

It is possible, by exercising some care, to cool water below its natural freezing point without freezing or crystallizing it. We speak thus of supercooled water. But when this has been achieved, if one takes even a small piece of ice and drops it into the supercooled liquid, crystallization occurs with great rapidity around the introduced fragment, which is called a nidus. A prophetic movement can be the nidus around which the remnant can crystallize in that final setting. To shift the metaphor slightly, a prophetic movement, insofar as it is true to its divine calling, may function as a catalyst bringing about that final polarization which constitutes the climax of the Great Controversy.

This, I think, constitutes the answer to that nagging sense of guilt and frustration which is beginning to hover like a cloud over a denomination that expected singlehandedly

to “finish the work” of evangelizing the world in a generation. In the final moments of earth’s history, there comes into visible being something bigger than any denominational institution, the final remnant; but it comes into being partly because there is a catalytic presence around which the remnant become visible as a testimony to their trust in a trustworthy God.

The Bible describes a sad time when no prophets were in the land. It also warns that where there is no vision, the people perish. The warning is as apropos today as then. It is high time that a prophetic minority called the Seventh-day Adventist Church became conscious of its God-given role — a role that sets it apart, giving it an identity and a voice; a role that also sets its face and heart toward its brethren, toward God’s people everywhere in all the churches.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Christianity Today*, August 29, 1975, p. 42.
2. Ellen White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1911), p. 11.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
4. Jack Newfield, *A Prophetic Minority*.

5. Ellen White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1917), p. 728.
 6. Ellen White, *Early Writings* (Christian Home Library), p. 261.
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Becoming the Family of God

by Nancy Vyhmeister

The church needs to become more and more a living, loving community, working toward common goals. The church needs to become a family; not the nuclear family that

predominates in a United States committed to individualism and independence, but what Adventism has already become in some other parts of the world — an extended family.

Seventh-day Adventists have, perhaps, a better chance than others to be such a family. There is, after all, the gift of the Sabbath, and its special twenty-four hours. When Adventists in the United States refer to the Sabbath

Nancy Vyhmeister, a native of Chile, is a graduate of Pacific Union College and Andrews University. She is assistant professor of mission at Andrews.

as “family time,” they mean a period when father and mother can spend a few hours with their children. In many other countries, the Sabbath is a time for the nuclear family to spend a full day with God’s larger family, sharing in worship, service, and fellowship. In South America going to church is like joining a family reunion. Members come for Sabbath school and church, carry on “missionary work” after lunch, gather for a Missionary Volunteer meeting at sundown, and stay for the Saturday night social.

The Sabbath is a day that members should enjoy so much that it affects their weekday life. (My son once asked why each week could not have six Sabbaths and one work day!) In South America and the Inter-American Division, Sabbath school classes are not once-a-week Bible study groups but social and outreach units active throughout the week. Sunday morning, members often gather to make needed repairs on their church building, and in the afternoon play soccer. Wednesday night, even children attend prayer meeting to see friends and listen to the latest chapter in continuing stories.

Churches that gather more than once a week should have buildings that are more than just sanctuaries. If Adventists were clear that they wished everywhere to be a community of intimately related persons, sharing not only a common set of beliefs and values, but a wide range of activities, Adventist congregations would make certain that they housed themselves in multipurpose buildings. They would direct architects to design a structure that within minutes could be changed from a place for reverent worship to a large hall, or a dining room, or a series of classrooms, or even a gymnasium. A church that is a family needs a home, but a home that can be lived in all week, not just on Sabbath morning.

In addition to the experience of the Sabbath, the commitment of Adventism to the priesthood of all believers helps sustain within Adventists the feeling that they are a family. In Latin America, lay members often not only teach the Sabbath school classes, but preach the church sermon and pastor each other during the crises of sickness and death that come to any extended family. The

young people are eager and able to develop their talents by entertaining themselves, including producing and performing plays on Saturday nights.

Members also accept responsibility for fostering intellectual fellowship. The church becomes the center of the lives of many because it is the community within which they develop their God-given mental faculties. Classes are conducted not only for other members, but for non-Adventist friends. Typically, these classes discuss parenting, nature, health, even Seventh-day Adventist history. Interaction in these classes is one way the church opens its doors to the larger community.

Of course, a bouyant community discovers that there are many ways it attracts others anxious to be warmed by its fellowship. Friends and relatives want to be a part of a church family that welcomes others to share in its love throughout the community.

Adventist teenagers in Brazil have given roses to sick ladies on Mother’s Day and visited cemeteries on All Saints’ Day to comfort relatives visiting their loved ones’ graves. Brazilian university students and professionals have given three or four weeks of their vacations to assist in schools, launches, clinics, small hospitals and churches serving their poorer brothers in northern Brazil. Other students and professionals in Chile have been interested in studying and analyzing the Bible in the home of an Adventist professor on the faculty of the University of Concepcion. Prominent Brazilians gather around the swimming pool of a well-to-do Adventist active in the nation’s capital, Brazilia, to explore the meaning of faith.

Human beings need to belong, to be accepted, to grow within a supportive community. With its members fellowshiping together and cooperating to express their Christianity in their lives, the Seventh-day Adventist church can and should be just such a redemptive and nurturing community. The church’s future shines brightest when it is a caring family, whose delight in fellowship is a foretaste of that community of love and delight that the Scriptures call heaven.