

# Sabbath Recorder



A Seventh Day Baptist Publication  
December 2016

MORGAN WEISTLING

We are thrilled and extremely honored that Morgan Weistling gave permission to use his painting on the cover of the *Sabbath Recorder*! Thank you very much, Mr. Weistling!!

## KISSING THE FACE OF GOD

by Morgan Weistling

This painting was first inspired by a song that I heard one day on the radio. Sometimes, hearing one phrase is all it takes, and then a flood of inspiration follows. The phrase "kissing the face of God" immediately struck me with this powerful image of Mary and the Baby Jesus. It is an image that we have seen depicted many times, but never simply as a mother and her child with real tenderness. I started to contemplate the awesome privilege that Mary was given, being able to hold God in her arms, but also keeping in mind that He was still her baby. This cute little child whom she bore was also God in the flesh. And yet, she cuddled and kissed Him, just as all mothers do with their babies. This thought propelled me right into this painting which I wanted to be a very human representation of divinity. My prayer is that the viewer will be struck, as I am, with the amazing way that God chose to send His Son into this world — in pure humility.

— Morgan Weistling  
mweistling@socal.rr.com

*Well known for his paintings of early American pioneer life, Morgan Weistling began his art career as a movie-poster illustrator. After 14 years, he left illustration to pursue fine art.*

*Interested in the effects of light, Weistling's paintings capture the mood and atmosphere of the past. His attention to the historical aspects of his subjects comes from his desire to portray the truth and beauty of America's pioneering spirit. His paintings have graced the covers of Art of the West, Persimmon Hill, Southwest Art, Western Art Collector, American Artist, and U.S. Art magazines.*

*Weistling's paintings depicting his Christian faith were compiled into the book "The Image of Christ" which has since sold out.*

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Visit my website at:  
<http://www.morganweistling.com/>

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

Like other Baptists, we believe in:

- salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus.
- the Bible as the inspired word of God. The Bible is our authority for our faith and daily conduct.
- baptism of believers, by immersion, witnessing to our acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord.
- freedom of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- the congregational form of church government. Every church member has the right to participate in the decision-making process of the church.

## THE SEVENTH DAY

God commanded that the seventh day (Saturday) be kept holy. Jesus agreed by keeping it as a day of worship. We observe the seventh day of the week (Saturday) as God's Holy Day as an act of loving obedience – not as a means of salvation. Salvation is the free gift of God through Jesus our Lord. It is the joy of the Sabbath that makes SDBs a people with a difference.

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## Pondering His Potential

What bothered Marcy so much wasn't the fact that she didn't get the female lead in her school's Holiday play. After all, she knew that her own voice wasn't as strong or beautiful as Laurie Berman's. Marcy had to admit that Laurie really did deserve the role of Mrs. Claus in the Arlington Middle School production of *Winter Workshop Wonderama*. Marcy was content with her own role as one of the lead elves. She would be singing a few numbers as part of a group of elves, and she even had a solo verse in one song.

**What was really frustrating Marcy was that her school wasn't even doing a Christmas play this year. It was doing a Holiday play.**

There wasn't even one mention of Joseph, Mary, or the Baby Jesus. It was all about Santa Claus! All the songs revolved around Santa and Mrs. Claus at their North Pole factory, as the elves were making toys for Christmas. Wow, thought Marcy, the school actually allowed them to use the term "Christmas" in their production. How generous of them!

"Hey, Peanut, penny for your thoughts." Marcy's father had quietly walked into the family room, where she had been lying on her back on the comfortable shag carpet, clutching her SpongeBob pillow as she was pondering what a disappointment this *Holiday* play was going to be.

Jolted back to reality, Marcy remembered how wise her father had always been, and how he usually saw something in a situation that she didn't see. "I just think it's so *stupid*, Dad. It's such a waste of energy. I mean, like, why go to all the trouble of putting on a huge production during the Christmas season and not even talk about what Christmas is, or who Jesus is. It just doesn't make sense to me."

"Yeah, I see what you mean, Pumpkin," her father responded. "Why put on a *non-Christmas* play during Christmas? Just doesn't feel right, huh?" Carl Ralston grabbed an overstuffed pillow from the couch and lay down next to his twelve-year-old daughter. He had just closed Bean Fix, the coffee house that he had been managing for the last fifteen or so years. Though Marcy had never liked the taste of coffee, she always loved the aroma that her father brought home with him from the shop. It was a more mellow scent, and it always brought to her mind thoughts of hospitality, images of reaching out to others and bringing them comfort. Seemed fitting that her father brought comfort to his customers. He had always been a very comforting presence in her life.

"You know, Panda Bear," Carl continued, "I'm wondering if God might have something really special planned for this production. I mean, on the surface it seems like the only thing that's going to be glorified by this play is the god of consumerism. All the songs are about making and delivering toys. It's such a shallow message. How can God be glorified through that?"

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"But do you remember last Sabbath when Pastor Larry was talking about the idea of *potential*? He was encouraging us not to get frustrated by the way things *are*, but instead to get excited about the way they *could be*. I love that illustration he used, from the story about Joseph and Mary and the Baby Jesus. Remember how he read from the gospel of Luke, that section where the shepherds had told Mary and Joseph that their son would be the Messiah? And then he read that verse that said, '*But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.*' I've been thinking about that verse all week."

**"But, Dad," Marcy interjected, "what does that story have to do with our lousy *Holiday* play?"**

"Well, think about it for a minute, Princess. Here was this girl, Mary, and she probably wasn't much older than you are right now. She was holding this *baby* in her arms, and she was trying to imagine how in the world this *baby* could actually be *God*. I mean, what an amazing concept! This insignificant infant, from insignificant parents, was going to become the most *significant* person to ever inhabit this planet. Don't you get it?"

"Sorry, Dad, you lost me at 'think about it for a minute.'"

"Okay, here's what I'm saying. This *Holiday* play, a production that doesn't even *mention* Jesus, seems like a total waste, right? To us, it seems like something totally insignificant. But to God, perhaps there's something very significant about this play. Just think about it, Puddin' Cup. Mary didn't know *how* God would use her precious little baby, but she still believed that He *would* use him. Even though she couldn't see Jesus' potential, she believed that he *had* an amazing potential, because God was in the middle of this story."

"But, Dad, *that's* the problem. God *isn't* in the middle of this story. This play doesn't talk about God at all, so *how* can He use it for His glory?"

Carl sensed his daughter's frustration as she seemed to be squeezing the life out of poor SpongeBob, so he cut to the chase. "Okay, here's the bottom line, PeeWee. You are just like Mary. You can't see how God could ever use this insignificant *Holiday* play for His glory. But the fact that you can't see the potential of this play does not mean that there is *no* potential. When God is in our lives, there is *always* a potential for Him to do something *amazing*, something we would never think of ourselves."

It was time for Carl to start putting dinner together, so he left his daughter to think about what he had shared with her, hoping and praying that he had adequately explained Pastor Larry's message from last Sabbath.

Over the next few days, Marcy joined her father in reflecting on that verse from Luke — "*But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.*" Could it really be true that God was going to do something special through



**He'd better get on it quick!**

that stupid *Holiday* play? He'd better get on it quick, she thought, because the play opens tomorrow night.

The next day Marcy was all smiles, as she anticipated the joy of being in a live theater production. Even though she didn't like the message of the play, she still relished the excitement of acting in front of a live audience.

During lunch, Marcy noticed that Laurie Berman, who would be playing Mrs. Claus tonight, was not her usual gregarious self. Laurie seemed to be sulking, isolating herself at a corner table instead of hanging out with her friends. Even though Laurie wasn't one of her friends, Marcy remembered Pastor Larry's teaching that God calls us to love everyone, whether or not they're our friends. So, she went over to Laurie and asked if she could join her

for lunch. Even though Laurie didn't bust out the welcome mat, she didn't slam the door in her face either. Marcy tentatively sat down next to her classmate and attempted to engage her in conversation.

**"Laurie, please don't take this the wrong way, but you don't look so good today. Are you okay?"**

"It's the play tonight," Laurie responded as she looked down and frowned at her food.

"I've never had such a big role before — I'm really nervous about it. A couple hours ago I started feeling sick to my stomach, and right now I can't even *think* about eating lunch."

"But Laurie, I've seen you during all of our rehearsals. You've been nailing every single song. You know the words, the music, and even all those stupid dance moves that Mrs. Ferguson is making us do. You've got it *all* down. How can you be nervous?"

"I don't know. I just am. And if I'm feeling like this when that curtain goes up tonight, there's *no way* that I'll be able to play Mrs. Claus. I'm gonna *ruin it for everyone!*" This last statement sent tears down Laurie's cheeks.

What could Marcy say that would help Laurie with her nerves? She herself brooded in silence for a couple minutes, then suddenly a thought popped into her head. "Laurie, let me tell you what I do when I'm gonna do some public speaking, or acting, or anything else that makes me nervous. I ask my dad to pray for me. He hugs me tight and asks God to remove my fear and my nervousness. Then he looks into my eyes and tells me that I'll do a great job. Every time he does this I feel so much better. It's almost like he turns me into a superhero, and my special ability is to focus on my lines instead of my nerves. Why don't you ask *your* dad to do this for you tonight, right before we go on stage?"

"There's *no way* my dad would ever pray for me like that, Marcy. My dad *hates* God. I don't know why. All my life, both of my parents have always been so bitter toward God, toward the church, and especially toward people who try to tell them how wonderful God is." Laurie's tears continued as she imagined how bad she would make things for everyone else tonight. She was stuck in her misery, and nothing else that Marcy said could change that. The two just sat next to each other and finished their lunch period in a silence filled with sadness and hopelessness.

Marcy spent the rest of the afternoon with a confusing mix of emotions. She was still excited about tonight, but she also felt sad when she thought about how terrible Laurie was feeling. What could Marcy do to help her classmate?

That evening, Arlington Middle School was a beehive of activity. Cars were filling the parking lot; rushed family members were scrambling for the few remaining seats in the auditorium; and behind the closed curtain, Mrs. Ferguson was trying her best to deal with all the last-minute crises that accompany live stage performances.

As opening curtain drew closer, Carl Ralston quietly made his way backstage to check on his precious daughter. He noted how cute she looked as an elf and remembered feeling the same way when he had seen her as a ballerina last year, as a leprechaun two years ago, and as a singing candy cane three

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**What could Marcy say that would help Laurie with her nerves?**

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years ago. He even remembered how cute she had looked as a potted plant when she was just six. He appreciated all the performance opportunities she had been given over the years.

"Dad?" Marcy hesitantly called out as she saw her father excitedly approaching her. He was on the verge of scooping her up into a bear hug when he suddenly noticed how worried she appeared.

"What's wrong, Pollywog?" he asked as he knelt down to look into her pleading eyes.

"My friend Laurie is supposed to play Mrs. Claus, but she's so nervous that she can hardly move. What can we do to help her?"

"Can you take me to her, Pork Chop?"

Marcy took her father's hand and led him into the corner in which Laurie had isolated herself. Laurie looked pale and hopeless, a shell of the vibrant socialite she usually was. She acknowledged Marcy's presence and also recognized Mr. Ralston from other school activities.

"Laurie," Carl began, "Marcy says you're really nervous right now. I usually pray with her before her performances. Would you like me to pray with you too?"

Laurie didn't know what to say. This was such a foreign invitation to her.

In her entire life, no one had ever offered to pray with her. Though it seemed strange and a bit scary, she looked into her friend Marcy's eyes and saw a level of peace that she herself desperately needed. "Please!" she blurted out, tears spilling from her eyes.

Before Carl even had a chance to reach out for Laurie, she grabbed onto him like her life depended on it. Carl wrapped his arms around this precious child and asked God to remove the anxiety from her. He asked God to enable her to focus on her lines and dance steps. He also asked that she would have the ability to be present in the moment as she performed, and that she would actually enjoy what she was experiencing.



As Carl said a very heartfelt "Amen," he started to release his grip on Laurie. But she refused to let go of this man who had accepted her, who had stepped into her world of pain. She held him tightly for another few moments and then stepped back, overflowing with a confidence matched only by the level of surprise moving through her.



**"Wow," Laurie whispered under her breath, still trying to take in the huge contrast between one minute ago and now. "What happened?"**



"Wow," Laurie whispered under her breath, still trying to take in the huge contrast between one minute ago and now. "What happened? I don't feel nervous at all. I even want to go on stage now. *What happened?*"

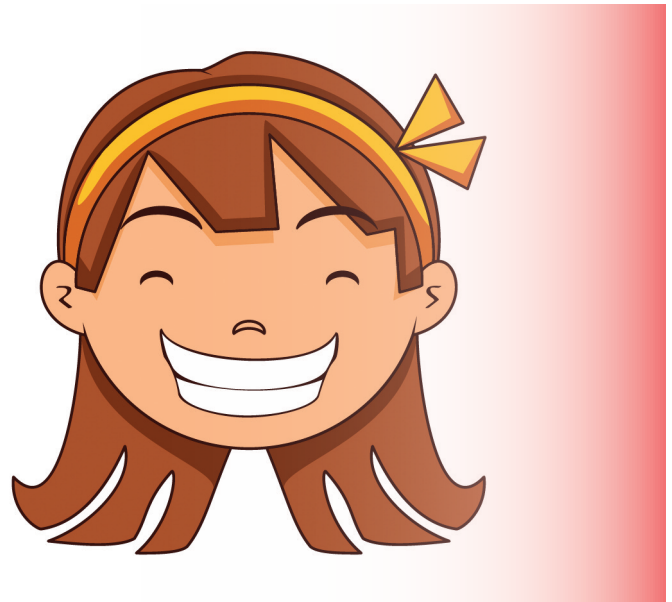
"Laurie," Carl said with a huge smile on his face, "Marcy and I believe in a God who loves us, who wants to help us, and who has the ability to help us. Your anxiety is gone because God removed it from you. He wants you to know that He is real, that He is right here with you, and that He *will* be with you every moment when you're on that stage. You're not alone, Sweetheart. God is *with* you."

Laurie had to get to her place for opening curtain, so she didn't have time to ask Mr. Ralston all the questions that were rushing through her mind: How can I know more about this God you're talking about? Why does He love someone as insignificant as me? Can He also help my dad, just like He helped me? She made a mental note to talk with Marcy and her father again, when she had more time, and she scurried off to her place onstage.

As she watched Laurie move quickly through the chaos of opening night actors, Marcy looked up at her father and said, "Dad, thank you so *much* for what you did!"

Carl's smile was still in place as he said to his relieved daughter, "Marcy, I understand why you were so frustrated the last few days. You thought there was no way that God could be glorified by this stupid *Holiday* play. But there is *always* a potential for God to be glorified. He can take even the most hopeless situation and do something *amazing* with it, something we would never think of ourselves. I think that's why Luke told us that '*Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.*' Jesus' mother wasn't focusing on what was. She was focusing on what *could be.*"

Marcy didn't have time to reflect on what her wise father had shared with her. Just like Laurie, she too had to rush to her place for opening curtain. As she moved to her spot on the stage, however, along with a bunch of other elves, Marcy thanked God that, even before this stupid *Holiday* play had begun, He had already made an appearance and had miraculously blessed someone who desperately needed Him. God has *already* been glorified through this play, she thought to herself, and He will *continue* to be glorified. She pondered this thought in her heart. SR



**Marcy thanked God that,  
even before this  
stupid *Holiday* play  
had begun,  
He had already made  
an appearance and  
had miraculously  
blessed someone...**

# Why Send A Kid?



*I write stream of consciousness poetry. Some call it slam poetry. After I wrote this one about Christmas, it had a lot of heaven; not enough earth. So I added passages from my Viet Nam journals. I embedded their prose between the lines of rhyme trying to seize the essence of Christmas Day without getting in the way of God who made it! If you, the reader, can find the pauses within the writing it has a chance to be a successful effort.*

—Mike Parker

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### *Heaven: A Holy Chord?*

Why a day like Christmas? With three-hundred-sixty-four not like Christmas?! Why send Son? Let Holy Kid stay in bed in comfy heaven? Why confront percentages? Why impede way of things the way they are? Why confront what humans chase to find their bliss in certain twist toward dark abyss ... What do you mean the Son's been gone for several moments? Whose womb? Your Kid?

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### **EARTH: CHRISTMAS/QUANG TRI, VIET NAM/1969.**

Christmas came and went in I Corp. Out the door, without spending minimum 24. I'm platoon poet making rhyme in place that doesn't.

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### *Heaven: Agitated Holy Chord:*

Send an army? Go Old Testament! Create quandary! All they are is dirty laundry! Give 'em December to remember. Consternation! Condemnation! What Holy combination! Why condescension bent toward apprehension? Why grace to place; better sold after the fall? Fear! What a tool! Slam them! Find compliance in absolute obedience! Their ears don't hear. Eyes don't see. They misuse all five senses? Highest creation has vacancy between the ears. In heart, as well ... And soul???

Well, that's yours! So, let's start over with just that. The soul, alone without its tent! Disengagement's best from nasty bits of bone and flesh. They'll pass no test for worthiness! ... What do you mean that's the point?

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### **EARTH: QUANG TRI, VIET NAM.**

Recon! Observe. Report. Don't Engage! Except fear at night. Anything moving becomes a battalion. Engage fear. Make it know its place.

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### *Heaven: A Third Holy Chord:*

Your creation lets looting renters occupy his head. They come and go leaving unmade bed, instead of ordered place! They don't treat it as their own. They wreck the place. Then, move on. No moral ethic. Delinquent payments. Worse is how they always leave the place! ... Always? ... Okay, if not always, maybe just for centuries.

*Continued on next page...*

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## **EARTH: QUANG TRI, VIET NAM.**

Movement last night. Called illumination. Lit us up, too. Not smart.

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### *Heaven: Holy Chord Confined?*

If God's confounded by earthly lack of stewardship; doesn't show it. Dictatorship, maybe? Just to give them breather from thinking for themselves! Absolutely appropriate! But, nope! Hope! That binding vine links faith to creator. Essential for God. Essential for created clod. Story Tellers like I AM overlook belligerence to believe in intelligence of their audience.

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## **EARTH: NAM AGAIN?**

Attached to Company A. Carried kid named Billy in poncho to "Deus Ex Machina" chopper. 50 calibers do God's talking. Kid begged not to be sent home the way he was. But nobody leaves here, the way they came. Billy the dreamer? Or, schemer like rest of us?

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### *Heaven: Holy Chord Five:*

Poise, in the noise, is what it's called. Standing in heaven's pocket, Throw a rocket! Hail Mary way down field? Is this new way of God the Father? What about the Law? You mean the one that led to dysfunction in junction 'tween we and them?

Then, what's the battle plan? Backed up, as we are in shadow of valley we know God owns? Others count cost of owning such real estate and suggest quick bail. The head who wears the crown must be most level. Absolute ownership finds no time for panic selling. Steady hand. Full throttle! The crown is never leased to lesser uncool head! Disheveled humanity must see God stand tall! Let night be itself. Stay upright in plain sight! Be light!

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## **EARTH: NAM, AS USUAL.**

It's their country. They know all the good hiding places. We're tourists asking for direction. We ask them. They disappear. What to think? So, don't.

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### *Heaven: Holy Chord Five Five Five; in Wing Together!*

Ah! Sweet, night! Safe for flight of things with Holy wing? Less traffic 'round midnight. Chaos of day time come and go gets frozen! Slowed in motion? The night what great concoction! We'll break the rule that nothing good happens 'tween one and five! Warm them with orchestrated explanation! Let Angel Proclamation knock lid off expectation! Jesus! He is the plan!... How will He go? As, one of them! You mean a man? Yes! You mean with sword? No, umbilical cord. Bad rhyme, I know. But, catch my meaning heavenly folk. Heaven leans toward love.

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## **EARTH: NAM.**

Deceived by corrupt plastic, my New Testament is now rectangular pulp unable to be opened. Paddy water. Rain. I know John 3:16 and Psalm 23. They're the only verses needed here. The rest of the Bible... is for civilians.

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## *Heaven: Holy Chord Continues:*

A baby? Why a baby? Why a child? Why a kid? A kid's a pause! What says mystery better than a kid? What says history doesn't matter? What says your past is not your future more than child? What says answer mild to what's defiled? What says slow and steady wins the case, for humanity better than kid, who makes you human? What says quiet? What says shush? Anger doesn't matter! Let it splatter other places. Put it on a platter on a shelf till later day. When he's grown, he'll reap the seeds you've sown. He'll fight your wars like all kids do. But not now. God's no angry argument toward must-win persuasion. Take child's birth to be your turning point. A change of direction. A chance for redemption. A kid's a reconnection to who we're meant to be! A kid changes most common madness into innocence and open-eyed wonder. In a world lazy with easy fist let child be calming first and final Word.

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A baby? Why a baby? Why a child? Why a kid?

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## **EARTH: NAM, STILL!**

Chopper recons; Roundhead and me. We call them pink teams. Bunches of times out. Without incidence. Easy duty. Then, our Huey's down. Roundhead's dead. Reality says I'm alive, but I'm a lie. Pink teams aren't the lark they used to be. I wish I was Roundhead and he was me.

*Continued on next page...*

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## *Heaven: Holy Chord Continued!*

Thank God for reasoned doubt that we deserve anything but conviction. A kid says always, full investigation. Face reality? Yes, if absolutely necessary. The human race will get its breath in better pace. Due process? Always! Beginning. Middle. End. The world struts till God sends the best of Who He Is. He, our Always Only Hymn. He, Our Lullaby to Answer lie that screams we exist by accident to live lives lonely. Then, die merely; severely by whim.

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### **EARTH: NAM.**

I extend my tour by four months to get an early out. We move North to DMZ as 3rd Marines pull back to states. Sent back to bush because South Viet Army has low morale. Mine's high. 12 months in country. Still untouched! I'm a cockroach lucky super grunt.

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## *Heaven: Final Holy Chord of Doubt Before Wow!*

Before heavenly realm commits giving lip to what seems like monumental slip! Are we sure? Send kid to them? Those stains? Won't they turn him into lost like them? They're facets can't be polished! They're flightless birds who can't find imagination's wing. They're things in ditches. They're ruts; unpaved roads. Squandered breath! Shall I continue chewing heaven's scenery?

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## *Heaven: God's Place Says NO! With Answering Chords:*

We're losing the light. The darkness now upon them. His birth nigh. My high bid to earth! Creation's contractor, knows the stakes. I, the builder know committed house does not lose. Percentages die before me. One day like Christmas can change a year. Even century. Even more!

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### **EARTH: LEAVING NAM!**

Never fired weapon. Called artillery. Never did anything above and beyond, but I was with kids who did. Discharged in Washington state. Travel down coast. Send journals home. I'm a good civilian, traveling light. Want to write but not now. Will wait for more perspective. Will write when I get it.

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## *Then! On Earth as in Heaven: Random Thoughts.*

God's face is not a football field high and almost just as wide. He's not a granite face on Rushmore. He's more! He's the core of who we seek to be. When Mary kissed her kid, she kissed the face of God. A kid like yours and mine. Only, He could change water into wine and, as you have heard, He changes lives, too. And wins the wars we lose.

My first kid was born on Christmas day, 1976. Her name was Rachel. I was an actor in New York with Nam behind me. I had talent. I'd been a grape in a "Fruit of the Loom" commercial. I always found just enough success to make me think I'd beat the odds against me. Working actor? Yeah!

Lots of superman plans made me a fan of me, myself. Career was taking me away from my wife whom I love and call "Big Al," because she's as solid as church girls get. I, with my depressions, who fights a constant civil war through the valleys of my head, find rest in often upward glance to Alice and Jesus.

My daughter's birth shoved my plans aside. The dream survives, but now it has weight and depth of added lives. Two kids more. Annie and Brandon. Happy rhymes. Fourteen grandkids later. I'm overwhelmed with poetry!

The kind of actor you are is the kind of person you are. You can't be more. But probably... you can be less. I know. I've been both. When a father bends low, he sees a child who looks like him without the furrowed brow. He sees his future. So, I became a carpenter. Like Jesus, the carpenter who captured the world, I captured just a portion of the world for mine. Smaller kingdoms fit best, I feel.

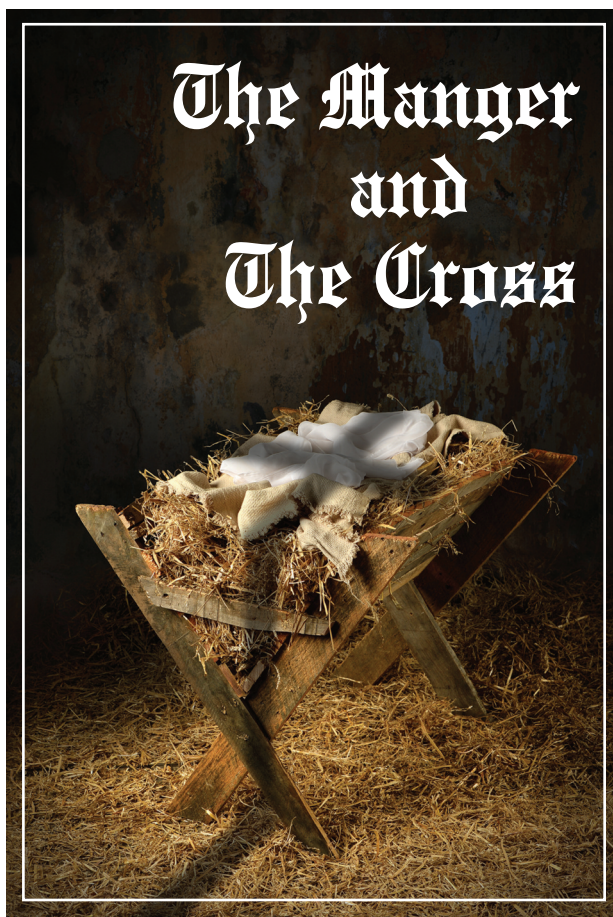
My family, my church are my platoons now. Imperfect, for sure, like the one I had in Nam. A man's imperfect shoulder finds proper place next to other imperfect shoulders like his own. His imperfect heart kept separate and protected; sometimes in other places. But, events dictate imperfect heart must follow imperfect shoulder of imperfect soldier. Thank God for making me a grunt for King like Him. God's face, bent low, lets me touch the sky! SR

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*I'm a visual person. Right now, I'm imagining a picture of the Bethlehem manger, overlaid with the shadow of a Roman cross. Only God knows whether the infant Jesus in those early months of His earthly life understood that it would end at the cross. Scriptures tell us He was committed to His Father's plan from adolescence forward. And He lived such a blameless life that His death sentence seems a cruel injustice – at least in terms of our human understanding. Throughout his adult life, He was focused on the cross at the end of His road, never wavering, knowing it would result in not only victory over sin but also our being with Him for eternity. Can we be as bold and determined to keep our eyes fixed on the cross until the moment of our physical death? There are many potential distractions in this life. Keeping the Crucifixion – and His resurrection – in clear view, while we continue to celebrate the manger, gives us daily strength to overcome them and keep reaching for the cross.*

*1st Corinthians 1:18 "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."*

— Donna VanHorn



Have you enjoyed reading Donna VanHorn's devotionals in the last few *Sabbath Recorders*? Her new book of devotional vignettes, **Tune God In: Your Heart's His Receiver**, is now in print. Purchasers can make their checks payable to Donna VanHorn and mail to her at 1245 SE University Avenue #309, Waukee, IA 50263. Price per book is \$17.78 (slight discount from publisher's list price, and including shipping and handling). Purchasers need to be sure they include their shipping address. National retailers will begin offering the book early in 2017.



*"...Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men..."*

— Matthew 2:16 (ESV)

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## The Cry of the Innocents: Then & Now

This time each year, many Christians commemorate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. We rightly remind ourselves of the miraculous circumstances of His birth. We surround ourselves with symbols and music which remind us of the great faithfulness of God. We celebrate the fulfillment of thousands of years of prophecy. It is a joyous time for many of us — a time filled with wonder and gratitude at the lengths God has taken to make us his children and secure our eternal futures.

But one of the prophecies which Matthew says is fulfilled frequently receives less attention in the grand scheme of our celebration narrative: the so-called "slaughter of the innocents," from Matthew chapter two. Matthew reports that the wise men who came to visit Jesus after His birth visited the murderous Herod, innocently telling him who they were looking for. When they found Jesus, they were warned not to return to Herod but to go home a different way. Likewise, Joseph, Mary, and the infant Jesus fled to Egypt to escape Herod's wrath. When Herod realized he had been tricked and the coming King may have slipped through his fingers, threatening



his own power, Herod ordered all the male children in the area of Bethlehem and the surrounding region killed. After this grisly act was completed, Matthew reports that the cries that issued from that region fulfilled a prophetic word from the prophet Jeremiah (chapter 31:15) referencing the cries of Rachel (Jacob's wife) for her children.

It may be that we deemphasize this story because it puts a damper on our celebration. But it is important that we not forget the voices of those who grieve this season, and that we do not ignore the plight of innocent children who suffer from the wrath of misguided and sinful adults in positions of power. Such things are still an unfortunate part of our world — and we should not become blind in our celebrations to those who are hurting, especially in this season of hope and expectation.

For the past several years, our Conference has been in the process of evaluating our responsibilities to children. We have renewed our commitment to doing what we can to offer a safe environment for our children during General Conference meetings and at official General Conference events. In our contexts and in this era, that means accountability, policies, and background checks. It also means raising our level of commitment and being proactive in our commitment to being a safe place for our children.

That commitment is sadly necessary because abuse of children, sexually and otherwise, has reached epidemic levels in our nation. A study conducted by the University of New Hampshire<sup>1</sup>

indicates that during their lifetimes, based on current trends, approximately one in five young women are sexually abused before turning 18 years of age; and one in twenty young men are likewise abused. The composite numbers reflect a staggering reality: nearly a third of all children are being abused before they turn 18.

Shockingly, the vast majority of these young people are abused by someone they know. Only 7% of victims are abused by a complete stranger. In our culture, the innocents still cry out.

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*It is important that we not forget the voices of those who grieve this season, and that we do not ignore the plight of innocent children who suffer from the wrath of misguided and sinful adults in positions of power.*

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The Conference has taken many steps in the past several years, including the passage of a resolution at General Conference in 2015, which have affirmed our commitment to child protection. One such step is to encourage and exhort the member churches of our Conference to take the initiative to protect the sanctity and safety of their congregations, especially for their children and young people.

Safety in our congregations at this point comes in a variety of ways.

1. <http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/CV192.pdf>

Continued from previous page...

Perhaps the most important step local congregations can take with respect to ministry safety and child protection is to develop and implement their own child protection policies. Such policies can be brief and customized to the life of your church, but should reflect accordance with local, state, and federal laws regarding child protection in your area. This will likely include carefully considering how you recruit, vet, and train those who work with children in your local context — as well as a careful consideration of your ministry space to ensure that both your children and ministry workers are safe and protected. It is important to pay attention to the laws regarding mandated reporting in your state, as these sometimes vary widely and might impact how you train your workers and do your ministry. In all cases, having written a policy, churches should then abide by it!

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*God saw to the protection of His Son while He was a child by giving Him a family and a community to protect Him.*

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The best resource to aid you and your church in navigating the sometimes murky legal waters is your local church's insurance company. They have a vested interest in your church complying with all applicable laws. ***If your church is not insured, you should move to investigate finding such insurance as soon as possible.*** Most think of insurance as only something necessary in case of an incident. But an important role for your insurance company is to aid you in limiting your risks and keeping your entire church safe.

We are aware that some churches would like additional counsel regarding safety in ministry

and child protection policies, so the Conference is considering the preparation of resources which would aid churches, including collecting sample policies from local churches and church insurance companies, and building lists of resources which may ultimately find their way into our *Manual of Procedures*. In addition, in 2017, we plan to undertake a survey of churches to evaluate how the member churches of the General Conference are providing safe ministry spaces for their children and ministry workers, and reporting the results back to the entire Conference.

A final way churches should be thinking about safety is through the lens of having appropriate insurance protection for themselves in the event of an incident. Even in situations where a congregation has taken all the prudent steps to provide a safe environment, we live in a broken world. Given the legal climate, and under such circumstances, churches who have an incident may have litigation brought against them.

***The General Conference does not assume responsibility for and does not insure local churches in the event of litigation. It is important for churches to provide for their own legal protection in such circumstances.***

As we move towards the new year, let us all resolve to be sure that, to the extent it is possible, we do not permit harm to come to the children and youth that God has entrusted to our congregations. God saw to the protection of His Son while He was a child by giving Him a family and a community to protect Him. Let that be an example to us as we seek to protect, teach, and love the children God gives to us! 



The Seventh Day Baptist Standing Committee on Christian Social Action & Disaster Relief (CSADR) has been busy — especially in the area of disaster relief! The CSADR Committee is: Chairman, Norm Burdick (Riverside, CA); Danita Lee (Colorado Springs, CO); and Craig Mosher (Berlin, NY). SDB Executive Director, Rob Appel, is also involved in an ex-officio capacity. In the past 12 months the Committee has sent funds to these missions of mercy:

#### **LEBANON & SYRIA**

In October 2015 and 2016, Pastor Gabe Bejjani (Riverside, CA) made a trip to Lebanon and Syria. His mission was, and is, to spread the Gospel in Lebanon and Syria as they are predominantly Muslim nations. This work is through a group called IHOPE Ministries (<http://ihopeministries.org/>).

Pastor Gabe states before the trip in 2015, “The situation in the countries of the Middle East is getting worse. More innocent refugees are risking their lives to escape the violence. In Lebanon alone, they have over one million refugees from Iraq and Syria. The purpose of the mission is to bring more needed monetary help to some families; evaluate and plan for the expansion of the English school that is held in one of our teachers’ homes in northern Lebanon; and to print 5000 copies in Arabic of our pamphlet about Seventh Day Baptists.”

Pastor Gabe just returned from his 2016 trip. He believes that this mission was potentially more dangerous than in the past years, but strongly believes that God is leading and will protect him and all who share the good news of salvation. He even secured a Lebanese passport so he would not have USA credentials on him while in Syria.

The purpose of this trip was to visit the refugee camps to bring hope and aid to the displaced families. He also took the needed funds to purchase heating fuel for cooking and warmth. It takes only \$60 per year to supply this to a whole family! You can still help in this cause today!

#### **GITAZA, BURUNDI, AFRICA**

There was massive flooding in Burundi in November 2015 that completely destroyed the Gitaza SDB church. In addition, 100 families from the district were left homeless. To complicate things, the church was having problems finding another place to worship due to funding. The CSADR partnered with the SDB Missionary Society to get funds directly to those in need.

#### **TEXAS**

In May 2016, there were strong storms that caused some major damage to the property of one of the families of the Texarkana (Arkansas) SDB Church. The CSADR team sent funds to the church to help this family with their recovery that insurance did not cover.

# YOU CAN HELP TOO!



#### **HUNGER CRISIS IN MALAWI**

The committee responded upon a vote by email to provide funds, through and in cooperation with the SDB Missionary Society, in an amount sufficient to provide 6000 pounds of corn for our SDB brothers and sisters in Malawi.

#### **HAITI**


The most powerful Caribbean hurricane since Felix in 2007 hit Haiti in October 2016 leaving a trail of death and destruction. Hurricane Matthew passed through the western part of Haiti causing widespread flooding, destroying houses, structures, and bridges — resulting in the displacement of thousands. Over 330 people lost their lives. Our SDB brethren in Haiti were not affected as much by the hurricane destruction; however some did lose their homes, and they did express their need for food and clothes.

Through partnering with the Miami SDB Church in Florida, we were able to send funds directly to those in need to buy rice, beans, sugar, and flour. There are other items like cooking oil, spaghetti, macaroni, tin salmon, and corn that were purchased as well. When the food is sent, Pastor Jean Lucas Julien, the Pastor in Haiti we work with there, announces a distribution day. They re-package the food into bags of 2 pounds or so, and give to each family, not only in the church, but in the community.

Pastor Andrew Samuels of the Miami SDB Church says, “Usually when we pay for the food here, it gets to them the next day. So, it is a very easy process. That’s how we encourage people to support our brethren in Haiti: by donating cash to contribute to sending the food this way.”

#### **DAYTONA BEACH, FL**

There were two families in Daytona Beach that lost their homes due to fallen trees during the effects of Hurricane Matthew. Funds were sent to help them through their recovery process.

To help support the work of the CSADR, please send your gifts to the Seventh Day Baptist Conference and on the memo line write “CSADR.” God bless those that help others in their time of need! 

# Life on Mission: Awakening

This journey “*On Mission*” is amazing — evolving and never ending. One of my desires for this year and throughout the conference experience is that there would be a renewing of relationship with God. Maybe I should call it an awakening — the kind of experience where you see something with fresh eyes that produces an eager spirit or quickening and an awareness of what God’s purpose is for each of us daily. As I described the phases of conference dynamics in my Conference presentation I used the words “encounter, equip and empower.” At Conference 2017, I pray there will be a time in which we are challenged to see God in all His splendor and connect in a vital experience. The other phases of our conference focus will involve learning and embracing concepts and tools to move out for Jesus. And finally, my prayer for each one taking this journey is to feel the freedom that comes with the Holy Spirit — to be fully charged with confidence to extend our reach because it’s the right thing to do... it’s what God commands. In Psalms 96:3 “*Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples.*”

Once again, as our small Women’s Circle has done for the past 18+ years, we met to have a retreat. Everyone comes to my home (previously we gathered at my father’s home). God blessed me with a wonderful place to retreat to daily and I love sharing it with others. Our theme this year centered around “*Life on Mission*” and we singled out the concept of “encounter”: to focus on a few concepts that enrich our relationship with God. I was drawn to the thought of revisiting the fundamental pathway to salvation. We shared and discussed the scriptures that point our hearts and minds to Jesus by understanding that we are all sinners, that God has a wonderful plan for our lives, and He provided a way to bridge the gap between man and God: “*in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.*” It’s knowing and accepting Jesus personally. Once again we paused to thank God for the gift of Jesus and the incredible sacrifice of love through His death and resurrection. It’s returning to the basics of knowing Jesus and what it means to have a personal encounter with that kind of love sacrifice.

Our time of spiritual retreat was deepened when we spent time Sabbath afternoon reading and discussing an article I shared from *Christianity Today* written by Dr. Juli Slattery titled, “*The 5 Secrets to Intimacy with God.*” The concepts were just what we needed to embrace our joint desire to experience God more personally. In her article, she shared a struggle and desire that parallels our need to know God, discern God’s voice and feel genuine love for our maker. She cautioned that her five points were not intended to be the end-all in finding the right relationship with God, but a simple suggestion to draw close to a mysterious, living God who cannot be tamed or manipulated into a relationship with us. Scripture states, “*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*” Jeremiah 29:13.

## LIFE ON MISSION

Touching lives for Jesus

### President’s Page

by Patti Wethington  
SDB Church, White Cloud, MI

To briefly summarize her points, they included:

- **Desire intimacy with God** — “It’s one thing to talk to your friend about wanting to know God, but how desperately do you want it? Is ‘intimacy with God’ one of 20 other things on your goals for this year?”
- **Know God’s Love Language** — Did you know God has a love language? God’s love language is an obedient repentant heart. The expression of love for God is something like what David spoke about in Psalms 51: “*The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit...and repentant heart.*” It’s a love filled with obedience to His will.
- **Love God Affectionately** — In Deuteronomy 6:5 Juli reminds us that God’s word says to “*love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your strength.*” That is to me the passionate love for a God who gave all for me.
- **Don’t give up** — God has His own time in all things. You will never, ever waste a moment seeking the Lord. Even during seasons of discouragement, God sees, God records and ...
- **God will respond in His time.** Be patient.
- **Share in His work** — Even though being in an intimate relationship with God pleases Him, there is a greater purpose: that His kingdom would come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). This can only be accomplished when we share in His work and reach out to do God’s will here on earth.

Living a *Life on Mission* for Jesus truly is a daily act of renewing our hearts and minds with a focus for God’s purpose — God’s purpose for me today and in this moment. Having a close and intimate relationship with God is there for all those who will seek it. That kind of intimacy tunes us in to a frequency that can be receptive to God’s directions and will. The question is, will you take the challenge of Jeremiah 29:13 and make it your heart’s desire to seek that kind of relationship with the One who gave all for you? [SR](#)



## “It’s the most wonderful time of the year....” isn’t it?

Another year has passed and it’s time for the Christmas season once again. Every year it seems like the advertising for Christmas begins earlier and earlier — many stores had out full displays of lights and trees in the beginning of October. Honestly, by the time Christmas rolls around, some years I’m Christmas-ed out. This year I’ve been dreading the Holiday season. I was already exhausted by Christmas in the beginning of August when all of retail began preparing for the onslaught of the Holidays.

Every time I had to talk about Christmas with anyone it was accompanied by a grimace and a little shudder. I am not one of those people who dislike Christmas in any way. I typically love this time of year — I don’t even mind the bad weather and I am generally okay with people playing Christmas music at any time of the year — sometimes you just need that little burst of cheer. But right now, the idea of Christmas is exhausting. There are many different reasons for this, some more valid than others. While I’ve not exactly turned into the grinch — sparkling, shiny Christmas isn’t really appealing.

Yes, I know what the reason for the season is. That is probably why I’m not in full grinch mode making diabolical plans to snatch the Christmas cheer of all the Whovillians. I do, in fact, plan on getting into Christmas at some point during the season because it is Christmas. The promise and hope of the season is infectious.

Over the past few years I’ve not had much of an opportunity to celebrate Christmas or the reason for it. I’ve been bogged down too much in the commercialism of sparkly, white, perfect Christmas — maybe that’s the problem. As a culture, we are sold on trying for the “perfect” holidays. The reality is that the

perfect anything on this earth is a myth we’re too busy chasing so we don’t have to notice the imperfection around us.

Reality is that not even the very first Christmas was perfect — at least not in the way we imagine. I mean, have you ever heard cattle lowing — not exactly birth-giving ambiance. And let’s not even get into the whole giving birth thing except to say that it’s not exactly a calm, sanitary, sparkly thing. Not to say that what you get out of the deal isn’t precious — but to imagine that Christmas could ever be perfect by earthly standards is a dangerous idea we get sold and we buy into every holiday.

Whether it’s buying the perfect gift or performing the perfect gift of service, it’s never enough to hide the imperfections of life. That’s something we need to remember — because even if we can delude ourselves into believing that we had a perfect day, then we crash afterward when reality catches up and it’s a huge letdown.

I’m not saying don’t enjoy Christmas. I’m not saying it isn’t a wonderful time of year. In fact as I write this, I feel the Christmas spirit beginning to take hold. I’m suggesting that instead of focusing on the perfection of Christmas, we focus on what the perfect One did for a world in spite of and because of its depravity. Really take the time to look around this Christmas and see the world around you. Recognize that Christ came because of the dirty imperfections all around and within us. That is the reason we should celebrate. He didn’t come to make perfection. He came to save. When you embrace that, whether you love or dislike Christmas doesn’t matter — we are not celebrating Christmas, we celebrate the Savior. SR

# MISSIONS: A CATALYST TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

by Garfield Miller – Missions Coordinator

Travelling to another country, living with and proclaiming the Gospel to unfamiliar people can be scary and difficult but usually purpose-filled. I had the privilege this past summer to be the Project Director to an SCSC team to Jamaica, which was the result of the continuing partnership between the Missionary Society and the Women's Board/SCSC Committee. Team members reflected on the trip. Here are parts of their testimonies:

**Elisabeth Lawson** — Colton, CA

*"This summer wasn't what I expected at all. Going to a new country for the first time, I went into things not knowing what would happen, only knowing that God would be with me. When I first applied to go to Jamaica, I had no idea why I applied. I knew I just felt called and that God had a special plan for me... **This summer was truly a life-changing experience in every aspect as God stretched me, broke me, and filled me.**"*

**Josiah Lynch** — Toronto, Ontario

*"Being in Jamaica presented many challenges for us as a team and for me individually and forced me out of what I knew to be comfortable. For all the challenges, be it with children, health issues, or work schedule, and all the discomfort with living conditions, God was there and my focus was on Him. **Having my focus on God allowed me to minister to others while also ministering to myself.**"*

**Michaella Osborn** — Boulder, CO.

*"Early in the project I learned that I couldn't trust anything outside of God. I couldn't trust that all of my partners would be healthy enough to help with VBS; I couldn't trust that people would understand my needs or*

*feelings; I couldn't trust that my project director would be there all the time; I couldn't trust that there would be food I would want to eat or even that there would be running water. **The one thing that I could trust was God.**"*

**Jennifer Brown** — Texarkana, AR

*"Imagine this: being completely worn out, sweating like a pig, your body reacting to the climate through hives and swollen feet, and suddenly being asked to plan an hour more of activities with kids while you're already struggling to find things for them to do right at that moment. Imagine taking a shower from a pipe in the wall that only had cold water, or better yet, using a bucket (similar to the ones we had to use to flush the toilets...). **I chose to focus on the things that blessed me, were a blessing to others, and have changed me.**"*

As their Project Director, I felt like a proud father as they did VBS, sermons, skits, music ministry, evangelism activities and visits to homes, schools and an orphanage. On many occasions team members were uncomfortable, unsure, exhausted, and scared, but due to their toughness and ever-growing trust in God, the project was an overwhelming success! Through their challenges many people across Jamaica were positively impacted but the team's many difficulties also became catalysts to their further dependency on God. From their testimonies, the greater impact was on their individual spiritual growth where they echoed Acts 20:24: *"I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me — the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace."*



FOCUS on Missions

Clinton R. Brown  
Executive Director



## The Gift that Keeps Giving!



- Staff
- Students
- Churches
- Project Directors

### 2017 DATES AND INFORMATION

- January 6, 2017 — DEADLINE for Student Applications
- January 25, 2017 — DEADLINE for Church Applications
- June 13 – 18 — Project Director Training: Camp Harley Sutton, Alfred Station, NY
- June 14 – 22 — SCSC On-Site Training: Harley Sutton, Alfred Station, NY
- June 22 – July 20 — On-site Projects
- July 20 – 23 — SCSC Evaluation
- July 23 – 30 —Final week of project at SDB General Conference, Azusa, CA

Information and Forms can be found at:  
[www.seventhdaybaptist.org/ministries/womens-board-scsc](http://www.seventhdaybaptist.org/ministries/womens-board-scsc)

There are struggles everywhere every day in this world. Society is trying to teach us that we're strong enough to fight our own battles, but that could never be more wrong. *"For the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you."* (Deuteronomy 20:1) You are not alone in this fight; in fact, it's not even yours. Fighting things on your own will not scare the devil, but trusting that God is fighting for you, will. *"The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His name... Your Right Hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces. And in the greatness of Your excellence you have overthrown those who rose against You; You sent forth Your wrath; It consumed them like stubble."* (Exodus 15:3,6-7)

Letting God handle your struggles is important, but prayer is also just as important. Every day of your life God wants to hear from you. Prayer is a way in which we can communicate with Him, worship Him, and present our requests to Him. When in doubt, pray; that is your fighting role. When it's hard, trust in Him, and the outcome will be much greater than what you can image. *"He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea."* (Psalm 102:17)

We must remember that no problem is beyond God's control. God has big plans for every little thing in this universe. He has promised to take care of us and love us unconditionally. Knowing this, we should not be discouraged when bad things happen. *"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"* (Romans 8:31)

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by Amya Snyder  
 Alfred Station SBD Church, NY

THE BEACON



## God is Making Me STRONGER

My life has been pretty far from what I have expected these past few months. I have gone through some good things and some bad things. My life has literally been a roller coaster ride with a bandana around my eyes; up and down — but you never know which one will come next.

Way back when, I would have rather tried doing things by myself. I would rather kept everything to myself instead of asking someone for prayer or just to listen to me. Honestly, I had always thought that asking for prayer or praying was a sign of weakness and I could do everything that I thought I could do, by myself. I didn't want to talk to anyone about what was going on because I did not want to be a burden; they had their own issues to deal with and they did not need to worry about me. I kept to myself and when people tried talking to me I would build my walls so high that there was no hope of anyone tearing them down. I thought I was doing awesome on my own — but God wasn't the biggest fan.

The past few months, I have had such a hard time: from feeling alone to not feeling good enough for anything or anyone. I had lost all hope in my future and my life. I did not think anyone deserved to go through what I was going through. I was having a hard time thinking that anything was going to get better. Everyone else had already gotten over the month-long pain, but I was still dealing with pain that had been there for much longer. I thought it was unfair to me. I felt that God had forgotten about me and I was jealous that everyone else seemed to be figuring things out. I was frustrated to say the least. That was when I randomly looked up a daily Bible verse on line and it read, *"Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy"* (John 16:20). This verse was an eye-opener. I started reading my Bible, I started praying hourly, and I started reading devotionals. This verse gave me the hope that I had been longing for for months. It restored my faith. It was just what I needed to hear that day and there was no doubt in my brain that God had led me to that exact verse that day. I started smiling again. I started laughing again. I let God's joy run through me. I accepted the fact that I needed Him and I couldn't do anything by myself.



My life has literally been a roller coaster ride.

I am not saying that my life is now perfect. I still have my doubts at times. I still wonder why I am not as happy as the others. I still wonder why God would ever let me get this low. But now I know that God is just making me stronger. He is building my faith every single day. Every day I have to repeat to myself that my grief will someday turn into joy that I could have never imagined possible. I cannot imagine trying to handle life without Him at this point. I cannot imagine going through every single day keeping every single thought and feeling I have to myself. I cannot imagine not asking people for prayer when I am having a bad day or when I am feeling doubty (I know, I know, it is not a word, but I like it there). I am still working on keeping my walls down and not being fearful. I am so much closer to God than I ever thought I would be and that would be impossible without Him. I have learned that God does not ever forget about us, and His timing is not our own. And for that I am forever thankful. [SR](#)





Article by Eric Geiger

Conflict is going to happen. After sin entered the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, God told Eve that the relationship with her husband would no longer be perfect: “Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you” (Genesis 3:16). Scholars have pointed out that the same wording of desire and ruling is used in the following chapter to describe Cain’s relationship to sin (Genesis 4:7). So often conflict in our relationships with one another is the result of sin.

Many of the letters in the Bible, the epistles we learn so much about God from, were written because there was conflict in the churches. God redeemed the conflict by giving us great books in the Bible for our encouragement and growth.

Of course, not all conflict is bad. Some conflict is really healthy tension, but unhealthy and sinful conflict destroys. Unhealthy conflict spoils the unity and morale of the team. Unhealthy conflict distracts from the mission. As this type of conflict arises, here are four mistakes leaders make:

### 1. Ignoring

Many a leader has said, “I just don’t like conflict.” But the longer conflict goes unaddressed, the worse it gets. Burying your head in the sand does not make the conflict go away. It only exasperates the pain and fallout when you finally pull your head out of the sand. A leader who ignores conflict is abdicating leadership responsibility. A leader who ignores conflict is being unloving to those he/she serves as the culture of the team disintegrates.

### 2. Being vague

Without specificity in a confrontation, it is improbable the person can adjust. When addressing conflict, being vague with statements like “I just sense something is off” or “I am uncomfortable about the vibe I am feeling” harms more than helps. A lack of clarity in confrontation is crushing. A person being confronted without clarity is likely to trust the team less, and the lack of trust will only create more relational strife.

### 3. Over-involving others

Relational and team conflict should first be addressed between those involved in the conflict. When leaders unnecessarily involve others in an issue that could be easily handled, the residue of the conflict can remain in the minds of others long after resolution has occurred between those who were at odds with one another. (I am referring to relational conflict, not issues that should be brought to light for broad exposure.)

### 4. Not distinguishing between sin and style

Confronting someone for habitual sin that results in conflict (dishonesty, divisive attitude, gossip, etc.) should be handled differently than confronting someone for a leadership style that is out of sync with the context or a lack of competence that is causing strife. People who don’t match the culture of a team or who lack competence in their role should not be confronted as if they are in sin. While the issues must be addressed, their character and integrity should be affirmed in the midst of the process. At the same time, people who cause conflict because of their sin should be confronted for their sin. They should be lovingly challenged to repent for their own sake and for the sake of the teams they will serve on in the future.

Ultimately, unhealthy conflict among leaders impacts the people the leaders are seeking to serve. Conflict will always exist while we live this side of eternity. Wise leaders recognize this reality and seek to handle it with wisdom and compassion.

*If you feel like you could use some guidance through a rough situation in your church, please reach out to us at the General Conference. We have the well-being of our pastors and churches at the heart of our mission.* SR



Thirty-three SDBs from across the United States and Canada descended upon beautiful Colorado Springs for the **2nd Annual MULTIPLY Church Development Conference** from October 20 to 22.

The main theme for the conference was “Engaging in Hard Conversations.” On Thursday evening, we met at a local coffee shop to have a panel discussion with authors Alan Briggs, Deb Hirsch, and D.A. Horton on the topics of ethnicity and sexuality.

On Friday, we heard from these authors and other practitioners in main sessions and breakouts concerning these topics and sharing our faith in our communities. On Saturday, we met together as SDBs to process the conversations and to do a little more learning as it relates to church development.

This was a wonderful time for those interested in personal and church renewal, church planting, and pastoral care. ***We look forward to breaking our record attendance at next year’s 3rd annual MULTIPLY Church Development Conference (October 19-21, 2017). Make your plans to attend now!*** SR

by Rev. John J. Pethel  
Director

Church Development & Pastoral Services



Over the course of 2016, the Committee on Support and Retirement and the General Conference have highlighted the 10 current retirees in our Old Pastors Retirement Plan, formerly called P.R.O.P. (Pastors Retirement Offering Project) to bring awareness to our continued need to meet the obligations set forth by the terms of these plans in honor of their service to Seventh Day Baptists.

If you wish to contribute to honoring the service of these individuals, you can make a donation by giving online with a mention towards COSAR at [easytithes.com/sdb](http://easytithes.com/sdb) or by mailing a check to:

COSAR  
PO Box 1678  
Janesville, WI 53547

THANK YOU for your generous support!

*Our current recipients include Bill McAllister, Cynthia Brissey, Joyce Burdick, Leroy Bass, Leland Davis, Edgar Wheeler, Victor Skaggs, Don Richards, Kenneth Van Horn, and Joyce Conrod. David Pearson and Rex Burdick passed away earlier this year.*

## MARRIAGE

### FOWLER – SANFORD

Charlie Fowler and Emma Sanford, daughter of Dean and Lyndia (Merritt) Sanford, were united in marriage on October 8, 2016, in Oklahoma City, OK. The bride and groom both serve as lawyers in the US Army JAG Corps.

### Memory Verse for DECEMBER

#### Youth/Adult

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

– Joshua 1:9

#### Junior

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

– Joshua 1:9

#### Primary

Be strong and courageous.

– Joshua 1:9



The DWELL Online Learning Cohort is a six-month commitment with a coach who has previously gone through the DWELL process and is intended to give you a tool to disciple/mentor/coach others in your congregation and/or life.

We are currently running our 2nd iteration of DWELL and will be doing this for the next few years to not only provide some short-term discipleship for leaders but also to help provide a framework in which discipling/mentoring/coaching can be multiplied in your own local church.

If you are interested in learning more about the DWELL Online Learning Cohort, please contact the Director of Church Development and Pastoral Services, John Pethtel, at 608-752-5055 ext. 1009 or [jpethtel@seventh-daybaptist.org](mailto:jpethtel@seventh-daybaptist.org).

## SEEKING PASTOR

**Covenant SDB Fellowship, a Seventh Day Baptist gathering, meeting in Hungry Horse, Montana, is seeking a pastor or entrepreneurial Bible leader to help catalyze this congregation.**

**Covenant SDB Fellowship** is a small gathering of active Christ-centered Bible believers who are seeking to love the people of Hungry Horse and the Flathead Valley and share with them the love of Christ by training them to become Sabbath-honoring and gospel-sharing ambassadors of Christ.

#### Ideal requirements:

- Biblically knowledgeable (Bible College or Seminary preferred)
- Previous pastoral ministry experience preferred
- Previous experience in starting a church or ministry preferred
- Ability to be bi-vocational or raise support to pursue this ministry
- Spiritual giftings in evangelism and/or administration helpful
- Willingness to live in a rural area required
- Ability to work with others and equip them to serve to their potential

Please send a resume including your ministry experience and a cover letter explaining why you believe you are a fit for this position to:

PO Box 190278  
Hungry Horse, MT 59919

*Hungry Horse, MT, is located near the Flathead Valley, in the gateway to Glacier National Park. Big Sky country provides the beauty that reveals the wonders of God's creation and provides the opportunity to spend time with God.*



**God loved** the world so much  
that he **gave** his one and **only Son**,  
that whoever **believes** in him shall **not** perish  
but have **eternal life**.

— John 3:16 NIV

A page to color for children...or adults, too.

Periodicals postage paid  
at Janesville, WI  
and additional offices

# LIFE ON MISSION



**Touching lives for Jesus**

**Coming Next Summer:  
July 23 - 29, 2017**

**Seventh Day Baptist General Conference**

**Azusa Pacific University  
Azusa, California**

***Hey Kids! Check out page 27!***