Dear Lexie,

"The Debt of Love"

While a student at Oakwood College, now Oakwood University, I had an experience that would forever change the direction of my life as well as my ministry. As you may know, I have been heavily involved in the area of media ministry for quite some time. But what you may not be aware of is that this love for broadcasting began when I got a job as an announcer at the college's radio station. And what is so ironic is that today my youngest daughter, Victoria, a junior broadcast journalism major at Oakwood....

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Milestones
Sligo Church Growth

Each new year, before I think about formalizing resolutions designed to propel me to new and better things, I like to sit and remember the many things for which I have to be thankful.

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Want to know why Sligo Church supports Sligo School?

Sligo School

The size of the annual subsidy it provides to Sligo Adventist School is
Denise Barclay, vocalist
Raissa Jei Labrador, vocalist

Brass Quartet
Curt Christensen and Kris Westrich, trumpet
Sarah Younker, horn
Colby Fahrenbacher, tuba

Sligo Sanctuary Choir, Jon Gilbertson, director

Columbia Collegiate Chorale of Washington Adventist University, James Bingham, director

New England Youth Ensemble of Washington Adventist University, Preston Hawes, director; Mark DiPinto

a measure of the place the school occupies in the Sligo Church’s conception of its mission and hierarchy of its ministries. The subsidy is the single largest expenditure in the church's local budget, and has been for many years.

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Faith Rewarded-Anyway
Wendell T. Osbourne’s Testimony

God works in mysterious ways—so mysterious, I haven’t figured it out decades later. After immigrating to the United States, my family was not yet completely settled.

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While a student at Oakwood College, now Oakwood University, I had an experience that would forever change the direction of my life as well as my ministry. As you may know, I have been heavily involved in the area of media ministry for quite some time. But what you may not be aware of is that this love for broadcasting began when I got a job as an announcer at the college’s radio station. And what is so ironic is that today my youngest daughter, Victoria, a junior broadcast journalism major at Oakwood, is working at that same radio station and doing a much better job than her “Old Man” ever did, I might add.

Upon graduating from college my love for radio would lead me to work at several radio stations around the country. One of those was a Christian station in New York that went by the call letters AM 1520 WTBE. One of my responsibilities as an announcer was to play music, along with reading commercials and a little weather and some news. But no matter what I did, I would begin each shift by playing a song that soon became my signature tune. The song was titled, The Debt of Love I Owe. Whenever you would hear that song being played, you knew that I was about to be “live” and on the air.

This Sabbath our church will have the privilege of burning the mortgage for our Organ Sanctuary Restoration project that was completed nearly eight years ago. What this means is that a debt that has hung over our heads for the past several years has been paid in full. In other words, we are finally debt free! Of course this has brought a great deal of excitement to many of us because it means that the energies of our church can be more focused on the purpose for which we exist, which is to bring people to Jesus “by any means necessary.” And all the people said, “Amen!”

Although being debt free is a goal that we as believers should strive to attain, there is one debt that we can never repay and that is the debt of love that we should have for what God through Jesus has done in our lives. Nothing we can do will ever repay Christ for the sacrifice that he made so that each of us might have a right to eternal life. But then again, he never asked us to repay it. Instead, what he does ask is that we pay it forward into the lives of others. When you think about it, the debt of love is the only debt I know of that as long as you have it, it will always be viewed as an asset and never a liability.
Each new year, before I think about formalizing resolutions designed to propel me to new and better things, I like to sit and remember the many things for which I have to be thankful. At an end of year function with a small group from Sligo, we were asked to share one thing from the year that left us the most thankful. When it came my turn I said, “I am so thankful that with God’s help we paid off the OSR this year.” I am sure this is something for which our entire church family can give a heartfelt thanks to God.

The current building in which the Sligo Church family gathers was completed in 1944. In 1985 we built an addition however by 2001, it was clear that there was need for significant renovation. Our congregation initiated a project labeled the Organ Sanctuary Renovation (OSR) project. The work included allowing more natural light at the front of the church (behind the pulpit), installing a new maple stage, a baptistery with Jerusalem marble, a Daffar organ and pipes and pews on the main floor. Acoustics were also improved. The original cost increased to $4.36 million when it became apparent that there was significant asbestos in the
THE PLAN

In May 2005 we started making payments on this 20-year, 7.0% fixed interest loan, with a monthly payment of $16,500. By 2009, despite an economy that was in a tailspin, we began a concerted effort to pay off the loan early. The campaign highlighted the endless possibilities of what an extra $16,500 could do for our many ministries. Pastor Tapp wrote a piece for the eSteward entitled “What if...” accenting the potential of invigorated ministries. And we as a church eagerly got to work to retire our debt early, not only save many hundreds of thousands of dollars in interest, but to free up offerings that can be used to further the many vibrant ministries of our church.
MILESTONES

By June of 2009, our monthly interest payments fell below $10,000 for the first time. A bequest from an estate came in so that by the end of the year along with faithful giving by so many members, the loan amount had dropped from $1.9 million to $1.3 million, with about $10,000 a month going to pay off principal. By the end of 2010 our loan amount was below $1 million and by the end of 2011 it was below $800,000. And this was during a time when we, along with Sligo Adventist School, elected to raise $350,000 for our school as a condition for a generous donation from the Commonweal Foundation. During 2012 several donations from anonymous donors and 2 bequests came in that allowed us to pay off our remaining OSR debt by Thanksgiving. And what a joyous Thanksgiving we had! Praise be to God! And thanks to each one of you who faithfully continued to give to this project.

NEW BEGINNING

So now at this birth of a new year, we give thanks to be free from the burden of debt. This new found freedom should embolden us to know that nothing is too hard for God. Not finding a way out of Egypt for the children of Israel, not paying off a $2.3 million loan in the face of a shaky economy. And if He can do that, what else can He do for Sligo? Which Sligo ministry would you like to support with your time, talents and money? How does
that giving engage with your new year’s resolution? And with that investment, what are the exhilarating, life-changing things God can do? The possibilities are truly endless.

Luke 6:38 “If you give, you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use in giving—large or small—it will be used to measure what is given back to you.” (New Living Translation)

By: Dr. James Gulley
The size of the annual subsidy it provides to Sligo Adventist School is a measure of the place the school occupies in the Sligo Church’s conception of its mission and hierarchy of its ministries. The subsidy is the single largest expenditure in the church’s local budget, and has been for many years. And that is as it ought to be: “Children are a gift from the Lord. They are a reward from him. Psa. 127:3”

Want to get an idea of the dividend from that investment? Check out a story written and originally published in the December issue of school’s student newspaper, The Sligo Scoop, by the eighth grade teacher, Ms Yolande Melbourne.
God works in mysterious ways—so mysterious, I haven’t figured it out decades later.

After immigrating to the United States, my family was not yet completely settled. We made our church home a congregation that was struggling to build a new church and a school. The cooperation of each member was needed.

Not short of fundraising ideas, the pastor arranged with a local bank to make personal loans to each member, then credit the combined amount to the church building program. Some members signed up for a good-sized note, trusting that the Lord would rain down a special blessing for their liberality. I listened to the pastor make the appeal. While I hoped for no special shower of blessings, I did feel moved by the Holy Spirit to do my part.

The commitments had to be made that Sabbath. So, having no time to consult my wife, I proceeded by faith alone and pledged a loan. I had no idea of the unexpected events that were to follow.

A few weeks earlier I had been involved in a very costly auto accident, which left my wife and me with no transportation to go to work or to shuttle our two children to school. We had remedied that problem with a new Ford Country Squire station wagon.

Then the unexpected descended with full force. First, just a few weeks after making our church loan commitment, we discovered, at the most inopportune moment for us, that my wife was pregnant. Then came a second shock—our new car was almost totally destroyed by a hit-and-run driver while it was legally parked.

In the end, we paid the loan in full with no undue hardship—a miracle I have yet to comprehend. Our transportation dilemma was miraculously solved, and the baby was born with no difficulties. The child who arrived at such an inopportune time is now the lovely, successful Monterey County Superior Court Judge, Marla Osborne Anderson, honored at La Sierra University and the recipient of numerous awards.

Even though we faced unexpected difficulties, God rewarded our faith anyway, and we can
SLIGO SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

"say, ‘We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do’” [Luke 17:10].

Story by: Wendell T. Osborne
Edited by: Beth Wear

TAGGED WITH — debt, Faithful, finances, fundraising, giving, God, immigration, Jesus, loan, luke, mystery, offering, paid, pay, sligo, sligo adventist, united state, Wendell T. Osborne

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3 RESPONSES TO FAITH Rewarded—Anyway

Carol Hammond says:
January 17, 2013 at 7:37 pm

A great story! When we allow Him to be in charge, everything works our to His glory!

meloquence says:
January 18, 2013 at 9:47 am

Thank you for sharing how God has blessed you. :)

Noelene Johnsson says:
January 21, 2013 at 10:17 pm

When we just give a little out of our bounty, we don’t really need the special blessings that could only come from God. Therefore we don’t get them. Thank you for challenging us all to think big for God. I can’t wait to see what big ministries God has for Sligo to get involved with in 2013.

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