"The One" Project: Christ-centered Unity and Unexplained Questions, Criticism: It is prophesied that young people will finish the work of proclaiming the gospel--yet a curious phenomenon continues as "The One" Project stokes vocal fears of metastasizing apostasy, according to some. This month's "The One" gathering in San Diego, California, focused on one of the most radical passages in Scripture....An exclusive AT news feature.....

Former Employees Drop Lawsuit against La Sierra University: Yes, the lawsuit filed years ago against La Sierra University is history. What precipitated the litigation and why was it suddenly dropped? What part did fear of losing academic freedoms, departure from lifestyle standards, and concerns about teaching evolution play in the decision?...

Corporate Connections, Legal Penalties, Big Investments: Adventist Health Ministry Today: Nearly five decades ago, the Church chose to join the big-business healthcare
cavalcade in North America, and the road has at times brought public relations nightmares and serious misunderstandings. Yet AH continues to soldier on....

**Apps, Games and Learning Tools Featured at Adventist Technology Conference:** Adventists appeared on the world scene at the cusp of the industrial and communication revolutions, and continue to promote moral values and distance learning through innovative technology....

**Students at Three Adventist Campuses: Two Dead, One in a Coma:** Three unrelated incidents in recent weeks at Adventist colleges and universities have left two young adults dead and a third in a coma....

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**OPINION**

**The Mystery of the Disappeared Record Keeper:** The deconstruction and demise of a creative venture designed to open dialogue about Adventism’s Great Controversy theme with a younger generation finds columnist Larry Downing asking good questions about the demise of a once-promising venture....

**The Ultimate Form of Child Abuse:** Guest columnist Nic Samojluk wonders why the Adventist Church has dropped the ball in allowing abortions to be performed....

**Mining:** Andy Hanson shares poignant and telling excerpts from mainstream Adventist magazines, hinting at the struggles in the lives and hearts of thoughtful Adventist members....

**What I've Learned about Sin from Some Uber-Liberals I Know (DEVOTIONAL):** Debbonnaire Kovacs reflects on the blessings of Ash Wednesday and the wonderful spiritual experience of mingling with some super-liberal Christians who mix ashes and olive oil as they prepare to relive in spirit the passion of Christ....
FEATURE

(Available to all logged-in subscribers; to apply for a free 30-day subscription, click here)

The Living Project: The Power of Story: In a relational era in which Bible students yearn not only for certainty but for a community in which to ponder and practice new insights, a church in California has established a new Sabbath school modality known as "The Living Project...."

POETRY & ARTS

Andraé Crouch Dies: The gospel musician, preacher, and composer relied heavily on Second-coming themes and seriously affected music as performed in Adventist churches, as congregations transitioned away from choral music and emphasized a gospel sound that featured soloists in such blockbuster anthems as "My Tribute" and "Soon and Very Soon."...

In All Vicissitudes (POETRY & ARTS): Life for Debbonnaire Kovacs could have been a lot tougher this week had she stayed home in Kentucky. But she flew to Los Angeles to visit and to enjoy great weather, as she built strength for the heavy post-groundhog snows....
The One Project: Christ-centered Unity and Unexplained Questions, Criticism

By AT News Team, Feb. 19, 2015: More than 1,100 Adventist pastors, lay leaders and young adults gathered in San Diego, California, for this year’s annual North American gathering of The One Project on February 8 and 9. Among the speakers were the senior pastors of some of the largest local churches in the denomination, chaplains and faculty from Adventist universities, and Pastor Ivan Williams, the ministerial director of the denomination’s North American Division.

They focused on a study of Christ's Sermon on the Mount from the gospels. “Unity is mandated by God,” said Tim Gillespie from Loma Linda University. “Can we support someone’s intent even if we disagree with their action? … Love is required.”

Every speaker picked up the theme of unity in diversity as crucial for the Adventist denomination if it is to be centered on Christ. “God has called us to love every person … not to say to some, ‘You don’t fit.’” stated Pastor Japhet

“Disagreement is not equal to rejection,” said Michaela Lawrence Jeffery. “We don’t show our integrity by assassinating the character of those who disagree with us,” stated Dr. Laurence Turner, an Old Testament scholar from Newbold College in England. He read to the group some of the criticisms of The One Project that he had found online and urged his listeners not to respond in the same manner.

Why is focusing on a Christ-centered Adventist faith so controversial, Adventist Today asked one of the planning committee later. “I don’t know. They haven’t talked to me. I just get letters saying, ‘Read this book. Watch this DVD. Then you’ll know.’ I don’t know why they are doing this. People go up to our children and say things that are really offensive and tell them their fathers or mothers are heretics.”

Evidently someone has caught the ear of someone among the General Conference officers. A number of sources have told Adventist Today that an investigation by the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) has been officially requested. Spectrum, the largest journal for Adventist academics, recently reported something similar. When AT contacted the BRI to ask about this, the reporter was told that “they don’t have a report yet. It’s too early in the research process.”

Later, Dr. Ekkehardt Mueller, deputy director of BRI, sent Adventist Today the following statement: “At the request of administration and according to BRI’s work description, the institute is always involved in reviewing documents as well as movements, ministries, and organizations. In most cases a public report is not available.”

Adventist Today asked several members of The One Project steering committee what was the goal of their gatherings. “To revitalize the church, the local churches need to be dowsed afresh every single day with who Jesus Christ is,” said Japhet de Oliveira, senior pastor of the Boulder (Colorado) Adventist church. “The church needs to encourage a vision for the local congregation. We get comfortable with just following a structure that just ticks along. What is Jesus calling us to do?”

“I hope that local congregations will have a healthier experience centered on the priorities of Jesus,” said Pastor Alex Bryan, senior pastor of the Walla Walla University Church. “I hope churches will care more for the poor and worshipping with great vibrancy; that people will go back saying, I want my local community to be filled with the life and teachings and Spirit of Jesus.”

An Adventist Today reporter talked to some of the lay leaders and young adults in the crowd. “This is my fifth year,”
said James Ho. Why does he keep coming back? “To make sure we’re not doing Adventist culture just to be
Adventist; let’s focus on Jesus.” It was “the discussions at the tables” that have attracted Kyle Kuehmichel, an
emergency medical technician and the son of an Adventist pastor. “We need to grow … we need to be looking to
serve those around us, so that our focus is all on Jesus.” In each One Project event the participants sit at round
tables with about a dozen people each and following each sermon there is a time for discussion. This makes the
impact more personal than most preaching events.

Is the upcoming decision about ordination at the next GC Session in July creating an atmosphere of division? Turner
told Adventist Today, “You have to assume the good will of the people with whom you disagree. If you see them as
the enemy … you just get warfare. You’ve got to assume this is your brother or sister in Christ. … If we had a better
way of discussing these matters, we’d have [greater] integrity.”

More than 100 pastors participated in a full day at the end of the session which was specifically for ministers. The
agenda included sessions on preaching, how to deal with the secular culture that is pervasive in both Europe and
North America and the future of The One Project.

“It is disturbing to hear that BRI is being used to investigate initiatives of local churches, institutions and
conferences,” a retired GC staff member told Adventist Today. “That is really not their role. They are not an Adventist
inquisition. If things are moving that direction it is really beyond the authority of GC officers to mandate it.”

When Adventist Today asked the members of The One Project steering committee about contacts from the BRI,
they responded by saying “No comment.” They were all puzzled as to why anyone would question their loyalty to the
Adventist denomination or the 28 Fundamental Beliefs. None of them have any record of dissent. “I am sure you are
wrong or this is just a big misunderstanding,” one pastor stated.
Former Employees Drop Lawsuit against La Sierra University

By AT News Team, Feb. 18, 2015: Three former employees of La Sierra University (LSU) have dropped their lawsuit against the Adventist Church. The lawsuit sought damages for wrongful termination, breach of contract, intentional infliction of emotional distress, and other grievances relating to what the trio claims were unfair coerced resignations from the university in 2011.

The three plaintiffs—Jeffry Kaatz, James Beach and Gary Bradley—were noted LSU employees. At the time of their resignations, Kaatz was LSU’s vice president of development, Beach was dean of the College of Arts and Science, and Bradley was a biology professor.

California Superior Court Judge Edward Webster ruled against the three plaintiffs on March 5, 2014. The three were in the process of appealing the March decision when they decided to drop the lawsuit. With this move, Webster’s summary judgment in favor of La Sierra University and the other defendants stands.

Richard McCune, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, told Adventist Today that the suit was dropped as a matter of practicality. McCune said that he believes the judge ruled incorrectly and that the matter should have gone to a jury. However, “once a case is decided wrongly,” McCune stated, “the rates are very low for getting that reversed in an appellate court. Even though we strongly believe the judge got it wrong, it’s just an analysis of the likelihood of being able to win an appeal.”

Daniel Jackson, president of the North American Division (NAD) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, stated in an NAD news release: “We are grateful that this lawsuit has ended and that the Church and La Sierra University can focus all of our attention and resources to the quality education of our students.” Jackson was named as a defendant in the lawsuit along with Larry Blackmer, NAD Vice President for Education, and Ricardo Graham, president of the Pacific Union of Seventh-day Adventists.

In 2011, the three plaintiffs were asked to resign after a recording of a private conversation between them and Lenny Darnell, a member of the LSU board at the time, was accidentally made public. The conversation included disparaging comments about church administrators and references to consuming alcoholic beverages.

At the time of the conversation, LSU was investigating professors who were accused of teaching evolution in their science classes. The degree of academic independence that Seventh-day Adventist educational institutions should have from the denomination’s administration was a significant aspect of the institution’s analysis. Regardless, it was the recorded conversation rather than the broader academic debate that led directly to the four being asked to resign from their positions with the university.

Although he was originally reluctant to join the suit, Gary Bradley shared with Adventist Today why became a plaintiff. “I was talking with a junior faculty member on campus,” Bradley said. “He said, ‘Gary, my entire life my goal has been to teach in an Adventist college. I have now attained that goal. If you don’t fight this thing, I’m going to spend my life looking over my shoulder.’ I went out and joined the suit.”

Bradley declared that his primary reason for joining the suit was to force institutional change. “I thought that if we won, it would force the Adventist Church hierarchy to leave colleges alone a little bit. I wanted La Sierra to be proudly Adventist but somewhat independent, an arm’s length from the hierarchy,” Bradley said.

With the end of the appeal, Bradley admits this change is not likely, which is a negative outcome for education in his view. “I believe that right now La Sierra and all of Adventist higher education are in dire straights because they’ve got the church hierarchy telling them that they must do one thing, and they’ve got their accrediting association telling
them that they must do something else. They're in trouble. Our lawsuit has not helped.”

Bradley’s concern relates to a letter that the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, LSU’s accrediting body, sent to the university. The letter said that a university could lose its accreditation if it allows external groups or constituencies to determine academic curriculum and policies.

Despite the acrimonious court proceedings, Bradley asserts that the three plaintiffs still value LSU. “We love La Sierra,” he told Adventist Today. “Our problem was with the North American Division and General Conference interference with La Sierra. I personally had been named approximately a year prior to that by the new president of the General Conference, Ted Wilson, as being a bad person needing to be fired because I teach evolution.”

In his defense, Bradley does not deny teaching evolution; however, he is eager to describe his motivation. “I spent 46 years in denominational work in education, always trying to be faith-affirming,” he declared. “I wanted to be faith-affirming for my kids, and I learned the hard way that if you say evolution is all b.s., then when the kids find out what the data is, they think you lied to them. I discovered that being the most faith-affirming was to say to the kids, ‘This is the data. Now you’ll spend the rest of your life wrestling with how to make that fit with your religion. Don’t throw away either one lightly. It’s a tough problem, but wrestle with it.’”
Corporate Connections, Legal Penalties, Big Investments: Adventist Health Ministry Today

By AT News Team, Feb. 16, 2015: Adventist hospitals in Illinois join with Catholic hospitals in a new organization, while Adventist Health joins new corporate arrangements in Oregon and California. At the same time, headlines announce millions of dollars in legal penalties and commitments to new facilities by Adventist health care operations across the United States. Recent events may cause some Adventists to question the denomination's health ministry organizations, but it is business-as-usual with faith-based health institutions in contemporary America.

Four Adventist hospitals in Illinois are joining with five Catholic hospitals to create a more comprehensive and efficient way of delivering health care in the suburbs of Chicago, reported the Daily Herald last week. Adventist Midwest Health has formed a joint company with Alexian Brothers Health System, completing a process that began in June last year and submitted for legal and regulatory approval in October. The new structure “allows the two separate organizations to preserve their respective religious identities and mission priorities, and to integrate operations while maintaining separate ownership of their assets,” the newspaper stated.

The joint arrangement “will provide our communities with high-quality care, while reducing cost and overhead,” said David Crane, chief executive officer of Adventist Midwest Health which is part of Adventist Health System (AHS) headquartered in Florida. The nine hospitals serve communities around Chicago with a total population of 3.8 million and more than 3,000 physicians. This includes the historic Hinsdale Adventist Hospital.

Portland Adventist Hospital has joined with three other hospitals in Oregon’s largest city to create a psychiatric emergency room at one central location. The letter of intent signed recently by the four institutions seeks to open “the state’s first comprehensive behavioral health care center in late 2016,” the Portland Business Journal announced on February 5. It will be called Unity Center and have 101 beds with an construction cost of $50 million, of which one of the collaborating hospitals is committing $10 million while donor organizations and government agencies have committed another $25 million so far. It is unclear what the Adventist share of the cost will be.

A hospital in the small central California town of Lodi recently agreed to come under the control of Adventist Health, the same regional health care nonprofit that operates Portland Adventist Hospital as well as 18 other institutions with a total of 2,700 beds in the three states on the Pacific coast as well as Hawaii. Lodi Memorial Hospital will become the 20th hospital in the system.

Health policy experts say that these kinds of larger corporate arrangements are absolutely necessary in the current economic context in the United States. “Individual stand-alone hospitals simply cannot survive any longer,” a retired health administrator and former government official told Adventist Today.

“Our goal is to create a healthier community,” Rita Waterman, an assistant vice president for Adventist Health, told the Lodi News-Sentinel. “Our mission is to serve our patients … with compassion, dignity and respect. … We are committed to sharing God’s love by providing physical, mental and spiritual healing [but] our ministry is not about proselytizing.” She stated that “every three years our hospitals conduct community needs assessments” from which they plan prevention programs for diabetes, heart disease, obesity, etc.

Adventist Health has committed an investment of over $100 million in the Lodi hospital, the newspaper stated. It will acquire the hospital and all of its related services and assets, as well as its debts and liabilities.

AHS announced last week that it will spend $25 to $30 million to build a new hospital in Sebring, Florida. It will update and increase the size of the 25-bed facility that serves a another small town so that there can be a larger
emergency room and more facilities for doctors’ offices and outpatient clinics, according to a report in the *Tampa Tribune*. Hardee Memorial Hospital was originally opened in 1970 and then closed in the early 1990s before AHS reopened it in 1994.

**Legal Penalties Assessed**

The U.S. government will deduct 1 percent from the Medicare reimbursements to a total of 721 of the hospitals across the country during 2015 because those institutions scored poorly on the prevalence infections and complications that patients acquire while in the hospital. “Of the 49 Adventist hospitals nationwide that were part of the federal [health agency’s] scoring, 10 were penalized,” reported the Kansas Health Institute. One of these was the Shawnee Mission Medical Center which scored the lowest among all the hospitals in the Kansas City metropolitan area.

Also in January, the U.S. Attorney in San Francisco announced that St. Helena Hospital and Adventist Health had agreed to pay $2.25 million “to settle allegations that it submitted false claims to Medicare for certain cardiac procedures,” according to the *Record-Bee* newspaper in Lake County, California. The patients were administered angioplasty on an inpatient basis which was “medically unnecessary [and] should have been treated on a less costly outpatient basis,” according the allegations of a former employee of the hospital. The hospital did not admit guilt although it paid the restitution.

This was not a criminal action, but a civil lawsuit filed under the “whistleblower” provisions of the False Claims Act. The suit was filed by Kacie Carroll who was employed for two months in 2010 as director of the emergency department at the hospital will receive $450,000 out of the settlement, the newspaper stated.

This is “the second time in a year and a half that Adventist Health has agreed to pay the Federal government over litigation brought under the … False Claims Act,” reported *The Sacramento Bee*, the major newspaper in the state capital. “In May 2013, the Adventist chain agreed to pay Federal and state officials $14.1 million to settle claims that is Los Angeles hospital, White Memorial Medical Center, paid inflated fees to a group of doctors who referred patients to the facility. Two doctors who blew the whistle on the alleged arrangement received $2.8 million of that settlement.”

The dynamic, even disruptive change in health care in the U.S. continues to make it very complicated for Adventist health institutions to chart a course in 2015. Flexibility and creativity are essential for the leaders of these institutions which have for more than a century been seen as stable, foundational elements of the Adventist mission in America.

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*Sharing is caring!*
Apps, Games and Learning Tools Featured at Adventist Technology Conference

From ANN, Feb. 16, 2015: The Global Adventist Internet Network conference (GAiN), the annual forum of Seventh-day Adventist technology and communication professionals and enthusiasts, concluded yesterday (Feb. 15). More than 3,800 people in 100 countries viewed the online sessions, the highest attendance yet. Presentations were available in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish.

For the first time, the event was hosted online, with three sessions held per day to accommodate the times zones of a global audience. Past conferences were held in cities such as Dubai, Hong Kong and Baltimore.

Seventh-day Adventist Church Chief Information Officer Nancy Lamoreaux opened the conference by asking how the Church and its members plan to continue embracing technology to spread the gospel. Despite the focus on technology, Lamoreaux emphasized the need to make personal contact in order to change lives.

Presentations and discussions addressed cyber security, app development, geographic software (GIS), online currencies, ministry, education and gaming.

North American leaders previewed a web portal aimed at bolstering distance learning opportunities for ministers, lay leaders and students. The initiative, named the Adventist Learning Community, will enable church entities and schools in North America to share courses and certification resources.

“Distance education for ministerial and educational purposes is a paradigm shift for how our church does business,” noted Adam Fenner, director of the Adventist Learning Community. Fenner said the Adventist Learning Community, which will go online in March at adventistlearningcommunity.com, promised to streamline the way that the Seventh-day Adventist’s North American Division (NAD) offers distance education.

As an example, he noted that five Adventist universities in North America currently offer identical courses online and employ separate staff to support the programming for each. “The quality of the courses would be much better, both in terms of content and media, and the cost to build and deliver the courses would be significantly less for the church as a whole,” Fenner said. Certifications are in the works for Family Ministries, Adult Ministries, Adventist Community Services, Youth Ministries and philanthropy, Fenner announced.

In another presentation, Dean Waterman, who serves as a pastor in Virginia, promoted the model of a multi-site congregation. The concept is one that plants a campus tied to the primary church, jumpstarting the church-planting process. Often, the branch location shares worship services through live-streaming.

Garrett Caldwell, the associate Communication department director for public relations at the Adventist Church world headquarters, participated in a presentation promoting the denomination’s online visual identity standards. In late 2013, the denomination released a corporate Web framework encouraging Church entities and congregations to maintain similar branding.

The identity framework is available at framework.adventist.org. “The identity standard is an extension of our logo. It strengthens our brand,” said Williams Costa Jr., Communication director of the Adventist world church.

Jesse Johnson, president of netAserve, shared about StudyTracker, a Bible study system on the netAdventist platform. StudyTracker works with cards that include a paper USB drive and near field communication, or NFC, to electronically deliver Bible studies. It also offers a smartphone app that handles campaigns and events by offering a scannable QR code to track attendance at meetings.
On the final day of the conference, DP Harris, vice president for information systems at Loma Linda University, promoted creating games for education and ministry. "Our challenge as educators is to create a learning experience that is engaging, challenging and achievable," Harris said. "Games are now on the forefront of reaching people all over the world."

Daryl Gungadoo, research and development engineer for Adventist World Radio, said Adventist World Radio is currently making a game that teaches AWR operations and engineering. Players attempt to send programming from the network’s mega station in Guam to countries throughout Asia by bouncing radio signals off the earth’s ionosphere.

Videos from the five-day conference, including a behind-the-scenes look at how it was produced, will be posted on the website gain.adventist.org.
Students at Three Adventist Campuses: Two Dead, One in a Coma

Corrected Feb. 21. By AT News Team, Feb. 19, 2015: Three unrelated incidents in recent weeks at Adventist colleges and universities have left two young adults dead and a third in a coma. The shocked campus communities have pulled together in prayer and support for the families.

Madison Baird died last Wednesday (Feb. 11) the day after she was struck by a pickup truck while riding a bicycle near the campus of Walla Walla University in the U.S. state of Washington. She was flown to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, reported the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin.

Baird was 20 years of age and a sophomore enrolled in a preprofessional program in nutrition and dietetics with a Spanish major. Her family lived in the local community and she graduated from Walla Walla Valley Academy, the nearby Adventist secondary school. “Stunned students gathered in groups to pray throughout the day,” said the Adventist Review. “A special prayer service was held at noon in front of the main administration building.”

Akim Zhigankov died Tuesday (Feb. 17) after more than a week in the intensive care unit at the hospital in Dasmarinas City, the Philippines. He was 23 years of age, the son of two faculty members at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS), the graduate school that serves much of Asia.

Zhigankov had been working in a project to develop a health retreat facility on Romblon Island in the Philippine Republic. He came home ill and was put in the hospital and his condition became worse, according to a bulletin from AIIAS.

Heather Boulais remains in a coma in a hospital in Lincoln, Nebraska, after a fall while setting up acrobatic equipment in the gymnasium at Union College on January 14. She had surgery on February 8 and her parents reported on February 12 that she has been off the ventilator for at least two days.

Boulais is also 23 years of age and a senior elementary education major from Laguna Niguel, California, according to a report from the college. She is a member of the Gymnaires, the college's acrobatic gymnastic team and was in a safety harness when she fell. Many readers have told Adventist Today that they are part of a network of people praying for her in congregations across North America.

"It is particularly painful when people at the beginning of their adult lives are struck down," a veteran youth worker told Adventist Today. "But when these things happen on an Adventist campus you see how caring everyone can be and the depth of the hope that we have in Jesus."
The Mystery of the Disappeared Record Keeper

by Lawrence G. Downing:

On a recent Saturday night a group of us met to view “The Record Keeper” (TRK)—all eleven episodes with a two-hour run-time. I had viewed the TRK trailer, but that short exposure hardly prepared for the full-blown product. My response to the film, after the credits were completed, was mixed. The occasional violence was graphic. I do not think less bloodshed would have diminished the film’s emotional impact. Other scenes were a challenge to place within the context of the previous ones and those that followed. I strained to follow the dialogue that was overpowered by the sound effects or music. At other times, when little was taking place on the screen, my attention wandered and stayed removed until brought back into focus as the characters began to speak again.

As the story developed, I found it difficult to identify with the characters and was not emotionally caught up in the plot lines. It was fascinating and a challenge to place the film’s action scenes with the underlying documents upon which the storyline was based. A person unfamiliar with scripture and Ellen White’s *The Great Controversy* will be hard-pressed to know why certain scenes were included and why the storyline unfolds as it does. The film is clear: evil is real, but evil does not have the final say. In a closing scene, the film opens the possibility that the beings who sided with the General, Satan, and who were once dedicated to promote and live evil are offered the chance to cross over to the good. This choice is not a biblical option, but the telling of a story does not demand that every presentation have biblical authority. There is room for possibilities and “what-ifs.” The joy and magic in telling a story is to entice the reader to hear old ideas bundled in new wrap.

Having said the above, I found “The Record Keeper” to be one of the most creative projects ever produced within the context of the Adventist church. Powerful segments that juxtapose good and evil demanded attention. The death struggles between the General and his minions and those who have chosen to remain loyal to the Prince catch the viewer’s attention. The fate of the aborigines (human) race is at stake.

The film’s target is not the biblical scholar nor the traditional Adventist member. Look to other media presentations to satisfy these groups. Nor was it the intent to present a replica of what one reads in scripture. The film is an art piece that, like a jazz musician, takes an established and well-articulated theme, turns it about, deconstructs it, and then, at the end, brings order and sense to the finished product. Yes, the producers took liberties and challenged stereotypes. This is the beauty of the film. The producers cobbled together visual and audio effects to shatter expectations and open new vistas of comprehension to create a memorable visceral experience. The one tragedy in the production is that the very organization that funded the film blocked its release. How could such a misguided decision gain traction? This is the great mystery! Did one (or a group of) influential, i.e., generous donor(s) demand that the film be quarantined? Did the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) objections have veto authority? As an aside, I find the objections from BRI an organizational embarrassment. Under several headings BRI enumerated their objections to the film. Examples:

**VIEW OF GOD AND HIS PERFECT CREATION:** The beauty and love permeating God’s perfect universe is never really represented. The original creation of the earth is never described, nor is its eventual re-creation, and there is almost as much conflict in heaven as on earth.

**VIEW OF CHRIST AND THE ATONEMENT:** Having characters in the film say of Jesus, “He’s not human,” and “He cannot die” denies the foundational doctrine of Jesus as fully human. He is both God and Man.

**VIEW OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:** The Holy Spirit is the one member of the Godhead who has no...
visible form. Not only is it blasphemous to depict the Holy Spirit as an angel, but to depict the Holy Spirit as a woman suggests the pagan notion that the Father has a consort and that the Son is the product of that union.

(For a full reading of BRI's objections, see GOOGLE, Biblical Research Institute response to The Record Keeper.)

Gentlemen, TRK is not a theological document. It is not a Confessional Statement. TRK tells a story, and a downright good one! Imagination? Yes. Bending of biblical accounts? True. Blasphemy? Be serious!

BRI members would have pulled their learned-beards in anguish and loathing had they been asked to pass judgment on the Man from Galilee’s story of a Rich man and Lazarus. And the story of the crooked manager? Veto! The story commends a businessman’s duplicity, so scratch it!

Put aside the message that the veto to TRK project sent to the Adventist artistic community. Ignore the million or so of our (tithe?) dollars that the General Conference spent on the production. Consider what might have been. The current Adventist media productions, whether by design or by default, appeal to the middle-aged-and-above traditional Adventist believer, and they have a relatively poor track record at doing this. I’m part of that demographic, and I watch none of the current Adventist programs, nor do thousands of others like me.

TRK targets a dramatically different audience. The very group that church administrators time and again claim they long to reach and the ones they lament are walking in droves out the church back door are the target audience. Does TRK catch their attention? How did test audiences respond to TRK? I don’t know. What I do know is that a creative package has been assigned to the trash heap because one person or a few persons decided that the project did not reflect traditional Adventist expectation.

In the fall 2014 *Spectrum*, Tompaul Wheeler interviewed Pacific Union College alum Paul Kim. Kim shared with Wheeler his views on Adventists and the media. Kim, a former senior producer of Adventist Media Productions at the Media Center and now associate professor of documentary film at Andrews University, observed that the biggest issue within the Adventist structure is a fundamental misunderstanding of the medium. “I think the reason why we fear what I see as a renaissance in visual culture happening around us is because we really do not understand it. Most of our leaders see those things not as a core part of who we are and how life’s truths come to be known, or even as elements that fulfill our innate desires and ability to create, but rather as some kind of trump card handed down from the divine to help fulfill the apocalypse.

“And so rather than studying and seeing those visual and narrative idioms for what they are, we are truly ignorant about both their origins and processes, using them as replication tools to regurgitate what it is that we are already doing” (p.37).

And what we fear, and what we do not understand, we castigate and crush. It might have been a great run, TRK. But “might-have-beens don’t count for much, do they?

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The Ultimate Form of Child Abuse

by Nic Samojluk, February 17, 2015: A recently created video by Loma Linda University [LLU] shows that physical, emotional, and sexual abuse in the Adventist community matches that of society in general. The same is true about the incidence of abortion. You can watch the dramatic testimony of several victims of child abuse and how they managed to overcome these dark experiences of their childhood by clicking on the link provided below.[1]

A Study Dealing With the Ultimate Form of Child Abuse?

As I was watching this video, I wondered if LLU researchers will ever decide to carry out a similar study about the ultimate kind of abuse: abortion. My reasoning is as follows: If child abuse is painful and tragic, what can be as hurtful and damaging as the dismemberment of the body of an unborn child? The victim of child abuse usually survives; the victim of abortion has no such hope. The act is irreversible and final!

Our Adventist Moral Blind Spot

Is such a study involving the ultimate form of child abuse likely to take place in the near future at our LLU? I don’t think so! My reason is as follows: As a community of faith, we have slowly developed a blind moral spot regarding abortion. This started approximately half a century ago.

The Strong Pro-life Position of Our Adventist Pioneers

Most Adventists are aware that our pioneers were definitely pro-life, as evidenced by the statements made by some of the leaders of the early Adventist movement.[2] A classic example is a paragraph taken from an article authored by a pro-lifer that James White, the founder of our publishing work, included in his book *Solemn Appeal*, in which he condemned the practice of abortion in the strongest terms: “Few are aware of the fearful extent to which this nefarious business, this worse-than-devilish practice, is carried on in all classes of society! Many a woman determines that she will not become a mother, and subjects herself to the vilest treatment, committing the basest crime to carry out her purpose. And many a man, who has as many children as he can support, instead of restraining his passions, aids in the destruction of the babes he has begotten. The sin lies at the door of both parents in equal measure; for the father, although he may not always aid in the murder, is always accessory to it, in that he induces, and sometimes even forces upon the mother the condition which he knows will lead to the commission of the crime.”[3]

How Did Adventists Manage to Jump Over the Life Fence?

The hard question is: How did a pro-life church manage to jump over the life fence into the pro-choice/pro-abortion camp? A fence so high that even Rome did not dare to scale it! And how did we dare to profit from the violation of the sixth commandment of the Decalogue, written by God’s own hand on two tables of stone, and the violation of our own Guidelines on Abortion?

In order to answer this question, we need to remember the days when the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was so hot that the symbolic hands of the Atomic Clock were moved to three minutes before midnight. The fear of an atomic Armageddon was augmented by the uncontrolled demographic explosion in the country of China, and many world leaders warned that this population explosion was to be feared more than an atomic war. This obsession with the uncontrolled population growth was complicated by the sudden legalization of abortion in the state of Hawaii, where our Castle Memorial Hospital was located. The non-Adventist physicians at said medical facility demanded the right to offer abortion on demand, and our North American Division president, Neal Wilson,
caved in to the pressure when he made the following public declaration:

“Though we walk the fence, Adventists lean toward abortion rather than against it. Because we realize we are confronted by big problems of hunger and overpopulation, we do not oppose family planning and appropriate endeavors to control population.”[4]

The Inevitable Result of This Change of Policy

Such a drastic change in Church policy regarding the sacredness of human life resulted in the participation of many Adventist medical institutions in the profitable business of killing human beings at the most vulnerable season of their lives. Here is a list of medical institutions that participated in this new facet of medical service which involved killing in addition to healing:

“Castle Medical Center, Hadley Memorial Hospital, Hanford Community Hospital, Loma Linda University Medical Center, Porter Memorial Hospital, Portland Adventist Medical Center, Shady Grove Adventist Hospital, Shawnee Mission Medical Center, Sierra Vista Hospital, Walla Walla General Hospital, Washington Adventist Hospital, and White Memorial Medical Center.”[5]

At least five Adventist institutions admitted that their abortion services included elective abortion. This, of course, was done with full knowledge of the leadership of the Church and with total impunity,[6] which made Adventist pro-lifers wonder about the apparent double standard applied to abortion: How can we declare that the Adventist Church does not condone abortions on demand,[7] but allow our own medical institutions to profit from the same? Isn’t this what Pilate did when he ruled that Jesus was innocent of any crime, but ordered his execution anyway?

The Thrashing of the Hippocratic Oath

This change in policy regarding the sacredness of human life explains LLU’s abandonment of the “Do No Harm” policy found in the Hippocratic Oath [HO] that had been in high esteem for two millennia in the West. Many Adventists are not aware of this change. Compare the so called “Do no harm” contained in the HO with the morally neutral statement contained in the LLU “Physicians Oath.”

“I will not give a lethal drug to anyone if I am asked, nor will I advise such a plan; and similarly I will not give a woman a pessary to cause an abortion.”[8]

“I will maintain the utmost respect for human life. I will not use my medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity. I will respect the rights and decision of my patients.”[9]

Notice that the abortion prohibition was replaced by the “will respect the rights and decision of my patients.” The obvious purpose of this drastic change was to allow for the provision of abortion services in our LLU medical facility. Seemingly no one has recorded a formal protest against such a fundamental alteration of our traditional respect for human life, except for one LLU professor: Ingrid Blomquist, M.D., an associate professor in the School of Medicine:

“Dr. Blomquist is Board certified in Internal Medicine and Infectious Diseases. She has been elected a Fellow of the American College of Physicians and a member of the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society. Being a Hippocratic physician, she has taken, and continues to believe in the principles of, the Hippocratic Oath. …”[10]

Conclusion

Considering all of the above, my conclusion is that there is an urgent need to restudy our policy of abortion and a need to pay attention to the ultimate form of child abuse: abortion. Yes, even considering that there is money to be made from the killing of innocent human beings who are eagerly waiting to see the light of day.

I am not calling for windowdressing—this has already been done with great success! I am calling for a radical treatment for this moral cancer that is threatening the vitality of our God-given mission to the world. I am calling for
the trashing of our “Guidelines on Abortion,” and the restoring of the Hippocratic Oath.

There is no need for any guidelines that negate the crystal clear prohibition contained in the sixth commandment of the Decalogue. God’s unambiguous directive needs no redefinition! We need to restore all ten of God’s rules for human behavior to the place of honor they originally had when the Adventist movement was born!

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References


• 2
• 6
Mining

by Andy Hanson, February 13, 2015:  Reader, Over the last few months I have accumulated a stack of magazines containing quotes taken from authors and readers of the *Adventist Review*, *Adventist World*, and *Ministry* Magazine.* All could have provided the stimulus to create an AT blog.

However, I hit upon the idea of sharing them with you on the off chance that you too might become fascinated enough to mine the nuggets of theological profundity and silliness that I find fascinating. These Adventist publications deserve our financial support, praise, and/or critical reviews. Our input is required if they are to faithfully reflect the many facets of Adventism.


To this thankfulness we should also add the millions of other Christians who today love God’s Word and share it on a daily basis. Like their ancestors, they also continue to bring the light of God’s Word to many people who are in darkness and in need of hope. Although we call them ‘non-Adventists,’ they are Christians, and many of them would not think of calling us ‘non-Something.’ Maybe one day we will grow in our understanding of our Christian heritage and realize we are not alone in this world to love God’s Word.

**Cindy Bailey, *Ministry Magazine*, September 2014, p. 22**

I do not have any problem with the idea that God may self-limit His omnipotence in order to allow sinful humans to exist…Certainly He must constrain Himself in order for us to survive to make choices. So, if God is in charge yet limits Himself in order to give us free will, we find it reasonable to think that bad things can happen that are not His choosing, His ideal will.


Summary of the Argument: Paul states a principle: The law reigns over us as long as we live (Rom 7:1). Once we die we are free from the law.

**Derek J. Morris, *Ministry Magazine*, May 2014, p. 5**

Citing the research of David Kinnaman, the authors note six grievances that Millennials have with the Adventist Church: intolerant of doubt, elitist in its relationships, antiscience in its beliefs, overprotective of its members, shallow in its teaching, and repressive of differences.


So, just as the sacrifice justifies God’s prerogative to forgive (Rom. 3:25, 26), some sort of examination is necessary in order to demonstrate that forgiveness has been truly and faithfully accepted. Only when both sides of forgiveness...
are clearly and fully vindicated can the blame—the legal responsibility—be finally taken away from God Himself.


When the Argentinian Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J., was elected as pope, one of his first official acts was to pray to Mary. No, the pope has not been converted. And all the indications are that the Adventist interpretation of Revelation 13 still holds true. The new pope—amid all legitimate sympathy for him—has made it even a bit more credible.


It is breathtaking, friend, how much in this last year the pope has reached out to Protestants, Jews, Mormons, Muslims, Hindus—as well as powerful government leaders. He is now consolidating his global influence, yet most people don’t know their Bibles well enough to understand what is happening. Together we can change that!


Research on religious coping finds that while employing positive religious beliefs (e.g., relying on God for strength and guidance) is related to better health and adaptation, negative forms of religious coping (wondering if one has been abandoned by God; believing that one’s illness is punishment for sins or lack of spirituality) are associated with poorer psychological adjustment and physical health. A study of medically ill patients found that individual with religious doubts and struggles had an elevated risk of death.


If all the authors did was to use the information where people checked whether they were vegetarians or not when they checked in at the clinic as conclusion that vegetarians have low sperm counts, then the conclusions are invalid.


I’m not sure that Jesus ever said to ‘love the sinner, hate the sin.’ Instead, His teachings were more along the lines of ‘love the sinner and hate your own sin.”


For many years, membership in the church was based upon a public acceptance of the 13 baptismal vows. The eleventh stated, ‘Do you know and understand the fundamental Bible principles as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church ordering your life in harmony with these principles?’ The vow did not require the member to believe the Fundamental beliefs, he only had to know and understand them and follow the external practices.

As we evaluate the data, we see things that are problems for creationists and we see things that are problems for evolutionists. No one can claim that they believe one more than the other, because it is not transparent; it leaves the possibility of choice.


The North American Division added fewer new church members in 2013 compared with the previous year, continuing a gradual decline for the fourth year in a row.

**Cliff Goldstein, *Adventist Review*, April 17, 2014, p. 21**

I long to enter the city of God as a conqueror, I really do. But as ‘a culprit barely pardoned’? I’ll take it, for even that’s more than I deserve.

*The Doug Batchelor quote is the one exception.*
What I’ve Learned about Sin from Some Uber-Liberals I know

By Debbonnaire Kovacs, Feb. 18, 2015

As I write this, it’s Ash Wednesday. I used to have a vague idea about Lent (you gave something up for 40 days) but I really never knew anything about Ash Wednesday. When I began attending a local multi-denominational church in my town I was, as I’ve mentioned before, going through an especially traumatic time in my life. So, as Lent neared, I decided I’d try participating fully in this season of sorrow and reflection, and see what blessings I might find.

Years before, I had learned to love the writings of Lutheran pastor Walter Wangerin, and I remembered being struck by something he wrote: words to the effect that those who don’t go through the sorrow of the season before Easter may not fully understand and participate in the joy of that resurrection. “If you don’t weep with the women, you can’t sing with the angels." Something like that.

My first Ash Wednesday was an eye-opener. Or more correctly, a heart-opener. For one thing, did you know that the ashes of Ash Wednesday are created from the palms of the previous year’s Palm Sunday? They are saved, and in a ceremony before Lent begins, they are burned to ash. That represents the fact that our highest praises and finest acts are, as the Old Testament prophet puts it, like filthy rags; that is, our best intentions soon turn to ashes.

Those palm ashes are then mixed with olive oil, which throughout the history of God’s people has represented the Holy Spirit and grace. This represents forgiveness and the chance to start again. The “imposition” of the ashes is received in a cross form on the forehead or hand. I find this incredibly meaningful, especially given the significance of forehead and hand as thought and action that I have always been taught in the context of Revelation and the end times.

Before the Ash Wednesday service, the pastor had laid out a simple square labyrinth on the floor of the fellowship hall with blue painter’s tape. That night at the service, he took a bowl of oil-bathed ashes, and quietly walked to the center of the labyrinth, pausing to pray at each turn. Once he reached the center, he stayed where he was, and each person present was invited to walk to the center, receive the ashes or a blessing, (their choice), and quietly walk out of the labyrinth. After we were all finished, the pastor walked the rest of the way out.

There was music and prayer and fellowship. There were laughter and tears. But the beauty I remember most was in that ash ceremony.

The weeks of Lent followed, and I struggled, with my hand in Christ’s, through some very dark days, but the light of hope shone around me. Then came Maundy Thursday.

That same pastor preached with an intensity I either have not heard before, or have not responded to so strongly, possibly in part because of those weeks of preparation. It was only a 5-10 minute homily, so it’s more deeply imprinted on my mind than any wearisome 30-60-minute sermon could be. “There he is, on that cross, there by choice!" The pastor rocked up on his toes and clutched the sides of the pulpit, leaning forward earnestly and catching the eyes of his listeners in the dim candlelight. “There by my choice! There by your choice! There because we choose to create and participate in systems that refuse freedom or dignity to God’s created and beloved children! There because we prefer lists of rules to love or grace!”
I cried.

Everyone cried.

It wasn’t until later that I realized how odd it was. I was always taught that “those liberals” don’t have a sense of sin—that they are all about conditional morality and situational ethics. That they don’t know God. That they are lost. Probably. “We can’t judge, of course,” those who teach this stuff would say righteously.

Tonight (if I can get to my church through a foot and a half of snow) I’ll receive the ashes on my forehead. My beloved pastor will look into my eyes and acknowledge that I am a sinner. He will look into my eyes and remind me that God’s grace is bigger.

Way bigger.

Amen.
The Living Project: The Power of Story

By Debbonnaire Kovacs, Feb 18, 2015

One Sabbath School class at the Glendale City Seventh-day Adventist Church in Los Angeles, California, is all about the power of story. The class is called The Living Project. Here is a photo of the sign outside its door. (The partial word reads “Adult.”)

Over the three years the class has met, some have come and gone, finding the group not for them, but a core group of six to eight have met continuously, and the group usually averages about ten or twelve people. One of the three core leaders will have prepared a topic of discussion, and will set the ball rolling, usually by asking the group what has impressed them during the past week, concerning the topic du jour. It could be something from the last meeting, that has been perking away all week, or it could be any incident or emotion from someone’s daily life. The discussion takes wing almost immediately, as individuals share stories and listen to each other with love. It’s not uncommon that the leader will let go of the prepared topic entirely, trusting that the Spirit is leading where they need to go that day.

The result is a circle of trust that is quite tangible in the room. When I visited recently, I felt it strongly, and would love to go every week. The topic this week was the fear that prevents the true joy God plans for our lives. In less than an hour, we ranged from bereavement to infantile development of emotion to a new ministry someone was starting. I left filled with joy and whispering, “This was great, this was so great!” I want to begin a Living Project class at my church. So I called the man who led the group the day I was there and is one of the founders of the gathering, and asked for more information.

Naturally, he told a story.

Michael Helm reports that he was raised in a mixture of Mormonism and Catholicism until he was about sixteen or seventeen. From that point, he became interested in Eastern mysticism, experimenting with Buddhism and the writings of Deepak Chopra, among others. Then he became interested in Scientology and Dianetics, studying these systems throughout his twenties. He left them behind around the age of thirty, describing his time in Scientology as “turbulent” and saying that he felt the need for a sort of spiritual “cleaning out.”

In his teens at school, he had been good friends with a girl named Ingrid, and although they had gone their separate ways, they now found each other “through a fluke, on social media.” They picked up their relationship, “at least 150 pages” to each other in emails over the course of six months, “fell truly in love, and got married a few months after that.”

“Being with her,” Helm says, “sort of rekindled and sparked an interest in going back to and understanding what I considered my roots, which was Christianity.” He asked to go to church with her and her family. At the time, they were attending the Vallejo Drive SDA church, and Helm was introduced to Smuts Van Rooyen. “We hit it off, and began to study together weekly, asking all kinds of tough questions, and it became a really neat relationship. He went straight to the New Testament with me, and we tried to tackle some of Paul’s stuff.

“He was a spiritual mentor for me. Our conversations were about my relationship with God more than denominational discussions. We never had any of those! Smuts’ thing was radical grace and a person coming to a
place where they would encounter Christ in a space not unlike the song Amazing Grace. I think his hope was that people would find Christ in that way. His confidence, his faith was in the grace."

Because of his friendship with Van Rooyen, and because of the things he learned and the growth he experienced, Helm was baptized into the Adventist church by Van Rooyen, but he felt, and continued to feel for a long time thereafter, that something important was still missing from his life.

"I felt like something wasn’t finished in me. I didn’t by any means want to invalidate the work Christ had done, but… I didn’t feel the profound change in my character that I thought I would…. I felt a void, a gap."

Helm reports that he almost reached despair, and began to pray fervently about his relationship, or rather the lack of relationship that he felt, with Christ. "I thought, I have this extraordinary relationship with my wife. We are soulmates. Can’t I at least have that much with Christ? Can’t I know him on a personal level, at least as well as I do my wife?"

He shared his concerns with Ingrid, and she felt the same lack. They both prayed earnestly to be led to a deeper relationship.

It was about this time (about 2007-8) that Helm discovered the form of Jewish mysticism called the Kabbalah, sometimes called “the soul of the Torah,” and Chassidut, called “the soul of the Kabbalah.” For him, the doorway to a closer and more loving and joyful relationship with God began to open as he studied these readings.

Helm makes a point of cautioning, “When one begins to search for the wisdom of Kabbalah and or Chassidut, many different ‘schools’ can be found, many of which claim to be authentic [that is, authentic Jewish sources]; and perhaps many of them are, to a greater or lesser degree, authentic. For me, I’ve found authentic sources when my love for God is strengthened as a result of my engagement with those sources.” (Interested readers will find some links that Helm recommends at the end of this article.) He also stresses that this may not be the route for all people, but that all should continue praying for that depth of relationship, trusting God to lead them.

By the summer and fall of 2011, Michael and Ingrid were beginning to come to a place “where there was a real nice synthesis happening in our hearts and minds. When you can come up with analogies between the spiritual and the physical, you’re really beginning to understand at a deep level.” They were beginning to long to share the treasures they’d found. Not only that, they were feeling an urge to share, which they felt came from the Holy Spirit. They had a new pastor, Todd Leonard, "and he seemed just bold enough to allow us to start group where they could study these concepts."

When they asked Pastor Leonard about it, they were surprised when he said, “Wow, that’s great! It just so happens I have others telling me the same thing, and I want to start a different kind of group, too!”

So they met, about a half dozen people at first, to hammer out what sort of group they wanted. They knew they didn’t want argument and debate. They didn’t want a person to share something, only to have another person say, “Well, I disagree with that," and begin to propound his or her own theory of “correct” theology. What they wanted was to feel connected. To tell their stories.

“We realized all of us who had come together to start this group had personal stories. That would probably be the launching for us. The concept of personal storytelling. We wanted our group to feel safe and to build confidence that this was a place where we could share. Perhaps through this very personal sharing, we would come to find and realize a connection between all of us. We felt that ultimately, in that connection, we would find our Creator,” says Helm.

They came up with the name, and one member came up with “this awesome statement” which now forms the body of their sign: “Telling my story, listening to your story, living our story.” And from the beginning, they met in a circle. “Like a cell, like a living thing. The circle has a center, but none of us sits there—the center is nucleus, and the nucleus is God."
Sites to explore:

http://astillsmallvoice.org

Kabbalistic Writings On The Nature Of Masculine And Feminine

http://www.neirot.com
Andraé Crouch Dies

From news release, Feb 4, 2015  [Editor’s note: Adventists, at least those of "a certain age," will remember Andraé Crouch and his music. Crouch’s work was and is popular among all churches, but some songs, particularly “Soon and Very Soon,” were especially suited to Adventists and were sung constantly on Adventist campuses. This man and his egalitarian ideals will be missed. DLK]

Andraé Crouch 72, a gospel composer and singer whose music appears in many hymnals, died January 8 after suffering a heart attack.

Among his most well-known compositions are “My Tribute,” “Soon and Very Soon,” and “Through it All.”

Crouch, an African-American artist who performed at Billy Graham crusades, became popular in white churches first and later among black audiences, said Bil Carpenter, author of Uncloudy Days: The Gospel Music Encyclopedia.

“This generation doesn't have any idea that some of the songs they sing every Sunday in church are songs Andraé Crouch wrote,” Carpenter said.

Crouch also contributed to recordings by Madonna and Michael Jackson and movie scores such as The Lion King and Free Willy. He collaborated with Quincy Jones on The Color Purple movie soundtrack.

Crouch became pastor of New Christ Memorial Church of God in Christ in 1995. His father founded the suburban Los Angeles congregation. He broke with his denomination’s tradition in 1998 when he ordained his twin sister, Sandra Crouch, and named her copastor.

“God’s agenda has no gender," Crouch told Religion News Service then.

Crouch won seven Grammys for his work as a soloist and with others. Crouch’s most recent album, Journey, was released in 2011 and reached no. 3 on Billboard’s Gospel Albums chart.

Anthea Butler, professor of religious studies and Africana studies at the University of Pennsylvania, said Crouch was influential in the 1970s when churches were making a transition from gospel choirs to more soloists.

“He was right there on the cusp of all that," she said. —Adelle M. Banks, Religious News Service
In All Vicissitudes...

Photos and words by Debbonaire Kovacs, Feb 18, 2015  

*In all the vicissitudes of life, God is there…*  
*Picture # 1 is where I was on Feb. 13 (Los Angeles, CA); Picture #2 is where I was on Feb. 16 (home in Kentucky)!*