NEWS

**Adventist Doctor Running for U.S. President Moves Up in the Polls:** Ben Carson, the medical miracle worker as a neurosurgeon, is slicing and dicing the Republican cast of presidential hopefuls with surgical precision....

**Wildfire Has Come Within 15 Miles of Pacific Union College in California:** A wildfire has come perilously close to the area surrounding Pacific Union College in Northern California and has led to major evacuations....

**In Dominica, ADRA Supports Communities Affected by Tropical Storm Erika:** In the aftermath of last month's devastating tropical storm that hit the Caribbean island of Dominica (population 72,000), Adventists continue to minister to the afflicted....
A Proposed Letter of Apology to Pope Francis from the GC President: AT Columnist Ervin Taylor believes the blanketing of Philadelphia with Ellen White's *Great Controversy*, which presents a highly critical review of historic Catholicism, is a tactical faux pas....

My Take: The World of the Small Church: Why is gathering with just a dozen or so worshipers such a different sensation than joining a packed hall with hundreds or even thousands of congregants? Columnist Raj Attiken says we need both kinds of churches, and to appreciate them we must understand their strengths and limitations....

Is Everything Equally Important?: Guest editorialist Reinder Bruinsma reminds us that focusing too much on high-level decisions in the Church may distract us from more important matters in our local congregations....

Navel Gazing: Columnist Larry Downing calls on the Church not to be overly distracted to the exclusion of the great Christian issues of our time, including the plight of the war-torn and the homeless....

Who Were You Expecting?: The Blessed Hope is all about expectation of the wonderful Jesus, but columnist Harry Banks wonders if He will measure up to our expectations when He comes....

Pani's Story: "Pani" is a loose translation of the Hebrew word "ruby." This week's devotional by Debonnaire Kovacs imagines a day in the life of Proverbs' "ideal woman."...
CNN Hero Kim Carter Helps Hundreds of Women Make a Lasting Change (FEATURE): Kim Carter and her "Time for Change Foundation" is meeting with outstanding results in their ministry to homeless and battered women.

On Kindness (PROSE): SM Chen uses the enigmatic shark to illustrate the contrasts between sociopathic behavior and the kindness inherent in the human experience.

Day in the Life of Jesus (UPDATED REVIEW): Debbonnaire Kovacs continues reading a chapter a day from the book, "A Day in the Life of Jesus," by the late Dennis Nickel, and recommends it to us for reading in the New Year.

Nothing in My Hands, Chapter Eighteen (PROSE): In Episode 18 of this serialized nonfiction biography, our demi-heroine, Dianne, sees glimpses of divinity at work in her life, while believing herself utterly undeserving of His grace.

Glory (VISUAL ART): Debbonnaire Kovacs shares a wondrous scene from a photographic pilgrimage near Prince Edward Island, Canada.
Adventist Doctor Running for U.S. President Moves Up in the Polls

September 15, 2015: On the eve of the second major Republican Party presidential debate, Dr. Ben Carson, the Adventist brain surgeon with no prior experience as an elected official, has moved near the leading candidate in new polls. A poll released yesterday found Carson tied with billionaire Donald Trump at 23 percent in Iowa, one of four states with early primary elections.

Conducted by Monmouth University, it was the first poll since July that did not show Trump ahead of all the other candidates, reported Cable News Network (CNN) on Monday evening (September 14). Carly Fiorina, the former chief executive officer of Hewlett-Packard, had 10 percent. All of the former and current senators and governors in the poll had only single digit support.

A national poll of Republican voters released Tuesday morning (September 14) puts Carson in a “statistical dead heat” with Trump. The CBS News/New York Times Survey found 27 percent of primary voters supporting Trump and 23 percent supporting Carson, but with a six percentage point margin of error. Trump’s share is essentially the same as the July poll by the same organization while Carson’s has jumped 17 percentage points.

“The results mark an enormous improvement in the poll for Carson, who wasn’t thought to be a serious candidate,” wrote Adam Edelman in today’s New York Daily News. The voters who are moving behind Carson are being pulled largely from those who supported former Florida Governor Jeb Bush and Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, Edelman stated.

Another poll from a few days ago put Carson at 14 percent and Trump at 28 percent, the New York Times yesterday. Again, all of the other candidates were in the single digits despite the fact that most of them are well-known public officials who have won elections previously.

Wednesday night (September 16) all of these candidates will participate in a debate on CNN which will likely be viewed by millions of Americans. This might be the occasion when the possibility that an Adventist will be elected President of the United States becomes a serious option, or it could be the end of Carson’s campaign if he makes a serious mistake. Trump has lashed out at other candidates, but has not been critical of Carson.

The only African American among the candidates, Carson has an inspirational background story that has been told in a television movie. He grew up in a single-parent family in a low-income urban community, won the opportunity to get an education at one of the top universities in America and became a famous brain surgeon at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. The Adventist values taught to him by his mother played a key role in his success.
Wildfire Has Come within 15 Miles of Pacific Union College in California

September 14, 2015: The Valley Fire in the State of California started Sabbath afternoon in the Napa Valley and by this morning was leading television news across the United States. At least one Adventist family was not permitted by authorities to return home after church and believe their house has been burned. The California Fire Service reports that the fire is as close as 15 miles from the campus of Pacific Union College, an Adventist institution in the area.

A total of 61,000 acres had been burned over by 8 am Pacific Time and the fire was only five percent contained, an official bulletin stated. “Hundreds of homes and hundreds of other structures have been destroyed.” Four injuries had been reported. The fire continues to grow in hot, windy conditions.

Evacuations were ordered near Middletown, Berryessa Estates, Cobb, Seigler Canyon, Loch Lomond and Hidden Valley Lakes. Emergency shelters are in operation at the Napa County Fairgrounds in Calistoga, Kelseyville High School, Redwood Empire Fairgrounds in Ukiah and Highland Senior Center.

A total of 1,255 fire personnel are fighting the fire. They are using 117 fire engines, 49 water tenders, 24 bulldozers, 10 helicopters and four air tankers, according to official information.

Pacific Union College has an enrollment of about 1,700 students and a faculty of nearly 160. It is operated by the Pacific Union Conference in the denomination’s North American Division. It is near the historic site of the last home of Ellen G. White, the most prominent cofounder of the denomination, and a hospital affiliated with the denomination.

The Angwin Volunteer Fire Department, which includes students and employees among the firefighters, posted a Twitter message stating that the “fire is most active on the north end away from Angwin.” A number of alumni and other Adventists have posted prayer requests and best wishes on the college’s Facebook page.
In Dominica, ADRA Supports Communities Affected by Tropical Storm Erika

From ANN, September 16, 2015: Days after Tropical Storm Erika devastated the Caribbean Island of Dominica, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Dominica, with the help of local Adventist church member volunteers, are active in providing meals to those left homeless in the most affected communities. ADRA is the humanitarian arm of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

The storm hit the small island of approximately 72,000 people on August 27, triggering mudslides, which destroyed roads, bridges and homes. Over 30 people died and dozens went missing.

Priscilla Prevost, ADRA coordinator in Dominica, reported that nearly 20,000 people have been affected and half of the island is without electricity. There were nine affected communities, and the most affected were in Petite Savanne, where all residents were evacuated by helicopters.

Flights into Dominica’s Douglas Charles Airport have been suspended since the tropical storm hit.

“ADRA Dominica is presently engaged in feeding about 120 persons at two main shelters,” said Prevost. “Our church member volunteers have been preparing three meals per day at the church’s Roseau Community Services since residents were evacuated from their destroyed homes.”

Last week, ADRA Coordinator for the East Caribbean Conference Collin Thorne, along with church member volunteers, visited the affected southern communities and distributed food and water to individuals in homes and shelters. Psychological first aid was also administered by qualified Adventist professionals during that visit.

Many pastors and church members traveled by boat with food and water to aid affected communities, and others joined the national relief program, ADRA leaders said.

Pastor R. Danforth Francis, president of the church in the East Caribbean Conference, which oversees the church on the islands of Barbados and Dominica, said one member died and ten Adventists lost their homes and are currently staying in shelters.

“Our primary school in Roseau was flooded and suffered damage as well as our Dublanc Adventist Church,” said Francis. “We are thankful our church members and pastors are all actively involved in the relief effort.”

Kern Tobias, president of the Caribbean Union, made an appeal to church leaders and members throughout the dozens of islands comprising the English Caribbean territory to help Dominica.

Churches across neighboring islands began collecting funds during church services shortly after the storm hit.

In the Central Adventist Church in St. Croix, Virgin Islands, Pastor J. Wilmoth James comforted many of the members of his congregation who were born in Dominica. “We are all traumatized by the tremendous loss of life in the tragedy, but we are assured that God is alive and is still in control of this world,” said James.
The church’s North Caribbean Conference overseeing US Virgin Islands and nine other islands is involved in collecting special offerings for the disaster relief efforts in neighboring Dominica.

ADRA is currently engaged in discussion with the government of Dominica to assist in building 10 starter homes for people who lost everything from the storm, according to Prevost.

*The Adventist News Network (ANN) is the official news service of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.*
A Proposed Letter of Apology to Pope Francis from the GC President

by Ervin Taylor, September 13, 2015: Readers of the Adventist Today web site and anyone living in Philadelphia who listens to or reads local media in or around that city may be aware of the recent mass mailing of a book, The Great Controversy, to 700,000 individuals living in that city or surrounding area. The mailing was intended to be coincident with a visit to Philadelphia, the "City of Brotherly Love," by the current Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Francis.

As readers of Adventist Today will know, The Great Controversy is a 19th-century work based on an extensive editing of materials originally produced by and under the name of a co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, Ellen Gould Harmon-White (1837-1915). Like a wide cross section of many other evangelical and later fundamentalist Protestant authors belonging to a wide range of conservative Protestant churches in 19th- and early 20th-century America, White was very critical of the theology and history of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe. Obviously, the heritage she reflected went back centuries, based on the long-standing, intense hostility that existed between Protestants and Catholics beginning at the time of the Reformation and continuing down into the late 19th century in many countries in Europe before being transplanted across the Atlantic to the United States.

A regrettable part of that heritage was the continued affirmation of conspiracy scenarios concerning alleged attempts of Roman Catholics to establish some sort of political advantage, usually by some nefarious means in America. Anti-Catholic hostility was exacerbated during the 19th century because of the competition for employment with native-born Anglo-Saxon Americans due to the large influx of immigrants from Catholic countries in Europe, especially Ireland. It even had a 19th-century political expression in America with the formation of the anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant, anti-Jewish "Know-Nothing" political movement.

We can be encouraged that the organization which was responsible for the mailing of the Great Controversy volume was not the official Seventh-day Adventist Church. The organization was Remnant Publications, based in Michigan. However, the message that this mailing was clearly intended to communicate is an anti-Catholic message and the source of that message emanates from a part of the Adventist tradition. In light of this action on the part of members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it is here proposed that the President of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church send the following letter or some version of it to the Pope asking for his understanding and forgiveness.

Here is a draft of the text of such a letter that would be written on the stationery of the General Conference of SDAs:

His Holiness, Pope Francis
Apostolic Palace
00120 Vatican City

Your Holiness:

It is recently come to my attention that certain misguided members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States have distributed a book, written by the co-founder of this Christian denomination, to many individuals living in the city of Philadelphia, prior to your upcoming visit to that city.

That book is entitled The Great Controversy. That volume was written in the 19th century at a time in the history of
the United States when the relationship between Protestant and Catholic Christians was much less than ideal. Unfortunately, that book reflected various very regrettable negative aspects of that relationship. A predecessor of mine has noted that the anti-Catholic views that this book endorses have been “relegated to the ash heap of history” by current Adventist leaders and lay persons.

I currently hold the position of president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and in that capacity I am writing to you to extend the apologies from a leader of one group of Christians to another, asking for your understanding and forgiveness for the unfortunate actions of a small number of members of the Christian faith tradition which I represent.

At a time when all Christians of good will should be seeking to come together to solve the serious problems facing our world, the actions of a few should not be allowed to confuse and disrupt that cooperation. It is in the spirit of that concern that this letter is being sent to you.

Please accept this apology in the name of all members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church who wish you and the church you represent the blessings of God.

Very Respectfully,

Ted N.C. Wilson
My Take: The World of the Small Church

by Raj Attiken, September 17, 2015: Most Christian churches are small. More Christians, however, worship in large churches. According to a recent National Congregational Study done by Duke University, 43% of churches in the United States have fewer than fifty adults and children attending, and 67% have 100 or less.[i] These are generally classified as small churches. In those areas of Adventism that I am most familiar with, a small church might be one with fewer than 30 or 40 adults and children in attendance, some as few as 20 or 25.

The following are my perspectives on small churches.

1. *The smallness of small churches is not a sign of failure.* Size is not a useful metric for congregational “success.” The typical “bodies, bucks, and buildings” criteria used to assess success in the church are not helpful with small congregations.

2. *Small churches are not underdeveloped or malformed versions of big churches.* Although many small churches try to imitate big churches in how they worship and conduct their life, they are a different “species,” with different and distinct congregational dynamics than a large church. Happy is the small church that embraces this reality!

3. *Small churches are usually not on their way to becoming large churches.* Most small churches remain small. This is not a reflection on their faithfulness, commitments, loyalties, or spirituality.

4. *Some small churches were once large.*

5. *Small churches are resilient: they have “nine lives”* (see my Opinion piece of August 15 in AT).

6. *Small churches, like all churches, are not immortal.* They die. By some estimates, between 4,000 and 5,000 churches close their doors permanently each year in the United States. Like individuals, churches have life cycles: birth, infancy, adolescence, prime, maturity, aristocracy, bureaucracy, and death. Each stage has its distinct features and challenges. The sequence is not inevitable – it can be intercepted.

7. *Small churches have some things that large churches don’t.* Among them is the possibility of relational intimacy, caring, and support.

8. *Small churches don’t have some things that large churches have.* They don’t have the money that large churches have. They don’t have the multiplicity of skills and abilities that are present in the memberships of large churches. They don’t have what it takes to offer numerous services, ministries, and programs.

9. *Most seminary graduates will pastor a small church some time in their career.* This is not due to a negative assessment of their skills, abilities, or dedication. It is just the way it is.

10. *Most one-size-fits-all denominational programs are irrelevant to the small church.* These programs are designed by denominational staff who are often far removed from the realities of the small church.

11. *Small churches are resistant to change.* This is particularly so in churches that have a long history. They have become comfortable and settled with how things are done, and look at change with a degree of suspicion.

12. *Small churches can change.* If the one or two major influencers in the church can be convinced of the value of the change, the rest are likely to embrace it.

13. *Small churches have particular expectations of their pastors.* They care less about how good a pastor is in planning programs or delivering deep sermons, and more about how much the pastor cares about people, visits them in their homes, and is available to them when they are in crisis.
14. For many small churches, the church building is a liability. Buildings consume a large percentage of the church's financial and human resources in maintenance and upkeep. Additionally, for many churches, the seating capacity of the building is multiple times that of its weekly attendance. This not only affects the relational dynamics when the congregation meets, it also conveys a negative impression to any guest who might show up. The visual impact of walking into an almost empty church building is generally unfavorable.

15. Small congregations, especially older, declining ones, have strong attachment to their buildings. The building represents to them the last visible, tangible symbol of the enduring nature of their hopes. Giving up the building for a more conducive and functional setting is a difficult choice.

16. Like all other churches, each small church has a unique personality and "soul." Its personality is shaped by its story. This is another reason why the one-size-fits-all denominational programs have little appeal to small churches.

17. Small churches can be tightly knit, closed communities that seal off admittance to anyone new. Such churches have subtle ways of sending messages to newcomers that they don't belong in the family.

18. In some small churches, family feuds become church feuds. An understanding of family systems and family dynamics is helpful if one attempts to facilitate conflict resolution.

19. Small churches take vicarious comfort and pride in big denominational events and programs held in far away places. They claim the success of these programs as their success. These "successes" add legitimacy to their existence.

20. Small churches generally do not have a pastor of their own; typically they are in a district with other churches that share the services of a pastor. Tithe generated in a small church is usually inadequate to support a pastor.

21. Small churches rely heavily on the leadership and involvement of many or most of their active members. They have to, in order to keep operating.

22. Small churches claim legitimacy for their existence in the assurance that where two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus, He is present.

23. Some small churches live with a diminished sense of self-worth. Some suffer an inferiority complex, partly due to their size, limitation of resources, and lack of recognition by the larger denomination.

24. Some small churches feel disenfranchised from the larger denomination and its activities.

25. In their missionary efforts, small churches are best at being incarnational rather than attractional. Members can incarnate the gospel among their families, neighborhoods, and communities more effectively than they can attract people to their church through programs and events.

Abraham Lincoln is credited with saying: "God must have loved the common man because he made so many of them." Perhaps the same could be said about the small church. There are many of them. And they matter. They matter to God. They matter to those who belong to them. Sometimes they matter to their communities. Small churches are here to stay. Though each one is small, together they have the potential for spiritual impact. They deserve attention. They deserve care. They deserve to be valued. That's my take!

[i] http://www.soc.duke.edu/natcong/
Is Everything Equally Important?

by Reinder Bruinsma, September 11, 2015: No, not all things in life are equally important. We often say: “The main thing is to be healthy!” And, fortunately, most people rate family and friends higher than all sorts of material things. Life becomes very difficult if one does not know how to differentiate between things that are really important and the things that should have a lower priority.

The same applies to the sphere of church and spiritual life. The “higher” church organization (in the Adventist church: General Conference, divisions, unions, conferences) certainly has a role to play, but the local church is the place where the rubber hits the road. A good understanding of theological issues is important, but a close tie with God and a faith that keeps you going in daily life are much more essential.

Is everything in the Bible equally important? It may be risky to ask that question, for who am I to say what parts of the Bible are more or less essential? In times past, church leaders and scholars decided what writings to include in the Bible and what not to include. Catholics (and also Lutherans) made a decision that differs from what Protestants have agreed upon.

Protestants tend to be satisfied with a biblical canon without the apocryphal books. The Bible is an authoritative book for them. But even most of those who claim to take everything in the Bible literally (as it “plainly” reads), tend to have something like a canon within the canon. Not everything in the Bible carries the same weight. Many Bible readers feel (to mention just one example) that they get more out of the Gospel of John than from the book Ecclesiastes, and that they find Psalms more helpful than the book of the prophet Ezekiel. This is also true for me. There are parts of the Bible that I read and re-read, but I must confess that there are also segments in the Bible that I have not read in recent years.

But, are we allowed to extend his argument even further? May we, for instance, say that some doctrines are more important than other doctrines? Adventists recognize “28 Fundamental Beliefs.” Are all of these equally “fundamental”? How in the world can they all be really fundamental, i.e., foundational? Often I hear people say: It is all part of the truth, so we cannot say that something is unimportant or less important than the rest. But, let's be honest: that is not how reality functions. Most (maybe all) Adventists sense that particular points define their being Adventist, while other points do not fall into that same category. I believe it is useful for all of us to draw up a short list of what is really “fundamental” for us, and what might, in fact, be more in the periphery. Next week I intend to say more about this and will share my own short-list of what I consider truly “fundamental.”

P.S.: A few years ago I did a presentation for fellow Adventist theologians about the question of whether all doctrines are equally important. A little later I rewrote the text of this presentation and submitted it as a chapter in a Festschrift for Dr. Jon Dybdahl—a much valued friend and colleague, with whom I worked closely at Andrews University for a number of years. Jon (now retired) was (and is) a gifted teacher and for some time served as the president of the Adventist Walla Walla University in Washington State (US).

For those who are interested: the text of this chapter, entitled “Is All Truth Truth?” may be found on my website: http://reinderbruinsma.com/are-all-truths-truth-2/
"The Stranger Within Our Gates"
by Larry Downing, September 14, 2015:  

Dr. Karl Menninger, in his book Whatever Became of Sin?, tells the story of a man who each day walked about the Chicago Loop. Every few feet he stopped, pointed his finger at an unsuspecting pedestrian and, in a loud, accusatory voice pronounced “GUILTY!” He then went on his way to confront another unsuspecting victim. Should I be one of the accused, I would have to agree with the verdict. I am guilty! I do not find solace in confessing my guilt, nor do I believe I am alone in this guilt, nor is there a point of pride that I now confess, nor is there a feeling of despair or self-loathing associated with the activating event that initiated my guilt. In simple words, my guilt is navel gazing! We experienced navel gazers have developed the fine art of looking at self. We have, like a laser beam, developed our ability to identify what we need to feel satisfied and what others are expected to do to fulfill our expectations. This gift of self-focus is not, in and of itself, a bad thing. It is important to hold people accountable and expect excellence from our leaders. We are chagrined when those in whom we have placed trust fail to live up to their responsibilities. We are correct in our disappointment when people neglect, or worse, reject the common values associated with human decency. But there is more to life than the attention we give to those events and actions that are so self-centered. It is at this point that my guilt grabs me.

While thousands of people flee for their lives as the travesty of war decimates their land and their lives, I have been occupied by the actions taken and promoted by my denomination’s administrators and leaders. I have agonized over the decision at the recent GC that, in an official action, voted that one gender is more acceptable to fill a sacerdotal function than another. While we were taken up by these parochial matters, countless men, women and children ventured forth on what is euphemistically called by the participants, The Road of Death. Thousands more will join the previous thousands who have died at sea, died on a trek across deserts, died at the hands of human smugglers, and died from hunger and thirst. And I gaze at my navel. Amazing!

It wasn’t always this way. When American lost the Vietnam War, thousands of people who had worked for the American government, were part of the South Vietnam military, or had other connections with American interests, were forced to leave their country. Many, like those who flee Syria, Sudan and other countries, died in their attempts to escape tyranny and war. Other people were more fortunate.

One of the major American entry ports for Vietnamese refugees was Indian Town Gap military base in central Pennsylvania. Indian Town Gap is located a few miles from Blue Mountain Academy, where the Pennsylvania Conference holds its annual camp meeting. When the first refugees arrived at Indian Town Gap, I, along with another pastor, was working to prepare for the hundreds of people who would soon fill the tents and school gym. When the local radio station announced that Vietnam refugees were arriving at the military base, I decided to visit the camp and see what was taking place.

I drove onto the base, parked, and began walking around. I introduced myself to a group of men and began a conversation. One of these individuals was a Vietnamese naval officer, Not just any officer – he was Admiral Cong, Admiral of the Vietnamese Navy. He informed me that he was sponsored by Admiral Zumwalt, head of the U. S. Navy, but several of his naval officers were in need of sponsorship. After several more visits and discussions, my wife and I agreed to sponsor one of his officers, his wife, and their three children.

At the time, I was president of the Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Ministerial Association. I shared with the area pastors the need for refugee sponsors and the requirements for those who agreed to sponsor an individual or family. The decision was made to combine our resources and form a sponsorship group with a goal of sponsoring 100 families. My wife and I agreed to act as emergency housing facilitators. The community exceeded its 100-family goal. My wife
and I, besides housing the navy officer, at various times housed four additional families.

What I can say is that during this experience there was little time for navel gazing. This was not a time to be concerned about the ruffles and turmoils that disturb ecclesiastical bodies. We were too occupied meeting with community businesspeople, asking them to hire our Vietnamese people. There were landlords to contact and contracts to negotiate and bank accounts to establish. And somehow, our navels got along without inspection!

I suggest that within the context of the now pressing refugee situation, we direct attention away from our parochial desires and needs and consider what responsible and helpful action we can take to alleviate an international human crisis, a crisis that, to a large extent, is a result of America’s policy and decisions.

The church is one of the most skilled and capable organizations in the world to address such issues, and the church is us! As of this day, September 10, 2015, government officials stated that by next year America is prepared to accept up to 8,000 Syrian refugees. Members of the Adventist church can step forward to facilitate this goal. We have an opportunity to offer refuge to men, women and children who have witnessed unimaginable violence, the shattering of social and family structures, the destruction of an ancient society and the ruination of a nation’s historic heritage. We do not have to reinvent the wheel. Church World Service, Refugees Welcome, The Salvation Army, and other organizations one can find on the web are available to help groups or individuals begin the sponsorship process and provide on-going assistance and support.
Who Were You Expecting?

by Harry Banks, September 12, 2015: My mother-in-law was hospitalized and my wife left Alaska to be with her family. The situation provided an opportunity for her and her young granddaughter to spend some time together. On their first trip to the hospital cafeteria, her granddaughter sat down at the table and said, “You know, Grandma, you are not quite what I expected.”

This past year or so, as I have been listening and relistening to the words of John 17 I’ve been trying to comprehend at a personal level what Jesus meant... KJV says, “I have manifested thy name...” in verse 6. NIV says, “I have revealed you.”

Did you ever wonder what pictures were in His mind when He uttered those words? Was He thinking of trashing the temple tables? Forgiving the paralytic? Announcing His Beatitudes? What was the essence of His meaning?

Obviously, for the people of His day, He was not quite what they expected.

When I observe the topics which seem to have the most interaction here in AToday, or on other sites, or I read the position papers... I sometimes wonder just whom we are expecting for this second advent.

Are we expecting the prophecy prover? The corrector of social inequalities? The validator of ordination?

Do you ever wonder what the people who say, “Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him” are expecting?

And what is that “Depart from me, I never knew you” stuff all about...? Sounds like somebody is going to be saying, “You are not quite what I expected.”

Lately I’ve struggled with how infrequently we hold our words and actions up against passages like 1 Corinthians 13 and the fruits of the Spirit of Galatians. What if Paul is actually right? All the words, prophecies, and other stuff really don’t count for much. Is that the God I’m waiting for? Based on my impatience with other’s spiritual journeys I’d have to say I’m not sure that’s the kind of God I’m expecting.

Longsuffering, gentle, Hmm... Not so much...

I recently had occasion to visit with some believers who are engaged in a church plant mission with a messianic focus. They casually mentioned that they expected to be deeply, personally engaged with their friends for eight years or more before those friends might have the trust and courage to declare for Christ.

And when that declaration for Christ comes, the new believers will experience total repudiation from family and friends. They have to know their Christian friends love them deeply. They have to see the love of Christ in their lives in a very real and tangible way.

Remember the New Testament... there was a lot of that total life change going on for those people.

Books with titles such as A Gathering of Strangers or Unchristian seem to accurately describe many congregational experiences, but what kind of God do you think those strangers are expecting? Am I one of those strangers?

Last Sabbath my friend died while driving home from collecting some of the fresh Alaskan mountain water that is piped out of the rocks along a scenic drive along Turnagain Arm. He slumped over the steering wheel. His wife was able to control the car and bring it to a stop.

When the Advent arrives for him and us, I wonder if we will be wondering, “But who were we expecting?” or if there...
will be resonating recognition.

So how much of I Corinthians 13 or Galatians 5 was in that “manifest” of John 17? Hmmm… And that person knocking at the door in Revelation 3… Would I actually recognize Him as someone I would want to hang out with? What does it actually mean to follow Christ’s admonition “Abide in Me?”

What is the “Beauty of Holiness,” the “Joy of Salvation” supposed to really look like? Feel like? Behave like?

When we went to San Antonio in July who were we expecting for the Advent? In the day of final questions, will there be recognition? Or will we be asked, “And just whom were you expecting?” It sure would be nice to find ourselves in the midst of the most loving friends we have ever known. Who love us enough we can feel safe in risking everything. Rumor has it that the God of that Advent is just that sort of being.
Pani’s Story

By Debbonnaire Kovacs, posted Sept. 16, 2015

[From Prov. 31:10-31; Pani is a loose transliteration of the Hebrew word translated “ruby.”]

It is dark when I rise, lighting the small lamp from the coals of last night’s fire. I shield the flame from my husband’s sleeping body, though I know he will be up soon, too. I dress quickly and go to the water jars in the back yard to wash. I want to go through the bundles my servants brought last night from the traders who are finally back in town, and be sure it is all good quality. If it’s not, they’ll be hearing from me today, before they leave again, and we will make a better trade.

The loose braids of flax fibers shimmer in the light of my tiny flame. Excellent! Smooth, tangle-free, and well hackled. This will be easy to spin. And the wool, oh, yes! The fleeces from the north are always finer. Lovely crimp! Can’t wait to get my hands and my spindles into this, though of course the girls will have more time for it than I do.

I can hear Joanna stirring now. “Joanna! Come and help me get this grain into the storage rooms. Shh, don’t wake the master. Yes, I know, but give him a few more minutes, anyway. This smells fresh, and I don’t see any insects, do you? Look at those spices! I can always trust Eli to bring me the best goods. I’ll instruct Samuel to give him a bonus today.”

While Joanna and Shoshana begin grinding for breakfast bread, I’ll go over the contracts again for that field I want to buy. I plan to add a vineyard to our holdings. Lemuel will be so pleased when he sees how we prosper. We’ve discussed it into the night for a while now, but he doesn’t know yet that I got such a good price. Old Simon has no sons to leave his fields to.

My husband is up now, getting ready for his work in the city. I am proud of the time he is beginning to spend with the elders in the gate. They are talking of making him a judge! He knows he can trust our young men to keep the livestock and fields as he would have them kept, even with a new vineyard to plant. I wonder if I can get some vine cuttings from winemaster Joel? His are the best.

As we eat, I surprise my husband with my news, and the light in his eyes makes my heart flutter. You’d think we were newlyweds, still! As old as I am, I can still blush. He wants me to go with him to see the fields before he visits his business partners.

Side by side, we admire our new field. It’s weedy now, but the harvest is nearly over, and then I can set the young men to scything. By planting time, the field will be ready. I can see two places where the wall needs to be mended, as well.

I decide to go with him into the city. I have some linen cloth and tunics to deliver to Leah before she gets ready to open her market booth tomorrow. I smile as I think what good quality my new flax will make for next year.

When I leave Leah’s, having made a bargain that pleases us both, I take my remaining sacks down a side alley. I prefer not to be seen on this particular errand. People make so much of it, and it’s nothing. Here they are, the poor widows, some old, some with children, all nearly destitute. Their faces are pitifully grateful as I pass out the new robes. I’ll be able to hire a few more, too, to do some extra wool carding and spinning for me. Or even mending. That’s an idea…

I give a bag of food to the old woman who is more or less in charge here, and she presses my hands.
“Don’t thank me, thank Yahweh,” I tell her. “It all belongs to Him, and it behooves us to share.”

As I turn away to go home, I know she would do the same for me, if our roles were reversed.

Home again, I gather my daughters and maids around me. One of my married girls has come, too, with her babies (who will probably prevent her being very productive today.) We all laugh as they tumble around us. As we work, we share stories, little stories of home (in which I sometimes try to hide some helpful advice), and larger stories of the matriarchs and patriarchs. We laugh and sing and get a good amount done. I have kept the best hank of flax for myself, and have draped it around my distaff just as I like it, and begun to spin fine linen thread. I want to make new tunics for everyone by winter. The younger girls are picking and carding wool, and some of it will go into the smelly indigo pot out in the back shed where little ones can’t get near it. But I also got some wonderful dye stuffs in this trade load. The others exclaim over the bright crimsons and even a little expensive Tyrian purple.

Before we know it, evening has come again, Miriam has taken her little ones home, and Joanna and Shoshana have created a wonderful meal. When Lemuel comes in, he seems excited. I wonder if he has some news for me?

He waits until we are gathered around the table. Then, before everyone, he takes my face in his hands. “You came up in the discussion in the gateway today, my beloved.”

My face feels warm. “I did? Why?”

Lemuel smiles. “They knew how much you paid for Old Simon’s field. Yes, Pani, you got a good price for us, but you could have paid much less. Jonah told me how you had made sure he would have enough for his declining years. And Elijah had seen the new clothes on the poor women in Lye Alley. You are beautiful, my wife, but your spirit is more beautiful still. They call you blessed in the gates of this city. Many women have done excellently, Pani, but you excel them all!”

My heart and my eyes are too full to eat. I only do my duty as a wife. I wish I could make him—and all men—understand: when a wife is so respected, so beloved, it’s not duty, it’s privilege.

Truly I am blessed among women.
CNN Hero Kim Carter Helps Hundreds of Women Make a Lasting Change

By Debbonaire Kovacs, posted Sept. 16, 2015

[Editor’s Note: You can help Kim Carter and her Time for Change Foundation help more women by clicking on her CNN Hero video clip here. Watch every day and help women with no effort on your part. But don’t stop there. Read this article and be inspired to find Christ-like ways of being the change you want to see in the world.]

There are many organizations attempting to help homeless people and released prisoners trying to return to society. It’s fair to say that most of the people working in those organizations probably feel that their efforts are very small drops in a very large ocean. In particular, it is extremely difficult to give help that is practical—that works—that brings real change into the lives of people so that they no longer fall back into long-ingrained habits of thought, emotion, self-image, and behavior.

Some manage that.

According to Kim Carter, Executive Director of The Time for Change Foundation, most of the over 800 women (so far) that have gone through her program don’t come back. “Their lives are changed.”

Last year Time for Change received Loma Linda University Health’s Community Investment Award, a yearly recognition for a local charitable organization providing great service to women. When I asked her about that, Carter said, “Loma Linda works with women who have been scarred and healed, and sees that our program is very successful. They see these women for years coming into the Emergency Room with black eyes, then when they go through this service, they see how their lives are changed.”

In other words, it works. Why? As reported that January in the Westside Story Newspaper [link], the Time for Change Foundation helps “homeless women and children achieve self-sufficiency by using a strength-based approach to address their needs. The Foundation’s programs and supportive services help to provide women and their children with the tools necessary to recover from homelessness, drug addiction, family separation, mental and physical abuse, and the effects of incarceration. Through these services, women are taught how to live healthy, fit, successfully productive lives.” [Emphasis added.]

In other words, instead of handing out fish, Time for Change helps people learn to fish.

When notified of that award, Carter expressed her joy, calling Loma Linda “a pillar in the community” and saying that their recognition “lets us know that we are on the right path in ensuring that all women have access to healthy lives.”

It seems likely that one big reason this organization is so successful is that Carter herself knows where the women she works with are coming from. You can read more about her life story, her first drink at five years old, her first hit of crack cocaine at seventeen, the spiral fall through prison, prostitution, and homelessness, at CNN’s site. You’ll read of her realization that it was time for a change, her entrance into the program that first helped her, her loss of years with her daughter, her joy and pride in the recovered relationship today, and her determination that it won’t happen to another mother if she can help it.

However, for Adventist Today readers, it might be particularly poignant to learn that more than a few of the women coming through the Foundation are Adventists. “We don’t ask about religious beliefs,” Carter told me. “We do ask if they have special needs, and we learn that they have dietary restrictions and want Sabbath rest. That’s how we find out women are Adventist.”
She told me a story of Sheila (not her real name), who was raised Seventh-day Adventist near the Loma Linda area. Her family was “deeply involved” in the church, holding leadership positions. “I think it started with her becoming involved with a bad guy, then she got into drugs.” Carter said Sheila felt so ashamed at letting down her family that she didn’t feel she could go back to church.

“I found my faith through the Twelve Step Program,” Carter told me, “so I never had that sense of obligation to a certain denomination. I just couldn’t understand that church wouldn’t be the first place you’d go when you fall down. She was just adamant that she would be met with disdain and judgment.”

I asked, “Did she ever get over that?”

Carter seemed sad as she replied, “She didn’t get over that while she was here. Her mom would visit, but apparently her dad was not so forgiving. She got her life back together, but she was not able to bring herself to go back to church.”

Fortunately, some of the staff at Time for Change are Adventist, so I hope Carter gets a chance to see that not all Adventists are like that. But at this point she waxed so eloquent on the subject of grace that I’ll let her speak for herself.

“A lot of that [shame] is from self, from issues and low self-esteem, but if we don’t let people know it’s okay to fall down and get back up, they will never be able to get back up! Those from religious backgrounds have been given rules for living, but they don’t have enough instruction about what to do when you don’t do those rules. If God forgives you, it doesn’t matter about anybody else. You don’t need to go through a middle man. You have to have your own relationship. I wasn’t able to go one day without drinking until I got a relationship with God—get away from what someone said about God and get your own relationship with a God who can take away those cravings that make you drink and do drugs when you don’t even want to. The brain repeats unhealthy talk; only God can get between you and that.”

Carter told me she is now “twenty-two years clean and sober and free from incarceration.” Her advice for recovery: giving to others, making amends quickly, and finding other ways of being healthy, particularly in the Twelve Step Program.

But I felt the gem was right there—tell people it’s okay to fall down and get up again.

—You can help the Foundation reach out to more women. This year, Kim Carter has been chosen as a CNN Hero, a program CNN created in 2007 “to honor individuals who make extraordinary contributions to humanitarian aid and make a difference in their communities.” You can watch her short video clip here, and by so doing, give her a vote. If our votes help her reach the top ten, Time for a Change will receive $25,000 (last year’s data). Votes will be tallied by October 2. After that, if she makes it, she will have the chance to try for Hero of the Year, and $100,000 (last year’s data). This would be an enormous help to the women the foundation serves, and you can vote every day.

You can also go to her own website and click on the CNN link on the front page, which might load more quickly. Besides, there is a lot more information there about ways you can get involved, not to mention many photos.

There is a slightly longer, more detailed video about Kim Carter’s life here.

Our Music News writer, Carole Derry-Bretsch, has also created a Facebook page to promote the Foundation here.
On Kindness

By S.M. Chen, posted Sept 16, 2015

I recently encountered an interesting short news item. Interesting because it represented the converse of the usual reported adversarial relationship between sharks and people – namely, shark attacks on humans. In actuality, there are only 50-70 shark attacks annually worldwide, of which under 20 are fatal. In comparison, in the coastal USA alone, lightning strikes and kills more than 40 people each year. Yet, for many, shark attacks hold an icy fascination. How else to explain the phenomenal success of first the book, then the film, ‘Jaws’?

Sleek, deadly, powerful, and built for speed and aggression, sharks have been described as the almost perfect killing machine and are apex natural predators. Their skeletons are composed of cartilage, which is lighter than bone and enables them to remain neutrally buoyant, floating without sinking or rising. They replace damaged or broken razor-like teeth with new ones in as little as 24 hours; over the course of a lifetime, they may grow thousands of teeth. Their sense of smell is keen (great whites can detect one drop of blood in 100L of water and may sense small amounts of blood in water up to 5 km away) and they do not sleep. Only 3 (of over 375) species – great white, tiger and bull – are responsible for most human attacks.

While sharks kill fewer than 20 people per year, they themselves suffer greatly at the hands of humans. It is estimated that 20-100 million sharks die annually from fishing activity, including that to remove their fins (which results in death of the animal) for the traditional delicacy shark-fin soup, popular in Asia.

This particular news item concerned the rescue of a shark by swimmers on Porto Pollo Beach, Liscia, in Sardinia, Italy. A short video by Saverio Porcari, documenting events, may be seen here. A shark, not large in comparison to some, is seen swimming close to a number of beachgoers, a few of whom recognized that the shark was hooked and trapped by fishing line. The shark was pulled to shore, where it was immobilized and the hook and line removed. It was then released, and swam away. Onlookers cheered.

Contrast this with what transpires annually on the islands of Faroe, where dolphins/pilot whales are lured into shallow waters by (often rowdy young) men, who, as a sort of rite of passage, hack the animals to death with sharp hooks and knives in blood sport.

Similar activity occurs in Taiji, Japan, with dolphins, porpoises, and small whales.

Our hearts are warmed by examples of human kindness to animals (and, of course, vice-versa; the easiest example of the latter is a dog’s affection/love for its owner). Or of human kindness to other humans, and animal kindness shown to other animals, including those of different species.

Why is that so? One might imagine that, as part of the narrative of the Descent of Man since the Fall, the opposite might be the case. But evil has ever been disparaged, in Holy Writ as well as elsewhere, and those whose moral compass is 180 degrees displaced, who substitute or confuse wickedness with virtue, we term sociopaths. Encoded within the DNA of most of us is the ability (and imperative) to distinguish between good and evil and, one hopes, act accordingly.

Paul, in Ephesians 4:32, exhorts: “Be… kind one to another.” While he was speaking to humans about fellow humans (the topic of which is not in dispute), I do not think it too much of a stretch to include creatures of the earth, air, and sea as worthy recipients of compassion.
As Mahatma Gandhi wrote, “The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.”
Day in the Life of Jesus (update)

By Debbonnaire Kovacs, posted Sept. 16, 2015

Back at the end of 2014, I wrote a story about Dennis Nickel and the devotional book he had written, which his family published after his death from cancer. I thought I should add an update, and it definitely goes into Poetry and the Arts. I have been faithfully reading a chapter each day so far this year, and I can say that Nickel had a gift for making the reader feel what it might have been like to be present as a follower of Jesus in the first century. You never know whose point of view you will be in each day. Sometimes the narrator introduces himself or herself early in the reading, but often you pick it up later, sometimes at the very end. It might be a priest or Levite, it might be the recipient of a miracle, and it is frequently a disciple. The readings are short and to the point, each with a thought-provoking insight or bit of learning gleaned.

You can get the book here.
Nothing In My Hands, Chapter 18

By Del Starr, a pseudonym, all rights reserved. Posted Sept. 17, 2015.

Oh Matchless Love

Dianne had reached the point where she had determined that she would never again marry. She did not seek for a divorce from Joe. Why should she? Life was just fine, as far as she was concerned. Joe had his life (with another woman), and Dianne had hers.

It had taken a bit of doing to get him to leave her alone. He would call her company, or go to the little restaurant where she often stopped on the way to or from her jobs and chat with the patrons about her. At one point one of the waitresses told Dianne that Joe had been in and talking about her once more.

Dianne heaved a sigh and said, "Nothing is better than Joe."

The waitress stopped and turned back to look at Dianne. "What?" she almost yelled, "We all know what Joe is. Why do you say that?"

With a small grin Dianne said, "You didn’t hear me. I said NOTHING is better than Joe."

The waitress chuckled and walked away.

The days and weeks passed by. Dianne always looked forward to coming home to her children. Sometimes she would be on the road for two weeks at a time. This might have bothered her earlier in her life but the only children she had at home now were able to care for themselves, and the state of Oregon had cast them out on their own long ago. The closeness was gone between them but Dianne loved them and when she was able to spend time with them they had good times together.

There were many emotional problems now in the family because of the situation with which they had dealt. The girls, Janelle, Tina, and Kira, seemed to flounder in a world not created by their own actions. Dianne was thankful now that Brad had gone to Grace’s. He had attended Auburn Adventist Academy and was now a member of the remnant church. He had built a relationship with the parents of his “roomie” at academy, and his vacations had been spent mainly at their home. They later were to become Brian’s relatives when he married their niece. Yes, Brian was safe. Best of all, he lived at home and kept things more stable for the girls.

Janetta had had a stormy marriage. Things had not gone well for the young couple and they were separated. Her husband’s parents had returned to Andrews University where once more her father-in-law was acting as a professor; however, only for a time. There was some controversy in the church as to what the young ministers were being taught at Andrews. There was also a conflict between the professor and the school that had nothing to do with what was being taught. Finally, he determined that it was in his best interests to move back to California with his family.

Many years later, it was suggested to Dianne by her local pastor that she read a book that had been formulated by a General Conference committee. Tucked away in the center of that book was a message about the controversial teachings at Andrews University. The teaching was denied as applicable to the church or the curriculum of the school. There was also, however, a disclaimer stating that there had been a controversial tape which had, along with the professor (Janetta’s father-in-law), disappeared.

Dianne was stunned by this and called the now-retired professor. He stated in no uncertain terms that he had
neither “disappeared” nor had he ever, at any time, had possession of any such tape. Dianne knew him well enough to know that he spoke truth. At that point she began to question what the masses were being told. This was, though, many years after the events we now portray.

Dianne did not now attend church. She felt that she was “high profile” in the area. Because of her association with the school through driving school bus, many were familiar with her and were aware of the events of her life. She believed in her heart that Jesus had come to die for sinners, but her own sins were too great to ignore. She seemed to be spinning out of control and she knew that God cannot look upon sin. She hated hypocrisy and believed that other (non-Adventist) churches were apostate. Should she venture into another church, she would still be lost, for she felt that one cannot once have the truth of Adventism and then attend another church. God would consider such a one to have fallen off the narrow path leading upwards to righteousness. She believed that Ellen G. White had said that once fallen from that narrow path, there would be no way that one could ever climb back up.

And so Dianne avoided any and all religiosity. She continued to read books by White, such as *The Great Controversy*, *Desire of Ages*, and the *Testimonies* series. Her prayer was always, as it had been for so long, “God, I know that there’s no chance for me but please hear my prayer for others. You know that they love you and their only problem is that they make mistakes. Please understand that, God. I know that I am only wicked. Anytime that I want to do good, I only do bad, but please, God, hear my prayer.”

She also attempted to direct her children to be righteous. She shared with them the knowledge that she had as to what God demanded from a Christian and emphasized that unless they discontinued doing some of the things they were doing and got right with God, attending the Seventh-day Adventist church and observing the seventh day Sabbath, they would be lost and be consumed in hell fire when Jesus returned.

She was concerned about living in metropolitan Portland, which she was sure was not in the best interests of her children. She began to seek a place, preferably in the country, where there could be better influences for them. Due to the nature of her job, she was looking along the 1-5 corridor from Seattle, Washington to Yreka, California. Several places looked promising but she could not yet decide.

It was early September, 1990. One of the other drivers with whom Dianne worked needed to stay in the Portland area, as his father was dying. The driver had been scheduled to work in Hungry Horse and Columbia Falls, Montana and now Dianne was asked to exchange her work the following two weeks in Portland for his in Montana.

She was excited. She couldn’t remember having been in Montana, though later she remembered that she had briefly passed through with her mother, Grace, when she had been much younger, but she did not remember that now.

Chad had finally been released to Dianne and he accompanied her on her travels, so he went with her. As with most early teenagers, he was not interested in the scenery as they traveled, so he slept. Dianne was alone in her thoughts. They passed through eastern Oregon, turned north through Washington, and then headed east again toward Montana, traveling through Idaho. When they finally reached Montana, Dianne wakened Chad to see the border sign, but he promptly fell asleep again.

In Missoula they stopped for lunch and fuel. Then they headed northward on Highway 93 toward Hungry Horse.

About 60 miles up the road Dianne rounded a corner and gasped! There was a “pullout” and Dianne exited the highway. “Chad! Chad!” she cried, “Wake up! You HAVE to see this!”

Spread out in the valley below, nestled among the towering Alp-like mountains, was a huge lake of the purest blue. Fluffy white clouds hovered in sapphire blue skies. Dotted around the edge of the lake were a few homes. Pasture abounded with gentle cows either grazing or placidly chewing their cuds. In all her travels, Dianne had never seen any place so beautiful. The closest she had come was Wallowa Lake in northeastern Oregon but that could not compare to the sheer vastness of Flathead Lake, which she now viewed.
Chad, too, was suitably impressed, and actually stayed awake as they traveled through the little town on the edge of the lake and then continued to follow the lake’s shore northward. Islands and evergreen trees made a perfect picture.

Dianne was to be working at the Hungry Horse dam for three days, so they settled in a small motel in Hungry Horse for the duration.

The dam was impressive, set against the mountains with a rushing stream flowing from it deep into the valley below. The two fell in love with the Rocky Mountains.

Chad accompanied Dianne to work at the dam. Tourist season was virtually over and daily the workers would come to Dianne’s workplace and take Chad to view the dam. He went where others were not allowed to go, deep into the bowels of the dam, where he could see the structure and view the enormous turbines. He loved the people. Chad did not sleep during the days now. He was enjoying himself too much.

The job completed, there was still a small job to be done at Columbia Falls. It would only take an hour or so the next morning and then Dianne and Chad would head back to Portland. That night was spent in Columbia Falls.

Late in the evening they began to hear strange noises. Chad opened the door and saw fireworks of every description. It was festival days in Columbia Falls. He was thrilled.

The next morning, with the small job completed, they reversed their travels and headed back south along the shores of Flathead Lake. As they pulled up the hill from which they had first viewed the lake, Chad said, “Mom, this is where I want to live.”

Dianne was saddened to have to tell him that it would be impossible to move to this area. She, too, loved the views and had enjoyed the time but she would not be able to take her job with her this far away. There was not sufficient work for them in Montana and it was obvious that jobs were not plentiful in the tiny towns through which they had passed.

“No,” she thought, “there is no way.”

A few weeks later, she was once more approached to head for Montana. Again she would be in the Flathead Valley, this time in Pablo, a tiny little town just before the hill where they had first observed the lake. She looked forward to being able to spend a bit more time there.

Chad was in school now with Brad in charge, so Dianne traveled alone. She decided to leave early and go by way of Seattle. It was a bit farther but she would not stay in a motel; she would be able to visit with Brian and his new wife.

After a good visit, Dianne bade them farewell and began her journey.

By the time she reached Ellensburg, she was exhausted and pulled into the truck stop. She decided that she would only sleep for a short while and continue, so she just curled up in the diesel pickup and, throwing a blanket over her shoulders, she went to sleep. It was chilly and she kept the motor running for warmth.

It was daylight when she awakened. She had slept much longer than she had anticipated but she had the entire day to get to Montana so she was not concerned. She folded her blanket and hit the road.

She came to George Washington, a small town just up the road from Ellensburg, whose name had always charmed her. It seemed that every time she had worked in the vicinity, there would be a problem, and this time was to be no exception. At the sign that read, “3 miles to George Washington,” Dianne was startled to see smoke coming from the engine compartment. She pulled over to the side of the road and pulled the hood latch. Reaching behind the seat, she felt for the fire extinguisher she always carried. It was not there! Someone had evidently borrowed it and had not returned it to the truck.
Looking through the crack now open between the hood and the body of the truck, she could see flames. She grabbed the CB mic and called for help from any trucker who might pass by.

A truck stopped on the opposite side of the freeway and the driver rushed across with his fire extinguisher. They lifted the hood and the driver sprayed the fire. Dianne’s alternator had caught fire and now the inside of the engine compartment was a blackened mess. She could proceed no further. She had to call her company with the bad news and have the truck and trailer towed into Moses Lake. There she checked into a motel.

Dianne realized that the fire could have started while she slept in the truck stop parking lot at Ellensburg. God had had His hand over her.
Glory

Photo by Debbonnaire Kovacs, taken near Prince Edward Island, Canada.

_The heavens declare the glory of God…_