### NEWS

**Major Reference Work on Ellen White to be Published in 2014:**
A massive, encyclopedic book on the life, views, and associations of Ellen G. White is being published next year. Advance orders are being accepted to save early birds nearly one-half off the publisher's price.

**Seventh-day Adventist Church Backs American Muslim in Religious Liberty Litigation:**
In an alliance not common between Christians and Muslims in North America, the Adventist Church is helping a Muslim job-seeker defend her right to dress with a traditional Muslim head scarf as an employee of an upscale department store.

**Deacon from Nampa (Idaho) Adventist Church Arrested and Charged with Sex Crime:**
Charges of committing sex crimes have been filed against a deacon in an Idaho SDA Church, near Boise.

### OPINION

**Wussy Culture among Christian Men and Considerations for Emerging Men's Ministries:**
Bewailing the feminization of American males has become a cottage industry for many histrionically inclined American men, and here essayist Danny Bell suggests yet a new ramification of the "neutering" of our Church.

**My Visions:**
Though a man of science by profession and a physician by calling, opinion writer Jack Hoehn says he knows God has intervened verbally in his life, in ways not dissimilar to the way He spoke to Joseph and Mary of old. What should we make of this mixture of miracles and medicine?
POETRY AND THE ARTS -

**Unto Us a Child Is Born:** ...and a little child shall lead them (Isaiah 11:6)....

**He Shines In All That's Fair:** Debbonaire Kovacs shares choice photographs from her late-autumn retreat to the wilds of Canada for a writer's working vacation....

FEATURES -

**Adventist Musicians Can Shine All Weekend:** SDA musicians who share their talents at Sunday churches can attend home church services without missing a beat. Debbonaire Kovacs examines the lives of several musicians who do just that—and are blessed in many ways....

**Jonathan Duffy -- ADRA President, Part 1**
If you’re really up against the wire in your Christmas shopping, read this *Viewpoints* interview of ADRA president Jonathan Duffy, and learn of a way to make your family and friends happy while making the world a better place!

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**HOLIDAY GREETINGS from *Adventist Today Update***

This is *Adventist Today Update*'s Holiday issue, our final regular newsletter of the year. We thank all of you who have helped make the *Adventist Today* website a going and growing experience. Above all, we wish you holiday blessings together. *AT Update* will be back in two weeks. Our office will be open Mondays and Tuesdays this week (Christmas week) and the following week (New Year's week). Phone us at 503 826-8600 on those days if you need personal help with your last-minute orders and contributions.... May you be richly blessed in every way, as so many of you have blessed us this year!

**The AT Staff and News Team**

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*a weekly newsletter from atoay.org*
Major Reference Work on Ellen White to be Published Early in 2014

By Adventist Today News Team, December 18, 2013

A 1,500-page peer-reviewed reference work that has been 15 years in preparation will be released in 2014. It is entitled *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* and will include hundreds of articles and key research tools by more than 180 writers, many of them with doctoral degrees in history, religious studies and other relevant academic fields.

The heavily researched and footnoted articles will cover most of the people White corresponded with, wrote about or interacted with as well as a wide range of topics touched on in her very large number of books, articles and unpublished manuscripts. Although not well known outside of Adventist circles, White not only helped to launch a religious movement that now has 20 to 30 million adherents and is recognized as the twelfth largest religious body in the world, but also generated one of the largest literary productions of any author. She wrote 26 books, 200 pamphlets, about five thousand periodical articles, more than six thousand letters and other materials; a total of about 100,000 pages over 70 years.

Included in the new reference work will be lists of White's books (including posthumous compilations), letters and other manuscripts. Appendix B will provide a chart showing the relationships among her books. Another article will provide a bibliographic essay on publications about White, and yet another will describe the existing archival resources and how to access them. These features alone make this an unprecedented tool for finding and understanding materials attributed to White.

The topical articles will summarize White's stand on topics as diverse as the doctrine of justification, the humanity of Christ, perfection, legalism, masturbation, dress reform, football, use of humor, consumption of dairy products, and use of the biblical Apocrypha. The biographical materials will include a detailed chronology of her life as well as a concise biography. While her official biography is six volumes, the summary of her life in early pages of this new reference work will devote about a dozen pages each to five segments: childhood and teen years (1827-1844), organizing a new denomination (1844-1863), shaping the church and its mission (1863-1881), key controversies and travels (1881-1900), and her senior years (1900-1915).

The project which led to this large reference work was launched by noted Adventist historian and writer George Knight, who is listed as "consulting editor" on the title page. The primary producers are Dr. Denis Fortin and Dr. Jerry Moon, listed as the editors on the title page. Both are trained historians who have published serious works. Moon is currently chair of the church history department in the seminary at Andrews University and Fortin served as dean of the seminary from 2006 until earlier this year when he returned to full-time teaching.

None of these three primary editors, nor assistant editor Michael Campbell, have ever been employed by the White Estate, which represents a new level of independence for any book of this type from an Adventist publisher. "We hope ... this work will stimulate a new wave of interest in and research about" White, the editors wrote in the preface.

The publisher is already taking pre-publication orders at a significant discount; about $40 if you order now as compared to $70 when it comes off the press. The Review & Herald Publishing Association, although currently struggling with severe problems with its business model as are almost all book publishers (secular and religious), is historically the first of the many publishing companies owned by the Adventist denomination. It was founded by Ellen White's husband with her encouragement and continues to publish many of her books.
Additional information is available and orders can be placed at this Web page:
http://www.adventistbookcenter.com/the-ellen-g-white-encyclopedia.html

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Seventh-day Adventist Church Backs American Muslim in Religious Liberty Litigation

ANN, December 17, 2013

Last week lawyers working on behalf of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination filed a friend of the court brief in support of an American Muslim woman who charges she was denied a job because she wears a head-covering due to her faith. It is the policy of the Adventist Church to defend the religious rights of people of other religions as well as those of its own members.

In 2008, Samantha Elauf wore a hijab when she applied for a retail job at an Abercrombie & Fitch store in Tulsa, Oklahoma. After a manager told her that the headwear was prohibited by store policy, she was deemed ineligible for any job despite the fact that there was no discussion of religious accommodation. The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which filed a lawsuit on Elauf’s behalf, said the move defies Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. That title obligates employers to take steps to “reasonably accommodate” a prospective employee’s “religious observance or practice.”

In 2011 a Federal judge ruled on behalf of the EEOC. This was appealed by the company and recently the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals reversed that decision, claiming Elauf never told Abercrombie she needed a religious accommodation, even though she was wearing a hijab in the interview. The appeals decision places undue responsibility on the applicant to determine whether her religious beliefs or practices conflict with company policy, assert the Adventist lawyers. “Placing the burden to inquire [about potential conflicts] upon the employer is not only the existing law, but makes sense because the employer is in the best position to know the work rules and anticipate a conflict,” their legal brief states.

Dwayne Leslie, lobbyist for the denomination's General Conference, said the appeals court ruling sets a troubling precedent. “Under the 10th Circuit’s new standard, employers would be able to insulate themselves from the duty to accommodate via willful ignorance [of the religious needs of employees],” Leslie wrote in a December 12 Huffington Post opinion article.

Religious clothing and the observance of Sabbath and other holy days are the most common areas of conflict in the workplace, the Adventist lawyers told ANN. Hijabs, turbans, yarmulkes and other head coverings frequently conflict with a company’s policies about how employees should look, while Sabbath observance can clash with scheduling.

This is especially a concern as the number of online job applications increase, said Todd McFarland, an associate general counsel for the denomination. Such applications typically require a job seeker to indicate scheduling limitations, but don’t offer an opportunity to explain why. When applicants submit limitations, they are automatically shut out of the job. “This [ruling] could have a significant impact not just on Muslims in similar ‘groom and garb’ cases, but on all people of faith,” McFarland said. “Any attack on religious rights in the workplace on any faith group is also an attack on the Adventist Church, its members and their ability to keep both their jobs and their faith.”

The legal brief was filed jointly by the Adventist denomination, the National Association of Evangelicals, the Christian Legal Society, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, the American Jewish Committee and the Sikh Coalition. The joint brief supports the EEOC and Elauf’s petition for a rehearing by the entire 10th circuit appeals court instead of the small panel that overturned the original decision. “There is tremendous concern well beyond the Muslim community about the weakening of Title
VII that will take place if this ruling is to stand," Leslie said.

Abercrombie & Fitch changed its policy on headwear three years ago. The Ohio-based company recently settled similar lawsuits in California, the Associated Press reported in October. An Abercrombie spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment by ANN.

This story was based largely on a report from Adventist News Network (ANN), the official news service of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

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Deacon from Nampa (Idaho) Adventist Church Arrested and Charged with Sex Crime

By AT News Team, December 19, 2013

A deacon from a Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nampa, Idaho, was arrested last week and booked into the Canyon County Jail, according to the Associated Press and newspapers and television news programs in the Boise area. He is charged with "lewd conduct with a minor under 16 years of age" and has evidently admitted to wrong behavior, according to police reports filed with the court. His name is Alexander G. Garcia according to news reports and court documents.

It is unclear which local church in Nampa was the site of the alleged events. There are two local churches in the community affiliated with the denomination's Idaho Conference; an English-language congregation with 394 members and a Spanish-language congregation with 263 members. Nampa is a suburb of Boise and the location of Pacific Press, a major institution of the denomination's General Conference.

According to reports of police detectives filed by the prosecutor and made public by the news media in Boise, on Sabbath, July 20, lured a 12-year-old girl into the storage room at the church during an afternoon potluck. He told her that he had something "cool" to show her. The girl later told police that in the room Garcia touched her inappropriately. She left the storage room and told her grandmother what had happened.

Police talked to the family and the child in July. Although it is unclear the precise date of the police interviews, a local blogger has said that "prosecutors said church officials had been very cooperative throughout the investigation."

Police detectives interviewed Garcia on August 20. He admitted being in the room with the child and said he did hug and kiss her, but did not consider that inappropriate behavior because that was something he did all the time. Later he admitted to misbehavior. "Garcia said that in 30 years he had never taken anyone into the room and he knew nothing good would happen when he took [the girl] into the room," the detective's report stated. According to the Idaho Statesman, Garcia "went on to claim that Satan was also in the storage room and may have taken control of his body."

A preliminary court hearing has been scheduled for December 24. The Humanist Examiner reported the incident as sexual abuse of a child and local newspapers have reported that if convicted, Garcia could face life in prison.

A retired church administrator told Adventist Today "this kind of thing happens too often. That is why it is so important for pastors and church boards to insist on the screening of volunteers working in church offices." The North American Division Working Policy requires that church members who work with children in local church ministries and other programs be screened through an appropriate background checking organization and that church officers promptly report any incident that involves inappropriate behavior.

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Wussy Culture among Christian Men and Considerations for Emerging Men's Ministries

By Danny Bell, December 16, 2013

I need to make a confession: I think most Christian men are wusses. I suppose I need to explain myself.

It starts from my own history with church culture and experiences of working with all kinds of men as a professional. It also includes an admission that I used to be a Christian “wuss” too. Not anymore.

From the day of my conversion in 1985 church life was as much my saviour as Jesus was. I embraced my new religion with white knuckles and never wanted to return to the old life. I was so wrapped up in my own personal experiences that I couldn’t see that it wasn’t all about me. I became devoted to getting a reputation as a “nice young man”—a wuss. Feminine church culture fostered my inner need to be liked at all costs.

As I grew in the church and entered pastoral ministry, I was getting a top-down view on things. I saw some things that shocked me to my core. I saw a cowardly side to many church men and how they compromised doing the right thing for a place in the popularity stakes. Ashamed and disillusioned, I remember reviewing my own stand and desperately sought God for answers but they didn’t come easily. I then had a break from ministry and went back to the pews where I began. God taught me many things, and it was there that I began to transition from being a churchy type to discovering my own biblical masculinity.

Something I discovered in my journey is the truth that many men don’t come to church to be transformed but to participate in comforting rituals that have changed little since their childhood.[1] This is the trap of wussiness. Sounds harsh but the hand extended from the male sector of church is usually limp-wristed and feels like a dead fish—tell me you don’t know what I am talking about.

Jesus had a lot of patience with wussiness that he had to deal with on a daily basis—the silence of the men in the temple when he asked if he should heal the man’s hand on the Sabbath; the time when he got frustrated at the lack of faith in those around him, “Faithless and perverse generation! How much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you?” (Matt 17). A characteristic of the wussy church man is that he has limited faith and vision and looks at why something can’t be done instead of the possibilities. Been there?

So how can the new emerging Men’s Ministries counteract wussy church culture and begin turning it around? There are some things that a men’s ministry can do in order to be effective and that is by modelling the masculine values of Jesus. A men’s ministry needs to stop fussing over the men inside the pen and concentrate on the men we are losing, which are typically not wussy kinds.

In another article I wrote about three basic types of men we encounter in church: The Core Church Male (CCM), The Fringee and The Non-Christian Male (NCM).[2] Most ministries seem to concentrate on the CCM with programs that appeal to them and not other types of men. Marriage enrichment seminars, emotional spiritual exercises, prayer mushrooms, how to stop being a bad husband and father. These meetings that attract wussy types who come with cap in hand, head bowed eager for another lesson of brow beating and masochistic self-flagellation. “All men are bastards,” as one church pastor confided in me.

NCM’s and Fringee’s don’t warm to these meetings because they have heard it all before in society. We need to look through their eyes and create environments that attract them to our community rather than repulse them. The western church has lost touch with men and boys and become internalised. A men’s ministry should seek to push boundaries and church stumbling blocks back to allow these rarer fish to enter the pond.

A men’s ministry needs to come down on the side of men, advocating for them, defending them and batting for them. The problem is that most ministries come down on the side of feminism or popular cultural ideals—appealing to softer, narcissistic types rather than average men. How is the church offering anything different to what society already offers? Men can go to any local self help “come and see how...
much of a loser you are” session throughout the health system in our countries. Nearly all of these agencies offer men help to fit into the woman’s world and very rarely seek to offer the reverse.

Teaching men how to be better at being a husband and father is not unique nor is it God’s ultimate goal for men according to my reading of the Gospel. It’s important but not ultimate. Placing family as the ultimate focus of life (even above God) has been shown to be a feminine concern.[3] A Man’s ultimate charge is not to be the world’s best dad or husband but to seek God’s will, which may go against family. An effective men’s ministry needs to challenge this false notion in church culture and advocate that men aim higher than domestic bliss. Most Christian males unfortunately go to their graves known as “nice men” but never really do anything significant for God or country. Being remembered as a “nice man” may have its benefits, but is it realising our full potential under God? Are we choosing a safe wussy path so that we can sneak over the finish line with a gold star on our suit, getting us entry into the Lord’s Supper without sacrifice?

Men’s ministry needs to be decidedly macho. This is where the wuss in us gets all twisted and bent out of shape. Most will misunderstand this word to mean egocentric chest beating, but this is not its true meaning. The original word is from Spanish history and was always used in a positive sense to describe those undeniable aspects of manliness and celebrated male characteristics. Modern uses have placed negative connotations on the word adding chauvinism and other attributes affecting our understanding of masculinity as something dirty or to be shunned. Feminist ideals have crept in and made being male almost a crime.

The church unwittingly adopts these ideals and we wonder why a wussy figure emerges from our classes—a domestic hero with an appreciative audience. The Alpha male on the other hand just left or at best remains on the fringes sensing something deep down grating against his God-given masculinity. Church culture is like Kryptonite to him.

To sum up, the basis of all ministry is found in the life of Christ and how he handled himself. Think about the above points in light of these:

1. Jesus did not fuss over the 99 in the pen but constantly drew attention to the lost sheep. His constant battle was with his community of faith and how it kept non-conformists out by attitudes and barriers that caused masculine men to walk away or be repulsed. An effective men’s ministry will work like Christ in pushing for change from an internal focus to looking towards the outer rings for those on the fringes.

2. Jesus defended his disciples from religionists. He came down on the side of men and not the establishment. While getting the disciples to look at motives for their actions, he did not dwell there but set their sights on much grander themes like dying for a cause rather than becoming domestic heroes. An effective men’s ministry needs to offer something different than what the world offers and challenge the church at every turn to create an environment where men feel welcomed and honoured, not feed the narcissistic gene in all of us.

3. Jesus demonstrated what kind of courage is needed for the last days. His enemies weren’t non-Christians but churchly types who were wrapped up in established ways of doing things, placing the bar so high that only the best etiquette athletes could scale it. Most of Christ’s courage and energy was not focused on teaching his disciples about duty to their families; instead, it was mixed up in battles with the establishment and creating space for the disenfranchised. If a men’s ministry is worth its salt, then characteristically it will be seen in the same position as Christ found himself, showing courage and determination in the face of opposition from religious leaders.

For me this is the ultimate test. As worthy pursuits as these are, there is no danger in being a good dad or father, in attending marriage enrichment seminars, in beating myself up in the company of other men—these won’t get me thrown in jail. Paul did not become imprisoned because he didn’t treat his wife well. He was incarcerated because he dared speak against his religious culture. The machismo, the masculinity, the toughness, the courage that wussy church men are lacking is not helping with the dishes after church potluck but may mean he will have to stand for something while his church or family deride him for doing so. He may have to speak up at the risk of losing his 20-year position. He may have to wear a badge of dishonour for blowing the whistle on something that is harming people. This is where the danger and true test of a man is; this is the ultimate place for our God-given journey as men, not tucking our children in at night, as worthy as that is.

A good men’s ministry will see it prepared to confront and go into battle for men as Christ did, not dithering around in please-and-thank-you-watch-your-language classes. If we are an effective ministry, then we will have trouble, and that trouble will come from the same place it came from for Christ. Any ministry for men that does not find itself challenging or confronting resistant cultures that don’t make space for men is a ministry that will eventually be absorbed and reach its ultimate destiny – wussiness!

[3] Women’s sense of identity very closely follows their priorities, with 62% of women saying their most important role in life is as a mother or parent. Only 13% of Christian women believe their most important role in life is to be a follower of Christ. (Christian Women Today, “Part 2 of 4: A Look at Women's Lifestyles, Priorities and Time Commitments,” Barna Group, Aug. 17, 2012).
Deeper Understanding of the Bible

My Visions

By Jack Hoehn, December 18, 2013

My first vision came at age 13. My regular sleep was interrupted with a meaningful dream of the second coming of Christ and the sensation of flying upward through the air and looking about and recognizing friend’s faces. The message and emotion not forgotten in the last 54 years was, “We’ve made it!”

It was of course a juvenile dream, and its message was neither profound nor worth repeating, so until now you have been spared Testimonies of Jack. But the message was very much worth remembering, and the sweet sensation of spiritual victory and Heaven at last, I can still taste even today. That dream helped me steer the troubled waters of youth with faith and hope.

Pray, Pray

I had a second supernatural manifestation in 1978 on a Friday evening after sunset at Mwami Adventist Hospital, near Chipata, Zambia. I was alone in a little brick mission house as my wife Deanne and our 4 year old son Jonathan were driving back from Lilongwe, Malawi with Mrs. Ruby Taylor, our Director of Nursing. They were returning from home leave by flying into the Lilongwe airport that afternoon.

The house was quite empty and quiet, and I was seated when suddenly I was commanded with a single urgent, audible but unseen-by-whom, task: “PRAY, PRAY!”

I was not told why or what to pray for, but I have never had a more urgent command, so I dropped to my knees and did what I was told. I prayed naturally for Deanne and Jonathan. I expressed my puzzlement but made my request known. I asked for understanding and prayed for everyone else I could think of at the moment.

I know now why Abraham offered Isaac. Heaven’s commands are clear and authoritative. I had no idea at that time why or what for, but I had no question as to my duty: there was no doubt that Jack was to PRAY and was to PRAY now. No doubt at all.

Shortly after that prayer, Deanne, driving in the darkness of an African night in our VW minivan, let Jonathan who said he was tired, crawl into the back of the van behind the last seat where he had a “little nest,” shortly after that, in the darkness, our VW van struck a black cow lying down in the middle of the tarmac road for warmth. Deanne was unhurt. Ruby, in the right passenger seat, had lacerations and abrasions and spent the night in a government hospital in Lilongwe. The VW bus was repairable. Jonathan was untouched.

There was a single-wire party-line phone at Mwami Adventist Hospital that worked 1 day out of 7 or 8, but later a call got through telling us that they were okay but had injuries and were put up by kind near-by farmers. In the morning with the hospital ambulance we got them and brought all back to Mwami Adventist Hospital.

My theology of prayer has not been enlightened by this experience. Why was I to pray? Why was an angel not sent to move the cow? What would have happened if I hadn’t obeyed and prayed? Was it in fact not a question of Providence or protection at all, but rather a message to me that spending 13 years in Africa doing impossible things was Heaven-approved, and unseen powers were on my side? (Read Dr. James Appel’s books and emails if you need details of what an Adventist mission doctor in Africa today is doing in the Great Controversy between Light and Darkness day after day after day.)

My third epiphany was simply a new and sudden understanding of a Bible text (Revelation 13:8) that opened to my mind a theology of creation I am still working out. The editor of Adventist Today has an 11-page introduction to this understanding of Genesis he promises to print someday. I have been blogging on “Old Earth Creationism” and hinting about Creation as A Great Controversy for a couple of years.
The sudden enlightenment of my understanding that started me on this course was as remarkable and to the minute as must have been the understanding of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus who suddenly got it.

Revelation 13:8 became suddenly clear to me that the Lamb was not slain (dead) after the fall of Eve and Adam, but from the foundation of the earth, from Creation Day 1. There was no death before sin, but the sin that brought death was Satan’s sin, not Adam’s sin. I suddenly understood that earth was in conflict with fallen created intelligences (fallen angels) opposing the Creator long before Adam and Eve made their choice. Eden was a set apart guarded paradise in a non-paradise world more like our own than unfallen Heaven. It let me think anew how Light has been fighting Darkness from Creation Day 1. “From the foundation of the earth” was a small key handed to me in a moment of insight that has opened a large door of greater understanding of creation story and the history of life on earth.

This explained to me why the history of creation in geology, botany, paleontology, genetics, and biology shows a Great Controversy on earth from earth’s foundation. Genesis 1–3 and John 1 tell the same story if we are willing to re-read it, and if we can accept that the Days of Creation might be Heaven Days, not human days, until after the creation of mankind. Our week and its Sabbath are clearly patterned on God’s Creation Week, but do not have to be the same length or duration any more than Moses’ earthly tabernacle was not the same size as the great Heavenly Sanctuary it was patterned after.

Listening to a Book

My last spiritual intervention was September of this year. This time there was no vision. This time there was no voice. This time there was no sudden illumination of a Bible text. This time there was simply a deeper but definite “settling into the truth.” This time I didn’t understand a new truth, but instead an old truth just took deeper hold of me.

A slow but firm conviction came over me during the 20 minutes as Deanne read to me out of a book, “A Year of Biblical Womanhood” by Rachel Evans. As Rachel in her cheerful yet engaging book on the Bible and women listed a small litany of the abuse of women happening today from Walla Walla to Kabul to Chad to Tacoma Park, the conviction took hold of me that the present controversy over the place of women in the Remnant Church is not a distraction nor an option, but absolutely vital, central, and necessary Present Truth.

I also realized that as a man I knew in my heart that the places most opposed to letting women regain their equality in Christ and in the kingdoms of this world need this truth the most. It is women and especially men in Africa and Asia and South America and Amazing Facts who need to know beyond a shadow of doubt that in Christ there is no male or female, and that in the Remnant Church women are the undisputed equal of men, as fit for leadership as all redeemed sinners can be made fit for spiritual and moral and economic and teaching leadership. That your next conference president, and the next General Conference president could be a spiritual, gifted woman as well as any other human. That mutual submission of men to women and women to men and children to parents, and all to Christ is the rule of our faith.

I remembered that our Bible is the introduction of truth, not the end of truth. The Bible leads to truth, it should not be used to hold back or restrict the progression of truth. Hasn’t God formed Adventism through a woman, our foremother Ellen White? I realized it is way past time for me to ensure that women are replaced into their position of equality, at least in the church, and in every way by every means possible to be uplifted from the unequal submission, degradation, and oppression that sin has wrought.

Instead of endless Byzantine arguments against ordination and self-serving defenses of “male headship,” Adventists should be known at the forefront in support of every law and every movement against the abuse of girls and women, including wife-beating and female circumcision, against inequality in wages and terms of employment, against pornography and sexual slavery, and against inequality in ministry.

As Deanne read me Rachel’s book, I felt something like a deep click in my soul. I changed from an approver of woman’s rights, to an activist for women’s rights. No conference or union that does not permit gender equality in ministry, including the ordination of women pastors, will receive any of God’s tithes from me. Not because I wish to punish anyone, but because the Spirit has made it clear to me that this is a moral and spiritual battle. I now see that those most opposed to this step in Adventism, most need to have it made clear to them that this is God’s way for the end time church. I am very grateful that Spirit responsive Unions and Conferences have taken a principled stand on women’s ordination. They will have the support of our tithes, until my own Conference and Union move forward on the light God is giving Adventists.

At various times and in sundry manners God has helped me see His truth in the past. I am well educated in Adventism through all the standard methods, but on a few widely separated occasions it has been very direct and personal. I hope I am learning to listen well enough that He can continue to help me progress in the future. I suspect it will not be with childish visions or audible angelic commands, but more
from spiritual insights as I restudy my Bible. I now understand my Adventist Christianity as a road I take to truth. The Bible has become the introduction and open door to truth, not the jail of truth.

My “visions” have been a rare but important factor in my personal life of faith. What are your visions?

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i It was 8:55 Sabbath morning, May 9, 2009.

iii John 1:5, NIV footnote reading, “The Light shines in the Darkness, but the Darkness has not overcome it.”

iv September 19, 2013 on the road to Moscow, ID.

v Ellen White, “…as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved…”

(Manuscript 173, 1902).

vi My local church with its female pastors is clearly in support of gender equality including women’s ordination and will continue to receive our support.

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Unto Us a Child is Born

http://www.atoday.org/article/2211/poetry-the-arts/unto-us-a-child-is-born

...and a little child shall lead them... Isaiah 11:6
Photo credit T N Gardea
He Shines In All That's Fair

http://www.atoday.org/article/2204/poetry-the-arts/he-shines-in-all-that-s-fair

Photo by Debbonnaire Kovacs, 11/2013
submitted Dec 19, 2013
The fall 2013 issue of Columns, the magazine of Southern Adventist University, featured a story by assistant professor Kendra Stanton Lee about Adventist musicians who “share their vocal and instrumental talents on Sundays as regular, paid contributors at several local churches.” [p. 8] The article goes on to tell about Judy Glass, “an award-winning professor in Southern’s School of Music,” who encourages her students to help pay their way through college by working at local churches.

If you read the full story at https://www.southern.edu/marketing/pages/columns.aspx, you will learn more about Professor Glass, as well as students or recent graduates Heather Peel, who plays organ for a local Methodist church, Jonathan Harper, who played piano at another United Methodist Church, and Emily Kurlinski, a singer at a Presbyterian church. The students build relationships which bring rewards back to them, as members of their “other” churches come to their senior recitals, ask them for stories about their student missionary experiences, and just generally show love and support. Sometimes this temporary student work leads to lifelong careers, as Peel’s father, Gerald Peel, is the musical director at one of the churches, planning all concerts, and directing both vocal and handbell choirs.

In Muncie, Indiana, a young Adventist woman named Monica Pavel Kissinger is or was the church choir director at a community Christian church. (AToday has been unable to follow up and obtain current information.) Pavel Kissinger is a native of Bucharest, Romania, daughter of a choir director, and began leading choirs herself at 14. By the time of the story referenced below, (late 2012) she and her older sister, Roxana, had staged concerts all around the US (where her family had moved in 1997) as well as overseas, and she had now obtained the job as music director at the Muncie church. http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/article/Choir-director-finds-home-at-Muncie-church

The concept of Adventists working at churches on Sundays is not a new one. We are uniquely positioned to play roles outside of the church service, such as nursery supervisors and child care volunteers, because, unlike members of those churches and their neighboring congregations, we don’t have to miss church ourselves to perform these important tasks. I myself worked for many years at a First Congregational Church in Ohio as nursery supervisor, and introduced the concept of classes for babies and toddlers, a new idea to that particular congregation.

There are all kinds of reasons this kind of collaboration between members of different churches can be enriching on all sides. It broadens horizons, opens up opportunity for faith-building dialogue, enriches experience, and besides, sharing talent always increases it! Perhaps the most important result is the relationships that are formed. This can be especially healthy for young adults, some of whom may have been raised in environments where “outsiders” are seen as questionable, perhaps even threatening. As Jonathan Harper put it, “It was eye-opening to encounter so many godly people outside the Adventist church.”

Yes. Most of God’s sheep, after all, are out there.
Welcome to Viewpoints: Adventist Perspectives on Peace, Justice and Righteousness. Jonathan Duffy is president of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), the humanitarian arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Prior to accepting this position in late 2012, Duffy was the CEO of ADRA Australia. He served as director of Adventist Health for the South Pacific Division of the Adventist Church from 2001 to 2008, and before this he worked in hospital management.

AToday: ADRA celebrates the Christmas season with its annual gift catalog. Tell me a bit about the catalog. How successful has this approach been over the years?[1]

Duffy: The gift catalog is one of our biggest appeals. I think that is because people can see the breadth of ADRA's work and choose to support the sector they value. They see they're able to make a practical difference, helping in a way that links to their passion. You can look at the protection of women, livelihoods, food security, water and sanitation, disaster relief, and so forth. It also gives manageable target amounts that school groups, Sabbath School groups, church groups or family groups can say, “Let's raise money for this particular aspect.”

AToday: ADRA was on the ground quickly after Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines. What are your main efforts there now and what are the on-going challenges?

Duffy: In our first phase, we responded in the area of North Cebu and Iloilo by bringing families emergency food kits. We provided 3,500 families with emergency food kits. After the disaster the three biggest needs are food, water and shelter.

In the second phase of roll-out, we've concentrated in Roxas and the surrounding communities in Capiz Province. There we distributed emergency food kits to 2,500 families. We brought in four water purification systems, producing 15,000 liters a day of drinkable water, which has provided
clean, potable water to 3,000 people daily. In addition, we also assisted with the transportation of clean water to the surrounding communities and the local hospital because they've had no potable water since the typhoon. We've now distributed 5,000 tarps and shelter kits to 5,000 families.

Now we're beginning to move into the recovery phase. Now that we've been able to assist with the immediate need of food, water and shelter, how do we help them to rebuild and re-establish themselves? So there are a number of project proposals that we have at the moment.

When the typhoon hit there were 13 or 14 million people who were affected by it. About 4 million people were left homeless. The typhoon destroyed around a million houses, and half a million of them were totally destroyed. It left around 4 million people without accommodation. 3 ½ million people found some kind of accommodation with others, and around ½ million people were in about 1,100 refugee shelters that were established.

Now we begin rebuilding. Those ½ a million homes that need to be totally rebuilt and the ½ million homes that need to be repaired are all part of the rebuilding phase.

When the sea water came in, washed up by the storm, that salt destroyed their crops. We're now dealing with that, not just in terms of replanting their crop, but by bringing in a strain of rice that will grow in salty conditions because of the salt that's been dumped in there.

AToday: When people give to a response effort like the one in the Philippines, how can they know their gifts are going to the intended operation? And how much of their gifts go to service delivery?

Duffy: When people give to a specific disaster, those funds are tagged, and they are spent on that disaster.

Ten percent goes to administration. It costs money to do business. If someone tells you they have no overhead, then in truthfulness don't give to them because how are they doing their monitoring? How are they evaluating how the money is being spent? How are they evaluating if the projects are achieving their goals? How are they ensuring that the field reports are accurate?

There is always an overhead cost in doing business. The question is, is the overhead portion reasonable or unreasonable. ADRA takes 10 percent for overhead, but most goes to service delivery. If you like ADRA to exist, if you like us to be professional, if you like us to have your confidence, then the truth is we do need to use a portion to keep the organization running professionally. That said, we're fairly lean and mean.

All our pre-planning as a network before disasters like Typhoon Haiyan strike, we couldn't do that if we didn't have overhead. Now we've got an emergency and people want to donate to the emergency, but it's not as sexy to donate to the pre-planning.

AToday: What is the best way for Adventists in the North America to support ADRA, especially after disasters like Typhoon Haiyan?
Duffy: The natural thing is to see someone hurting and want to help them. We think of the good Samaritan. We want to be there, to make a difference. Money is often seen as a second-class gift, but sometimes money is the solution. In the usual sense, money is too easy. But we need to say to church members, “It's money that makes the biggest different in the emergency because it enables us to buy goods, buy shelters, ship decontamination units for water. But you're not required.” That's a hard story to tell people. It almost seems rude.

Even in the case of donated goods, the reality is that everybody in a disaster is affected including the local merchants, and so when we ship goods in, nobody needs to buy anything for the next 12 months because we've met their needs. So the local shopkeepers go out of business. So by using a voucher system for food or clothing, it encourages people to invest in the local economy, which helps the local community recover more rapidly. There are points when we need gifts-in-kind, and points when you don't, where it is better to work on a cash basis that rebuilds the local economy. Knowing when to make those calls is not simply; it's complex.

In emergencies, it's not about giving energy or time unless someone has volunteered and is part of the plan prior to the emergency or disaster so they can have a defined role. It's hard to tell this to church members. If you're not part of the plan, then it's difficult to just show up and contribute. You don't have a defined role.

At the same time, church members can work to make a difference in the community where they live. Yes, we need your money, but your local community needs you to make a difference, to reach out to touch people in need around you.

AToday: You have said you want to strengthen ADRA’s relationship with the church. Although you are still in your first year as president, what steps have you taken in this direction, and what further plans do you have? How did you promote this connection when you were leading ADRA Australia?

Duffy: I think we've missed out on a dimension of the work. ADRA is the humanitarian arm of the church. Is it adequate that we just bring food to people, or do we bring spiritual growth as well? How does ADRA contribute to the spiritual growth of the church? To me it's about helping church members meet their responsibility as church members.

ADRA is all for prayer. We have prayer warriors, and we love people to pray for our ministry. But as an individual, you shouldn't use prayer as a way to insulate you from being the one to meet someone's needs.

Money can be insulation. “I'm a busy person, so I'll give some money.” But if I'm using money as an insulator to prevent me from getting down and dirty with people who are in need, then again I'm using money as an insulation.

In reality, we want people's prayers, and we want people's money. That's given. But in Australia I wanted to also create touch-points where people were challenged with the opportunity to be able to actually reach out and make a difference in their community. We developed a portfolio of
five simple areas where churches could connect. When churches chose one of these five programs, we could help them get started by seeding it and providing training.

Those programs link the congregations to the welfare service, so we didn't just come up with a solution that was in isolation—"We think this is the community's need." We are meeting an identified community need.

At that point, ADRA resources the church. To me the public space of that program is the church because what I want is the local church to connect with and be relevant for the local community. So the people who live in the community who hear we're Adventists say, "Wow, we love Adventists in our community. You're the only ones who are doing something for the youth in this community. My neighbor had a hard time, and you were the only ones who were there for him. I've got a shut-in aunt, and your church has adopted her and makes sure she gets her groceries and gets to the doctor. We're so grateful for the Adventist church."

I used to do this in a sermon. I'd ask people, "Imagine I know nothing about Adventists. Tell me, what is an Adventist?" Traditionally what people would start to talk to me about was, "Well, we believe in the Sabbath." They'd go into various doctrine. They might start about food or alcohol.

Then I'd say, "Okay, now describe to me Jesus Christ. I know nothing about this Jesus Christ character." They'd say, "He is the most kind, patient, loving, forgiving, accepting being whoever walked the face of the earth."

I'd say, "Now, when we talk about the Adventist church, how do you want us to be known? Aren't we to reflect Christ? Wouldn't it be wonderful if you asked people about Adventists, and they said Adventists are the most kind, loving, caring, compassionate people that exist in our community today?"

So it's about reflection of Christ's character. That's why we designed a program that gave those touch-points to the church. What I wanted were simple programs that weren't overly costly, so the local church could sustain them mostly with volunteers.

The truth is, I find a lot of Adventists who are proud to be Adventists on Sabbath, but during the week they don't talk about their church. They don't want to invite their friends to a Daniel and Revelation seminar. But what I'm finding is when they talk about the community work that they've done, their friends and work colleagues say, "Wow, we'd like to be engaged."

This is generating interest and support amongst their friends because their friends are now beginning to be engaged in the community activities of the church. Now they're beginning to fellowship, and to connect with the church, and they're attracted because this is the church that is very practical, very real.

That's where I have a passion. So for ADRA at large, we come in and do a big project, which is wonderful. We should be very proud of the 12.5 million people that we helped last year. But how have I actually engaged and resourced the church to make a difference for those who are broken within the shadow of their own church? We need this two-tiered approach. The big work and the
big projects that we do are really important, but we could accomplish so much more if we actually resourced the local church to reach out and make a difference in their local communities.

Churches can do that even in developing countries. We have big memberships in areas like Africa, and yet we've never challenged and engaged with the church to reach out and make a difference.

Now I can't take U.S. funds that are given me and give it to the local church and say, “Look, I want you to do a program.” But what I can take are the expertise that I've been able to develop within that ADRA office through the professional people that are employed with project funds to say, “Hey, put your community development skill into actually designing an intervention for the local church.” That's not taking the money away from the U.S. funds; that's just using the intellectual capacity that we have within ADRA to help the church be more effective in its outreach.

This is a growing issue. I've started planting those seeds. Like with anything, it takes time to grow the concepts, to mature them. We're looking at how to add this to our work.

**AToday:** What were the five areas of church-based community service in Australia that you mentioned?

**Duffy:** We had programs for at-risk youth. For example, the Avondale College Church has a program called Cranked. It's a mountain biking club. They take kids who have been identified by schools in their district as being at-risk, and they take them out mountain biking, water-skiing, wake-boarding, and so on.

All the church members who are in the program have gone through a mentoring program, which ADRA has designed. They get amongst young people, and they begin to build relationships. It's been shown to change lives. The juvenile justice system in the area has contacted them, asking “How many kids can you take because we don't want to put kids into juvenile detention. We know that only perpetuates the crime cycle. But we've seen with kids who come through your program that it changes lives.”

We also had short-term crisis relief. Someone needs help with a food parcel or they need short-term assistance with a bill. It's that traditional Dorcas welfare component, where we help, but we link in with the Salvation Army, with all the other welfare services in the community, so that people don't go welfare shopping. You work through the local counsel and other groups so that you are seen to be one of the providers, and they refer people to you.

The third area is elderly shut-ins. Someone's around to make sure they get their groceries or get to the doctor if they need, make sure they get to the pharmacy. There are elderly people who don't have family around, so it's almost like an adopt-a-grandparent type of program.

There's another program for refugees. That was more under development as I left.

The fifth area was community gardens. Churches have land, and often they have a lot of unused
land. The concept was to work with gardeners in the community to create a vegetable garden. Then the produce from the community garden was actually shared with families in need in the community, to give fresh produce. It sort of became a hang-out area for people in the community to come and use their gardening skills for good. So Adventists and non-Adventists alike engaged in the project, used the church grounds to grow the produce, and got a lot of joy and pleasure out of providing food for people in need.

**AToday:** Would you say you're in the early stages of bringing this to ADRA International?

**Duffy:** In the early steps. In North America, [Adventist Community Services](http://www.communityservices.org/) (ACS) does a lot of these things already, and we're not trying to tread on ACS's ground.[2] We're just trying to say, “Let's find areas that we have in common, and let's work together in a more synergistic way.”

To me it's not about ADRA or about ACS, it's about how do we help the local church to reach out and become more relevant. It's not about branding; it's about actually empowering our local churches, both with religious conscience about their need to make a difference in the lives of others, and also resourcing them to do that.

In other parts of the world, ACS is not as strong and the local church isn't as active, so how can ADRA actually engage more directly with the local church and help to strengthen those systems. Some of them have Welfare Service, whether it's called Adventist Welfare Service or ACS or Dorcas. So it's really trying to say, “How can we as a church—with all of the different agencies that we have—work together to connect the church more effectively?”