“COMMUNITY BUILDING,” ONE MEMBER AT A TIME
by Ray Minner

There was a time, years ago, when classroom teacher George Akers realized that being a Richard Nixon lookalike was helpful in arresting the attention of his class. It might not be as great an asset these days, but George now has a lot of other things going for him as well.

He and Philip Follett often alternate in teaching the Akers/Follett Sabbath School class, which meets at 10:15 in the Seminar Room. When they stand in front of a class their message is colored by many decades of rich experience in church leadership. Both retired from the General Conference, Akers as director of the Department of Education for the whole world field, and Follett as a general vice president of the GC.

But when you talk with George Akers about this class, it isn’t the life experience of the leaders that comes to the surface. It is care for the individual class member. “We keep track of everybody,” says Akers. “If they’re not there, we make sure we know why.”

Although the class has chosen to follow the Lesson Quarterly for their study, each week’s meeting begins with a presentation by Roy Dingle on how God has been at work in the world during that particular week, with an emphasis on last-day events and religious liberty issues. Then they entertain prayer requests, carefully documenting each one for follow up.

“No matter which phase of the class we may be in, the prayer requests, the last-day events emphasis, or the discussion of the lesson itself, we try to create a comfortable, inviting atmosphere, encouraging free expression,” Akers says.

Brian Willard, a class member, maintains a website in Google Groups where members can easily access the lesson for each day, including a commentary and pertinent quotes from Ellen G. White. Prayer requests and other kinds of information of interest to the class are also posted at https://groups.google.com/group/akers-follett-ssl-study-group. Class members are even able to post messages and comments to each other.

“Our members are keenly aware of the significance of the times,” says Akers. “Everything we do is geared toward caring for each other and being prepared. We’ve discovered that community building is the anchor that holds it together.”

The average age of Akers/Follett Class members may be a little older, but they are still intellectually curious and still looking for the Sabbath School lesson’s practical applications to their lives, he says.

On most Sabbath mornings 50 to 60 members and visitors are on hand to share their mutual concerns and to keep the lesson discussion fresh and on target. They seem to have achieved the sense of community that was their goal—but they’re still building.
YOUNG ADULT CLASS PREPARES FOR ITS SECOND YEAR

by Ray Minner

Convinced that the church needs a deeper and broader ministry to young adults, last September Mindi Rahn and Amanda Jehle started a Sabbath School class geared to conveying and reinforcing the vision and message of Adventism to young professionals from 21 to 35.

“Adults just out of school and newly on their own often just don’t go to Sabbath School,” says Rahn, “and this led them to the niche for their class, which began quite small in the Spalding Elementary School music room and is still growing and hoping to attract visitors and new members.

The class, which meets at 10:15 each week, follows the Lesson Quarterly, but may also from time to time shift its focus to a particular book of the Bible, such as Acts, says Rahn.

“We encourage our members to cultivate a deeper conversation with Jesus,” she says, “and we tend to focus on the aspects of the lesson that we have found the most practical for daily life.”

The years that follow graduation and entry into the fulltime work force often determine the patterns of life, and it is during this period that many church members question and re-evaluate their relationship to the church. The mission of this class is to engage them and create a nonthreatening atmosphere where the free exchange of ideas can flourish and find direction.

Energies are directed outward as well, says Rahn, with a health outreach to the community and class-sponsored Bible studies.

Some of the class’s social activities are on summer hiatus, but during the school year they also meet on Wednesday evenings in members’ homes to encourage and pray for each other.

Maybe you know a young professional person who would be blessed by the ministry of this class.

What a surprise to open the new quarterly and discover a subject on which we are all experts: Worship!

Rosalie Haffner-Lee Zinke brings a lifetime of serious study of worship, both true and false, and her presentation will likely stimulate spirited discussion, and if we are fortunate, perhaps also reassessment of how we think of worship, and what we accomplish by it.

When we find ourselves caught up in discord over worship styles and see with our own eyes the potential for disunity in the body of Christ we sometimes interpret it as a modern phenomenon, an index of how “legalistic” or how “corrupted” the church is becoming, depending upon our own view. This ignores the stark reality that disagreement over worship issues opened the door to the first jealous act of murder ever recorded.

Abel, the son of Adam and Eve, brought his offering to God in precisely the manner he believed God had instructed; his brother Cain, of equal value to God, he believed, brought a different gift, substituting something which seemed more appropriate to him. And so we see the first manifestation of what would become over the centuries the “God doesn’t care what day/God doesn’t care what I wear” mindset of worship. Cain brought to God the very best product of his labors. “This is what I do best,” he thought. God should be satisfied with it. Cain felt the offering should please Cain.

Years ago, a wise elder in a church I then belonged to was heard to think aloud about our worship services, and posed the question, “Why do I never hear anyone ask what kind of worship service God wants? What is it about our coming together each week in His presence that pleases Him?”

So often I have considered that very question. So often have we utterly failed to answer it, both in our rationalizations and in our corporate worship itself. We attend a service, we sing, we participate in the congregational acts of prayer, we remember a sentence or two from the sermon (sometimes we notice whether the service seemed well structured and thematic or whether it just “happened”), and then we go home thinking we have worshipped.

continued on page 3, Courts
In these Sabbath School lessons Zinke puts to rest the notion that “none of this really matters to God.” Why was God so particular, so specific in His instructions for the desert tabernacle and for Solomon’s temple? Why did he ask Moses to remove his shoes? Why was the young Jesus apparently so faithful in his worship attendance on the Sabbath?

I think God searches across the political borders and cultural contrasts of this world, hoping to glimpse an understanding in those who come to worship that they are actually entering a place made for the sole purpose “that I may dwell among them.”

We toss off casual references to “God’s House” without even considering the implications of what we have said. On Sabbath morning we actually enter the physical place where we expect to find God dwelling. We are on His ground!

The psalmists understood. Psalm 84 makes this very clear. In Psalm 122 David himself rejoices when it is time to go to God’s house. The writer of Psalm 42 longed for God’s presence—panted after it as the deer pants for water!

If only the worshiper’s motivation were truly seeking for God, meeting in God’s presence! But throughout the frustratingly checkered history of God’s people, from Genesis (Cain) and Leviticus (Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu) right down to the 21st Century, we see worshippers who have not hesitated to substitute their own “strange fire” and call it worship.

We have seen civil and church authorities who, for political expediency, have attempted to shift sacredness (as if they could actually do that!) from the Sabbath of Creation to “the Lord’s Day.” We have seen barrier after barrier put in place to separate the people from true worship, including the banning of Scripture itself.

What is it that makes our worship acceptable to God? We see a partial answer in Hebrews 9:24 and 7:25. It is the personal ministry of Jesus on our behalf! “Worship coming from redeemed sinners is acceptable to God because of the intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ! Hallelujah!”—Worship by Rosalie Haffner-Lee Zinke, p. 65 (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2011)

If Jesus the Intercessor Himself is seated somewhere inconspicuously in our sanctuary on Sabbath morning, what does He see? Other than “Happy Sabbath,” what would He say to the person seated next to Him? It is a sobering question.

I hope we immerse ourselves in these lessons. We should accept the challenge of truly understanding why we worship.

So shall we render Thee thankful devotion
For Thy deliverance from peril and sword,
Singing in chorus from ocean to ocean,
“Thine is the power and the glory, O Lord!”
PART-TIME CHURCH RECEPTIONIST needed Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. No benefits. Send resume to church@southern.edu or drop by the Office. Application deadline is July 8.

A 20TH BIRTHDAY PARTY will be held for Kiddie Kampus on Sunday, July 31, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall.

THE 55+ CLUB MEETING on July 10 will be at Greenbrier Cove’s Garden Plaza at noon. The speaker is Marcel Schwantes, a life coach and relationship success coach. He will present a new way of looking at people's personalities and knowing how one can best relate to them. Attendance at this meeting is by reservation only by calling 396-5100 by July 5. For further information, call Ken Kirkham at 994-7748.

THERE ARE NO WORDS to express my gratitude for the food, flowers, cards, and all you've done to help me get better. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Marion Blanco

SOMETIMES we think that mission is overseas, but I have seen missionaries in action who really care about those that are near and those that are far. We appreciate all those that came to help us after we lost our home in the tornado. We praise the Lord and thank our University family. A special thanks to our son, daughter, and Charles, who have been there for us. Thanks to the families of Marty Hamilton, David “Smite” Smith, Steve Reeves, Nick Joy, Barry Becker, Elizabeth Burbano, and others. A special thanks also goes to Oliver who drove from Canada after hearing of our loss, as well as the prayer, love, and support from Izak and Elaine Wessels. May God bless all of you and guide you in all your ways. The Artigas Family

BABYSITTER NEEDED for two children ages 3 and 1 from 1:30 to 5:30 p.m., Sunday through Thursday. Contact Veronica at veronica.witt@gmail.com or 540-818-8234.

A WOMEN’S RETREAT will be held October 7-9 in Townsend, TN. The speaker is DeeAnn Bragaw - The Cheap Chocolate Chick. She is a speaker, author, educator, and professional ‘messer-upper’. Call 800-567-1844.

IN MEMORY

Delores Rice, wife of Larry Rice, passed away June 12. A memorial service was held June 26. Memorial contributions can be made to Your Story Hour, The Quiet Hour, or 3ABN.

Frances Andrews passed away May 27. A memorial service will be held Sabbath, July 2, at 3:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Memorial contributions may be made to Frances Andrews Endowed Scholarship for Journalism Students, Southern Adventist University, PO Box 370, Collegedale, TN 37315.

Earl L. Raney, Sr., father of Rob Raney, Scott Raney, and Laura Messersmith, and grandfather of Robby, Cayla, and Rachel Raney, passed away June 7 after a very short illness. Services were held June 9 in New York.

Dan Rozell, father of Kay Sutherland and Ken Rozell, and brother of Susan Pettibone and Carol Pickel, passed away June 17. A memorial service was held June 27 in Arkansas. Memorial contributions may be made to the Accelerated Reader Program or to Student Financial Aid at Ozark Adventist Academy, 20997 Dawn Hill East Rd, Gentry, AR 72734.

Wednesday, June 29
10:00 a.m. 55+ Activities
7:00 p.m. Prayer Group

Thursday, June 30
10:00 a.m. 55+ Bible Study

Sabbath, July 2
9:00 a.m. Adoration 1: Sam Chetty
Adult Sabbath Schools
10:15 a.m. Adoration 2: Sam Chetty
Sabbath Schools
11:30 a.m. Connect: LeClare Litchfield
11:45 a.m. Renewal: Sam Chetty

Offering: Church Family Budget
8:58 p.m. Sunset

Monday, July 4
Church Offices Closed
6:00 p.m. Celebrate Recovery Meeting

Wednesday, July 6
10:00 a.m. 55+ Activities
7:00 p.m. Prayer Group

Thursday, July 7
10:00 a.m. 55+ Bible Study

Sabbath, July 9
9:00 a.m. Adoration 1: Sam Chetty
Adult Sabbath Schools
10:15 a.m. Adoration 2: Sam Chetty
Sabbath Schools
11:30 a.m. Connect: Andy Nash
11:45 a.m. Renewal: Sam Chetty

Offering: Student Aid
8:57 p.m. Sunset

Monday, July 10
6:00 p.m. Celebrate Recovery Meeting