaplain Jerry Johnson Graduates

22 Young Adult

Learning to Seek God in the "Meh"
by Michaela Osborn

23 Church Development

Called to Pastoral Ministry?
Church Planting Co-Worker Program

24 Council on History

New Auburn Builds New Church
by Donna Sanford Bond

26 President's Page

Come... Call... Pray!
by Patti Wethington

5

6 Signs of a Wicked
and Hardened Heart

6

Real or Fake?
by Rev. Donald Chroniger

10

The Struggle is Real
by Nicholas Kersten

12

The Lord's Prayer
"Who is in Heaven"
by Phil Lawton

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WHO ARE SEVENTH DAY BAPTISTS?

If you've never read *The Sabbath Recorder* before, you might be wondering who Seventh Day Baptists are.

Like other Baptists, we believe in:

- 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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6 Signs of A Wicked and Hardened Heart

No Conviction

When a person begins to feel no conviction from sinning, the Spirit may not be as easily recognized next time. When we resist the conviction of the Spirit, it's like a little tiny callus starts forming over our heart...and the more we grieve the Holy Spirit, the less we'll feel His telling us to stop and repent of this and then confess it to God. This is very dangerous for someone who's not a Christian but does believe in God, since, if they fall away *"it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them"* (2 Peter 2:21).

No Contentment

Whenever we start growing discontented with things in life, we are starting to harden our hearts a bit. It's not that contentment comes naturally, because even the Apostle Paul had to learn contentment and, despite beatings, stonings, lashes, and imprisonment, he says *"I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content"* (Philippians 4:11). If anyone had a reason to be discontented in life it was Paul but he says, *"I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need"* (Philippians 4:12). He learned it. He made a choice. When discontentment erupts into anger (which in time it will), that's wickedness in a person's heart.

No Affliction

How can we have been redeemed from the pit of hell and then withhold the good news from others is a mystery — but some will settle into their pews and not be interested in leaving the church to bring others into the kingdom. The psalmist wrote that *"It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes"* (Psalm 119:71). When we are no longer afflicted by this world's evil we may be hardening our hearts. For the Psalmist, affliction was for the purpose of his learning God's statutes because *"Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word"* (Psalm 119:67).

No Tears

In many Christians' lives we have: prayers without tears, giving without sacrifice, living without fasting, profession without persecution, and prosperity without being poor in spirit. All of this while the world goes to hell. If we can't cry for those who are perishing with tears asking God to save them, then we care more about ourselves than others. Notice I said "we" since I am not immune either.



No Brokenness

God says that He is close to those who are broken-hearted and the contrite of heart. Psalm 34:18 says, *"The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit."* God cannot fix what is first not broken and cannot fill us if we are full of ourselves.

No Humility

God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble, so says James (4:6), but the Greek word for opposed is "to range in battle with" or to "be at war with." So if you read James 4:6, the way it reads in the Greek, it says *"God is at war with the proud"* and who wants to be at war with God? Not me! Yes, if we are full of pride, we are more like Satan than God because Satan's pride caused him to rebel against God and our hearts are wicked if we live a life of pride.

Conclusion

God says through Jeremiah the Prophet that *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it"* (Jeremiah 17:9). But God can give us a heart of flesh and take out the heart of stone. A fleshly heart is more pliable and easier to penetrate, which is just what God wants to do. If you or people you know starts losing the conviction of the Spirit, grows in discontentment, never afflicts themselves over their sin, never sheds a tear in prayer or for others to be saved, no brokenness, and a lack of humility — it's time to get on your (and my) knees and repent, ask for forgiveness, and find your satisfaction in Christ. If Jesus is all you have...you have all you need. SR

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Are you able to tell if something is real or if something is fake?

That is the question. With what is happening in our country today, can you really tell what is the truth and what is a lie – the real or the fake? In our world today we have things that are counterfeit...like clothing. I saw, not too long ago, there was a knock-off pair of Levi™ jeans over in Russia. It was just a copy – it wasn't the real Levi™, it was fake. We also get that with music online – you steal a copy of the music online and use it, copying it over and over again without paying the royalties for it to iTunes. How do you tell the real from the fake? Is it just a copy or the original?

The parable of the wheat and the weeds

Jesus told a parable about the wheat and the tares. Jesus said there was an owner of a field and he planted good seed into the field. It was

starting to grow and someone stuck some other plants (we would call them weeds) among the wheat. The one who was watching over the crop went to the owner of the field and asked what he should do. Because quite frankly, the wheat and the weeds look alike. So, should he go through and pull up the weeds? The owner said, "Let the two grow together." (In certain parts of the Middle East, tares or weeds really do look the same as the wheat. They look the same color, and the heads and texture make it hard to tell them apart. So you would never know if you try to take the weeds out before the harvest comes that you may be pulling the wheat out by mistake.) "When the harvest comes, we will separate the weeds from the wheat. We will gather the wheat into barns and the weeds we will burn." Jesus said, "That will be the same as at the end of the age." When Jesus comes there will be a separation of the real and the fake.

Matthew 7: 15-23 (NIV)

¹⁵ Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. ²¹ Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?" ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Spiritual but not Religious

You have heard the phrase, "I am spiritual but not religious." What do people mean when they use this phrase? Do they mean that their highest value is what they feel? Is it a rebellion – anti-big, anti-discipline, anti-everything? Their highest priority and value of what they feel – everything – becomes relative. Every truth is relative. "It is my truth: I am spiritual." Then they go out into the world and start a smorgasbord of "spiritual ideas." They take a little of Yoga, a little Zen, maybe some Tao, some Kabala. They take wonderful quotes, "spiritual quotes," even quotes from the Old and New Testaments – but they never take the time to study the Scripture, or the source of the quotation, or read what is really being espoused. Why? Because it is what "I feel" that matters.

To say, "I am spiritual and not religious," also reflects the "ME" generation and being self-absorbed. Truth becomes what I feel and how it affects me. When historic or intuitional demands on behavior are added to the observance of rules, then all of it is thrown out and replaced with absolutely nothing. It's just how I am feeling! These are the people who ended up in the "New Age" stuff, the eastern religions, the Asian culture which came into our country, and the influence of such groups as the Beatles and the Mahtani Yogi. Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:3 [NIV] *"For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear."*

As in the time of Jesus, this is happening in our culture today. People still say: "I'm a spiritual person. I only want to hear what I want to hear and what makes me feel good. I can be who I feel I am. This is who I am."

False Christ – False Prophets

Jesus said that there will be individuals who will come like "wolves in sheep's clothing." Speaking of the end of time, Jesus said in Matthew 24:24 [NIV], *"For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect."*

Phony, not real, no basis in the reality of the God who created them: these are the false prophets who will come and point us in the wrong direction. Jesus spoke directly to the Pharisees:

Matthew 23:23-29 (NIV)

²³ *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former."* ²⁴ *You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.*

²⁵ *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence."* ²⁶ *Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.* ²⁷ *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean."* ²⁸ *In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.*

²⁹ *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous."*

It is about putting on airs on the outside appearance but inwardly being empty and dead – the outside looks good but the inside is dirty! This is what false teachers do – they look good on the outside but the inside is one big lie. This is what we are called to look at. God forbid that we are like that – that we put on a show. We come to worship and it has nothing to do with our hearts. Jesus is saying take care of the inside and the outside will be taken care of: your behavior will change and your attitude will change when your inside relationship is clean.

Before these false prophets showed up on the scene, the Old Testament Law pointed out specific things that a false prophet will do. How do you know a false prophet is on the scene – even when doing miracles?

Are you able to tell if something is real or if something is fake?

Continued on next page...

Real or Fake?

continued from page 7

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 (NIV)

¹ If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, ² and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," ³ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁴ It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him. ⁵ That prophet or dreamer must be put to death for inciting rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. That prophet or dreamer tried to turn you from the way the LORD your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you.

- **A False Prophet's** predictions will not be 100% true in fulfillment and cannot be manipulated to be true. Every prophecy of the coming of Messiah Jesus has been fulfilled and was 100% accurate. False prophets will guess, and they will try to do things to get one to believe – but they will not be 100% accurate.

- **A False Prophet** will say, "Go after other gods." The Galatians had this problem and Paul writes in Galatians 1:6-9 NIV: ⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel ⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! ⁹ As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse! In other words, this prophet would try

to turn the individual away from the Lord, away from Jesus and point to something else. I know sometimes that money, power, and position are being preached and in the end the individual turns away from God (who is really Jesus both in the Crucifixion and the Resurrection).

- **A False Prophet** will do the supernatural. He will do wonders and occult techniques in order to turn the individual to someone other than Jesus. The supernatural doesn't necessarily have to do with a relationship with Jesus. There is also the other side (demonic) that is being used. It is all to lead someone away from God.

- **A False Prophet** is rebellious and unrepentant. He is teaching rebellion against God. Even if you confront false prophets about their sin of leading people away from God, they would remain unchanged.

These individuals have been around since Jesus died and rose again. Throughout church history there have always been individuals who try to lead people astray using supernatural things.

There is going to come a time when each individual will come and stand before God.

Matthew 7:21-23 (NIV)

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' [Look what we have done.] ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

That sounds harsh, doesn't it? Look at all they say they did. Look at what they performed. They did miracles! They prophesied! They were great preachers! They said, "We did it! We did it in your name!" Jesus says, "I never knew you."

The Real Relationship

These people were able to perform miracles without the character of Jesus in their lives. It's about the relationship. That is what becomes deceptive. We recognize they are spiritual people and yet in the end, in their own hearts, there is not a relationship with Jesus. Jesus talks about a particular kind of tree and the production of a certain kind of fruit. A good tree produces good fruit and a bad tree produces bad fruit. It is not about the fruit; it is about the tree. It's about character. There is not the character of Jesus being produced in their lives.

This is something to examine. Do you know the difference between the real and the fake? More and more these days, we better know what is real. When a person is real, his relationship with Jesus

We better be aware of the real and the fake around us so that we will not be fake.

is producing the character of Jesus in him. You are born again, born from above, Jesus said. A person who is born from above is like the wind – you see what the wind is doing but you cannot see the wind. You see the change in a person that is born from above, but you can not quite figure out how the change happens. It is the Lord who changes the inside and transforms the heart so

that the behavior will change. The character changes – therefore, the behavior changes. You change the heart – you change the behavior. We cannot change behavior by ourselves. We cannot do that in our hearts by ourselves. That is how we define the Grace of God. The Grace of God is the ability to live a life that we could not possibly live on our own. God gives us the ability to live differently, which we could not do on our own.

We better be aware of the real and the fake around us so that we will not be fake. I don't want to be – and I hope you don't want to be – like Jesus described the Pharisees: you look good on the outside but you're dirty on the inside, like white-washed tombs. Clean the inside and then the outside will look beautiful. What are white-washed tombs? During festivals in Jerusalem, the outside of tombs would be painted so people could avoid stepping on or touching a tomb by mistake – be declared unclean. You white-wash the outside but it is dead inside. Take care of the inside, because it's not about the white-wash. It's the inside that needs to be cleansed. Change the heart. I believe if we move in that direction with our life with Jesus, we become more like the good tree and produce good fruit.

Finally, God has called us to be awake in our everyday life. He has called us to be aware of what messages we are taking in. Don't put it on autopilot. Take it in and evaluate. Test the fruit and know it's real. [SR](#)

– Rev. Donald Chroniger
SDB Church of Shiloh, NJ

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The Struggle Is Real

by Nicholas Kersten
Director of Education and History

(This originally appeared on Nick's private blog and has been lightly edited for content and length.)

As I sit writing, it is technically the last day of 2016, though only just barely. I have spent much of the past two years taking on a job which, by everyone's admission, was too big for a person to accomplish alone. It didn't stop me from trying, but in the end, those efforts didn't make me a plurality of people. The job has been big. Happily, many talented and devoted Seventh Day Baptists have stepped up to aid me and my fellow Directors in accomplishing the work over the past two years. These days, the work of the SDB General Conference is increasingly being done very competently by a growing pool of talented and dedicated volunteers. I call that a significant victory, not just for my sanity, but for us as a people.

I am grateful for the many people over the past 30 or so months who have expressed concern for my health, for my sanity, and for the health and sanity of my family — and especially my wife, who has soldiered on bravely with a fraction of a husband for most of the past two years. We were aware that the transition would be difficult and that the first couple of years especially would be hard. In that expectation, we have not been disappointed.

But my reason for writing is because, as I have journeyed through the past 24 months with our leaders, something has become painfully clear: the cultural and spiritual forces working against what God is doing among Seventh Day Baptists are formidable, and worse, they are destroying leaders and churches throughout our Conference. To put a finer point on it: the leaders of our General Conference and the leaders of our local churches have been under an onslaught of trouble and difficulty for a period which is at least as long as my tenure as the Director of Education and History.

Many people in the United States have spoken about the difficulty and pain of these past couple of years by personifying a year as though a calendar could somehow be malevolent. 2016, in particular, seemed to receive blame for the difficulty, as though a span of chronological time could be culpable for what transpires during it. I assure you, a span of time is not our real enemy. Instead, I suspect that we have personified and demonized a span of 366 days as a way of ignoring the plain reality: we have entered a difficult time, and in the midst of the difficulties, we are all being tested.

Because I work at our General Conference office, many of the stories of these difficulties and struggles among SDBs reach me in a way that is unique, though certainly not every story or piece of bad SDB news finds us at the Center. Even so, in the past two years I have noticed a decided uptick in the attack on our leaders throughout the Conference, both in the local churches and in the Conference leadership. More specifically, I have seen...

the marriages of our leaders come under increased stress, leading to divorce, separation, and departure from leadership;

the families of our leaders come under increased stress, including fractures in families, untimely deaths, and the children of our senior leaders departing the faith;

the emotional and physical health of our leaders come under increased stress, including freak accidents, unexpected and rare illnesses, and emotional breakdowns;

the economic well-being of our leaders comes under increased stress, with some losing their livelihoods and others facing extreme financial hardship, sometimes as a result of health issues or freak accidents;

inappropriate strife and relational problems in our churches, especially among our leaders, leads to church splits and uncharitable behavior which degrades our witness to Jesus Christ.

It has been rough. My suspicion is that these troubles are finding everyone. But the probability of these troubles finding our leaders in such an egregious and disproportionate way leads me to believe that at least some of these troubles are coming directly from the enemy as a means of slowing our work — and more broadly, the work of God's kingdom. The specifics of some of these difficulties and who they have afflicted are not the reasons I have been driven to write — they are widespread, but obviously not every leader or church has been afflicted equally. If reading this led you to ask who I am talking about, you may be missing my point.

I have been slow to disclose this for fear that discussing it would somehow convey that I was not ready for the responsibilities of my job — that I was “too green” to lead. But at this point, given how widespread and prevalent the issues are, such fears have become a luxury I can no longer afford. In addition, the scope of the problem is very apparently much larger than just my own life — though I will not deny that I have not been exempted from some of the difficulties I have noted.

That's why I'm writing this entry tonight. As I have taken stock and prayed over the past few months, it has become increasingly clear to me that part of the

problem is that we have not done a good job interceding for our churches and our leaders as a Conference. That's where you come in.

The purpose of this article is to beg you to pray. We need faithful people who will commit to praying daily for Seventh Day Baptists. More specifically, **we need people who will pray...**

...for the leaders of local Seventh Day Baptist churches, including pastors, deacons, teachers, etc;

...for the families of the leaders of our local churches, including the parents, children and grandchildren of our leaders;

...for the work of the local churches, and for clear guidance, discernment, and unity as the churches seek to do the work they are called to;

...and for our denominational leaders, including the General Council members and their families, the members of our Councils and their families, and our Directors and their families as they achieve their various responsibilities.

Would you commit to pray for these four groups daily, even if it is just for a few minutes?

Your prayers can make a difference in the lives of your churches and leaders, even as they make a difference in your own. If you are already praying regularly for your leaders, on their behalf I thank you! Please continue in it! Would you prayerfully consider spending even more time in intercession? If you aren't praying regularly for your church and for your leaders, would you commit to praying, if even for a minute each day? The Scriptures clearly teach that your prayers are powerful, and that our response to difficulty should be to pray (James 5:13-16). Those of us who work for the Conference have renewed our commitment in the last few weeks to praying for these things. We hope that example is one which will be widely followed elsewhere. For those who may read this who aren't Seventh Day Baptist — we will happily accept your prayers as well, in addition to your prayers offered for your own Christian leaders!

The times of trouble appear to have come. We are not without a way to respond! We need to commit to humble and expectant prayer together, even as we pull together to continue to do the work of building God's kingdom. SR



THE LORD'S PRAYER

Who is in Heaven...

*We probably
don't spend
as much time
understanding
this phrase
as we should.*

Heaven. If you asked most Americans they would say that heaven is up in the sky. It has puffy clouds and golden gates and angels with harps and halos. But this is not really what Jesus meant when He said that the Father is in heaven. Actually, He said that the Father is in the heavens. He used the plural. For some this might not do anything, but for others this might change the meaning.

Just like the last entry in this series, we often overlook this phrase. We think we know what Jesus meant when He said, "Our Father, who art in heaven." But the truth is that we probably don't spend as much time understanding this phrase as we should. We need to look at more than just the translation. The history of the use of this word is just as important as the translation.

I realize that what I just wrote might bring up a lot of questions for some of you. Does the plural really matter? Does the plural translation mean that Jesus was talking about the sky? Does that mean that there really are puffy clouds? Was this the first time this phrase was used to describe God? This last question is where we will start.

I should note that the next two sections are heavy into grammar! You can just skip over to "No Clouds, No Halos, No Harps" where I will summarize the main points.

In the Beginning

The Greek word used in Matthew 6 for heaven(s) is οὐρανοῖς (oo-ran-ois'). This is a plural form of the Greek word οὐρανός (oo-ran-os'). οὐρανός appears in the very first verse of the very first chapter of the Bible: Genesis 1:1. Isn't the Old Testament written in Hebrew? Yes, and I will get to that, but all you really need to know is that there was an ancient translation into Greek known as the Septuagint. Why this exists is a story for another day.

What we find is that, for Matthew, this term was about the place that God lived. It was the dwelling place of God.

What is interesting about this appearance in Genesis is the way that it gets translated into English. It ends up being the opposite of the Greek. Our English translations have the plural used in Matthew (as heaven) and the singular used in Genesis (as heavens). This is not exactly surprising. The Hebrew word used (שָׁמַיִם) is plural and since most English translations are from the Hebrew and not the Greek this makes sense. However, these same translations take the plural Greek form and make it singular.

The Dwelling Place of God

If you do a word study on οὐρανός you will find a distinction in use between the singular and the plural forms. The singular forms often get translated as the heavens or sky. (The word used in both cases here is οὐρανοῦ in Greek and שָׁמַיִם in Hebrew.) The plural form does show up in the Old Testament, but many times the different plural forms are translated as heavens. However, one form in particular sticks out: οὐρανῶν (oo-ran-ohn'). This form only shows up a couple of times in the Old Testament and in every case it refers to the place where God lives.

Matthew must have picked up on this distinction. The uses of οὐρανῶν in the New Testament are almost exclusively by Matthew and in every case it is used in the phrase “Kingdom of Heaven.” He doesn’t stop with that. When Matthew uses οὐρανοῦς it is almost always “your Father in Heaven.” What we find is that for Matthew this term was about the place that God lived. It was the dwelling place of God.

No Clouds, No Halos, No Harps

So we know that when Matthew talked about heaven it was a reference to the place that God lived. But what does this mean? We might think that since this term developed from the word for the sky, he must be referring to what we think of today. But this really isn’t the case. Yes, the Old Testament uses heavens to refer to the sky, but that almost always is coupled with the term earth. The best way to see this is to look at Genesis 1:1.

Heaven was the best way that the Bible writers had to describe the foreign nature of God. God was not us, and so much so that His dwelling place was the sky. This enabled them to talk about God living in heaven, without falling prey to thinking that he actually lived in the sky.

Jesus is teaching us the mystery and reality of God. He is showing us that the Father is instantly relational and infinitely unknowable.

The Greeks and Romans of the New Testament, and many of the nations of the Old Testament, worshiped gods who lived in the sky. Many of our constellations were named after mythological characters. Even our planets got their names from Greek and Roman gods. Native American cultures worshiped the sun. **It is not uncommon to look to the sky and see gods — but for the people of YHWH, it is merely a way to talk about God, not the exact place where God lives.**

We can then declare that for Matthew the dwelling place of God was not the sky. It was not full of halos, and harps, and clouds. Rather the term heaven was used to describe the other-worldly nature of God. It was used to show just how different God is from us.

continued on next page...

The Lord's Prayer Who is in Heaven

continued from previous page

God of Mystery, God of Reality

If we look at the times Matthew uses the term Father we find that often he uses the term “Father in heaven” or “heavenly Father.” Matthew is making a distinction between our earthly fathers and our heavenly Father. What is amazing about this is the contrast that this creates. In one term we have something so familiar and something so foreign. In theological terms, we have the imminent and the transcendent. We have the concept that we understand — father — and we have the completely foreign nature of heaven.

Jesus was imminent and transcendent too. He was human like us, and He was God. He felt our pain. He suffered like us. He died like us. But He also rose. He was like us in every way and nothing like us. This is a dichotomy that we are familiar with in reference to Jesus, but here Jesus is using it in reference to the Father. The Father is at once close like our earthly Fathers and at the same time distant and worthy of praise.

The way we pray shapes our concept of God. Here Jesus is teaching us the mystery and reality of God. He is showing us that the Father is instantly relational and infinitely unknowable. These first two phrases of the Lord's Prayer gives us that distinction. We should look to God as a perfect Father, but we should never forget His holiness — a concept we will look at next time. [SR](#)

*May you look to the sky and see the wonders of God. May you feel the love of a perfect Father.
May you know that heaven is the dwelling place of God and nothing else.
And may God lavish His love on you.*

Amen!

— by Pastor Phil Lawton from the Seventh Day Baptist Church of Shiloh, NJ.
Check out Phil's blog at contemplatingkenosis.blogspot.com

Love Month

Hallmark didn't invent Valentine's Day. But the greeting card giant, along with thousands of other retailers, has figured out over the years how to profit big-time from the February holiday's sentimental theme. It is estimated this nation's consumers, in 2016, spent a record \$19.7 billion in honoring their special someone. A breakdown shows \$147 was spent by each of those actually making Valentine purchases (candy, cards, flowers, jewelry, dinner dates were the top five categories). I've benefitted from some of my husband's most ingenious, and more often simple but thoughtful, Valentine gifts. Why wait for an annual holiday? I hope we all make it a daily priority to remind our spouse, children and close friends how much we love them.

I do wonder, though, how often we tell God how much we love Him. Not only in our prayer time, but also in our relationships with those around us. I can't think of a better way to show Him how much we love Him than by telling others in our daily walk what God has done for us — and by stepping up to serve those who have special needs only we can meet.

The Old Testament's King David is described as a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). He authored a huge part of the Book of Psalms, and many of those psalms are love poems in tribute to a God he loved and obeyed. David wasn't perfect; none of us are. But he knew to whom he owed his life — and his forgiveness — and he wrote love notes to thank God for that grace. Why should we do anything less?

Psalm 18:1-2: "I love you, oh Lord my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."

— Donna VanHorn

For information about Donna's devotional book, *Tune God In: Your Heart's His Receiver*, visit her website at www.tunegodin.com



Being a senior in high school, all of the paperwork, applications, and decisions can be overwhelming. Learning to make the right decisions and to trust God where He is leading you in your life is an extremely hard task to accomplish. I am a person who likes to know where I'm going in life – everything needs to be in its place and happen exactly when it's planned. For example, in my freshman year of high school I knew I would be attending California Baptist University. I was certain I was going to be studying art education. Even before those thoughts, I was sure I was going to be a special effects makeup artist and be staying in New York for college. But now I plan on attending Lancaster Bible College for Live Production with the hopes of working at Sight & Sound Theatres as a stage manager and making a life in Lancaster.

Although these are my life plans, I have learned over the past four years of high school that you don't always get to make the plans for your life. In fact you don't get to plan your life. Slowly over the past few years I have reluctantly learned that this is God's job, not ours. I know it is extremely hard to surrender your whole life – past, present, and future – to our amazing Creator. Letting God have complete control of your life and the life you are going to live is something we all have to learn to do.

Recently the phrase "let go and let God" has been circling through my head on an endless loop. The letting go part really puts me to the test. I am a very controlling person. Being a stage manager and striving for that in a career, I am the person

who puts everything together, who makes everything work out, makes sure everything is in its place. Making God that person in my life and not myself is a little nerve wracking.

Trusting in God's plan for my life instead of mine has proved to me that there is an even better outcome for my life that I didn't even know about. When I was first looking at colleges, I had my mind set on California Baptist University. I knew that's where I was gonna go and the life that I had been planning for years would unfold there. However God had a different plan – when I showed up to visit this dream college, I felt so homesick and so out of place. I knew God was steering me in a different direction – even though that is not what I wanted in my life.

Coming back home to start from scratch on my college search, stressed me out so much, I had no idea where to begin. I looked through what seemed to be an endless list of colleges. Nothing jumped out at me nor caught my eye like CBU had. That's when I found LBC. This college wasn't even on my list and now it's where I will be attending in the fall of 2017. This was a really big moment in my life – realizing that I finally let God lead me to where I needed to be.

"I'll show up and take care of you as I promised and bring you back home. I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned out – plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for." – Jeremiah 29:11 (MSG). SR



God Likes To Use the "NOTS"



by Danny Lee
President, Missionary Society

What a wonderful year! It has been my pleasure to serve as President of the Missionary Society. I remember when the Board asked me to be president, as with most folks, I thought to myself, "How can I add one more thing to my already full plate?" My job is demanding at the tune of 60 hours a week; I'm already a committee member and board member of other organizations; I travel all over the country about every other week; time with family is important; busy in church, etc. etc. As I was whining to God about why I couldn't take on anything else, He reminded me He is the **God of time**. Finally, God said I needed to Cowboy up and remember He will take care of me as He has always done. Therefore the decision to accept the position became easy.

What a blessing to go and see God working around the world. I was personally blessed with the opportunity to go to Tanzania and Haiti in November. At this point, I



FOCUS on Missions

Clinton R. Brown
Executive Director

am reminded that everyone needs to remember to keep Executive Director, Clinton Brown, in our prayers for his safety as he travels the world for the work of the Lord. He is a man who loves the Lord and has a heart for the work of the Lord and the Great Commission.

When you go on these mission trips, there are so many humbling memories and blessings received from God. The people you meet, the relationships you build, the miracles you witness, and most amazing is just watching God at work. Memories from my last trip to Africa, where we visited Ghana, Liberia and Cameroon were still fresh in my thoughts and prayers. So I was excited to see what God was doing in this region of Africa and how God was working in Tanzania and in Haiti. God was laying on my heart that in any sermons/teachings/conversations, I was to share Jesus and the importance of evangelism. Now it is important to realize God likes to use the least likely, the “Nots” (as described in the Bible), and that is usually where I come in to the picture. In all that God does, the glory needs to always go to Him. That is where He uses guys like me (sinner, **not** so talented, **not** the executive look, however saved by grace and willing to give life to further the gospel).

After a two-week trip like this, there are so many stories to share. However, I will just share two of my fondest memories. One evening, one of the churches was having a special service where they invited members and locals. Just as I was going up to give the message, the generator and all lights went out pitch black! So Clint and a few others used their cell phone lights to get a little light in the structure. I began to preach with a flashlight in one hand, microphone in the other hand, and my interpreter next to me. Thankfully, they were able to get the lights on about ten minutes later. Towards the end of the message, I invited whoever felt led to come forward and we would pray with them. I was praising God when He led about four to come forward — I closed my eyes and started to pray. Not doing

this all the time, I realized I should have kept my eyes open to see what was going on, but I just kept praying and feeling God at work. When I opened my eyes, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the church was standing at the altar. I was fighting back tears, being so moved by observing God doing what He does.

Another time that will forever be in my memory was when we went out in the country to a church that had dirt floors and no roof — so we had the service outside the building. I was reminded that church is truly a body of believers coming together and not about the building. As I was about to go up and give a message that I wanted to give, God said to give a message on the cross and salvation. I wanted to push back and ask God, “Are You sure?” But I didn’t have time, so I had to go with His plan. With no notes and only the Bible in hand, off I went — explaining to God as I was walking to the front that if this doesn’t work, it is on You. As I was speaking, the sun was setting over the African countryside and I remember what a beautiful sight as God was speaking! I was reminded of the reason God likes using me: I am just the vessel. So I just enjoyed the views as He was speaking. Now keep in mind, most the time when speaking in these regions, churches have generators and microphones that they turn up loud. As I was speaking, I began to notice behind the church congregation, many people walking down the dirt road were stopping to listen intently. Some were in traditional African dress, leaning on their staffs/spears. I found myself speaking to the crowd behind the congregation and understood why God wanted His message delivered and not mine.

We are so blessed in America to have our needs met in abundance. My prayer is that we remember our Christian brothers and sisters around the world who have so many needs. What can we do to help? Go to God in prayer. He will lead us in the way that He will have us be a part of His work to help those in need. [SR](#)

Other Cheek or Blind Eye?



In Matthew 5, Jesus teaches a crowd using the Ten Commandments and other portions of Old Testament scripture. Specifically, in verses 38-42, He speaks of a portion of scripture repeated several times that is familiar to us today: an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. Jesus contradicts this saying, if someone “slaps you on the cheek you should also turn and offer him the other cheek to slap.” Turning the other cheek has become a popular phrase as well a way of life for many Christians through the ages.

Turning the other cheek has become synonymous with integrity and “taking the high road.” Refusing to return evil for evil is a sign of a decent person — but merely neglecting to take revenge is not what Jesus is talking about (even though that is the commonly accepted definition). Christians are to step beyond ignoring or refusing to take negative action on the wrongs perpetrated against us. Responding with kindness and compassion makes it a stark hallmark of Christianity. This truly does have transformative power. When we neglect this extra step, in my opinion, we contribute to a counterproductive mentality of ignorance in the church today.

When what we actively pursue is a way to ignore other people’s actions, our heads tend to stay in the clouds. We notice less of the world around us — except what immediately has to do with ourselves. We can turn our cheeks all the time, but if we never turn back, we can completely miss what’s going on around us. Repaying evil with kindness gives us an outward focus. If we miss that step our focus continually goes inward. The only thing that matters is our own reaction. It isn’t difficult to become wholly me-focused — culture is already all about individual wants and needs.

From there things become a slippery slope. If we can ignore the wrongs done to us by other people, it is much easier to ignore wrongs that aren’t directly perpetrated against us. The suffering of others is easier to miss than our own without our willful ignorance. We’re so involved with our introspection that we don’t notice anyone beyond our comfortable “Good Sabbath” zone. We decide to ignore questionable things going on around us because we don’t feel like we need to be involved or it isn’t our place. We turn away because we think we were turning a cheek. Actually, we are just turning a blind eye.

When we don’t know what to do or how to help people, I think we sometimes use turning the other cheek as an excuse not to get involved. Instead, we turn away because that’s what turning the other cheek means to us. Victims notice and feel further victimized because of it. I’ve recently been a part of conversations with several different people about how distrustful they were of the church because members of the church had turned a blind eye to verbal, mental, and/or physical abuse. The ignorance of the church signified to them that the church approved of their mistreatment when, generally, nothing could be further from the truth.

We have no excuse for ignoring overt mistreatment of others. In the past year racial slurs, bigotry, misogyny and maliciousness have become publicly commonplace. If you think they weren’t there before, you’re wrong. If you believe it’s not happening where you are, you’re wrong.

It’s time for the church to take its blinders off and be aware and ready to take action. If the way a person or group of people is treating another makes you uncomfortable, it isn’t something to ignore. It is something to change. Don’t confuse turning the other cheek with turning a blind eye to evil. SR



Seven Things Pastors Would Like Church Members

to Know About Their Children

I was serving a church in St. Petersburg, FL, when it hit me hard. One of my young children had playfully fallen on the floor in the foyer after a worship service. A deacon in the church came up to me and spoke forcefully: "You need to tell your kid to get up. Pastors' children aren't supposed to act that way."

My internal emotional reaction was carnal. I'm just glad I held my tongue. I was really mad. I can still remember my thoughts: "How dare this man hold my young son to a standard different than other kids! My boy really didn't cause any harm. He was just being playful."

I recently conducted a Twitter poll of pastors and their spouses about this very issue. Though the poll was informal and not scientific, the responses were nevertheless fascinating. Here are the top seven responses in order of frequency. A representative comment or combined comments are given with each of the seven.

- 1. Don't expect more out of pastors' kids (PKs) than any other kids.** "My children need to have the same expectations as the other children in the church. They are not some kind of spiritual superstars because their dad's a pastor."
- 2. Please offer encouragement to my children.** "It's not always easy to be a PK. The glass house thing is real. I am so thankful for the church members who go out of their way to encourage my children."
- 3. Realize that they are kids.** "I know a few church members who seem to think my kids are miniature adults. They expect them to act like a 40-year-old instead of a 4-year-old."
- 4. Please don't call them "PKs."** "Their identities should not be based on their father's vocation. They have their own unique and special identities."
- 5. Please pray for my children.** "I am blessed to have this one lady in my church who prays for my three children every day. She knows the special challenges of being a PK."
- 6. Our kids see and hear more than you may think.** "After one particularly tough church business meeting, my 7-year-old boy asked me if I was going to get fired."
- 7. Don't make me choose between my kids and the church.** "Too many PKs have grown up bitter and disillusioned about the church. Dad gave more attention to church members than his own children." SR



*Used with permission.
Originally found on ThomRainer.com.*

Agape Ministry Iglesia Bautista del Septimo Dia — Part 2

By: Pastors Joel and Judith Houts
Part 1 is in the January *Sabbath Recorder*



The Agape Ministry Iglesia Bautista del Septimo Dia has asked for membership in the Conference. This is a hope to let you get to know them better.

As we tried reaching new people, our people were being harassed by others. One gentleman stopped coming as a result and joined another church. He met with me in private and told me he was afraid. Shortly after this happened, a family of five that had accepted the Lord and been baptized moved to the United States looking for a better life. That left our church with zero active members!

Joel traveled back and forth from the USA as work allowed helping Ruth and me in the ministry. For one full year I preached to very few. Nevertheless, the Lord began bringing people to church and leaders began emerging. In the midst of all this, my mother's health worsened and in 2014 she passed away.

Through all this, we were certain of the mission and that God had called us. We had relocated from our old house to another house down the road. But when the original family left and moved to the United States, we had to relocate again. We found an apartment to rent, and moved there, but it seemed as if no one found us. The roof leaked and the landlord refused to fix it. After a year of preaching to no one (or so it was thought), one of the local drunks came into the church carrying a machete. He told us he came from what was supposed to be a duel (the other man did not show up). Ruth began serving him several cups of coffee. I prayed for him and he was healed from alcohol. He became our new member.

He told us later on that the services could be heard outside the church and many people gathered on the balcony above to listen to the music and hear the Word — leaving as soon as the final prayer ended.

We didn't know that our next door neighbor, Maritza Figueroa, had been sitting near her bedroom window listening to the music and the preaching. She once said that she thought we were out of our minds, we preached as if the church was full, but she saw no cars in the parking lot. Maritza's kids began attending our youth group. Later she began visiting and today she is our Associate Pastor, attending seminary. She is our Music Director along with her husband, Adrian Gonzalez, who is also a member and an accomplished singer/composer. Today they have their own ministry, born from our small church, the Dia Septimo singing group.

Because of water damage to our equipment, we had to move one more time, which took us to our present location. The church is more visible now — which has allowed more people to visit us. Some have become members and are leaders today. In the last year, we have officially become **Agape Ministry Iglesia Bautista del Septimo Dia**.



Pastor Robert Van Horn with Judith

We have several outreach community programs such as: Por Solo Una Sonrisa Community Luncheons, Three Kings Day procession (music and candy distribution), singing to home-bound, Christmas Tree White Banners (white envelopes with money to feed hungry in Christmas), Thanksgiving Community Luncheon, Voucher Program with a local cafeteria, and the Nursing Home Ministry. Most of these outreach programs are supervised by our one and only long term missionary to Puerto Rico, Ruth Russell.

In the last four years we have been blessed with the visits by other SDB missionaries: Clint Brown and Paul Andries, The Skateboard Ministry, Andrea McKenzie, The Berlin NY Team, Daniel Lovelace, Patty Petersen, Pastors John Pethtel, Helmer Umana, and for a second visit, Robert and Lana Van Horn.

Thanks to God, we have continued a slow, but steady growth in attendees and members, and we are becoming well known for our love and compassion in our



The Houts with Ruth Russell

community of Barrio Hoyamala in San Sebastian. In October of 2016 we celebrated our fourth anniversary. The all day program was attended by many people in the community, including a representative from the Mayor's office.

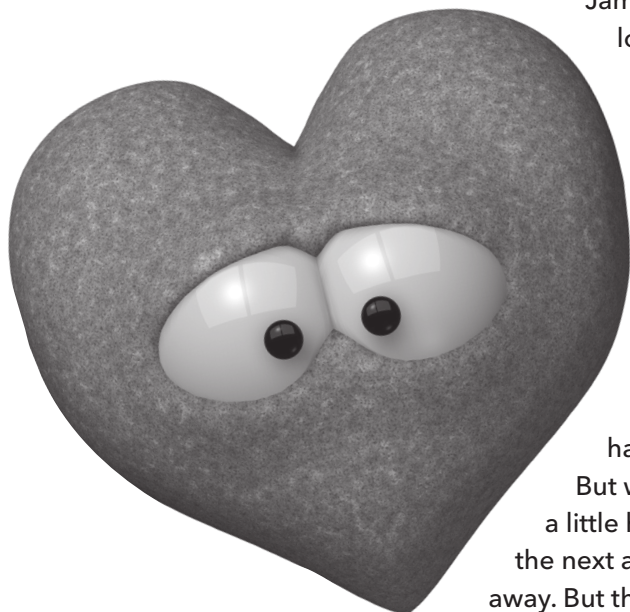
We are excited to see what God has for this church and its community in the future. To God be the glory! SR

Chaplain (MAJ) Jerry Johnson

graduated with honors from the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff Officer School (CGSOC) at the Fort Belvoir, VA satellite campus on December 15, 2016. He finished the Intermediate Level Education – Common Core with a 3.98 GPA after a rigorous fifteen weeks of studying Army doctrine and tactics, joint military operations, national security strategic planning, military history, organizational leadership, Army force management, and military communication skills. The curriculum combined working in a staff group of fifteen with individual papers, projects, and examinations. This program is a mandatory component of an Army Major's Professional Military Education and will enable Jerry to be eligible for his primary zone Lieutenant Colonel promotion board in the spring of 2018. Jerry is returning to his duties at Fort Belvoir Community Hospital, where he expects to remain until the summer of 2018. He thanks all SDB friends, especially Pastor Dave Taylor and the Central SDB family, for their prayers and support during this intense experience. SR



Learning to Seek God in the “Meh”



This summer I had the opportunity to serve on an SCSC project in Jamaica. I've had a passion for cross-cultural ministry for as long as I can remember, but this was my first experience actually doing it. When I got home I remember feeling like now that I've had this experience my life would magically change. I thought that I might do a better job keeping up with a consistent Bible study, find a new ministry to get involved in, or have a greater passion for my church. Essentially, I thought that five weeks doing ministry in a different country would make up for my own inconsistencies and shortcomings.

I feel like a lot of us do this – right? Something exciting happens and it's easy to see God at work or to trust in Him. But when we get back to everyday life, it's hard again. It gets a little harder when I'm just going to work or school hoping for the next adventure. For me, when my life is boring, God feels far away. But the thing that I've been learning this year is that God feels far away because of my own habits and lack of focus on Him, not because of the fact that I'm home. It's easy for me to be passionate about God when I'm in a place that I feel called and fulfilled. However, there are times in everyday life, when I am not doing ministry, that I'm almost resentful of the fact that I'm not to a certain point in my life yet.

I hear this from other people all the time. This feeling of having important things to do for the Kingdom, but not getting to do it yet, can stick with you. It's a feeling of wanting to fast forward through all of the growth and exploration and just be where we are supposed to be. It's hard to work on the “here” when you want to be “there.” When I get particularly discouraged with these kinds of feelings, I think about Ruth.

In her situation, it would have been really easy to just ignore God and focus on surviving – and hope that someday her life would be different. But that isn't what she did. She sought God's will when it meant traveling far away from her home with her mother-in-law. Even in the monotonous labor of gathering wheat by hand, she was faithful in the tasks given to her. If Ruth can do that, I can probably make time to pray and read my Bible when I get home from work or school. I think, as young adults, we are almost wired to have these big dreams and passions so we have something to work towards. However, it's putting in the work during these years, to actively seek God and learn to be faithful in the mundane, that gives us the foundation to be able to follow those passions and achieve the dreams.



Here are several questions you should ask yourself as you ponder a call to pastoral ministry:

1. Do I meet the qualifications laid out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1?

This is the place to start. If your character is not mature, stable, and (in a non-perfectionist way) exemplary, then you are not ready to be a pastor. This does not necessarily mean you are on the wrong path if you don't yet have victory over certain sins. It means you won't be ready until you meet the Scriptural standards.

2. Do the Christians who know me best consistently affirm my gifts for ministry?

The most important call is the objective call of your church encouraging you to pursue pastoral ministry.

3. Do I like to teach all kinds of people in all kinds of settings?

Most people thinking of pastoral ministry are excited to preach. I want to know if they are excited to preach at the Rescue Mission and excited to teach five-year-olds.

4. Do I find myself stirred by good preaching?

If a man is called to preach the gospel he should be thrilled to hear it preached. The content should move him, and he should find himself thinking, "Oh, that I could proclaim this good news."

5. Do I find myself stirred by bad preaching?

The last point was obvious. This one is less so, but just as important. I think there ought to be a fire in a man's bones when he hears the word of God handled badly.

6. Do I enjoy being around people?

Some pastors are extroverts; I am not. I look forward to being with people more than some pastors I know, but not nearly as much as many men I admire. Whatever your personality, you won't be a good pastor if you don't like people and recoil from them as much as possible.

7. Do I make friends easily?

This is a subjective test (like many of these questions), but a lack of meaningful friendships is not a good sign. It could be an indication that you are too harsh, too much a loner, or frankly, too awkward to be effective in pastoral ministry.

8. Do I like to read?

Thankfully there is no GPA or SAT requirement for pastoral ministry. Yet, if we are to be "apt to teach" we must be eager to learn. Preaching grows thin and ministry gets stale without time in the Book and the books.

9. Have I thought about doing this for more than a few months?

Often when students or adults come to Christ they quickly assume that because they are zealous for the Lord they ought to go seminary and prepare for the ministry. This is usually misguided — sometimes because of pride and sometimes due to misplaced zeal. There's a reason the Bible insists that church leaders not be recent converts.

10. Do I still want to be a pastor if I never write a book, never speak at a conference, and never have a big church?

Our passion must be to feed the flock, not feed our egos.

Church Planting Co-worker Program

SDBs have identified church planting as a critical area of focus in accomplishing the mission that God has given us. Strong pastoral leadership is crucial to any healthy church — but even the most gifted pastor does not have every gift nor will he be able to do all the work of planting a church by himself. It requires a team of people to successfully launch a new church.

It has become evident that God has given some individual SDBs a passion for being involved with church planting. This program would allow those individuals to answer God's call to serve in SDB church plants by reducing the financial impact that comes with the reduced time available for other gainful employment. SDB church plants would benefit from having an infusion of gifting, skill, and manpower in an area of need

which supports their overall vision for establishing a new SDB church. Frequently, the Co-worker will be more familiar with SDB polity and culture than the church plant itself and can help the new church/pastor understand SDB culture and procedures.

The goal of this program is not full financial support of the Co-worker. It is a means to assist called SDB individuals to relocate and provide temporary support for their project until the project is complete or they can establish themselves permanently with the SDB church plant.

If you or your church are interested in learning more about the Church Planting Co-worker Program, please contact the Director of Church Development.



by Rev. John J. Pethel
Director

Church Development & Pastoral Services



New Auburn Builds a New Church

"Iou," Daddy said, "We've been called to New Auburn, Wisconsin, to help them build a new church. God is leading me to accept. I can keep writing *The Helping Hand* lessons there and we will have a real house with a **new bathroom!**" I was six years old and we lived in an upstairs apartment over a converted cheese factory in Independence, NY. The year was 1955.

So we loaded up our Studebaker, a two-wheeled trailer and a top carrier, and started our three-leg journey to a place where icicles would soon reach from the porch roof to the ground. First stop was Mommy's childhood home outside Jackson Center, OH, for Thanksgiving dinner. When we got ready to leave in the morning, Grandma Miars surprised us by adding her little suitcase and a bag lunch to the heap and piling in beside my brothers, Doug and Dean, ages 3 and 2, and me in the back seat.

After a weekend in Milton, WI, where my parents had met, we headed up Highway 53 and approached our new hometown. When we saw the 20-by-30-foot white structure across the "frozen tundra" adjacent to a pig farm, we speculated on which house held our "new bathroom." We were warmly welcomed by a work force, including Genny Pederson and her preschool daughters, Connie and Christine. Mommy's greeting was, "We have come to build your church."

Upon examining the church record books, Daddy learned that the church had been talking about a new building for 40 years! At the first business meeting in 1956, the subject was again brought up. Elmer Nelson challenged the assembly: "Why don't you just give up the idea of building? You know you can't do it!" Was he using reverse psychology? Perhaps, for the church Moderator was his wife Helen! The motion to build was seconded and carried unanimously.

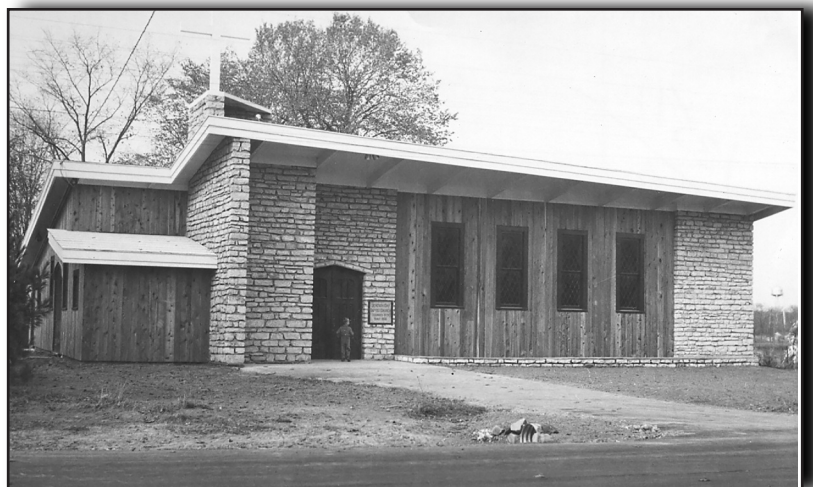
At a Divine encounter with someone from a neighboring town, Daddy learned of a church that was being torn down. Would it be possible for SDBs to recycle Congregational fixtures? For \$625, the building "fund" acquired: stained glass windows with storms, all interior and exterior doors, inside and outside trim, basement windows, rest room facilities, furnace and hardwood flooring in the basement.

Daddy sent the specs of all of these items to his friend, Dr. Wayne Rood in California, an amateur functional church architect, asking for ideas on how to use the castoffs. Dr. Rood responded with blueprints and a scale model (read: "toy") of the beautiful church pictured here.

New building with Douglas Sanford standing in front—1957



Old building with Rev. David and Frances Clarke standing in front—early 50s.



Dad's story is skillfully told in detail in *The Autobiography of Don A. Sanford*. Even as a child I could see God working through His people and the community at large. Ladies Aid fundraisers introduced me to "Preacher's Kid Lament": "No, sorry. The cake is not for us; it's for the church bazaar/smorgasbord/bake sale."

Townsppeople with special skills donated time and elbow grease. Previous pastor Dave Clarke brought a crew of nine young people from Colorado, including future pastor Melvin Stephan, to unleash their energy. After Grandma Sanford died, Grandpa came for a visit and dug trenches and laid ductwork. Jess Babcock, a retired mason and carpenter from Milton, and his wife Nina parked their camper in the churchyard three times and shared their talent. Even we children were allowed to paint a section of wall in the fellowship area. It was estimated that 5500 man hours were donated.

On October 12, 1957, the cornerstone was laid and a dedication ceremony was held. Prominently displayed above the platform was a cross composed of tiny interlocking blocks. Jess Babcock had resurrected the 2 x 4 stud from the entrance to the old church and crafted this memorial to the congregation's past.

By the grace of God and hard work, the New Auburn people had built a \$40,000 temple in a tiny town of 300 working class inhabitants. The building was handicapped accessible 30 years before passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Other creature comforts of the church (and, for that matter, the parsonage) surpassed some of the members' homes in terms of electricity and indoor plumbing. It was truly a labor of sacrificial love.

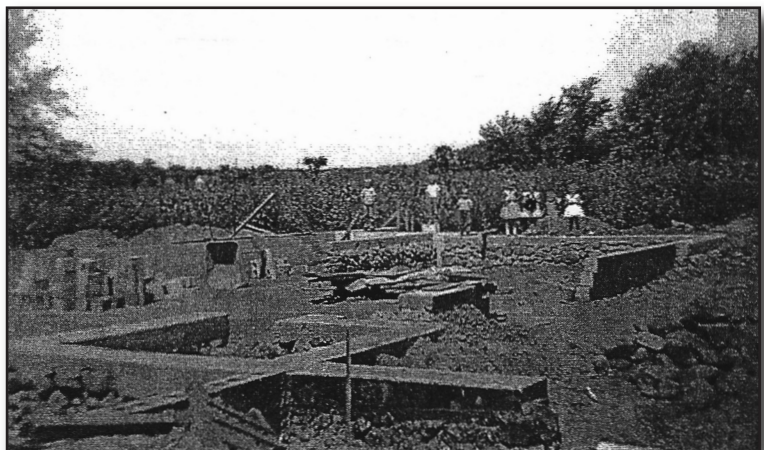
In October 1968 we returned to New Auburn and watched Dad set fire to the mortgage document over a charcoal grill.

While the new building attracted a lot of attention to Seventh Day Baptists, the spirit of God's people has sustained this body for another 60 years. The interior was designed so that the worship area could be expanded into the fellowship hall and classrooms with a simple rearrangement of movable partitions. Still, there have been occasions when the congregation could really use even MORE space! SR

To God Be the Glory!

By Donna Sanford Bond
SDB Church of Shiloh, NJ

This month, we are happy to print the first article submitted in response to our request for local church history stories! See the January 2017 *Sabbath Recorder* for more information or contact Nick Kersten if you have your own story you would like to submit for consideration!"



Children standing on foundation: Dennis and Duane Pedeson; Douglas and Donna Sanford; Connie Pederson; Dean Sanford; Christine Pederson—1956



Front of sanctuary showcasing cross made by Jess Babcock

Life on Mission:

Call... Come... Pray!

I'm praying your entry into 2017 has been enjoyable. For me, I spent my New Year's celebration in Samobor, Croatia, with my daughter, Leanna, and her husband, Tomislav'. We stood on the balcony of her third floor apartment which overlooks the city and enjoyed a cascade of fireworks from multiple locations. Samobor has "pyrotechnic" shops and firework companies that provided enough combustible product to blow up the whole town — or so my ears thought it to be!!! I stood oohing and aweing until the last pop.

It was a "must-do" trip for me because I have not been separated from my children for any length of time. Now I have come to realize that my Lele is established, married, and living in Croatia for what she declares, "the rest of her life." WOW! Never in my wildest dreams did I think any of my children would move so far away and strike up dual citizenship as well. Anyway, the trip allowed me to rest my spirit and see for myself that she is well, loved, and making a home with her family there. Of my three children, Leanna is the last one I thought would venture out like this. However, when I asked her if she liked it there and if she felt comfortable living in this faraway place, she, without a pause, told me that this is right where she is meant to be and that life is great. I'm going to thank God for the confidence I have in knowing He has a plan for each of our lives and this is my Leanna's journey.

Also, I took this trip desperately needing some time to rest — to reflect on a very busy year; to prepare my spirit for the new year and Conference planning; and to be eagerly receptive to what God wants for my future. I hold dearly to Jeremiah 29:11: *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* I claim this promise and believe that my current calling is being fulfilled in General Conference planning — and that there is something more to be revealed. As I read on in Jeremiah verses 12-14: ¹² *"then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you"* declares the Lord.... God promises again that when we seek Him and, do so with all our hearts, He will listen and we will find God. *"I will be found by you,"* He tells me. I

LIFE ON MISSION

Touching lives for Jesus

President's Page

by Patti Wethington

SDB Church, White Cloud, MI

stand right now in this seeking place reaching out for a God who gives me this confirmation that I will be found by Him. No worries — just call, come, pray — and my desires will be heard.

Standing in a seeking place, I realized that I need to reexamine a few things and I ask this question: Have you ever felt a bit lost and wished you could just find that safe place where there is warmth, understanding, comfort, peace, and safety? I took a pathway in my work life that I thought would give me more security and freedom — only to find that there was a false sense of liberty in that choice. It clearly squashed my spirit and drained my energy, and finally I realized that I was putting my trust in a fake sense of security. I awakened to realize that I am not trusting that *"my God will supply all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:19). It took my breath away to comprehend how easy it is to grasp a false sense of security in this world. All God wants us to do is reach out for the real freedom we can have when we trust in Him to fulfill our daily needs. Once again, I had grasped onto an all-consuming work life that overpowered God's plan to take care of me. I see that now and understand that God wants me to know that He is waiting to be found by me. Call... Come... Pray! I will find Him.

I had to seek out in Croatia to find that my Lele is confident, safe, well cared for, and loved. I know that when I seek my God the same way, He is real! He is patiently waiting to be found and will, as he promises in Jeremiah, reveal His plan to give me hope and a future." Once again I learned to cease placing my trust in the false promises of this world. SR



*Create in me
a pure heart,
O God.*

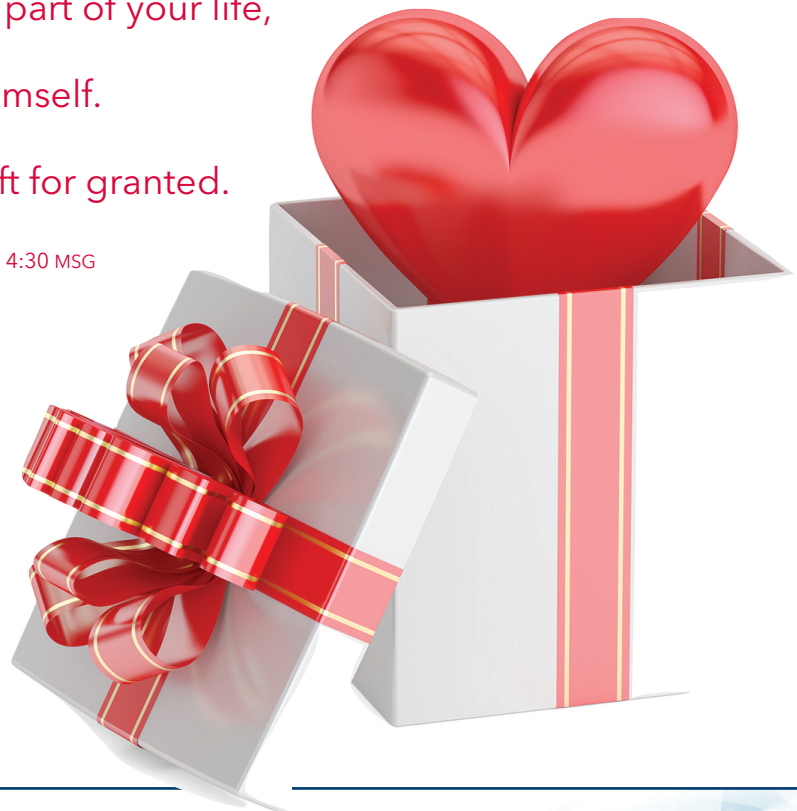
Don't grieve God.

Don't break his heart.

His Holy Spirit, moving and breathing in you,
is the most intimate part of your life,
making you fit for himself.

Don't take such a gift for granted.

— Ephesians 4:30 MSG



Coming Next Summer:

July 23 - 29, 2017

**LIFE
ON MISSION**

Touching lives for Jesus

Seventh Day Baptist General Conference

Azusa Pacific University — Azusa, California

