NEWS

Inner City Adventist Family Shows Real Courage in the Face of Tragedy: A young Adventist deacon in Phoenix, Arizona, has saved the life of his own sister by stepping in front of an assassin's fatal bullet. A suspect has been apprehended and the Adventist family urges forgiveness.

Adventist Church in North America Appoints Theology of Ordination Committee: In a renewed round of study which could culminate in 2015 with greater worldwide understanding and unity, a multiracial committee consisting of nine men and four women, all with doctoral-level degrees, has been named by the North American Division.

Adventist Secondary School in London Faces Assessment, Possible Closure: An Adventist secondary school in London that serves one of the most depressed neighborhoods in the city, has been singled out by the government for closure, citing low test scores. The John Loughborough School in Tottenham is appealing the verdict.

Fifth Adventist University Opens a Medical School, This One in Peru: Loma Linda University was once the only place to get an M.D. in an Adventist university. But things have changed, and the church this month opened its fifth medical school, with plans for a sixth in the Philippines.

15 Women Serving as Pastors Approved for Ordination by the Columbia Union Conference: All procedural hurdles appear to have been met for ordination of 15 women nominated by a number of conferences in the Columbia Union (eastern US).

OPINION

Who Controls the Church?: Adventism is "blessed" with multiple layers of authority and a confounding degree of inter-relationships. Blogger Lawrence Downing examines the interplay of pastors, administrators, and local church members.

**Yom Kippur, 2012:** Devotional writer Debbonnaire Kovacs ponders the message of the Day of Atonement and what it has to say to her today, as a Christian living in 2012.

### Subscribers' Bonus Features

**Church Publishes Books on Two Controversial Issues:** A new book on the divergence of thought regarding creation and a second book regarding homosexuality in Adventism have just come off the presses. Learn more about these timely editions.... (Available to AT Subscribers Only)

**Need a Home Makeover? Ask the Adventists!** Members of the Cornerstone Adventist Community Church in Coquitlam, B.C. (Canada) each year adopt at least one existing home in need of repairs and/or maintenance in their community. The community and press have responded very positively.... (Available to AT Subscribers Only)

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*A Weekly Newsletter from atoday.org*

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Inner City Adventist Family Shows Real Courage in the Face of Tragedy

Submitted: Sep 24, 2012
By AT News Team

On Thursday evening last week (September 20) a 16-year-old young man gave his life to protect his 14-year-old sister. The family consists of members of the Beacon Light Seventh-day Adventist Church in Phoenix, according to The Arizona Republic daily newspaper.

Andrew Murphy saw someone aiming a gun at his sister and ran to protect her. He was shot in the chest and died later that night in the hospital. Police have taken an 18-year-old man into custody and charged him with murder and armed robbery, reports the newspaper.

Murphy “loved God and loved his church,” the newspaper said. He was a volunteer in the church’s community service program that fed the homeless and he served as a deacon on Sabbath. His sister told the newspaper that as he lay dying he whispered a prayer. Perhaps he was remembering the prayer of his Lord whispered when he was near death, “Father, Forgive them.”

Andrew’s father gathered the family around him as he was given word of his son’s passing and much to the surprise of the newspaper reporter, said to them, “We must not only forgive the young man who took Andrew’s life, we must love him too.” In an editorial, the newspaper described the family as “people who have the courage to live their faith.”

Beacon Light Church is a historically African American congregation with nearly 700 members. The pastor is Dr. Calvin B. Rock, who returned to local ministry when he declined re-appointment as a general vice president of the General Conference. He also served for many years as president of Oakwood University.

The church building is located at 2602 North 51st Avenue in Phoenix. The Arizona Republic announced that a fund has been established in the name of Andrew Murphy and the church can be reached by telephone at (602) 285-9391.
The officers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America have appointed a 13-member committee to participate in the study process on the theology of ordination that was announced at the 2010 General Conference (GC) Session in Atlanta. This is the third major, official study of the topic conducted by the denomination since the 1970s when church units in Europe asked for guidance on the appropriateness of ordaining women to the gospel ministry. Both of the two previous studies ended in an impasse when Bible scholars reported that there is no reason not to ordain women as clergy, but administrators were afraid to allow non-discrimination to be implemented.

The committee will prepare research materials from the perspective of the North American Division (NAD) over the coming year and present those to the 2013 annual meeting of the NAD executive committee for approval. This document will then be subjected to a lengthy and complex process in which a second committee, to be appointed by the GC administration in November 2013 for the purpose of reviewing similar reports from all 13 divisions, will prepare a combined report. This combined report will then be reviewed by the three top officers of the GC, three other administrative bodies and then presented to the Annual Council of the GC executive committee in October 2014. This body will make a decision at that point as to what, if anything, resulting from this process is presented to the delegates at the 2015 GC Session.

Although the purpose of this process is not specified in any policy document, it is generally understood that there are high hopes for the development of a consensus that will break the deadlock that has developed as a result of a mixed bag of decisions voted at the 1990 GC Session in Indianapolis. At that meeting it was voted by the delegates to (1) accept a report from a study commission made up of Bible scholars which stated that Scripture neither demands nor prohibits ordination from being extended to women; (2) authorize the ordination of women as local elders; (3) allow women to serve as pastors; and (4) not to ordain women to the gospel ministry in order to preserve unity in the denomination.

The 13 members appointed to the NAD study committee are all scholars with a doctoral degree or enrolled in a program to earn a doctoral degree. Six are faculty members at universities affiliated with the Adventist denomination. Four are pastors leading local churches. Two are denominational officials who supervise and resource pastors. One is a staff scholar at the GC’s Biblical Research Institute (BRI).

The committee exhibits the diversity of the Adventist membership in North America. Six are white, five are black, one is Hispanic and one is Asian. There are four women in the group.

It also seems to balance the range of views that exist on this topic. At least two are current or past officers or board members of the Adventist Theological Society (ATS) which is the more conservative scholarly group and several have been speakers for or active in groups that have advocated for the ordination of women pastors. One participated in the unauthorized ordinations that took place in 1995.

The committee is also a highly qualified group. At least two have written chapters in or edited books on the topic of the role of women in the ministry and life of the church. All are well-
schooled in the methods of Bible study used to fully understand the text in its original languages.

At least seven of the members are on record approving the ordination of women, including some who are among the more conservative scholars. Three more are not on record so far as Adventist Today could determine, but likely to favor extending ordination to women pastors based on the guesses of close associates interviewed by Adventist Today. No information about their views could be found on two of the members and one is seen as having taken a negative position on the topic.

“It is likely that this group will prepare a report making a case for permitting women to be ordained,” one retired NAD officer told Adventist Today. “There is a strong consensus among the leadership in North America to move in that direction and it would be unfair not to make a strong statement supporting that consensus.”

Profiles of the Committee Members

Gordon Bietz was appointed chairman of the committee. He has a long track record of bringing together conservatives and moderates to effectively accomplish goals for the denomination. He is president and a theology professor at Southern Adventist University. In 1998 he was co-convener with Larry Geraty, the president of Atlantic Union College, of the first joint meeting of the conservative Adventist Theological Society (ATS) and the more moderate Adventist Society for Religious Studies (ASRS). He has continued with ATS, speaking as recently as 2006 at a symposium on the trinity organized by the group.

Kyoshin Ahn has been vice president of the Illinois Conference since 2005. He was previously a pastor in Virginia and coordinator of Korean churches for the NAD. He is also a board member for The Hope of Survivors, a support group for victims of clergy sexual misconduct. Although he has a PhD, Adventist Today could find no record of his belonging to either ATS or ASRS. He was a speaker at a 2009 symposium on campus ministry organized by the Center for Youth Evangelism at Andrews University and received an award for excellence in ministry from the Ministerial Association at a recent NAD Ministries Convention.

Dedrick Blue is pastor of Ephesus Church in Harlem, West 123rd Street and Lenox Avenue, New York City. He is involved in many social causes as a board member for Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement (HCCI), a multi-faith community organization, and cofounder of Adventists Against AIDS in Africa, and international relief agency, but evidently is not active in ATS or ASRS. He has been a faculty member and administrator at Oakwood University. His wife, Elfreda, is an associate professor at Hofstra University with a PhD from the State University of New York (SUNY). The couple conducts marriage weekends together.

JoAnn Davidson is a professor in the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary at Andrews University. She wrote a chapter entitled “Women in Scripture: A Survey and Evaluation” for the 1998 volume Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives. Both she and her husband, Richard Davidson, the Old Testament scholar at the seminary, are on record in support of extending ordination to women. He has been an active member of ATS and the author of a chapter in the book mentioned above which demonstrates that there is no biblical support for the Southern Baptist doctrine of headship which is championed by some Adventists in opposition to women’s ordination.
Dwight Nelson is senior pastor at Pioneer Memorial Church on the campus of Andrews University and one of the most widely-known Adventist television preachers. He was the lead evangelist for the NAD’s NET 98 campaign. He is clearly on record in support of ordination for women, helping his large and influential congregation to work through conflict about ordaining women as local elders more than two decades ago and speaking to current issues on January 21 with a sermon entitled, “Of Perfume and Tears and Grumpy Old Men.” This sermon can be seen online at [www.adventistonline.com/video/dwight-nelson-on-women-s-ordination](http://www.adventistonline.com/video/dwight-nelson-on-women-s-ordination).

Kendra Haloviak-Valentine is an associate professor in the H. M. S. Richards Divinity School at La Sierra University and a New Testament scholar who has written on the Book of Revelation. She was one of the women clergy ordained in 1995 at Sligo Church in Takoma Park, Maryland. Both of her parents were employed for many years as part of the General Conference staff, where her father retired as Director of Archives and Statistics.

Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson is also a professor at La Sierra University and the editor of the 1995 volume *Women and the Church* which includes a number of scholarly papers related to the current assignment. She has served as president of the Association of Adventist Women (AAW) which has repeatedly urged the GC to approve ordination for women and recently signed a petition in which thousands of church members have expressed their support.

Stephen Richardson is the administrative pastor at Dupont Park Church in Washington DC and a PhD candidate at Vanderbilt University specializing in the Hebrew Bible. He has been principal of Pine Forge Academy as well as the pastor of a number of suburban and inner city churches in the Washington area for the Allegheny East Conference. Both he and his wife are the children of well-known Adventist clergy. Sources have told Adventist Today that he is supportive of extending ordination to women.

Edwin Reynolds is a professor in the School of Religion at Southern Adventist University and editor of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*. He was one of the coauthors of a report in 2004 which recommended that “the General Conference consider initiating an appropriate process which would enable Fundamental Belief #6 on creation to speak with greater clarity regarding the historicity and timing of Genesis 1-11” which seems to have played a key role in the decision by the new GC president in 2010 to announce such a process. So far as Adventist Today has been able to find he is not on record about the issue of women’s ordination.

Russell Seay completed a PhD in religion at Vanderbilt University in 2008 and more recently became an assistant professor at Oakwood University. His dissertation was on Martin Luther King, Jr. He served as a district pastor in rural Alabama; Memphis, Tennessee; and Jackson, Mississippi. He was also senior pastor of the South Nashville Church. Sources have told Adventist Today that he is sympathetic toward the ordination of women to the gospel ministry.

Tara VinCross is a pastor in Philadelphia and working toward the Doctor of Ministry at Andrews University. She is the director of a successful urban ministry program in which young adults engage in community service and sell Adventist books door to door. Sources have told Adventist Today that she definitely favors extending ordination to women.

Clinton Wahlen is an associate director at the Biblical Research Institute at the GC. He earned a PhD in New Testament at Cambridge University in 2002 and was a faculty member at the denomination’s seminary in the Philippines which serves two divisions in Asia and the Pacific,
the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS). He has published numerous scholarly articles in respected, refereed journals and was a contributor to the InterVarsity Press Dictionary of the Old Testament. He is a member of both ATS and ASRS. Sources have told Adventist Today that Wahlen opposes the ordination of women to the gospel ministry.

Ivan Williams is ministerial director for the NAD, a role he was appointment to as part of the new administration in late 2010. He has served as a pastor in the Pacific Union Conference and ministerial director in the Northern California Conference. Sources indicate that he is supportive of ordaining women in ministry. Last year his department sponsored a major gathering of women clergy from across North America and his keynote address affirming women in ministry can be found online in video form.
Adventist Secondary School in London Faces Assessment, Possible Closure

Submitted: Sep 25, 2012
By AT News Team

John Loughborough School in the Tottenham neighborhood of London is run by the South England Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with public funding. Civil authorities took steps last week toward closing the school because a “review team agreed that the school does not meet the required educational standards and has not for some time,” reports The Haringey Advertiser, a local newspaper. The team included representatives from the denomination as well as public education authorities.

Graduating secondary students in the United Kingdom all take standard examinations and just 35 percent of the Loughborough School graduates got a grade of C or higher on at least five of the exams, according to the Hornsey Journal, another local paper. The review team also looked at the quality of education provided and the finances of the school.

Parents of students and the chairman of the school board spoke at a hearing conducted by the local government council. “We understand it has been a failing school and we recognize we have fallen short and needed to do something.” Samuel Davis, school board chairman, told the hearing. “We have taken steps to address those issues [and] students are keen to stay at the school and parents want to help keep it open,” Davis was quoted by the Haringey Independent. “We appreciate it is a difficult situation but the closure of the school will disrupt the education of the children already there.” He also told the council that the school is seeking an academic partner organization to provide more resources.

Council member Ann Waters, who is responsible for issues relating to children in the local government, told the council that she understands the concerns of the parents and welcomes their involvement in the issue. “We recognize and welcome the school’s ethos and its role in the community,” she stated. “But the school’s educational achievement is not good enough and, despite the support provided by the council and the church, it doesn’t show signs of sustained improvement.”

A decision about the future of the school has been delayed pending a consultant working with the school board and faculty, starting October 1 and continuing to November 19. Tottenham is an area of concentrated poverty in the inner city of London. According to Member of Parliament David Lammy, it has the highest level of unemployment in London. It was the location of urban riots in the 1980s and again last year.

The Loughborough school is the only Adventist secondary day school in England. The British Union Conference operates a boarding secondary school at Stanborough, an outer suburb of London.

The CognitiveGenesis research project conducted for the North American Division of the denomination by the Hancock Center at La Sierra University has demonstrated that Adventist schools in North America are consistently ahead of public schools in the achievement test scores of students. Even small, one-teacher Adventist schools with limited resources provide better educational attainment than public schools.
Fifth Adventist University Opens a Medical School, This One in Peru

Submitted: Sep 26, 2012
By Adventist News Network

Last week a medical school was opened at the Adventist university in Lima, Peru. “A medical school has always been a necessity in Peru, and today that dream has become a reality because Peruvian Union University dreamed it,” said Erton Kohler, president of the South American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. There is a significant demand for physicians in Latin America which the new school will help satisfy.

The school’s founding dean, Dr. Carlos Alfonso Balarezo, is a Peruvian citizen who has served as chief of surgery at Riverside County Regional Medical Center in Riverside, California, and as an associate professor of surgery at Loma Linda University. He also holds the title of Master of Peruvian Surgery, a distinction awarded by the Peruvian Surgical Society and held by only three people.

Balarezo said he left the United States five years ago to join the team that established the school in Lima. “It’s a tremendous opportunity to help mold these students,” Balarezo said in an interview. “Like Loma Linda [University], we want to place a lot of emphasis on preventative care. This will differentiate us from other medical schools here.”

The school’s curriculum is a seven-year, post-secondary program. Classes started in August with 80 students. School officials say the program will continue with about 60 students admitted each year.

Peru is underserved with physicians compared to the rest of the world. The country has nine doctors per 10,000 people, according to the World Health Organization. The global mean average is 14. Student Flor Cari told ANN, “It’s wonderful to now have this program, which will prepare us to serve those who have needed us for so long.”

Peruvian Union University has about 8,100 students, making it the second largest university by enrollment affiliated with the Adventist denomination worldwide. Brazil Adventist University in São Paulo has more than 10,000 students.

Church leaders said the new medical school has a strong Adventist base to pull from in Peru, a country with one of the highest proportions of Adventists. There are more than 410,000 church members in the nation, which has a population of roughly 30 million. Approximately 60 secondary Adventist schools enroll a total of roughly 10,000 students. Officials said the new school would also draw students from neighboring countries, including Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Brazil.

Dr. Allan Handysides, health ministries director for the General Conference, said he expects the school to thrive because of the extensive planning by school officials over the past five years. “I think it’s going to be a great success because they were extremely focused on following to the exact detail the recommendations from the [denomination’s] Education department,” Handysides said.

The new school is the Adventist world church’s fifth medical school, inaugurated three months after the Benjamin Carson School of Medicine opened at Babcock University in Nigeria. There
are also medical schools at Adventist universities in Montemorelos, Nuevo León, Mexico; Liberator San Martín, Entre Rios, Argentina; and the flagship school in Loma Linda, California. A sixth medical school is being developed in the Philippines.

This story was provided by the Adventist News Network (ANN), written by Ansel Oliver with reporting by Angela Brown.
15 Women serving as Pastors Approved for Ordination by the Columbia Union Conference

Submitted: Sep 26, 2012
By AT News Team

Today (September 26) the executive committee of the Columbia Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church voted to approve the ordination of 15 women who are currently employed or are retired from employment as pastors in the denomination. This follows a four to one vote by delegates at a special constituency session July 29 to ban gender discrimination from ordination to the gospel ministry.

Three pastors from the Allegheny East Conference, four from the Ohio Conference and seven from the Potomac Conference were approved for ordination, as well as one retired pastor. The retired pastor is Dr. Josephine Benton, the first woman to serve as a solo or senior pastor in the Columbia Union in the second half of the twentieth century. She is also the author of a book with profiles of many women who served as Adventist ministers during the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.

The decision was not unanimous, but it had very strong approval observers told Adventist Today. At least one conference in the union was on record opposing the move prior to the July 29 constituency meeting and the president of another conference has promised his constituency not to move ahead with the practice at this time.

The Pacific Union Conference on the west coast has taken the same steps to end an impasse that began when the 1990 General Conference Session voted a package of contradictory positions on the topic. At that session in Indianapolis it was voted to recognize that the denomination’s scholars could find no Bible grounds for denying ordination to women, to authorize the ordination of women as local elders and at the same time to refuse to allow the ordination of women serving as pastors out of concern for “unity.”

The Columbia Union committee also voted to send a document to the GC officers responding to public statements that the GC leaders made after the July 29 constituency meeting. This document will be published in the next issue of the Visitor, the publication of the Columbia Union.

The North German Union in Europe has also approved the ordination of women serving as pastors and the Adventist Church in China has been doing so since 1980s. Ellen G. White, cofounder of the denomination, held credentials as an ordained minister.
Who Controls the Church?

Submitted: Sep 1, 2012
By Lawrence Downing

In my previous blog, I addressed the subject of ecclesiology: Who controls the church? As a partial answer to this question, it is legitimate to examine three of the major players in the ecclesial debate: pastors, church administrators and the people in the pew.

The pastor’s influence, in most situations, is limited to the parish she/he serves. The pastor may express views to those in administrative positions, but it is a quiet voice that may or may not be heard. Within the parish, the pastor has considerable influence. To many of our parishioners, we are the face, the heart and the mind of the Adventist church! We represent the church in its proclamation of Gospel of Jesus Christ. The pastor’s real authority rests in her/his ability to persuade people to act. The adage, “You can’t fire volunteers” is the operative mode.

Once we leave the context of the parish, we enter the church administrator’s realm. In an ideal world, church administrators facilitate the mission of the church. They are in office to provide support to the people in the local parish, assure that the routine tasks, such as payroll, insurance and other business matters, are carried out, coordinate programs within a conference or regional area, and monitor the churches within their boundaries. In the real world the ideal is seldom realized.

In the Adventist church, with its four bureaucratic layers, the tasks associated with operating a multi-faceted organization with its numerous churches and institutions are complex and diverse. It is important to acknowledge that church administrators, likely a great majority, are well-meaning, pleasant, caring and responsible individuals. They are the kind of people we welcome round our table and enjoy the opportunity we have to know them. Men and women in administrative positions have a genuine concern for the church and its people. At all administrative levels there are people dedicated to the Christian faith and the ideals of the Adventist church. In private conversation many will acknowledge the problems that confront the Church. They recognize frailties and suggest viable solutions. At they same time they admit how difficult it is to modify the status quo.

By virtue of their office administrators have access to finances that are beyond the reach of the parish minister. They determine how funds are allocated and assign people to various tasks. They decide what ideas are promoted and which ones will be diminished or rejected. Their decisions, when positive and wise, often go unnoticed; when decisions have a negative outcome the internet hums.

Like the pastors, the administrator’s authority over the parish is limited to persuasion. There is more direct control over people within the organization they govern.

The person in the pew is often caught in the middle of the various forces within the church administrative levels. In past times, church members were usually so far out of the loop that what took place in the bureaucratic levels above the local parish had little or no impact. The World Wide Web has dramatically changed the communication process. Many church members keep up on church politics and share ideas and concerns via the Social Media. These communication systems have changed the world forever and nothing will ever be the same.
What influence does the person in the pew have? Much in every way! The person in the pew is the one essential to assure the Adventist church continues to fulfill its mission. The people in the pew are the only sure source of income. They provide the resources that keep the wheels turning and aligned. They volunteer their services and share their wealth. Should they choose to do otherwise the Adventist church will slip into oblivion.

With the above as context, I want to look again at church administrators. What authority do they have? They have the authority to lead! They can take action that will facilitate healing and unity within our church. The following suggestions, I believe, are worth a look:

1. Become a facilitator, rather than a blocker.
2. Acknowledge that God works through his church on all levels, especially the parish.
3. Practice a Servant-Leadership model.
4. Do not take the CUC and PUC vote as a personal attack.
5. Express praise to God that the Spirit is active within the church.
6. Implement justice.
7. Place compassion and values above policy.
8. Uphold a theology and practice that is consistent with Jesus’ love, mercy and grace.

Should church administrators decide to implement one or more of these options I believe the result would be a calming effect that will counter animosity or fear. Church administrators have opportunity to assure members that each individual, including the one who may take issue with certain church policies, is a child of God and a valued member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
Dr. David Wilbur: Power and Illusion: Religion and Human Need. Part 1

Submitted: Sep 24, 2012
By Ervin Taylor

The next 16 blogs on this thread will summarize ideas and perspectives presented in a 2010 book entitled *Power and Illusion: Religion and Human Need* written by David W. Wilbur. Dr. Wilbur received his PhD from UC Berkeley in biophysics, and MD from the Loma Linda University School of Medicine. His distinguished medical career at LLU focused on clinical oncology. He grew up in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and has, for more than 20 years, been a regular participant in a Sabbath morning discussion group at the Loma Linda University Church of Seventh-day Adventists. Dr. Wilbur states that his book is an attempt to “understand religion as a powerful ideological tool; dependent on a supernatural mask, serving many human needs thus creating its good, its evil and it central importance.”

This book was recently reviewed by the distinguished American historian, Ronald Numbers. Dr. Numbers noted that some of those most insightful students of religion have come from religious fundamentalist backgrounds. He notes the career of Martin Gardner, who spent his youth in the SDA Church, and most readers will know that Numbers himself comes from that same religious tradition. With this book, Dr. Wilbur has now joined the ranks of this illustrious group.

At the beginning of his introduction, a comment of William Butler Yeats is quoted: “Man can embody truth, but he cannot know it.” Wilbur states that his book is “written for those believing or otherwise who, looking at ubiquitous religion, find discontinuities in claims and functions and wish to explore further how it shapes our world . . . [it is an effort] to describe how religion actually works in practice, both its intended and its unintended or unacknowledged effects. I attempt to outline the sources of its power and widespread acclaim and to describe its impact in important areas as diverse as ethics, culture, politics, science and human health.”

Part 2 of this blog will consider the first chapter of this book. Subsequent blogs will continue considering the materials discussed in the book’s 16 chapters. Those not interested in evaluating truth claims of various religious systems, including that of the Adventist version, and willing to undertake “a fair and honest assessment of religions’ many roles” may wish for the next 16 weeks to read some other blog.
Yom Kippur, 2012

Submitted: Sep 27, 2012
By Debonnaire Kovacs

I find great blessing in keeping and celebrating God’s ancient Feasts and Fasts as a child of God who believes that Messiah has come and has fulfilled those types as Prophet, Priest, King, and Sacrifice. For the Ten Days of Awe between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, (which I believe are well typified by these long days of waiting for the Coming and final At-One-Ment of God and God’s people) I pray through the Ten Sefirot I found a couple of years ago on iyyun.com/holidays/yomkippur: foundation, thanksgiving, victory, beauty, strength, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and malchut—hard to translate—the ultimate sovereignty of God. [Note: these are no longer found at the site, though iyyun.com is still active and still has interesting reading for those interested in Jewish spirituality.]

For Yom Kippur, the great Day of Atonement, I take the day off work, fast, spend the time in prayer and meditation, and wear white, a renaissance custom I read somewhere that represents the fact that you will be judged pure and innocent even though you don’t deserve to be (so much for the concept that there’s no Grace in the Jewish theology!)

This year I asked God the following question. Some of the answers I received are in italics below. You may wish to ask God for answers of your own.

If you were creating me today, a whole new person, if you took away from me all my past, all my gifts and talents, all my knowledge and plans and dreams, all my possessions, and I stood before you empty and completely new. . .

what would you give me back?

I give you back your past, complete, leaving nothing out, but entirely cut free from power over you. Your castle still has its dungeons, swept clean, even retaining the memory of the torturing devices, but they are under glass, locked securely, never able to touch you again. This past is almost like a diorama—no power over you now or ever, but it does contain the roots of who you are, and you need it for reference.

I give you those you’ve loved and who have loved you, and the treasure of the grief of their loss, along with the greater treasure of the certainty that your relationship with them is not over. These, and their love and grace, have also contributed hugely (especially my child, your mother) to who you are.

I give you the gifts of everlasting Love, flowing constantly through you from Us, the strength of compassion and loyalty and always stubbornly believing the best of others, your unleashed desire to share reconciliation and healing with all, and the ability to express these things in spoken and written words. I give you the joy of living and working outdoors and the restorative ability to make things with your hands and to teach others. I give you clear sight and the persistence to keep digging and unwrapping a situation until you see it clearly.

I give you music and dance and laughter and friendship.

For now, I give you the possessions of your home and your woods and cabin, but hold them gently and be willing to relinquish them if asked to do so.
And today... are you ready? ... I give you the key to the Tower. You may now begin to explore and to learn the differences and similarities between the Watchtower where I guard you (and the ways you can guard yourself), and the Towers where your work is. You will find gateways to the outside world, to the villages and castles of others. You will learn wisdom concerning when to open the gates and when to keep them closed.

Together, we are ready for the next chapter.

Thank You, Thank You, Thank You, Lord. I accept Your commission. I re-throne You more centrally and more securely and more certainly than ever, on the throne of my life where You have always lived.
Church Publishes Books on Two Controversial Issues

Submitted: Sep 27, 2012
By Debbonnaire Kovacs, Avondale and Andrews Media Depts.

Two Adventist institutions have recently published books on two issues that are receiving a lot of heat lately. Avondale College, New South Wales, Australia, launched a book on creation, and Andrews University Press released one on homosexuality. The information below is from the respective publishers and does not contain reviews. Adventist Today would be happy to see reviews of either or both of these books.

Launch reflects healthy state of origins discussion
Brenton Stacey
Public relations officer
Avondale College of Higher Education
Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia

Participants at the launch of a book about creation see it as a valuable contribution to the discussion about origins despite expressing differing views about its content.

In The Beginning shows “we don’t have all the answers—we never have,” said panelist Dr David Tasker, field secretary for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific, during the launch (Ladies Chapel, August 18). Editor Dr Bryan Ball summarised the tone of the discussion. “These are perspectives on origins. They’re not the only perspectives. They’re not the final perspectives.”

Dr Steve Thompson described contributing a chapter about the New Testament use of the Genesis text as his “most spiritually enriching writing exercise.” He referred to Hebrews 11:3 as giving a “brief, elegant and informed” Christian response to speculation about origins. “It says that while the world is a phenomena that can be observed with human senses, the act of creation is prephenomenal.”

Moderator Nathan Brown, book editor at Signs Publishing Company, asked about the importance of mystery and wonder in the theology of creation. Steve, borrowing from Plato, responded by noting the tension between “a human narrative of an evolutionary beginning” and “a human, divinely inspired narrative of a created beginning.” “A likely story: that’s all scientists can deliver,” he said. The inference: that is all theologians can deliver, too.

Two-thirds of In The Beginning discusses origins from a theological basis. “God’s revelation in Scripture is the primary source of information about origins,” said Bryan in his opening, “and this places upon us an obligation to understand what Scripture says and not to impose upon it what we want it to say.”

Avondale College of Higher Education president Dr Ray Roennfeldt thanked Bryan for remaining respectful of differing opinions and for expressing that difference in the book. He wanted to read more about the humanity and the interpretation of Scripture, about how to live with the incommensurate worlds of science and Scripture, and about how to communicate this to postmoderns “who know we don’t have all the answers even when we don’t tell them we don’t
Andrews University Press Releases Book on Homosexuality and the Church
Keri Suarez, AU media relations

Berrien Springs, Mich.—The first major book from an Adventist publishing house addressing the complex issues surrounding homosexuality and Adventist life and faith has just been released by Andrews University Press.

Niels-Erik Andreasen, president of Andrews University and chair of the University Press board, said the topic of this book is timely and needed. “Recent developments in our faith community, religious organizations, American politics and secular society require careful thought on this sensitive subject. Andrews University is pleased to help sort out some of these issues by bringing together a range of perspectives on this subject within our church.”

Titled Homosexuality, Marriage, and the Church: Biblical, Counseling, and Religious Liberty Issues, the nearly 600-page book was released in early August. It is a collection of 14 major essays on a range of topics, and an additional six personal testimonies from individuals who have struggled with homosexuality in their personal lives. The content of the book, including the testimonies, is material largely based on presentations at a conference on the same subject held at Andrews University and sponsored by various entities of the Adventist Church in October 2009.

“Much as it might like to, the church can no longer evade questions about homosexuality and same-sex marriage,” says Nicholas P. Miller, lead editor of the work, along with Roy E. Gane and H. Peter Swanson, all of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews. “Society, with increasing stridency, is forcing Christians to confront these topics,” Miller says.

Miller points to the several states whose legislatures have enacted same sex marriage provisions, sometimes against the convictions of their own citizens. He notes that this fall, at least two states, Maryland and Washington, will have referendums on election ballots, initiated by citizens seeking to overturn the same-sex marriage laws recently enacted.

“Consider the strange controversy and apparent outrage that erupted when the owner of a national fast-food chain recently expressed his support for traditional marriage,” Miller said. “It was the same position held until very recently by the president of the United States. And the media-driven reaction is an indication of how efforts are being made to shift public sentiment on this issue. Meanwhile, a film documentary affirming the gay lifestyle among Adventists is being heavily promoted by some within the church. Through all of this, Adventists must have a clear understanding of all the issues at stake, and they are significant.”

Ronald Knott, director of Andrews University Press, notes that along with the biblical and religious liberty issues, the book makes a passionate case for the highest level of pastoral love and support for those Christians who, he said, “may have been lured down a dangerous spiritual path by charming but false arguments from scripture and political history, coming from outside and inside the church.”

Following a preface and general introduction, various essays and articles are divided into four sections. The first addresses the Old and New Testament biblical material on homosexuality, with articles by Gane, Richard Davidson, and Miroslav Kis, all of Andrews, and Robert A. J. Gagnon of Wheaton College. The second section addresses legal and religious liberty issues,
with essays by Miller, Alan J. Reinach from the Pacific Union Conference, Gerald Chipeur, a partner with the Canadian law firm Miller Thompson LLP, Scot Zentner from Cal State, San Bernadino, and Gary Wood from Andrews University. The counseling section features articles by Stanton Jones of Wheaton College, Mark Yarhouse of Regent University, Carlos Fayard of Loma Linda University, and Inga Anderson, founder of a ministry to homosexuals. The fourth section includes the personal testimonies from several Christians who have lived and struggled with homosexuality. An appendix reproduces the various official statements relevant to homosexuality issued through the years by the Adventist Church.

In addition to his teaching responsibility as associate professor of church history at Andrews, Miller is also director of the university’s International Religious Liberty Institute. On October 6, the Institute will sponsor a day-long forum on the political, religious and social issues regarding same-sex marriage. The event will be held at the Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Spencerville, Md. The forum, planned in the context of Maryland’s ballot referendum to overturn the state’s same-sex marriage law, will draw attention to the issues, to the new book, and will feature panel discussions and a sermon on Adventists and social action by Bill Knott, editor and executive publisher of Adventist Review/Adventist World.

Homosexuality, Marriage, and the Church is available through Adventist Book Centers, and online at Amazon.com and Andrews University Press (universitypress.andrews.edu). Andrews University Press is the only regularly established academic publishing house to serve the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide.
Need a Home Makeover? Ask the Adventists!

Submitted: Sep 27, 2012
By Debbonnaire Kovacs

Members at Cornerstone Seventh-day Adventist Community Church in Coquitlam, British Columbia, have obviously been watching television. Someone liked Extreme Home Makeovers. so they decided to do it themselves. Talent and skill? They had plenty! Energy and will? Plenty of that, too! Money? Well, that was God’s business!

So the Home Team was launched. On the church website at http://www.coquitlamsda.com, the Home Team has its own site [/hometeam] and here is how they describe themselves and their mission: The Home Team is a non-profit community outreach program of the Cornerstone Seventh Day Adventist Church in Coquitlam, BC, which, is seeking out unique and meaningful ways to better the lives of individuals and families within the Tri-Cities area. The team consists of 12 core team members who are passionate about helping others. The program involves 'enhancing lives by providing home repairs for families in need'. The teams concept of home repair is inspired by the Extreme Home Makeover TV show, and another Lower Mainland Church who has been doing similar projects for the past 5 years. The Home Team's goal is to accomplish one project each year. Nominations will be accepted for deserving families with homes in need of repair. Selected recipients will be given a home makeover by a team of many skilled and unskilled volunteers, free of charge. Major issues will be addressed and resolved, and when time and resources allow, interior decorating will also be undertaken. The majority of home improvements will be made possible by donations of materials and labour by local businesses and contractors.

They state a goal of one project per year, but in 2008 they did two, and in 2011, three. They are getting ready to begin their second project this year in October. Nominations are taken all the time (you can go to the website and nominate someone right now if you wish), and winners can’t be church members. Local business and contractors supply materials and labor, which can run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

According to an article in the local Province newspaper, Pastor Stevan Mirkovich says, “Most of the families we have dealt with have gone through hell. We just want to bring a slice of heaven to earth.” The latest family, the Gagnons, would likely say they're succeeding. They say they can hardly believe this has happened to them.

If you visit the church’s webpage and click on Projects, you’ll find some great reading. But as amazing and heartwarming as this outreach is, it’s not the only way this church is reaching out the arms of Christ to its community. First of all, its website is visually stimulating and easy to navigate. On the Contacts tab, their Points of Contact include besides the pastor, the Audio Department, Facility Rental, Leadership, Personal Ministries, and a Visual/Web Dept. (Also an invitation to potluck every fourth Sabbath. When was the last time you visited an Adventist church website and couldn’t even find directions and the time for the service?)

Perhaps best of all, on its calendar page, it says this: “The Coquitlam SDA calendar not only includes events from the Coquitlam SDA church, but also includes other churches from the lowermainland. We are Christians, and as such we want to share our events with other churches.
and open our arms to visitors. Check out some of the events going on.”

Adventist Today salutes Cornerstone SDA for being the hands and feet of Jesus in BC!