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- **Consider the Snowflake:** This greeting from North American Division Ministerial Leadership, with some commentary by Debbonnaire Kovacs and fabulous snowflake photographs by Dr. Kenneth Libbrecht, published with his permission, is linked to many more photos. Apologies to those who really don’t want to consider the cold beauty of snowflakes, just right now....

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Adventist Pastor Fired for Participating in a Same-Sex Wedding

By Adventist Today News Team, December 12, 2013

Pastor Brett Hadley, chaplain and Bible teacher at Highland View Academy in Maryland, has lost his job as a Seventh-day Adventist minister because of his role in the same-sex wedding of his step-daughter. The event was more like a dinner for friends and Hadley has denied conducting a wedding, according to a report from Spectrum Magazine, the publication of the largest organization of Adventist academics. But another relative discovered that Hadley had signed the marriage license and contacted denominational officials seeking his dismissal.

What may be the first firing of an Adventist minister for participation in a same-sex wedding began with the marriage of Rande McDaniel and Britney Moss in Bellingham, Washington, on September 13 and 14. Rande Moss is the daughter of Hadley's wife. The event was designed to be different than a religious wedding and included a dinner for 40 to 50 relatives and friends with several individuals sharing anecdotes about the couple. They did not exchange vows and sign their wedding licenses until the next day at a different location.

Same-sex marriage is legal in Washington State and neither woman is an Adventist Church member. According to the Chesapeake Conference one of the reasons they decided to fire Hadley is that he "misrepresented his role when asked about it." The Spectrum article quotes his wife's blog and other relatives, and clearly conflict among the extended family over how to relate to same-sex marriage by non-Adventist relatives has played a role in the outcome.

Hadley graduated from the theology program at Southern Adventist University, then taught high school for eight years and spent three years as a youth pastor in California. He got involved in ministry with the deaf and earned a teaching endorsement in American Sign Language from American River College. In 1992 he formed the Adventist Christian Theatre group and for 11 years directed this highly successful drama ministry as well as working at various summer camps.

Known as a top expert on drama ministry with young people, Hadley has written four books and completed an MFA degree at the University of California Davis. He was senior pastor of the Mountain View Adventist Church in Las Vegas from 2006 to 2011 when he joined the faculty at Highland View Academy, the boarding academy operated by Chesapeake Conference. A significant number of parents and students are upset about Hadley's firing and feel that he was not treated fairly.

"The Chesapeake Conference [has] a commitment to uphold the fundamental tenants of the Seventh-day Adventist Church ... which states that marriage, as created by God, is between a man and woman," said a conference news release. It also included the following: "We hold that all people, no matter what their sexual orientation, are children of God and loved by God. We do not condone singling out any group for scorn and derision, let alone abuse, but desire to treat all people with Christian love."

"It is difficult to maintain both of these positions," a retired pastor told Adventist Today, "especially when there are a number of members who have a very restricted view of how families, especially ministers and their families, are to respond in a situation such as this one. Some believe that it is really not appropriate to behave according to the last part of this statement despite the fact that it is from an official, General Conference document."

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Dr. Teleka Patrick, a medical resident in Kalamazoo, Michigan, has been missing since last Thursday (December 5). She was reported missing the next day after failing to show up at work. She was last seen going to her car in the parking lot at Borgess Medical Center in the Michigan community which is home to the University of Michigan's main campus.

Her car has been found by the Indiana State Police on Interstate 94 near the town of Portage, according to television Channel 6 in Indianapolis. Yet, the Kalamazoo Sheriff's Department continues to say that they do not suspect foul play.

Patrick is the daughter of Pastor and Mrs. Matthias Patrick who retired as a clergyman employed by the Greater New York Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The conference youth department is circulating a prayer request via social networking media on the Internet and the Columbia Union Conference has distributed the note through its electronic newsletter.
First Passive Solar Church in America is Being Built by Adventist Congregation in New York

By Adventist Today News Team, December 11, 2013

The Kinderhook Seventh-day Adventist Church is building a new facility which is "the nation's first house of worship to fully implement passive building standards," according to a report from Columbia-Greene Media. Passive design is based on a concept from Germany that replaces conventional fossil-fuel heating plants with a combination of sunlight, internal heat sources and heat recovery technology.

The use of passive solar heating will reduce the carbon emissions from the new 6,000-square-foot building to 38 percent of the limit in the construction code in New York state. Instead of the boiler, pipes and radiators in a conventional fossil-fuel heating plant, a passive solar system has a single post heating coil with windows, a highly-insulated roof and foundations, heavily-insulated outside walls, and heat-trapping ventilation technology that recycles heat from the exhaust.

The United States Green Building Council is in hopes that more congregations of all faiths will follow the example of this Adventist group. The council plans for more outreach to faith-based organizations, according to Jodi Smits Anderson, director of Sustainability Programs for the New York State Dormitory Authority and a delegate to the council's recent national meeting in Philadelphia.

Green construction "affects everybody, and everybody needs to be involved in building them," Smits Anderson told Columbia-Greene Media reporter Joe Gentile. The New York "Department of Taxation saves $3.5 billion a year" because of green and sustainable facilities, Smits Anderson stated.

The Member of the United States Congress from the area, Rep. Chris Gibson, affirmed the congregation's choice of green construction. He mentioned the energy that the U.S. must import and said "we must do better," referring to the Adventist project as an example of how to reduce American dependence on overseas oil. He pointed to "God-given talent" at the heart of the project.

"We are joyful [for] this design," Pastor Anton Kapusi was quoted in the news report. The green construction is part of the witness of the congregation he indicated. "We are making this place a beacon of light, of truth and health for the community we live in."

Dennis Wedlick is the architect for the project and construction is expected to be completed before the end of 2014. "When you're doing it so precisely and so carefully, you create an equilibrium, a body at rest," Wedlick told Columbia-Greene Media. "And I think that's such a perfect, perfect metaphor for this building: peace."

The Kinderhook Church has 88 members according to the online directory of Adventist congregations. It is located in an outer suburb of Albany, New York, the state's capital city, but it is affiliated with the Greater New York Conference which covers the New York City metropolitan area.

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Adventists Respond to the Death of Nelson Mandela

By AT News Team, December 8, 2013

Friday (December 7) Pastor Ted Wilson, president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, released a statement in response to the death of Nelson Mandela. The denomination "joins the people of South Africa and the world in mourning the loss," he said.

Mandela's "life of forgiveness and reconciliation served as a light in a world that too often lives in the shadow of reprisal, anger and malice."

"May all reflect on his important efforts to bring people together in peace," statement continued. "What a joy that we can also be part of that process as we are reconciled to God and each other by the grace of Jesus Christ, the Prince of peace. We offer our sympathy and condolences to the Mandela family and the citizens of South Africa."

Many Adventist pastors mentioned the event during Sabbath services. For example, Pastor Jimmy Ferguson at the Devonshire Church in Bermuda told the congregation, "We join people of genuine goodwill around the world in celebrating the memory of Nelson Mandela. I find it fascinating at this defining moment in the history of our world, with the whole of 20th century race relations in view; that the most memorable man on the planet today and the most powerful man on the planet today are both of African descent. ... One in four Christians on the planet today lives in Sub-Saharan Africa."

The Adventist University of Health Sciences in Orlando, Florida, flew the flag on campus at half-mast, although no special events are planned. At Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee, a history department convocation on Thursday will focus on Mandela, a faculty member told Adventist Today.

It is exam week at Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama, and some students have already left school for the holidays. This week the 34th Annual Pastoral and Evangelism Council is meeting on campus and Mandela has been noted by several speakers. This is the largest yearly gathering of African American clergy in the Adventist denomination's North American Division.

Adventist Today continues to gather information from Adventist churches, institutions and groups. The editors are interested in hearing from readers about activities or responses related to this historic event.
First to Give Women the Vote: Pitcairn Celebrates 175 Years

From APD, December 9, 2013

The country with the highest percentage of Adventists is Pitcairn Island, also the smallest and most isolated community on the globe. On November 29 the island celebrated the distinction of being the first country in the world to grant suffrage to women.

In 1838, while visiting Pitcairn Island, Captain Russell Elliott of the British warship H.M.S. Fly, answered the pleas of the island's residents to provide a constitution and code of laws. Elliott included the right to vote for women and the education of all Pitcairn children was made compulsory.

New Zealand generally claims to be the first country to grant women's suffrage (in 1893), but Pitcairners point to most dictionaries, which, in addition to defining “country” as a “nation,” also define “country” as being any “territory of a nation.” Pitcairn Island is very clearly the territory of the United Kingdom, a British Overseas Territory.

The 175th anniversary was a day of festivity on Pitcairn, highlighted by the men of the island preparing a sumptuous feast for the women. Letters of congratulation about Pitcairn's "first" were received from national and international women's organizations around the world.

The Pitcairn Islands Study Center at Pacific Union College in Angwin, California, quoted one woman in the island community, “I am proud that my ancestors valued women enough to give them educational opportunities as well as voting rights along with the men for such a long time before any other country did." In addition to universal suffrage, Pitcairn Island today fines any citizen of 18 years or older who fails to vote in annual elections, so voter turnout is 100 percent.

In 2004 six men on Pitcairn Island were convicted for sexual offenses against underage girls. A review of records at the time revealed that many women on the island had their first child when they were 12 to 15 years of age.

There are about 36 Pitcairners of voting age, 19 women and 17 men. The total population is about 60. The most recent Annual Statistical Report of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church reports 21 members which would be 58 percent of the adult population. It is the only organized religion on the island. No other country on the globe comes anywhere near this rate of penetration.
Almost the Worst Christmas Ever

By Andy Hanson, December 11, 2013

For me that Friday before Christmas Eve was the most depressing day of the year. Nothing much happened at school to take my mind off what was coming, and so when I started walking home I was dragging my feet. My Catholic neighbor on the corner was building a brick wall in his backyard, and there was a pile of sand in his driveway. Since I was a Seventh-day Adventist and hence the sworn enemy of all Catholics, particularly the Pope, I felt justified in kicking the pile of sand two or three times.

Just as I dreaded, my father was giving my neighbor a haircut out back by the garage. Since he only charged a dollar, he usually cut three or four heads of hair every Friday. I thought his haircuts were hideous. He almost shaved the temples and only let short hair exist on the top of the head. To make matters worse, he had used gasoline to “dry clean” his Sabbath suit. It was on a hanger hooked to a bar inside the open garage door. I couldn't believe the man getting the haircut didn't complain about the smell.

It seemed like my mother always came home late on Friday, and this Friday was no exception. She was a fifth-grade teacher, and she liked to get her grading done before she came home for the weekend. In the winter months, that meant she had only about an hour to get the housework done before Sabbath. As her oldest son, it was my responsibility to clean my brother’s and my room, which meant that I had to mop under the beds and dust. Since I usually put this off until my mother began her housework, I too was in a rush to finish cleaning.

On this particular Friday afternoon, I'd been foolish enough to take off shoes full of my Catholic neighbor's sand in my room. And since I had to clean the room anyway, I had decided to just dump the sand out on the floor. I found out to my cost that sand, unlike dust or dirt, could not be mopped up. Consequently, on this Friday I had to locate a whisk broom and dustpan and crawl around on my hands and knees. The sand seemed to be everywhere, primarily under the bed.

When I finished my job, I checked the sunset table taped to the refrigerator and discovered that the Sabbath hours were swiftly approaching. My mother was an admirable person in many ways, but she was negligent in one. She did not guard the edges of the Sabbath. And so it was up to my brother and me to carefully countdown the minutes to sundown. As my brother counted down the minutes in a loud voice, I positioned myself next to the wall socket and extension cord that provided the power to the vacuum cleaner. I pulled the plug exactly one minute before the Sabbath began. My brother and I faithfully performed this service to assure ourselves that our mother would be able to enter heaven if she died in the night.

My father was late. It was his job to bring home the tree, but he didn't show up until we'd just finished our Friday night meal of rice with cinnamon, bananas and honey. When we heard the front door open, we raced from the kitchen to see my dad bringing the tree in through the living room. (The living room in our house was a place where nobody lived. Except for Christmas, Thanksgiving, and the visits of relatives, sheets covered our couch and its matching overstuffed chair.) What made the scene memorable was the spray of dry pine needles that were knocked off the tree as my father pushed it through the door. Debris of any kind touching the living room carpet was anathema.
The tree itself was dry, scrawny and, of course, free. Tree sellers were happy to get rid of trees that weren't sold by the night before Christmas Eve. I don't know what my mother was expecting. Perhaps she hoped that this year would be different, but the sight of that scrawny tree wobbling on its wooden stand made her cry. The contrasting emotions of my parents, my father laughing, my mother weeping, made me want to run out the back door into the night.

My mother opened the boxes of ornaments and the tissue wrapped packages of tinsel from years past. My father seemed not to notice that my mother was crying when he offered to help her put the white sheet under the tree. It was supposed to simulate snow, but it never did. My mother told him to go into the kitchen and eat his rice.

Placing the sheet under the tree without getting too many dried up needles down my neck was always an adventure. Then my mother got out the string of white and red and green and blue lights, and my brother and I managed to circle the branches. All the lights worked when we plugged in the extension cord. My mother said that was a Christmas miracle.

We always hung the tinsel first. That was because scrawny trees need lots of tinsel. That Christmas we put on all we had. Then the ornaments. My dad was helping by this time. I managed to break one and my little brother broke two or three. Finally the tree was decorated.

Then came the moment when my parents went into their bedroom and brought out the presents. My brother and I always hoped for toys, but toys under the Christmas tree didn't happen often in our house. My mother usually wrapped our new winter clothes. That Christmas, I was sure there would be no toy packages under the tree. I knew it was going to be the worst Christmas ever.

My father always made pancakes on Sabbath morning. (I remember once on a cross-country trip we stopped at a restaurant, and I ate pancakes on Wednesday. That whole day felt like Sabbath.) I was depressed, so I ate pancakes until I couldn't stand the sight of another one. Dad did the dishes because he was already dressed for church while the rest of us got ready.

Our blue fifty-one Ford was out of the garage and parked next to the front porch steps. The engine was running, and Dad was motioning for me to get my brother and get into the car. Out of loyalty to my mother, the two of us decided not to leave the house until she was ready. The tension grew, and my father started honking the horn. That meant that we were going to be late for Sabbath School again.

There was still no sign of mother. Finally, my father turned off the engine and started walking the four miles to church. He had done this once before and humiliated all of us. About ten minutes after my father left, my mother appeared dressed to the “nines” as we used to say. My brother and I followed her out to the car, and she drove us to church. We passed my father after about a mile. My mother honked and began to slow down, but he paid no attention. So she sped up and got us to church about half an hour before my father got there.

The Junior Sabbath School was in the basement of the church. As I took the basement steps two at a time, my stomach began to feel funny. When I got to the classroom, there were no vacant seats in the back, and I had to sit up front with the younger kids and girls. Our teacher was trying to help us develop good health habits, and on this particular Sabbath she wanted to know who had brushed their teeth that morning. I raised my hand with the rest even though I hadn’t. At first I thought the cramp I felt was the result of the lie, but then I realized that I was just about to vomit. I bolted out of my seat and made a dash for the door.
I managed to close the door and take two steps toward the bathroom before I threw up. All those pancakes came up so fast that I nearly fainted. When the deed was done, I raced for the bathroom. As luck would have it there was no one in the hall, and I made my escape without being observed by anyone. When I got to the bathroom, I sucked water out of a sink faucet, spit, drank, and was about to do it again when I heard someone running down the hall. The door to the janitor’s supply room was in the bathroom, and I correctly guessed that some adult was coming to clean up my mess. I was standing on a toilet seat with the cubicle door securely latched when I heard the bathroom door open and a key turn in a lock. A man's voice said to someone, “It must've been an adult. No kid could eat that many pancakes.”

When the deacon left, I remember feeling marvelously better. I waited another minute and then shot out of the bathroom and up the stairs to the foyer of the church. I slipped out the front door, sat on the church steps and waited for Sabbath school to be over. When conversations began in the lobby, I went back inside and found my parents and brother waiting for me. The four of us climbed the stairs to the balcony to take our regular seats halfway between the rear balcony and the preacher’s platform.

On that day strangers were sitting in our regular seats, and there was just enough room for two adults to sit comfortably in the second row of pews. When our church was filled to capacity, deacons allowed the overflow crowd to sit in the elevated choir loft behind the speaker's platform. My brother and I had always wanted to sit there because the seats were high up, and we were convinced that the view of the entire congregation would be spectacular. We asked and surprisingly our parents gave us permission to sit in the choir loft.

It took us a while to get there because we had to go back down the stairs, through the lobby, down the stairs to the basement—we leaped across a large slimy wet spot on the carpet—to stairs at the other end of the church. There was a swinging door that led to the top section of the choir loft. My brother and I decided to sit in an empty pew at the middle section of the top row.

The view was spectacular, and we particularly enjoyed looking at the bald spots on heads of the preacher and the elders on the platform. When they knelt for prayer, the preacher casually brushed some lint off his shoulder, and an elder scratched his butt! However, even the view and the bald heads were not enough to keep my brother and me entertained for long. So we began to entertain ourselves by telling each other jokes and sliding along the pew. As I recall we made airplanes out of tithe envelopes and could barely restrain ourselves from flying them.

Needless to say our parents were not happy with our behavior. That meant what they called a “settlement” when we arrived home. In those days settlements were painful, but the worst part was not the pain. It was the nap. After our milk and peanut butter sandwiches, we were confined to our beds for two hours.

It was a tradition in our family to open presents on Christmas Eve, and even though we knew there were probably no toys under the tree, we hoped we might have overlooked something. Before we could open our presents, we had to put on our pajamas and sing Christmas “favorites.” These were unaccompanied by a piano, and you can be sure my brother and I didn’t let the music drag.

It was as I expected. There were only clothes. I remember trying hard not to say anything about my disappointment, but my little brother began to cry. That was the moment my father picked him up in his arms and took me by the hand and said there might be a present for each of us out in the garage.

The long heavy boxes weren't wrapped, and my brother and I carried them back into the house in a kind of disbelieving trance. Inside my box was a long yellow flatbed truck big enough to kneel on and ride down the steepest roads in our neighborhood, which I did for the next year. (I only had one close call involving a car.) In my brother's box was a red and blue eighteen-wheeler that he could sit on and ride down our driveway and on the sidewalk in front of our house. We were allowed to play with our trucks until it was time to go to bed.
My mother sat on the end of my bed and told us stories about Christmas when she was a little girl on her father's cattle ranch in Arizona. When the last story ended, my brother went right to sleep. Suddenly, I had to pee. On my way to the bathroom, I peeked around the corner into the front room. My parents were sitting together on the couch. I could see their feet, the end of the bookcase to the left of the fireplace, and the Christmas tree. In the light from the tree, I saw the back of a large red religious book entitled **Armageddon**. When I had looked up the meaning of the word and looked at some of the pictures inside, I had recurring nightmares. Just glancing at the book was scary. But the silver tree with its lights and ornaments somehow distracted me. After I crawled into bed, my last conscious thought was that as long as there was Christmas, I was, in some magical way, safe.

_____________________
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Undeniable Plausibility

By Stephen Foster, December 11, 2013

Here is a novella written for the purpose of illustrating/reiterating a frequently previously-made point.

In the year 2029, fifty-two year old President Orlando Alvarez—the first Hispanic elected President of the United States—and a liberal in the mold of former President Barack Obama, is in the second term of his presidency. Alvarez is being threatened with impeachment by the conservative Congress for taking controversial executive actions in the implementation of some of his blatantly redistributive economic policies which could never have even gotten a hearing, much less a vote, in the conservative United States House of Representatives.

President Alvarez is suffering through typical second term blues, and his job approval numbers have taken a nosedive in recent months.

The liberally controlled U.S. Senate is poised to change hands in next year’s (2030) off-year elections, as several liberal senators are up for reelection in states that have trended reliably conservative in recent presidential elections. President Alvarez’s policies are particularly unpopular in most of these same conservative states.

Interestingly enough, the President’s policies and his economic outlook are viewed with favor by the reigning pope who is in the mold of one of his recent predecessors, the late Pope Francis I, who 16 years earlier, had expressed deep concern about the plight of the poor among us.

With President Alvarez looking into an increasingly likely political abyss for his administration, its legislative agenda, and his political party in 2030, he decides to leverage the economic and social ideological solidarity he shares with the charismatic new pope, and actively seeks opportunities to publicly align his administration and its agenda to those policies which the new pope seems to think are worthwhile.

Out of apparent desperation to tread political water, he starts quoting the pope in political rallies to remind the public that he and the pope see things similarly.

To be, or not to be, continued? (Can you go to the back of any book and find out an ending?)

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Hitting the Number

By Preston Foster, December 8, 2013

My dad didn’t gamble. He did, however, play the numbers.

I asked my dad how he decided (50 years ago) to leave his “safe” and well-paying job as a ship fitter at the Brooklyn Navy Yard to become the caretaker at Victory Lake Camp (an Adventist haven) in Hyde Park, New York.

Dad knew the job in Hyde Park paid much less than what he was making at the time. Dad and Mom had (at the time) two growing, athletic boys who could eat through a week’s worth of groceries in 3 days, so money was an issue.

Moving to the country was really my mom’s idea. She attended Victory Lake’s Senior Camp (for those aged 21 and higher) and fell in love with the place. She saw the opportunity to raise her sons on 106 acres of beautiful rolling hills—a few miles from both the Franklin Roosevelt and Vanderbilt estates—as ideal. Although we lived in a nice “Huxtable” suburb in Long Island, Victory Lake would be, in her mind, a significant upgrade that provided what the suburbs could not.

Still, Dad was a practical and cautious man. He could not leave a good-paying government job on a whim. So they prayed. In prayer, Mom and Dad specified a minimum acceptable salary that would be the sign of the Lord’s will. If God wanted them to do this—to move to the country, eliminating Mom’s salary as a secretary and drastically reducing Dad’s—then they needed a sign from Him.

The next day, Dad drove into Manhattan to the Northeastern Conference office on 150th Street in Harlem, where he met with R.T. Hudson, the conference president. Elder Hudson gave Dad his best pitch. Elder Hudson praised Dad for his work with young people in Mt. Vernon and Westbury, helping to found vibrant churches in both places. He talked about the benefits of raising kids in Hyde Park, the great schools, and the distance away from the negative influences of both the city and the “burbs.”

Then Elder Hudson, almost apologetically, began to discuss salary. He softened the blow by emphasizing the benefits of the job: free housing, seasonal work, and the opportunity to pastor a small mission in Kingston, then a church in Poughkeepsie. When Elder Hudson told my dad the maximum salary the conference could offer, Daddy began to weep, uncontrollably. Elder Hudson, fearing he had lost the “sale,” re-emphasized the benefits of the job and the limits of the pay, saying that it was a much as he could offer.

Elder Hudson did not realize that he had “hit the number” requested as a sign in prayer exactly. It was the power of God’s specific answer to his prayer that unhinged my father. The fact that God would be so intimately involved in his life and the life of his family moved him to tears. Besides accepting Christ and, later, marrying my mother, moving to Victory Lake was the best decision Dad ever made. While there he also served as chaplain of the camp, baptizing and influencing thousands of campers—some of whom went on to be ministers, conference presidents, college administrators, Grammy-award winning gospel artists, and, most importantly, kind, loving Christians.

Faith is amorphous, but it can yield tangible, objective results. Using statistics, it is easy to discount the significance of Elder Hudson’s “hitting the number.” You can account for the range of probable correct answers, rounding factors, a knowledge of likely salary ranges, etc., to minimize the miracle nature of this mini-lottery. However, if you saw the blessings that flowed to many people as a result of that single decision, it would strengthen your belief in Divine Intervention. It was faith that God rewarded in directing, by the numbers, my father to Victory Lake. The evidence of things not seen was made tangible to a faithful layman pastor and his family.

I do admit that, some days, I’ve wished that Dad had applied that faith to the real lotto.

Pray, church.

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Farewell to the River

http://www.atoday.org/article/2194/poetry-the-arts/devotional-thoughts/farewell-to-the-river

By the time you are reading this I will be on my way home to Kentucky, or there already. Today is Sabbath, December 7, and I have spent quite a bit of time sitting by the river and contemplating its flow. Fortunately, the weather has broken briefly, and it’s warm enough to sit, bundled. It will be cold again over the next couple of days, and I may be fighting snow as I begin my long drive on Monday.

But today is for resting, my final full day of resting by the river. Today is for saying Good-bye and Thank You! The river, like my life, flows on, over obstacles, around barriers, sometimes high and happy sometimes low and slow, sometimes overflowing all over the place.

Last sunset, good-bye to the cabin! DLK

Things I have learned from the river:

Keep trying for the ocean. It’s there. Somewhere.

Keep singing.

Spend some time in quiet shallows.

Spend some time in exciting (if not dangerous) rapids.

Try to get along with the beavers.

When things get thin, wait for more rain.

Expect beauty in all seasons.

Give of yourself to all who pass, from mice to moose and from tiny flowers to giant trees.
Smooth the sharp points off rocks you run up against. No stone is really stronger than you are.

Try to stay in between your banks. When this doesn’t work, get back there as quickly as you can.

Keep trying for the ocean. It is there—honest!

I am unspeakably grateful for the blessings I have received here, and in turn I leave my blessing—on the river, the land, and those who come here. But I’m not leaving my peace. I’m taking that home with me.

May God grant you pieces of peace today.
The Ethos of Right Wing Adventism: A Compendium

Ervin Taylor

Until the early 1960s, there was no recognition within official Adventism that there had developed, at least within the North American Adventist Church, a conservative right wing and a liberal left wing. The right wing can be characterized as being composed of fundamentalist, historic, and traditional Adventists while the left wing reflects the views of cultural and progressive Adventists. (It would be interesting to attempt to locate the first mention in print of the contrasting words “conservative” and “liberal” Adventism or Adventists contained in the Adventist Review during the decade of the 1960s being applied to individuals or groups within Adventism.)

Since that time, there have been many suggestions as to how one might accurately characterize what constitutes the contemporary Adventist left and right wings. Of course, the reality is much more complex in that there obviously are not just two divisions with clear lines of demarcation between them but a wide spectrum of subsets and subgroups with an overlapping membership. For example, there is Adventist liberalism and conservatism defined in terms of lifestyle as opposed to Adventist liberalism and conservatism defined in terms of contrasting theological perspectives on, for example, the authority of Ellen White and creationism/evolution debate within Adventism.

Despite all of the nuances that one needs to keep in mind when considering the current divisions within contemporary First World Adventism, there are some indices that might be useful when comparing and contrasting the differences and similarities among current Adventist subsets.

For example, I recently received a catalogue listing “downloads, CDs, DVD, mps Discs, Books and eBooks” of Adventist evangelists, theologians, and Church administrators published by “American Christian Ministries.” This organization was formerly known as the “American Cassette Ministries.” (One might wonder why this organization does not use a name such as “American Adventist Ministries” since it appears that all of the individuals whose materials are listed in their catalogues are Adventists and they proclaim that since 1975 they have been committed to “Maintaining the Integrity of the Three Angels’ Messages.”) The return address of the catalogue lists Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and their web site address is www.AmericanChristianMinistries.org.

Reviewing the names of the individuals whose materials and topics are listed, it quickly became apparent that this catalogue can reasonably be viewed as a compendium of the works of a veritable Who’s Who of right-wing Adventism, many of whom were founding members and leaders of the Adventist Theological Society.

Listed alphabetically are some of the names of those whose books, tapes, and CDs are listed for sale in this catalogue: David Asscherick, Doug Batchelor, Joe Crews, Gerhard Damsteegt, Jo Ann Davidson, Richard Davidson, Jay Gallimore, Cliford Goldstein, Leslie Harding, Gerhard Hasel, Michael Hasel, Raymond C. Holmes, Robert H. Pierson, Edward G. Reid, Lewis Walton, and Ted NC Wilson. I recalled that in a previous catalogue assembled by this same organization, books authored by and tapes containing sermons by Samuel Koranteng-Pipim had been listed. There is no listing or mention of him in this compendium.


Defining “conservative” and “liberal” within contemporary First World Adventism is very difficult. However, I suggest that the ethos projected by the materials in this catalogue provides vivid illustrations of the nature of an important segment of the Adventist right wing whose ideology is currently being actively advanced by those in positions of power and authority inside the corporate Adventist Church.
**Consider the Snowflake**

http://www.atoday.org/article/2195/poetry-the-arts/consider-the-snowflake

by NAD Ministerial Leadership
Debbonnaire Kovacs
all photos Dr. Kenneth Libbrecht, http://www.snowcrystals.com

The short essay offered below was written by the North American Division Ministerial Leadership team, and if you receive the Best Practices newsletters, you’ll have seen it before. AT has obtained the permission of Ministerial Director Ivan Williams to reprint it here for the readers of Adventist Today Web Edition.

After capturing 5,000 snowflakes and finding no two identical, Wilson Bentley wanted the world to know just how unique snowflakes were. He wrote over 60 articles and books and was eventually dubbed the snowflake man.

When he died in 1931, Bentley was the world's snowflake expert. What he discovered was the intricate details of a Creator who cared. What does a snowflake say about God and His intimacy for us?

We are also told there are no fingerprints alike. Could this be our personal address or uniqueness to heaven? I have a friend who works for the Hubble Space Telescope who shared with me, scientists are now admitting the great possibility that space is endless. This simply means space has no boundaries and no end point. Wow! How big is God, and why is He so concerned with us on planet earth? Why is He so concerned about us
The Bible says in **Galatians 4:4, 5** when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to son/daughtership. We are special because God showed us how much He loved us by sending His only Son to planet earth. During this season where we hear Christian Christmas music played in public places, may each of you remember how special you are to God.

Blessings,
The NAD Ministerial Leadership Team

We also have the permission of a different “snowflake man,” Kenneth G. Libbrecht, Professor of Physics and Physics Executive Officer, Caltech, to illustrate our essay with some of his amazing snowflake photos, captured with special snowflake photography equipment. You can see lots more at www.snowcrystals.com.

One surprising thing that Dr. Libbrecht points out is that the vast majority of snowflakes are not, in fact, symmetrical. People love the images of the perfect ones, but the fact is, we love the (impossible) ideal of being perfect people, too. Dr. Libbrecht says, “The most common snow crystals by far are the irregular crystals. These are small, usually clumped together, and show little of the symmetry seen in stellar or columnar crystals.”

http://www.its.caltech.edu/~atomic/snowcrystals/class/class.htm
I got to wondering, is that what churches are? Irregular flakes, clumped together for security?

So here are some of God’s lovely snowflakes, no two alike, some quite strange ones even among the regular crystals, and some not so perfect, but ALL BEAUTIFUL EXPRESSIONS OF GOD’S LOVE!
Teaching Braille through the Fundamental Beliefs

http://www.atoday.org/article/2192/features/articles/teaching-braille-through-the-fundamental-beliefs

By Dexter Thomas
submitted December 10, 2013

Those with physical challenges such as blindness and deafness are often unreached by the church despite the fact that Seventh-day Adventists have a history of has championing the cause of "the least of these." In November 2011 the denomination’s Pacific Union Conference gave a grant to the Freemont (California) Church for an educational ministry teaching Braille using the 28 Fundamental Beliefs.

This ministry is important because many blind Americans do not read Braille due to the fact that they lost their sight as adults. As program director, I took the children’s version of the Fundamental Beliefs and created an abridged Braille version with Braille exercises as part of each chapter. With these materials blind individuals could improve their Braille literacy and at the same time learn Bible doctrines. I used the children’s version of the document because of its brevity and simplicity.

We advertised free Braille classes as a fun learning experience with food and fellowship. This is a key concept because the visually challenged tend to be highly isolated due to the mobility issues they face. Schools for the blind, the National Federation for the Blind, blind camp participants, and Lighthouse for the Blind were used as avenues for advertising and recruiting persons to attend our “Braille Hangout Club.” The food and fellowship not only attracted the visually challenged but also their caregivers and a number of Freemont Church members who helped create a warm, non-threatening environment for the class.

I was asked, why learn Braille when so many services offer audio books and other listening materials? The fact is that listening to recordings is not reading. It does not teach sentence construction or spelling, etc. Reading Braille is essential to a blind individual’s literacy.

I have taught Braille classes at the Camp for the Blind and met many blind individuals who have been without sight for as long as 20 years and never learned to read Braille. “I never knew Braille was this easy, in fact it is easier than learning what I was previously taught,” said Mary during her first Braille lessons. Even sighted individuals have been excited to learn a new language that was simple and practical.

As the class progressed, I watched as hearts were turned, minds were changed and literacy among the blind increased. This unreached group related to the Adventist Church as people who cared for their well-being and education. Visually impaired individuals are used to persons rushing by them and used to feeling lonely in a sighted world. When we reach out to them we are able to bring confidence and assurance to them that there are still people in the world who care.

The Braille Fundamentals project placed our church in a compassionate ministry to an often-
ignored community. When Christ said “the least of these,” He was talking about the blind, deaf, disabled and poor. My prayer is that such a ministry will spread to other places as churches partner with the disabled and their families to promote their wholeness and to give them a foretaste of the unconditional love and acceptance we will all experience in the Earth made new.

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Historic Church Moves Overnight

http://www.atoday.org/article/2193/features/articles/historic-church-moves-overnight

by Debonnaire Kovacs
submitted December 10, 2013

There is more than one way to move a church! In Shawano, Wisconsin, it was done by truck. Around 1900, in Belle Plain, Wisconsin, a small church was built—one of your basic, simple little white churches with a steeple front and center. This church served its people well for 38 years, and then experienced its first move, to River Street in Shawano, to become the home of a Seventh-day Adventist congregation. Allen Heling, an elder in the church, says that lots of feelings and memories, good times and bad, were shared in that little church.

Then the time came to move again, in a different way. The congregation outgrew its old structure and moved to a new location on Cherry Avenue. This was a great thing and no doubt the hand of God at work, but…what would they do with the old church? No one wanted to see it torn down.

A community member came to the rescue, purchasing the church and donating it to the Shawano Historical Society. Time for the little church to move again. It was slowly and carefully loaded onto a trailer and, escorted by police and interested citizens, made its slow way a little over a mile to the Shawano Heritage Park.

A member of the historical society, Karen Grover, said, “We just had worked so hard for this and it's really happening and it's been a wonderful experience.” The church will be renovated to its original appearance and used for weddings, memorials, and other services.

Heling is just glad it will still be a church. “It's not torn down, it's not used for home, it's not used for business, it will remain a house of prayer.”

You can watch the church move (at night so as to avoid heavy traffic) at http://www.ksdk.com/news/article/390651/28/113-year-old-churchmoved-overnight, as well as reading an article about the move, by Kristyn Allen. The website at the congregation’s new home is shawano22.adventistchurchconnect.org