



How Do You Rest?

May 2023
A Seventh Day Baptist Publication

Don't forget the Sabbath,
The Lord our God hath blest,
Of all the week the brightest,
Of all the week the best;
It brings repose from labor,
It tells of joy divine,
Its beams of light descending,
With heav'nly beauty shine.



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Sabbath Recorder

A monthly journey into the mind and heart.

May 2023

Patricia Cruzan, Editor

A Seventh Day Baptist Publication

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WHO ARE SEVENTH DAY BAPTISTS?

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

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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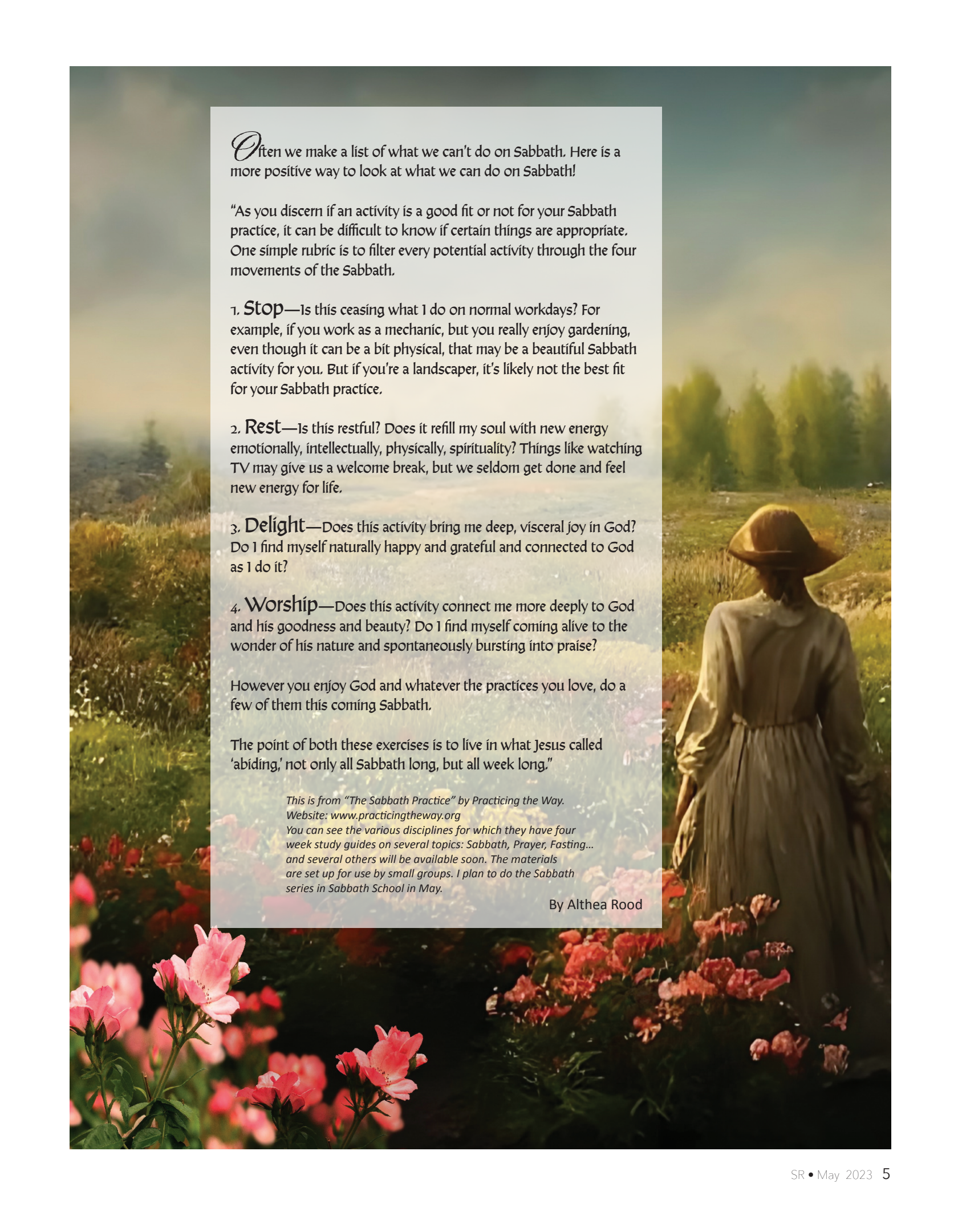
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A woman wearing a long, light-colored dress and a wide-brimmed hat is seen from behind, walking through a field of vibrant pink roses. The background is a soft-focus landscape with green trees and a bright sky, suggesting a peaceful, natural setting.

Often we make a list of what we can't do on Sabbath. Here is a more positive way to look at what we can do on Sabbath!

"As you discern if an activity is a good fit or not for your Sabbath practice, it can be difficult to know if certain things are appropriate. One simple rubric is to filter every potential activity through the four movements of the Sabbath.

1. **Stop**—Is this ceasing what I do on normal workdays? For example, if you work as a mechanic, but you really enjoy gardening, even though it can be a bit physical, that may be a beautiful Sabbath activity for you. But if you're a landscaper, it's likely not the best fit for your Sabbath practice.
2. **Rest**—Is this restful? Does it refill my soul with new energy emotionally, intellectually, physically, spirituality? Things like watching TV may give us a welcome break, but we seldom get done and feel new energy for life.
3. **Delight**—Does this activity bring me deep, visceral joy in God? Do I find myself naturally happy and grateful and connected to God as I do it?
4. **Worship**—Does this activity connect me more deeply to God and his goodness and beauty? Do I find myself coming alive to the wonder of his nature and spontaneously bursting into praise?

However you enjoy God and whatever the practices you love, do a few of them this coming Sabbath.

The point of both these exercises is to live in what Jesus called 'abiding,' not only all Sabbath long, but all week long."

*This is from "The Sabbath Practice" by Practicing the Way.
Website: www.practicingtheway.org
You can see the various disciplines for which they have four week study guides on several topics: Sabbath, Prayer, Fasting... and several others will be available soon. The materials are set up for use by small groups. I plan to do the Sabbath series in Sabbath School in May.*

By Althea Rood



Four important aspects of Sabbath

By Althea Rood

As a Sabbath-keeper for all of my life, I feel that I am just discovering some of the meaning of the Sabbath and how God has designed it for me...and for all of us! As Jesus said, "...The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27,28, NIV) We live in a society characterized by restlessness, workaholicism, and consumerism. We seemingly have an unquenchable, insatiable lust for more...more money or more time. "The Sabbath is an act of resistance, a prophetic act over (and) against the accomplishment and accumulation of our society."¹ In a society that is addicted to the twin drugs of accomplishment and accumulation, Sabbath is how we "fight" back against Egypt, Pharaoh, and his empire. It is easy to acclimate to our society. Sabbath is one way to resist—one way to say "enough work" and to break our addiction to accomplishment. The Sabbath is an opportunity for us to align with God and His Kingdom. It is a time for us to remember who we are as image bearers of our Father God. We don't need to earn His love. We need to learn to bask in His love for us! The amazing thing is that He has given us the gift of the Sabbath for that purpose!

The Sabbath is:

- Built into the rhythm of Creation
- Blessed...intended to be a day of delight!
- Holy...a day where we find God (without obstacles)
- A day of rest and worship
- A command and a gift
- A day when we remember who we belong to and who we are!

Four important aspects of Sabbath include: Stopping, Resting, Delighting, and Worshipping.

Stopping: Sabbath is a time to stop working, to stop thinking about working, to stop worrying, and to stop wanting more. Many of Jesus' healings took place on the Sabbath and the word "soter" means both to heal and to save. The Sabbath provides the opportunity for healing our minds and bodies. God invites us to take ground in our war against hurry by providing the Sabbath. As Marva Dawn states, "Intimacy with God cannot be rushed."

Resting: Sabbath is an opportunity for wholistic rest... physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual rest. Sabbath is a concrete way to trust God...for His love, His provision, etc. Resting helps us release the illusion of control, that we think we have, to God! We have no need to produce anything! We can let God be God and not attempt to usurp His position.

Delighting: For many, Sabbath seems to have more negatives than positives. "Don't do this...you can't do that." However, God seems to have designed it for delight! Stopping and resting increases our capacity to delight...to notice more...to see the world in a new way. Sabbath is designed to fill our souls with joy! We have the opportunity to pamper our souls with the beauty of nature or music or art or writing or relationships. It's a time when I can be overwhelmed by God's love for me. As Dallas Willard has said, "Joy is a consciously chosen way of thinking and living."

Worshipping: Due to our stopping, resting, and delighting, it automatically opens our gratitude bank! Stopping, resting, and delighting enables us to see God in all of our lives and it gives us a greater appreciation of who God is and all He has given us! It frees our souls to be filled with praise and worship of God! The Sabbath enables us to experience a contentment and restfulness in God's Kingdom.

We desperately need the Sabbath that God has given us as a very special gift. A gift to help us overcome the busyness of our lives. Too often my life may reflect what Corrie ten Boom is quoted as saying, "If the devil can't make us bad, he'll make us busy." I realize that busyness does something to my soul. It many times cuts me off from awareness of the Spirit of God. Sabbath is an opportunity to restore my soul...to increase my awareness of God's presence and work in my life. I encourage you to join me in responding to Jesus' words: "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." (Matthew 11:28-30, The Message). [SR](#)

¹ From podcast "The Sabbath as Resistance" by John Mark Comer. (08/26/22)

Althea Rood is a high school math teacher (who once was retired), wife of a retired pastor (Dale), and mom to two adult children (Kristin Camenga and Jeffrey Rood). She is enjoying doing what God created her for...teaching. The subject of Sabbath fascinates and challenges her because she is by nature in the "business of accomplishment" and desperately needs to learn to use Sabbath better! She would recommend that people check out "Practicing The Way" for teaching materials on the Sabbath and other Christian disciplines. She finds herself challenged to grow in her relationship with God and others through the podcast teachings of John Mark Comer. She loves the quote by theologian Walter Bruggeman: "People who keep the Sabbath, live all seven days differently." She prays that this is true in her life.

Sabbath as a Pause for What?

By Carl Greene, Executive Director

I have spent much of my life examining how a Sabbath pause refreshes me for another productive week. I measured what I gave up on Sabbath Day in reference to how much better I would feel afterward. I wanted a Band-Aid to my exhaustion rather than a healthy life.

What I am finding is that Sabbath is more than a good nap. Sabbath is a pause that is life-changing. Rather than trying to parse out how “worky” preaching or leading a Bible study is, or what exactly constitutes a good work that is Sabbath worthy, I am pursuing a fuller pause.

“Sabbath is not simply the pause that refreshes. It is the pause that transforms...Sabbath is an invitation to receptivity, and acknowledgement that what is needed is given and need not be seized.”¹ Sabbath is an invitation into a life-changing posture of restfulness.

Restlessness vs. Restfulness

Restlessness. We experience it during the long, dark night of worry and concern. We live it through days of being preoccupied with a problem that we just cannot seem to fix. We fight it during seasons of boredom in which life simply does not offer engaging opportunities.

Restfulness is the antithesis to restlessness. Restfulness is also God's design for healthy living.

Restlessness might be a cultural phenomenon today, but it is nothing new. The Israelites knew all about restlessness. We see throughout Scripture how they would serve various gods that demanded never ending activity and costly service. They chronically gave up the restfulness offered by God to obtain a counterfeit benefit offered by another nation's gods.

The ten commandments contain a call to the Israelites to stay away from the gods of Egypt that they had left behind. They were to follow God and put away any sort of idol. And yet, they dreamed of returning to Egypt. They desired to go back to the land where they had no rest, increasing burdens, and a constant need to produce. We are not much different.

Source of Restlessness

The Israelites wanted to get back to making bricks in Egypt because they forgot about the exodus.² Despite the cost, there was security in going back to the system that they were used to. Likewise, we are



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addicted to making bricks in life. We become consumed by outproducing the number of bricks that others generate.

We try to produce more parenting bricks by having our kids involved in more activities than their peers.

We try to outproduce bricks vocationally by pouring on the extra effort to win accolades and achievement.

We try to produce more churchy bricks by getting more people in the pews and other awe-inspiring metrics.

We agonize over our social media bricks getting the recognition that they deserve. After all, we are just as witty and happy as our friends.

Our brick producing leads to anxiousness. We are anxious that we will not have as many bricks produced as our peers. We worry that our bricks will not be as flawless as our friends. We multi-task in an effort to keep up the brick-making pace. We become so enamored with making bricks that we no longer even recognize our restlessness and unhealthy living.

Restlessness Quiz

Take this restlessness quiz to establish your own level of restlessness.

- 1) Am I able to be physically still for an extended period of time without reflecting on work or family concerns?
- 2) Am I willing to be quiet for at least as long as I speak in a conversation?
- 3) Am I able to remain calm when there are concerning circumstances building in my life?
- 4) Do I need to keep my schedule full of activities to avoid boredom?³

We swim in a society that is full of restlessness yet deficient of restfulness. Our collective restlessness is not part of God's design for healthy living, but without intentionality, it is where you and I consistently live our lives. Sabbath is a weekly practice that breaks us

free from restlessness. Sabbath welcomes us into practices and behaviors that reframe our experience away from constant brick making.

A Different Sabbath Metric

Sabbath is definitely an opportunity to pause and be refreshed. But, if I structure the Sabbath only around that metric, I miss out on the fullness of God's invitation to rest. So now, when I am asked to do good on Sabbath, I am agonizing less over how worky it feels, and give far more attention to how it contributes to Sabbath restfulness.

Here are three metrics that I am finding helpful in living out a transforming Sabbath:

- 1) What are behaviors on Sabbath that generate the anxiousness and worry of brick making? When I specifically name these, I am able to better know what to say no to.
- 2) What are life-giving practices that I thrive in doing on Sabbath? I do not need to agonize over these opportunities when they arise—I can pre-decide saying yes to these opportunities.⁴
- 3) What are ways that I prepare for Sabbath worship with my church family where I am most open to receive reminders of our exodus from sin?⁵ Rather than showing up with the hustle and bustle of brick making, I can prepare with restful practices.

Together

Sabbath is not simply an individual spectator experience. Our churches provide a beautiful context for fully orbbed restfulness that occurs in community. We remember and experience transformation with our church family. We encourage one another in healthy living.

Together, we multiply rest. SR

¹ Brueggemann, Walter. 2017. *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.

² *Ibid.*

³ The 'quiz' builds from the definition found at <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/restlessness>

⁴ Brueggemann, 2017.

⁵ Deuteronomy 5:15



I think of the
balanced flow
God designed
for us:
from work
to stopping
and then
back to work

The call to STOP is a call to REST

by Andrew J. Camenga

Seventh Day Baptists are known for our desire to obey God's call to "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). We contemplate how to faithfully execute God's expansion of that command: "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your ..." (Exodus 20:9-10). We comprehend that God connects our stopping to keeping the sabbath day holy. We marvel at God's explanation: "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy" (Exodus 20:11). We ponder the reality of a tireless God who, declaring the work of creation complete and very good, stopped working, dedicated that pause to Himself, and invites us to participate in the blessing.

We intuitively understand that this call to stop is a call to rest. We resonate with rhetoric of the author of Hebrews as we sense that the Sabbath offers a perfect analogy for the promise of God that in Christ we will enter His rest—and that Christ, our High Priest, will do all that is necessary for us to "draw near the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

We hear Jesus's affirmation of all those things when He says, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). We recognize that the Gospel of Matthew wants those words ringing in our souls and ears when we consider Jesus' demonstration of sabbath-keeping as He interacts with His disciples and the religious leaders of the day.

In short, we know that God in Christ has called His people to a life marked by faithful work and fulfilling rest—a rhythm modeled by God's sabbath command and a promise to be fulfilled in the last day.

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Some of us, at times, not only know these truths but also experience them: a balanced flow from work to stopping and then again to work—a flow undergirded by living in and perceiving Christ's promised rest.

And yet, many of us do not. We juggle and drop events; We agree to too many tasks and discover to our chagrin that some tasks must be left ugly and unfinished; We feel a pervasive sense of weariness that undercuts work and, surprisingly, undermines rest—discovering that neither work nor rest accomplish what they should. In these times, we, with the society around us, demonstrate that busyness has become both a valued measure of success and a great distractor from what is best. We have, in this sense, become conformed to this age.

When I think of the balanced flow God designed for us—from work to stopping and then back to work—I know that there have been many times in life when I've disrupted that flow. I've seen that my practice of stopping (or not) for Sabbath has been the proverbial "canary in the coal mine"—a place where I can first discern the pressure that comes when I fail to attend to Christ's important call: "Come to me...and you will find rest for your soul".

To be crystal clear: There have been times when my mind and body cry out, "Sabbath-smabbath! Keep Working. You've got to get this done." In those times, I've discovered that my focus has shifted in perilous ways—and God in grace has helped me see them and recover.

Sometimes, my actions proclaim that I believe the outcome depends on me. Even as I recognize the valuable insight and effort provided by others, I mistakenly try to bear the weight of an entire project—expecting that if I do my job in the right way, success will be guaranteed. One of the ways God has helped me see that I've twisted my thinking and developed an overwrought sense of self-importance has been by demonstrating that my patterns of planning, troubleshooting, communicating, and doing don't shift on Sabbath. In those moments, God brings home the truth He'd

already taught: The outcome never depends on me. We plan. God causes.

Sometimes, I trick myself into believing that I am valuable because I get things done. Since God calls us to work, getting things done isn't a problem—until you start to believe your only value comes from getting things done. One of the ways God has helped me see that I've forgotten my place is by helping me notice that I'm starting to treasure the count of tasks completed on Sabbath. In those moments, He reminds me that is not my works which matter—but the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes, I fail to do the work I should do. I choose other tasks. I engage in other conversations. I invent other work. Every now and then a task will arise that I simply don't want to do, and I thoroughly avoid it. Then, when Sabbath draws near, the work seems to cry out, "Why don't you do me now?" That metaphorical cry carries weight, and the lingering unfinished task can easily encumber the goal of stopping. Yet, here too, God has graciously allowed his provision of Sabbath to help me see the folly of my choices. He has helped me remember his call, "six days shall you labor and do all your work." He also reminds me that by His grace and through His strength I can tackle any task He sets before me.

In these ways and others, God has used the Sabbath to help me see when my focus on work has shifted in perilous ways and has graciously reminded me of His love and restored me to His path. Because of His work, I can rejoice that God in Christ has called His people to a life marked by faithful work and fulfilling rest—a rhythm modeled by God's sabbath command and a promise to be fulfilled in the last day. [SR](#)

Andrew J. Camenga serves the German SDB Church in Salemville, PA, as pastor. He is grateful to God for the blessing of walking through life alongside his wife, Kristin, and daughters, Elisa and Annika.



What does the Sabbath mean to you?

By Dr. George Cruzan

Sabbath in the Old Testament

God tells us (Genesis 2:1-3) that he completed creating the vast heavens and earth, including plants, animals, and man, in six days and that he rested on the seventh day (Saturday) and he made the seventh day holy. God set apart the seventh day as distinct from the other six days. I don't think God rested because he was exhausted from six days of creation. He rested to set an example for us. A holy day.

There is no mention of the Sabbath again until after the Exodus from Egypt. God provided manna and quail six days per week when the Israelites were wandering in the desert, but not on the Sabbath (Exodus 16). On the sixth day of that first week of manna, Moses said to the people: "This is what the Lord commands: Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord." (Exodus 16:23) Some tried to gather food on the Sabbath, but God provided none. A few days later, he gave the Ten Commandments. He said, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." (Exodus 20:8). He says to rest and not work and quotes Genesis 2: 2, 3. (Exodus 20:11: For in six days the Lord made the heavens, and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.)

God chastised the Israelites for not keeping the Sabbath after they occupied the land. Even after the 70 years of Babylonian captivity and return to the land, they did not keep the Sabbath. Nehemiah (13:15-22) stopped the Israelites from working on the Sabbath and prevented merchants from bringing goods into Jerusalem on the Sabbath.

From the beginning, the Sabbath was important to God, not just to rest from work, but to be holy, to remember God.

Sabbath in the New Testament

The Jewish leaders had two problems with Jesus: he didn't follow their Sabbath rules and he claimed to be God. There are numerous incidences in the gospels where Jesus healed someone on the Sabbath. When the Jewish leaders questioned him, he responded that one ought to do good on the Sabbath. In Matthew 12:8 (also recorded in Mark and Luke), Jesus says he is "Lord of the Sabbath." Mark (2: 27) records that Jesus said, "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." However, every time Jesus healed someone on the Sabbath, scripture says that the Jewish leaders plotted how to kill him. It seems to me that plotting how to kill someone is more work than healing someone.

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I don't think God rested because he
was exhausted from six days of creation.
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A holy day.

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Paul is often referred to as the apostle to the gentiles, yet throughout the book of Acts we read that Paul regularly preached on the Sabbath. Paul stayed for a year and a half in Corinth, teaching and preaching every Sabbath.

Neither Jesus nor the apostles commanded or recommended a change to Sunday as the holy day. Sunday as the day for Christians to worship developed some 150-200 years later.

Sabbath Today

Most Christian organizations consider Sunday as the day for worship. Most Christians think that Jesus or Paul changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday; yet, we find no evidence of that in the New Testament. God declared the Sabbath (Saturday) to be holy; some 150-200 years after Jesus' death and resurrection, men decided to change the holy day to Sunday.

The Jewish religion continues to regard Saturday as God's Sabbath. Seventh Day Baptists continue to hold the seventh day of the week (Saturday) as God's holy day. On Sabbath we study scripture through sermons and Sabbath school. We sing praise to and worship God. But what else do we do?

In addition to worshipping God, we are called to rest. What does rest mean to you? A traditional Sabbath afternoon nap?

I think rest means to stop our focus on our worries, our careers and jobs, our finances, etc. To think about God's provision, his love, his salvation. Jesus was criticized for healing on the Sabbath; at least five healings on the Sabbath are recorded in the gospels. He said we should do good, not harm, on the Sabbath. If you see someone helping a person with yardwork (or something else you consider work) on the Sabbath, don't criticize them for "working on the Sabbath." That is exactly what the Pharisees did when Jesus did good on the Sabbath. We all need to think about how we can heal others on the Sabbath.

Is the Sabbath a tradition from your forefathers? Do you go to church on the Sabbath only because the church you go to worships on Saturday? How do you "rest" on the Sabbath? What does the Sabbath mean to you? [SR](#)

Dr. Cruzan is a retired board certified toxicologist, currently residing near Shiloh, NJ. He has served as Conference President, General Council member, Memorial Board trustee and president. He has been a deacon and taught Sabbath School at Raritan Valley and Shiloh SDB churches. He and his wife, Pat, have three married sons and eight grandchildren.

Sabbath: The Struggle to Pause and Recharge

By William Wells

In today's fast-paced society, finding the time and space to pause, rest, and recharge can be challenging. The concept of the Sabbath rest, as outlined in the Bible, is a vital practice for maintaining our mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. However, many of us struggle to disconnect and embrace this time of renewal. This article will explore the importance of the Sabbath rest, why we find it difficult to stop and rest, and how we can overcome these obstacles through supportive scripture and practical guidance.

The Sabbath rest is a foundational principle in the Bible, established in the creation story as a day of rest for God after creating the world (Genesis 2:2-3). God commands us to honor the Sabbath in the Ten Commandments, emphasizing its significance (Exodus 20:8-11). The Sabbath is a time to pause our daily routines, reflect on God's goodness, and recharge our spiritual and emotional batteries. It is also an opportunity to spend quality time with loved ones, worship God, and engage in activities that nurture our souls.

In today's fast-paced world, the culture of busyness often takes precedence over the need for rest. Being constantly busy is seen as a badge of honor and a measure of success, making it challenging to prioritize the Sabbath rest. However, the Bible reminds us that true success and fulfillment come from God alone (Matthew 6:33).

The fear of missing out (FOMO) is a significant barrier to embracing the Sabbath rest. Our desire to stay connected and informed about everything happening around us can make disconnecting from our devices and social media difficult. Jesus teaches us to focus on the present and trust in God's provision (Matthew 6:34).

Our desire for control can make it challenging to surrender our time, plans, and responsibilities, even for one day. The Sabbath rest calls us to relinquish control and trust in God's sovereignty (Psalm 46:10).

Recognizing the value of rest is essential to prioritizing the Sabbath. Jesus understood the importance of rest and sought solitude to recharge (Mark 6:31-32). Reflect on the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30, inviting us to find rest in Him.

Setting boundaries is crucial to safeguarding your Sabbath rest. Disconnect from technology and work-related tasks, and communicate your boundaries to others (Proverbs 4:23). Use this time to engage in activities that nourish your soul and bring you closer to God and loved ones.

Embrace the promise in Philippians 4:19, where God assures us of His provision for our needs. Trusting in God's provision will help alleviate the anxiety of setting aside time for the Sabbath rest.

Use your Sabbath rest to cultivate gratitude and reflect on God's goodness. Psalm 92, a psalm for the Sabbath, highlights the importance of praising God and meditating on His works.

The Sabbath rest is a gift from God designed to nurture our physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. As we face the challenges of busyness, fear of missing out, and the need for control, let us turn to scripture and practical strategies to prioritize and protect our Sabbath rest time. In doing so, we acknowledge the importance of rest, establish boundaries, trust in God's provision, and cultivate gratitude and reflection. Embracing the Sabbath rest enables us to reconnect with God, our loved ones, and ourselves, fostering a more balanced and fulfilling life.

As we overcome the struggle to stop and rest, let us remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." By practicing the Sabbath rest, we honor God's design for our lives and experience the rejuvenation and renewal we need to face each new week with vigor, purpose, and a deeper connection to our Creator. SR

William Wells is a retired business owner and passionate Church Planter in Stillwater, Oklahoma, cherishing time with his wife Debra, two daughters, three grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

The church blog is:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/sabbathrestfellowship>

But You Would Not Have It

By Nicholas J. Kersten, Director
Education & History

*“..in repentance and rest is your salvation,
in quietness and trust is your salvation,
but you would not have it...”*

—Isaiah 30:15

During my college years, I had a long holiday weekend which was my first time totally physically alone. On the first day, following some reading I had been doing about spiritual disciplines, I decided to go as long as I could in silence. The first day was surprisingly easy. I did what needed to be done quietly and did not turn on any media. It was very peaceful as my body detoxed from all the noise I was regularly immersed in. I noticed my awareness increasing and my senses sharpening to smaller and smaller sounds. Going to bed that evening, I was enthusiastic for the second day of the experiment.

The second day did not go as well. Rather than peace, there was a slow drip of torment, and by day's end I was climbing the walls. As the second day wore on, I began to feel intense emotions as the silence was filled with intrusive thoughts, loneliness, memories of painful experiences, temptations, and cutting reminders of weakness. By the end of the weekend, I understood why so many people flee from silence. We don't flee from silence because it is empty—we flee silence because of what it is very quickly filled with.

It is not only with audible sounds that this principle applies. Anywhere people might stumble into an empty space which might be unpleasantly filled, we can find people seeking mindless distraction. I have discovered this same principle proves true with my

Sabbath observance. What is it about 24 hours devoid of the work of the other six days that is so daunting and difficult? As I have tried to gain insight into my own discomfort and as I have observed the struggles of others, I think there are three major things that our Sabbaths can become filled with which we are desperate to avoid, and so we do not fully engage the opportunity we have in the Sabbath.

First, we are often ensnared by a worldly and demonic perspective that suggests that what stands between us and happiness is more of our preferred worldly pleasures which we gain access to by working. When we are thirsty for more of the comforts of the world, Sabbath is unwelcome because it limits our ability to work for the distraction they provide. Sabbath confronts the selfishness, greed, envy, and covetousness reflected so often when our hearts whisper a desire for “more.” What Sabbath offers is more of what God gives freely and not what the world offers through effort. Choosing to work for self-gained worldly pleasure instead of reveling in rest to find pleasure in God's healing and holy love for us, is the essence of what the Enemy plans for every person who loves Jesus Christ. Elements of this desire have been present in humanity since the Garden. If you consult Genesis 3:6-7, it is clear what the people desired was to be like God without God's presence with them. It is equally clear that the first thing they do after pursuing that powerless form of

What is it about 24 hours devoid of the work of the other six days that is so daunting and difficult?

godliness (2 Timothy 3:1-5) is to work to produce clothing to cover their own shame at that fact.

Second, our own desire to be used by God can make it harder to keep Sabbath. It is good, as bondservants redeemed by Christ, to work hard “as unto the Lord” (Colossians 3:23-24) for six days. It is good to see the Lord use our efforts, and natural to want to be increasingly used by God through our work in the world. There is deep and abiding satisfaction to be found in our work in this world. But it is also common for us to feel our limitations and the frustrations of working cursed soil (Genesis 3:17b-19) which sometimes does not produce the crops or yield we hope for, but instead produces thorns and weeds which are fit only to be pulled up and burned (Matthew 13:24-29). These frustrations at our struggle to produce a harvest can feel holy and righteous, but ultimately rely on a lie: that God’s work in our world is automatically increased as our labor increases. The point of God using us to achieve His purposes on earth is to demonstrate the surpassing power of Jesus Christ even through broken earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7). God’s work has never been slowed by even an instant because one of His children obeyed Him and sought Sabbath rest and replenishment in Him. God’s pleasure is to bring the harvest through the appropriate work and rest of His people in obedience to Him as a result of His power at work through them. The flow of that power is necessarily limited by disobedience to the patterns of loving care He provides to us through the rhythms of grace He has established. When we work beyond the parameters that God has set out of a desire to accomplish more for Him, we are ironically less likely to accomplish what He does desire for us, in us, and to be done through us. As SBC pastor David Gundersen says, “when work is an idol, rest will feel like a sin.” Our idolatrous sacrifices of overwork or overcommitment are not offerings He desires and ultimately not ones which serve to glorify Him. We do not receive more from God when we trust our own work over His, or our power over His.

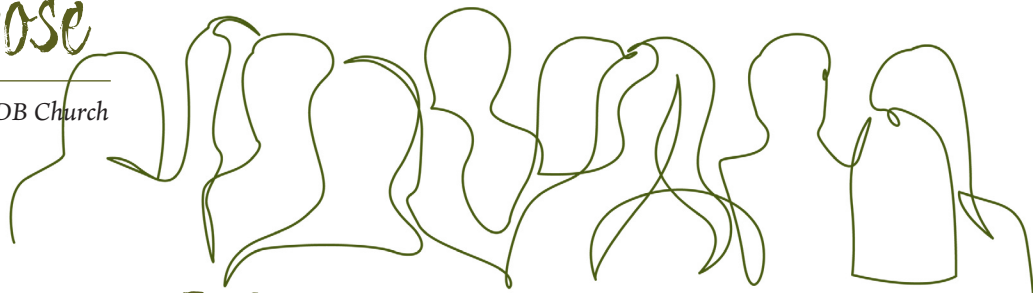
Third, there can be strong emotions of fear, shame, and pride from our life on the other six days which can become even stronger when we cease our labor

on Sabbath. We are all tempted to use work to avoid the broken places in our spirits. Where work becomes a way to avoid dealing with our own brokenness and trauma or medicine to limit our pain, Sabbath will become peroxide on an infected open wound. Those who most closely tie their identity to their work are often those most anxious to avoid what happens inside them when they stop working. Working for them becomes an elaborate fig leaf to cover the pain of their most broken places. To overcome this, we must permit ourselves to be naked and transparent before God—including about what floods into our hearts and minds when we leave Sabbath space open which is meant for Him. This means confronting our fears, shame, and pride and refusing to withdraw ourselves from His holy presence while He works in us to heal us. Honesty about our struggle before God is helpfully one of the easiest ways to grow our love of God, because as we confess our need, we see His gentle and skillful mercy and grace pour out to us. Our healing is His pleasure, and His pleasure is our good. Many of us would do well to have a few more painful Sabbaths of being cleansed and healed in God’s presence as we seek His wholeness. Those difficult Sabbaths of repentance and healing would be followed by restful ones of quiet trust, blessing, hope, and joy.

May each of us in the coming Sabbaths cease from our labor, difficult though it may be, and leave an open space of time which God will fill. May we find our identity in God and trust in His love for us in a way that will make us courageous when the cares of the world flood into our souls when we come fully to rest. May we stand transparently before the Lord of love in expectation of the healing He will bring when our brokenness confronts us in His presence. May we repent of the ways we have filled the space meant for Him, and the pleasures we have sought instead of him. May we be healed and restored as we rest in Him. And may we return to the world in healthy ways which multiply the rest of God we have in Jesus Christ—where we do not trust in our own efforts, but instead in the powerful, loving, and glorious God who has done, is doing, and will do more than we can ask or think (Ephesians 3:20-21). Amen. [SR](#)

Full of Purpose

Part 6 of a Sermon Series at Shiloh SDB Church
by Pastor Tyler Chroniger



Serving in Obscurity

Each of the previous articles has stemmed from a place where you were created on purpose, with a purpose, for a purpose. It is still true that you were created on purpose. It is still true that you were created with purpose. It is still true that you were created for a purpose. The lens that we are looking through this month is “you exist to bring God glory through serving.”

The hospitality industry is a broad category of fields within the service industry that includes lodging, food and drink service, event planning, theme parks, travel, and tourism. As of 2021, this industry had four trillion dollars of the market share. This would include going places like restaurants and hotels and, quite frankly, anything in between. When we go to places like this and we pay out our hard-earned cash, we expect a certain level of service. When we go to a restaurant, we expect the hostess to be courteous and welcoming. We expect to be seated in a timely manner. We expect the server to get our order right. We expect the server to keep checking on us to make sure our needs are met. We expect the restaurant to be clean. We expect a certain quality of food. Nothing is different about going to a hotel. When we go to a hotel or motel, we expect the front desk person to be welcoming. We expect our room to be clean. We expect the bed to be comfortable. We expect, if they serve breakfast, that there is a certain quality. We expect our needs in the moment to be met. This got me thinking about one of a Christian’s favorite places to eat—Chick-fil-A:

“From the beginning, Truett based his business on Biblical principles that he believed were also good business principles, and since 1982, our Corporate Purpose has guided all that we do. We keep our Purpose front and center because it helps us to steward our business and our work to positively influence everyone we meet. [Two of their tenants are] To glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that is entrusted to us. To have a positive influence on all who meet Chick-fil-A and to live out our Purpose and honor Truett’s legacy, we are focused on creating a culture of care, both at the Support Center and in our restaurants. We believe that a strong and caring culture is essential to our success and to offering fulfilling careers for our staff. The notion of care applies not only to our franchise Operators and their Team Members and customers in our restaurants, but also to how we treat each other at the Support Center. Chick-fil-A is committed to a workplace culture where everyone is treated with honor, dignity and respect. And our policies, practices and benefits support this goal. At our restaurants, we’re known for

being closed on Sunday, to allow Operators and their team members to enjoy a day of rest, be with their families and loved ones, and worship if they choose.”¹

It sounds like a great place to work and be supported. The thing about Chick-fil-A is this, and I believe this is true about most people who go into the service industry, the reason they do it is because they care about people. Maybe they don't always show it but there is a care for people. A person who cares about people will meet the needs of the people. In that same vein, I would also say the hospitality industry is one of the most underappreciated industries. The question is why? Today, I hope that you might understand a little better what it means to do what we are called to do. The reason we serve is to bring God glory. We exist to bring God glory through serving but, at the same time, we might not always serve with the best intention. Maybe you don't know why you were supposed to serve. Whatever the case may be, I want you to know that in serving, you might be serving in obscurity.

First and foremost, we need to understand that serving is tied to generosity. Remember, generosity has a lot to do with our heart. Out of the overflow of our heart we are able to be generous. Likewise, serving comes from the overflow of our heart. We care about people so we serve those people. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 9:10-15 that when people supply the needs of others it means there is an “overflow expressing of thanks to God.” We give because we are blessed to be a blessing. We serve because we are blessed to be a blessing. It is an expression of our thanksgiving to God. The people in Corinth, according to Paul, met needs because of their hearts and therefore desired to be generous. They were overflowing in thanksgiving to God. This brings God glory. There was a realization that the reason they were able to serve in such a manner was because God blessed them so they could. The principal point is this, serving has to do with your recognition of God's blessing on your life so that by your good deeds, by your generosity, people give praise to God. Our motivation for serving has to do with our desire for others to come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Serving is also tied to the Holy Spirit at work in your life.

Paul tells us in Galatians 5:13-16 that we are to use our freedom to serve one another humbly in love—he says to walk by the spirit and not by flesh. You are free because of Jesus Christ. You are given new life in Christ. You are a new creation, the old has passed away. We are free because sin and death no longer have a hold on us. We are not to use the freedom we have to indulge in the flesh. We should not be using our freedom in Christ (because He has set us free from sin by paying wages of our sin by His death) to indulge in fleshly things. We are to serve one another instead of using our freedom for fleshly things. This idea of serving means to be a slave to, or to obey, or submit to. I must yield obedience to another person. Walk by the spirit. Serve by the spirit. Love through serving. This idea of love is the *Agape* form of love or the highest form of love. God's love. Paul is saying that, instead of allowing our freedom in the flesh, we serve each other because we love each other with a type of love that is genuine, a love that is sacrificial, a love that endures, a love like our Lord and Savior. Serving one another demonstrates we are submissive to others as well as to the Spirit of God because we shouldn't be walking by the flesh. Serving is tied to generosity. Serving shows that we are walking by the Spirit of God. People should be serving both inside the church and outside the church.

Paul tells us in Galatians 6:1-10 that we are to test our actions, our motivation for serving. He goes on to say that we shouldn't compare ourselves to what others do. As we do those things, Paul says:

⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

If we don't become weary in doing good, we will reap a harvest. This is a reference to those who don't believe. When we serve people outside the church, we will eventually draw them into the church. So, at every opportunity we do good to those outside the church. At the same time as a part of the church we are to do good to those especially in the family of believers. We are to serve both groups of people. Do good to those outside the church, so that they will become part of the family inside the church. Do good

Continued on the next page...



You are impacting more lives for Christ than you could have ever imagined.

Continued from previous page...

to those inside the church because, as he says previously, we are fulfilling the law of Christ. All of this is true about serving and yet, there is a problem. Most of our serving is to be done in obscurity.

The word “obscurity” means a state of being unknown, inconspicuous, or unimportant. None of our verses so far have told us what we need to do. None of our verses said cooking dinner for my family is what we need to do. None of our verses said teaching a class is what we need to do. None of our verses spelled out every little thing as to what we need to do. I want to make this claim that your task in which you are serving might be obscure. When you take someone’s trash to the dump; when you are the one who cleans up after everyone has left; when you are the one who recognizes the need to clean the toilets; when you cook the dinner for your family—the task might be obscure. It might be something that seems unimportant. It might be something that seems unknown by others. It might be something that seems inconspicuous, or not clearly visible, or not attracting attention. Your task can be an obscure task. Not only can the task be obscure, but the results can be obscure.

You might never see a raise at your company for doing what you do: you are doing an obscure task. You might never receive praise for cooking dinner: you are doing an obscure task. You might never get a huge shout-out for cleaning the toilets: you are doing an obscure task. The results are obscure because they simply might not exist. There is not always a reward for being a good mother or father and serving your kids. There is not always a reward for going above and beyond for your employer. There is not always a reward for serving in the church; for being the one to clean the building; handling the music; handling the finances; caring for the Biblical education of the next generations. There is not always a reward for those things. The results can be obscure—nonexistent. This is the rub, as it were, or where the rubber meets the road. If I expect praise from people, it might not come, but what am I to do?

Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:5-8 that slaves or servants are to obey their earthly masters just as they would obey Christ. If slaves are to obey earthly masters as they would obey Christ, what does that imply for us? We are to serve as though Christ is telling us what to do. In fact, in Ephesians 6:6, Paul says to obey to win favor but know that you are doing the will of God in your heart. I am obedient as a servant to all, not to win their favor, but because I am doing God’s will. I am obedient as a servant, not for the

praise of them, not for them to say thank you, not for them to recognize that I was one doing it, but because I am doing God’s will. Paul goes on to say that we serve the Lord, not people. If the motivation of my heart is being kind, I will serve people because I am a slave to the Lord. The reward we have been expecting from people is from God (Ephesians 6:8).

You see, most of the serving we do is for people both inside and outside the church. People might never say thank you. Our motivation is that we serve because of our generous hearts. Our motivation is we serve because our reward comes from God alone. We might serve in obscurity. No one is paying attention, but God sees all that we do. **This is what I mean, that serving is mostly done in obscurity.** The job or task you are doing might be done in the dark. What you do might be inconspicuous. What you do might seem unimportant. What you do might not even be seen by anyone. That is where the value is. That is where God has placed you. God has given you the foresight to see the needs and meet the needs—to see areas where you can serve, to see areas where you help, support, encourage individuals—where you produce more for the kingdom of God by doing things that no one seems to notice. You are impacting more lives for Christ than you could have ever imagined. You might not be promoted. You might not be praised. You might not be told thank you. Yet we are to serve as to the Lord. Our service isn’t done for people’s praise but because our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has directed us to serve. **Your purpose is wrapped up in bringing God glory through serving.** SR

¹ <https://www.chick-fil-a.com/careers/culture>





Claudia's testimony can be viewed on Facebook on the Seventh Day Baptist Church of Daytona Beach's page (May 14, 2022, video at the 7 minute spot).

Testimony of Gratitude for Answered Prayers

Claudia Fields is one of the newest members of The SDB Church of Daytona Beach, FL. Claudia came to know our Lord Jesus Christ when she attended one of our Saturday events called: "Hotdogs and Hamburgers for Jesus' Community" on Saturday, January 15, 2022.

Claudia returned the following Saturday, January 22, 2022, and our church was celebrating communion. Pastor Marcela had the blessed opportunity to wash her feet. Pastors Ben and Marcela recall that Claudia was very emotional when her feet were being washed and how all the sisters in attendance welcomed her by embracing her just the way she was.

After attending our church gatherings for a couple of weeks, Claudia spoke with Pastor Ben and expressed her desire to accept Christ as her personal Lord and Savior. Pastor Ben had the blessed opportunity to baptize Claudia on April 16, 2022.

Claudia continued to attend our church while living at a transition home for Battered Women. She also started to work at a nearby restaurant but had conflict of schedule to attend our church. In the meantime, Claudia mentioned that she was looking into buying a van that would allow her to move out of the transition home. Our church immediately started to pray for the Lord to provide a van for Claudia. The Lord answered her prayers on June 4, 2022. Claudia drove to our church in her van with all her belongings in it.

On that day Claudia mentioned to Pastors Ben, Marcela, and Sister Cathy Tissier (Our Church Deaconess) her anguish of not being able to attend church some Saturdays

due to conflicts of schedule at work. She also explained that on the Saturdays that she was able to attend she could not stay for Bible class nor fellowship because she had to go out in haste to make it to work by 12:30 pm. Pastor Marcela and Sister Cathy prayed with Claudia as she went off to work and promised to bring her prayer request of a schedule change at work to the Daytona Beach SDB Prayer Warriors.

Within a couple of weeks of having to prayed for Claudia's request of work schedule change, on Saturday, June 18, 2022, Claudia gave her "Testimony of Gratitude." Claudia told Pastors Ben and Marcela that the Lord had answered all prayers and now her boss gave her Saturdays off as long as she works on Sundays.

Beloved ever-growing family of God, as you all read Claudia Fields' testimony, we ask that you lift her up in prayers as the desire of her heart is to be reunited with her five children. Claudia knows that our beloved Heavenly Father will answer such earnest prayer and that He is not done working in her life.

We all know that God is still in the business of performing miracles because He continues to do His MAGIC! SR

My
Awesome
God
Intervenes
Constantly.

By Pastors Ben and Marcela Figueroa
The SDB Church of Daytona Beach, FL



TANZANIAN SDB WOMEN ON A MISSION BEYOND BORDERS

By Rahma John and
Mokanga Ryakitimbo

From March 7-10, 2023, two women from the Tanzania Seventh Day Baptist Conference embarked on a missionary journey from Tanzania to Rwanda for the sole purpose of ministering to fellow women in Rwanda. These were historic fellowship moments which coincided with the SDB Africa Bible College seminar officiated by Pastors Andy Samuels and Garfield Miller. Also attending the seminar were SDB student pastors from Burundi, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Zambia, Malawi, and Rwanda.

The Tanzanian women were Ms. Rahma John and Ms. Mokanga Emmanuel from the SDB church of Calvary in Arusha, Tanzania. Together with Rwandan women, they carried out what was commonly expected to be a task of male pastors with the theme, "For A Time Like This." This theme was derived from the Book of Esther 4:14: ***"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"***

The joint Tanzania – Rwanda women seminar was focused on recalling valuable lessons from women of

faith as reflected in the Bible, and how their lives can empower the modern Christian woman to contribute proactively into the Great Commission. The seminar focused on the following key objectives:

1. Empowerment through the Bible (Bible discussions on various Women of Faith and what modern SDB women can learn from them)
2. Church hymns and singing sessions (History of women authors behind the songs we sing in church and the importance of songs in worship)
3. Talent identification and how women can use their talents to generate income, contribute to church projects and serve God (Evangelism)
4. "Safe space" discussions where women share challenges they face as church members, wives and mothers, and discuss alternative solutions to those challenges

The seminar provided a rare opportunity for SDB women from two different countries and cultural backgrounds, to come together and strengthen each other in faith and rekindle their spiritual calling to proactively take part in the great commission. Women



Rahma John and Mokanga Ryakitimbo

"Mokanga Ryakitimbo is a Financial Manager at Kuza Steam Generation, a local NGO that focuses on increasing digital access to rural women in Tanzania. She also serves as a lead singer for the SDB Church of Calvary in Arusha Tanzania, and a mentor for women. She holds a Master's degree in Finance and Accounting from the University of Arusha and a dual degree in Business Administration."


"Rahma John is a social worker by profession serving as a Director at SEE Africa, a local NGO that focuses on empowering children, youth, and women to take on more active roles in their communities. She also heads women empowerment programs and occasionally leads Bible studies for the SDB Church of Calvary in Arusha Tanzania. She holds a degree of Bachelor of Arts in Education from Tumaini University."

brought prayer requests and together prayed for each other and other SDB women around the world. Women were encouraged to not only support church members, but also take more active roles in reaching out to their communities through outreach campaigns, and supporting other women and needy people, regardless of their religious backgrounds.

Other issues emanating from the “safe space” discussions allowed them to discuss common challenges facing women from both countries such as cases of violence against them, poverty, and marital issues. The seminar took four days to complete for each of the following churches reaching approximately 90 women:

1. Maranatha Church
2. Nyamutera Church
3. Nyarutovu Church
4. Cyeru Church

The experience in Rwanda proved that **FAITH KNOWS NO BORDERS**, and that although women often do not get the chance to take part in mainstream ministry programs like men do, they have so much to give to the church and to the Great Commission. Those four days provided an opportunity for Tanzanian and Rwandan women to strengthen each other and feel appreciated for the roles they play in church.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Rwandan SDB conference for hosting and supporting us during the seminar, Ms. Hellen and Ms. Rachel (co-facilitators from SDB Rwanda), Pastors Andy and Garfield for their encouragement, and SDB Africa Bible College student pastors for their prayers. But more particularly the wonderful Rwandan women who took us as their own; their love, compassion and devotion to Christ will forever remain in our hearts as we wait for the glorious coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 





How Great Is Our God!

By Charlotte Chroniger, Conference President

Observations and Thoughts of a Recent Trip to New Auburn, Wisconsin

Recently Don and I flew to Minneapolis/St Paul on our way to New Auburn, Wisconsin, our first church. The weekend focused on the theme “Many are called but few are chosen”. Besides the New Auburn folks, the Dodge Center, MN, and the Portage, WI, churches were represented.

As I reflected on some of the experiences of the weekend, I was reminded of a number of things:

1—When we picked up our rental car, the salesman suggested that we might want to get a little larger car that could handle snow since there was a blizzard coming. We are grateful for his suggestion as New Auburn received around 12 inches of snow! Thank you, Lord, for that salesman's suggestion.

2—New Auburn is about two hours from the MSP airport. We wanted to get to New Auburn before the snow hit and darkness came. Instead of snow, we had torrential rain and got to NA by 7 pm with 30 minutes to spare before it got dark. The blizzard didn't hit until several hours later (although the snow blew all night). Thank you, Lord for protection and travel mercies.

3—The snow plows were busy Sabbath morning trying to get the roads cleared. Our host's long driveway wasn't plowed right away, but people were driving on the driveway to get it passible. When it was time to leave for church, we didn't have to worry about sliding off the road. The ruts kept us on track. Sometimes the ruts of life help keep us on track so we don't get off course.

4—We were able to reconnect with some of the New Auburn congregation—those who were active when we were there in the 1980's.

But most of the people we had worked with in the 1980's were no longer around. Many had died and went on to their eternal reward. The saints of years ago were not around to make their contributions to the ministry. But Praise the Lord, there were many new people in the congregation. God had provided a new generation of young adults and adults, along with a whole lot of youth, children, and babies to be the generation to carry on for the Lord. It was so exciting to see. Lord, bless the new families as they find their niche in ministry. There may be new ideas to consider, new ministries to develop.

New building projects to complete. New Auburn has completed a new building project of Sabbath school rooms, and is looking forward to building a new sanctuary in the future. Are our churches looking forward to new people coming to our church? How welcoming are we to those families who haven't been raised in the church through the years? Are we willing to help new people learn about procedures, practices, etc.?

5—After we flew back to MSP, we turned in the rental car. We started following the signs to get to the Lindbergh Terminal. It felt like we were walking in circles. Fortunately, we meet an angel flight attendant named Sophia, who not only showed us where to go, but walked with us the entire way. We

couldn't thank her enough. In ministry we may need to travel with someone on their life journey. We may need to help someone find their way.

6—On our flight to Philadelphia, the pilot announced that we would be flying through some intense turbulence but keep your seat belt on and we will make it through the wind. He didn't swerve to avoid the turbulence, but rather he flew through

the wind. Once we got through the wind, the flight was as smooth as could be.

Is there someone who needs someone to be with them during the struggles and challenges of life?

Thank you, New Auburn and Freedom Community Church for a blessed time of learning and fellowship! [SR](#)

Register for Conference Week 2023 Now!

Greetings to you in the name of our great God! This is your invitation to register for Conference Week 2023!

Conference President Charlotte Chroniger and the Conference Week team are looking forward to Conference Week 2023 in Grand Rapids MI, from July 23-30 on the campus of Calvin University centered around the theme, "How Great is Our God".

In anticipation of your desire to gather in-person for our annual Conference Week for the first time in three years, registration for Conference Week is now open. This means that you can show your excitement for this wonderful program by registering TODAY!

You can access links to register at: seventhdaybaptist.org/conferenceweek2023.

There you will also find other information including a Registration FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) related to most questions you might have about Conference Week 2023.

For further details, or if you have questions, please contact our Conference Week team at registrar@seventhdaybaptist.org or 608-752-5055 ext. 708. We look forward to seeing you this summer! [SR](#)

—Advancing God's Kingdom with Your Partnership,
SDB General Conference Leadership

Women's Board Nominations

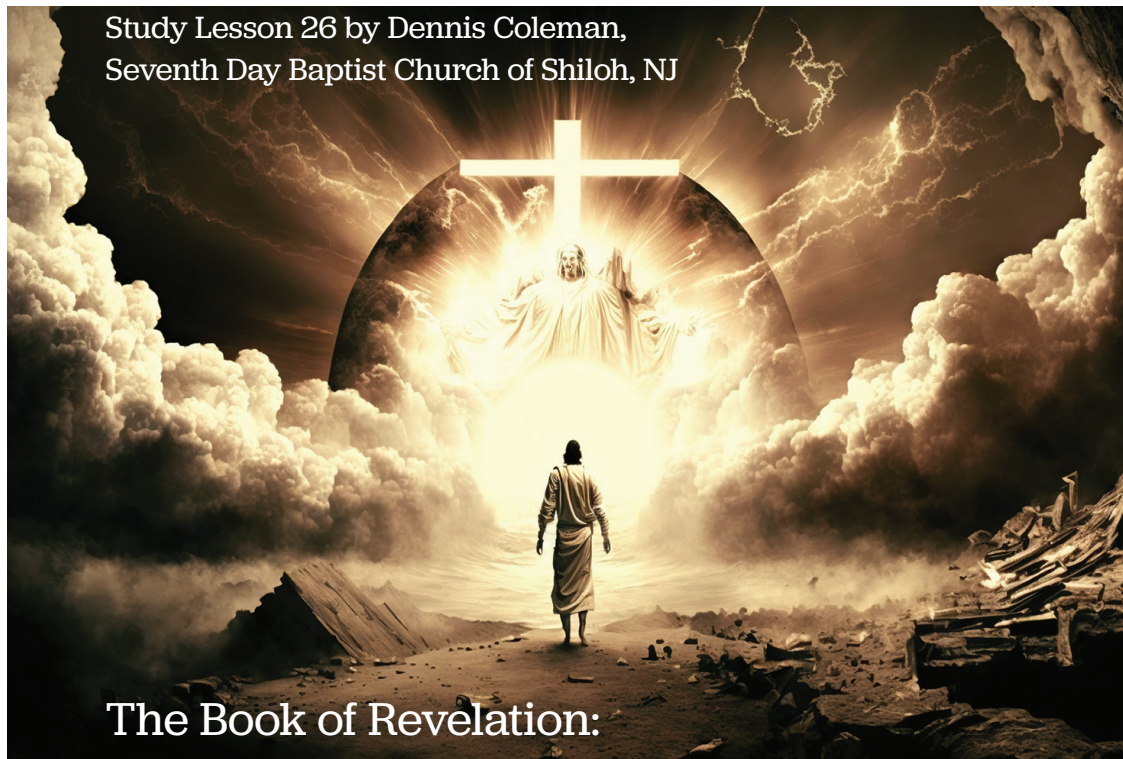
The Recognition Committee of the Women's Board would like to encourage you to submit your nominations for the **Robe of Achievement** for a woman who has served the denomination, her home church, family, and community or for the **WISE Award** for a woman who has given evidence of service above and beyond the call of duty in her home church. We don't want you to be inhibited by the forms and all the information that is needed. Fill in what you know and don't worry about the exact dates of activities if you don't know them. This information can be secured later if your nominee is chosen for the honor of receiving the **Robe of Achievement** or **WISE Award**.

The deadline for nominations is **May 31, 2023**.

Nominations submitted in 2022 will be considered with this year's submissions. The forms are available on the Women's Board webpage at <http://www.sdbwomen.org/> under the Recognitions tab or by requesting a copy from Lydia Solomon by email at ljdavis311@aol.com.

The submission forms can also be submitted to Lydia Solomon at the same email address or by mail to 226 Candlelight Drive, Clarksburg, WV 26301. [SR](#)

Study Lesson 26 by Dennis Coleman,
Seventh Day Baptist Church of Shiloh, NJ



The Book of Revelation:

The Great Tribulation

I want to start this installment by clarifying (correcting) something I may have implied in the two previous installments. I spoke of there being four special groups of people that we have seen in these first seven chapters. In fact John only speaks of seeing three of these four groups: The twenty-four elders in chapter 4, the martyrs in chapter 6, and the great multitude in chapter 7. When he mentions “The Sealed of Israel” which is the 144,000 mentioned in the first part of chapter 7 he says that he hears the number of those who were sealed (Revelation 7:4). It does not seem as if he sees them. He only hears how many there are.

In earlier installments we saw that the twenty-four elders likely represent either the church and/or a combination of Old and New Testament believers. The martyrs represent those who gave their lives for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Sealed of Israel represent those whose ministries remain undefiled and the great multitude represent the end result of those ministries. But that is not all that the great multitude represent as we see in Revelation 7:13-17.

Prayer Time

Father, we pray for wisdom and we pray for Your peace as we learn about the difficult times to come. Thank You for the hope that comes with knowing that, in You, Your church will be victorious.

We Worship Once Again

In Revelation 7:10-12 we are blessed with yet another glimpse of how worship is done in Heaven, beginning with a declaration made by the Great Multitude. Remember that this is:

“...a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,”

—Revelation 7:9

The Great Multitude declares that:

“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

—Revelation 7:10

Revelation 7:10 speaks of the promise of salvation and, as described in *Ellicott's Commentary*, the promise includes deliverance “...from the curse of law, from the power of sin, and from the perils of life.” *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* adds that the words used to express the idea of salvation in the Bible are always “a positive concept,” with the idea being that we are delivered from or “saved from some evil” and, according to *The Cambridge Bible*, “placed in a state of positive blessedness...” in the presence of our God. This deliverance is something that only God can accomplish and, according to *The Cambridge Bible*, the process of deliverance is of God and rightfully belongs to God.

The bottom line is that it will become more and more difficult to be a true Christian.

In response to the testimony of the multitude, the elders, the four living creatures, and the angels fell on their faces before God. Imagine, angels bowing... correction...falling before God and shouting, "Amen!" In so doing they agree with the declaration given by the multitude. All present are in agreement that

*"Blessing and glory and wisdom,
Thanksgiving and honor and power and might,
Be to our God forever and ever.
Amen."*

—Revelation 7:12

It's in the midst of this wonderful time of worship that one of the elders turns to John and asks, "*Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?*" (Revelation 7:13) The wording of this verse is very interesting and I hope you caught the difference in what I wrote and what the verse actually says. You see the verse says that the elder "answered," not asked. Yet, it does not seem as if John had asked any question. Perhaps the elder knew what John was thinking. The Bible does not tell us. What we are told is that John responds by saying, "Sir, you know." In some versions it is written "My lord, you know." The use of the word "lord" here is intended to show respect not worship.

In response the elder tells John that:

"These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb..."

—Revelation 7:14

The Great Tribulation

What is The Great Tribulation and how long will it last? *Ellicott's Commentary* suggests that we should not limit the term to one period of time but should instead see the multitude as coming from all ages. Thus The Great Tribulation would have to be the experience of the church over a large period of time. On the other hand, *The Expositor's Greek Testament* points to what seems to be a specific period of time, a "brief interval before the end."

I think the key here is what Jesus says in Matthew 24:9:

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake."

In other words there will be a time when it will be dangerous to follow Jesus. In some places that is

already true. However it seems as if this period of time might be worse than anything experienced before or after it happens. It appears to be a time when the world will put great pressure on those who have the light of Christ in them, likely in an attempt to silence those who would spread the Gospel. *Barnes' Notes on the Bible* describes it by using the terms "affliction" and "persecution." *The Pulpit Commentary* points to "the last great trial of the Saints..." The bottom line is that it will become more and more difficult to be a true Christian.

In thinking about The Great Tribulation, I fear that if we focus on whether or not it is a specific period of time versus it being spread out over time; or if we focus on disputes over Daniel's prophecies which may or may not point towards when The Great Tribulation might happen and how long it will last; or if we focus on the post- versus pre- argument; that we will miss what is truly important. (A mistake I fear I made when I taught this at Shiloh Church. Sorry everyone.) Yes, there will be people who suffer greatly because they hold to the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yes, during that time there will be false prophets and even false christs (Matthew 24:24). But I believe that what is truly important is that we remain focused on our God, learning the truth while rejecting what this world tells us is true, and holding fast to the promise that our Lord will return. To do so we must avoid being distracted by disputes over the nature of The Great Tribulation, making sure that we follow and teach as we are led by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus warns us that His church will be persecuted. Jesus warns us that people will hate us because of Him. Jesus also tells us that, "...he who endures to the end shall be saved." (Matthew 24:13) He declares: "...And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14) He also asks a question which I think is more important than any debate over what The Great Tribulation is or whether or not His church will be around to see it. What is that question?

"Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

—Luke 18:8 SR

(All verses cited are from the New King James Version of the Bible)

DODGE CENTER Seeking Pastor

The Anchor of Hope Church located in Dodge Center, MN, is prayerfully seeking its next pastor to lead its congregation forward in its mission to “Invite people to know Christ, Invest in people’s Christian growth, and Inspire people to reach out.” We are a rural community nestled in Southeast Minnesota. We are the oldest church in Dodge Center with a small, but committed congregation.

The ideal candidate for this role would have:

- Biblical knowledge (Bible College or Seminary preferred)
- Previous pastoral ministry experience (preferred)
- Ability to be bi-vocational or raise support to pursue this ministry
- Willingness to live in a rural community
- Ability to work with others and equip them to serve to their potential
- Goal oriented, self-motivated, and innovative

Duties may include (but are not limited to):

- Preaching
- Visitation
- Discipleship
- Teaching
- Counseling

Those interested in being considered for this role should submit a cover letter indicating their interest and a resume or CV of ministry and work experience to:

Anchor of Hope Church
PO Box 340
Dodge Center, MN 55927
dcsdbchurch@gmail.com

Candidates may send questions concerning the role to the same email address.

VERONA Seeking Pastor

The Verona SDB Church, NY, is seeking God’s provision of our next full-time pastor. Our church desires to move to the next level in its outreach and ministry for the Lord. The pastor should possess the following attributes and life commitments to help us move forward in God’s purposes:

- Strong calling from God to lead in: “Glorifying God. Building His Body, Caring for Community”
- “Servant” leader with high ministerial integrity
- Love for all ages
- Vision to gently share the Gospel with all walks of life
- Teacher and leader in consistently applying Biblical principles
- Passion to strengthen personal faith within the body and energize the work of evangelism within the church’s “Jerusalem.”
- Active in cultivation of leadership skills within the church
- Leadership using congregational methods common to SDB churches
- Presence and participation in appropriate ways in the surrounding community
- Formal SDB accreditation through the SDB General Conference USA and Canada; with a Master of Divinity degree, or at minimum SDBU certification, or be in active pursuit thereof.

For more information, please contact:
pastor.VeronaSDB@outlook.com
Pastor Russ Johnson 315-264-4411

ALFRED STATION Seeking Pastor

We are looking for a person who has some Christian post-graduate training and pastoral experience, is compassionate, who preaches by bringing the Bible teachings to today’s living, and is attentive to congregational needs.

Our church has a membership of 100+ members with an average attendance of 50 +/-.

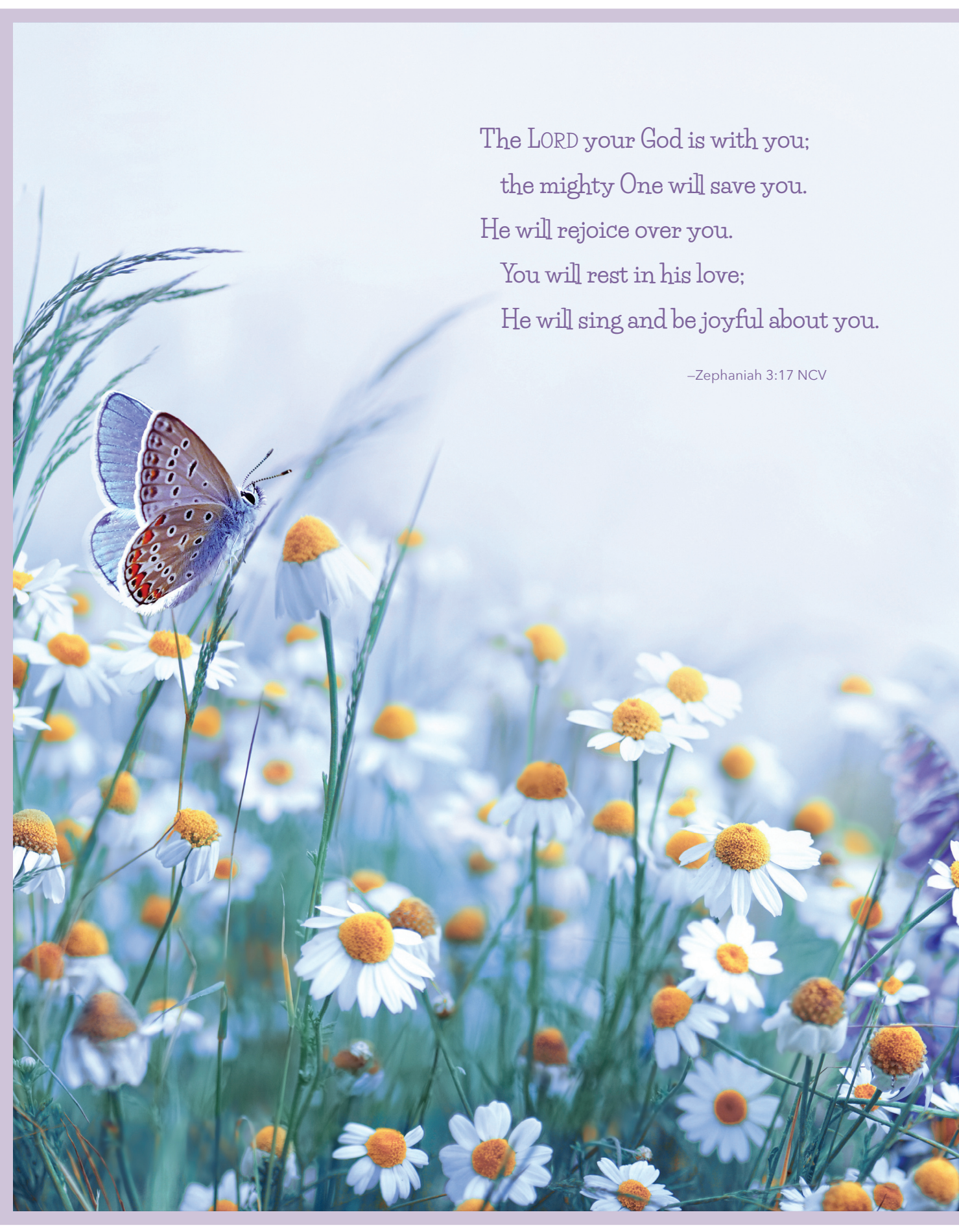
We support five Sabbath school classes and two Bible studies each week.

Anyone interested can watch our services weekly on YouTube and Facebook by looking for Alfred Station Seventh Day Baptist Church. There are live broadcasts as well as past services.

Our Church is located in Alfred Station, in the southwestern part of New York State. Our town is a couple of miles from Alfred, home of Alfred University and Alfred State College. Alfred was recently identified by WaPo as the Number One Ultimate College Town out of 150 candidates.

It is a few more miles from Houghton University. Houghton is the Christian college that has trained many of our pastors and other SDB students and has employed several Seventh Day Baptist faculty members over the years.

For information you may email: Lyle Sutton at lbsutn@verizon.net

A photograph of a butterfly with blue and brown wings perched on a daisy flower in a field of many other daisies. The background is a soft, out-of-focus field of flowers under a light sky.

The LORD your God is with you;
the mighty One will save you.
He will rejoice over you.
You will rest in his love;
He will sing and be joyful about you.

—Zephaniah 3:17 NCV

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