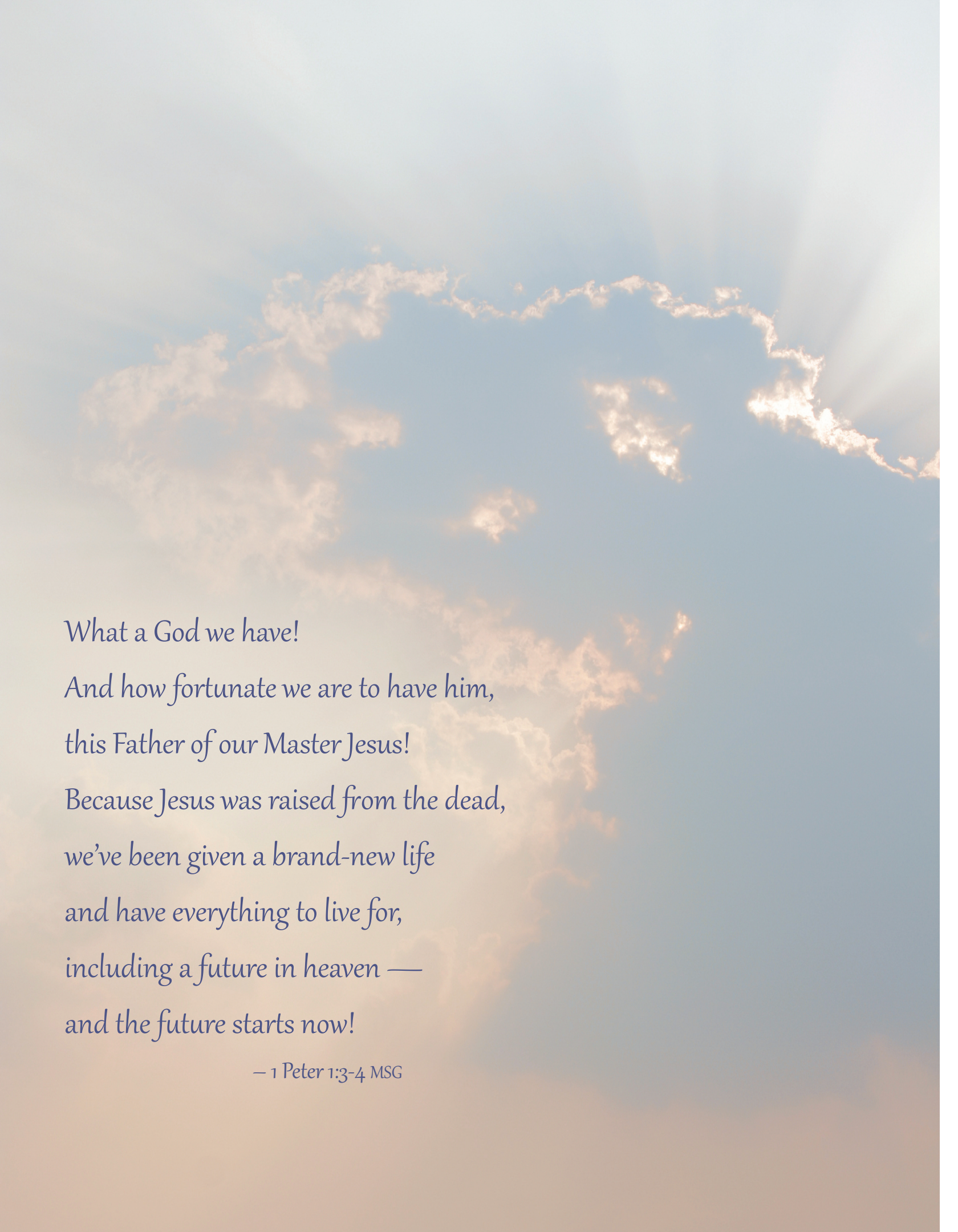


# Sabbath Recorder

*God sent His Son — they called Him Jesus;  
He came to love, heal and forgive.  
He lived and died to buy my pardon;  
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives.  
Because He lives, I can face tomorrow;  
Because He lives, all fear is gone.  
Because I know He holds the future,  
And life is worth the living just because He lives!*

— Gloria Gaither and William J. Gaither  
(CCLI 45150)





What a God we have!  
And how fortunate we are to have him,  
this Father of our Master Jesus!  
Because Jesus was raised from the dead,  
we've been given a brand-new life  
and have everything to live for,  
including a future in heaven —  
and the future starts now!

— 1 Peter 1:3-4 MSG

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# Sabbath Recorder

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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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## "Happy Easter, Groundhog!"

The tall, graying rabbit rose from his chair. Was that the front gate, he wondered. What's the time? Oh, dear! He'd been too deep in thought to watch the clock and now nearing his kitchen window he could see Groundhog coming up the walk. Rabbit met him at the back door.

"Hello, Hog, I wondered if you'd be free so early in the year!"

"Hello there, hello there" Hog said in his quaint, repetitive way. "I did get an early start this year!"

"Yes, but still, you are one who likes your sleep!" teased Rabbit. "Come in! I have tea waiting for us."

Groundhog entered the cottage and found his way to the kitchen table, selecting the first chair, which was more of a short, wooden foot stool, and Rabbit hopped into his favorite seat across from his guest.

As Rabbit poured two cups of tea, Hog began: "So, my friend, what shall we talk about this year?" and proceeded to gnaw on a carrot as if he were eating a cob of corn.

Rabbit and Groundhog would get together every new year for tea, once Groundhog had emerged... for good...from his winter slumber, and before Easter Rabbit was due to make his rounds. But this year Hog could tell Rabbit had much on his mind.



Rabbit cradled his teacup in his hands as he stared out the kitchen window, gazing at the buds on the trees that swayed in the early spring breeze. The groundhog stopped his chewing, cleared his throat, and prompted his host again: "Rabbit...?"

Rabbit blinked, focused on his guest, and let out a deep sigh. "Sorry. It's been a busy start to the year."

"Well, you do have a big day coming. But it's not your first Easter, now, is it?" chided Hog and pointed at his host with a half-eaten carrot.

*Continued on next page...*

## "Happy Easter, Groundhog!"

*Continued from previous page...*

"No, but I do hate it when I hear..."  
Rabbit's voice trailed off.

"Hear what?"

"Well, when I hear those that question my purpose around Easter!"

'Oh, this again...' thought Groundhog.  
"Really, you are the Easter Rabbit, or Easter Bunny, or even Easter Hare. That's who you are! Here we are, you and I, lucky to live here in Folkton. What's not to like about folk like us? Not every tale gets so well treated!"

"But, really, don't you ever wonder?" Rabbit looked up at nothing in particular. "I mean, you've got your day all to yourself. I'm left sharing a very important day...with the Almighty!"

"Now, just think about it" assured Groundhog as he stirred his second cup of tea with yet another carrot. "Think about all those kids you'll visit this Easter. Don't you think you make them happy?"

"Maybe..." said Rabbit, nervously pulling his ear. "But what about those I don't make happy? Those that see me as competing with a grander event? Christ's resurrection! That's some stiff competition!!"

"Rabbit, you and I have lived here in Folkton for a long time. We both have long histories, much of which even we have forgotten. Why, if I recall, you arrived with the sir name of Osterhase."

"You've got a long memory! That's been a few centuries!" Rabbit said with a brief smile. It had been quite a while since he'd thought about his German relatives. And that was saying something. As a rabbit, he had plenty of relatives! Rabbit let go of his ear and looked earnestly at Hog. "But how does that lessen this competition?"

"Rabbit, when you first arrived here in Folkton, it was as that "Osterhase" or "Easter Hare." There's nothing to worry about. You're not competing," Hog assured him. But Rabbit still didn't seem convinced.



*"I'm sharing a very important day... with the Almighty!"*

*That's some stiff competition!!"*

"But that's just a name. And some claim that very name 'Easter' comes from some pagan word. Again, putting me in competition with the Resurrection!" Groundhog could see that Rabbit was quite bothered.

"You know, Rabbit, I've also heard the name Easter might have German roots, just like you. That it's some translation error for white week, since early Christians would wear white and get baptized around what is now called Easter week." Groundhog paused to see if he was getting through to Rabbit. Just for good measure he poured himself some more tea. "There's really no proof of either, you know."

Rabbit stared at his guest. "How on earth do you know so much about the subject?"

Groundhog gave off another repetitive reply: "Ha-hee! Ha-hee! And you thought I slept all winter? I manage to do a fair amount of reading before I drift off for the season. And I always seem to be awakened by ole' Kris Kringle in December. I have done my research on a fair amount of holidays, including my own! Not too many have heard of Candlemas — but that's more my story, and we were talking about you and yours. Easter is Easter. That's all there is. Some will question and some will not."

"Maybe..." Rabbit furrowed his eyes. "But still others bring up my eggs. I love bringing things to the children." Rabbit sounded crestfallen as he continued. "It's more than just eggs. There's chocolate, candy, jelly beans!"

"I've read some 16 billion jelly beans are

bought each Easter." Hog realized he'd interrupted Rabbit's train of thought. "My apologies! Continue. Please!"

"Wherever do you find these facts!" exclaimed Rabbit. He shook his head, then proceeded. "There are those who talk about my eggs being a symbol of fertility, of some long-ago pagan tradition meant to lessen the significance of the Easter message..." Rabbit pulled on both ears now. He was quite upset.

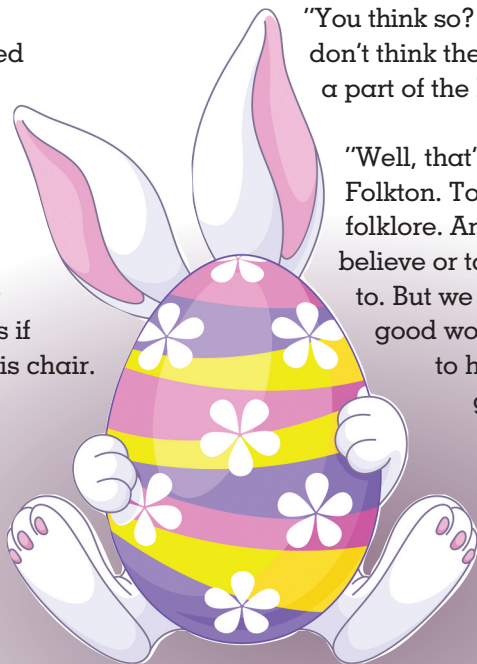
Groundhog set down his cup and brushed a carrot leaf or two off his vest. "Rabbit, think back. Think back to long ago, to when you started bringing your eggs at Easter. Why did you first bring eggs on Easter morning?"

Rabbit looked at Groundhog, still tightly pulling his ears down around his head as if he were trying to keep from floating off his chair. Slowly Rabbit began to recollect. "The children would make nests for me...and I would put my eggs in their nests."

"But why eggs?" Hog quizzed his friend.

"Well, you weren't allowed to eat eggs during the Lenten season." As Rabbit grew deeper into his memories, he gradually began releasing his grip on his ears. "Christians were called to give up things as they remembered the sacrifice of Christ. One thing was to 'fast' or not to eat — at least certain foods. Eggs were one of the items you weren't to eat, at least until Easter came." Soon one ear popped out of his hands, then the other. Rabbit was feeling more like himself as he continued. "But you see, my friend..." Rabbit took a quick sip of tea, let off a relaxing sigh, and began to smile ever so slightly. "Chickens don't observe Lent, so they would keep laying eggs. Sometimes a dozen at a time! These eggs were valuable to the farmers and their families. The only way to preserve so great a source of food was to hard boil the eggs. So I would go around on Easter morning and leave hard-boiled eggs for the children as a reminder that the time for fasting had passed and it was now time to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus!"

Groundhog smiled to himself. His friend was finally starting to see his point. "So, what you're saying is for years you've helped to bring joy to children on Easter Sunday. You're actually helping to remind families from all over about the good news of Christ's resurrection? That doesn't sound like a competitor. That sounds more like a courier. I think you're actually sharing the message by making sure more people remember the Easter season."



"You think so? But what about those that don't think the Easter Bunny should be a part of the holiday?"

"Well, that's the joy of being from Folkton. To some, we really are only folklore. And those that prefer not to believe or talk about us don't have to. But we are there to spread the good word to those that want to hear. Children, parents, grandparents...to some people that aren't sure about the Easter story, you may be the best way to share that message. Your message. His message.

*You're actually helping to remind families from all over about the good news of Christ's resurrection?*

Think about that the next time you start to worry."

Easter Rabbit looked at peace finally. "Hog," Rabbit said. "I'm so glad we had this chat! Would you care for another carrot?"

"I don't mind if I do."

As Groundhog reached for the offered snack, he leaned in and looked Rabbit right in the eyes. "Happy Easter, Easter Bunny!"

Rabbit sat back and picked out his own carrot to munch. He looked approvingly at his friend and said, "Happy Easter, Groundhog!" SR

— Bill Probasco  
SDB Church of Shiloh, NJ



# FREEDOM!

*We are given the responsibility to testify to the world of the freedom Christ has brought to us through His propitiatory act on the Cross.*

*Seeing Jesus during the time of the Crucifixion from the perspective of three women in the Bible gives us an insight into who Jesus is, the value of the Cross, and what He did in changing their lives and ours for all eternity!*

*I moved among* the crowds, watching the sequence of events and remembering how different, painful and sad my life used to be — how much things had changed when this Man came into my life! I am not the same. Instead of hiding in the shadows, I freely moved through the people who were now shouting, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Pontius Pilate, the Governor, stepped forward, “Why? What crime has He committed?” The crowd shouted even louder, “Crucify Him!” Pilate washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this Man’s blood. It is your responsibility.” Pilate’s soldiers took my Savior, my Healer, into the soldiers’ Praetorium where I watched them strip Him, put a scarlet robe on Him, force a crown of thorns on His head, and mock Him: “Hail King of the Jews.” If they only knew; if they only knew how much more He is. I held back the tears, the piercing in my heart, fighting not to hate but to love as He taught me...as He taught us. I pushed my way through, wanting to see what was going to happen next. They spat on Him and repeatedly struck the crown of thorns on His head with a staff. Blood ran down His face, scarlet like the robe He wore. The soldiers thought this was a game. I heard myself say, “No, stop that!” but

nothing came from my lips. A tear ran down my cheek. You see, I am a woman among a society ruled by men. My voice is silent here! Heartbroken, I watched my Messiah take insult after insult. What is happening? He is being tried. For what reason? For being kind, for healing the sick, for feeding the masses, for teaching us amazing mysteries of GOD, for casting out demons from the tormented, for looking on a woman like me?



Looking to my left, I saw another woman pushing her way through the crowd; our eyes met and it was as if we knew how much Y'Shua, the Messiah, meant to each other. We looked ahead and the two of us saw another woman moving through the crowd as well. The third woman shared the same expression, the same understanding, the same love for Him — the same freedom. We each inched our way, closer, closer to see what was going on. Oh, what He meant to us! What He did for us freed us beyond belief. Each one of us had a story of freedom.

*I was the first.* He came to my town on His way to Galilee. It is known every Jew avoids my area. We are the half-breeds, the outcasts. It was the hottest time of the day and I, in my shame, avoid the women who come in the cool of the morning to draw water. I had enough of their snickering, their judgmental hypocritical, holier-than-thou life. So what? I made many mistakes, six to be exact! There He was sitting by Jacob's well alone. Okay, this morning is different! I hesitated. But this was a Man I had never seen before. What was He doing here? The men are off working, farming. I should be alone here; me and my thoughts keeping me company. Well, I must go on. He spoke to me! What?! He asked me kindly and nicely for water to drink. Could this be the husband I have been looking for? But wait, He is a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. He turned towards me and said the most profound thing I had ever heard: "If you knew the gift of GOD and Who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water." He wanted me to know that I might ask for natural water, as what comes from Jacob's well, but He would give me much more? He would give me living water? I want that gift of GOD that allows this Man, if asked, to give me living water. I want this living water. I observed

*What He did for us  
freed us beyond belief.  
Each one of us had  
a story of freedom.*

that He did not have anything to draw the water which was deep in the well. And surely, Jews do not use Samaritan utensils. Not understanding, I asked, "Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father, Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?" I mean, who does He think He is? Another profound statement, spoken with authority! He did not sound like the rulers and religious men I knew. He told me that drinking from Jacob's well will mean I will be back for more water; in a way, living the

same hidden life, the one I have lived for so many years. He was offering me a New Way to live. I wanted this more than anything! I have lived a life of shame as I look for love in all the wrong places. I simply want to be loved. Then, He told me something He should not know — unless He

is...a prophet, the Messiah, the Christ? I know the Messiah will explain all things to us because Samaritans and Jews argue about on which mountain we are to worship the Father. He taught me of worship in Spirit and Truth, not the mountain, not Jewish or Samaritan ways! That together we will worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth! Then, He revealed Himself! The Messiah was here! The Messiah was here! I no longer felt shame, nor did I want to hide. I ran to my town calling my neighbors, "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" Everyone came out to see Him. I found true love, the Messiah's love!

*I lived a life in the shadows.* The Levitical Law says I am ceremonially unclean. I must not be seen among or with anyone as long as I have this existing condition. I am so lonely, longing for human touch, sympathetic hands! I can't even go to GOD and offer sacrifices. I can't go to the priest because I continue in uncleanness!

*continued on next page...*

## Freedom

*Continued from previous page...*

I am broke — spent all I have for treatments from men who call themselves doctors; I had to find a way to get better. I only suffered more and more and got sicker and sicker. What a life! Outcast, yet a Jew! I hear He is coming here. Talk has been around town of His healing power, that He healed everyone who was sick in Galilee. I need to see Him. I must get to Him. Oh, my, there He is! So regal, gentle, kindness all over His face. Let me hide! I am not supposed to be here and if seen and recognized, I could face being stoned. He is going with this man, Jairus; I recognize him. He is one of the Synagogue rulers. Wow! Jairus is asking Him for help for his dying daughter. This is my chance! All I need to do is touch His Tallit. The tassels of His Tallit (called Kalah) are sufficient; I know His power is all over Him, even in His Tallit. But I must go unnoticed. Yes, the crowds will provide a good cover; so many touching Him, He won't know who touched Him. Wiggling my way through the crowd, getting close enough to come up behind Him, I reach out, stretch my hands beyond those in front of me; closing my eyes, I pray for His Healing power to be mine today — believing! What just happened? I feel different; the bleeding has stopped. I am free! I am free! I am amazed! Praise GOD! Then the unexpected happened. "Who touched my clothes?" He asks. I only touched the kalah of His Tallit. There is no way He knew I touched Him. There are so many people around Him. How did He know? He's looking around. Oh, no! I can't hide anymore! The Messiah knows! I fell to His feet trembling with fear, I told Him the whole truth. "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go into Shalom [wholeness] and be freed from your suffering." That's it! No stones! Go into the Shalom He has given me? I am freed from my suffering. I will follow Him!

*I am the third woman.* My life was one of respect and dignity. Yet, I was unsatisfied, disgruntled with my husband. I was caught in the act, pulled from the

shadows, from the arms of one I thought I loved. New love! Dragged to the temple courts; put on display for all to see; forced in my shame to stand before everyone! And there He was, sitting among them, getting ready to teach. The Law of Moses says I am to be stoned. "Now what do you say?" This was the question asked of Him; I don't even know His Name. He calmly bent down and with His finger started to write on the hard, cold, cobbled stones. He said nothing for a few minutes but continued to write. What is He doing? Why are they asking Him this question? This is a matter for the Jewish rulers to decide about my stoning. Who is this Man? They peppered Him with questions. When He was ready, He stood up, poised and regal. I

am dead now! "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." He once again bent down and wrote on the ground. I tried to see what He wrote. You should have seen the look on their faces! One by one, they started to leave; the older ones first. I fell to my knees sobbing, preparing to die by

stoning, drowning in my shame! What have I done? One moment of pleasure now costs me my life. Bracing for the pain, nothing came! I waited for what seemed like an eternity. Then I heard a voice, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" I opened my eyes to see only this Man remained. Amazed, I said, "No one, Sir." Sweetest words I have ever heard came to my ears, "Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin." The teachers of the Law would, but they could not; He could, but would not! Such grace! Such freedom!

*Together,* we watch as our LORD is beaten beyond recognition, mocked, spat upon, treated like less than a human, when He has been the most humane to those like us three who deserve to be stoned! He risked His status as a Jewish male to talk with a Samaritan woman, to extend healing to a ceremonially unclean Jewish woman, and to give the gift of no condemnation to a Jewish woman caught in adultery. Every nail pounding in His hand runs ripples through

*We are free!  
Freedom has come!  
Glory to GOD!*

my spine, every hit resonates in the air! He yells with pain as He is tortured! Jesus, we know Your Name! We don't understand everything that is happening, but we three can testify of the Love of the True and Living GOD in His Son, Y'Shua. The soldiers cast lots for His robe; the very same one I saw Him wearing at Jacob's well; the very one He wore when I touched His Tallit; the exact one He wore when He extended His hand to me — the touch I so longed for. Covered in His blood and wearing only a loin cloth, He endures a punishment He does not deserve! The soldiers take turns watching Him. Above His Head, they place a placard with the inscription "THIS IS JESUS, KING OF THE JEWS" in all the known languages of the time. The Jews get even more agitated, yelling for the sign to be removed.

The time is growing near! We can see Him growing weary! Father, give Him strength. He is asking why You have forsaken Him. Listen! He said, "Kalah" (finished, accomplished, achieved) at the same time the High Priest declares the sacrifice at the Temple is finished. He has breathed His last breath. Oh, My Savior!

What is happening? An earthquake! We learn later the curtain in the Most Holy Place ripped in two, the altar was broken, and many holy people were coming out of their tombs, raised to life immediately after Jesus said "Finished," and breathed His last. To even further the excitement, we hear that He is risen now. It's been three days! He should be as good as dead! Yet, we hear of testimonies of those who have seen Jesus and the holy people, freed from death! What a glorious time to be alive! We are free! Freedom has come! Glory to GOD! We understand the Messiah came to set us free from sin, showing us the LOVE of the Father. His death paid the price and now we experience the full meaning of what He came to do. Freedom in Christ!

*The three women in focus* had one thing in common: they should be stoned! One looked for love in all the wrong places. She was guilty on six counts The other needed physical, psychological, and financial healing. She was guilty on twelve counts. The other needed condemnation removed. She was guilty on one count. No matter how long we have lived without acknowledging His love for us, He died for us! Freedom in Christ is a step

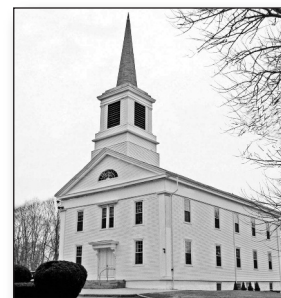
away. These women found freedom in the prospect of Jesus dying. We find freedom in retrospect! He has died. Romans 5:7-8 says, "Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But GOD demonstrates His own love for us in this; While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." The story does not end here. He also was raised to life for us! Romans 8:10-11, "But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who lives in you." He is Risen! Do you know what that means? As you remember in this time who Jesus is, remember who He did it for and why. It was for you. "For GOD so loved..." John 3:16. Powerful word, "so"— signifies intensity, not quantity. Praise Him today! He is Risen! Hallelujah! [SR](#)

— Julia Coleman  
SDB Church of Shiloh, NJ

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For more details and information, contact Pastor Dave Stall

Phone: 401-377-2123 (church office) Email: pastordavestall@gmail.com

**It's Easter**, so you might think that I am going to be talking about bunnies and eggs and pastel colors. Nope. I want to talk about Zombies. Yes, you heard me right...Zombies. At this point some of you might be thinking I have gone off the deep end. Well, I might have, but that is not why I am talking about Zombies.

A few years ago, I saw an image on *BuzzFeed* that told us that Jesus was not a Zombie. After all, Zombies eat humans and Jesus most certainly did not. It continues that He is not a ghoul since they continue to decay. This goes on through things like vampires and ghosts, and ends with the conclusion that Jesus is a lich. The explanation is that a lich uses magic to return a soul to a body for the express purpose of living forever. Oh, and a lich has the power of necromancy.

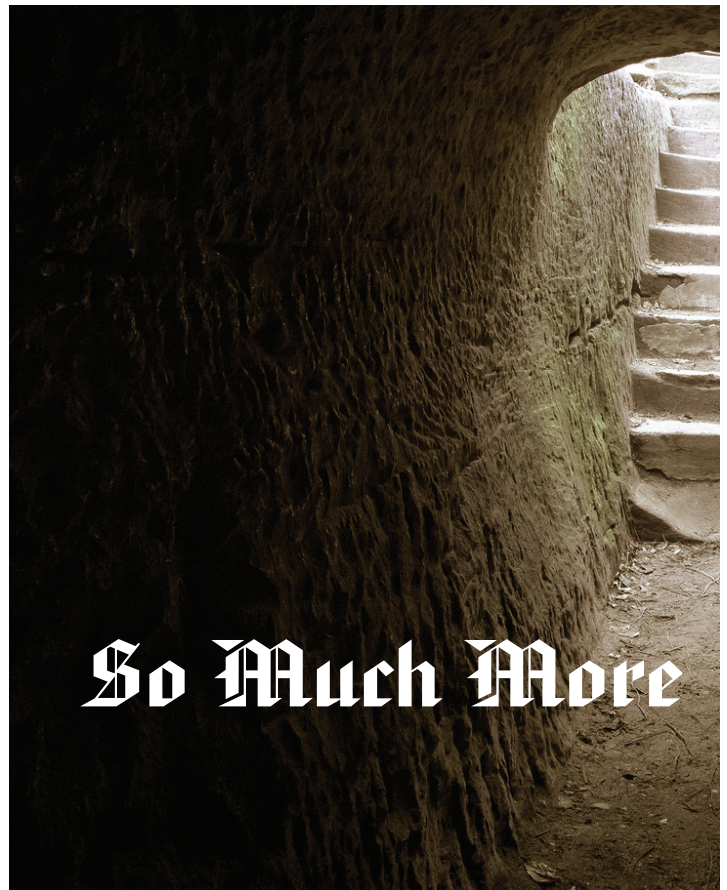
Now this image was meant in jest, and as someone who understands the fantasy world, I laughed. But it also made me think. What do we believe about the resurrection? What does it mean for our lives? Was Jesus some kind of "Biblical lich"?

The answer to the last question is most certainly "no." But the other questions are good questions to ask. What we believe about the resurrection has a dramatic impact on our faith. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:19 that if Jesus is not raised, "we are of all men most to be pitied." (NASB) This is not some hyperbole of Paul. For Paul the central hope of Christianity rests in the resurrection of Jesus. If this is true, then a full understanding of the resurrection is central to all Christian belief.

### **What DO we believe about the resurrection?**

This brings me back to *BuzzFeed* and the "Jesus Zombie." That image was created because it was very popular for people on Facebook to post "Happy Zombie Jesus Day." After all, isn't everyone who comes back from the dead a Zombie? Well, the creator of that image understood this was not the case and sought to inform the world.

I agree with the intent of the creator — Jesus was certainly not a Zombie. Yet the conclusion is not correct either. What the creator did in jest was actually the start of a great exegetical concept. The problem with concluding that Jesus was a lich is that it assumes that Jesus falls into some understood category. The miracle of the resurrection is that it was something completely new. It was something that had never before happened and has not happened again since.

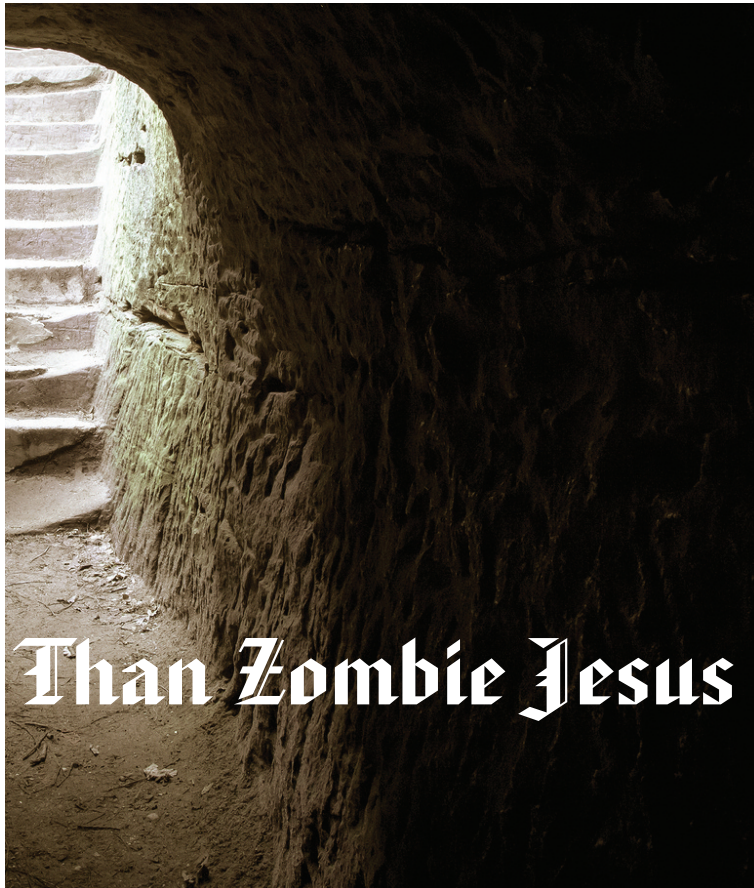


The astute among you may say, what about Lazarus from John 11? Or those raised at the crucifixion mentioned in Matthew 27:52-53? Or Elisha and the Shunammite's son in 2 Kings 4:18-37? You would be right to say that in all of these cases someone was raised from the dead. But here is the difference: Each of them died again.

The difference with Jesus is that He did not die again. If we use the image from *BuzzFeed*, we might say that in each case they were ghouls — their bodies were still aging. No, Jesus was something very different.

We find in the gospels that the resurrected Jesus is able to appear and disappear in the blink of an eye (see Luke 24:13-35, specifically verse 31). Later we see that He is able to get into a locked room (See John 20:19). To some this might indicate that Jesus was some kind of spirit with the ability to appear and disappear at will and potentially walk through walls. Yet the image from *BuzzFeed* assures us that He had physical form and still had His wounds. Guess what? That's true.

If we look at the rest of the account in John 20:19-29, we find that Thomas is able to touch the wounds of Jesus. Luke's account of this (24:36-43) adds that Jesus ate fish with them. A spirit would not be able to be touched nor would it be able to eat fish.



## Than Zombie Jesus

The conclusion then is Jesus is a lich, right? No. Jesus is God. This is the problem with the image on *BuzzFeed*. It ignores one of the central tenets of Christianity. Oh don't get me wrong, there were several councils in church history where just exactly how Jesus is God was discussed. (Spoilers, they couldn't agree with exactly how, but they did agree with things He was not. Namely a spirit or only a human.)

### What does the resurrection mean for our lives?

I have already said that Paul thinks the resurrection is of vast importance. But why? Well, for Paul, Jesus is the first fruit of the hope to come. (See 1 Corinthians 15.) Because Jesus was raised, we will be raised. Because Jesus defeated death, we do not have to fear death (verses 20-23). These are amazing promises!

Yet there is more. Paul goes on to tell us that the bodies we will be raised in will be changed bodies. Our resurrected bodies will be bodies of glory (verse 43). We will not have to worry about sickness and weakness and death. Again, these are great promises!

But this also brings up another point that I must say. Our hope is not heaven. At least not as we often think of it. Paul does not say that we will be spirit beings with harps and halos. No. Paul declares that we will have physical

## The difference with Jesus is that He did not die again!

bodies. They will certainly be glorified bodies, but they will be bodies. Our hope is not to leave behind a shell but to be reconstituted into a better body.

We find in Revelation 21 that there will be a new heaven and new earth (verse 1) and that heaven will come down and meet earth at the new Jerusalem (verse 2). More than that, we find that God comes and dwells with His people! (Verse 3) We find that He will wipe every tear, and there will be no more mourning, and no more crying, and no more pain. (verse 4). How great are these promises!! This is the hope of Christianity! This is the reason for Paul's confidence even in the face of death. And this is the reason that Easter is a celebration.

Easter is not about candy and bunnies and eggs. No, Easter is about victory. Victory over Satan. Victory over death. Victory over pain and sorrow and crying. Easter reminds us of the hope of Christianity!

I leave you now with a passage from my favorite book by one of my favorite theologians. N.T. Wright has this to say about Easter in *Surprised by Hope*:

*The bodily resurrection of Jesus is more than a proof that God performs miracles or that the Bible is true. It is more than the Christians' knowing of Jesus in our own experience (that is the truth of Pentecost, not of Easter). It is much, much more than the assurance of heaven after death. (Paul speaks of "going away and being with Christ," but his main emphasis is on coming back again in a risen body, to live in God's newborn creation.) Jesus's resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. That, after all, is what the Lord's Prayer is about.<sup>1</sup> SR*

— Phil Lawton  
SDB Church of Shiloh, NJ

<sup>1</sup> N.T. Wright. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 293.

As 2015 turns to 2016, the entire world seems to reflect on the previous year and resolve to be better in the upcoming one. You're going to drink more water, and she's going to lose weight, and he's finally going to finish that one project. Our lives change so drastically in the span of a mere 24 hours as we begin the new year with determination. Yet, no one seems to last. Maybe you're feeling really determined and you make it all the way to May before you give up — but, you still fail. We all do. We're flawed.

But maybe our failure is less of a lack of dedication and more of a lack of perspective. How can we expect to improve in any way when we are so wrapped up in ourselves and our desires? The only way to anything worthwhile whatsoever is through Jesus Christ. Maybe we should put less emphasis on self-improvement and more on self-sacrifice.

God has been laying on my heart how comfortable I am with a passive faith. Lately, life has gotten so much in the way that I've missed out on truly living with a limitless faith. I have been so stuck. I try to get myself unstuck and I end up digging an even bigger hole for myself. The truth is that I cannot read my Bible enough, or listen to enough sermons, or dig deep enough into any theology to ever compel my heart on my own. For Christ's love compels us (2 Corinthians 5:14). My head knows this, but my heart has a hard time believing it. So often I fall back into a pattern of complacency that leads to self dependence. I fail time and time again and wonder why. But, what is the Gospel but complete, utter failure on our part and the glorious grace upon grace of Jesus Christ? In trying to become better, I become worse and need Jesus more and more with each passing day. We all do.

So, we become comfortable. We fool ourselves into believing that we are good enough, and mature, and

where God wants us to be. Yet, we miss so much. What if David was "too comfortable" to fight Goliath? Or if Esther was "too busy" to go speak to the king? We have so many limitations. We know the truth. We know the incredible truth of the gospel and yet we live like we don't. If the fact that JESUS IS ALIVE doesn't completely change everything, then maybe we are only fooling ourselves. If I say with my mouth that Jesus is Lord, yet I hold on to my dreams and my plans for

my life, then I am saying with my life that He is not in control over me. If I say that I believe in the gospel, and yet, I will not GO and proclaim it to others, then I am diminishing the power of what Jesus Christ has done. If I say that Jesus is alive, and yet, can't and won't give up my heart and my limitations, then I am saying with my life that He is still in that tomb. If we truly have encountered the beautiful truth of Christ and who He is, then we will be able to say

with Paul that nothing else compares. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord (Philippians 3:7-8). I am convinced that there is nothing in the entire universe that is as worthy as the Lamb who was slain for us. I so desperately want to rid my faith of mediocrity. I am tired of singing "take me deeper than my feet could ever wander" or "take my life" and still holding on to my ideas and dreams and limitations.

So let's turn from our limitations, and pride, and from ourselves to a God with radical plans for our lives. In this new year, let's look to Jesus Christ in everything, presenting our bodies as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1). This is all He ever wants and the only thing we are still so reluctant to give. As we look into 2016 with fresh eyes, let's stop reaching towards self-improvement. Don't give up a habit. Give up your heart. [SR](#)

## GIVE UP YOUR HEART



A little less than a year ago, I received a notification on Facebook that I had been added to a secret group. The notification read, "You have been added to the secret group 'I have a Tumor in my Chest'." I would have never anticipated entering my Facebook feed. I went to the group page to be met by a post by José (obviously the name has been changed for confidentiality). The post read something like, "I have a tumor in my chest and this was the easiest way to tell you all. I plan to do something within the next month; and odds are, I will die. I've known a couple months, but I've used that time to try and comprehend it. I was planning to just let myself go, but my resolve has strengthened. Do what you will with this information, but don't tell my family. I need to do that. Thank you for being in my life."

A week later, José posted that he would be having surgery in an attempt to remove the tumor. Praise God, he had the surgery a week or so after that and everything went well. The tumor was removed and he was going to have radiation therapy in order to remove the last part of it! We even had a party to celebrate! Everything seemed like it was all going so much better! All of our prayers had been answered and our friend was going to be okay.

Mid-July I received another notification from the secret group. I went to the group page and written there was one simple sentence: "They checked on my chest again and found that the tumor is still growing." Our hopes had been crushed. What we thought had been healed and had moved past had returned. However, about a month and a half later, another post went up letting us all know that it looked like he might be in partial remission! Again, praises were screamed to God that our friend once again was going to be okay and he would be healed!

A few weeks ago, another notification came to my Facebook and I am all ready to read about how well he was doing, and how the tumor was completely gone. The post read along the lines of: "Things don't look good. The doctors don't have anything positive to say, They don't think I'll make it past July." Reading that hit me like a rock, I had no idea how to respond. I couldn't understand how this could be happening to him. José was such an amazing person. He had worked so hard to

get to the place that he was in his life. He was someone I looked at and aspired to work even half as hard as he had. I was so angry — José didn't deserve this and why was God letting this happen to him again? It wasn't fair! I was so upset at the idea that God was going to just let someone who had worked so hard to get where he was die so young — to make all that hard work mean nothing.

The second half of José's post said this: "I have faith in God, however. I know I'll get through this. And even if I don't, it's part of God's plan. We all have a purpose. I feel okay, so I know I have more time. Anyway, I just wanted you all to know. I'll be okay." How could this be? How could José have so much faith in God? I am only an outsider in José's health and I was getting so upset. Yet he was LIVING it and he still had the faith that he was going to be okay. I was in awe. It's that faith that I need to aspire after. Not how hard working he is or how far he has come in his life, but rather that amazing unwavering faith that he has in God. We all need to strive and have that kind of faith. I pray every day now for José's health and I ask that you do as well. As José said, God has a plan and in the end God's plan will win out; we are all put on this earth for a purpose, and when we've fulfilled that purpose God calls us home to live with Him. Even if he doesn't realize it, I know that part of José's purpose was to teach me that unwavering faith. I will continue to strive to have that same amazing faith. <sup>[SR]</sup>

## UNWAVERING FAITH

*“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*

— Hebrews 11:1



## Steps of Faith

— Nadine Lawton  
First Hopkinton SDB Church, RI

We take many steps of faith throughout our lives. Our first steps are as a baby when we trust our parents to hold our hands as we take those first tentative steps toward walking on our own. My grandson is taking those tentative steps now.

As we grow, we continue those steps of faith. One of the first major ones is making the choice to go to college or find a job after high school. Many parents pray for their child to listen to the Lord's leading in that decision. My son just completed that step of deciding to go to college and is now trusting that the Lord will help him find the right job, since completing his degree.

One step of faith that Seventh Day Baptist Young Adults might make is whether or not to go into Summer Christian Service Corps. Should they not get a summer job and spend the summer in the Lord's service, supporting the ministries of one of our churches, or perhaps with the Missions Track serving our Jamaican Conference?

Many hours of prayer go into these decisions. And many hours of listening for the voice of the Lord also go into these decisions. I have it on good authority that many have made the decision to apply for SCSC. It looks to be a good team this year, with a new SCSC director and many new staff members to help train these young adults as servant leaders.

This is the 4th year that the Women's Board is asking you to *Step Out in Faith* to support these Young Adults. The students are asked to raise funding to help with their transportation and training costs (they all like to eat and have a roof over their heads!). But they also need to come up with what it will cost them to attend Conference and travel home. Or perhaps they are only able to come up with enough funds to travel home and not attend Conference. The Dorotha Shettel Fund was created to support these students by making it possible to attend Conference and get home after their summer of training as servant leaders.

How will you *Step Out in Faith* this year to raise funds for these dedicated young adults? Will you donate a dollar for every mile that you walk or run? Or perhaps you are more of a reader and would donate a dollar for every page that you read in a week. Are you trying to be more disciplined about your devotional time? How about charging yourself \$5 for every day you miss your time alone with God? Or give a gift of \$2 for every time

you do meet with God. Or perhaps the Lord just wants you to donate the amount He tells you to give to the Women's Board for the Dorotha Shettel Fund.

Last year, I took a step of faith and did a 40-day study of many of those listed in the Hall of Faith (Hebrews chapter 11). If you would like a copy of it, you can contact me at 4lawton@pkfamily.com or send a request to 4 Fields View Rd., Bradford, RI 02808. It is not an authoritative book about faith, but it will help you to look deeper into God's word to strengthen your faith. It's a reminder that none of us are perfect, but with faith in God, and making sure we are available for His work, we can take those steps of faith that He asks us to take. For every book I send out, I will pay the cost of mailing it to you, as well as donate that same amount to the Dorotha Shettel Fund. And I would ask that you donate \$5 to the fund.

Donations to the Dorotha Shettel Fund can be sent to: SDB Women's Board: Dorotha Shettel Fund, P.O. Box 1678, Janesville, WI 53547-1678 

## Robe of Achievement Nominations

The Deadline is **March 31** to submit nominations for the Robe of Achievement award from the Women's Society. The woman you nominate must be a member of an SDB church who has had an influence or contributed beyond the limits of her own community and church. A complete resume must be submitted containing a life history including her achievements and activities.

A nomination form is available at [SDBWomen.org](http://SDBWomen.org)  
A paper copy of the form is available from:  
Karen Payne, 13528 595th Street, Claremont, MN 55924 or email [karen.payne1127@gmail.com](mailto:karen.payne1127@gmail.com)

*Your nomination for the Robe of Achievement must be submitted to Karen Payne by March 31.*



Women's Society

Katrina Goodrich  
[www.sdbwomen.org](http://www.sdbwomen.org)



# Make the songs your prayer...

Linda Lawton  
Boulder SDB Church, CO



*And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." — Luke 10:27*

Music has always been an integral part of my life. I grew up in a church where every service included an anthem by the choir, in addition to other special music, and where the congregation sang ALL the parts in the hymns. I learned to appreciate the rich harmonies of an earlier generation at a very early age. More than that, the singing of hymns was the beginning of my theological education. Indeed, hymn writers like Martin Luther and Charles Wesley believed hymns were a means of teaching theology. My early years taught me to love God with all my strength and all my mind, to engage my brain in worship and to evaluate the truth of what I was singing.

I spent 22 years in that church. After I was married, I began to experience other churches, other traditions. In one of those, a very dear friend introduced me to "Contemporary Christian praise music." It was through this music that I learned to love God with all my heart and all my soul. When I feel impassioned about something, I speak with my entire body, and my hands are always in motion. The culture of praise music was such that I felt free to let my passion for God be expressed not only through my voice but through raising my hands in worship, whether I am singing hymns or praise songs.

One thing from my early years is ingrained in me, however. What we are singing must make sense, spiritually, theologically, and even (dare I say it?) grammatically. There is, to my mind, no excuse for singing something in praise to God which we would not speak to Him in prayer, no matter how beautiful the music. This means that there are both hymns and "worship songs" which should probably never be sung, not because they are not

beautiful, but because they point the worshipper back to him or herself, and do not direct us toward God, the true object of our worship.

In 2 Samuel 6, David wears nothing but a linen ephod and dances before the Lord in joy as he brings the Ark back to Jerusalem "with shouting and the sound of the trumpet" (vs 15). Other verses speak of praising God with tambourine and dance, loud clashing cymbals (Psalm 150), with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Eph 5:19, Col 3:16), and kneeling and bowing down (Psalm 95:6). These verses point to a multitude of ways to worship God. My daughter-in-law is a born-again Roman Catholic Christian, and I enjoy attending worship with her. The Catholic service encourages me to worship my creator by engaging all my senses through beautiful surroundings, much singing by celebrant and congregation, alternately standing, sitting and kneeling, and use of incense in some congregations.

When I took the "Perspectives on the World Christian Movement" course, perhaps the most powerful verses to me were those from Revelation 7:9-12. When I read these verses, I see the great multitude of every nation, and tribe, and people, and tongue, all bowing down before the Lord; I hear the glorious cacophony of praise from all these people worshipping Him in their own language, their own music, their own way, and it stirs my heart. God has not ordained that men worship Him in only one way. Our congregational worship services should strive to be a reflection of the great worship that is going on in Heaven!

Come to Conference. If you cannot sing with the hymns or praise music, then listen and make the songs your prayer to God. I will gladly stand next to you and raise my hands as you sit quietly. Together we will worship. [SR](#)



## Zambia T.I.M.E. Program and Gospel Feet Update

The course is half completed with three of our two-man training relays having completed their turns. Gordon Lawton (former Director of Pastoral Services in the USA and Canada Conference) and Carlton Ferguson (Principal of the Jamaica Bible Institute: JBI) were the first to take the baton as presenters for ministry training in the Jamaican Conference. They covered modules in Biblical Interpretation and Old Testament Survey from June 17 to 30, 2015.

They were followed by Brent Hannah (pastor of the Salem SDB Church in West Virginia) and Ian Ingoe (pastor of the West Auckland Seventh Day Baptist Church in New Zealand). They flew from two different directions to Zambia on October 1 and left on October 7 after training the leaders in Fundamentals of Christianity and New Testament Survey.

Our third team, took up the task of teaching on Church Administration and Leadership, as well as Spiritual Maturity and Tithing. Jon Gerstel (of the Berlin SDB church in New York state) accompanied his pastor, Matt Olson. They arrived in Zambia by way of Albany, DC, and Johannesburg on the 15th of January, 2016. By the 19th they had completed their seminars, spent time in worship, fellowship, and question and answer sessions, and were on their way back to the USA.

Three teams remain with a couple of slots open. However, we have Nick Kersten (Dean of the School of Ministry for the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA & Canada) slated to partner with our own Garfield Miller (Missions Coordinator for the Missionary Society in Kingston, Jamaica). Together they are to cover Christian Education, SDB History, and SDB Polity, as well as a brief review of the previous three sessions. Their trip is scheduled for March 31 through April 10. They need your support and prayers to get there, guide the students into a better understanding of following Christ as Seventh Day Baptists, and have safe travels home.



This project was kicked off with the *Ties that Bind Gospel Feet* 5K walk/run at the 2015 General Conference meetings in Lancaster, PA. At the writing of this article we are still running short about \$2,500 to keep the project fully funded. Everyone is invited to partner in this project, as a trainer, prayer partner, or sponsor. We need your help for us to finish strong. [SR](#)

### Missionary Society Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the members of the Seventh Day Baptist Missionary Society will be held at the Missionary Society Office, 19 Hillside Ave., Ashaway, RI, on Sunday, March 20, 2016, at 2:00 p.m. for the following purposes:

- To elect voting members, a Board of Managers and officers to hold office until the next annual meeting and until their successors are elected.
- To hear and act upon the reports of the Board of Managers and officers for the fiscal year January 1, 2015, to December 31, 2015.
- To ratify the appointment of independent public accountants for the current fiscal year.
- To consider and act upon such other matters as may properly come before said meeting or any adjournment thereof.

The Board of Managers has fixed the close of business on February 29, 2015, as the time at which members entitled to notice thereof and to vote at the meeting and any adjournment thereof shall be determined.

— Kathy Hughes, Secretary

*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,*

— Hebrews 12:1



FOCUS on Missions

Clinton R. Brown  
Executive Director



## The society we must create to realize our potential.

This is the last in a series about the “Vision Map” that the General Council introduced last July at General Conference Sessions in Lancaster, PA. In December, 2015, I began a four-month series covering each side of the “Vision Map.” The “Vision Map” lays out for the reader and viewer four distinct areas the General Council believes define and move Seventh Day Baptists forward as we advance God’s Kingdom. The four sides are:

**Mission** — The reason for our existence

**Core Values** — Commitments that everybody lives by — Our nonnegotiable

**Focus** — What is the most important thing we do day in and day out

**Culture** — Society we must create to realize our potential

This month we will explain the Culture.

In his book, *Leading from the Sandbox*, author T.J. Addington explains Preferred Culture this way:

*The culture you are committed to creating that will maximize your ministry’s impact and achieve your missional goals.*

*The definition of your desired culture has three major implications.*

- 1. You have a way to measure success in your ministry.*
- 2. It forces you to grapple with what your desired culture really is.*
- 3. It gives your staff the target they are working toward and alignment around that target.*

### THE SDB KINGDOM CULTURE

#### Compassionate Biblical Living

People demonstrate compassion by ministering to others as Jesus did. Our daily living should Biblically demonstrate the love of God.

1. Live Biblically
2. Pray First
3. Serve Compassionately

#### Generous Givers

People unselfishly contribute time, talent, possessions, and finances as God has blessed them.

1. Give Generously
  - a. Time
  - b. Talent
  - c. Resources
2. Look for Opportunities to Serve with Spiritual Gifts

#### Family

We desire to invite people to join us in worshipping and serving God. We will communicate and treat each other as if we are family because we are brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

1. Introduce people to a personal saving relationship with Jesus
2. Grow and mature as Christians

#### Wise Stewardship

Stewardship is wisely demonstrated in managing all of the resources God has entrusted to us. We actively use

and invest what God has given us rather than just storing it away.

1. Equip SDB’s for ministry
2. Invest in people who are equipped with ministry tools

#### Volunteer Focused

Volunteers are encouraged, empowered, and mobilized to serve. Many ministries are successfully supported by passionate volunteers. (Through these opportunities, leaders are identified and developed.)

1. Serve Compassionately
2. Healthy Ministries  
We believe that our ministries need to be healthy. Only healthy people can produce truly healthy ministry outcomes since relationships mean everything in ministry.

I hope and pray that this series has helped you with the “Vision Map.” I also hope that if you didn’t read about the Mission, Core Values, and Focus in previous issues, you will go back and do so.

The General Council was blessed in many ways as they went through this process for the Conference. I would strongly urge you to undertake this process in your local church. It won’t harm your church and its current undertakings, and will most likely bring clarification to what you are currently doing. [SR](#)

Rob Appel  
Executive Director



# 2015 Sabbath School Teacher of the Year: Rachel Trudell

The Seventh Day Baptist Christian Education Council is pleased to award the 2015 Sabbath School Teacher of the Year to Rachel Trudell from the Alfred Station Seventh Day Baptist Church.

Rachel began teaching when she was in college. She started with the 2nd and 3rd graders. After taking a break while starting to raise her children, she began teaching the high school class. She has guided this class in such a way that three of her students have become Sabbath School teachers themselves. She encourages participation by providing yummy treats and a safe environment for the youth to share their thoughts and opinions. She incorporates skits, laughter and outside-the-box thinking to allow the students to learn. She is never judgmental but will not compromise her beliefs when leading the class in discussions regarding worldly versus Biblical values.

One of Rachel's students said, "She has taught us that it is okay to be unsure about something, and to never be afraid to ask questions. By example, she has taught us what it means to be authentic and live with God in our lives. She is a very loving person who is extremely supportive of us, as a Sabbath school, and as individuals."

Rachel cares about the youth in her class. Each Sabbath, Rachel uses her caring as a licensed Counselor and her spiritual gifting for one-on-one counseling. These counseling opportunities receive high priority. Rachel truly believes that faith must be passed on to the next generation in a way that integrates this generation into the older generation.

Rachel not only serves her church as a Sabbath School teacher, but also serves on the Christian Education Committee, leads the Junior Youth Fellowship and serves as Vice President of the Church.

The Christian Education Council encourages all churches to honor those in their church who serve as Sabbath School teachers. One way to honor these teachers is to nominate one for the Sabbath School Teacher of the Year.

The Council seeks nominees whose outstanding teaching skills have contributed to the Christian nurture of our people. Because only one person is selected, not everyone worthy of recognition will be identified and honored. Nevertheless, we seek to honor one teacher on behalf of the many who have shared Christ and His teachings. Member and branch churches of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA & Canada, Ltd., may nominate a Sabbath School teacher. <sup>SR</sup>

— Peggy Chroniger



## Sabbath School Teacher of the Year ELIGIBILITY AND NOMINATION:

### Nominee:

- is a member in good standing of the nominating church
- exhibits the quality of faith and teaching found in the life and teachings of Christ
- he or she CURRENTLY serves as a Sabbath School teacher

### Local Church:

- is a member or branch church of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA & Canada, Ltd.
- certifies the nominee's church membership, present Sabbath School teaching position, previous Sabbath School teaching experience, unique teaching skills or practices, and other Christian Education service
- attaches the nomination comments from student or parents (in the cases of teachers of children) in support of the nominee's teaching effectiveness
- the local Pastor and Superintendent will submit the nomination to the Christian Education Council by **e-mail or post by the deadline of May 31, 2016**. The date of submission is determined by the date that the document arrives to the Council.
- Churches from whose membership a person has received the Sabbath School Teacher of the Year Award shall be ineligible for the next three years. For 2016 nominees will not be considered from the Riverside, CA (Kurt Berg), Salem, WV (Jo Rogers) and Alfred Station NY (Rachel Trudell) churches.

### NOMINATION FORMS:

- Forms are available by e-mailing the Director of Education and History, Nick Kersten (nkersten@seventhdaybaptist.org).
- As long as all of the information requested on the nomination form is provided in an easily identified manner, the church may substitute its own format for the nomination.



Christian Education Council

Rev. Nicholas J. Kersten  
Director of Education and History

## Donald E. Richards

Donald E. Richards (Pastor Don) was born on June 5, 1925, in Montrose, CO. Pastor Coon from the Boulder SDB Church visited with families in the Montrose area as much as possible; and in the Spring of 1934, Don came forward during a revival meeting. He accepted Jesus as his personal Savior and was baptized shortly afterwards.

The family moved to Riverside, CA, and Don graduated from Riverside Polytechnic High School in 1943 and from Riverside Junior College with an Associate in Arts Degree in 1950. Don also attended Salem College graduating in 1952 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree.

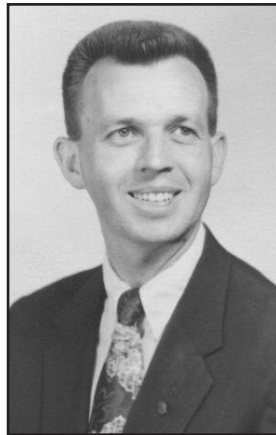
On May 29, 1955, Pastor Don married Edna Ruth Randolph in Lost Creek, WV, with Rev. Rex Zwiebel officiating. They had four children together: Dan, Tim, Elizabeth, and Doneta. Edna Ruth passed away on January 2, 1980, after a struggle with cancer.

Pastor Don then received pastoral training from the Alfred University School of Theology, graduating with a Bachelor of Divinity in 1957, and a Certificate in Pastoral Counseling from Princeton Theological School in 1978.

Pastor Don married Shirley Maxine Boyd on September 19, 1982, in Salemville, PA. Shirley passed away on February 20, 1985.

Pastor Don also married Geraldine Cox on September 3, 1989, in Ritchie County, WV. Gerry passed away on September 21, 2003.

Pastor Don served SDB churches in Riverside, CA; Battle Creek, MI; Alfred, NY; Berea, WV; Middle Island, WV; Dodge Center, MN; Verona, NY; Marlboro, NJ; and Waterford, CT; he was on the Board of Christian Education, the American Sabbath Tract Society, and the Missionary Society. Pastor Don is currently a faithful member of the Milton SDB Church. <sup>SR</sup>



1963



Pastor Don

# Retired Pastor Profile

## COSAR

*Over the course of 2016, the Committee on Support and Retirement and the General Conference wish to highlight the eleven 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 [seventhdaybaptist.ministrygive.com](http://seventhdaybaptist.ministrygive.com) or by mailing a check to: COSAR, PO Box 1678, Janesville, WI 53547.*

*THANK YOU for your generous support!*



## Top Ten Words

### Monopoly vs. Chess: Exodus 20:15

Sermon Series by Pastor Dusty Mackintosh, Next Step Christian Church, Thornton, CO

**Not “what’s yours is mine” but “what’s mine is yours.”**

#### Jim the Monopoly King

In the year 2003, I worked for a criminal mastermind by the name of James Paul Lewis, Jr. We called him Jim. Jim was president of the company I started working for while I was in college. I was a junior programmer; he was the guy who showed up at company meetings with a briefcase full of \$100 bills, giving each of us one on the way out of our monthly meetings. He was a popular boss. This guy owned all sorts of businesses and had investments, had his private jet, drove a Lexus V12, homes everywhere...we knew he was a financial genius. We had confidence he was going to take this small start-up company to glory! He did take us to fame, when, in 2004 he fled California with the FBI hot on his tail. After a short manhunt, they arrested Jim, seized all his assets, and sentenced him to 30 years in prison. Over 20 years, Jim had stolen around \$311 million dollars from “investors” in a classic Ponzi scheme...the ninth largest financial fraud in history. They recovered about \$11 million.

Now, you may think he got his “just desserts.” But somehow his family stayed wealthy (enough sheltered assets) and for twenty years he lived the high life. He could be counted a fantastic success. For twenty years he was considered AMAZING by everyone who knew him. The only trouble is he got caught. But he was 60 by then and he had gotten to experience comfort and luxury — opulence — he had it.

If life is a game of Monopoly...and most of the time, it basically is...we spend a great deal of our time and we make a whole lot of our decisions in the world of Monopoly. In the game of “Monopoly,” Jim was *this* close to winning.

From Jim I learned this lesson:

Stealing is the most effective means of amassing wealth. You have to be clever, you have to get tricky. But if the goal of life is to maximize pleasure, to maintain comfort, and to gain wealth...why not? Let’s ignore what the judge called “a crime

against humanity” and the hundreds of investors (many elderly) left destitute. **Why not gain the world?**

#### Hands Off My Stuff

Exodus 20:15 — *You shall not steal.*

No thieving!

That is simple enough, really. This is not complicated. Stealing is making my pile of stuff larger by taking from your pile of stuff. Or, simply:

#### What’s yours is mine.

Ooh, that looks nice...and it’s mine now. That’s how stealing works. Everyone clear on that?

#### Making it Complicated

Now, of course, people are going to make this complicated. The civil laws are coming, and they are going to help define, in a largely agrarian tribal society, what is thieving. Because people, being people, are going to try to get away with stuff. Anything they can get away with.

What about borrowing and not giving back? *Thieving*. What about borrowing and “losing” the cow? Investigation into your motives and the location of the cow and a binding oath before God or...it’s *thieving*. What about taking advantage of someone’s need, loaning him money when he is desperate, then charging him interest when he pays it back? That’s like the foundation of our economy! *Thieving*...though it does get a little more complicated. All of these examples come up. God addresses specific examples in the civil law because people are going to try and get away with whatever strategy they can. They are going to be Creative. They are going to use the best strategies they can within the boundaries...and outside those boundaries if they can get away with it. But at heart, stealing is really pretty simple. I look at your pile of stuff, and I say:

**What’s yours is mine.**

## Why not Communism?

Why did God do this?

We don't tend to think about this because this is something we take for granted. But God is working with a relatively blank slate. He has delivered the people of Israel out of slavery. Everything that they have now, everything that they "own" was gifted to them by the people of Egypt who were glad to see them go after all the plagues. This is God's opportunity to set up a Communist ideal. Everyone has his needs met: manna appears in the morning, plenty for everyone, water from rocks when you need it, quail when you need meat — life is good. We are all one big family, after all, so let's just pool everything together, and everyone work together for the common good. God has this opportunity to create the perfect Communist society. But He doesn't.

### Your Sliver of the Universe

He draws a boundary, a border, around private property, around wealth, and protects it. This isn't the first time — from Creation, God said to Adam, you are "over" all of this, subdue it. **God created and gifted personal wealth.** He made sure, even as nomads in the desert, that they had gold and stuff from the Egyptians. Then He gave this command, and instigated, affirmed and protected the idea that: you have stuff, and "they" can't take "your" stuff.

This is a big deal. God creates and protects private wealth... and we have to assume God does so for a purpose. This is God, carving out a little piece of the universe...and then calling it "yours." No one else is allowed to take it. Then He sits back, and I think, watches to see what we are going to do with it. That is quite remarkable, actually. **God gives wealth.** Why? What are we going to do with it? **What is the purpose of wealth?**

### Monopoly and Sideways Football

One obvious idea is the Monopoly idea. Obviously, the point is to run up the scoreboard! To get all the wealth.

The early Israelites absolutely understood that wealth came from God, but they interpreted it this way: if God gave you lots of wealth...you must deserve it. You must be righteous! The wealthier you are, the more righteous you must be! So if you can scheme your way, slipping and sliding right up against that boundary of "no thieving," maybe tiptoeing past it, you are super righteous because you are super rich. *Scoreboard!*

A whole lot of "technically" this isn't stealing. I can't charge my "fellow Israelite" money, but anyone who has a little foreign blood? 200% interest...and now you're my slave! Look how Righteous I am! *Scoreboard!*

All of the incentives are stacked on gaining the most toys, the most wealth, the most comfort, and the most pleasure! It is like God set up the football game with the eighth commandment. Here is wealth, I created private property. And here are the boundaries. You can't "steal" each other's stuff. *Game on!* And they started playing...but they started playing sideways.

The goal was to get up as close to the edge of the boundary as possible, amassing as much wealth as possible...and calling that righteousness. Brilliant. Or, just like in Monopoly, they skirt all around the edges. Forget about seeking the center of the command...let's stay as close to the edge as possible and get rich. God even sets it up later to reset everyone's wealth every 50 years. The Year of Jubilee: everyone gets his ancestral land back. They ignored that. They were busy running up the scoreboard, and thus proving how much God loved them and blessed them. The prophets yelled over and over, "You are playing sideways...and you're not even inside the bounds!" You thieves, you cheat on your taxes, you cheat on your tithes, you dress it up and try to complicate it but...you look at each other, and you look at God, and you say, "**what's yours is mine.**" You misunderstood the purpose of wealth. **What is the purpose of wealth?** If only Jesus had weighed in on this topic...

### Jesus on Wealth

Wasn't it handy how Jesus addressed the last few commandments in the sermon on the mount? There are few subjects Jesus talked about more than money. The Kingdom of God, the Sabbath, maybe one or two others. Jesus wouldn't shut up about money.

He said: *be careful, it's dangerous, it is another Master, and you can't serve two.* He said: *it isn't Righteousness, don't be fooled. Wealth won't get you in, any more than a camel can fit through a needle. Impossible!* He said: *Don't bother gathering earthly treasures...it's all about the Kingdom.* He said: *The Kingdom is like the man who trades everything he has, all his wealth, for the Pearl.* In other words, every way you can find to use your wealth, to trade your wealth, for the gain of the Kingdom of God...do it; it is the most valuable trade possible. Jesus said: *What does it gain to gain the WHOLE WORLD (that's our Monopoly win) yet forfeit their soul.* And there is the dichotomy. All the wealth...against the soul, the core of the person, the essence of you. Who you have become and are becoming and will be.

### Chess

Gaining the whole world is a Monopoly world. At the end of Monopoly, all the money goes back in the box. Chess is a different game. Chess is a series of choices. It is a series of gains and losses, and a whole lot of sacrifices. It doesn't matter, at the end of the game, how many pieces I still have on the board, how many pieces I sacrificed. In chess, all that matters at the end of the game, is my relationship to the King.

### All that matters, in the end, is my relationship to the King.

What game are you playing? I am playing to chase after the King. That game never stops. At the end of this life, the rest of the board and players clear away...but we get Life 2.0, chasing after the King. I am His disciple. I want to be close to Him. I want to be like Him. I want to obey Him. I want the kind of life He showed me and promised me. He said to me "**what's mine is yours.**" Not "what's yours is mine." That's stealing, but Jesus freely offered his own self for me. And in that, He won the game — all of the games. He won the victory for you and me.

*Continued on next page...*

## Top Ten Words

Continued from previous page...

### What's Mine is Yours

In Exodus 20:15, God sets up the game. He creates wealth, He protects "private property." He slices off a piece of His Universe and says, "that gets to be yours, you play with that," like He is going to watch and see what we do with it. This creates a boundary — an out of bounds. No thieving. You don't get to say "**what's yours is mine.**" Then Jesus, as He did over and over, shows us the heart of the commandment, the purpose of the commandment, the end-zone of this game.

**Not what's yours is mine...but what is mine is yours.** We are to be the kind of people who practice sacrificial generosity. The absolute opposite of thieving! We want to do that, not to earn our righteousness, but to model ourselves after our King, to follow Him, to take hold of the life He purchased for us, to walk the course of Righteousness in His footsteps. We aren't saved because of what we do...but if we are saved, **we do differently.** He, our King, said: *be the kind of people who give someone their coat in addition to the shirt he is trying to steal from you. Be the kind of people who literally walk the extra mile with someone who legally forced you to carry his burden for one mile.* Jesus said: *whatever you do to the least of these, you have done to Me.* Jesus calls us to radical, **sacrificial generosity.** He calls us to find every opportunity to show love, to love our neighbor, with our wealth. That means sacrifice. Practically, that means working hard, too, so that we have extra to give. So we can say, **what's mine is yours.**

### Ephesians 4:28

<sup>28</sup> *Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.*

Stop thieving! Obviously that is the most straightforward point of the commandment. But then go all the way to the opposite extreme. Use that wealth, including the skill of your hands to gain more wealth, the opportunity of your time, to work, and so have something to give. In words to the Ephesians' pastor, Timothy, Paul made this more general. It's not just thieves, but anyone with wealth...that's all of us, by the way!

### 1 Timothy 6:17-18

<sup>17</sup> *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.* <sup>18</sup> *Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.*

That's the way. That's what the wealth was for; that's what the gift was for; that's why God created wealth and protected private property. That is Righteousness. The purpose of the Ten Commandments is to show us the Course of Righteousness. **No stealing** shows us the boundary — loving our neighbor requires that we never say to them **what's yours is mine.** The Old Testament doesn't stop there either, but Jesus makes it so clear, the

end zone is to not stop there, but to say to one another, to say to those in need, to love our neighbor by saying "**what's mine is yours,**" freely, out of the wealth God gives us.

<sup>19</sup> *In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*

### Application – Inverse Thieving

How many financial decisions did you make this week? Today? Every day we make tons of decisions with our checkbook, with our time, at our jobs. Part of us is looking around for every opportunity to increase our pile of stuff. I bet you have a story of someone looking at your stuff and saying "what's yours is mine." (Besides your spouse...) I bet you have a story of your own thieving. Maybe it was an obvious one as a kid. Maybe more subtle as an adult.

We make things complicated: Taxes are my money in the first place, so it isn't really stealing! If I download the music, it does not hurt anybody. My boss won't really mind if I Facebook all day or play games all day. He has more than he needs...and I really need some extra cash right now.

How can I make a Kingdom decision...one that best lets me serve His kingdom? How do I, with every decision I make (not just my finances, but my time; not just my paycheck, but with everything that I have and everything that I am), *lay up treasure for [myself] as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that [I] may take hold of the life that is truly life?*

I want to say to God, not **what's Yours is mine.** I'm not satisfied with just consuming as much of this universe as I can, I want you to transform me. **What's mine is Yours.**

I want to say to all of you, to all my neighbors, I will never strive and connive and toe that line, that boundary, "it's not technically stealing but..." **what's yours is now mine.**

I want to, at every opportunity I get, as God blesses me with more than my daily bread, I want to follow my King in saying, **what's mine is Yours.** I want to pour out my life, my wealth, my time for You. That is love; that is Righteousness; that is the Kingdom in action. SR

March Memory Verse EDUCATION	<b>Youth/Adult</b> Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it. – Proverbs 22:6 NASB
	<b>Junior</b> Train up a child in the way he should go... – Proverbs 22:6 NASB
	<b>Primary</b> Train up a child... – Proverbs 22:6 NASB



## OBITUARIES

**MCCOY** – Julia Loraine McCoy, 95, lifelong resident of Nortonville, KS, passed away Monday, December 28, 2015, at the Village Villa Nursing Home in Nortonville.

Julia Stephan was born June 6, 1920, in Nortonville, KS, the daughter of Earl and Sarah Alice (Crouch). Julia graduated from Nortonville High School. She worked as a telephone operator, but primarily she was a devoted wife, mother and grandmother. Julia and Douglas Charles McCoy were married on January 1, 1944, at the Seventh Day Baptist Church in Nortonville. Julia was a member of the Seventh Day Baptist Church and the Ladies Aid of the church, and she enjoyed gardening.

Julia was preceded in death by her husband, Douglas, on November 11, 1978; her parents; two brothers, Wilmer and Curtis Stephan; and a sister, Alice Maxson.

Survivors include a son, Joe L. (Diane) McCoy, Wichita; daughter, Ileen (Merle) Soeken, Mountain Home, AR; sister, Wilma Adamson, Pittsburg, KS; five grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.

Julia has been cremated. A memoria l graveside service was held at a later date at the Nortonville Cemetery.

Memorial contributions to the Nortonville Cemetery in honor of Julia may be sent in care of the O'Trimble Funeral Home, PO Box 267, Nortonville, KS 66060.

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**VAN HORN** – Merlyn O. "Button" Van Horn, 96, of North Loup, NE, passed away on Wednesday, January 27, 2016, at the Valley View Senior Village in Ord.

Merlyn Otis was born December 27, 1919, in North Loup, NE, at the home of his parents, Lloyd O. and Clara M. (Severance) Van Horn. He grew up in the Valley County area, finally settling with his parents in the North Loup area. He graduated from North Loup High School before attending Kearney State College for a short time. Merlyn entered the United States Army in January of 1942. He served in Panama during World War II until he was discharged in October of 1945.

On January 25, 1945, Merlyn was united in marriage to Frances Ruth Goodrich at the SDB parsonage by their Pastor, Reverend Ahert. The couple lived in Grand Island for a short time while Button prepared for his career as a construction contractor. They settled in North Loup and Button worked for several other construction businesses before starting his own business, Van Horn Construction. They raised three children, Phillip, Joy and Jerry, during that time.

Merlyn accepted Christ as his Savior at an early age and was baptized and became a member of the North Loup Seventh Day Baptist Church on August 1, 1970. He served as a deacon and in numerous other capacities. He was a charter member of the Ord Elks Lodge and served in many positions, including Exalted Ruler and Secretary. He was instrumental in keeping the lodge active. He was a member of the American Legion for 71 years and a past member of the Lions Club and North Loup Volunteer Fire Department.

Merlyn enjoyed spending time with his family, golfing with Joe, fishing with his grandkids, or barbecuing and frying fish for a family gathering. After retirement, he still found joy in doing odd jobs for others, growing a huge garden and sharing his produce with friends and family. He read almost every mystery book in the North Loup Library.

Survivors include his wife of 71 years, Frances of North Loup; two sons and daughters-in-law, Phillip and Peggy of North Loup and Jerry and Jill of Council Bluffs, Iowa; one daughter and son-in-law, Joy and Joe Palermo of Omaha; six grandchildren, Heather (Jody) Looper of Lincoln, JoElle (Seth) Williams of Hyannis, Daniel (Ashlie) Van Horn of Ankeny, IA, Nick (Amy) Palermo of Omaha, Ashleigh and Taylor Billings of Omaha; 11 great-grandchildren: Sydney, Molly and Reese Looper; Isabel & Brooke Williams; Elliahna, Aaliyah & Cambriah Van Horn; Thomas & Noelani Palermo; and Lila Billings; two sisters, Merna Babcock of Missouri and Muriel Tolfa of North Loup; two brothers and a sister-in-law, Leland Van Horn of Iowa and Carroll and Terry Van Horn of West Virginia; and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents; a grandson, Drew Billings; two brothers, Lyle and Harold Van Horn and a sister, Ruby Meyer.

A Celebration of Life was held on Sabbath, February 6, 2016, at the Seventh Day Baptist Church in North Loup. Pastor Scott Hausrath officiated the service with inurnment following in the Hillside Cemetery at North Loup. Memorials are suggested to the North Loup Seventh Day Baptist Church.

### How to contact General Council:

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

Regular mail can be sent to:

Susie Fox, General Council Chair  
1722 Taylor Station Road, Blacklick, OH 43004.

## OBITUARY

**FOX** – Dean S. Fox, Jr., 88, of Newark, OH, passed away Saturday, January 9, 2016, at his residence.

Mr. Fox was born November 29, 1927, in Milton, WI, to the late Dean S. “Stanley” and Belva (Severance) Fox. He grew up and was married in the Milton Seventh Day Baptist Church.

Mr. Fox retired in 1984 after 32 years with IBM. He retired as a systems engineer and had worked in Chicago, Phoenix and Sacramento during his career. He served in the U.S. Navy during WWII. He enjoyed working with his hands. He built three of his residences and assembled many model planes, trains, and ships. During his retirement, he flew remote control airplanes. He also toured the country by travel trailer. His favorite pastime was spending time with his family.

He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Diane H. (Linsley) Fox, whom he married September 2, 1949; sons: Dean S. (Susie) Fox III of Blacklick, OH, and Eric (Susan) Fox of Auburn, CA; sisters: LuVerna North of Bloomer, WI, and Barbara Johnson of Milton, WI; grandchildren: Jennifer (Jeff) Barros, Peter Fox, David (Rachel) Fox, Gavin Fox, James Fox, Chessah Fox, Belinda (Nick) Iden, Nick (Jodi) Bradley; four great-grandchildren: Kalea, MacKenzie, Jacob, Elyse; and many loving nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, a daughter, Ellen Copeland, and a grandson, Andrew Copeland.

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## BIRTH

**HOLBROOK** – A daughter, Lillian Esther, was born to Ryan and Kathleen (Sanford) Holbrook of Milton, WI, on January 25, 2016.

## NEW MEMBERS

### BERLIN SDB CHURCH

Berlin, NY  
Matthew Olson, Pastor

Joined by testimony  
Kostin Galusha  
Ellen Myers

Joined by baptism  
Ian Davis  
Caleb Gerstel

### NORTH LOUP SDB CHURCH

North Loup, NE  
Scott Hausrath, Pastor

Joined by transfer of membership  
Mike Graves  
Sharon Graves  
Jean Jorgensen  
D. Scott Smith  
Jeanie Smith  
Aaron Smith

### STONEFORT SDB CHURCH

Stonefort, IL

Joined by testimony  
William E. (Gene) Bethel

### WHITE CLOUD SDB CHURCH

White Cloud, MI  
JR Shick, Pastor

Joined by testimony  
Al and Millie Bleiler  
Luann Cruzan  
Kattie and Matthew Meyer  
Able Rubio  
Maria Rubio Garcia  
David and Debby Schmude

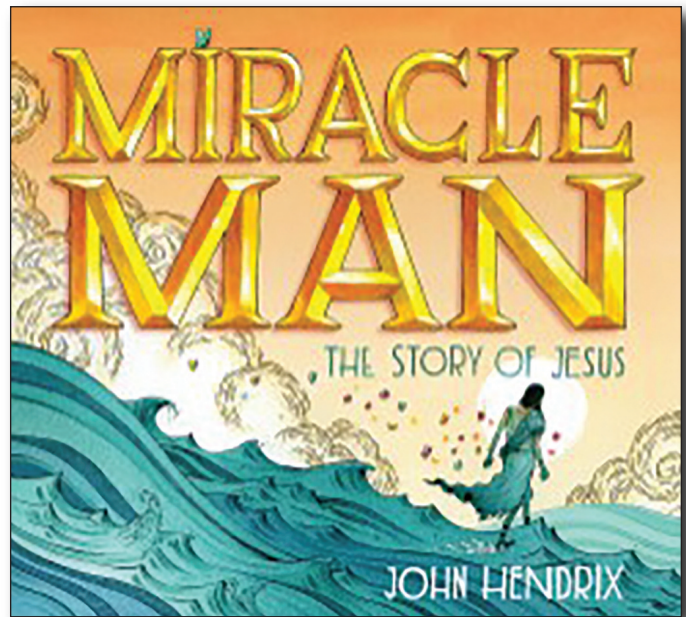
**MIRACLE MAN: The story of Jesus**

by John Hendrix

Just in time for Easter comes a must-have, beautifully illustrated new biography of Jesus, perfect for families to share year round. MIRACLE MAN focuses on Biblical accounts of Jesus' many miracles leading up to his Crucifixion and Resurrection.

Hendrix interweaves hand-lettering with stirring and exquisite illustrations to create a rare sophisticated approach that readers of any Christian denomination will find inspirational.

*(Abrams Books for Young Readers; February 2016; \$18.95; 978-1-4197-1899-1)*



Editor's Note: This is really a beautiful book that children of all ages will love!



**Note Cards Available**

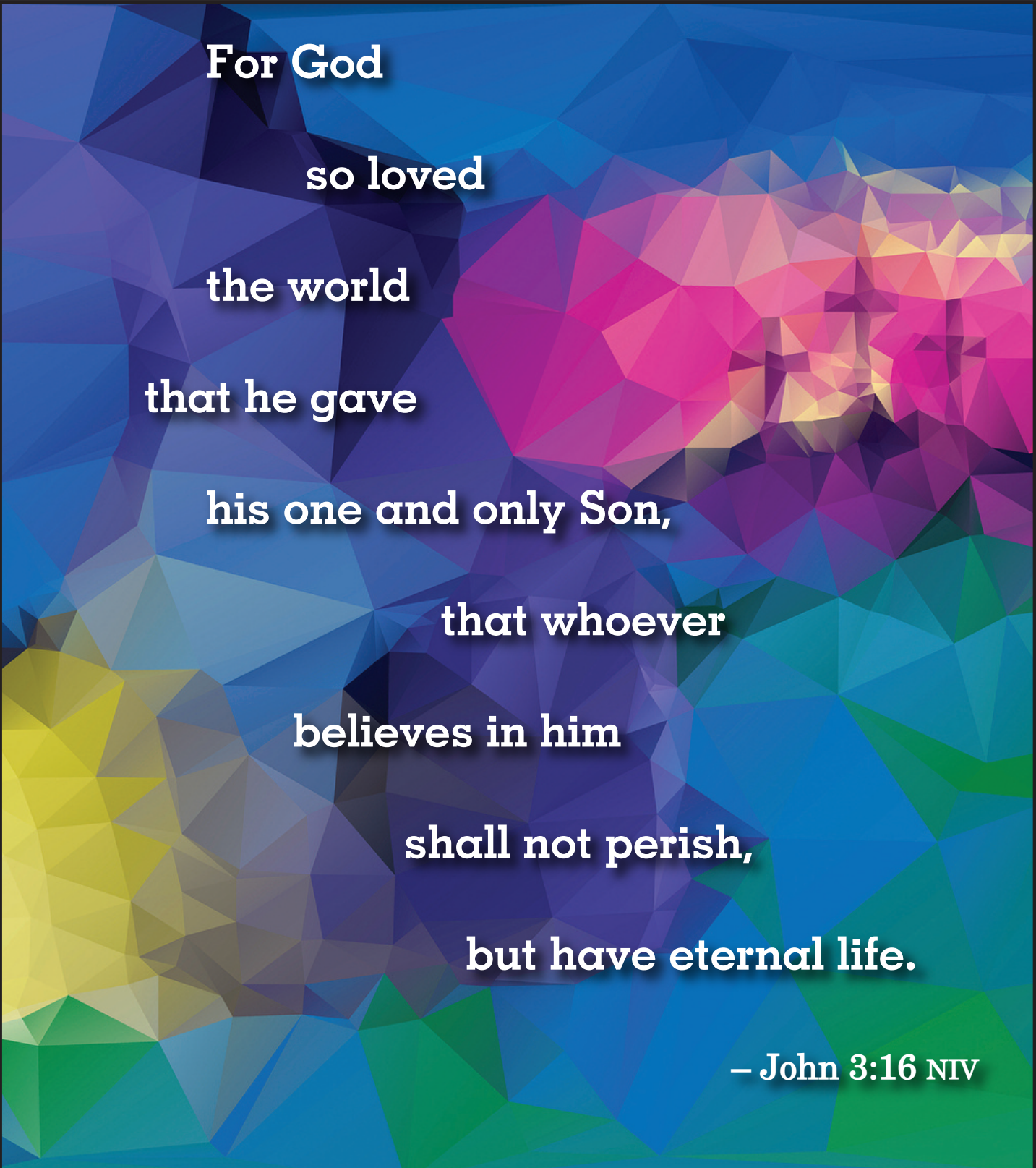
A local artist donated a beautiful painting of the Verona Seventh Day Baptist Church which was sold at their Fall Harvest Auction. Note cards of this painting have been made and are available for a suggested \$10.00 donation per package of six. All monies go directly to the "Stair Fund" to replace the stairs leading up to the main entrance of the church. Please indicate the number of packets you would like along with your check payable to: Verona Seventh Day Baptist Church. Mail to: Maurice Warner, 210 Allen St., Sherrill, NY 13461. The note cards will be promptly mailed out.



**THEY'RE BACK!** After rave reviews from Conference Session in Lancaster, game show developer, producer and hosts return to Conference Session 2016.

On Monday and Tuesday of Conference week, after the evening reception, Bill and Val Probasco will bring fun and relaxation to Wesley Chapel on the Houghton College Campus.

Repeat these words: **"GAME ON!"**



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

**– John 3:16 NIV**