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Kuna, Idaho Church Finding out a Little Child Can Really Lead!: The Kuna, Idaho church (near Boise) has always sought ways for kids to become a part of its activities. But now the kids themselves have started coming up with ideas of their own....

Next!: A new poem by O. Kris Widmer, subscriber, poet, and church pastor in northern California, guarantees both tears and laughter....

SPECIAL Adventist Today EVENT - "The Millennial Generation & Adventist Faith"
A panel of articulate, young adults from many walks of life will share their views, focusing on their spiritual experience, hopes, and expectations as Seventh-day Adventists. The meeting is free and open to all and will be held Sabbath, February 15, beginning at 3 p.m in the Damazo Amphitheater in the Centennial Complex at Loma Linda University. For more informate, click here....
Noted Protestant Author's New Book is about the Sabbath

By AT News Team, February 4, 2014

One of the most widely read contemporary Christian authors, Walter Brueggemann has released a new book that focuses on the meaning of the Sabbath. In *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now*, Brueggemann argues that Christians have distorted the meaning of the Sabbath with moralistic laws and arguments over whether or not a person should be able to play cards or purchase liquor on Sundays. These views, he contends, sap the life-energy out of the Sabbath, which is not about keeping rules but breathing new life and community into our anxious and competitive world.

Brueggemann speaks to a 24/7 society of consumption, a society in which we live to achieve, accomplish, perform, and possess. Keeping the Sabbath, he contends, helps people break the cycle of anxious acquisition and competition and opens them to new ways of living every day of the week. Although he ignores the Adventist concern with precisely when is the Christian Sabbath, his approach does connect not only with Sabbath-keeping, but also Adventist concern for health.

"In our own contemporary context of the rat race of anxiety, the celebration of Sabbath is an act of both resistance and alternative," Brueggemann writes. "It is resistance because it is a visible insistence that our lives are not defined by the production and consumption of commodity goods. Such an act of resistance requires enormous intentionality and communal reinforcement amid the barrage of seductive pressures from the insatiable insistences of the market, with its intrusion into every part of our life from the family to the national budget."

"Sabbath is not only resistance," he continues. "It is alternative. It is an alternative to the demanding, chattering, pervasive presence of advertising and its great liturgical claim of professional sports that devours all of our ‘rest time.’ The alternative on offer is the awareness and practice of the claim that we are situated on the receiving end of the gifts of God."

Brueggemann is William M. McPheeters Professor Emeritus of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary. An ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, he is the author of dozens of books and hundreds of articles. The book was published by Westminster John Knox Press, the publishing house of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in Louisville, Kentucky.

"There are many new books coming out on the topic of the Sabbath," a retired Adventist theologian told Adventist Today. "There is really unprecedented interest in the Sabbath both among Evangelicals and Oldline Protestants. I don't think Adventists have yet really figured out how to related to this."

*This story includes information from the publisher's news release distributed by Religion News Services (RNS).*
Adventist Motorcycle Ministries Organizing Chapters Across North America

By Adventist Today News Team, February 5, 2014

Jay Estep was initially attracted to Adventist Motorcycle Ministries (AMM) because of his love of Harley-Davidson motorcycles he told the Newark Advocate. But he soon realized the group was about much more than that. “The motorcycles are on the back burner now,” he said. “It’s about the ... the Lord Jesus Christ. The motorcycles are just a plus,” the daily paper in the Ohio city quoted Estep.

Estep is now vice president of the Ohio Chapter of AMM, which is dedicated to helping motorcyclists find faith. “We all watch each other’s back and we have the same goal, to lead people to Christ,” Estep said. An international, independent group, AMM is looking for leaders to start chapters in states and metropolitan areas across North America.

The group is hoping to increase its membership, Pastor Tom Hughes, AMM president and a minister in the Ohio Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, told Adventist Today. He has been doing ministry with bikers for more than 15 years, including serving as a chaplain at several levels for the Christian Motorcycle Association (CMA), the major inter-denominational group.

“It’s a group that wants to help bikers find Christ as their personal savior. Every ride is a mission,” he said. “The most important thing to us is not what you wear or what patches you have on your vest. The most important thing to us is that you get to know Jesus.” Hughes

AMM chapters meet monthly and organize rides. They travel to local motorcycle events and distribute information and literature. They are willing to visit any church or organization to talk about motorcycle safety, riding as a group or how faith in Christ has enriched their lives.

“We don’t necessarily preach a lot. It’s about fellowship,” Hughes said. “We are happy to ride with people from any church group.” He has worked with the Review & Herald Publishing Association to produce an edition of Steps to Christ, the class Ellen White book, with a popular photo of his Harley Davidson on the cover.

Hughes has also organized a Biker Camp Meeting with people from across North America each of the last three summers. And for several years he has brought together teams to conduct informal ministry at the major American gatherings of bikers in Dayton Beach, Florida, and Sturges, South Dakota.

Estep said he came to like the group because it delivers a positive message but doesn’t force it on anyone. “If someone is not interested, you move on,” he said. “But we talk the talk and walk the walk. It’s a real thing, not a scam.”

Joining AMM helped him get through a difficult time in his life. A stroke had robbed him of his career as a chef and he was struggling. Through the group he made friends and found a system of beliefs that worked for him.

“As soon as I got into the church I felt better,” he told an Advocate reporter. “I’m honestly a happy man.” He’s hoping to get younger bikers involved in the group and spread the word as much as possible. “It’s just a fun ministry. It’s not sitting in front of preacher, it’s bringing people in, it’s leading people to the Lord,” he said. “That’s something everyone doesn’t get to do.”

Anyone interested in more information is invited to call (740) 739-0750 or Email Hughes at tomhughes@BibleBiker.com. There is also information the Bible Biker web site.
Sudden Pope-ularity

By Stephen Foster, February 6, 2014

Let me begin with an unfortunately necessary disclaimer, especially on what is a site dedicated to the free exchange of ideas and information related to topics of contemporary interest to Adventists of every ideological stripe: I know that some may conceivably be uncomfortable discussing certain issues, and/or would rather discuss issues of their choosing or interest. If this, in any way, describes you, you may want to skip this blog post.

Our brother Clifford Goldstein wrote a book a while back entitled *Day of the Dragon*, in which he parallels contemporary events with historical or conventional SDA eschatological doctrine.

In one passage I recall him imagining that (the late) Mother Theresa might be profiled on a *60 Minutes*-type of program in which her selfless and charitable acts toward the poor and infirmed are highlighted in juxtaposition to the caricatured SDA characterization of Roman Catholicism (as some bogeyman organization). This would, of course, have positioned Adventists as sort of kooky on national television, bringing subsequent wide-scale embarrassment to its membership.

This nightmarish public relations scenario has not occurred to this point. Or has it? I recall cringing in embarrassment any time David Koresh or the cultists in Waco, TX, were mentioned in connection to any previous SDA associations or memberships.

Now of course, suddenly there is a new pope, who is suddenly very popular. I use the word “suddenly” advisedly because the previous pope suddenly abdicated his position.

The circumstances that afforded this pope the opportunity to ascend to his position were historically rare and therefore cannot be discounted, but we only have the reported reasons provided for his predecessor’s abdication and perhaps really shouldn’t speculate beyond those official reasons.

In any case, Pope Francis I is suddenly much more popular—particularly with those of liberal persuasions with regard to economic and political issues—than was his predecessor.

This is significant because (as with Seventh-day Adventists?) it was largely liberals who were somewhat disgruntled with much of the official doctrinal and policy approaches of Roman Catholicism. (Interestingly enough, however, with Adventists in America the disaffected liberals are often politically conservative—although this is undoubtedly due largely to ethnic, sociological, and historical differences in
With Roman Catholics in America, there appears to be less of a political/theological dichotomy. Politically liberal Catholics seem to also be relatively liberal in their approaches to traditional Catholic teachings on such things as married priests, contraception, abortion, evolution, and gay rights. On the other hand, politically conservative Catholics appear to be equally as religiously conservative, at least in terms of Catholic doctrine.

But it is in the sense of unifying these ideological wings of Roman Catholicism (and Catholics) that this pope appears ingenious.

Liberal Catholics in the (so-called liberal) media have been particularly impressed and even enamored by Pope Francis I’s statements and stances. It is these liberal Catholics, who have recently championed family planning, abortion, and gay rights, and who have been most at odds with traditional Catholic teaching and stances on these issues, and are in some cases estranged from Catholicism, who may be returning.

These Catholics, and even President Obama, have been so impressed and happy with Francis’s statements relative to poverty and wealth in society that they can hardly contain themselves. MSNBC’s Chris Hays, host of All In with Chris Hays, has raised the possibility that Pope Francis I is perhaps the “best pope ever.” Check it out.[1] If by chance you think Mr. Hays is alone in his thinking, think again.

Actually, many would consider the pope’s “enlightened” (“If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?”) position regarding Catholic priests who have a homosexual orientation to be more accepting, less judgmental, and more “Christ-like” than was that of his predecessor, whose attitudes toward gay priests and homosexuality generally (especially in the wake of a widespread scandal) was never nearly as forthcoming. Furthermore, the pope's approach may be more accepting than the attitudes of conservative Protestants, including those of Seventh-day Adventists (including mine?). This alone is winning the pope popularity.

As has been indicated in our preceding blog (http://www.atoday.org/article/2198/opinion/foster-stephen/2013/undeniable-plausibility), the President of the United States is clearly among the smitten, and he is scheduled to meet the new pope next month to cap off his next European trip. This is not unusual, as American Presidents routinely meet Catholic popes. (Indeed, President Obama had of course met with Pope Benedict XVI early in his first term.)

What is unusual is the willingness or eagerness of the U.S. President to cite or quote the pope as an authority in seeking (or bolstering) support of his policy and programmatic approaches to alleviate poverty.

"The President looks forward to discussing with Pope Francis their shared commitment to fighting poverty and growing inequality” reported White Press secretary Jay Carney in a prepared statement.

We are now to understand that the new pope’s approach is actually strategic, at least according to an actual papal voter, and perhaps the most influential American cardinal, Timothy Cardinal Dolan of New York City.
In a recent *Meet the Press* interview, he says that the new pope has not only instituted a change in tone, but also “a change in strategy.”

[2] A pope by his nature cannot make doctrinal changes. He can make a lot of changes in the way, the style, the manner in which it’s presented.”

Earlier in this interview, regarding what we’ve termed this pope’s pope-ularity, Cardinal Dolan had said that “I can’t walk down the streets of New York, which I do a lot, without people stopping me and saying, ‘Cardinal, I’m not even a Catholic, I’m not even a believer, but I love Pope Francis, and thanks a lot for voting for him.’ Because they love him; you put the finger on it I think when you spoke about the humanity—his simplicity, his sincerity, his genuineness, his humility. We as Catholics believe God came to us through the Person, through the humanity of His Son Jesus; and I think Jesus is coming to us as Catholics, and again to the world, through the humanity, the simplicity, the sincerity, of Pope Francis.” That’s saying something.

However, what *Time* magazine managing editor Nancy Gibbs wrote in explaining “The Choice” of Francis as the magazine’s 2014 Person of the Year, says something too. Gibbs writes, “…in a very short time, a vast global, ecumenical audience has shown a hunger to follow him.” Need anyone say more?


If Then Justice

by Debbonnaire Kovacs

submitted February 5, 2014

The Lectionary’s Old Testament passage this week is the first part of Isaiah 58 (1-9)—one of my favorite passages in the Bible. Those who have been on my website know that I have chosen verse 12 as my “logo”—“Repairing the Breach.”

In my life, there have been a lot of breaches—breaches between me and others, between me and myself, even between me and God. This chapter lays out the problem, and states the cure. It looks deceptively simple…

If you…

Break yokes, end injustice, stop pointing the finger or speaking evil, feed, clothe, and house the poor, and stop hiding…

Then…

“Then your light will break out like the dawn, and your recovery will speedily spring forth; and your righteousness will go before you; the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’” (vs. 8, 9a, NASB)

But then, as I read it more and more, and meditated on it, I began to ask deeper questions.

What yokes? Break them how?

What do I do, daily, that helps to end injustice?

[A weird side-trip: Why is it that in our tradition, we see justice as mercy’s opposite? “God is merciful,” we say, “but, he’s also just!” Where did we get the idea that justice, which is simply another word for righteousness (take a look in a French Bible, for instance) means punishment?? Other churches work hard for what they call “peace and justice issues,” and what they mean is what Jesus spent most of his time doing. Just saying.]

Am I really supposed to bring the homeless into my house and give them my food?

In what ways am I hiding, from whom, and how do I quit? Because, I have to tell you, I love the sound of those promises! Dawn! Recovery! Righteousness! God before me, behind me and speaking to me! That’s glory, all right, and I want to do anything I can that will put myself and others into the way of receiving that.
You Want a Piece of Me...at?

By Danny Bell, February 4, 2014

I don’t quite remember all the details of how I felt, but in 1985 when I came to Christ, I quit a lot of stuff. Alcohol, pot, acid, cussing, smoking, trouble with the law, satanic music, debauchery, evil friends, sexual promiscuity—the list goes on... and, oh yeah—meat.

It all just dropped away somehow, and I didn’t crave those things any more. My sights were fixed on God, and those things just fell away like rotten old clothes. I’m not blowing my trumpet, just remembering out loud. I have never gone back to any of those things, but one did sneak back up on me—yup, meat-eating. Not red meat (haven’t eaten a cow or sheep since 1985), but chicken came back with a vengeance. All I can say is, I crossed the road to get to it—not the other way round.

Don’t get me wrong, I don’t think eating meat is a sin unless one is convicted of its dangers and continues to do it. I was going okay, but somehow the old Kentucky just ended up on my plate. A chicken sandwich at a funeral, a drumstick at a wedding, a wing-ting at a party—before I knew it, I could hear the wheels talking, and they weren’t vegetarian.

I think the problem may have started when my wife and I swung wildly into veganism while at college. If you want to know how to turn people off quickly, just start asking your hosts if there are animal products in what they are serving you. Yeah, I did that. The vegan friends we hung out with were all skinny, and the conversation was always about food. Some time later I would be at a party and start to feel there was something up with the vegan culture—the vegans I knew seemed...a bit weird. A common thing they used to do was to have ‘cleaning weekends.’ We never participated, but they would always shout out the window as they were driving off: “don’t forget your bucket and pump!”

The food too was really hard core. There were wholemeal pastries and cakes that were like chewing on concrete. I remember following a recommended cleansing diet with Carmel—raw spinach with a few cashews thrown in. We ate it for about a week and then I cracked. “I can’t do this any more,” I yelled. I was feeling really hungry all the time and not looking forward to meals. It was depressing, and I felt we were doing it all wrong. So ended the foray into internal purity as we brought back cheese, eggs, butter, normal bread and all the nice tasting stuff—no red meat, but the chicken unfortunately did raise its ugly head off the block at me.

Why do I say unfortunately? Well, I believe in our health message and always have. I do think there will come a time that animal products will be too diseased to eat. The thing is, I reasoned that it would only be somewhere in the future when chickens heads would drop off through sheer rottenness.

My weight gained dramatically as I began to loosen up on other things in the desert department and unhealthy beverages like soft drink. Pretty soon I hit 132 kilos. Something had to change.

The hardest time was when I had not made my lunch for the day and ate out at fast food places. There I was staring through the glass at heated chicken in all of its forms. I had to stop somehow. I told my wife that I wanted to give up chicken, and so she supported me by not bringing it home any more. I had a little struggle when walking by the chicken sections when shopping, but as long as I didn’t buy it and take it home I could cope. I could choose something else to put in the basket.

Right there is one of the first lessons I learned in my battle with chicken (sounds epic?): it’s easier to say no at the supermarket than if it were in easy reach at home. I used to teach this tip to Quit Smoking Seminar attendees when I was a pastor. It was easier for them to not pull over and buy smokes than if they had some fags in the drawer at home and were trying to quit—a recipe for failure. I applied this method to myself, and it does work.

The Lionheart’s health nights (this is the name of our church support group) also gave me an added boost. There was something motivating about telling the group I was giving up chicken (we ask everyone at the group about what things they want to change in their lives). When
the food van came along while I was at work, I was tempted, I admit. But in my mind I could see myself saying to the group, “I failed today.” That thought seemed to repulse me, and so I chowed down on an egg and lettuce sandwich instead. I felt a victory—a small one, but it made me feel really good inside. Since then I survived the annual family Xmas party and loads of the stuff passed under my nose without even a ripple. My weight has begun to decrease as well, and at last weigh-in on health night, I was 126 kilos. I changed nothing else—just gave up chicken—that’s it.

As I continued to read some good info online about meat and the current disease epidemic, I have developed a theory. What if all these new allergies and diseases nobody has ever heard of before are the result of meat consumption? What if people getting sick more than normal is linked to eating meat? Seriously, the medical world is awash with new data showing that we are in an epidemic of food allergies and diseases that are hard to treat and diagnose. What if that prolonged cold or the fact that you always seem to get everything that’s going around is linked to meat consumption? What about skin conditions, strange headaches, the new Alzheimer’s epidemic, Parkinson’s, motor neuron diseases, rare blood disorders—what if they all in some way are linked to our excessive love affair with meat? Yes, we have genetic pre-dispositions to a lot of these, but what if meat-eating is a factor that triggers their onset?

We know for a fact that meat-eating severely increases our risk of contracting cancer—that’s been verified by the World Health Organisation; no big surprises there. But what about its link to other diseases and the exponential affect it has on the onset and rapid decline in patients who have recoverable conditions but result in death? Why do some diseases kill people, and yet others recover from gangrene, arthritis, bone and joint conditions, meningitis, bee stings, insect bites, gastro bugs, flu’s, asthma attacks? People sometimes die from something as simple as a scratch!

Indeed medical treatments have improved the detection and treatment of many diseases, but medical scientists all seem to be saying the same thing: “we don’t know what is causing the frequency and severity of these things.” I am not a doctor, but in my life experience and study, there is a correlation between lifestyle and diet on the one hand, and resistance, contraction and recovery from disease on the other. To the uninformed and ignorant, this may be news, but to Adventists this should come as no surprise. We were told something very similar a long time ago—like over 100 years ago.

Listen to our spiritual grandmother:

The effects of a flesh diet may not be immediately realized, but this is no evidence that it is not harmful. Few can be made to believe that it is the meat they have eaten which has poisoned their blood and caused their suffering. Many die of diseases wholly due to meat eating, while the real cause is not suspected by themselves or by others. (CG, p. 382)

Nobody knows what the causes are—hmmm…

Cancers, tumors, and all inflammatory diseases are largely caused by meat eating. (CD, p. 388)

Inflammatory diseases—allergies, reactions to simple foods? The other day at work I used bore water in my plaster mix as opposed to clean tap water. The mix went off a lot faster. I had to work double time as the bore water had an effect on the workability of the plaster, and caused it to prematurely cure hard. I wonder if this is what’s happening to humans who eat meat? Put bad stuff in and you get bad stuff out. Sounds simplistic, but the mix didn’t behave in the normal way it should because I used a dirty medium. Our blood is what aids in recovery of foreign attacks, getting rid of poisons and cleaning up our system. If it’s dirty, it’s going to go into meltdown. Listen to this:

The animals are diseased, and by partaking of their flesh, we plant the seeds of disease in our own tissue and blood. Then when exposed to the changes in a malarious atmosphere, these are more sensibly felt; also when we are exposed to prevailing epidemics and contagious diseases, the system is not in a condition to resist the disease. (CD, p. 386)

A “malarious atmosphere” means those times of the year when we are exposed to pollens, insects and various other normal seasonal assaults on our system. Why do some go down in a heap while others don’t even flinch? Of course there will be the exceptional cases, but that does not account for the epidemic of allergies and diseases for which there seems to be no known cause. There’s a lot to be said about immunity and our insistence on the consumption of meat. Are we compromising our blood immune system and normal recovery from what was once just a common cold?

For me, I am returning as close as possible to foods that are healthy and steering away from a reliance on animal products. I still have a long way to go on many other issues in my life, but I believe I have made a positive start in an area I can control. From spreads to milk and other seemingly normal pantry items, I find myself slowing down and looking on the packaging for ingredients. Am I being fanatical? I
don’t think so. I just want to be around a bit longer and enjoy life, not be in a state of suffering, catching everything that passes by my door. Also, I want to follow what I believe God is telling me to do—that’s the crunch, the sauce and the balance of flavours for me.
The No of Adventism

By Greg Prout, February 4, 2014

Nothing robs a person of the “abundant life” more than the doctrine that this life is only a preparation for the next, that now is simply a training ground for the hereafter, that everything has value only as it relates to eternity. Raised and nurtured in this dualism where “now” is subservient to “then,” often creates a person overly concerned about her current performance and in how it buys her a ticket over there—heaven—then. Self-centeredness gussied up in religious fervor ushers you into a feeling of “holy endeavor,” of doing the Lord’s work. A person becomes obsessed with their spiritual development, always wondering if they are “good enough” to gain entrance through the pearly Gates. Is God happy with me? Am I safe to save? Heaven becomes an enterprise of religious calisthenics, character development becomes holy self-absorption, and we become spiritual Narcissists.

NO is the tool fundamentalism employs to create separation from and distortion of the society God came to save. Fundamentalism believes its NO to culture pacifies God’s hot anger at our fallen selves. NO says you cannot find authentic God outside of or apart from Church dogma. Growing up in this negation environment was called “present truth.” Though lifeless, it was all that mattered, like growing up and never being able to leave the house; the neighborhood was off limits.

My childhood was confined by two negative factors structural to my development. One was the finances of an alcoholic. My father’s alcoholism and his spotty work experience often left our family in jeopardy of paying rent or buying groceries. It was not uncommon to hear “No, you can’t do that, or buy that; we don’t have the money.” “No, you can’t go there; money is short.” Our struggle with basic finances created a small world with few ports and fewer embarkations to the outside world. Dreams were my only escape from NO.

But significantly more crippling, like the old Chinese practice of binding feet, were the religious attitudes and beliefs that shaped my upbringing. NO was the “thou shalt not” to life on earth. The Church held a strong belief that God was displeased with our culture at large, and just about everything our culture produced was dangerous or wicked. The number and frequency of religious prohibitions was proof. Negation of culture and separation from it were foundational to our church’s mission. The God we worshiped loved to say NO; loved to keep us caged, held down, and locked away in spiritual ghettos free of contamination from the outside. Cultural expressions like the cinema, novels, long hair, certain fashions, playing cards, dancing, most music received the NO. Worshipping on the wrong day, eating the wrong foods, failing to have morning worship, the admonition to witness, etc., were also NOs employed to promote our love for a Savior that died to set us free. Freedom defined not by what you were liberated to do, but by what you should not/could not do.

Our religious community was an isolation ward from which we asserted the destiny of the world hung on our eschatological views. The world must come to us. We proclaimed “No” from the mountain tops and expected society to come running. Meanwhile, irrelevancy and “ho-hum” showed up.

If you subscribed to these religious prohibitions and rules, and embraced the NO devotedly, you were esteemed a person every other
sojourner should emulate. Developing in such an environment created a worldview anemic and shriveled; everyone outside was a prospect/suspect to save or shun. Subtle was the air of superiority such exercised beliefs engendered, implying those who believed differently were less enlightened and in need of our heavenly interpretation. We had the truth; they subscribed to something less, something wrong, something errant. They were deceived and our objective was to enlighten them, or warn them, and lead them out of Babylon into the green pastures of our rarefied NO. If we failed to witness about our wonderful God, guilt was our reward. Warning others was a precious admonition; more NO. Our gospel: you can become like us and be saved, if you believe the right doctrines: ours.

Our love had an agenda. We loved not because love is the true reality in which to live; we loved either directly or by implication to make others reflect us, to replicate our spiritual identity. Somehow introducing them to a God of love was insufficient, too simple. More was needed. Producing Adventists marching in unison and conformity superseded the simple “believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved...” (Acts 16:31). Such is the nature of fundamentalism: it believes it alone has the truth and all must pass through its gates to find God. Fundamentalism views everything before it’s time as inferior, or “partial truth,” and everything in the future as suspect and deception. Adventist fundamentalism possesses the keys and has the controls; your destiny depends on its authority. And it is a lie.

We had a prophet who told us how to believe, what to believe, and yet encouraged us to think for ourselves; a nagging contradiction, not unlike condemning the Pope for setting himself up as God on earth, while in his place we ordained our prophet.

Explicitly, we were told not to judge, quoted verses supporting that claim, yet by inference we judged everyone, especially those who used tobacco, alcohol, ate meat, wore make-up, dawned jewelry, worshiped on Sunday, swam on the Sabbath, attended movies, etc. We declared Life apart from Adventism is not life at all.

Our high standard of conduct aside from being tyrannical, set us up as arbiters of right and wrong over our neighbors, even though we pretended to express our judgments tactfully in love. We loved to quote our prophet who wrote about Jesus denouncing the Pharisees with “tears in his eyes.” It gave us courage to stand up for truth and point out another’s sin; however, tears rarely graced our cheeks. We judged, blatantly or quietly, with conviction, denouncing “outsiders” by our holy truths. My mother told my father that God would not go with him into the bar, that somehow our broken behavior would sully God’s holiness. That seemed to fly in the face of the Incarnation I had come to know.

Our eternal life, though preached as a gift from God, was practiced with much uncertainty. Many sermons were delivered questioning whether we were saved or not, and was it possible to know. ‘If you died tonight, where would you spend eternity?’ was a favorite question. Anxiety loomed over our final destination, and though told we were saved by grace, and not of ourselves, we were reminded our behavior played a decisive role in our redemption. We believed a befuddled gospel. Was salvation by grace or not? I grew up confused.

Though we believed God was omnipotent, it seemed our puny will could thwart the loftiest intentions of the Most High God; even the Almighty appeared to bow at the altar of our will. I was told this is how “love” works. Sometimes I wondered who was in charge: God or our consent. Salvation was reduced to an opportunity dependent on our volition. Jesus forgave soldiers crucifying Him without their volition, but the rest of us are not so fortunate.

Then I met Jesus, the YES of God; a dream come true. The greatest discovery of my life was learning salvation was accomplished by God, without my assistance; that He is a God of mercy and grace. Like nothing else, realizing God’s love opened the gate of my religious kennel and told me to run free. For too long I lived in tension—salvation was about Jesus and my free choice; about Him and what I can do; about what He did and how my decision can make it efficacious. Certainly, love exists in freedom in our imperfect world, but are we short-changing God’s great cosmic act on the Cross by insisting its impact is determined by our fallen self? I wonder.
God in Christ on Calvary is the story; we do not share the stage, but we are gifted its glory. It is not about my power of belief or my free choice, or my behavior and religious performance; it is about Jesus and His grace. Some call this “cheap grace.” There is nothing cheap about it; it cost the Son of God His life, which He gladly gave so we could live. He was/is YES to life. That is “good news”! He has reversed the hell created by Adam. He is the star of our show; His name is on life’s marquee. The Bible is about Him and His love for humanity. We are not the subject; He is. We are the direct object in the sentence, the ancillary character in the story, a derivative, and yet He adores us.

I am here to love others as He loves me, and the Now is vital, for NOW is where His Kingdom of love resides. Tomorrow has been purchased by His life and death and resurrection, and it is as certain as His compassion. His love is the air I breathe, His forgiveness the ground I walk on, and His grace my Eternity. I have earned nothing; He has given me everything.

“God…who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, *not according to our works*, but according to His purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus *from all eternity.*” (Italics supplied), 2 Timothy 1:9. YES!
A moment ago I darted into my drafty garret room under the Gothic eaves of the *Adventist Today* building, then I instantly locked and double-barred the door. From a pocket in my cape, I withdrew a weathered piece of paper and placed it next to my laptop. On the paper is printed an email, written in 2010 shortly after the General Conference session, that was sent to Adventist Man but never delivered.

The reason it has surfaced only now, of course, is that the Jesuits absconded with it as soon as it arrived. Our building is rife with them—solemn young men dressed in dustcolored robes who scurry out of sight if anyone approaches. (I’ve seen their graffiti in the restrooms—scrawls about the new pope, such as “Francis is ASissy!”)

A few minutes ago I surprised two young acolytes playing Ping-Pong® in our break room, and as they dashed out through a secret door, one of them dropped this paper along with a papal-crested paddle. Knowing their sinister ways, I instantly snatched the paper and hightailed it for my garret. Now I’m going to try to finish this column before someone pops out at me from a trapdoor.

Here’s what the three-years-late email said: “This past Sabbath [late 2010], our local church replayed our new [GC] president’s July 3rd GC Sabbath sermon. Once [Elder Wilson] explained how God doesn’t like clapping but does like ‘Amens,’ he had me. I’ve always secretly suspected that clapping probably annoyed God, but there it was, spelled out so clearly there was no missing the point.”

At this juncture my correspondent reveals his knowledge of how craftily the Jesuits have infiltrated our church. Notice how powerfully they work.

“This is my concern,” he writes, “and I suspect it is the Jesuit priests—again! What is the deal in Isaiah 55:12 about the trees clapping their hands? Since clapping annoys God, why are the trees clapping at all? This doesn’t add up, and it confuses me. I understand that the Bible was written word for word as the Holy Spirit guided the various authors’ quills, so I think the original KJV must have had it correct. It probably originally read “and all the trees of the field shouted Amen.” Again, I personally suspect that the Jesuit priests were up to their old tricks of trying to deceive God’s true remnant church (this time by downplaying the evils of clapping) and snuck the change into the newer editions of the old KJV.”

Now you can see why our building’s secret inhabitants sought to keep this incriminating evidence from the light of day, even taking this paper with them to their papist Ping-Pong® playtimes. But now the truth is out.

Since these sinister guys still haven’t leaped out at me through a priest’s hole, I will go a bit further. The trees of the field notwithstanding, there are actually several hidden dangers in the act of clapping, and I will set these before you. If this column suddenly breaks off in the middle, you’ll know what happened.

The first and most obvious danger of hand clapping is the injury it can cause to ears and hands. Persistent pulsive percussion is already doing a number on the aur al canals of our music-listening kids, so why add further trauma? And each hand-smack not only causes stress on tendons and muscles, but also wears away palm and finger prints—part of what makes you uniquely you.

Adventists in Alaska and Minnesota already know the second problem with hand clapping, especially on humid summer evenings at church campouts next to lakes. Each palm-to-palm smite inevitably commits murder upon large numbers of
mosquitoes and June bugs. Picture the irony of a camper singing “I’ve got love like an ocean” while simultaneously blooding the landscape with the corpses of winged creatures of the night.

A third evil of hand clapping is that it contradicts the Scriptural injunction not to let your left hand know what your right hand is doing (Matthew 6:3). Each hand should be out there doing good, but independently of each other. As I type this column, for example, my hands are each busily at work, but neither encroaches into the other’s territory. However, each clapping hand knows exactly what its fellow is doing. And anyway, if we are to be so noncombative as to turn the other cheek to an assailant, why should our hands ever be employed in one-on-one assault upon each other, especially in the sanctuary?

A final (and perhaps the ugliest) evil of hand clapping is that it contributes to hypocrisy. We’ve all attended grade school, academy, or college graduations where, as each name is read, the audience is expected to applaud. This is fine for the first eight or 10 diploma recipients, but then the palm gets sore and the clapper merely touches his or her palms together, producing no percussion and therefore no pain. This “pretend applause” does the soul no good.

So instead of clapping in church, let’s belt out a good “Aaaa-MEN!” Anything that exalts the male gender has gotta be positive.

Do you have a tough question? Adventist Man has “the answer.” As a former member of “the remnant of the remnant,” Adventist Man was ranked 8,391 of the 144,000—and working his way up. Now he relies solely on grace and friendship with Jesus. You can email him at atoday@atoday.org.
Kuna, Idaho Church Finding out a Little Child Can Really Lead!

http://www.atoday.org/article/2312/features/articles/kuna-idaho-church-finding-out-a-little-child-can-really-lead

by Debonnaire Kovacs
Submitted February 5, 2014

“The kids saw the cameras in church, and thought, ‘Hey, that might be cool—I’d like to do that!’” says Pastor Randy Maxwell of the Kuna, Idaho, Seventh-day Adventist church. “We had adult camera operators, but we started having problems keeping the schedule full. Sometimes we had to put one or two of the three cameras in a fixed position. Some kids stepped up and said ‘we’d like to try.’ When other kids saw this happening, they got interested, so we had a training, and they do a pretty decent job!”

The Kuna church has approximately 400 members, and a typical attendance of half that, which is fairly large for an Adventist church, especially in a community whose population is only 15,000, and most of that is recent growth. Being a larger church, it’s not unusual that they make use of technology such as power points, video-taping their services, and having a web presence. It’s also not entirely unusual that young people who have grown up with this technology are the ones who run it.

What drew me to this story, reported in the Gleaner in October, 2013, was that it was the kids’ idea. I was also surprised by the ages. There are certainly college-age and older members involved in this media ministry, as Pastor Maxwell calls it, but there are also nine- and eleven-year-olds.

I decided to call Maxwell and ask more questions about the role of children and youth in his church. He said that he believes that all believers should be working in their church, one way or another. So when they are baptized, no matter what age, he asks them what they want to do. “We had an 8th grader that got baptized last Thanksgiving, and that was one of the first things he wanted to do—work with the technology.”

Maxwell points out that working with children is a different matter from working with adults. They can have shorter attention spans, or lose their focus, or need to go to the restroom. The church has set things up in such a way (and has enough eager volunteers) that kids can spell each other.

“Our church has always been very pro-kid and we looked for ways to engage the children in the service so that they feel a part and they feel that they’re contributing. They feel important, needed, that they’re making a contribution. The earlier we can give them a sense of ownership, the better. That will carry over in their future lives and ministries,” said Maxwell.

He commented that it was when he was doing interviews for the Gleaner article http://gleanernow.com/news/2013/10/kuna-kids-reach-beyond-children%E2%80%99s-story that he realized it was having even more of an impact on the kids than he had expected. They said
things about helping to do God’s work, that they were spreading the word, and that Jesus “is
glad” and “is proud of me.”

There are adults overseeing the things that the kids and youth are doing. For example, the head
of the church’s live stream ministry is an elder, the manager of their KTSY radio station. “But
the actual brains of it, the one who has put together the core of the computer stuff and everything
is a young college student by the name of Joshua Fieldstad. He helps with upgrades, knows how
to run the switch and archive the videos… Then there’s Michael Whitsun, I think a senior in high
school—he knows how to do everything!”

The church’s technology reaches beyond power points in sermons or video cameras in the
sanctuary. “We always encourage people at the beginning of the sermon to go on Facebook and
Twitter and tell people the service is beginning. We have a live chat feature on our online stream,
and we’re in evangelism right now, so after the sermon I have something we call ‘the
conversation.’ We open the floor for comments and questions—and during that time, in addition
to whatever is coming live from the audience, the online viewers are able to chat in their
questions. We get questions every week. Our live stream is up and we have 50-60 people online
watching. Some of those are our members, of course, but there are also some from out of state
and out of the country—we have regulars from Australia, Africa, and all across the US. We also
have a special Facebook page where we have a ‘community conversation’ and people can
dialogue and talk back to us.”

Maxwell’s daughter, Danielle, who is 21, is now doing video editing. “We could archive,” says
Maxwell, “but not edit, or pull out YouTube teasers and so on. She’s good at that and has just
come on board.”

Other ways children and youth minister in the Kuna church are by reading Scripture, helping
with children’s church and nursery care during evangelistic meetings, passing the microphone
during prayer and praise request time, and so on. Maxwell’s oldest daughter, Candi Zappia, is the
head of the music ministry, and the praise team is “quite blended between older and younger
singers and instrumentalists.” During the week, there are small groups meeting in people’s
homes to discuss and share the thoughts from the evangelistic series, and young adults make
some of the willing hosts.

In other outreach, there are two apartment complexes near the church, and Kuna members have
been reaching out to one for a year. They began with Thanksgiving baskets that included an
invitation to a pancake breakfast. Then they took Christmas baskets, and eventually an Easter
basket which included a story about the resurrection, written by Pastor Maxwell. “We just do it
to make friends. After a year, we did a prayer walk, and people knew who we were and were
willing to engage and pray with us.” This year, they’ve begun on the second complex.

“Kids,” says Maxwell, “are our main footmen for distributing flyers and baskets, with adult
chaperonage. Typically, it’s the entire Junior class. And they love it! They’re not scared, they’re
not shy, they’ll knock on any door, and when we run out of baskets, they say, ‘Aren’t there any
more?’”
Baskets and invitations usually include web links. “If we can get them to check us out and check in on the live stream, that will break down some of the mystery and make them more likely to come visit us sometime.”

That’s probably true. The face-to-face friendships Kuna members are developing will make people feel even more welcome. And it might be that the eager faces of children who love their church and feel that they are an important part of God’s kingdom could be the most appealing invitation of all.

The church’s website--http://myflock.com/cgi-bin/menu.pl?churchid=church4921
Their Facebook page--https://www.facebook.com/pages/Kuna-Seventh-day-Adventist-Church/141941442519605
Next!

O. Kris Widmer
submitted February 5, 2014

By O. Kris Widmer...a son, for his dying father.
February, 2007
In Love, Affection and Comfort for anyone who lives with a terminal diagnosis.

The Great Physician will see you now.
He’s agreed to take your case.
You fall within His specialty –
Which is the human race.
You need a lot of fixing,
But He’s capable and strong.
It’s time. There’s no more waiting!
You have been waiting long!

The Great Physician will see you now –
Just the briefest anesthesia.
A little sleep, then you’ll wake,
Alert, with no amnesia.
He’ll fix your dimming eyesight,
He’ll give you brand new skin.
I just checked on His schedule –
Yup, the Great Physician’s IN.

The Great Physician will see you now.
He’ll not use tubes or pills.
You’re gonna like His treatments.
You’re gonna like His bills.
He’ll give you brand-new kidneys.
He’ll tweak your achin’ spine.
From bent-up toes to hearing loss,
He’ll fix what’s in decline.

The Great Physician will see you now.
You’re sick of being sick!
Well, in His operatory,
You’ll never feel one prick.
When the hospice nurses leave for good,
He’ll say "Friend, I guess you're next.”
Then, what has rigor mortis
Will once again be flexed!

The Great Physician will see you now.
You’ve waited quite a while.
It took all of your livelong life
For Him to grab your file.
But you have not complained one bit
About this long delay,
And now, before you know it,
He’ll see you right away.

The Great Physician will see you now.
He’s planned your renovation.
You will not feel a twinge of pain,
He’s got such good sedation!
A nip up top, a tuck down low,
New colon or a shoulder;
When finished in His clinic,
You never will grow older.

The Great Physician will see you now.
You’ll soon know strength and vigor.
You’ll look, I’d say, ‘bout twenty-five,
Yes - younger, taller, bigger.
He won’t use swabs or tonics,
No needle or a probe.
Slip off your earthly tatters, dear.
Slip on this Doctor’s robe.

The Great Physician will see you now.
The best in all the earth!
There is no estimation
What His services are worth.
He’s going to treat you…Pronto!
At least that’s what I read.
And child, you needn’t worry none!
He knows just what you need.

The Great Physician will see you now –
No earthly cure awaits you.
For this final operation
It is Jesus that sedates you!
Just a little sleepy time,
And then, you’ll jump and run.
So, close your eyes, get ready.
Let’s count down…three…two…one.

The Great Physician will see you now.
You’ll soon be on the mend.
He’s about to bring your suffering
To a quick and glorious end.
He’ll send you off to La-La Land,
And then His changes make.
He’ll rock your boxy gurney
When He shouts “Awake. Awake!”
The Great Physician will see you now.  
Deep breaths, then gentle slumber.  
He always takes new patients.  
He’s about to call your number.  
We would not keep you. Off you go!  
How can we make a fuss!?  
For by and by, before too long –  
We know He’ll call for us.
The Millennial Generation & Adventist Faith: Feb. 15 Panel will Explore

By Adventist Today News Team, January 16, 2014

A panel of 20-somethings from with a variety of relationships to and perspectives on Adventist faith will share their views on Sabbath, February 15, at 3 p.m. The event will be held in the Damazo Amphitheater in the Centennial Complex at Loma Linda University.

The speakers will include Alfredo Lee, Dr. Keisha McKenzie, Edgar Momplaisir, Pastor Courtney Ray and Syd Shook. There will also be time for questions from the audience. Moderator for the panel will be Ryan Bell, a board member for the AT Foundation. Monte Sahlin, a veteran researcher and executive director of the AT Foundation, will share a summary.

Alfredo Lee was born in Mexico to an Adventist family and immigrated to Los Angeles, California, sharing the immigrant experience of many in his generation of Adventists. He served as a pianist every Sabbath for his father's congregations until he left home for college. He identifies himself as a mystic and a queer man of color, and works for a child advocacy organization in Los Angeles.

Dr. Keisha McKenzie is originally from London and attended Northern Caribbean University in Jamaica before completing a PhD at Texas Tech University. She is engaged in research about the way scientific information is used in government communications, civic participation and organizational development. She is a consultant to nonprofit organizations, public sector groups and educational institutions. She worships both with a Seventh-day Adventist church and a Quaker group and cohosts weekly Twitter chats on religion.

Edgar N. Momplaisir is a writer and film director from northern California. He was born into an Adventist family in New York City and attended Adventist schools for most of his life. He is expecting to graduate from Pacific Union College in June with a BA degree in Film and Television.

Pastor Courtney Ray was first introduced to the Adventist faith as a student in Adventist school. She is associate pastor at the Tamarind Avenue Seventh-day Adventist Church in Compton, California. She completed an undergraduate pre-medicine program and later studied in the seminary at Andrews University. She has served as a pastor at Adventist churches in Baltimore, Maryland, and Hanford, California, as well as completing a master's degree in neuroscience and psychology at Loma Linda University.

Syd Shook joined the Adventist Church in 2010. Since then her church home has been the Hollywood Seventh-day Adventist Church where she has served an elder and staff assistant. She is currently a graduate student at Fuller Theological Seminary and has worked in faith-based international development organizations for several years. She lives with her husband, the poet David Shook, in the Silverlake neighborhood of Los Angeles.

A recent research summit convened by the denomination's General Conference revealed that more than a third of the people baptized in the Adventist Church over the past 50 years later dropped out. Several surveys have shown that about half of the children raised in Adventist families have disconnected from the Church by their mid-20s. The widely-held idea that the Adventist dropout problem is largely related to recent converts has proved to be a myth. It seems to have a stronger correlation with "second generation" church members.

The AT Foundation has organized this event not only to help Adventists gain a clearer understanding of inter-generational faith dynamics, but also to celebrate 20 years of publication of the independent news source. The first volume of the journal was published in 1993 and with 2013 it completes 20 volumes. It has grown into a multi-media operation with Web, Email and Facebook editions alongside the print magazine and book publishing activities.

No pre-registration is required to attend the event. No attendance fee will be charged, although a freewill offering will be collected. Questions can be directed to atoday@atoday.org by Email by phone at (503) 826-8600.

It is cosponsored by the Adventist Today Foundation and the humanities program of the university's School of Religion. It will be open to
any interested individual or group.