NEWS

News Media in Philadelphia Puzzled by Mailing of "Great Controversy" Paperback: The City of Brotherly Love has been blanketed with "The Great Controversy" by Ellen White, astounding news media with the audacity of circulating the book in the face of the visiting Roman pontiff....

Noted Leader of Self-supporting Alternative Health Care Ministries Died Last Week: Dr. Agatha Thrash, noted Adventist leader in health and lifestyle education, has died at an advanced age....

Urban Adventist Church Opens Change Center for Neighborhood Teens: A Philadelphia Adventist congregation is reaching out aggressively to adolescents, teaching them skills in gardening, healthful cooking and eating, physical fitness and conditioning, and business entrepreneurship....

Adventist Youth Initiative Receives Government Award in Vietnam: Community Projects in Vietnam earn plaudits for Adventists, who are transforming the way outreach...
OPINION

Presidents, Popes, and Power: Columnist Stephen Foster believes the Pope's upcoming visit to the US will be strongly political, as presidential candidates seek to find comfortable spots on the skirts of one of the world's most powerful leaders....

Facing San Antonio the Morning After: The GC Session earlier this summer in San Antonio provided a window on change in the Church, in particular the sweeping evolution in perception of the role of women as bonafide leaders in the SDA denomination....

Eternal Light (DEVOTIONAL): Debbonaire Kovacs offers devotional flavors straight from the Apocrypha, in a passage that identifies wisdom as a woman, in the manner of Proverbs....

FEATURE & THE ARTS

Adventist Author Ventures into Scary Territory (FEATURE): Adventist author Trudy Morgan-Cole is venturing into the scary territory of self-publishing, and unusual "Christian" fare. She says, "Life--even life with God in it--is messy, and I like to read and write books that reflect that messiness."...
The Future of the Catholic Church with Pope Francis (BOOK REVIEW): Many of us have spent long after-dinner Sabbath afternoons pondering quaint and curious thoughts of what the Roman Catholic Church may be up to these days, in light of prophecy. A new book overviews the major issues Francis and his Church face.

Nothing In My Hands, Chapter Seventeen (PROSE): In this continuing nonfiction account of the travails of a woman caught on the wild slopes of Adventism outside the fold, the bottom of Dianne's world drops out as her children are taken from her by Children's Services and she attempts suicide in the face of allegations that she is an alcoholic and drug-user. Why has God forsaken her?

Kim Carter, CNN Hero (ART NEWS): Readers have a chance to help Kim Carter—a CNN Hero who has helped hundreds of women find new lives—gain more recognition and funding for her organization.

The Origin of Tongues (POETRY & PROSE): Our familiar friend, S M Chen, takes up the question of tongues. How many different languages can you spot in this essay?
News Media in Philadelphia Puzzled by Mailing of “Great Controversy” Paperback

September 10, 2015:  “I turned it into an art experiment,” wrote Greg Adomaitis, a journalist for NJ.com in the New Jersey suburbs of Philadelphia after a 378-page paperback entitled The Great Controversy arrived in his mailbox along with 700,000 other homes in the tri-state metropolitan area the week of August 24. It was mailed by Remnant Publications, an independent ministry based in Michigan and included an appeal for donations and encouraged recipients to purchase gift copies for friends outside the area, according to Adomaitis.

The book “addresses preaching the ‘persecution of God’s faithful children’ and how the past shapes the purpose of life,” the journalist wrote. The 42-chapter book “dates back to the 1858 religious writings of Ellen G. White, who would go on to form the Seventh-Day Adventist Church.” He quoted the promotional piece inserted with the book; it “will help readers understand issues at stake in an ‘impending conflict’ and why the reader ‘cannot remain neutral’ [as they] learn about the geographic ties to historic religious events.” He reports that it is available on Glenn Beck’s web site, a controversial political commentator not affiliated with the Adventist faith.

Those who raised the funds for this mailing, which could be as much as a half million dollars, “wanted it to coincide with Pope Francis’ visit next month,” another reporter at BillyPenn.com quoted Dwight Hall, the Adventist who owns Remnant Publications. “When you’ve got such power and you’re getting into politics, that scares a lot of people,” Hall said in reference to the Pope.

More than a third of the nearly six million residents of the Philadelphia metropolitan area are Catholics, according to the United States Census of Religion for 2010, compiled by the statistical officers of the nation’s religious denominations. Just six percent are from conservative Protestant faiths, including 12,762 Adventist adherents. (Adherents includes children not old enough to be baptized and non-members who attend regularly, as well as church members.) That is one Adventist for every 467 residents, well above the one to 15 ratio in Jamaica, for example or the one to 20 ratio in Zambia.

Adomaitis reported that Remnant Publications aims at distributing 10 million copies of the book. It has already done so in New York City, Washington DC, San Francisco and Charlotte, North Carolina. Hall told the journalist that “many lives … have been transformed forever” by the book, although no research is available on the impact of these mailings. Residents have “taken to Twitter … to vent frustrations about [the lack of] ways of opting out” of the mailings, Adomaitis wrote.
Noted Leader of Self-supporting Alternative Health Care Ministries Died Last Week

September 8, 2015: Dr. Agatha Thrash, a well-known leader among independent health ministries operated by Adventists, died Friday (September 3) as the Labor Day Weekend began. She was 84 years of age and suffered “complications from a stroke that occurred several months ago,” announced the Southern Union Conference chapter of Adventist-laymen’s Services and Industries (ASI), the largest association of “self-supporting” or independent ministries organized by Adventists.

Thrash was “a world renowned expert on natural health remedies and vegetarian cuisine,” reported the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer. Together with her late husband, Dr. Calvin Thrash, she co-founded in 1970 the Uchee Pines Natural Health and Lifestyle Center in Seale, Alabama, and the Country Life Natural Food Store and Vegetarian Restaurant in Columbus, Georgia. Both towns are near Fort Benning on the boundary between the two states in the deep South of the United States.

The couple was “quite a team,” the newspaper quoted Dr. Tom Theus, a retired physician who worked in Columbus for 35 years and was a friend of the family. “They were pioneers in preventive medicine and did a great job in training medical missionaries and treating a lot of patients with simple remedies and had good results in most cases.” They coauthored 15 books.

Thrash was chief pathologist at St. Francis Hospital in Columbus and her husband was an internal medicine specialist in private practice when they joined the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in the 1960s. She was born in Baxley, Georgia, and did her undergraduate education at Berry College and the Georgia State College for Women, completing medical school at the Medical College of Georgia.

Often interviewed on health topics for a variety of television programs and training videos. She was a member of the Uchee Pines Adventist Church and led a Sabbath School class at Columbus Adventist Church.

The newspaper quoted her daughter, Ann Thrash-Trumbo: “It was even difficult to buy whole wheat flour in Columbus in the 1960s. And whole grain rice was hard to find.” The two doctors started a health food store to help their patients, special ordering things like peanut butter without added sugar. One of the first community health programs they started was a day camp for overweight girls.

“Mom just put a little classified ad” in the newspaper, Thrash-Trumbo remembers. “I think we had about 15 to 18 girls that first summer and we ran it for about four years.”

As a pathologist, Thrash had a goal to establish a large lab to process tests for doctors throughout the region. But when she became an Adventist, “Jesus got a hold of her and said ‘I have a different way I want you to go, not just making a lot of money. I want you to change lives.’ And she did.”

A memorial service was held at 11 a.m. on Sunday (September 6) in the chapel on the campus of the Uchee Pines Institute, according to an announcement from the ASI organization. Thrash was “well known for her common sense wisdom [and] health ministries frequently consulted her for her insight,” the ASI bulletin stated.
Urban Adventist Church Opens Change Center for Neighborhood Teens

September 10, 2015: “To expect someone to succeed without providing them the proper tools and training on how to use the tools, is essentially assisting them in failing,” said Pastor Keith Hackle, as he presented the Change Center to his community. He is pastor of the Philadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Martin Luther King Park neighborhood on the east side of Des Moines, Iowa. It is an historically African American congregation in a low income, urban area.

The center provides a program for youth ages 9 to 15 in the neighborhood that integrates healthful living with youth empowerment. The approach was first tested in Benton Harbor, Michigan, near Andrews University. Kimberley Francisque, the program director, has moved from Michigan to Des Moines with her husband, Estapha, to develop the new project.

In the summer the teens work in a community garden, learning to grow vegetables for their families and other local residents. After the harvest, they learn to cook recipes that use the crops they grew. Environmental care is also part of the curriculum as they learn to do composting and conserve water use.

During the fall and winter there are classes on finances, job skills, nutrition, social abilities and physical fitness. Cooking classes teach the teens to make healthy meals and the finance classes prepare them for entrepreneurial opportunities. A fitness room provides equipment for exercise and fun.

The center is open from 4 to 6 pm Mondays through Thursdays. Many businesses and nonprofit organizations help with various activities through community partnerships. The center hopes to be a “fulcrum for change” in the neighborhood as well as in the lives of young people, Hackle stated.

More information is available on the Web at https://thedsmchangecenter.org and readers can communicate directly with Pastor Hackle by email at dsmchangecenter@gmail.com.
Adventist Youth Initiative Receives Government Award in Vietnam

From ANN, September 10, 2015: An innovative Adventist youth program in the Seventh-day Adventist Southeast Asia territory (SSD) has recently earned praise from local government leaders in Vietnam. One Year in Mission (OYIM) Vietnam volunteers received a certificate of governmental appreciation for two community projects in ward 9 Phu Nhuan district. The award was given during an August 27 ceremony in Ho Chi Minh City, formerly known as Saigon.

Ward 9 (sub-district) leaders cited the group’s community activities during the recent summer months as positive contributions to the well-being and health of residents.

OYIM volunteers partnered with the ward to clean railway and outdoor market areas for one project. The second project was a health day complete with free haircuts and back massages.

In addition to these two projects, the group has partnered with other wards and organizations to meet community needs over the last year. Activities included school supply distribution to disadvantaged children, a clean-up day, a dental health day and free motorcycle washes in this city of approximately 3.5 million motorcycles.

The volunteers also work with hospitals, charities, and other entities in Ho Chi Minh City and throughout Vietnam. For example, they partnered with a local Buddhist place of worship known as a pagoda for a school supply distribution project.

During a video report about this event, OYIM Vietnam coordinator Le Bao Ngan (Keiko Le) shared that the purpose of their activities is to “not only bring meaningful action and warmth to...children but to inspire young people to do good…daily.”

Another way these volunteers seek to empower and inspire youth is through creating positive social gatherings such as free guitar lessons. These night-time lessons enable youth to gain a new skill while enjoying an uplifting and fun environment.

“It’s just a small way but we hope that the [OYIM Vietnam] movement will help young people become more involved and inspired to impact society,” said Le.

Originally developed by the General Conference in 2013, the OYIM initiative was then introduced in each division. The Southern Asia-Pacific Division now has OYIM country coordinators in 11 of its 14 countries with a wide-ranging network of volunteers.

Vietnam is a Communist country bordered by China, Laos and Cambodia. Reports indicate that approximately 8% of its more than 91 million people practice Christianity. Officially recognized by the government in 2008, the Seventh-day Adventist denomination has more than 11,000 members and 15 churches in the country.

*The Adventist News Network (ANN) is the official news service of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.*
Presidents, Popes, and Power

by Stephen Foster, September 8, 2015: Personally, I am uncomfortable with President Obama’s willingness to leverage the pope’s influence, popularity, and opinions to advance his own political and ideological agenda, even when the President’s agenda coincides or intersects with my own political and ideological beliefs—which is frequently.

On more than one occasion in his presidency, the President has demonstrated a willingness (or need) to drop the pope’s name, so to speak, and associate the pope with specific policy positions that he has/favors. Any liberal president is liable to do this, just as conservative presidents have done so in the past with popes who have not been, or haven’t appeared, as liberal, or who may have been conservatives.

Of course the current pope is just that – the current pope, meaning that he would at some point be succeeded by another pope; and the current President of the United States (POTUS) must also be succeeded by someone just 17 months from now. So then, these are temporary personalities who hold permanent positions of power and influence.

However, the pope can occupy his position for life if he wants to; whereas the President—any POTUS—can only serve two four-year terms, and those only at the constitutional pleasure of the American electorate, which is the key to the dynamic. The President—any President—needs the pope more than the pope needs the President.

Popes are assumed to be infallible by much of their constituency, and they issue “constitutions,” encyclicals, and decrees on their own. At best, Presidents of the United States are assumed to be incompetent by the segment of the electorate that didn’t vote for them, which can number 40-45% even in “landslide” elections. Instead of decrees, presidents can issue executive orders within the purview of the constitutional powers of the executive branch of the federal government, and they can veto or reject legislation passed by both houses of Congress—although their vetoes can be overridden (by both houses of Congress). Instead of pronouncements, presidents may propose and promote legislation that only Congress can write and pass, which he/she may then sign, which would then become law—subject to challenge in, and review by, the courts. As commander-in-chief of the United States armed forces, a president can marshal those forces into action at his or her discretion, subject to the oversight of Congress, which appropriates all funding and which solely can declare an official war.

It doesn’t matter who the pope is; papal actions and documents aren’t subject to be overridden, and neither is there any oversight of them other than public opinion, in which case they get the benefit of the doubt from their constituency—and much of the rest of the world.

So the spheres of influence and cache of popularity and goodwill of any pope versus any president are quite different, with the pope enjoying a clear advantage. As well as anyone, Presidents of the United States and prospective presidents of the United States know this. (If not, they learn.) The current United States president knows this; and with the pope sharing many of his perspectives, the opportunities to advance his agenda using the draft of the pope’s influence and popularity are clear and unmistakable.

Make no mistake about it; this is also the case for those who aspire to the presidency in the near future. So as the pope prepares to come to America in September, it will be interesting to observe those currently in political power—and those who have presidential ambitions.

This pope—as any pope—is uniquely positioned to influence both sides of the political divide in the United States; and both sides of the political divide here are willing to leverage the pope’s—influence and cache to advance their political agendas; which is what makes papal prestige a danger to the principle of separation of church and state, and as such, possibly threatening to liberty of conscience.
Facing San Antonio the Morning After

by Edwin Schwisow, September 10, 2015: An electric silence hung in the air in San Antonio as auditors began to count and tally the ballots late Wednesday afternoon (before old-style song leaders struck up sing-along anthems to help fill the ominous dead air with angelic nuances of hope).

It suddenly became clear that the vote would be much, much closer between the "Yes's" and "No's" than any such wide-scale poll had ever come before on the question of ordaining women by geographical discretion around the world.

The two positions on ordaining women by divisional discretion had been separated by a huge margin 25 years ago, on a question almost identical to the one placed before the delegates in 2015, and some believed the vote would be very similar. But this was not to be.

Change in the Air

As I toiled in the Convention Center, promoting our special edition of the magazine and distributing books and publications for the advancement of Adventist Today Foundation, change was clearly in the air. At our table we offered free publications in both Spanish and English, presenting in measured tones the comparisons and contrasts of various ordination scenarios, and the demand for these booklets ran into the hundreds and then the thousands, with Spanish-language demand at times surpassing calls for the English (both of us at the booth were bilingual, and we could understand the background discussion as the Hispanic delegates, caught in a valley of decision, pondered what they were reading).

Despite massive and costly campaigns to argue the virtues of men-only ordained ministry, we sensed that this would be a far different vote than in 1990, and that in fact it very well could be "close." The "Nay's" still wore the spurs and carried the riding crops among the delegates, but the margins were narrowing, and in fact by the time the vote was tallied, the margin had narrowed to about three-to-two opposed. Clearly attitudes across the world field were on the move. Ellen White's comments more than 100 years before on another issue applied here – when in doubt about an issue (paraphrasing), take note of the tone of those advancing each side of the argument. An accusative, bitter tone often accompanies an argument on the wane.

In fact, the Adventist Today booth (though small and simple) became a major gathering ground for those seeking understanding of the ordination issue and other questions. The two of us at the booth put in 10-hour days of nearly continuous bilingual dialogue, and Cherie was able to greet the African delegates with native aplomb from her days as a young missionary in Nigeria in the 1950s, and later in the 1970s.

The Voices of the People

From time to time the delegates recessed and were allowed to circulate in the aisles of the vast hall, filled with hundreds of booths ranging from sale of soy products to cases for hold-the-line traditionalism made by some
ministry proponents. Prior to the session *Adventist Today* (AT) had prepared and circulated by mail and email, to each division, copies of a special "double" issue of the AT journal, focusing on the issues on the agenda at the GC Session.

Scores of delegates stopped by our booth to thank us for publishing the special issue (at not inconsiderable expense) and asking us in many cases for additional copies. Ours was a purposely measured voice in the hall, not non-supportive of a "Yes" vote on ordination, but always reasonable and never vitriolic in the tones we often heard from the other side of the issue.

**Heard at Our Booth**

1. One of the most vehement such comments was a prediction that “ordaining women will inevitably provide a gateway path for the ordination of those caught up in an unrestrained homosexual lifestyle.” This argument seemed to carry water with few, if any, at our booth. Undoubtedly the measured reasoning over the past 25 or so years by the independent Adventist press has diffused that argument, except among the most decisively pro-male-headship cases.

2. A second argument went like this, “If we ordain women, we will be taking the whole Church into apostasy, delaying yet further the coming of Jesus to take home His perfect Bride.” Interestingly enough, the “Ellen White argument” seemed to counteract this concern, especially among Hispanics who by and large hold the life and ministry of Ellen White in highest esteem. Came the response, “But our Church would not exist without the inspired leadership of a holy woman. If God can consecrate a woman in 1844 in full-time ministry, certainly He is free to do so even more in 2015!”

3. But the message has gotten through convincingly that ours is not an Old Testament church and that the day-to-day practices of the prototypical tabernacle are no longer binding. Ours is a Christian faith, where a woman was allowed many times to view, in vision, the most sacred inner sanctums of heaven.

4. We also heard at our booth words to the effect that “This is a liberal/conservative issue, where liberals support ordination and conservatives are struggling to hold the line on what they believe is apostasy.” Quite interestingly, some of the most persuasive arguments pro-ordination were being expressed at the Session by moderates and conservatives, and this was noted by visitors to our booth. “But aren’t Cindy Tutsch and Ty Gibson both conservatives?” “Yes, they are,” came back the response. “We no longer see this as a liberal/conservative issue. It’s an Adventist issue, and it’s not a moral issue; it’s a decision God makes, as to whom He will bless. Ordination simply recognizes the gift already divinely given.”

5. A most surprising observation at our booth was this: “One of the most convincing arguments pro-ordination is the style and spirit of the anti-ordination advocates. If these are the kinds of arguments needed to sustain their position, maybe their position is not biblical.”

*Adventist Today* was a strong presence, but even so the VOTE did not go pro-ordination, but from our observations, the TREND is definitely moving that direction, at an accelerating rate. Women will continue to be ordained in moderate numbers, without great fanfare and controversy. There will be a death struggle by opponents, but the winning argument clearly will be: “God is God, and He has the right and privilege to break from tradition and bless us in special ways in these times.”

**A Time to Move Forward**

*Adventist Today* must continue to grow as an agenda-setter in a Church clear prone to conceptual and procedural missteps. The ordination issue has been a case study. One visitor asserted, “How paradoxical that one way to move an idea forward in North America is to arrange to have GC administration oppose it. That’s an
overstatement, granted, but it does seem that on this one issue of ordination, the GC has lost a tremendous amount of credibility, and I understand the situation may be far worse in parts of Europe.”

Within this context, leadership from the intellectual grass roots of the Church is necessary, and this was pointed out to me by a delegate from Scandinavia: “Thanks for sending us your special issue. We read it and were encouraged that there is hope for the Church, despite this problem with the ordination question.”

Financial Needs Serious

As I have returned to the office and “counted the cost” of our sojourn in San Antonio, I note that it was an expensive foray, yet fraught with wonderful accomplishments and a vital, revitalized franchise direction for Adventist Today. Our news team this year consisted of several decisively youthful writers, with their refreshing points of view. We were able to publish an extremely vital special edition of the magazine that circulated throughout the world BEFORE the session and was distributed by the thousands during the Session itself. AT emerges from this Session in a stronger position of influence than ever before.

This summer we must replace our depleted resources with at least $30,000. Our needs are serious, but our platform is firm. We must cultivate what we have sown in San Antonio, and our first step in that direction is through an issue in just a few weeks, dedicated to analyzing exactly where the Church finds itself in the post-San Antonio milieu. (To accomplish this we will most certainly need that $30,000 within weeks, not months.)

We are moving forward. There will be contests ahead, but what has been accomplished must be pressed forward with dignity, aplomb, and convincing Christian attitude. This Adventist Today will do with your support and blessing.

Edwin A. Schwisow, Treasurer \ Secretary for Development \ Adventist Today
Eternal Light

By Debbonnaire Kovacs, posted Sept. 9, 2015

For a devotion this week I thought I’d share a text most Adventists are not familiar with. This is a passage from the Apocryphal book Wisdom of Solomon, very reminiscent of several early chapters in Proverbs, where Wisdom is also personified as a woman. You may recognize the last line—it is quoted in the familiar song, “All Things Bright and Beautiful,” but is not actually found in the Protestant Bible at all. It is from this passage. I think this is a beautiful passage, and recommend some quiet meditation on its principles.

Wisdom of Solomon 7:26-8:1

For wisdom is a reflection of eternal light,

a spotless mirror of the working of God,

and an image of his goodness.

Although she is but one, she can do all things,

and while remaining in herself, she renews all things;

in every generation she passes into holy souls

and makes them friends of God, and prophets;

for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom.

She is more beautiful than the sun,

and excels every constellation of the stars.

Compared with the light she is found to be superior,

for it is succeeded by the night,

but against wisdom evil does not prevail.

She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other,

and she orders all things well.
Adventist Author Ventures into Scary Territory

By Debbonnaire Kovacs, Sept 9, 2015

I recently read a novel called What You Want, by Canadian author, Trudy Morgan-Cole. It is her first self-published novel (though not by any means her first novel), and I found it completely engrossing. I felt I’d gone on the road trip on Route 66 with the heroine and her friends. It gets into some pretty controversial territory. There are things in this book that some conservative Christians would find quite threatening. Morgan-Cole describes herself as “a Christian who loves Jesus, but finds some of his followers scary,” and “a Seventh-day Adventist who doubts, questions, and loves my church passionately.” I asked her if I could explore her writing life in a feature, and she agreed.

Trudy Morgan was nine years old when her first poem was published. She was a Primary herself, and so received Primary Treasure, but she sent her poem, “Seasons Four” to the younger children’s magazine, Our Little Friend. It was published, not in a children’s corner, but as a Real Poem with a full-page illustration, which Trudy says was “wildly exciting!”

“As a child,” she says, “I was always a storyteller, and even before I was able to write things down, I used to narrate life in my own head.”

This early success with her poem led her to continue submitting things to church magazines throughout her growing up and teen years, and some were published.

The summer after her sophomore year in college, Review & Herald advertised a writing competition for new writers. Trudy won second place with a novel that was later published as All My Love, Katie.

The Writing Bug had well and truly bitten her. At 20, before even graduating from college, she was a published author.

Over the next few years, besides devotional books and young-adult stories, she tried short stories in an attempt to be more “literary.” (“I didn’t even like reading short stories. I thought that was what you were supposed to do!”)

By now she was Trudy Morgan-Cole, and while writing was not her way of supporting herself—she was a teacher—she was becoming quite prolific.

During seven years when she was at home with small children, Morgan-Cole did freelancing. She enjoyed being able to supplement the family income, but she also found it frustrating; “Most of my writing time was going on stuff other people were excited about, not stuff I was excited about.”

During this time, though, she also continued to write for R&H: a series of novels based around the lives of Biblical characters—Esther, Deborah, Lydia, and James the brother of Jesus. She found these much more enjoyable and satisfying—and so did her readers. Morgan-Cole has an enormous gift for portraying the ancient world in such a way that when the reader finally lifts her head, she feels she’s been time-traveling.

“Church publishing,” she says, “was a rich and wonderful place for me where I was mentored by gifted editors—people like Penny and Gerald Wheeler and Jeannette Johnson whom I was fortunate to work with for so many years at the old Review and Herald Publishing Association. But I’ve always had the urge to write for a wider audience, too.”

Morgan-Cole tried fantasy and historical fiction, the latter being her favorite reading material. The fantasy went nowhere, but she was working, in between freelance jobs, on a historical novel about a woman on whom she had
written a paper in college. In 2003, she found an agent who helped her get signed by a fairly large publisher (Arkana), and in 2006, *The Violent Friendship of Esther Johnson*, the lifelong friend and inspiration of Jonathan Swift, the author of *Gulliver’s Travels*, was published.

Morgan-Cole thought she’d arrived. Or at least begun to arrive…

However, the publisher of *Violent Friendship* did no marketing to speak of, and the book did very poorly. Morgan-Cole describes herself as reaching a low point in her writing career, and becoming very discouraged.

But she didn’t give up. She lives in Newfoundland, where she is an adult-ed teacher and says, “My students are the bravest people on earth.” So she tried her hand at a series of novels (*By the Rivers of Brooklyn*, *That Forgetful Shore*, and *A Sudden Sun*) which she says “grew out of the history of women’s lives and stories here in Newfoundland,” and which were published by a local publisher. She met new people in her own region, found readers who loved her work, and got to go to a lot of book clubs. This might have been as satisfying as writing the proverbial best-seller would have been, if not more so.

Then came *What You Want*. Morgan-Cole describes it as being “about a young woman who takes a road trip to figure out where she’s heading in life. It’s about losing your faith and finding your path, and like all my novels it explores religion and spirituality as part of the complex pattern of our lives.”

Losing your faith and finding your path? But—doesn’t finding your path always lead to finding faith? Doesn’t God always tie up all the loose ends? Somehow, Christian publishing, Adventist or not, seems to expect that, which seems odd, when we all know from personal experience life is not that way.

Morgan-Cole says she doesn’t see herself as moving “away” from anything. She would still publish with traditional publishing, including Christian publishing, especially if someone wanted another novel about a Bible character. So why the turn in the road? I’ll let her speak for herself.

“I will confess there is a greater freedom, in some ways, in writing for audiences outside the Adventist, or even the Christian bookstore market. With a ‘Christian book’ that’s marketed as such, there’s a strong expectation that you’re going to offer clear resolutions and answers. (This isn’t always the case in Adventist, or Christian, publishing. The best book, in my opinion, ever released by an Adventist press was June Strong’s novel *Mindy*, which deeply impressed me as a young reader with the author’s willingness to leave the ending painful and unresolved in many ways. No easy solution there!) But often, the expectation in a Christian novel is that you may raise tough questions, but loose ends will be resolved and a Biblical solution will be presented by the final pages. I’ve never found that real life works that way—and outside Christian publishing, there’s not necessarily the expectation that books will work that way either. There are more questions than answers, and the answers aren’t always as easy to apply as we’d like. Life—even life with God in it—is messy, and I like to read and write books that reflect that messiness.”

AToday readers may applaud that courage.

Find Trudy Morgan-Cole’s website [here](http://atoday.org/adventist-author-ventures-into-scary-territory.html).

Watch her YouTube channel [here](http://atoday.org/adventist-author-ventures-into-scary-territory.html).

Especially watch this video, in which she draws her writing life in less than five minutes, and from which some of the quotes above were taken.

And try her books. If you like them, tell her so. Writing can be a lonely business, especially if you’re trying to do it to the glory of God.
I was reared in an Adventist home where I was taught that "the Catholics" were shameless, truth-rejecting, alcohol-bibbing, commandment-breaking, idol-worshiping, violence-prone blasphemers who claimed the rights of God on earth and ultimately would try to kill those of us who refused to accept their brand of totalitarian Christianity (my apologies to those who may be offended by my rhetoric here; I am simply describing the histrionic inventiveness of three kids who had been taught in sermon after sermon, lesson after lesson, that Roman Catholicism would be the primary contributor to time-of-the-end chaos such as had never before been known on Planet Earth.

My sisters and I in fact created a little game known as “Catholics and Adventists,” in which the two sides would attempt to present the most derogatory reasons possible as to why the other side was decisively wrong (long harangues about the proper day of worship were favorite elements of the game; the audacity of the Pope to claim to stand in the place of Christ on earth—"Antichrist"—was another hot button in the game.) Each afternoon the game grew rowdier and more tumultuous, until Mother finally outlawed “C&A” altogether, apparently believing that the game itself would eventually cause a “Time of Trouble” such as had never before been known in her house.

Why is it that we Adventists hold the Roman Catholic Church in such depredation and disrepute, while we so seldom actually study the history and inner workings of the organization? Are we afraid that we might find something admirable and seductive underneath the harsh rhetoric? In my class work in Adventist education, not once did we seriously ponder the doctrinal progression of the Roman church, except in the context of its failings (as described by Protestant writers). I was well into my teens before I learned as a fact that the clerics of Rome were responsible for delineating which gospels and other elements of the New Testament were to be included in the canon, and which were to be discarded (quite a sobering revelation, which I determined could be accepted only by crediting the Spirit of God with salvific sway in safeguarding Holy Writ, even years after the Catholic Church had succumbed to the influences of the Dragon).

In Pope Francis we have a far more “accessible” prelate than in the past, one who once upon a time walked the same streets and visited some of the same buildings we Adventist missionaries did in Latin America, from the days of Fernando Stahl forward, in a post-Vatican II world in which the Roman church buried the hatchet of overt persecution and its clerics began to wear civilians’ clothing and celebrate the mass in the popular languages of the day. One fine day I well remember, Padre Jaime Postma, leader of our local diocese and a concert pianist, showed up at our front door and asked if he could play our piano for a while, and would any of the local children be interested in lessons?

Mother invited him in and we enjoyed a concert right there in our front room, but Mom turned down his offer of lessons, still fearing that his primary goal was to indoctrinate her children, who only three years before had been playing “Catholics and Adventists.”

My personal experience as a maturing Adventist roughly corresponds with the material in Wills’ book, “The Future of the Catholic Church with Pope Francis.”

Wills sees his Church (yes, Wills is a liberal, intellectual Catholic himself) as a massive institution that changes slowly but surely, regardless of the particular Pope at the controls, even as the hands on a clock keep time, but without appearing to move except through time-lapse exposures.

The book itself is more a review of the life and times of the Church leading up to the coronation of the first Jesuit
pontiff, rather than a biography of the pontiff himself. This is understandable, given the newness of Francis on the world scene. Wills looks primarily at five vital areas of Church practice, beginning with the decision long ago in Rome to conduct all masses in the Latin tongue (in a move to encourage unity among the far-flung dioceses by teaching and preaching in the universal language). For the same reason, today, Latin (now considered a dead language) is discouraged in the churches, in an effort to better minister to contemporary generations.

Adapting to a World without Monarchies

In its early days the Church depended on a symbiosis with monarchies to survive and defend its far-flung real estate holdings. With the decline of monarchies, many of these holdings are no longer proprietary to the Church or are simply guaranteed constitutionally, in some way, in the countries where they are located. In Mexico, for example, it is illegal for a denomination to formally hold title to land, yet there are Catholic houses of worship by the thousands. The absence of monarchies in the West continues to alter the ways the Papacy plans for the future.

The Coming and Going of Anti-Semitism

For centuries improbable stories and misunderstandings pitted Jews against Christians throughout the former Roman Empire, and into the New World. The Jews had firmly established themselves as providers of financial services, which the Roman Church required in a world where they were biblically prohibited from paying or charging interest. Yet the Jews, who could lawfully negotiate interest rates with non-believers, had a hard time in a world where one could be an international banker or a Christian, but not both simultaneously. Certainly the position of Jews as experts in finance contributed to serious sociological misunderstandings and many attacks against Jews by enraged Christians. The calming of anti-Semitism is changing the way the Church functions and safeguards its wealth.

The Coming and Going of Natural Law

The Catholic Church has traditionally seen the world and its Heaven as naturally patriarchal and God Himself as masculine. With the arrival of the enlightenment, more and more the Popes have defended their traditional interpretations by interpreting Natural Law to concur with their traditional understandings of the way God wants things to be. In a world of advancing education, this is less easily done today.

Consequently, concerns about natural law have enmeshed the Church in round after round of controversy about the proper roles of men and women in the Church, of sexual responsibilities and procreation, and ultimately the very purpose of marriage itself. Large numbers in the Catholic Church are unmarried and nominally celibate, a situation now slowly being addressed by Francis, as he appears more open than former Popes to relax the strict restrictions on marriage of clergy.

Use of contraceptive routines, medications, and devices are still nominally prohibited in many cases, but the Vatican no longer appears to be focused on contraception, except in the matter of abortion, which it vociferously opposes.

The Coming and Going of Confession

The practice of formal confessions and masses are in many cases the financial foundation of the Church, and appear to be here to stay for a long time.

How interesting that the Church has held on most tenaciously to the very rite that got it into so much trouble with Reformers in the 16th century. Luther rebelled against the Church in large part (it was the straw that broke the back of his religious camel) because of the Church’s claim to hold the salvation of individual members in its hands, and could determine the eternal fate of any and all, by divine authority purchased by the penitent with money.

Summary
There is little doubt that the Roman Catholic Church continues to fight for relevance in a world that increasingly has less and less room for religious ritual. But the Roman church has shown itself to be a vibrant force in Western civilization, and there's no doubt it will remain so for a long time to come.

Whatever the case, the Church under Francis seems determined to raise its profile higher and higher in our lives, and assume more and more relevancy to everyday people. How well it succeeds will be interesting to observe, and whether or not other denominations follow suit is surely indicative of the Catholic Church's fortunes in the developed and developing world today. This is a recommended book, though it moves slowly and is very thorough, something we Adventists may find unusual in a book about our perceived nemesis and natural adversary, the Catholic Church.

Anybody for a game of C&A?
Nothing In My Hands, Chapter Seventeen

By Del Starr, a pseudonym, all rights reserved. Posted Sept 9, 2015.

My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?

Dianne watched the patrol car pull away with Janelle in the back seat. Though her heart was breaking, she knew that it would all be okay in the end. Janelle had told her the truth about Joe's conduct. Dianne understood teenagers and also understood that Janelle, at thirteen, wanted to go back to Kansas in whatever way she could. Dianne turned around and went into the house.

A hearing was called and Dianne went to the Youth facilities for that meeting. There wasn’t much said to her, she was only allowed to listen. No questions were asked of her. When the meeting was over, the pronouncement had been made that in the interests of the children, they should all be removed from the home.

Dianne rushed from the building to the nearest pay phone and called home. Brad answered the phone and between horrid, raging sobs said, “They took them, Mom! They took them! There wasn’t anything I could do. They just came in and took them!” Brad was fifteen years old.

Dianne raced home. The children were gone. The only one who remained was Brad. They had tried to take him also but he had reminded them that he would soon be sixteen and old enough to determine for himself where he should live.

Meetings, meetings and more meetings. Hearings and more hearings. Dianne lost her job because she had to attend all the meetings and hearings. With each ensuing hearing, the noose tightened around her neck. She expressed to the social worker that she loved the children with all of her heart. The reply was, “Sometimes love is not enough.”

There was absolutely nothing Dianne could do. Her heart palpitated with terror. Each time she heard a siren she just “knew” that her child had suffered an injury. Doctors would not prescribe anything for her nerves and she was a basket case. She begged and borrowed anything that would help to calm her down. She also got a new job. This time it was for a company that traveled Washington, Oregon, Northern California, Idaho and Montana on a contract basis with companies that must perform OSHA-demanded testing. This served to give a focus to Dianne’s life and she didn’t have to face the lonely house.

Brad was tortured by memories and many nights he awakened with nightmares.

Visitation was arranged for Dianne with the children. Her company was very good to arrange her schedule so that she could attend the visitation but when she had attended more than one visitation in a row, the schedule would be changed and she would have to rearrange her schedule to accommodate the state.

Dianne’s habit had been to reassure her children by touching them gently on the cheek. On the occasion of one visitation she reached out to touch Cynthia’s cheek and Cynthia pulled back. Dianne was not allowed to be alone with her children and she protested to the caseworker/observer that her child must be being abused, for she had withdrawn from her mother’s touch, something she had never previously done. Dianne was ignored by the caseworker.

The children had been in the care of the Children’s Services Division for a year when Ted called Dianne, asking to speak to his children, Cynthia and Randy. Dianne’s state of mind was not so that she could talk seriously with the man. Because of his drinking their home together had been ruined. She was furious that he had left her alone to...
raise the children and that he had not been in contact for a year and did not know of the whereabouts of his children. She told Ted all of this.

Ted contacted the Children's Services Division and arranged for visitation with Cynthia and Randy. He too, noted that Cynthia had been abused and spoke with the case worker about it. It had been nearly a month since Dianne had brought it to the attention of the case worker and only now, when Ted mentioned it, was any action taken. The children were interviewed and it was determined that indeed they were being abused. They were immediately removed from the foster home they were in and moved to another.

Ted then submitted application for Cynthia and Randy to live with him. It was granted and he was given custody of the children.

After two years, Dianne had become reconciled to the idea that she would not get her children back. Sometimes they were able to slip off and come to her home for a visit but that was rare. The case went to court and the judge declared that Dianne was a drug addict and an alcoholic and that her children should be given over for adoption.

Dianne could not reconcile all of this in her mind. She had never used drugs of any sort, had vehemently decried her sister Kathy's usage of them and yet she, Dianne, was now determined to be a drug user.

The part about being an alcoholic seemed ironic to her. It had been several years since she had been drinking any alcohol and to now be avowed as an alcoholic also bewildered her. She had submitted to personality tests (MMPI) and alcohol screening. Both had shown that Dianne had no problems. She did not understand what had taken place. All she knew was that her precious babies were not in her care and that the lines of communication between them were being broken. The children had been separated; some of them were in institutional homes and others in private homes. The entire family had been upset.

One day, Dianne was scheduled to be in Southern Oregon in the evening. The day had already been miserable. Another driver for her company had borrowed her trailer and when he parked it, he had put the handle for the landing gear in his own pickup. He was long gone and Dianne had to work up some way to get the landing gear lifted. The morning had been used in going to welding shops and the like, to have another handle made. Now she barely had time to make her trip.

She was finally ready. The pickup was under the trailer and she was raising the landing gear when a car drove up. A lady got out and asked if she could direct her to Dianne. Dianne identified herself and the lady informed her that Joe had turned her in to psychiatric officials as having mental problems.

Dianne's mouth dropped open and it took her a few moments to speak. Finally, in frustration and anger, she said, "Look! I have 300 men waiting for me in Southern Oregon. I'm late already and I don't have time for your nonsense. Give me your card and I will call you when I return."

The lady smiled and said, "I think you have answered our questions adequately." She got back into her car and left.

Dianne felt that the entire world was closing in around her. Too many thoughts, too many feelings, too much interference, too much of everything. Dianne could not face more. It was only a few short weeks later that Dianne determined to end her life.

She awakened in the intensive care unit of the hospital. It was several days before she was allowed to return home. The social worker asked her, before she left, what she planned to do now. Determination had again built in Dianne and she replied, "I'm going home and get that load of laundry washed that I had loaded in the machine." She was allowed to return home.

Another six months or so passed and the older girls, Janelle and Tina, called Dianne and asked to speak with her. Dianne met with them and they asked if they could come home. Dianne couldn't believe her ears. How could they
legally return home? She learned that the girls had run away from the homes in which they had been placed. Janelle had once more flown to Kansas, but this time she had been intercepted by the police. They had wanted to find jobs, but the state would not help them get work permits. They had been declared “incalcitrant” and released from custody. Janelle was sixteen and Tina was fifteen and they were on their own with no help and no hope. Dianne gathered them into her arms and they went home together.

It was only another couple of months until Kira also was released and she, too, came to Dianne. It would be another long year-and-a-half before Chad was released to Dianne’s custody.

Since the incident of Joe’s reporting Dianne for mental problems, Dianne had discontinued having anything to do with him. Joe ran back and forth to Mississippi several more times and finally moved in with another woman.

Dianne continued in her job traveling the country. She loved it, she loved the people with whom she worked, and it gave her time to be alone with her thoughts and to get her life in order Many times she would lie on the bed in her motel room and read the Gideon Bible that was always at her bedside. She longed to have a relationship with God but she knew now, as never before, that she could never accomplish it. She did, however, want to learn about Him, even if she could not know Him and so…. she read.

At home she would read her precious books by Ellen G. White, to shore up the things she knew in the Bible. She would switch from one to the other, always seeking, ever learning.
Kim Carter, CNN Hero

By Carole Derry-Bretsch, posted Sept. 10, 2015

Editor’s Note: This is not precisely an Arts notice, but we do include videos, and these are particularly well done. Most of all, the issue is an extremely important one and we hope and pray all of you will support it by watching the video short.

I had the privilege of speaking with Kim Carter and her staff yesterday. The Time for Change Foundation, which works with women who have been or are homeless or imprisoned, often with drug, alcohol, and other issues, is incredibly effective. Therefore, it is in the top 25 of the CNN Heroes for this year. But I would really like to see her reach the top 10, and have the opportunity to reach the top spot.

Every program that reaches the top 10 spot wins $25,000 for their organization.

The winner will be awarded $100,000 for their cause.

She cannot do that without all of our help. What we all can do is very simple.

All you have to do is:

Go to Kim’s Link – www.timeforchangefoundation.org.

Then, click on the CNN link, and watch the short video.

Everyone who watches the video will let CNN know that a person is interested in this project, and those numbers are what raises an organization in the rankings.

I cannot tell you how much I believe in this program. After talking to her, I can see what an incredible woman she is, and how much God is the center of her life.

I would love to ask you all to take a couple of minutes, and go to her webpage, and then the CNN web page.

Could I ask for another favor please? Would you be willing to share this with your friends, and on your Facebook pages? Together, we can all make a difference. Let’s see how quickly we can help Kim get to the top 10.

I would love for Kim to get to the CNN Hero of the year spot. This recognition would be so amazing for her program.

Thank you, and God bless the work of the Time for Change Foundation!
The Origin of Tongues

By S M Chen, posted Sept. 9, 2015

Based on Genesis 11:1-9

There was a time, after the Great Deluge, the likes of which no one had witnessed before or (thank God) since, when we spoke one language. This was convenient, to say the least. To say the most, it was most convenient, and facilitated, in an equable manner, communication and interaction.

Looking back, this is the way it should have remained. But it was not to be. For, ever since the Fall darkness lay in the heart of man.

The conflict between light and dark, day and night, good and evil was to be a hallmark of Earth. Man had tasted the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and thought it good. With more than a touch of irony, his natural tendency ever thereafter was to seek evil. Like a moth to a flame, he would be drawn to that which would initially entice but ultimately destroy.

The serpent in the Garden, through whom Satan spoke, did utter one truth (so beguiling but deadly is the lie that contains some truth): he claimed that Eve’s eyes would be opened if she partook of the forbidden fruit. And they (and Adam’s) were. After partaking, they saw that they were naked. The protective veil that cloaked their nakedness disappeared when they chose Satan’s lie over God’s truth.

It was on the plain of Shinar that we hatched a plan that we thought would forestall a future flood. We didn’t believe in the Almighty’s promise to Noah, signified by a rainbow, that Earth would never again be visited by a deluge.

At first, all went well.

Bricks are not difficult to make. One needs a mold, into which wet mud is poured/placed and allowed to dry. Addition of straw strengthens the brick.

Alternatively, bricks can be fired in a kiln, in which event heat results in a stronger end product. This is the method we used.

Many men make much mortar. And many bricks.

So the construction of a city, including a tower, proceeded apace. The tower grew taller and taller, ever skyward, making Earth, as it were, ever smaller.

Then it happened. I witnessed it myself, with my own eyes and ears.

One man who was hauling brick from the kiln asked, “Where are these to go?”

Another answered, “Tutaj.”

First: “Qué dijo?”
Second: “Dixi illic.”

First: “Spreken onze taal.”

Second: “Ne dedin?”

First: “Nem ́ertelek.”

Whereupon he threw up his hands, dropped the bricks in disgust and walked away.

Variations on this played out everywhere on the building project.

As the sun beat down, one fellow wiped his brow and commented, “Sure bu gün isti.”

Fellow worker (FW): “Beth wnaethoch chi ei ddweud?”

First: “Oh yekela.”

FW: “Ich fühle mich gleich.” He stopped what he was doing.

At another site, this conversation took place:

Worker (motioning to man with bricks): “Onlari buraya getir.”

Brickman (puzzled): “Co?”

1st man: “Esan nion: ‘Ekarri itzazu hemen.’”

2nd man: “Nî maith liom leat an oiread.” And threw a brick at the first man, who ducked and quit what he was doing.

Work halted. Men walked away, never to return.

I marveled. Surely the hand of God must be in this, I thought. Or the devil. Either way, work was not going to continue. Babel was finished.

* 

In 460 B.C., the Greek historian Herodotus visited the tower, which had been crumbling for a long time. Despite that, he was impressed, and wrote: “It has a solid central tower, one furlong square, with a second erected on top of it and then a third, and so on up to eight. All eight towers can be climbed by a spiral way running around the outside, and about halfway up there are seats for those who make the journey to rest on.”

Archaeologists exploring the Mesopotamian plain between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in modern day Iraq have found what appears to be the tower’s foundation. King Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 B.C.) rebuilt the tower to stand almost 300 feet high. A royal inscription indicates the tower was constructed of “baked brick enameled in brilliant blue.”

Today all that remains of the fabled city of Babylon, including the tower, is a mound, or tell, of broken mud-brick buildings and debris.

As the Wise Man wrote (Ecclesiastes 12:7), “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was…”

There are now close to 6500 spoken languages throughout the world. Had it not been for the Tower of Babel, how many would there be?