



Spiritual Formation

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2012: Year of the Spirit

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Calvin Burrell: Editor

Sherri Langton: Associate Editor

Keith Michalak: Director of Publications, graphics

Sylvia Corral, Raul González: Translation, proofing

LeRoy and Hope Dais, Linda Michalak: Correspondence, proofing, clerical

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New Hope Song

We've hung a new calendar for this year. What else is new? No new Eternal One for 2012 — just the same Almighty and His inspiring Word. New translations, maybe, but the same grace and truth, more ancient than hills: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Psalm 90:2). Same God and Savior — yesterday, today, forever.

Not too many new problems this year either — just new twists on the old ones. Same Satan — still accusing, still tempting in the same fallen world through the same unholy flesh, and with the same devilish sins. Ugh!

New elections this fall. People play the same earthy games, here and abroad. This new world order feels a lot like the old disorder. Nothing new under the sun? Not yet, but who knows? Let's hope, do all the good we can, wait, and see.

Is anything really new, then? No, says the cynic. We're stuck on repeat; we've seen the whole vain show before. There's truth in that, but not the whole truth. The same Book that says, "Nothing new under the sun" also says, "I make all things new." His mercy and compassion are "new every morning."

That's a fresh thought, worth a new song: "Mercy is fresh like early dew, gentle rain, God's Spirit dove;/All things are washed and new through the Son of His love."

What else is promised in "all things new"? The Word names new birth, new heart, new spirit, new fruits, new creatures, new covenant, new commandment, new name, new fruits, new garment, new harvest, new life, new man, new way, new tongues, new treasures, new wine, new heavens and new earth. These add ever more verses to our new song. Write on!

New trust and up-to-date obedience bring fresh ways of telling the age-old story of Jesus' love, modern steps in the ancient paths of good and right, recent illustrations and current applications of God's vintage truth and grace. All His ways are old like mountains, new like rivers.

Let's be done with sameness, lameness, tameness in 2012. From the written Word, the Holy Spirit is ever non-conforming us to the world while reforming and transforming our hearts like unto the incomparable, timeless Christ. Read on!

— Calvin Burrell



[Spirit-formed]



Welcome, Holy Spirit

Abundantly more:
an invitation to the
deeper life.

by **Whaid G. Rose**

The T-shirt reads: “It’s a Holy Spirit thing. You wouldn’t understand.” This statement reflects a commonly held view of the ministry of the Holy Spirit: It happens in believers’ lives, but the effects are so powerful, they remain mysterious and elusive.

At the other end of this spectrum are

conservative Christians for whom the very subject evokes fear and discomfort. One writer observes, “[They] all can affirm this theologically, but pragmatically [they] act as though the Holy Spirit died with the early church.”¹

Accordingly, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit suffers from extremes on both sides of the theological aisle. The goal of “Spirit-Formed” in CoG7’s “Vision of a Vibrant Twenty-first Century Church” is living out a biblically balanced view of the Holy Spirit, thereby experiencing the deeper life promised while steering clear of extremes. Being Spirit-formed is an invitation to discover the depths of the Spirit, to better understand and embrace the ministry of the Spirit in the lives of believers and in the church.

Symbols of the Spirit

We do so by giving close attention to key terms and symbols used in Scripture referring to the Spirit. Among the most common is Comforter (John 14:16; 16:7), from the Greek *paraclete*, “to come alongside; to strengthen.” This is generally illustrated by the idea of an advocate or legal counsel testifying to truth in a court of law – the reason the Holy Spirit is also called “the Spirit of truth” (see John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13).

Other symbols include wind, which pictures the Spirit’s involvement not only with creation (Genesis 1:1, 2), but also with the new birth (John 3:5-8). Fire speaks of power, as manifested at Pentecost (Acts 2:3). Water symbolizes cleansing and quenching of thirst, an association Jesus made in John 7:37-39:

On the last day, that great

day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Dove, a symbol of purity, humility, and gentleness, was the sign of the Spirit’s presence at Jesus’ baptism (Matthew 3:16). Oil is associated with healing (James 5:14) and depicts anointing, the meaning of Messiah – “the anointed one” (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18). The Spirit is also called a seal or guarantee of our future inheritance (2 Corinthians 5:5; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). And because the number seven symbolizes holiness and perfection, the “seven Spirits of God” in Revelation (see 1:4, 3:1, 4:5; 5:6) depict the uniqueness and completeness of the Spirit’s ministry.

Pentecost

The presence of this supernatural Spirit in the lives of millions of believers may be the basis for Jesus’ promise that New Testament believers will do “greater works” than He (John 14:12). It may also be the reason blasphemy against Jesus can be confessed and forgiven, but denial of the Spirit who convicts people of sin and makes salvation effective, is different:

There is a marked difference between slandering the Son of Man in His veiled condition, and slandering Him after the Holy Spirit, the Gift of His exaltation, had completely vindicated His claim to deity. Many who doubtless had spoken evil against Jesus in the days of His flesh, when they received the fuller light of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, became His ardent disciples.²

Understanding the meaning and significance of Pentecost also helps our understanding of the Spirit’s work:



When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4).

Pentecost is the Greek name for the Jewish Feast of Weeks, celebrated seven weeks after the Feast of Firstfruits to commemorate the wheat harvest. Over centuries, this typified the firstfruits of “the gospel harvest,” the first harvest of the souls who would accept Jesus by faith in response to the preaching of the gospel. Rightly understood, therefore, Pentecost is to our salvation experience what power is to an engine. “Pentecost made available to men all that Calvary made possible.”³

Abundantly more

Drawing upon “the twin centres of Calvary and Pentecost,”⁴ we discover the “abundantly more” of the gospel. Not only are our sins forgiven, which is

no small matter, but we are being sanctified by the indwelling Spirit. Alan Redpath reportedly said, “The conversion of a soul is the miracle of a moment; the making of a saint is the task of a lifetime.”

This twofold aspect of the gospel is described as “the work of the Son of God *for us* . . . [and] the work of the Spirit of God *in us*.”⁵ This is illustrated in Paul’s letter to the Romans. Chapters 1-7 show man’s failure to obtain righteousness through the law. Chapter 8 illustrates how the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in those who no longer “walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (see vv. 1-4). God’s grand purpose for the Christian is conformity to Christ’s image (vv. 28, 29), which happens through the work of the Spirit. The Spirit brought physical life at Creation and enables spiritual life in salvation, transforming victims of the Fall into “a new creation” in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) — the church.

Right balance

We learn from this brief overview that there’s more to the ministry of the Holy Spirit than meets the eye. This realization informs the way we live, separating status quo believers from

those thirsty for “Spirit-fullness.” It causes spiritual hunger and an increasing discomfort with shallow religious experience.

In Scripture, the revelation of the law at Sinai correlates with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. Paul underscores that the giving of the law was accompanied by a measure of glory, but that it pales like a candle in relation to the light that now shines through the Spirit on this side of the cross:

But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? (2 Corinthians 3:7, 8).

The Church is therefore wise in balancing Bible-based (“a people of the Book”) with Spirit-formed (“a people of the Spirit”) for, according to the old adage, “All law and no Spirit, believers dry up. All Spirit and no law, believers blow up. Law and Spirit in good balance, believers grow up.”

This flows over into the way we do church. Because the Holy Spirit baptizes believers into Christ’s body and distributes spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:11-13) for its effective function (Ephesians 4:11-13), the Spirit is said to be the “administrator of the church.” Because the Holy Spirit “convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment” (John 16:8), reveals Christ (15:26), and empowers believers to take the gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), the Spirit is

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The church grows as its members yield to the Spirit’s control and as the corporate body gives priority to the work of the Spirit.

Questions & Answers

Where do you stand on the personal nature and identity of the Holy Spirit?

God is holy and God is Spirit. Thus God is Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is divine — not human or “other.” Rather than an impersonal “force” from God or a mechanical “extension” of God, the Holy Spirit should be regarded as God’s personal presence with and within His people on earth.

Is the Holy Spirit, then, a third person of the Godhead, as the Father and Son are persons? There is no simple answer nor complex formula by which the Christian Deity may be fully analyzed and finally summarized.

When we speak of God in heaven — transcendent and wholly other — we think of the Father. When we speak of God on earth — imminent and knowable — we think of the Son. When we speak of God now at work in the world and in our hearts — convicting, teaching, comforting, guiding, and empowering — we think of the Holy Spirit. Still, we confess only one true and living God who has become all things to His people.

Consider this biblical evidence. Since the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in most apostolic salutations, benedictions, or doxologies (as are the Father and Son); since the Spirit is not pictured as enthroned or reigning in heaven (as are Father and Son); since the Holy Spirit is not recorded as being worshiped or as being addressed in prayers (as are Father and Son); and since the Holy Spirit participates in no “I-Thou” communications with Father or Son as they do with each other; thus it is better to think of the Spirit as the personal presence of the Father and Son on earth and within believers, rather than as a third person of the Godhead.

— *From Chapter 2 of This We Believe*
(see pp. 16-17)

I have witnessed the practice of people taking their deceased loved ones to be waked at a church. Is this biblical?

First, I’ll clarify my understanding that your question does not refer to awakening of the deceased but to a common religious service for viewing the corpse before burial — a *wake*.

Searching for Scriptures that address how and where the dead are to be eulogized and their bodies disposed of, we find nothing that directly addresses the propriety of dead bodies in the tabernacle, temple, church, or other sacred assembly. Because the Bible says little on this topic, church practices regarding the dead and their burial are likely to be influenced as much by culture as by Scripture.

If we broaden the topic to include contact with dead bodies, several limiting texts are found in Mosaic covenant laws (see, for example, Lev. 21:1-3, 11; Num. 19:11-14, 22). In the New Testament, however, less restrictive practices prevail.

We read in the Gospels that holy women prepared spices and oils to anoint Jesus’ dead body, evidently feeling no reluctance to perform that service (Luke 23:55, 56). More relevant is the case of Tabitha (Dorcas), whose lifeless body was washed by the disciples and laid in an upper room while the church mourned there (Acts 9:36-42).

With these pieces of evidence, and lacking biblical instruction to the contrary, we see no good reason for the church to discourage the practice of holding Christian funeral services — *wakes* — in its facilities set aside for worship and sacred assembly.

— *Elder Calvin Burrell*

A Day of Grace

Orphans half a world away can trigger a whole new way of seeing.
by **Jenny Anklam**



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As a single young adult, I went on several missions trips to various countries. When I visited China in the summer of 2001, God taught me one of my biggest lessons about His character and His love for the human race.

I've always had a heart for orphans and volunteered at an orphanage in El Salvador several summers. This was a happy place, and I had the sense that children there were the "lucky" ones.

The orphanage in China was different. As staff members with a group of mostly teenagers, our main project there was to work with Chinese high schoolers in a cultural exchange program, hoping to share our faith in the process. We would also visit an orphanage, a visit I eagerly looked forward to.

We almost weren't allowed to do that. Due to a series of negative reports on American and

British television, the Chinese government began greatly restricting access to their orphanages by "outsiders." After a twenty-four-hour train ride from Beijing, we arrived in Lanzhou (central China) to learn that permission had been granted after all. We would visit the orphanage!

Chinese law says that each family is allowed only one child, and boys are esteemed above girls. Since most families want a son to carry on their family name and fortune, many baby girls are abandoned. Children with any type of disability are also regularly discarded, because people don't want their one heir to be "imperfect." The heartbreaking result is orphanages full of little girls and handicapped children.

Ministry to orphans

Entering the orphanage, we were greeted by apparently happy and healthy older children.

(Later I realized that they seemed healthy because only the strong could have survived to that age.) Then our group entered the infant/toddler section — large rooms full of cribs for babies and other rooms filled with toddlers. In the first room the rotten smell of urine overwhelmed us. We soon realized that this facility had no running water. There were maybe two Chinese women working in a room with at least thirty children. Had they had the desire to truly care for these children, they didn't have the means or enough helpers to do so.

We played with some of the toddlers first, and they enjoyed seeing the few balloons we brought with us. One toddler caught my attention. He seemed to be tied with a rope onto his potty seat. Going over to him, I realized he was blind. But as soon as I touched his arm, the biggest smile enveloped his

whole face. He was so full of joy at any type of human contact. I sang some songs to him and touched his arms and face, and he was so happy. But as soon as I left, the blank, empty look returned.

I peeked into several rooms and saw rows and rows of cribs filled with frail little bodies. One room was very quiet, with no workers seen in there. Looking closer, I saw that these babies were even skinnier than the others. They looked like skeletons and were covered with flies! I realized that this must be where they put deathly ill children, not expected to live.

In another room the babies had no diapers but were wrapped in some sort of burlap material tied around the waist with twine. They hadn't been changed in a while. Each baby I picked up was soaked to the bone and smelled foul. These babies were extremely thin, with skin stretched tight over their bones. Most of them wore no clothes — just the offensive, scratchy “diapers.” Many of the children had cleft lips or palates, none of them yet corrected by surgery. A few had Down's syndrome, and some appeared to be crippled in their legs or arms.

Awesome presence

I have never felt so useless. All we could do was cuddle these babies, give them attention, sing, and pray for them. Some of them looked too frail to even pick up, so I just touched them and prayed. Those who seemed sturdier I carefully lifted and held.

Oddly, these babies didn't seem to cry. It was as if they knew that no one would re-

spond, so they had given up trying long ago. My heart broke as I held each new baby. I sat on a bed, rocking these poor children and staring into clear, brown eyes that seemed too wise and sorrowful for those of an infant. Their gaping holes where lips and mouths should have been couldn't offer even a smile of thanks. I had to swallow my pride just to hold them. They stank so badly, and my clothes got soaked with their waste.

This was the most horrible place I had ever seen. Yet strangely, the song “You Are Awesome In This Place” kept running through my mind, and I sang it quietly to the frail little creatures in my arms. I did feel His presence there, for God dwells among the brokenhearted and the outcast. He truly is the Father to the fatherless. I know He cares deeply for those children. It breaks His heart to see them, too.

Grace lesson

I began to sense the lesson God wanted me to learn that day, about grace. Here I was, surrounded by this country's “unmentionables” — unloved, unwanted, abandoned; smelly, sickly, disfigured. They had nothing to offer; some of them were

too sick to even smile. Yet I was filled with such an overwhelming sense of love for these children because I knew they were precious in the eyes of God.

And then the message of grace hit me: This is how God sees all of us! This is how God sees me! To Him, we are all hopelessly crippled, disfigured, and filled with the rank odor of sin. We have all been scarred and hurt by life in some way. We have all sinned and fallen short of His glory. And yet God loves us. By His grace, we are no longer orphans, but adopted. We belong to Him.

That is my only hope for those precious little ones I had to leave behind in China. They are not really orphans; they do have a heavenly Father who loves them and cares for them. Even when the whole world has turned its backs on them, He is there.

There wasn't much conversation riding the bus back to our university dorm rooms that day. Later, in discussing our orphanage experience, we sat and cried for at least two hours, our hearts breaking again as we relived those moments. Nearly ten years later, I still can't even write about it without weeping.

I wish I could have taken them all home with me that day. Of

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*The Anklams (L to R):
Andrew, Jenny, Emma,
and Caleb*

Life and Death Choices

@ Stefano Lunardi—Dreamstime.com

While we cheer pro-life progress, it's no time to give up the fight. **by Brian Franks**

On the precipice of this new creation He stood, with one more being to make. He had spoken everything else into existence, but that would not be enough for this last effort, which would share His likeness. No, His hands must form His greatest handiwork. Stooping down to the dust, He gathered and sculpted it into marvelous form, finishing with His own breath to give it life. And then He declared it very good.

* * * *

As the mother watched the procedure on ultrasound, the vacuum catheter slowly approached its prey, harmlessly floating through the amniotic fluid of her protective womb. This new creation had done no wrong, said no words, good or

bad. But if allowed to continue, this life so thoughtlessly begun by its DNA donors would be inconvenient to them. With the catheter now in position, the vacuum was switched on and quickly disassembled this one so fearfully and wonderfully being made. Another soul snuffed out.

Abortion is one of many human acts in which we think we know better than God. We debate when life begins, thinking that if our laws decide it's not at conception, then abortion isn't really wrong.

Life debate

When does life start? Many thinkers regard birth as the beginning, but science makes no mistake. Pro-abortion geneticist Ashley Montagu admits, ". . . life begins, not at birth, but con-

ception" (naapc.org). Until pre-human nuclei from a man and woman merge at conception, there exists only the potential for a human. The moment they do unite, the resulting cell becomes a new and unique human being.

An unborn baby has a beating heart, the symbol of life, just three weeks after conception. That may be only a week after a woman discovers she's pregnant. All these points are moot to most Christians. God's Word says that each person's beginning and identity are found in Him, long before conception. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you . . ." (Jeremiah 1:5; see also Psalm 139:16). The conception that exists in God's mind is long before we earth-parents get involved.

Abortion is impossible before conception because there is

nothing to abort. If human life begins at conception, then how is it not murder? To murder is to strike one made in God's image, though he has done nothing worthy of death. To approve abortion is to not love our neighbor as ourselves. To abort is to destroy the handiwork of God, who is "knitting" together that being in the womb.

Reasons to abort

More incriminating to those who abort are the primary reasons they do so. Women give three major reasons, according to the Guttmacher Institute. Three-quarters say that having a baby will interfere with work, school, or other responsibilities. Another three-quarters say they cannot afford a child, and half say they do not want to be single parents or are experiencing problems with their husbands or partners (*Abort73.com* - U.S. Abortion Statistics).

These are matters of convenience. None are life-threatening to the mother. Politically, abortion may be called "pro-choice," but the most important choices aren't much considered. The physician chooses to make money, the parents choose their convenience, and God's choice is ignored, as is the unborn's. Everyone who favors abortion has already been born.

If you were the baby in the womb and could talk to your mother who wanted to abort you, would you agree to it? A woman's right to choose abortion tramples the rights of lives that cannot yet speak for themselves.

Christian response

What should the Christian do in response to the abortion issue?

- Educate yourself. Numerous Christian ministries provide information on abortion, like *Abort73* (*abort73.com*).

- Speak out. One who knows about evil but does nothing will be held responsible for his silence (Leviticus 5:1, for example). This is complicity, from which the word accomplice comes. This does not mean illogical, raging arguments. Knowing the facts about abortion, one can argue logically and kindly. Ezekiel (see 33:1-9) was appointed by God as a watchman to sound the alarm when danger appeared. He was not responsible for how people responded to the alarm.

- As you lift your voice about abortion, use the opportunity to speak of the gospel and forgiveness also. Too often we condemn and stop there. God is the judge, but He also loves to forgive those who repent. Abortion too is forgivable. The church is made up exclusively of sinners saved by grace.

- Finally, remember "Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him" (Psalm 127:3). Let us not think that we know better than God. Let us delight in the gift of children and raise them in the way everlasting.

BA

Brian Franks serves the congregation in Walla Walla, WA. He and his wife have a one-year-old son and another son due in March. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.

A Day of Grace

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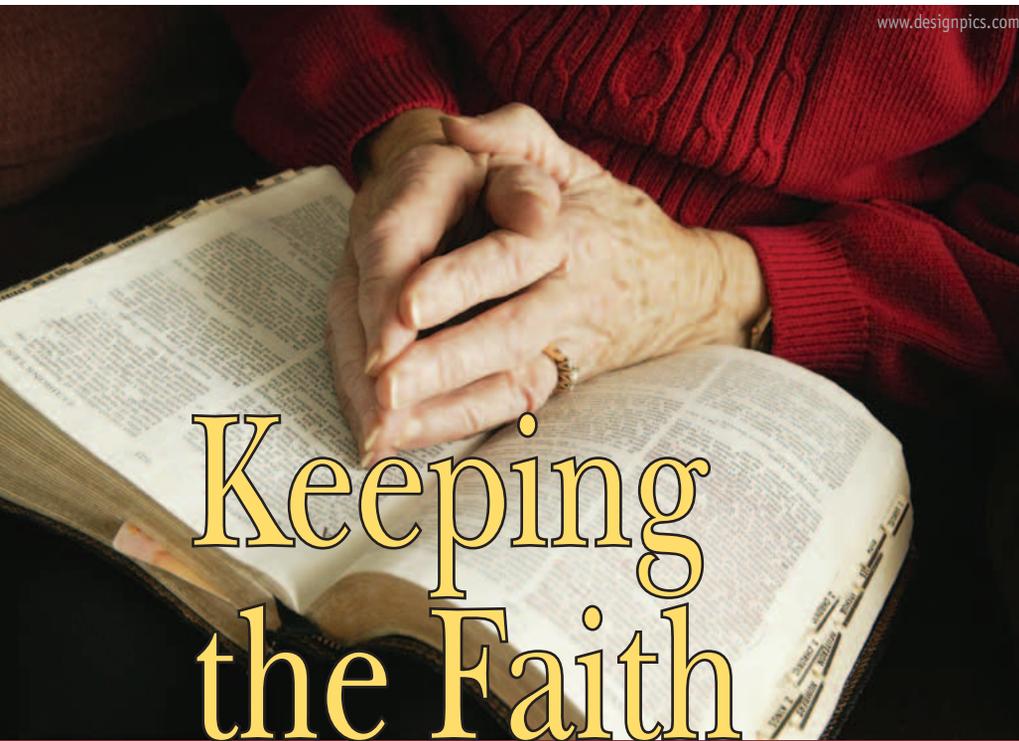
course, that was not possible. I always had the idea that I might adopt children, but since that day, it's been a little girl from China I really want to adopt. I decided that if God ever allowed me to get a child from an orphanage like that and bring her home, I would consider it a great honor and privilege to help Him take care of one. And I would like to name her Grace, for it was in China that God truly showed me a picture of His grace.

Plans to adopt

I am married now, with a wonderful godly husband and two children of our own. I can't help but feel that our little family is not quite complete yet. We are starting the process of adopting a child from China. My little Grace may become a reality — so exciting! It will take a mountain of paperwork, years of waiting, and a financial miracle for us to do it, but through Christ all things are possible.

My husband recently reminded me of the definition of grace: "God's unmerited favor." And that's exactly what Grace will be. We don't deserve her, and we can't afford to adopt her, but she will be God's gift to us if He allows us to bring her home to be a part of our family someday. BA

Jenny Anklam is secretary for the CoG7 Orphans and Widows Ministry. She lives in Tulsa, OK, with her husband, Andrew, and their two children.



Keeping the Faith

Some people of faith, ancient and modern, practiced the one thing that matters most. **by Ken Lawson**

Hebrews 11 is called the Faith Chapter, and rightly so, for faith is the amazing theme of it all. From verse 1 — “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” — all the way to verse 39 — “These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised” — men and women of faith are named and honored for their faith. Then in the last precious verse of the chapter, you and I are included with the many saints of Scripture in this deeply spiritual journey: “God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect” (v. 40).

Why are all those names written in Hebrews 11? Were they the most popular people of their time? Did they win multiple medals in the Olympics or the Nobel Peace Prize? Did they invent some world-changing product or a cure for the common cold?

None of the above. Their names are listed for one and only one reason: They went to their graves without compromising their genuine faith. They did not reject or turn from their belief in the reality of God’s existence and love, their hope in the promise of their Creator and Savior, Jesus Christ.

These faith-heroes were not perfect people. Do a Bible study on these names, and you will

discover the sins and mistakes of most. You will also see that their choice will work for us too. In spite of our sins and imperfections, we must hold to our faith in God’s grace. That one thing will bring us into God’s family and keep us there unto resurrection and eternal life.

Faith as seen in Hebrews 11 must be the most important thing in our lives. We too can go to our graves with an enduring faith, never turning away from it. Faith remains as the one thing that provides genuine hope of justification and redemption from our sins (Romans 5:1-11).

Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses’ parents, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Sampson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel are listed in Hebrews 11. A host of others are also included: those who crossed the Red Sea (v. 29); those who marched around Jericho (v. 30); and God’s servants, the prophets (v. 32). Another host is found in verses 33-38. No names are listed there, but actions are recorded for our learning. Millions and millions of folks fit that category — people of faith.

Modern saints

In my life and yours, there are noteworthy believers. Some have died, but their faithful lives still influence us tremendously (v. 4b). In the margins and spaces around Hebrews 11, I have penciled in the names of some of these precious modern saints. Eight names are from my family. Six are from churches I have served. Two are previous pastors of mine. When I read this chapter, I see their names, just like

those of Joseph and David.

Among these penciled-in folks of Hebrews 11, the name Davy Crowson stands out for me. A young man paralyzed and in a wheelchair, Davy was baptized at Silver Creek Falls youth camp with me and about thirty others.

Just moments after I was baptized, Elder E. A. Straub asked me to pick Davy up and carry him out for baptism. When I got Davy across the slick rocks and into deeper water, my arms were so tired, I couldn't hand him off. Elder Straub just laid his hand on Davy and prayed, then together we lowered him into the water. As Davy came up, his wide smile brought Elder Straub, the big crowd, and me to tears.

As I watched Davy Crowson's faith in action, a still, small voice spoke to my heart: "You could preach the gospel and baptize people all your life!" This was a major part of my calling to pastoral ministry.

The one thing about the Hebrews 11 heroes and those sixteen more I've penciled in the margins is the genuineness of their faith. I encourage you to do the same. Think of those names that remained faithful and that encouraged you by their faith. Pencil them in. Notice them when you read this amazing chapter of faith and hope.

Call to persevere

In a world where faith in God, His Word, His Son Jesus, and the hope of eternal life are mocked and crumbling in the hearts of multitudes, hold onto your faith. This one thing God is ready and able to support. We may lose our friends, our jobs, our homes, our health, and our wealth, but we

must not lose our faith! God's love, forgiveness, and our faith in the work done by Jesus is the victory. We and a huge host of trusting souls will rise to meet Jesus, and eternity will become reality.

The testimonies of Hebrews 11 and of faithful folks today serve this purpose for us. Run the race and hang on! Fix your eyes on Jesus. Endure the difficulties of life. Throw off sin. Finish well — faith intact. That is the one thing! **BA**

Ken Lawson of Cottage Grove, MN, chairs the License and Credentials Committee of the Church's Ministerial Council. Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*.



Steps to Hebrews 11 Faith

1. Seek an encounter with Jesus. Immerse yourself in Him. Believe!
2. Bring Christ your deepest needs. Know that "All things are possible."
3. Pour yourself into God's Word, the story of Jesus our Savior.
4. Place yourself in vibrant, genuine worship regularly.
5. Maintain a daily habit of prayer/praise/reading the Word.
6. Share your faith with others when that door opens to you.
7. Stand against any theory or attack that lessens faith.

Keeping Faith Real

In a world making all-out war against any who claim the faith once revealed, a world constantly compromising absolute truth, keeping faith may seem daunting and impossible. It is not! God is for us. He will not allow more to come against us than we can endure (1 Corinthians 10:11-13).

If your faith is under attack, if you have family or friends about to give up, if you are discouraged, if you are short on answers to those who mock your faith, if the enemy seems stronger than your strength, then do this little Bible study:

- Read Hebrews 4:14-16. Always stay fresh in the seven steps to Hebrews 11 faith (above).
- Read 1 John 4:4. Though you have a real enemy, He is easy to defeat. Read 1 Peter 5:6-10.
- So fight him. Read 1 Timothy 6:12 and Ephesians 6:10-18.
- He loses — Revelation 20:10! We win — Revelation 21:1-7!
- Then say a prayer, asking God to help keep your faith strong and any doubts under full control.

— Ken Lawson

DEFEATING THE

In every wholesome pursuit, imbalanced ones impose their fanatical views. **by Brian Knowles**

I don't know about you, but I believe there is such a thing as a "religious spirit." It can be a mere mentality or an actual spirit that manifests itself in obsessive fanaticism. The net effect of such a mentality is to turn others off to God and true faith. The religious spirit is not limited to Christianity; it can manifest itself in any religion. It can also find expression in political ideology, science, religious humanism, or even medicine.

We've all known excessively religious Christians who indiscriminately follow television personalities as though they were in the place of God. This "follower" or "true believer" mentality encourages cults of personality that can wind up in a People's Temple/Jim Jones-style cult, which proved fatal for hapless hundreds. In the latter half of the twentieth century, we saw a number of such cults arise: the Moonies, Branch Davidians, and Heaven's Gate, to name a few.

These groups were egregiously fanatical. Others are less overt but equally obsessive. Typically, they have circled the wagons around the teaching of

some domineering leader, upon whose every word they hang. All that drips from the self-important leader's lips is viewed as gospel. Followers accept his or her teaching as though it were straight from God himself.

The leaders of such groups will often claim that their teaching comes directly from God. To challenge them is to challenge God. Followers are cowed into cringing submission, and the noose of cultic rules is drawn ever tighter. The faithful are forbidden to have contact with "outsiders," even if they are family members. Leaders take charge of their followers' money, time, and activities. Most importantly, they commandeer the minds of the faithful.

Every religion, including secular ones, has its dark side. Every one can lead to an obsessive religious spirit and mindless fanaticism. Follow the money, follow the power, and study the control freaks of the world, and you'll see what's happening. Here are some scriptural guidelines for avoiding possession by, or involvement with, the religious spirit.

Key questions

Is it idolatrous? Any movement that puts anyone or anything ahead of God is idolatrous. Avoid it. God says, "I am the LORD [YHVH]; that is my name! I

will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols" (Isaiah 42:8). True faith is centered on God, Yeshua, and divine instruction, not on human personalities, movements, ideologies, and cults – environmental or religious.

Does it tend to freedom or bondage? "To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free'" (John 8:31, 32). If something is truth, it does not bring you into bondage. Jesus came to "set the captives free," not to enslave them to anything or anyone. If we are Jesus' disciples, then we are His "bond slaves" and no other's. "Don't you know," wrote Paul, "that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey . . . ?" (Romans 6:16). If we submit to no bondage but Christ's, then we will be free indeed.

What are the fruits? Said Jesus, "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit" (Matthew 7:18). Whether something is good or bad can be determined by what it produces (v. 20). If a leader, a movement, an ideology, or even an idea produces bad fruit, avoid him, her, or it. If it produces death, destruction, bondage, loss of freedom, enslavement,

'RELIGIOUS SPIRIT'

economic collapse, pollution, the destruction of the traditional family, Ponzi schemes, etc. etc., avoid it. In fact, if you have the means, actively oppose it.

Beware of isolation

Many religious cults seek to isolate their members from the world. It is true that Paul warns against unhealthy alliances with unbelievers, citing Isaiah 52:11 to make his point (2 Corinthians 6:14-17). But Paul's instructions are qualified by Jesus' own prayer that the Father wouldn't take His followers out of the world, but protect them from the evil one (John 17:15-19).

Jesus did not want His followers physically separated from the world. Rather, He sent them into the world to preach the gospel and to be light and salt. In Greek, there is a play on words here: "I do not make request that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest take them out of the evil."¹

As Christians, we do not participate in Satan's domain or the evil that it produces. In our lifestyle we are separate, but physically we live in the world, not in an isolated compound near the Dead Sea, or Guyana. The word translated "sanctify" is *hagiazō* in the Greek. It means to "make holy, consecrate, sanctify."² Bauer says the last sentence of verse 19 could be translated "I

dedicate myself for them (the disciples)"³

Jesus lived in the world, and He fully participated in it occupationally as a carpenter, socially as a Jew, and spiritually as a rabbi. He engaged people at every level. He had done so from childhood. His Father did not hate the world; He loved it so much that He gave Jesus as a sacrificial gift to save it (John 3:16).

Our possession of the truth of God sets us apart. We march to the beat of a different drummer. We take our cues from heaven, not from the spiritual darkness of this world. We are here collectively to preach the gospel, live kingdom values, and set a Christ-like example. We do not hide our light under a bushel. We do not cringe in a corner, geographically separated from those to whom we are called to serve. As Jesus taught in Mark 2:15-17, while He dined at Levi's house, it's not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. Jesus and His disciples did not isolate themselves from these people. They freely mixed with them and ministered to them. It was such people, and worse, who made up the church (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Perilous plague

The religious spirit is a plague in the world. It is destructive, isolating, fanatical, crazy-making, alienating, and distorting. It in-

vites the "darkness of this world" to express itself. It manifests itself in Christian cults, in fanatical Catholics and Protestants, in all the world's religions, in the global warming and environmental movements, in animal and gay rights movements, in feminism, in Neo-Nazi groups, in evangelistic communism, in terrorism, in the natural health movement, in political ideologies, in science, in the medical profession ad nauseum.

The religious spirit represents a loss of balance, a closing off of any other possibility. It is exclusivist, saying, "My way or the highway." It is "zeal, but not according to knowledge." It is obsessive, closed-minded, and bigoted. It needs to be fought and defeated at every turn. **BA**

Once managing editor for *Plain Truth* magazine, **Brian Knowles** now writes for *The Sabbath Sentinel* and other publications from his home in Monrovia, CA. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



1. *The Englishman's Greek New Testament*, p. 297
2. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, p. 8
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9

NAMC PRESENTS .

In cooperation with Bible Advocate Press, the North American Ministerial Council announces imminent publication of *This We Believe: Teachings of the Church of God (Seventh Day)*. This 200-page book is scheduled to go to press by January 31, 2012, with distribution expected to start in mid-February.

What was the last full-length book of CoG7 teachings? *The Bible Home Instructor* was published by the Church (both Stanberry and Salem conferences) between 1919 and 1946.

How can this new book serve the Church? In addition to being a personal handbook on Bible teachings for every minister and member, *This We Believe* may serve as a textbook in our church schools, a source book in church and school libraries, and a gift book to any interested person. Churches should order a supply for the many local uses that arise.

Who are the book's authors? Primary contributors are listed in the book's Preface, abridged and reprinted on this page. Many other ministers read one or more chapters and made suggestions that found their way into the final text.

What's the price? Single copies will be shipped for less than \$10 (postpaid), with multiple copies at discounted prices.

When and how may copies be obtained? Books should be available on or shortly after February 15, 2012. Contact the Bible Advocate Press, P. O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233; phone 303-452-7973; or e-mail bap.orders@cog7.org. Plans are to make the book available in e-book format as well.

Abridged Preface from *This We Believe*:

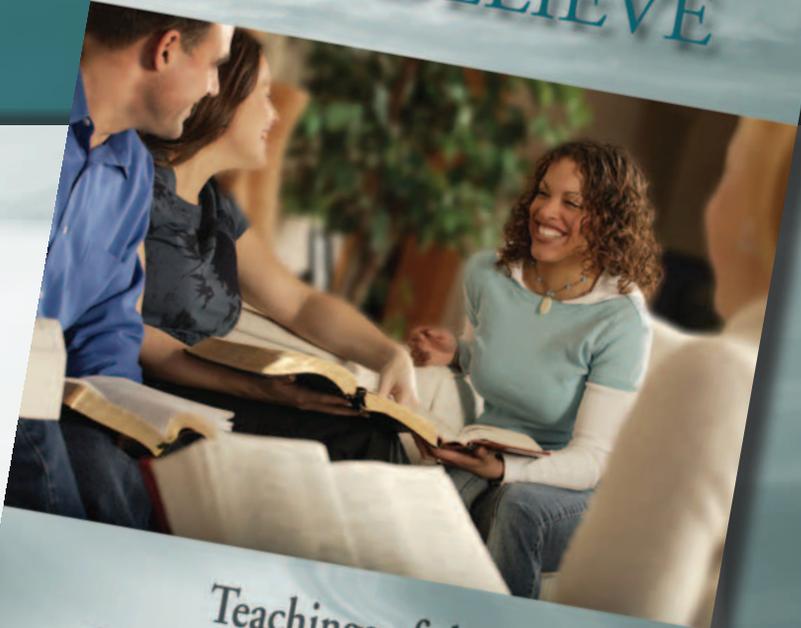
The Church of God (Seventh Day) maintains an open creed — one that can be (and has been) amended with the passage of time. In Overland Park, Kansas in 2006, our latest Statement of Faith was adopted by the North American Ministerial Council as official Church doctrine. It represents our present best understanding of basic Bible teaching. At that meeting the NAMC also called for a book-length explanation of this Statement of Faith.

In addition to writing first drafts of two chapters, '06 Council President Robert Coulter appointed five men to serve on a writing committee for this project: Elders Calvin Burrell, Roy Marrs, Max Morrow, Antonio Vega, and Richard Wiedenheft. When Elder Wiedenheft died in 2007, two other ministers — Elders John Lemley and Israel Steinmetz — accepted the invitation to join the writing committee.

For the next three-and-one-half years, these men worked diligently to produce manuscripts that presented the biblical basis for our Statement of Faith. In general, one man would take responsibility for writing the first draft of a chapter, after which the rest of the committee would provide feedback and recommendations. By the time a second or third draft was completed, it was impossible to attribute a given chapter to a single writer. Each was, to a large degree, the product of the committee as a whole.

As chapters neared completion, input was sought from all the Church's ministers and further improvements were made in this manner for about a year. The book was approved for final editing at the 2010 NAMC meeting in Colorado Springs. The five years of work that have gone into creating it

THIS WE BELIEVE



Teachings of the Church of God (Seventh Day)

represent a mere fraction of the many lifetimes of study and wisdom that inform its content.

We hope this writing will reach a broad audience who share our conviction that Scripture is the only authoritative rule of faith and practice for the body of Christ. We do not attempt to defend Scripture against the writings of other faiths, nor do we appeal to creeds, church tradition, or other extra-biblical sources as foundation for our belief. Our primary concern was not to argue against the beliefs of others, but rather to clearly explain why we believe what we believe in light of Scripture. Rather than trying to disprove our detractors or convince the skeptics, we leave the convicting, teaching, and sanctifying work to the Holy Spirit.

For fellow Christians of other denominations, this book serves as a means of dialogue and information regarding our distinctive beliefs and practices. For those within our denomination, it serves to clarify, inform, encourage, and strengthen us in our shared convictions regarding Scripture. Among other uses, it can serve as a textbook in our training programs, an aid for individual and group Bible studies, and a reliable source of information regarding our denomination's doctrines.

Writing theology is never easy. Writing it by committee is an even greater challenge. The process humbled us, knit our hearts together, and reminded us often of the need for the fruit and gifts of the Spirit in our lives. We thank God for the uniting work of the Holy Spirit in and through us as we wrote and rewrote. And we thank the entire NAMC, especially its final review committee, for

their partnership in this important and historic task.

The success of this project depends entirely upon the grace of God. Anything true in this book we attribute entirely to Jesus Christ, who is the truth, and to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Anything in error we attribute to ourselves, the weakness of our flesh, and the limitation of our knowledge. In this way we desire that any good that comes of this book will be to the glory of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Above all, we desire this book to be a tool in God's hand as He advances His kingdom in the world. ^{BA}

— Writing Committee
North American Ministerial Council

Idols in the Sanctuary

Are we in danger of breaking the first commandment — and don't even know it?
by Bob Hostetler

King Ahaz wasn't looking for trouble, necessarily. He had simply traveled to Damascus to pay homage to Tiglath-Pileser, the Assyrian king who had recently come to Ahaz's aid. There, a pagan altar caught his eye, and he sent back instructions to Uriah, the priest of God at the temple in Jerusalem.

So Uriah the priest built an altar, just like the plans King Ahaz had sent him from Damascus. Uriah finished the altar before King Ahaz came back from Damascus. When the king arrived from Damascus, he saw the altar and went near and offered sacrifices on it. He burned his burnt offerings and grain offerings and poured out his drink offering. He also sprinkled the blood of his fellowship offerings on the altar. Ahaz moved the bronze altar that was before the Lord at the front of the Temple. It was between Ahaz's altar and the Temple of the Lord, but he put it on the north side of his altar (2 Kings 16:11-14, NCV).

Ahaz didn't have the bronze altar, the altar of God's house, moved out of the temple. He simply had it moved aside, and placed the new altar in the temple as well.

We may be doing much the same thing in our churches. We haven't turned our backs on the one true God or stopped worshiping Him, but we have allowed some of the pagan idols that surround us to creep into the sanctuary. Sometimes we have lugged them in ourselves. And some we have even placed in prominent places.

We don't keep a golden calf in our vestibule or chant prayers

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to an image, but that doesn't necessarily mean that our lives are free of idols. It may just mean that our idols are more subtle. It may mean that the idols we worship, we worship in ignorance, as the ancient Athenians did (Acts 17:23). Here are a few of the most common.

Consumerism

We shop around until we find a church we like. It's natural to consider practical needs when evaluating a church and its ministries. But in doing so, we become consumers and not followers of Him who said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve . . ." (Mark 10:45, NASB).

The idol of consumerism goes deeper than that, however. We attend for a while and eventually join — until something happens. Perhaps the pastor failed to visit us in the hospital. Or the lady in the nursery snapped at us when we were late picking up our children. Or the church grows to a point where we don't feel "at home" anymore.

So we move on. We find another church, until something happens there. And then we move on again. Through it all, we treat the body of Christ like a mall or a health club, instead of seeing it as God sees it: as a community, a family, a body.

Celebrity worship

Walk into any Christian bookstore and many churches, and you'll see that we Christ-followers are as prone to celebrity worship as everyone around us — perhaps more so! We idolize famous ath-

letes, authors, preachers, singers — not primarily because of how God uses them but just because they're famous. And sometimes we rush from church to church or conference to conference following not God, but the "anointing" we believe that person has.

Author Marva Dawn writes:

The danger of such "fame" became apparent to me several years ago when a teenager who had heard me speak at a large youth convention saw me in a store in Portland and begged for my autograph. I asked her why my signature was more valuable than hers. We are all equally significant members of the Body of Christ, are we not? We all have crucial parts to play in the church's ministry to the world. The Church should be the last place where anyone is thought to be more important than anyone else.¹

Excellence

Many evangelical churches have bought into a culture of excellence that values the flawless, flashy performance, the charismatic personality, the insane pace. Spiritual director Kasey Warren Hitt says, "Work-

ing as a youth pastor in a large, growing church that had a high level of excellence was exhilarating at first. It felt professional, a cut above the rest. I believed we had figured out how to make the Gospel of Grace attractive, through the most relevant music, drama, décor and message. But I couldn't escape the feeling that something was not quite right. Looking back after a battle with burnout, it dawned on me: we preached and performed grace, but our lives did not reflect grace, neither for us nor for anyone else. Therefore, it felt like a false invitation, something we knew in word, but not deed."

America

America itself is a prominent idol in many evangelical churches. Author and pastor Mike Erre writes "Call it patriotism, call it activism, call it anything you want, but all too often it's a thinly disguised form of idolatry. We're fortunate to be Americans, and we can afford to be justifiably proud of our nation. But it's so easy to step across the line when singing the praises, not of God, but of America and the American way."

We don't keep a golden calf in our vestibule or chant prayers to an image, but that doesn't necessarily mean that our lives are free of idols.

Bob Russell cites what one man wrote when he heard that flags were about to be removed from the church sanctuary and used only for special events. "As a member of this church and a U.S. Navy veteran, I challenge the authority and necessity of taking down the American Flag and the Christian Flag from the Sanctuary. What kind of church are we becoming?"

Success

How ironic that churches, pastors, and church members who claim to follow the One who talked repeatedly about seeking out last place (Mark 9:35), taking the lowest position in a social setting (Luke 14:10), and including the least "important" people in your plans (v. 13) seem so enamored of size and success. Pastor and author Jim Kallam points out:

Scan ads in Christian periodicals and you'll reach this conclusion: Success can be yours. If you need to know how to market your church, try this or that program . . . Listen to how we describe churches. Our words ooze success: "Fastest growing church in the Southwest." "Largest in their denomination." "The church with the key to reaching the next generation."²

Kallam goes on to mention a book that identifies the top one hundred churches in America. Think about that. Do you doubt that size, prestige, and fame were among the criteria for making the list?

Casting down our idols

These are just some of the idols that have crept into our churches. They may be harder to recognize than a golden calf, and harder to correct. But our modern American idols are as abhorrent to God as the idols that tempted ancient Israel. If we don't do something about them, they will corrupt and devastate us just as they did the Israelites.

So how do we cast down our idols? The first step is acknowledgment. When we recognize an idol, we must be humble and repentant, call our pet idolatries by their proper name — sin — and confess each to God.

Once aware of an idol, we must not only refuse to bow to it any longer but also avoid reinforcing it. We must clearly and consciously "set apart Christ as Lord," even as we are careful to make our case "with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15, NIV). Russell says one way to accomplish that in the church is

by using humor whenever possible. "For example, we have three preachers on our preaching team. I wear a tie when speaking, but Dave Stone and Kyle Idleman do not. So we frequently joke about it during the sermon and try to make the congregation see the levity of it."

Finally, casting down our idols will mean giving ourselves anew to prayer and devoting ourselves to the cultivation of new beliefs and new behaviors. We must beg God to replace our false gods with His sufficiency. We must yield to God our consumer attitudes and let Him teach us how to serve, how to give our lives, how to excel in the "grace of giving" (2 Corinthians 8:7, NIV). We must turn our backs on celebrity worship and learn instead to value and imitate the "meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29, KJV). We must relinquish our allegiance to "excellence" and pursue both quality and grace. And we must likewise surrender our exaltation of America and our embrace of success, asking God, in the words of the hymn writer:

The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee
(William Cowper, 1772). **BA**

When we recognize an idol, we must be humble and repentant, call our pet idolatries by their proper name — sin — and confess each to God.

Bob Hostetler
writes from Hamilton, OH.



1. Marva Dawn, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down*, p. 51
2. Jim Kallam, *Risking Church*, p. 52

Welcome, Holy Spirit

continued from page 6

also said to be the “executor of the Great Commission.”

Therefore, ministry without the Spirit, the church’s chief operating agent, is ineffective. The Spirit is given to comfort, correct, instruct, guide, empower, and much more. The church grows as its members yield to the Spirit’s control and as the corporate body gives priority to the work of the Spirit. In so doing, we bear the fruit and exercise the gifts of the Spirit. With fruit on display and the gifts in operation, the church can assault the gates of hell to change the world, as did the early church.

Extended ministry

It’s been observed that in the Incarnation, a physical body was prepared in which Jesus would identify Himself with man and secure their salvation.

In the inauguration of the church, a spiritual body was prepared in which the Holy Spirit would dwell in extending the ministry of Jesus on earth till He returns. For this, we give thanks to God. **BA**

Whaid G. Rose is president of the General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day). He and his wife, Marjolene, live in Denver, CO.

1. Daniel B. Wallace, “Who’s Afraid of the Holy Spirit?,” *Christianity Today* (September 12, 1994)
2. J. Oswald Sanders, *The Holy Spirit and His Gifts*, p. 103
3. *Ibid.*, p. 48
4. *Ibid.*
5. Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit*, p. xii



Islam and 9/11: Survey Results

As part of our ten-year reflection on terrorist attacks in America, we invited folks to report their own 9/11 experience and to complete a survey of opinions on Islam (September-October BA, p. 12). Here we offer our consensus statements of the results of that survey. Online, you may review a statistical summary of the survey results and read how the twenty-five respondents answered our questions.

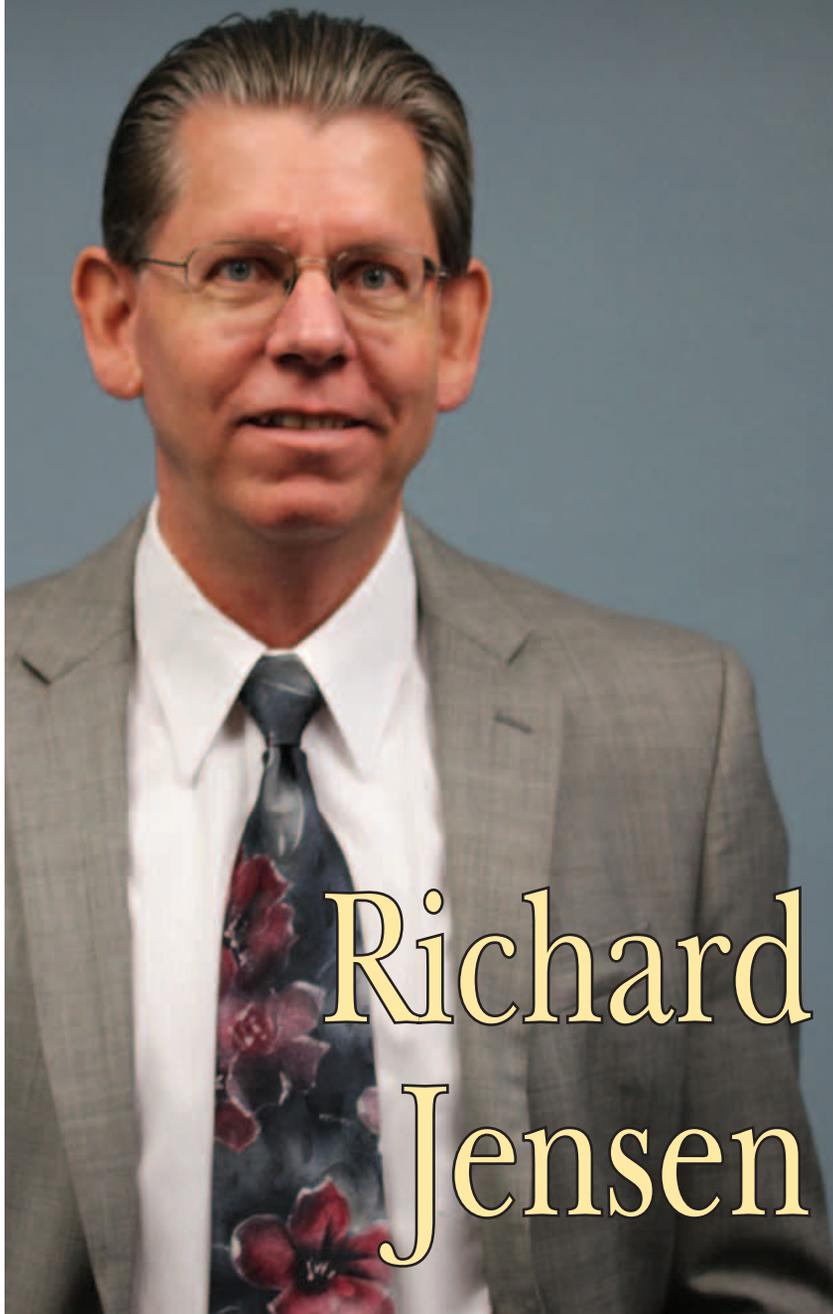
Cumulative responses to opinion survey on Islam, summarized:

- We have a mostly negative view of Islamic faith, tending to believe that Mohammed is the false prophet of Revelation 16. We doubt that a majority of the world’s Muslims either oppose terrorism or prefer to live in harmony with people of other faiths. We believe that Muslim expansionism is a serious threat to world peace in our time.
- We believe that America will experience an increase of permanent Muslim residents similar to that already seen in Europe and that this titanic clash of cultures (Islam vs. Christianity) gives us legitimate reason to fear. Still, most of us agree that Christians should befriend Muslims in our communities and that Jesus’ teaching to bless and pray for our enemies extends even to those who would harm us.
- We’re willing to blame the Koran for the evil deeds of Islamic extremists, but unable to see how some texts of our Bible (Old Testament) have been used for violence against Islamic peoples, the enemies of modern Israel. Muslim terrorists are just doing what their religion teaches, we usually think, while violent Christians throughout history must have misused the Scripture.
- On the other hand, we’re reluctant to say either that most Muslims cheered the events of September 11, 2001, or that Christians were right to celebrate the death of Osama Bin Laden. While we express general support for our country’s military efforts against Islamic terrorists, still we feel there must be a better solution than war to solve the looming problem.

To those who read and responded to our survey, thank you! For more details, click online at baonline.org. **org** **BA**

– Calvin Burrell, Editor

Getting to Know You:



Editor's note: Dr. Richard Jensen came to Colorado in July 2010, to serve as executive director of General Conference Ministries for the Church of God (Seventh Day). Now after his eighteen months on the job, BA invited Dr. Jensen to help the Church come to know him better through this exchange.

BA: You came from the SDA Church. What was Adventism's impact on you, and what attracted you to CoG7?

RJ: Adventism gave me a truly global perspective. By that I don't mean just trying to spread the gospel. I mean a united, concerted effort that takes the Great Commission so seriously that it drives every decision the church makes. Teaching at an SDA university gave me a window into the huge benefits of a truly organized denomination. I came to see the profound value in that sort of organization to accomplish great things for God in the world.

When I first attended Walla Walla Church of God (Seventh Day), I noticed differences that were appealing to me. And I have seen these differences all over this church. CoG7 folks really study their Bibles. Because people don't feel that they have all the truth, they keep searching. There is less pride and arrogance here. I love the "unique but not exclusive" line! Not thinking we are the one true church has a positive effect on people's core attitudes. People seem more genuine to me. I could go on and on, but the long and short of the matter is that I just feel "at home" in CoG7 in a way I never did before.

BA: Address the concern that you came into your current position without adequately knowing our CoG7 culture.

RJ: Most people don't realize that I was exclusively attending the Walla Walla church years before President Rose started talking to me about coming to Denver. At first I was just an attending guest. Then I was asked to do some preaching, and I spent a lot of time talking with Pastors Carl Palmer and Brian Larson in the Spokane church. After a long time talking about doctrinal issues, my wife and I became CoG7 members. Later I received my ministerial license. All that time I was helping any way I could in Walla Walla, with no idea where it was all leading. Even after being invited to join the G. C. staff, it was over a year of discussions before my wife and I agreed. Meanwhile I had been exposed to multiple CoG7 congregations, Super Sabbaths, Ministerial Councils, and so forth. Not exactly green, I had been a full part of CoG7 for about five years when I came to Denver in my current role.

BA: What are your biggest surprises in this job?

RJ: I've done some difficult, complicated things in life, but nothing like this! Most CoG7 members have no idea how many things we're engaged in. For example, I typically answer fifty or more e-mails a day, many of them quite sensitive, requiring time, prayer, and reworking before being sent. While working on an e-mail, the phone rings, and it's a whole different issue. The ability to multi-task and shift gears is constantly needed.

So the biggest surprise is how challenging the job actually is. And the corollary to that is the surprise I feel in hearing that some people actually think the General Conference doesn't really do anything! That's both surprising and disconcerting.

BA: As a world-class rock climber, you spent more than a month of your life doing an unclimbed route on Yosemite's El Capitan. What's the essential life lesson of that feat?

RJ: My partner, Mark Smith, and I were on that wall for thirty-nine days and nights. It turned out that we were putting up what may have been the hardest technical rock climb in the world.

The lesson for me is that regardless of pain, setback, suffering, danger, or opposition, when you believe that your cause is right and important, you pay any price to press forward. It might feel only grim to you now, not wonderful or glorious, but God will use your striving to accomplish great things for His cause. Don't settle for a mediocre life. Always strive for excellence, and God will make your efforts into something magnificent.

BA: As interim director for LifeSpring School of Min-

istry, tell us how the Church can best support LifeSpring's effort to prepare pastors and leaders.

RJ: The key thing people need to decide is whether or not they believe in an educated, trained ministry. To me the answer is slam-dunk obvious! In this era of increased intellectual sophistication and more worldly education than ever, the average person has questions about religion that never occurred to most people fifty years ago. If our ministers cannot respond to such questions and help train our own people, then our denomination will soon become irrelevant and fade from existence. All of us should prioritize Christian education.

The second perspective change we need concerns the way LifeSpring is supported. Many people seem to think that LifeSpring must "make it" by carefully balancing expenses against tuition income. But tuition dollars count for only a small fraction of the income needed to sustain most higher education. Every university and college I'm aware of depends upon ongoing, systematic support from its constituency and/or large endowments, the interest of which dramatically supplements tuition dollars.

So we've asked people to get

Don't settle for a mediocre life.
Always strive for excellence,
and God will make your efforts into
something magnificent.

behind the idea of contributing \$35 per person per year directly to the support of LifeSpring. Some have jumped on board that plan, but most haven't. It is so important that our people recognize LifeSpring as "their school" and systematically contribute to its support. If every member of CoG7 will pledge to directly give LifeSpring \$35 per year, it will revolutionize what LifeSpring can accomplish!

BA: You have often been complimentary about the Denver office staff. What are your goals for these dozen Church employees?

RJ: The spirit of service I see in the office day by day is very uplifting to me! My prayer for these wonderful people is that God will continue to lift them up and keep them of good courage, giving them grace to be most effective in His service.

"Goals" implies doing more in some sense. But I can't imagine our staff doing more, given our current resource constraints. They already do so much with

so little that, as the saying goes, soon they'll be doing everything with nothing. If the Spirit touches any readers' hearts about this, I pray that our people would step up in this time of financial hardship to contribute a bit more directly to the work of the General Conference. We really do need your support.

BA: What is your main hope and prayer for the Church these days, with regard to spiritual formation?

RJ: Unity! With forces of Satan and the world ever pulling us apart, and with our carnal natures ever inducing us to magnify our own perspectives and priorities, for us to survive and go on to accomplish great things in the cause of Christ, we absolutely must pull together in a unity not seen since the upper room experience of Pentecost. If we will truly become of one mind and purpose, the Lord will reward that unity with another outpouring of His Spirit, which we must have to accomplish the work He envisions for us in the

world. Unity is the main thing. Everything else pales in comparison!

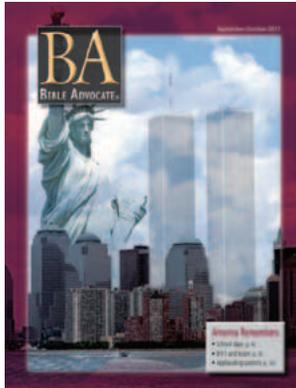
Conversely, my greatest concern is that we have a natural tendency to tear apart, to magnify self instead of prioritizing a systematic, organized response to the Great Commission. If we have a fundamental spirit of independence and unwillingness to submit to spiritual authority, that carnal nature unfits us to work together in unified harmony. If we continue in this spirit of independence, disorganization, and disunity, we will be rendered less and less effective in satisfying the Great Commission.

When we are tempted to magnify self and some pet perspective, we must remember that our pulling together and submitting to each other are most vital. Even when we disagree, we must exercise great charity and tolerance toward each other, realizing that God gifts our brother and sister as He does us. We need each other, as we are all just parts of the body. One part cannot despise another part. We must be quick to exercise charity and slow to be angry. We must keep the Great Commission ever in mind, the magnitude of which should drive us to our knees before God and each other.

In Christ's lengthy prayer just before He went to Gethsemane (John 17), the central theme is unity. In a real sense, His last will and testament was both a plea and prophecy that His disciples would experience unity, a unity as profound as the Father and Son enjoy — a high bar indeed! A very intentional spirit of self-submission and a consuming passion for unity: These are our only hope. **BA**



Richard and Dana Jensen



Gentle and generous

From within a rather unhappy communion, I applaud CoG's convention leaders for abandonment of potentially divisive proposals (Ecclesiastes 11:3, KJV). Thanks to Elder Burrell for his timely reminder that conflict may arise from passionate care ["First Word," September-October, p. 3].

Regarding *The Message* Bible, Presbyterian [Eugene] Peterson's 10-year project was thoroughly reviewed by scholars (listed) "who assured it as accurate as well as faithful to the original languages."

I deeply appreciate the *Bible Advocate* and value its gentle and generous orthodoxy.

D. H.
Vancouver, BC

Muslim beliefs

I noticed on the list of correct Muslim beliefs that Muslims believe in one God ["The Muslim Among Us," September-October, p. 14]. They do have a big difference, though, with the vast majority of Christians on this subject. Muslims (and Jews, I might add) believe in one individual who is God. My studies suggest that Christians believe in two (binitarianism), three (trinitarianism), or more individuals in one God. So "God" is the category

consisting of more than one individual.

Thank you, again, for a fine Christian magazine.

S. P.
Morgantown, WV

Editor's response: Interesting comments. For a moment I thought you were going to solve the divine numbers problem among Christians. Any reason you chose individual(s) rather than person(s) in reference to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?



Tribulation truths

I read with interest the remarks about Great Tribulation, mostly reflecting my beliefs [November-December, p. 4]. But none gave Scripture for why there will be no future worldwide persecution. Daniel 2 tells us why. The feet and toes of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream were iron and clay mixed, telling us that people in the end times would never unite. For a world ruler to persecute, nations have to cleave together. From the time of the Roman Empire, there will be no more world rulers until Christ returns, according to Daniel. From this, I believe that no future Antichrist will ever rule the world and

persecute God's church.

But we are not home free. Far more dangerous than persecution is apathy existing in the church — not only in regular worship attendance but also in Bible reading and study, Sabbath school attendance, praying, supporting financially, and every involvement with the Lord. People involve themselves in almost everything they want, but not in the church. So we are not home free, by any means. This is a last-days warning for the church.

W. W.
Ft. Smith, AR

Essay winner

I received the book *The Story of the Bible*, by Larry Stone. I am pleased to have such a beautiful volume telling the Bible's history in my library — a wonderful asset. Thank you so much. It goes nicely with an old Bible I have, published in 1814 in Philadelphia. It's large, like the Bibles many pioneers carried with them into the Western wilderness. The cover is worn and years ago someone taped it together with duct tape. It has the apocryphal books as well. The pages are yellow and somewhat brittle but basically in good condition.

George Farrow
Chiefland, FL

Crisis in Kachinland

I very much enjoy to read all the articles. Kachinland is now becoming war-field areas. It is still now fighting all the time. Over 30,000 Christians are now fleeing to China border as refugees. We Church of God groups should consider to help the Christian refugees.

L. B.
Kachinland, Myanmar



Author of Life

*Jesus reached down from heaven
And gathered a lump of clay
Pressing here, smoothing there
A ray of sunshine for the hair
A rose petal for the cheeks
A touch of stardust for the eyes
A song of angels for the lips
On the heart He wrote "Made for Me"
Filling the lungs with His breath
He gave His life for that lump of clay
Creating a work of art that is to bear His name
Therefore, my child, you belong to Him
May no one change what He has authored
May no one remove His copyright
For you are His workmanship
His story for the world to read*

Susan Rehberg

January Emphasis:

NAWM



Grace Sanchez, Director



National Women's Committee, left to right: Grace Sanchez, NAWM director; Esther Winchell, Northeast District; Sylvia Corral, National Hispanic rep; Janine Williams, Eastern Canada; Jennifer Stucker, West Coast District; Sandy Shapitka, Western Canada; Rosie Davila, Southwest District

North American Women's Ministries (NAWM)

February Emphasis:

SWORD



Christy Lang, Director
See page 29

Grace Sanchez, Director

The July 2011 convention at Pheasant Run proved to be the best place to meet and greet our sisters, promote the ministry, and raise funds. Using the theme "Amazing Talent," our women's luncheon honored CoG7 writers and authors by displaying their work and giving them opportunity to sell. Poet/songwriter Peggy Kuryluk shared her journey, and her daughters (Wendy and Stacy) sang songs written by their mom.

More retreats: What a delight for women to come together and share hearts for ministry! At retreat, women are free to raise their voices and deliver a unique women-to-women message as only women can. At the National Hispanic Women's Retreat in September, I was asked to lead 6:30 a.m. prayer sessions. *A piece of cake*, I thought, until I stood in the midst of 60 or 70 prayer warriors. The last morning almost 100 came to pray. Everyone should covet this experience.

At the Red Lion Hotel on the beautiful Columbia River in Portland, Oregon (site of our next National Women's Retreat, March 30 - April 1), NAWM's fall planning session gave top priority to two business items:

- Upgrade our Seekers program. We plan to hire someone with a passion for children's ministry to help bring this program together,

using current materials and developing fresh ideas with new technology available to most children.

- Better serve our Spanish language sisters. Recognizing the need for printed materials and other communications in both English and Spanish, we added a new position to the NAWM board and appointed Sylvia Corral to fill it.

May the year 2012, with its opportunities and challenges, be met with grace and endless praise.

Haiti Report

Nearly two years after Haiti's devastating earthquake (January 12, 2010), seven representatives from Missions Abroad and its Widows and Orphans ministry traveled to this island nation in October-November 2011. One purpose of the trip was to visit

orphanages in the capital city of Port-au-Prince and in St. Marc, Haiti — both operated by brethren there. Plans are underway to sponsor 56 children between these orphanages.

A second purpose of this visit was to facilitate meetings between Church groups in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Although these two CoG7 groups, like the nations they represent, share the same island (Hispaniola), they were unknown to each other until this trip. A positive relationship was established by God's grace, and further dialogue between them is anticipated.

Pray for our Haitian brethren as they proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and help rebuild earthquake-ravaged sections of this stricken nation. Members of the travel team were Pastor Ronald Rousseau (Chicago); Pastor Gregory Crayton and

Sister Daisna Gibson (New York City); brothers Bryan and Noah Cleeton (Pueblo, Colorado); and Brian and Holly Baker (Loveland, Colorado).

International Students, Welcome



LifeSpring School of Ministry is now open to students everywhere, online (classes in English). Interested persons may visit lifespringschool.org.

2012 Calendar

- January 7-28 - Annual Prayer Initiative: "A Passion for Holy Spirit Fullness"
- February 19-22 - Annual Board of Directors meeting (Denver)
- February 26-28 - Annual License and Credentials Committee meeting (Denver)
- March 10 - Pacific Northwest Super Sabbath at Jefferson Baptist Church, Jefferson, OR
- March 30 - April 9 - SHINE Missions trip to El Salvador
- March 30 - April 1 - National Women's Retreat at the Red Lion Hotel on the Columbia River, Portland, OR
- April 5 (Thursday evening) - Annual Lord's Supper Service observed in every congregation, with washing of feet
- April 20-22 - Florida Ladies Retreat, "Woman of Wonder," at Canterbury Conference Center, Oviedo, FL; call/text Alorna Largie (352-638-1416;



Pastors Ron Rousseau (left) and Gregory Crayton (center) meet with local CoG7 leaders in Haiti during a recent visit to that nation. Above the photo is a fuller report on this mission trip.

alorna00008@yahoo.com) or Sharon Henry (407-719-0173; macanoc1@aol.com)

May 25-27 - Graduation weekend at Spring Vale Academy, Owosso, MI; 989-725-2391

May 25-28 - Southwestern SWORD Retreat at Brookhaven Retreat Center, Hawkins, TX; contact Danny and Jacqui Melgoza (210-900-9889)

June 10-16 - Dover Family Camp at Camp Cimarron, near Kingfisher, OK; contact Jared Ullrich (jared.ullrich@yahoo.com or 918-864-5589)

August 25-29 - International Ministerial Congress at Kents Hill Park Conference Centre, Milton-Keynes (near London) in the United Kingdom; contact office@cog7missions.org or visit www.cog7missions.org

August 31 - September 3 - National Hispanic Women's Retreat in Southern California

October 29 - November 4 - North American Ministerial Council at the Red Lion Hotel on the Columbia River, Portland, OR. A National Men's Retreat is scheduled at same location, November 3-4.

LITES Correction

In the November-December BA (photo caption, p. 27), we wrongly named Andrew Fernandez as director of LITES program in Stanberry, Missouri. Don and Janis Steinhauser are LITES directors; Andrew is a staff member. Contact lites.cog7.org.



SWORD retreaters in Goldendale, WA, in November 2011

SWORD

Young Adult Ministries

Christy Lang, Director

In most CoG7 congregations today, young adults are actively worshipping and serving the Lord. At the convention near Chicago in July, a fire was ignited in the hearts of many.

The generation that served before us is aging and passing away before our eyes. New Church leadership is rising up; we can no longer afford to take the back seat in ministry. Through SWORD and other ministries, we have an encouraging network in our walks with the Lord and avenues to build genuine relationships with other young adults.

SWORD can help provide the resources necessary in your local ministry and family life. Stop by our Web site soon (<http://sword.cog7.org>) and link to our Facebook and Twitter pages, to local SWORD groups and their Facebook pages, to Internet blog sites, and to the latest events and resources available in young adult ministries.

We appreciate feedback on how we can better encourage and walk alongside young adults in their life ministries.



@ Pariwattip—Dreamstime.com

International Congress

Fresh Launch

For the past seven years, this BA page has been dedicated to informing members and readers about what's happening in CoG7 around the world – a.k.a. International Ministerial Congress (IMC). Here you've learned about the seven world zones and about remarkable increase and progress for the Church abroad in this generation.

Because missions is important to Christ and His followers, we'll keep on spotlighting the world Church in the BA with fresh content on this page. Keep reading, won't you, and keep supporting IMC and Missions Abroad with your prayers and gifts.

IMC to the UK in 2012. In less than eight months, delegates chosen by national CoG7 conferences around the world will descend on Kent's Hill Conference Center near London for a five-day International Ministerial Congress. "Unity Within Diversity" will be the theme.

British brethren and others will be present as the congress opens on Sabbath, August 25. It will continue through August 29, attending to the Church's needs, doctrinal and missional, in every corner of the globe. IMC delegates and others interested in observing this quadrennial event should contact office@cog7missions.org and watch for updates at www.cog7missions.org.

Much of the planning and support needed to receive, transport, and bless the IMC delegates during their week in the United Kingdom is being provided by the U. K. Conference board and members there, in concert with IMC officers. Please pray for them, and for God's blessings on the 2012 congress.

Letter from India. Dear Brothers and Sisters, greetings in the name of Jesus, our wonderful Saviour!

The Church of God (Seventh Day), India, has been around a long time, waiting patiently for the call of the Creator to show the awesome work of our Almighty God. We give thanks and praise to the Lord for dedicated men and women who have kept

the true faith alive, in spite of utter poverty, hardship, and even the cost of their lives.

We invite our brothers and sisters around the world to visit our new Web site www.cog7india.org and see the wonderful work God has done for us.

Pray for India. We look forward to your generous support for ministries in this part of the world.

Your brother in Christ,
Pastor V. Jacob S. Rao, M. Th., D. Min.
IMC Representative, Zone 4

Crisis in Europe. The Church of Portugal held a special Sabbath (November 12, 2011) on Europe's deep moral, economic, and political crises, with four topics:

1. Europe in prophecy and the Roman Empire's survival until now (Daniel 2 and 7)
2. Economic crisis until the time Christ returns (Revelation 18:1-16)
3. Efforts of Germany and France to create a more powerful core inside the European Union
4. Italy's crisis; Rome's place in prophecy (Revelation 18:21) from the Roman Empire until the E.U.'s Treaty of Rome (1957)

Christ's followers must be spiritually alert and attentive to signs of the times.



The church in Spain, its recent graduates shown above, has new instruments and broad activity in gospel service.

Visit its Web site: www.icpromesa.org.

Time-Tested Enterprise

Do you realize that you are part of one of the most significant enterprises in the world? Our church's commitment to the Bible and to sharing its message spans more than 150 years! A modest estimate of the combined number of years served by its dedicated workers, of hours logged by our staff, of pieces of literature produced and distributed around the world, and of lives impacted for Christ as a result is more than you might imagine.

But there is little point in counting, for "You can count the seeds in an apple, but you cannot count the apples in a seed." Only eternity will reveal the true impact of this cooperative effort known as the General Conference, Church of God (Seventh Day).

The Denver office is often reminded of this impact through messages from people in distant lands and nearby places. Through our literature, many are discovering Bible truth. Through our online resources, such as "Meet Jesus" on the G. C. site, *Now What?*, and *BA Online*, many in crisis are finding help and hope. This letter from South Africa is a recent example:

I was searching the web to research about faith. Saw your website, got to reading and realized I had been living a lie and decided to make a decision. I decided to make JESUS a part of my life. Looking forward to hearing from you.

As with most enterprises, none of this happens without funding. Where does funding for the General Conference come from? The answer is not complicated. The G. C. receives 15 percent of the tithe you give your local church, plus emphasis offerings in support of our national ministries: Youth, Young Adults (SWORD), Women (NAWM), Ministerial Training (LifeSpring), Missions, and Publications. Offerings are also received for Spring Vale Academy, a key part of our spiritual enterprise.

You might wonder why appeals like this are necessary. Frankly, they wouldn't be if the required 15 percent of the tithe from all 235 affiliated congregations was consistently passed on to the Denver office through its districts. Sadly, that isn't the case. Some congregations do not report regularly to their districts; others not at all. Adding to that challenge, the recession hit home in the Church in 2011, causing a significant projected shortfall. The board and its executive staff are taking appropriate measures to work within this lean budget.

I remain confident, however, that we will end this fiscal year (March 31, 2012) in the black through your generosity joined with God's grace and provision. For your past financial support of the General Conference, please accept my sincere thanks. Since we count on donations sent directly to the Denver office to help us meet financial goals, I'm making this public appeal, soliciting your help for the present need. Your tax-deductible gift will be greatly appreciated.

In closing, here are some timely questions:

Do you care enough to actively engage in this time-tested enterprise?

Do you value the collective effort made possible through the General Conference — more than 200 congregations doing together what each cannot do alone?

Will you make an eternal difference in the world through financial support of the church you love?

I pray that your answers are in the affirmative and that Christ's kingdom will come, His will be done on earth, though your generosity, for His glory!

— Whaid Rose
Conference President



Cristo Viene...

a few dollars per month can take the gospel a long way

Monthly gifts of \$10, \$25, or more support dozens of native missionary workers like these, on five continents. Visit www.cog7missions.org for more, or mail support to Missions Abroad, P. O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233.



Kenya: Abrahams Odongo (fourth from left) baptized in neighboring Tanzania.



Argentina's Jorge Gillig (right) organizes a church in Venezuela.



Pakistan: Shamas Pervais (dark shirt) serving in the city of Karachi.



Italy: Roberto Torre (white shirt) serves from his Sicily home.