

BA

BIBLE ADVOCATE®



America Remembers

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- 9/11 and Islam (p. 9)
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2011: Year of the Bible

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A publication of the
Church of God (Seventh Day)

This magazine is published to advocate the Bible, represent the Church, and glorify the God of grace and truth.

Volume 145 • Number 5

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The BIBLE ADVOCATE (ISSN 0746-0104) is published bimonthly by Bible Advocate Press, 330 W. 152nd Ave., Broomfield, CO 80023. Periodicals postage is paid at Broomfield, CO, and at additional offices. Subscription is free to any who ask. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Bible Advocate Press, Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233-0677.

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Subscriptions and Orders

Bible Advocate Press
P.O. Box 33677
Denver, CO 80233-0677
phone: 303/452-7973
fax: 303/452-0657
e-mail: bibleadvocate@cog7.org
orders: bap.orders@cog7.org

Notice: Send all address changes and other correspondence to the address above.

Publications Agreement No. 40042428

The Bible Advocate Online appears at www.BAonline.org.

Cover photo: @ Kenneth Graff—Dreamstime.com

Because We Care

You may have noticed your editor’s penchant for tracking seasonal and calendar events in the BA. Our March-April issue, for example, usually carries items about our Lord’s death and resurrection, while May-June often explores marriage and family matters.

This explains what we’ve cooked up for you in pages that follow: sections on work and employment (Labor Day is September 5); on Islam and 9-11 (now ten years new); on encouragement for ministers (October is Pastoral Appreciation Month); and on vertical and horizontal forgiveness (National Forgiveness Week/Day is October 23-29).

More church news than usual is in this issue, reflecting past work and future plans of caring members. For the present, we’re reporting CoG7’s convention in St. Charles, Illinois (pp. 28-29). The attendance bounce (up over 70 percent from 2009) and warm fellowship that characterized July 18-23 at Pheasant Run Resort suggest Church vitality now and greater responsibility ahead.

A convention downside was heard during its business sessions. Leading up to Pheasant Run, tension had mounted among a few key leaders over matters of the Church’s direction and polity. Public expression of that struggle on the convention floor, though mostly muted, surprised many who had been unaware of its existence.

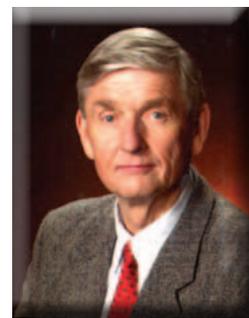
We confess this to our shame and to accent God’s grace, seen in the leaders’ decision to set aside potentially divisive grievances and proposals. In this, they yielded to the desires of most conventioners, many of whom were uncertain as to what the much ado was all about.

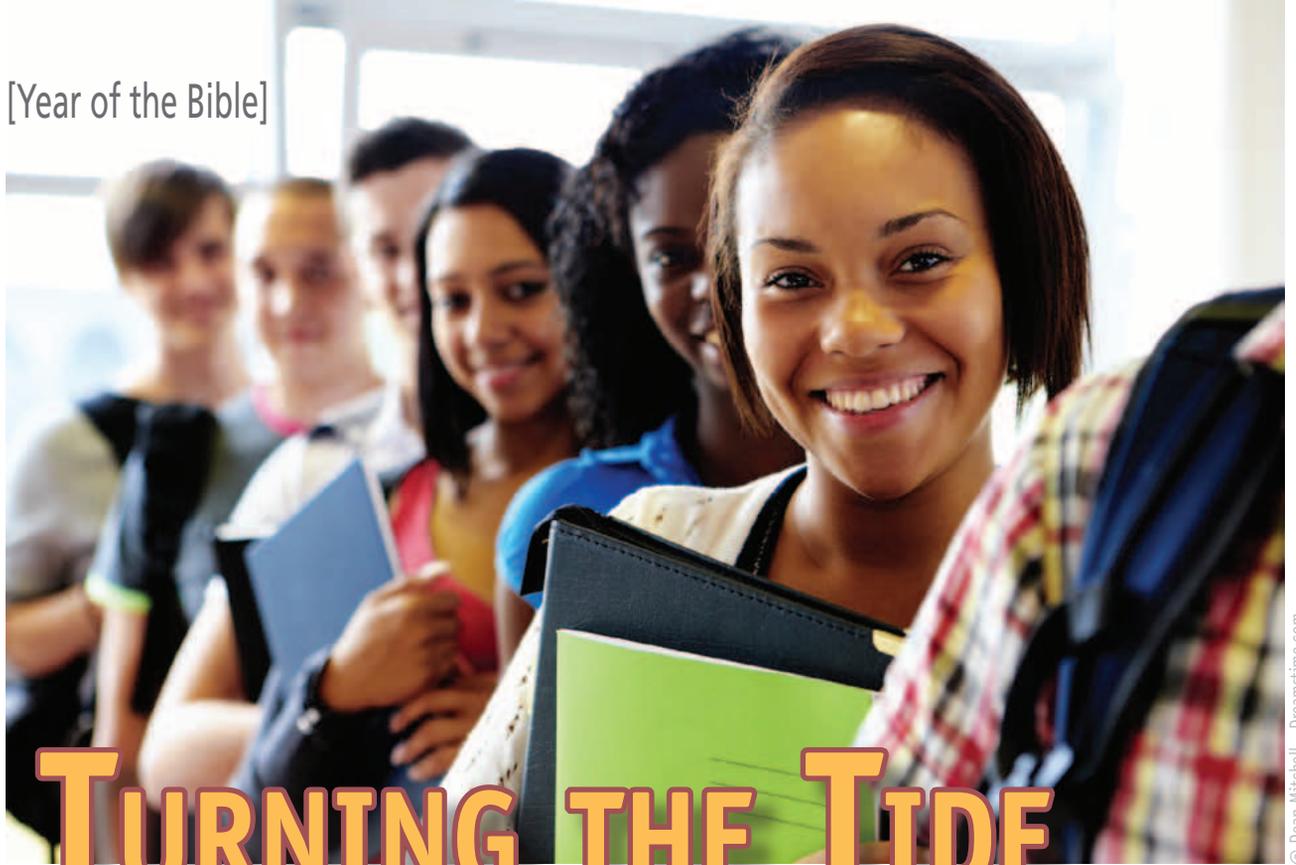
Families and churches experience conflict through human failure, but also because members care — often more passionately than in other settings. With a fifty-year run-up of harmony and ministry growth around the world, CoG7’s care and expectations are high and rising.

In recent years, our conference leadership has won broad commitment to its big-picture vision. To maintain this commitment, it will need to patiently and methodically build consensus for the newest element of that vision: conference consolidation. God’s grace has brought us safe thus far, and His wise grace can lead us on.

The next BA is our issue on prophecy. Your questions and items for consideration are welcome here through September 19.

— Calvin Burrell





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What parents can do to keep their Christian freshmen from becoming atheistic seniors. **by Israel Steinmetz**

It's another decade before I send my first child off to college, but it's never too soon to begin preparing her and her siblings for that day. Inevitably I think of my own experience, having attended college for eight of the past ten years. What prepared me to withstand skepticism and secularism, the doubts and doubters? How can I pass these things on to my own children?

Our children face serious challenges to their faith as they enter adulthood and attend college. We hear the reports of Christian dropouts and see the failures every day in our churches and

families. In the face of this crisis we ask, "What can we do to empower our children to come out the other side of higher education with a stronger faith?"

Genuine relationship

One thing that preserved my faith through my twenties was maintaining a genuine relationship with God. I knew God and God knew me. I loved God and knew God loved me. I knew what it was to be a sinner and what it meant to be saved by God's grace through faith alone. No amount of Bible reading, Scripture memorization, church attendance, or doctrinal knowledge — necessary as these are — can replace a genuine and ongoing encounter with the living God.

In moving toward adulthood on a college campus, our children will meet new things that

are real, living, exciting, frightening, life changing, and compelling. The hope that they will hold to sterile, secondhand religious tradition in the midst of this existential adventure is unrealistic. The best way we can prepare our children for college is to help them encounter the true God who desires to be their Father, Friend, Savior, and Lord. If my children leave home as nominal Christians, they simply will not withstand the appeal of unbelief and sin in college. But they will if they genuinely know the Lord. Children encounter God as adults do — through worship, prayer, fellowship, and being attuned to God's presence and providence in everyday life.

Of course, we can't expect our children to have a genuine relationship with the living God unless we're first encountering Him through a dynamic, vibrant

faith. I learned to know God first from my parents, then from mentors and friends in churches I attended and from my second family — the staff, students, and friends of Spring Vale Academy. My relationship with God, nurtured by these people, carried me through my college years. Looking back on the way they loved God, experienced His love, faced both victory and defeat, and trusted God in the face of doubt empowered me to do the same.

Support network

An authentic, dynamic relationship with God takes place not just at home but also in the community of Christ's body. As doubts and fears assailed me through college, I leaned on Christian brothers and sisters for prayer, guidance, inspiration, and correction. We can't wait until the children in our churches become adults before engaging them in the life of the body, helping them discover their gifts and place among God's people. Building a meaningful friendship with them now means they will trust us with their doubts, faults, and fears later on.

When my children are vitally connected to Christ through His church body, they have the support and encouragement to face the challenges of adult life and the seduction of unbelief in college. They will continue to rely on the relationships they built with their parents and friends from their home church. And they are likely to seek out new connections with Christ's body in college, through Christian

groups, campus ministries, and a nearby local church.

Arriving in Dallas for college, I entered a city where I knew no one. Thanks to the church "grapevine," I was quickly adopted by a local family and congregation who provided the support I needed to handle my first real taste of independence and adulthood. I hope to provide the same network of support for my children should they leave their hometown to attend school by connecting them with fellow Christians in the area of their campus.

Sense of purpose

How helpful it will be to our children if they can grasp their general, if not personal, calling in life before they leave home. Some kids will know the specific area of ministry God has called them to at a young age, as I did. The rest of them will not discover this until they become independent adults. What is absolutely vital is that they understand early on the purpose and calling on all God's people to be ambassadors for Christ, ministers of the gospel, members of Christ's body, and lights to the world.

Do our family and church foster this sense of identity? Or

do we foster a lack of purpose and direction in which young people drift aimlessly in a world of fast entertainment, mindless leisure, and selfish pursuits? I was blessed to not only know what God was calling me to but also have family and church friends who encouraged, shaped, and supported my pursuit of God's purpose in life. Without them, I might never have stuck with His call.

To support them in pursuing God's high purpose, we must help our children see that life matters, that time is too precious to waste, and that they are called to make a difference in the world. We must give them tools and motivation to engage God and people in real, life-giving relationships, rather than settling for the impersonal and hypnotic fix of electronic screens. Entering adulthood with true purpose, they will mature and pursue their studies with that in mind, rather than being dragged mindlessly into the doubt and disbelief that will inevitably tempt them.

Taste of apologetics

Something else very valuable to me, and that I hope to pass on to my children, is a taste of apologetics — the logical explanation

We must help our children see that life matters, that time is too precious to waste, and that they are called to make a difference in the world.

and rational defense of our biblical faith. It is an essential element in our children's training as they enter college.

Some folks would call for a heaped-up helping of apologetics for teens, believing that with enough training, a youth develops an unassailable Christian worldview to answer any question and fend off any skeptic. I am less optimistic that a college frosh can be fully ready to argue for the existence of God, explain the problem of evil, or answer the scientific claims of the evolutionist, the philosophic claims of the secularist, and the religious claims of the pluralist.

But I think we can expose our children to Christian apologists who will show them that Bible believers are tackling the most complex questions and finding compelling answers. In this way, we'll guard against the inevitable professor or person who wields a well-trained intellect and a well-honed vocabulary to make all others sound like backwoods ignoramuses with archaic superstitions.

By exposing our children to solid apologists (see sidebar), we help instill this confidence in them, that while they may not grasp all the arguments, they do line up with those who do en-

gage the skeptics at the highest level. Thus they can have both hope and a deepened desire to learn. During my high school years, I had the privilege of attending a creation seminar, conducted by Answers in Genesis, and an apologetics conference with Ravi Zacharias that had this very effect on me.

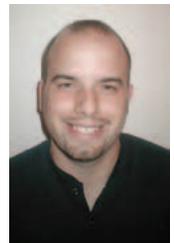
Many pop-apologists offer inaccurate or simplistic answers that serve only to make Christians more vulnerable to their intellectual opponents.

Work and pray

Preparing my children for adulthood and college, some old advice comes to mind: Work as if everything depends upon you, and pray as if everything depends upon God. When we've done all we can to prepare our children and have entrusted them to God, we must hope that they have truly come to know Him and that He will preserve them through these trying years. The reality is that people make their own choices.

I pray that as we trust and obey the Lord in this matter, we will see our children know and love God and, when they enter college, rise up and turn the tide against unbelief. **BA**

With his wife, Anna, and their five children, **Israel Steinmetz**, lives and serves from their home in Kansas City, MO.



Resources for High Schoolers .org

The resources under each topic are listed in order of their level of challenge to a high school student – from least to most advanced. None of these can replace relationships with God, parents, and church family, but each might supplement those relationships.

For additional resources, please visit baonline.org.

Knowing and serving God

Do Hard Things, by Alex and Brett Harris (www.therebellion.com/blog/)

How to Stay Christian in High School, by Steven Gerali
How to Stay Christian in College, Th1nk Edition, by J. Budziszewski

Apologetics

The Case for Faith, by Lee Strobel (www.leestrobel.com)
Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (www.rzim.org)
Answers in Genesis (www.answersingenesis.org)

Christian campus groups

Campus Crusade for Christ (www.campuscrusadeforchrist.com)
Youth With a Mission (www.ywam.org)
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (www.intervarsity.org)
Chi Alpha Campus Ministries (www.chialpha.com)

Our home's silence seemed to be enveloped by a giant ice cube, and our empty nest needed to be refilled with contentment again. But how?

Our youngest daughter's departure to college had silenced our familiar family chatter, laughs, and groans like fog erasing sunshine. A thick emptiness threatened to chill my emotions. Thankfully, I still had my part-time employment to add diversity to my days, and my husband remained busy with his teaching career.

Having once wished I could hire a cook to help in the kitchen, I suddenly longed to cook for a crowd again. Oh, for one more chance to pause and enjoy the fullness of family life.

But when thunder rumbled amid churning gray clouds, sliced open by jagged forks of lightning, I used the opportunity to take a vicarious trip to yesteryear. Leaving the rain to tend my neglected garden, I ascended the creaky attic stairway to pick through memories of our four children's lives, now carefully stacked and labeled in the dim attic corner.

As I opened each box, the room filled with the gentle scent of dryer sheets that had been tucked neatly inside to help keep the contents fragrant. Soon the floor around me was filled with scuffed white baby shoes, paint-stained kindergarten aprons, and four first-day-of-school crayoned drawings, each depicting a house aglow from the yellow sun above the rooftop. Every item I studied blurred the boundaries between the present and the past, and before I knew it, I was transported back to those long-ago, giggle-filled years.

Attic Visit

by Audrey Carli

@ Thinkart—Dreamstime.com

Those days had also held many a wet diaper, baby's first smiles, spit up-stained nightgowns, toddler-clutched dandelion bouquets, sand-gritted floors, skinned knees and hugs generously laced with "I love you, Mommy!" and "I love you, Daddy!"

Lightning flashed and memories poured forth as I dug into box after box. Handmade greeting cards and report cards conjured up memories of front-tooth-missing youngsters to bright-faced teens ready to face the world. Albums and scrapbooks overflowed with programs from band and choir concerts, napkin souvenirs, and crayoned snowmen pictures.

As I closed my eyes, younger versions appeared of my children, husband, and me rushing to church, leaving damp towels draped over the bathtub. The aromas of my kitchen — our children's favorite oven pancake, baked beans, or caraway seed rye bread — filled my senses. I remembered the late nights my husband and I stayed awake discussing teen dilemmas. I smiled recalling the loud laughter that erupted when we shared the humorous happenings of our lives.

I was drawn back to the present by a sudden flood of light. I hurried to the small square window and saw the sunshine streaming in through a break in the clouds. A sense of tranquility embraced me as I realized that my attic visit had been a piece of sunshine slicing through my own personal gloom.

That tranquility became a silent song as I repacked the boxes, carefully restacking them in the corner of the attic, and descended the creaky steps.

My husband and I had each other. We formed new memories of nature hikes, shared meals, and cozy evenings curled up with good books. Fresh peace filled our home.

Affection and frequent communication now preserve family ties despite the miles separating us. And when yearning begins to roll in like a dark cloud, a plaque on my kitchen wall reminds me "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24, NIV). **BA**

Audrey Carli writes from Iron River, MI.



Questions & Answers

How does one avoid the possible mis-translation errors of English Bibles? How reliable is *The Message* translation and other study Bibles by individuals?

No translation or current version of Scripture is flawless. This is true, in part, because of the different manuscripts from which our Bibles are translated.

Differences among the many manuscript copies in existence are mostly minor and seldom affect doctrine. Taken together, however, those minor differences yield versions that are not quite identical with the original Bible manuscripts, which no longer exist.

Another reason we have no perfect versions of the Bible is that translation itself is not an exact science. Even if every word in Hebrew and Greek had its perfect counterpart in English (it does not!), still sentence structure, grammatical nuance, syntax, and other linguistic factors assure that the task of translation is much more complex than the mere choice of words.

Although it's not possible to avoid all errors in Bible versions, we can 1) be confident that the basic, essential message of Scripture is preserved in most versions and 2) use good judgment and follow good counsel to select versions that more accurately and understandably render the Bible's message in its entirety.

High accuracy and simple English may not come in the same version. *The Message*, for example, gets high marks for readability and comprehensibility — but not for formal accuracy. Eugene Peterson, whose effort it was, did not set out to translate in the most literal sense, but to convey the meanings of the original writers, as he says, "in the common, informal idiom of everyday speech, street language" (author's foreword, *The Message: The New Testament in Contemporary English*).

Many study Bibles have been produced in recent years. Using them, one must take care to

note where the inspired text ends and the words of the author-editor begin. Not all study Bibles are created equal, so use them with care. And do the same with any translation or paraphrase that's primarily the work of one person.

— Elder Calvin Burrell

Last Sabbath the preacher told the congregation that we are sinners. I have been washed in the blood of Christ and baptized to take away my sins. Am I a sinner or a child of God? (I know I can sin.) Help!

In a few places, the Bible speaks of God's people in Christ as sinners, with the understanding that they are "sinners saved by grace." Paul, for example, admits to being the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15b), yet also one who trusts the saving mercy and grace through Jesus Christ (vv. 12-16).

A second example of this is in James' letter. Writing to Christians who love the world too much and their brethren too little, James says, "Cleanse your hands, you sinners . . ." (4:8) and humble yourselves before the Lord that you may receive more of His grace (vv. 1-10).

The Bible's usual manner of referring to believers in Jesus is not as sinners — but *saints*. Paul uses this term for Christians nearly forty times in his epistles. In calling us saints, he does not mean that we no longer sin but that we have been declared righteous in Christ and set apart for holy purposes in Him.

As followers of Jesus, let us confess, as you have, that we are children of God, forgiven of our sins and called to be saints. At the same time, let us not deny the sin that yet remains in us, although it no longer reigns over us (Rom. 6:12; 7:17ff).

— Elder Calvin Burrell

The Unforgettable September 11



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Applying Bible principle to politics in the US or to any other nation can be tricky business.
by Calvin Burrell

Ten years ago this month, whatever innocence and isolation remained in America crumbled with New York City's Twin Towers. Compared to the decade since, our pre-9/11 world seems like a failed dream.

After the Berlin Wall fell (1989) and the USSR imploded, the world felt strangely safe for democracy again. With the Cold War over and Saddam Hussein's seizure of Kuwait reversed by the first Gulf War, the US was touted as the lone world superpower. Our State Department calmed, our stock market bulled ahead. In the rearview mirror, 1991 through 2000 look like an economic and foreign affairs golden era for Americans.

Then came the horror of September 11, 2001.

Two days of infamy

Not quite sixty years after the first day to live in infamy, Pearl Harbor, the second such day descended on us from the skies. Not from Japanese bombers this time but from our own domestic airliners, hijacked by Middle East terrorists. Not on a remote Pacific isle now, but on the largest commercial and military hubs of our nation's most important cities, the fire fell.

In 1941 we lost about three thousand sailors, several warships, and dozens of smaller military aircraft. In 2001 we lost two World Trade Center skyscrapers, much of the mammoth Pentagon, three full-size airliners, and around three thousand citizens.

In 1941 the enemy's identity was clearly emblazoned on the

What Did Jesus Say?

Radical Islam is, indeed, a serious threat to the safety and welfare of Christians in several places. Our hearts and hands are extended to our brethren in Pakistan, Indonesia, northern Nigeria, and other nations with a dominant presence of militant Muslims. God help them!

The political and military strategy that any city or country should employ to restrain fanatical Muslims within its borders is both unknown to us and beyond our present scope. Our purpose here is primarily to echo the biblical counsel on how Jesus' disciples are to personally relate to their enemies, be they political or religious. We find it in Matthew 5:44-48; Luke 6:27-37; and Romans 12:17-21, adapted here:

Christians should love individual Muslims, bless them, salute them, forgive them, pray for them, do good to them, reach out to them, give to meet their needs, and extend the love of Christ toward them. We should not judge individual Muslims, return evil for their evil, or celebrate their downfall.

On this much, the words of Jesus and the apostles are clear. They may not be the *whole* truth about relating to Muslim "enemies," but they are true. Such counsel may need special application in 2011, but it must not be rejected.

— CAB

many warplanes that flew low across the Hawaiian island of Oahu. This time, the enemy was much more difficult to identify, even if the hijackers were not.

Muslim enemies

Less than forty-eight hours after that dreadful day, US intelligence had released their names, their nations of origin (mostly Saudi Arabian), and the common loyalty that drove their dastardly deed — Al Qaeda. This, we soon learned, was a group composed of the most militant followers of the prophet Mohammed and members of the faith of Islam.

This identity of the 9/11 perpetrators has expanded the enemy for some Americans, who consider all Muslims our foes. For

others, the enemy was a smaller subset of Islam: Bin Laden, Al Qaeda, and the extremists who do not represent the majority of a more peaceful Muslim faith. In the days after 9/11, President Bush often insisted that we were not fighting Islam itself but only terrorists who happened to be Islamic fanatics.

In ten years since 9/11, we've learned more geography (Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan) and more religion: Islam with its mosques, imams, Sharia law, Sufi and Shiite factions, along with more radical Muslim groups like the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Hamas, and Hezbollah in Gaza and Lebanon, the PLO in Israel, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and Al Qaeda.

Because Saddam Hussein, Iraq's now ousted and executed dictator, was a nominal Muslim who tolerated Christians and Jews well, the first Gulf War raised few issues about Islam. Osama Bin Laden, on the other hand, was a wealthy and iconic leader among fanatical and fringe Muslims who champion the cause of violence against Christian and Jewish infidels. Though Bin Laden was not mainstream, his words and actions brought mainstream Islam into the public crosshairs, for better or for worse.

Disturbing questions

So who was the real enemy on 9/11, and how do we "defeat" them? Since all nineteen terrorists that day were Muslims, does it follow that all Islam is freedom's foe? Or was it only radical Muslims, like Al Qaeda and the Taliban, who waged war on America ten years ago?

Whatever Islam's true nature, it took only a day, September 11, 2001, for that faith to leapfrog a dozen other issues to the top of most Christians' lists of most worrisome world problems. There it remains for many to this today.

Islam in our culture is, for many, like the elephant in the room: We don't talk much about it, but we know it's there.

The recent bombing and mass shooting in Norway re-raises our fears. It's time to talk about Muslims in America, but how do Christians address the issue? Do we begin with assumptions that Mohammed is the false prophet of Scripture, that Islam is the Devil's religion with plans to kill us all if we don't convert? Or might another approach better

reflect the grace and truth of our Lord, not to mention the main currents of Islam?

The terrorist-gunman in Oslo was not a Muslim but a right-wing nut who contends he is waging a Christian crusade against cultural diversity and what he sees as the Islamisation of Europe. He seems to be, to put it bluntly, an Islamaphobe – a hater of Muslims in general.

Conviction and actions

None of us will defend the insane act of that “Christian” terrorist in Norway. Nor are we likely to push for immigration from Saudi Arabia or Iran, for more Islamic faith in America.

Somewhere between these extremes, what should be our conviction – and our actions?

Should we forward e-mails that misrepresent or ridicule Islamic faith and practice?

Should we oppose and speak insultingly about mosques being built in our cities?

Should our reflexive thoughts applaud the apprehension and death of militant Muslims, with little thought for their families or their souls?

Should we see Muslims as enemies whose advance is to be opposed and stopped by any means, or as neighbors to be engaged and loved by all means, according to Christ’s command and in His name?

What are the lessons for Christians from the unforgettable September 11? **BA**

The author-editor invites responses to this topic, pro and con, and will publish several in a future issue.

What Would Jesus Do?

When Christ was here, Islamic faith was more than six hundred years future; no Muslims existed. We may note, however, Jesus’ response to the Samaritans, an ethno-religious group whose relation to the Jews of His day reflects much of Islam’s relation to Christianity in our day:

- As Samaritans were related to Jews by natural birth, so Muslims trace their lineage to Abraham through Ishmael.
- As Samaritans shared much of the Hebrew faith (with differences), so Muslims hold to many elements of biblical faith (with differences).
- As centuries of deep resentment poisoned relations between Samaritans and Jews, so it is between Muslims and Christians.

Since the Samaritans of Jesus’ day occupied a religious position similar to the Muslims of our day, we may profit by investigating Jesus’ approach to the deep Jewish-Samaritan divide. Rather than stoking the fires of separation and hostility between those groups, we read that Jesus . . .

- traveled through Samaria, not detouring around it as most Jews of His day did;
- initiated conversation with a woman at a well in Samaria, resulting in her conversion to Christ and evangelism of other Samaritans;
- showed His compassion for Samaritans by healing ten Samaritan lepers at once;
- told the story of a Samaritan who dared provide traveler’s aid to a wounded Jew, when the most religious of the traveler’s Jewish countrymen wouldn’t help. Thus did the Samaritan become a “good” hero in one of Jesus’ most-loved parables.

We can hardly escape the conclusion that Jesus, if He were on earth today, would look for ways to bridge the deep and distressing Christian-Muslim divide. And He would not place all the responsibility on Muslims to bridge it.

Jesus would likely speak plain words of gentle correction to Muslims, as He did to the Samaritan woman in John 4:22 – a correction that was also aimed at Jewish pride and arrogance (vv. 20-24). Christ’s most unrelenting religious rebukes, however, were aimed at the hypocrites among His own people: Jewish elders, Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes.

Surely Jesus Christ would reject the knee-jerk religious hatred, hostility, and suspicion to which this generation has fallen heir.

– CAB

Survey on Islam and 9/11

We invite you to complete this survey and return it by removing (or photocopying) the page and mailing it to BA Editor, P.O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233 or faxing it to 303-452-0657. Or you may complete the survey electronically at baonline.org. Results received by October 31 may be compiled and published in the January-February BA. Identity and location of respondents will not be published.

How did you first hear of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington D.C., and what was your initial response?

What changes in faith, life, and worldview have you experienced in ten years as a result of 9/11?

What do you see as the mind of Christ toward Islamic faith and Muslims in your homeland?

Rate the following from 5 to 1: 5 - strong agreement; 4 - mild agreement; 3 - unsure; 2 - mild disagreement; 1 - strong disagreement.

- As a Christian, I should befriend Muslims who live in my community.
- Most Muslims celebrated the pain and loss of America back on 9/11/01.
- True Christianity shouldn't be blamed for those who represent Christ badly.
- Islamic expansionism is the most dangerous threat to world peace in our time.

- Muslims in America are a major threat to our legacy in the Christian way of life.
- America will be overrun by Muslim immigrants, as Europe and England are now.
- Jesus' teaching to bless and pray for our enemies applies even to those who harm America.
- We have valid reasons to fear what's ahead in the clash of cultures – Islam vs. Christianity.
- Mainstream Islam shouldn't be blamed for the bad behavior of fanatical Muslim extremists.
- It was OK for Christians to celebrate when Osama Bin Laden was killed by American troops.
- Mohammed (or Islam) is the false prophet of Revelation 16, moving the world toward Armageddon.
- A majority of the world's Muslims oppose terrorism and want to live in peace with people of other religions.
- I learn a lot about terrorism, Islam, and related current events from talk radio, Fox News, and/or the Internet.
- The control or capture of Muslim terrorists is primarily a matter for military intervention by those countries that are affected.
- It is unrealistic to expect the non-violent tactics of Jesus, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King to succeed against terrorism while the enemy uses swords, guns, or bombs.
- Considering the cost (in lives and dollars) and futility of finding lasting solutions through military action (Iran and Afghanistan), there must be a better way of dealing with Muslim extremists.



Church unity

Congratulations to Pastor Franks for his insightful encouragement to foster unity ["Undoing the Splits," July-August]. If followed, it will enhance significantly our walk "in Christ." His reminder of the reasons for splits calls to mind a discussion between Ivan and Alexi Karamazov in Dostoyevsky's classic novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. Ivan, the intellectual, questions whether a Creator God exists in contrast to an imaginary, created god who helps us endure life's inexplicable tragedies. Extending this premise, even though there are proper reasons and correct ways to dissent, one might wonder whether the approving god who supports egos that question, agitate, then separate is not also a product of human creation.

R. S.
West Linn, OR

Brian Franks is on target. The best process to resolve conflicts includes SALT: **S**peaking the truth with love, **A**sking good questions and giving good **A**nswers, **L**istening for understanding in-

stead of agreement, and **T**hinking in silence without interrupting.

Perhaps the best words in any conflict are these: "I know our relationship is not the best right now. What can I do to make it better?" In this way we are loving without conditions and laying down our life for our friends.

Let's set the captives free, heal the sick and tired, and restore the relationships with God's people, church after church after church.

B. M.
Liberty Center, OH

Religious contention

I once presented a study showing some validity for some of the Hebrew names for Christ and the way He is referenced in that tradition ["Messianic Judaism," May-June]. I concluded that there is no value in preferring one language over another in describing our Savior. This subject brought much contention to surface.

One group left because we were too Messianic; they didn't want to worship where some called the Hebrew Christ by His Hebrew name. Another group left because we were not Messianic enough; they wanted to go where everyone referred to Jesus and God by their Hebrew names. This is what you get from trying to be a church with diversity.

Can Messianic and traditional Christian co-exist? I would hope so (see Romans 3:29, 30)! Our Heart of Worship CoG7 in San Antonio maintains a policy of acceptance and tolerance of diversity. We have had some Messianic elements from the start. Some folks in our church keep the feasts

on the side, but with more discretion than others. I respect those viewpoints, but we will still abide by CoG7 doctrine. This seems simple enough, but it is far more complex.

My siblings (not in the Church) think I am Messianic or Jewish because I keep the Ten Commandments, eat kosher, and worship on the seventh day Sabbath! I tried to explain that these issues are not merely Messianic but also Christian, but to no avail,

If your church has not gone through the difficulties we have, I hope you can be more vigilant about avoiding the problems that Messianic vs. traditional Christian worship can pose. Since you simply can't please everyone, focus on pleasing God instead!

J. C.
San Antonio, TX

Help for healing

Sure enjoyed "The Wounded World of Bethesda," by Ken Lawson [May-June]. This new light of truth should have been revealed long ago. Thank the Lord some are in the pool ready to help.

D. T.
Fargo, ND

Delightful journey

Away from home for three years, I couldn't receive my BA. Now I'm back and catching up on the missed issues — a delightful journey. Thank you for the well-thought-out articles. Keep up the blessed work.

N. T.
Zimbabwe, Africa

The Muslim Among Us

How would the average Christian react
if a Muslim walked into church?
by Kimberly Rae

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It was a nondescript, typically humid day in Asia. Neena and I were discussing cultures, a fan nearby pushing the hot air in circles around us. Suddenly Neena asked, “If I moved to America, would people hate me because I wear a head covering?”

I sat stunned for a moment. What could I say? I wanted to say no, to reassure her. But the truth was, I really didn’t know.

After I returned to America, Neena’s question continued to haunt me. How do Americans react to the Muslims around them? I decided to find out.

I unpacked the black head covering I’d bought overseas, put it on, and looked at myself in the mirror. I felt nervous. Really nervous. How would people respond if I went out in public like this? Would they be hostile? Suspicious? Angry? None of the above?

My biggest question – the real reason I decided to put myself through this – was to find out

if God’s people would respond better, or worse, than the world.

Public appearance

I set out with trepidation. I started with a few stores, where most people treated me with polite, politically correct indifference, as if seeing someone in a head covering was totally normal. At a restaurant and a couple other places, the people waiting on me were extra nice. I could tell they were trying on purpose to make me feel comfortable and accepted. Good for them.

After a few hours, I almost forgot I was wearing a head covering. It was rather anti-climatic after all that nervous energy I’d expended dreading the whole experience.

Now it was time to test the Christians.

Going to church

I went to a church across town, where no one would know I was not really a Muslim. I was

petrified. It took me weeks to work up the nerve.

In the end, it wasn’t so bad. The people made a genuine effort. They came and shook my hand during greeting time. One woman said she hoped I’d come back again. I was truly impressed.

No one sat next to me or asked any friendly, curious questions. I think they didn’t quite know what to do with me, so out of context. Maybe they were afraid. Afraid of offending. Or afraid of me, perhaps? An honest Christian friend told me that she feels she should be nice to Muslims because she’s afraid of what they might do to her.

Was that it? Was fear the basis for both the politeness and the distance?

Lessons learned

I had wanted to know if God’s people did any better or worse at responding to Muslims than the world did. Christians did well; they were nice. But they didn’t reach out as I had hoped they

would. Overall, between God's people and the world, I didn't find much of a difference, which was disappointing.

When I talked with people about my experiment, the words I kept hearing were *fear*, *suspicion*, and a *desire to not offend*. I think for many, deep down, all three of these feelings mix into a strong tendency to avoid.

So we often act polite and tolerant, but distant. If we dissect our motives, we may find political correctness is an excuse, a veil that covers our fear or anger or . . . even hate?

Hiding behind veils: I thought Jesus set us free from that.

Here's the biggest lesson I think I learned from my experiment: People who are full of God's love are going to show it. And people who are full of fear or anger or the desire for self-protection are going to show that too. Sometimes by their response. Sometimes by their lack of it.

Which one are you?

Overcoming barriers

Even if a Muslim is seeking truth about Christ, there are many barriers. For one, most Muslim nations are group-oriented, and seeking as an individual is usually frowned upon — or worse. For another, many Muslims see America as a Christian nation. Therefore, what is portrayed in movies is what a Christian acts like.

I cannot imagine a Muslim ever just walking into your church, not even if he wanted to. It's logical, then, to conclude that the only way most Muslims in the world will ever truly see the love of God is if they meet

Christians who live it. Christians like you.

If you are willing, here are some ideas on how to start a friendship with a Muslim:

- Next time you see a Muslim, instead of looking away, make eye contact and give a real smile.

- If the response is positive, walk up and say hi. Ask where the person is from or another question of genuine interest. Remember, this is a person, not just a Muslim.

- Lead into spiritual conversations by talking about things Muslims already believe — things you agree on (see sidebar).

- If the person expresses a personal problem, ask if you can pray for him in Jesus' name. Pray aloud for that person. This is powerful.

- In time, and with the Holy Spirit's help, try to ask questions

that will tell what that person feels is missing in her life. From that, you can give biblical truths that offer hope, peace, forgiveness, and other spiritual help.

Somewhere out there is a Muslim, or two, or a thousand who truly want to know God. You probably won't see any of them at church this weekend. But one of them may walk into your workplace, your shopping mall, or your children's classroom one day.

When that happens, you may be the only representation of Jesus Christ the person will ever meet. **BA**

Kimberly Rae
writes from
Lenoir, NC.



What Do Muslims Believe?

Some true Muslim beliefs — a great place to start!

- There is only one God.
- God created everything and is to be worshipped.
- God is merciful and forgiving.
- Jesus was born of a virgin.
- Adam, Job, Noah, Joseph, Abraham, and Moses are Bible stories to be believed.
- Jesus lived a perfect life and never sinned.
- Jesus was a good teacher and healed the sick.

Muslim beliefs that are untrue:

- God overlooks your sins if you had good intentions.
- Jesus did not die on a cross. God would never let His prophet die, so He took Jesus up to heaven and switched Judas to die in His place.
- There's no way to really know if you will "go to heaven" when you die.
- No one can truly know God.

— Kimberly Rae



by Dr. Paulo Coelho

Esteeming Ministers

Encouragement

What is it to be a pastor in God's church? As with other human endeavors, being pastor can be seen in terms of personal abilities for the job. Mainly, however, it is a matter of God's call and the work of His Spirit. By these He does amazing things in us, transforming the impossible into reality as He did with Paul of Tarsus, the man most unlikely to become apostle to the Gentiles.

By the Spirit's power, pastors should live in a triangle of harmonious relationship that unites them with God and with the people we serve. In this vision of our mission, pastors celebrate two mutually interactive components of their ministry: the vertical (with God) and the horizontal (with people).

Members of the church must be aware of their role in supporting pastors according to God's Word. This support in spiritual and practical expressions will result in a strengthening of pastoral service (Hebrews 13:16-18).

According to the example of our Lord Jesus, pastors are often touched by adversity, misunderstanding, depression, and isolation. The inner motivation to serve others and assist in the goal of their salvation can give us the power to overcome these difficulties (2 Timothy 2:3, 10). This is the role of God's Spirit, who can transform

discouragement into joy and isolation into friendly communion.

Pastors should realize that our anchor in God holds firm. His strong presence is the only guarantee that we can faithfully fulfill the pastorate.

We may not understand the unhappiness that sometimes attacks the church, but the Spirit-presence of God can touch our people and us in an intense and unexpected way. Realize it!

As fragile men (pastors are weak, too!), we tend to internalize the question that our Lord Jesus Christ asked at the peak of His suffering: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46b). This example and God's Word don't always explain the adversities we face, but they do offer us the only sure way to overcome them all: Give ourselves totally into His hands (Matthew 26:36-42; Luke 23:46).

The difficult times we live in are different with new opportunities. In spite of the miles that often separate us, we can still support each other through the Spirit. The powers of hell cannot prevail against the sons of the Almighty. His light will defeat this darkness!

As pastors, sometimes we need to taste the "vinegar" of life, as Jesus did symbolically. We should keep in mind that the final promise of God is to drink the good "wine" of His perfect eternity.

BA

Dr. Paulo Coelho serves the Church in Lisbon, Portugal, as pastor. He also serves as IMC representative in Zone 7 — Europe.

... and saying so during Pastor Appreciation Month (October)

Two Faithful Shepherds

... selected by the Editor to represent all the Church's pastors and ministers. May we hold such men in esteem and receive them in the Lord with all joy (Philippians 2:29).

	Kenneth Knoll	Glen Palmer
Home states	Wisconsin	Idaho
Spouses	Mary Jean	Barbara
Children	Karla, Kristi	Teri, Pam, Darren
Grandchildren	Five	Ten
First pastorate	Conroe, TX	Lodi, CA
Present pastorate	Eugene, OR	Harrisburg, OR
Years in ministry	40+	45+
Favorite exercise	Racquetball	Racquetball
Main racquetball foe	Glen Palmer	Ken Knoll



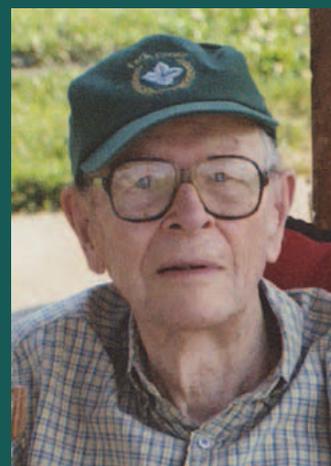
Mary Jean and Ken



Barbara and Glen

Faithful Unto Death. Elder L. L. Christenson, the Church's oldest surviving pastor-minister, died on July 28 in Kansas City, Missouri, at the age of 100. Survived by his wife, Rubye, his daughter, Helen, and two grandsons, he was buried in Stanberry, Missouri.

The son of a General Conference president, Elder Christenson began ministry as a young man and served faithfully for a lifetime — mostly in the country's mid-section from Wisconsin to Texas. We honor his memory as a gentle, friendly man who loved to play the violin during congregational music, tell Bible stories to children, and talk-write about how the church might better win people to Christ and Bible truth. May the Lord raise up many younger men to fill the gap Brother Christenson leaves.



[Labor Day]

Work and Wages

Jesus laid down the principle (Luke 10:7).
But what if no work exists?



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Carried by Christ

by Jennifer Slattery

I grew up in a non-Christian home filled with tension and fighting. My parents divorced after I left the house, but our family had fallen apart long before then. Things began to unravel when my dad, a teacher in Oregon, lost work. We lived off credit cards for a while, then turned to state assistance. Without Christ's love to unite us, we began to lash out at each other.

Dad found a job up north within a year, but the seeds of bitterness planted during his unemployment bore fruit. Anger filled our home. Family meals turned hostile, then were abandoned. We became strangers in passing. I blamed our broken family on my dad's job loss. If only he'd been able to stay teaching in Oregon, everything would've been fine.

When I married, I determined not to allow my family to go

down the same destructive paths of my parents' home. I had it down to a carefully fixed schedule. If my husband and I went on x number of dates, spent y number of hours in family activity, read our Bibles each night, led regular family devotions, and watched our budget, our family would be unbreakable. The habits I worked so hard to create and maintain were good in many respects, but I allowed them to dominate our lives.

Despite my plans, everything unraveled in a flash when unemployment came again. I felt like a scared, lonely child, certain it was only a matter of time before my worst fears came true and my family fell apart, just as my childhood family had.

Our savings dwindled, and I grew increasingly depressed. My husband and I took temporary jobs, but they didn't keep up with our expenses. We realized we needed to sell the house, quickly. As we loaded our belongings into storage units and put our house on the market, my

depression deepened and painful memories from my childhood merged with fears of the present.

One day while I stood in the kitchen recovering from a fit of tears and about to launch another, my husband turned me to him and said, "I need you to be strong." His eyes were moist with unshed tears, and in that moment I realized I had been so wrapped up in myself, I had failed to see my husband's pain and how badly he needed me to stand beside him.

A few days later, I came across Proverbs 14:1: "The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands." I realized God was giving me a choice: I could continue to spiral further into depression, tearing my family down with my own hands, or I could turn to God and trust in Him, showing my daughter what it means to live by faith.

From that moment on, I determined to draw near to God and be strong for my husband. It is amazing how much more man-

ageable fears are when you place them in God's hands and quit feeding them with one negative thought after another. The fears didn't go away entirely, but when they'd arise, I took my thoughts captive and focused on God's truth instead. My fears weakened and my faith grew.

For the next few months, we turned to one another and to God. We clung to Bible verses that spoke of God's faithfulness, and openly talked about His power and love. As a result, the same event that had destroyed my childhood family actually strengthened my adult family.

Today, five years later, my husband and I are stronger than ever, as is our family, because Christ held and continues to hold us together. But what is more, having relived the events that caused me such pain as a child, I experienced God's deep healing. He removed the fear of family failure that had consumed me for so long and placed in its stead a deep peace.

The reason my childhood family fell apart wasn't because my dad lost his job or we had to move. It was because we tried to walk through our trials alone. My husband and I committed ourselves to not make the same mistake. We still cherish date nights and family time, and we still seek to raise our daughter on God's Word. But we do so with a deep sense of peace, knowing that no matter what happens, God will see us through. **BA**

Jennifer Slattery
writes from Kansas City, MO.



Labor Day, God's Way

Seven Bible teachings regarding work.

1. Rather than having a punitive purpose, manual labor in Scripture is a positive element of God's best plan for man in His image: "the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden . . . to tend and keep it" (Genesis 2:15).
2. Only after sin entered human experience was routine work, both manual and mental, experienced as difficult, tedious, painful, and failure-prone: "Cursed is the ground for your sake . . ." (3:17-19).
3. A person's due diligence and best effort should be given to his/her work; laziness and sloth lead soon enough to poverty and destruction: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10; see also Proverbs 10:4; 13:4; 14:23; 18:9; 19:15; Romans 12:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:11).
4. Human labor that is unrelated to the higher values of God's kingdom and righteousness leaves the worker empty and dissatisfied: "Do not labor for the food which perishes . . ." (John 6:27; see also Ecclesiastes 1:3; 2:11; Isaiah 55:2).
5. Those who regularly toil for the benefit of others should receive prompt and proper compensation, for "the laborer

A Day of Rest

My mind has a desperate need
For a day of rest,
A Sabbath journey of a thousand miles,
Begun today.

Shut off the whirring machine right now,
The didactic, daily details consuming me,
Robbing my spirit of the spring and green
Of youthful, everlasting life.

Let me live
Absent from the lists, demands, and weights
Of the world's diurnal grind
But rather to the rhythm and the rhyme
Of the sacred, bubbling stream
For but a day.

Rick Livingston

is worthy of his wages" (Luke 10:7; see also Leviticus 19:13; Jeremiah 22:13; Malachi 3:5; Matthew 10:10; 1 Timothy 5:18b; James 5:4).

6. Beyond providing for oneself and one's family, another purpose for diligent labor is for the worker to be generous with those who cannot work: "By laboring like this . . . you must support the weak" (Acts 20:35; see also Ephesians 4:28; 1 Timothy 5:8).
7. Six days of labor in the interest of others, followed by a seventh day of rest, reflect the divine pattern. God began this rhythm and blesses it still: "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work" (Exodus 20:8-11; see also Genesis 2:1-3; Deuteronomy 5:13; Hebrews 4:4-11).

— Calvin Burrell

Poverty in America

An exclusive BA interview with the Family and Senior Homeless Initiative

In our Denver hometown, the BA learned of a new effort to help those who don't have a place to call home — the Family and Senior Homeless Initiative (FSHI). We asked director Brad Hopkins these questions:

BA: Your approach to homelessness focuses on families and seniors, instead of on single males, who are the stereotypical chronically homeless. Why?



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Hopkins: FSHI helps homeless families and seniors secure stable, long-term housing through faith community mentoring and first month's rent and deposit assistance. We focus on families, in particular, because family homelessness is currently at epidemic proportions. Our recent studies found that 62 percent of the total homeless in Denver are families, while only about 10-12 percent are single males. Children, moms, and dads on the knife-edge of poverty need a boost to attain stability again. Most of these families are disconnected from healthy, supportive relationships [that the church can offer].

BA: How does FSHI operate?

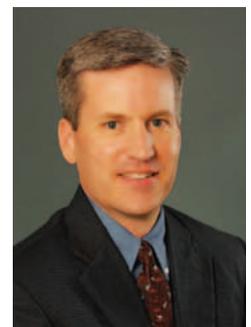
Hopkins: FSHI pairs mentor teams from the faith community with a homeless family or senior to provide the first month's rent and deposit, as well as mentoring with the goal of sustainable permanent housing. Trained mentors offer the family physical, spiritual, financial, and emotional assistance for four to six months, over a minimum of seven meetings.

BA: FSHI's model started in Denver and spread to other cities. Is it working?

Hopkins: The FSHI program, resourced by the Denver Rescue Mission, was adopted into the city's ten-year plan to end homelessness in 2005. As of May 31, 2011, mentor teams have partnered with 888 families and seniors who have moved into permanent housing. With the efforts of 315 congregations of faith, 2,089 individuals have been placed into housing, and 85 percent of families who had been mentored are still in housing one year later. Other cities — Las Vegas, Portland, Dallas, Boise, Knoxville, and more — are also catching the vision and making progress. Local governments are thrilled about new, creative ways to partner with local faith communities to help solve real social problems, and the faith community is drawn to the idea of helping in the name of Christ.

Readers with interest in the

topic of homelessness are invited to visit www.fshi.org.



Forgiving Failures

by Joe Corrales

As a boy of ten, I walked to and from school with my sisters. One day they talked of hidden treasure they'd heard was beneath a house along the route. Passing by, they bolted toward an old, deserted-looking place and began to crawl under the front porch, while I stayed on the sidewalk and yelled for them to stop.

Hearing the commotion, the man who lived there came out to check. He jumped off the porch and grabbed one sister's leg to pull her out as the other sister fled, screaming. Instinctively I ran to this big guy and began to pound him on the back. He released his grip on my sister and grabbed me. I hollered at my sisters to go home and call our dad.

For what seemed like an eternity, he tried to drag me into his house while I fought to stay out. When Dad finally arrived, the man turned me loose. A heated discussion followed in which the man accused us of trying to break into his house to steal. Nothing more came of it, and we finally went home.

I wished my dad had beaten this guy up. *I'll pummel him senseless — when I grow up!* I vowed to myself. As the years went by, I could still see those

large blue eyes staring at me and feel a bitter twitch whenever I was in that area of the neighborhood.

Many years later, when my family had long since moved, I wanted to see what the old neighborhood looked like, so I stopped in front of the old house where I had experienced that terrible ordeal. Suddenly the front door opened and an old man came out to sit in an easy chair on the porch. I found myself moving from the truck and up the sidewalk to see if it was really he.

As I reached the first porch step, the old man asked, "Who's there?" His eyes were clouded with cataracts. I didn't know what to say except, "I used to live near here and came back to look around."

He extended a frail hand, and I felt a twinge of those past feelings again. I was now six feet tall and didn't need to fear him anymore. I grabbed his hand and shook it.

I was a big guy and could throttle this lonely old man to get even, but I could feel only compassion for him. Those familiar hurts now seemed so out of place. I sat and listened as he talked about the loneliness after



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losing his wife years ago. He had bitter memories, losing her so young. He had considered moving away but just could not part with the old house. That explained a lot about his earlier attitude. I soon wished him well and excused myself.

Climbing back in the truck, I could see him wave goodbye. I had considered telling him of my boyhood brush with him, how I forgave him for hurting and scaring me that day. Realizing it would bring back a memory best forgotten, I decided just to forgive him instead.

A sense of peace came at that moment — so liberating, though it made me feel foolish for my years of resentment. If God could forgive me for my failures, then I should learn to forgive others for theirs. **BA**

Joe Corrales

is a husband, grandparent, pastor, and college instructor in San Antonio, TX.



God's Forgiveness and Ours

Bible answers to common questions, compiled by the Editor.

How many sins does God forgive?

All of them (Psalm 103:3; Mark 3:28).

Through whom has God forgiven our sins, and by what means?

Through Jesus and by His blood – i.e., His death on the cross (Acts 5:30, 31; 13:38; 26:18; Matthew 26:28).

What is our role in forgiveness?

We confess our sins and repent – turn from them (1 John 1:9; Luke 3:3; 24:27; Acts 2:38).

With sins forgiven, what is our present status?

We're blest and alive with Christ – redeemed! (Romans 4:7, 8; Colossians 2:13; Ephesians 1:7).

Since God has forgiven our sins, what should we do for others?

Forgive their sins against us (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13).

How many of our brother's sins should we forgive?

Seven per day (Luke 17:4) and seventy times more (Matthew 18:21, 22).

How vital is forgiving others?

Our refusal to forgive others implies that we have not yet received or understood God's forgiveness (Matthew 6:14, 15; Mark 11:25; Luke 6:37b).

If others don't confess offenses against us, must we forgive?

Only if we want to imitate Jesus (Luke 23:34a; Romans 5:8) and be free from the toxic resentment created by those offenses.

What about the unforgivable sin?

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, explained as the only unforgivable sin (Mark 3:29), is the continual, final rejection of the Spirit's work in drawing us to God through Christ (John 6:44). If you had committed that one, you surely couldn't be trusting Jesus now – and likely wouldn't be reading this.

Synonyms for forgiven

- *remission* of sins (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 10:43; Hebrews 9:22; 10:18)
- *sprinkling* of Jesus' blood (Ezekiel 36:25; Hebrews 10:22; 12:24; 1 Peter 1:2)
- *washed* from our sins (Acts 22:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Revelation 1:5)

Analogous truths

- God removes sins as far as east is from west (Psalm 103:12).

- He casts them into the sea-depths (Micah 7:19).
- He remembers them no more (Jeremiah 31:34b; Hebrews 8:12; 10:17).

Thought for every day: I will forgive everybody for everything.

National Forgiveness Week / Day

BA reader Robert Moyers reports that National Forgiveness Week is the last week of October and that Saturday (Sabbath), October 29, is National Forgiveness Day. Bob explains the value of focusing this grace on one week and day each year:

God seems to be multiplying our National Forgiveness Day efforts tenfold each year. We started in 2006 by walking door-to-door with information encouraging love and forgiveness in our village of Liberty Center, Ohio. Since then it grows as God's people come together to share our "Be Healthy" message of love and forgiveness [September-October 2010, pp. 10, 11] with thousands and even millions.

To learn more about this event, visit www.unconditionallovelive.com. **BA**



The Worth of Gold

Lord, the weather has turned cold.

*You have clouded the sun, the green of leaves
is leaking away like fresh paint in the rain.*

*You covered Your colors all summer in those
shades,*

but now they will drip like rain to the ground.

*Regal hues of red and orange;
thin, crisp, stiff gilt sheaves
will litter my garden like treasure.*

*My children will jump in Your bounty, oh
Lord,*

and I hear You say,

"They know the worth of gold."

Candice Lucey

G. C. Ministries
Emphases

Publications



Keith Michalak, Director

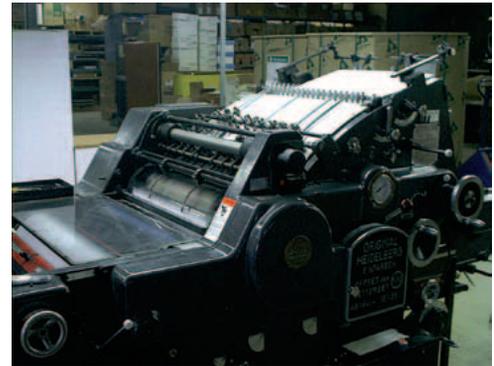
LifeSpring



Richard Jensen, Director
See page 27

Going Strong

Keith Michalak, Director



What has the Bible Advocate Press been up to lately? The same thing we've been doing for decades: publishing and distributing gospel magazines and tracts for the Church of God (Seventh Day). And for the most part, we haven't charged those who receive it.

For 145+ years the *Bible Advocate* magazine has taught and inspired thousands of readers. Its messages have directed them to Christ through articles on salvation, doctrine, prophecy, and current events. In our times of economic and political turmoil, the BA has endeavored to fortify readers so they can overcome struggles, to God's glory.

Think about how effective printed material is in sharing scriptural teachings. For little money, literature travels all over the world — even to areas with restricted communication. Pastors and members in other countries welcome it, knowing how precious gospel material is — and rare, compared to North America. We hear stories of tracts and magazines being passed around until they are worn out.

Recently, technology has expanded our ministry beyond the printed page. The BA can now be viewed around the world online, at the click of a mouse. Our outreach e-zine *Now What?* continues to feature stories of faith and hope, and the BA's Facebook page offers a place where hundreds of folks share their thoughts and receive encouragement.

Many times people come across a BAP tract or magazine and contact us to learn more about Christ and our organization. We make sure they get a personal message from us. In cooperation with the Holy Spirit, we keep sowing gospel seeds and watering them for eternal growth.

How can you support Publications?

1. Join Editor's Circle by making several small donations per year. Ask for coupon reminders to give and pray for the ministry.
2. Support our free literature fund, enabling the shipment of tens of thousands of tracts each year.
3. Watch for our spring funding letter — the only direct-mail request readers who respond will receive all year.
4. Go online (www.baonline.org) and select the Donate button.

Pioneer Missionary Training

If God is giving you the desire to serve, an interest in missions, and a vision to reach beyond, Pioneer Missionary Training (PMT) could be for you!

PMT is hosted and operated by the Mexican Church on behalf of G. C. Missions, SWORD, and National Youth Ministries. Participants learn evangelism by classroom training and hands-on practice, while living and working with brethren in other countries.

This year's PMT team will travel to Veracruz, Mexico, for ten days, December 20-30. Cost of the trip (covers housing, food, insurance, local transportation) is \$455, plus travel to and from Veracruz.

(Note to ages 18-35: SWORD will award a scholarship for this amount to one applicant who answers these questions – "Do you feel God is calling you to a certain ministry? How will PMT enhance your calling?" A PMT application form is posted at <http://sword.cog7.org>).

If God is prompting you to stretch, ask for an application, which must be submitted by November 1.

– Kurt Lang, National Youth Director, 541-517-1079
or kurt.lang@cog7.org

– Monico Muffley, PMT team leader, pastormonico@juno.com

Note: Important travel notice issued by the US State Department: <http://travel.state.gov/travel>.

SHINE to Ecuador

by Bev Brenneise

Our June mission to Ecuador proved a blessing both to people there and to the SHINE team. Though nearly half the team became ill and new components of service were added to our work, the SHINE team's spirit and desire to help never wavered.

Though they live in the second poorest country of South America, we found the Ecuadorian people to be generous in spirit. They donated food and bottled water for all the team's lunches and dinners, sparing us those typical costs.

When brethren met to show appreciation to the team on its last day, a young girl approached, gestured for me (I had distributed stickers among the children during the week), and placed a sticker on the back of my hand – a touching gesture of giving back.

In a kind of irony, the contrasting circumstances of this mission may reflect God's sense of humor in how our church began in Ecuador. A Jehovah's Witness from there, Luis Montero, relocated temporarily to Central America. Evangelizing his faith there, he met CoG7 brothers and was himself convicted of further truth. He returned to Ecuador in 1960 and introduced the Church, with assistance from Pastor Antonio Vega and others.

A second irony occurred in the

1990s, when brothers in the La Libertad area (site of our second clinic) suffered persecution while engaged in evangelism. They had to sneak from house to house and through fields to avoid attack from members of the country's dominant church. Yet our church in La Libertad endured. Its pastor now is one of the former persecutors!

Four new clinic services were introduced by SHINE in Ecuador: prosthetic dentures, ear lavages, a prayer room for patients, and counseling on women's issues and holistic approaches to medicine. Also, reading glasses developed into a permanent clinic component. More than 500 pairs were given away.

In six days of clinics, 3,756 patients were seen, around 200 persons gave their lives to Christ. Before we left, plans were already underway to present mini-missions in several Ecuadorian churches too far away for their brethren to attend our two clinics there. Praise God for Ecuador and its people!

SHINE leaders bless team supplies.





Teaching Trip to Nigeria

For three weeks in April, the Nigerian Church received extensive training for ministers and leaders, including women and youth. Dr. Robert Jacobs of Jamaica was the primary teacher. Participants were introduced to several topics, including Bible survey, hermeneutics, homiletics, counseling, spiritual gifts, pastoral care, church management-conflict, family life, and biblical leadership. Attendance was 110 from the Rivers, Enugu, Abia, Akwa Ibom, Akwa Cross, and Bayelsa state conferences. The generosity of many made this training possible.

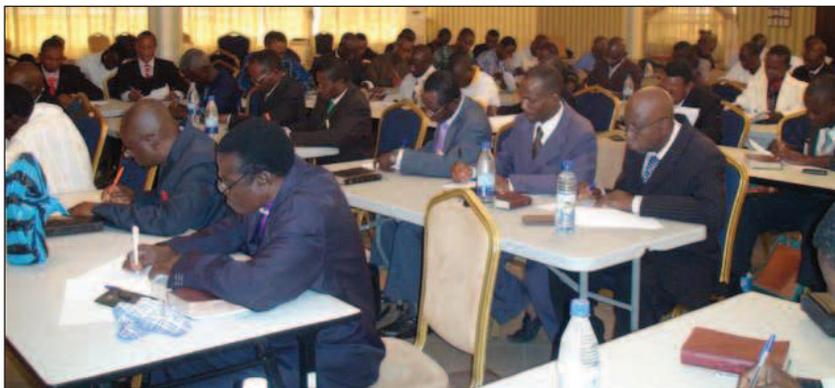
A special lecture on women in ministry by my wife, Maxine, was well received by all and meant much to the sisters, given the cultural bias against women speaking publicly in the presence of men. We thank God that

balance and harmony prevailed in all sessions, despite differences of opinion.

April 14 marked the closing ceremony. Colorfully adorned choirs sang melodiously. I delivered a special charge, encouraging all participants to rise above mediocrity and self-glorification and be servant leaders who honor the Lord in every aspect of ministry.

We had Lord's Supper on April 17 with the Gambia Street Church of Port Harcourt, pastored by Dr. Lawyer C. Obara. On Sabbath, April 23, we visited the Akwa Ibom State Church under the leadership of Bishop F. A. Nkai, who expressed his desire for full fellowship. We then traveled to Ikot Abasi for a short visit. Truly the Lord's blessing was with us all the way.

— Pastor Robert Crawford
Gloucester, UK



Ahead in Nigeria: A grand church dedication is planned for December 23-30, 2011, in the Omoku District, Rivers State Conference. The new edifice there, underwritten in thanksgiving by Brother Felix Obuah, whose life was spared after he was shot by criminal elements, will accommodate from 2,500 to 3,000 persons. The complex includes an electronic library and pastor's residence. This invitation is extended to CoG7 membership to visit this great continent and share in a rich cultural worship experience. For details, contact Robert Crawford, Zone 5 rep for Africa: robertashcrawford@hotmail.com or call +447864290466.

Also, Nigeria will host the next African Regional Convention in April 2013. Watch for details.

More Golden Couples



Murray and Yvonne Sweet of Bulverde, Texas, were married 60 years on June 17.

Larry and Dorothy Brooks of Burleson, Texas, will be married 50 years on September 23.

Edward and Pearl Lewin of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, will be married 50 years on December 23.

Wise Investment

Richard Jensen, Director

LifeSpring School of Ministry has exciting news. Over \$12,000 in need-based scholarship money was awarded for the summer/fall term alone, covering up to 75 percent of tuition costs in some cases. Another \$10,000 is available for students enrolling in winter/spring courses.

You can help keep scholarships like this alive for the future! Let us introduce you to one of our scholarship programs you could invest in.

Faithful Servant Scholarship Fund is an endowed scholarship fund for ministry students, begun in 1955. For several reasons (e.g., dropping interest rates), this fund has not proved adequate to meet the recent heavy demands upon it. So we have started the new Faithful Servant Annual Fund and Scholarship Program:

- This merit-based scholarship program provides students with over 50 percent of tuition needed for one year of study with LifeSpring.
- Your family, church, or group can sponsor a Faithful Servant Scholarship, naming it in memory or honor of a person, class, ministry, or group.
- You can develop a relationship with the student who is awarded the scholarship named for your loved one or group.
- An individual or group can establish a Faithful Servant Scholarship with a gift of as little as \$1,200.
- One thousand dollars of your gift will be awarded as a merit-based scholarship during the next academic year, while the remaining \$200 will go the Faithful Servant Endowment Fund, where its interest will be used to assist future students.

Donating to this new fund is just one way you can help today's students while investing in the education of future enrollees.

And, of course, you can offer LifeSpring signifi-



cant support for only \$35 per year. We'll emphasize that again: If every member of the Church budgeted merely \$35 per year toward support of LifeSpring, our struggling budget would be rejuvenated! Will you commit to helping us prepare tomorrow's pastors for just \$35 every year? Hundreds of LifeSpring students will thank you.

Now let's talk about our new hybrid delivery model. Our new "simulcast" approach makes LifeSpring courses more accessible than ever. It puts many "remote classrooms" together into one real-time, fully interactive classroom where students can talk to the instructor and to each other — all this over a standard Internet connection! If you can't be present at one of our simulcast sites, you can view the instruction live in any Web browser, streamed to your personal computer. This simulcast technology, coupled with traditional online methods, makes our hybrid approach to instruction truly twenty-first century. It is yet another step forward in fulfilling the promise to "take training to the people."

Finally, some important upcoming dates you will want to note:

- November 15 - CBS late application deadline
- November 27 - Winter/spring scholarship application deadline (CBS/DPM students)
- November 15 - December 15 - Winter/spring course registration

Donors, students, or prospective students can contact us at www.lifespringschool.org.



General Conference Convention

A review . . .

Facilities: A network of comfortable, spacious buildings for lodging, meeting, and relaxing dominated the sprawling but well-manicured Pheasant Run campus, where golf and swimming offered appealing diversions.

Fellowship: Resort hallways offered several specialty shops and unique settings where strolling conventioners would often meet and greet or stop and talk.

Climate: Temperatures were controlled indoors, while weather was warm and humid outdoors, with late-night thunderstorms.

Music: Folks enjoyed everything, from solos to family ensembles, the Randy Sanders sing-alongs, team-led hymns, and the convention choir.

Spoken Word: Ten workshop presenters and ten preachers fed us this week, including 60+ minute lectures on "True Love Doesn't Wait" and "God's Love and the Problem of Evil," and an exuberant 90+ minute sermon.

General Conference business: A record number of 665 persons registered for these sessions. Jose Hernandez, Samuel Holland, and Loren Stacy were returned to the board of directors, and Mark Caswell was elected for the first time.





Amazing Love

**Pheasant Run Resort
St. Charles, Illinois
July 18-23, 2011**

Early-week differences on the convention floor gave way to a placid and praiseworthy resolve on Friday.

Sabbath: Nearly 1,800 persons worshiped and heard morning and evening messages, embellished by wonderful programs by CoG7's children and the African Children's Choir. This day's worship was streamed live around the world, as were the previous evening services.

Fraternal delegates: Brethren came from abroad (Jamaica, St. Croix, and Trinidad) and from the Seventh Day Baptist Church.

CD's/DVD's: A list of convention presentations available for purchase may be seen at www.cog7.org.

Churchmanship: Two couples unable to attend convention — Joe and Lillian Shapitka of Eugene, Oregon, and Charles and Lorraine Carr of Conroe, Texas — were announced and honored as recipients of Churchmanship Awards by G. C. President Whaid Rose.

Convention Program Committee: Thanks to Charles Carr, Ray and Shelly Bobcombe, Miguel and Natalie Garcia, Ken and Elizabeth Keim, Harold and Vona Ogren, Nugget and Sue Gold (co-directors).





Asia

The end of 2010 marked Elder Bill Hicks' visit to India and Myanmar, paving the way for a bright future in Zone 4 mission fields. The nine-day visit was packed with pastors' conferences and training in East and West Godavari, Khammam and Krishna Districts, and an All India Pastors' Conference and Training in Hyderabad. Leaders came from the northeastern state of Mizoram to the southern-most state Kanya Kumari.

At this three-day conference, a new board was elected for the Association of the Churches of God (Seventh Day) India, headed by George Hnamte as chairman. Jacob Rao continues as general secretary.

Myanmar. Bill Hicks, George Hnamte, and Jacob Rao visited Myanmar for a two-day conference in Yangon, attended by 22 pastors, leaders, and evangelists. The first-ever board of the National Conference of the Churches of God (Seventh Day) Myanmar was elected.

New fields. Correspondence from several congregations/leaders seeks to establish new CoG7s in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. We plan to visit the states of Kanya Kumari, Tamil Nadu, Imphal, Manipur, Tripura, and Uttar Pradesh next year to preach and plant churches. We request prayers and support for these pioneer efforts.

Kerala mission. In May 2011, Jacob Rao visited Kerala state on India's southwest coast. Traditionally it is believed that the apostle Thomas landed here and preached Christ for some years before being martyred in A.D. 72. During this visit, a congregation was formally launched at Trissur, Kerala.

Church buildings. With generous help from G. C. Missions, construction of the church in Umameshwaram has begun. We humbly request funds for completing this building and for repair of a small church in Mizoram, damaged by hail. Construction of the church building in Laxmipuram, Andhra Pradesh is now complete.

Children's ministry. In 2010 we requested 500

gift boxes for our Sabbath school children, as well as for slum or street children outreach ministry. We humbly request individual sponsors/churches to sponsor these gift boxes — either through Samaritan's Purse or with funds to enable us to procure the same.

— V. Jacob S. Rao
IMC Zone 4 Representative
General Secretary, ACoG7I

Pacific Rim

Philippines. The 54th annual Philippines national conference was held in April at the church's Opol Convention Center near Cagayan de Oro City. About 600 attended. Elders Calvin Burrell and Phil Kordahi, representing Missions Abroad and IMC Zone 6, were guest speakers. National president and pastor Billy Abugan shared his vision for the Filipino church, and 28 brothers were ordained into various levels of ministry.

Indonesia. This year, Pastor Alfred Ander has evangelized in East Kalimantan province, where prospects look promising. Funding is needed to purchase land in Sangatta and build a center for education and training, which would also house the church. One aim of the school is to help people find jobs and support themselves.

Australia-Ghana. Australian Elder David Kidd and his wife, Angella, assisted Dreamland Primary School in Akumandan, Ghana, for one month in February. This school of about 300 children was founded by CoG7 Pastor James Dugger and his wife. His vision is to expand the school to secondary level. Angella Kidd's knowledge and teaching experience were much appreciated by students and other teachers. Elder Kidd held leadership sessions, preached in local churches, and helped with evangelism.

— Phil Kordahi
IMC Zone 6 Representative

The Church We Want to Be

Every two years during convention, such as the recent one near Chicago, members of the General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day) come together for worship and fellowship, to learn of the church that we are, and to work on becoming the church we want to be. As we go forward toward that goal of becoming the church we want to be, we will do well to keep in mind Colossians 2:2-7. There, the apostle Paul wrote:

My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness (NIV).

The first three characteristics of the church we want to be are provided in verses 2 and 3. We want to be a church of believers who 1) have courageous hearts, 2) are united in love, and 3) have understanding that leads to a full knowledge of Jesus Christ. The Greek behind the English translation suggests that the encouragement that causes courageous hearts is the result of “having been” united in love. Here is the progression of verse 2: Love unites, unity encourages, and those who are thus united and encouraged are able to “know the mystery of God, namely, Christ.” That’s the sequence we want to enjoy and the church we want to be. We want to love and encourage one

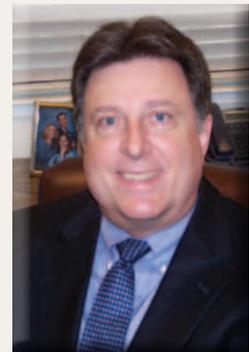
another. We want to know Christ so fully that all of His wonderful love and mercy and grace flow from us into the lives of others.

The final three characteristics in this passage are found in verses 4-7. We want to be a church of believers who 4) will not be deceived, 5) exhibit a soldier’s discipline, and 6) live Christ-centered lives. In the first two of these, Paul borrowed terms from the courts and the military of his day. The possibility of being deceived by “fine-sounding arguments” calls to mind a defense attorney trying to persuade a jury to acquit a guilty defendant. We do not want to be misled. The Greek words translated “orderly” and “firm” in verse 5 were used to describe soldiers, well-ordered by rank, solidly dug in and prepared for battle. That’s what we want to be in a spiritual sense: “rooted and built up in [Christ], strengthened in the faith . . . overflowing with thankfulness.” That’s the church we want to be.

This year’s convention provided us with a few ups and downs. We were made very much aware of the tremendous blessings that are ours as the church we are, but also of the work we still need to do to become the church we want to be. Above all, we were reminded of our need to draw closer and closer to Christ. By tuning ourselves to Him, as instruments all tuned to the same tuning fork, we find ourselves in tune with one another.

— Loren Stacy, Chairman
Board of Directors

President Whaid Rose will return to this page in the next issue.



shine Medical & Dental Mission of COG7



Serving Him In Nations Everywhere

This international, interstate team of doctors, dentists, medical and dental assistants, pastors, and support personnel traveled to Ecuador June 19-27, serving 3,756 persons of limited means in two locations there. See page 25 for more on this trip, championed and supported by your G. C. Missions and CoG7s of Northern California. Visit www.cog7missions.org/.

“Let your light so SHINE . . .” (Matthew 5:16).