



Sabbath Recorder

Thy  
Will  
Be  
Done

A Seventh Day Baptist Publication

April 2018

MORGAN WEIDENFELDER

# Above All<sup>©</sup>

by Michael W. Smith

Above all powers  
Above all kings  
Above all nature and all created things  
Above all wisdom and all the ways of man  
You were here before the world began

Above all kingdoms  
Above all thrones  
Above all wonders the world has ever known  
Above all wealth and treasures of the earth  
There's no way to measure what you're worth

Crucified  
Laid behind the stone  
You lived to die  
Rejected and alone  
Like a rose trampled on the ground  
You took the fall  
And thought of me  
Above all

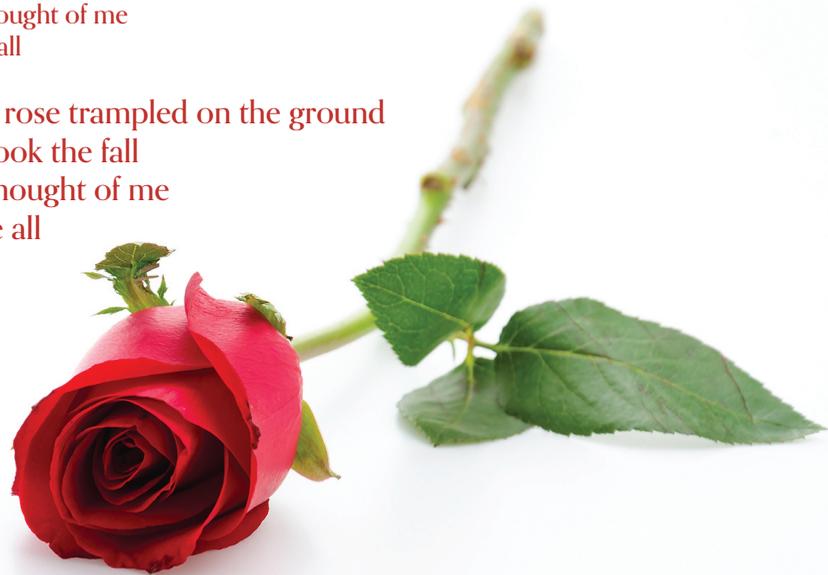
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*Songwriters: Lenny Leblanc / Paul Baloche Above All lyrics © Capitol Christian Music Group*

## OnTheCover

### Thy Will Be Done<sup>©</sup>

by Morgan Weistling

This painting is a portrait of prayer. I was struck by the number of times the Bible refers to Christ going off alone and praying to his Father—such as in Luke 5:16: “But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.” This led me to paint Christ deep in prayer, as he was so much of the time.

In this painting I wanted the viewer to imagine how Jesus would look if you were

to come upon him in a private moment of prayer. I wanted to emphasize his strong carpenter’s hands, clasped in prayer, representing his communion with the Father.

The title is from The Lord’s Prayer in which Christ taught us how we should pray to the Father. This painting is a gentle reminder to cling to God in prayer, not only in times of need but thoughtfully and often, just as Christ did.

*We thank Morgan Weistling for granting us permission once again to use one of his awesome paintings on the cover of the Sabbath Recorder!*

*To see more of Morgan’s paintings and information about his new book,*

*visit his website at*

*[www.morganweistling.com](http://www.morganweistling.com).*

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# Sabbath Recorder

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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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<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. <sup>4</sup> In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. <sup>5</sup> The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

<sup>18</sup> No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

– John 1



# INCARNATION

By Pastor Philip Lawton

The title of this sermon is "Incarnation: God with Us." You might say Emmanuel. What's unique about Christianity is that our God became like us. This is what John tells us in the first chapter of his gospel. When he's telling us, "This is the story of Jesus," he tells us that the Word is God. It's the very first verse. Then in verse 14 he says the Word became Flesh. All the Greek gods, all the Roman gods, all the other gods are separate, distant, apart from humanity. But our God became like us. He dwelt among us. That is the miracle of Christmas. This tiny baby is the creator of the heavens and the earth.

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John tells us that, too. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* And *"All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."* All that you see around you, the people next to you, the trees and the stars, and everything that we know, came into being through Jesus Christ. At Christmas this amazingly powerful being is encapsulated in a tiny baby.

*with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."* We have a high priest who understands. We know what it is to be human and so does our God. The One who stands before and judges us says, "I know what you've been through. I know where you are. I have been rejected by my family. I have been cursed and beaten and suffered. I have died. I know what you're going through."

## *God becomes like us so that we can become like Him.*

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 12:23, tells us that this concept of God becoming like us is foreign to everyone. He says it's foolishness to the Greeks. It's foolishness to the Gentiles. It's foolishness to those who don't know Christ. Why would an all-powerful God who can do anything – a God who created the world – why would this God become weak, lowly, fragile, and broken? Why would this God come and do these things? It makes no sense. Certainly God could fix the problems of the world in another way. The thing is He can't.

But what's more, this incarnate God, this God in flesh, this God-man understands us.

Christmastime for me is a wonderful, joyous time. There's a little bit of a joke in my family that I tend to be a Scrooge until Christmas morning and then I'm up at 3:00 a.m. But I love Christmas because I have memories of joy. I have memories of hope and fun and family. But there are many people for whom Christmas is the worst time of year because it reminds them that they have no family. It reminds them that they are alone. It reminds them that they are suffering. And that is the message that they get from the world because the world says look at all this stuff. If you had all this stuff you would be happy. Look, here are these happy families. Here's this Hallmark movie about somebody picking that country guy over the city guy. There's all this stuff that happens at Christmas, and for those people who don't have the memories that I do, it's sad. It's pain. It's mourning. But that is not the message of Christmas.

John tells us the message of Christmas is that you are not alone. The message of Christmas is your suffering is understood by the One who created you. The God who made you has been in your shoes. The God who made you came to this earth, suffered, died and – praise God – He rose again. Our God understands. This is the same message that the writer of Hebrews tells us in chapter four: *"For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize*

God with us at the Incarnation – that is what this means. This means that we do not have a God who we have to be perfect for. We do not have a God who doesn't understand what we are. We do not have a God who sits up on high and lords over us all the power that He has. No! We have a God who is just like us and yet so much more than we are. That is the message of the incarnation.

That is the promise of a tiny baby. That is the joy of a priest at a temple when he sees this baby coming to be circumcised. He says, I can die now because I know that my God lives with me. He spent years anticipating the coming of the Savior. He sees the Savior and he understands this is something different. This is not a God who will conquer the whole world with fire and sword. Rome said that. Rome had a god who was human. That god was brutal and ruthless and his peace was at the end of a sword. But the true God is a God who came and brought peace through His suffering; through His sacrifice.

God with us means that I can come to God and say "God, life sucks," and God will say, "yeah, I know. I've been there." We have a God who mourns with us. We have a God who weeps with us. We have a God who suffers with us. This is the message of the Incarnation. It is a message of hope. It is a message of God coming and being like us. Living like us. Suffering like us. Dying like us. And being raised unlike us so that we can be raised like Him. Because of that we read in Revelation 21 that there is a day coming when there is no more pain. A day when there is no more suffering. A day when He will wipe every tear from our eye.

This is the promise of Christmas. Jesus comes in the form of a babe. God comes to us to live with us, to dwell among us, to save us from ourselves. God becomes like us so that we can become like Him. We have, by adoption into God's family, what Jesus had by birth. That is the message of the Incarnation. SR

# Paul's Prayer for God's Will

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THERE IS NO BETTER LIFE, THERE IS NO GREATER THING THAN TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD....AS WE COME TO KNOW GOD'S WILL WITH THE WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WE WILL HAVE THE POWER, GIVEN TO US BY GOD, TO DO THE THINGS THAT PLEASE HIM. AND MORE THAN THAT, WE WILL FIND GREAT JOY AND PLEASURE IN DOING THEM NO MATTER WHAT CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS WE FACE BECAUSE ANYTHING WE DO OUTSIDE THE WILL OF GOD IS WORTHLESS—BUT WHATEVER WE DO BY THE WILL OF GOD IS GLORIOUS.

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When you start to see God as He really is, the eyes of your heart are opened to the truth of Colossians 1:17 that He holds everything together. He holds everything together from the stars in the heavens to the cells in your body. He holds each day in His all-powerful hands. He never takes a vacation. He is always working out His will on earth.

It doesn't matter if you feel like your world is falling apart or if you are confused about why something is happening to you. Christ Jesus still holds the world and specifically your world together. He doesn't let go because it is not in His nature to let go. He is always true to His word. He always fulfills His promises. His love and care for His creation, and yes that means you, is unconditional because He can be nothing other than unconditional love.

But the Lord is not just holding your life together. He has a great plan for your life. It does not matter what stage of life you are in—whether you are just beginning or you are closer to the end. The Lord is working all things together for good for you and for all His people. The best good for your life is for God's will to be done in it. This is why Jesus taught us to pray, **"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."** (Matthew 6:10)

This is also what the apostle Paul had come to understand as a Christ-follower. There is no better life, there is no greater thing than to live according to the will of God. So when he was told about the faith of the Colossian believers, that's the first place he went. He prayed that they would know and live out the will of God.

Knowing God's will is of such great importance that it could be at the top of the list at every prayer meeting. As we come to know God's will with the wisdom and understanding of the Holy Spirit, we will have the power, given to us by God, to do the things that please Him. And more than that, we will find great joy and pleasure in doing them no matter what challenges and problems we face because anything we do outside the will of God is worthless—but whatever we do by the will of God is glorious.

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## INSTEAD OF WANTING GOD'S WILL TO BE DONE, THE SELFISH HUMAN NATURE WANTS GOD'S WILL TO SHIFT SO THAT IT CONFORMS TO ITS WILL.

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So let's take a closer look at the words from Colossians 1:9-14. Paul starts out by saying, "**from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you.**" Just think for a moment about the things that you never stop doing. Whatever makes it on your list is going to be something that is very important. The first thing I thought about was eating. I don't stop eating. Maybe for a period of time once in a while I will go without eating, but I consider eating to be an important part of my daily routine. Sleeping makes the cut also. That's pretty important. Telling my wife and kids that I love them is at the top of the list. So is spending time with the Lord every day in His word and in prayer. However, very few things make it into my prayers unceasingly. What exactly makes the apostle Paul's list of unceasing prayer?

### To Fully Know God's Will

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This is a fantastic prayer! His exact words are, "**that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will.**" (Colossians 1:9) Notice that he doesn't just ask for this church family to have a little knowledge of God's will but to be filled—all the way up to the top, as much as they can hold. No one can know all there is to know about God and His will. We just couldn't take it. But to know as much as is possible for us to know is like praying for the greatest blessing ever and as much as we can hold.

God's will is what is pleasing to Him. So if we know God's will then we know what pleases God. However, it's not just that we know about what pleases God. To know God's will as Paul prayed is to understand it and to experience it. In other words, his prayer is for them to experience the things that please God, and that means to take part in it with their lives. How does that work? Well, there are a couple of parts to it.

The first part is to know what pleases God in "**all spiritual wisdom.**" When the Bible says "spiritual" it always means by the Holy Spirit. There are good spirits whom we call angels. They are God's messengers. There are evil spirits who are led in their wicked ways by Satan. Then there is the Holy Spirit. To be spiritual in the Bible does not mean to be mystical or to be discerning or to be interested in "spiritual" stuff. To be spiritual is to be led by the Holy Spirit who is God.

It's important to first get that right because just like there are different kinds of spirits there are also different kinds of wisdom. There is the wisdom that is from God on the one hand, and on the other there is what the Bible calls the wisdom of the world. One of these things is not like the other. Wisdom from God lets us see things from His perspective and gives us practical ability to live out God's will in the real world. It is different from worldly wisdom. It's not the kind of thing you pick up on the street.

Listen to how the apostle Paul differentiates between the two. "**Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.**" (1 Corinthians 1:20-21) Now this is pretty deep stuff, but in a nutshell, the Bible says that human wisdom is foolish because it never leads you to know God. Think about it—if God is the greatest, most awesome and glorious Creator of everything (which He is), and human wisdom says, "We don't need God," then human wisdom is absolutely worthless garbage.

Gandhi was considered one of the greatest men of the 20th century. He was called "Mahatma" which means "great soul." His influence is perhaps unparalleled among the so-called great people of his time. Yet he believed Jesus was a good man—not God come to earth as a man. He believed Jesus was a moral teacher. Gandhi even went so far as to put Jesus' "principles" into practice—but he never went so far as to believe that Jesus was God come to earth as a human being.

But Jesus wasn't a good man. He was God-man. Gandhi worked to "be the change you want to see," but Jesus taught that He is the only way that the human heart can be brought to life and be changed. Human wisdom says, "I can change." Human wisdom says, "I can reach up to God and know Him." Spiritual wisdom, God's wisdom, says no human being in his own wisdom can ever know God. But in the Son of God, by faith through God's grace, we become new creations. Spiritual wisdom says human wisdom is not able to know God. God can only be known as He reveals Himself. In Jesus' (the God-Man) death and resurrection He revealed Himself and His perfect will. If we are going to know God's will, "**his good, pleasing and perfect will**" as Paul talks about in Romans 12:2, then it will be by the wisdom of the Spirit and not the wisdom of the world.

The second part is to know what pleases God in "**in all spiritual...understanding.**" Spiritual understanding means understanding that has been given to us through the Holy Spirit. This is an extremely important distinction to make because human understanding is clouded by the selfish human nature. Instead of wanting God's will to be done, the selfish human nature wants God's will to shift so that it conforms to its will. Jesus showed us how our will was meant to respond to God's will in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before He was killed. "**My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.**" (Matthew 26:39) Because it was God's will for Jesus to die and so achieve salvation for sinful humanity, Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient to death. (Philippians 2:8)

So because we're not like Jesus, we need to be led to the knowledge of God's will by the Holy Spirit. The job of the Spirit is to lead us into all the truth—step by step. So when we talk about spiritual understanding it means that we understand what God says about life through the revelation of the Bible. The Holy Spirit leads us to understand how God wants us to think and to live because we know the truth of the scriptures. Without the Spirit leading us into all the truth, we wouldn't understand how to live. As Jesus said, ***"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth."*** (John 16:13)

Paul's ongoing, incessant prayer is for the eyes of their hearts to be opened to see the truth of God's will. His prayer is really just coming in line with what the Holy Spirit is already working on in us—to lead us out of the darkness of worldly wisdom and understanding and into the light of God's wisdom and truth. However, Paul's prayer doesn't end with asking that they fully know God's will.

## To Be Fully Pleasing to God

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Paul prays for them to know God's will ***"so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him."*** (Colossians 1:10) If you are a new Christ-follower, "the Christian walk" might be a new term for you. Christians used to ask each other, "How's your walk?" meaning, "how is your relationship with God and living as a Christian going?" Well, nobody answers that question by saying that he is perfectly living out the Christian life. So when Paul says that what he is praying for is for them to live worthy of the Lord and to be fully pleasing to Him, my first response and maybe yours is to say, "That's impossible! Nobody can live in a way that is fully pleasing to God."

So let's define the words according to how Paul meant them because I think their meaning is easily lost in translation. To live in a worthy manner doesn't mean perfection. It means that our lives are focused on God's honor and glory. The word "worthy" here means to be esteemed. You can live your life for the esteem of people or you can live your life for the esteem of God—but you can't do both. Jesus makes this really clear: ***"that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God."*** (Luke 16:15)

Likewise, to be fully pleasing to God doesn't mean perfection. It means that in every area of our life—home, work, school, church, vacation, with relatives and friends, etc.—we are living in a way that pleases the Lord. It means that we don't act one way at church and another way at work or school or with our friends. Again, this is not saying that 100% perfection is the goal of the Christian life. What it does mean is that the Lord is at work transforming us to not only want to do His will but also then to actually live it out. First we need to know what pleases God, then we want to please God, then we do what pleases God. All of this is planned and orchestrated and worked out by the Lord. As Paul says in Philippians 2:13, ***"For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."***

It's not just that as Christ-followers we do good works. It's more than just doing good deeds. What God is doing in us is to grow us in His sacrificial, unconditional love nature as we do the things that please Him. Our good works have a quality of God which comes through us as we do them. Like fruit, the unconditional love of God is something that grows in us as we get to know Him more. Now here's the nugget that I'm really pumped about: as we grow in our love for God and other people more and more, we get to know God more. Because God is love, we can only know Him fully as we love more fully. Therefore, to be fully pleasing to God is not just about helping old ladies across the street—as good as that deed is. It is about knowing Him and experiencing Him in His character of love and grace as well as every other character trait that is His.

Paul's prayer for the Colossians is that they fully know and live out the will of God. This prayer is agreement with the work that God is already doing in the lives of his people. Here's a simple prayer that I have been praying lately which is inspired by the words of Paul. I invite you to join with me.

***God, may the things that are pleasing to you  
be the things that please me too.*** SR

by Pastor Nate Crandall

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THE LORD IS AT WORK TRANSFORMING US TO NOT ONLY WANT TO DO HIS WILL  
BUT ALSO THEN TO ACTUALLY LIVE IT OUT. FIRST WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT  
PLEASES GOD, THEN WE WANT TO PLEASE GOD, THEN WE DO WHAT PLEASES GOD.

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# Thy Will Be Done...

By Pastor Scott Hausrath

“Doh! Did I actually eat that *entire* bag of chips?” “Did I really get *that* intimate with my girlfriend?” “Why in the world did I cut and run after that fender bender?” These are some of the questions I’ve asked myself after making choices that were clearly not God’s will for me. Why is it that I, that we, so often make choices like this?

To be sure, we don’t know God’s *specific* will for every life situation. “Shall I apply to just the schools in my area, or should I also consider out-of-state schools?” “Are we ready to commit our lives to each other, or should we keep dating for a while?” “Should I submit myself to another round of chemotherapy, or is it time for me to start saying goodbye to my family and friends?” These complex questions have multiple possible answers, many of which could easily be viewed as God’s will for us.

Instead of discussing complex scenarios, I’m talking here about questions whose answers are so obvious that there’s no need to even ask them. “Is it okay to deceive my roommate into paying for my portion of the utilities?” “Should I raid my mom’s cookie jar so I can take my date to a fancier restaurant this weekend?” “Is it all right for me to start an affair with my spouse’s business partner?” There are many situations about which we are 100% certain of God’s will for us. Why do we sometimes turn our backs on God in these situations by making choices that are blatantly disobedient to Him?

There are many factors that can motivate us to do the wrong thing instead of the right thing, and I think one of these factors is clearly illustrated in Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor who handed Jesus over to the religious leaders for crucifixion. Take a look at John 18:28 – 19:16 and you’ll see what I’m talking about.

As we see in the story, Governor Pilate told the religious leaders three times that he found no basis to charge Jesus with any criminal activity. He knew that the right thing to do was to release Jesus from custody. Moreover, according to John 19:12, not only did he know the right thing, he also tried to do the right thing: *Pilate tried to set Jesus free...* What was it that prevented him from doing what he knew to be right?

I’m no Einstein, but even a dolt like me can clearly see that Pilate was in bondage to his status quo. He had the authority to release Jesus, but when the religious leaders told him that such a move would make him *no friend of Caesar* (19:12), all his authority melted. This part of the narrative ends tragically in verse 16 with Pilate impotently handing Jesus over to the religious leaders to be crucified.

Why did Pilate care so much about being a friend of Caesar that he led an innocent man to his death? Because Caesar held sway over his lifestyle. Being loyal to Caesar was mandatory if Pilate wanted to maintain his



role as Governor. His status quo included this high-level position, bringing with it significant power and prestige. He knew the right thing, and he wanted to do the right thing, but his desire to keep what he possessed — his power, prestige, and position — prevented him from doing the right thing. Pilate was in bondage to his status quo.

What about us? Are we like Pilate? Are we in *bondage* to our status quo? There's nothing wrong with having a status quo. The term simply means our existing state or condition. The question is not whether we have a status quo. The question is, are we in bondage to our status quo? Are we so desperate to hold onto what we already possess, that we're not able to let go of any of it, even if we know it would be the right thing to do?

As we look at this story from John's Gospel, on one side of the coin we see Pilate, who was in bondage to his status quo. On the other side of the coin, however, we see Jesus, who was in bondage to nothing. Jesus knew that His mission would radically change His status quo. His mission entailed leaving the wholeness of Heaven, and experiencing the brokenness of death, in order to give us life. There's no "Easy" button for that!

We get a glimpse of how difficult a mission it was as we read Matthew's account of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46). Jesus repeatedly asked His Father to prevent the agonizing death that awaited Him. This was a genuine illustration of how overwhelmed with sorrow Jesus actually was. Yet each time Jesus requested His own will, He also accepted His Father's will. The phrase "not as I will, but as you will," is not a lament of a personal defeat; it is rather an acknowledgment of a personal victory, that of choosing the Father's will instead of one's own.

Returning to John's narrative, we see a profound contrast between Pilate and Jesus. Pilate, who possessed the power to set Jesus free, was actually possessed by his own power. The more tightly he held onto his power, the more tightly his power held onto him, preventing him from doing what he knew to be right. Jesus also possessed the power to set himself free, but He was not possessed by His own power. Because He was not in bondage to His status quo, Jesus was free to remain in bondage to Pilate, by saying to the Father "not as I will, but as you will." Jesus' spiritual freedom enabled Him to give up His physical freedom, eventually securing our freedom. The apostle Paul says it this way in Galatians 5:1: *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.*

Do we consider ourselves to be free people? On the surface, we *might* appear to be free: we have the freedom to make our own decisions, to go where we want, to do what we want. But when we look at ourselves below the surface, what is it that motivates our decisions? Are we actually free to make our own decisions, or are many of our decisions made by something to which we are in bondage, whether it be our status quo or something (someone) else?

The truth is that, even though we have freedom because Jesus gave us His freedom, sometimes we allow ourselves to become slaves. We allow ourselves to become slaves of something or slaves of someone. That's why the apostle Paul, immediately after he wrote *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free*, also wrote *Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

This day, this week, this month, is there something or someone to which we are in bondage? Jesus Christ did not give up His freedom so that we would be *burdened again by a yoke of slavery*. Let's begin each day by acknowledging that we are already free through Jesus Christ. Then, as the day goes on, let's ask God to help us stand up to whatever or whoever tries to enslave us again. If we need to, let's also ask God to provide someone to stand with us. And let's be willing to stand with others as they take their stand against bondage. [SR](#)

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# Remembering Jonas Sommer

Kevin Butler  
former SR Editor  
Unforgettable

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Jonas was one of the first Brazilian SDBs we met at the Curitiba airport, and one of the hardest to say goodbye to.

He was quiet and thoughtful, which I interpreted as Jonas not being confident with his English skills. That was partly true. As his English got better, so did our friendship. We will never forget his permanent grin and rapid-fire laugh.

Jonas helped to teach me some Portuguese, and thanks to the nickname he bestowed on me, we taught his friends some English. It was so hot there, I was known to carry a battery-operated fan, like everywhere. The Brazilians would point to me and exclaim, "Fan Man!"

Dale Thorngate  
General Secretary Emeritus, SDB World Federation

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Jonas Sommer was a Baptist Bible college student when I first met him in Brazil in 2001 during preparations for the SDB World Federation to meet there in 2003. For the next two years he translated hundreds of email and airmail communications (English to Portuguese; Portuguese to English) between the Brazil Conference and World Federation leaders. It was a task crucial to the success of the 2003 sessions.

Two strong themes emerge as I reflect on the all-too-short friendship we shared over the next seventeen years: Jonas' vision and commitment to education for pastoral ministry and his development of his own gift for bilingual communication as a key to that education in his own Conference and in the larger SDB world. One measurable result is the training of over 100 Brazil pastors in the three-year TIME (Training in Ministry and Extension) program he adapted and conducted for the Brazil Conference.

The Brazil SDB Conference and SDBs around the world have lost a dear friend, a masterful ministerial leader, and, in Clarice, a significant woman of loving ministerial vision. The loss of his whole family at once is a tremendous blow to me personally and to Seventh Day Baptists everywhere. Their legacy will bless us for a long time.

Janet Thorngate  
Editor Emeritus, SDB World; Tribute to Clarice

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*The entire Seventh Day Baptist Community from around the world is mourning the tragic passing of Pastor Jonas Sommer, his wife Clarice, and their children Marcos and Paula. An auto accident in their homeland of Brazil is responsible for claiming their lives on February 15, 2018. Pastor Jonas was the President of the Seventh Day Baptist World Federation.*

Within hours after I met Clarice Kollenberg Sommer, we recognized laughingly that we were both "bag ladies." I was armed with "hostess gifts" for our time in Brazil, a pile of easily packable cloth bags with Seventh Day Baptist logos on them. Clarice was ecstatic to discover a bright green one and immediately incorporated it into the several bags being packed for an all-day Sabbath at church — bags for music, Sabbath School materials, lunch (two or three), things for the children (not her own children; they were yet unborn). "Bags, bags, bags!" she quipped in English, and I recognized my own pattern of preparations for Sabbath. It became our mantra as we traveled with our husbands the next three weeks visiting churches, attending their Conference, sightseeing, renewing friendships and making new ones. That first week in her home, and in mine a year later, we went through kitchen cupboards and drawers naming forks,

knives, sugar, flour—in English and Portuguese—supposedly teaching each other our language. She was the one who learned, and when we spent a week in her home nine years later (a year ago) she was teaching English classes and teaching her own young children, two of the many additional roles for which she packed “bags, bags, bags.” Her big bags were suitcases for travel as leader of their Conference Women’s Federation, part of the team she had marshaled to conduct women’s regional weekend retreats in churches around the country. Perhaps her most dramatic “bag project” was their making clothes and collecting clothes to fill suitcases that the World Federation African delegates could take home for distribution in their churches and outreach ministries. Clarice’s bags were always filled for other people.

### *Canaan Phiri*

#### *SDB World Federation Vice President for Africa Africa Mourns the SDB World Federation President*

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On behalf of all SDBs in Africa, I would like to express our profound shock at the tragic and untimely death of Jonas Sommer, the President of SDBWF, and his entire family.

I personally first met Jonas in 2003 at an SDB World Federation conference in Curitiba, Brazil, as a youthful but hardworking pastor. In 2004 he visited Malawi on a mission to assist in de-linking and registering the Mozambican Conference. I had the privilege of meeting Jonas again at the SDBWF sessions hosted by Brazil again in 2017 — this time, married to a fair lady, Clarice, and blessed with two cute children. Jonas and Clarice were a perfect match, both committed to serving the Lord.

Jonas’ maturity surpassed his age: a man of few words but ever smiling, friendly and accommodating. No wonder the entire conference unanimously elected him to the highest office in SDBWF!

We in Africa join the rest of the SDB fraternity worldwide, and the Brazilian Conference, in mourning this great couple and their two children whom death has deprived us of. We will miss Jonas’ commitment and the budding vision he had for the world body.

### *Pastor Luciano Barreto Nogueira De Moura* *former Seventh Day Baptist World Federation Vice President for South America*

#### *“The power of choice ...” — A tribute to the Sommer family*

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“... and most importantly, consider God in your decisions!” — Pastor Jonas Sommer (September 10, 2016 - São Paulo SDB church)

It’s very important to know what is your calling, and your life purpose.

That was the admonition Pastor Jonas had for any and every one, especially the young people he had an opportunity to influence. “Whether you are from the countryside, with a simple, rural upbringing, or you are from contrasting circumstances, you can overcome every obstacle and dedicate your life to helping people and preaching the Gospel of Christ!” Those chosen by God consider Him in their decisions and are victorious in Christ!

That’s how Jonas and Clarice Sommer were. They were chosen and set apart by God, to live in Christ and for Christ. God blessed them with beautiful children. We were blessed for their lives, for their care, kindness, attention and love, that they gave without reservation. God used them fully to bless lives and fulfill the mission of preaching the Gospel of love and salvation. Their legacy in the T.I.M.E. Program and Women’s Board will remain in our minds and hearts. They were a loving father and mother, excellent preachers, dedicated disciplers and beloved friends.

Thank you, Lord, for the lives of Jonas, Clarice, Marcos Paulo and Paula Hadassa!

### *John Pethtel*

#### *Seventh Day Baptist World Federation Vice President for North America*

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“Please tell me this is not true.” This is what I said to a Brazilian friend when he tried to contact me after I had read a story on Facebook about the tragic death of the Sommers family.

While physical death on this side of eternity is part of the curse of sin, we expect it to happen to our 90-year-old grandma — not a young vibrant family.

Jonas was a loyal and caring friend. He loved and did everything he could to provide for his family. He was a wise and knowledgeable pastor who served as a role model for all ages. Even in his frustration with an imperfect world, he showed commitment to the people and causes that came into his path.

Jonas’ legacy will be that he made people care more. More about God. More about their church. More about their family. His passing will lead me to care more, too. More about my short time here on Earth and how to leverage it for Kingdom impact.

### *Andy Samuels*

#### *General Secretary, SDB World Federation*

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Jonas had become one of my very best friends. He is one of the few people who specifically and intentionally asked me, “Would you be my mentor?” I have had the unmistakable joy and privilege of traveling to Brazil on about seven different occasions. For every one of those trips, except for the first one in 2003, and the most recent in 2017, my friend Jonas was almost single-handedly responsible for me being there.

Jonas bore the fruit of the Spirit. He was visionary. He was committed. He had a sharp intellect. He was an effective leader.

Shortly before his passing, in his capacity as President, he had unveiled to the SDB World Federation member conferences, a five year plan for growth and development. It is an excellent plan. Clarice was a worthy spouse, sharing with her husband in all aspects of ministry. Both of their darling children had inherited their parents’ very active sense of humor, and Marcos shared a few jokes with me on occasion.

Their legacy must continue.

### *Rob Appel*

#### *Executive Director, SDB General Conference USA & Canada*

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Jonas & Clarice were my friends! Three years ago I was privileged to spend a week with them, in their home, in Santo Antônio do Sudoeste, Brazil, where I came to love them and appreciate the wonderful ministry they shared together. I also got to know their two wonderful children, Marcos and Paula. Paula was the same age as my oldest granddaughter and she was prompted by Jonas to call me, “Papa.”

Jonas was a wise man, Clarice was exceptionally astute! Together they were a force to be reckoned with. The Brazilian T.I.M.E. program that was run by Jonas was the envy of all SDB Conferences around the World. What Jonas did in Brazil was ground-breaking! Pastors in Brazil owe their start and education to Jonas’ efforts.

Jonas was a remarkable soccer player. He didn’t have the look, but he was determined and elusive. He was the same way in his ministry. He could look like he was complacent about a subject, and then he could speak about it with such passion!

I was devastated to hear of their passing. They will be sorely missed. God bless all they touched! SR

# What's Your Interview Question?

I am intrigued by some of the interview questions ascribed to major companies. For instance, an interview at Whole Foods Market might entail this question: “Would you rather fight 1 horse-sized duck or 100 duck-sized horses?” Keep thinking about that one while you consider a question that might be posed in a Trader Joe’s interview: “What would you do if you found a penguin in the freezer?”

Awesome questions. It is fascinating to consider how I might answer these questions. Even more, I wonder, why on earth are they asking these questions? How do these questions help frame the suitability of someone for employment?

Let’s apply that to the church. What questions are we asking of people whom we are selecting for leadership roles, teaching roles, and service roles? It is tremendously dangerous if the only question that we ask is: “Are you willing?” That means that our main criteria for filling positions in our church is if a person is warm and with a pulse. It would seem as though we should be asking a whole lot more of people than a willingness to fill a slot. We need to be looking at the qualifications of Ephesians 4: Character, Competence, and Chalk.

## CHARACTER

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Ephesians Chapter 4 presents how we have unity in the body of Christ. The first piece of making that happen is that each part of the body exhibits character.

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love. (Ephesians 4:1-2, ESV)*

**Walk.** Based on verse one, our character should be defined by our walk. This concept of a defining walk was brought to life for me by my friend Bill. I remember sitting with Bill in front of the nursing home he resided in when we saw someone on the other side of the parking lot get out of his vehicle. (Watching traffic and pedestrians was a favorite pastime of ours on sunny afternoons.) Bill was 95 years old while I was well under half his age, so I had certain eyesight advantages. Yet, Bill would inevitably beat me to identifying the person. I pride myself on identifying people—but

Bill could pick someone out before I could start to adjust my eyes on him. Because Bill had a secret.

I would be looking for specific features of the person’s face or hair color, but Bill would watch the walk. While I could not see the shape of his nose from the other side of the parking lot, Bill clearly discerned whose “walk” was crossing the parking lot. See the connection with Ephesians 4:1-2? Character is not simply picking out a certain number of individual traits that can be seen in someone’s life, but it is seeing how those traits come together. The “walk” of a person’s character is his humility, his gentleness and patience, as well as his bearing with one another in love.

Notice that this walk cannot be an act. With time, our walk betrays who we truly are. We know this, but how often do we try to cover up a character issue for others, or especially ourselves? When I have not been particularly gentle in how I interacted with a family member, do I make excuses of why that was not truly my walk? Our excuses can sound something like this: “I am sorry for that, but I am tired, I am stressed, you know I have a short fuse...or I have chronic halitosis, or perhaps I have hairy hobbit toes.” Some excuses are better than others. Our walk is our walk—excuses serve no other purpose than to cover up areas in our lives that we are not living according to Christ’s call on our lives.

**Unity.** There is one more piece to the “walk” of character. Ephesians 4:3 states: “*eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*” Notice two things about this verse: 1) We maintain not create unity, and 2) How we walk with others matters. Unity flows from Who the Trinitarian God is, as described in verses 4-6 of Ephesians 4. The measure of unity is not what a person creates, but how a person contributes to the maintenance of unity. The other piece to that is realizing that character is not just my individual walk, but how I interact with others. This deepens the consideration of someone for a role within the church. Not only is the question about his individual walk—but we must also ask how he interacts with others. If someone is dripping with talent and individual qualities, yet lacks the emotional intelligence and empathy to be a team player, there is a growth area that requires attention prior to being placed in a position.



The “walk” of a person’s character is his humility, his gentleness and patience, as well as his bearing with one another in love.

Are we, as a church, asking about someone’s walk?

## COMPETENCE

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While character is a prerequisite, competence plays a significant role in the interview process that we are discussing. There is something to intentionally developing our skills, talents, and abilities to be better prepared for places of leadership, teaching, and service. This brings me back to the old adage my mother told me often: practice makes perfect. This “practice makes perfect” phrase was shared often when it came to bike riding. But, my mother lied.

During my formative bike riding days, despite practicing for many weeks, I still wiped out in a patch of wet leaves which provided me with two very skinless elbows. After even more weeks of practice, I lost the brakes on my bike while riding down a steep hill. I was approaching an intersection at the bottom of the hill with no way to stop, so I attempted an ingenious solution—a bicycle water landing in the nearby pond. Sadly, rather than getting the bike to the water I put the bike into a ditch and experienced an amazing over-the-handlebars experience.

**Perfection versus Mastery.** Practice makes perfect? Not so much for me. Yet, the phrase “practice makes perfect” has been traced by some phrase enthusiasts to the 1560’s saying: “use makes mastery.” I really like that concept of use makes mastery. The more I use gifts, talents, and abilities, there might not be perfection, but there will be increased mastery.

Notice how this fits with Ephesians 4:7—*“But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.”* Our skills, talents, and abilities are not ours to perfect, but are actually gifts for us to master. You and I are called to steward the gifts God has given us. Yet, do we live like this?

Looking at this from another direction, how would you respond if I called you and asked if I could borrow your car for the weekend? Most likely, even if you know me, you would want to verify my purpose before lending me your car. This makes perfect sense. What about when it comes to our gifts, talents, and abilities—do we figuratively see them as the car we are borrowing from God—or do we simply assume ownership of our skills? A measure of competence is not simply the raw ability, but Who we are serving with that

competence. If our use of skills is simply self-serving, we are clearly outside of God’s intent.

**Purpose.** Here is a way to monitor movement away from the self-serving use of our God-given skills. The intent of our stewarded abilities is *“to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ”* (v. 12). This means that the people living out their stewarded giftings in verse 11 (apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers) should not simply be getting work done, but intentionally raising up emerging leaders. A measure of my competence is whether or not I am facilitating the growth of other leaders. Two questions help with this reflection. 1) Do I invest in people or only in the task that needs to get done? 2) Do I invite others to invest in me? We know the right answer to the first question. The second question might be a good check on our honesty, though. If I am not inviting others to invest in me, I clearly do not value the leadership development process in my own life. With that lack of value, is it really reasonable to think that I am investing in others? If you do not have an intentional mentor speaking into your life, this probably is not only stunting your own growth, but enabling a habit of not valuing the investment in others’ lives as well.

One of my favorite illustrations is to eat while standing on my head. This 10th grade biology lesson about peristalsis speaks volumes to me. Food goes to its appointed place even though I am upside down and eating a granola bar. Amazing! Yet, ridiculous. When I can eat right side up, why would I choose an uncomfortable and potentially hazardous method of eating?

When it comes to competence, we need to ask similar questions. Just because someone possesses masterful competence, what is the purpose? If the purpose is only to get a task done, it is like eating upside down. Yes, it worked, but it was well short of what it could have been. On the other hand, if competence is utilized to get a task done while concurrently developing emerging leaders, purposeful competence is exhibited.

Key church interview questions involve the walk and unity of character, the equipping and building up of competence, and finally...the chalk line. Onward to the chalk line in the next article. [SR](#)



# Focused to Race — Part 2

By Brenda Rankhorn

In last month's issue, we began discussing our lives in the context of a race, or for the purpose of illustration, a bike ride. Just as there were things that could hinder my choosing the bike route that I set out to take, there are things that hinder us from glorifying God, from running "the race marked out for us." What are some things that keep us from glorifying God? We can come up with quite a list: pride, fear, inadequacies, busyness, distractions, poor health, problems, identity, feelings, our past, etc. The list can go on and on. For the purpose of making a point I'm going to focus on our identity, our feelings, and our past. We will see that the remedy for getting rid of these hindrances will be the same remedy that can be used to get rid of any and all of them.

Let's begin with our identity: Moses is an example of someone who almost let his sense of identity keep him from the great call that God had on his life. In Exodus 3, we can read how God spoke to Moses from the burning bush. God explained how He saw the suffering of His children in Egypt and that He was going to use Moses as His tool to release them from Pharaoh's power. Let's read Moses' response in verse 11 of Exodus 3. We find Moses making a pathetic excuse based on his identity (ESV) <sup>11</sup>*But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"* (He's saying, "Poor pitiful me, I was driven from Egypt. Who will listen to me? I am a nobody.") God's response is in verse 12. <sup>12</sup>*He(God) said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."* First, God tells him that He will be with him and gives him a sign. Further along in this passage, God continues to explain who He(God) is, what Moses is to say to the elders, what he is to say to Pharaoh, what God is going to do, and the final result. Moses continues with excuses. We are going to skip to Exodus 4 verse 10, as this is another excuse based on Moses' identity. Exodus 4:10-11 (ESV) <sup>10</sup>*But Moses said to the Lord, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue."* (He is saying, "I am not good at smart comebacks or saying things in the right order; I get my words mixed up at times.") Then the Lord said to him, *"Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?"* (A paraphrase: "Moses, who do you think you are talking to? I am the one who formed you in the womb. I know EVERYTHING about you. I know who you are and how you speak.") God basically responds to both of these comments with, "I will be with you, I am doing the work through you, and I'm not surprised by your weakness, I am calling YOU



in spite of this." He wants Moses to stop looking at himself and instead look to God for strength and wisdom, to understand God's might.

Another hindrance is our feelings. How often do we imagine or assume how others will respond to the message of the Gospel or to us simply showing the love of God to them? Or we don't praise God in church or pray aloud because we just don't feel godly, wise, or capable enough? Moses had fears that drove him to the "what ifs." In Exodus 4:1 he responds to God with, *"But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.'"* How often do we not share Jesus with someone else because we are afraid of the response or we just don't know what to say? Just like God tells Moses, in verse 15 of Exodus 4, <sup>15</sup> "You shall speak to him (Aaron) and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do." God tells us that He will give us the words to say and that the Holy Spirit will speak through us (Luke 12:11, 12; Matthew 10:19, 20). As far as feeling godly or capable or wise, God chose us because we are not. I Corinthians 1: 26-31 states: <sup>26</sup> *"For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup> God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are <sup>29</sup> that no flesh should glory in His presence. <sup>30</sup> But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— <sup>31</sup> that, as it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.'"* God chose us just the way we are—foolish, weak, low, despised—we have no excuse to not glorify God. God's response once again to Moses and to us is that He is with us and that He wants to use us just the way we are and He wants the glory. The focus is God's wisdom, God's strength, God's power. Focus on who God is and not on what we are not.

Part 3 in this series will be in the upcoming issue of the *Sabbath Recorder*. SR



# 30-day Challenges

A couple of weeks ago I watched a buzzfeed video where they challenged themselves to do a hundred squats for thirty days. The video consisted of three people, two females and one male. The video takes you throughout the different days from each participant's perspective. In the beginning, the participants have doubts about how it'll be for them. They feel that they are going to struggle to succeed but feel that the outcome will be worth it. As the challenge went on, the participants found the 100 squats to be a piece of cake and not so much as a chore. They would find ways to incorporate the squats into their lives, such as when watching TV or reading a book.

I found the end results of this challenge intriguing and inspirational, and decided to try it for myself. In the first week, I found it hard to do them because they hurt my knee—but I pushed through. I learned to start to incorporate them throughout my day. Days I was busy, I would do them throughout the day whenever I got the chance, instead of taking away a whole chunk of time. Throughout this process I felt stronger, in better shape, and mentally stronger because I pushed myself.

Doing this challenge got me more than just stronger legs—it brought me inspiration. It takes thirty days to make a habit. So maybe 30-day challenges are a good thing. Is there something you've really been wanting to try? Turn it into a challenge! Whether it's going to the gym, eating better, or even doing more devotions—it doesn't hurt to try. Get creative with it! Maybe try running for ten minutes every day, reading a chapter a day, or even drinking a glass of water in the morning. Set alarms and reminders on your calendars. Find it a challenge for yourself because you never know what results you'll get. In a year from now you're going to wish you started today. So get started! I look forward to hearing all the different challenges you guys come up with—and if you need help, I'll come up with one for you! [SR](#)

# Love of the Father



Recently I had the difficult job of diffusing a situation involving a parent/child disagreement that was spiraling out of control. The child was angry with his parent for a very insignificant reason. It had boiled into an out-of-control fight on the part of the child over something that was, in reality, extremely ridiculous to be fighting over. An hour later that same child was still upset and adamant that his mom didn't love him.

Life isn't fair. Irrational anger and unfounded feelings of persecution tend to go hand in hand with being human, just as justified anger and real persecution do. Knowing the difference between justified and unjustified isn't easy. The ability to differentiate between the two is important. However, I believe of greater importance is how we react to unfairness.

Just as it is so easy for children to blame their parents for being unfair or heavy-handed, or ruining lives for the sheer intent of malice, it is just as easy for humans to blame our Heavenly father when life isn't going the way we planned. Children have the distinct lack of frontal cortex development to explain their inability to understand that their parents love them enough to enforce unpopular rules, decisions, and, yes, even punishment/ consequences. It is our responsibility as adults to treat children as though they are children, providing them with boundaries and consequences to keep them safe and to nurture them.

In the same way, God has provided for us, as His children, boundaries and consequences to keep us safe and encourage our growth. And just like children, we rebel and blame our Father for the unfairness inherent in life, denying His love. Becoming a Christian doesn't mean that life starts being fair or that problems work themselves out naturally in our favor because we prayed for it. God isn't an earthly shield and sometimes

bad things will happen. It's up to us to try and respond in an adult way rather than as a child.

When a child gets upset at his circumstances, phrases such as *they don't care about me, you aren't being fair, you don't love me, and you're mean* come out. When life isn't fair as adults, we say the same thing about God. When the "blessings" aren't flowing, we often translate that into a punishment or consequence from God—or other people are happy to make those implications for us. I can't answer the questions that come with why bad things happen to good people because I don't know. What I'm beginning to have an inkling of is maybe, like children don't understand why their parents/adults let some things happen and set rules that aren't fair, we can't comprehend what is in the mind of God.

Perhaps this conundrum was to some degree on Paul's mind when he wrote 1 Corinthians 13. The chapter is talking about love, and then seems to take a detour about behaving as a child, and then growing up and realizing we won't understand everything about God because we don't have that ability in the here and now. The most important thing is realizing that, in spite of the fact that unfathomable things will happen to us, God loves us. Jesus spared us the worst consequence of our sin, which is true death, in an act of sacrifice on the cross because he loved us. He loved you. He loved me.

In light of the cross, every other bad thing that happens here pales in comparison because we are spared a horrific ending in eternity; given grace where, if the world were fair, we wouldn't receive any. You cannot deny the love of a father who would lay down his life for his children, so don't deny the love Christ has for you. Cast off your childish love and embrace the love of Christ, who died so that you may have life. SR





*Greetings from SDB Brethren in Burundi*

In October of 2015, I had the privilege of traveling to the African countries of Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi with Johnmark Camenga, pastor of Lost Creek SDB Church in West Virginia. Before going, the lead pastor in Burundi, Gilbert Nduwayo, advised me that we should not follow through on our plans to travel into their country by road because of the threats to personal safety. He said it would even be risky to be in the capital city, but we would need to fly into there anyway. The reason is because Burundi is a “Christian” country that desperately needs Jesus. They have had a century of evangelism, and most proclaim a Christian culture — but the country is rife with corruption, violence, and other crimes.

Their president, Pierre Nkurunziza, insisted on running a third term in 2015 despite constitutional prohibitions. Following his election, he faced violent popular resistance which he violently suppressed. Part of his strategy for remaining in power is to turn a blind eye to the activities of armed youth militia that has a reputation for hunting down and making examples of those who speak out against the current administration. Our church leaders there have had to go into hiding to avoid retribution for expressing their views against illegal government activities.

This has prompted international bodies to place sanctions on Burundi causing increased financial hardship and loss of opportunities. One way the government has responded is to convert the way they look at Christian institutions. They now pressure them to act as government revenue sources, forcing them to pay for “registration” and pay “fees,” promoting the more financially supported or successful organizations. They do not see the Church as a body of believers, but as an organization used to gather religious customers that will then receive overseas support for their religious activities.

To support this idea of religion as an enterprise, the government has prohibited religious gatherings except in approved church buildings. To protect larger well-paying church groups, they have prohibited establishing churches within a mile of existing churches. So if another group builds within a small town, our people most likely would have to build outside of town and could not meet until they had.

This is the world in which our SDB brethren are trying to minister in Burundi. A prosperity-based Bible philosophy might suggest that God is not with our congregations there because they struggle. They are growing in number, but face ongoing persecution and extortion. They are often challenged to obtain food, water, and shelter. They fit much better into the suffering servant philosophy, which expects a follower of Christ to live in perpetual affliction. I believe closer to the reality of a life with Jesus is to expect God to love you, and sometimes things will go well, and sometimes they may not. And though we can be certain that God desires to bless His children, sometimes we are blessed with opportunities to lean on Him and grow in our faith. The Bible illustrates times when the faithful were in prisons, and in palaces. God is good, and God is good in Burundi. Please pray for our brethren who serve Him there.

*...For he makes his sun rise on the evil  
and on the good,  
and sends rain on the just  
and on the unjust.*

—Matthew 5:45

## God is Good in Burundi



*Johnmark Camenga and Gilbert Nduwayo  
in Bujumbura, Burundi*

# Shiloh Easter Ride

by Donna S. Bond  
2001, 2008 and 2018 co-chairman

What do a blue agate, two-gallon beribboned coffeepot; a horse and buggy; spring cleaning; egg dishes; a mystery; Christian fellowship; and a 128-year-old springtime tradition have in common? It's the annual Shiloh (NJ) Easter ride!

In 1889, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Allen and their neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Ayars (descendant of the 1705 town founder), planned and carried out a horse-and-buggy tour of the village and surrounding farmland, ending at a member's home for Easter dinner. The menu for this sumptuous feast for 25 consisted of five dozen rolls, three cans of fruit, four cakes, a half dozen eggs apiece, one-and-a-half pounds of butter and a quarter pound of tea.

The party was so successful that it was repeated the following year. The rest, as they say, is history!

There are many legends surrounding the annual Easter ride in Shiloh. Most of them are documented in careful records kept by Mrs. Anna Glaspey, who attended the first 50 consecutive rides (and three more after that), and John Bonham, whose 1952 pre-Easter death caused the only cancellation of the ride in 128 years. The record books also include clippings from the *Bridgeton Evening News*, a few pictures, and members' obituaries from the *Sabbath Recorder*.

Cars have replaced the horse and buggy, of course; cell phones lessen the chances of participants getting hopelessly separated; and a more varied menu is now the order of the day—usually at the Shiloh or Marlboro SDB church, Jersey Oaks Camp, a member's crowd-friendly home, or a restaurant.

Remaining are the mystery (as only the planners know the destinations), the coffeepot (which is left as a surprise with next year's committee chairmen), good Christian fellowship, and an emphasis on eggs—even chocolate eggs! The Easter ride now provides a reminder to tidy up Sunday morning “just in case.”

Places visited in 128 years are as varied as the leaders' imaginations and their contacts. Members' homes are still “on call”—after all, the pot has to be left somewhere to ensure a future! More focus is now placed on the back rooms of businesses, new schools or hospitals, farms, museums, historical sites, other churches or ministries, and private collections of various items (e.g., dolls, quilts, trains, art work, clocks).



Spirits have always been high, but never more so than the 1946 ride which was interrupted by the church wedding of Matilda Harris to Melvin Dickinson on April 21. After the wedding, the Easter party returned to their hosts' home for a business meeting.

Of interest to twenty-first century SDBs is the 1958 program at the Friends Meeting House in nearby Woodstown, where the curator described the work of George Fox (sound familiar?) in founding the Quaker movement.

In 1952 the party visited the Delaware Memorial Bridge, which was under construction. Forty-seven years later, another generation of party-goers descended under the roadway where the change continues to be collected from the toll booths.

The 1989 centennial celebration of the Easter ride was planned by another descendant of Robert Ayars, William Richardson, who arranged for part of the journey to be taken by horse-drawn carriage.

After-dinner entertainment includes the reading of the minutes, introduction of new members, announcement of the following year's planners, and a program of some type—musical performance, demonstration of a craft (e.g., decoy-carving, basket-weaving), games, silly or serious readings, slide show, and/or group singing of Easter “carols.”

The sharpest break with tradition (besides the automobile) was the 2004 decision to hold future Easter rides on Palm Sunday due to family activities and holiday closings of some destinations. Attendance continues to average around 25. SR



Council on History

Rev. Nicholas J. Kersten  
Director of Education and History

**Poem by Anna Glaspey  
read at the 1897 Easter party:**

The noonday sun is fast receding  
Here comes the Easter crowd,  
With joyous faces, prancing steeds  
And peals of laughter loud.

Now all is quiet, see they wait  
Three men now step aside  
With heads together bending low  
The destined place decide.

The signal to move on is given  
They all in line proceed  
From road to road up hill and down  
Their leader's movements heed.

And if perchance a by-road leads  
Up to a farmhouse gate,  
He's sure right there to take a turn,  
All follow on in state.

"They go to our home," some one cries  
And fly on past the rest,  
But lo; they turn and off they go  
And some one's left, I guess.

Back to the village streets they ride  
Then often turn about  
When suddenly a stop is made  
With joyous laugh and shout.

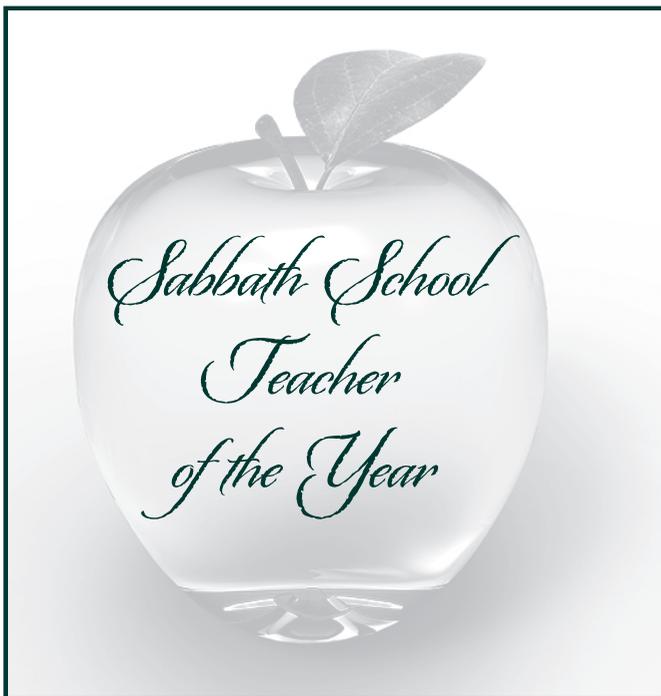
Now for the frolic, now for the fun,  
As into the house they go  
With everything nice of things to eat  
And eggs that must be served just so.

Eggs baked, deviled and fried,  
Eggs hard boiled and rare,  
Eggs daintily laid in a nest of green,  
Egg omelet made with care.

The table now is tastily spread  
With delicacies rich and sweet  
All ready for the Easter guests  
Who are ready to take their seats.

The repast ended, all repair  
The social feast to crown  
With good old songs and pleasant games  
As the merry jest goes round.

The time has come for us to part  
And as we homeward ride  
We wonder if we all shall meet  
On another Eastertide.



Each year the SDB Christian Education Council solicits nominees for the Sabbath School Teacher of the Year. This year we are changing the guidelines to include more opportunities for other leaders. Any member church (or branch church) of the General Conference may nominate a Sabbath School teacher, Bible Study leader, or Small Group leader.

The CEC encourages all churches to honor someone for his work in the Christian Education ministries of the local church.

Selection for this award shall be based on the following criteria:

- The Sabbath School Teacher of the Year shall exhibit the qualities of faith and teaching found in the life and teachings of Christ;
- serve as a Sabbath School Teacher, Bible Study leader or Small Group leader
- and be a member of the nominating church.
- Other Christian Education service shall contribute to a fuller appreciation of the nominee's Christian service.

The Christian Education Council selects a person from those nominated to be honored at General Conference. This person receives a certificate of award and a crystal apple.

The deadline for nominations for this award for the 2017-2018 Conference year is May 31, 2018. The nominations form can be downloaded at the link below. Upon completion of the nomination form, it should be sent to Peggy Chroniger either by e-mail ([chroniger@gmail.com](mailto:chroniger@gmail.com)) or by postal mail (5940 St Rt 21, Alfred Station, NY 14803).

Nominations sent by postal mail must be postmarked by May 31 to be accepted.

Sabbath School Teacher of the Year Nomination Form (fillable PDF):

<http://seventhdaybaptist.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Sabbath-School-Teacher-of-the-Year-Nomination-Form-final-fillable-PDF.pdf> 





# 5 Questions to Ask if Your Church Isn't Growing

Chances are you don't want to see your church stop accomplishing its mission. One of the primary missions of the local church is to reach new people with Christ's love, which, naturally, implies growth. But almost every church (and almost every organization) faces seasons in which growth stops. Some haven't seen growth in years...or decades. What was effective before has stopped being effective now. A malaise sets in that's difficult to describe. What do you do?

One of the best things any leader can do when he is in a tough spot is to stop making assumptions and start asking questions. Our assumptions got us to where we are, but they won't necessarily get us where we need to go.

Here are 5 telling questions you can ask when your church stops growing:

## 1. Is our sense of mission white hot?

Effective churches have a white hot sense of mission. It's far more than a piece of paper on a wall or something the board recites at annual meetings—it lives daily in the souls of countless people in the congregation. It motivates all the action in the organization. It consumes people.

Often a church that has stopped growing has lost the urgency of its mission.

## 2. Are we focused on unchurched people or on ourselves?

Our natural drift is to focus on ourselves. Not on Christ. Not on others. The gravitational pull of any church is toward insiders, not outsiders. Left unattended, your church will become a place where the preferences of the members trump passion for the mission.

There are two primary ways to address this drift:

- In every decision, focus on who you want to reach, not who you want to keep.
- Commit to losing yourself for the sake of finding others.

## 3. Has our strategy or approach become dated?

What got you here won't necessarily get you there. While the mission of the church is eternal, strategy should shift from generation to generation. It may even need to shift faster than that.

How do you tell if your strategy is dated or needs to be evaluated? When it stops being effective.

## 4. Are we on top of the constant change in our culture?

While you're studying your strategy, you might also want to study culture. It's changing, radically and quickly. We now live in a post-Christian, post-modern world. That's true in Canada. It's increasingly true in the United States. Churches need to grasp the enormity of the hole that the church leaves in culture by not knowing it or speaking into it.

## 5. When was the last time I personally invited someone to church?

Ouch! The reality is many Christians, for a variety of reasons, don't actually spend time with that many non-Christians. There are many excuses why.

But if almost no one at your church knows any unchurched people, it's no mystery why your church isn't growing. Go where people are. Love them. Engage them where they are. Invite them to know Christ the way that you know Him. Encourage them to belong to the community that you have in your local church. [SR](#)



# Personal Evaluation

by John J. Pethtel



I like John Maxwell. I have read many of his books. I agree with many of the things that he says. One of those things that has been beneficial to me has been to do a personal evaluation.

I used to just hope that things in my life would get better without doing any assessment or working at it. While God is gracious, it turns out that He has given me enough wisdom, emotional intelligence, willpower, and empowerment from the Holy Spirit to recognize sin to repent of and shortcomings to improve on.

I am committed to being the best me that God has created me to be so this personal evaluation has become a very important part of my spiritual growth. It is not a complex process and I want to share it with you so that you might consider giving yourself a check-up too.

There are four key areas that I evaluate and assess:

## 1. HEALTH

Since I have started to actually pay attention to my health, I have had more energy and think more clearly. Areas that I assess include physical health (weight, stamina, pain, etc.), mental health (thinking, cognition, memory, etc.), emotional health (depression, anger, etc.), and spiritual health (joy, peace, patience, etc.). I also include an evaluation of my rest and sleep patterns.

## 2. RELATIONSHIPS

This is where I evaluate which relationships I have that are joy-bringing and which are draining. I evaluate the health of my marriage; and my relationships with each of my children, my friends, my coworkers, my church family, and my neighbors. I make plans to deepen relationships and to strive to become a better husband, father, pastor, co-worker, friend, and neighbor.

## 3. FINANCES

I look at how I might have foolishly stewarded resources over the past year and make plans to become a wiser steward and more generous giver. I strive to build as much margin in my finances as I can so that I can be as helpful to others as I can.

## 4. MINISTRY/CAREER/CALLING

I evaluate what God has done to me and through me over the past year. I plan to improve in areas of ministry or career competency. I reassess my calling to my location, to my particular role, and to the people I serve.

When I keep these four areas in focus, I seem to be more prepared for the more preferable future that God has for me. If you are interested in ways to do a personal evaluation, please do not hesitate to contact me. [SR](#)

## PASTOR SEARCH

The following SDB churches or groups are looking for pastoral leadership. Please keep them in prayer as they search for their church's more preferable future.

- First Hopkinton SDB Church (Ashaway, RI)
- Middle Island SDB Church (New Milton, WV)
- Covenant SDB Fellowship (Hungry Horse, MT)
- Simpson Chapel (Marengo, IN)

If you are called to pastoral ministry or if you know someone who might be interested in pastoral ministry, please contact the Director of Pastoral Services by email at:

[jpethtel@seventhdaybaptist.org](mailto:jpethtel@seventhdaybaptist.org).

## Team Members Requested

Would you like to be part of a team that has a lasting impact on the future of Seventh Day Baptists?

We are currently seeking enthusiastic, nurturing and loving brothers and sisters to support **Children's Conference for 2018 in Kenosha, Wisconsin.**

Please consider joining this teaching, singing, dancing, loving and laughing group by spending your mornings making a difference in the lives of the children (ages 4 – middle school) in our denomination.

Please contact Emily Watt at 240-393-6294 or ew9@hood.edu if you are interested in working with this amazing program.

## Save for Retirement

Just a reminder that it is never too early to be considering saving for retirement as a pastor. While we never fully retire from the work of God's Kingdom until we get to live there permanently, we have a personal responsibility to ourselves and to our families to be able to take care of ourselves after we are not able to work full-time.

**Retirement planning** can be done many different ways. IRAs, matching 401k investments from other employers, investing in mutual funds/real estate, or participating in the 403b plan that the General Conference offers.\*

**If you are a church** that does not contribute to the retirement plan of your pastor, I encourage you to begin honoring your pastor in this way.

**If you are a pastor** and are not already participating in the 403b plan that the General Conference offers,\* please contact the Director of Pastoral Services to get started.

**If you would like to know how** to assist pastors who are already retired, please contact the Director of Pastoral Services.

Church Development & Pastoral Services  
Rev. John J. Pethtel, Director  
jpethtel@seventhdaybaptist.org  
cell: (304) 629-9823

\*These contributions are not matched by the General Conference; the administration of the plan is assisted by the General Conference.

## SDB GENERAL CONFERENCE USA & CANADA CONFERENCE SESSIONS DISPLAYS POLICY

Displays are an extension of the ministries of the SDB General Conference USA & Canada. The displays are used to inform, celebrate, and support the Conference and its mission.

Display space is limited at every conference session based upon size and location of the venue used. Therefore, priority will be given based upon the following categories of display, with Category 1 being the highest priority:

- **Category 1:** This category includes displays related to the councils, allied societies, or other ministries of the SDB General Conference USA & Canada. There will be no charge for these displays.
- **Category 2:** This category includes member churches of the SDB General Conference USA & Canada. There will be a fee of \$50 for a display in this category.
- **Category 3:** This category includes churches and groups identifying as Seventh Day Baptist. There will be a fee of \$100 for a display in this category.
- **Category 4:** This category includes vendors or other ministries that support or encourage the mission of the SDB General Conference USA & Canada. There will be a fee of \$150 for a display in this category.

**Additional Charges:** If the display is selling products, there shall be an extra \$25 charge. If the display needs electricity, there shall be an extra \$25 charge. Displays in Category 1 are exempt from these charges.

**There shall be no guaranteed location for any display.**

Internet and electricity may or may not be available for displays and availability shall be on a priority and then first come, first served basis.

1. Application for a display must be submitted no later than May 15 of each year, or the Monday following the 15th if it falls on a weekend. Acceptance of your display will not be confirmed until after May 15.
2. A separate request must be submitted for each display table.
3. Tables will be at least six feet long. You will be responsible for providing a tablecloth and skirt for your display. (These are required.) One chair can be provided per display upon request.
4. Nothing may be attached permanently to any walls or to the display table. Storage may only be provided underneath the display table.
5. No audio equipment or sound amplification of any kind is permitted. Videos without sound may be shown as long as the monitor/television rests on the display table.
6. We prefer and recommend electronic distribution of information instead of printed matter. Use of QR codes, web addresses, or SDB LINK is recommended.

If you must ship materials for your display, you must contact the Executive Director to obtain the proper address. You will be responsible for the costs of shipping your display.

No display may be set up at the venue prior to the opening Sunday of the conference sessions. All displays must be removed from the venue by 10 am on the closing Sunday of the conference sessions.

All displays that have items for purchase shall remove or cover the items from 6 pm Friday until 6 pm Saturday.

All displays must be approved by the General Council and/or Executive Director.

Waivers to this policy may be requested from the General Council and/or Executive Director.

**For more information contact**

**Robert Appel, Executive Director**  
robappel@seventhdaybaptist.org  
Phone: (608) 752-5055



## High Blood Pressure

The old saying goes, “A healthy heart is a happy heart.” One component of a healthy heart is a normal blood pressure. Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of your arteries that carry blood from your heart to other parts of your body. It normally rises and falls throughout the day but if it stays high for a long period of time it can damage your heart and cause problems such as heart disease and stroke, the leading causes of death in the U.S.

About 75 million American adults, or one in three, have hypertension (high blood pressure). Another 1/3 have prehypertension – numbers that are higher than normal – but not yet in the high blood pressure range. Only half of those with high blood pressure have their condition under control. One in five adults is unaware of having high blood pressure.

In 2014, high blood pressure was a primary or contributing cause of death for more than 410,000 Americans. That’s more than 1100 deaths each day. It costs the nation \$48.6 billion annually. This includes the cost of health care, medications, and missed days of work.

Medical risk factors for hypertension include prehypertension and diabetes. Unhealthy behaviors which can increase the risk include: smoking tobacco, eating foods high in sodium and low in potassium, not getting enough physical activity, being obese, and drinking too much alcohol. These behaviors combined with the medical conditions listed above significantly increase the risk. Some risks that you can’t change include age (chances increase with age), gender (men before age 55 and women after menopause), family history, and race (African Americans are at increased risk).

There are usually no warning signs of high blood pressure. The only way to know if you have it is to have a health professional measure it. A home monitor will help you keep track between doctor visits. Keep a record so the doctor can assess how you are doing. Blood pressure is measured using two num-

bers. The top number measures systolic pressure or the pressure in your vessels when your heart beats. The second number, diastolic pressure represents the pressure in your blood vessels when your heart rests between beats.

You can also have low blood pressure which is 90/60 or lower. This may make you feel light-headed, weak, dizzy, or even faint. It can be caused by not drinking enough liquids, blood loss, some medical conditions, or too much medication.

Recently new standards have emerged for different levels of pressures. They are as follow:

Normal	systolic: less than 120 diastolic: less than 80
At risk (prehypertension)	systolic: 120-139 diastolic: 80-89
High	systolic: 140 or higher diastolic: 90 or higher

If your pressure is higher than 180/120 call your health care provider.

It is discouraging to work to bring your blood pressure under control and then have the standards change. Research is constantly being conducted and these numbers reflect that. These new standards are believed to protect your heart more adequately and give you a healthier life.

You can decrease your risk factors by stopping smoking, eating a healthy diet, cutting down on salt, drinking less alcohol, getting a good night’s sleep, managing stress, exercising every day, and maintaining a healthy weight. If these lifestyle changes don’t reduce your blood pressure, the doctor may prescribe medication. Be sure to take it exactly as ordered. Keeping track of your blood pressure periodically with either a home unit or at a clinic is important. It helps you determine how you are doing. You deserve a healthy heart. [SR](#)

–Source [CDC.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)



## General Council Announces Retirement of Executive Director

The SDB General Council of the United States and Canada Conference announces that Executive Director, Robert Appel, has informed them that he will not renew his current contract, which expires at the end of the General Conference Sessions in August 2019. Appel has held this position since May 2004. The General Council was quoted as saying, "We deeply appreciate Rob's commitment to follow God's direction and his steadfast dedication to Seventh Day Baptists over the past 14 years".

In his letter to General Council, Executive Director Appel stated, *"I feel that Seventh Day Baptists need a new change in leadership going forward... with my departure as the Executive Director we may see a revitalization and commitment within the Conference."*

In accordance with SDB Bylaws, he has given adequate notice (12 months minimum) so that a smooth transition may be planned and implemented within the next 16 months. The General Council is reviewing and planning the process for the next Executive Director. Please be in prayer about this process. [SR](#)

## FLORIDA MISSION TRIP = LESS TALK, MORE ACTION



Ever think or even talk about your desire and duty to serve the Lord by helping others? Ever think about the excess that you enjoy within your family or church, and your responsibility to share? These sound like simple ideas. The most important principles of our faith are often simple concepts that are a challenge to live out. That's the point of this Conference theme. You understand what walking with Jesus looks like, you talk about it with ease, now it's time to DO it!

At the First Hopkinton SDB Church, we don't just talk about missions. We are ON a mission. Over the last couple of years, we have started sending out thousands of dollars (from our excess) to support various missionaries and ministries outside our church. We have supported missions through prayer, administration, and other ways. Recently, the time came for us to BE the missionaries on our first church mission trip.

With some divine inspiration and some consideration of national weather patterns, we decided to leave cold New England and head south in late February. We sent money and manpower to two SDB churches in Florida: Edgewater and Daytona Beach. This is not because they couldn't survive without our help. It's not because we are God's gift to SDBs who need rescuing. It's because God is moving in those churches and we have the resources to offer some help and encouragement

# LESS TALK MORE ACTION

Rev. David Stall, Conference President

[pastordavestall@gmail.com](mailto:pastordavestall@gmail.com)

in their work. Our desire was, quite simply, to show practical love and give our sister churches a boost by giving and serving. Could this be a big step toward church revitalization? I think so.

Our team of 18 worked hard and had a great time during this 10-day mission. God blessed us as we sought to bless others and we learned some things along the way! Most of the team stayed in the Lee family beach house, which was an awesome contribution that helped us succeed in this mission. Thank you, Danny and Danita!

In Edgewater, we had a big cleanup from a rummage sale fundraiser last year. Next, we cleaned up construction debris inside and outside the new building. An entire large dumpster was filled! We did some extra yard work and brush clearing outside. Then, we removed 20 pews, a pulpit, and some chairs from another church and moved them to the new Edgewater building. Part of our crew spent a full day refinishing those pews.

In Daytona, we removed 2 windows to frame in shelves and an A/C unit. We also cut a hole in their nursery wall and framed in a window opening. The nursery and adjacent hallway were painted. Some replaced boards on the sanctuary ceiling were stained to match, and most of the church interior was cleaned. In preparation for their food pantry distribution day, we helped prepare and pack food. Outside, we removed an unsafe staircase from a storage building, added an indoor attic staircase, and dug a trench for a buried water line.

In both churches, our group joined for worship on Sabbath. We provided special music and I preached a Conference-themed message in both churches. We were treated in both places to a wonderful fellowship lunch and we were welcomed with loving hospitality.

These churches embraced our offer to help and worked alongside our team.

I was impressed by the ambitious building project in Edgewater. Their new building will be an excellent tool in a great location to reach many people. More action indeed! The Daytona church has a remarkable ministry to the homeless and needy who live near the church. They have put their faith in action in ways that our other churches should learn from. In one trip, I saw three churches owning this conference theme and getting things done. God is good! [SR](#)



9/30 All. Assoc. Toronto	10/6 Berlin NY	10/7 C.NY Assoc. Verona, NY	11/11 S.A. Assoc. Atlanta, GA	12/23 Boulder CO	12/30 North Loup NE	2/24 Edgewater FL	3/3 Daytona Beach, FL		5/4 E. Assoc. Shiloh, NJ	7/29 Conference Kenosha, WI
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That's what Christ did...  
He went through it all—  
was put to death and  
then made alive—  
to bring us to God.

— 1 Peter 3:18 MSG

