

# Sabbath Recorder

February 2020  
A Seventh Day Baptist Publication

A Closer Look  
at the



Sabbath

## A Picture of God

It was the first day of the new school year. The young children starting Kindergarten were excited. Miss Allen was excited, too. It was her first day of teaching. She greeted each child with a happy face.

Miss Allen told the class that the first project would be drawing a picture of their favorite thing. Each child was given a large white sheet of paper and a new box of crayons.

Miss Allen walked around the room looking at the pictures being drawn. She thought the pictures were very interesting.

Mary drew a picture of a cat. Anne drew a picture of her new school shoes. Tom drew a picture of a large star in red and blue. Jack drew a picture of a green truck. Billy's entire page was colored bright yellow. Miss Allen asked him to explain his picture.

Billy said, "It is a picture of God."

Miss Allen shook her head. "No one knows what God looks like," she gently explained.

"Now they will!" said Billy with a big smile on his little face. "God is Light. The Light of the World. My teacher at church told me," he said with pride. "I made my picture yellow like light. It is my favorite thing, 'cause it makes me feel happy."

May God bless you and keep you. May you feel the love of God and walk in His light.

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*This short story is from the book, "And No One Can Change My Mind." The story is written by one of the founding members of Philadelphia SDB Church. She is 92 years old.*

—Mrs. Virginia Ayars  
Philadelphia Seventh Day Baptist Church

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# Sabbath Recorder

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## WHO ARE SEVENTH DAY BAPTISTS?

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

Like other Baptists, we believe in:

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

## THE SEVENTH DAY

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

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# A Matter of Belief or Experience?

Excerpts from SDB Statement of Belief:

*Preamble: "Seventh Day Baptists consider liberty of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to be essential to Christian belief and practice. Therefore we encourage the unhindered study and open discussion of Scripture. We uphold the individual's freedom of conscience in seeking to determine and obey the will of God."*

...

*"We believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God and is our final authority in matters of faith and practice. We believe that Jesus Christ, in his life and teachings as recorded in the Bible, is the supreme interpreter of God's will for mankind."*

...

*"We believe in the Holy Spirit of God, the comforter, who gives birth to believers, lives in them, and empowers them for witnessing and service. We believe the Holy Spirit inspired the scriptures, convicts of sin and instructs in righteousness."*

...

*"We believe that the Sabbath of the Bible, the seventh day of the week, is sacred time, a gift of God to all people, instituted at creation, affirmed in the Ten Commandments and reaffirmed in the teaching and example of Jesus and the apostles. We believe that the gift of Sabbath rest is an experience of God's eternal presence with His people. We believe that in obedience to God and in loving response to His grace in Christ, the Sabbath should be faithfully observed as a day of rest, worship, and celebration."*

Excerpts from SDB Vision Map  
Core Values (2015)

*"Bible and Spirit Led*

*The Bible is the Word of God and our standard for our Faith and practice. We expect the Holy Spirit to inspire and lead us as we fulfill our mission."*

*"7th day Sabbath*

*We are a people who lovingly observe the 7th day Sabbath (Saturday) as a day of blessing and rest."*

*By Rev. Dr. Dale D. Thorngate*

How does your belief about the Bible and the leading of the Holy Spirit influence what you believe about the Sabbath? I think the response of most Seventh Day Baptists to that question would be more biographical than theological. For me, that is certainly the case.

Continued on next page...

## A Matter of Belief or Experience?

*Continued from previous page...*

As a lifetime SDB I can't separate the Sabbath truth from my own biography. So I want to share a personal reflection on my experience of dealing with the importance of the seventh day Sabbath. I was born in the home of my parents, Ernest and Leona Thorngate in Battle Creek, Michigan, parents that raised me to be a Seventh Day Baptist Christian. When I was ten years old, I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior and was baptized by my pastor, Rev. Alton Wheeler, in the Battle Creek, Michigan, Seventh Day Baptist Church, while at Camp Holston.

As many who know me remember, before I entered the Seventh Day Baptist ministry, I spent twenty-one years in the US military: twelve in the US Air Force and nine in the US Army. I have since realized that during that time, I was actually trying to ignore some of my SDB upbringing.

During the whole time in the military I was involved in the chapel program at all the bases or forts where I was assigned both in the States and in other countries. While a training instructor at the US Air Force Academy, I directed the Prep School chapel choir of pre-cadets preparing for attendance at the Academy. Over the years, I also tried worshiping in several Sunday Baptist churches but I must admit that I just didn't experience a Sabbath on Sunday.

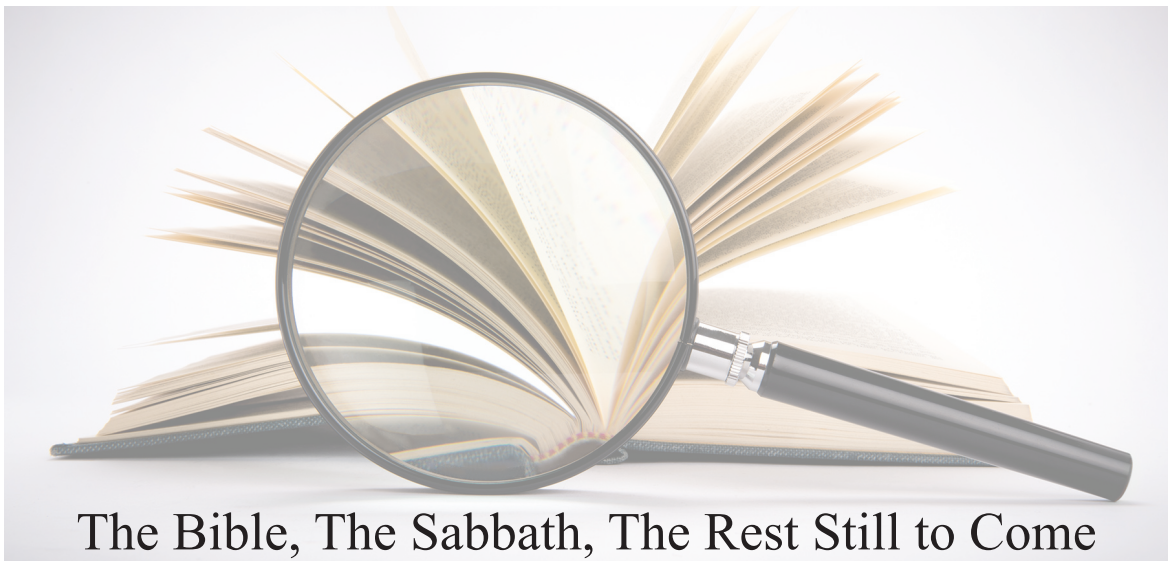
During my last five years in the Army, I was stationed at Ft. Belvoir, Virginia, just south of Washington DC. While there I was able to attend the Seventh Day Baptist Church on 16th Street in Washington DC. I immediately felt at home. It was like returning to the family—and to the importance of the seventh day (Saturday) Sabbath with all its blessings of rest and renewal of my personal relationship with God.

It is my personal understanding that, although we agree that the seventh day (Saturday) Sabbath is affirmed in the Bible as being instituted by God at creation, reaffirmed by the Ten Commandments, and by the teachings and life of Jesus, the Christ, for me, my personal attempt to find a Sabbath on Sunday, just didn't work. It was in my childhood that I had truly experienced the Sabbath in the atmosphere of the church family where I grew up. So when I returned to a Seventh Day Baptist church for worship and fellowship, I personally felt that Sabbath experience again. Today, I can say with full confidence, that I keep the Sabbath not just because Jesus did (He never changed it) but because I have personally experienced its rest and blessing in my own life. And I am able to comprehend what God had in mind when He created the Sabbath in the first place and why Jesus, His Son, reaffirmed it in His life and teaching for us. We know that God knows us better than we know ourselves. So when Jesus says that the Sabbath is made for people, we know that God established it because He knew what we would need, at least once a week.

On page 5 are the pertinent references to the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and the Sabbath contained in the SDB Statement of Belief and in the 2015 General Council Vision Statements about the Core Values of Seventh Day Baptists. The latter I personally contributed to as a member of that General Council. The Core Values, like the Statement of Belief, because we are Baptists, are descriptive of what SDBs believe, rather than prescriptive of what we must believe. Our connection to God through Christ is more a matter of relationship than of mere belief. And so it is with the Sabbath. [SR](#)

*“I can say with full confidence, that I keep the Sabbath not just because Jesus did (He never changed it) but because I have personally experienced its rest and blessing in my own life.”*





## The Bible, The Sabbath, The Rest Still to Come

I admit I was a little bothered by the fact that the church business meeting was scheduled to coincide with the Eagles-Cowboys football game. In Philly two things matter—winning championships and beating Dallas. So I was a bit surprised when a church deacon began questioning me about my checking the score during our December business meeting. I still think about his question, though it was asked many years ago: “Can a Christian truly be a fan of a sports team?” I still believe, as I did back then, that the answer depends on which one shapes who you are: your team or your Bible.

*“We believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God and is our final authority in matters of faith and practice. We believe that Jesus Christ, in His life and teachings as recorded in the Bible, is the supreme interpreter of God’s will for mankind.”*

(Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief)

As Seventh Day Baptists we look to the Bible to shape what we believe and how we practice those beliefs in our daily living. Yes, like other denominations, we do have our own publications such as the *Sabbath Recorder* you are currently reading and *The Helping Hand* used by many around the world as a lesson plan for Sabbath School on a weekly basis. We also have our traditions, though with cultural twists that add variety to the types of services you’ll find when going from one SDB church to the next. Ultimately it is the Bible, not our publications nor our traditions, to which we turn when it comes to the reason we worship on the Sabbath.

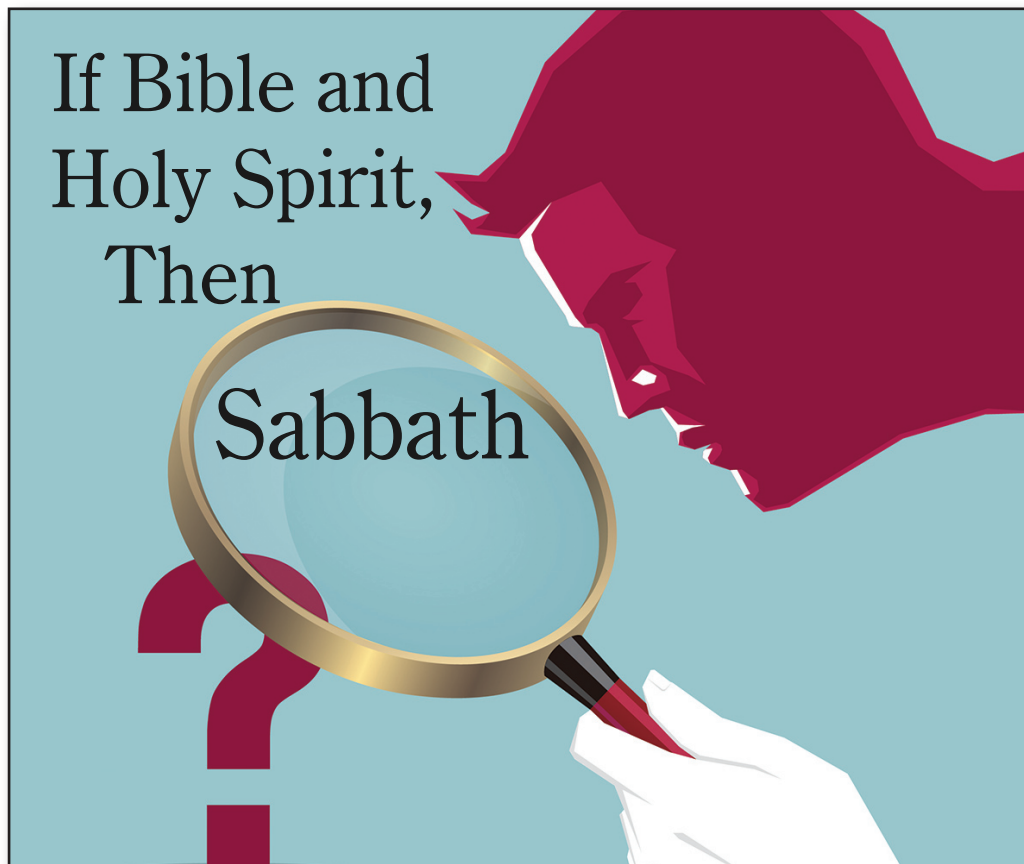
The seventh day Sabbath, standing as part of our identity, serves also to make us outliers among our fellow believers in the modern day church. As such it is important that our understanding of the Sabbath be rooted in Scripture. But Scripture is not ours to use as a weapon against others nor should we use Scripture to elevate ourselves above those with whom we disagree. Instead Scripture should inform us, helping us grow in our understanding of the Sabbath and of how it fits in the context of being saved by grace.

The Bible teaches that salvation is a gift of God, received only by faith in Jesus Christ. Every aspect of how we practice our faith must have at its foundation Biblically sound teaching of the Gospel message of being saved through (and only through) our Lord and Savior. Thus, while we must acknowledge that some keep Sabbath incorrectly out of a legalistic mindset, we must look to the Bible to instruct us in righteousness and to equip us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17) including instruction on what it means for someone who is saved by grace to worship God on The Lord’s Sabbath.

The Bible speaks of the Sabbath at creation. It also speaks of the Sabbath given to Israel as part of the Ten Commandments. If that were the end of the story we could truly question the motives of anyone who keeps the Sabbath under the New Covenant teachings about grace. But we also see that Jesus’ custom was to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16). The Bible tells us that Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28). We also see the Apostle Paul’s custom of entering the synagogue on the Sabbath day (Acts 17:2; 18:4). These mentions of Sabbath invite us to explore its meaning under the New Covenant. Further, our SDB belief in the Bible as our final authority on faith and practice demands that we turn to Scripture in order to answer any and all questions about the Sabbath, in the process freeing us to walk as God instructs in His word.

That same word speaks of a future rest (Hebrews 4:9-10). From this we know that the Sabbath is but a shadow of the rest to come for all of God’s children no matter their chosen day of worship. In this we have our hope, a hope that can only be understood if the Bible holds its rightful place in the life of the believer. Seventh Day Baptists should set an example by adhering to our belief that the Bible is the final authority on all matters of faith and practice, including the believer’s response to God’s gift of the Sabbath. <sup>[SR]</sup>

—By Dennis Coleman



By Pastor Rick Crouch

One of the reasons that I majored in journalism in college is because I wanted to get as far away from calculus as I could. Math is not my friend, and so by majoring in journalism, I was able to take easier classes like Logic to satisfy the math requirements.

Whether we realize it or not, most of us use logic every day—especially the conditional *if ... then* statement, where if the first part of the statement is true, then the second part is also true. If I am thirsty, then I should get something to drink. If I am hungry, then I should get something to eat. We believe something to be true, and then we act based on that belief.

Scripture contains many *if ... then* statements. It's important for us to connect both parts of the statements as we come across them because, although God's love is not conditional, many of His blessings are. It's also important for us to be aware of *if ... then* logic because if we believe that Scripture is true, then action is required based on that belief.

The introduction to the Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief begins, "*Seventh Day Baptists consider liberty of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to be essential to Christian belief and practice. Therefore we encourage the unhindered study and open discussion of Scripture.*" Later in the document specific beliefs about the Holy Spirit and Scripture are laid out.

About the Holy Spirit it says in part, "*We believe the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures, convicts of sin and instructs in righteousness.*" And about Scripture it says in part, "*We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and is our final authority in matters of faith and practice.*"

It is through these lenses that our beliefs about the Sabbath are formulated. If Scripture is true, then what it says about the Sabbath is true. If the Holy Spirit convicts of sin and instructs in righteousness, then the Holy Spirit will guide us in our attempts to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.



2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”* (NKJV).

This is one of the passages upon which our beliefs are based. At the time Paul wrote this, “all Scripture” consisted of what we now call the Old Testament. This doesn’t mean that the New Testament isn’t Scripture, it just means that the Old Testament has not been done away with and cannot be disregarded. It also means that God’s instructions for His people consist of more than just what is found in the New Testament.

That is why when talking about the Sabbath, our Statement of Belief makes reference to it being *“instituted at creation, affirmed in the Ten Commandments and reaffirmed in the teaching and example of Jesus and the apostles.”* Our belief is based on the entirety of Scripture. If this is true, then how we observe the Sabbath should also be based on the entirety of Scripture.

In regards to observance, our Statement of Belief says, *“We believe that in obedience to God and in loving response to His grace in Christ, the Sabbath should be faithfully observed as a day of rest, worship, and celebration.”*

This is a nice, general statement that leaves room for a wide variety of interpretations. I appreciate the sentiment expressed in what I quoted earlier regarding “liberty of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit,” but I am concerned that too many people cling to “liberty of thought” and leave out “under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.” If the Holy Spirit is guiding you, then you will not be led to do things that are contrary to Scripture.

As someone who was born into a Seventh Day Baptist family, my personal observance of the Sabbath was initially based on what was modeled for me in my home and in my church. Although I was verbally taught that the Sabbath is a 24-hour period from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday in which no work should be done, what I was taught by example is that the Sabbath is only however long it takes to have church and Sabbath school. Work and everything else are okay as long as you make it to those two things.

After I was married and started having a family of my own, I began to take my faith more seriously, and I began the “unhindered study of Scripture” that is encouraged in the introduction to our Statement of Belief. It was in this study that I discovered passages

like Nehemiah 13:15-22 in which Nehemiah makes a big deal about how we should not work or buy and sell on the Sabbath, and I started to examine my life in the light of Scripture.

For example, whenever there wasn’t a fellowship meal, my family always went out to eat after church. Now I began to wonder why it was okay to go out to eat on the Sabbath—and I asked myself, “Why is it okay for me to pay someone to do a job that I’m not willing to do myself on the Sabbath? Did Jesus die so that I could conduct business on the Sabbath?” Both Scripture and the Holy Spirit told me, “No, Jesus died to give you freedom from sin, not freedom to sin.”

So Grace and I started pruning back what we did on the Sabbath. We clipped off restaurants and Friday night movies without much struggle, but then came a difficult one for me. I used to be a big college football fan and the majority of the games are on Sabbath—so I tried to cover my ears when the Holy Spirit began to speak to me through my wife and tell me that I could not serve God and football at the same time.

But the Holy Spirit kept pricking my conscience and asking me if I was remembering the Sabbath to keep it holy by rushing home from church so that I could watch men throw a ball around and pummel each other? He asked me if my thoughts of violence and ill-will toward the opposing team and their fans were restful and worshipful.

And then I discovered Isaiah 58:13-14 which says, *“If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words, Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken”* (NKJV).

#### ***If ... then.***

If I want to honor God and the Sabbath and delight myself in Him, then I need to stop trying to satisfy my flesh with selfish pleasures on the day that He set apart to spend in fellowship with me.

If Seventh Day Baptists believe that Scripture is true, and that the Holy Spirit guides us in our understanding of Scripture and empowers us to follow its instructions, then we should take seriously God’s command to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. In so doing, we will rest, worship, and be blessed. SR

## What Does It Mean to Be Spirit-Led?

Seventh Day Baptists believe in God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who gives spiritual birth to believers, lives within them, and empowers them for witnessing and service. We believe the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures, convicts of sin, and instructs in righteousness.

To be led by the Spirit is the same as with Him but carries the additional emphasis on His leadership. We do not walk along with Him as an equal but follow His leading as our sovereign and divine guide.

Romans 8:14 (ESV) lets us know, "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." The converse is also true: Those who are sons of God are led by the Spirit of God. Believers do not need to pray for the Spirit's leading because He is already doing that. They need to seek for willingness and obedience to follow His leading.

Many verses in the New Testament make it obvious that walking by the Spirit is not simply a matter of passive surrender. The Spirit-led life is a life of conflict because it is in constant combat with the old ways of the flesh that continue to tempt and seduce the believer. The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

To put it another way, we often underestimate our need for the Holy Spirit and overestimate our ability to influence others for God.



Five ways to know that you are being led by God the Holy Spirit:

1. *We walk away from sin.* Sin is disobedience to the revealed will of God. Walk away from sin by having the sin nature cleansed by the pure righteous life of Jesus. Walk, therefore, to the cross and leave your sins with Christ Jesus, by faith.
2. *We walk away from any other supposed "way" to God.* Walk away from any idea that you can please God or satisfy God's righteous requirements and His punishment for sin by doing something yourself. You can't. It is cosmically impossible. But what God has required, God has provided through His Son, Jesus our Lord.
3. *We walk towards the truth of God's Word.* To walk in the Spirit is to walk in the Word. God the Holy Spirit breathed out the very Word of God. He will fill you as you breathe in that sacred Word that He breathed out.
4. *We walk towards the light of the love of Jesus.* Jesus said that He is the light of the world. And the light of Christ is His all-pervasive grace and love.
5. *We walk in prayer and total dependence upon the Lord.* Seek Christ and His life in daily prayer, in public prayer, and in meditation on God's Word. [SR](#)

### PASTOR SEARCH

**The following SDB churches or groups have called new pastoral leadership:**

Miami SDB Church (Miami, FL) — Benjamin Figueroa, Pastor

**The following SDB churches or groups are looking for pastoral leadership. Please keep them in prayer as they search for their churches' next leaders:**

Shepherd's Fold SDB Church (Johnson City, TN) Assistant  
Bay Area SDB Church (Pinole, CA)  
Covenant SDB Fellowship (Hungry Horse, MT)  
Central SDB Church (Mitchellville, MD)  
Remembrance SDB Church (Ft. Worth, TX)  
Edgewater SDB Church (Oak Hill, FL)

There are other potential vacancies in the near future. If you are interested in one of these vacancies, 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) or call 608-752-5055 ext. 702



Church  
Development &  
Pastoral Services

By John J. Pethtel  
Director



# Entering His Rest

## Fix Your Eyes on Jesus with Your Sabbath Rest

### *A Practical Guide to Fixing Your Eyes on the Sabbath in the 2020's*

Seventh Day Baptists are somewhat unique in our Sabbath belief in that we keep the seventh day Sabbath as motivated primarily out of our love for God and our desire to be in the blessings prescribed to that holy day. Our Statement of Belief says this about the Sabbath:

*We believe that the Sabbath of the Bible, the seventh day of the week, is sacred time, a gift of God to all people, instituted at creation, affirmed in the Ten Commandments and reaffirmed in the teaching and example of Jesus and the apostles. We believe that the gift of Sabbath rest is an experience of God's eternal presence with His people. We believe that in obedience to God and in loving response to His grace in Christ, the Sabbath should be faithfully observed as a day of rest, worship, and celebration.*

The General Conference's Vision Map would describe the seventh day Sabbath as one of SDB's core values this way:

*We are a people who lovingly observe the seventh day (Saturday) as a day of rest. It is a blessing, not an obligation.*

With these beliefs in mind, here are seven practical ways that we can use the observance of the seventh day Sabbath as a blessing in rest, worship, and celebration.

#### **1. Fix Your Eyes on Working Enough on the Other Six Days**

Along with the command to rest on the Sabbath, we are commanded to work six days. Use the rest of your week to help you keep the Sabbath holy and to keep non-emergencies off of your plate for the Sabbath.

#### **2. Fix Your Eyes on Providing Some Transition Time Between Work and Rest**

When you are running on the treadmill of our busyness during the week and you try to just step off for the Sabbath, you are likely to fall flat on your face. Give yourself some time to transition from the secular to the sacred.

#### **3. Fix Your Eyes on the Windows instead of the Screens**

On Sabbath, prioritize looking through the squares that are in the walls of your home (windows) rather than the squares on the walls of your home (televisions). Consider the things that God has created (nature) more than the things that man has created (movies, shows, games).

#### **4. Fix Your Eyes on your Family instead of Your Phone**

Consider a 24-hour technology or media fast for Sabbath day. Your influence can be replaced on the Internet but not in your home.

#### **5. Fix Your Eyes on the Bride instead of Your Business**

Sabbath is the perfect day to worship and spend time with your church (the bride of Christ). She is just as important as the bridegroom and certainly more important than your plans.

#### **6. Fix Your Eyes on Recreation instead of Vocation**

Focus in on activities that help you relax or build relationships with others. This is Kingdom productivity that your boss at work would never encourage.

#### **7. Fix Your Eyes on Your Eyelids**

Nap. Do it. Catch up your sleep. Cuddle your spouse or kids. Turn your phone off. No one worries while they are unconscious. All of the world's problems will still be there on Sunday. <sup>SR</sup>

## Biblical Rest in a Weary World



In his recent book, “You Found Me,” evangelism researcher Rick Richardson, with the Billy Graham Center for Evangelism at Wheaton College, charts and interprets recent evidence about those people around us who do not believe in Jesus Christ. Contrary to some studies well-publicized, Richardson believes that the standard, sloppy, defeatist narrative around Christian witness with those who don’t believe in our times is overplayed and overgeneralized, and in a way that discourages from living out what our faith teaches.

The remedy for this inertia in our witness, according to Richardson? Authentic faith which reaches out to our neighbors. According to Richardson, “**...We belong out there [in the world] as individuals and the church; bless people where we live, work, study, and play; and then bring them into the community of our congregation. People then go through a cycle of becoming the beloved in community. They connect to Christians, contribute their gifts and abilities to the congregation, commit to Christ, and communicate what God has done in their lives, inviting others into the same journey.**”<sup>1</sup>

I will comment further on some of Richardson’s findings in future columns, but for now I want to focus on one aspect of Richardson’s work: blessing people “out there.” As Seventh Day Baptists, we are missing one very important opportunity we have because of our Biblical convictions to bless the people around us in the underpromotion of our distinctive belief in the seventh day Sabbath of the Bible. Elsewhere in this issue of the SR, other articles have addressed our Biblical belief about Sabbath and how we can be led by the Scriptures and Spirit to keep it and believe rightly about it.

We need to carefully study the Scriptures on these matters for ourselves and to live from how we are led under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we study, but that guidance is not only for us. Our genuinely lived-out convictions regarding the Sabbath can be a powerful testimony to a world that is obsessed with never switching off. Real rest, even for our brothers and sisters in Christ who do not share our conviction, is difficult to find.

It has become so difficult to find that there is a proliferation of Christian books about finding “a Sabbath rest,” or “holding to the Sabbath principle.” We have important things to contribute to this conversation, both experientially and theologically, but our witness in these things is only as good as our lives can demonstrate. Ironically, one of the best things we may have to offer our world is our testimony as SDBs about what we refuse to do, or more correctly, when we refuse to do it. To a frantic world, an opportunity for real rest and fellowship with the God of the universe that can refresh us is very, very good news, both for believers and unbelievers alike.

As Seventh Day Baptists, we have long held that the seventh day of the week is sacred time, set apart and sanctified by God for rest—cessation from our weekly labors in a way that is totally different from the other six days of the week. We have affirmed this belief repeatedly, but a belief we don’t hold convictionally or won’t follow through on in our own lives has very little benefit to anyone, including ourselves. If it has been a while since you have gone back through Scripture and considered what God has done in providing the Sabbath for His people, it is high time for you to prayerfully return. This is not only for you, but for the good of our world and your neighborhood. God’s Spirit can work powerfully in your own life and in the lives that touch yours—but for that doorway to be open, you need to be in God’s Word, you need to be living out your conviction, and you need to be in contact with people who need God’s rest. [SR](#)

*If you have need of resources or materials to aid you in your study of the Sabbath, please contact us at the SDB Center. We would be happy to direct you to helpful resources!*

<sup>1</sup> Rick Richardson, *You Found Me: New Research on How Unchurched Nones, Millenials, and Irreligious are Surprisingly Open to Christian Faith*. IVP Books, Downers Grove, IL. 2019, p230.



Christian  
Education  
Council

Rev. Nicholas J. Kersten  
Director of Education  
and History

# Samuel and Tacy Hubbard: A Couple Devoted to God's Sabbath

By Rev. Don A. Sanford

*[Editor's note: Given the theme of the publication this month, we have elected to print this previously unpublished work from the beloved (and now departed) SDB Historian Don A. Sanford.]*

Few people in colonial times left as complete a record of the times and families as did Samuel Hubbard. Much of his journal was later used by such Baptist historians as Isaac Backus. Extracts copied from Hubbard's journal are still considered a primary source of thought and actions of the last half of the seventeenth century. It is from this journal that we find an account of the 1549 Cramner New Testament in possession of the Seventh Day Baptist Council on History:

*Now 1675, I have a testament of my grandfather Cocke's printed in 1549 which he hid in his bed-straw lest it be found and burnt in Queen Mary's days.<sup>1</sup>*

Samuel was born to Dissenter parents in Mendelsham, England in 1610. Samuel's paternal grandparents, Thomas Hubbard and wife, are listed in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* as having been driven out of the town of Mendelsham in 1556 for believing that Scripture contained enough information on its own to teach necessary doctrine to be saved.

Samuel emigrated to Salem, Massachusetts in 1633, and became acquainted with Roger Williams. The following year he moved to Watertown and became a member of the Congregational Church which had been organized there. Two years later, a large contingent migrated westward to the wilderness along the Connecticut River. They experienced considerable hardships from the weather as well as from unfriendly natives. But the journey was not all bad, because among the company was a young woman named Tacy Cooper from Dorchester who was able to cheer him up through all these difficulties.

After their marriage, the Hubbards made several moves. At Springfield, they were instrumental in gathering a church together. In 1647, they moved to Fairfield where they subscribed to Baptist ideas. Samuel gives his wife credit for taking the lead in this enlightenment:

*God having enlightened both, but mostly my wife, into his holy ordinance of baptizing only visible believers, and being very zealous for it, she was mostly struck at and answered two times publicly; where I was also said to be as bad as she, and are threatened with imprisonment to Hartford jail, if not to renounce it or to remove; that Scripture came into our minds, if they persecute you in one place flee to another: and so we did.<sup>2</sup>*



In 1648, they moved to Rhode Island where they were baptized by John Clarke and joined his church, which had been established in 1644 as the second Baptist church in America. Samuel appears to have been recognized as a leader. In 1651, Samuel Hubbard was sent by the church "to visit the brethren who were in prison in Boston for witnessing the truth of baptizing believers only." A few years later, he accompanied Obadiah Holmes on a mission to brethren on Long Island.<sup>3</sup>

In 1668, a Baptist church under the leadership of Thomas Gould was established on Noodle Island in Boston Harbor. This was the first Baptist church of record in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The Governor and Council of the colony "accounting themselves bound by the law of God and the Commonwealth to protect the Churches of Christ from the intrusion made thereby made upon their peace in the way of godliness," had these Baptists arrested and put in prison. In order to correct them in their errors, they promised a "full and free debate" on the issues. Mr. Clarke's church at Newport sent three men to help represent the imprisoned Baptists. Two of these had already accepted the Sabbath along with their Baptist beliefs: Samuel Hubbard and William Hiscox.

*Continued on next page...*



Council  
on History

Rev. Nicholas J. Kersten  
Director of Education  
and History

## Samuel and Tacy Hubbard...

*Continued from previous page...*

The record of the Hubbards' acceptance of the Sabbath is recorded in Hubbard's journal:

*My wife took up keeping of the Lord's holy 7th day Sabbath the 10 day of March 1665. I took it up 1 day April 1665. Our daughter Ruth 25 Oct. 1666 – Rachel – Jan. 15 day 1666. Bethiah – February 1666. Our son-in-law Joseph Clarke 23 February 1666.<sup>4</sup>*

The exact circumstances of their coming to the Sabbath are not recorded. Since this happened shortly after the arrival from England of the Stephen Mumford family, who had been Sabbathkeeping members of Tewkesbury Baptist Church, it is generally assumed that the Mumfords were instrumental in bringing them to the acceptance of the Sabbath. Yet Seventh Day Baptists are not dependent upon an "apostolic succession" for the Sabbath. The question of the Sabbath was seriously debated in England during the Great Decade of the 1650s and could hardly have escaped notice by the people in the colonies who were in close communications with the mother country. In a letter written by Hubbard in 1669 to the church in Bell Lane, London, reference is made to books by Stennett, Cowell, and probably Saller, all leaders among the Sabbatarians in England. Stephen Mumford may have introduced members of the congregation to some of these writings and called Tacy and Samuel Hubbard to the concept of the Sabbath, but it was the study of the Scriptures which confirmed this belief.

By the end of the 1660s, there were eleven people within the congregation who had chosen to embrace the Sabbath. In addition, there were others, including John Crandall and Dr. Clarke's nephew, Joseph Clarke, who had moved to the western part of the colony where several of Hubbard's family had settled. In 1671, the first Seventh Day Baptist church in America was born. But as in any birth, there was a considerable time of gestation accompanied by discomfort and labor pains. In his biographical sketch of Obadiah Holmes, one of the chief antagonists of the Sabbatarians, Edwin Gausted commented upon this period:

*The six years between Tacy Hubbard's first apprehension of her Christian duty in 1665 and the final separation at the end of 1671 were years of painful decision and almost daily discomfort. From the Sabbatarian side, the questions were these: how much proselytizing of others within the church was appropriate? Could one still take communion with non-Sabbatarians? How much loyalty did the Hubbard family, for example, owe the church of Clarke and Holmes? How should one behave toward those who became Sabbatarians and then changed their minds?<sup>5</sup>*

It was this last question which in the end forced a separation from the mother church. Two couples, Nicholas Wyld and John Salmon and their wives, had been among those who accepted the Sabbath, but in 1669 they left the Sabbath and even spoke against it within the church. The anxiety and discouragement which accompanied this "apostasy" (as it was viewed) is revealed in correspondence which Samuel Hubbard carried on with Sabbathkeepers in England, with members of his family in Westerly, and even with other Baptists in the colonies. When Obadiah Holmes preached a series of sermons accusing the Sabbathkeepers of leaving Christ to go to Moses, it became apparent that a split was inevitable.

Hubbard gave a little information in his journal about the immediate break stating simply:

*We entered into a church covenant the 23rd day Dec., 1671, Wm. Hiscox, Stephen Mumford, Samuel Hubbard, Roger Baster, Sister Hubbard, Sister Mumford, Sister Rachel Langworthy.<sup>6</sup>*

A John Comer manuscript among the Isaac Backus papers at the Rhode Island Historical Society Library contains the content of that covenant:

*After serious Consideration and seeking God's face among our selves for the Lord to direct us in a right way for us, & our Children, so as might be God's glory and our Souls good and others Example, We entered into Covenant with the Lord and with one another, and gave up ourselves to God and to each other, to Walk together in all God's Holy Commandments and the Ordinances accord to What the Lord had Discovered & Should Discover to us, to be his Mind for us to be obedient unto; with Sence upon our Hearts of great need to be watchful over one another, Did promise to do, and in Building and Edyfing each other in our Most Holy faith.<sup>7</sup>*

Nearly 350 years later, that covenant and the example of Samuel and Tacy Hubbard still provide incentive for Seventh Day Baptists to renew a covenant which upholds God's Holy Sabbath.

From the Hubbards, we see many encouraging messages:

1. There is value in one's heritage. We do profit from the ideals and examples of our ancestors.
2. Sometimes it is necessary to make moves for one's conscience's sake in order to have freedom to practice convictions.
3. Although history is often male-dominated, Tacy Hubbard is an example of countless women who have been spiritual leaders in their families. She was the first to accept the concept of adult baptism and the first to come to the Sabbath.

4. Samuel in his journal gave recognition to this fact, otherwise her role might have been neglected. Do we give women their rightful place in history?
5. The Hubbards symbolized the importance of the covenant relationship and Lord's Supper.
6. Although they felt it necessary to break with their Baptist Church, their relationship remained cordial and cooperative.
7. They passed their convictions on to their children and grandchildren. Only three of their seven children lived to maturity, but what an impact those three had for Seventh Day Baptists through their families! Many Seventh Day Baptists with roots in the tradition can claim the Hubbards in their family trees, including the author of this piece!

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Hubbard, *Register of Mr. Samuel Hubbard*, (copies in many locations; Backus transcription at Rhode Island Historical Society)

<sup>2</sup> Hubbard, *Register...*, pg4-5

<sup>3</sup> Edwin S. Gausted, *Baptist Piety: The Last Will and Testament of Obadiah Holmes*, Grand Rapids, MI: Christian UP, 1978, p22-30.

<sup>4</sup> Hubbard, *Register...*p9-10.

<sup>5</sup> Gaustad, *Baptist Piety...*p52-53.

<sup>6</sup> Hubbard, *Register...*p10.

<sup>7</sup> John Comer, "History of Baptists in Newport," n.d., Isaac Backus Papers, MSS 273, B1, F2, Box 6, p2, Rhode Island Historical Society. [Note: there are slight variations between the exact text in the extant copies of the Newport SDB covenant.]

***If you have questions after reading this brief sketch, please contact the Director of Education and History for further resources about the SDB heritage of Biblical Sabbathkeeping!*** SR

As I write this article, I am going into my 12th week of pregnancy, which also means I have finally begun to tell people about this exciting news. Pregnancy has been very tough for me. People tell you about the normal symptoms but they do not prepare you to what extent that may lead. For me, my symptoms have been extreme. It's been impossible to keep any food down and I find myself living on my bathroom floor in front of the toilet. I even drag a blanket in there because I know it's going to be a while.

When you find out about your pregnancy, you want to tell everyone—but it's become traditional to wait until you are about 12 weeks along and the chances of miscarriage are reduced. While pregnant I've learned that it gets kind of lonely. I felt very alone, and sometimes I still do. Of course I have my husband and my parents right along beside me in this process. But you feel this loneliness because, at the end of the day, the person going through this is you and no one is going to fully understand although everyone will try to. Now, I do not have the full lesson about how to avoid this loneliness because it's absolutely normal. Something I have learned through this is that no matter what, even when you feel alone, God is right beside you.

It took me a couple weeks but I eventually started to say a little prayer every time during these throw-up sessions. I prayed that any discomfort this baby could ever feel be put on me. I've realized this sickness is going to have the greatest payoff and I have no arguments. At the end of the day little prayers can bring such comfort. I have never been a big praying type, I find it hard to sit down and just pray my guts out—because the second I'm feeling something I just need to get it off my chest. That may mean praying a sentence a hundred times a day or just saying a comment to God like, "please help me here, thank you."

At the beginning of this article I did not know where I was going with it and maybe this is me just ranting about the things that I've been holding in. But I hope this brings a little encouragement to just one person out there. Maybe some of you wanted to know a little more about the girl you read from every month: Hi, I'm Sarina Gumness and I'm pregnant with my first kid, scared out of my mind, and not absolutely sure what I'm doing— but we can all get through this with a little bit of prayer. If you're in a situation where you feel lonely, I pray there's a payoff for you as well. And at the end of the day, I've got your back and so does God. SR

## Say a Tiny Prayer

YOUNG ADULT

By Sarina Gumness

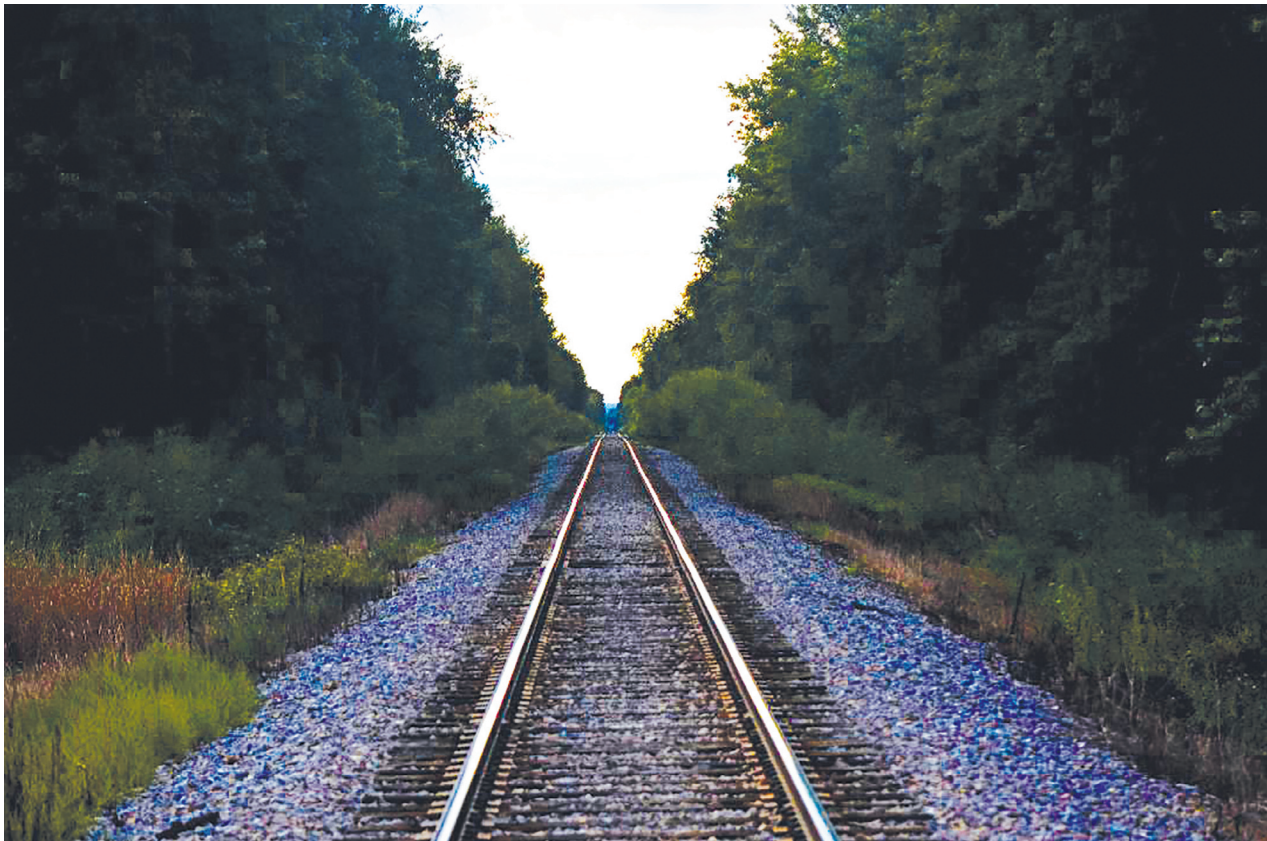


Photo Courtesy of Samuel Greene

## 2020: A Vision of Health for the Road Ahead

I failed the vision test. There was no way around it: I simply could not see clearly.

I was in the high school nurse's office with my face pressed into the overgrown viewfinder. I was essentially looking through a stationary pair of binoculars into a little box where I was supposed to see sign markings down the edge of railroad tracks

that stretched out into the distance. I could see up close, but all that I could see down the line was a blurry outline of multiple signposts.

There was something especially troubling here: I thought that I could see fine—both close up and far away. Regardless, my parents set up an eye appointment for me to address the issue. The result, however, was far different when I looked at the doctor's eye chart on the wall. This time my vision

came in at 20-10, and he suggested that I consider being a pilot (which is especially funny given my reliance on Dramamine).

More broadly, the doctor explained my issue: when I looked at the wall chart, I knew I was looking long distance and my eyes focused accordingly. When I looked into the little box in the nurse's office, my brain was expecting something close up, not simulated signs down the edge of distant railroad tracks. I was so fixated on what was close-up that I had no vision for the long term.

### Vision for the Road Ahead: Health

I believe that vision issues are similarly true for us as churches and church members—we can become so focused on short-term tasks, on sustaining programs, or on maintaining our schedules that we start to lose the ability to have vision for the long-term future.

I think that this is especially the case when it comes to health. For instance, paying attention to my own physical health requires time, which is especially



By Carl Greene  
Executive Director



difficult when life is jam-packed with unending deadlines. I simply have to give up certain short-term productivity if I am going to invest in my long-term physical health.

Similarly, for churches and church members, we need to make some sacrifices in the area of productivity to allow for investing in emotional and spiritual health. I believe that this is a key component of our vision for the road ahead as a General Conference.

In Deuteronomy 4:9, the people of Israel are given a clear directive about long-term health as they prepare to enter the Promised Land: “Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children’s children ...” God is calling the people to so much more than the promise of land in the near future—He is calling them to faithful obedience across the generations. This long-term vision requires three key components: Scripture, Spirit, and Sabbath.

### **Scripture**

Soak in for a moment this phrase from verse 9: “take care, and keep your soul diligently.” This is an active role that we are called to—one that is explained more in verse 10 in which God says, “that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me ...” This is a key recipe: long term health across the generations requires listening to God’s voice. If we want to experience increasing health as a General Conference, we need to listen diligently to God’s voice expressed in Scripture. Make no mistake about this—there is a “productivity” cost. We cannot simply be all about initiatives for church growth—there is a desperate need for long-term health derived from spending more time in Scripture than we currently spend.

### **Spirit Led**

God calls His people to be in step with Him on our daily journey together. When we are called to be careful not to “forget the things that your eyes have seen” or to be careful that we do not allow our God moments to “depart from your heart,” we are called to be in step with Him. In fact, we are to be so passionate and consistent in our walk with God that we make our

stories known to our children and our children’s children. We live life so authentically in step with God’s leading that it impacts those around us. Once again, this is a health item. We cannot be productive and pouring out all of the time to drive initiatives. We are called to commune with God and invest ever more time with Him in prayer and reflection.

### **Sabbath**

This is a key piece to our call to health. In Deuteronomy 4 where God is presenting a picture of health through Scripture rootedness, He lays the foundation for Deuteronomy 5 where the 10 Commandments are offered as specifics of what a healthy life looks like. In many ways, this picture of health is one of healthy rhythms, especially in the area of Sabbath. On the one hand, we should be very attuned to this given our name as Seventh Day Baptists. However, is it possible that we can be so focused on short-term change that we sacrifice the healthy rhythms of Sabbath rest as individuals and as churches? Do we step back and assess if as a faith community we are adequately providing margin where we are renewed and restored in a way that maintains long-term health according to God’s plan?

### **Healthy Churches and Healthy Leaders**

As a General Conference, a key area for us to lean into is the long-term vision of healthy churches and healthy leaders. You will be seeing different ways that we flex and adjust as a Conference to best facilitate attention on health. We deeply love our churches and the leaders of those churches—it is important to express that love through keeping long-term vision for and investment in their health.

Back to the railroad tracks where I failed my vision test. I wonder if the long-term focus for our health as a General Conference relies on seeing the tracks clearly. One rail of the tracks is Scripture rootedness, one rail of the tracks is Spirit-led, while the space in between reminds us of the rest God provides through Sabbath rhythms. May we celebrate and move deeper into who we are as Seventh Day Baptists as we pursue long-term health along with the immediate demands of today. Blessing on our journey ahead. Together. SR

# A TRIP TO THE INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT



*Pastors Andy and Wayne with Emerson Baroi in Bangladesh*



*Pastor Wayne preaching in Bangladesh, with Jim Baroi translating*



*Pastors Wayne and Andy, along with Pastor Pau Haang Tombing, his wife and children in Manipur*

Our world has become so much smaller because of the advent of the Internet. On the Internet, a brother in Bangladesh reached out to an SDB Pastor's wife in Cumberland, Maryland. Her name is Karen Higson. Over the next almost two years, that connection blossomed and was nurtured, so that our brother in Bangladesh, Emerson Baroi, began to boldly embrace the core tenets of Seventh Day Baptist belief and doctrine. Over the period, and all through the Internet, Emerson connected with other Seventh Day Baptists, not just in the United States, but also in the Philippines and elsewhere.

In December 2019, Pastor Wayne North and I had the privilege of traveling to Bangladesh to see and share in the ministry of Emerson and his family, including his son Jim. What we found was tremendous openness among Hindus who were being exposed to the Gospel. Emerson, working with relatives of his, who are affiliated with a couple of other evangelical churches, is reaching out to Hindu communities with the Gospel, and with the conviction to plant Seventh Day Baptist Churches in Bangladesh. Once or twice a day for several days, Pastor Wayne and I had opportunities to preach the Gospel to spiritually hungry people, watch them open their hearts to Jesus Christ, receive His healing for their souls and bodies, and manifest radiant expressions of the joy of the Lord on their faces.

So, the groundwork has been laid, the soil has been prepared, and we anticipate that in short order, the first Seventh Day Baptist Church in Bangladesh will be a reality.

For Pastor Wayne and me, our next stop was Manipur, India. Here, Pastor Pau Haang Tombing leads an SDB congregation of Zomi people, who are of Burmese descent, having crossed the border from Myanmar (formerly Burma) into the northeastern Indian state of Manipur. The congregation was warm and welcoming, and we had opportunities to share the Word with them and encourage them in the faith.

To be visited by us was sheer delight for them. And they loved on us with their food and did their best to cater to our physical needs. But most of all, even with the language barrier between us, the bond we have in and through Jesus was evident and strong. We embraced each other as family. We understood each other through smiles, through laughter, and through music.



**FOCUS on  
Missions**

**Andy Samuels**

Chief Executive Director  
SDB Missionary Society



*Pastor Wayne preaching in Manipur (above);  
Pastor Andy preaching in Manipur (right)*



We then moved on to the state of Andhra Pradesh in India. There are eight SDB Churches in this state, led by their Conference President, Pastor Paul Chukka. This Conference is a member of the World Federation, and through Pastor Paul's orchestration, Pastor Wayne and I were able to visit six of the churches, sometimes preaching three times in one day. In almost every church we visited, we were showered with garlands and salvas, part of the traditional Indian welcome of special guests, where flowers are thrown at the robed honorees.



*Pastors Andy & Wayne, with Pastor Paul Chukka in Andhra Pradesh (AP)*



*Pastor Wayne preaching in one of the churches in AP*

In the middle of the day, people gathered to hear the Word of God, leaving their chores undone and bringing their children along. The Word was like an oasis to them. They clung to the hope we proclaimed through Jesus Christ, embraced His grace freely given, and learned of the empowerment He offers to each of them, regardless of their present circumstances. Again we saw hearts opening to Jesus Christ, bodies healed, and faces lighting up at the power of the Gospel. It was clear that the one and only true God, was filling the vacuum in the souls of His seeking people.



*Greeted by children in some of the churches in AP*

Some of the church buildings, modest as they were, could be improved upon, thus providing better facilities for the congregation. As always, there are overwhelming needs in the places we visited, but we also know that our omni-resourceful God is able to provide and meet those needs.

Pastor Wayne and I were truly blessed to experience God's demonstration of power, love, and grace in unmistakable ways among people who desperately need Him. We appreciate the prayers of all those who so interceded for us. SR



# Galentine's Day

February 2020 is here and with it all the romantic airs of couples in love and the angst of people who aren't. People tend to either love or loathe February 14—or they just choose to treat it as any other day. Any reaction you have to Valentine's Day is fine—I'm not going to shame someone for finding joy in making sure at least one day of the year is extra special in the romance department. I'm also not going to be offended by the scoffer who dislikes the commercial feeling of the holiday and believes that concentrating on expressing love only on one day of the year rather than the whole year is dumb. Honestly, I tend to be relatively indifferent to the holiday—maybe that will change at some point—I don't know. But there is a "holiday" that's come out of the Valentine's Day craze that I wholeheartedly support and am on board with: Galentine's Day.

For those of you who are unaware of what Galentine's Day is—it was a made-up holiday on a secular TV show called "Parks and Recreation." The protagonist in the show introduced us to her holiday: February 13, Galentine's Day, as a day for awesome women to celebrate their friendships. What was meant as a cute idea to showcase a character has taken off. Increasingly, people are bucking the commercialism and forced ideals of a holiday that matters most to those in a romantic relationship and alienates those who aren't.

Just like Christmas and Easter, it can be difficult to see the real meaning of a holiday like Valentine's Day. It's easy to get caught up in the candy and hearts and miss the important ideal this particular holiday points us toward. Romance is part of it and if you want to celebrate that—no judgement. But a day celebrating love should point us toward ultimate love: the unconditional love of God for us.

Galentine's Day took off because it helps fulfill the human desire for love and connection in a way that isn't commercialized into meaninglessness. Strengthening connections through celebrating friendships is important. Taking time to remind the other people in your life of their worthiness to be loved as they are, that the person they are is valuable. Galentine's is a great way to remind people that they matter and are loved.

Celebrating love should point us toward Christ because that is where love begins and flows from. Unsurprisingly, we make it about us. But Valentine's Day really shouldn't be about us because love doesn't originate with us. It should be about more than just one or two people—leaving it at that cheapens what love truly is and misrepresents and cuts out the purpose of love. Including others, to underscore their importance and worth, it encourages and lifts up and gives meaning—embodying what love should be.

This February, instead of focusing on love that only reaches so far, consider how you can widen your scope. Plan a Galentine's Day celebration with your friends, volunteer at a shelter, plan something that brings people closer together. So many people feel isolated and alone, alienated. Finding a way to fight that feeling, especially on a day that tends to highlight loneliness, and bring people into closer connection with each other and their Creator, gives a purpose to a holiday many have described as pointless. Feel free to celebrate your romantic relationship on Valentine's Day but, in addition to celebrating romantic love, add to your celebration and find a way to extend the celebration of love to others as well. [SR](#)



Women's  
Society

By Katrina Goodrich

Ravi Zacharias is one of the foremost evangelical Christian apologists out there today. Ravi was actually invited to speak to several thousand Mormon leaders at their tabernacle in Salt Lake City.

When he got the invitation (and after recovering from the shock), Ravi asked if any other evangelical had ever spoken to them. They said, “Well, over a hundred years ago, D.L. Moody came and spoke.”

Ravi felt pretty good about being included in that kind of company.

He made two conditions for his time at the Tabernacle: 1) that he would pick the subject, and, 2) that he would get to bring the music.

For his topic, Ravi said that he would teach on the exclusivity and sufficiency of Jesus Christ. They said they would have to ask the head apostle on that one.

And the music? “I’d like to bring Michael Card with me.”

Lord willing, Michael Card is coming to our Conference in July.

Over his long career, Michael has sold 4 million albums, has written nineteen #1 contemporary Christian songs, and authored more than two dozen books.

One of his most famous songs was sung by Amy Grant: “El Shaddai.” That was named by the Recording Industry Association of America as one of the top 365 Songs of the Century. He wrote “Immanuel” and “Joy in the Journey,” and his song “Heal Our Land” was commissioned to be the National Day of Prayer theme song.

Popular music is not why Ravi Zacharias chose Michael to accompany him. And that’s not why I invited him to Conference. His music is carefully written and Biblically based. With a Master’s in Biblical Studies, Michael is both a student and teacher of God’s Word. He has written books on each of the Gospels (the *Biblical Imagination* series), and that research comes out in his music.

I started going to his *Biblical Imagination* study workshops long before becoming Conference President, and long before I ever imagined (sorry) having Michael come to one of our gatherings.

So, instead of just hosting him for a thoughtful and meaningful concert, I’ve asked “Mike” to also lead an afternoon seminar on “Fixing our Eyes” on Jesus.

Something special to look forward to on July 28, the Tuesday of Conference week!

### More about Biblical Imagination

The idea for the *Biblical Imagination* series came from William Lane, Michael Card’s spiritual mentor for nearly three decades. Dr. Lane would say, “You must engage with Scripture at the level of the informed imagination.” Michael saw his mentor model it, but it was never written down. Card set out to do that.

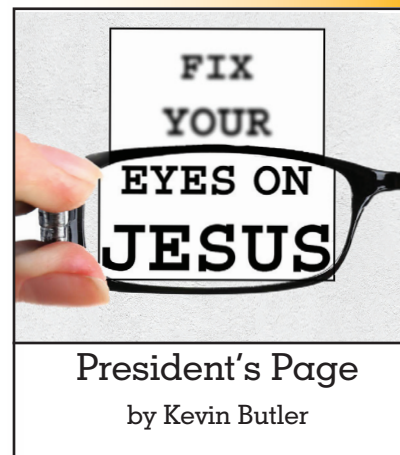
Michael says, “The imagination is the bridge between your heart and your mind. Because of the Fall, our hearts and our minds are fragmented. Some people engage the Bible with their minds, and that’s fine, because God gave us our minds. But they tend to just be theological and argumentative and they like to be right.

“Some people like to engage with their hearts, and that’s good because God gave you your heart; but they don’t tend to do their homework.

“If you look at the Bible you see that it’s really targeted to your imagination—not specifically your heart or your mind. The narratives, the poetry, the apocalyptic, and the parables of Jesus, they’re all designed to capture or re-capture your imagination.”

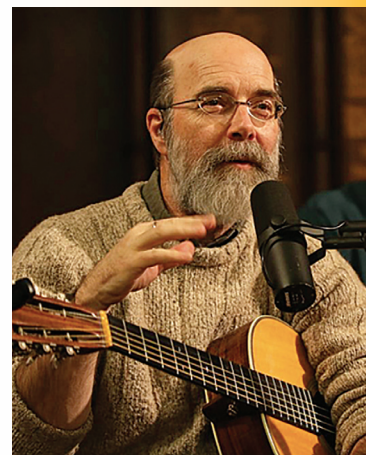
Through his studies and his books, Michael sees the Gospel accounts as four “Portraits” of Jesus. “I want to help others learn to know the four portraits in the Gospels, and then to really understand who He is now, through those portraits.”

Let’s use our Spirit-inspired imaginations to Fix Our Eyes on Jesus. SR



## President’s Page

by Kevin Butler



## Not just any Card

By Pastor Phil Lawton

## Netflix and Jesus

No, our second installment of *Everyday Theology* is not some weird slang for Bible dating. There has been a lot of news around these two topics recently. Though I plan to give a little background on two recent additions to Netflix's lineup, the point is not to give a review in the typical sense. The point of this series is to apply the truth of the Gospel to our everyday lives. Since much of the media is not Christian, I think it is important for us to consider how our response to movies and television displays Christ.

One note before we get into the topic: By the time you read this I will have already had the first installment of *Everyday Theology Q & A*. Yet, at the time of writing this we are still a week out. That's the time travel of print media. I say this because I want to remind you that we will be doing another Q & A livestream on February 20<sup>th</sup> at 8 pm EST. If you want more information on how to get involved, or you want to get questions in ahead of time, you can visit the Facebook page for my blog: *Contemplating Kenosis*. That page will always have the most up-to-date information.

I can't count the number of times that someone (usually a youth) has seen something (usually on YouTube) and asked me, "Pastor Phil, is that true?" There used to be a saying—"You can't believe everything you see on TV." At this point you can replace TV with Internet. Lest you think this is simply a problem of youth, I have heard people many years my senior swear that "God helps those who help themselves" is in the Bible. It's not. That was Benjamin Franklin... or Aesop... or maybe just ancient Greek theology.

The point of all this is not to tell you to never watch secular media. Some might feel that way, but honestly, I have issues with much of Christian

media, too. The point is that we cannot be simple consumers of media. We have to think critically about the things that we watch. Every creator has a belief system. Those beliefs will come out in the media they create. This can be an invaluable tool in understanding how the secular world views Christians.

### But Jesus Isn't Gay...

Around Christmas, Netflix released a movie called *The First Temptation of Christ*. I have not seen this movie, but I gather that it depicts Jesus as gay and Mary as smoking weed. This is not a Netflix original. It's by a group called *Porta dos Fundos*. If you go to their YouTube page, you'll find that this is nothing new.

The response to this from Christians was to #CancelNetflix. If I had to guess I would say that most people who were angered by the movie didn't actually cancel their subscription. Even if they did, yelling about it on Twitter wasn't helping anything. When I looked at it back in December (At the time of writing it seems Twitter is upset about Netflix and Goop. \*sigh\*) the theme from non-Christians seemed to be that Christians were overreacting. I agree if I'm honest. But that wasn't even the worst thing that happened. The *Porta dos Fundos* studio was firebombed on Christmas Eve.

The message that this sends to the world is that Christians hate people who think differently than they do. We don't care about poverty or refugees. We'd much rather yell about irrelevant movies on Twitter and throw Molotov cocktails at buildings. This is NOT the Christianity that I know. Chances are it's not the Christianity that you know either. But this is the Christianity that the world knows.

## I Don't Believe in that God Either

In college I had a professor who loved to have conversations with atheists. He would often mention that when people heard he was a professor at a Christian university they would tell him that they don't believe in God. His response would be to ask them to tell him about this God they don't believe in. Most times when they got done his response would be "I don't believe in that god either."

I think we wrongly assume that things like *The First Temptation of Christ* are about God. The reality is that they are not a critique of God. They are a critique of Christians' portrayal of God. They are a critique of the church. I don't know about you, but I welcome that kind of criticism. God may not be fallible, but I certainly am.

Jesus told us that to follow Him meant dying to self. Paul says that we do not live, but it is Christ who lives in us. To be a Christian means to live as Jesus. If what the world sees is not Jesus, the flaw is not with them. It is with us. Responding to purposefully antagonistic movies with hate just proves the world's point. The best way to silence falsehood like this is to live like Christ.

## Converted or Conned?

I have to say, Netflix knows me really well. Those trailers at the top of the page always get me excited. The one for *Messiah* was no different. It was about a modern-day Jesus. The second coming. It checked all the boxes. He was from the Middle East and not white. It involved conspiracy and ambiguity. It had a CIA agent who didn't believe. And then the question "Will he convert you?" changed to "Will he con you?" I was hooked. I had to know.

If you believe the critic score on Rotten Tomatoes, this show is a dud. But if you believe the popular score this is a home run. That usually means that this is something to watch. You may not like it, but at least you will have a strong opinion. Before I go on, I want to say that I am going to spoil things from here on in.

Is Al-Masih the second coming of Jesus? This question will plague you from the first episode right up to the last. We are given all kinds of reasons not to believe it. His grandfather who raised him was a magician. That means that the miracles he does could be faked. The guy knows how to trick people. He is friends with a Russian spy. That means the guy might be handled by the Kremlin. Al-Masih was institutionalized for a messiah complex. Maybe he's just crazy.

And yet how do you fake walking on the reflecting pool in Washington? How does he know personal information about everyone who interrogates him? The last minutes of the last episode suggest that he can raise people from the dead. That must mean that he is Jesus. Unless it doesn't.

## Outsourcing the Gospel

I think I was most excited about *Messiah* because I thought it might actually be good Christian television. Modern Christian movies tend to be heavy-handed with their message. *Messiah* is anything but obvious. But the more I watched it the more the show just seemed off. Al-Masih was promoting peace and unity, which is good, but not strictly Christian. Whenever anyone asked if he was God, his response would be to ask them what they think. Rather than heal a wounded dog he shoots it, because it was suffering.

All of these things lead me to the conclusion that the person who wrote this was not a Christian, but knew a lot about Christianity. This has led others to conclude that Al-Masih is actually being portrayed as the Anti-Christ. I'll admit it fits. The world seems to love him and yet it seems like he leaves chaos in his wake. But (other than meaning season 2 will be exciting) it does not change the larger point. We can't outsource our evangelism to media.

Using good stories as a tool to share aspects of the Gospel is great. I do this all the time. Jesus told stories to answer questions and tell people about the Kingdom of God. But they were not the only things that He did. A movie that accurately portrays the Gospel in 90 minutes is a sermon and I don't know any American who wants to hear an hour and a half sermon. If we really want to share the Gospel with people, we have to show it and not just tell it.

It would be easy for me to say that we shouldn't promote *Messiah* because it doesn't get Jesus right. But the truth is I think it is good. It gets people to talk. I want people to talk. I want people to ask questions, because then we get to give them answers from the Bible. The important part is not the doctrinal correctness of the movie, but the relationship that grows from talking about it. Stop worrying about how a movie portrays Jesus and think about how your life portrays Jesus. It is God, not a movie, that converts people. SR



## Helping Those Who Struggle

When someone is struggling we want to help but may be afraid of saying the wrong thing, so we remain silent. Knowing what to say can be difficult—but it doesn't have to be. *Active Minds* ([activeminds.org](http://activeminds.org)) presents a three-step model which you may find useful. The steps are Validate, Appreciate, and Refer.

**Validate** looks like this: When a friend confides in you that they are struggling, validate their feelings and appreciate the courage it took them to share. Tell them what they are feeling is okay and you believe them. Validation may sound like this: "That sounds difficult." "That makes sense." "I'm sorry you are struggling right now." "I'm grateful you told me."

**Appreciate** their courage looks like this: Speaking up is a challenging step—let them know it's a good one. Show you are there to support them. Appreciation and affirmation sounds like: "Thanks for sharing." "You are not alone." "I'm here for you."

**Refer** looks like this: Sometimes, what a person needs is someone to listen, but at other times they may need more. You can help refer your friend to skills and support. Refer sounds like this: "Sometimes taking time for self-care and listening to a comedy podcast help me; can we do that together?" "I've been using this meditation app. It's really helped me slow down my thoughts." "I think it might be helpful to talk to someone. I can stay with you while we call/text a hotline." "Do you want a distraction for a while? Maybe a walk?"

Some things you might hear a person say that suggest they may need support include: "I'm just having a hard time lately." "It's hard to get going with my day sometimes." "I'm really stressed out." "I've been feeling really anxious lately." "I'm really feeling overwhelmed."

If someone is struggling let them know that their feelings are real and that it is not their fault for feeling

this way. No matter what their brain is telling them, they will not be bothering others by reaching out. That is a sign of strength.

When someone confides in you, you have the privilege to help. Your concern, words, questions, hugs can save a life. But helping someone experiencing mental health-related difficulties is challenging, awkward, and uncomfortable. We are not taught to deal with these things, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't reach out.

Ask how you can help. Not just, "Let me know if you need anything," but, "Is there anything I can help with?" Giving specific suggestions gives them choices.

Remind them that they rock. Mental health issues can make you forget your self-worth, so having external affirmations can help.

Thank them for sharing. Being vulnerable is scary and requires a leap of faith. Knowing you appreciate their confidence helps reduce feelings of being a bother.

Have patience. Many mental health issues are treatable but it could take months or years for someone to recover. To be supportive means to stick around and continue checking in.

Practice self-care. It can get weary constantly be there for someone who is struggling. Establish boundaries, remind yourself it is not your job to "fix" them or make them happy. Although you may be frustrated that you are not doing enough, at the end of the day, it is not your personal battle. You cannot run the marathon for them, but you can offer support by handing them towels (or tissues) from the sideline.

Listening, accepting, connecting—you could make all the difference in the world.

—Adapted from *activeminds.org*



# OBITUARY

**RICHARDS**—Donald E. Richards of Milton, WI, died November 13, 2019. He was born the son of Oscar and Edna (Clement) Richards, June 5, 1925, in Montrose, CO.

His first fourteen years were spent in this Colorado town where he attended the North Side Elementary School, Morgan Middle School, and Montrose High School through his freshman year. He also became a Christian believer through faith in Jesus and a part of the Calvary Baptist Church where he began his Christian life. During the school year, the family lived at the Montrose Cider and Vinegar Plant and during the summer lived on the Ranch below Red Rocks.

In the summer of 1940, the whole family moved from Colorado to Riverside, CA, where he attended Polytechnic High School. He graduated in 1943 after the beginning of World War II. During these same years he attended the Riverside Seventh Day Baptist Church where he continued to grow as a Christian believer.

That same fall he entered the U. S. Army. Ultimately, he served in the 770<sup>th</sup> MP Battalion where he received his basic training in Camp Dulzura, San Diego Co., CA, a small camp in Long Beach, CA, and Camp Fort Ord, CA, where he became a Radio Operator First Class. During his military years he also served in the 440<sup>th</sup> Combat MP Battalion and was mostly located in the states of CA, MI, and IL. At the end of his military career he was detached from his unit to serve three months on town patrol in Chicago, IL.

Upon discharge in May 1946, he returned to Riverside and became an apprenticed printer at the Beacon Printery in Redlands, CA. He also became a member of Riverside County Christian Endeavor Union, where he served as president for two successive years and as treasurer. During these years, he grew in his Christian faith and felt the call into full-time Christian ministry.

In the fall of 1948, he enrolled as a freshman at Riverside Junior College and graduated in 1950, when as a junior, he transferred to Salem College, Salem, WV. He graduated May 1952 with a BA Degree with a major in Social Studies and minor in Psychology.

On May 29, 1952, he married Edna Ruth Randolph, daughter of Ashby F. and Ruth Content (Bond) Randolph, a fellow student at Salem for two years. During that summer he became the assistant pastor of the Riverside SDB Church.

From 1952-1955, he was a student at Alfred University School of Theology where they lived in "The Gothic" and worked on the University Campus Maintenance Staff for three years. He also served as the assistant pastor for First Alfred SDB Church, and became a member of the SDB Board of Christian Education serving on the Youth Committee. Their first child, Daniel E. Richards, was born March 7, 1953. Additional children included Timothy Reese (May 1, 1956); Elizabeth DeAnn "Betsy De" (July 4, 1958); and Doneta Ruth (January 8, 1961).

SDB Churches he served as pastor included the Ritchie SDB Church of Berea (Ritchie County) WV; and the Middle Island SDB Church of New Milton (Doddridge County) WV (1955-1960); Dodge Center (MN) SDB Church (1960-1965); Verona (NY) SDB Church (1965-1970); Marlboro SDB Church, Bridgeton, NJ (1970-1982); and Waterford (CT) SDB Church (1983-1986). While pastor of Marlboro, he also served on the Board of Directors for the SDB American Sabbath Tract Society, Plainfield, NJ. While in Waterford, he also served as pastor of the Rockville (RI) SDB Church and worked with a group of Jamaican SDBs in Hartford,

CT. In addition, he served on the Board of Directors of the SDB Missionary Society, Westerly, RI. Earlier he served as interim pastor of the Durhamville Baptist Church and New London Methodist Church, both located in New York State.

Edna Ruth became a special education teacher, who graduated from Glassboro State College, NJ, and taught in the Southern New Jersey School Systems. She died from cancer January 2, 1980. He married Shirley Boyd, daughter of Jerome and Eva (Stiffler) Boyd, in Salemville, PA, September 19, 1982. She suddenly died from a brain aneurysm February 29, 1983, and was buried in Salemville SDB Church Cemetery.

In November 1986, he became Manager of Camp Joy, Berea, WV, where he moved as a widower, and again became a part of the Southeastern SDB Association and member of the Middle Island SDB Church. When the Pastor, the Rev. Doyle Zwiebel died, he again became pastor of the Middle Island Church while managing Camp Joy and served through February 2003.

On September 3, 1989, he married the widow, Mrs. Geraldine A. Mullenix-Moyers-Cox, where they made their home in Harrisville, WV. She had two sons, Paul and Calvin Cox and five additional grandchildren. She died from heart disease, pancreatitis and Alzheimer disease on September 21, 2003.

On February 28, 2005, he underwent a five-way heart bypass surgery in Saint Joseph's Hospital, Parkersburg, WV, and almost died. Afterwards he was cared for by his nephew and wife, Gregory and Julia (Welch) Randolph. After recuperation from surgery he moved from Harrisville, WV, to Milton, WI, so he could be closer to his family and he became an associate member of the Milton (WI) SDB Church.

Survivors include Daniel and Dawn Richards, Texarkana, TX; Timothy Reese Richards and Terry Heath, Smithfield, UT and Sun City, AZ; Elizabeth DeAnne "Betsy De" and Clifford Bass, Madison, WI; Doneta Ruth and Joel Osborn, and ex-son-in-law, Verne Wright, Milton, WI; stepchildren Paul and Eva Moyers, Mount Hope, AL; and Calvin and April Moyers, Town Creek, AL; 12 grandchildren; 9 stepgrandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; 13 step-great-grandchildren.

He is also survived by the following sisters and sisters-in-law and brothers and brothers-in-law: Mae (Randolph) Lewis Bottoms, Wellsville, NY; Phyllis (McClain) Randolph, Marshville, WV; Elizabeth "Beth" (Randolph) and Joe Boyd, New Enterprise, PA. He also has 20 surviving grandchildren and 46 great-grandchildren, counting Joanne's descendants, plus many nieces, nephews and cousins. However, we lost track of Joanne's descendants soon after her death.

He was predeceased by his parents, all three wives, and their parents; a sister, Gladys (Richards) Bellman and Jerry Wagner; a brother, Robert "Bob" Dale and Patty (McLaughlin) Richards; a daughter-in-law, Joanne, "Jodie" Dussling Wentworth-Ratan-Richards; Ashby Bond "Bond" and Ruby (Oldacker) Randolph; Alois and Mary Ann (Young) Randolph; Xenia Lee (Randolph) Wheeler; Rev. Edgar Wheeler; Harry Lewis; George Bottoms; Rex Randolph; Mary (Boyd) Ellis; Clyde and Pearl (Mullenix) Haddox; Paul "Dutch" and Pauline Cox Mullenix; Denzil Mullenix; Paul Trickett; Sarah (Mullenix) and Charles Reed; Lucretia (Mullenix) McDonald-Myers; Leonatine "Teenie" (Mullenix) Morris; Stephen Grover "Buck" Mullenix; Thomas Dewayne "Hezzie" Mullenix; and Esther "Mullenix" and Lehman Stutler. He has also lost one of his 21 grandchildren, Jenna (Richards) Looney, who died of cancer.

Middle Island  
Seventh Day  
Baptist Church  
Celebrates  
Jesus Christ,  
the Messiah



Above left: adult members; Above: children of the Middle Island Seventh Day Baptist Church

Remembering the real reason we celebrate Christmas, the members of the Middle Island Seventh Day Baptist Church honored the season by wearing their T-shirts for the December 21, 2019, service. The front of the T-shirts had a nativity scene and read “JESUS MESSIAH – The True Christmas Story” and the church name on the back. As a church family, the congregation felt that it was important to “advertise” the message of Jesus Christ – the author of our Salvation. A special service was conducted with the normal worship, and included special readings and music by members. Following the service, members enjoyed a festive luncheon with pizza, cookies, chips, drinks, and especially “Christian fellowship.” Our prayer to all is for a healthy, happy, and blessed New Year. SR

By Roberta A. Ash

**OBITUARY**

**STEVENS**—Jacquelyn R. Stevens, 84, formerly of Burnt Hill Road, Weston Mills, NY, passed away November 19, 2019 at Cuba Memorial Hospital Palliative Care Unit.

Born May 29, 1935, in Olean, NY, she was the daughter of Richard H. and Elaine C. Adams Stevens.

Jacquelyn was a 1953 graduate of Olean High School. From 1955 to 1957, she served in the U.S. Women’s Army Corps at Valley Forge Army Hospital.

She began her employment with Corning Glass Works, in Bradford, PA, for a number of years before receiving her Master’s degree in social work from the University of Buffalo in 1989. She then began a career in counseling services, first for New York state at the Gowanda Psychiatric Center, then as a full-time counselor for the Wellsville Counseling Center. She eventually worked part time for the Center until her retirement in 1997.

She was a former member of the Obi Community Church, and was currently a member of the Little Genesee Seventh Day Baptist Church. She was also a former volunteer for Interfaith Caregivers. She supported several Christian programs in the area and she enjoyed doing leather-working as a hobby for many years.

Surviving are two sisters, Barbara J. Seeley of Little Genesee and Linda Stevens of Olean; several nieces and nephews; grandnieces and grandnephews; and great-grandnieces and -nephews.

She was predeceased by two sisters, Kay Stevens on September 7, 2005, and Sally Gayton on March 18, 2013; and a close friend, Sylvia Green on July 27, 1998.

Funeral services were held on November 23, 2019. Rev. Clint Pearsall, nephew to Jacquelyn, officiated. Burial was in Mount View Cemetery.

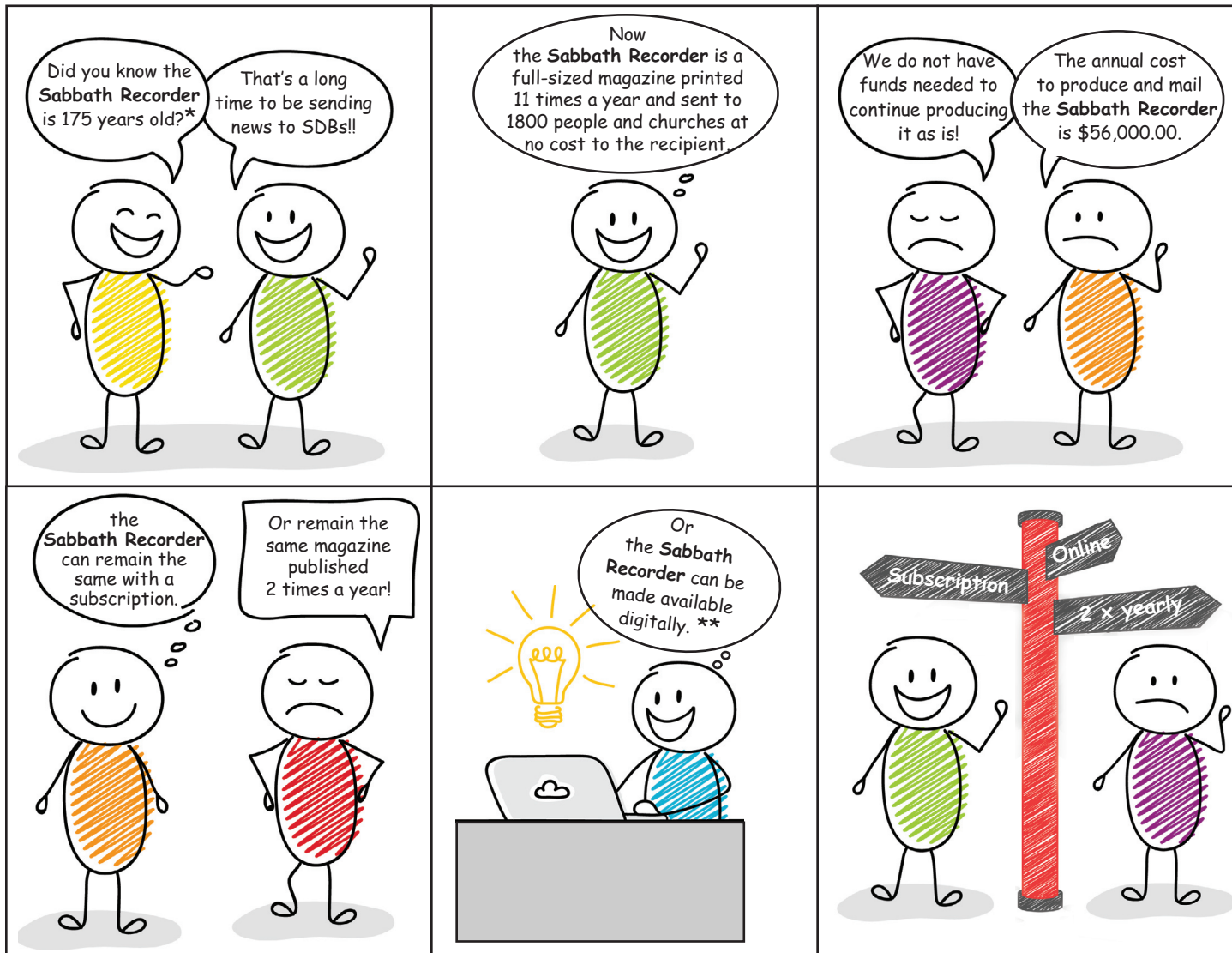
**Missionary Society Annual Meeting**

The annual meeting of the members of the Seventh Day Baptist Missionary Society will be held at the Missionary Society Office in the First Hopkinton Seventh Day Baptist Church Parish House, Ashaway, RI, on Sunday, March 15, 2020, 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, 2019 to December 31, 2019.
- 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, 2020, 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



Thank you for your prayers for the Tract and Communications Council and your response to the survey.

*\*The Sabbath Recorder began publication in 1844 and is one of the longest continuous printed religious publications in the United States of America. For the past 175 years, the Sabbath Recorder has existed in many different formats to provide news about Seventh Day Baptists in the USA and Canada and around the world.*

*\*\*The Sabbath Recorder would be made available digitally with the understanding I would have permission to print part or all of each issue as needed.*



Please choose one of the following options that you prefer for the **Sabbath Recorder**:

- I prefer the **Sabbath Recorder** to remain the same printed format through a paid subscription of \$\_\_\_\_ a year.  
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- I prefer the **Sabbath Recorder** to remain in the same printed format but with only 2 issues each year.
- I prefer the **Sabbath Recorder** to be made available digitally only with the understanding I would have permission to print part or all of each issue as needed.

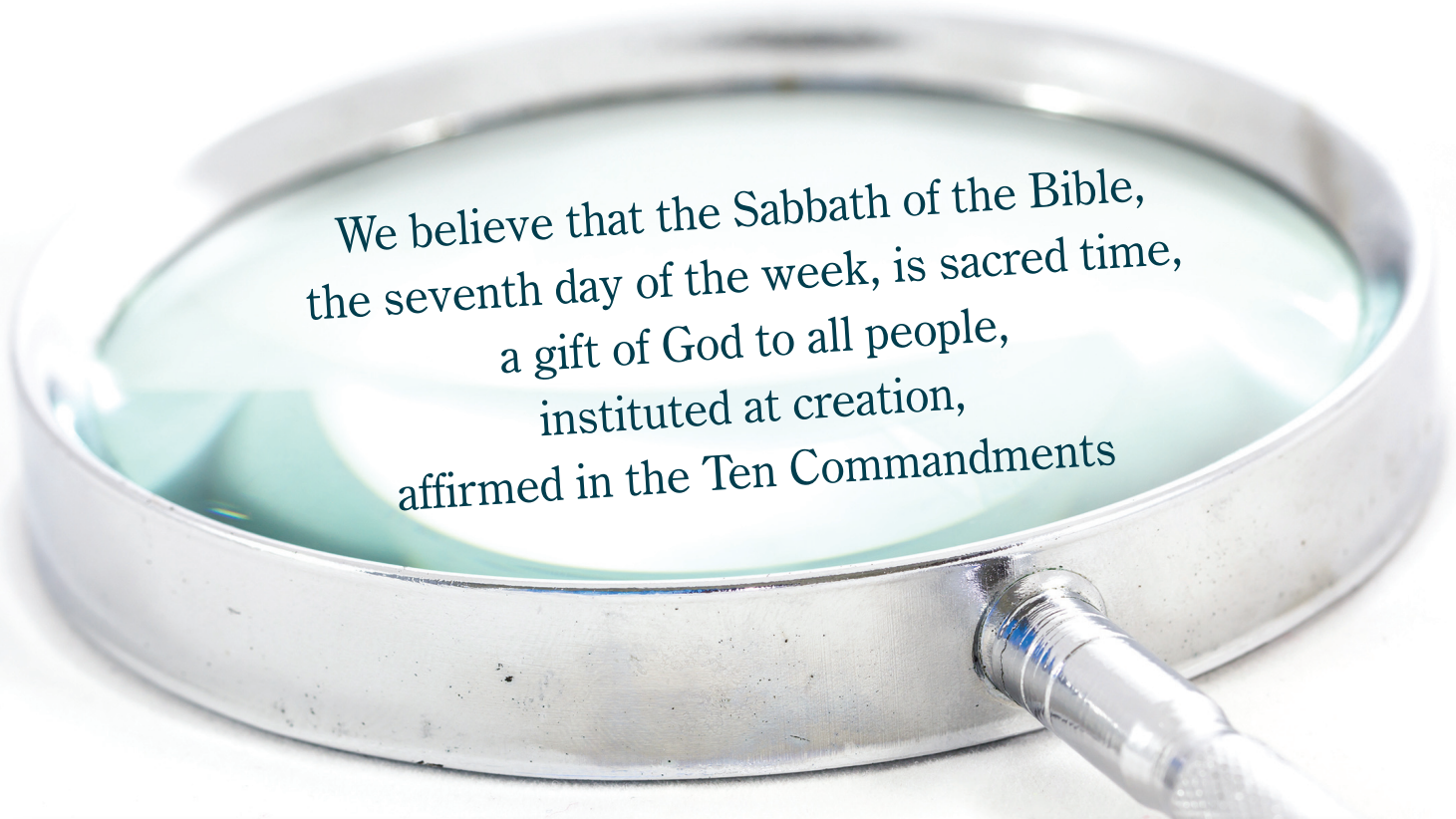
Please send your response to:

Attn: SR Survey  
 PO Box 1678  
 Janesville, WI 53547-1678

Or answer online at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SRSurvey2020>

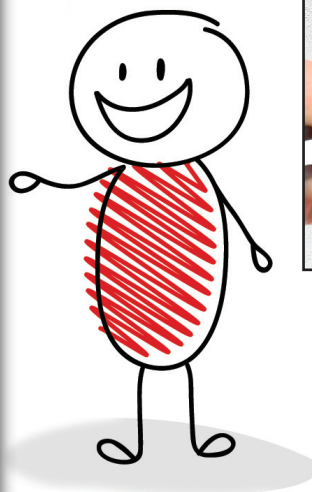
Periodicals postage paid  
at Janesville, WI  
and additional offices



We believe that the Sabbath of the Bible,  
the seventh day of the week, is sacred time,  
a gift of God to all people,  
instituted at creation,  
affirmed in the Ten Commandments

**Look Inside!**

**Please  
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Sabbath  
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**Coming soon!**



**FIX  
YOUR  
EYES ON  
JESUS**

**SDB Conference  
20/20**

July 26 - August 1

Calvin University

Grand Rapids, MI