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*A Weekly Newsletter from atoday.org*
Police Kill an Armed Man Who Threatened Staff at Portland Adventist Hospital

Submitted: Feb 19, 2013
By AT News Team
Updated February 22

A major hospital operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Portland, Oregon, became the site of a confrontation between a man thought to be armed with a gun and city police late Sunday night. The incident began about 9:30 p.m. Pacific Time and “the hospital was locked down for several hours to protect patients and staff [while] police searched the large … complex,” reported KGW television Channel 8, the NBC affiliate in Portland. The man was found on the hospital grounds, appeared to draw a gun and was killed by police.

Tuesday the Oregonian daily newspaper identified the man as Merle M. Hatch, age 50, an escapee from a U.S. Bureau of Prisons pre-release center in Colorado. He “checked into the emergency room” at the hospital and then “threatened a hospital employee,” telling the employee that he had a gun and would use it.” He walked out into a parking lot and appeared to point a gun at a hospital security officer in a marked car. By that time city police had been called and a “Code Silver” announced to lock down the facilities and try to protect patients, visitors and staff.

Portland police officers engaged in an extensive search of the grounds before finding Hatch and the fatal confrontation occurred. Marcus Beck who happened to be in the area told the television station that “he heard nine shots fired.” Following standard procedures, the officers involved were placed on paid administrative leave and detectives were assigned to investigate the situation.

The Oregonian reported that Hatch had “an extensive criminal history,” with a number of arrests for drug-related offenses and a conviction in 2004 for bank robbery. He was near the end of the ten-year sentence that he served for that crime. Hatch’s mother lives in Iowa and told the newspaper that she had not seen her son in two decades.

“He was in and out of prison most of his adult life,” Mary Hatch was quoted by the Oregonian. “He got into drugs early. There wasn’t much left of the person we knew as a kid growing up.” It is unclear how Hatch got from Colorado to Oregon, possibly by hitch-hiking or sneaking onto empty freight cars on the railroads.

Once the homicide detectives complete their investigation, reported Brent Weisberg, an independent journalist, “the Multnomah County District Attorney’s Office will review the case.” There is no reason to anticipate that any charges will be filed.

On Thursday (Feb. 21), the Oregonian reported that the detectives investigating the shooting found that Hatch did not possess a gun, but was evidently using a black cell phone to appear to have a weapon. "A man matching Hatch's description robbed a Wells Fargo bank in Clackamas," a community near the hospital, a few days earlier, the newspaper reported. He passed a note to a teller which implied that he had a gun.
“This is one of those textbook tragic cases,” a retired ER physician told Adventist Today. “Those who work in the emergency department of any hospital in a big city are all too familiar with this kind of thing. I don’t think the average person—the average church member—realizes how dangerous it can be for the professionals who save lives.” This sounds like the kind of story sometimes called “suicide by police officer,” speculated another health professional.
On Thursday, February 21, a special meeting of the constituency of La Sierra University (LSU) met to consider changes recommended by the institution’s bylaws committee in response to concerns conveyed by an accrediting body in mid-2011. The university is affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church and some members have expressed fears that the changes will reduce the denomination’s control of the school.

LSU has been criticized by independent Adventist groups for several years, first about how evolution was taught in some science classes at the university and more recently because the university accepted a major donation from an Adventist physician, naming a center after him in the business school, because of his involvement with abortions. Internal conflict related to how to handle the outside criticism led to faculty and board members being dismissed last year. The turmoil resulted in a “Notice of Concern” from the Western Association of School and Colleges (WASC), the primary accrediting body for the university.

Two key changes recommended by the bylaws committee are in direct response to the WASC concerns, stated Meredith Jobe, an attorney who chairs the committee: “That the board chair be elected by the board from among the four union officers on the board, rather than automatically being the union president [and] clarification to the board role in setting basic university policy, while holding the president strictly accountable for the implementation of that policy.” The issues here are standard in nonprofit institutions; a clear line of authority rooted in the purpose and constituency of the organization without conflict of interest or confused chain of command.

The university is under the control of the denomination’s Pacific Union Conference and the president, secretary, treasurer and vice president of the union are *ex-officio* board members. Up to this point the president has been *ex-officio* chairman of the university board. WASC expressed concern because he has the same role for Pacific Union College, also in California. It is very unusual for the same person to be chairman of the board at two colleges or universities at the same time and there is no other such situation in the Adventist Church in North America.

Jobe also stated in the letter introducing the report that the committee did not change three key elements of the bylaws because it “was committed to maintaining the university’s connection to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.” These are “(a) the make-up of the constituency; (b) the constituency’s election of board members; and (c) the constituency approves all changes to the bylaws.” As long as these elements are retained “we believe the school will remain clearly integrated with the Church and its mission.”

Nonetheless, sources have told Adventist Today that a number of alumni and other Adventists are concerned that the change in the ex-officio role of the union conference president as chairman of the board, along with a couple of other, less obvious changes, result in church authority being attenuated. If the amendments are voted, the bylaws would specify that the
majority of the board members must be laity, not employees of the denomination, and the second and subsequent references to the union conference would be shortened from “Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists” to “Pacific Union.” The committee could have recommended PUCSDA for the additional references throughout the document. It seems an attempt to shift the reference point away from the denomination in the view of some.

Another source told Adventist Today that the lay majority on the board has been a reality for nearly two decades, although not specified in the bylaws. This source pointed out that a lay majority is present in many of the denomination’s governing bodies and is required in some conference bylaws.

Greater concern seems to focus on the proposed revision of the language defining the role of the board and the job description of the university president. The new language “will essentially turn the board into a vision setting, advisory body and consolidate institutional power in the president,” wrote Michael Peabody, a Los Angeles attorney and LSU alum, earlier this week in ReligiousLiberty.TV, an independent Adventist web publication devoted to religious liberty issues. The accrediting body “exists for one primary reason,” Peabody said, “to provide a general standard … for educational institutions to ensure they provide a quality of education … and do not defraud the public. … It is not WASC’s role to dictate bylaws changes, determine who is on the board, or to dictate how personnel decisions will be made.”

Clearly, accrediting bodies have operated in a wider frame of reference than Peabody defines. Atlantic Union College lost its accreditation not because of issues related to the quality of education it has provided, but because of financial issues in the institution and the union conference that sponsored it. But this wider framework may not be something that the denomination should accept. “Threats to remove accreditation [and] the Seventh-day Adventist Church … can and must challenge WASC when it exceeds its authority,” he wrote.

Peabody stated that WASC has failed to demonstrate why having the same board chair at LSU and Pacific Union College presents a conflict of interest. He also expressed his view that “the proposed bylaw changes will weaken the influence of the … Church over all of its institutions of higher education [and] the entire church in North America need to be concerned.” He has a history with issues of this kind, serving as a staff attorney with the Church State Council in the California state capital from 2004 through 2008, and currently a partner at the Bradford & Barthel law firm.

The proposed changes in the section specifying the role of the university board does shorten the list of functions and delete a sweeping statement which authorizes it “to order and control all affairs and business.” But it also introduce new language that has not been present in the past, empowering the board to “ensure proper implementation of the University’s mission and major policies, and to ensure that the University’s mission and policies are aligned with the goals, philosophy and objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”

“I think this is a classic conflict over how much detail does the board gets its hands into,” a retired church administrator told Adventist Today. “Do you see yourself in a role similar to the proprietor of a small business and feel like, ‘I want to be able to fire someone if they go too far.’
Or, do you see yourself as part of a larger body that focuses on large issues and leaves the hiring and firing and related things to managers that you appoint?”

Other observers have told Adventist Today that this is primarily an issue about trust. “There has been a lot of distrust sown around La Sierra,” said an alumnus. “It is too bad. I think this would be something that could easily be hammered out in a committee if it were not for the level of distrust that has been created by these independent ministries and the horrible things they have said.” It is rare that amending the bylaws results in more than a few yawns at a constituency meeting.
City with Largest Number of Adventist Hospitals Rates Best in National Evaluation of Hospital Care

Submitted: Feb 20, 2013
By AT News Team

The Dayton (Ohio) metropolitan area tops the national ranking of hospitals with low death rates, according to a report from the health care ratings firm, Health Grades, Inc. With an overall inpatient mortality rate of 4.68 percent, Dayton rated better than any other metropolitan area in the United States in the company’s 2013 report, released Tuesday (February 19).

Dayton has a larger proportion of hospitals affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church than any other metropolitan area in America. Eight of the 23 hospitals in the metro area or 35 percent are part of the Kettering Health Network (KHN) which is controlled by the denomination’s Columbia Union Conference. Orlando, Florida, is better known because it is the location of the headquarters of the largest Adventist health care organization, the Adventist Health System (AHS) with hospitals throughout the state and across the South and Midwest. But only seven of the 32 hospitals in the Orlando metropolitan area (22 percent) are part of AHS.

Unlike many of the awards and rating systems that hospitals announce regularly, this study was not voluntary. The rankings in this study were taken from public records of the 4,500 hospitals across the country in Medicare reports. “Hospitals cannot choose to participate or not participate,” Dr. Archelle Georgiou, a medical advisor to Health Grades, Inc., told the Dayton Daily News.

One of the Adventist hospitals in Dayton ranked among the top 50 hospitals in the country based on low rates of complications and death across 27 illnesses and procedures over the last seven years. Grandview Medical Center, the KHN facility in the inner city of Dayton, achieved this remarkable record. Richard Haas, president of Grandview, told the newspaper that this is the result of “years of dedication in applying evidence-based best practices.”

The Dayton metropolitan area has a population just under one million, while the Orlando metro area has a population of 2.1 million. “People in the Midwest generally have better health than people in the South,” a health planning official told Adventist Today. “Nonetheless, I think that Adventist concepts about health have made a real contribution in this area.”

Dayton has 11 Adventist churches and a church school that includes 12 grades plus a Kindergarten and preschool. KHN operates a college as well as hospitals and community clinics. Two of the churches also operate child care centers and Good Neighbor House, the community service agency of the Adventist churches in the area, is one of the major providers of health and social services for the poor.
Adventist Church in North America Announces a New Approach to Addiction Recovery

Submitted: Feb 18, 2013
By ANN

The founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were active in the temperance movement that led to Prohibition even before the denomination was officially organized in the early 1860s. Membership requires a ban on alcoholic beverages, tobacco products and even caffeinated drinks, although surveys show that a percentage of members do not follow the rules, especially the one about caffeine.

Adventists battling addiction and compulsive behavior are not alone in their struggle. That’s a message the health ministries department of the denomination’s North American Division is promoting as a new phase of the church’s addiction recovery efforts gets underway.

“We want to show that addiction is common, like diabetes—something a lot of people deal with,” says Katia Reinert, director of health ministries for the Adventist Church in North America, a public health professional. “People don’t want to say, ‘I’m an addict,’ but all of us have some form of compulsive behavior. It’s not just about alcohol or tobacco or gambling. It’s about many other kinds of behaviors that can be unhealthy, from the food we eat to the entertainment we choose.”

This new message was to be shared in every local church on Health Sabbath, February 16. A sample sermon, a children’s story and a short video promoting *Unhooked*, a new television series on the Hope Channel were distributed to help get the word out. These items continue to be available for download on the health ministries web site and many churches may yet use them.

As Adventist health leaders continue to raise awareness of addiction recovery, Reinert says she’s optimistic that the program will expand outside of North America. Already, the ministry translates its *Journey to Life* newsletter into Spanish, Portuguese, French and Russian. Plans are in place to translate training resources as well.

“Addictions are sadly one of the ‘best kept secrets’ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” says Peter Landless, associate director of health ministries for the denomination’s General Conference. “Adventist Recovery Ministries is an intervention I pray that the world church will embrace, making our churches community health centers where people in recovery may find a haven of safety and experience the love and grace of Jesus.”

The model dates back to the mid-1980s, when Adventist attorney Hal Gates, himself a recovered alcoholic, felt called to develop a recovery ministry anchored in Christ’s healing power. Shortly afterward, “Regeneration” support groups sprung up across North America and later elsewhere in the world. While the Adventist Church was supportive of Gates’ ministry, it wasn’t until two years ago that the North American Division voted to change its name and make Adventist Recovery Ministries a recognized program of the health ministries department.

Now, with new resources available, church health leaders are offering training programs at the
annual Health Ministries Summit and locally. A typical training seminar runs over a weekend and equips health care workers, clergy and lay people to oversee a support group in their church or community, Reinert says. “Traditionally facilitators have themselves gone through the recovery process, but we want everybody to be equipped to facilitate a recovery group,” she says.

Knowledge and understanding of addiction is a crucial step in removing the stigma often associated with recovery, Reinert says. “We really want to support everyone who wants to move beyond that feeling of being trapped in an unhealthy behavior, to find freedom in Christ to make a different choice.”

Adventist Recovery Ministries offers a spiritual take on the traditional twelve-step program used by Alcoholics Anonymous. The revised program matches each step with Bible verses and themes from the writings of Ellen White that illustrate Christian principles such as surrender, confession and reconciliation. It also defines Jesus as the “highest power,” replacing the “higher power” recognized by traditional twelve-step programs as a source of strength.

This story is based on a report distributed by the Adventist News Network (ANN), the official news service of the Adventist denomination, which was written by Elizabeth Lechleitner.
Dead Certain? Comment on “ORIGINS” Lesson 7.

Submitted: Feb 19, 2013
By Jack Hoehn

Note to readers: Jack was away from home, and he forgot to send in this commentary before he left his home computer. So this comment is on last week’s Sabbath School lessons on “Origins” Lesson 7 but the topic is important enough to review even though it was triggered by a statement in last week’s lesson. You will also be able to read his comments on this week’s lesson later this week.

Monday, February 11, 2013: “One thing is certain: the world in which we now live is vastly different from the one that came forth from the Lord at the end of the Creation week.”

A thing may be certain to some of you, but it is not certain to many of us. I have a book about President George W. Bush, called “Dead Certain” that demonstrates that many things President Bush was “dead certain” about, he was “dead wrong” on, like the non-existence of the so-called “weapons of mass destruction” in Saddam Hussein’s arsenal.

So let’s question the Biblical evidence that “the world in which we now live is vastly different from the one that came forth…at the end of the Creation week.” Many things the Bible suggests about the world outside Eden sound very similar to the world we now live in.

EDEN was apparently different from the rest of the world.

a.) Genesis 2 suggests that the earth as it came from the Creator’s hand while good, was not yet what we could call perfect. Eden was different and better than the rest of earth. Eden was a Paradise, a distinct location, within the larger earth. All of earth was not Eden, (east of Eden was Nod, and the rivers from Eden flowed to Havilah, to Cush, to Asshur).

b.) Eden was a protected, guarded or even walled place (the origin of the word paradise means “a walled garden”) within an outside, un-walled, less planted, unguarded different kind of world than inside Paradise. (1.)

c.) In Genesis 2, after the special creation of Adam outside of Eden, and the planting of Eden, God takes Adam into Eden and informs him of at least one thing the Garden could guard man against. The Garden of Eden with its Tree of Life could guard the man from death! And with its Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil man was at risk of death. After the fall of Adam, death came by moving him outside of the Garden (away from the Tree of Life) into the rest of the earth where death apparently reigned unprotected by the life tree.

Adam could die, why do we think plants and animals wouldn’t die outside of Eden and its Life Tree?
a.) The warning against disobedience in eating of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil means nothing if mankind didn’t know what “dying thou shalt die” meant.
b.) Plants had to die if man and animals were to live on them.
c.) Satan was murdering “from the beginning” according to Jesus not just after the undated fall of mankind. (2.)
d.) Outside the garden were no life trees. If man was created mortal, were plants and animals living outside of the Garden created immortal? Do you think there were immortal carrots and grasshoppers, but mortal dear Queen of Creation Eve? If mankind was mortal, doesn’t this suggest that animal and plant death was possible or even probable outside the Garden?
e.) Man and Edenic animal were told to “replenish the earth” from the Garden of Eden, why were they to replenish it, if there was no death before the fall of Eve and Adam?
f.) Adam was told to subdue the earth, how do you subdue a perfect earth?
g.) In the Garden mankind had a choice to make at the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. What would it mean to not choose evil, unless in fact there was already a controversy between Light and Darkness going on during creation itself?

Wages of Sin as death can apply to angelic fall and rebellion long before the creation of man.

a.) Death as the result of sin, could result from Satan’s fall long before Adam’s fall. As C.S. Lewis writes, “The origin of animal suffering could be traced, by earlier generations, to the Fall of man—the whole world was infected by the un-creating rebellion of Adam. This is now impossible, for we have good reason to believe that…Carnivorousness, with all that it entails, is older than humanity…It seems to be, therefore, a reasonable supposition, that some mighty created power had already been at work for ill on the material universe, or the solar system, or at least, the planet Earth, before every man came on the scene... If there is such a power, as I myself believe, it may well have corrupted the animal creation before man appeared...some animals live by destroying each other.” (3.)
b.) Romans 5:12 clearly speaks of human death, not animal death, and Paul’s argument loses nothing if we believe that animal and plant death existed before the human fall.
c.) Romans 8:18-24 “the groaning of creation” is surely true, but gives no indication when that groaning started, likely from Satan’s fall and banishment to earth, and then from Adam’s fall, and then from Noah’s Flood, and now again from environmental exploitation. The Great Controversy pre-existed the creation events. There were “sinners” on earth long before Adam and Eve were created. A sinful Satan and sinning angelic host cast to the earth before the creation might imply that the creation events themselves may have been happening on a battle field.

If each of creation’s Days were accomplished in disputed territory, where God’s ways and God’s laws were being actively opposed by Satan’s ways and Satan’s philosophy, might this not explain why the geologic record of life on earth appears to be one of repeated conflict?

Finally, read your Bible to think about what kind of world Adam and Eve found outside of Eden. It sounds very much like our world today with cities, domesticated animals, and domesticated plants.
a. There were already herds of domestic animals for Abel. There were domesticated plants for Cain to farm. This is a relatively advanced human culture, who had developed this culture for the children of Adam?
b. There were spouses for Cain. Sisters? Perhaps but not stated.
c. Guilty Cain feared destruction by “anyone who meets me” does he mean destruction by his brothers  and sisters? Who were the “anyone” that Cain was marked to be protected from?
d. Cain built a “city,” do you call it a city if your family are the only inhabitants?
e. There were “daughters of men” to interest the “sons of God.” Who were these women and who where their parents? Where there good-looking Neanderthals living outside of Eden?
f. Who were the Nephilim, the giants on the earth, did God create them or were they from Satan’s mutations?

We may feel “certain” the world outside Eden was just as perfect as Eden. But the Bible does not seem to show that. Just as soon as Adam and Eve stepped outside of the lost protected Garden, they entered a world very much like our present world with herds of animals, farming, and with evil, death, danger. There appears to be some form of human civilization, perhaps even other kinds of humans (hominids?) present.

Perhaps regarding our Origins we should not be “certain” but mostly curious and somewhat open about our understanding of the early history of earth.

ENDNOTES:

1. Ellen G. White, Education, p. 23, supports that the whole earth was not yet like Eden. “The Garden of Eden was a representation of what God desired the whole earth to become, and it was His purpose that, as the human family increased in numbers, they should establish other homes and schools like the one He had given. Thus in course of time the whole earth might be occupied…”
2. John 8:44 “He was a murderer from The Beginning…”
4. I saw this huge larger-than-life-size dramatic painting in the Louvre, Paris, France; by Fernand Cormon, said to be painted about 1880, “Cain Flying Before Jehovah’s Curse.”
You get a double header this week! These comments are on the ORIGINS Sabbath School lesson 8 for February 22. The following quote from Ellen White introduces that week’s lesson.

“The hand that sustains the worlds in space, the hand that holds in their orderly arrangement and tireless activity all things throughout the universe of God, is the hand that was nailed to the cross for us.”

- Ellen G. White, Education, p. 132.

The “orderly arrangement and tireless activity of all things throughout the universe” was revealed in dramatic fashion on Friday February 15, 2013 as a 55 foot, 10,000 ton piece of the universe shot through our atmosphere starting in Alaska and ending over the Urals in Russia. Recorded by multiple video cameras is the contrail of the meteor and the sonic boom as water or other gasses inside the meteor superheated and exploded in the air miles over the city of Chelyabinsk. The hundreds of Russian people cut by flying glass shards as their windows imploded will have information for us about the “orderly arrangement” of the universe, or in this case perhaps the “tireless activity” sustained by the hand of Christ.

Hours later on the same day an asteroid of 150 feet size and 143,000 tons weight was watched from Australia passing overhead on the other side of the world 17,000 miles above, close enough to leave a faint but visible trail through the thin remnants of the firmament out there.

One astronomer described the day as earth being in a shooting gallery!

Is the hand of Christ sending bullets at earth? Did God intend to punish those hundreds of wounded Russians with his meteor? Was Russia targeted because of their recent history of official atheism, and Australia spared because Ellen White labored there for 10 years and left behind Avondale and Sanitarium breakfast cereals?

Please understand that I do not disagree that the universe is sustained by the hand of Christ.

Please understand that I do not disagree that meteors and asteroids are orderly. The Australian asteroid was identified a year ago and was tracked and predicted. The smaller Russian meteor (although not a lot smaller!) was more of a surprise showing the limits of our technology. But chunks of the universe impinging on our protective atmosphere are orderly, often predictable, and certainly tireless.

The orderly and predictable Leonid shower of 1833 was a powerful stimulus to our New England spiritual ancestors launching the Great Advent Movement (our Movement now seems to be at risk of grinding to a halt in rigid creedalism). Those meteors were orderly, tireless, and prophetically predictable.
But this does not mean that the universe Christ created and still sustains with his nail-pierced hands is either personal or safe for us. Why must this be so?

**There is no choice without chance.**  
Freedom of choice is meaningless in a world without chance. Without chance there is no choice. As Gerald Schroeder writes,  
“*Without some degree of randomness, all events and all choices in the universe would be totally predetermined by unyielding laws of nature, the physics and chemistry of all reactions. We would be mere robots. Our every thought and action would be fixed by the immediately preceding chemistry of our bodies and the conditions of our environment. The future would be totally controlled by the past.*” (2.)

“The infinite Creator imposes less than infinite control over the products of creation... The laws of nature provide direction, but within that direction there is leeway, meanderings contingent upon the immediate environment, just as a river’s meanderings are contingent on the local terrain. (In nature this is called chance.) In humans, these meanderings are called free will.” (3.)

“We humans choose within the constraints contingent upon our surroundings. The meanderings of nature and of society produce challenges to each person contingent upon her or his locale. How we react to those challenges provides them with spiritual significance.” (4.)

Freedom in nature is necessary to allow freedom of will. If nature were created (even before the choice of Eve and Adam) robotic, they would have nothing to choose, nothing to reason, nothing to decide. Free will and chance, including the potential for tragedy, go hand in hand.

**The Bible teaches chance, and the Bible teaches choice.**  
Chance made Sarah barren, this gave Abraham a choice. [Genesis 16:1,2.](#)  
King Ahab was killed by chance with an arrow shot randomly. [1 Kings 22:34.](#)  
God does not prevent mutations and deformities even in believers. [Leviticus 21:17-23.](#)  
Time and chance happen to all. [Ecclesiastes 9:11.](#)

**Jesus taught chance and calamity as natural.**  
[Luke 13:4-5.](#) A tower collapses and kills 18 people. This is random and impersonal, Jesus said; physical catastrophe is not superintended by God and not a moral judgment.  
[Luke 13:1-3.](#) Soldiers go berserk and attack a group of religious zealots. This is random and impersonal, Jesus said; human-caused catastrophe is not superintended by God and his angels,
and individuals are not protected from each other by heaven. Rape, murder, abuse happens; the hand of Christ sustaining the universe does not stop it.

**John 9:1-7.** Something goes wrong during fetal development, and a baby is born blind. This is random and impersonal; Jesus said, mutations causing disease or harm are not superintended by God and his angels, and individuals are not being punished by disease or deformity. The issues confronting your autistic child, your Down’s syndrome baby, your deaf, lame, blind are not being caused by God, nor is he protecting them or you from randomness and mutations.

**Ellen White agrees with freedom of CHOICE and chance.**

“Jesus employed no miraculous agency to compel men to believe in him. They were left to choose or reject him, of their own free will. No direct power was to force them into obedience, and destroy the free moral agency that God has given to man.” (5.)

“God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automaton. Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced... It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule.” (6.)

"The Lord permits suffering and calamity to come upon men and women, to call us out of our selfishness, to awaken in us the attributes of His character." (7.)

Our theology of Creation must include the facts of randomness and chance, if we are to retain a theology of freedom of choice. A perfect world with no trace of randomness, chance, possible catastrophe is inconsistent with the Universe God has revealed to us. If it was perfect and untouched by chance or randomness then at most it stayed so for about 7 days, out of a total history of 13.7 billion years! Especially when you realize that a Great Controversy was going on long before earth’s creation commenced. I believe in Eden, but Eden was the exception, not the rule for the entire created earth. God’s creation is much more complex than that.

Because there is no choice without chance. So the infinite God permits chance in His creation and choice in His creatures, and applies unfailing love through all chances and to all choices.

**FOOTNOTES:**

3. Ibid, p. 15.
I watch him stand at the microphone and begin a speech that simultaneously assaults my ears and raises my hackles. Beside me sits an extraordinarily gifted female pastor whose spiritual journey I’ve followed closely since she committed all her spirit, energy, and talent to her Lord Jesus at age fourteen. The next year, before I baptized her at Sunset Lake, I asked the Spirit to anoint her for kingdom service and enable her to identify His gifts.

Over time, I’ve watched this young woman graduate from academy and college, marry, earn an MDiv, and as a pastor, lead scores of multicultural young adults for evangelism and service, preach life-altering sermons at her home church and at the General Conference Session, provide team-building leadership to initiate sustainable urban ministries, including literature evangelism, organic community gardens, tutoring, and cooking schools, ably and systematically mentor pastoral interns, lead evangelistic campaigns and mission trips, serve articulately on commissions and boards at every Church level, and plant churches!

And now the speaker is declaring emphatically that the Church must apologize to pastors who are women for ever calling them into pastoral ministry in the first place!

My growing indignation is stifled mid-course with his next words.

“I’ve dedicated my life to this Church, because I believed the Church held Scripture as authoritative, that it was not to be reinterpreted to accommodate culture or historical criticism.”

Now his voice shakes with emotion as he pleads, “Is this still my Church? Am I now to watch it slide into higher critical interpretations that alter the plain teaching of the Word of God?”

Suddenly, instead of the elderly man at the microphone, I see my dad. Both courageously chose Adventism mid-life at great personal sacrifice. Both gave themselves wholeheartedly to the cause of God, working in education and ministry for the Church they serve loyally with every fiber of their beings. Though outwardly aging, both wait with inner expectant joy for Christ’s Second Advent.

I wanted to call out to this dedicated, God-fearing saint, “Don’t paint us all with the same brush! Most of the people in this room who support gender inclusive ministry also hold a high view of Scripture. We affirm the authority of the Word of God, the sacredness of the family, and the centrality of missions. We believe strongly in a literal Creation week, a pre-Advent judgment, the inspiration of Ellen White, biblically defined marriage and sexual activity confined to a married man and woman. We support and participate in the proclamation of Revelation’s Three Angels. We support inclusiveness because of **biblical mandates**, including Ephesians 4
and Acts 11 that show it is the Spirit who calls and anoints men and women to pastoral ministry and Church leadership. Lay down your fears! We are not your enemy! Together, with every wall of partition broken down, we will become together that ‘army with banners’ that proclaims the Loud Cry through the agency of the Holy Spirit in Latter Rain power.”

I worried for my young pastor friend, the only committee member under the age of forty, lest she become disillusioned hearing an ecclesiology that limits, rather than expands, her ministry, that condemns, instead of affirms, her sacred calling.

I needn’t have worried.

Our elderly brother approached my friend after the committee adjourned.

“I apologize to you for this great injury the Church has done you by calling you into pastoral ministry,” he began. Gently, her young face radiating the love of the God she serves with passion, she declared, “I cannot accept your apology. It is the Lord Jesus who has called me to be a Seventh-day Adventist pastor. It is He whom I serve, and who gives me joy in my ministry. What God anoints, no human being can annul.”

My heart goes out to them both.

Humanly speaking, it seems that The Divide is too great. In our humanity, we can never cross it. But God is in the business of interrupting human history with acts beyond our frail human-driven solutions.

Just as Peter was shocked by the message of inclusiveness he learned from the vision of motley creatures in a sheet, so we too may one day be startled by a message to church leaders from God Himself.

I pray for the day we all understand that the cross of Christ is the bridge over The Great Divide we have dug with our own inert ideas and understandings. I pray that we meet at that cross together as one “melded humanity,” united in our mission and believing and living our oneness in the Spirit. I pray that we return to the roots of our Adventist movement, with no hand held back that could be carrying out the calling which God Himself has given.

Because while we again spend time, resources, and energy to quibble about who is authorized to dispense the water of life, those who are dying of thirst cry desperately for rescue.
Why Does the Public Reject Science?

Submitted: Feb 20, 2013
By Mailen Kootsey


The public is usually enthusiastic about new technologies for lifestyle, entertainment, communication, or exploration. Acceptance is much more reluctant, however, when scientific developments call for a change in belief or opinion. Why is it that a significant percentage of the public does not accept scientific consensus views on such topics as global warming, evolution, and vaccines? Writing in Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith, Keith Miller analyzes the public debate over global warming, sorting out five misconceptions about the nature of science and the scientific community that distort the public evaluation of a carefully-researched scientific consensus.

FACTS

The first misconception in Miller’s list is that the public sees science as a search for unchanging scientific “facts”. “However,” says Miller, “if ‘fact’ means an objective statement of the true nature of the physical universe, there are very few ‘facts’ in science.” The best that scientists can do is to record observations and then build an approximate understanding of the natural world on these observations.

Even with the aid of remarkable new instruments and computers, recorded observations are still a limited snapshot of reality. There is no way to prove that more observations would not change a current view. Nevertheless, basing a theory of nature on experiments and observations does maintain a connection with reality. Scientists, as part of the scientific method, have practices designed to minimize the limitations of observation and theory. For example, repetition of an experiment is always necessary, not only by the initial observer, but also by other scientists – the more diverse, the better.

THEORY

Observations (data) by themselves are not helpful for living in a real universe, no matter how large the collection. What humans crave is accurate predictions, ways to know the results of myriad everyday choices. Human experience is just too diverse to predict by making an encyclopedia of all experience. Scientists are thus challenged to find consistent patterns in observations, showing that the natural world behaves in regular and predictable ways. With enough of these patterns, it may be possible to construct cause-effect relationships as shortcuts to making predictions. The process of going from observations to patterns and ultimately to cause-and-effect relationships is what it means to construct a scientific theory.

For scientific lay persons, the theories of science may seem indistinguishable from science
fiction, guesses, or speculations. In actual practice, scientific theories are always based on observations. Imagination and creativity are required to find the patterns, but data always constrain the results. Also, theory building is not completed in a single attempt. Rather, a good theory is tested repeatedly with new experiments and observations. Some theories fail, but each successful test brings increasing confidence in a theory.

Skeptics sometimes complain that a theory based on observations has not been “proven.” True, scientific theories are never proven in the absolute sense that a mathematical theorem is proven from axioms. Instead, confidence in a scientific theory is increased by repeated and varied experimental tests.

UNCERTAINTY

Public detractors of science often raise the issue of the uncertainty in science. There are multiple sources of uncertainty in the scientific process: measurement precision, too little data, inherent randomness in the process under study, and an incomplete understanding of the natural mechanisms involved. Uncertainty is thus always present in attempting to predict natural events or outcomes. Scientists work to reduce uncertainties by various means, such as improving instrumentation and repeating experiments. A good scientific report describes not only the conclusions from the observations, but also the uncertainty in the conclusions.

The public can easily be made uncomfortable with science by quoting uncertainties when an important decision must be made. If a scientific theory is not “proven,” then it is not wise to act on the basis of the theory, it is argued. But scientific theories of natural processes are never proven in an absolute sense. The value of a theory is best described in terms of a level of confidence based on repeated testing. Pleas to wait for science to achieve an unobtainable level of certainty only produce delays. Even a theory with some uncertainty is a better basis for decision making than rumors, unsubstantiated claims, or outright guessing. Failure to act is also a decision that may have consequences.

IMPORTANCE OF SCALE AND CONTEXT

“Any process will act only within a particular range of time scales,” says Miller. Trends can only be recognized and understood in the context of a particular time and space scale. This principle is especially applicable to the current hot topic of climate change. Is hurricane Sandy or an especially hot summer evidence for climate change, for example?

Miller lists six major mechanisms that determine global climate: solar radiation, plate tectonics, ocean circulation, atmospheric composition, albedo, and human causes. These mechanisms have effects at time scales ranging from years to billions of years. Variations of some mechanisms can produce effects on widely different time scales. For example, ocean circulation can be at the root of changes on a scale of years (El Nino and La Nina oscillations) all the way to tens or hundreds of millions of years (changes in the shape or connections of ocean basins).

No single climate event or even an unusual season can by itself be attributed to climate change. Only trends studied over years or much longer intervals can be valid evidence for or against
climate change. Similarly, unusual localized weather events are not evidence for global climate change. For example, in North America the Winter of 2009-2010 was unusually cold, but by itself, that observation is not evidence for or against global climate change because it refers to a limited region.

REJECTION OF SCIENTIFIC CONSENSUS

Any new scientific theory is not complete until it has been debated within the scientific community and a consensus is reached. This process includes replication of experiments under as wide a range of conditions as are appropriate and detailed comparison of the new theory with previous ideas and related concepts. The more diverse the participants in the discussion and the broader the range of disciplines brought to bear, the greater the weight given to the consensus. A consensus conclusion reached in this way is not easily overturned, and rightfully so.

The public can easily have quite a different view of the consensus process. The consensus, while it is a majority view, does not mean that everyone in the scientific community agrees with the conclusion. Without an understanding of uncertainty in science, an overwhelming consensus conclusion of the scientific community may be rejected because of a critical argument from one or a few individuals. The public is not likely to be able to give correct weights to the community consensus and the detractor’s idea, concluding therefore that the scientific consensus is not valid. The media may also reinforce the public’s mistaken conclusion by giving equal weight to dissenting scientific views that have limited credibility—all in the media’s attempt to give a “balanced” view.

“Consensus is also often rejected because of a perception that the majority is driven by social, political, or religious motives,” writes Miller. The public is accustomed to advocates of all kinds presenting selected or even manufactured “truths,” and they can easily regard the scientific consensus in the same way. “Uncomfortable scientific conclusions are dismissed as attempts to advance a hidden agenda. This is seen in the charges of materialism and atheism leveled at evolutionary biologists by those who see evolution as in conflict with the Bible.”

CONCLUSIONS

When a conclusion from the scientific community contradicts a widely-held public view, there are multiple reasons why the public might reject the scientific view. It is therefore essential for the value of the scientific case to be presented as a description of the real world derived by a careful and organized process from observations, with every effort made to eliminate personal biases and agendas. Uncertainty is always present in scientific theories, but they still represent the best efforts of a careful and dedicated community.
Summary for Chapter 8: Religion and Politics

The art of politics consists in hiding the face of power behind the mask of doing good.

Historical Commentary

Throughout much of recorded history, the state has chosen a specific religion for official support and that religion has also provided the approval of the Gods/Heaven to justify the power of the state. Christianity brought to the Greco-Roman world the idea that a believer could only serve one Deity. Christianity started to assume political power as soon as it made peace with Constantine. This power grew almost unchecked for centuries. The Islamic tradition also has a long history of melding political and religious authority. Much of the world has now abandoned coercion in religious matters. However fundamentalist strands of Christianity and Islam are still eager to force religious compliance.

Some Rudiments of Politics

People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf—George Orwell

Human political systems can be thought of as varying combinations of strands from three major concerns: Freedom, Utopian and Special Interests. The United States was founded largely with a concern for freedom. The Bolsheviks came to power with a utopian idea—but no plan. Current US politics seems substantially bent by special interests. Specific laws often seem less important than who gets to interpret those laws.

Democracy is not a guarantee of good government, as a tyranny of a majority can be just as damaging to any minority as an unrestrained dictator. Constitutional government with a strong judiciary was the solution of our founders.

Throughout much of history, support from the Gods has been used to justify political authority. However, there is a democratic strand that justifies political power by the consent of the governed. It goes back to classical Greece and was resurrected especially in the Enlightenment.

In a crude but very real sense, politics is the discussion of the legal use of violence in society;
to what ends.

Power, Utopia, and Religion

Religions usually seek the approval of the political authorities and as a religion grows in popularity, there often comes a point where it is mutually beneficial for the religion and the state to recognize and support each other. The early Christian Church went through this, moving from persecuted to persecutor relatively quickly after getting formal political sanction. Most religions have some utopian ideals that are safe enough if expected in another reality but risky if their implementation is sought here.

Corruption, Diversity, and Religion

Political power brings an increased risk of corruption to a religion as people seek to control such power. Religious diversity is usually not looked on with favor by religious leaders or the civil authorities with whom they seek accommodation. Thus political power may encourage a single orthodoxy.

Religion and Political Freedom

Religions usually have a desire for their own freedom of worship but no general goal of human freedom. In fact, religions tend to teach respect for authority and the group and to be largely conservative except at brief moments of innovation, such as the founding of a new dissenting tradition.

Political Revival and Religion

Revival of neglected religious traditions in support of political rejuvenation is a not infrequent pattern. This occurred in the Old Testament histories, under the Maccabees, under various Roman leaders including Augustus, under Josef Stalin, and even with Saddam Hussein.

Religion and Place

Religions have often come to designate some pieces of geography as holy to their God and deserving to be controlled by the faithful, even at the cost of great violence. Jerusalem is the most memorable example for a seemingly petty God who has to control a particular pile of rocks and dirt.

Fallibility, Freedom, and Religion

Human freedom is impossible except in a society that tolerates significant diversity. For those who seek to impose some religious vision on the world, this may not be an option. In general, fundamentalist religious traditions reject this type of tolerance.

Truth, Politics, and Religion
Educated people generally know that *political speech seeks political advantage*, usually without concern for truth. On average, religious leaders have a better record of telling the truth so their endorsement is often desired by politicians.

*Political Benefits of Religion*

Those who would relieve oppression and improve human life have sometimes been able to use religion in positive ways—20th Century examples include Martin Luther King and Mohandas Gandhi. However, religion is plastic enough so that it is usually mobilized on both sides of any important long-lasting issue.

Religion and politics are almost always to some degree enmeshed, sometimes officially and sometimes unofficially. Each represents opportunity for the other—for both doing good and being corrupted.
One Sabbath I listened as members in my Sabbath School class talked about God and creation. One member (I’ll call him Fred) mentioned that God knew the problem that lay ahead when he created Adam and Eve but he still created them. Immediately I remembered Richard Rice’s book *The Openness of God*[^1], which takes the position that God did not know what lay ahead when he created Adam and Eve but that he was ready to deal with the future regardless of their choices.

That led me to wonder why Fred had presented his view as if there were no other view, not even mentioning that he was aware that others see it differently. Maybe Fred had never heard of Rice’s view. Or maybe he’d heard of it but forgotten it. Perhaps he thought it was in the flat-earth theory category, so obviously wrong that it didn’t need to be mentioned. On the other hand, nobody in the class (including me) spoke up to mention a different view to Fred. The thought occurred to me that very few in the class were probably even aware that some Adventists (never mind the wider population) would challenge Fred’s comment that God knew the future absolutely.

Fred probably hasn’t heard of Rice’s teaching. I don’t remember seeing the “openness of God” concept dealt with in depth in a Sabbath School quarterly. Nor do I remember hearing Rice’s ideas discussed anywhere, other than a few very brief discussions in Sabbath School classes, where such an idea was quickly dismissed. Rice’s concepts were discussed (or dismissed) in an *Adventist Review* column by Clifford Goldstein[^2], but neither Rice nor his book was mentioned.

In this article I’m not trying to promote what Rice says. I will point out that Rice’s view doesn’t have to answer the question of why God would create Lucifer if he knew that Lucifer would start the sin problem. But the issue that this column is raising is why Fred doesn’t know about Richard Rice or open theism. I suggest at least 3 reasons.

**Reason #1 – Church conservatism regarding different views.** Adventist Book Centers do not sell Rice’s book. Understandably. Nor do they sell books promoting Sunday observance. If the church has not ruled favorably on Rice’s teaching, why risk problems by selling his book? The *Adventist Review* has made a notable change of course recently in allowing writing that is favorable to women’s ordination, but there is a tendency among most religious groups to be careful about letting new or differing (challenging?) ideas be promoted.

**Reason #2 – The theory is so offbase that it died a natural death.** Even if the book had been distributed more, it might not have gained many adherents because of the problems with the theory. The theory has attracted adherents. I don’t have any figures of believers, but someone online named Tim Chaffey[^3] says that “open theism [as Rice named his teaching] is growing in popularity among evangelical Christians.” An article on bible.org states that InterVarsity Press is “a popular publisher of open theism theology.”[^4] Apparently the theory is far from dead.

[^3]: Tim Chaffey, personal communication, June 20, 2013.
Reason #3 – We’re not reading much. Reading books is becoming less common, at least in the United States. Surveys vary on how much reading people are doing, but the trend is clearly down, as brick-and-mortar bookstores are noticing, even if e-books are gaining. If we’re not reading, our main encounters with differing theological views (for better or worse) are likely to come from church or Sabbath School. Which means we probably won’t hear of open theism or other views not considered mainstream.

Nowadays we have a flood of information available from radio, magazines, television, internet, newspapers, and books. We can’t possibly keep up with all the information, so we find it most convenient to stick with what we favor or already believe. Why should I read books by politicians with whom I disagree? Or athletes or actors that I despise? Or atheists or people of other religions who might lead me astray? “Our underlying worldviews move us to select information that reinforces our own opinions and blinds us to those of others.”

I can take a shortcut by reading safe books that discuss those other dangerous or wicked beliefs, but I won’t run the risk of letting the other side speak for itself. Of course I wish they would listen to my viewpoint but that doesn’t mean that I need to risk my salvation by letting them present their beliefs. You know how it works: if you’re a liberal, stick with MSNBC; if you’re a conservative, limit your watching to Fox News; if you’re a Jehovah’s Witness, don’t read anything that’s not put out by the Watchtower; and if you’re an Adventist, don’t read books (or magazines) that aren’t published by Pacific Press and Review & Herald.

If we encourage non-Adventists to read Adventist material, why might we fear the reverse of that? Do we picture God as one day scolding us for daring to read books that we knew might be wrong before we read them? Or might God encourage us to use our brains to read material from another angle that might help us better understand our own beliefs?

I learned about the English language when I took classes in French and Greek. I didn’t know what verb conjugation was until I learned about it in French class, and I didn’t know what the subjunctive mood was until I encountered it in Greek. We can learn more about our beliefs in inspired writings or health or the Sabbath or . . . by reading others’ explorations of related subjects. We may even discover areas of theology that we hadn’t even realized existed.

The aforementioned Sabbath School class in which Fred made his comment is a place where I look forward to an exchange of ideas, to encounter perspectives I had not entertained before or had not heard in a way that appealed to me as much. But the Sabbath School class is only one day a week for a little over an hour.

Most people can manage to read a book every few months on a topic that challenges their thinking. If nothing else, reading such a book will remind the reader that other people (indeed, most people) probably understand things differently. But at least it gives others a chance to make their point. Let’s stretch ourselves. In the same way that we push ourselves physically to start or maintain an exercise program for physical health, we can gain spiritually and mentally by enlarging our reading repertoire.
We can’t begin to cover all the theological or philosophical topics that are out there to explore, but we can work to enlarge our little boxes. In the same way we gain by visiting new countries or eating new foods, we can benefit by reading unfamiliar ideas. Next time someone says, “God knew . . . “ or expresses some other commonly-held view, we may be more aware of alternative views that provide enrichment for our perspectives.

(2) Adventist Review, November 27, 2003, p. 23
(3) [http://www.midwestapologetics.org/articles/theology/opentheism.htm](http://www.midwestapologetics.org/articles/theology/opentheism.htm)
(4) [http://bible.org/article/examination-open-theism](http://bible.org/article/examination-open-theism)
This evening I attended the first of several meetings on Joan Chittister’s book, *Monastery of the Heart*. For those who are not familiar with her work, Chittister is a prolific writer of amazing spiritual depth. She is also a Benedictine nun. This book is her attempt to share some thoughts on the ways in which some of the ideas and ideals lived in communal religious life might be lived out in an “ordinary, everyday” life. She suggests we make monasteries of our hearts.

My own opinion is that the concept of communities of celibate men or women living in close quarters and often under rigid discipline has not always been a healthy or spiritually productive one. However, I do believe that most of the people who have tried this (for centuries on end) have had at heart the intention of coming closer to God, and that God has drawn very near to every soul who desires that closer connection. I know that I can learn deep truths from some of these fellow Christians: Brother Lawrence is one good example. I feel that way about Chittister’s writings. They are rich in spiritual truths and I have been blessed by them.

So I thought that for the next few weeks I’d take those of you who are interested to my meetings with me.

Tonight, after prayer that God would help us “listen with the ears of our hearts” (one of the Benedictine prayers), we read together the introduction of the book and discussed some of the questions it raised. One of these questions was, “Do you agree that seeking the Divine is an attempt to complete the incomplete? Why or why not?”

My own reaction to this was that there are two ways (at least) to see the term “incomplete.” One is something that is broken or inadequate. The other is something that is new, small, has not grown up yet.

I can’t explain why I always, as long as I can remember, from babyhood or at least toddlerhood, have been strongly aware of the presence of God around me and in me. I have never experienced the “search for God” that is such a huge and sometimes desperate part of the lives of so many. Yet I began to be aware, in a small way as early as 7 or 8, and certainly by 14 and up, of my need and desire to “grow up” in God—to “complete the incomplete” in that sense. I am still aware of that need and desire.

Throughout my life it is also true that there has been much brokenness—both damage done to me by others who had power over me in one way or another, and damage done to myself by my own unwise choices. So one of the ways I like to think of the Holy Spirit’s work is as a sort of “force field,” holding me and all my holes and cracks together while I’m mended from the inside out. Completing the incomplete.

Paul said we see unclearly, as in the dim mirrors of polished metal with which he was familiar.
We don’t see the Whole—and only a few of the parts, for that matter. But together with God we keep putting the puzzle pieces together, discovering parts of the Big Picture as we go, and one day (oh, please, God, soon!!) the Picture will be Whole. Complete.

Come, Lord Jesus! And in the meantime, keep the shields up and our force fields of faith activated. Amen!
As my time here as a student missionary is rapidly coming to a close, I’m frantically trying to make plans and figure out what I’m going to do next year. I’ve changed since I’ve been here and I’m not going back to the US to do the same thing I was before I left. As a result, I have a lot of paperwork to do and forms to fill out to rearrange everything. It’s weighing heavily on me to get everything done, but I’m not sure what I want to do. It’s very stressful.

Because all this was on my mind, when I remembered that I had to speak for vespers I decided that I would speak on this topic. It was very encouraging! Here is what I learned and what encouraged me the most.

In Proverbs 16:9 it says, “We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps.” That was encouraging for me because I have made a lot of plans in my life. Right now I have several possibilities that I’m trying to incorporate into my “plan.” But if God wants me to go somewhere, He will tell me, whether or not it fits into my plan. Further down in Proverbs 16:33 it says, “We may throw the dice, but the Lord determines how they fall.” God has a purpose and a plan and everything that we do works out according to His plan. So I’m better off just letting Him do the planning in the first place.

That sounds easy. Just let God do His thing and tag along. Much easier said than done. One of my favorite verses is Proverbs 20:24, “The Lord directs our steps, so why try to understand everything along the way?” Things always seem so confusing. But it’s God’s plan, so why do I need to understand it? It’s a big opportunity to develop my faith. It’s God’s plan, He knows what He’s doing so I’m just going to close my eyes and follow. Like it says in Isaiah 30:21, “Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say, ‘This is the way you should go,’ whether to the right or to the left.” I need to learn to not be afraid to trust God. He’s not going to leave me hanging. He will guide me. The hardest part is for me to know His voice. I need to have such a good relationship with Him that I can recognize His voice. Once I know that, He will tell me the way to go.

Sometimes it’s hard for me to trust God. When He doesn’t work on my timetable, I get worried and frustrated. But He tells me in Matthew 6:34, “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.” He knows just how much we can handle and if He actually left me to figure it out all on my own I would be overwhelmed. Instead He tells me not to worry and to trust in Him. In one of my favorite books, it says that we should just do what God has set before us and let Him handle the rest.

The final promise that I received is what makes all of this hard work worthwhile (aside from the fact that I don’t have to worry and more!). I need to remember that God knows what is best for me. It shouldn’t be any trouble for me to give my plans to God because He knows me even better than I do and His plans will be much more satisfying for me than my own plans. In Isaiah 60, God promises Israel that He will gather all their children from the far lands and that
Israel’s enemies will come bowing before them. He says that they will be the center and all the wealth in the world will come to their land. He basically promises them the world. That’s much more than anything that I could even imagine for myself.

God knows us better than we know ourselves. By placing our futures into His hands we not only free ourselves from worry, but we develop a deeper faith in God and are subject to the many blessings He has planned for us. We are in for a future more grand and fulfilling than we ever imagined.
Welcome to Viewpoints: Adventist Perspectives on Peace, Justice and Righteousness, an interview series presented by Adventist Today in partnership with Adventist Activism.

In this eighth installment, we speak with Pastor David Kennedy, the lead pastor of the Newday Adventist Church in Parker, Colorado. Dave planted Newday in 2005 out of the Franktown SDA Church. After 5 years of operating as a multi-site church, the two congregations multiplied in 2010, and Dave has been leading Newday ever since. Dave and Kim (his wife of 21 years) have two sons. Luke, a freshman at Walla Walla University, is 19. Logan is 14. Dave enjoys travel, skiing, distance running and leading teams on short-term mission trips.

Jeff: Your congregation celebrates Christmas in a unique way. Tell me about what you do.

David: We believe, as many churches do, that Christmas can and should still change the world. It changed the world radically 2,000 years ago when Christ was born, and the celebration of Christmas today should still radically change the world, not with consumerism or materialism or buying more stuff for one another that we don't need, but by giving the things that Jesus cares about. So every year we take up a Christmas offering as part of Advent Conspiracy,[i] a nationwide movement of churches that basically says, “Let's buy less stuff for one another, and let's give the money we save to Jesus. Let's give it as an offering.” Usually it's around $20,000, but this year we really saw a jump—up to almost $38,000.

Jeff: What does your congregation do with the money?

David: Every year we try to target things that are aligned with the values of Jesus and why He said He came. So we're targeting hunger, poverty, injustice, injuries from war. So together with the LPGA (Ladies Professional Golf Association[ii]), we built a hospital in a community in Rwanda. We have given through ADRA[iii] to dig wells in Afghanistan for widows and vulnerable children affected by the war. We have given to our local food bank on numerous occasions. We are giving to help eliminate sex trafficking through International Justice Mission.[iv] We are also partners with World Vision.[v]

Jesus said that He came to be a “light in the darkness,” so this year we're bringing 700 solar lights to kids in Rwanda so they can do their homework at night in areas where they have no electricity. And we partner with an Adventist organization here in Denver called Global Health Initiatives[vi]. GHI takes teams of nurses and doctors to various developing countries to perform surgeries at no cost. One place they go is Rwanda, where club foot disease is a huge issue for kids. So last year we partnered with them and paid for four life changing surgeries for four kids, and we did the same thing again this year for four more kids.
So we're basically working through partnerships, trying to be aware of what's happening in the world. We support three to four projects per year, try to have a variety because different people have different issues that motivate them to give—“Oh that's the program I want to be giving to. I want to be involved in something like that.”

At the end of November or beginning of December, I start talking about the projects, kind of lay all three of four of them out, and then each week leading up to Christmas we dig a little deeper into each one. We spend five or ten minutes in the service each week talking about the issue, maybe watch a video on the organization, and then say, “Christmas can still change the world, so we're asking you to spend less and give more this Christmas, and your offering is going to go to this particular need.”

**Jeff:** I know you've had an on-going relationship with World Vision. How did that start?

**David:** In 2003 I really had my heart broken over what was happening with HIV/AIDS in Africa. God basically spoke to me and said, “Go to Africa and do something.” We realized that one church couldn't do anything to make a difference with HIV/AIDS or chronic malnutrition on the huge continent of Africa. We couldn't even make a difference in a small country like Rwanda. But we did realize that if we partnered as a church, combined all our resources, and targeted one community in Africa, we could probably make a difference.

We had heard about a project that World Vision was just starting in 2003; we were right on the front end of it, a program called C-2-C, basically linking a church with a community in Africa. So we went on our first World Vision trip in 2003, and we were introduced to the community of Nyamagabe, Rwanda. It's a community of about 32,000, and we went and saw the effects of HIV/AIDS, and how it devastates a community, wiping out a generation. It really tears apart the social fabric; it takes out all the workers, all the parents. It basically devastated the entire community, which led to chronic malnutrition. Something like 63% of the community was suffering from chronic malnutrition. The kids were just trying to survive, so they couldn't go to school. They weren't getting an education. It's the cycle of poverty.

World Vision invited us to partner with them, and the primary way we did that was through child sponsorship. Our plan was, “Everyone in our church is going to sponsor kids in this community in Nyamagabe.” We started other projects as well, like education projects, building a hospital, and different things like building homes for orphan-led households. But through the years, we found that child sponsorship was the number one way to funnel resources into the community. We've sponsored 200-250 kids at $35 a month, basically funneling thousands of dollars into the community on a monthly basis. And over the years, over half a million dollars has been channeled into this community, and World Vision has been a great steward of those resources in bringing holistic change to the community through education, getting people involved with different programs, vocational training, food assistance, agricultural education, clean water, health care. They do it all.

Eight years ago we were just trying to keep people alive, but now we're going over there—we just took our fifth trip last year—and we're seeing completely different issues. People are now thriving, and now we're dealing with issues of educational excellence and these kinds of things.
We're actually developing an exit plan right now, and in 2016 World Vision should be out of this community because they should be completely self-sustaining.

My first sponsored child has been a microcosm of what has happened in the community. I've been able to watch Eugenie grow up from eight years old. At the time, she was malnourished and barely surviving. She's now seventeen, healthy, vibrant, looking forward to going to college.

Jeff: When the exit plan is completed in 2016, do you plan to partner with another community elsewhere?

David: Yes, for sure. This has become part of the fabric of who we are, our DNA. We love World Vision. We love partnering with under-resourced communities. It will definitely be part of who we are always.

Jeff: How has this work affected your local congregation? As the pastor, what positive impact have you seen at home?

David: It's multi-faceted. It gives our people a sense of pride in their church because they see that their church is really making a difference globally. We talk about glocal impact—combination of global and local. We want to be serving and making an impact locally, but also globally. They know that their $35 a month is making a difference; they have a relationship with the child in another country. They're corresponding with that child. It gives them a sense of empowerment: “I can't make a difference in the world, but I can make a difference in this one child's life.”

But more than anything, it's the mission trips that we take that really impact the church. We also have a relationship with a community in Peru. We travel there regularly. It's a different relationship; we actually hire a full-time pastor there raising up Adventist churches along the Amazon. We partner with him and take groups there for medical missions, building houses, and doing Vacation Bible Schools. So it's more evangelistic there.

But it's taking people on these trips where they get into a developing country. We do very intentional devotionals while we're there. They come back with more of a global mindset that with great blessing comes great responsibility—to use the wealth God has given us to show the love of Christ around the world negating poverty and suffering. That's the biggest impact: the people who come back from the trips. They come back totally changed.

One of the neat things we do as a church as well is that we offer scholarships for all of our mission trips to make them very affordable. For the Peru mission trip we offer a scholarship of between $1,000-$1,500 for their expenses. And for Rwanda we pay $2,000 of their expenses. And when they come back, they have a spiritual contract that they have to fulfill, spiritual growth things they do to earn this scholarship like inviting people to hear them talk about their trip, time in the Bible, etc. We're seeing a lot of spiritual growth because of the contracts people have after the trip.

Jeff: You mentioned glocal. In addition to this international work, I'm curious what your church
does locally.

**David:** Basically three things. We partner with local nonprofits and send them volunteers. We send them finances. And we do our own projects in the community as well.

We're always looking for needs through our local partners that maybe they're not meeting, and then we try to meet those needs through community outreach events. So we'll do servant evangelism projects, no-strings-attached acts of kindness. We'll also do some service projects in the community that meet a particular need like a Christmas store.

So we send volunteers. We send money to local partners. And then we have our own community outreach events. I'm held accountable to make sure we have a certain number of outreach events every year. This year I'm accountable to have six all-church community outreach events. And at least three of them have to be tied to needs that we discover through our community partners.

**Jeff:** Who holds you accountable?

**David:** Our Accountability Board.

**Jeff:** Some people believe these kinds of congregation-based service efforts are a distraction from what the church should be doing. How do you respond to this critique?

**David:** You're talking about evangelism versus social justice? First of all, if you look at everything Jesus talked about, you're going to find much more about social justice than you are about evangelism. Look at what Jesus said in his very first sermon in Luke 4, he basically said, “I've come to not only proclaim good news, but I have come to proclaim freedom for the captive and recovery of sight for the blind.” Jesus was about serving the poor.

And I think one the greatest passages is Matthew 25. We often disconnect Matthew 24 from 25. In Matthew 24 we read the great discourse on the second coming—signs of the second coming and what to look for. And the very next thing Jesus talks about in Matthew 25 is how to be ready for the second coming. He shares three parables: the parable of the 10 virgins, the talents, and the sheep and the goats. And the sheep and the goats basically tells us that to be ready for the second coming we need to be about serving the poor, visiting the lonely, clothing the naked. So I would say that we can't separate evangelism from social justice. They're two wings of the same bird; they both need to be implemented otherwise we're not doing what Jesus asked us to do.

**Jeff:** If pastors or lay leaders in other congregations want to participate in this type of ministry, what guidance would you give them?

**David:** I'd say start small. Start with things that are most important to your heart as a leader, the things that break your heart. And you basically just cast vision for what you can do to make a difference on this particular issue. And then be consistent. Keep doing something. And give people a tangible way to be involved, whether it's through child sponsorship on a consistent basis or telling them, “We're going to spend less on Christmas gifts this year and give more in the Christmas offering.”
And then you have to give a report and celebrate what has been done. Throughout the year we're coming back to celebrating Christmas. I've already got things scheduled all the way through June, having people come in from different organizations so we can say thank-you, give reports on how the money was spent. We can't just do and forget, but celebrate so people have a sense of accomplishment and joy in knowing what's been done.

[i] http://www.adventconspiracy.org/
80 Homeless Enjoy Special Valentine Banquet

Submitted: Feb 21, 2013
By Debonnaire Kovacs

Grace Fellowship Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Valdosta, GA, takes the command to “go into the highways and byways” quite literally. But when they went out and invited the homeless friends they had been making over the winter to a special Valentine’s banquet just for them, they didn’t find any need to “compel them to come”!

Sometime in November, Grace Fellowship’s pastor, Winston Taylor, had lunch with Lee Roy Henderson, a local pastor and radio personality on Black Crow Media, News Talk 105.3. Henderson told Taylor about the plight of about 15 homeless people who were living under a nearby overpass. Taylor wanted to help, and decided to take three young people, Loveinson Chevelon, Jemarion McEady, and Jevontay McEAdy from Grace Fellowship to visit the people under the bridge. What they saw broke their hearts.

Fourteen-year-old Jemarion begged, “Let’s go out and raise money for them right now!”

The church learned that there are about 900 homeless individuals in Valdosta. There are some local resources, food donations and so on, available to these people, but what they really want, as described by a December article in the Valdosta Daily Times, is “employment and a safe place to stay and sleep comfortably. For someone to be on their side when they genuinely call for help.”

From that time, Grace Fellowship, with its community services assistant leader, Kenda Henley, has pledged to be there to feed and otherwise offer support to the homeless under the bridge. The church has also partnered with the South Georgia Partnership to End Homelessness, hoping to end “this horrific monster” completely.

The friendships they made doing these visits to the “homes” of the homeless led to a special plan. On Valentine’s Day, 2013, they invited all their friends to invite all their friends to a special Valentine’s Day banquet. The goal was to treat these people who were facing such hard times and might often feel discouraged and even worthless like “kings and queens.” Anakaye Fagan, Communications Secretary at Grace Fellowship, stated, “The mission of the banquet is to remind the homeless that they are special, needed, and that they can contribute to society.”

At least 80 homeless people showed up. With church members, volunteers, and people from local aid organizations who heard about it and came to help, Fagan thinks there were at least 150 present, though she only counted homeless guests.

The remainder of this space is turned over to pictures, interspersed with comments from some of those present.
It was real nice. I got food and enjoyed listening to the speakers. **Gary B.**

I enjoyed the program. My mom taught me to be humble and I came to learn from so many inspirational people. My favorite part was listening to the speaker Dexter Sharper. **Angelica Owens**

I enjoyed it. It was good. The food was good. My favorite part was listening to Poetic Magic. **Misty T.**

It was good. I enjoyed it. My favorite parts were the food, singing and the people. **Joshua**

It was very nice. My favorite part was all of it. **James**
G. I loved it. It was fantastic. My favorite part was the speaker - he was very enlightening and gave us hope that there are people out there who really do love us. **Ben**

S.
I heard about the event through a community newsletter on base and thought it would be a good thing for our association to volunteer here. We had 16 volunteers here and 2 kids. We had a great time and enjoyed ourselves. I learnt what a close knit community Valdosta is. When I got my daughter to leave and get to bed she said, “I’m not ready. I just put new gloves on.” **Jacqueline Haro, Air Force Sergeant Association Chapter 460, Moody Air Force Base**

During the **Blessing**

Never felt greater in my life. Really enjoyed it. **Jeffery W.**

I enjoyed the service. Really good. Comfortable. Like your presence and your church. **Jeanie D.**

It was okay. I was able to get some for somebody else. **Anthony W.**

It was great. The food was real good. **Grant S.**
Attendee giving thanks

Had a fantastic dinner and a real nice time at this church. I get to take food home with me. I have a friend at home, a little girl, and today is her birthday and she wanted a cupcake for her birthday, and she’s getting a cupcake for her birthday, so I’m really happy. Dr. Paula Cousino-Cooper

I tell you what, I had a wonderful evening, just filled with joy and good food and love abounding. Patricia W.
The night was good. Enjoyed the food.

Charles
Banquet was fun. Janet
It was very nice. Aree Howard Jr.