Dear Lexie,

Can we still Believe?

Occasionally I wonder whether I would be a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church had it not been for the fact that I was born into a Seventh-day Adventist family. Whatever the answer to that question, I am grateful that I am a Seventh-day Adventist and carry in my heart the hope of the second coming of Jesus. It is a hope that edges all my dark, discouraging and depressing experiences with the bright light of optimism and the prospect of one day knowing the full meaning of human existence.

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Hope in our Heritage

150 years of ministry and hope
This Sabbath:
May 18, 2013

Speaker:
Pr. Charles A. Tapp, "Out of Egypt"

Special Musical Guest:
Sligo Sanctuary Choir
Jon Gilbertson, Director

Sligo Children's Choir
Charisse Sullivan, Director

Desmond Pierre-Louis, Soloist

On this Sabbath, we the Sligo church pause and join in reflection as we celebrate the 150 year anniversary of our Seventh-day Adventist faith community.

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Carrol Hammond
Journey of Blessings

Malachi 3:10 "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open...

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Can We Still Believe?

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My maternal grandfather, who was born in 1893, became a member of the church as a young man and thought that Jesus would return before he passed away. He died in 1985 but with the strong conviction that it was “almost time for the Lord to come.” That was also the conviction that the pioneers of our denomination had in their hearts when they banded together 150 years ago to form the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Hymns, such as “Never Part Again” (449 in our SDA Hymnal), which they frequently sang, tell us that many of our spiritual forebears had expected Jesus to come within months, years or decades. Sadly, after 150 years our world still groans under the weight of wars, injustice, poverty and the many other consequences of sin. Can we still believe? Is it time for us to reassess our expectation that Jesus is coming soon and accept that He might not come soon or at all?

Certainly Not! Jesus is coming again, as promised. This view is not based on some sentimental longing, tribute to my grandfather or loyalty to the advent cause but on my appreciation of the nature of the One we call our heavenly Father. We can take Him at His word for He is trustworthy and reliable. Throughout the Old and New Testament we find numerous examples of His faithfulness and trustworthiness. One verse of scripture that has served as an anchor to my personal faith over the years is 2 Timothy 2:13: “If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.” (KJV). The God’s Word translation renders this verse as, “If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful because he cannot be untrue to himself.”
What a profoundly reassuring thought! God cannot be untrue to Himself. That is the basis of our belief in scripture as the word of God and in the second coming of Jesus. So, after 150 years we can still believe that Jesus is coming again and that He is coming soon. “In just a little while, he who is coming will come, and will not delay.” (Heb 10:37). The ‘little while’ is the unknown for us. I am reminded of an apocryphal story about a man who had a longing to meet God face to face. According to the story, while the man was walking along the Sussex Downs in England early one morning his dream came true – he met God. He said to God, “Can I ask you some questions?” “Go ahead, my son,” was the reply. The man asked, “Is it true that a thousand years with you are like a minute?” “Yes, my son.” Embolden by that reply he went on, “Is it true that a thousand pounds with you are like a penny?” “Yes, my son.” Then came the punch line: “Can you give me one of those pennies?” “Certainly, my son. Just wait a minute.”

God’s ‘little while’ is not our little while and His minute is not our minute. We must be careful about placing God within our own human constructs and interpret scripture as if we actually knew the mind of God. It is good enough for me that God has promised that Jesus is coming again. When that will occur, I do not know, but it will certainly come to pass. In the meantime my duty is to live in readiness for that climactic event and share the good news of my coming King with as many as I can. We can still believe, even after 150 years!

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On this Sabbath, we the Sligo church pause and join in reflection as we celebrate the 150 year anniversary of our Seventh-day Adventist faith community. We cast a historical eye on the gestation era of the great awakening, and zoom in on our mount Moriah moment, Ascension Rock. Here hope-filled souls waited the glorious moment of the ages, the Second Coming. It was not to be, and the savage bite of a New England winter pummeled the unprepared. We are most grateful that it was the covenant promise of a living God that gave new spark to enable these pioneering believers to hope again.

Their confidence in a loving God called them back to deeper prayer and study for fresh insights into God’s Word, which they received. The Blessed Hope reignited their commitment to the Great Commission of being partners with heaven in sharing the Good News in a nation torn apart by a civil war! Hope, yes the blessed hope, is a gift from God that like vitamins gives us renewed strength and courage in the face of life’s most challenging moments.

- It’s the blessed hope that called J.N. Andrews to become a pioneering missionary and writer.
- It’s the blessed hope that compelled Nellie Druillard to bring fresh insights into the fields of education and health.
- It’s the blessed hope that beckoned Anna Knight to journey to India as a pioneering missionary.
- It’s the blessed hope that inspired Law Keem pioneer the work of medical ministry.
It’s the blessed hope that powered the faith of our community through these 150 years to imagine, to give, to build, and to sacrifice for the cause of the Kingdom.

It is this blessed hope that is a part of our permanent inheritance that will not fade away!

Lord, give us here at Sligo today, a fresh assurance that your redemptive plan is still on course and that our hope is well placed. Our hope-filled faith calls us to live in the space of now and not yet, still confident in your way, and in your time. Thank you for your grace, which is our only hope. We pray in the great name of Jesus, amen!

By: Chris Daley

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James and I were married December 20, 1959, at age 29 and 24 – fairly young by today’s standards. Two years later (1961) when I was five months pregnant with our first child, we were called to go as missionaries to teach at the Bekwai secondary school in Ghana. James taught science and I taught English and literature. I continued to teach after our daughter Endea was born. Although with deep sadness we buried our second child in Africa, God blessed us with three more children. We were now a family of six.

Following our term at Bekwai, James served as president of two missions – Sierra Leone Mission from 1969-1971, and the North Ghana Mission in Tamale from 1972-1974. We were in Ghana during the time when President Nkrumah was ousted! The soldiers toppled the statue of this Socialist dictator. Student groups that he formed wore Nazis-like uniforms and sang “I will make you fishers of men, if you follow me!” Spies sent to our churches and other organizations made it difficult to determine who was who in large crowds of people.

James built four churches in Ghana with money from donors in the United States. Sometimes he would spend our food money to help the churches, but God always came through in providing for our needs. We were never hungry or in need of anything.

In addition to teaching and caring for the children, I regularly entertained visitors from the States. We were advised not to use our American-purchased foods, but to serve visitors the local food. Local dishes included groundnut soup and cassava.

In 1974 we returned to the States. James taught at (then) Columbia Union College and I...
taught at Sligo Adventist Elementary. Keeping four children in church school stretched our budget to the limit. It was time to start claiming the promises of the Bible.

Our biggest test of faith involved the calculation of my retirement. On returning from the mission field I was informed that after serving 13 years, only James had accrued retirement credit. After stretching their generosity to the max the General Conference allotted me three years toward retirement out of my 13 years teaching in Africa. Policies hopefully have changed.

When faced with disappointment, attitude is everything. I could have been angry about losing ten years towards my retirement, but I chose to rest in the Bible promises. God helped me complete my Ph.D at Howard University (2000) in Educational Psychology. He provided me with adjunct teaching jobs at Washington Adventist University and at Radians School of nursing, and part-time work at the State Department. I made more money at those jobs than the lump sum I had been denied at retirement. I’d say that was a blessing.

Our children are our greatest blessing. Endea Thibodeaux, our first-born, is an entrepreneur and the mother of three –Darius, Aliyah, and Aron. Renata Craig, a lawyer, is the mother of two — Julian and Hayley. Rona Smith, a guidance counselor, is the mother of two — Miata and Sierra. James Hammond, Jr., a nurse anesthetist, is the father of two –Jada and Sydnie.

James, a church worker for over 40 years, has now retired. I worked 39 years for the denomination and am still working. Yes, God has blessed us abundantly, and I am confident He will continue to “open the windows of heaven.”

Carol Hammond, a member of Sligo for 38 years, taught at Sligo Elementary School for 22 years. Presently, she is an adjunct faculty member at Washington Adventist University. She is a graduate of Oakwood University (BS), University of Maryland (MA), and Howard University, (PhD in Educational Psychology). She is author of the book, “Precious Memories of Missionaries of Color.”

Editor: Elizabeth Wear

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VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 2013

By Darius Thibodeaux On April 12, 2013 - Add Comment - In Children's Ministry, Events

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