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**Spectrum Ultraviolet Arts Fest (ANNOUNCEMENT):** An ultraviolet art festival is coming up September 12 and 13, in the Los Angeles area (Glendale City Church). Mark the date.

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How Accurate a Record are the Official Minutes of the GC Session?

By Dennis Hokama, August 17, 2015: Those who have only the official minutes of the 12th Business Meeting of the 60th General Conference session in San Antonio, Texas, as recorded in the July 10, 2015, General Conference Bulletin, will not get a view of the intensity and acrimony of the debate that actually took place over women’s ordination. The flashpoint of the session was when former Dr. Jan Paulsen, a former GC president, made a plea for a “Yes” vote half way through the afternoon session. This was followed by a parade of no less than eight points of order, six of which were made by delegates from the global south protesting against Paulsen’s advocacy.

Of these eight points of order, only the last one, a request for prayer to calm tensions by Lisa Burrow, a delegate from North America, has been preserved in the official record. In the GC Bulletin, published by the Adventist Review, they appear immediately after Paulsen’s speech. The seven points of order that preceded it are deleted. Without that context, her words come across like a non-sequitur.

Here are Paulsen’s words followed by Burrows words just as they appear in the official minutes:

Paulsen: I appeal to my brothers and sisters to vote “yes” on the motion before us. A “no” vote will cause rupture and serious damage to our global church.

Let me say this: I have served our church in ministry for 55 years. Most of these years have been in senior leadership roles. I’ve lived and served the church, from Africa, in Europe, and the global church for our world headquarters here in North America. And just for the record, let me say that the spirit that guided me during the years I provided leadership for the church did not leave me when I left office.

I believe that I know this church, this global church, well. I know what it is that holds us together. I know also many of the tension points when cultures meet that cause difficulties for us. But we as a church can overcome these things.

I’ll be clear about it. It has been stressed by several speakers what we are really voting on today. It is not the question of who has won the argument for ordination or not ordination. This is a question of trust.

We have leadership established around the world in every one of the 13 divisions. They work in counsel together. They also work in close counsel with General Conference leadership. They pray, they search the scriptures, they seek the Spirit’s guidance, and the Spirit is guiding them. Do we trust them enough, under the guidance of the Spirit, to know what is good for the church in their particular part of the world?

Let me say to you, my brothers and sisters from Africa: Do you trust your leaders, elected leaders, from Africa to give the best leadership for the life and mission of the church in Africa? If you do, vote “yes.”

I say to you, my brothers and sisters from South America: Do you trust your elected leaders to provide reliable, good, Spirit-driven, Spirit-inspired leadership to the live and witness of our church in South America? Then vote “yes.”

The same applies to North America and to Europe. We need to trust each other to get together and to vote “yes” on this motion.

Voting “no” will damage the church. I am fearful of what will happen if we do not allow the church to go forward on this. So I say to you, please do not let delegates from major segments of our church return to their fields bruised and bleeding and confused and disenfranchised because they were being driven by this community live a life somehow...
judged by this community not to be worthy of the responsibility that they have.

It is important, I think, that we empower our delegates, allow them to go back home and know that they have the right and the empowerment of this body to respond under the Spirit’s guidance to God as to how they can best lead the church.

We are struggling in some parts of the world. We are struggling badly to try to hold the church together, to engage young and old, men and women, in the mission and ministry of the church. We need everybody’s involvement.

We are bleeding in many ways. We’ve got to stop this. We are losing so many of our youth and young professionals. They have problems the moral integrity of the church, and they say, “Why is the church having problems with this matter? The public does not. It’s not a problem to the public. Why should it be to the church?”

And there is no biblical injunction that stops us. We have to fix this one.

Please, brothers and sisters, I believe that it is the will of God that we should enable the church in every part of the world to make the decisions that are best applicable in the part where they live without being a violation of the will of God. Thank you.

Lisa Burrow: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can sense, as you can, that the tension has risen in the room. And I’m wondering if this would be an appropriate time to pause for prayer. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. [Excerpt from page 51 of the July 10, 2015 General Conference Bulletin]

The Hole in the Record

There is a gap of several minutes between Paulson’s last word and Burrow’s first words because seven embarrassing points of order have simply been deleted. While Adventist Today does not have a recording of the session, a paraphrase of each point of order that was deleted from the minutes immediately following Paulsen’s comments was made at the time by an observer: (The Ryan in this dialog is Dr. Michael Ryan, a GC vice president who chaired the business meeting.)

Point of Order 1; K. Frank from IAD: Mr. Chairman, the person who has a reserved slot should be neutral!

Ryan: The chair has the privilege of reserving a slot for a person to make statements as they see fit. I stand on that privilege.

Point of Order 2; Gillett from IAD: Mr. Chairman, the insertion of President Paulsen changes the order of presenters that has been established.

Point of Order 3; Prince Nqandu from SID: Mr. Chairman, President Paulsen’s appealing to African and South American division delegates was inappropriate! (clapping)

Point of Order 4; J. Diaz from IAD: Mr. Chairman, Former President Paulsen had to be neutral!

Point of Order 5; Berit Elkjael from TED: Mr. Chairman, if the applause from the audience continues, then all the observers should be expelled and the session should continue with only the delegates present.

Point of Order 6; J. Perez from IAD: Mr. Chairman, President Paulsen should not be allowed to influence the body!

Point of Order 7; Ikeqwuonu from WAD: Mr. Chairman, I call the question!

Ryan: You are not allowed to make a motion on a point of order.
**Point of Order 8; Lisa Burrow from NAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can sense, as you can, that the tension has risen in the room. And I’m wondering if this would be an appropriate time to pause for prayer. …

**Ryan:** Thank you. And I think that is something very, very advisable. I would like for everybody to pray silently. And we will pause for a period of time.

Some of the statements make reference to numerous outbreaks of cheering and applause every time Paulsen’s comments were condemned. This continued despite numerous attempts by Ryan in the chair to stop it, and this is what finally prompted Burrows to ask for prayer, and for Ryan to eagerly accept her suggestion.

Gillett was complaining that Paulsen upset the alternating sequence of pro and con speakers that had been established by the chair. Gillett was apparently confused about the sequence up to that point because of intrusive points of order. Notes taken by an Adventist Today reporter at the time indicate that the previous speaker (omitting points of order) was Pastor Louis Torres who advocated a “no” vote.

Gillett’s complaint did anticipate the violation of sequence that occurred following Paulsen’s comments. According to notes taken by an Adventist Today reporter at the time, the next speaker following the prayer break was G. Townsend from SPD who recommended a “Yes” vote on the basis that “we should remain united in mission” and do not need to dictate methods. But the GC Bulletin minutes fix this sequence problem by simply deleting Townsend’s comments entirely. According to the minutes in the GC Bulletin, the first speaker after prayer is Sam Larmie who advocated a “no” vote. (See page 51 of the July 10 GC Bulletin.)

Even prior to Paulsen’s speech, Adventist Today reporters counted 21 additional points of order that are omitted from the minutes of that meeting. Adventist Today has not made any study of past documentation, nor is it even clear that the archives would contain sufficient documentation to prove the point, but the question comes to mind: Are these the most heavily redacted minutes of GC Session in the modern era? Or, is this typical of the record of previous sessions. And, if the record has so many deletions is it a reliable representation of the discussion that was carried on at the Session?
Adventists in Myanmar Aid Communities Devastated by Flooding

From ANN, August 18, 2015: As monsoon rains continue in flood-devastated Myanmar, Adventists throughout the country are responding to the overwhelming needs. Current national news reports indicate the death toll has passed 100 and almost one million people have been affected, a number of whom were already displaced before the flooding.

The Myanmar Union Mission (MYUM) has organized the Central Emergency Disaster Response Committee (CEDRC) to implement Adventist relief work through various small groups. Last week they assisted 110 families in upper Myanmar, and this week relief teams are in the areas surrounding Yangon and in the hard-hit Ayeyarwaddy region.

Adventist schools, churches and individual members are also contributing through fundraising, relief supply donations and on-site relief efforts.

Yangon Adventist Seminary (YAS) students collected $400 USD in funds for students at their sister institution, Upper Myanmar Adventist Seminary, located in Kalaymo, which is in one of the regions declared under a state of emergency. Local churches across Myanmar have donated funds, food items, clothing and ready-to-eat meals. An Adventist restauranteur donated food boxes for all relief teams so they could continue their work in disaster areas.

A team from Adventist World Radio has also joined the efforts by partnering with YAS teachers and students. On August 13 they delivered relief supplies and provide support to an isolated village 170 miles from the nation’s capital of Yangon.

Water continues to cover the village’s roads, houses, schools and jetty. Of the 109 families there, more than 500 people have been affected. The flood destroyed their homes as well as the rice paddy fields which serve as their source of livelihood. According to the villagers, the Adventist group was the first to arrive with assistance.

Meanwhile, on the same day in southern Myanmar, Ayeyarwaddy Mission (AM) President Khin Maung Latt, Executive Secretary A One Thein and other relief team members also distributed food items. As part of a MYUM’s overall strategic plan to assist both community and church members, the AM team focused that day’s efforts on a village where more than 70 members live.

With the effects of the flood devastation challenging relief efforts, groups such as the Adventist denomination and ADRA have enormous opportunities to assist as many survivors as they can. While it may seem that the response is limited in comparison to the overwhelming needs, Adventist church leaders in Myanmar believe that Adventists there can still make a powerful impact in survivors’ lives through an organized, compassionate response.

Myanmar is one of the 14 countries within the Southern Asia-Pacific Division. With Buddhism as the main religion, it is home to 230 Adventist churches and over 28,000 Adventists.

For current news about ADRA Myanmar’s activities, please go to https://www.facebook.com/AdventistDevelopmentAndReliefAgencyMyanmar. Donations can be given through ADRA International at www.adra.org.
The Adventist News Network (ANN) is the official news service of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.
Seven Campaign Against Abuse Transitions to enditnow

From News Release, August 20, 2015: Adventist Risk Management (ARM), the risk management company for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, is transitioning its child abuse prevention campaign to the enditnow campaign, led by the Women’s Ministries department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The move will enhance the resources provided by the enditnow campaign and expand its focus to children in distress. The transition will be completed this fall.

“We’re grateful that ARM is sharing its resources with us. This is a meaningful contribution to our mission to protect women and children around the world from abuse and neglect,” said Heather-Dawn Small, director of Women’s Ministries for the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. “It is a natural progression in our journey to reach not only women in trouble but their children as well.”

Launched in 2012, the Seven Campaign raised awareness about child abuse, including bullying, neglect, physical and sexual abuse. The transition comes as leaders at ARM felt enditnow would be a better platform to share preventive resources globally. enditnow is a well-known and established initiative that has called attention to the plight of women around the world who suffer in silence against physical and emotional abuse.

“We’ve seen that enditnow has impacted the lives of many women and we want this important focus to expand to children who are in danger,” said Bob Kyte, president of ARM. “Our mission is to encourage risk management and any way we can help other ministries of the Church protect the most vulnerable.”

To learn more about enditnow and its digital resources, visit www.enditnow.org. Also, to learn how to implement a campaign in a local congregation, go to www.slideshare.net/jive07/how-to-implement-the-enditnow-campaign.
Religious Liberty Gathering Considers Peace-Making Power of Religion

From ANN, August 19, 2015: A group of scholars, lawyers and religious freedom advocates met last week to challenge a widespread belief that religion is primarily a divisive force in society, fueling tension and violence. The 17th annual “Meeting of Experts,” organized by the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA), brought together some 20 academics at Pepperdine University School of Law in Malibu, California, to consider the role of religion in current global conflicts, and to focus on ways that faith can, instead, be a powerful force for peacemaking and conflict resolution.

“We need to use faith anchored in forgiveness and reconciliation,” said Ambassador Robert A. Seiple, a former United States Ambassador at large for Religious Freedom, and current IRLA president. “We need to know our own faith, and likewise, we need to understand our neighbor’s faith and respect it.”

Ambassador Seiple, who gave the first of ten major presentations, focused on his firsthand experience with the horrific 1994 Rwandan genocide. He described visiting the country in the aftermath of the violence and standing on a bridge over a river clogged with hundreds of decaying bodies. According to Ambassador Seiple, one of the most troubling aspects of the Rwandan genocide is that it took place within a “Christianized” country—some 85 percent of the total population identified themselves as Christian. But in spite of this colossal failure on the part of churches in 1994, religious values have since played a vital role in rebuilding social stability. As Rwandans have reclaimed their country, they have shown the world the power of forgiveness, said Ambassador Seiple. He noted that many perpetrators of the genocide are today living side-by-side with their victims.

According to Dr. Ganoune Diop, Secretary General of the IRLA, each presentation during the four-day event was shaped in some way by two key questions: “How can we live with our deepest differences?” And, “How can the best of religions overcome the abysmal record of religious wars, religious ethnic cleansing, and genocides fueled by religious discrimination?”

Although the Meeting of Experts examines these questions from a scholarly perspective, the issues that drive the work of these scholars are far from abstract. “Too many people suffer discrimination, persecution, or even martyrdom or genocide because of their religious differences,” says Dr. Diop. According to a Pew Forum study released earlier this year, some 5.5 billion people—or 77 percent of the world’s population—live in countries with “a high or very high overall level of restrictions on religion.”[1]

The meeting brought together a diverse panel of scholars who represented universities and organizations from seven countries. Presenters included Dr. David Little, professor Emeritus of Harvard Divinity School; Reverend Canon Brian Cox, senior vice president of the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy; professor Cole Durham, president of the International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies based in Milan, Italy; professor T. Jeremy Gunn, professor of International Relations at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco; and, Dr. Amal Idrissi, law professor at the University of Moulay Ismael in Meknes, Morocco.
Over the past two decades, the Meeting of Experts has aimed to bring together some of the world’s foremost scholars and practitioners in the field of religious freedom to track legal and sociological trends. Papers presented at the annual meetings are published, and have produced a significant body of academic and practical resources. The papers from this year’s Meeting of Experts will be published in the 2015 edition of Fides et Libetas, which will be available later this year from the IRLA, which can be contacted through its website at www.irla.org or its Facebook page at www.facebook.com/IRLA.HQ.

The IRLA was established by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1893 and is the world’s oldest religious freedom advocacy organization. It promotes freedom of belief for all people, regardless of faith, and has non-governmental organization status at the United Nations. Along with the annual Meeting of Experts, the IRLA sponsors regional religious freedom festivals and forums, and every five years organizes a world congress, which attracts an international mix of scholars, legal practitioners, government officials and human rights advocates.

*The Adventist News Network (ANN) is the official news service of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.*

Insight Editor Launches Online Evangelism Tool

By AT News Team, August 19, 2015: Omar Miranda, the editor of Insight magazine, the Seventh-day Adventist publication for teens, has personally launched an online evangelism tool for young people titled Amazing Grace.[1] The focus of the website is a version of the “great controversy” story—the origin of evil and God’s solution in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Miranda wrote the account as a response to questions posed by the youth with whom he was working.

The story is set in heaven when Satan returns to announce that humanity has fallen. In the exchange, Jesus reveals his intention to be born as a human, to die, and to be resurrected. A number of theological themes are addressed in this conversation—free will, pain, forgiveness, salvation and perfection, among others.

“The story was originally written in 2002 as an apologetic response to mostly middle-schoolers, teens and young adults’ questions, discussions, and aversions to God related to the existence of pain, evil, and suffering,” Miranda told Adventist Today.

“Over the course of my ministry, I’ve noticed that everybody struggles in some way with this issue,” Miranda shared. “We live in a world that’s filled with evil, pain and suffering. I think there’s enough pain and suffering in everyone’s life, that broaching this issue won’t be difficult at all.”

Miranda believes the website is well-suited for sharing with friends and people who are struggling. He explains: “This is a great tool for sending to a friend with a short blurb: ‘Hey, I finally know the truth about why evil, pain, and suffering exist in the world! Check it out!’ And include the link.”

Miranda told Adventist Today that people could have business cards printed with the website. “In the course of someone’s daily life and conversations, if the Lord impresses them, they could hand a person a card and encourage them to check out the site,” he shared.

Over time, Miranda hopes to expand the resources provided on the website. Currently, there are ten links to external websites where people may learn more about various themes covered in the primary story. “It’s my hope that as I find additional financial support and sponsorship, that I’ll be able to provide a dedicated blog with new content daily or weekly,” Miranda noted. Furthermore, he would also like to establish a forum or chat room, add additional audio and video testimonies, attach a downloadable PDF version of the story that could be sent to others as a stand-alone resource, publish a book in multiple formats (paperback, hardcover, audio), and produce a dramatic radio theater version.

“It’s my hope that this story and web-site will draw the reader to really think deeply and critically about who God is, and to search for Him in a deeper and more focused way,” Miranda explained to Adventist Today. “And I know that if they are searching for Him with all their hearts, they will find Him.”

Injured Union College Gymnast Leaves Hospital

By AT News Team, August 16 2015: Seven months after falling 23 feet in the Union College (UC) gymnasium, Heather Boulais walked out of the hospital and returned home on Thursday, August 13. "Boulais, receiving support from two caregivers on each side, rose from a wheelchair and slowly made her way out of the Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital in Lincoln, Nebraska. She smiled broadly as onlookers applauded enthusiastically and television cameras captured the triumphant scene," reported the Adventist Review.

Boulais suffered a serious brain injury when she fell on January 14, 2015, while installing equipment for a gymnastics routine involving aerial silks. The Lincoln Journal Star noted that Boulais was captain of the UC Gymnaires when the accident happened.

"It's been life-changing for Heather and all of us. It's been long, difficult, exhausting," Heather's mother Cheryl Boulais told KETV 7, the ABC television affiliate in Lincoln.

In a show of support, community members began wearing "Prayers for Heather bracelets." Heather's father Terry shared, "To see her stand, take the steps, is very humbling. But we're very thankful for the prayers and everything." Commenting further on the role of prayer, UC president Vinita Sauder told the Adventist Review, "The Union College family rejoices that Heather has made such wonderful progress! The Lord has blessed and has heard the prayers of those of us here in Lincoln, Nebraska, and around the world."

Boulais is still recovering from the fall. Her parents expressed "excitement that she was finally able to drink fluids on her own through a straw," noted the Adventist Review. "But they asked for prayers for improvements with eating and drinking, and, most importantly, the return of her ability to speak."

KETV 7 reported that because Union College is conducting an investigation into the accident, the school is "unable to provide additional details at this time."

Boulais's recovery process can be followed on Facebook [1], and donations can be made online [2].

[1] https://www.facebook.com/groups/971428729535905/
My Take: In Praise of Congregations:

by Raj Attiken, August 15, 2015: For most Adventists, the face of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the local congregation. The Adventism lived and modeled in their local church is the Adventism they know. Their involvement and engagement with the Adventist Church happens primarily at their local church and its ministries. While they may be aware of, and even involved in, the larger denominational entity and its ministries, their primary and dominant point of engagement is with their local church. The flourishing of local congregations, therefore, should be a matter of interest to Adventists. Healthy, Christ-centered, vibrant congregations have immense potential to have long-term impact on the lives of people in and outside the church.

In the current climate in which denominational actions, pronouncements, programs, and personnel have seized the attention and emotions of Adventists, it seems that the local congregation is invisible or nonexistent. Its presence and contribution seem completely eclipsed by the din and tumult of denominational concerns. In this context, it is important to be reminded that the local congregation is the life-blood of the denomination, and that its contribution cannot be replicated anywhere else. Also, that there is nothing about the denomination that can and should keep a local congregation from pursuing its vision and fulfilling its mission. Nothing! If denominational leaders employ fear and guilt to garner support or compliance, the congregation can refuse to be captive to that fear; it can instead celebrate its hope and assurance in Christ. If denominational leaders issue unreasonable edicts, the congregation can opt for reason and conscience. If denominational leaders advocate for injustice and inequality, the local congregation can be an exemplar of justice, equality and fairness. The local church – the worshiping, nurturing, ministering community – is the church. Everything else is para-church. If there are no congregations, there can be no denomination.

Congregations play a vital role in bringing people to faith, nurturing them in the faith, and equipping them to live their faith. They help guide the faith-formation of our young. They hold space for youthful questioning and adult exploration. They provide opportunity for us to be periodically reminded of the humility that must characterize Christian living, and hold a spot for us at the Lord's Table. They help keep hope alive. They welcome into the family those who enter the waters of baptism. They make sacrifices to educate our children. They bless the marriage of our sons and daughters. They provide comfort when grief strikes. They accompany us through life's ups and downs. By their stable, permanent presence, investment, and engagement in the community, they "earn the right to be heard" – the right to tell the story of Jesus in compelling ways. Their presence is a reminder to society that faith, God, and the sacred are enduring realities.

Congregations are not mere social groupings. They are communities inspired and empowered by the Spirit of God. The Spirit is present when they gather. The Spirit equips its members with all the spiritual gifts they need to make their congregation a healthy, wholesome community. Congregational leaders have the freedom to discover and discern what the Spirit wishes to make of their congregation. They can lay Spirit-led plans. They can set Spirit-led goals. They can employ Spirit-led methods to fulfill the mission for which God has raised up their particular church in their particular place.

Research on congregational life has identified the complex dynamics that are at play in congregations of all sizes. The late Lyle Schaller, who was called the dean of church consultants, taught and wrote extensively about congregations. In my early years as a pastor of small churches, I was attracted to his typology of churches based on size. Small churches are cats — they have “nine lives,” he cautioned us! Denominations try to merge them, yoke them, close them, or ignore them – but they survive. Trying to direct and manage a small church is like trying to take a cat for a walk!

Schaller’s descriptive typology of church size included the collie, the garden, the house, the mansion, and the ranch,
each with its distinctive dynamics, idiosyncrasies, leadership and pastoral needs. Schaller also outlined how denominational staff can best relate to, and serve, congregations of various sizes. In recent decades other church consultants have developed further useful approaches to the study of congregations and how best to nurture their health and vitality.

Mega-church pastor, Bill Hybels, who is known for his passion for the local church, wrote: “There’s nothing like the local church when it’s working right. Its beauty is indescribable. Its power is breathtaking. Its potential is unlimited. It comforts the grieving and heals the broken in the context of community. It builds bridges to seekers and offers truth to the confused. It provides resources for those in need and opens its arms to the forgotten, the downtrodden, the disillusioned. It breaks the chains of addictions, frees the oppressed, and offers belonging to the marginalized of this world. Whatever capacity for human suffering, the church has a greater capacity for healing and wholeness... No other organization on earth is like the church. Nothing even comes close.”¹

The operative phrase in Hybels’ description of the local church is “... when it's working right.” Pastors, lay leaders, and members generally work hard to get their local church “working right.” Their efforts should be recognized, affirmed, and supported. Denominational programs, campaigns, and extravaganzas come and go, but the local church remains as a steady and faithful witness to the enduring power of faith, hope, and love. The local church deserves our care. That’s my take!

by Reinder Bruinsma, August 18, 2015: At the time when our son was enrolled in the Christian elementary school in the Dutch town where we lived, now over 40 years ago, my wife offered to assist as volunteer to help the students in acquiring good reading skills. Her offer was appreciated, but there was a small problem. The school had an explicit Calvinist basis and demanded of teachers and volunteers the signing of a statement that they agreed with the Three Forms of Unity. My wife had never even heard of the “Three Forms.” She did not want to sign anything and, as a result, offered her volunteer services to the adjacent public school.

What are these Three Forms of Unity? They concern documents the Dutch Calvinists of the sixteenth and seventeenth century accepted as authoritative. These were the Belgic Confession (1561) and the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), which defined in great detail what was considered “the truth.” Some fifty years later the Canons of Dort were added. They owe their name to the fact that they were agreed upon by the famous Synod of Dordrecht (1618-19), where proponents of predestination won their bitter conflict with the followers of a certain Arminius. These Arminians argued that people have a free will. This group was usually referred to as the “remonstrants” and the Canons of Dorttare (therefore, often also called the Five Articles Against the Remonstrants).

Even though the school administrators indicated that signing the statement was a mere formality, my wife did not like the fact that she was obliged to formally indicate agreement with these ancient documents. Until today, they belong to the so-called confessional documents of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN). Does this mean that most of the members of this denomination (and most other denominations in the Calvinist tradition in and outside the Netherlands) know what these documents contain? Certainly not. My guess is that the vast majority have never even read one letter of them. But many discussions about certain articles (in particular in the Belgic Confession) have demonstrated that it is extremely difficult to change anything. And from time to time these confessional documents are used to assure that people stay in line (or to refuse a volunteer who wants to assist in a reading program in an elementary school).

This is precisely what the early leaders of the Adventist Church had in mind when they stated that they were against adopting any formal confession of faith. They had seen how these documents had received, in the denomination in the US that they were acquainted with, almost the same level of authority as the Bible, and how difficult it had become to start an open discussion about some biblical theme. Everything had been defined once and for all, and one had to stick with what the wise men in the past had decided. The Adventist pioneers knew for sure: ”We have no creed but the Bible!”

Gradually the conviction that it was wrong to develop a “creed” was pushed aside. And now we have a document that is known as the (28) Fundamental Beliefs. It has become much more than a simple enumeration of the most important Adventist beliefs. Just as the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism in Dutch Protestantism, the Adventist Fundamental Beliefs have become a test of orthodoxy. This is what you must believe, if you really want to be part of it.

Does this mean that all Seventh-day Adventists know more or less what the 28 “fundamentals” are all about? Far from it. I have at times done a little research and concluded that most Dutch Adventists at best are able to list 10-12 of their “fundamentals.” And, let’s be honest: most newly baptized members only have a vague idea of the content of these 28 Beliefs. In far-away countries the situation is probably not any better. I do not think that most of the 30.000 members that were recently baptized in Zimbabwe, after an evangelistic campaign of some weeks (just to mention one example), will be able to enumerate more than ten “fundamental” Adventist beliefs. Yet, at the same time, church leaders have at various occasions said that you cannot be a good Adventist if you do not fully subscribe to all
28 Fundamental Beliefs.

Without any doubt, the *Three Forms of Unity* are important historical documents. They have helped to safeguard many of the basic Calvinist convictions in Dutch Protestantism. But the details in these documents hardly play any significant role in the daily life of today's church members. Likewise, the Adventist document with the *Fundamental Beliefs* is an important document. Nevertheless, we must not make it more important than it is. We must conclude that most Adventists share a number of important general Christian and more specifically Adventist convictions, without continuously referring back in their daily life to the text of the document with the *Fundamental Beliefs*. And the 28 *Fundamental Beliefs* may never acquire the sterile status of a “confession of faith” that can be used as a checklist to determine someone’s orthodoxy (or the lack thereof). That simply is totally at odds with a precious Adventist tradition.
Community Strong

by Daniel da Silva, August 16, 2015: A month ago, the city of Chattanooga was in deep shock and commotion over what happened the morning of July 16. A man opened fire on a military recruitment office before driving a few miles away and killing four Marines and a Navy sailor at a military training facility.

The Chattanooga area came together as a community to mourn the loss of those five men. Vigils were organized. Prayer meetings were held at area churches. Volunteers worked together to support the victims. Fundraisers were organized. Businesses, local institutions and churches united to help the city cope with this tragedy. People were hanging flags and signs across the city with the slogan, “Chattanooga Strong.” News media carried stories of local people who were trying to help others at this difficult time.

At the funeral services, the whole community was involved with the procession. Local pastors, law enforcement officers and the Boys Scout of America lined the roads to the cemetery to show support for the families.

I live in Collegedale, a suburb of Chattanooga which is considered by some people to be “an Adventist ghetto.” I observed that we were not involved in showing support for our local community during this tragic time. I did not see our Pathfinder Club out waving flags, or our churches opened to host community prayer meetings, or any of our local institutions with a tent pitched near the memorial sites distributing water or something that the community needed in that moment. My take is that we as a faith group failed when it came to being involved with our local communities both here in Chattanooga and across the United States.

This was a perfect opportunity for us to show compassion and help others during a difficult time. We needed to have a tent with volunteers providing water and snacks for the media, law enforcement officials and members of the general public who were at the site of the shootings. This was not a time to hand out pamphlets with the beasts of Revelation or doctrinal concepts; it was a time to love people and show sympathy for their needs.

When Jesus was on earth, His first concern in pursuing His mission was to mingle with people and meet their needs, leaving it until later to gain their respect and share spiritual ideas. We Adventists need to be less self-centered and more focused on our neighbors. Unfortunately, the way I see it, our church has a big lack in being a part of our local communities.

It’s time to change this and make a real difference, if we want to live what the Lord says. We need to be more involved with our local community and be aware of their basic needs and give them something special that expresses God’s love.

Jesus says in Mathew 5:13 that we are to be “the salt of the earth.” In order for us to make a difference in this world we need to mingle with our neighbors outside of the walls of our churches. We need to start showing the love of the Father in our lives and doing something concrete for our neighbors. We may not necessarily agree with what has happened or how things were handled, but to be present and stand with our neighbors in a time of need is the greatest testimony to our belief in Christ.

Daniel da Silva is a senior theology student at Southern Adventist University. He already has a BA in international relations. Born in Brazil from a Portuguese Sephardic Jewish background, he is now a resident of Washington State in the northwest U.S. He has a passion for evangelism, reaching out to local communities across America, and humanitarian causes. In his spare time, he loves Legos and camping. He is married to Wendy K. da Silva.
By Debbonnaire Kovacs, copyright 1999, posted Aug. 19, 2015

This week we are going to do something rather significantly different. One of the lectionary passages is the one in Ephesians 6:10-18, concerning the armor of God. I wrote a small booklet years ago that tells a story based on this passage, and ends with a Bible study. Here is the first part of it. If you like it and want to read more, go to my website every day for the next several days (or wait a week and read the whole thing together).

IN SHINING ARMOR

Trying not to make a sound that would draw attention to him, Paine struggled into a sitting position against a broken stone wall and opened swollen eyes. The night was black, not a single star out, but he could see a little by the red flicker of fires that were still smoldering. Nothing he could see gave any reason to hope. He breathed in shallow, aching gasps, trying not to gag on the smoke and the choking smell of ruined lives and shattered dreams. He wished he were dead, like so many others.

A noise behind him made Paine whirl and take some attempt at a defensive position.

“Don’t be afraid,” said a quiet voice. “Are you thirsty?”

Paine squinted at a woman holding out a cup, somewhat warily, as if she were a little afraid of him. His lip cracked as he tried to smile derisively. She was the one in full armor, obviously a warrior. No telling on which side—they all looked alike these days. Surely she could see he was no threat to anyone or anything.

“Are you thirsty?” she repeated.

Paine looked at the cup. Yes, actually. His throat was clogged with dust and defeat. Why not drink? If he was lucky, she was an enemy and it was poison. If not, it might really be water.

Saying nothing, he held out a shaking hand, and the woman put the cup into it. It wasn’t water, it was the dew of heaven! Paine drained the cup and leaned back against the wall with his eyes closed. He felt as if he had gulped life itself. He frowned and opened his eyes. Gulped life? His condition must be worse than he realized to make his thoughts wander like that.

The woman had squatted on the ground near him. He gave the cup back. “Thanks.”

“There’s more where that came from,” said the woman.

Paine looked more closely at her face than he had before. It was a strong face, but the eyes were not the eyes of other warriors he had met. He gave a dry croak of a laugh. “I get it. You’re one of those recruiters, aren’t you?”

She shrugged. “I guess you could say that. My name is Petra.” She eyed him for a moment and added, “Wouldn’t it be nice to be on the winning side for a change?”

“That’s what they all say,” Paine pointed out.

“True. Why don’t you come with me and meet my Commander, then decide for yourself.”
“No, thanks. I’ve had enough of charismatic leaders who promise you the moon, and all they ask in return is your lifeblood. I’m sure you mean well. I mean, it’s easy for you. What do you know of blood and pain and being so tired you could die from it? If I could afford armor like that, I could go around like Mighty Warrior, too!” The sneer was a deliberate attempt to make her go away and leave him to his misery.

The woman didn’t move. “This armor was free. You could have a set just like it for the asking. But don’t expect it to magically keep you from all those things. You wouldn’t need armor if you weren’t still going to be in the War.”

“Free? What do you mean, free?”

Petra smiled. “I mean free, gratis, no charge. You see, lifeblood has already been paid for it.”

“What in the world—?”

“It’s a long story. I’ll explain it all to you on our way to—shh!” Petra’s head snapped up and they both listened. There was a grate of heavy boots on rubble and then a guttural laugh.

“Behind me!” hissed Petra. She was already on her feet, her sword drawn. Not waiting for Paine to reply, she moved in front of him with a swirl of mantle. Paine was silent, his heart pounding, wondering if her sword had really flashed as he thought it had, or if his mind was slipping further out of the bounds of reality.

In the next few minutes, he was sure it was the latter. Crouching behind Petra, bitterly aware of his cowardice, he couldn’t be certain of what exactly was happening. Petra murmured something and moved her hand, and a shimmering glow surrounded both of them. Around Paine, and where the glow met the stone wall, it seemed to crackle and spark, as if it were shorting out. Paine barely had time to register this (or imagine it?) when the fierce fighting began. Petra seemed to be ten warriors—flashing here and there, back and forth, wielding her sword as if it were lightning, but never moving more than a few feet from Paine. There were growls, mutters, and roars, and through it all, the murmur of Petra’s voice—and another?—saying things he could never quite catch. Suddenly, she gave a great cry and a mighty sword thrust, and it was over. All Paine could hear was Petra’s harsh breathing and the enemy’s heavy, retreating feet.

She turned, and Paine could see that she held a communications device in her hand. “Thank you!” she panted into it, and Paine realized why he had heard another voice. He could hear it clearly now—a strangely beautiful, melodic voice that pulled at him in a way that was almost frightening.

“All will be well now,” said the voice. “Bring him, if he will come.”

To be continued…
Voluntourism: More Harm than Good

By Heather Ruiz, reprinted by permission; Aug. 19, 2015

[Editor’s note: This story is quite different from what you normally find here—more like opinion or blog. In fact, it was first published in the Walla Walla University Collegian under opinion/perspective. But it impressed me so much that I obtained permission to reprint it in its entirety here. It’s also longer than I usually publish. I hope to read it to the end, and I hope it blesses you and (as a friend and ministerial director used to say) “stirs up your pure mind.” Follow the links to see photos and more information, and let the conversation begin!]

In August, 2013, Heather Ruiz traveled through West Africa as a journalist for ADRA. After working in development for nine months, Ruiz moved to a village in the Western Sahara to find answers for her questions about responsible volunteering and empowering communities.

The following article is her insight on constructive service.

* * * * *

It took me a while to find it. The taxi driver and I were shouting over each other in French about whether the orphanage was another street down or already behind us, but finally the crooked sign “Grace House” appeared in dripping, painted words. The driver lost no time in depositing me on the lonely street, and I felt more orphaned than ever before marching through the creaking gate.

Dirty floors and dim lights welcomed me inside. I did my best to prepare myself for what might come next — coughing invalids or stray chickens or skeleton babies — and I nearly stepped on top of bright red Sanuks.

“Who are you?” The voice caught me first, unmistakable in her accent.

“Who are you?” The voice caught me first, unmistakable in her accent.

“The journalist from ADRA. I called earlier about stopping by?” I found myself looking at… well, a stereotypical American College Student in all her glory: pink tank top shouting Abercrombie like a tag line to her expressionless face; Ray-Bans slipped into a highlight-streaked ponytail; I almost expected an iced Starbucks to appear in her hand.

“Oh, I’m just here for a week before we go on the safari.” She shrugged. “I came to volunteer with a group from my university.”

I followed her through the halls and corridors to her squad in the main room, and there I found the chaos.

Some children were dancing, others scaling volunteers’ laps and arms, still more were jumping in place as the uncontrollable excitement pummeled through their slender bodies.

“Green dress?” A volunteer was pulling clothing out of a cardboard box.

“Miiiiiiine!” screeched every girl voice and, honestly, a few boy voices. They tore and clawed through the crowd, arms flailing out.

“Blue t-shirt? Yellow socks?” The voice continued.

“Hey, I have candy over here!” Another volunteer contributed. Even the walls seemed to be quivering with pleasure.

I discovered the director in the back of the room, smiling wide.
"How many volunteer groups do you get here?" I shouted over the din.

"Sometimes two a month," he beamed proudly. "The volunteers cover almost all our staff."

"You aren't providing jobs for any local workers?" I repeated.

"Well, no." He paused a moment, sensing the need to make it sound better. "We have so very many children here at Grace House. They need food and a home. They need help. Here, they get help."

"Where do they come from before here?" I encouraged, reaching for my notepad.

"Terrible families. No food. So poor, you know."

"Wait, they have families?"

"Half of them have families." I was frozen for a moment, but the sad truth is such numbers are typical in African countries. After the wave of volunteers to orphanages in Ghana began to show signs of an abusive business enterprise, the Social Welfare Department organized a survey revealing that 90% of Ghanaian orphans have one or more living parent. The presence of volunteers visiting so many orphanages created "jobs" for children from families that could benefit from a few less mouths to feed.

"Some of these children have lost their parents and are emotionally susceptible at this stage," I gently said. "Isn't it damaging to further their never-ending cycle of abandonment from a revolving door of volunteers?"

"This is just the way it is." The director crossed his arms. "We do this to make a difference the best we can, and you need to remember, this is for the volunteer, too. This experience is life-changing."

I glanced at the group of college students, taking selfies with the animated children. *No doubt this will be a series of profile pictures.* For a moment, I wondered if the unidentified, romping, homeless children seemed reduced to the same status of elephants and zebras on the veld.

* * * * *

"So your grandfather sells shoes on the street so your sisters can eat?" I asked again to make sure I had gotten the French right.

"Yeah." Hassan traced a stick around his bare toes. "As far back as I can remember. Can I have your watch?"

"No. I didn't tell you that you could have it."

"But the other volunteers give me things," Hassan insisted.

"Well I came here to play with you." I stared back stubbornly into his grinning eyes.

"Do you have an iPod in America?"

"Yes."

"Can I have it?" He had such lust in those small eyes.

"No, Hassan. Keep telling me your story about your grandpa."

"When I grow up, I'm going to America, because I want to buy things like what the volunteers have." He pointed a stubby thumb at his bare chest. "I'll be a rich man, like in the movies."

"Hassan, has anyone told you about Jesus when they visited?" I knelt down on his level.

Voluntourism: More Harm than Good - Adventist Today http://atoday.org/voluntourism-more-harm-than-good.html
“Yeah,” he shrugged. “I know about him. I pray to him when the volunteers come. Do you have Angry Birds on your iPod? The volunteers showed me that game. I know how to play that game.”

“What else do the volunteers show you?”

Hassan began to mumble, not understanding the concern on my face.

“The last volunteers gave me things,” he said hopefully.

This is the classic White Savior Complex, the worship of the land of the White Man. Somehow, despite hearing that Jesus loves him, the message of material goodness has swept him further in devotion, and he will worship the white saviors for the spectacular contributions to his development rather than the ostensible Jesus fellow. Will Hassan wake up tomorrow thinking about his grandpa, selling shoes in determination to provide and sustain, or the next group of regaling volunteers?

* * * * *

It became clearer to me over time that it is necessary for collegiate volunteers to re-prioritize and re-evaluate our approach to aid so that we use our resources to empower countries to develop themselves according to their own standards and not continue to hinder them with our own.

The “mission trip model” has been praised for the individuals willing to sacrifice their time and money for impoverished communities, doing as Christ would. However, without knowledge of language, local culture, societal nuances, and the economical framework of the community, this type of “voluntourism” is sometimes wasteful at best, and possibly destructive to the community at worst.

The development industry, which previously consisted of agencies and governments giving and spending aid, is now joined by masses of enthusiastic college-aged hopefuls, wishing to change the world while knowing little to nothing about the complexities of the country. In 2010, $211.77 billion was spent on international volunteering, creating an industry devoted to the volunteer’s personal experience. The temptation to swoop in and fix a village’s hunger, poverty, and disease seems simple enough and personally fulfilling, but it presents Africa as “victims” and creates a feel-good spectacle for the volunteers. By sending out untrained volunteers, we are essentially saying that development work is “easy,” that our skills as middle-class twenty-somethings are so valuable that they can save a village, and that just because we are from the U.S., we are superior to the third-world countries that we aim to serve.

The complexities of Africa’s social and economic development remain unconsidered, and questions about how and why poverty exists are overshadowed by the aesthetic pleasure of the experience. After just a few months, the volunteer will come to realize their shortcomings and a part of them may give up, realizing that it’s not a simple answer.

It’s time to recognize that in pursuit of a service experience, we may be salving our own consciences without fully examining the consequences of the people we seek to help.

Teju Cole, a writer on the topic of responsible volunteering, tweeted: “The White Savior Complex is not about justice. It’s about having a big emotional experience that validates privilege.” [More here.]

Cole has a point. Individuals fundraise for Africa, do a little good, experience something that their affluent lives cannot offer, and return home with a full memory card and a story that places them in the ranks of the kind-hearted and worldly wise.

But can’t there be more than an experience? Can’t we redirect this “voluntourism” industry to be sustaining and empowering local communities, so that good intentions will carry into good outcomes?

As individuals from developed Western countries, shouldn’t we allow our role in international development to be
defined not by our own interests but by the expressed needs of developing nations?

* * * * *

“Bring in the goat!” Cheikh Mohammed beckoned towards one of his wives. She returned a moment later with a blistering platter to add to the collection of feast foods. He motioned for me; we plunged our fingers into the meat.

After spending nine months with ADRA, I decided to leave with my unanswered questions about responsible third-world development and take a bush taxi deep into the Saharan interior. I wanted to see a community still relatively untouched from outside aid; I wanted to know how people can withstand hardships and sustain themselves by themselves. I wanted to see inner empowerment working for myself, a community that hadn’t yet been crippled into dependency.

That’s how I found myself sharing dinner and conversation on the village chief’s rooftop each Thursday night, overlooking a cluster of low painted tents and the gingerbread-type houses breaking up the wide expanse of desert.

“Cheikh Mohammed, do your friends give you gifts?” I started in Arabic, breaking off a piece of village bread.

“Oh of course, it’s a friendly thing to do.” He adjusted his posture on the scratchy woven carpet.

“Now if I’m coming from America to give you gifts, am I your friend?”

His face darkened, and he chewed a great deal before he spoke.

“Heather, a donation is a very dangerous thing to give away. Your American world is filled with so many items and material goods, that you might not understand the gravity of handing something for free to someone who has never been handed anything.”

I watched him deliberately dip his bread into goat sauce and carefully chew, knowing that he would explain himself.

“Do you know what this village means? Generations of desert wanderers, learning and toiling for their bread and meat and homes. We are proud of this; we are empowered, by this. Now, give a village man a handout? You’ve just weakened him. You’ve increased his dependency; diminished his sense of self-esteem. One of the most widely-accepted notions is that Westerners are the solution to African problems. This requires portraying us as helpless and endlessly recirculating images only of abandonment and violence, or innocence and primitivism.”

I chewed on his Arabic words while he finished his bread.

“But poverty and hunger still exist, and our morality moves us to feed and clothe,” I broke into his silence.

“You asked me if my friends give me gifts,” he said. “Make sure that you are my friend. Make certain you understand me, first. Learn my strengths, my heart, my efforts. Once we are established in brotherhood, then yes, send me a present, one that won’t hurt me to open.”

“You see, Heather,” he set his meat down to look closely at me, “We are not weak. We are not underdeveloped. If you believe we must be helped, look more closely. We are content in our hearts, affectionate to each other, and attentive to our souls. Perhaps the greater need is for us to be helping you.”

* * * * *

A reflex reaction to this critique may be, “At least they are doing something,” or “Wow, I guess we can’t really do anything,” but this would be lazy thinking. It’s not that our intention isn’t genuine, it’s that our analysis isn’t. As long as the West has the kind of economic, cultural and militaristic stronghold over places like Uganda, our hard work is still not targeting the root or causes of oppression. Our main goal should be evaluating foreign policies, which we
play a direct role in electing, not short-term solutions that make us feel like we “done good.”

The Egyptian military receives $1.3 billion in annual U.S. aid, and, interestingly enough, is also stomping out country’s movement for democracy and killing off activists. Nigeria is one of the top five oil suppliers to the U.S, and the American government was not interested in supporting the Nigerian protests against one of the most corrupt governments. After the U.S. donated a profusion of subsidized white rice, Haitian rice farmers struggled to continue on. [More here.] And finally Uganda, our country of interest, suffered when the Obama administration recently halted or reallocated an estimated $9 million in aid, cancelled regional military assistance over rebel activity, and barred Ugandans involved in human rights abuses from entering the U.S.A.

Isaiah 10:1-2a: “Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right…”

The greater need for involvement is where American policies are advocating for the crimes that motivated us to volunteer in the first place. This means setting aside our hero-thirsty ego and addressing with our votes the policies that shackle our foreign friends. This means accepting that our help is valuable for contributing with multi-person assistance, not just our own individual efforts.

For orphans, let’s provide resources to the capable families, donate for child sponsorship and feeding programs like the one Christalis is also running, assist at-risk mothers, and re-home children or develop a family model in orphanages. Let’s support vocational training and community-based initiatives. Let’s talk about this White Savior Complex and how to keep it out of ministry. Let’s match volunteers to their existing skill set and require them to be integrated with their host communities, learning and listening to real needs.

Let’s befriend these fighters, these strong survivors, and then let’s refocus aid to further empower our friends.
Nothing In My Hands, Chapter Fourteen

By Del Starr, a pseudonym, all rights reserved, posted Aug 19, 2015

Something’s Fishy

Once more life began to take on a bit of structure for Dianne and her family. There were now eight children at home. The house was brand new and Dianne enjoyed it thoroughly. There was not as much yard as there had been at the old house nor were there fruit trees or room for a garden but Dianne was so busy she didn’t have time for those things anyway. The children were old enough to be able, for the most part, to stretch their wings, as long as Dianne was aware of where they were and whom they were with.

There was a garbage disposal and a dishwasher, things that Dianne had longed for but been unable to afford. Dishwashing would no longer be the chore it once had been.

Joe was still in the picture and was a frequent visitor to the modest home. Often he would show up with the ingredients for stew which he would cook himself. The children really enjoyed that for they had never known a man to cook before. Dianne was falling in love with this sweet and generous soul.

Joe took the younger boys fishing. This also was something they had never experienced and they were so excited! When they returned home that evening, each of them proudly held up a fish. Something did not look right about those fish to Dianne but she exclaimed over them and praised the boys. Joe cleaned them and Dianne fried fish for dinner that night. Later in the evening Joe took Dianne away from the house for a little bit and Dianne had occasion to reach under the seat. Her hands touched something like plastic wrap and a container such as meat is packed into in stores. She pulled it out and there were two packages marked “fish.” Dianne laughed hilariously as she realized that the boys had “caught” their fish in the grocery store, but this was only one more little indication that Joe would be a good father to the children and a friend and companion to Dianne.

Joe had come to a point where he desired his own privacy and he had now moved into his own apartment near where Dianne and the children lived. He had given Dianne a key to that apartment and this told her that she could trust him implicitly. Why else would he allow her access to his home at any time of the day or night?

There were a couple of occasions when Dianne found Joe with another woman but she figured that it was not anything to be concerned about and he was free to do what he wished. They had not talked of continuing plans though Dianne hoped, in her heart.

Saturday nights were Joe’s time alone. Nothing interfered with that time and Dianne respected that. There were six other nights a week and Joe most often shared his time away from work with Dianne and the children. She had come to depend on Joe to chase away the pangs of loneliness and insecurity.

Dianne and Joe had their first argument. It was heated and when Joe left the house, she sobbed uncontrollably. For the first time in some years she prayed, asking that God would bring them back together for she firmly felt that Joe was the proper man for her.

Late the following evening, there was a knock at the door. When Dianne went to open it, there stood Joe in his pajamas, a stick over his shoulder with a little bag tied onto the end of it, looking quite forlorn. Dianne laughed and invited him in. When the door was closed, he sat in the corner by the door, on the floor with his knees pulled up to his chin and his thumb in his mouth. Dianne could not keep from giggling at his antics. He finally opened the little bag and true to his custom, there were the ingredients for stew.
Once again Joe headed for the kitchen. He had even made “bowls” for the children from the parts that were cut out for headlights at the Freightliner factory. He had become an integral part of the family. The children loved him as did Dianne.

It seemed a little silly to have two places of abode since Joe spent most of his waking hours with Dianne and the children and so it was determined that when his lease was up on the apartment, after six months, Joe would move into the house with them.

Dianne’s dreams were coming true.

She also realized that God had played a part in Joe’s return to her life after the argument and she began to think more and more on the things of God. With Kathy gone, she no longer frequented bars and dance halls, but stayed home with her children. Joe gave reason to her life. She made friends with the neighbors and they were seemingly a loving family, although not without problems.

Brian continued to have problems with his hyperactivity. The doctors had told Dianne that he would outgrow it by the time he was ten but he was now sixteen and was becoming a danger to the other children as he manipulated control. Dianne was constantly being called to the principal’s office because Brian had “pulled another stunt.” There was the time he super-glued the teacher’s chair to the floor and his pencil to the desk. There was the time that he and a friend tossed marbles down the hallway and pulled the fire alarm. His antics frightened Dianne a bit but she didn’t know what to do about them. He had found a job when he was ten years old and had been working ever since. He was reliable and dependable and never went anywhere without telling Dianne where he would be. The only problems seemed to be that he needed specific attention that was impossible for her to give because of the other seven children still at home.

On one occasion, Brian got into a scuffle with Brad and threw his brother into the dishwasher. Dianne had to straighten out the dishwasher to get it to work again in addition to patching Brad up. She had reached her wits’ end and decided that it would be much better for Brian if he went to his Grandma Grace’s house for the rest of the school year. She called Grace, who agreed, and Brian was packed up and put on the bus.

Now Dianne worried that Brian would feel that she didn’t love him and that he had been rejected. She felt, however, that he was in the best place that she could offer him. At least now the other children were safe from his bullying.

The relationship with Joe became stronger and stronger. He built triple bunk beds for the girls in their bedroom. Dianne was impressed. He took every opportunity to play with the children and laughter reigned in the home. Dianne was pleased.

She spoke with the children before Joe moved in with them, to determine if there were any who didn’t want him to. The children were all of one accord. They wanted Joe there on a permanent basis. The six month lease ended and Joe moved in.

Joe still took his Saturday night time every week, and now it began to bother Dianne. Before, when he had lived on his own, it wasn’t a problem, but now that they were living together, it disturbed her. She didn’t know what he was doing, other than he would go out and have a couple of drinks and he would always be home (or at least almost always) by about 1 AM. Once in a while he was later but Dianne remembered her own time with Kathy and how they would have breakfast and chat with their friends so she wasn’t unduly concerned.

She began to contemplate that since Joe had his time away, she should too, but she still held firm to her conviction that she would not leave the house until the children were in bed. On Saturday nights when Joe would leave, Dianne began to leave also. She didn’t like the arrangement and didn’t want to get back into drinking but there was not much else to do at that time of night unless one wanted to go to a movie and she could just as well watch TV at home if that was what she desired. So Dianne began to drink again.
It was spring and daylight savings time was to begin that night. Joe took his usual Saturday afternoon nap and while he was sleeping, Dianne went throughout the house and changed every clock. He had taken off his watch and laid it on the headboard and Dianne quietly slipped in and got the watch and changed it also.

When Joe awakened, he was stunned to see how late it was. He told Dianne that he had not anticipated sleeping that long. He quickly took a shower and shaved and got dressed but as he was leaving, he turned to Dianne and with a sly grin said, “You won’t have time to get where you’re going!” Dianne just smiled sweetly and told him to have a good time.

She showered and dressed and went to her favorite spot and had a really good time, knowing that Joe was an hour ahead of himself and that he would not check other clocks but would, rather, go by his own watch.

When she returned home, Joe had been there for a couple of hours. He was steaming! “Where,” he demanded, “have YOU been?”

Dianne couldn’t keep from laughing. The older children, Brad, Janelle, and Tina, were up waiting to see what would happen and they too, burst into laughter. Joe was puzzled and through gales of laughter, Dianne told him what she had done. Joe looked a little sheepish for he enjoyed mind games and Dianne surely had won this one.

The two began to talk about marriage. Dianne was not really interested in being married again but Joe was asking and this was the man she had dreamed of for so many years.

Once again she seated the children around her as she told them that Joe had asked her to marry him. She had chosen a time when he was at work so that they would not be interrupted. Did they, she asked the children, have any opposition to her marrying Joe and was there any reason that they might be hesitant that she do so?

“Oh, NO!” they declared, “Please, Mom, marry him! He’s so cool!”

And so when Joe returned from work that evening, she told him that she would agree to marry him.

They planned a very simple ceremony. They would just slip over the border into Vancouver and pronounce their vows to each other before a Justice of the Peace. Dianne was excited that day, in spite of her misgivings. When the ceremony was concluded, the newlyweds made their rounds to share their news with their friends. The deed was done.
**“Love at Work” Ten Commandments Musical**

By Carole Derry-Bretsch, posted August 19, 2015

**A MUSICAL THAT YOU ARE NOT GOING TO WANT TO MISS**

Make plans to attend the “LOVE AT WORK” TEN COMMANDMENTS MUSICAL AT THE WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL, ON OCTOBER 3. (Details are all repeated below the poster, with working links.)
The “Love at Work” Ten Commandments Musical is timeless and reaches deep into the soul of man because it is the Word of God—in song. This inspirational musical is not only moving, but it moves you. It speaks to the fact that, GOD IS LOVE! And He loves each one of us like no one else can! The Ten Commandments Musical has gotten rave reviews and will be performed for the first time at the Washington National Cathedral.

Featuring some of your favorite musicians –

- Wintley Phipps
- Jennifer LaMountain
- Steve Darmody
- Rudi Micelli
- Charles Haugabrooks
- Christian Berdahl
- Yolanda Innocent-Palmer
- Neville Peter
- Anika Sampson-Anderson
- Javier Gonzales
- Steve Adetumbi
- Jeremy Morada
- Julie Penner
- Rachel Hyman
- Esther Alonso-Neal
- Lonnie Melashenko – Narrator
Barry Black – Chaplain of the United States Senate

John Bradshaw – It Is Written

Clifford Goldstein

Thank You to Yolanda and Schubert Palmer for creating this incredible program.

Watch the promo at:

The “Love at Work Musical” National Cathedral Promo

Go here for all the details.

You are also able to donate to this awesome musical from this page.
Water

By S M Chen, posted Aug. 19, 2015

A cup of water played a significant role in the conversion of 33 souls in India. Their inspiring tale was related in the 7/31/15 issue of the Adventist Review by Derek Morris, editor of Ministry magazine. [Photo by S M Chen: Vosu beach. Lahemaa National Park. Estonia. 2005 (view through tyre).]

Water has ever been important to human beings and in human (as well as divine-human) interactions.

Our bodies contain over 50% water. Over 70% of our planet is covered by water.

Division of water(s) was key in the formation of Earth.

Water was instrumental in the destruction of Earth by the Great Deluge.

The meeting between Eleazar, servant of Abraham, and Rebekah, future wife of Isaac, came about through his request for water at her city’s well.

And the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea to allow the Israelites’ escape from the pursuing armies of Pharaoh involved water. It was because Moses struck the rock, rather than spoke to it, in response to the Israelites demanding water, that he was not permitted to enter the Promised Land.

Jonah’s being cast into the sea/water is what caused cessation of the storm that besieged the ship he had boarded in an attempt to avoid delivering God’s warning to Nineveh.

Christ’s first recorded miracle was the transformation of water into wine at the wedding in Cana.

And no less miraculous, although less obvious, was the conversion of the Samaritan woman at the well in response to Jesus’ request for water, when He revealed Himself to be Living Water, the Water of Life.

Peter, in his enthusiasm to emulate Christ, attempted to walk on water. Like many others, he came to realize that, of himself, he could do nothing.

I lived in country near the Middle East for two years, and can attest to the importance of tea/water as custom and tradition. Most of the water was not potable; drinking tea was one way of being reasonably sure the derivative water was safe. And the courtesy of serving guests water/tea continued from Biblical times.

We who live in the Western world often take water, and its potability, for granted. We should not do so. I believe we should take nothing, and no one, for granted.

Water—H₂O in chemistry. Or, written another way, HOH. Two atoms of hydrogen, the most abundant element in the universe, comprising about 75% of its mass. And one of oxygen, which comprises about 47% of our Earth’s mass.

This may be a bit of a stretch, but it occurs to me that HOH could also symbolize the Trinity. O might represent God.
the Father, the alpha and the Omega, the One who can only be described in superlatives. Omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent.

The first H might represent the Son. He who knew no sin. He who sacrificed Himself on our behalf. Holy and utterly without blemish, save for the marks of crucifixion He will ever bear.

The second H might represent the Holy Spirit/Holy Ghost. About whom we know little, based on Holy Writ (I have to assume that was by design). But an essential part, nevertheless, of the Triumvirate.

We cannot live without water. One can go perhaps 30 days without food, but only 3 days without water.

Just as our bodies were designed to live on water, so our souls were designed to live on Living Water. And we are made such that, if we do not embrace Living Water, we will find something or someone to attempt to replace it.

Such attempts will meet with failure. As the Wise Man observed, “All is vanity” (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

So back to the story of the 33 Indians who were converted as the result of a simple request for a cup of water: God does indeed move in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform (from Christian hymn, William Cowper, 1773, based on his poem ‘Light Shining Out of Darkness’).

A fascinating, although unsubstantiated background of the poem/hymn, supposedly the last Cowper penned (from cyberhymnal.org):

‘Cowper often struggled with depression and doubt. One night he decided to commit suicide by drowning himself. He called a cab and told the driver to take him to the Thames River. However, thick fog came down and prevented them from finding the river. After driving around lost for a while, the cabby finally stopped and let Cowper out. To Cowper’s surprise, he found himself on his own doorstep: God had sent the fog to keep him from killing himself. Even in our blackest moments, God watches over us.”
Spectrum Ultraviolet Arts Fest

Posted by Debbonnaire Kovacs, Aug. 12, 2015

An invitation to an interesting event coming up in the Los Angeles area:

What: “Spectrum Ultraviolet Arts Fest with Jennifer Knapp. You can learn more here. There are Facebook and Twitter links associated with this event, and it sounds exciting. According to Spectrum magazine, the event will begin “with a special Glendale City Church service at 10:50 AM, followed in the afternoon with a free classical piano concert by Hyak Arsenyan at 4:00 PM. Saturday’s events culminate in a live concert featuring indie singer-songwriter Jennifer Knapp and Aaron Beaumont at 7:30 PM. The arts festival itself begins Sunday morning at 9:00 AM with Jennifer Knapp headlining.

When: Saturday, September 12 at 7 pm, PDT through Sunday, September 13 at 7:30 pm.

Where: Glendale City Church, Glendale, California.