### NEWS

**Poll Indicates Large Numbers of Americans Think the World Is In the Biblical “End Times”:**
Unexpected results just released from a national survey show that Americans in awesomely high numbers, from all sectors and ethnicities of society, now see civilization taking its final gasps....

**Forum Discussion: Can Dialog With Other Faiths Help Adventists Overcome Internal Conflict and Strengthen Identity?:** Adventists have been cautioned to beware of influence from members of other religions, but some Church leaders now believe that more contact with other Christian faiths could help us all heal rifts within our community of faith....

**Adventist Church Asks Nigeria to Not Schedule Elections on Days of Worship:**
In the name of religious liberty, the Adventist Church has asked the Nigerian government not to schedule future elections on days holy to either Christians or Muslims....

**Festival of the Laity Began On Line September 11, Continues through Weekend:**
Enrichment events for lay leaders in local congregations continue this week @ http://www.festivalofthelaity.com/....

### OPINION

**Remembering 1963 and 2001:**
Columnist Monte Sahlin reflects on the Birmingham Bombing and Martin Luther King's *I Have a Dream* speech and 38 years later the destruction of the Twin Towers, and concludes that meditating on these watershed events may bring good, or even evil, but that both deserve our special attention at this time....

**Amusing Ourselves Unaware:**
Are online attractions keeping us from deeper reading and study? Columnist Mark Gutman suggests we may be whiling away more and more time on the superficial, no longer reading in depth or taking action in the real world as Christians....
**15th Annual Festival of Flowers this Weekend at Historic Stanborough Park Church in U.K.:**

One of the original Adventist congregations in the British Isles is taking a new approach to outreach and development, hosting a festival that focuses on the very best in floral husbandry and arrangement and also benefits charity while helping defray local church financial needs....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peace:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We all want peace, but do we know what it is and where to get it? Do we understand how it helps build community and breaks down division, rather than severing bonds and building fences? Debonnaire Kovacs starts us thinking....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEATURES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>available to logged-in subscribers only</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(for free 30-day subscription, <a href="#">click here</a>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| "Living Water": Poet Leannna Kelly reminds us of the steep price of self-absorption in the quest to walk with God.... |

| Victory Over the Beast, Chapter 22 - The Cup of His Wrath: This new chapter in Dr. Thomsen’s *Victory Over the Beast* looks at the touchy subject of the wrath of God. The author believes that wrath against sin is an integral part of God’s love for sinners.... |

| South Central Camp Meeting, 2013-Part II: This final installment of AT’s 2013 camp meeting series features continued reflections by South Central Conference President Dana Edmond, with emphasis on three other camp meetings he visited this year.... |
Poll Indicates Large Numbers of Americans Think the World Is In the Biblical “End Times”

By AT News Team, September 12, 2013

According to a poll released on September 11, a total of 41 percent of all United States adults, 54 percent of Protestants and 77 percent of Evangelicals believe the world is now living in the "end times" described in the Bible. Barna Research Group, based in Ventura, California, asked a random sample in an omnibus poll, "Do you, personally, believe that the world is currently living in the ‘end times’ as described by prophecies in the Bible, or not?" The response was much different among Catholics with 73 percent saying no, although among Catholics who attend mass regularly 45 percent said yes. The poll shows a split between ethnic groups on this question. A total of 54 percent of Blacks said yes as did 48 percent of Hispanics, about one out of two in both cases. Whites were at 39 percent, slightly below the national average. The survey also revealed that married adults were more likely to believe we are living in the end times and the same was true with families that had children in the home. The polling firm used recognized techniques with 1,000 online respondents among a representative sample of adults, ages 18 and older in the United States from July 29 through August 1. The margin of error was plus or minus three percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. But, it is also true that Barna polls have a reputation among experts in survey research about religion of a consistent conservative, Evangelical tilt. And, this question in an omnibus poll was paid for by the publisher of a new book entitled, The 9/11 Prophecy—Startling Evidence the Endtimes have Begun.

“Even I was surprised by the findings,” said James F. Fitzgerald, the author who commissioned the question. "I thought the numbers could possibly be as low as 10 percent for the overall population and maybe 30 percent for Christians in general, or less. I had no way to know before the survey. But the response of the overall population was higher than what I expected from Christians, and the Evangelical’s response was nearly twice what I thought."

Fitzgerald has been working since 1993 to produce a video edition of the New Testament. It is called the WatchWord version and published on 10 DVDs totaling 26 hours of viewing time. To date he has sold 700,000 copies, according to a news release from the Religion New Services (RNS).

"I am not surprised," a veteran Seventh-day Adventist evangelist told Adventist Today. "There has been a recent increase in the number of people who have some interest in the Book of Revelation and the end times. Historically, we have always seen an increase when there are economic problems or international tensions and the potential for war. But, an interest in this topic does not always translate into people getting serious about joining a church and making a contribution to the mission of the church. It does not necessarily make evangelism any easier."

A 2009 survey of members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America indicated that 23 percent had volunteered in some way to help conduct a Revelation Seminar in the last year. The survey was conducted by the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University for the Office of Information and Research at the denomination's North American Division.

"This is a confusing and upsetting time for people of faith," commented Monte Sahlin, an Adventist who monitors trends in American religion as part of the multi-faith Congregational Studies Partnership based at Hartford Seminary. "As America becomes more pluralistic, its tradition of tolerance and liberty puts more and more people into the position of choosing between deeply-held values. On the one hand there are people saying and doing things that are abhorrent to one's faith and on the other hand we are supposed to allow this without responding with anger or vehemence because we are all Americans. Also, contemporary political and technological change create new issues that are more difficult to understand in terms of religious traditions. It all adds up to a feeling that the world is coming to an end in one way or another."
Forum Discussion: Can Dialog With Other Faiths Help Adventists Overcome Internal Conflict and Strengthen Identity?

By Adventist Today News Team, September 12, 2013

The weekend of September 6-8 brought together 170 Adventist academics from across North America to discuss how dialog with other religions might help the Adventist movement overcome "the liberal/conservative divide" and strengthen Adventist identity. Speakers included Brian McLaren, the well-known evangelical author; Dr. William Johnsson, retired editor of the *Adventist Review* and special assistant to Pastor Ted Wilson, president of the denomination's General Conference; and Dr. Samir Selmanovic, an Adventist minister who founded Faith House in New York City, a nonprofit that hosts multi-faith conversations. The meeting was held in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

McLaren's books have helped young Adventists find a renewed commitment to their faith. Brenton Reading, one of the organizers of the meeting, shared with Adventist Today his own journey. He had a strong Adventist identity, went through Adventist schools, graduating from Southern Adventist University, then encountered ideas he had not been exposed to before and found his faith deconstructed. He started with a more conservative faith, hostile to outside influences but when it was deconstructed, he moved away from Adventism, until he discovered McLaren's writing.

McLaren's critique of his evangelical background was supportive of Adventist beliefs in the wholistic nature of humanity, the danger of the doctrine of eternal burning hell, and the importance of health. "Reading Brian McLaren actually brought me back to the Adventist Church," said Reading. "And I'm an active member of my local Adventist church today because of him."

Both the conservative/hostile Christianity and the liberal/benign Christianity fall short in McLaren's view. Instead he advocates "a strong faith rooted in clear identity that interacts with others in loving and benevolent ways, a strong/benevolent faith." Reading said, "I think that is taking the best from our conservative and liberal traditions. It's been described as a third way because it's a new approach to how we live our faith."

McLaren's books have attempted to deal with the increasing discomfort in new generations of believers with the conventional conservative and liberal versions of Christian faith, a trend widely expressed among younger Adventists. Selmanovic and Dr. Ryan Bell, a community organizer and religion professor from California, are two Adventists who have discussed these themes with McLaren in prior events. "This was a reunion," Bell said, recalling that they were all three involved in a conference on urban ministry in 2002 and have continued to exchange ideas.

Johnsson's Sabbath morning sermon was the highlight of the weekend, according to a number of participants. He talked about his career in the Adventist ministry and broke down in tears when he revealed that after 15 years as a missionary in India, he had not made a single friend outside of the Adventist community. He told how he later became close to a Muslim sheik in Australia. “He ended the sermon by encouraging us all to go out and make friends outside of our immediate community and let those friendships impact us,” one participant told Adventist Today. He received a standing ovation.

Representatives of other faiths were invited to respond to the major presentations and share their perspectives. These included Amin Issa, a Muslim leader, and Deborah Levine, a Jewish worship specialist. The crowd also seemed significantly younger than past years to several observers. Bonnie Dwyer, an executive with the Association of Adventist Forums (AAF), the sponsor of the event, told Adventist Today that 26 students were present, most from Southern Adventist University.

Books by all three of the key speakers can be purchased through major online booksellers. AAF may distribute audio recordings of the presentations.

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Leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria appealed last week for the nation's government to reschedule elections on days other than the Sabbath, reported the *Daily Post*, a leading newspaper in Africa's most populous country. They did not limit their request to Saturdays, but included two other days, Sundays and Fridays, which are normally days of worship for Christians and Muslims.

A news conference released letters that were sent to the appropriate government officials who fix the dates for elections. Pastor Oyeleke Owolabi, president of the union conference that covers the largest share of the country, spoke with reporters on behalf of the denomination in Akure, the capital of Ondo state.

Owolabi suggested that it would be proper for the government to choose any work day for elections, according to the newspaper. He stated that other countries in the world do not normally conduct elections on Saturdays and stressed that this was an issue of religious liberty. He said that the government should respect religious days because the Nigerian constitution protects freedom of religion.

"We are not speaking with a selfish mind," he said, "but what we are pressing for is that elections should not be conducted on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays because these days are important worship days. ... We have our brothers and sisters in other religions who have their own worship day on Fridays and events like elections and other crucial activities are not normally fixed for such day." He was referring to the regular Muslim day for weekly prayers.

In August church leaders had raised the same issue as well as that of scheduling major tests for students on Sabbaths. Pastor Michael Senne-Aya held a press conference on Wednesday, August 14, to call on the Independent National Electoral Commission, the National Assembly, and several testing organizations to change the days of elections and examinations. He stated that denominational leaders had made several efforts to gain respect for members' religious rights, according to the *Guardian* newspaper in the city of Benin.

"The only area we got concession was writing ... exams in our Babcock University," he was quoted. "We have over 500,000 members and they are being disenfranchised during elections." He urged that Nigeria follow the example of Tanzania, Ghana and South Africa "where elections are conducted on week days." In 2011, the denomination's leadership declared a boycott of the national elections because the event was scheduled on the Sabbath. There is no indication on record that this affected the outcome of any of the contests. The number of Adventist adherents in Nigeria is relatively small, estimated at less than two tenths of one percent of the population by a writer in *Spectrum*, the journal of the largest association of Adventist academics, that year.

There were 283,000 members and 2,148 congregations in Nigeria reported in the most recent *Annual Statistical Report* of the denomination's General Conference, although the news media in the country generally agrees that there are about a half million adherents. It operated four hospitals and 15 community clinics, as well as an orphanage and two veterinary clinics. In June last year the Benjamin S. Carson School of Medicine was inaugurated at Babcock University in Lagos. The university has more than 300 faculty and an enrollment of about 7,000 of which only about 16 percent are church members.

The denomination operates ten secondary schools in Nigeria with a total enrollment of 6,371 in the most recent *Annual Statistical Report* and 324 faculty. It also has 109 primary schools with about 14,000 students and over 600 faculty. About four out of five of the families served by these schools are not church members.

The more recent annual report of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) listed nine projects in Nigeria providing benefits to more than 26,000 people. Total funding was about $1.3 million that year.

Nigeria is about equally split between Christians and Muslims according to a number of estimates from various recognized sources. There are regular incidents of violence associated with religion.
Festival of the Laity Begins On Line Tomorrow, Continues through Weekend

AT News Team, September 10, 2013

Where other parts of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church have large convocations for their Festival of the Laity events, with considerable expense for travel, lodging, etc., the denomination's North American Division (NAD) is conducting its event on line. This makes it available to a much larger group of church members, including many outside of North American, points out Pastor J. Alfred Johnson, the organizer and director of adult ministries for the NAD. The focus is getting equipped for effective ministry and there is no registration fee. There will be sections for adult Sabbath School leaders, personal ministries and prison ministries, starting tomorrow evening, Wednesday, September 11, and continuing through Sabbath, September 14. Groups will meet in many local churches and others will attend from the comfort of their home or office. Johnson said that the concept got started with a few “what if’s. What if everyone could be equipped for these ministries at the same time? What if [there were] no travel, no registration fees, no hotel bills, and no spending for extras? What if I could ask my questions and have them answered live during the program?”

Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. Eastern time, Pastor Dan Jackson, president of the Adventist Church in North America, will be the keynote speaker. A seminar on small group leadership will be presented by Pastor Kurt Johnson, who has written several books on the topic and is director of the Voice of Prophecy Bible School, will be presented at 6:30 p.m. and again at 8 p.m. on both Thursday and Friday evenings and continue at 3:30 p.m. on Sabbath afternoon. In the same time frames a seminar on leading the adult Sabbath School class will be presented by J. Alfred Johnson with Dr. James Zackrison, an adjunct professor for Griggs University retired from service as a missionary in Latin America and a staff member at the General Conference. An alternate channel in the same time frames will carry a seminar on the same topic in the Spanish language taught by Pastor Minner Labrador, church ministries director for the Southwestern Union Conference. Dr. Cleveland Houser will present a seminar on prison ministry during the same time frames on yet another channel. Houser is an ordained Adventist minister who served for 16 years as a chaplain in the units of the Tennessee Department of Corrections that deal with psychiatric patients serving prison terms. He has also been a faculty member at American Baptist Theological Seminary, Selma University and John C. Calhoun State College. His involvement in community efforts to prevent and treat drug addiction among young people led Tennessee Governor Ned McWherter to honor him. The closing session of the Festival will begin at 5 p.m. on Sabbath, September 14, and continue with live question and answer time until about 7:15 p.m. All of the times listed are in Eastern time and need to be adjusted according to the location from which a group or individual seeks to access these live events. If you are interested in any of these events, it is important that you register in advance with the Festival of the Laity at http://www.festivalofthelaity.com/ and if a group is gathering to participate, it is essential to have proper equipment such as a video projector and connections to the local public address system in the room where the group is meeting. All seminars will be archived at the same web address for future use. There are also many PowerPoint presentations on these and other topics which can be downloaded at www.nadadultministries.org.

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15th Annual Festival of Flowers this Weekend at Historic Stanborough Park Church in U.K.

Adventist Today News Team, September 9, 2013

The Stanborough Park Seventh-day Adventist Church in the London suburb of Watford will have a flower show this coming weekend (September 13-15), and the main display is being produced by "an award-winning floral artist, well known throughout the world for his artistic ability," reported the Watford Observer. There will be more than 40 displays around the theme "Ode to Joy," created by members of the Adventist congregation and other local churches and flower societies in the area.

The star flower arranger is William McMillan MBE, a Presbyterian pastor from Belfast, Northern Ireland. He is a regular presenter at the National Association of Flower Arranging Societies (NAFAS) in the United Kingdom. "Reverend Mac" and his wife connected with Audrey Balderstone, a member of the Stanborough Church a few years ago and she has helped him with articles in the NAFAS journal and two books.

Balderstone has organized the Festival of Flowers at the Adventist Church each year for 15 years. In addition to celebrating the artistic and natural aspects of God's creation, the events are also fund raising activities. She has raised more than $157,000 for charities. This year the funds will go to Keech Cottage Children's Hospice and the church's Development Fund.

"A special feature of this year's festival will be a 'River of Roses' where visitors will be invited to buy a rose," stated the newspaper, "and write a dedication to somebody. It is anticipated that by the end of the event there will be around 1,000 roses in the river."

The Stanborough Park Church is one of the original Adventist congregations in the United Kingdom. It is located near the office of the denomination's Trans-European Division (TED). The Adventist denomination in the United Kingdom and Ireland has about 300 congregations and 32,000 members.

Growth of the denomination in Britain has been almost entirely among immigrants for decades with a very small percentage of native-born converts. The British Union Conference, although led largely by ministers from ethnic minority groups, has begun to encourage greater creativity in outreach to the indigenous population and the Festival of Flowers is one example of these activities.
Remembering 1963 and 2001

By Monte Sahlin, September 11, 2013

This is a week of memories. Things past flood in upon the present and at my age you begin to realize how much the present shapes and taints the past. Memories are not packed away in archival containers, acid-free and protected for posterity. They are living realities. They change us. They eat on our minds. They can inspire for good or evil, depending on what we choose to remember and how we remember it.

Twelve years ago, I was at home near Washington DC preparing for my weekly trip up the New Jersey Turnpike to the community ministry and church plant that I was leading in Hoboken, just across the Hudson River from Manhattan. Four airliners, taken over by armed fanatics, crashed into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a rural farm in Pennsylvania. The next day people I knew in Hoboken told me about standing on the waterfront and watching the towers collapse, knowing that friends and neighbors and spouses had gone to work that morning in offices in that building. One of the men killed in that event was a young man I had chatted with at the Church of the Advent Hope on Manhattan from which some of our team had come to help with the project in Hoboken. Fifty years ago, I was a teenager in Glendale, California, when Walter Cronkite on CBS television reported the deaths of the little girls in a Birmingham church from a bomb set by someone trying to intimidate the Civil Rights Movement after Martin Luther King’s inspiring speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington a few days prior. My memories are less distinct, both because of age and because at the time my very conservative Adventist parents thought it best not to have television in the home. So far as I know, I did not actually see the original news broadcast until several years later. I was, at the time, an active member of a right-wing organization for young people and had been taught that King was a Communist and civil rights would subvert America. The Birmingham bombing began to change my mind. In a strange and cruel way, those little girls had to give their lives for people like me to get straight on the subject of race in America. A few years later I traveled with friends to Birmingham saw the place where it happened, and by that time I was ready for a lasting impression. As I wrote in my first book, “I have stood on the street corner where a preacher was shot in the back. I have sifted through my fingers the ashes of a bombed-out Sunday School.” (Student Power in Christian Action, 1972: Pacific Press, page 9.) It changed me forever, although the conversations we had on that long journey in a car across America probably did more to change me than the dramatic moments.

My memories of the days immediately after 9/11 are clearer and were more sharply focused. I was on the phone and exchanging Email with friends in the faculty at Andrews University, Columbia Union College (now Washington Adventist University), Oakwood University, Loma Linda University and La Sierra University. Volunteer professionals and students came in from all over the country and helped with a community service project based at the Church of the Advent Hope. Some of them stayed with our team in Hoboken and helped people there too. The debriefing sessions shared a jumble of feelings of shock, anger and pain. There were also stories of tremendous human compassion and caring.

Terrorists miscalculate. They think their acts of public mayhem will intimidate and dominate those they see as crushing their dreams, but in fact such pointless killing and silly violence actually generates much courage, creativity and compassion. In the end the goals of the terrorists are entirely lost. Or, do I misunderstand? Is it simply the primal thrill of hurting “the enemy” that causes the terrorist to feel good? Are they, in some sense, possessed by evil, beyond rationality?

As we remember these events, what would Jesus have us call to mind? Memory can be about nurturing vengeance and hating haters. It has become popular in America to feel victimized, to the extent that affluent people complain that they are victimized by the poor and members of the ethnic majority feel that they are victimized by those in the minority. “You are an offense to me because you exist,” an emperor tells a beggar in a novel I have long forgotten, except for that one absurd line. Meditating on wrongs done can lead to larger carnage and worse wrongs done back. There was a certain justice in American forces finding and killing Osama bin Laden, but what kind of character is built on taking pride in destroying one’s enemies? Is it the character of Jesus or is it something else? Primitive tribes cut off pieces of the bodies of their dead enemies and carry the bloody things around, and some Americans are still pressuring the government to release the photos of bin Laden’s dead body.
There is no comfort in death, even if it happens to “them” and leaves me alive. What we really remember from these great tragedies is the astounding measure of kindness and practical caring that they engendered. We remember the fire fighters and police officers who ran into the falling buildings while the crowds were rushing out. We remember the volunteers who opened the Manhattan Adventist Church to the crowds in the street and gave cups of cold water, as well as the opportunity to wash the caked dust from their faces. We remember the millions of people from many nations who gave their professional expertise, their time and their money to help. The spirit of God is in all of us, in at least some small measure, and when evil asserts itself on these occasions, God overcomes. It is instinctive. It is proof that we are created in His image. Evil repaid with good. Where else does that come from?

Memories can make us better people. Or worse. It depends on what we choose to think about. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, “Finally, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (Philippians 4:8 ESV)
Amusing Ourselves Unawares

Mark Gutman - September 13, 2013

Item #1 - Theater attendance has been a hot-button issue for years, but I don’t remember much criticism of television programs such as Lassie or Jeopardy. Fundamental Belief #22, Christian Behavior, includes “our amusement and entertainment should meet the highest standards of Christian taste and beauty.” That probably makes those who were Adventists before the 1980’s think of the theater. Those words just don’t seem to apply to Jeopardy, sports, or “reality-TV.” Once you avoid the major no-no, you don’t really need to spend more time evaluating alternatives. (For a similar theme, see my “Squeaky Wheels” column of Oct 2012.)

Item #2 - Years ago I read about a couple people who were trying to break the world teeter-totter record. They understood they needed to reach a certain number of hours to break the record. As they neared that number they learned that the record was actually a couple hours more than they had originally thought. The comment was made that they were fortunate to have learned the correct record in time. Otherwise, they might have quit too soon and wasted all that time. I’m not sure, but I presumed the “wasting time” comment was meant to be funny. The long teeter-tottering hurt people’s health, but so what? Teeter-tottering isn’t a bad activity.

Item #3 - Journalist Guy Harrison reflected on his ignoring the coverage of a recent media event. “I suppose I could have spent the summer of 2011 keeping up with the Casey Anthony murder trial that seemed to captivate most of America. But I chose instead to use that time hanging out with my kids, reading, writing, and doing other things I felt were a more valuable use of my time. . . . It’s also curious that so much attention was given to the Anthony case – centering on the death of one child – considering the fact that during the forty-two day trial more than one million children under the age of five died in the developing world from malnutrition and preventable diseases. How much coverage of those child deaths did you see during the summer of 2011?"¹ I doubt if anyone was threatened with church discipline because of watching the trial.

Teeter-tottering or watching Jeopardy or a murder trial. What’s the big deal? Isn’t religion already too nitpicky, majoring in minors? Let’s take another look.

Harrison’s words could well apply to other popular media or current events. Keeping up with “American Idol” or commenting frequently on Twitter and Adventist Today is not considered taboo. (Disclosure: I’ve watched American Idol and made many comments online.) But what are those activities crowding out? Chris Hedges reports that “a third of high school graduates never read another book for the rest of their lives, and neither do 42 percent of college graduates. In 2007, 80 percent of the families in the United States did not buy or read a book.”² The popular media have helped keep us from reading books or from helping our community or from all kinds of other useful activities. Church members who wouldn’t waste their time on TV have found the internet a less objectionable entertainer and time-user. More hours on even 3ABN or on internet must mean fewer hours reading books or spending time with live people.

Life must include amusement and diversion. There are many positives in having fun, commenting online, teeter-tottering, or watching moving pictures. The problem develops when we trick ourselves into thinking that we are doing something useful with our time when we aren’t. While we pat ourselves on the back for not doing anything bad, we can fail to notice that we are being distracted or sidetracked from activities such as the ones mentioned by Harrison.

Brian Wansink tested people who ate at McDonalds and Subway. He found that the Subway eaters get a certain impression from Subway’s ads (or napkins, trays, or cups). “It seems to give them false confidence in what they are eating, and it gives a health halo to all the Subway foods, including the mayonnaise, bacon, potato chips, cookies, and large drinks.”³ McDonalds patrons weren’t fooled by any “health halo.” Isaiah 55:2 (NIV) asks, “Why spend money on what is not bread?” Adapting the wording to fit time use: “Why spend [so much] time on what isn’t going to make you healthier or stronger or more productive?” Because we’re not using our time at junk-food McDonalds, do we figure all our time at Subway is well spent?
Some who spend a lot of time online accomplish far more than I do. And others online don’t care if they achieve much. The main problem is that often the posting accomplishes little, while many posters (or readers) are puzzled at their lack of accomplishment. Are we unaware that time reading little snippets online crowds out other activities? Sometimes we don’t realize that saying yes to the easy short media presentations may mean saying no to more thought-provoking or informing material.

The first three paragraphs of this column describe situations in which people may innocently be amusing themselves, unaware that they are not really engaged in activity to make them better able to help their community and deal with life’s problems. If their goal is to spend an hour (or whatever) a day in relaxing entertainment, and that’s their goal in TV, so be it. But many self-entertainers are insisting to themselves that they are in the serious business of informing themselves or others.

Harrison’s chapter about TV news laments the fact that so much of TV news is a waste of time, serving more to divert watchers from the real issues. Neil Postman sounded a similar theme in Amusing Ourselves to Death several years ago, pointing out that we entertain ourselves by watching TV under the guise of informing ourselves (about politics, news, religion, and education). “[M]ost of our daily news is inert, consisting of information that gives us something to talk about but cannot lead to any meaningful action.”

C. John Summerville recommends skipping the news, with its emphasis on the sensational, the still-to-be-figured-out, and the weird. He recommends reading books instead, to get more of “the whole story” instead of a slice. “As you get into whole books, you’ll be amazed at how little the news taught you about the world you live in.”

Joel Zaslofsky lists 49 lies we tell ourselves. His #28 is that “I value spending more time learning over applying what I already know.” Is it possible that we are fooling ourselves into thinking that we are accomplishing something when we are actually merely entertaining ourselves? How often do we change our thinking because of something we read online, whether the topic is women’s ordination or creation/evolution or other church issues? Do we read (or watch) to confirm our biases, to understand someone else better, or to gain meaningful information? What do we really expect to accomplish by our reading? George Gillespie, a Scottish theologian, wrote that “Reformation ends not in contemplation but in action.” Substitute the word “study” or “learning” and see if the sentence holds true for you. Let’s keep checking ourselves to see if we’re missing out because we’re overdoing the amusement.

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1 Guy P. Harrison, 50 Popular Beliefs that People Think Are True (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2012), 168.
2 Chris Hedges, Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2009), 44.
4 Neil Postman, Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business (New York: Penguin, 1984), 68. In the book, he points out that the Iranian hostage situation was getting extensive media coverage, but intimated that most people following the coverage, “well-informed,” did not even know the main language spoken in Iran or the religious beliefs of most citizens. 107
6 valueofsimple.com/49-powerful-lies-and-how-to-speak-the-truth/
Let me add a special prayer today for all (all! on both sides!) who were affected by the tragedy twelve years ago today. I think it’s amazing that today’s entry just “happens” to be about peace.

On my website homepage are words which were once on many churches, monasteries, and other places which eschewed violence: Peace to all who enter here [or pass this way]. I frequently pray fervently and specifically for those who read or hear my words, or who meet me in daily life, that they will pass over the mistakes and stumbles I make and see and hear only the good voice of God. I am doing my best to become transparent enough that God can shine through with as little interference from me as possible. I do that pretty poorly, on average, but fortunately God is such a great light that my streaks and stains can’t keep that light from shining through. God loves me. Enormously. Unbelievably. And you, too! That’s the only real message I want to pass along.

So I love Joan Chittister’s chapter on peace. We are nearly to the end of her little book, The Monastery of the Heart. Next week we’ll say good-bye, with the epilogue. I hope some of you have checked out her website and learned more. You may not agree with every single thing she says—is there a human being with whom you do absolutely agree?—but there are beautiful little windows to God there. She, too, is trying to learn to be clear and let God shine.

She begins this chapter by pointing out those words inscribed over medieval monastery doors: Peace to All who Enter Here. Then she attempts (that’s all any human can do) to describe that indescribable peace that passes understanding. Even the human Jesus could only say, “Not as the world gives.” He could just give it. And live it. And so can we. Live it, I mean. He’s the only Source.

Peace, says Chittister, “is not a lifestyle dominated by control and a plethora of rules. It is a lifestyle that foregoes violence on every level, for any reason.”

Here’s what I think is the best paragraph:

It creates community out of a collection of strangers—
a slice of life
that crosses age levels,
economic backgrounds,
and ethnicities—
to where differences can be honored,
and differences can be broached,
and peace can come to both the person and to an entire population at the same time.

I was just wondering. . . Is that a good description of your church? If so, how blessed you are! If not, what can you do to begin the change?
Living Water
by Leanna Kelly
posted 9-9-13

Did you know?
He has been with you all this time.
Never left your side
Not even for one minute
How come I forgot?
What was so important
To make me forget?
Did I win the lottery?
Take a free trip around the world?
Have I been pregnant for 15 years.
Was I trapped on a mountain
Fighting for my life?
What was so important?
Me!
Ah I was self absorbed
So what did I do for me?
No degree,
No athlete putting in endless training.
Did I paint the world?
Was I shifting obesity?
Feeding the poor?
Grooming my hair? My face?
What was I doing?
I haven't a clue.
But I forgot you......
I'm sorry.
I didn't forget to breathe though did I!
Nor drink, nor eat
Nor poo, nor wee.
So why'd I forget you?
What do you have that I don't think I need?
WHAT DO YOU HAVE?
And why do I not think I need it?
Was I born stupid?
Dumb?
Foolish?
Should I cover my airways?
Could I stand next to a tap and not drink?
Would I thirst then just before it's too late take a sip?
NO not a sip
a DROPLET.
Would I stick my tongue under that tap
And wait for a droplet?
No one is there except me
I have power to turn the tap on.
Would I turn it?
Would you?
So why just a droplet
I am dying here
A DROPLET!
Did I forget how to use the tap?
Did I forget I can turn it on?
No way
No one has ever forgot
Oh so that means.......
What?
If I'm thirsty I drink water right?
So what if I chose wine instead?
Then......
Don't complain when you're suffering.
Foolishness!

Leeanna Kelly is a Christian, a wife and a mother of two (in that order). Her daughter is 7 and her son is 5. She has been writing poetry from the minute she could talk. She loves health and fitness and works as a sports massage therapist/personal fitness trainer.
"If anyone worships the beast...he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name" (Revelation 14:9-11).

The multiple crime scene investigations, portrayed on television as entertainment, can indeed be fascinating. The detectives are not just interested in discovering exactly what happened, but their overshadowing concern is to discover the motive. The worst crime ever committed was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the spotless Son of God. Why did this innocent Man die? Did He have to die? Was His death just the result of evil men conspiring because He had stepped on their turf, or were there larger motives at work, known to only the Father and Jesus Himself, and later to His followers? “Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but it lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:17, 18). In much of our study of the scriptures, we so often will avoid looking at the wrath of God, because it seems so much more helpful to study about the love of God. But the two are inseparable.

The Reality of God’s Wrath

Let’s first of all come face to face with the reality of the character of God. He is, after all, a God of love. The love of God and the wrath of God are not attributes opposed to each other, but are totally complementary to each other though this may seem ever so paradoxical. Because He is a God of justice, God must judge sin. It is really the most loving thing He could do. The justice of God is His personal commitment, rooted in His holy character, to actively seek to correct all injustice. There is no conflict between God’s justice and God’s love. Consider these insightful perspectives from well-known Christian writers:

“God is holy and holiness is the moral condition necessary to the health of His universe. Whatever is holy is healthy. The holiness of God, the wrath of God, and the health of creation are inseparably united. God's wrath is his utter intolerance of whatever degrades and destroys… Not only is it right for God to display anger against sin, I find it impossible to understand how he could do otherwise. God’s compassion flows out of His goodness, and goodness without justice is not goodness. God spares us because He is good, but He could not be good if He were not just.” [1]

"God and love are synonymous. Love is not an attribute of God, it is God. Whatever God is, love is. If your conception of love does not agree with justice and judgment, purity and holiness, then your idea of love is wrong.” [2]
“The wrath of God is neither mysterious, nor irrational. It is never unpredictable, but always predictable because it is provoked by evil and evil alone. The wrath of God is his steady, unrelenting, unremitting, uncompromising antagonism to evil in all its forms and manifestations” [3]

So, what is God’s wrath? We must not understand God’s wrath as an outburst of anger by Someone whose patience with sin has finally reached its limit. We cannot possibly understand God’s wrath apart from an understanding of His holiness, for God’s holiness is that attribute of His character by which He maintains the integrity of His being as both a God of justice and a God of mercy. His holiness makes it impossible for Him to tolerate evil in any form anywhere in the universe. When the Scriptures use the terms “wrath” and “anger” in reference to God, they express God’s personal revulsion toward wrong, and the utter incompatibility of sin and wrong with His being. Because our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29), it is impossible for any sinner to stand in His presence without being consumed. The everlasting gospel is the announcement that God Himself, through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, has made it possible for sinners to approach a holy God and be welcomed and embraced, without being destroyed.

Many modern people often struggle with the idea of God’s inflicting punishment on sinners, but when we see sin as slavery and God’s punishment as the freely chosen skid row of the universe, hell becomes much more comprehensible to the mindset of contemporary man. Christian pastor Timothy Keller makes these points about the necessity and justice of punishment in God’s plan –

“...to understand hell we must understand sin as slavery. Romans 1:21-25 tells us that we were built to live for God supremely, but instead we live for love, work, achievement, or morality to give us meaning and worth. Thus every person, religious or not, is worshiping something—idols, pseudo-saviors—to get their worth. But these things enslave us with guilt (if we fail to attain them) or anger (if someone blocks them from us) or fear (if they are threatened) or drivenness (since we must have them). Guilt, anger, and fear are like fire that destroys us. Sin is worshiping anything but Jesus—and the wages of sin is slavery....The universal religion of humankind is: We develop a good record and give it to God, and then he owes us. The gospel is: God develops a good record and gives it to us, then we owe him (Rom. 1:17). In short, to say a good person, not just Christians, can find God is to say good works are enough to find God. You can believe that faith in Christ is not necessary or you can believe that we are saved by grace, but you cannot believe in both at once. So the apparently inclusive approach is really quite exclusive. It says, “The good people can find God, and the bad people do not.” But what about us moral failures? We are excluded. The gospel says, “The people who know they aren’t good can find God, and the people who think they are good do not.” Then what about non-Christians, all of whom must, by definition, believe their moral efforts help them reach God? They are excluded. So both approaches are exclusive, but the gospel’s is the more inclusive exclusivity. It says joyfully, “It doesn’t matter who you are or what you’ve done. It doesn’t matter if you’ve been at the gates of hell. You can be welcomed and embraced fully and instantly through Christ.” [4]

So to preach the good news, we must first preach the bad news, but we will understand that the bad news is really good news, because God is telling us the truth. The bad news about God’s
punishment of sin is not, as some would portray it, some psychological twist intended to produce
guilt feelings in people, but it is based on the reality of the world and the cosmos that we live in,
and the reality of the God who is. God’s wrath is as much an integral part of His being as is His
infinite love and compassion. In explaining this, Christian author Stephen Neil stated:

“The best way to understand the doctrine of the wrath of God is to consider the alternatives. The
alternative is not love; since rightly considered love and wrath are only the obverse and reverse
of the same thing ... the alternative to wrath is neutrality – neutrality in the conflict of the world.
To live in such a world would be a nightmare. It is only the doctrine of the wrath of God, of his
irreconcilable hostility to all evil, which makes human life tolerable in such a world as ours.” [5]

The Witnesses to the Cross

The final judgment of God to fall on planet earth is the undiluted wrath of God. “And I saw
another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in
them the wrath of God is complete” (Revelation 15:1). As God pours out the plagues of His
wrath on planet earth, He does it in the presence of witnesses – “in the presence of the holy
angels and in the presence of the Lamb” (Revelation 14:10). So awful was the agony, that the
Son cried out, “My God, why have You forsaken me”? (Matthew 27:46). It is in the light shining
from Calvary’s cross that we must understand the teaching of God’s wrath and His final
judgments.

“Unless we come to grips with this terrible doctrine, we will never even begin to understand the
depths of what Jesus did for us on the cross. His body was being destroyed in the worst possible
way, but that was a flea bite compared to what was happening to his soul. When he cried out that
his God had forsaken him, he was experiencing hell itself. If a mild acquaintance denounces you
and rejects you—that hurts. If a good friend does the same—the hurt’s far worse. However, if
your spouse walks out on you, saying, “I never want to see you again,” that is far more
devastating still. The longer, deeper, and more intimate the relationship, the more torturous is
any separation. But the Son’s relationship with the Father was beginning-less and infinitely
greater than the most intimate and passionate human relationship. When Jesus was cut off from
God, he went into the deepest pit and most powerful furnace, beyond all imagining. And he did it
voluntarily, for us.” [6]

When unrepentant sinners receive the punishment of God’s wrath as they are cast into the lake of
fire at the end of the world, what will be the greatest agony they will experience? Will their
torment be that of the flames and heat, or will it be that of the final separation takes place in the
presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb, who had already done everything
possible to avert this awful experience. [For a biblical understanding of the "the smoke of their
torment ascends forever...” (Revelation 14:11) go to this endnote]. [7]

The Cup of His Indignation

The Old Testament writers frequently used the vocabulary of “wine” and “cup” to describe the
intensity of God’s anger toward sin. God is often said to give the cup of indignation to nations
whom He is about to destroy (e.g. Isa. 51:17; Lam. 4:21; Jer. 25:15-16; 49:12; 51:7; Ezek. 23:31-
Thus Babylon is described as having “made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (Revelation 14:8). This seems to suggest that sin has with it an intoxicating effect so that persons are unable to detect and resist whatever damages them. Even though they know that they will be punished with everlasting destruction, their intoxication with sin prevents them from doing anything to avert the final destruction.

Likewise the apostle Paul writes “…who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them” (Romans 1:32). Notice that the text in Revelation 14:10-11 says that worshipers of the beast will drink of the cup of the wine of the wrath of God poured undiluted into the cup of His indignation. Part of the message of the third angel is that Jesus did really drink that cup for us in the Garden of Gethsemane and in His sacrifice on Calvary’s cross. In agony He cried out in the garden, “And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.” (Matthew 26:39, 42 KJV). Because, in our place, Christ drank the cup of God’s wrath for us, full strength, we don’t have to drink it. This is the undiluted three angels’ messages.

**How God Averts His Wrath: Propitiation**

The gospel is the good news that God personally has done something of such significance that His holy wrath is thereby averted. The Bible uses the term “propitiation” to describe how this is accomplished through Christ’s death on Calvary’s cross. Yet we must never think that the atonement procured grace, but rather that it flowed from grace. God’s love is the source, not the consequence of the atonement. Man is alienated from God by sin and God is alienated from man by wrath. It is in the substitutionary death of Christ that sin is overcome and wrath averted, so that God can look on man without displeasure and man can look on God without fear. The benefits of the cross are thus available to all of us.

“…being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” (Romans 3:24-26). “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

Some individuals would dismiss the scriptural concept of “propitiation” as having a rather pagan flavor, where through rituals the worshipers would seek to appease the wrath of the deity in the hope of shielding themselves from his wrath. Others have termed the concepts of “substitution” and “substitutionary death” as cosmic child abuse. But remember that all of Scripture is inspired or God-breathed. So rather than dismissing such concepts as incompatible with our limited and incomplete views of God’s character, let us seek to understand these terms according to the totality of His character. I think that no one has done this better than John R.W. Stott.
“We must picture Him neither as an indulgent God who compromises his holiness in order to spare and spoil us, nor as a harsh, vindictive God who suppresses his love in order to crush and destroy us... We must not, then, speak of God punishing Jesus or of Jesus persuading God, for to do so is to set them over against each other as if they acted independently of each other or were even in conflict with each other. We must never make Christ the object of God’s punishment or God the object of Christ’s persuasion, for both God and Christ were subjects not objects, taking the initiative together... If the Father ‘gave the Son’, the Son ‘gave himself.’ If the Gethsemane ‘cup’ symbolized the wrath of God, it was nevertheless ‘given’ by the Father (John 18:11) and voluntarily ‘taken’ by the Son. If the Father ‘sent’ the Son, the Son also ‘came’ himself. The Father did not lay on the Son an ordeal he was reluctant to bear, nor did the Son extract from the Father a salvation he was reluctant to bestow. There is no suspicion anywhere in the New Testament of a discord between the Father and the Son, whether by the Son wrestling forgiveness from an unwilling Father or by the Father demanding a sacrifice from an unwilling Son. There was no unwillingness in either. On the contrary, their wills coincided in the perfect self-sacrifice of love... It is God himself who in holy wrath needs to be propitiated, God himself who in holy love undertook to do the propitiating, and God himself who in the person of his Son died for the propitiation of our sins. Thus God took his own loving initiative to appease his own righteous anger by bearing it his own self in his own Son when he took our place and died for us. There is no crudity here to evoke our ridicule, only the profundity of holy love to evoke our worship.” [8]

In Christ’s death on the cross, God conclusively demonstrates the blending of both His justice and His mercy, and that there is no contradiction between the two. Similarly, Ellen G. White wrote about the combination of God’s holiness and mercy, His wrath and compassion.

“Justice and Mercy stood apart, in opposition to each other, separated by a wide gulf. The Lord our Redeemer clothed His divinity with humanity, and wrought out in behalf of man a character that was without spot or blemish. He planted His cross midway between heaven and earth, and made it the object of attraction which reached both ways, drawing both Justice and Mercy across the gulf. Justice moved from its exalted throne, and with all the armies of heaven approached the cross. There it saw One equal with God bearing the penalty for all injustice and sin. With perfect satisfaction Justice bowed in reverence at the cross, saying, It is enough!” [9]

The Compassion of Jesus

While seated on the Mount of Olives, just days before His crucifixion, Jesus showed ever so clearly His compassion for His own people when He said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” (Matthew 23:37, 38). How then do we reach today’s generation with the message of God’s compassionate love? Is it at all possible to blend anger with love? And how do we as God’s messengers accomplish this? There is a way to do this; it is the way of Jesus. His ministry was an amazing combination of truth and tears. This is the blend we so often lack. Consequently, does the world ever sense our sorrow for the way sin is damaging the lives of people?

What is missing is not truth, but tears. Christian pastor, Tullian Tchividjian, stated it so aptly:
“When people see us hating what God hates because our love for God and people is real and deep, they may be more open to hear what we have to say.” He continues…

“The world so often senses our anger – but do they ever sense our grief? They think we’re angry simply because we’re not getting our way, but I’m afraid they don’t feel our sorrow over sin’s negative, dehumanizing effects. Our anger is not communicated in a ‘You were made for so much more than this’ type manner. They hear our anger without grief and conclude, ‘They’re not angry because they want what’s best for us; they’re angry because they only want what’s best for them and they’re not getting it.’ No wonder they tune us out. When we see the restlessness and wreckage in people’s lives because they’re not in relationship with God and they’re living sin-filled lives, it should stoke our anger – an anger that arises because we love them and grieve to see them living for something so destructive when God created them to live for something beautiful and satisfying” [10].

There is only one way to escape the wrath of God, and God Himself has provided that way through the spilt blood of His Son Jesus Christ for “Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Just as the blood of the Passover Lamb, sprinkled on the doorposts of God’s people in Egypt, averted God’s wrath from His people, so it is the blood of the Lamb which enables sinners to stand before a holy God without fear during the final outpouring of God’s wrath. Just as the sprinkled blood at the Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place of the temple provided a just and righteous propitiation for sin, so the trust of the believer will never be in his own accomplishments or attainments, but only in the atonement of Christ. On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand!

Life Applications

Questions to Ponder:

What was the greatest agony that Jesus experienced both in the Garden of Gethsemane and on Calvary’s cross?

What kinds of suffering and agony did the Father experience as Jesus died?

Why did Jesus have to die for our sins? Could the sin problem not have been solved in some other manner?

Text to Remember: In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10).

Truths vs. Lies:
Replace the lies of the enemy with these truths that will set you free:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lies or half truths</th>
<th>Truths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus died in order to move the Father to love us.</td>
<td>Both the Father and the Son loved us equally and together even before Jesus went to the cross.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God is never angry with sinners. His wrath is rather that of leaving sinners to reap the natural consequences of their actions.</td>
<td>God’s anger against sin is the revulsion of His entire being against sin in all its forms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To seek propitiation for my sins I must pray more and work harder to become worthy of my salvation.</td>
<td>To find propitiation for my sins, I must come to Jesus and accept that He died for my sin as my substitute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The wrath of God and the love of God are incompatible.</td>
<td>The wrath of God and the love of God are both expressions of the holiness of God.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Endnotes –**


[7] What do we do about the expressions in Scripture that may seem to indicate that the fires of hell will burn forever and ever? Interpret them contextually in light of the rest of Scripture and common sense.

The expression “unquenchable fire” is found twice in the Bible, meaning that the fire will run its course, but as long as it runs its course it is *unquenchable*.

“Eternal fire.” The New Testament book of Jude describes the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as receiving the ‘punishment of eternal fire.’ Are these cities burning today? No! *Eternal fire* refers to the *effect* of the fire. It lasts for eternity (see *Jude* 7).

“Everlasting punishment.” The phrase is not *everlasting punishing*. What possible purpose would
be served by unending torment? The punishment – separation from God – lasts forever. It is a
done deal. No second chances. After all, the wages of sin is death, and God gave “His only
begotten Son so that anyone who believes in Him should not perish” (John 3:16).
“Forever and ever.” The word is used by both Jonah and King David as meaning “for the time
being.” Do your own research on “forever” with a Bible concordance, and you’ll find that it is
used fifty-six times in connection with things that have already ended.
What purpose would it serve in God’s eternal plan to keep sinners alive ad infinitum? For a
comprehensive study on this subject, read The Fire That Consumes – A Biblical and Historical
1986), 150, 151.
anger/
South Central Camp Meeting, 2013-Part II

This is the final installment in our camp meeting series. It is selected from the second of President Dana Edmond’s reflections, this time not on the camp meeting in Huntsville, but on three other camp meetings he visited this year. It provides an interesting insight into the different ways that various large convocations approach time management. AT would be interested to hear your own reflections on the way you like to see time managed in these circumstances. DLK

South Central Camp Meeting, 2013-Part II

by Elder Dana C. Edmond
Submitted Sept. 11, 2013

Each year, I share with you in this space what I learn as I have the opportunity to go to camp meetings in other conferences.

This year, from the end of May, until the end of June, I had the privilege of visiting 5 camp meetings, the 2 that we have in South Central, plus, Georgia-Cumberland, Southeastern and Allegheny West. I had a wonderful time; I was on a Camp Meeting “high!”

It started in Georgia-Cumberland on the campus of Southern Adventist University. The thing that fascinated me about Georgia-Cumberland’s camp meeting was (among other things) the efficiency of their service time wise. They had 2 Divine Worship Services at 8:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m., with Sabbath School in between.

In South Central, we start Sabbath School at 9:00 a.m., with Divine Worship at 10:45 a.m., with a target ending time of 1:00 p.m., or sooner.

We got out at Georgia-Cumberland for their second service at 1:00, which means that they did almost two services in the time that it takes for us to do one. Amazing!

Of course, they do not have choirs; their conference president makes a lot fewer remarks than ours does; I think the only time he got up to say anything was when he introduced the speaker. It is an interesting dynamic to have two services; for me at least. I have done it twice in my life. Both services are exactly the same; the same hymn, the same special music, etc. The first time I was the speaker for a place where I had to speak for 2 services, the pastor who introduced me even used exactly the same words.

The audiences for the two services are typically different, but the staff (e.g., the pastoral staff, the audio-visual people, etc.) is the same for both services. I typically am uncomfortable making those people sit through the same sermon twice, so I changed some things for the second service.

That is weird, in a way, because if I like a sermon, I want to hear it again, and again and again. I
have already listened to some sermons from this past camp meeting twice and I plan to listen to them several more times. But I do not like to make people listen to the same sermon more than once.

Two weeks later, I was at the Southeastern Conference’s camp meeting. I was fascinated with time (again) and the different way that I approach time in South Central, and how I approach it when I am in someone else’s conference, and I am not responsible for what happens.

There are basically two ways that regional conferences approach camp meeting, church officers convention and other major worship services. One is the kind of tightly scripted, time-conscious method, where someone says to the platform participants before they come out for worship, "if you have the scripture reading (or the opening hymn, or the special music or whatever) this morning, just read the scripture (or announce the hymn, or give the special music or whatever). Please do not give a testimony or preach before your assignment, just do whatever the assignment is." In South Central, you probably can guess who the person who says that is.

But there is a reason why I do that (other than what I know appears to be an obsession with time): First, there are always programs that come behind Divine Worship at camp meeting, and if Divine Worship runs long, it affects those programs, especially for people who stay off campus.

But even more importantly, I believe that the most important thing that happens during any Divine Worship is the preaching of the Word of God. In South Central, I am trying to get us to the Word of God as soon as possible. If we are going to have to be long doing something, I want to us to be long in hearing the Word of the Lord.

I have learned that if you are not intentional about that, if somebody is not insistent about that, then you will have a service where at least some of the platform participants feel as though it is not a problem for them to add their extra touch to the program.

The other way to approach worship at major events is to allow worship to just sort of let it flow. If someone wants to give a testimony before reading the scripture or giving the special music, then, let them do that. If the Lord blesses the choir and they want to reprise the song when they are finished singing, let them.

In the worship service at Southeastern, the choir was blessed to do an excellent job. I was thinking” You all need to reprise that !” I never think that in South Central!

The service at their camp meeting ended about an hour after our service did. But the music was great, the sermon was great; one of our pastors, Elder Debleaire Snell, senior pastor, Huntsville First Church, was mightily used of God. And even though he did not get up to preach until the time we were getting out at our camp meeting, no one seemed to mind the time. And since I wasn’t responsible for anything that happened at someone else’s camp meeting, I did not mind either.

But we ate in their dining hall for Sabbath dinner and I noticed that as I was leaving to speak for their afternoon program, not only were there people in the dining hall who were still eating, there
were people who had not gotten their food yet!

The lesson I learned, again, is that you **cannot** have it both ways. Either you are going to be very **intentional** about trying to make sure that worship is both spiritual and punctual, or, you can decide that you are only going to be **intentional** about it being **spiritual**. There is nothing **wrong** with not being **intentional** about being punctual, but in a black church, that usually means getting out of church at 2:00 or later.

The next week, I was at the Allegheny West Conference, for their camp meeting. That is home for me, I grew up in that conference.

Again, there was a mighty Word from the Lord for Divine Worship. Dr. Leslie Pollard, the President of Oakwood University, spoke for Divine Worship. Dr. Pollard and I went to Oakwood and then Andrews Theological Seminary together; I have heard him preach a number of times, the Lord used him in a special way as our keynote speaker at our Camp Meeting.

But I have never heard him, or too many other preachers, be used by God in that manner. While old-fashioned Adventists, like me, typically do not do this, people sometimes will stand up at various points in the sermon when they feel especially moved by the Word of God. There was a lady near us who **stood the entire sermon**.

I had a wonderful time this camp meeting season. I feel extremely blessed. Our camp meeting was special, and then I was blessed for Mrs. Edmond and me to be the guests at 3 other camp meetings. I received the opportunity to worship with our brothers and sisters at other camp meetings and to learn things that I hope the Lord can use to make our camp meeting better next year and in the years to come.

I can hardly wait for Camp Meeting, 2014.