

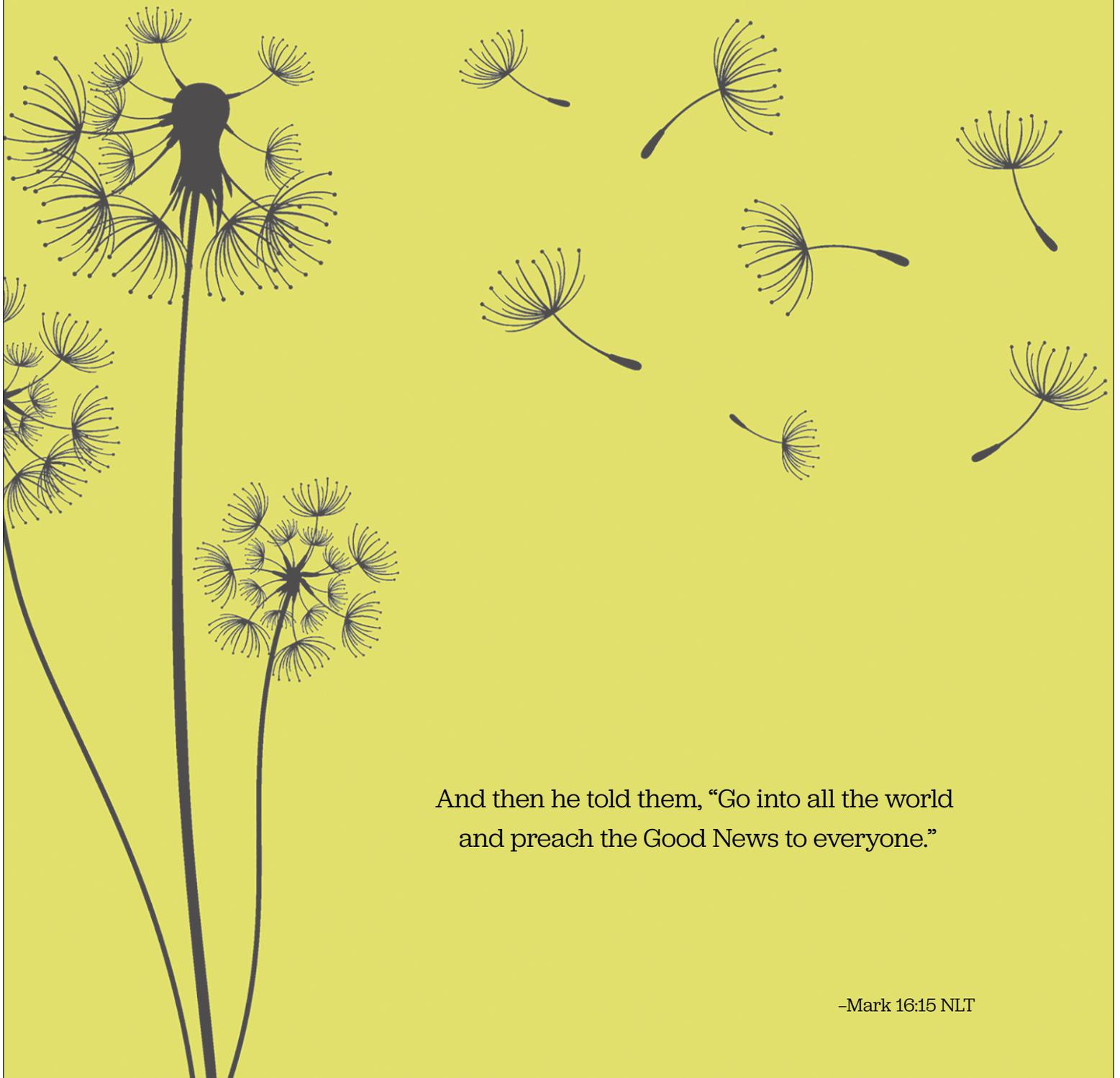


# Sabbath Recorder

January 2021

A Seventh Day Baptist Publication

So,  
you want  
to plant  
a church!



And then he told them, "Go into all the world  
and preach the Good News to everyone."

-Mark 16:15 NLT



**6 Not Just Any Church Plant:  
Three Challenges in SDB  
Church Planting**

By Pastor Chuck Meathrell

**8 Church Planting:  
Not for the Faint of Heart**

By Pastor Ron Higson

**10 "Phoenix for Christ":  
An Update**

By Pastor Darrell Chilson

**12 Church Planting:  
Living an Unedited Life**

By Carl Greene  
Executive Director

**14 God is on the move to plant  
SDB churches**

By Patty Petersen

- 17 **He restoreth my soul**  
by Kevin Butler  
Conference President 2021
- 18 **Planting SDB Churches in  
Pakistan and Egypt**  
by Andy Samuels  
Chief Executive Director
- 20 **Get to Know Your Community**  
by Katrina Goodrich  
Women's Society
- 21 **Health News: Grief and Loss  
During the COVID Pandemic**  
by Barb Green
- 22 **Home News**  
Reprinted from the *Sabbath Recorder*
- 23 **Grace**  
by Marcy (Payne) Kersten
- 26 **COH Newport Challenge  
SDB Contact Information**

**Beginning this month...  
A Study series about the  
Book of REVELATION  
page 24**



For access to the library of  
current and past issues of  
the *Sabbath Recorder*,  
go to your App Store and  
download the *free SDB LINK* app.



# Sabbath Recorder

January 2021

Patricia Cruzan, Editor

## A Seventh Day Baptist Publication

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## WHO ARE SEVENTH DAY BAPTISTS?

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If you've never read *The Sabbath Recorder* before, you might be wondering who Seventh Day Baptists are. Like other Baptists, we believe in:

- salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus.
- the Bible as the inspired Word of God. The Bible is our authority for our faith and daily conduct.
- baptism of believers, by immersion, witnessing to our acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord.
- freedom of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- the congregational form of church government. Every church member has the right to participate in the decision-making process of the church.

## THE SEVENTH DAY

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God commanded that the seventh day (Saturday) be kept holy. Jesus agreed by keeping it as a day of worship. We observe the seventh day of the week (Saturday) as God's Holy Day as an act of loving obedience—not as a means of salvation. Salvation is the free gift of God through Jesus our Lord. It is the joy of the Sabbath that makes SDBs a people with a difference.

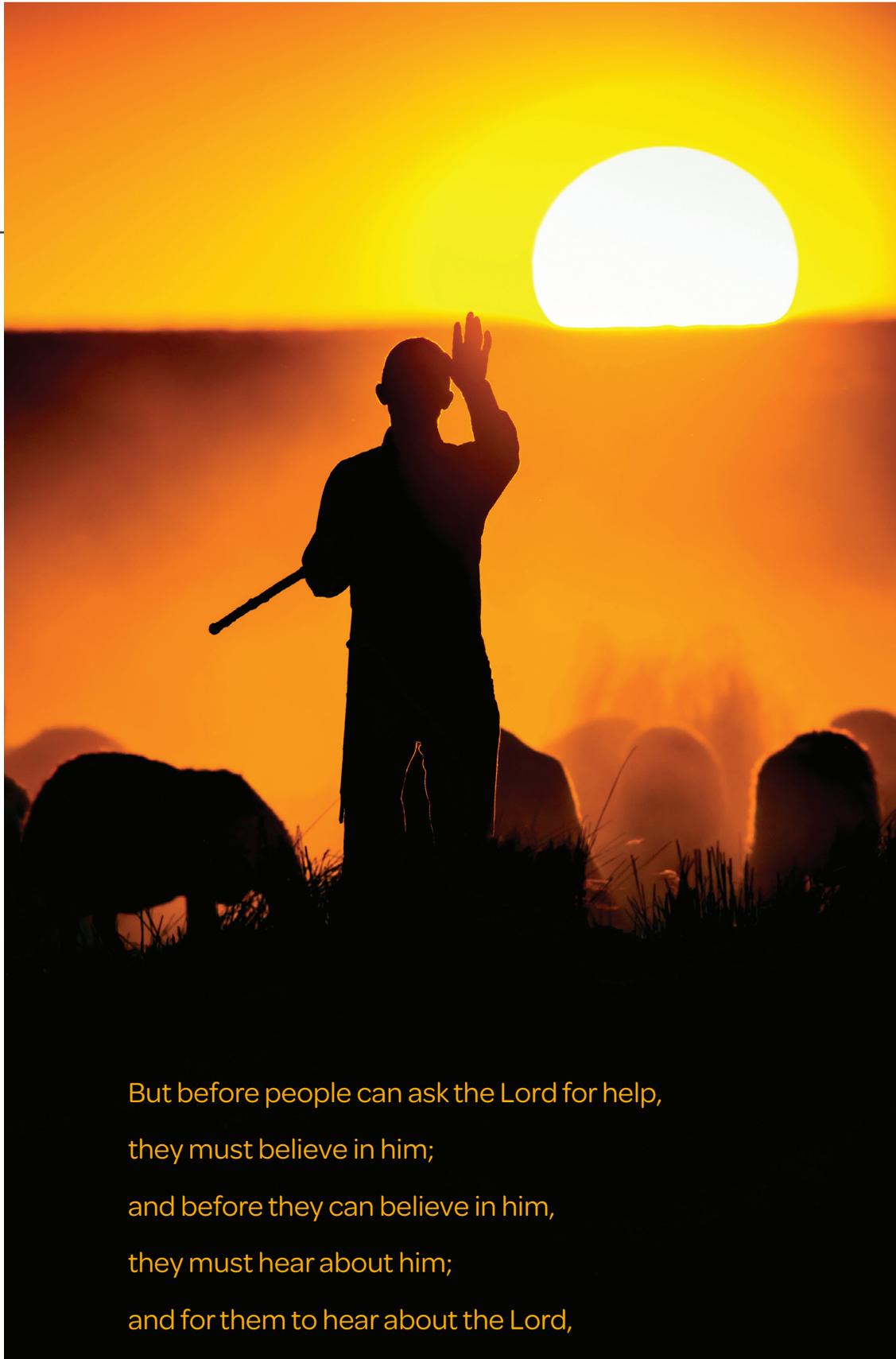
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But before people can ask the Lord for help,  
they must believe in him;  
and before they can believe in him,  
they must hear about him;  
and for them to hear about the Lord,

someone must tell them.



# Not Just Any Church Plant:

## Three Challenges in SDB Church Planting



JACOB'S WELL  
CHURCH

By Pastor Chuck Meathrell

Possibly the toughest thing I have ever had to do as a pastor is to move on from Jacob's Well Church in South Carolina. I have sometimes felt that it must be something like sending your child off to college. You hope and pray that she remains focused, that she clings to the King, and that she hangs onto the lessons you strove to teach her for all these years. I suppose I was never terribly worried that Jacob's Well would suddenly lose track of its values; we just didn't want to say "goodbye." This church was our baby.

I guess it probably sounds a little condescending to talk about the church like she's a child, but I don't mean it that way at all. You go through many of the same kinds of struggles as a church planter that you do as a parent. There is a lot of triumph and there are a *lot* of tears. You do a lot of laughing and sometimes there may even be a tantrum. You try to teach generosity and faith. You even do some disciplining. I was never very good at that.

I think there needs to be a book on this just for us. There are more books on church planting than you can shake a stick at. There are not, however, any books that talk about planting a Seventh Day Baptist Church. Obviously, planting a church brings with it some challenges that are absolutely unique to our denomination. This article addresses three of those challenges.

## *There are not any books that talk about planting a Seventh Day Baptist Church.*

### **Challenge #1: They're Not All Going to Be Glad You're There.**

Early on in the church planting process, I put together a blog post entitled “Churches, Churches Everywhere...and Not a Drop to Drink.” I had been challenged a number of times by individuals noting the phenomenon in America’s Deep South of “a church on every corner.” It’s not only a cliché; it’s a real thing. My challenge back to them was always that, first, they were not talking about *churches* but *church buildings*. Secondly, being that the American church is in something of a numerical freefall, the churches were no longer meeting the need in the community. This was the inspiration for the article’s title. Last but not least, I was not answerable to them but to the God who was sending me out.

Another issue we faced was simply that other churches either looked upon us as a kind of competition and were often not interested in working alongside us or just thought we were weird. They assume we’re Adventists or some snake-handlers and reject any relationship out of hand. *You go to church on Saturday? What is wrong with you?*

The point here is that you shouldn’t expect the world around you and your church plant to think it great news that you are there. Even the local churches may not be delighted at your arrival.

### **Challenge #2: Be Prepared to Be Kind of Lonely**

They didn’t teach this part in seminary – possibly because they didn’t know.

When we planted Jacob’s Well Church, the nearest SDB congregation was nearly three hours away and our main connection was with the Metro Atlanta Church which was more than four. There have certainly been a lot of wonderful Sunday-goers who were supportive but they could never grasp what it is to be a Seventh Day Baptist. We’re just different. To top all this off, there were not a lot of us

doing SDB church planting in those days, or at least not that we knew of.

What this all meant is that we spent time being rather lonely. It was just the six of us and often it felt like we were on our own. Since then, social media and the advancement of telecommunications have made these connections a lot easier – and I hope you all will avail yourself of them in your support of church plants across the USA, Canada, Mexico, and around the world.

### **Challenge #3: It’s GOT to Be a Team**

This is more of a tip than a challenge – but it can be particularly tough to achieve in our little denomination.

Church planting takes teamwork. This is a hugely important detail. You’ll be making your own work a lot tougher if you go in with a plan to start a church on your own. There should be more spiritual gifts than just your own. More heads than just yours. You need others to sing with and weep with. Taking care to do so will help you cope with challenge numbers one and two.

I am more thankful than I can say that Jessica and I had the Catoes to help and encourage us in those early days. Simply put, the church would not exist today without them. It’s odd to think now that two of the three of them have passed away and the Meathrells have moved to Ohio. None of the original founders are part of the church, but it continues actively today.

If I had to do it all again, I would jump in. I would still be lonely and offended by the rejection of other Christians – but I look back on those days as being some of the most refining days of my life. Church planting is extremely hard stuff but it is Kingdom stuff. Be prepared, if you are called to it, to hurt and laugh and sing and weep. Just like parenting, it brings all the best stuff [SR](#)

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*Pastor Chuck Meathrell is thankful and humbled to serve as the pastor of the Pataskala SDB Church in Ohio since spring, 2020. He lives in Pataskala, OH, with his wife and three sons.*

# Church Planting: Not for the Faint of Heart

By Pastor Ron Higson

*Thanks Patricia for the opportunity to share our experience and to encourage those who may be contemplating planting a Seventh Day Baptist church.*

When I told my wife that Patricia emailed about writing an article about church planting for the *Sabbath Recorder*, the first words out of her mouth were, "It's not for the faint of heart." Those indeed are true words because starting a church requires a lot of prayer, commitment, patience, dedication, time, and hard work. (*Oops I'm supposed to be encouraging you, right – not trying to scare you.*) One must not enter into such a worthy endeavor as planting a church unaware of the effort and commitment that is required – though the blessing of serving Him and building relationships with the people that God places in your path makes all the effort worthwhile.

Galatians 6:9:

*Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.*

Brief summary of Full Gospel SDB church:

We began with four families meeting in our home on Sabbath for Sabbath school and fellowship, for about eight months. Then we took the leap of faith to plant a church. Though the Conference did not have a task force to help with church planting at that time, they did help guide us in the right direction. We

*Our goal should be that the church would grow and become a place for Sabbath-keepers to worship long after our lives are over.*

were encouraged to reach out to Pastor Ed Sutton and the Bell Church in Salemville, PA. That was the beginning of a wonderful relationship with Pastor Ed and the Bell Church family. They accepted us as a branch church and the first couple of years, when there was a fifth Sabbath in a month, a group would travel from the Bell church to join us for worship and fellowship meals. We have continued to meet together for Thanksgiving annually – except for 2020 (thanks to COVID).

The visits from our brothers and sisters from Salemville, and the visits from then-Director Rob Appel, the warm welcome we received from all the member churches of the Appalachian Association, and those we have met at General Conference have been a great source of encouragement.

I used to be a big NASCAR fan (not so much anymore) but something you will see if you watch NASCAR, when a driver wins a race, during the interview in the winner's circle, the driver will thank his car owner, his crew, the shop that builds the cars and engines; then he goes down the long list of sponsors – that's the decals all over the cars. He thanks all those responsible for allowing/helping him to be able to drive that race car. Why does he do this? He knows that he couldn't do it alone; it takes a whole network of people to make that moment possible.

Planting a church similarly takes more than one person – or one family even – it requires a strong core group consisting of three to four families; a sponsor church; a lot of faith, prayer; and strong determination. Our goals should not just be that we have a place to worship on the Sabbath, but that the church would grow and become a place for Sabbath-keepers to worship long after our lives are over.

Thankfully, there are people within the denomination who have a heart for seeing the denomination grow through church planting. There have always been people with the heart for planting churches before, but now they have become better organized and, this January, there will even be a person whose main role will be church planting. This is wonderful news for those contemplating planting a church. They will be able to connect you with the right people who will help guide you through the process.

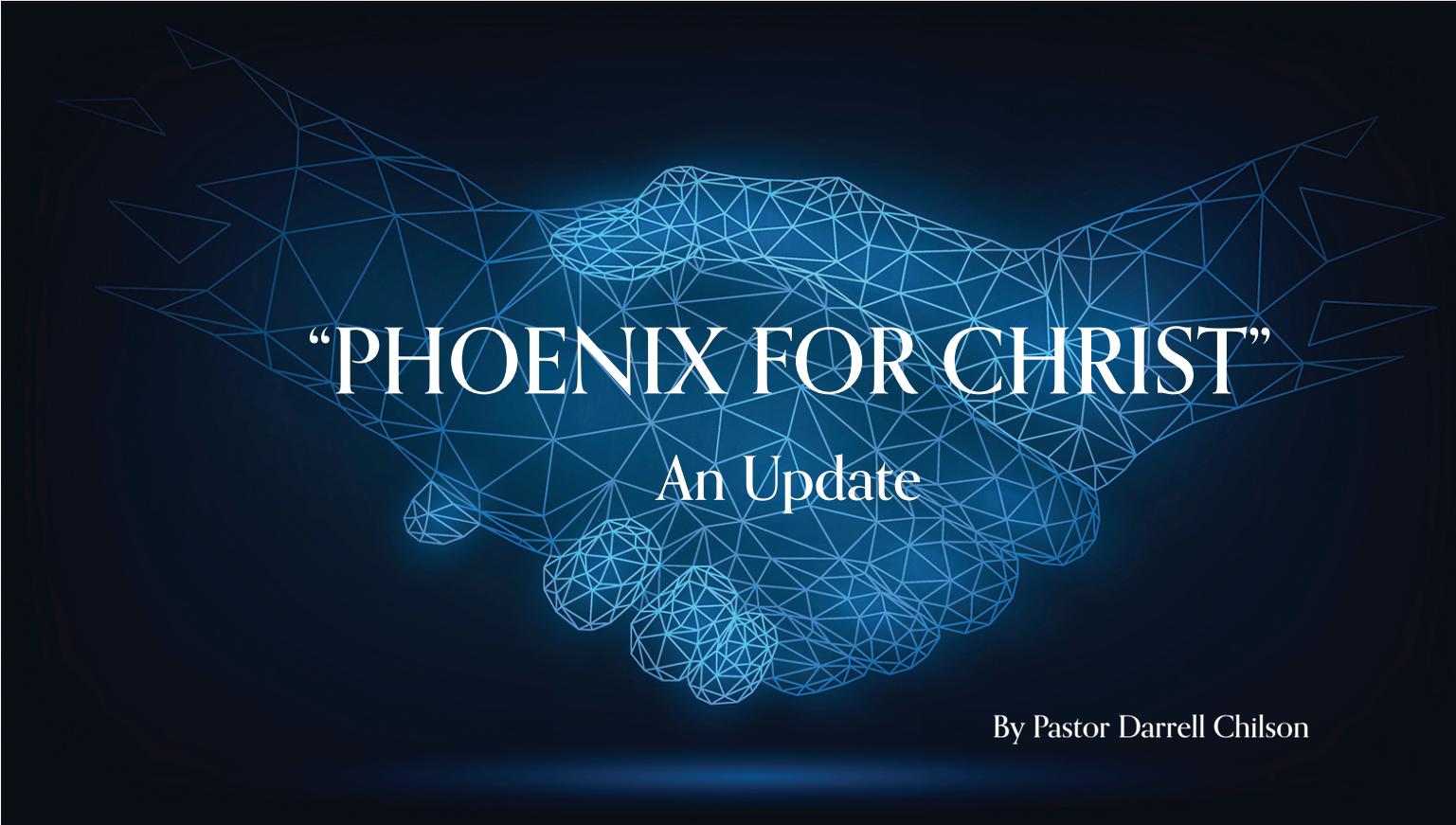
If you are that person or group contemplating planting a Seventh Day Baptist church, I encourage you to keep the faith, be strong in the Lord, pray and don't give up, and enjoy the blessing of keeping the Sabbath. Beyond that, never hesitate to reach out to another church that may be able to support you in some way – even if it is only by phone.

Isaiah 58:13-14 :

<sup>13</sup> *"If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the Lord honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words,* <sup>14</sup> *Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken."* SR

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*Pastor Ron Higson has been pastor of the Full Gospel SDB Church, Cumberland, MD, for fourteen years; his wife of 42 years, Karen, is also a pastor; they have two children: Jennifer Raines, Roseanna White; and six grandchildren.*



# “PHOENIX FOR CHRIST”

## An Update

By Pastor Darrell Chilson

It all started with an earnest desire to reach “Phoenix for Christ” (an article so named in the *Sabbath Recorder* of September 2019) and an opportunity to establish a Sabbath ministry in the fifth largest city in the United States. This new ministry had to be Christ-centered, and the telling of His story the focus of its mission. Up until September 2019, there had been no Seventh Day Baptist presence in the Phoenix area.

Our first service was held on September 7, 2019, in our home. Sixteen individuals were in attendance. All in attendance had been invited except for one couple, who that very morning had found our website with the announcement of services, put on their church clothes, and drove an hour to attend! Jay and Linda have become strong supporters and involved members of Phoenix SDB Fellowship – and truly a blessing to our entire church family.

Today, more than a year later, our congregation has strong ties to one another, in spite of the need to meet mostly virtually since March 2020. We have had two baptismal services this year (four baptisms), for which we have gathered in person with the usual precautions of wearing masks and practicing social distancing. We will meet again in an outdoor park setting in a couple of weeks to worship and fellowship in person – we so miss that!

Out of necessity, and yet a blessing we might have missed had we not been forced to start meeting virtually, we have developed an online ministry that is extensive. We first started our ministry by building a website, and we have substantially built a library of videos from our bi-weekly broadcasts. We now are reaching more individuals in distant areas that we might ever have reached otherwise.

Looking back on how the Lord has led in the establishment and continued blessing of the Phoenix ministry, there are factors that we believe have played an important role in creating a vibrant ministry for our fellowship:

- A passion for the story of God's saving grace, freely extended to sinners in response to their faith in His Son, Jesus Christ – ALONE
- A ministry that is based on the Bible ALONE, including the truths that are outlined in the Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Faith – especially the truth of the 7th-day Sabbath
- A recognition that all that is blessed and born of heaven comes in answer to earnest prayer and committed hearts
- The faithful support of the Church – its leaders at the Conference level, and its members at the local level – Phoenix Fellowship has been blessed with tremendous support from both groups!
- Advertising – an attractive website and a social media presence – TWO OF OUR MEMBER FAMILIES FOUND US AND BECAME MEMBERS FROM OUR INTERNET PRESENCE
- A place of meeting (when meeting is appropriate) – SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS A RESIDENCE CAN BE THE BEST OPTION IN THE BEGINNING!
- Regular meetings – virtual in nature with Zoom and YouTube – seeing each other's faces, interacting and praying together, showing movies and sharing good music keep our congregation together during these times of "the pandemic"

There are people who are currently looking for a Sabbath-promoting, gospel-centered fellowship where they can worship, find fellowship and enjoy a common understanding of the Word of God. One of the greatest examples of how God is leading people to search out Sabbath-keeping, Christ-centered congregations is the story of James and Priscilla. They both came to us from religious backgrounds very different from the Seventh Day Baptist faith. But they had become hungry for the Word of God, began studying the Bible quite apart from any church affiliation, discovered the seventh-day Sabbath from the leading of the Holy Spirit, and began searching for a church that taught what they were discovering. That's when

they called us, began finding answers to their questions, vigorously embraced an identity with our fellowship and were baptized into Christ and this congregation just weeks later.

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference is rightly picking up on the potential for extending the Kingdom of Christ through church planting. Creating even a small presence in many different places is an effective way of growing the Kingdom of God. Our leaders recognize this and are currently training many individuals to do just that! What insight—definitely the leading of a God who is about to bring into His Kingdom many who need to know Christ and join others in their efforts to take His story to others longing to find Him before He returns!

If you are reading this article, please join us in praying for a mighty outpouring of the Spirit of God upon our Church and its leaders—upon the members of each congregation, and upon those who are being called to establish outposts of God's Kingdom where they live. "People need the Lord," and we need to be active in making His voice heard through our united voices! [SR](#)



*Pastor Darrell and Sammy Chilson live in Goodyear, AZ. They have spent many years in ministry, seeking to bring Christ to the congregations in their care. The "gospel of Jesus Christ" is their passion, and their love for one another is the treasure of their lives. They planted a church in Tucson, AZ, in 1994, and are now leading the Phoenix Seventh Day Baptist Fellowship.*

# Church Planting:



I crave efficient schedules. I color code my calendar so I know not only how much time I have committed each day, but also what I am investing in each day. I schedule my electronic reminders to ensure that I do not forget commitments...and *Sabbath Recorder* article deadlines. I track the number of hours that I invest in various areas to ensure that my work life and my family life are complementary and holistic. And, I love it when everything runs on time. My dad taught me long ago that if I arrive 10 minutes before the suggested arrival time, I am late.

There is a place for having a script to life. It keeps me motivated and structured. I would daresay it facilitates my productivity. But, it can leave me lifeless if it is a completely edited script.

An unedited life is one which provides space for relationship building through conversation. Rather than having everything on a timetable, rather than examining how to maximize every minute for a productive strategy, there is a willingness to engage in spaces that build relationship over completing the task.

**Seven-Minute Rule.** In comes the seven-minute rule. It has been observed that it “takes at least seven minutes to see how a conversation is going to unfold.”<sup>1</sup> There is a certain amount of boredom, awkwardness, and silence that takes place in communication before the conversation opens the door into a meaningful exchange. On the one hand, this is a great reminder to exhibit sincere care with our cell phone when talking with someone. If we break out our cell

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<sup>1</sup> Turkle, Sherry. 2015. *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. New York: Penguin Books, 322.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 153-154.

# Living an Unedited Life

By Carl Greene  
Executive Director

phone during that seven minutes of ice-breaking because we simply “need something to do” or we wonder about that critical factoid pertaining to the caloric content of marshmallows (that obviously needs to be discovered in the moment)—we sabotage our opportunity for real conversation.<sup>2</sup>

**A Church Planting Welcome.** When it comes to church planting, real conversation is necessary. Conversation is required for public witness of our faith and it is needed for gospel saturation to soak into every aspect of our lives. The seven-minute rule is also needed for sister church relationships.

We Seventh Day Baptists are a relational people. We long to welcome new groups and churches into our Conference—into a partnership in the gospel in which we join God in His work of actively advancing His Kingdom. This partnership requires welcoming new expressions of SDB faith into relationship.

Do not miss the intentional use of the word “welcome.” “Welcome” is derived from an Old English word meaning “a desired guest.” That sounds really nice, but it stops short of the experience of truly connecting with people. Who wants to remain a perpetual visitor in life

in which we never experience belonging? A Seventh Day Baptist welcome does not end at simply visiting as a guest—it is an invitation to come home.

**Coming Home.** If we are seeking to welcome new groups into our “Conference home,” then we should be engaging in real conversation with new groups and wholeheartedly supporting them. A simple question: Is your church intentionally building relationships with new and emerging SDB groups? In the letter to the Philippians, Paul thanks the Philippians for their partnership in the gospel, for engaging in ministry in their own geographic context while also supporting him in new church planting efforts (1:3-6). Applying this example to our season of ministry as SDBs: we must sincerely consider our own church’s commitment to intentionally building relationships with new groups as a part of the church planting initiative.

If this has struck a chord with you, I hope that you reach out to our Director of Church Development, Rev. John Pethtel, [jpethtel@seventhdaybaptist.org](mailto:jpethtel@seventhdaybaptist.org). We are stepping into an exciting season of church planting that involves a lot more than strategy. There are unedited scripts to discover as we build relationships... which take more than seven minutes to enter into. SR

The family of Eusebio and Karina Vergara, leaders of the Hispanic SDB church plant in Auburn, WA.



## God is on the move to plant SDB churches

By Patty Petersen

One of the best parts of my job as the New Contacts and Data Management Coordinator for our Conference is hearing the excitement of people who have newly discovered God's holy day, the seventh-day Sabbath. They are very excited to find Baptists who keep the Sabbath. Their next question is usually, "Is there a church near me?" And my reply is usually, "The nearest church is several hundred miles away. Here is a link to a list of our churches with online services. Would you consider starting a group?"

Based on the records in our database, we receive 60 to 70 inquiries per year, or about 5 to 6 each month, the vast majority asking, "Where is the nearest church?" In the past three years, five of these inquiries have become (or will soon become) new church plants or small groups. Praise the Lord!

Is it a coincidence that people are coming to us as we are taking more action to fulfill our mission of actively advancing God's Kingdom through planting more churches? Let's review some recent SDB history.

- We know that faithful prayer is needed for something as momentous as church planting. The young adults initiated a weekly time of fasting and prayer for SDB church planting starting in 2002 and lasting several years. Today we are continuing the prayer support through the "Team 21 Prayer Initiative". (To join in, email [contact@seventhdaybaptist.org](mailto:contact@seventhdaybaptist.org).)
- Rob Appel told us in his 2011 annual report as Executive Director that he believed God was telling SDBs to "get ready" to receive the people God would bring to our SDB movement; people in search of a like-minded Christian family where the Bible is our authority and the Sabbath a special joy.
- Do you remember the 2012 Conference theme? It was, "Are You Ready?" President John Pethel asked, "Are you ready for God to bring His Kingdom growth into Seventh Day Baptist churches?"

- The churches of the Allegheny Association had a sense of calling to help motivate and equip our Conference for church planting, so they hosted a Church Planting Conference open to all SDBs in the spring of 2014 with 17 in attendance.
- In 2019, the Conference theme was “People, Get Ready.” President Jane Mackintosh told us “the Church is returning to the Sabbath.” Many Christian leaders are writing about and practicing the Sabbath concept, some keeping the actual Sabbath and some choosing another day of the week. Jane urged us to “get our houses in order” so we would be ready to welcome those God would send us.
- When I heard Pastor Kevin Butler announce the 2021 Conference theme, “Restored for a Purpose,” I felt sure that purpose had to do with planting more SDB churches. We can provide a home for both new disciples of Jesus and those who have newly found the Sabbath.

God is bringing new Sabbath keepers to us, including ministry leaders. God is raising up church planters and supporters within our existing churches, raising our level of passion for this work. How will you personally participate? Pray? Train workers? Support with finances? Tell God you are available if He wants to send you? How will you encourage your church to participate? We are restored for a purpose!

Below are highlights of the communication I’ve had with people seeking to know more about SDBs and be part of us, wherever they live. I hope these encourage you to join God in this exciting work.

*“Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.”*

—Matthew 9:36-38

**A pastor and experienced church planter in Texas:** With his family, he visited the Remembrance SDB church and talked with Pastor Steve Saunders. He felt led to get an SDB group going in September. “Thanks for your emails, information, encouragement and prayers. We are planning to have our first service this Sabbath, starting off with a house full at a friend’s house. We had not discussed this with them before, but they have been discussing Sabbath issues and researching for about a month and wanted to discuss it with us!” (This pastor is attending our monthly Church Planting Boot Camp. See [www.seventhdaybaptist.org/church-planting/sdb-church-planting-boot-camp/](http://www.seventhdaybaptist.org/church-planting/sdb-church-planting-boot-camp/))

**A brother in Alabama:** He was happy and surprised to find there were Baptists who keep the seventh-day Sabbath (found us online). “It would be a wonderful thing if at some point a church of our own Baptist background that honors the Lord’s Sabbath would be stood up in our area. Baptists have a strong foothold here in the South but many who are under the same Sabbath conviction as me may not be so bold to venture out to a church that doesn’t at least identify as being Baptist. I am definitely praying about this.” (Also a Boot Camper.)

**A married couple moving to North Carolina:** As a seminary student several months ago, he was digging in his Bible and saw that the Sabbath was still for us, the seventh day. Went to his parents and shared the study with them. He found SDBs online and thought we “had it right.” “How can we be part of the SDB movement?” (Also a Boot Camper.)

**The father of the above couple:** “The more my wife and I have talked and prayed about all this, the more we feel called to serve in ministry. I have been continuing my seminary classes online and I will check out the information for the SDB University. I am excited to start digging into these courses. We are also very excited about the long-term possibilities to mentor and equip others to spread the church all throughout NC and beyond. I went ahead and registered for the Church Planting Boot Camp.”

**A pastor in southern Mexico** reached out to us via a circuitous route: He found Pastor Luis de la Cruz of Spain (SDB), then Pastor Bernardino de Vargas Sobrinho of SDBs in Brazil, then Pastor Manuel Marambio Torres of SDBs in Chile, then Pastor Miguel Leiva of the Hispanic SDB church in Houston, who referred him to me. He said he had “always been looking for a group like yours.” (Also a Boot Camper.)

**Hispanic brother in Florida:** “I received the package [of literature]. I’m excited reading about the denomination. I also went to the links you sent me. I really appreciate the invitation to work together opening a group in this part of Florida, which would be an honor for me. We meet every Saturday, about 5 to 10 people, to pray and worship the Lord...so we are praying about this with gratitude in our hearts.”

**A brother in Ohio:** “I’ve been keeping the seventh-day Sabbath for about three years now and I live in north-west Ohio. Today I visited the 7th Day Baptist Church in Pataskala, Ohio, and really had an enjoyable Sabbath with them. I’m leading a Bible study at a public school and I’m thinking about transitioning to Saturday meetings with these school children, inviting the parents to

*Continued on next page...*

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come along and neighbors and acquaintances that are interested. I'm basically starting a Saturday afternoon church and I'd like to know any support you could provide or any direction or guidance."

**A sister in Vermont:** "How does one determine what's ok/not ok to do on Sabbath? I know that ultimately it's between one's conscience and God, but are there any type of guidelines or 'arguments' for lack of a better word about how other Baptists do this?"

**A married couple in Connecticut:** "We have been doing a lot of reading and study. Last weekend we started to observe the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath. We wondered if it was okay to attend a Sunday church, since no SDB churches nearby?"

**A brother in Virginia:** "I contacted your group on Facebook. I have been keeping the Sabbath day for seven years. I absolutely love the simple statement of beliefs for your organization and its history. Unfortunately, there are no close congregations to me. What is the process for starting a church here? Do you allow lay pastors? Any advice would be appreciated."

**A brother in Kansas:** "I have long felt a call to observe the Sabbath, but in this contemporary Christian world it seems like such an oddity, even absurd. Unfortunately Sabbath observance is so often connected with fringe sects. So you can imagine how excited I was to discover your website and that such people exist. I've read your statement of faith and am in total agreement. I would love to attend one of your churches but it is much too far for me. I don't know what God will ever bring of it if anything, but I have preaching experience. Please help my family in any way that you can."

**A retired couple in South Carolina:** Baptists most of their lives and did missionary work all over America. They watched a television program on the End Times and became interested in the seventh-day Sabbath. Searched the Scriptures and noticed the Sabbath began at Creation. Interested in starting an SDB group where they live.

**A pastor in Nevada:** He became a Sabbatarian about six years ago after reading a brochure from a seventh-day group and studying the Sabbath in the Bible. He has done a lot of research on the Sabbath. He embraces our statement of faith and appreciates the freedom of thought. He started a Sunday church in Las Vegas in 1980. He would like to get an SDB fellowship going.

**The widow of a Baptist pastor in California:** "I am interested in seeing the basic beliefs and teachings of the Seventh Day Baptists as I feel that Saturday is the true Sabbath and the day that you should worship on. Please send information so I can research and explore."

**A sister in Kansas:** "Through personal study and prayer, I am convinced that the Sabbath is the true day to worship God. I live in a small town in Kansas that doesn't have a Sabbath keeping church. I am also homebound due to a disability. Can you please direct me to any resources, i.e. books, study guides, blogs and/or websites that will help me in my personal worship on Sabbath?"

**A brother in South Carolina:** "I was calling because I'm in prayer about planting a church in South Carolina and wanted to get some information about the process to go through to be a part of the Seventh Day Baptist organization."

**A brother in Texas:** "I would be interested in possibly starting a group here in Austin. Please send me a packet of information on Seventh Day Baptists. I would also like some of your resources, quarterly Bible study guide, SDB history, tracts on the Sabbath as well."

**A sister in Oklahoma:** "I wondered if there were any plans for a plant here in Oklahoma City area, or if you knew of any pastors here that might be interested in planting? Just wondered if there was any action going on here in the Oklahoma City metro area for a 7 Day Baptist Church."

**A sister in Indiana:** "I was searching for Seventh Day Baptist churches and came across your website. To my dismay, there are only a handful of Seventh Day Baptist churches and none near Indianapolis... I've been doing my own research and study on the Sabbath."

**A brother in Indiana:** "I belong to an Independent Baptist church and here lately God has been dealing with me on the Sabbath issue. I would love more info on trying to start something here and hopefully get something going."

**A sister in Virginia:** She found the Sabbath "on her own in the Bible." She was raised a Baptist. She looked online for other Christian Sabbath-keeping churches and found us. She also wondered if she could become a member of an SDB church from a distance and I encouraged her to contact one of the churches if she begins attending online. She can form a relationship from a distance and pursue membership. SR

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*In addition to her part-time job for the Conference, Patty volunteers on the PULSE team for Frontier Church—Carbon Valley, a recently replanted SDB church. She enjoys street evangelism as well as looking for opportunities for spiritual conversations in everyday life. Daily walks and chasing young grandchildren help keep her young.*

# He restoreth my soul



The 23rd Psalm is a masterpiece within the pages of our Bibles. You can envision the Lord as our shepherd—providing for, leading, protecting, caring for, feeding, and housing His sheep (us) both now and forever.

Mark D. Taylor, member of the NLT Bible Translation Committee, speaks of the popularity of Psalm 23:

“God is a zealous protector of his sheep, training us to hear his voice, leading us into pleasant pastures, and even walking with us through the darkest valleys. And he is extravagant in his goodness. He doesn’t just feed us; he prepares a feast in the presence of our enemies. He doesn’t just bless us; he fills our cup to overflowing. He doesn’t just offer his goodness and love; he pursues us with them. We aren’t simply his assignment; we are his passion—forever.”

I appreciate the truly restorative provisions of the Lord as our Shepherd as I read these illustrations from a sermon by Emile Wolfaardt.

One of the challenges facing a shepherd is to make sure that his sheep do not become “cast.”

A cast sheep is one that has turned over on its back, and because of its lack of agility and its thick woolly coat, is unable to get up again by itself. The sheep

will, if not helped, die in that position. This condition is not uncommon among pregnant sheep.

Unless the shepherd keeps diligent watch over his flock, a cast sheep will die or fall victim to predators. The shepherd must “restore” such sheep. He must help the cast sheep to get back on its feet again and regain its equilibrium.

Author Phillip Keller writes: “A ‘cast down’ sheep is a pathetic sight. Lying on its back, its feet in the air, it flays away frantically struggling to get up, without success. It will bleat out for help in frightened frustration. If the shepherd does not arrive on the scene within a reasonably short time, the sheep will die.

“This is why it is so essential for a shepherd to look over his flock every day, making sure they are up on their feet. If even one is missing, the first thought to flash to the shepherd’s mind is, ‘One of my sheep is cast down somewhere. I must go in search of it and set it on its feet again.’”

It’s not only the “cast-down” sheep that need restoring, but also the constantly wandering sheep.

Haddon Robinson tells that when a shepherd took his sheep out to graze, often one of the sheep would become interested in a tuft of grass here, and another there, and another. Finally, without realizing, it discovers it has wandered away from the flock.

The shepherd that night counts the sheep when they come into the fold: “96... 97... 98... 99...” and discovers one is missing. Leaving his flock in the care of a trusted friend he moves out into the darkness. As he walks he calls out and listens for the cry of the sheep. Finally, out in the darkness, he hears the bleating of this lost one. He goes to it, puts it on his shoulders and brings it back to the fold.

I have seen many a child of God needing restoration. There has been many a time when I have needed restoration. Times when I have wandered into sin, and the Shepherd came and fetched me. Some of you know what I am talking about. You wandered into sin, and He fetched you.

Thank you, Lord—the Great Shepherd—for restoring my soul. [SR](#)

By Kevin Butler  
Conference President 2021





## FOCUS on Missions

By Andy Samuels

Chief Executive Director  
SDB Missionary Society

# Planting SDB Churches in Pakistan and Egypt

## PAKISTAN

Churches are planted out of all kinds of circumstances, including some that are less than desirable. And sometimes churches are planted even unintentionally. In Pakistan, Seventh Day Baptists have inherited a very interesting situation.

A little over two years ago, a Sabbathkeeping group planted a new work in Pakistan. They have been financially keeping this work afloat and have made some progress. However, it came to their attention that the local Pakistani leadership had been misappropriating funds and abusing their power, prompting the sponsoring group to withdraw from any mission work in Pakistan. Brother Gulzar Dass, a Pakistani brother from the group, relocated to Sydney, Australia, aligned himself with the Sydney Seventh Day Baptist Church, and shared with them the mission opportunity in Pakistan. Phenomenal inroads had been made into the Hindu community and Brother Gulzar had been single-handedly managing the mission. The Sydney SDB Church, under the leadership of Pastor Gabriel Alegre, prayerfully and in a step of faith, assumed the administration of the work. The work is thriving and plentiful, with access to Hindu communities readily available. One such community has over 2000 Hindus of which the local SDB school has over 100 students.

Since the Sydney Church has been managing the mission in Pakistan, there are now five schools, they have become land owners, built



*One of the new SDB Sabbath Schools in Pakistan*



*One of the SDB Church Plants in Pakistan*

a community well, and baptized 31 individuals at the end of 2019. They have also established a women's training center teaching ladies to sew, and have several fellowships meeting in various locations.

Pastor Alegre reports that the work is growing at such a fast rate that it is becoming more than they can handle as a single local church. Thus, the work has now been embraced by the Australian Association of SDB's and is being administered by their leadership team in Sydney.

There are eight Sabbath Schools in the Faisalabad District, which encompasses 5,856 sq. km.

In Bahawalpur District, there are currently 130 students (from Christian, Hindu and Muslim families). The Muslims are happy for the SDBs to be associated with it. Educated Muslims, those who are not fundamentalist, still trust Christians over their own people. The strategy is to establish schools and use the Bible to teach English to the students.

Someone has gifted a plot of land for a community project such as another Sabbath School, or for welfare work. The donated land has been cleared and is ready to build upon. The utilities of water, electricity, and gas will be registered in the name of the Seventh Day Baptist Church, Sydney congregation. The plan is to start building the classrooms on this land, along with a double-story building.

There is also ministry taking place in the Karachi region.

Pakistan is on the travel agenda for the Missionary Society in 2021, if the Lord permits.



*Some members of the SDB Church Plant in Cairo, Egypt*

## EGYPT

Between late 2019 and early 2020, some South Sudanese Seventh Day Baptists fled their homeland and settled in Cairo, Egypt. They needed to escape from the war and violence in South Sudan. Desiring to continue to engage in practicing their faith, they boldly launched a church in Cairo—although their refugee status placed limitations on them and impediments in their path. They have rented a facility, and a group of about 30 people meet for worship each Sabbath.

Both in Pakistan and in Egypt, our brethren are applying principles found in the book of Acts, such as chapter 8, verse 4: "Those who had been scattered, preached the word wherever they went." And also, chapter 16, verse 9: "During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'"

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The Missionary Society is committed to working with others to plant Seventh Day Baptist Churches all over the world. We are humbled and privileged to share in such a noble exercise which helps to fulfill the Great Commission. [SR](#)



## Get to Know Your Community

As the year 2020 ends and 2021 approaches, I am thinking about how much has changed during this past year: a lot of things! For the most part, 2020 was difficult and messy and, at times, it felt like the year would never end. Now that we are getting toward the beginning of a new year, I find myself thinking that it doesn't seem possible that this year is coming to a close.

While there have been parts of this year that were truly terrible, many good things happened as well. Although I say it in jest a lot, I know that a year is not truly responsible for the success or the disappointment which I have felt. A unit of time cannot control the events that have occurred. But sometimes, it's awfully tempting to write events and consequences off as an attribute of the time rather than the responsibility of the people living within that time.

Now, I'm not saying that as individual human beings we are directly responsible for the range of fiascos 2020 contained. What I am suggesting is that there are many things highlighted that I believe we could do better—individually as Christians and also corporately as the church.

Individually, I think it begins with getting to know your community. Not just your church community and not just to invite people to church, but to truly form relationships with the members of your community. I'm not saying everyone needs to be your best friend. Certainly be smart and safe during the pursuit. I think a ton of misunderstanding and distrust of Christians happens because the greater community of non-Christians at large don't know us—and by and large we don't know them. We think we know them and they think they know us—but in many cases we're all just wrong.

Many times we check "Christian" at the door and do a lot of inward-focused outreach (devotions, etc.). We do need to recharge but somewhere as an individual Christian there should be some sort of outreach to our community: it isn't just up to the five-member outreach committee to make it happen. Think about who your community is and how best to begin that relationship. (Also, we're hopefully going to be pandemic-free soonish, so while some suggestions aren't practical or safe now, plan for when they are). Maybe you need a soft start and just begin acknowledging people with a smile as you pass by; start up a conversation with the person that you regularly see in line to get coffee; become a big brother/sister; organize a block party, etc.

Corporately, as the church, building relationships may be a bit more difficult, especially considering that it can be difficult to find your niche. I tend to be of the school that actions mean more than words—sometimes just donations to different organizations. Think about the needs in your community and then what are you willing to try. Maybe your congregation has people who like to do yard work and there are lots of elderly in your community who need that sort of help; or your church mans a night at an after-school program, etc. It doesn't have to be a "big" thing, but some sort of activity geared toward spending time building the community around you.

Find ways to support existing structures. Help change crumbling existing structures that can't cope with the needs placed on it or are perhaps themselves oppressive. The goal is to just build relationships and make yourself(ves) a known entity. Be open to questions or things that obviously challenge accepted tropes. Christianity isn't merely the religion of "do's and don'ts" but rather of hope and forgiveness. Don't ignore the challenges of 2020 and miss out on the opportunities of 2021. [SR](#)



Women's  
Society

By Katrina Goodrich



## Grief and Loss During the COVID Pandemic

Our current world situation is not one that we are accustomed to. The presence of a deadly disease has turned upside down the way we look at situations and perform our daily lives. Trauma, defined as anything that changes our view of God, self, or others for the worse, is something that is happening to all of us to some degree. Another important aspect of this turmoil is a feeling of grief and loss which is different than the usual type. To help us deal with this, Dr. William Worden has developed a model for dealing with grief during the epidemic which includes four tasks:

1. Accept the reality of the loss. This takes time, especially with COVID. In this pandemic, losses are ongoing and may change daily. We don't have an end date. Every day we need to tell ourselves "this is what my life is right now and I have no control over it." It is helpful to admit you are struggling.
2. Explore and express all the difficult emotions involved with the losses. There is no right way to do this. Pause and ask yourself about your feelings. Disappointment is a common one. Don't bury these emotions in an attempt to be strong. We are healthier when we allow ourselves to feel: talk to someone, journal, take long walks, talk to Jesus.
3. Make the necessary adjustments to find the new normal. This is hard because the normal keeps changing. We may need to create new relationships when the old are not possible. We may find we need to adjust to a new personal identity which comes with trial and error.
4. Develop an enduring connection to what we have lost. Find meaning, hope, and trust in Jesus. Ask, "What is the tangible good? What do I need to accept about the reality of my losses? What difficult emotions has the pandemic elicited? What am I grateful for? What adjustments have I made? What changes am I resisting or still need to make?" If you are not doing well, reach out to someone you can trust who is safe.

In addition to adjustments to self, family, and other relationships, spiritual adjustments need to be made. These may include corporate worship including the ability to attend church and how we connect to God. Who and what am I trusting in? We may feel a sense of injustice—"Why, God?" What is God saying through His Word? We need to walk by faith. It may be helpful to communicate with a pastor, write a letter to God or do a small group study through Zoom.

Self-care is another essential part of this new normal. It is not selfish to take care of yourself. Give yourself permission to not be okay, give margins between activities and just be. You don't always have to be productive or learning. Allow time for relaxation, meditation, and leaning in to God.

Resilience—the ability to bounce back, to be grounded, to seek support—is a trait every one of us needs to develop. If you find yourself becoming depressed or discouraged, reach out to a friend, counselor, or pastor. You are not alone. We need to help each other. [SR](#)

# HOME NEWS

**MILTON JUNCTION, WIS.**—Although the first blizzard of this winter struck Milton Junction on January 6, it did not prevent the people from gathering about one hundred and fifty strong at the Seventh Day Baptist church for the usual annual meeting. The wind and snow blew a gale all day. Some good-hearted brothers, with their horses, cheerfully “toted” town people to and from the church. Those who came in from the country in the morning found it somewhat harder to make the trip home through the drifts in the afternoon.

Vol. 84 No. 8

<https://www.sdbhistory.org/resources/sabbath-recorder-archives/>

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**NORTH LOUP, NEB.**—The interest has been good at the Sabbath afternoon meetings and the attendance fair. But the weather has been so cold, and the roads so bad, that on only a few Sabbaths could any one come in from the country. Like all other societies, we are losing a number of our boys and have a service flag in the church with about fifteen stars, and others that should be added now.

Vol. 84 No. 10

<https://www.sdbhistory.org/resources/sabbath-recorder-archives/>

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**BATTLE CREEK, MICH.**—Our weathermen assert that Michigan has had the severest winter in fifty years. What the “Oldest Inhabitant” says, we have not learned. The railway and street-car traffic that has been blocked a few times seems to prove the statement. However, the services of the church have only once been suspended and the congregation has averaged well.

Vol. 84 No. 11

<https://www.sdbhistory.org/resources/sabbath-recorder-archives/>



**BOULDER, COLO.**—The annual church dinner was held as usual in Buckingham Hall on New Year’s Day....

The day was perfect—dry and sunny with the thermometer registering nearly 60 degrees above. To the writer, who had left Wisconsin three days before with the thermometer at 17 degrees below and the wind blowing a gale, it “seemed too good to be true.”

Vol. 84 No. 12

<https://www.sdbhistory.org/resources/sabbath-recorder-archives/>

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**PLAINFIELD, N.J.**—The winter has been very cold with much snow, ...so I like to account for the diminished (Sabbath School) attendance in this way.

Vol. 84 No. 15

<https://www.sdbhistory.org/resources/sabbath-recorder-archives/>

# grace

by Marcy (Payne) Kersten



I looked up “grace” in the dictionary. There were a lot of different definitions. Some of them are: charm, elegance, attractiveness, esp. of a delicate, slender, refined, light or unlabored kind; courtesy, as in “he had the grace to say thank you;” favor as in “fall from grace;” and a short prayer offered before or after a meal. But the one we’re talking about tonight means “unconstrained and undeserved divine favor or good will; God’s loving mercy displayed to man for the salvation of his soul.” I didn’t really like that definition, because it made it sound as if God only showed us grace the one time in our life when or if we chose to accept His gift of salvation. So I looked it up in my sister’s Bible dictionary. This is what it said: “an undeserved favor or gift; the **undeserved** forgiveness, kindness and mercy that God gives us.”

There are lots of different verses on grace in the Bible, but I have chosen a couple that I liked. In 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Paul writes that the Lord told him, “My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness.” He then goes on to say, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” I guess this passage really hit me, because my entire life I have struggled with trying to keep up the perfect front—trying to make people believe that I can handle anything; that I don’t need help, when actually I know that God has helped me through all of my struggles. He promises me, and He promises you, that His grace is sufficient for you, for His power is made perfect in weakness, but who here enjoys admitting their weaknesses? I know I don’t. I have a hard time admitting that, “What, I’m not perfect?”—but God’s grace is sufficient for me, because His power is made perfect in my weaknesses. The more I admit to how weak I am, the more God gets the glory, because I know that without Him, I couldn’t have accomplished my goal, whatever it may have been or be.

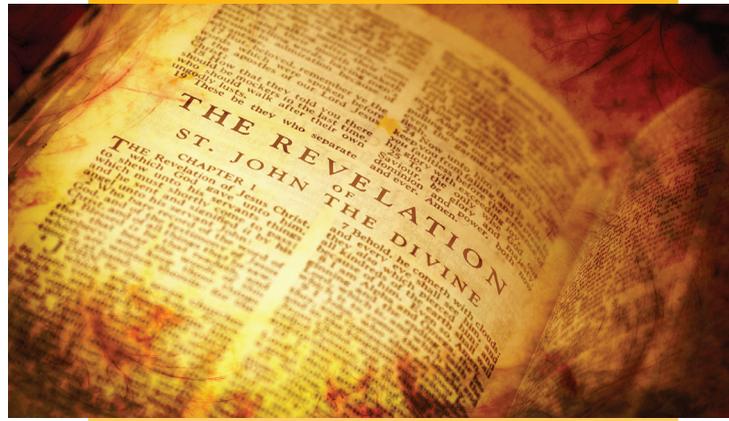
Another verse I really liked about grace was Titus 2:11-14. “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good.” I like this verse because it explains why I don’t do some of the things that other people do, and think that I **should** do. The grace of God “teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions.” It teaches us to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives...while we wait for the blessed hope the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good.

I don’t know about you, but I am thrilled that God considers me His daughter. The verse says, “a people that are his **very** own, eager to do what is good.” When I read those words, I get a very strong image in my mind. The fact that He says a “people that are His **very** own” instead of just “His own” makes me feel special. He claims us as his **very** own instead of...eh..His. We are precious to Him. Then the phrase “eager to do what is good.” I read “eager” and picture a child with his eyes lit up expectantly. Children are always eager to please someone they look up to. I transfer the energy from that picture to the “eager to do what is good” and think “Wow! I’m precious to God—why on earth wouldn’t I be that eager to do what is good”—just to please Him and make Him proud of me? And it says that the grace of God teaches all of that.

The last verse I have for you speaks for itself. I pray that someday I can honestly say this verse and mean every word of it. It is Acts 20:24. “However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.” SR

*Marcy wrote and gave this Baccalaureate speech to her graduating class at Triton High School in 1998.*



# The Book of Revelation

## John of Patmos

*A Study by Dennis Coleman, Seventh Day Baptist Church of Shiloh, NJ*

Do you avoid reading the book of Revelation? Early in my Christian walk I made sure to avoid the end of the Bible. I thought I knew the story of the end of everything and what I knew sounded a little scary. It also sounded just a bit complicated. What is Revelation about: Pre-trib, Post-trib, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse? I listened to debates and thought about “The End Times,” all of which led me to believe that the Book of Revelation was best left to theologians. Do you agree? So here I am, writing to you about a book I used to avoid. How did this happen? I’m also teaching the Book of Revelation to a Sabbath School class made up of junior high, senior high and college-aged young adults. In both situations I hope to share my newfound appreciation for the Book of Revelation: an appreciation built upon my understanding of the book’s third verse. What does that verse say? Well, I’ll come back to that later. For now let’s walk together through a study of the Book of Revelation.

### Prayer Time

Before we look at the book’s text I want to do two things. First, I want to ask you to take a moment to pray. We will not be able to understand the Book of Revelation without the help of the Spirit who gave these visions to John in the first place. Please spend some time talking with our God. Invest as much time in prayer as you need. I’ll wait.

### John of Patmos

Second, I would like to take some time to get to know the writer of the book: John of Patmos.

Traditionally the author of the Book of Revelation is thought to be John the Apostle, but in my research for these studies, I found some historical debate in which John of Patmos was thought to be a different John. I’ll leave you to study that debate on your own. I personally believe the author to be the Apostle.

So what do we know about John the Apostle? He wrote five books in the Bible (The Gospel of John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John and Revelation). John witnessed Jesus' transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-10, Luke 9:28-36). He worked with his brother, James, in the family business run by their father, Zebedee. Jesus gave the two the name Boanerges which in Greek means "Sons of Thunder." (Mark 3:17) In more modern times this name is applied to a fiery preacher, but the Bible does not tell us why they received this nickname. John was one of Jesus' disciples and called to be one of the twelve Apostles (Mark 3:13-19). He was one of three disciples whom Jesus asked to go with Him into the garden of Gethsemane while He prayed (Matthew 26:36-46). John would continue in ministry after Jesus' resurrection and is thought to be the only one of the twelve who died of old age.

While on the cross, Jesus called upon John to take care of His mother after His death (John 19:25-27). By tradition, the oldest son takes care of his mom in the event of his father's death and it is believed that Joseph may have passed before Jesus' crucifixion. I believe that by appointing John, Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the commandment to honor thy mother, making sure that Mary would be taken care of. At the foot of the cross, John replaced Jesus as Mary's oldest son as Jesus took John's place, receiving the punishment we all deserve for our sins. Most likely John took care of Mary for the rest of her life.

There is evidence that John may have lived in Ephesus before (and possibly after) being exiled to Patmos, an island located in the Aegean Sea between Greece and Turkey. John speaks of his time on Patmos in Revelation, saying that he was there "for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Revelation 1:9 NKJV) While there, he received a vision from God of which he testifies in the Book of Revelation which he wrote sometime around 95 AD. As described in the book's first verse, this vision was a revelation of Jesus Christ, signified by His angel (see also Revelation 22:6), and given by God in order to show His servants things that "must shortly take place."

In obedience, John testifies of what he heard and saw (verse 2). Thus Revelation is John's testimony of Jesus Christ as he shares with us all a glimpse into Heaven and of the throne and of the judgment still to come.

## Revelation: Written to be a Blessing

I mentioned earlier how the third verse of the Book of Revelation became the building block for my appreciation of this complicated book. What does the third verse say?

*"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near."*

—Revelation 1:3 (NKJV)

Did you catch that first word: "Blessed"? Revelation is intended to be a blessing. The NASB 2020 says:

*"Blessed is the one who reads, and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written in it; for the time is near."*

The Living Bible says:

*"If you read this prophecy aloud to the church, you will receive a special blessing from the Lord. Those who listen to it being read and do what it says will also be blessed. For the time is near when these things will all come true."*

The point is, the Book of Revelation is intended to be a blessing to us. It is not intended to be scary nor is it to be used to coerce us into weekly church attendance. Through it, God is offering us all a blessing. Granted, this is a conditional promise of blessing. To receive the blessing we must read (or hear) the prophecy and we must keep those things written in the prophecy. We are to hear and believe the prophecy, receiving it as real and responding accordingly. It is a call to obedience but not out of fear. Instead, I believe we are to draw near to God today in order to receive the blessing that comes with knowing that what the testimony describes will come to pass.

Have you thought of Revelation as offering a blessing from God? I'll leave you to think about this blessing and hopefully, I'll see you here again next month when we will look at verses 4-8: the benediction section of the Book of Revelation. SR

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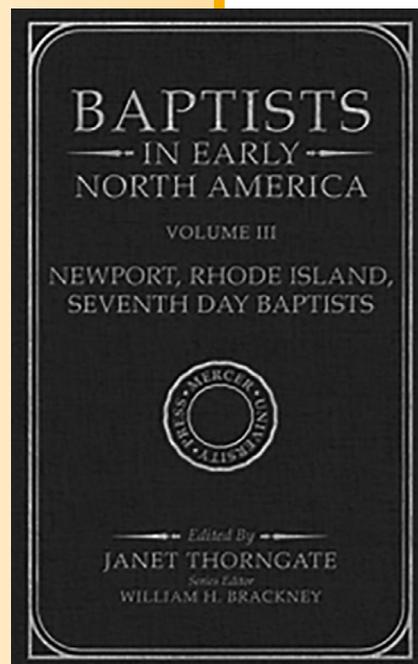
*Dennis Coleman is proud to be one of God's children; he is a husband and father of two teens. A member of Shiloh SDB Church, Dennis is honored that God lets him tag along as He ministers to His saints.*

# COH issues Newport Challenge!

The Council on History is making a challenge to you!

The first 35 people to donate \$350 dollars to the Centennial Fund in honor of the upcoming 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Newport SDB church, will receive a signed copy of Janet Thorngate's book on the history of the Newport church!

*Checks can be sent to the SDB Center, c/o the COH, or you can respond to the recent History appeal mailing, or make a donation online!*



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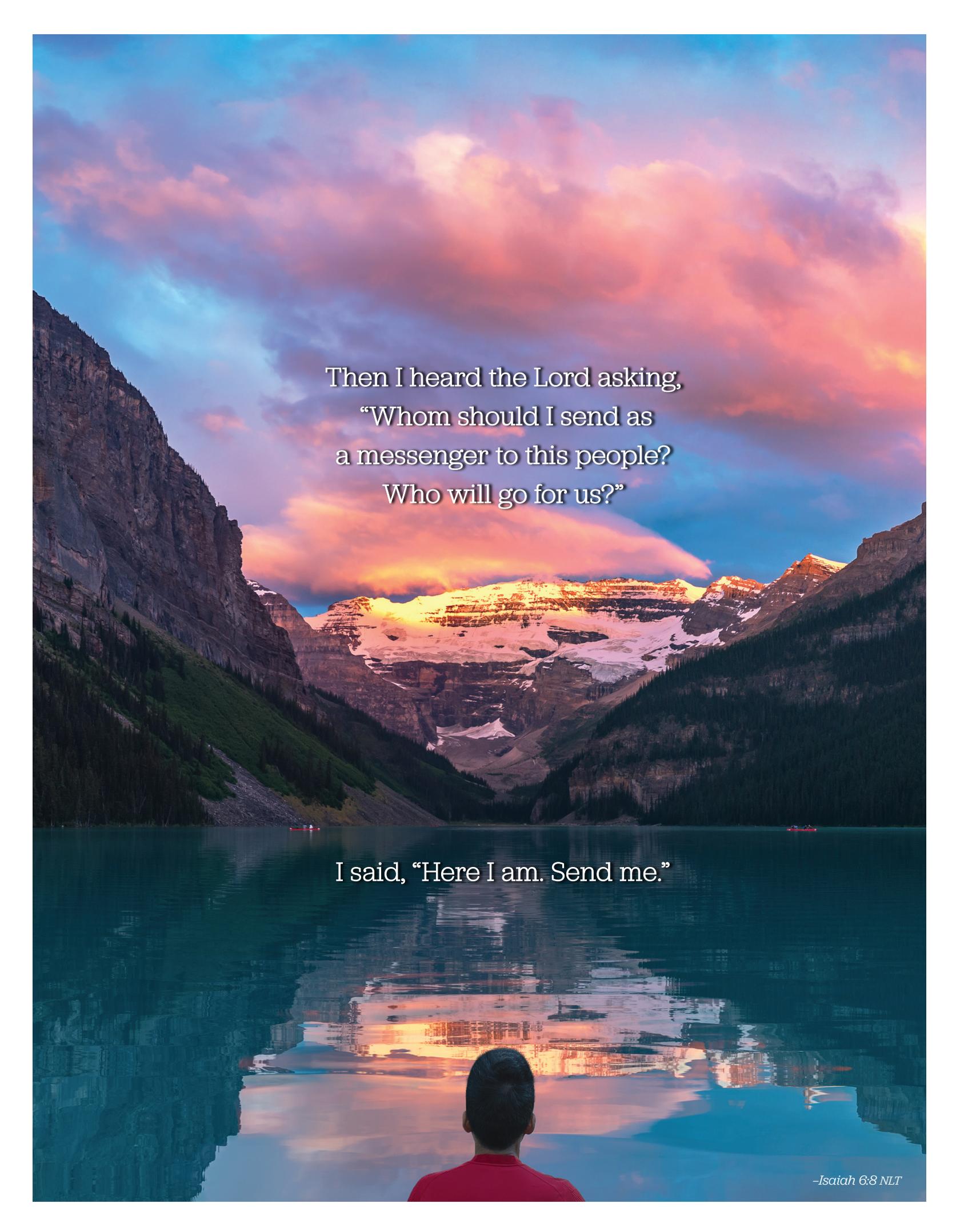
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A person in a red shirt is seen from behind, looking out over a vast mountain landscape at sunset. The sky is filled with vibrant, colorful clouds in shades of blue, pink, and orange. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a golden glow over the snow-capped mountain peaks. The water in the foreground is calm, reflecting the colors of the sky and the mountains. The overall scene is serene and majestic.

Then I heard the Lord asking,  
“Whom should I send as  
a messenger to this people?  
Who will go for us?”

I said, “Here I am. Send me.”

It's not important who does the planting,  
or who does the watering.  
What's important is that

God makes the seed grow.

