

PEG HEMPE ORDAINED

NEWS • ANALYSIS • OPINION

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# ADVENTIST TODAY

VOL. 5, NO. 4

JULY • AUGUST 1997

MOVIES

THE SPIRIT

LIFESTYLE

LOOKING BACK

## A Look From the Inside

# 1888

NEW ASSOCIATION OF  
INDEPENDENT ADVENTIST  
CONGREGATIONS

CLINICAL MINISTRY  
DEGREE OFFERED AT LLU

NAD AND AMERICANS  
UNITED TERMINATE  
RELATIONSHIP





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## Inside Adventist Today

# To Stir Up Your Pure Minds

One of the durable, memorable, stimulating teachers at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary for the first twenty-two years of its life, and almost the last twenty-two of his fifty-nine years of service to the church, was Dr. Roland E. Loasby, chair of the New Testament Department. Those privileged to sit in one of his Greek classes will never forget his usual introduction to a class period on the Book of Romans or some other epistle: "To stir up your pure minds..." You might not agree with everything Dr. Loasby said; in fact, some seminarians were so upset that they lamented the fact to some of the VIP's at the General Conference next door. But no one who ever heard him intone those droll words will take exception to the fact that he made people think—and usually they woke up later to realize that he was, believe it or not, right.

"To stir up your pure minds..." would make an appropriate introductory statement to each issue of *Adventist Today*, including this one for July and August.

For instance, take the brief news item on page 6 about the formation of a new Association of Independent Adventist Congregations in July and its first national conference at the Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago, in August. Some may wonder why *Adventist Today* would take note of this challenge to the unity of the church. To begin with, it's news, but beyond that anything that threatens the unity of the church is vital to its health and well being. In our May-June issue we told about a congregation in Oregon and another in Colorado that are potential members of this new Association. And there

**It is important to thinking Adventists to know about this new sign of the times and the factors that have contributed to it.**

are others in Oregon, Illinois, Maryland, and Florida of which we are aware, whose relationship to the church is in question. It is important to thinking Adventists to know about this new sign of the times and the factors that have contributed to it.

Others may take exception to the point of view expressed in "Adventists Going to the Movies" on page 13. It reflects the perspective of a responsible member of the church, and it is good for all of us to know what others of us are thinking about this matter. I recommend a very simple, plain, and responsible solution—to witness, voluntarily, only conduct that is in harmony with moral principles.

Still others may question the propriety of the article, "Spirit-Seeking Needed in Adventism" on page 9. Again it is appropriate to know and to evaluate what others are thinking, whether we agree or disagree. Listening attentively and perceptively to someone else's point of view helps us to clarify our own thinking on a given subject.

The decision by the Loma Linda University Church to ordain Peg Hempe, who began a long and fruitful ministry there more than twenty years ago, witnesses to the fact she has amply fulfilled Paul's counsel to Timothy to give full account of his ministry. She began preaching in 1976 and ten years later became the first Adventist woman pastor to baptize her candidates. Peg is the fifth woman pastor in the Southeastern California Conference to be ordained by the congregations they have served so faithfully and so well. *Adventist Today* rejoices with her and with the University Church for this well-deserved honor. (See page 24.)

Unfortunately, former president of the General Conference G. I. Butler and *Review* editor Uriah Smith, two of the VIP participants in the historic 1888 session of the General Conference (Butler in absentia), are not on our mailing list and will not be reading Robert Hunsaker's glowing tribute on page 12 to the 1888 message of righteousness by faith, which has, more recently, found an honored place among our current twenty-seven articles of fundamental beliefs and, hopefully, in our own lives.

**Raymond Cottrell, Editor**





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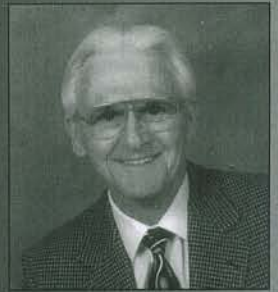
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Adventism has many faces and beliefs. Each one needs to learn to appreciate and value the others. Unity in Christ alone should be our goal.

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# FIRST CLASS

Letters to the Editor  
Adventist Today  
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## Young Adults and the Church

There is probably not a subject in which I have a deeper interest than that of the future of the Adventist Church. Hence I read with great interest Dupertuis' article "Young Adults Make Adventism Their Own." I am a "thirtysomething" life Adventist who, I believe, still qualifies as a "young adult" but has also had a little time to observe and to reflect on trends within the church. Dupertuis' assessment of young

adult thought within the church is true to my own observations and interviews of young Adventists. However, if indeed his evaluation is true, (is that word permissible?) then his assertion that young adults' theology is "rooted in the tradition of their forebears" is false for at least the following reasons:

1. According to Dupertuis, "Young adults generally care very little about missionizing and converting others to some notion of absolute truth." The fact is that the inception and growth of Adventism, the Reformation, and of Christianity itself would never have been possible with that mind set. None of these movements were merely a relevancy evolution of archaic social or religious constructs. All of them resulted from focused, concerted effort toward ideals which usually opposed the popular culture of the day, offered people something radically different from what they already had, and most importantly,

was powered by the radiant witness of those who were certain. Certainty is a difficult concept in the nineties but does Jesus Himself say that some ideas are true and some ideas are not true? It is not belief in universal truth that has caused pain in human history, but rather the notion that people must be forced to subscribe.

2. The author states that young adults generally "spend little time thinking about traditional Adventist understandings of the imminent end

of the world." When one considers how Adventism was born, it is inconceivable that this statement describes people who are connected to Adventism as it has been. Why have an Adventist Church in the next century? Perhaps the fortysomethings and the fiftysomethings have serious reflecting to do. Could they have something to do with the fact that their children find little relevance in "Adventism" and know very little about what inspired our forebears?

Margaret Song  
Loma Linda, California

## AT a Necessity

For years I have been a loyal supporter of the Adventist church—educated in our colleges (PUC, EMC). Even taking a class from Editor Cottrell at PUC convinced me without a doubt I was a member of the so-called 'remnant church' and could arrogantly proclaim with the most conserva-

tive and traditional Adventist that we have the 'Truth.' In the old days it was almost considered sinful to even question or even entertain any doubts about our doctrines or the writings of E. G. White. When the bomb the present editor of the *Review* calls F. D. R. (Ford-Davenport-Rea) [fell], I expected the *Review* to present a totally unbiased presentation on the problems and issues presented by these men. After all, we have the truth and the truth should be able to withstand any challenge if it is of God. So what kind of hash are we served in the *Review*? Very little and what little that is dished has very little meat to it. . . . full of presumptions and assumptions by so-called intellectual theologians of our church. Use a Jewish writer to explain and defend our ideas on the sanctuary, hire a Catholic attorney to say that Mrs. White's writing was not plagiarism. . . . The stance the church has taken to meet the current problems seems akin to political cover-up that has plagued our country in recent years. Integrity and honesty should be the basis of any group who claims to [be] God's representatives, or we are jeopardizing the salvation of not only ourselves but all to whom we are presenting the so-called truth. I can no longer accept the idea that we are the so-called 'remnant church,' and only the members of the remnant church are eligible for salvation. For years I can still hear the cries of those parents in prayer meeting whose children have left the church and condemn them to the 'Adventist hell.' I had hoped I would never go through that experience, but I did a few years ago when I lost a son, who left the church (as thousands of young people) to a heart attack at 38. But. . . what I learned from his friends, their testimony to his life gives me comfort that makes me confident that he is 90% more eligible for salvation than most of the

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young adults' theology is  
"rooted in the tradition of  
their forebears" is false...

## Correction

The article "Adventist Time of Trouble in Ethiopia" in the May-June issue of *Adventist Today* was not written by James Walters. Its two authors, each of whom teaches at an Adventist institution of higher learning, wish to remain anonymous. We apologize for the error. —editors



members of our church that sit in the pews Sabbath to Sabbath and that is about all that constitutes their relationship to God—and that includes me, the clergy, and even the current G.C. president who assumes his job is to separate the sheep from the goats. That is Christ's job and the only judgment we have to be concerned with, as described in the last verses of the 25th chapter of Matthew.

Not only do I think we need a magazine such as *Adventist Today*, but it is a necessity. I hope you aren't too discouraged by those who wish to cancel their subscription because of what they consider a negative stance by some of the contributors. It is sad that there [are] so many who close their minds to all thought that does not agree with their brainwashed historicism. Sorry to say I was in that category—similar to the Pharisee's unyielding stance to accept Jesus because their self-righteousness stood in the way.

**Susumu Mitoma**  
Oakland, California

### Evolution Not an Option

In the last issue of *AT*, which was very informative as always, I bristled at Max Phillips' attempt to characterize evolution as a value free system—a philosophically neutral enterprise....Get real! We fought the last world war against the very ideology that embraced evolutionary philosophy to perpetrate its crimes against the "genetically inferior." Darwin's theory inspired Hitler, Marx and Stalin. This has been well documented. Not only does evolutionary biology have philosophical/religious implications, it is religious philosophy pure and simple, secular as it is....

I take further exception to the false [idea] of progressive creationism with theistic evolution. The position of ancient earth progressives is adamantly against evolution. Both positions agree that God created in stages, [but] whether in stages long (progressive creation) or short (6 day) is another discussion. And both positions agree that God created—no spontaneous generation, no mutation/selection naturalistic development of new organs and organism[s].

**Darrel Lindensmith**  
Bismarck, ND

### Individuals in Community

I was enriched by the articles by Dick Winn and Duane Covrig. The question of the "self" is fundamental to both theological and philosophical discussion....While to a large degree we owe our sense of self to the communities we come from, to maximize this idea in practice can lead to fascism whether of the religious or political kind....

The individual and the community of faith are both ideas Christians must come to grips with, and the way each one does this will depend on what one experiences in the community. This will inevitably create tension between the individual and the community, between tradition and novelty. All dissidents are accused of novelty by the traditional community....

But there are communities within communities, and in these the dissident, the scholar, [and] the one embraced by novelty, receive identity and experience spiritual nurture. But even here we dare not surrender our sense of individuality. For community is continuously born out of community, and new self identities formed.

**A. Joseph Greig**  
via e-mail

### Grace Place

[Clay Peck] established an officially sponsored church in Berthoud. His service is high-tech (computer graphics), and nontraditional—music and coffee. His sermons [are] very doctrinal and use extensive scriptural passages. He can have 400-500 in attendance each Sabbath. Many are non-attending SDAs and non-SDAs. But he has taken members from other local SDA churches. By the way, he has membership standards which require annual review and specific commitment to the local church program.

After operation for one year, there was some thought that he might bring down the president, Jim Brauer. He did not. He and Brauer spent eight hours in conference at Andrews over doctrinal issues. He

is being supervised on a weekly basis by Conference officials!

**Gregory Matthews**  
Brighton, Colorado

### Holocaust Lessons Ignored

No one should ever deny the suffering and pain of the Jewish Holocaust. This would be wrong. But I did find Doug Kasischke's viewpoint (06/97) a little bit too much. In it, he gave the false impression that there was something historically unique about that...event.

First, in this century alone, there have been other holocausts that deserve our attention, too, like the Armenians under the Turks, the Cambodians under Pol Pot, and the

Russian people under the Josef Stalin-Lazar Kaganovich gang. It may surprise Mr. Kasischke that Kaganovich was Jewish, as were many of Stalin's top lieutenants, especially in the Ukraine, in his killing machine....

Second, I believe that some of the more important lessons from the Jewish Holocaust have been ignored. Mr. Kasischke is right that "all people deserve to be protected from senseless violence and persecution." Yet, the silence from the Jewish community in America about Zionist Israel's brutal occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and southern Lebanon speaks volumes about complicity in the face of state-sponsored terrorism....

It is wrong always and everywhere for one people to subjugate another. Mr. Kasischke, Steven Spielberg, and the Jewish Holocaust Foundation have a moral obligation to publicly address the desperate plight of the Palestinian people. And, when are they also going to stop preaching "down" to the gentiles and practice what they preach? When?

**Bill Hughes**  
Baltimore, MD

**And, when are they also going to stop preaching "down" to the gentiles and practice what they preach? When?**

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**  
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# NAD and Americans United Terminate Relationship

ALBERT DITTES

**C**iting a shift of Americans United to embrace gay rights, the North American Division has terminated a 40-or-more year relationship with an organization "dedicated to preserving the constitutional principle of church-state separation."

have served on its board of directors. Its official publication is *Church & State* magazine.

"They broadened their agenda by embracing the gay community," says Clarence Hodges, vice-president and director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty for the North American Division. "Our focus is on preserving religious liberty but not human rights in

federal grant to Loma Linda University. "We do not think religious institutions should receive funds for religious activities, but using it to buy expensive health equipment serves the total community. Taking those funds does not violate the separation of church and state," Hodges says.

Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United, was surprised to hear the North American Division gave gay rights as a reason for terminating. "We are not involved in that issue at all," he says. "We were involved in a California lawsuit where a woman owning commercial real estate used free exercise of her religion as the reason for not renting to an unmarried couple. We felt religious liberty was not an issue there. We are disappointed the Adventists separated out from us."

"The only reason they gave me was secularization. They never described the specifics," Lynn says. "I don't understand it. We have a faith group coordinator working with religious groups. I spend hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to reach out to the religious community. I still get invitations to speak at Seventh-day Adventist colleges and also read *Liberty* magazine."

Lynn says the financial support of Americans ended about two years before the official statement of termination was published in the *Review*.

Adventist members are still active in Americans United. Some contribute financial support; one even serves as a chapter president. A recent issue of *Church & State* magazine lists Robert Dale, formerly of the North American Division, and Robert W. Nixon as trustees. Lynn says Dale's term on the board expired, and he did not renew because of retirement and moving to Oregon. General Conference Attorney Robert Nixon serves as secretary of the board. Melvin Adams, a retired associate director of the General Conference religious liberty department, is listed as trustee emeritus.

**Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United, was surprised to hear the North American Division gave gay rights as a reason for terminating. "We are not involved in that issue at all," he says.**

Based in Washington, D.C., Americans United for Separation of Church and State has always opposed government intervention in religion and has taken the same stand as Adventists regarding Sunday laws and other church-state issues. Many Adventists

general. We may do some joint things with them but won't work with them in general. We parted as friends."

Hodges says the division had been giving Americans United \$1,000 a year. There had been some other disagreements. Americans United had opposed a

## New Association of Independent Adventist Congregations

**T**he Evangelical Sabbath Association is a new association that was formed at a conference held in Oregon on July 24 & 25. Its purpose is to equip, empower and serve grace-based, Sabbath-celebrating ministries.

The Evangelical Sabbath Association will seek to broaden into a national organization when many of its members convene in early August at a larger conference to be held at the Willow Creek Community Church, Chicago, Illinois. Tentatively scheduled are such speakers and topics as: Bob Bretsch and his departure from the

Sunnyside Church in Portland, Oregon; Eric Bahme and his one-year experience with the New Life Christian Fellowship of Congregational Seventh Day Adventists in Washington State; Chad McComas and his experience with Set Free Ministries in Medford, Oregon; and Marc Schelske, pastor of student ministries at the Bridge City Community Church (Portland, Oregon) and his convictions on the relevance of the Sabbath in contemporary evangelical churches.

Eric Bahme has led out in formation of the new association of independent Adventist congregations.



# The Inaugural Issue of Scanner

JIM WALTERS

**I**t's the most hip Adventist youth publication ever. Forget *Insight*, *College People* and *Dialogue*—all GC publications. *Scanner* is where it's at! Tame magazines are fine for neo-traditionalists, but *Scanner* is self-consciously cutting-edge. The editors want to address young adult Adventists in contemporary urban society.

*Scanner* is a slick, 20-page, over-sized magazine published by the Glendale (CA) City Adventist Church. It is edited by youth pastor David Wood, with heavy responsibilities carried by co-managing editors Rene Dupertuis and Michael Zbaraschuk, both doctoral students at nearby Claremont Graduate University.

The inaugural issue represents the MTVification of Adventism. Multicolored graphics and photos are everywhere, often existing in ambiguous relationship to anything else. Background images are underprinted on most pages of text. And the text itself sometimes includes varying-sized lines of type in the middle of an article. Pages vary in color from deep blue to see-through onion skin to pale yellow. Although the layout of *Scanner* may not be the preference of the over-40 set, it speaks to its intended audience—Generation X.

Supportive City Church senior pastor Mitch Henson writes in a guest editorial that his church's young adults are not content to merely take "a piece of the pie," as offered by high church leaders. Young adults "prefer to be invited to construct the menu, prepare the meal, share it with others....Anything less will indicate to them that other forms of worship, other religions, or perhaps, no organized religion can be their home."

The managing editors, in their 20's, write that "we, young adult Adventists, did not have a safe space to try on the clothes of historical Adventism and see where they fit...and where they don't. *Scanner* is a place where it's "OK" to

question, have doubts, and be confused about how to live as an Adventist in a contemporary world." The name *Scanner*, says the editor, means that "we'll scan our world for a role worth playing."

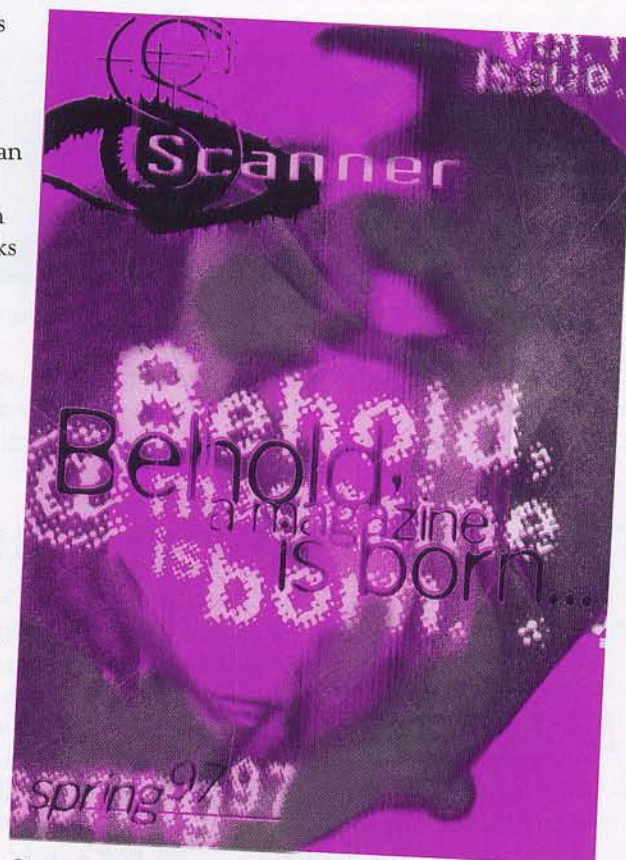
In addition to a movie and a book review, the first issue of *Scanner* includes articles in which young adult Adventists grapple with their faith.

For example, Craig van Rooyen honestly deals with the conflict of faith and workplace—he works as a prosecuting district attorney in Riverside: "After a lifetime of school I feel as if I have finally been initiated to the real world—a very secular world. I am 29 years old, the son of an Adventist preacher, and along with other young Adventists being socialized into secular careers, I am confused....Sometimes I'm forced to take positions I feel are unfair because my superiors tell me to. They feel that political pressure to be tough on crime. I feel the pressure to keep my job. And in some cases I don't know who is right and who is wrong. The gray is numbing. Real life eschews poles. Morality is a continuum."

Lisa Pak writes a creative piece entitled "Adventist Anonymous." The setting is a therapeutic interview that Nancy has concerning her religion, and she is stutteringly apologetic to admit she's an "Ad...uhh...Ad...er...Ad...Adventist." Going to a public university Nancy feels shame about associating with a group linked to the "Branch Davidian/Waco fiasco," and the six-day creation theory. Other topics of concern are love of meat,

R-rated movies, jewelry, dancing, Sabbath dining out, wedding champagne, non-Adventist friends.

The Pak piece ends with the therapist encouraging Nancy: "Well, you've shared quite a bit today...You're on your way to healing. Remember, the first step is admitting that you have the problem in the first place. You've made a big stride toward recovery by attending this meet-



Cover of the inaugural issue of *Scanner*.

ing. And to paraphrase on old ad campaign, let me leave you with this parting thought: 'The new Adventism. This ain't your parents' religion.' "

*Scanner* isn't for every Adventist young adult, but it's an intelligent and candid forum for today's urban twentysomethings who struggle with their religious tradition and desire dialogue.

Although *Scanner's* audience is Los Angeles area young Adventists, a sample copy is available by writing to the Young Adult Program, Glendale City Church, 610 E. California Avenue, Glendale, CA 91206.



## Clinical Ministry Degree Offered at LLU

ALBERT DITTES

A new two-year master's program in clinical ministry primarily for hospital chaplains but open to those wishing to make counseling a part of their pastoral ministry has just begun at the Loma Linda University School of Religion.

The students will spend their first year studying academic courses. The second year consists of clinical internships in settings most conducive to their career goals—be it hospital, pastoral counseling or parish ministry. Students will be encouraged to take Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at an accredited hospital center anywhere in the United States. "We recommend CPE, but they can propose an internship through another means," says Randy Roberts, program

director and assistant professor of practical theology at the Loma Linda University faculty of religion. "We are open to other configurations and want to be flexible for

**...this degree is more specialized than the M. Div. and is attracting students in their 30s going through career-shifts.**

students wanting other counseling-related careers."

For example, students willing to take extra units can additionally qualify them-

selves to teach family life courses in a hospital, community or church and be certified by the National Council on Family Relations.

The first class started in the fall of 1996 with two or three part-time students. Roberts says he plans to accept six or eight students into the starting class this year and to continue growing from there, hoping to award the first Master's degrees in 1999.

He says this degree is more specialized than the M. Div. and is attracting students in their 30s going through career-shifts. "Not one has yet come to us directly out of college," he says. "They may have spouses working or military stipends."

In the future he hopes to make the program available through the distance learning program utilizing e-mail, video, computer and the web.

## How They Grow at Azure Hills

RAYMOND COTTRELL

A church family that requires three fully attended worship services every Sabbath morning in order to accommodate its growing membership must have discovered the genetic secrets of church growth.

Such is the noteworthy experience of the Azure Hills Church in Grand Terrace, California, a relatively small residential community adjacent to Loma Linda. At a time when some congregations are gradually withering and others barely holding their own, factors in the success of Azure Hills merit thoughtful consideration.

Under the experienced shepherding of Pastor Morris Venden and his alter ego Marilyn, membership has grown over the past eight years from 1,400 to 2,200—as solid as the growth of an oak tree. Of course this is not their first pastorate. A quarter of a century ago Morris was the greatly beloved pastor of what is now the La Sierra University Church, twenty freeway minutes away to the southwest in Riverside.

The Azure Hills Church was founded about thirty years ago by persons serving Loma Linda University and its Medical Center but residing in Grand Terrace. They took over the bankrupt Azure Hills Country Club with its various recreational facilities, sat in folding chairs, and eventually built a model sanctuary with appropri-

**"People need the Lord." Apparently they find Him at Azure Hills.**

ate complementary facilities. Public media of the time were intrigued by the fact that what had once served club patrons as a bar metamorphosed into children's Sabbath School divisions! Lloyd Wyman was the first pastor, and Dr. Jack Booker, one of the remaining charter members, was the first Sabbath School superintendent.

When asked what he believed to be the

key to his noteworthy ministry at Azure Hills, Pastor Venden responded immediately: gospel-centered ministry. In the words of a contemporary song, "People need the Lord." Apparently they find Him at Azure Hills. There is also emphasis on congregational singing, in the contemporary mood but without the high decibels and staccato notes of celebration singing.

Most of those who find the Lord at the 8:15 Sabbath morning service are older, many of them charter members. The second service at 9:45 attracts the twenty-to-thirty age group. Worshippers present at the third, 11:15, service are a cross section of the congregation. There are two Sabbath School hours concurrent with the second and third services.

Pastor Venden gives major credit to a fine supporting team—Tami McGrew in women's ministry; associate pastor Salim Elias, once pastor of the Baghdad church in Iraq, now in charge of Azure Hills' hospital ministry and educational program; youth minister Robert Skoretz; and Tom Mayer, church administrator. Azure Hills also conducts a six-grade elementary school that serves approximately one hundred children.



# Spirit-Seeking

## NEEDED IN ADVENTISM

BERNARD BRANDSTATER

**A**dventists have stayed aloof from the Renewal, the neopentecostal movement that many Christians believe to be the Latter Rain coming on the world. Our ingrained fear of deception as well as our insistence on doctrinal correctness has made it hard to believe that God might bless people who don't have the Truth.

I suggest, however, that we need to take a second look at this movement. The nine gifts of the Spirit listed in I Corinthians 12:7-11 include tongues, healings, miracles, revelatory prophecies, wisdom, knowledge, faith, distinguishing between spirits, and interpreting tongues. In spite of my initial doubt, I have observed all nine of these gifts demonstrated in Adventist and non-Adventist Christians whom I trust, whose spirituality I do not question.

Are we being deceived, or is it time for a "Spirit-seeking Adventism" to assert itself?

I believe the answer is "yes." At stake is the very nature of Adventist spirituality. The mind set that seeks the Holy Spirit produces

a transforming effect on the very core of our spiritual life.

Charismatics live in vivid, joyful awareness of God's closeness and involvement in their lives. God is near, approachable, and willing to disclose himself supernaturally through the Holy Spirit. They find confirmation of His closeness from physical mani-

**S**atan's final coup may be to so harden us against every new wind that blows that we fail to discern the Lord's own mighty wind.

festations. I've heard many first-person accounts of physical healings, of revelatory dreams and visions, of prophetic illuminations, and private-life interventions that had to be supernatural. For many, being gifted with a new unknown language is a continuing reminder that God is with them.

Many people to whom I've talked about these gifts were thought leaders—educated, sensible, Bible-quoting believers who were as much on guard as I was against anything phony. They point to wonderful fruit in indi-



**Bernard Brandstater**, an anesthesiologist with Australian roots, came to Loma Linda via Philadelphia, London, and Beirut. He dabbles in music, archeology, cosmology, and ecclesiology and dotes on four grandchildren.



vidual lives: an intensified love for Jesus, a hunger for more Bible study, a new passion for prayer, a serious acceptance of stewardship, and a glowing delight in fellowship.

### **Worship in Spirit and Truth**

On the other hand, the anti-charismatics, including most Adventists, see God as more distant, holy and majestically silent, sought through the intellect. The choice seems to be between an excited intimacy with God or a distant formality with him. I submit that Adventists should seek a balance—to worship in both Spirit and Truth.

On my first-ever visit to the Anaheim Vineyard I was amazed to find about four

thousand people gathered for worship in a warehouse, carrying large study Bibles which showed signs of hard use. The average age of the congregation was in the low twenties. It gave me pause as I thought how the Adventist church anguishes about the disappearance of its young people. What's more, these young people frankly and with deep conviction say they have met the Master and have been touched by the gifts of the Spirit.

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Among Spirit-seeking Adventists that I know there is a lot of praying. Intercessory prayer is seen as a privilege and a joy, as well as a solemn duty. God urges us to pray boldly—and not faint.

### **Shake-up by the Spirit**

Intentional seeking of the Spirit has profound results in personal and church life. It has changed my view of what constitutes "God's church." His gifts have not only brought blessings but also divisiveness, especially to established churches. If we place high value on uniformity and centralized church governance, the Holy Spirit will shake things up.

Which of us would risk labeling as demonic the real work of the Spirit in human hearts? Satan's final coup may be to so harden us against every new wind that blows that we fail to discern the Lord's own mighty wind.

The Adventist church urgently needs the empowerment that has already blessed millions. It is time to take the truth that we love and join to it the promised Spirit. Dare we choose to deliberately absent ourselves from the Upper Room?

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### **No Passing Fad**

Contrary to our early judgment, this Renewal is no passing fad. It is a worldwide awakening of historic proportions. And there is much more theological substance to the movement than appeared at first. Rather than ignoring or condemning it, Adventists should be studying it intently, rejecting what is neither scriptural nor edi-

## **Coming next issue...**

- **Small Groups—Pro and Con**
- **Exploring the Value of the Seventh-day Adventist Lifestyle**
- **Report on Interfaith Sabbath Conferences**





# Lifestyle:



## THE GREAT EQUALIZER

JOHN MCLARTY

**I**t happened Easter weekend. My wife, three kids and I were supposed to leave Thursday morning for a long weekend in Zion National Park with a small group of Adventists from around Utah. But as of Wednesday night, our van still lay comatose in intensive care at the mechanic's. Finally, Friday about noon, we gave up on the van, crammed camping gear and kids into our Subaru and headed out. Eleven hours later, after stops for gas, food and restrooms and repeated inquiries, "How much farther?" we pulled into Zion.

Sabbath morning at breakfast we met the other three families. By the time we had eaten, taken a hike and done church together beside the Virgin River, we felt like we were among old friends. Never mind that most of us were meeting for the first time.

### Sense of Belonging

I've experienced this magic repeatedly—nearly instant friends created by Sabbath fellowship. And it seems to me the Adventist fraternity comes as much from our common way of life as from the details of our theology. There's a special sense of belonging that comes from our Sabbath habits and peculiar diets. Adventism as a comprehensive culture is a modern counterpart to early Christianity, which spoke of itself as "The Way" (Acts 24:14).

Sabbath afternoon, while our kids clamored about on the rocks, we adults chewed on questions that arise at the interface of geology and theology. We talked the afternoon away, luxuriating in the social and spiritual space created by our Sabbath habits.

It was not a gathering of like minds. We

were all over the map. But there were several common elements linking all of us—geologist, entomologist and theologian, conservative and liberal alike. We all confessed a haunting sense of the limitations of our knowledge. We respected each other as honest seekers for truth. And we acknowledged the common bond we shared in the Sabbath. Not in the sense that a need to "preserve" the Sabbath dictated our geological conclusions, but we were aware that our connection with God and our church community was vitalized by our Sabbath keeping.

### Sabbath Ritual Most Potent

Sabbath is the most potent of sacraments, a metonymy of salvation. Friday night rituals, Sabbath patterns in our weekend campouts, church attendance—these things give us a way to confess our own incompleteness, frailty and evil and to acclaim the goodness of God. We do not have to resolve all our intellectual quibbles before we can experience God in the Sabbath. When to Sabbath keeping I add other behaviors like morning devotions, eating vege, abstaining from alcohol, making prudish choices regarding videos and movies, counting ten percent of my income as God's, holding family worship, I find within Adventism a whole structure for doing Christianity. It offers me a pattern of wholesome and spiritual life I can teach my children without having to answer all their questions about the formal beliefs and institutions of Adventism or the imponderables of Christianity.

Many Adventists with advanced education have unanswered questions about some aspect of Adventist doctrine. They cannot affirm without qualification the 27 Fundamental Beliefs plus the extensive quasi-official commentary. But they are gladly and resolutely Adventist. Sabbath offers

them a connection with God that bypasses their cognitive difficulties. Some who are respected as conservative theologians secretly hold opinions in one or another area of doctrine or Biblical interpretation contrary to standard Adventism. These thinkers yield to the authority of the church as far as their preaching is concerned, but the church cannot control their minds. The Adventist lifestyle offers them another way to affirm their commitment to their church. This lifestyle can perform the same service for liberal questioners and offer an alternative to unquestioning orthodoxy as a basis for unity. Individuals in both groups sometimes find it easier to be loyal with their bodies than with their minds.

Of course, the Adventist lifestyle is not the way of salvation. We don't purchase heaven with labels from vegelink cans. We are saved by grace, not by discipline. But the Adventist lifestyle does offer a workable form of spiritual life for angst-ridden questioners who are eager for a vital connection with God and Christ's body.

That weekend in Zion, sharing Sabbath fellowship, I was reminded again of the value of our common life as Adventists. I made new friends with whom I can talk about God and the world as I know them, people who will help me in my friendship with God. And these new friendships, like so many others which enrich my life, are the fruit of the Adventist lifestyle.

**John McLarty** is writer and producer of The Sunday Broadcast at The Voice of Prophecy. His special interests are spiritual formation, creation spirituality, systematics, and cities.





# Looking Back to 1888

## Is It a Contemporary Message?

ROBERT HUNSAKER

**T**he Pacific Press recently published a book entitled, *Ten Who Left, People Who Have Left the Church and Why*. As I look back on my own experience, I realize I, too, was on the fast track out of the church but for a gracious encounter with what Ellen White called a “most precious message” that presented “the matchless charms of Christ.” Today this message is known as the 1888 Message. I am 100 percent convinced that if it were not for that message, I would have been an eleventh who left.

I was born in a solid, third generation Adventist home, had a loving, devoted Adventist mother, attended Sabbath School and church every week, and usually knew my memory verse. I attended Adventist schools for 20 years from first grade through graduate school. I took the required religion classes and even paid attention—usually. Still, with this rock-solid, deep-rooted Adventist background,



**Robert Hunsaker** just completed an anesthesia residency at Massachusetts General Hospital and is a cardiac anesthesia fellow at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Massachusetts. His wife Andi is a radiologist.

I found myself drifting away from any interest in spiritual things, Adventist or otherwise.

### Drifting Away

I had become a typical Adventist youth of the Valuegenesis generation. In college, I had two interests: doing well in school to “make it” at the next level—whatever that might be—and sports. I was extremely busy, and religion simply lacked relevance. I wasn't even concerned that I was drifting out of Adventism and Christianity. After all, I had lots of important goals to attain. And besides, all you had to do to be saved was believe that Jesus died for your sins, something I thought I already knew and believed.

Fortunately, God has a thousand solutions to our lukewarmness. I grudgingly honored a commitment I'd made to my mom to accompany her to some meetings so she wouldn't have to go alone. And in spite of my hard heart, the Lord began to open my eyes. The first thing that piqued my curiosity was hearing someone explain that if Christ had had his heart's desire he would have returned to earth much earlier in our Adventist history.

### God's Hands Tied

I had always grown up hearing that God was just waiting for his appointed time to arrive, and then he would come. But that had always been to me an intellectually unsatisfying answer, because it

seemed to make him place his own agenda above the suffering of humanity. It became clear that we had tied his hands and hindered his desires, not vice versa.

Now, as I began to listen with a renewed interest, I heard many things that came to my heart as cool water in a dry desert. I heard that the gospel equation is not my pursuing a “relationship” with an elusive God, but his pursuit of an evasive me. I heard salvation depended not on my making promises to God which I was never able to keep, but on believing his promises to me. I heard the Christian experience wasn't meant to be the hard, difficult, and heavy journey I had experienced it to be, but that Christ's burden was “easy and light.”

I heard how Christ had come to this earth and paid the penalty of the entire human race, not just the ones who were smart or clever enough to believe—like me, I thought. I heard my behavior was important, not to prove my faith was real or to pass in the judgment, but to vindicate God's character and his claims in the great controversy.

### Stale Doctrines Rejuvenated

All of a sudden many dry, stale doctrines like the Sabbath, the state of the dead, and even the sanctuary became alive and interesting. I began to understand the gospel has the power to lift me above my natural self-centered motivations for following Christ, namely getting a heavenly reward or avoiding a “hellish” punishment. Instead, I could be motivated by an appreciation of what the cross cost him and a desire that he receive the reward that he deserves.

In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Evangelist points Christian to a light above a distant gate to guide him out of the city of destruction. Christian cannot see the light, but only a spot in the distance that seems less dark than the others. He follows that “less dark” spot in the distance as it grows brighter and brighter until he finds his way out of the city of destruction.

The 1888 message has been to me the brightest spot on a sometimes seemingly dark horizon of Adventism. And the more I study and learn, that spot becomes brighter and brighter.



# Adventists Going to

# THE MOVIES

The fact that movie theaters have often been used for evangelistic purposes confirms the obvious. There is nothing inherently wrong with these places; the important thing is the content of the show.

**Hector Hammerly, Ph.D.**, is Professor of Applied Linguistics at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, B.C., Canada. He has published seven books and has developed an evangelistic series for secular people. He and his wife Ethel worship at the Coquitlam SDA Church.



HECTOR HAMMERLY

**A**t age twelve I sneaked with a friend into forbidden territory—a movie theater. As it turned out, the Walt Disney film we saw was perfectly wholesome. But for a couple of Adventist boys to be in such a place—what of the fear of being seen, the excitement and the guilt?

On further thought, I could find nothing wrong with the place. Except for its darkness, it was like any other auditorium. With some modifications, it might even look like a church building. Since there was nothing wrong with what we had seen—why the guilt? Could our parents and pastors be mistaken?

## Neutral Territory

The fact that movie theaters have often been used for evangelistic purposes confirms the obvious. There is nothing inherently wrong with these places; the important thing is the content of the show. To condemn movie theaters per se would be like condemning libraries because some books on their shelves are unwholesome. What matters there is the contents of the books one chooses to read.

Of course, the great majority of movies

(and television programs) drip with violence, materialism, and immorality, and so are unsuitable entertainment for Christians. Watching any such material is a form of mental and spiritual abuse.

But there are pearls among the trash. A few shows are clean, occasionally inspiring, and, once in a while, sublime. Should Adventists deprive themselves of what good entertainment there is just because so much entertainment is bad?

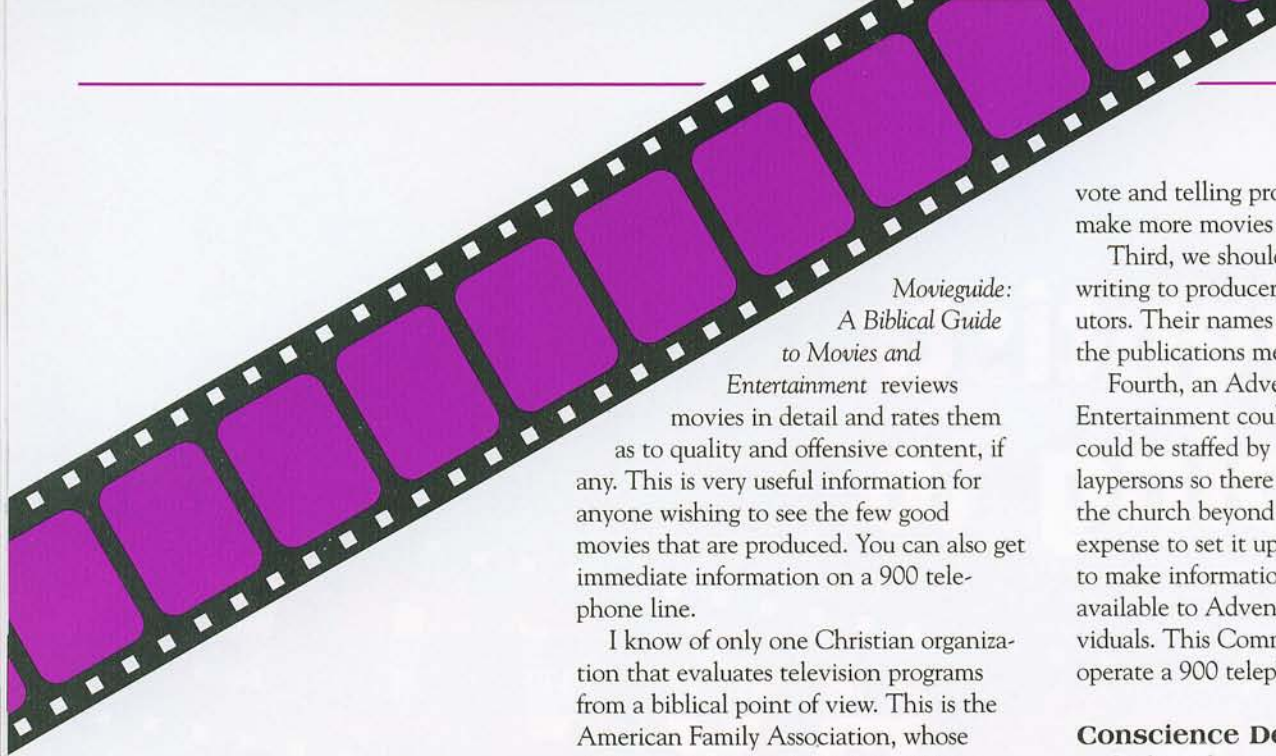
The question of place has become moot: today Adventists with a television set and a VCR can bring into their homes, if they so wish, the most terrible, mind-polluting shows. Clearly the church has to get out of the business of condemning places and entertainment media and redirect its efforts toward principles that inform Adventists' choices.

People need information about content before they watch a show. No one should have to be exposed to any part of an unsuitable show or waste funds on one.

## Advance Information Available

Fortunately, thorough advance information about movies from a Christian perspective is available. Ted Baehr's





*Movieguide:  
A Biblical Guide  
to Movies and*

*Entertainment* reviews movies in detail and rates them as to quality and offensive content, if any. This is very useful information for anyone wishing to see the few good movies that are produced. You can also get immediate information on a 900 telephone line.

I know of only one Christian organization that evaluates television programs from a biblical point of view. This is the American Family Association, whose AFA Journal not only reviews TV pro-

grams but also encourages involvement in the fight against pornography and the presentation of sex, violence, profanity and secular humanist values in the entertainment media.

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**For Movie Information:**

**Movieguide**

P.O. Box 9952, Atlanta, GA 30319  
Telephone: (900) 226-3400

**American Family Association**

P.O. Drawer 2440, Tupelo, MS 38803  
A year's subscription (10 issues) costs \$15.00

**Promote Good Entertainment**

The Lord said through Amos: "Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is." (Amos 5:14, NIV). There are several things we Adventists can do to seek—and promote—good in the world of entertainment.

First, we must be well informed so our decisions may be sound.

Second, we must spend our entertainment dollars wisely. In the entertainment industry, the dollar is king. Every time we buy a ticket, rent a video or support the sponsors of a TV program we are casting a

vote and telling producers and networks to make more movies or programs like that.

Third, we should voice our concerns by writing to producers, sponsors and distributors. Their names and addresses appear in the publications mentioned above.

Fourth, an Adventist Commission on Entertainment could be established. It could be staffed by volunteer Adventist laypersons so there would be no cost to the church beyond the small initial expense to set it up. Its function would be to make information about entertainment available to Adventist churches and individuals. This Commission, too, could operate a 900 telephone line.

**Conscience Decides**

Such guidance would in no way attempt to dictate what is right and wrong for anyone. Such published guides and the proposed Commission would not be forms of censorship. Instead, they could provide Adventists with the detailed, objective information they need to make their own decisions. Ultimately, it is up to each individual's conscience, in dialogue with God's voice, to decide where to go and what to see. But wise decision-making requires sufficient information.

Adventists and movie entertainment are not mutually exclusive. With advance content information for guidance, Adventists, like other Christians, can choose to see only what is wholesome.

The fifth and final thing Adventists can do about entertainment is to participate in the industry themselves. Wealthy Adventists could produce high-quality, entertaining films and programs that reflect our values. This would be our most creative and noble strategy in helping to redeem the entertainment industry.

Entertainment is pervasive. We may not wish to admit it, but most of our church members are watching movies, videos and TV programs—often ones unsuitable for Christians. And let's be realistic: they will continue to seek entertainment. So let's offer them the guidance they need in order to separate the pearls from the trash. And let those among us who are financially able be the salt of the earth in an industry that has largely gone astray. It's the least we can do in this area if we wish to "seek good, not evil."



# The Pearl

## And the Price

MARYAN STIRLING

I know Jesus as a shepherd because I once knew Pete, the Basque herder whose sheep ate the wheat stubble around our place every fall. He'd give us kids any abandoned lambs and then come by to help us put nipples on ketchup bottles to feed them milk.

"Poor fella, you!" he'd say tenderly, a dozen times anyway, patting Dinah's woolly side. "Poor fella, you!"

Remembering Pete, I don't mind being a sheep in the Shepherd's flock. I know how shepherds feel. And I know about vines and branches. I'm a branch, and that's fine.

But the parable of the pearl merchant had always eluded me. A pearl merchant? Looking for a high priced pearl? What on earth would be going on in his mind?



**Maryan Stirling,** charter member of the Gender Inclusiveness Commission of the Southeastern California Conference, is a journalist who enjoys studying astronomy and theology.

### Pearl Lust

There's never been a pearl merchant in my life. Nor, really, any pearls, for that matter. I did look at a necklace in a glass case one day last week. A short string of middle-sized pearls with a price tag well over a thousand dollars. I bent over the display—and I wasn't prepared

to make sense to me. I know what's happening in his mind. There's something about pearls! You see?

It all fits in with what I learned from Eileen Khoury. She studied the baffling social system of the pearling way of life on the Gulf of Arabia and reported her findings in

**You won't believe it of me, of course, but just for a moment there, I stood in the jewelry store lusting for the wonderful beauty, the deep glow, the perfection of each one individual pearl.**

for what happened next. Suddenly, I wanted those pearls. You won't believe it of me, of course, but just for a moment there, I stood in the jewelry store lusting for the wonderful beauty, the deep glow, the perfection of each one individual PEARL. I began to ask myself if they might not be a wise investment that would grow in value...

If this wild impulse could come to me, of all people; if it could threaten my radical and crusty value-system even for a moment, then I could begin to understand Jesus as the "Merchant seeking goodly pearls." He began

*Aramco World.*

Some of the world's most dazzling pearls are found in its deep water. You catch a little of the people's passion in the fact that Arabic has so many words for pearl. They have words that distinguish between a black pearl and a pink pearl, a round one and a pear-shaped one. The *sindaali* is flesh-colored, *sofri* is yellow, and the *khardil* is black. The ideal pearl is called *jiwan*. Perfectly round, white with a soft blush of rose "and with a luster so pure that it comes alive with radi-



ance," as Khoury says.

I'd like to see it. I'd like to hold it in my hand.

And then there's the mysterious, ugly gray pearl, the *majhoolah*, rough and dull. Majhoolah means "unknown." Sometimes—rarely but sometimes—inside the unknown majhoolah will be found a pearl of perfect beauty. As round, as white, as deeply lustrous as any pearl could be. With great skill and patience, some dealers have learned to peel away the thin layers of gray to reveal the precious inner pearl.

### **Pearl Is Master**

I've begun to understand the old saying among the pearling people of Qatar: "We are all, from the highest to the lowest, servants of one master—PEARL!" They believe that when a fine pearl drops into the hand of a

is motivated by that desire alone. There's got to be something about the pearl itself that fuels the merchant's passion. To hold it. To marvel at its uniqueness—never two completely identical. Its life. Its radiance. The happiness it brings him. ("The joy that was set before him...", you know.) In Jesus' little story, the merchant finds the pearl. The pearl he has spent his years searching for. He sees it. He wants to hold it in his hand, to put it in his velvet bag. This is the pearl he must have—the one he will never sell, but he'll keep it near him and he'll look and look at it. It will be his delight, his joy, his energy. But the price—oh! the price!

He'll have to sell everything he has to buy that pearl. He'll have to sell every pearl in every cloth bag. In every strongbox. In every display-case. All right. If only he can gather enough to buy that one incredible pearl.

**This is the pearl he must have—the one he will never sell, but he'll keep it near him and he'll look and look at it. It will be his delight...**

truly expert dealer, it takes charge. It becomes the master.

Alfardan is a tenth generation pearl dealer and he is old. To put into words his feelings about pearls is not easy for him.

"I have a private collection," he whispers. "Not for sale. It is not to sell. When I am sad, when I am tired, I take the pearls out and look at them. I lose myself in dreaming of the past. I sing to myself the old pearling songs. Then I feel happy. Just looking at pearls makes me happy. Their monetary value is nothing—is nothing compared with this, this special feeling I have for pearls."

A man like Alfardan may own a dozen pearling boats and hire scores of divers, line-men and workers to bring up the oysters and open the shells.

### **The Ultimate Pearl**

Can it be so different today from the way it was done when Jesus compared himself to a dealer searching for the ultimate pearl? Why did he want that pearl? So he could sell it and make himself rich? Not even Alfardan

he does have that. The light at the end of the terrible, dark tunnel. It's the "uttermost farthing" of the terrible price tag on the pearl of great price. That's the last installment before the ultimate pearl is in his hand, paid-in-full, free and clear. He'll give it. Even that.

The light goes out at the end of the tunnel. Into the dark death of no hope and no promise he goes. Into separation from God, the second death reserved for the final enemies of truth. He pays the full price. And the pearl is in his bloody hand, held tight, secure forever. "No man can pluck him out of my hand."

Nobody ever has. Nobody ever will.

### **The Pearl Is Me**

But Jesus, you're holding it so tight I can't see the pearl. The beautiful pearl, all lustrous and pure. The essence of all a pearl could ever be. I want so much to see it. I promise I won't grab it. Could you just move one finger so I can look into your hand? I've never seen a pearl of great price. The pearl you paid so much for is me. It's me and all of humankind. I want to see it there in your hand so safe, so unscratchable, so cherished.

And Jesus smiles. He straightens out one finger. He turns to catch the sun to let me see.

"Is that it?" I ask. He nods.

"That can't be it," I say. "It's gray and dull." I'm screaming. "It's rough and ugly. It's not a pearl of great price. You paid the awful, awful price and they gave you Majhoolah."

He looks at the great gray pearl and his eyes shine with joy.

"They call it majhoolah—unknown." He laughs. "But not to me. It's not unknown to me," He says. "I know what's in there," and he cradles it in his hands triumphantly, the great, dull thing.

He knows how, you see. He has the skill and the patience to peel away all the layers and layers and layers of our incurable grubbiness. He paid the great price and he has the pearl. And it's rough and it's gray and it's ugly—and it's me. And his joy just wells up and wells up as if what he clutches in that scarred hand forever is the glorious bargain of the ages. The pearl of very great price.

### **All For the Pearl**

When all his pearls are gone, he sells his shop. He sells all his dozen pearling boats and all his lines and winches. But it's not enough. He still hasn't got the price of the pearl. Never mind. Sell the real estate on Main Street.

Still not enough. Sell the house. The furniture, the dishes, the horses, the chariots, all the rich robes in the closets. And he counts up the gold—and it's not enough. He was rich, but now he's poor. He has nothing but the clothes he's wearing. Sell them. And with the clothes goes his dignity and personhood. He is naked and there is nothing else to sell. All he has left is his life. We're talking about Calvary.

His life isn't as important to him as the pearl. He'll give his life. But even as he is giving his life—freely giving his life for the pearl—to pay the great price, he knows the price is more. He has nothing more to give. All he has—all he has to cling to—is the hope of resurrection. The assurance of the Father's acceptance. He has nothing else, but

PREVIOUSLY PRINTED IN PONDERINGS



# The Kingdom of God is Here— Now!

**It is not necessary to wait until the second coming or until we die and are resurrected to begin to experience and enjoy the marvelous gifts of the kingdom of God. They are accessible now.**

DOUGLAS COOPER

**A** unique feature of the Christian faith is God's offer to supply his Holy Spirit to live in the heart and soul of believers. "Do you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" (1 Cor. 6:19 NIV.) The Gospels are virtually a commentary on this one subject: the kingdom of God entering the human heart and beginning to change men and women into the image of God. The term "the kingdom of God" is used thirty-seven times in the book of Matthew and thirty-two times in Luke. Practically every parable, every

saying, every thought of the Master was dedicated to helping men and women realize the kingdom of God in their hearts and souls. "The kingdom of God has arrived among you," he proclaimed with great energy and authority. (Matt. 12:28, *The Living Bible*.) He knew that the establishing of his spiritual kingdom in the hearts and minds of men and women was the one and only hope for the human race.

Through the presence of God's Spirit of love, the kingdom can actually be in you and me. We no longer have to be content with learning about truth and love. We can become truthful and loving. When the Lord presented the kingdom of God as within people, he rescued it from the nebulous realm of the future and projected it boldly and dramatically into the present.

## Heaven Can Infuse Our Lives

The kingdom of God is a present reality, a here-and-now experience. You can have a personal connection, oneness, intimacy with God, right now. The love, the joy, the serenity of heaven can begin at once to enter your life. There

can be a mystical indwelling of the presence of God by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men and women in a very real spiritual and psychological way. Heaven can begin now. This can transform human beings. The principles of heaven can be infused into our families, our businesses, our government.

Rodney Vance has written, "The kingdom of God is made of people who have experienced resurrection not simply as a future event but as a present reality... [It may take] our personal wastelands today to tell us that there is life after bankruptcy, life after divorce, life after the promotion you didn't get, life after your child turns his back on you, life after death!... Resurrection is not just for more time sometime; it is for better time right now. This is our hope. This is our light to the world.... We are not about fear. We are about hope in the face of fear. We are about life in the face of death." (*Adventist Review*, June 16, 1994, p.10)

The entire focus of Jesus' ministry was on the kingdom of God as available to transform individuals and society, to help you treat your wife or child better, to love your neighbor more, to become

Douglas Cooper is president of a wholesale distributing firm and co-owner of Napa Valley Tours. He has been a pastor, chaplain, and family counselor and has written seven books. In the summer he fishes commercially in Alaska. He and his wife Pamela have two sons and two daughters.





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part of a community of people who would accept Christ as their leader.

Most of the religious people of Jesus' day did not comprehend, for they heard only what they wanted to hear. To the Jews the ideal kingdom of God would be one that punished and eliminated their Roman conquerors. They wanted a Messiah who would restore Israel to a position of glory, power and wealth in the world.

Many people today confuse the second coming of Christ with the coming of the kingdom of Christ. They act as if

Church. This church came to believe that Miller had been correct about the date but wrong about the event—the real event, they concluded, was the entrance of Christ into the Holy of Holies of a sanctuary in heaven to begin a special work of “investigative judgment” of all believers. Scholars debate the biblical basis for this doctrine, though it is still held by the church. Some feel it has distracted the church from presenting the gospel effectively, and it has had a divisive effect on the membership. Yet the church recognizes

make ourselves less sensitive to the suffering of other human beings. Brother Andrew, better known as “God’s Smuggler” for the years he spent getting Bibles behind the Iron Curtain, said in 1944, “We evangelicals major in escapism. We have no plan for this earth. Because of that, we have thirteen million refugees (90 percent of them Muslim), forty-two wars, an AIDS epidemic, and two hundred thousand children in slavery worldwide.”

The foundation of our hope is not some future historical event, regardless

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**Scholars debate the biblical basis for this doctrine, though it is still held by the church. Some feel it has distracted the church from presenting the gospel effectively, and it has had a divisive effect on the membership.**

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the second coming is the only hope for society, and until it happens they can only sit by and watch everything degenerate into social and political chaos.

### **Second Coming Overemphasized**

Nineteenth-century Adventists under William Miller overemphasized the importance of the second coming and distorted their theology. They believed that signs they saw in the sky had tremendous prophetic and religious significance, like a “Dark Day” and a dense meteoric shower. These events helped convince them that the end of the world was at hand.

The group became focused on their expectation of the second coming of Christ on October 22, 1844. Many of them sold or gave away their material possessions and some even may have prepared “ascension robes.” They had set themselves up for severe disappointment, so when nothing actually happened, many gave up interest in spiritual things. Others began looking for an explanation for their disappointment, including some who became the Seventh-day Adventist

the Millerite movement as part of their religious heritage and has made shrines of the old buildings and conducts tours to their locations. Some question even now whether the Holy Spirit was leading the Millerites, since Jesus had stated plainly that no one would know the day or the hour of his return.

Perhaps the most significant feature of the sanctuary in the wilderness was the Shekinah glory that shone between the golden angels’ wing tips in the Holy of Holies. This was a symbol of the personal presence of God. God had told Moses, “Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.” Though the temples in Israel are long gone, since the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit has been available to enter and dwell in the ultimate temple, the individual human heart. It can supply us with the love, joy and peace that are the fruits of the kingdom of God.

### **Evangelical Escapism**

If we overemphasize the material sanctuary, we may be led to deny present problems and ignore the gospel and

of how spectacular it might be. Our hope rests on our surrender to the presence and person of Jesus Christ in our lives right now. That alone will prepare us for the second coming when it does occur.

Jesus promised that he would come again to give his followers eternal life, and the apostles called this promise the “blessed hope.” But he also promised to come immediately to individual believers through the Holy Spirit. “He who trusts in me has hold of eternal life,” he proclaimed. “He has already passed from death to life.” (John 5:24 NEB)

### **Heaven's Joy Now**

The good news is this: It is not necessary to wait until the second coming or until we die and are resurrected to begin to experience and enjoy the marvelous gifts of the kingdom of God. They are accessible now. The love. The joy. The freedom from fear. The serenity. The guiding ministry of angels. The delicious intimacy with the presence of God. Oneness with the Father. A conscious, moment-by-moment awareness of his con-



stant companionship. The beginning of the transformation of ourselves into spiritual people. An assurance of eternal life. The continual guidance of the Holy Spirit over our words, our work and our relationships. The restoration of our childlikeness. The return of our sense of awe and wonder. The reenchantment of our religion and our lives. A sense of the sacred in the ordinary. The development of our personal spiritual gifts for a satisfying life centered around loving service to others. And an opportunity to join others who trust God and one another. All this—now!

Certainly the second coming of Christ will be a wonderful and momentous event. However, for the truly spiritual person it will be only another step, a natural transition point on the journey toward the arms of the Father that was started long before. Important as the second coming is, a far more important event is your entrance into the kingdom of God here and now.

Since the cross people are not kept out of the kingdom by their sins. If they do not enter into God's presence, it is only because of their unbelief. Think about the thief on the cross. What a gift

this man's story is. The thief admitted his need. He cried out for help. He believed in the Savior. On the basis of that trust, the Master assured him that he had entered into the kingdom of God. Right then, on the spot.

There are some important differences between the second coming of Christ and the coming of the kingdom of God (see chart below).


When Jesus introduced the concept of the immediate presence and availability of the kingdom of God, in one fell swoop the whole religious system of the day was invalidated. The new personal spirituality revolutionized everything. The kingdom of God had come, and all the old religious concepts, all the archaic theology, all the old rules of how to please God, how to earn the kingdom over time by trying and struggling and begging and pleading and obeying and sacrificing and performing, were gone.

Jesus came saying that salvation and transformation were a free gift. Available now. Just for the asking. There was absolutely nothing anyone had to do to qualify for it except to ask for it.

## Sin the Only Requirement

The only requirement you have for joining Alcoholics Anonymous is an alcohol problem. The only requirement to join the kingdom of heaven is that you be a sinner. You qualify on the basis that you recognize your need. Nothing else. It is your desperate need that attracts God's mercy and grace, not your virtues.

Religious teachers before Christ were apocalyptists, as many still are today. Their tendency was to subordinate the present to the future, to teach believers to put their energy into seeking a distant reward. It was as if you had to jump through a series of religious hoops to qualify for the kingdom. They believed it took a whole lifetime of struggle to qualify.

Anyone can experience the kingdom of God that Jesus introduced because it is based simply, as with the thief on the cross, on one's acknowledgment of his or her need for God. It flourishes because it is grounded on the inner growth of the individual and that person's connection with God. And one who lives as a citizen of the kingdom will look forward with joy to the return of the King in glory. 

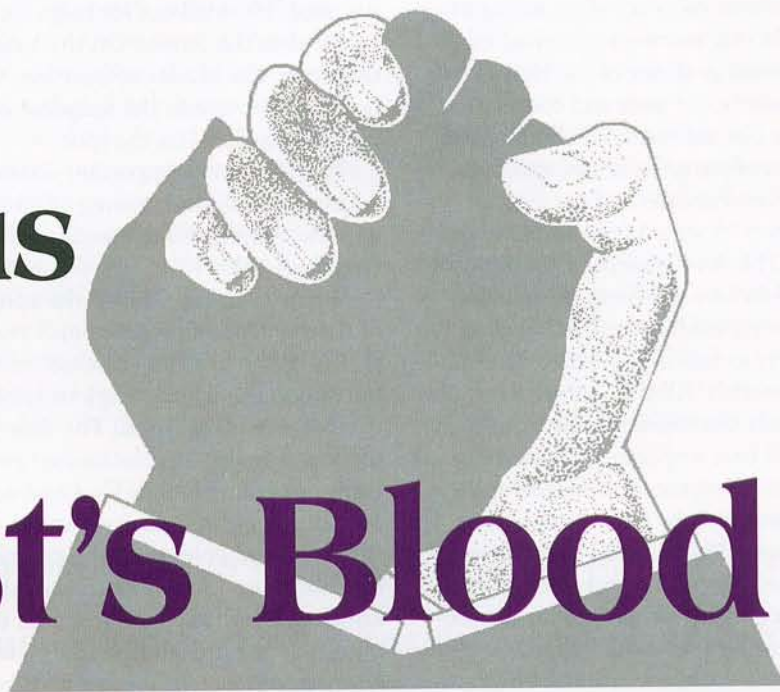
# The Kingdom of God and the Second Coming of Christ

(Luke 17:20, 21)

The Coming of the Kingdom	The Second Coming of Christ
1. A spiritual event	1. A physical, historical event
2. It happens in the heart, internal	2. It happens in the world, external
3. It is an experience	3. It is an event
4. It is unseen—believing	4. Everyone sees it with their eyes
5. Experience it only by faith	5. Faith not necessary to experience it
6. It is here now	6. It will occur in the future
7. You decide when it will occur	7. No one knows when it will occur
8. You make it happen when you are ready	8. God makes it happen when He is ready
9. You can ignore it	9. You can't ignore it
10. It is about love and transformation	10. It is about justice and restructuring
11. It is mystical	11. It is historical
12. Jesus talked about it constantly	12. Jesus mentioned it a few times
13. It is about incarnation	13. It is about reorganization



# Mysterious Unity in Christ's Blood



MITCHELL F. HENSON

**S**ome of the greatest crimes against humanity have been carried out in the name of ethnicity or race, and nothing stirs greater passion in our culture today than hints of prejudice. For example, think of the polarized reactions to O. J. Simpson's civil trial over whether or not he shed innocent blood. "Finally, a murderer brought to justice," some rejoice. Others pronounce, "Just another racist society punishing a black man."

In Ephesians 1:7-10 we read: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all the wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of

his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."

Many people are turned off by this reference to a blood sacrifice by Jesus, but it's a Protestant tradition which we hold dear. Throughout Christian history, apostles, scholars, and prophets have communicated to us the significance of this gift of God through Christ—this mysterious will of God operating through Christ's sacrifice to bring us into oneness with God.

One says, "Jesus's sacrifice was a substitute for our rightful punishment as sinners." You have heard this one—it is called the Substitution theory of the atonement, and over the years, many have endorsed it.

Another says, "Jesus's blood ransomed us from the penalty of the law." As if we had been held hostage, or abducted, Christ's blood ransoms us and pays the price that returns us to full favor with God.

Still another says, "Jesus' blood paid the price." His blood paid the penalty for my sin because the law says, "Anyone who sins shall surely die." Therefore the

law requires a blood sacrifice, as in the Old Testament, and Jesus' blood was spilled to cover our sins.

However, regardless of the various atonement theories, for me, Jesus' sacrifice is most instructive as I reflect on my part in his death, of how damaging sin is and how his horrible death has changed my life.

## Judging by Appearances

If the Christian church really took to heart Paul's talk of blood redemption, there would be no racism, no sexism, no classism; in fact, the Christian church would demonstrate in its fullness the unity of the body of Christ.

I attended a seminar recently at which a world famous ethicist asked us—a class of 100 or so people—to sit and think for a minute how we look at and evaluate others. She asked, "How many of us evaluate people according to the color of their skin? How do you determine the race of an individual?"

How do we judge people? Perhaps we look at an individual's hair length. Should women always wear long hair? Some scripture seems to support this idea.

Age is another way we measure and



**Mitchell Henson** is the senior pastor at Glendale City Church in Glendale, CA, where he has served for the past 13 years. He is more excited about the Gospel today than he has ever been before.



evaluate each other. People come to me from time to time and say, "You know, Elder Henson, you act so young—perhaps you should dye your hair." Yet others say, "It's halfway between blonde and white. Just let it all go white."

We sometimes measure people in our surroundings by their colors, sizes and expensive gadgets. Someone lent me a luxury car a couple of years ago. When my wife and I used it on a vacation it was so quiet inside, we could actually talk to each other. I learned how it feels to be measured by my car. Every time I pulled up to a gas station, someone would look at me and say, "Wow! Nice car." When I drive my Mazda pickup truck, I never hear, "Nice truck!" Never.

### It's All in the Blood

When the Apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians, there was really only one way to determine who would be saved or lost. As a Bible commentary says, "It was all in the blood." The ancients didn't take blood tests, but if you had lived then, the purity of your race or the place of your birth largely determined whether you were slave or free, king or serf, saved or lost. The stories of Jewish prejudice against Gentiles in Christ's day are legendary. A faithful Jew would rather die than accept a glass of water from a Gentile. And if a Jew allowed even the shadow of a Gentile to fall on him during his everyday work, he was considered unclean for the evening worship. Gentiles' words were not accepted in Jewish courts. A Gentile was considered unsavable and fodder for the fires of hell. All was determined by one's blood.

### The Church and Racism

It seems that as the Christian community grew larger and larger, "Christian Gentiles" found the opportunity to turn the table on Jews. In his recent book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, David Jonah Golhagen says, "Protestants and Catholics played a major role in Hitler's ability to carry out the extermination of Jews." Here are a couple of examples:

- "Protestant Evangelical Church leaders from eight counties in Germany collectively issued an official proclamation which declared the Jews...incapable of

being saved by baptism, owing to their racial constitution."

- "Archbishop Conrad Gober published a Pastoral Letter replete with anti-Semitism. He placed upon the Jews the blame for the death of Jesus, which he implied justified what Germans were then doing to the Jews. This self-imposed curse of the Jews, 'His blood be on us and on our children,' as recorded in Scripture has come terribly true..."

Protestant pastors standing in pulpits and Catholic leaders—the Christian church united against the Jews!

### The Mystery Revealed

What is the "mystery" in blood redemption that Paul speaks of in Ephesians 1? Some say it's the mystery of

**His blood makes you a brother or a sister of those sitting next to you.**

salvation. Some say it's the mysterious union of the human and the divine in Jesus Christ. I am sure that's all part of it. But why conjecture further?

Look at Ephesians 3. Here Paul explains this mystery. Look carefully at this text which has been mysteriously overlooked for thousands of years: "This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel" (vs. 6). There it is—the great mystery revealed. Diverse people—economically, racially, educationally—members of one body, together sharing in the promise in Christ Jesus! Why have we ignored this text? That is the real mystery.

Racial problems today are as rampant as ever. A racist once said to me, "One drop of alien blood pollutes your purity. Know where you are from. Know who your parents were. Keep your blood lines pure." And there must be many like him who take pride in their racial stock. Please understand, we have made progress. But what would happen if you and I determined to make this mystery a reality in our spheres of influence? To take positive steps to ensure that we do not participate in that which is anti-Christ?

I have good news. With our modern understanding of genetics and inheritance, we know that my racist acquaintance was wrong about alien blood. But let's just suppose that the ancients were right: if one drop of alien blood could pollute you, Jesus's blood can make you clean and acceptable to God and to others. His blood makes you a brother or a sister of those sitting next to you. I don't care where they came from. I don't care how smart and how educated, how rich or poor they are. There is power in the blood—the redeeming blood of Christ that is more powerful than our gene pools. One of the great truths that the world is waiting to hear today is the oneness of people who call God by name in Christ.

We Christians need to make this truth a reality by the way we live. I recently received a letter from my daughter in another state, 35 miles from where I grew up. She wrote to me about encountering racism and sexism and said, "Dad, I will be so glad to get back to California where they don't have that." I thought, "Wow! I wish it were true." We have a lot of work to do before she returns.

### Church All Together in One Body

Can we truly say that Jesus is Lord as long as we separate and segregate and discriminate against one another because of gender, race, economic status, education, sexual orientation or ethnic origin? Do you dream of a heaven where everyone is your color, everyone speaks your language, and everyone drives a Lexus like you? If so, then visit the Scripture again that says, "This gospel is to go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people."

Remember, God has transcended our gene pools and has "made of one blood all nations of men." The blood which Christ poured out on the cross has redeemed and can unify us all.

*Based on a sermon given in February, 1997. The sermon resulted from Pastor Henson's growing concern that the new conference structure in the Southern California Conference is doing much damage to the unity and fellowship among pastors and churches. Although the original intent of the conference reorganization was to give local congregations more attention, the real result has been splitting the conference along racial and ethnic lines.*



# Loma Linda Church Ordains Peg Hempe

CONTINUED FROM BACK

merated her pastoral talents, skills, and accomplishments.

Louis Venden, past pastor of the LLU Church, spoke about the history of Peg's ministry, then Peg read her response, crediting Jesus Christ along with many people "in the right place, at the right time" for supporting and facilitating her development and accomplishments as a minister.

Loveless invited those in the congregation to stand who were members of Peg's family (about 15) as well as those who had been personally helped by Peg's ministry (scores). Pastor Marvin Ponder read the short charge by Paul to Timothy, and Loveless offered prayer, while those on the platform placed their hands on Peg's shoulders and arms. Finally, Jerry Winslow, chairman of the church's ministerial committee, presented Peg with her ordination certificate and a wallet-size minister's license.

The August 16 church service was a "Campmeeting" style service, an annual August event at the University Church,

with old-fashioned praise songs and worship format, and informality. Many women participated in the service, including a women's chorus. Pastor Shirley Ponder, in a delicate pink suit, offered the opening prayer, and Pastor Jennifer Ferrell preached a sermon on marriage, part of the month's emphasis on family. Pastor Fred Kasischke told the children's story about Rosa Parks.

The action to ordain Peg Hempe was voted on May 28, 1997, by the Ministerial Committee of the University Church. This committee is comprised of six University Church lay members, some women and some men, of various professional backgrounds.

Some have criticized the University Church for lagging behind others in ordaining its women pastors, but the church waited until it had completed its own policy for training, employing and ordaining ministers. This policy was voted by the church board on May 6, 1996.



Gerald Winslow, chair of the church's Ministerial Committee, presented the certificate of ordination and ministerial credentials to Peg Hempe while senior pastor William Loveless looks on.

A conversation with one woman member reflects the emotion that many University Church members expressed regarding Peg's ordination. This member told *Adventist Today*, "It means so much to women to see women pastors not only available but regularly visible in the ministry and leadership of the church."

She recalls the first time Peg Hempe conducted a baptism, on December 20, 1986: "My family was at home, watching the church service on television. A routine baptism began, and then we realized it was Pastor Hempe—a woman—in the baptistry, performing this important rite! This was unheard of then. My 6-year-old daughter stared at the screen for a long moment, then began dancing around the room, squealing with delight. My mother and I wept."



Officials laid hands on Peg Hempe during the prayer of ordination.

## Certificate of Ordination

This certifies that  
after having given satisfactory evidence of her call to the ministry

**Margaret Hempe**

was duly ordained to the work of the gospel ministry at  
Loma Linda, California on August 16, 1997  
with the following



# & CLEAN UNWORTHY

RICHARD TINKER

One of my earliest memories is my mom telling me to get ready for Sabbath. I had to pick up my toys, change my sheets, shine my Sabbath shoes, lay out my Sabbath clothes on the foot of my bed, and most important of all, take my bath. I scrubbed off all the accumulated dirt of the last couple of days, and even had to wash my hair. I was squeaky clean. Friday night I would crawl in between those fresh sheets in my clean pajamas feeling so clean and pure—so ready to be in God's presence at church the next day. It really felt good.

The next morning, after a hearty breakfast, I would put my Sabbath clothes on. These were clothes that I only wore to church on Sabbath. I had a Sabbath suit, shirt, tie, shoes, and even socks that never saw the light of day except on Sabbath. Soon I was all dressed up and even had Brill Cream in my hair for that great greasy look. I was all ready to go to church. I had not a spot or blemish anywhere. I was perfect.

Is our focus on being cleaned up when we go to church teaching us something that isn't true? I would like to propose that for some, this practice of cleaning up for church has taught that God only accepts people and their worship if they are good—on the inside and the outside. They spend a lot of time making their outsides look clean and spotless so that they can come into God's presence. At church, everyone looks so righteous. Who needs Christ's robe of righteousness when we all look so good?

Nowhere does the Bible say that we have to purify ourselves, to become clean on the inside or outside, before coming to Christ. But many don't want to be in Christ's presence if they feel unworthy. They don't realize that in Jesus' presence they can rejoice in the gift of the white robe of right-

eousness that he gives freely to anyone who will accept it.

Jesus' parable of the wedding feast illustrates how freely he offers his righteousness to cover our blemishes, and how free of conditions is his call to us.

"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. 'But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' " (Matthew 22:8-13)

Both good and bad people were at the wedding banquet. The condition for being there was not their goodness, it was their acceptance of the free wedding clothes.

From beginning to end the Bible tells of God's love for us and of his longing to make us clean. He doesn't ask us to clean ourselves. Rather, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." (Revelation 22:17)

Jesus opens his arms to all and says come. Come with your dirty insides and outsides. Come with your unworthy feelings. Come with your pain. Come as you are. He has the perfect solution for our dirt: His perfect, white and clean robe of His righteousness. He says, "Come."

**Richard Tinker** is a graphic artist who lives with his wife and two sons in Southern California. He leads a Sabbath school discussion class, and he and his wife host an interdenominational home Bible study group.

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# Loma Linda Church Ordains Peg Hempe

CHERIE ROUSE AND ALBERT DITTES

**O**n Sabbath, August 16, the University Church honored its first woman minister with ordination.

Margaret (Peg) Hempe, 75, joined the University Church staff as a Bible instructor 31 years ago. According to Gerald Winslow, chair of the church's Ministerial Committee, the committee is pleased to have arranged to give her the respect she deserves. "She has been an effective pastor for many years," Winslow points out. "We are doing this as a recognition of her current ministry and what she has done in the past."

"I 'caught' Christianity from my Lutheran grandmother, who reared me from the time I was four," Peg tells *Adventist Today*. In 1947, when Peg was 25, she was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her husband joined her as a church member the following year. He became a minister, and the couple served in the Potomac and Northern California Conferences. When Peg was 44, the marriage of 25



Elder Peg Hempe

ed the bulletin to list me as 'pastor' so that the women members would understand that I was available to provide general pastoral counseling and nurturing, and sure enough, when they saw me listed as pastor, many began to phone me."

Peg began preaching in the Loma Linda University Church in 1976, and in 1979 she was

ordained as a local elder and received her "Licensed Minister" credentials. She began serving at the communion table and conducting wed-

dings and funerals. In 1986, she became the first Adventist woman pastor to baptize her candidates.

Peg started four new ministries in the church which are still in place: Singles Ministries, Divorce Recovery Groups, a

62-Plus Club for mature members, and the University Church Campers. She also gives a great deal of time to one-on-one pastoral counseling. "I will continue working as long as I can talk," she says.

"The Lord has been my strength," Peg says. "As I have proceeded in my pastoral ministry, doors have opened. And I have always been so nurtured and encouraged by the other pastors and staff and their spouses at the University Church. I have never had a negative letter nor remark, and people have been helped and blessed."

The University Church originally recommended Peg, along with others, for ministerial ordination by the Pacific Union in 1987. She told *Adventist Today*, "But the Pacific Union didn't, and still hasn't, approved women's ordination. The application is on hold. I understand that since the General Conference and Pacific Union Conference have not approved it, neither can the local conference."

The August 16 ordination was an action of the local church, like those at the Sligo, La Sierra, and Loma Linda Victoria churches. The Southeastern California Conference officials were invited to attend.

About 20 minutes of the 11:00 - 12:30 church service was taken for the ordination. Twenty local church officials and members, 11 men and 9 women, gathered on the platform to participate and signify their support, including the other pastors and the members of the Ministerial Committee.

In brief remarks, William Loveless spoke for the church's pastoral staff and Gerald Winslow spoke for the Ministerial Committee. Both stated that the ordination represented public acknowledgment and support for the clear call by God seen long ago in Peg's life and her clear response. Loveless read a biography of Peg's spiritual journey and professional life, and both officials enu-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

**In 1986, she became the first Adventist woman pastor to baptize her candidates.**

years ended. Peg served at St. Helena Sanitarium for a year, then moved to Loma Linda to join the pastoral staff as a Bible instructor.

"My title was changed to 'pastor' in 1972," Peg says. "The head pastor want-