

Sabbath Recorder



Do ...
Something!

**But if you cause one of these little ones
who trusts in me to fall into sin,
it would be better for you
to be thrown into the sea
with a large millstone
hung around your neck.**

—Mark 9:42 NLT

**For we are not fighting against
flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers
and authorities of the unseen world,
against mighty powers in this dark world,
and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.**

—Ephesians 6:12 NLT

**Who will protect me from the wicked?
Who will stand up for me against evildoers?**

—Psalms 94:16 NLT

Who will?

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Sabbath Recorder

A monthly journey into the mind and heart.

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Patricia Cruzan, Editor

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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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More from
Conference 2023



Frank Mazza
Friday Worship

“Whatif” “Yeahbut”

It was good to be back together again for Conference week! It was a blessing to reconnect with old friends, make new friends, and worship together in person again. The music was amazing and it was awesome to hear the praise band with the choir all together. Thank you to Charlotte for keeping our history in front of us with the morning devotions; and also involving all ages in the evening services.

During the Conference week, we heard about how great God is from Pastor Wayne, God’s great faithfulness from Pastor Tyler, God’s great and wonderful grace from Pastor Steve-O, and God’s great victory in Jesus from Pastor Phil. On Friday night, we celebrated God’s greatness because Jesus lives!

The week made me think back about other conferences and how much of a blessing it is to be united back together. There is a blessing when something “old” feels new again. We have three teenagers in the house, and sometimes laundry gets scrambled. Sometimes things get lost. Being here is like finding that favorite shirt that has been missing and you thought you’d never see it again—but then you put it on and it still fits perfectly.

Having this refreshing experience this week also made me think back to the first day of high school. It was a big building compared to the elementary school and it took some time to find my way around. This was especially true at Calvin where the buildings all have Dutch last names. It took a couple days wandering around between events to find the easiest path from the dorms to meals and to the chapel. For example, after getting checked in at the Hoogenboom/Venma Center, I

had to go find the Huizenga Hall dorm. After that I struggled to find the Hiemenga Hall and Chapel. If you were not at Conference, here are some building names that you would pass by between events:

- Leave Huizenga Hall and exit thru back doors of Kalsbeek. If you got to Van Reken you went too far.
- Keep the Stikwerda tennis courts on your right
- Go past the Vanderwerp and Noordewier buildings
- Stay between the Van Dellen/Heyns dorm and the Eldersveld/Shultze dorm.
- Pass under the walkway between Spoelhof and Hiemenga buildings
- Arrive at Chapel.

For those less fluent in Dutch, it may be easier to just use the first initial of each building and make an acronym. To simplify, that’s HKVRSVNV DHESSH. When its time to go back in the evening, just follow the same order in reverse: HSSEHDVNVSRVKH.

All joking aside, if you did attend Conference, you may have also noticed a variety of other buildings around the campus. There is a coffee shop, sports fields, and school store. Has anyone noticed the Whatif/Yeahbut Life Application Center? If not, don’t be surprised. I made those up for the purpose of this message (ok...still joking a little). Have you ever been some place new, or been faced with a renewed experience and responded to God with “What if?...” For example, God spoke to Moses through the burning bush and instructed him to go to Pharaoh with four simple words—Let My People Go.

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How Great Is Our God!

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Nervousness and anxiety are okay and normal. It is fine to visit that place— but not okay to stay there.

(Exodus 3:10-14). Moses' response was "What if Pharaoh doesn't listen to me?" and "What if the Israelites don't believe that YOU sent me?" Eventually Moses, with the assistance of Aaron, did go and lead the people out of Egypt. Moses had a fear of the worst-case scenario and that was a stumbling block to him and his calling. Moses was also hesitant to go into a situation that he could not control the outcome. That combination of not being in control plus fearing the worst is the formula for anxiety. Once Moses humbled himself, and became obedient, and trusted God with the outcome, then God was able to work through him.

Do you remember Gideon? God sent an angel to him as he was hiding in a wheat threshold and told him to lead an army against the stronger Midianites (Judges 6:11-15). Gideon's first response? "I hear you Lord... Yeah, but if the Lord is with us, why has all of this happened?" Then a second time he responds to God and says, "Yeah, but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my family."

How many times have we used the Whatif/YeahBut strategy in our spiritual walk? Avoiding God's call only prolongs the blessing. When God calls, you have two options—you can go or you can go. God will win the argument. Now, it is normal and natural to have these reactions especially when facing a large life-changing task. What God desires is obedience and relationship. Even Jesus asked God to take the cup from him while praying in the garden—but the example here is that he prayed and communicated with God and stayed obedient to the call. Nervousness and anxiety are okay and normal. It is fine to visit that place—but not okay to stay there. Jesus says in John 14:17 "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. **Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.**"

The week's theme was "How Great is Our God." I was blessed to share a message related to the hymn "Because He Lives." Did you know this is a song that was written from a place of fear and anxiety? In the 1960's, there was a certain amount of turmoil around the world. Communism and Democracy clashed in the jungles of Vietnam, the U.S. was under threat from the Bay of Pigs and Cuban Missile Crisis, the Berlin wall was erected, President Kennedy was assassinated, as well as Dr. Martin Luther King. The civil rights movement led to riots and protests all over the country, especially in the South. Baby boomers were coming of age and experimenting with drugs

such as marijuana and LSD. There were some good things that happened for sure. But there was also a lot of tension and turmoil.

In the early 1960's, Bill and Gloria Gaither were married and had left their high school teaching jobs to become full-time song writers. Around 1968, they had two small children and were pregnant with a third. At the same time Bill was fighting with a long-term illness and was not getting any healthier. One night, Gloria was home with her husband and the pressure of raising three children in trying times with financial, social and spiritual pressures really got to her. They ended up calling a friend to pray with them that evening. As they prayed, their friend arrived and laid hands on them, and prayed with them as well. Gloria says, "He just had that simple faith, and something in the Spirit broke after that. Nothing we could see changed at that moment, but we did feel again that God was in control. And when our little son Benjy was born [July 19, 1970], we actually felt incredibly confident."

Gloria continues: "It dawned on us that the Resurrection is a true thing. It's true in every situation. It's true in the world to come. God's got a plan. Resurrection is a fact of life and I think it was built into the earth as a metaphor for Christ in the very beginning of Creation. It's the principle that life wins. If we put our trust in Him, we are victors. What if the world blows up tomorrow? Our destiny and our life and our future do not depend on circumstances. This song has that sense."

We don't know what tomorrow may bring. But we do know who holds the future. Stay confident that despite our fears and anxiety God is sovereign and always in control over situations—even if we don't know what the outcome might be. Because He lives, we can face tomorrow. Because He lives, your fears can be gone! Because He lives, our lives are worth living each and every day—from newborn babies til the day we cross the river and experience the lights of glory and know He Lives! ^{SR}

*Because He lives,
we can face tomorrow.*



How Great Is Our God!

More from
Conference 2023



Tom Davis
Sabbath Worship

The King is Coming

Once upon a time and what seems like a really long time ago, when Charlotte told me what song would form the basis for my message today, my wife, Joanne, and I were out for a walk. We were on our way home, and in the ten minutes that it took for us to get home, this (“Jesus is coming, Everyone look busy” meme) is what was going around and around in my head. I was pretty sure that was not what Charlotte had in mind. Sorry.

The song *The King is Coming* was written, at least partially, by Gloria Gaither, after hearing a sermon which put a different spin on Jesus’ return than what Ms. Gaither was used to. Picture the late ‘60s, late ‘70s. For a number of years, the default way to preach Revelation was *Fire and Brimstone. Death and Destruction. Judgment and Damnation.* If you don’t want to be judged harshly when Jesus comes back, you had better get right with God, right now. If not, you are going to Hell.

The preacher that particular night took a different tack. Instead of trying to scare everyone into salvation, he looked at the return of Jesus to Earth from the perspective of someone who was a believer and who would be looking forward to living forever in the presence of God, worshipping and glorifying him. No more death, no more suffering. Only a glorious eternity. He looked at Christ’s return as a time of joy, not heartache. The King is Coming! Praise God! He’s coming for me! Won’t you look forward to His return with me? It was so different to hear the message delivered this way that, so the story goes, when Gloria got home from that service, she couldn’t help but write many of the words for what we now know as *The King is Coming*.

So, how do we look at this song? I could look at it like a news story: Who, What, When, Where and Why.

Who is coming? The King. Not Elvis or LeBron James. David says this in Psalm 24:7-10:

- ⁷ Lift up your heads, O gates!
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
- ⁸ Who is this King of glory?
The LORD, strong and mighty,
the LORD, mighty in battle!
- ⁹ Lift up your heads, O gates!
And lift them up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
- ¹⁰ Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
he is the King of glory!

Revelation 19:11-16 describes a rider on a white horse, who is called “Faithful and True,” who judges with justice, who is also called the “Word of God” with a sharp or double-edged sword coming from His mouth to strike the nations. The name written on his robe and on His thigh is “King of kings and Lord of lords.”

The same Lord that David was talking about? The same Lord that John talks about all through Revelation? Yes, that King.

What is he doing? He is coming back. For him to come back insists that he was here a first time. That is our belief as Christians, that he came to Earth as a human, lived a sinless life, was put to death on a cross, buried and then resurrected on the third day. After spending time getting his disciples started in the right direction, he returned to Heaven so the Holy Spirit that he has promised his followers could be poured out on them, and eventually us.

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How Great Is Our God!

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After his ascension in Acts 1:9, we read this:

While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. They said, *Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven.*

He, Jesus, is coming back.

I'm going to skip When for now.

Where? Here. Earth. In a cloud. With the sound of trumpets. It will be so obvious that everyone will know it. You won't need CNN or Fox News or the internet. It won't be a secret that just a few people know about. It will be a world-wide event that no one will miss.

Why? Because He said He would. The preachers of old were not wrong. Jesus is coming to judge us all. To defeat Satan, not just win the battle, but to finish the war.

When? That is the big question. Lots of people have studied and calculated and guessed. And you know what? They don't know when he will return. It could be today. It could be next week. It could be in a hundred years, or a thousand. Is there going to be a rapture? I learned in my SDBU (Seventh Day Baptist University) classes all about amillennialism, premillennialism, post-millennialism, pre-tribulation-post-millennialism. I don't know which one of those schools of thought is right. I don't really think it matters. I do know this much: it will be at exactly the right time, because God has determined it to be so. Why was Jesus born into the world when he was? It was in the fullness of time; it was the right time. It won't be any different for His return.

I also learned in my SDBU class, Introduction to Theology, about the doctrine of the sufficiency of the Bible, which says that the Bible contains everything that I need to know for salvation. That means that if knowing when Jesus is returning was necessary for my salvation, that information would be in the Bible. But it isn't, so it must not be necessary for my salvation.

Jesus spends time, recorded as Matthew 24, talking about eschatology, or end times. His primary lesson is that we don't know, we won't know, we can't know. So, what are we supposed to be doing? In verses 45–46, Jesus tells his listeners this:

If knowing when Jesus is returning
was necessary for my salvation,
that information would be in the Bible.

Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.

If knowing when Jesus is returning isn't important, what is important for us to know? Well, like the song says, *The King is Coming*.

Jesus follows his discourse on not knowing when he is returning with a couple of stories. We often see Jesus leaving his listeners with a story that tells them what they need to remember in a way they can understand and reinforces the point he is trying to make. Just like everything else in the Bible, context is important. He is telling these stories now, for a purpose.

In Matthew 25, Jesus starts by telling two stories before going on to talk about the final judgment. I'm not going to read all the way through both stories. Your homework assignment is to read Matthew 24 and 25. Let me summarize them for you now.

In the first story, there are ten young women who are waiting for the bridegroom to arrive so the party can get started. Five of the women are prepared and the other five are not. When the groom finally arrives, late, the five unprepared women are out shopping for more oil for their lamps because they had run out of oil while waiting. The five prepared women are invited into the party. The others arrive back to the party after the groom has arrived and are excluded.

In the second story, the head of a household is going away on a trip and he entrusts his possessions to three of his servants. Two of those servants wisely use what they are given and earn a return on what they were left. The third servant, even though he knows his master will judge him harshly, does nothing with what he was left. When the master returns, the two servants who put what was entrusted to them to use were praised and rewarded. The last servant was chastised, had what was given to him taken away and given to another, and was then thrown out of the house.

Why does Jesus tell these stories, at this particular time? I think it is because he has several things he wants his listeners, including us, to understand and remember.

The first is maybe the least obvious—or maybe the most obvious. Matthew's whole gospel is written from the perspective of Jesus as King. Here, Jesus is telling his listeners that He is going to go away. And then He will be coming back.

Trying to go Jesus shopping at the end will be too late.



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The King is Coming.

In the first story, we hear about the bridegroom. We don't know a lot about this tradition, but it seems that the groom has gone to get his bride from her family's house and when he returns home, there is a party. For some reason, the groom is delayed in returning. We don't know why. Perhaps the bride wasn't ready yet. Or maybe there was a big party at her family's house to celebrate her getting married off. We just know that he did not return when everyone expected him to. I have played the piano or organ at a few weddings. At only one was the bride on time. I was told at that wedding: "The bride may not be ready but when this wedding coordinator says the bride will be walking down the aisle at 3:02 p.m. you had better be playing the right music because she will be walking down the aisle." And she was.

It is not coincidence that Jesus refers to himself as the groom. In Mark 2:19-20 we read: *Jesus said to them, The wedding guests cannot fast while the groom is with them, can they? As long as they have the groom with them, they cannot fast. But the time will come when the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.*

In Revelation 2, the angel shows John the bride, the wife of the Lamb. If Jesus is the Lamb, that makes him the groom. The groom is going to come back. And there will be a party when he gets here.

In the second story, the master goes away. We aren't told whether he told his servants how long he would be gone. My guess is that he did not. Travel was somewhat unpredictable. We aren't even sure why he was going away. Just that he was. While he was away, he entrusted his possessions to three of his servants with the expectation that they would have used what he left them wisely so that when he returned, his holdings would have grown. The understanding that his servants had was that he was going to return. At some point in the future. And that is the first lesson that Jesus was trying to ensure that his listeners heard.

Lesson two starts with the idea that the people in the story had no idea when the person they were expecting to return would return. They didn't know if it would be today, tomorrow, next week, month, or year. We've already established that we don't know when Jesus is returning. But what Jesus is telling us in these stories is simple: We are to be ready for his return.

Jesus is Coming. Everyone Be Ready!

The groom in the first story isn't concerned that he was later than expected, or that the women who weren't ready were excluded from the party. There are no excuses. They knew the groom was coming and should have been ready when he got there. We don't have the luxury of saying that we aren't ready. We can't say, "Well, I'll wait until I'm pretty sure that Jesus is coming back to get right with God, ask for His forgiveness and all that, then I'll be good. I'll look for the signs. I'll have time. I'll get a fair warning." But it won't work that way. Either we are ready, or we aren't. Either we have brought enough oil with us to sustain us until he returns or we have not. Trying to go Jesus shopping at the end will be too late.

The King is Coming. Everyone Be Ready.

While the women in the first story were simply waiting, the servants in the second story had other things expected of them. And that is the third lesson. The master who left them with his possessions didn't expect them to just sit on them, idly doing nothing. The expectation was that they would take what they were given and put it to work. To use it. To grow it. And they had better get started because they didn't know when their master was returning. They were sure that they would be held to account when he returned, so they had better get busy.

The King is Coming. Everyone Get Busy.

The master in the second story has set the expectation that his servants will have used what they were given to earn a return, even if it was just interest from the bank. But the one servant hadn't even done that. He had just buried what he was given in a hole in the ground. He gets thrown out. The other two servants are rewarded for taking what they were given and growing it. What have we been given? In Matthew, Jesus tells us that He gives us rest (Matt 11:28), the secrets of the kingdom of Heaven (Matt 13:11), the keys of the kingdom of Heaven (Matt 16:19). Or in John 14:26-27: *But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you. Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful.*

When Jesus left Earth, he left his possessions with us. He also left instructions on what to do with them. Matthew 28:19-20: *Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing*

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How Great Is Our God!

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them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

They seem like pretty clear instructions to me.

He warns the Temple leadership in Matthew 21:43: *Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruit.* We don't get to show our church membership card as a get out of jail free token, even if it is from a Seventh Day Baptist church. And, "look at all the committees that I serve on" doesn't help either. How many different places do we read about Jesus telling his disciples that they need to bear fruit, meaning spiritual fruit?

Jesus doesn't expect to return to Earth and find just eleven disciples idly waiting for His return.

Which servant are we like? Have we buried what we were given in a hole? "I can't let people know that I'm a Christian; they might laugh at me or make fun of me. Don't you know that it is really hard to be a Christian today?" That one servant knew that his master was a hard man, reaping where he had not sown, gathering where he hadn't scattered seed. And he still didn't do what was expected of him. And he suffered the consequences.

I'm not trying to say that Jesus is a hard man. Or unfair. Or unjust. But he is coming back and he has set expectations for what we will have done and will be doing when he does return. We have heard all this week about *How Great is our God*, about how *Great is His Faithfulness*, about *His Wonderful Grace*, about how we can have *Victory in Jesus*, and about how our lives are different *Because He Lives*. We need to be so saturated with the Gospel that we drip. And not just a slow grudging drip but God's grace and love and presence should be pouring out of us because we are so saturated. I am here today to tell you that the *King is Coming* and that you had better be ready and you had better get busy. If our God is great, shouldn't we be doing something about it?

If we were to continue reading in Matthew 25, we would read about the righteous sheep and the unrighteous goats, and how Jesus will separate them when he returns, with the righteous gaining eternal life and the unrighteous being sent to eternal punishment.

If our God is great, shouldn't we be doing something about it?

When you read even further in Matthew 25, you will read this in verses 35 and 36: *For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me; I was in prison and you visited me.*

His listeners ask, "When did we see any of this?"

⁴⁰ *"And the King will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"*

The King is Coming. I believe this is true. This is where I hear Pastor Tyler's voice in my head (which is in itself unnerving) say "What are you going to do about it?" There are pretty clear expectations of what Jesus wants me to be doing while I am waiting. I'm sure it isn't just sitting here, twiddling my thumbs.

I am certain that we are meant to be waiting expectantly. There is a difference between "Jesus is coming" and "JESUS IS COMING!" It could happen at any time, and I want to be, I need to be, ready for it to happen. And while I am expectantly waiting, I need to be busy working to fulfill Jesus' expectations of what I am doing while I am waiting. How about you?

Jesus, the King, is Coming.

Are You Ready?

Are You Busy? [SR](#)

I need to be busy
working to fulfill
Jesus' expectations
of what I am doing
while I am waiting.



How Great Is Our God!
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Announcing the David L. Taylor Pastor’s Heart Award

By Carl Greene

We are pleased to announce that Pastor Deryck Thomas and Pastor Helmer Umana are this year’s recipients of the David L. Taylor Pastor’s Heart Award. Both pastors are ideal candidates for this award and we celebrate their gospel-centered ministry. Pastor Deryck Thomas ministers at the Agape SDB Church of Christ in St. Albans (Queens), NY, and Pastor Helmer Umana serves at the SDB Christian Church (Iglesia Cristiana BSD) in Silver Spring, MD.

The Seventh Day Baptist Council on Ministry annually recognizes a pastor “for exhibiting a genuine calling to shepherd God’s people with biblical counsel and a loving spirit.” This award recognizes the dramatic investments that our pastors make, but also highlights the ongoing shepherding that takes place day in and day out. The award honors Pastor Dave L. Taylor’s legacy by recognizing pastors who consistently exhibit a pastor’s heart and are a blessing to others.

Whenever we speak of the pastor’s heart, we think of a pastor with a gentle heart, who has a genuine calling on their life to shepherd God’s people, one who is trusted with confidential information yet helpful in counseling others biblically. This is a pastor who celebrates with those who saw God’s blessings and favor, and commiserates with those who experience suffering and loss. Thank you, Pastor Thomas and Pastor Umana for serving with a pastor’s heart.

Looking forward toward 2024, anyone can nominate a candidate for the David L. Taylor Pastor’s Heart Award. The submission should include a brief biography of the candidate (including but not limited to contact information, SDB church service, and family information) as well as a summary of how they exhibit a pastor’s heart. Submissions may be sent to the Director of Pastoral Services (jpethtel@seventhdaybaptist.org). Please consider nominating your pastor or another pastor whom you know exhibits these characteristics. The recipient of the David L. Taylor Pastor’s Heart Award must be a called pastor of a member church or a retired pastor in a member church in the SDB General Conference USA & Canada and over the age of 18. SR



Pastor Deryck Thomas



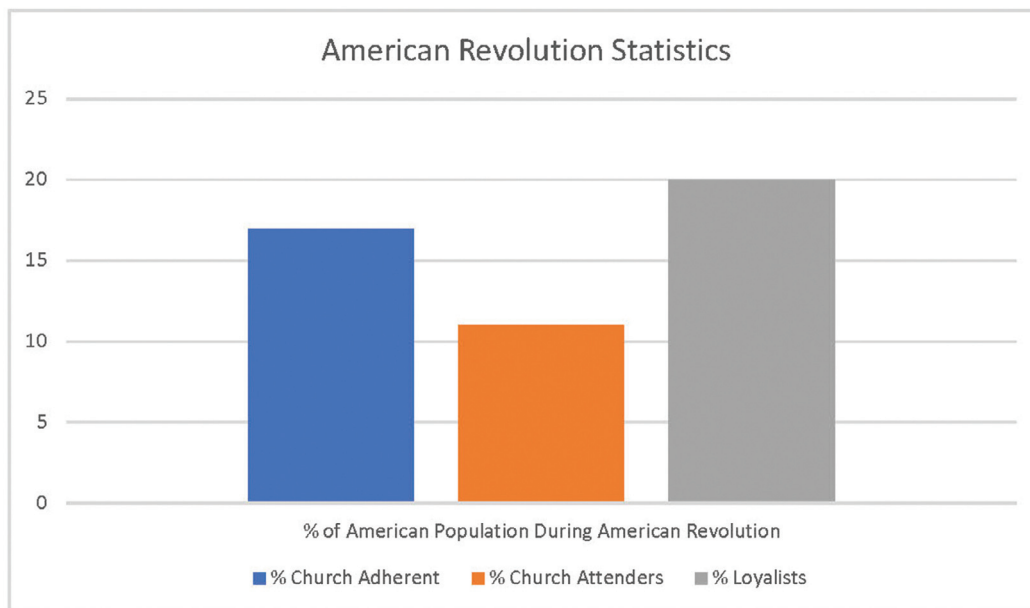
Pastor Helmer Umana

BIPs or DSC?

By Carl Greene

1776. American Revolution. And a really bad year for church statistics.

At the time of the American Revolution, 17% of Americans were adherents to a church. Even worse, only 10 to 12% were regular attenders at worship services.¹ Contrast this statistical backdrop with the estimate that 20% of Americans were loyalists to England and King George.² *The reader can insert their own socio-political analysis here.*



Bad. But...

No matter how you slice the statistics, the church is not portrayed in a healthy light. Yet, coming out of the American Revolution, Baptist churches began multiplying like crazy. Not *adding* churches, but *multiplying* in number. The growth was phenomenal because the focus was on DSCs rather than BIPs.

First, we need to define BIPs: "Butts in Pews." While somewhat crass, this is the metric that has been defaulted to in order to assess the health of a church. Essentially, how many people showed up for worship? The problem is, this metric focuses on the addition of people to a church, not the multiplication of God's Kingdom work. Getting people inside a building is not the most captivating of visions.

¹ Stark, Rodney and Roger Finke. 2000. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*.

Berkeley: University of California Press.

²<https://www.ushistory.org/us/11b.asp#:~:text=The%20current%20thought%20is%20that,was%20on%20alternative%20but%20independence.>



Pastors and Spouses Luncheon at the 2023 SDB Conference Week in Grand Rapids, MI



Second, we need to define the preferred approach of DSC: “Disciple Sending Capacity.” This is an assessment of Kingdom multiplication. We grasp the disciple-making process of the church and also the missional work of the church through noting the sending of disciple-makers into the community and abroad. The season of tremendous growth among Baptists after the American Revolution took place as churches were incredibly focused on sending disciples into the mission field of the frontier and under-reached communities.

Rather than trying to add as many people as possible into a single church, the mission was to multiply God’s Kingdom through sending out equipped ministry leaders. An effective way to describe these missionally minded churches are “Greenhouse Churches.”

Greenhouse Churches

A greenhouse is a place where plants can thrive and flourish with intentionality. They are watered, optimal light is provided, ample fertilizer is tendered—and then they are purposefully planted where they can take root. Greenhouse churches provide a context where ministry leaders are discovered, developed, and then deployed. These churches provide a captivating Kingdom mission for people to get involved in, and then equip healthy disciples to lead. Notice, these churches are not guilt-tripping people to fill a vacancy on a committee or to join an organization. They are inviting people into a movement that is expressly focused on gospel living and proclamation.

21st Century SDB Land

No matter what statistics you look at for the United States and Canada, the numbers on church attendance are dismal compared to the 20th century—at least in terms of BIPs (Butts in Pews). We are increasingly similar to the statistics at the time of the American Revolution. Might that mean that we are ripe for a season of multiplication through intentionally focusing on Disciple Sending Capacity (DSC)?

DSC is worth the risk.

As I shared at the Pastors and Spouses Luncheon at the 2023 SDB Conference Week in Grand Rapids, MI, we are in a season of great opportunity. Through intentionally focusing on leadership development, we can have multiplying Kingdom impact. That focus continues to rely on training and education—but increasingly emphasizes lived experience through internships.

As a Conference, we are refreshing our focus on pastoral internships, ministry internships, the church planting coworker program, Ministry Staff Development (MSD), and licensing to preach. This is the season to invest in our current and future ministry leaders—maybe a time unmatched since the American Revolution.

There are three ways you can participate in SDB multiplication:

1. Pray. (Matthew 9:35-38)
2. Be a greenhouse church. As a church, assess your overall discipleship process. Are you focused on Discipleship Sending Capacity where ministry leaders are being discovered, developed, and deployed?
3. Financially partner in growing the Disciple Sending Capacity of the SDB General Conference. Read on the next page to learn of a unique opportunity to partner with the SDB Memorial Fund in equipping future ministry leaders. [SR](#)



Doubling Our Investment in Young SDB Leaders

By Carl Greene



Rev. Alton L. and Ethel Wheeler

The Rev. Alton L. and Ethel Wheeler Leadership Development Fund has been created in memory of a ministry couple who shaped, equipped, and mobilized a significant number of SDB leaders. The Fund will be used to prepare our next generations of SDB ministry leaders in this unique window of leadership development opportunity. The Rev. Alton and Ethel Wheeler Leadership Development Fund has been established to equip and missionally send young SDB leaders.

Given the urgency of this work, *through a partnership with the SDB Memorial Fund, any financial gifts given to the Wheeler Leadership Development Fund through the end of October will be matched dollar for dollar.* You have the opportunity to multiply the development of our leaders today and into the future. We have renewed opportunity in 2023. Together.

In order to partner financially, please make checks payable to the “SDB Memorial Fund” with “Wheeler Leadership Development Fund” in the memo line. Checks can be sent to: SDB Center, PO Box 1678, Janesville WI 53547. If you would like to give online, please go to <https://www.seventhdaybaptist.org/giving/> and select the fund entitled “Rev. Alton Wheeler and Leadership Development.” SR

Rev. Alton Lawrence Wheeler Biography

By Mark D. Lewis, SDB Memorial Fund Treasurer

Rev. Alton Lawrence Wheeler was born in Nortonville, Kansas, in 1917. He earned his bachelor's degree at Salem College and went to the Alfred University School of Theology for his divinity degree. He pastored churches in Nile and Richburg, NY, where he was ordained. He went on to pastor in Battle Creek, MI, and then Riverside, CA. He was acting President of General Conference in 1950, Conference President in 1951, and went on to become the General Secretary of General Conference 1965–1975. Following that he returned to pastoring the Riverside Church. He was very active in leadership development and a great influence on SDB leaders. The Rev. Alton and Ethel Wheeler Leadership Development Fund was established to continue the priority of leadership development that Rev. Alton Wheeler supported so passionately.

Trivia Tidbit: a check of the SDB Historical index turned up 72 index cards with references to the work of Rev. Wheeler, in addition to the multiple cards referencing Ethel's contributions. SR

Welcome Back

by Heather Gadd née Hemminger

Many churches have greeters who welcome those who walk into the church. They offer a smile, maybe a hug, they hand the person a bulletin, and direct them to the coffee station or the sanctuary. It's rare that a greeter in a small church goes through formal training, but greeters are often chosen because their personality lends itself to making people feel welcome or at ease. However, the church isn't filled with greeters, it's filled with all types of people, and while I would hope that a variety of people read this article, I believe that what is covered should be shared with everyone in a congregation to increase the maximum benefit of its message. How people are greeted when they first walk through the doors is the equivalent of a first impression, and first impressions can be the difference between someone deciding to come back or to never walk through those doors again.

As an SDB "lifer," I've seen many people in the church come and go. People leave or are absent for various reasons. Some people just move, others move on from the church, either SDB or in general, some need a break or are ill. More and more we're seeing people stay home on the Sabbath and watch the livestream because they've reached the age where getting to church is often too difficult or it's not advised due to their health. Just as I've seen many people leave, there are occasions when people who have been gone for some time come back. We should all be happy to see these people come back, whether it be for just a visit or maybe they are exploring coming back permanently—it is the type of situation where an offhand comment can make or break whether this person decides to stay.

My impetus for writing this article stems from a particular greeting, the passive aggressive, backhanded, "well-intentioned" greeting. Someone walks in the door, after having been gone for any number of months or maybe even years, and the greeting they receive is, "Who is

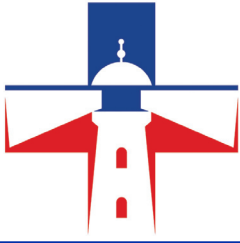
this stranger?" or "Well, well, well, look who decided to show up..." or any iteration of this greeting. I've heard this greeting more times than I can count and have even received it—let me tell you, as someone who has taken breaks from church, usually while pregnant, knowing I'm going to receive this greeting has given me anxiety on returning to church. If I get anxiety returning to my lifelong church because of this greeting, I can't imagine the feeling of someone who is on even shakier ground, either mentally or in their faith. No one should hear this upon entering the one place where they should feel safe and loved unconditionally, without terms and conditions. This type of greeting absolutely needs to stop.

When someone walks through that door, they should be greeted with a smile and a warm, "Good to see you." Easy on the enthusiasm, regardless of your own excitement to see them, because this person might already be anxious and we want to put them at ease, not draw attention to them unnecessarily. No need to mention that they've been absent, how long they've been gone, where they were, or any of those details. How much they are willing to talk about or share should be completely up to the individual. The only thing that should be acknowledged is that they are there at that moment. The ideal situation would be to ensure that a person feels welcome without pressuring them to make any commitments or divulge personal details.

My hope is that the responsibility of this message is not relegated to a greeter, but that this is the etiquette every single person in a church holds when welcoming someone back into the fold. SR

Heather is a wife, mother, soapmaker, student, and is growing into her role as a church lady. She enjoys reading, writing, baking, and hyper fixating on various crafts.

How people are greeted when they first walk through the doors is the equivalent of a first impression...



“BUMP!”

BEACON

By Ellie Greene

It is not unusual to have struggles along our walk with Christ. Just like Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, each day new temptations, troubles, and trials come along, causing us to stumble along the path. These troubles never seem to come at a convenient time; rather, they often come when we least expect (or want) them to! Recently, God has been teaching me that I should use every obstacle as an opportunity to grow closer to Him.

Years ago, on a sunny, drowsy morning during a family road trip, we heard a BUMP. Then another BUMP. And another! We all sat up, opened our eyes, and looked around with frightened expressions. My dad quickly pulled our minivan over. We had all realized the bad news: we had a flat tire.

So there we stood on the side of a dusty Wyoming highway while Dad tried to change the tire. But something was wrong. The tire was rusted to the wheel! Car after car went by, but nobody stopped to help us. The sun grew higher in the sky, but still there was nothing we could do but wait.

Finally, a pickup pulled over and an older couple hopped out. The gentleman began helping my dad while the lady chatted with my mom and us kids. After a while, with the joint effort of the gentleman and my dad, they eventually got the tire off and put on the spare. We all cheered and thanked the couple before they drove away.

Sometimes, we get into situations (BUMP!) when there is nothing we can do to get ourselves out of a mess. We need someone to come rescue us. And that Someone is God. We are trapped by sin with no way out and can do nothing to save ourselves. We need a rescuer! That's why we need God and His Son. When Jesus died on the cross for our sin, He saved us from the flat tire we can never change on our own.

We were all relieved that the struggle was over and we happily climbed into the van. But when Dad turned the key—it didn't start! We couldn't believe it! So we got out of our van and the whole thing happened all over again. This time we called a tow truck; someone came and helped my dad jump the car. For the third time we got into the van...and thankfully we stayed, making it safely to our destination.

Does it feel like you have a flat tire right now? Are you on the side of the spiritual road? Maybe you can't fix it because you don't have the right tools. But you know what? God does.

Our whole dilemma on the side of a Wyoming highway gave us the opportunity to pray and learn to be patient and enduring. Difficulties don't happen without reason. Troubles are often the best chance to overcome temptation and grow in faith.

Struggles are a normal part of life. The key is how you respond to those problems. Are you defeated by your problem or will you overcome it?

James 1:2-4 says, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian goes on a journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. Just like him, we are called by God to go on a journey from the sinful world we were born into and wired to love to the joy of being with and glorifying Him. On this journey we will encounter trials, troubles, and difficulties like Christian. That is inevitable.

But Romans 5:3-8 says, “Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

God did the ultimate saving by dying on the cross for us, when we were stranded on the side of the road. We can be confident that He will pull us through the problems we are facing and give us newfound great faith in Him. Isn't that an encouraging thought? [SR](#)



Patience: A Virtue

By Isaac Floyd

“Don’t ask God for patience; God will give you a way to practice it.”

You might have heard a similar phrase, if not those exact words. The general idea is that if you pray for patience, you won’t appreciate the opportunity God gives you to practice patience. It’s a somewhat bitter mindset, isn’t it?

God desires us to grow closer to Him and become better through the perfect gifts He grants us after we ask with prayer and supplication. So, why do we despise the process? It seems counter-intuitive.

Here’s the story that got me thinking about this topic:

For the past five months, my wife, Samantha, and I have been interested in a program that the Seventh Day Baptist denomination has put together: a pastoral internship. The purpose is to send someone to a church to study under a mentor pastor and become their intern. I have been interested in pursuing this opportunity because I have felt the call to pastoral ministry for at least a decade.

For the majority of those five months, I had no clue where I might be and when I might be there. It was an incredibly stressful and uncomfortable situation. Forget having a five-year plan; I didn’t even have a one-year plan! This speaks to the amazingness of my wife, who expected such uncertainty to come with marrying a man pursuing ministry. She was still ecstatic about the possibility of participating in this program. I was also excited, but a great deal of anxiety came with it, simply because I don’t like feeling like I’m stuck in ignorance.

Jesus made it very clear to me:

“Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?” (Matthew 6:26-27)

Certainly, I was not concerned about my direct survival, but something far less pressing: Will this all work out? When I decided to obsess over whether it would all work out, I began to accept the false belief that I could do something to make the process smoother. I couldn’t, and I still can’t. This is all in God’s hands, and He has allowed me to be more reliant on Him, to be more virtuous. He is good.

In the past few weeks, I have received more information about where and when I might go somewhere. However, nothing is set in stone yet, and I am once again waiting for things to be officially set in motion. I can feel my spirit becoming even more uncomfortable and irritation beginning to set in. However, an unexpected somebody shared a message with me and my wife: This is God’s work. He is sending us where He intends us to go. His ways might not be our ways, and His thoughts might not be our thoughts (Isaiah 55), but His will is good, pleasing, and perfect (Romans 12). Whatever happens in this field is God’s plan for me. There is no alternative conclusion.

This is where patience really kicks in: learning to be pleased by God’s will, as we ought to be. If we are not pleased by God’s will, then what does that say about us? It says that we remain unwilling to love God’s authority to some degree. Being displeased by God’s will is different than being inconvenienced by God’s will. The latter happens to me frequently. Being pleased with God’s will means being content with where you’re at and excited, just like I was about the internship, to begin with, to see what God will do in the future.

That’s what I am currently learning: How can I learn to be pleased by God’s will? Because the alternative is fraught with anger, anxiety, frustration, and arrogance. I’d like to spend my time in other ways. [SR](#)

Isaac Floyd is the Youth Director of the All Nations Seventh-Day Baptist Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is often thinking about or researching something that relates to theology or the Christian lifestyle.



UNEARTH THE CHURCH

By Johnmark Camenga
Conference President

One of the first things you'll experience as you move toward unearthing the Church is resistance. This shouldn't be a surprise to anyone who has ever tried to unearth anything, especially in rocky soil. You set the tip of the shovel against the earth at the appointed place; you consider your balance; you lift a foot in preparation for the first violent motion; and then—with force usually reserved for moments of anger or fear—you stomp on the top of the spade only to discover that it penetrates the earth only a half inch before all of the remaining force of your stomp recoils into your body, thus turning the shovel into a one-rung ladder or a very sad pogo stick.

Analogies like this can be a bit dangerous when we start considering the implications. The temptation is to start considering the different elements within the analogy and then to start identifying with one of the elements. I know how I tend to think about this sort of thing: my tendency is to think more highly of myself than I ought. "The old has passed away and the new has come," right? So, I probably used to be the rocks in the soil, but now I think I'm the shovel. Ahh, humility. I mean, at least I'm not identifying with the shoveler—who we can assume is the Lord. No, I'm identifying as the instrument in the hands of the Lord being used to do his work according to his will.

I don't know what you might latch onto within this analogy, but whatever that might be (soil, rocks, shovel, shoveler), I want to offer another far-less-flattering consideration.

Perhaps you are the resistance. And not in the good, Star Wars sense. Perhaps you are the resistance against the shovel and the shoveler, the one who trampled the rocks deep into the soil, and the one who works against the process of unearthing. Perhaps you are the one to whom Stephen said, "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you." (Acts 7:51)

Stephen, speaking to the council led by the high priest, was outlining the ways in which the people of Israel repeatedly rejected the prophets God sent them, preferring their own ways, their own ideas, and the gods of their slavery over the perfect plan and will of the God who repeatedly saved them. There was an ongoing resistance to the Lord.

Like I said before, we tend toward flattery for ourselves. When we hear about the failings of the Israelites we like to think, "Good thing we're not like them. Good thing we don't resist the plan and will of God" (Luke 18:11 anyone?).

Oh, but we are like them, aren't we? We do resist, don't we?

Stephen's message to the council was immediately followed by his stoning. The messenger who bore witness to the continued resistance of the people of Israel to the plan and will of God—to the very Messiah that God had promised—was cut down for naming it. Their resistance was entrenched. It was so intermingled with who they were that when their resistance was attacked, they responded with anger, wrath, and murder (which is the same response they had to the man about whom Stephen preached and for whom Stephen died).

Challenge number one as we move toward unearthing the church is to acknowledge our resistance to what God is trying to do with us, through us, and for us. What untouchable emotion is keeping you from letting go of your resistance? Fear, anger, sadness, anxiety, arrogance? What might happen if you let your guard down and got out of God's way as he unearths the Church?

God, would you unearth our resistance and all the things that are protecting it? In Jesus' name, amen. SR

Una de las primeras cosas que experimentarás al avanzar en el desenterramiento de la Iglesia es la resistencia. Esto no debería ser sorpresa para nadie que haya intentado alguna vez desenterrar algo, especialmente en suelo rocoso. Pones la punta de la pala contra la tierra en el lugar designado, tomando en cuenta tu equilibrio, levantas un pie en preparación para el primer movimiento violento, y entonces, con una fuerza normalmente reservada para momentos de

ira o miedo, pisas la parte superior de la pala sólo para descubrir que solo penetra en la tierra media pulgada antes de que toda la fuerza restante de tu pisotón retroceda hacia tu cuerpo, convirtiendo así la pala en una escalera de un solo peldaño o en un muy triste pogo saltarín.

Analogías como esta pueden ser un poco peligrosas cuando comenzamos a considerar las implicaciones. La tentación es comenzar a considerar los diferentes elementos dentro de la analogía y luego comenzar a identificarse con uno de los elementos. Sé cómo tiendo a pensar en este tipo de cosas; mi tendencia es pensar más alto de mí mismo de lo que debería. "Lo viejo ha pasado y lo nuevo ha llegado, ¿verdad? Entonces, probablemente solía ser las rocas en el suelo, pero ahora creo que soy la pala."

Ahh, humildad. Quiero decir, al menos no creo ser la pala, que podemos asumir que es el Señor. No, me estoy identificando como el instrumento en las manos del Señor que se usa para hacer su trabajo de acuerdo con su voluntad.

No sé a qué podrías aferrarte dentro de esta analogía, pero sea lo que sea (tierra, rocas, pala o el que cava), quiero ofrecer otra consideración mucho menos halagadora.

Tal vez tú eres la resistencia. Y no en el buen sentido como en Star Wars. Tal vez eres resistencia contra la pala y el

que cava, el que pisoteó las rocas profundamente en el suelo, y el que trabaja contra el proceso de desenterrar. Tal vez tú eres a quien Esteban le dijo: "Gente obstinada, incircuncisos de corazón y oídos, siempre resisten al Espíritu Santo. Como vuestros padres, así también vosotros." (Hechos 7:51).

Esteban, estaba hablando al consejo dirigido por el sumo sacerdote, describiendo las formas en las que el pueblo de Israel rechazó repetidamente a los profetas que Dios les envió, prefiriendo sus propios caminos, sus propias ideas y los dioses de su esclavitud sobre el plan perfecto y la voluntad del Dios que repetidamente los salvó. Había una resistencia continua al Señor.

Como dije antes, tendemos a adularnos a nosotros mismos. Cuando escuchamos sobre las fallas de los israelitas, nos gusta pensar: "Qué bueno que no somos como ellos. Menos mal que no nos resistimos el plan y la voluntad de Dios." (Lucas 18:11 ¿alguien?)

Oh, pero somos como ellos, ¿no? Nos resistimos, ¿no?

El mensaje de Esteban al consejo fue seguido inmediatamente por su lapidación. El mensajero que dio testimonio de la continua resistencia del pueblo de Israel al plan y la voluntad de Dios, al Mesías que Dios había prometido, fue degollado por nombrarlo. La resistencia estaba arraigada. Estaba tan entremezclada con lo que ellos eran que cuando su resistencia fue atacada, respondieron con ira, enojo y asesinato (que es la misma respuesta que tuvieron con el hombre sobre el que predicó Esteban y por el que murió Esteban).

El desafío número uno a medida que avanzamos hacia el desenterramiento de la iglesia es reconocer nuestra resistencia a lo que Dios está tratando de hacer con nosotros, a través de nosotros y por nosotros. ¿Qué emoción intocable te impide dejar ir tu resistencia? ¿Miedo, ira, tristeza, ansiedad o arrogancia? ¿Qué podría pasar si bajas la guardia y te apartas del camino de Dios mientras desentierra a la Iglesia?

Dios, ¿desenterrarías nuestra resistencia y todas las cosas que la protegen? En el nombre de Jesús, amén. [SR](#)





The Book of Revelation: The Seven Trumpets Part 2

Study Lesson 29 by Dennis Coleman,
Seventh Day Baptist Church of Shiloh, NJ

I had a great time at this year's Conference week for The U.S.A. and Canada and I want to say a special thank you to Sister Charlotte Chroniger and to those who helped make this year's conference great. It seemed as if we were all very hungry for God's word and for the opportunity to worship together. I think we were also hungry for some family time and this year's Conference met all of these needs.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

Romans 12:15

While I truly enjoyed myself at Conference, the week was a bit of a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde when it came to my family and my personal life. As many of you may know, my dad became seriously ill and passed away during Conference week. (Thank you for all of the condolences and well wishes, as well as your prayers for my family.) I believe that Romans 12:15 is a call for us to stand with others during the ups and downs of life and it was great to know that I have so many brothers and sisters in Christ who were willing to stand with me and my family during this difficult time.

As I endured the loss, God reminded me of a dream that He gave me many years ago. This dream included His instruction on how I should handle life's various ups and downs. Maybe someday I will get to share the entire dream, but what was important during my time of mourning was a reminder that I should always draw from my Source and that when I am wounded I should worship my God. His peace was and is amazing and in His strength I am able to process my loss. I could feel His love along with the love of His children who surrounded me at Conference.

It was amazing that we were only two hours away from the hospital, as opposed to the 9-10 hours away that we would have been had we been at home. This was a blessing from God, whose plan is always perfect. God truly provided and is carrying me during the ups and downs that will come over the next few weeks.

I want to encourage all of us to remember and to obey Romans 12:15. I believe it is an important way for us to touch the lives of others, both believers and those who do not believe.

*...the goal is for everyone to know that
there is none like our God in all the earth.*

Prayer Time

Father—Thank You.

Help us to love one another through the ups and the downs of life. Remind us of Romans 12:15 and please equip us to love others in the same way that You love them and us.

Now please guide us into Your Bible, In Jesus name. Amen.

*So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets
prepared themselves to sound.*

—Revelation 8:6

As I mentioned last time, when I think of these angels and their trumpets, I think of a group of heralds announcing an important event. And as each of these heralds blows their trumpets the world as we know it will be significantly changed.

I believe that what John sees in this part of the visions represents things that will actually happen on earth. His vision might be literal or it might be an allegory for the events that will unfold. John does his best to describe these events but I am not sure if he has the words to fully describe what he is seeing. Because of these language limitations and because we are left to translate things that someone else saw, even Bible experts debate some of the meanings behind these visions. There is very little debate over whether or not something is going to happen, with some people believing that some of these events may have already started. The only question is what will (or do) they look like as they play themselves out here on earth.

*The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed,
mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth.
And a third of the trees were burned up,
and all green grass was burned up.*

—Revelation 8:7

Does Revelation 8:7 sound familiar? It should. John watched as the first angel blew his trumpet and the trumpet sound was followed by hail and fire. This is of course similar to the seventh plague which God poured out on Egypt during the time of Moses (Exodus 9:13-35). Through Moses, God tells Pharaoh that the purpose of this storm was to show the people that there was none like God in all the earth (Exodus 9:14). I suspect this is God's goal on earth when the first angel sounds his trumpet. But is this goal achieved by a literal storm or is this symbolic of something else going on?

This is another situation where there are differences in interpretation. There is the simple, straightforward explanation, that this is a physical storm that destroys a third of the plants on earth. It seems as if recent commentary on this verse dismisses this as a possibility, but I am not willing to close the door on the idea of physical destruction being represented here. After all, what the people experienced in Egypt was a real storm. Who's to say that God wouldn't do the same in the future?

However, the commentaries seem to point to this being allegorical, representing something happening to mankind. *Ellicott's Commentary* points out that this hailstorm has one very major difference from the one in Exodus as John describes seeing blood. This difference led the writers of the commentary to believe that this represents a storm falling upon "the proud and lofty." Based on this interpretation, something will happen that will humble those who (like Pharaoh) would see themselves as being above the Lord God. Other commentaries describe something similar, with some pointing to past events and to the possibility that this humbling has already started to happen.

I agree with something that *Ellicott's Commentary* points out: that the form of this "humbling" is not important. The simple fact is that we will see prideful people taken down by the power of God or we will see a physical storm that likely will accomplish the same goal with its destruction. Either way I believe the goal is for everyone to know that there is none like our God in all the earth.

For the most part the commentaries do not deal with the mention of "one-third" of the earth. I don't think we should see this as an exact measurement. Instead I believe it is given to give us an idea of the magnitude of this event. Something will happen (either physical or spiritual) of such significance that it will be noticeable, as if one-third of the earth is affected. I also hold to the belief that the Holy Spirit will give discernment so that God's children will know exactly what is going on and will be able to minister to those who don't believe.

The prideful will be brought down. This seems to be a theme that runs throughout the entire Bible. Knowing this, I would like to end with this admonishment from God's word:

*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord,
and He will lift you up.*

—James 4:10 SR



SDB Missionary Society

By Andrew Samuels
Chief Executive Director

DRC—A Demonstration of Dedication

In May, 2023, I had the privilege of visiting the Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa for the very first time. What a tremendous blessing that visit was! Much prayer preceded the trip since there have been frequent reports of the country being ravaged with militia attacks by rebel groups, particularly in the eastern part of the land. My traveling partner for this mission was Dr. Benoit Nzokizwa, Secretary of the Burundi SDB Conference. I had personally met Dr. Benoit on another mission trip to his native country of Burundi in March 2023, and he proved to be a worthy colleague. His French-speaking skills, as well as his giftedness as a communicator, was highly instrumental in ensuring the success of the mission.

With all the volatility in the east, we decided to stay in the capital city of Kinshasa, which is in the west and away from the violence and unrest. Seventh Day Baptist pastors and leaders traveled from various other parts of the country, to meet with us in Kinshasa, a city of 17.1 million people. The ministry in the DRC consisted of multiple activities including, but not limited to, preaching, teaching, training, counseling, listening, and assessing needs.

Pastor Andre Kalunga Kabobo, President of the Seventh Day Baptist Conference in the DRC, met us at the airport with an entourage of enthusiastic brothers from the church. On our first full day, we encountered a group of lively and spirited congregants who waited patiently for us and greeted us with singing and dancing and the laying down of cloths for us to walk on as we entered the sanctuary. Those were cultural welcoming gestures which demonstrated with gracious and exuberant expressions how they felt about the presence of their guests. They have a strong orphan ministry, and we had the opportunity to meet some of the current orphans, as well as some former ones who had aged out of their program. One of those orphans is currently an ordained evangelist, and another is a medical doctor and a pastor, both in the SDB ministry.

Sometime in 1998 was when Seventh Day Baptists had their beginning in the DRC as Pastor Andre Kalunga Kabobo, through personal study, became convicted of the Biblical Sabbath truth, which he then introduced to his family. After a brief alliance with another Sabbath-keeping church, he started his own ministry in 2003 and by 2006 became aware of Seventh Day Baptists through one of his members who had traveled to South Africa and Rwanda. Contact with the SDB Missionary Society was made in 2010, leading to the studying of the Statement of Beliefs and the subsequent embracing of the doctrines. The Missionary Society made a visit to the DRC in 2016, some local churches were visited, and there was a solidifying of the relationship. Since then, the SDB witness in the DRC has been growing steadily and they are reporting that currently there are 165 SDB congregations in 20 of the 26 provinces of the country, totaling about 4,000 people.

For our time in the DRC, Dr. Benoit and I taught classes on SDB Identity, Leadership, and Stewardship. We also preached about the transforming power of the Lord to make us into the purposeful humans He created us to be. The leaders and pastors, who had come from about 10 of the provinces, appeared to glean much from the teaching and discipling times. Such was their eagerness, that most of them had traveled long distances to attend the seminars and spend the time with us. In fact, two pastors had walked approximately 60 miles to Kinshasa for the gathering. What sacrifice! Furthermore, it was reported that there were a few pastors who did not make it to Kinshasa in time to join us for the teaching opportunities. They arrived after we had left the DRC. Pastor Andre Kabobo, being the astute leader that he is, asked them to stay in Kinshasa for a few days, and he taught them the same lessons we had spent five days teaching him and his leaders who had made it there in time. To our astonishment, the late arrivals ended up spending three months in Kinshasa after we left, and Pastor Andre spent time teaching and mentoring them. Incredible! That is dedication! [SR](#)



Church at Worship



Dr. Benoit teaching with an interpreter



Pastor Andre Kalunga (Conference Leader)
Dr. Benoit, and Andy Samuels



View of the church from the outside



Reimagining the Church at White Cloud

Seeking to understand God's purpose for the local church is always important, whether experiencing good times or coming out of bad. To this end, the White Cloud SDB Church established a Reimagining Committee to consider the following question: What is essential to the founding of a new church? We agreed that a covenant relationship between the members would be an essential beginning. With that, we arranged to celebrate a new covenant relationship within the church, starting with a formal covenant signing banquet. At that time we committed ourselves to Christ and to each other.

From there, the Committee sought to reimagine what would be important to people coming to the church. One of the first items was the need for a fully functional nursery. We had a nursery but the space was also used for a children's classroom, a play area, a dining area, and as a general hangout for teens and others. We wanted to dedicate this space fully to a nursery and arrange for these other ministries to be conducted elsewhere. With that in mind, we designed, decorated and furnished a dedicated nursery. This was the first time in our church's history that a room had been dedicated solely for the purpose of providing care for infants and toddlers. From that time, the nursery has been used by one to six infants and toddlers. What a nice space! Using our church's Child Protection Policy, nursery staff was trained. Since the extent of our staffing capabilities was uncertain, we initially sought an outside staff person for assistance. Although we anticipated that she would be paid for a limited period of time, she graciously and insistently provided her time and service as a volunteer! Where God guides—God provides!

During the initial period of the Covid pandemic, worship services were held via Zoom technology. This later was followed by in-person worship outside on the lawn of the church. It was during this time that we first began live-streaming our worship service using Facebook Live—a

new step for us into the technological world. After worship services moved back inside, and the committee was formed, it was decided that it would be good to continue a hybrid worship service, both for those who attended in person and those choosing or needing to attend via streaming. To date we continue live-streaming the worship service.

Unfortunately, our technology for streaming was antiquated (as well as the technicians needed to install and operate the new technology). The committee reimaged an updated delivery system using a better computer, camera, monitor, etc. Although this process has been slow, the technical assistance provided by Jeremiah Owen has been invaluable in moving us along. A new computer has been installed along with new cable connections and monitors. The camera update has yet to be fully implemented. It is hoped that with these upgrades the online stream will be better. Although slow in implementation, live-streaming of the worship services has reached people throughout the world. Praise be to God!

Two additional ministries within the church have become hybrid. During the pandemic, both our Friday night Bible study and Sabbath School were conducted via Zoom. After beginning in-person Sabbath School, we discovered that we could accommodate additional attendees if we continued to make it available via Zoom for people who were sick or out of the area. Consequently, over the past year our attendance has been higher on average than it would have been otherwise. With this in mind, the committee was able to purchase a large TV monitor, camera, room microphone and sound bar. A new computer is expected to be added to the system.

For Friday night Bible study, we found that more people were able to attend if we simply continued via Zoom rather than everyone gathering at the church! We now

What is essential to the founding of a new Church?



have a higher average attendance than we ever did before! Additionally we have attendees from Connecticut and Colorado who are now able to join us. God is great!

The committee is continuing discussions on reimagining the sanctuary and our fellowship areas. Re-imagining the church is an ongoing process which we pray will bear much fruit for the Kingdom.

We would like to express our deep appreciation to the PULSE Church Revitalization Program, Memorial Board, and all denominational executives for the grants which have allowed us to undertake these reimagined and revitalized ministries. Without their assistance these ministries would have been delayed or deemed impractical or impossible. Additionally, we would like to thank Jeremiah Owen for his technical assistance and patience in making recommendations and working us through the process of upgrading our technology.

Finally we would like to thank our fellow SDB churches throughout the denomination for their support of the Memorial Fund and the denomination. Together we can accomplish much for the Kingdom of Christ here-and-now and into the future. May God continue to bless you as you seek His will. [SR](#)

—The White Cloud SDB Church Reimagining Committee: Ed Cruzan, Gaby Alonzo, Sarah Shick, Millie Bleiler, Luann Cruzan, Pastor JR Shick, Tori Nader, Tracy Ishman



Thank You!

to all our Pastors and Leaders

DEATH NOTICES

PEDERSON—Martin Jens (“Marty”), former member of New Auburn, WI, and Riverside, CA, SDB Churches; resided in Eau Claire, WI; died May 24, 2023, at age 60. Burial at Lakeview Cemetery in Eau Claire.

DAVIS—Kenneth L., former member of Battle Creek, MI, and Kitty, British Guiana, SDB Churches. Resided in Medina, OH; died May 27, 2023, at age 75.

MILLER—Thice Lystra (Cover), deacon of Faith SDB Church of Bronx, NY; Resided in Wakefield; died July 16, 2023, at home; age 100.

STERLING—Samuel, deacon of Waterford SDB Church in St. Catherine, Jamaica, and founder/pastor of Agape SDB Church in New York City; resided in Leesburg, GA; died in Tallahassee, FL, July 21, 2023; age 70.

SHOBE—William Eugene, Jr., charter member and pastor of Metro Atlanta, GA, SDB Church; pastor of Houston, TX, Washington, DC, and Dodge Center, MN, SDB Churches; and member of CEC (Christian Education Council) and COM (Council on Ministry); died August 19, 2023, at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN; age 68.

WARNER—W. Garth, deacon of Verona, NY, SDB Church; resided in Oneida, NY; died August 19, 2023, at home at age 97; burial in New Union Cemetery, Churchville, NY.

SDBs ONLINE

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Conference evening WORSHIP SERVICES can be viewed online at: bit.ly/sdb2023yt

NO FEAR
NO LIMITS
NO EXCUSES

Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged.
For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

—Joshua 1:9 NLT

Periodicals postage paid
at Janesville, WI
and additional offices

October is
Pastor Appreciation
Month!

