ACS Responds to Texas Twisters
Adventist Community Services Disaster Response (ACS DR) teams are at the scenes of tornado devastation in Texas. Nearly a dozen twisters touched down across the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas, area Tuesday, leaving thousands without power and hundreds of homes damaged or destroyed. According to one news report, cars and trucks were tossed around like toys. Reports are still coming in as to damage. The Texas ACS DR Depot in Keene, is safe, although one tornado hit about four miles away. "We praise God that the reports have come back stating no one has died as a result of the storms, but lives have definitely been altered. Please continue to pray for those affected by the recent storms," says Dan Jackson, North American Division president. For updated reports go to the ACS DR Facebook page HERE.

NAD Conferences Ponder Women’s Ordination
In a direct response to recent actions by the North American Division, several union conferences have voted to support the ordination of women within their constituencies. The Mid-America Union Conference executive committee voted in March to support "women who have experienced ... the call of ministry in their own lives." This reflects related actions in the Pacific Union and Columbia Union conferences. The Southern Union Conference committee took a more conservative stance. Its members voted this week to affirm women in ministry but only with such measures as are in harmony with world church actions taken during a General Conference business session. The next North Pacific Union Conference executive committee session is scheduled for May 16.

Is Our World Church Missing $12 Billion in Tithe?
How much money would the Seventh-day Adventist Church have for mission each year if world membership records were accurate and each member returned a faithful tithe? About $14 billion, according to the Global Tithing Index (GTI), a report measuring 2010 statistics of tithing faithfulness per capita across countries. The denomination currently receives about $2 billion annually. This year’s GTI introduced a new measurement called the Total Tithe Potential, the total tithe that should theoretically be received in a country if all Adventist Church members were faithful in giving 10 percent of their income. Read more from the Adventist News Network HERE.

Looking Ahead
April
13–15: NW Prison Ministry Retreat
14: OAMC Spring Festival
19: June Ad/Article Deadline
26–29: ASI NW Convention

May
9–13: SAGE Creation Retreat
17: July Ad/Article Deadline
17–20: NPUC Regional Convocation
18–20: Tillamook (Ore.) Adv. School Alumni Weekend

June
9–16: Alaska Camp Meeting
12–16: Idaho Camp Meeting
13–16: Mont. Camp Meeting
13–16: UCC Camp Meeting
14–23: Wash. Camp Meeting

July
17–21: Ore. Camp Meeting

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The North Pacific Union Conference Stewardship Summit held in partnership with and hosted by the Washington Conference in Auburn, Wash., April 1–2, attracted 80 church and school financial leaders and 70 pastors and elders. The summit embraced the Blessings Above and Beyond initiative of the Washington Conference and a stewardship theme of "Christ living in me." "Stewardship is about value transformation ... by Christ," says Erika Puni, Adventist world church stewardship director, who presented several seminars at the summit. "Stewardship is ALL of me in response to ALL of God." You can access seminar presentations and handout resources at the Washington Conference website HERE.

Check out a PBS Video on Adventist Longevity
A recent PBS video features the unique beliefs and practices of the Adventist Church which have led to an increased segment of its members living longer, healthier lives. Watch this brief five-minute video HERE.

Kelso-Longview Easter Program Makes the News
Echoing other similar programs around the Northwest, the annual Kelso-Longview (Wash.) Adventist Church pageant, Journey to the Cross, is scheduled to run throughout this weekend. Read an interesting newspaper article and view several photos about this free program from The Daily News online HERE.

Adventist Filmmakers to Meet April 12–14
The annual SONscreen film festival will be held at the Adventist Media Productions center in Simi Valley, Calif., April 12–14. Professional and student filmmakers gather each year for this special event and to screen festival winners. Check out more information or register for the event HERE.

Cindy’s Garden Blog
I reached for my aching, swollen jaw — and looked down at my three toddlers playing and smearing Play Doh — EVERYWHERE. See this week’s Cindy’s Garden Blog for a new tithe story.
Spam
Not spam
Forget previous vote
This year’s Global Tithe Index indicates that accurate membership records strengthen local tithing rates, no matter the country or currency. The index is not an official publication of the Adventist Church, but it can help examine tithing rates when adjusting for economic factors specific to different nations. [Stock photo]

How much money would the Seventh-day Adventist Church have for mission each year if world membership records were accurate and each member returned a faithful tithe? About US$14 billion.

The denomination currently receives about $2 billion annually.

That’s according to this year’s edition of the Global Tithing Index (GTI), which is a report measuring 2010 statistics of tithing faithfulness per capita across countries.

This year’s GTI introduced a new measurement called the Total Tithe Potential, which shows the total tithe that should theoretically be received in a country if all Adventist Church members were faithful in tithing 10 percent of their income.

The total tithe potential for 2010 was about $14.1 billion. The same year, the Adventist Church received about $1.9 billion in tithe.

The GTI is an instrument that aims to level the field in comparing tithing faithfulness across countries that have economic disparity. It measures tith per-capita by comparing a nation’s measure Gross Domestic Product with the aggregate tithe volume per country divided by the number of members on church rolls.

The GTI examines 104 countries and uses information from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2010 Statistical Report and the United States’ Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook.
Eritrea and Switzerland again topped this year’s annual ranking, followed by Austria, Denmark and France.

The GTI also indicates increasing faithfulness among members in countries such as Brazil, which in 2010 was responsible for about half of the gains in world tithe.

This year’s edition also offers stark evidence of how an audit of membership rolls reveals a more accurate gauge of members’ financial support. Nations that had big gains in ranking on the index this year – including Togo and Bolivia – were areas that Adventist Church leaders have recently conducted membership audits.

Togo jumped to number 7 on the ranking, up from the 38th spot last year. Richli attributed the jump entirely “to the courageous decision on the part of its leadership to drop all missing members,” he wrote in the report.

In 2010, Togo reported 5,343 members, a 52 percent drop from 11,028 the previous year.

That move, Richli said, showed that active members in Togo were as faithful as their counterparts in affluent countries. The church’s action in Togo, however, puts a spotlight on the “obvious need” for membership audits in many countries, Richli wrote.

Unfortunately, Richli said, about one-third of countries surveyed contribute less than 10 percent of total tithe potential. He said that figure “clearly shows that in those countries, church rolls are vastly inflated.”

Two advisors on the project are business professors at the Adventist International Institute for Advanced Studies, a graduate school in the Philippines and directly affiliated with the Adventist Church’s world headquarters.

“In looking at the GTI reports over the years, it’s been evident when church administration has taken clear steps to address issues in financial governance and membership records,” said Ronald Vyhmeister, director of the business program at AIIAS and a consultant to the GTI.

“This year again the membership record issue stands out as an issue that quite evidently needs to be addressed in many parts of the world,” Vyhmeister said.

Other trends noted in this year’s report include tithing in Europe, which shows a mixed picture. Some countries, such as the United Kingdom and Norway, show a gradual improvement following the start of the recession, but countries such as Spain show that the recession is severely affecting giving there.

Also, three countries ranked in the denomination’s Southern African Union – South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland – confirm that their rise in previous years was not due to a statistical distortion; each are among the top 20 countries, ranking solidly in the middle of the Western countries.

See the full report here: [http://www.aiias.edu/gti/reports.html](http://www.aiias.edu/gti/reports.html)
**“Bring your full tithe to the Temple treasury so there will be ample provisions in my Temple. Test me in this and see if I don’t open up heaven itself to you and pour out blessings beyond your wildest dreams,” Malachi 3:10, MSG.**

## Top 10 Ways to Receive Blessings Above and Beyond

### 10. Give to your Local Church

Your church and its members are the salt and light in your community. Local church funds pay for your building and its needs, your local school and its needs, and all of your local ministries such as children’s ministries, outreach programs, etc. Every church has expenses — giving to the Local Church Budget is not just about paying bills. It’s not really about what we give as much as it is about to whom we give — our God who has already given us everything.

### 9. Give Out of Appreciation, Not Obligation

The Bible says that when we give from the heart it produces joy within us. “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver,” (2 Corinthians 9:7, NIV). Don’t give until it hurts; instead, give until it feels good. Give an amount that produces joy within you, an amount that truly glorifies God.

### 8. Give to Make a Difference

We want our lives to matter, to make a difference in the lives of others. When we give to the church we’re giving to something greater than ourselves, something that has lasting and eternal significance. Your tithes and offerings go on to support the larger church and its ministries and missions that are literally saving lives and preparing people around the world for eternity.

### 7. Give to Show Thankfulness

Thanksgiving is a basic part of true worship. We are especially mindful of the many ways God has blessed our lives and so we offer to God our thanks and praise. But words can be empty if we do not also give thanks through our offerings. In every recorded Bible incidence of worship, there was an accompanying offering given.

### 6. Give Because God has Asked You To

“A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord,” (Leviticus 27:30, NIV). God gives us everything and asks that we return 10 percent. That is His condition if we are to receive God’s blessings above and beyond. He is looking for selflessness in His people.

### 5. Give to Grow as a Disciple of Jesus

Growing spiritually mature and Christ-like means that we spend time in prayer, in the scriptures, in witness and it means that we give regularly and sacrificially. If we do all those other things and do not give, we are missing out on one of the most vitally important parts of our spiritual life. Jesus said, “You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things,” (Matthew 23:23, NLT).

### 4. Give Generously as an Investment

“Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God,” (2 Corinthians 9:10-11,
NIV). When we give much, we receive an even greater amount — we call this Blessings Above and Beyond.

3. Give to Grow Your Church
When the church grows, God’s kingdom grows. Our task is to make disciples for Jesus Christ and build the kingdom of God. Our tithes and offerings help make our local and worldwide church strong and effective in its mission. Giving is a vital part of fulfilling the Gospel Commission.

2. Give to Grow Your Faith
Faith is all about learning to trust God. That means letting go of our little financial security blanket. On your coins and bills you’ll find the words: “In God We Trust.” Jesus tells us: don’t put your faith and trust in money. It will not save you. Put your trust in God, for God will provide.

1. Give to Make God Your First Priority
“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well,” (Matthew 6:33, NIV). God needs to be first in our lives if we are to be truly His. “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money,” (Matthew 6:24, NIV). How we spend our money speaks volumes about who we truly worship. If God is number one in our life, then everything we have belongs to Him and we have no trouble giving to God and the work of His church.

washingtonconference.org/blessings

Share your story of God's blessing above and beyond
Give a financial gift (through Washington Conference Church)
Arrange your Trust, Will or Estate Plan
Being the bad guy has its ups and downs.

"I really enjoy it," said Wayne Nichols, who plays the role of Satan in the Kelso-Longview Seventh-Day Adventist Church's production of Journey to the Cross. "I get to be the person who everyone else plays off of and be someone I'm not."

He also has been kicked in shin by an elderly woman who found his performance too convincing.

"She kicked me pretty good," Nichols said. "She didn't understand I was playing a part. ... It was a little bit of affirmation that I did a good job."

The West Side Highway church is putting on its annual Easter production Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings. The hour-long program portrays the final three and half years of Jesus's life, starting with his being tempted by Satan in the desert and ending with his resurrection after being crucified.

Nichols says he goes into a dark room to "evil up" and get into character before each performance.

"But I try to come up with ways to make it a little different than what people will expect," he said.

Steve Green has played Judas Iscariot for the last 15 years. But it wasn't an easy decision for him to assume the role of the man who betrays Jesus for 30 pieces of silver when first asked to do so.

"I thought about it for a while, being a believer," Green said. "It's better than playing Satan, though."

Green said he's never been assaulted while playing the role of Judas, but he has fallen victim to some light ribbing.

"It's just good-natured humor," he said.

Just in case not everyone gets the message, the audience at Sunday night's sneak preview/dress rehearsal was reminded that Nichols and Green are only playing the "villians" in the Easter story and shouldn't be regarded as espousing the views or actions of their characters.

Dan Hughes, one of the directors of Journey to the Cross, said this year's musical is similar to previous productions with the exception of a few minor adjustments and some changeover in the cast. But it's a show that doesn't require many wholesale changes, he add.

The husband-wife team of Rollyn and Angie Bettis, both of Salem, Ore., are returning to their familiar primary roles. Rollyn Bettis plays Jesus while Angie Bettis, who appears throughout the production in a contemporary red dress while the rest of the cast wears "Bible times" clothing, functions as a combination narrator and vocal soloist.

"I've seen a lot of different productions," Hughes said. "The reason why we've stuck with this production is because it tells the complete story where people who don't know church history can come and get something out of it."

The presentation begins at 7 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. No admission will be charged.

"Just like salvation, it's free," Hughes said.
SONscreen Film Festival X

SONScreen Festival Event Schedule*

THURSDAY, APRIL 12, 2012
Registration                          2:00 pm – 7:00 pm
Screening                             7:30 pm

FRIDAY, APRIL 13, 2012
Registration                         8:00 am – 9:30 am
Workshops (Session 1)                 9:00 am – 10:30 am
Workshops (Session 2)                 11:00 am – 12:30 pm
Pitch Fest                           2:30 pm – 5:00 pm
Screening                           7:00 pm

SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 2012
Screening                          10:00 am
Complimentary Lunch                 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm
Screening                          2:00 pm
Panel Discussion                    3:30 pm
Awards Ceremony & Keynote Speaker   6:00 pm – 7:30 pm
Awards Dinner                      7:30 pm – 9:30 pm

*Schedule and times are subject to change, please check back for updated Event Schedule.

Contact
Brittnie Clark Sigamoney, Associate Producer
SONscreen Film Festival X
310-975-5774

When
Thursday April 12, 2012 at 5:00 PM PDT
THURSDAY, APRIL 12, 2012
Registration                          2:00 pm – 7:00 pm
Screening                             7:30 pm

FRIDAY, APRIL 13, 2012
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Awards Dinner                      7:30 pm – 9:30 pm

*Schedule and times are subject to change, please check back for updated Event Schedule.

Register Now!
I reached for my aching, swollen jaw — and looked down at my three toddlers playing and smearing Play Doh. Never down, much less out, I “sprang” for the “decadent” root canal but disregarded sage advice: “Give oneself a week to recover.” Now, even Tylenol 3 was as effective as candy.

As the hours wore on, my children grew restless. The toddlers needed walking, reading, playing with, meals — a mother. I needed sleep. I looked at my options as a single mom: my own mother couldn’t take time off from work; my friends could spare but a few hours. And so I reached for my check ledger and crunched the numbers. I realized there was budget enough, but certainly none for a babysitter or helper while I recovered.

Messy Toddlers

I worked the numbers again. Suddenly I noticed something: I hadn’t paid my tithe. Why that would be just enough money for a nanny-for-a-week. And so I began to wrestle God for His check. Wasn’t my swollen jaw comparable to a mission field? Weren’t these messy toddlers His toddlers? Shamefully, I went over all the misuse/abuse/miss-appropriation of tithe funds I ever knew. I even made God a list. If that wasn’t enough, I pointed out church workers driving Cadillacs (this was low). Finally, I asked what kind of deity “asks his ‘girl’ to recover about miserably for such a relatively small check?”
But somewhere in that argument, I couldn’t squelch the microscopic-size voice telling me different. It was as if God was saying “You’re right. You’re right. But put the check in the mail anyway honey; put it in the mail —” And so seconds before the postman came down my walk, I threw it in the box. I’d like to say a happy, contrite woman put that check in the mailbox; but that would be lying. I remember instead, actually slamming it into the mail and saying “whatever” and “there you go.”

Lake Lot

I heard the postman click my mailbox shut. And now for the record, I don’t believe in writing from the clouds, audible voices, or silly dreams, but just as the postman walked down my sidewalk and the mailbox clicked shut … my phone rang. Literally it rang; and as long as I live I’ll hear that ring.

Jean-Anne, a nearby friend from Tri-Cities was on the other end and delivered the words faster than I could make sense of them. “Cindy how long has it been since you and those boys have had a vacation? Hurry and pack your suitcases right now. We’re headed to our lake lot in Canada and insist on taking you and the boys with us! We won’t take any money and we won’t take ‘no’ for an answer.” Instantly both hot AND cold tears streamed together and uncontrollably past my swollen, throbbing jaw. Now Jean-Anne had no idea I was recovering from a complex-root canal, but she felt impressed RIGHT THEN to invite us to her family’s lake lot.

My children and I spent a six-day first-class vacation at a fine resort, enjoying homemade meals, with three adult friends acting as doting nannies to each toddler, unlimited fun, water toys, boats, skis and more. It wasn’t until I was laying face-up on a sunny deck in flip flops
sipping iced tea, with the children on a boat excursion that I thought again of the babysitter I hadn’t been able to obtain. And from somewhere I heard that same faint, microscopic-size voice ask if I wanted my measly tithe check back.

With a smile, I realized my jaw was — healed.

P.S. Years have passed; one “toddler” goes to college this year, the other to academy, the baby to middle school. God, forever the gentleman, never ceases to honor the handshake He and I made that dark day at the mailbox, and what a trip it’s been.

Pictured here are the "three toddlers" as they are today.

Posted in Cindy's Garden Blog | 1 Comment »