As Southeastern celebrates its 30th anniversary, there are many in Adventism that are questioning the relevancy of Regional (Black) Conferences today. In fact there is a grass roots effort in place to dissolve regional conferences. I recently received a letter addressed to the editor of Sketches asking this very question.

Regional Conferences were created by the General Conference to make the work of spreading the gospel among Blacks more effective and to help ease racial tensions in the church. Blacks can reach Blacks better than Whites can reach Blacks. Unfortunately, many of the same racial issues that divided us back then persist today. In this edition of Sketches we take a look at the beginnings of Regional Conferences.

Also in this edition of Sketches a new section makes its debut - God Encounters. We are admonished to share with others that which God has done for us. Whether He has healed us of a dreadful disease or has made a way out of no way, we are to let the world know what God has done for us.

“After healing the woman, Jesus desired her to acknowledge the blessing she had received. The gifts which the gospel offers are not to be secured by stealth or enjoyed in secret. So the Lord calls upon us for confession of His goodness. ‘Ye are my Witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God!’ Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven’s chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world,” states Ellen White. “We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through the holy men of old; but that which will be most effectual is the testimony of our own experience. We are witnesses for God as we reveal in ourselves the working of a power that is divine.”

Thus, God Encounters will feature stories about your personal experiences with God. I encourage you to send in your God Encounters to Sketches; it is your duty to do so. These stories will provide encouragement to others that will strengthen their faith in God.

Celebrating 30 years
Last year, 2010, we had to cancel the yearly gathering of camp meeting due to the 59th General Conference Session that was held in Atlanta, Ga. While it’s been two years since we have gathered together for that heartwarming experience in Hawthorne, it is only fitting that we reconvene on the 30th anniversary of Southeastern Conference.

In preparation for this year’s camp meeting, a lot of work has been done to improve the campground. We have continued our work on improving the cabins and grounds. We have expanded the parking area, built an outdoor pavilion, expanded our camp office and added a business center. Work has also begun on the construction of the cafeteria that was burned down a few years ago. The 12,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility will be much more than a cafeteria. It will feature four breakout rooms that will host workshops and provide you with an opportunity to fellowship with each other. It will also feature the latest technology. The anticipated hope is to have it ready prior to the start of camp meeting 2012. I solicit your prayers in that regard.

Carlton Byrd, D.Min., director/speaker of the Breath Of Life Telecast and pastor of the Berean Church located in Atlanta, Ga. was the first weekend speaker. During his time with us, Byrd filmed six episodes for the Breath of Life Telecast, which will air in the fall of 2011.

Emil Peeler, D.Min., director of church growth and discipleship at the Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, located in Riverside, Calif., took us to another level speaker for the second weekend.

While we have made plans for camp meeting, we must be mindful of the fact that this is not our home. Recent events - the cyclone that hit Australia, the hurricane that devastated the islands of Samoa, and the massive blizzard that paralyzed the Midwest - suggest to us that we are in the final moments of earth’s history. We have a lot of work to do.

Ellen White admonishes us to be faithful to our cause: “We are nearing the close of this earth’s history. We have before us a great work, —the closing work of giving the last warning message to a sinful world... This world is out of joint. As we look at the picture, the outlook seems discouraging. But Christ greets with hopeful assurance the very men and women who cause us discouragement.” Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 7, pp 270

I solicit your prayers and ask that you join me as we celebrate 30 years as a conference. We will continue to sow seeds, reap the harvest and accept the revival that God has in store for us.

God bless!

Hubert J. Morel Jr.
SEC President
During the 1970’s ideas and conversations were had about dividing the vast territory of the South Atlantic Conference so that the gospel commission could be fulfilled. At that time the Conference territory reached as far north as the Virginia border and as far south as Key West, Florida. It was bounded on the east by the Atlantic Ocean and its western borders touched such states as Alabama and Tennessee. This land mass represented approximately half of the Southern Union Conference territory.

In a letter dated August 30, 1974, R. L. Woodfork, president of the South Atlantic Conference, wrote H. H. Schmidt, president of the Southern Union, inquiring about the possibility of dividing the South Atlantic Conference.

On September 3, 1974 Schmidt replied to Woodfork with the suggestion that a Commission of 13 people be set in place to give formal study to the idea of dividing the South Atlantic Conference. This commission would include the Union officers, the South Atlantic officers, W. S. Banfield of the North American Division, three pastors and three lay persons.


At the 1978 Annual Council meeting of the General Conference, approval was given to divide the South Atlantic Conference.

On August 9, 1979 the Study Commission voted the plan it would recommend for the division of the South Atlantic Conference. The Northern territory would be North Carolina, South Carolina and all of Georgia north of and including Early, Calhoun, Dougherty, Lee, Crisp, Wilcox, Dodge, Wheeler, Montgomery, Toombs, Tattnall, Long, and Liberty counties.

The Southern territory would be all of Florida (except that portion of Florida west of the Apalachicola River) and that portion of Georgia south of and including the counties of Seminole, Miller, Baker,
Mitchell, Worth, Turner, Ben Hill, Telfair, Jeff Davis, Appling, Wayne, and McIntosh.

On June 8, 1980, at Hawthorne, Florida, the South Atlantic Conference Constituency voted to formally divide the South Atlantic Conference and to authorize a session of delegates from the new territory to meet and formally organize a new conference. At that time votes were taken on recommended budgets, office locations in the north and the south, disposition and division of assets, workers and other pertinent matters related to start up.

The first session of the new conference convened at 10 a.m. on June 22, 1980 in the music building of Forest Lake Academy in Forest City, Florida. There were 169 regular delegates and 28 delegates at-large making a total of 197 official delegates.

At this session the following officials were elected: J. A. Edgecombe, president, D. A. Walker, secretary-treasurer, O. J. McKinney, departmental director, G. W. Timpson, departmental director.

Southeastern Conference officially opened for business on January 1, 1981 with approximately 8,511 members; 51 churches; 20 pastors; 5 church schools with 24 teachers; 12 literature evangelists; 2 associate publishing secretaries; and one Bible worker.

Pastor-Evangelists like R. R. Brown, K. Dennis, W. L. Taylor, D. Ross, H. L. Davis, T. Fraser, E. Young, G. Nosea, W. C. Byrd, and J. Harris were consistently under tents summer after summer winning and baptizing souls. Add to these countless church and lay evangelism rallies to increase the harvest of souls and the establishment of new congregations. Julio Astacio was our first Hispanic worker. Gerard Nosea was our first Haitian pastor. At the close of 2005 Southeastern Conference employed seventy-four English language Pastors, nine Spanish language Pastors, One Filipino Pastor and twenty-two Creole/French language Pastors.

By December 31, 2005 there were 32,782 members in 137 congregations; 86-English (63%), one Filipino (1%), 35-Creole/French (25%) and 15 Hispanic (11%). There were 74 ordained ministers, 12 licensed and 4 part ministers for a total of 90. Also employed were two Bible Instructors, 20 staff persons, 46 full time and/or part time Literature Evangelists, and 61 teaching personnel. Southeastern operates 13 schools with Miami Union also offering 12 grades. Tithe for 2005 was approximately 18 million dollars compared with approximately 2 million dollars in 1981.

Southeastern has a diverse membership of 39,790. Southeastern employs 240 pastors, teachers, support staff and auxiliary workers. It operates 137 churches, 15 schools, 2 administrative complexes and 2 campgrounds.
The first SDA minister to enter the South was Elbert B. Lane. He travelled to Tennessee in 1871. Lane held his first outreach in a railway station house: “the white people occupying one room and the colored the other.” (*The Advent Review & Herald of the Sabbath*, May 2, 1871, 158.)

In *The Advent Review & Herald of the Sabbath* of September 26, 1871, under the heading, “The South,” Lane reported:

“I had not long left the Ohio river before I saw what I had often read of and seen pictured, that is, the large plantation with its mansion and many negro huts or cabins, sometimes built of brick, but usually of boards or logs. They are small, one story buildings, often without windows or ventilation, except by means of the door. These buildings are now rented to the negroes who are in the employ of the planter. They receive low wages, ranging from five to ten dollars per month. The condition of this unfortunate race is truly lamentable.”

Lane continued: “This is in many respects an unfavorable field in which to labor, owing principally to the feelings of dislike which the people bear toward the North. This however gradually gives way. My first congregations there were very small, perhaps ten or twelve, while my last were between two and three hundred. ... I felt a deep interest in the work there, though I labored under some embarrassment. I could not get the people...

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**Black Seventh-day Adventist History (1842-1901)**

- 1842: William Ellis Foy, a black Millerite minister, receives the first of four visions relating to the early Advent movement. Foy faithfully carries out his commission. In 1844 he meets with Ellen White and recognizes her prophetic gift and ministry. Though he receives no more visions after 1844, he continues to pastor until his death in 1893. His grave is in the Birch Tree Cemetery in Ellsworth, Maine.

- 1859: Ellen G. White instructs church members to disobey the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act that requires American citizens to deliver fleeing slaves to their masters.

- 1861: Ellen White receives the historic vision at Roosevelt, New York, revealing the horrible curse and degradation of slavery. She declares God is bringing judgment against America for “the high crime of slavery” and that God will punish the South for the sin of slavery and the North for so long suffering its overreaching and overbearing influence.

- 1862: Abraham Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, effective January 1, 1863. The move opens the door for the Adventist message to move into the South.

- 1871: Elbert B. Lane, the first Adventist minister in the South, reports holding meetings in a Tennessee depot building with “white people occupying one room, and the Colored the other.”

- 1877: First black SDA school begins in Missouri.

- 1886: The first black congregation is formed in Edgefield Junction (Madison), Tennessee.

- 1889: Charles Kinney becomes first black, ordained SDA minister; was won to the Adventist faith through the preaching of J. N. Loughborough and E. G. White. He goes on to become one of the major pioneers in the black work.
The concept of black conferences is first suggested by Charles Kinney when confronted by efforts to segregate him and his members at camp meeting on the day of his ordination. He suggests this as a way to work more effectively among blacks and to help deal with racial tensions and problems in the church.

The famous testimony by Ellen White entitled “Our Duty to the Colored People” is published.

James Patterson leaves for Jamaica: becomes first black missionary.

Harry S. Shaw is appointed as a special agent by the General Conference to evangelize blacks in the South.

Edson White and Will Palmer begin to evangelize Southern blacks via the steamship Morning Star; they land in Vicksburg, Mississippi, in 1895.

The Gospel Herald is published by Edson White at Yazoo City, Mississippi. Designed to be an evangelistic journal for black people.

The first SDA Church to be established in the south was at Edgefield Junction, Tennessee. It was founded by Lane who responded to an appeal by a R. K. McCune who had received SDA literature & requested that the Church send a minister.

In 1877 R. M. Kilgore was sent by the General Conference to the South—Texas. He spent 8 years working there. He faced threats of lynching and once his tent was burned. He was called as president of the Illinois conference in 1885. In 1888 he returned to the South when placed in charge of District No. 2—

Southern Missionary Society, devoted to working for blacks in the South, is begun, headed by Edson White. It is incorporated in 1898 and becomes part of the Southern Union Conference in 1909.

Oakwood Industrial School begins operation; becomes junior college in 1927. J. L. Moran becomes first black president in 1932; school becomes senior college in 1943; receives accreditation in 1958.

First black SDA camp meeting, Edgefield Junction, Tennessee.

The photo comes from a page documenting the history of the South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Edgefield Junction Church members—the Allison family
all the southern states east of the Mississippi. At the time there were 5 ordained white ministers and no black. There were about 500 white church members and 50 black. In 1889, the General Conference heard a report from the Southern Field that pointed out some difficulties workers were facing:

“Considering the peculiar sentiment and prejudices existing in the South ... [and] the difficulty of reaching both whites and blacks in one public meeting ...” (General Conference Bulletin Vol. 3, 1889, 26.)

In Charles M. Kinney accepted the Adventist message in Reno, Nevada, as a result of the preaching of John Loughborough and Ellen White. A colporteur, then preacher and evangelist, Kinney was ordained by Kilgore in 1889, becoming the only ordained black minister in the denomination.

In an 1885 issue of the Review and Herald, Kinney wrote: “I earnestly ask the prayers of all who wish to see the truth brought 'before many peoples ...,' that I may have strength, physical, men-

Charles M. Kinney (The photo is also from the aforementioned History of the South Central Conference.)

Black Seventh-day Adventist History (1901-1981)

Anna Knight arrives in India; becomes first black woman of any denomination to serve as a missionary there.

First black SDA medical facility is founded in Nashville, Tennessee; it is later expanded to Riverside Hospital in 1927 under the direction of Mrs. Nellie Druillard. Turned over to the General Conference in 1933; further expanded with the purchase of 46 acres adjacent to property. Modern hospital building constructed in 1947; sold in 1983.

Testimonies, vol. 9, is published; section entitled ‘Among the Colored People,’ dealing with work among blacks, is included.

Negro Department of the General Conference is formed (name changed to North American Colored Department in 1941; changed to North American Regional Department in 1954; discontinued in 1978). The department is created in the General Conference to deal with the growing issues of the black work. W.H. Green becomes first black head of the department. His successors are G. E. Peters, F. L. Peterson, C. E. Moseley, H. D. Singleton, and W. W. Fordham.

Black membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is 1,000.

Lottie Blake becomes first black physician in the Adventist Church.

Hadley Memorial Hospital opens.

Black membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is 4,000.

Harlem (later Northeastern) Academy opens.

Eva B. Dykes becomes first black woman in the United States to complete requirements for the Ph.D. degree.

James K. Humphrey, a black Baptist minister who became an Adventist in 1902, a gifted leader, founds the First Harlem Seventh-day Adventist Church. Plans to create Utopia Park, consisting of an orphanage, a nursing home, a training school, an industrial area, and healthcare facilities. Conference administration feels that Humphrey is not cooperating and moves to defrock him. Harlem congregation stands with Humphrey, and the Greater New York Conference votes to defrock him and disfellowship the entire congregation. It adopts the name United Sabbath-day Adventist Church.
Black membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is 8,000.

Message Magazine is established on October 16, 1943.

Lucy Byard, a light-skinned Black SDA from Brooklyn, was denied treatment at SDA owned and operated Washington Sanitarium. She died after she was transferred to Freedman's Hospital.

McElheney introduced the topic of Regional Conferences to the GC Committee's Spring Council held April 8-19, 1944, in Chicago. Following some debate (Of the 22 speakers on record, 17 spoke in favour, 3 against, and 2 asked questions of clarity.)

All members agreed that there was no biblical or theological basis for racism.

EJ Waggoner proposed the following resolution which was carried: "WHEREAS, The Bible says that there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond, but that all are one in Christ Jesus, therefore, Resolved, That it is the decided opinion of this Conference, that when the colored of the south accept the Third Angel's Message, they should be received into the church on an equality with white members, no distinction whatever being made between the two races in church relations." (General Conference Bulletin 27 November, 1887, 3.)

Kinney made an important contribution to the debate in 1889 during the Southern Conference camp meeting in Nashville, Tennessee. R. M. Kilgore had suggested that black attendance at the camp meeting was to blame for the low turn-out of white's. He suggested therefore, that future meetings be segregated along racial lines. In response, Kinney made some recommendations, stating, "It is probable that my ideas may be a little different from what has been expressed by some... In the first place, a separation of the colored people from the white people is great sacrifice upon our part: we lose the blessing of learning the truth—I have reference especially to general meetings... It would be a great sacrifice upon the apart of my people to miss the information that these general meetings would give them; and another thing, it seems to me that a separation in the general meetings would have a tendency to destroy the unity of the Third Angel's Message. Now, then this question to me is one of great embarrassment and humiliation, not only to me, but to my people also." (Quoted in Utzinger, “The Third Angel's Message for My People,” 30-31.)

Kinney continued: "I am glad to state that the third angel's Message has the power in it to eliminate or move this race prej-
udice upon the part of those who get hold of the truth.” At the same time he reasoned: “The third Angel's Message will enable us to remove that obstacle. The color line question is an obstacle; in other words, the very presence of the colored people in church relation and in our general meetings is an obstacle, a barrier that hinders the progress of the Third Angel's Message from reaching many of the white people. (Quoted in Utzinger, “The Third Angel’s Message for My People,” 31.)

Kinney presented twelve propositions, number 4 bluntly stated, “Where the two races cannot meet without limitation in the church, it is better to separate.” Later he stated, “I would say in this connection that in my judgment a separate meeting for the colored people to be held in connection with the general meetings, or a clear-cut distinction, by having them occupy the back seats etc., would not meet with as much favor from my people as a total separation.” (C. M. Kinney’s Statement on the Concept of Regional Conferences October 2, 1889.)

The concept of separate Black conferences was apparently first suggested by Kinney when confronted by efforts to segregate him and his members at a camp meeting on the day of his ordination. He advocated Black conferences as a way to work more effectively among Blacks and to help ease the racial tensions in the church. These Black conferences would, “bear the same relation to the General Conference that White conferences do.”

The bottom-line is: Conferences divided along racial lines were always a second-best solution—they were never presented as the ideal or best solution to the SDA Church’s racial problems.

References: C. M. Kinney's Statement on Regional Conferences 1889


In October 1928, W. H. Green—the Colored Secretary of the General Conference (GC)—died. His position was not filled immediately as many Black ministers felt that “the only way to improve the work among Negroes of the country is to organize colored conferences, whereby the colored people may handle their own money, employ their own workers and so develop administrative ability and all cultural lines of work ... to organize Negro conferences that would function in exactly the same relation to the General Conference as white conferences.”

(Quoted in Jacob Justiss *Angels in Ebony* p46.)

After discussion, the GC appointed a commission of eleven Whites and five Blacks to study the issue. J. K. Humphrey had been one of the Black ministers calling for Black Conferences and was one of those appointed to the commission. Humphrey later accused the White members of the committee of meeting separately and asking the Black members of the committee to rubber-stamp their decision that Black Conferences were not appropriate. Humphrey later left the SDA Church and formed the United Sabbath Day Adventist Church.

By 1944 however, the situation had changed—the Black membership of the church had grown considerably and Black members were better educated and more confident than in the past. This lead a group of Black SDA laity to form the National Association for the Advancement of World-wide Work Among Colored Seventh-day Adventists on October 16, 1943. The group was chaired by Joseph T. Dodson, other members included Eva B. Dykes—one of the first Black American woman to receive a PhD, while the Corresponding Secretary was Valarie Justiss—the second SDA Black woman to receive a PhD.

The group met on at least two occasions with J. L. McElheney—GC President. They presented a petition entitled Shall the Four Freedoms Function Among SDAs? to the GC leadership in Washington DC. (The document takes it’s name from the State of the Union address given by Franklin D. Roosevelt on January 6, 1941. The four freedoms were:

1. Freedom of speech and expression
2. Freedom of every person to worship God in his own way
3. Freedom from want
4. Freedom from fear (See Wikipedia entry. See a copy of the speech.)
The group was not requesting the formation of Black conferences but rather recommending an end to racial discrimination in all SDA institutions. Graham states that the group also "asked for a full accounting of the money that Black people were contributing to the denomination and requested that their Black leaders be treated with courtesy." (Ricardo B. Graham, "Black Seventh-day Adventists and Racial Reconciliation" in Perspectives: Black Seventh-Day Adventists Face the Twenty-first Century Calvin B. Rock ed. Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1996, 136)

- Racial discrimination was rife at SDA institutions and the Four Freedoms document did not hesitate to point out specific cases:
  - "The Washington Sanitarium refuses to admit colored people."
  - "Colored girls are denied admittance to the Washington sanitarium School of Nurses and some other schools open to the whites."
  - It was the policy of Emmanuel Missionary College to seat Black students at the rear during chapel services.
  - "There are no Negroes so far as we know on staffs of Adventist institutions."
  - "There is not even one General Conference office filled by a colored person."
  - "There is no colored editor, circulation manager, and business manager of the only Adventist periodical devoted exclusively to the interest of the 13,000,000 colored people in the United States."

The document draws frequent contrast between SDA practice in these areas and the practices of secular or other religious organizations. These include: "Since white and colored eat without friction daily in the cafeterias of the Library of Congress, Union Station, National Art Gallery, Interior Department, and other government buildings, it is illegal to segregate the Secretary of the Colored department for his meals." (All quotes from Shall the Four Freedoms Function Among SDAs?

One of the impetuses for the petition was the tragic case of Lucy Byard. Byard was a light-skinned Black SDA from Brooklyn who was admitted to the SDA owned and operated Washington Sanitarium and hospital based on her appearance. When her true racial identity was discovered from her admittance forms, Byard was wheeled into a hallway without examination or treatment, while a place in another hospital was sought for her. She was eventually taken to Freedman's Hospital where she died shortly after of pneumonia. While it is impossible to ascertain, it is often stated that her condition—at the very least—worsened due to the time spent in the drafty hallway of Washington Sanitarium.

McElheney introduced the topic of Regional Conferences to the GC Committee's Spring Council held April 8-19, 1944, in Chicago. Following some debate (Of the 22 speakers on record, 17 spoke in favour, 3 against, and 2 asked questions of clarity. See Delbert W. Baker "Regional Conferences: 50 Years of Progress" Adventist Review November 2, 1995, p11.) a resolution was passed: "WHEREAS, The present development of the work among the colored people in North America has resulted, under the signal blessing of God, in the establishment of some 233 churches with some 17,000 members: and WHEREAS, It appears that a different plan of organization for our colored membership would bring further great advance in soul-winning endeavours; therefore WE RECOMMEND, That in unions where the colored constituency is considered by the union conference committee to be sufficiently large, and where the financial income and territory warrant, colored conferences be organized." (Quoted in Baker, "Regional Conferences" p14.)

From 1945 to 1947, seven Black Conferences were formed: Allegheny, Lake Region, and Northeastern (1945), South Atlantic and South Central (1946), and Central States and Southwest Region (1947). In 1967 Allegheny divided into the Allegheny East and Allegheny West, while the South Atlantic divided into the South Atlantic and Southeastern Conferences in 1981. Regional Conferences were not formed in the two westernmost districts: Pacific and North Pacific Union Conferences. Work amongst the Black population in these areas was coordinated by a Regional Affairs Office. (Baker, "Regional Conferences", p14.)

It should be noted that there has been some recent agitation amongst Black SDAs in these western Union Conferences regarding the formation of a Black Conference. (See articles in Adventist Today.)

REFERENCES:


Jacob Justiss Angels in Ebony chapter entitled "Regional Conferences". Available as part of the Telling the Story Anthology (Part 2, p37-48)

Shall the Four Freedoms Function Among SDAs?
New generations of young upcoming female Adventist professionals are finding new paths. These paths have been illuminated by the lamps of a previous generation of courageous women. Shaunda Elyse Kelly stands on the shoulders of female pioneers who paved the way for their daughters. Shaunda was the first black female to be accepted into the School of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at the University of Alabama. To date she is still the only black female to have been accepted into the program.

A 2001 Cum laude graduate from Oakwood University, she has faced many challenges. During her undergraduate years, her experiences were many and varied. For most young people the pressure from peers is a challenge and that was no different for Shaunda. Pressure from friends to become involved in activities, though wholesome, she felt were not conducive to her academic development nor her goals.

Her grueling schedule which included a full load of classes and two jobs left little time for “frivolous” activities. For three days a week, from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., she worked as an ER technician at Huntsville Hospital. This gave her an hour to get from the hospital to her 8 a.m. class. From classes, she went to her on campus job as a research assistant. Through her involvement in working with the Seeds Grant through the Ecology department she established the Nature Trail near the boys’ dorm on the Oakwood University campus.

Her first published paper was through the department of chemistry as a research associate in Plant Electrophysiology.

June of 2005, saw Shaunda graduate as a doctor of dental Medicine from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Of the five black students who entered the dental program she was one of the four who graduated. Despite the rigors of the program Shaunda found time to serve as President of the National Dental Association - a black organization on campus. Her involvement in various groups allowed her to develop a support system. She continued her studies at the University of Alabama School of Medicine. Most of this time was spent in Huntsville, Alabama where she broadened her horizons, got good experiences and developed a better perspective on life.

A few years later, she graduated from the School of Medicine as a medical doctor. What Shaunda considers her greatest accomplishment as a professional, is not being both a medical doctor and a dentist, but rather finding her place in Christ and solidifying her faith in Him.

The next leap of faith for Shaunda was applying to the UAB Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Residency Program. Being the first black female accepted into the program came with a feeling of nostalgia for her. Though she experienced isolation and a sense of being derailed, she felt she had to defend herself.

Despite times when she was not given pertinent information needed for assignments, God always filled in the missing pieces of the puzzle and covered her with His favor. God’s hand was on her in that she has never had to retake any board examinations. As cream always rises to the top, Shaunda rose to the top of her class as chief resident of Oral Maxillofacial Surgery at UAB.

Through these experiences she has learned to respect the differences of others in a very small, tight knit environment. God’s favor continues to shine on Shaunda as she embarks on the next phase of her journey as chief of Oral Maxillofacial Surgery at the VA Hospital in Birmingham Alabama.

Strange as this may seem, in light of her accomplishments, Shaunda had to overcome feelings of self-doubt, and learned not to measure herself by the opinions of others. She chooses not to remember the negativity of her experiences but rather the experiences that made her a better person and drew her closer to Christ.

Through mistakes and learning challenges she found the strength to rise above the negatives and become who she is today, a strong, intelligent, professional, beautiful black woman who loves God above all else. Her message to us is “Don’t judge my journey, but focus on your own path and where God is leading you.”
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Through its LEAP adult degree completion program, Oakwood University now offers “tuition forgiveness” to former students from 2005 and before who wish to finish their Oakwood degrees.

Citing the Bible’s Deuteronomy 15:1 directive, “At the end of every seven years, you must cancel debts,” (New International Version) LEAP Director, Dr. Rachel Williams-Smith explains that the offering is as easy as the Bible mandates.

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When the graduation requirements are completed, former students will be awarded their Oakwood degrees in either Organizational Management (Business), Psychology, General Studies, Church Leadership or Information Technology.

And at the same time, the former Oakwood College debt will be erased, Dr. Williams-Smith stated, adding:

“What many don’t realize is that our LEAP adult degree completion program not only costs less than half of our traditional college, but LEAP’s costs are also in line with – or, often less than – what most public universities charge.”

For more information about LEAP, visit www.OakwoodLEAP.com, or call 256-726-7098.

IN ORDER TO RECEIVE TUITION AMNESTY, FORMER OAKWOOD STUDENTS:

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2. Must keep their new LEAP tuition payments current.
OU Competes at 2011 Honda Challenge

—By Jamaal Pemberton

Every year since 1989, Oakwood University has participated in the Honda Campus All-Star Challenge, usually held in Orlando, Florida. This college bowl quiz tournament, sponsored by the Honda Corporation, includes 48 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) from around the country.

The 2011 OU team included: Marcus Cooper (captain), Jamaal Pemberton, Antoine Southern, and Nichelle Warren. The team advanced to the final round, completing the match in second place to the 2011 team from Florida A&M University.

This is not the first time Oakwood University has placed well—in 2008 and 2009, teams brought home the winning trophies, top recognition, and priceless experiences. In the years since these Oakwood teams have competed, Honda has awarded $210,000 to the university. Prior to coming to Florida each year, school teams spend months in preparation.

This year each school had to participate in a community service project. The Oakwood and Alabama A&M teams decided jointly to work with the Boys and Girls Clubs in this area by reorganizing their library and facilitating a sleep-over for youngsters. This cooperative Oakwood and A&M community service project won $1,000 for the Boys and Girls Club.

In every year’s competition, Oakwood has a primary goal and a secondary goal. The secondary goal is to win the tournament. The primary is to represent God in everything we do, win or lose. With that in mind, the OU team requested and received permission to have intensive sessions on Friday afternoons, without the usual rest periods, so they would not have to compete during the Sabbath hours.

The team’s only two losses were in the final round, and even then, Marcus Cooper, captain for the OU team, was the highest point earner in the competition. Overall, Oakwood came in second to FAMU. For the Oakwood team, this is not a chance to grasp for prestige and honor—this is an opportunity for us to show the world who God is by our actions.
The lives of twins Cecilia and Dawnmarie Simmons were changed forever on June 11, 2009. Their parents, Jonathan, 47, and Undine, 46, were killed by a Ford Explorer driven by Joan Brown of Kentucky, who hit them while they were surveying the damage done to their vehicle, after it hit the guard rail on Highway 75 because a tire blowout.

Two years later the twins have continued to piece their lives back together. Enrolled in Southern Adventist University, the two are pursuing careers in education.

From day one, the lives of twins Cecilia and Dawnmarie Simmons were filled with educators – their father, their uncle, their aunts, and their mother, who home-schooled them from elementary school through high school.

Believers in the importance of Christian community, the Simmons family, members of the Shiloh Seventh-day Adventist Church, involved their girls in many activities, including Adventurers, Pathfinders, and Bible Bowl. Cecilia and Dawnmarie always appreciated their unique educational experience, but didn’t realize how deeply it was a part of them until college.

For their associate’s degrees, the girls enrolled at a local community college. In keeping with their childhood experiences, they tried to get involved on campus, but found it difficult since so many events were held on Sabbath. When they enrolled at Southern Adventist University for their bachelor’s degrees, these limitations suddenly melted away.

“I had always wanted to be involved, and now everything was a possibility,” says Dawnmarie. “I could participate in whatever I wanted without a Sabbath conflict.”

Dawnmarie’s first project was running for Senate. Nervous that she wouldn’t be able to balance her academic and extracurricular activities, she only half-heartedly campaigned, but her twin, Cecilia, who had faith in her abilities, secretly printed posters and urged people all over campus to vote for her sister. Dawnmarie won.

Things took off from there. Cecilia was soon getting involved herself, as a mentor for freshmen. Dawnmarie later became a resident assistant. Both girls participated in campus intramurals, led out in a women’s Bible study, and became officers in the campus chapter of the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI).

In the whirlwind of activities, the girls chose for their majors something that had been deep in their hearts for many years: education. The more they explored this field, the more they realized God had been preparing them for it all along.

“My love for learning began in our home when my mother home schooled us,” says Cecilia. “It was definitely a labor of love. I hope to be as much of a blessing to my future students as my mother was to me.”
It was a day of deliberate action taken by my husband and me as we drove up to the apartment complex looking for a short lease in the city of Memphis, Tennessee. We spoke with the manager and requested an apartment that was on the ground floor.

During those years we had a large and cumbersome typewriter, satchels full of papers, cards, and other items that we would be taking back and forth from workers meetings, and the evening evangelistic service. We envisioned less travel time to our place of rest as we looked at the number of stairs that we would have to climb. Not to even think of climbing them with stuff. The manager of the complex promised us that he had someone moving out and when we came, there would be no problem.

The paperwork was done, we had prayed about our place of residence for the summer, and we were cool. Memphis was the place that the late Charles Dudley designated to evangelize CITY WIDE during this summer. All of the regional Seventh-day Adventist churches would participate. This would be one of two back to back meetings that we were requested to hold in this great city. In fact the church Word of Life was born from this meeting in an area called Frasier, a suburb of Memphis.

We left the apartment headed for home fully at peace about where we were going to stay. During an evangelistic series, having a place to rest is critical and we took pains in making sure that was in place. Upon our return to Memphis, having gotten all of the workers in place, prayer meetings, times of fasting, pre-work done and the meeting ready to go, we come to the apartment, ready to move into ground floor apartment, and lo and behold, NOT AVAILABLE.

The management stated that the persons that were suppose to move did not and he only had an apartment on the top floor of this six floor apartment. He was quite apologetic, but that really did not help us very much. We did not waste time, we knew what had to be done and we started lugging all of the items, suitcases and equipment, up the stairs. I said, "Lord, I thought that you had this in your control." (I was speaking of the ground floor apartment).

Finally the unpacking was done; I cannot go to sleep with unpacking to be done. We retired and prepared for the weekend of activities, Saturday was the opening night. The opening was absolutely phenomenal. The music from the churches in Memphis is like no other place. The deep Spirit with which they sings goes far beyond “having church”, the singers take you with them on Angel’s wings straight to the throne room of God. Oh what a blessing it was! I must stop here an exclaim, HALLELUJAH!!!!

During the week, around the middle of the week as we were preparing to go to workers meeting, a time when all of the workers for the evangelistic crusade, including area pastors, local Bible Workers and those brought in for meeting, the Evangelist, Tent Master, and sometimes musicians, we all come together daily for time of sharing concerns, praying for ourselves, and needs of the meeting, most importantly the souls that has come and those that will find their way to the meeting.

As my husband and I were going onto the landing before the stairs, a tall attractive young lady came outside of her apartment and Pastor went down the stairs, but I stopped to speak with her. She had just had a baby and as I congratulated her, she fell on my shoulders and began to cry uncontrollably. I stayed with her for a while and Pastor came looking to see what had happened. He never, ever wants to be late to worker’s meeting or any meeting any where, ever. Today, we would be late. I prayed with the young lady and made sure that I would see her again tomorrow.
Because, Marva (pseudo) had just given birth, I went in to help her as much as I could. She had what she needed for the baby, and her apartment was lovely, so material things were not her issue. What she needed went much deeper, and I knew who it was, Jesus.

We began to study the Word of God together, and eventually Marva and baby came to the meetings with us. We made food for her, and just loved her. Marva kept coming and the baby seemed to grow more than usual. Her (Marva) growth was exiting to see. She was absolutely ready to be filled with all that Jesus had for her. Marva was a part of the first baptism of the one hundred and thirty-seven (137) persons that were baptized. Her words are still echoing in our ears, “IF YOU HAD NOT BEEN ON THE TOP FLOOR, I WOULD NOT HAVE MET YOU.”

You know the story about that.

But that’s not the best part of the story, you see, back in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Marva had a praying grandmother that had taken her to Sabbath School when she was a little girl. Brought her up in the church, but Marva got older and went outside of her training. The Seventh-day Adventist message was not strange or foreign to Marva. Even though she had gone far, into a strange land, as it were, when she heard it again it was like returning home. The grandmother’s prayer was this: "Dear Heavenly Father, please send someone to my granddaughter, and bring her back to you.” Our benevolent Father heard the cry of Grandma, He did not allow us to have the convenience of the ground floor, we had to go up the stairs and get that grandbaby (Marva) to answer Grandma’s prayers. Glory, Glory to His name. Marva is holding on to Jesus, and when the trumpet sounds and the dead in Christ shall rise first, Marva and her grandmother will be reunited.

We are more committed to allowing God’s will to be done in our lives. He is in control and knows what He is doing under all circumstances. There is so much to tell of His goodness, but let’s just be reminded that when we think that all is lost, that a loved one for whom you are praying shows no signs of coming back to God, remember the story of Marva, because God will inconvenience heaven and earth (the cross was not convenient) to save one soul. Marva will testify that she was going, gone, but praise the Lord, RETURNED! In Jesus’ Name, amen.
Palm Beach Heat

Basketball Team has led one young man to be baptized and countless others may be on their way too.

—By Sherrie Barton-Smith

The team is a Christian youth organization sponsored by the Ephesus Seventh-Day Adventist Church in West Palm Beach, Florida. The Heat organization consists of a Varsity Team (ages 19-up), Junior Varsity Team (High School age), Pee-Wee Team (12-under), Women’s Team and also Cheerleaders. They strive to teach young people the importance of Christianity in recreation, sportsmanship, leadership, community outreach and soul winning.

Throughout the past five years the Palm Beach Heat basketball team has partnered with the Ephesus’ personal ministries and community service departments to facilitate quarterly outreach projects. These projects are based in the impoverished Tamarind Avenue neighborhood of West Palm Beach, Florida.

The team assisted in the organization and implementation of a community day established to provide local residents with hot meals, groceries, clothes, shoes, health screenings and various other resources. More recently, the Heat is involved in a fund-raising effort to fund an innovative community outreach program that will service 100-150 residents of the Tamarind avenue community.

The team is at the center of the action, learning the true meaning of the word “Christian” through their service to others. They learn to put aside their personal desires and to serve the needs of others who are less fortunate.

The Ministry is also a platform to provide leadership training, community awareness through involvement in service projects and educational achievement.

Orie Bullard, head coach for the team, came up with the initial idea for his team to be involved in community outreach. “I had a community team in 2004 - 2005 and part of the requirement to be on the team was to do community outreach,” said Bullard. “So I parlayed it into the church team and they adapted to it so well that it is no longer treated as a requirement, they just want to do it.”

“A lot of the guys are in the neighborhood and would not come into the church by any other conventional means,” added Bullard. “Basketball is a tool that we use to try and get the neighborhood guys into the church.”

If you would like to know more about or become a sponsor of the Palm Beach Heat Basketball Team, please log on to their website www.PalmBeachHeat.com
When you put together the scrapbook of your life . . .

shouldn’t this photo be there?

7000 Adventist Boulevard, NW
Huntsville, Alabama 35896
256.726.7000 www.oakwood.edu
Union Competes in Annual Robotics Competition

—By Robert Henley

In their first appearance in the Adventist Robotics League’s Annual Southern Union Robotics Challenge Competition, the Miami Union Academy Robotics Team, the Robo-Docs, won second place in the Research Division and Second place in the Team Work division.

The Robo-Docs were one of 14 teams, featuring more than 100 students, that competed in the event, which was held at Southern Adventist University on April 3.

The teams competed in five categories: robot design, robot programming, team work, research presentation and the robot challenge.

Union’s appearance in the competition launches Southeastern Robotics, a joint venture between the education and technology departments of Southeastern conference.

The initiative is designed to improve technology education in the Southeastern Conference School system. Next year every school in Southeastern, a total of 15, will have the opportunity to participate in the competition.

The annual Academic challenge is hosted each year by the university’s School of Computing.

The Adventist Robotics League is sponsored by the North American Division Office of Education and operates robotics challenges across the country to provide students in Seventh-day Adventist school the opportunity to expand their skill and learn life skills.

You can view more photos at http://www.flickr.com/secsda. For more information about the Adventist Robotics League visit http://www.adventistroboticsleague.net.
Samara Bowden Records 9 songs for 3ABN

On April 17, 2011 Samara Bowden, singer and song writer, recorded nine songs for the 11th season of new Kids’ Time programs, a popular children’s program on Three Angels Broadcasting Network (3ABN).

“What impressed me most, even above her beautiful voice, was her love for Jesus.” said Brenda Walsh, producer and host of Kids’ Time. "When she sings, she forgets the cameras and just shines for Jesus! I have no doubt that God will use Samara in a powerful way to win souls for His kingdom.”

Bowden taped 15 songs last year and 9 songs for this season of Kids’ Time, and she is currently scheduled to return to the 3ABN studios to record during a special live taping in December 2011.

Bowden began her early musical training at the age of 5 under the direction of Jacqueline Waldon. In the last five years, she has performed in Florida, Atlanta, California, Mississippi, Ohio, Illinois, and Western Samoa.

She was recently a featured artist at the 2011 Black Adventist Youth Directors Association United Youth Congress in Orlando, Florida where she debuted two of her original songs entitled "Uh Oh” and “Like I do.”

She is currently going to the 8th grade and will be attending Mt. Olivet SDA School in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. She is a very bright student who is learning how to juggle school, friends and her passion of singing.

When asked why she loves to sing, Bowden simply said, “Jesus gave me this talent to sing, so why not use it? Every time I sing, I feel so free and happy.”

Bowden is currently working on a solo album with producer Claude Matthews the Third and vocal coach Tracy Anthony. Bowden utilizes every opportunity to grow her talent and never lets a day go by without singing something.
In seven years, Pure Reality has grown from its modest roots of 100 attendees at the Embassy Suites in Miami to sold-out weekend retreats at Camp Kulaqua averaging annual attendance of more than 400 young people from the United States, Jamaica and the Bahamas.

With such phenomenal growth comes an even greater question: How much bigger can Pure Reality get while maintaining its core values?

Pure Reality is a biblically sound, character-based campaign that educates, defines and explores God’s design for sex and a lifestyle of purity for young people between the ages of 12 and 25. This message remains uncompromised and unwavering, even in this culture steeped in licentiousness and depravation.

Perhaps Michael Kelly, Pastor of the Mount Rubidoux SDA Church in Riverside, California, the featured speaker of this year’s retreat (from March 18-20), said it best: “Purity is not the absence of something, but the presence of Someone,” and with the presence of Jesus in one’s life comes great responsibilities.

The directors, Lauldi Nedd, DonnaKaye Scarlett and Dominique Diambois, and the army of volunteer coordinators, mentors, chaperones and staff, take this commitment very seriously and take every opportunity to share the message of purity and God’s ideal for sex.

The month after the retreat is time spent creating the perfect atmosphere for the Treasure Key ceremony, where attendees have the opportunity to publicly proclaim their vows of abstinence and their commitment to live a lifestyle of purity.

Where it was once an afternoon program, Pure Reality now hosts the Treasure Key Weekend, which includes presentations from retreat speakers, video highlights from the retreat and socials to fellowship and remembering the good times had by all.

Much like communion is a time to reinforce the commitment of baptism, the Treasure Key Ceremony is used to reinforce the lessons learned at the retreat. On the Sunday the attendees participate in a sacred ceremony where gentlemen of honor and ladies are virtue are awarded keys to symbolize that they are saving themselves for marriage and vowing to live pure lives by guarding all the avenues of their souls, with support from their parents, relatives, friends and Pure Reality community.
Sarah Willis, 28, the president of the Pure Ambassadors group, puts it best when she said, “Treasure Key weekend symbolizes a marriage between you and God. During the marriage, you make a vow to your God to love and follow His standards of purity. You agree to God’s standards by accepting a key which He gives to you. The key symbolizes possession and authority. Therefore, you are to wait until God sends you to the mate whom he created for you”.

A new tradition has even emerged from the Treasure Key Ceremony, and in the past year, two young couples, Jonathan and Ketsia Gustave, and Jonathan and Natacha Dalberiste exchanged their Treasure Keys during their wedding ceremonies rather than traditional rings, as a public declaration that they remained pure until their wedding day.

Pure Reality will host its first overseas Treasure Key Ceremony in the Bahamas the weekend of June 24-26. During the past few years, the Bahamas Academy and other churches have brought students to the retreat, and this year a special Treasure Key Weekend will be taken to them, giving the previous and current attendees a chance to be inducted.

Less than three weeks after the retreat, Pure Reality had a booth at the Black Adventist Youth Directors Association (BAYDA) United Youth Congress in Orlando, Florida, from April 6-11. The Mission: Spread Pure Reality throughout the United States and beyond.

The BAYDA conference brings young people from around the world together, and provided a great platform to expose Adventist communities to the message of Pure Reality. The Pure Ambassadors and other volunteer staff gave thousands of postcards to the BAYDA crowds, televised interviews, proudly wore their Pure Reality apparel and told their peers about the goal of Pure Reality: To spread the message of Purity and abstinence throughout the world.

Passing on Pure Reality to future generations will be key to the long-term success of the program. In September 2010, a group of teens and young adults attended five weeks of training and attained the title of Pure Ambassadors.

They complete an arduous training course in leadership, discipleship, public speaking and team building the Pure Ambassadors are being groomed to take the Pure Reality message to churches, schools, homes, colleges, universities, the workplace and everywhere. They conduct panel discussions, monthly programs on the last Friday of each month, maintain the Pure Ambassadors’ Facebook and Twitter pages, write and present plays and poetry about the benefits of Purity as a lifestyle and the pitfalls of a promiscuous life.

Throughout the year, Pure Ambassadors have taken the message of sexual purity throughout the Southeastern Conference. They also work closely with Pure Reality coordinators in the various departments, learning the administration of the ministry from the inside. The Ambassadors are encouraged to think for themselves and discover their own relationships with God as they represent Christ every day.
In a letter of encouragement for her fellow Pure Ambassadors, Clodiane Guillaume writes, “The mind and the thought realm are probably the most important areas of our lives because what we think about has a powerful influence on what we do and who we become. The most basic thing we can do to maintain purity is guard our hearts and minds. Lustful thoughts and images are often the first weapons Satan uses in the battle for our minds. … Through Christ we receive a renewed mind and this verse makes it clear that we can control our thoughts. We do not have to accept and dwell on every thought or image that drops into our heads. As soon as an improper thought is allowed to linger, we enter the danger zone that can lead to sinful behavior.”

The Pure Ambassadors played an integral role in the setting up of this year’s retreat, which is the centerpiece of the Pure Reality experience. As the program matures, these same ambassadors will serve as the leaders in the not-too-distant future.

Plans are under way to take Pure Reality on the road, to host conferences and symposia in other states and countries. Pure Reality will continue to host and participate in town hall meetings and other innovative and collaborative forums to help spread the message of a Lifestyle of Purity.

Kimberly Nedd, 24, who has attended all seven Pure Reality retreats, said, “I could see Pure Reality get to the point of having chapters in elementary school, high school, colleges, and universities.”

With God’s help, a dream can be a reality.

For more information on Pure Reality, go to www.purereality.org
Calendar of Events

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MEN’S
CONVENTION
2011

November 5-6
Mt. Sinai SDA Jr. Academy
2600 Orange Center Blvd., Orlando, Florida 32805

For additional information

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or (407) 496-8245 Cell

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